

DIRIGO FLYER

Vol. X, No. 7 July 2002

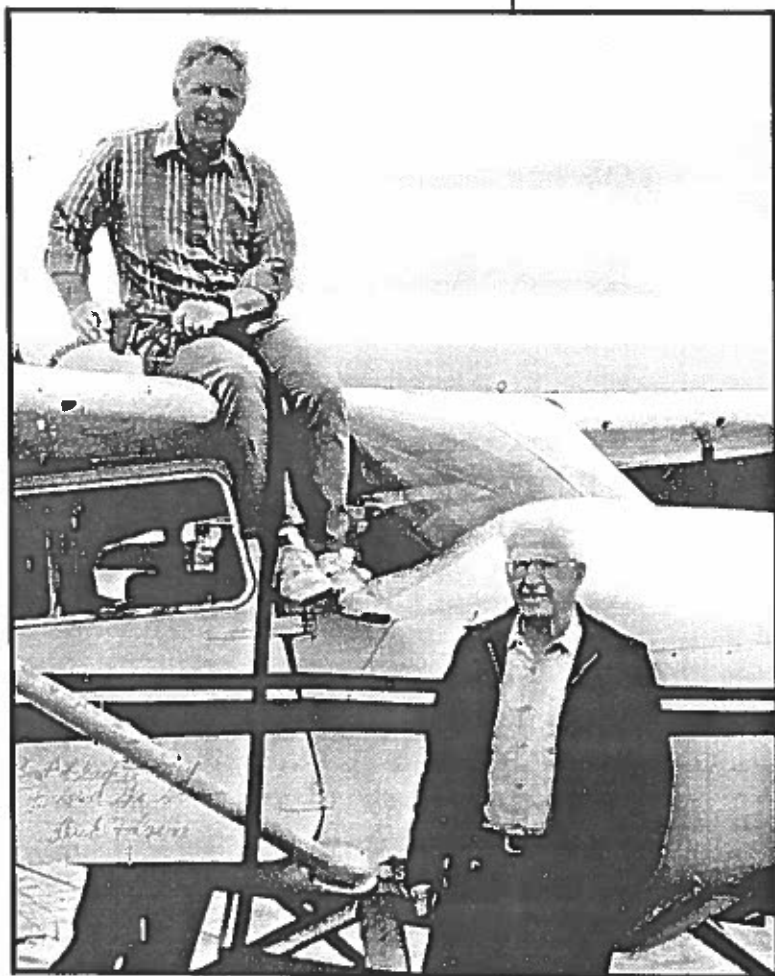
Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society
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*Farewell,
Dear Friends ...*

Dear Leo,

How ironic fate can sometimes be!

I snapped this photo of Dick and George a few years ago on the dock at Folsom Air Service at Moosehead Lake. If ever two men had a mutual love of the freedom of the air and of float flying, then Dick and George certainly qualify. Put them at the head of the class.



George was intensely proud of his Maine heritage, as was Dick. Their relationship goes way back to the '40s when George's father was the Game Warden in the central part of Maine and Dick was just starting out with his flying business. They were good friends and I believe George always used Dick as his role model when he was setting up his Greene's Air Service. George believed in treating his pilots well and with respect, as did Dick.

Their loss leaves a large void in the aviation community. Sure, life goes on, and someday another person will step up and fill that void, but absolutely no one will ever replace the characters we knew as Dick Folsom and George Greene.

*Sincerely,
Bill Thaden*

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Monthly meetings
 are held at 10 a.m.
 on the second Saturday
 of each month
 at various locations.

See calendar for details.

Maine Aviation Historical Society

Monthly Meeting Notes • June 8, 2002

The recording secretary was late in arriving. This copy of the minutes starts with the secretary's arrival. This meeting was held at the Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine. There were 20 people present.

Treasurer's Report. See sheet 0602-01 attached to secretary's copy of the minutes.

Secretary's Report. No correspondence was received by recording secretary. All electronic correspondence via the web page was forwarded to the president.

Fundraising. Carl Sederquist reported on the memorial/donor brick program. Samples were passed around. The bricks will be personalized for donations of \$100 for a red brick and \$250 for a marble brick. A 350 pound marble bench can be had for a donation of \$10k.

Building. No report.

Physical Plant. We are still working on the occupancy certificate from the city. Electrical work is being done, exit signs, the fire alarm system, fire detection system is being installed and holes from the removal of duct work are being plugged. The city might grant a parking waiver when we get opened and operating. Work times are Tuesday and Thursday, 5-7 p.m. and Saturday, 8 a.m. to finish.

Hikes. Peter Noddin reported that no hikes were held this spring due to work on the museum. Flags have been replaced at a number of sites. Research is continuing on the locations of several new sites, including an A-20, P-47, and F-84.

Aquisitions. An update on the recently acquired UH-1 was given. We might be working toward obtaining an F-4.

Appreciation. Thanks were given to Bob Day for his production of large scale, full color plaques representing the various military units from Maine. (See photo on page 6.)

Miscellaneous. President Shaw reiterated our need for help. Many small tasks remain to be completed. There was an update on the refurbishing of the Scorpion helicopter. The fiberglass shell is almost finished. There was a short discussion about the cleaning of the Stinson frame. This work is planned but not immediately scheduled. We are again in need of additional funds and fundraising efforts must continue.

The business meeting was followed by a slide presentation by Rick Alexander.

— William Townsend, Recording Secretary

Rick and Leo taped Leo's slide and talk show about Maine aviation so the museum will be able to use it when we are open. They had to wait until there were no planes flying overhead as it would make too much noise on tape.

We worked on getting the blocks over to the helo pad and we're ready to move the Huey over to them. The Matthews family members helped by digging out the soil around the too-small pad before we placed the blocks there and by painting the pad and the blocks. They also painted the rust stains on the walls of the museum left over from the old steel roof drip edges. They were waiting for Dave and Mike to come back from painting the Scorpion, which will look great when it has its final coat of yellow paint ... and it will be *yellow!* Great job done by the crew from American Eagle.

Shelly Shaw painted the outside light fixtures to match the metal covers done earlier this spring. She also painted the main door and frame. We got one of Don Martin's old shop display counters mounted on a frame so it will be high enough to use for displays.

Les Shaw worked on the conduit pipes that we need to comply to the safety codes, getting them ready to install the emergency lighting, fire pull stations, etc. still needed to get our certificate of occupancy.

— Mike Cornett

President's Message

Work is coming along slowly at the museum. We are still working on getting our certificate of occupancy and by the time you read this newsletter, we hope to have that accomplished. We are starting to build and set up displays in the museum. I am in hopes that we can open real soon as a work-in-progress. We do need help, so if you have some free time stop by and give us a hand.

— Les Shaw, President

The British Are Coming!

The History of the U.S. Naval Air Station, Brunswick, Maine — Part III

The following U.S. Navy narrative outlines the use of the Brunswick Naval Air Station from its beginning.

— Leo Boyle, Editor

The arrival of VOF-1 at Rockland and AG44 at Sanford began the training of our Navy squadrons at this command. Considerable effort by all hands was necessary to ready these two facilities by April 15. CASU 22 sent a large detachment to Sanford and a smaller one to Rockland.

Negotiations for use of the Portsmouth (NH) Airport and the Augusta (ME) Airport were started during this month: Portsmouth to be used as a "bounce" field from Sanford and Augusta to be used by Lewiston's squadron during the proposed runway improvement scheduled for that field.

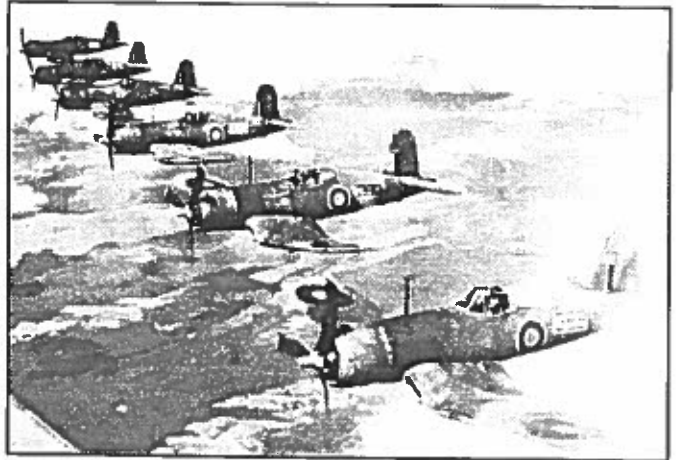
Training activity increased considerably during April 1944 with Royal Navy 1842 F4Us and Royal Navy 1820 SBUs reporting in to Brunswick. Excellent weather, 83% contact, increased the training hours to 1837, although two fatal accidents — one at Rockland and one at Bar Harbor — occurred in this month.

The arrival of AVR C-26581 started this command on its way toward aid/sea rescue development. This 63 foot aircraft rescue boat and crew reported on April 12 and was assigned to NAAF Casco Bay to stand by for air/sea rescue work in this area.

With four fields under this command operating different squadrons of aircraft, coupled with pleasant and moderate weather, flight operations took a sharp upturn during May. Again there was 83% contact condition and the training hours for Brunswick swelled to 3632 hours as night flying was again instituted. However, as might be expected with the increased flying, three fatal crashes occurred in May 1944. An F6F attached to VF-44 was lost at sea off Cape Porpoise; the second on May 16 when two F4Us from 732 at Lewiston were lost in a probable mid-air collision at Sebago Lake, Maine. Extensive search and dragging failed to locate either the planes or other evidence of the cause of these crashes.

The personnel of NAS Brunswick received firsthand instruction in the handling of a blimp when, on May 7, 1944, a K-type airship from South Weymouth was landed here. Following this landing, the airship proceeded to NAAF Bar Harbor where operations continued for several days to indoctrinate personnel in airship handling. This was the second visit of a blimp to this field, the first one arrived way back in April 1943.

In June 1944 a new taxiway was started which was to speed up the ground traffic pattern and work was finally started on the enlargement of the control tower to keep pace with the increased operations and equipment. This month saw quite an emphasis on remodeling and new construction as work was started on bowling alleys. The Ship's Service Galley was enlarged and alterations to the General Mess Hall were started to develop into the Marine barracks. Although the Marines had long been a familiar sight around this station inasmuch as Major



Voight Corsair IIs of the Royal Navy 738 Squadron, a common sight at Brunswick during World War II. (Peter Bowers Photo)

J. E. Knowles, USMCA, had arrived back in March 1943, yet there had never been a Marine barracks. These men, mostly veterans of the South Pacific campaign, had been quartered in many strange places from half of one side of a partially completed B-1-B barracks to the cooks' quarters over the mess hall. The plans now called for a barracks, NCO quarters, and a day room.

Brunswick was host to the British Ambassador Lord Halifax on June 23, 1944 at which time he received both the American and British officers and delivered a short informal talk which did much to explain the relations between the British Tar and America in general. Senators Barton of Ohio and Brewster of Maine also attended this ceremony, the latter making a short speech.

Two mid-air collisions occurred during this month of June. The first between two British Corsairs in which both planes lost wings and plunged into the sea off Pemaquid Point. Extensive search failed to locate either pilots or planes. The second occurred on June 9 when two F4Us from Lewiston collided during a formation flight. Miraculously, both planes were able to land, one at Lewiston with a bent propeller, the other at Brunswick with two and a half feet gone from the port wing.

With the arrival of the USS Eagle PE66 at Portland, Maine, Naval Air Station Brunswick, as far as known, became the only Naval Air Station to have a commissioned vessel attached. This ship, a relic of World War I, has been used for many tasks, including spar towing for dive bombing, patrol work for Portland Frontier Base, and towing of the 7H submarine target, and has been of considerable value to this command in training both Royal Navy and our fleet units.

Nearly a week of continuous rain during June 1944 lowered the percentage of contact weather to 76% but nevertheless training kept up to 3036 hours and AG44 left Sanford having completed their training. Royal Navy 732 was disbanded and 1842 left for overseas.

"BNAS" continued from page 3

By the end of July 1944 several new construction projects had been completed. The new taxiway to runway #27 from between hangars #1 and #2, the bowling alleys adjacent to the gymnasium, and the addition to the Ship's Service Galley were all finished and put into use. Work still continued on the new control tower and the lumber shed, while the stabilization program and sealing the runway safety strips went ahead. This last project was started as a result of terrific dust storms which at times forced the closing of the field due to the runways being obscured by dust clouds. During 1943 and early 1944, thousands of dollars had been spent to remove this menace of blowing swirling dust, but the stripped areas, borrow pits, and unsodded safety strips still filled the air with dust from any wind over 20 knots. The only solution, to seal the safety strips, had been arrived at during the winter and all spring work had proceeded in leveling, filling and spreading gravel preparing for the sealing coats.

The extent of Royal Navy training had reached such an amount by July 1944 that it was decided to have an officer designated as Assistant Superintendent of British Air Training assigned to this command. Accordingly, Lt. Comdr. Martin, RN, reported to NAS Brunswick to assume this responsible position. Setting up offices in the Operations Building, he took over the complete training program for both Brunswick and Lewiston and welcomed in 1846 and 1848 Squadrons which arrived during this month.

Flight operations during July 1944 continued at a high rate until the end of the month when several days bad weather cut the contact average to 74%. Nevertheless, 3721 hours of training time and 613 hours of time for VJ-15 were piled up. One fatal crash occurred when an F4U from 739 Lewiston crashed

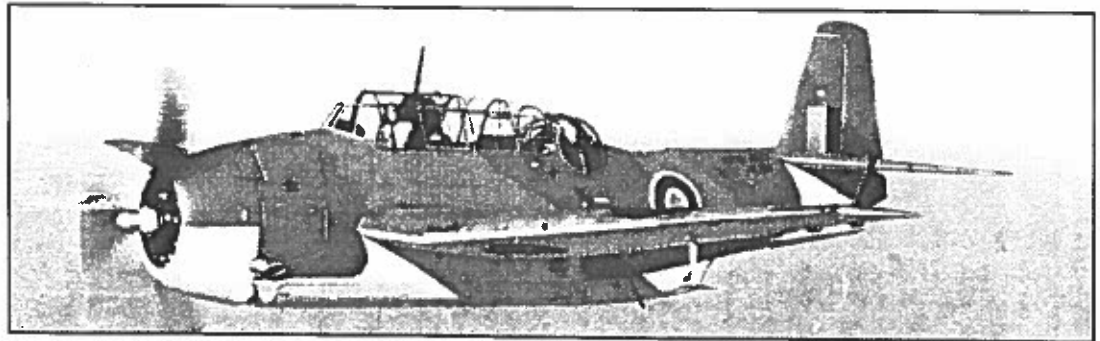
in a forced landing near Waterville, Maine. Plane was demolished and pilot killed.

On August 3, 1944 this station was visited by Captain McAfee, (WR) USNR, accompanied by Congresswoman Margaret Chase Smith of the Maine Second District. The Waves were reviewed and Captain McAfee and party toured the station. On August 9, Commodore Rowe, ComFairQuonset, visited the facilities and returned to Brunswick for the night. Two days later, on August 11, Rear Admiral Richardson, USN, landed here for a brief visit and later Rear Admiral Cheverius, USN (Ret.) arrived for a short stay.

This month also saw the transfer of Lt. Comdr. Firth who had carried out the duties of SENO for nearly a year. Lt. Comdr. Firth had been a most popular officer and had done much to further the pleasant friendly relations with our British allies. A fine officer and gentleman, his wit added much to the ward-room mess and his cooperation never waned. His duties were temporarily assumed by Lt. Comdr. Martin, RN.

A bad fire broke out at 0300 on August 4, 1944 in the Junior BOQ. The flames spread rapidly and only by valiant efforts of the civilian fire department, Navy personnel, and town of Brunswick fire department, was the second wing of the building saved. Upwards of 40 officers, British and American, lost their personal effects in the fire; and, most unfortunately, one British officer lost his life. Work was immediately started to rebuild the building. Less than a week later a British pilot attached to 1846 Squadron was killed when his aircraft lost flying speed and stalled out during a carrier deck landing practice. The plane crashed and burned about a mile from the NAAF Bar Harbor field.

Grumman Avenger I
of the Royal Navy,
many of which
trained in Maine.
(Grumman Photo)



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On Sunday morning, August 13, 1944, a sudden and violent storm hit NAS Brunswick, uprooting many large trees and completely blocking the main entrance for some few hours. A Wave, on duty in the control tower, was badly cut about the face by flying glass when a large window in the tower was blown in by the 62 knot gale. Steps were immediately taken to construct padded braces which can be installed when wind is expected to reach a dangerous velocity. In spite of foggy mornings and some bad weather, contact conditions reached an all time high of 90% and flight time jumped accordingly to 4052 hours of training.

The end of August 1944 also brought the end of a command for Comdr. J.C. Alderman, USN. In a colorful ceremony attended by service personnel, civilian workers, and townspeople, many of whom had witnessed the commissioning of the station in April 1943, Comdr. Ezra M. Ellis, USN, assumed formal command of the station and its facilities. This ceremony was preceded by an inspection and review of ship's company and Royal Navy officers and men.

New England's second hurricane in eight years hit the Maine coast about 2300 on September 14, 1944. Winds up to 56 knots were recorded but adequate warning prevented only the most superficial damage. However, flying weather during September reached an all time low of 68% contact. Attempting to make up for the past summer's drought, 6.2 inches of rain fell during the 30 day period. This, coupled with numerous stretches of foggy mornings and evenings, severely cut into the flying. Sanford and Lewiston, a few miles further inland, suffered only from the rain.

The SeaBees got busy installing the catapult and arresting gear on the SW safety strip of the NW-SE runway. Work progressed rapidly on the stabilization of the safety strips and the station ground improvement program leaped ahead with the laying out of sidewalks. Junior officers moved back into the first deck of the BOQ which was badly burned in the August 4th fire and work progressed on the piping of auxiliary water lines to the various hangars.

Among the many high ranking Naval officers visiting this command during the month of September 1944 was CominCh who attended the launching of the USS Frank Knox by the

Bath Iron Works on September 10, 1944. Included in this launching party were Admiral Pace, Admiral Cooke, Captain Roper, and Congressman Bates. Commodore Rowe, ComFair-Quonset, also paid a short visit during this month.

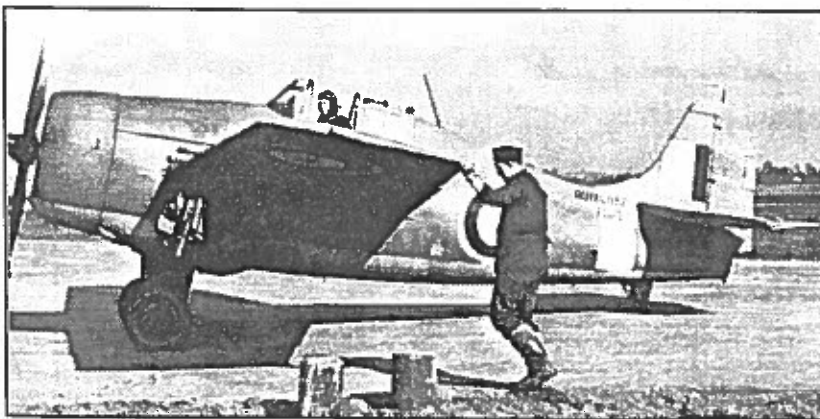
The morning of September 11, 1944 brought forth the worst crash this station has experienced. Flying in a nine plane formation over the eastern end of the field, two F4Us of 1849 Squadron collided, both crashing beside the taxiway leading from the tower to the end of runway 34 and on either side of hangar #1. Both planes were completely demolished, one bursting into flames, and both pilots killed.

By ComOne District Circular Letter No. 14-44, NAS Brunswick and its facilities were assigned as aviation activities under Commander Naval Air Bases FIRST Naval District and Captain Ben H. Wyatt, USN, assumed duties as ComNav-AirBases FIRST NavDist. Captain Wyatt, accompanied by Captain Hulfish (SC) and Captain Johnson (CSC), visited NAS Brunswick on September 25 to September 30. Captain Wyatt visited NAAF Sanford and Lewiston for the purpose of a material inspection.

On Saturday morning, September 9, 1944, an air/sea rescue test was carried out. Following an IFF signal a two man life raft was dropped by one of VJ-15's TBFs. Using the Fighter Director Radar, VJ's ready duty amphibian was vectored to the scene and the aircraft rescue boats based at Portland and Portsmouth were dispatched. Although the raft was picked up by a neighboring DD, both plane and rescue boat were successfully led to the scene and many communication problems were brought to light.

On October 11, 1944, three additional 63 foot AVRs with officers and crew arrived at NAAF Casco Bay. With a quota of six 63 foot AVRs and one 45 foot AVR, this command was given the responsibility of guarding the Maine coast for air/sea rescue. Carrying out a long range plan which had been worked out over a period of months, these AVRs were based one at Rockland, Maine, one at Boothbay Harbor, Maine, three at Portland, Maine, and two at Portsmouth, New Hampshire Navy Yard. In this way, all the seaward operating areas used by squadrons attached to this command could be covered.

To be continued . . .



Grumman Martlet I, another lend-lease aircraft used for training in Maine.
(Photo via Philip Jarrett)

The 36th Annual Meeting of the
Northeast Aero Historians

October 18, 19 and 20, 2002



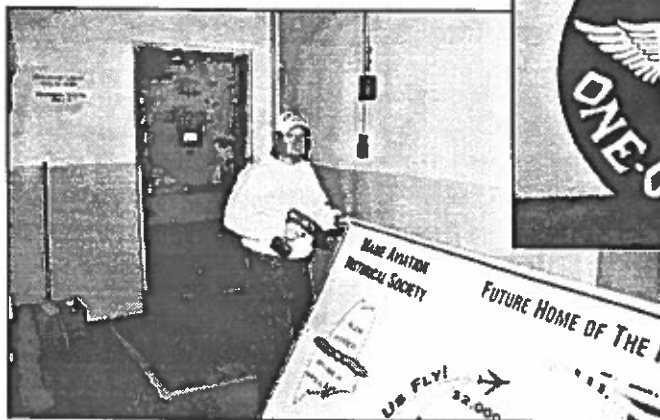
Cradle of Aviation Museum
Garden City, New York

Welcome Home, Huey



Above: John Garbinski secures the Huey helicopter now at the museum.
Left: Our new Bell UH-1 Huey helicopter. (Mike Cornett Photos)

Signs of the Times



Above: Member Kent Knowles works on one of our signs. Kent has made the F-101 service boards work again. Inset: One of member Bob Day's beautiful paintings of various unit patches in Maine. (Mike Cornett Photos)

Correction

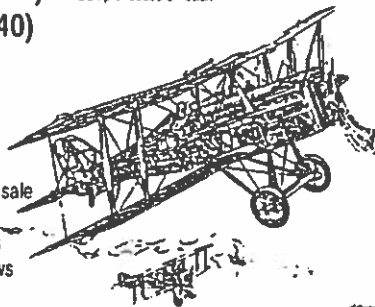
Sorry, Pauline! Caption was wrong ...
The photo below shows Pauline Sodermark and
Greg Hildreth, not Jim Sodermark.



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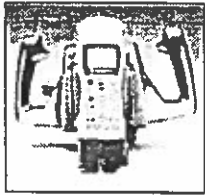
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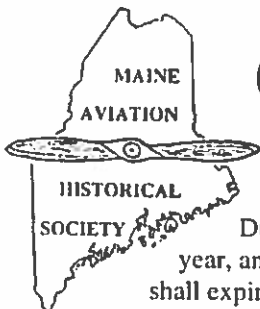
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Maine Aviation Historical Society
P.O. Box 2641
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July Meeting

Saturday, July 13, 2002

10 a.m.

Maine Air Museum
Bangor, Maine