

DIRIGO FLYER

Vol. XI, No. 11 November 2003

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society
P.O. Box 2641, Bangor, Maine 04402 • 207-941-6757 • 1-877-280-MAHS (in state)
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A Mysterious Maine Enterprise

By James McCarthy

One summer day in 1948 an odd duck showed up on the parking ramp at Gander Airport in Newfoundland. It proved to be a US registered Douglas B-18, a strange, ungainly thing, squatting among the sleek, new Model 049 Constellations, resting in preparation for their big jump across the Atlantic to Ireland, England and mainland Europe, or the short hop to east coast North American cities.

That particular B-18, a remnant of the US Army Air Corp's "heavy" bomber fleet, until replaced by the Boeing B-17, had been converted to cargo configuration and licensed as a civil aircraft. As unlikely as the decision now seems, the B-18 had been selected and produced as the American heavy bomber over its competition, the B-17, for one reason only. It was cheaper. It soon became evident, however, that building war clouds in Europe demanded an aircraft of longer range and greater bomb capacity. The Boeing bid for the B-17 was resurrected, reevaluated and accepted.

I soon learned that the B-18 on the Gander ramp was owned by Larry Mudgett, a Bangor native, formerly with Pan American, who operated the aircraft as the lone piece of flight equipment of Maine Air Freight, which he also owned. He was accompanied on the flight into Gander by another Bangor native, an old school chum of mine, Roland Marley. Marley was later a long time Nissen Baking route salesman, but for a short time he was co-pilot, mechanic and general "go-fer" with Larry Mudgett. He knew I was in Gander, so leaving the B-18 to its humiliation, he located me.



Douglas B-18 "Bolo." (USAF Museum Photo Archives)

A Maine Air Freight objective was to purchase and supply live Newfoundland lobsters to the US market, using the B-18 as transport. The first load was delivered from Lewisport, a nearby fishing village, and loaded aboard the aircraft that day. I was asked if I, as a licensed A & P, could accomplish a required inspection on the aircraft while it was in Gander for the next load. I agreed, and sure enough, it wasn't many days until the B-18 showed up again. Together with a couple of local mechanics, we provided the service Mr. Mudgett needed.

That was my last look at the aircraft and my last knowledge of Maine Air Freight.

Editor's Note: Does anyone know what happened to Maine Air Freight and/or Larry Mudgett?

There are two more articles on the Douglas B-18 and B-18A on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter.

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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 Minutes October 11, 2003

The October 2003 meeting of the Maine Aviation Historical Society was called to order at 1000 hours at the Maine Air Museum in Bangor, Maine by President Peter Noddin. There were 12 members present.

Treasurer's Report: For the period 1 January through 3 September, the Maine Aviation Historical Society had an income of \$10,164.72 and expenses of \$9,700.46 for a net income of \$314.26.

Secretary's Report: Recording Secretary Townsend reported on forwarded e-mails. The web page statistics indicated 9364 hits as of 3 August.

President's Message: The president summarized the summer's activities and announced goals for the coming year. A full text of the message is on page 3.

Museum Update: Cornett reported on material received from Col. Green, the last commander of Dow AFB. This included a complete engineering blueprint of the base as it was in 1963. The 1909 *Boston Sunday Herald* newspaper report on the sixth anniversary of the Wright brothers' flight has been conserved and framed for display. The restored WWII Link Trainer is now on display at the museum. An ACRO Sport experimental aircraft has been donated. It will eventually be auctioned off.

Fundraising Update: A couple more bricks have been sold. Our best weekends in terms of income have been after Labor Day. This reaffirms our decision to remain open into October.

Crash Site/Hike Report: We are still scheduled for the 25 October hike to the B-18 crash site. There will be people present who were at the scene of the crash at the time it happened. There is no new news concerning the Sebago Lake Corsairs. Everything is on hold and court proceedings are taking place concerning ownership, rights of salvage, and other concerns. There has been a request that the MAHS assist in trying to locate the site of a 1962 military crash in which one person was lost. This request was made by the family.

Displays: The 42nd Bomb Wing display is not yet finished but nearly so. Construction was slowed due to some health problems with the people involved with the display.

Aircraft Acquisition: We are still waiting word on our application to obtain a Navy P-3 Orion. The Navy has inquired as to our display plans for the jet engine that they had sent us last year. Since the engine container did not contain an engine when opened, we plan to notify the Navy of our findings.

Other Business: We have heard nothing back from Flying Fisherman Films on earlier plans for MAHS assistance in the production of a film.

The meeting was adjourned at 1107 hours.

William Townsend, Recording Secretary



MAHS at the Portland Jetport

Leo Boyle and Bob Umberger man the table at the Jetport's "Neal Strange Day."

(Mike Cornett Photo)

MAHS President's Message

As our 2003 season at the Maine Air Museum comes to a close, many dreams and visions that predate my involvement with this society have been fulfilled. Through the exhaustive work of our Volunteer Coordinators and many hours of time volunteered by members, we have been able to stay open and fulfill our mission of introducing the multitudes to Maine's aviation heritage. The board will be planning a volunteer recognition BBQ at the museum next month.

As we move into the winter season, it is time to do some more historical society type things. We must seek out niches in our aviation history to collect, discuss, present, and preserve. This will involve seeking out speakers and perhaps moving a few meetings to other areas of the state.

Let's not forget that it will be time to reopen soon enough. New displays need to be planned, existing ones need upgraded interpretation and maintenance and, if the P-3 arrives in the spring, we'll be biting into a volunteer project of similar magnitude to the renovations and opening of the museum.

It is also nearly time to elect new leadership and to develop Hall of Fame nominees for next year. 2004 promises to be another exciting season, with the Centennial of Flight publicity over the winter and the possible opening of the Challenger Center as a neighbor, there will be great opportunities for the Maine Air Museum.

So let's stay involved, collect and preserve some history, and not forget to have some fun along the way.

Peter Noddin, MAHS President



Nominations for 2004

— Officers —

Nominations are now open for the following positions to take office for two years commencing January 1, 2004:

President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer

— Board of Directors —

Nominations are also open for three (3) seats on the Board of Directors for three year terms commencing January 1, 2004.

— Hall of Fame —

We will also be choosing four candidates for the Maine Aviation Hall of Fame. Nominations are in order now.

Please bring your nominations to the November meeting or mail ahead to:

Mike Cornett
Maine Air Museum
P.O. Box 2641
Bangor, Maine 04402

Board of Directors Meeting

The meeting was called to order by MAHS President Peter Noddin at 1130 hours at the Maine Air Museum. Present: Noddin, Sederquist, Cornett, Gopan, and Townsend. Absent: Armstrong, Shaw, Boyle, and Cormier.

Old Business: We still need to complete installation of the ductwork for the furnace. Cormier needs to be present when we install this. No one was present who could discuss last year's heating expenses. There was an agreement that our most immediate priority is to get the ductwork installed and to discuss fuel expenses. It was generally felt that our furnace is inefficient.

Work Day: A work day is needed to get the ductwork up, the Luscombe moved inside, and material moved from the back bay. No final discussion could be made without info from Armstrong and Cormier.

J-57 Engine: Papers of transfer of responsibility need to be signed. This has not been done and no plans for display have been made because the shipping container did not contain an actual engine.

Flying Fisherman Films: The contract from Flying Fisherman Films has not been received. We currently have \$400 invested in legal fees at this time.

Volunteer Picnic: Scheduled for November, weather permitting.

Veterans Day Parade: We are not planning to participate in the Bangor parade this year.

Outstanding Volunteer of the Year: Mike Cornett was nominated as the Outstanding Volunteer of the Year. The vote was 4 in favor, 1 (Cornett himself) opposed.

Publicity: We seem to be lacking in publicity for the events we held this year, including the Ford Anniversary meeting. Publicity is going out but not being used by papers outside the Bangor area. We could possibly purchase ads but there was some discussion as to whether or not even these were effective. If we get the P-3 then we will probably start a P-3 or Orion "project."

Maine Aviation Hall of Fame: Nominations needed. Voting will be in January. There was a discussion as to whether or not we should do this every year. It was generally felt that we would do this each year.

Board Membership: Memberships of Noddin, Townsend and Shaw expire this year. Shaw is willing to run again for the Board and for the position of MAHS vice president. Townsend will also run again. Noddin is unsure. We will ask for nominations.

The meeting was adjourned at 1305 hours.

William Townsend, Recording Secretary

We Still Need Volunteers

We still need volunteers to work in the museum! We need people to work on our engine displays, touch up and production of historical displays, office work, computer filing, and, of course, yard work. We also need a serious model builder to assist in repairing, cleaning and constructing models, dioramas and other displays.

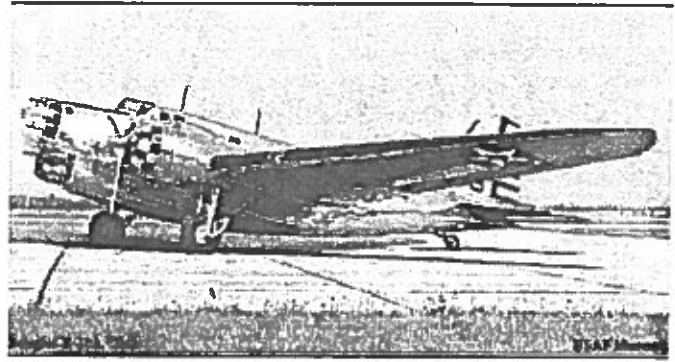
To volunteer, call 1-877-280-MAHS. To check the dates on which we need help, link to:

MaineAirMuseumvolunteerschedule.org

The Douglas B-18A "Bolo"

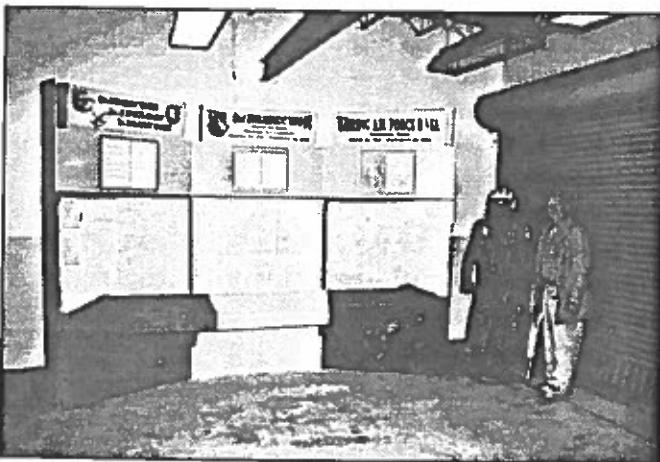
The Douglas Aircraft Co. developed the B-18 to replace the Martin B-10 as the Army Air Corps' standard bomber. The Bolo's design was based on the Douglas DC-2 commercial transport. During Air Corps bomber trials at Wright Field in 1935, the B-18 prototype competed with the Martin 146 (an improved B-10) and the four engine Boeing 299, forerunner of the B-17. Although many Air Corps officers believed the Boeing design was superior, only 13 YB-17s were initially ordered. Instead, the Army General Staff selected the less costly Bolo and, in January 1936, ordered 133 as B-18s. Later, 217 more were built as B-18As with a "shark" nose in which the bombardier's position was extended forward over the nose gunner's station.

By 1939, underpowered and with inadequate defensive armament, the Bolo was the Air Corps' primary bomber. Some



B-18s were destroyed by the Japanese on December 7, 1941. By early 1942, improved aircraft replaced the Bolo as a first-line bombardment aircraft. Many B-18s were then used as transports, or modified as B-18Bs for anti-submarine duty.

42nd Bomb Wing Memorial Project



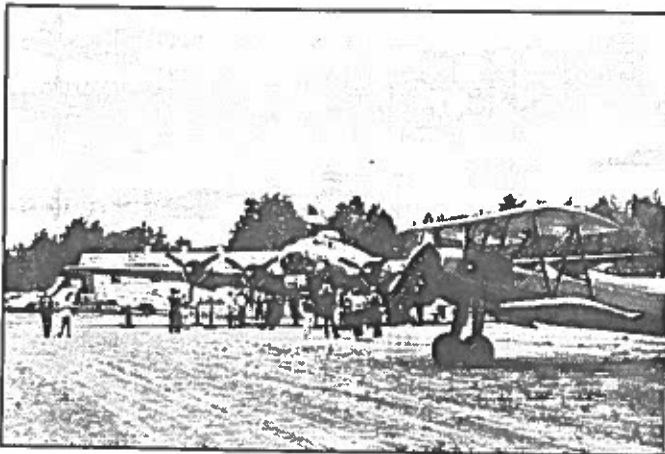
Phase One of the 42nd Bomb Wing Memorial is now completed. The final phase is scheduled for completion in June of 2004.
(Mike Cornett Photo)

Project Manager Hank Marois is proud to report that Phase One of the 42 Bomb Wing Memorial has been completed. The 8'x12' memorial honors the accomplishments of 42nd Bomb Wing personnel between 1953 and 1994 while the wing was assigned to Loring Air Force Base.

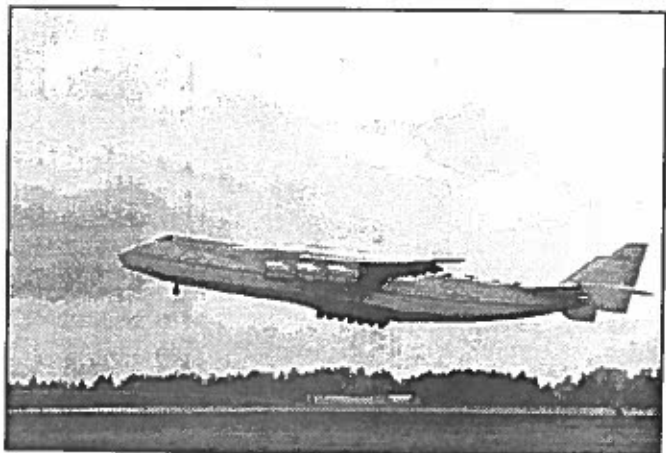
The display features brief histories of Loring Air Force Base, the flying squadrons, and the 42nd Bomb Wing. Depicted on the display are three typical missions flown by KC-135 and B-52 crews. One is an airborne alert mission flown over the Mediterranean Sea during the Cuban Missile Crisis; the next is a bombing mission on Hai Phong flown during the Viet Nam War; and the final panel shows a Desert Storm mission into southern Iraq.

Phase Two of the display will feature the installation of interactive electronics which will include sound chips from an actual bombing mission. The display will also have scale models of a KC-135 refueling a B-52.

Recent Sightings ...



The Boeing B-17 and a Stearman PT-17 at Waterville for the Radial Roundup. (Mike Cornett Photo)



The outsized Russian Antonov AN-225 leaves Bangor after a recent visit. (Mike Cornett Photo)

Another B-18 Story

The account of the crash of the Douglas B-18A Bolo in Lee, Maine in November 1941. Next month, we will have an account of the hike to this crash site with the Lee Historical Society held on October 25, 2003.

By Peter Noddin

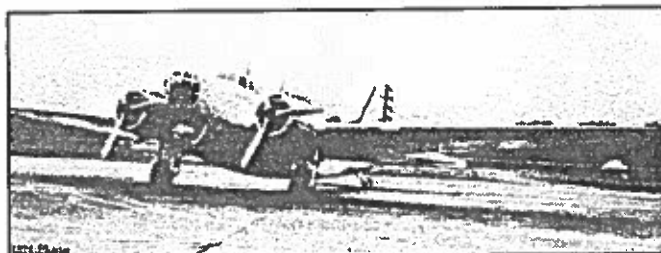
The aircraft was returning to Bangor from bombing practice at Langley Field, VA and had last departed Westover Field, MA after dropping off eight enlisted men there. It was one of two ships flying loosely together, but under separate "contact" (VFR) flight plans.

When the two aircraft arrived over Bangor, the first let down through the 1400 ft. ceiling and landed. Lt. Beckham, pilot on the accident aircraft, radioed that he was having trouble locating a radio range leg to come in on. He then asked for the weather at Waterville and Old Town airports. He made a final transmission that the tower operator took to be "going to Portland." The Augusta tower called Bangor and confirmed that he had heard Beckham say he was diverting to Portland.

PLANE BOUND FOR BANGOR AIR BASE WRECKED IN WILDERNESS

Had Operating Crew of Four Aboard—
Hunters Send Out First Word of Tragedy—
Saw Bomber Circle, Then Heard Explosion
And Saw Flames Rise Into Air—Searchers
From Bangor Air Base and Woodsmen
Making Way to Scene in Hope Members of
Crew Escaped by 'Chutes

About an hour later, the aircraft was seen flying around in the night sky over the towns of Lee and Springfield, 60 nautical miles northeast of Bangor. Three hunters at the Carry Farm, a section of high ground south of the towns, saw the plane pass over at very low altitude and drop a flare over the "Thousand Acre Bog" area, presumably looking for a place to make an emergency landing. The aircraft was heard circling and then a crash echoed through the night, with a large fireball being seen. The hunters tried to locate the wreck in the thick woods, but lost their fix when the fire died down. They walked



B-18A "Bolo" 37-521, November 15, 1941.

out to town to report the incident. At first, USAAF personnel denied missing a plane since the aircraft had been assumed to divert to Portland, but an air and ground search was launched the next morning.

The aircraft was located on a small ridge, south of the bog. It appeared that Beckham had lined up with a burned over area, believing it to be a clearing and attempted a ditching. At the last moment, he saw the burned snags and throttled up into a left banking climb. The left wing struck a tree on the small knoll and the aircraft cartwheeled several hundred feet along the ridgeline, killing all four crewmen instantly.

It is likely that the crew overflew the Bangor radio range beacon and picked up the signal on the rear of the antenna. This led to a flight out over the woods north of Bangor, disorientation and fuel exhaustion.

Killed in this accident were: 2 Lt. Payton W. Beckham, Pilot; 2 Lt. Wyman Thompson, Copilot, Cpl. Jacob L. Parson, Flight Engineer, and Pfc. Lee E. Rothermel, Radio Operator.

Searching Parties Reach Grim Scene After Struggle Through Dense Undergrowth in Forest

Four Crew Members Thrown Clear of Wreckage—Evident Lieut. Beckham Attempted Landing Before Plane Crashed into Side of Hill—Flares Had Been Dropped—Bangor News Reporter Sends Out First Word of Tragic Accident—Only Small Quantity of Gas Left in One of Three Tanks

Hangar Flying the American Eagle



(left) Mike Shaw and Bob Umberger at American Eagle last month. (right) Member Dick Johnson in the cockpit of the American Eagle RJ during last month's tour.

(Mike Cornett Photos)



Buy a Brick and Support the Maine Air Museum

The Maine Air Museum is proud to announce the new Memorial Pathway Program. Here's how it works:

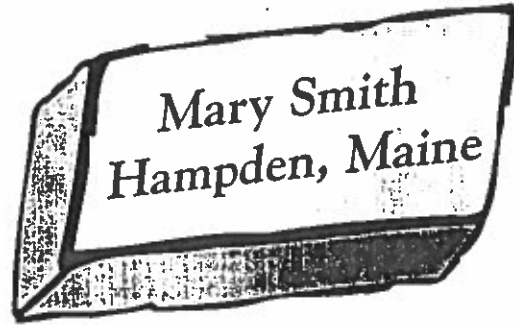
To successfully carry out and reach the museum vision, and to refurbish building 98, the Maine Air Museum needs the financial support of business and public community leaders and individual private citizens. Your interest in preserving the rich Maine aviation history will require funding presently not available to the museum effort. To this end, the museum board has established the following contribution plan for receiving your monetary donation and recognizing your gift permanently in the museum pathway and wall of honor. Remember: your donation is fully deductible.

★ Stratocumulus Member (Sc) — \$100 Donation

Entitles the gift giver to a one-year membership and two-year museum pass and a benefactor's engraved 4"x8"x2.5" red clay brick with up to two lines (14 characters/line, .65" high) of commemorative text in the name of the gift giver or his/her memorial to others. Brick to be installed on the museum grounds, walkway or building facade.

★ Altostratus Member (As) — \$150 Donation

Entitles the gift giver to a two-year membership and three-year museum pass, copy of The United States Air Force in Maine, and a benefactor's engraved 4"x8"x2.5" red clay brick with up to two lines (14 characters/line, .65" high) of commemorative text in the name of the gift giver or his/her memorial to others. Brick to be installed on the museum grounds, walkway or building facade.



See Order Form on Page 7

★ Altocumulus Member (Ac) — \$250 Donation

Entitles the gift giver to a five-year membership and five-year museum pass and a benefactor's engraved 4"x8"x2.5" pearl gray marble brick with up to two lines (14 characters/line, .65" high) of commemorative text in the name of the gift giver or his/her memorial to others. Brick to be installed on the museum grounds, walkway or building facade.

★ Cirrus Member (Cj) — \$2500 Donation

Entitles the gift giver to life membership status and a benefactor's engraved three foot white marble setting bench with one line (27 characters/line, 2" high) of commemorative text in the name of the gift giver or his/her memorial to others. Bench to be installed in the museum building or on the museum grounds.

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Join the MAHS Today and Catch the Excitement !!

Upcoming MAHS Meetings and Events

✈ ✈ ✈ 2003 — 2003 — 2003 — 2003 — 2003 ✈ ✈ ✈

Oct. 31-Nov. 2 All Day Northeast Aero Historians, New England Air Museum, Windsor, Connecticut.

November 8 10 a.m. MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine.

December 13 10 a.m. MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine.

MAHS meeting sites and programs are flexible. Call Les Shaw at 1-877-280-MAHS if you have any ideas or if you can help.

Welcome, New Members

458. Frederick C. Kelly (*Maine WWII Airfields*)
P.O. Box 264
Bath, ME 04530-0264 207-443-5815

Got Ideas?

MAHS meeting sites are flexible and we're always looking for guest speakers and new program ideas. If you have any ideas or if you can be of help, call Les Shaw at 1-877-280-MAHS.

Got E-Mail?

Don't forget to send us your e-mail address if you want it listed in the *Dirigo Flyer*. It's a great way to keep in touch with other members, share information quickly and stay current on aviation issues and happenings.

Thirty-Sixth Annual Northeast Aero Historians Meeting

The New England Air Museum is hosting the 36th Annual Meeting on Oct. 31-Nov. 2, 2003. A most interesting program is planned and the cost is quite reasonable. If you are interested in attending, please see or call Leo Boyle (207-854-9972) for details as soon as possible.

The Maine Aviation Historical Society is one of the sponsoring organizations.



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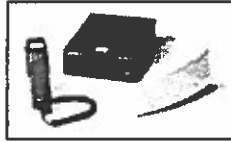
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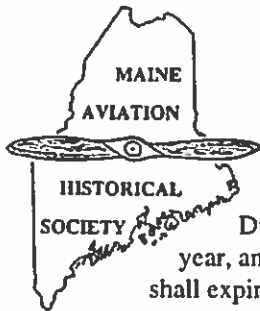
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Lifetime	\$500*
* (2 annual \$250 payments)	

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Newsletter, Decal, Museum Admission
Newsletter, Decal, Museum Admission, 4 Free Passes
Newsletter, Decal, Lifetime Membership Number, Museum Admission, 10 Free Passes

Maine Aviation Historical Society
P.O. Box 2641
Bangor, ME 04402

November Meeting

November 8, 2003

10 a.m.

Board Meeting to follow
Maine Air Museum
Bangor, Maine