



DIRIGO FLYER

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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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B-18A "Bolo" Memorial Crash Hike November 15, 1941 — October 25, 2003

The November 2003 issue of the *Dirigo Flyer* featured the story of Maine's first fatal military crash near Lee on November 15, 1941. Sixty-two years later, on October 25, 2003, the Maine Aviation Historical Society and the Lee Historical Society placed a cross honoring those who died there.

Story and Photos by Mike Cornett

At the museum the week before the hike, Pete Noddin made the memorial cross, getting it ready to be painted, which I did on the 24th, finishing it up before leaving to go to Mallett Hall in Lee. There I met up with Pete and the Lee Historical Society, where Pete talked about what and why the crash happened. We were joined by member Dick Johnson, who was taking to a friend the night before who flew B-18s off the Virginia coast!

While Pete was researching the area he ran into Bernard Staples, who flew in B-29s during World War II. He talked Bernard into coming to the Millinocket Airport when we held our monthly meeting there back in January, where he talked about his time in the 29s. While we were talking it turned out that Bernard had been one of the members of the rescue attempt on the B-18A! Along with other people from the Springfield/Lee area they made their way to the crash only to find out that the four crew members had perished in the crash. The story of what happened is in the November *Dirigo Flyer*.

With help from another one of the original members, Floyd Cobb, they and Pete found what was left of the crash site. Both Bernard and Floyd swamped a path to the site and by the looks of the road and its bridge, repaired them and cut blowdowns along the way, too. Though it had snowed a plowable amount earlier in the week, it was melted by the time we got there. Another coincidence, one of the original flight crew, Carl Averill, who had swapped with one of the soldiers who was killed, happened to be from Lee and was well known by the rescue people!

After Pete's talk Bernard read Floyd's account of what happened that day when they found the crashed plane. Floyd's wife, Maude, read Carl's account of why he didn't happen to be on the plane. We set out on the road to the crash site going twelve miles down Route 6 from Lee, beyond Springfield to the turnoff onto a dirt road that, fourteen and a half miles or so later, found

us at the site. With the fifteen plus people from the Lee area, we walked down the path for about 400 yards that was cut by Bernard and Floyd, passing by metal buckets and a barrel hoop that, as it turned out, were objects from the logging camp that Bernard's father and three uncles had stayed at back before World War I.

"Bolo," con't on page 4



(Top) The memorial cross, with Pete Noddin, President, and member Dick Johnson at the site. (Bottom) Thanks to member George Tinker, we have this photo of a Douglas B-18A "Bolo" in Maine Air Freight markings.

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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 November 8, 2003

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m. at the Maine Air Museum by board member Mike Cornett at the request of President Peter Noddin who would be arriving late at the meeting and Vice President Shaw would be absent. There were 14 members and guests present. President Noddin arrived at 10:15 a.m.

Secretary's Report: The minutes of the October meeting were accepted as published in the *Dirigo Flyer*. There were favorable comments concerning the continued support of the Greenville Fly-In which donated \$3000 to the museum this year. It was felt that some of the money should go toward setting up a display concerning seaplanes in Maine.

Web Page Report: We continue to get over 9000 hits per month on our web page. It was suggested that we consider switching from a home produced web page on Prexar to a commercially produced page at Hypernet. Secretary Townsend presented arguments for a professional page. It was noted that we already own the address of maineairmuseum.org. This will be discussed at the Board of Directors meeting to follow.

Membership: A total of 180 newsletters were mailed out this month to members. Fifty percent of the membership is due to be renewed at the end of the year.

Museum Report: Mike Cornett reported that the museum is closed for the season. Donations of a Naval high altitude flight suit, an original photo of Charles Lindberg, and a 1948 *Life Magazine* cover illustrating a flight of F-84s had been recently received. Information was offered concerning the 49th FS reunion in Bangor on May 20-23, 2004. We have received some KC-135 pictures at the old Dow AFB. A DVD of Miller's Field was also received.

Crash Sites and Archaeology: Pete Noddin reported on the B-18 hike in Lee. We worked with the Lee Historical Society. About 20 people attended. The Passamaquoddy Nation has expressed interest in erecting a permanent granite marker at the site. There is new information as to the exact location of the C-40 crash site. An update on the Sebago Lake Corsairs was presented. The Maine State Museum, Maine State Preservations Commission, the U.S. Navy and MAHS are all involved. The barge and crane have been removed from the lake and the matter is still in the court. *Editor's Note: The judge has ruled that the Corsairs should remain in Sebago Lake. This ruling may be appealed.* It appears that the establishment of some new laws in Maine may result.

Aircraft Acquisition: We have been in contact with the Navy concerning the jet engine. They want photos of what is in the storage container. We may have to transport it to Brunswick Naval Air Station but there is a possibility that the Navy might dispose of it through the local Air Guard. Wings for the Stinson have been located in Rhode Island and could be picked up by a full-sized pickup truck.

New Business: Maine DOT has requested a guest speaker list for volunteer guest speakers on aviation. Ed Armstrong has expressed thanks to all who participated in staffing the museum this summer. We learned much in the way of procedures for doing this. Based on this there will be some changes in the procedure for next summer. Heat ducts have been installed. There is some more to be done in the bathroom.

Elections: This will be discussed at the next meeting. (*See reminder below.*)

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

NOTE: Due to the time taken getting the Luscombe inside for the winter, no board meeting was held.
William Townsend, Recording Secretary

Nominations for 2004

- Nominations are now open for the following positions to take office for two years commencing January 1, 2004: President - Vice President - Secretary - Treasurer
- Nominations are also open for three (3) seats on the Board of Directors for three year terms commencing January 1, 2004.
- We will also be choosing four candidates for the Maine Aviation Hall of Fame.

Please bring your nominations to the December meeting or mail ahead to:
Mike Cornett c/o Maine Air Museum P.O. Box 2641 Bangor, Maine 04402

MAHS President's Message

As we approach November 11, Veteran's Day, my thoughts always turn to the men and women from Maine who have served their country over the past two and a half centuries, especially those who served in the air. Then one must reflect on the thousands of Americans who served in the Army, Navy and Air Force aviation units in Maine. Also, tens of thousands of military aircrew became part of our aviation history as they passed through Maine airfields, air bases and airports enroute to World War II in Europe, to stand alert in the remote frozen landscapes of Iceland or Greenland, to stand nuclear ground alert in Europe or one of the Persian Gulf wars.

Though the threats and needed responses have changed over the years, our servicemen and women are still serving, and dying, abroad. Maine again is playing its small part in the current effort to preserve our freedoms and way of life. Let's never forget that Maine has played an important role in each conflict from WW II to date.

Revisionist historians would downplay this part of our aviation heritage, but each time that I study or research the conditions and challenges faced by military aviation personnel in

Maine, I recall the final words of the admiral in James A. Michener's *Bridges at Toki-Ri*: "Where do we get such men." Let us be thankful to those who have given us the life opportunities that we all enjoy today. Let us further remember that our own ranks in the organization are filled with veterans who have lived the history that we enjoy and wish to preserve.

We recently worked with a local historical society to honor the first military aircrew to lose their lives in Maine: 2nd Lt. Payton W. Beckham, 2nd Lt. Wyman Thompson, Cpl. Jacob L. Parson, and Pfc. Lee E. Rothermel. This has led to an upsurge of interest in WW II history in local schools and civic organizations. The landowner has expressed interest in placing a large, more permanent monument at this site in the future.

So, as we head off into our winter season of MAHS activity, let's take the time to collect and preserve some of our military aviation history. Oh, and when you thank a veteran for taking the time to speak with you or speak before a group, don't forget to thank him or her for everything that you have and enjoy about our way of life.

Peter Noddin, MAHS President

News from Presque Isle ...

Your editor received the following letter from member Gary Boone of the Presque Isle Air Museum. Enjoy the story and think of some of the things that we can do.

I thought MAHS would be interested to learn that the Presque Isle Air Museum, at our 10th October meeting, hosted the four remaining (to the best of our knowledge) World War II B-26 pilots living in Maine. The four had never met together previously. One of our museum members, Stephen Naas (age 88) flew B-26s and B-24s stateside in training programs across the country. He managed to contact the other three: one from Caribou, and two others from Auburn and Rockland. Ralph Gould, also of Auburn, was located via Naas's ad in the *Dirigo Flyer*. The latter two were reluctant to make the long drive to PQI so I talked another of our members, John Trask, a former B-52 pilot and presently an FAA flight examiner and owner of a Piper Seneca, into flying down to pick them both up at Rockland the day before our meeting, and fly them back after our meeting. I flew with the nominal title of copilot.

One of our guests, Benedict Goldsmith of Rockland, flew his B-26 first with the 8th Air Force, then most of his missions with the 9th, and racked up a total of 71 missions over occupied Europe. He is an artist, and recorded scenes in his sketch book that he always carried with him. Many of his sketches are cartoons done in a style reminiscent of Bill Mauldin, and with great humor. Others, especially those done later in the war, are stark and haunting. He is a gracious, kindly and modest man.

Our other two guests, Ralph A. Gould, Jr. of Auburn and Vernon P. Leavitt of Caribou, both flew B-26s in the same (575th) squadron in the 391st "Black Death" Bomb Group commanded by Col. Gerald Evan Williams of Presque Isle! They did not know each other previous to our meeting, didn't know that each was from Maine, and although they knew, by reputation, of Col. Williams with great affection and respect, they didn't know he was from Maine. They both said that had they

known, they would have tried to arrange to meet him. So I had photographs and a portrait of Evan Williams on display. At last, after 59 years, they saw him in photographs. What amazing coincidences.

Ralph Gould is the youngest of the four. He arrived in the ETO in early spring of '45 and managed to get in 12 missions before the Nazis surrendered. Goldsmith, Gould and Leavitt flew a combined total of 118 missions over Europe. As they shared their memories at our meeting, it became clear that they feared flak more than they feared the Luftwaffe fighters. Gould revealed that once the flak batteries found their range, the flak would usually come in bursts of three: two ahead of his bomber, with the third often finding its target. The second slammed shrapnel into his flak vest. The third missed Gould's ship, and he lived to tell the tale. Since the B-26 was capable of flying almost as fast as fighters, it was common to make bomb runs as low as 2500 feet—almost hedgehopping for a bomber. Leavitt had similar experiences. Goldsmith said that on D-Day, he and his unit flew so low the Germans were firing hand guns at him. He witnessed the ships and landing barges coming in to Omaha Beach. Being Jewish and cognizant from early in the war of what befell Jews at the hands of the Nazis, Goldsmith admitted that he enjoyed his role of squadron commander and all his missions despite the hazards and the constant fear. After his 71 missions, he volunteered for further missions, and protested being sent home, shortly before the end of the war in Europe.

All four men had a fine time, and their stories, interspersed with quick light and dark humor, provided us a grand spectacle of living history, an event that moved us greatly. The four agreed to stay in touch and to get together again.

To Stephen Naas of Presque Isle, a member of our museum and also of MAHS (# 256) goes the credit for hatching the idea for this get-together. It can't be called a reunion, because they had never met before!

"Bolo," continued from page 1

After arriving at the site, Dick and Floyd started digging a hole for the memorial cross. Using the VCR-C camera that was donated by Pete Marini, I taped the parts that were left of the floor, one of the metal seats, one part that someone had hung in a small tree, had tubes and other parts attached to it. This is the first time I've seen aluminum ingots left over from the fire at a crash site. They started out thin, then up to three inches thick and back to thin again.

After looking at the parts and placing the cross in the ground, Pete again talked about why we were there and then dedicated the memorial to the four military flyers who were killed that day in November 1941.

Later, another member of the hikers said a prayer, too. We listened to Bernard and Floyd talk about what happened that day, which direction they carried the remains to the creek that they followed to where they met up with the crew from Bangor Air Field. We headed back out to Route 6 and back to Lee where Dick had made arrangements with Kay Crocker of the Historical Society to see a part of the Hindenburg that had been given to them by one of the Bishop family. Their junkyard in Lagrange has given to the world the second oldest B-17 to survive the scrapping of them at the end of World War II.

By this time it was night and as black as it can get. As Pete had to leave earlier, Dick and I parted to go on our way at about 6:30 p.m knowing that with Pete we had added to another good day for the Maine Aviation Historical Society through our attempts to memorialize the fallen military aviation warriors of the state of Maine.

Many thanks to the Lee Historical Society, especially Bernard Staples, Kay Crocker, Floyd Cobb and the rest. Without them, we (Peter, Jim Chichetto and the rest of the "wreck chasers") would have taken many more searches to find the site. Many thanks also go to the Passamaquoddy Tribe, especially Lee Soctomah, for permission to place this memorial.



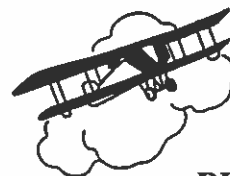
The Lee Historical Society home, headquarters for the B-18A "Bolo" ceremony. Members of the Society who participated were: Floyd and Maude Cobb, Bernard and Gloria Staples, Al and Irene Charette, Charles and Susan Oliver, Arthur and Kay Crocker, Carol and Paul Marino, Roland Scribner, Harold Noyes, Bill Brewer, Kevin Tengren from Lincoln News, Kathy Crise with Amelia and Kevin, Stephanie Carey, David and Freda Parker.



Erecting the B-18A memorial cross in the woods in Lee at the site of the crash.



Floyd Cobb and Bernard Staples of the Lee Historical Society recount finding the crash on November 15, 1941.



December 17, 2003

REMEMBER ...

*One hundred years ago today
the Wright brothers made their first flights
in North Carolina. Because of their great
pioneering and study,
we have had a century of excitement,
thrills, tragedy and progress.*

*Never forget
our humble beginnings.*

A Near Miss for Carl Averill

While I was in the Army Air Corps at Langley Field, Virginia in 1940, I was assigned to a new cadre that was to become the 13th Reconnaissance Squadron. After a month of getting equipped with personnel and material, we were transferred to Dow Field, Maine in early 1941, where we continued receiving our full complement of men and material. At that time we were using B-18 airplanes, but due to the Air Corps expansion, we had less than our full quota. We weren't formed into regular combat crews then, but flew flights of training and shore patrols with "pick-up" crews of men who were available and needed flying time.

I don't remember the exact date, although it was toward the end of summer, I was the radio operator on one of the two B-18s that flew to Langley for a few days of aerial gunnery and bombing practice. On the way back to Dow we landed in the Boston area to refuel. As the weather was deteriorating for the remainder of our flight to Dow, it was recommended that we stay over at Boston and continue the next day. However, the majority of the crew on my plane, especially the pilot and navigator, wished to go on that night for the experience and to be with their families on Saturday night. Being single, our crew chief and myself thought an evening in Boston quite appealing, so we exchanged places with the crew chief and radio operator of the other plane as they were also married and desired to continue that night.

We enjoyed a night on the town and knew nothing of the fate of the other crew until we landed at Dow around noon that Sunday. My immediate feeling was of relief at the news, thinking of my lucky decision to stay behind. Then I felt extreme guilt and grief, having known and flown with those men the previous week.

My luck held throughout the war, as I was actually in three airplane crashes that completely demolished the planes and yet I walked away from each. I often think, *why me?* I have no answer.

P.S. From Floyd Cobb and Bernard Staples

Floyd Cobb, Bernard Staples and Carl Averill were all from Lee and friends in their younger years. They often spent a week or so hunting on Passadumkeag Stream, staying at a camp at the OxBow and hunted many areas including the so-called "Burnt Land" on Chamberlain Ridge.

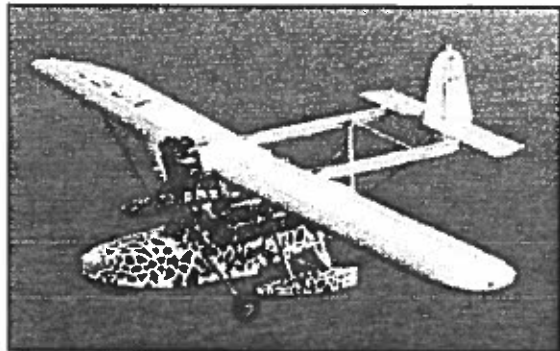
Bernard and Floyd learned that a plane from Carl's squadron had gone down in that area. They immediately loaded their boat on Bernard's Dad's truck and had him take them to the Forks where they put their boat in to go down the stream. (This was a 16" wooden boat with a 5 h.p. motor that they had bought from 'Gid' Haskell for \$1.00 a week.) They didn't realize this was Carl's plane at that time, but due to some bizarre circumstances (recounted in Carl's letter) he wasn't on the plane, thankfully.

They went down Passadumkeag Stream to Upper Taylor Brook, down the brook as far as they could by boat and joined the search party about a mile or so from the crash site. Needless to say it was a gruesome sight. There were four airmen on the plane and none survived. The only way to get the bodies out was to carry them to the boat and take them down Passadumkeag Stream.

Charles Thurlow and "Pard" Mallett each took one body and Bernard and Floyd took two in their boat and down the stream where they were met at Pistol Green. It was a long day and after dark when they reached their destination. This was the first passable road to the stream in 1941 for the Air Force personnel. The bodies were transported to their vehicles and taken to Dow Air Force Base.

Carl Averill joined the Air Force in 1939 and Bernard Staples in 1943. Floyd Cobb joined the Navy in 1944. Bernard and Floyd came back to Lee after World War II while Carl made the service his career.

Sikorsky on Tour



(above) Member Dick Jackson's Sikorsky S-39-C in flight. This aircraft was at Oshkosh this year and took part in the 2003 National Air Tour.

Lockheeds at BNAS



(right) Lockheed P-3 Orions at Brunswick Naval Air Station. (Photo via Stu Chipman)

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:

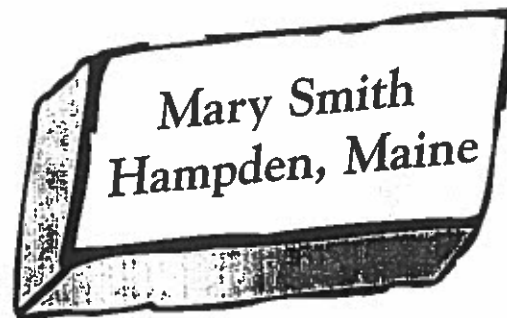
To successfully carry out and reach the museum vision, and to refurbish building 98, the Maine Air Museum needs the financial support of business and public community leaders and individual private citizens. Your interest in preserving the rich Maine aviation history will require funding presently not 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

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See Order Form on Page 7

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★ 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.

The Maine Air Museum is wholly owned and operated by the Maine Aviation Historical Society.

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1900
to
1919



SKYWAYS

1920
to
1940

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12/02

Join the MAHS Today and Catch the Excitement !!

Upcoming MAHS Meetings and Events

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

December 4 5:30 p.m. Opening: Soaring Imagination Exhibit, Maine State Museum, Augusta.

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

January 10 10 a.m. MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine.

February 14 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.

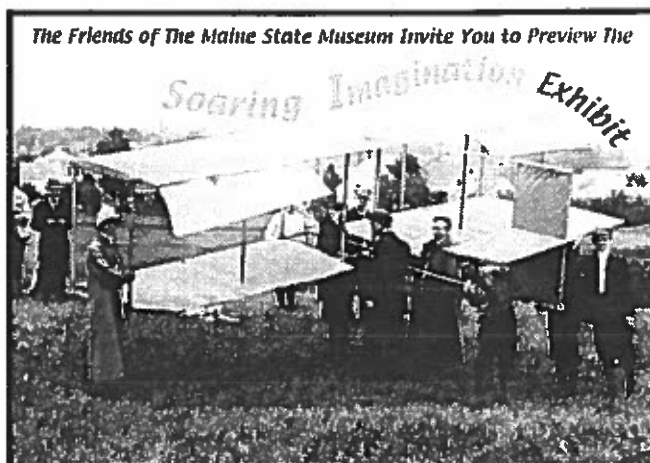
Welcome, New Members

459. **Loren Harmon** (*Lost Wrecks*)
P.O. Box 721
Kennebunkport, ME 04046-0721 207-967-4035

450. **Dick Fleming**
HyperMEDIA
P.O. Box 299 dick@hypernet.com
Brooklin, ME 04616 CAP web site

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.



Opening December 4, 2003. The exhibit features the museum's replica of the 1911 Cooper glider from Auburn, Maine. Maine State Museum, State House Complex, Augusta, Maine.

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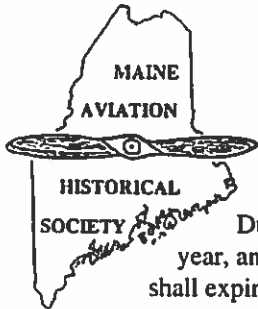
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Supporting	\$100 annual	Newsletter, Decal, Museum Admission, 4 Free Passes
Lifetime	\$500*	Newsletter, Decal, Lifetime Membership Number, Museum Admission, 10 Free Passes
* (2 annual \$250 payments)		

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

December Meeting

December 13, 2003
10 a.m.

Board Meeting to follow
Maine Air Museum
Bangor, Maine