



DIRIGO FLYER

Vol. XII, No. 1 January 2004

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society
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Flying the Albatross with the 58th ARS

The following story is excerpted from the book Naval Fighters Number 11, Grumman Albatross by Steve Ginter. Lt. Col. Colby's co-pilot was Bob Thurston, who came from Bucksport, Maine and his last known address was Penobscot, Maine. Col. Colby currently lives in Florida. Also included is a letter received by then-Captain Colby in late 1957 from First Lt. H.F. Clements, the F-100 pilot he rescued. Member Phil Plummer is a friend of Malcolm Colby.



A Grumman SA-16A of MATS colors. This is similar to the SA-16B with larger wing and tail surfaces flown by Col. Colby. (U.S. Air Force Photo)

There were two memorable incidents during my SA-16 days. The first happened in mid-March 1957 when we were on alert. It was on a Sunday which is usually a very quiet card playing and sleeping day. One of our crews assigned to SAR duty for Vice President Nixon's VIP visit through Africa was standing strip alert at Khartoum. One of their engines sheared an oil pump shaft, which put them out of commission and us in. We flew to Khartoum to replace the other SA-16, and while there were invited to meet the Vice President and Mrs. Nixon. This meeting left me very impressed with Mrs. Nixon.

The following incident occurred on Sunday, October 20, 1957. At approximately 1100 hours an alert came in that an F-100 pilot, in a flight of three from Tripoli to the Netherlands, had made a high-speed bail out over the Mediterranean, 120 nautical miles SSE of Sardinia. We were ready for take-off in six minutes, but the tower held us until a flight surgeon could get from church to the aircraft. He rushed over so fast that he was still in civilian clothes. Our take-off was delayed till twenty minutes after the alert, which was still three minutes before the pilot hit the water.

It took us nearly three hours to arrive at the site. We found the Italians and the British already at the scene. The Italian SAR unit was flying an old Caproni tri-motor floatplane and the British SAR unit was flying an Avro Shackelton. The British had dropped a 20-man life raft in which we found the F-100 pilot.

Since the pilot seemed gravely injured we felt a water landing was the only solution. We made a water analysis and what we saw was not good. It was what is called a "confused sea." Most people think that since an airplane has a boat-like hull it can land on water anytime — not so. The sea had a major swell from 330°, a minor swell from 30°, wind waves with frothy white caps from 240° and a 30 knot wind from 180°. This left two alternatives: one, land parallel to the major swells and into the wind waves; or two, not land at all. Since no ships were within four hours of steaming time and the pilot appeared injured, I decided to land.

We had the squadron's first SA-16B and had made two unsuccessful passes by the downed pilot trying to find a smooth place to land. The 16 is "slow flown" at 70 knots with full flaps about four to six feet above the water in an "open sea landing." When the sea is confused, the various water factors previously mentioned will compound to make mountains or valleys and periodically cancel and leave a smooth area. On the third pass we spotted the smooth place. I chopped the throttles, the co-pilot dumped the flaps and we were done flying. I hit the throttles into idle reverse and we ran out of smooth water, up over a mountain and back into the air in about a 30° nose up attitude. For the first and only time in my flying career, I had to do a "rudder exercise stall" to keep the wings level. I had the column in my gut and we fell into a deep valley. The column slammed forward and I

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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 Maine Air Museum News and Photos

Election Time 2004

Once again, we have to vote for our officers and directors. Luckily, all of our officers have volunteered to run for re-election as of this time. Sometimes experience counts, and in this case we have excellent experience from which to choose. You will also find a blank line for write-in candidates, which we encourage. We need a pool of willing volunteers ready to step in if it ever becomes necessary.

Three of the candidates (Noddin, Shaw and Townsend) are directors by virtue of their office and, if re-elected as officers, they retain their seats on the board. If you write-in a candidate for these offices, also write them in for the board. Write-ins are welcome but please be sure they are willing to serve.

Nominations for 2004 Hall of Fame

Nominations are now open for candidates for the Maine Air Museum Hall of Fame. Candidates fall in the following categories: Military Aviation

Civil Aviation
Civic Aviation
Aviation Pioneers

Nominees from last year and not elected are candidates for 2004 and are as follows:

Military Aviation: General Phillip Tukey Jr.

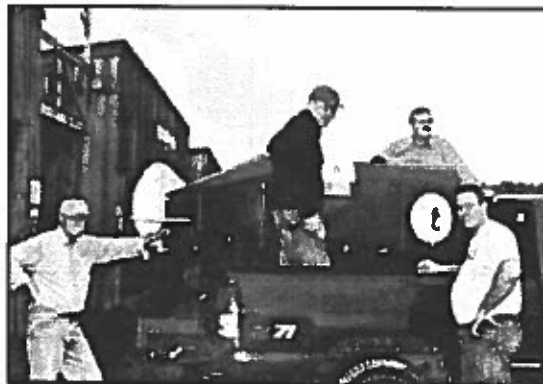
Civil Aviation: Dr. Clifford Strange

Civic Aviation: Harold Jones

Aviation Pioneers: Thaddeus Lowe

Please nominate other worthy candidates.

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

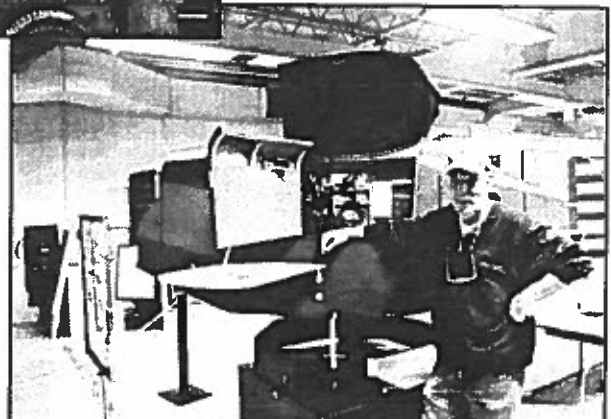


Link Trainer Arrives

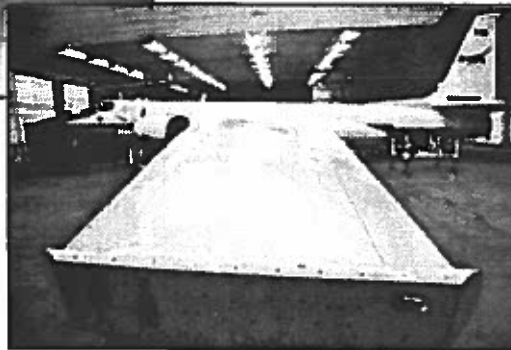
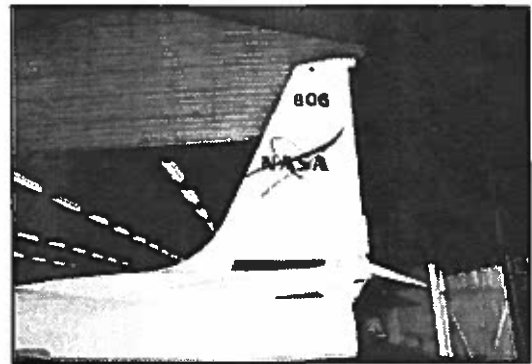
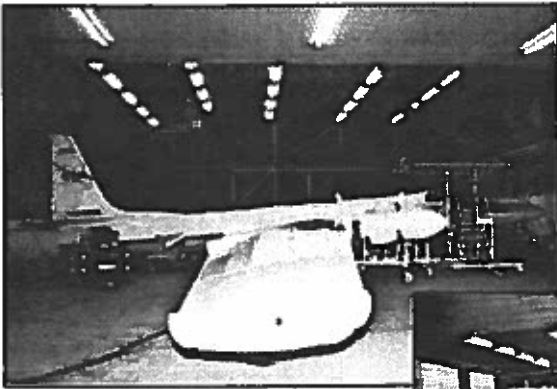
Thanks to member John Miller, a vintage link trainer moves from Miller Field to the Maine Air Museum. Left to right are Ed Armstrong, John Miller, Les Shaw, and Pete Ness.

John Miller
proudly stands
behind the link
trainer he restored
in the museum.

Photos by Mike Cornett



A NASA Lockheed ER-2 ...



**... undergoing
maintenance
at Bangor on
Nov. 19, 2003.**

(Mike Cornett Photos)

"Albatross," con't from page 1

bumped my head on it and lost my head set (my shoulder harness failed to lock). Fortunately, I wasn't stunned and saw that the float was still in place on the left. I rolled the plane onto that float, then went to maximum power, called for 15° of flaps and for a right float check along with a bilge check. We had both floats and weren't leaking, so I taxied back to the life raft and the downed pilot.

The sea was too rough to make a conventional rescue, so we came to within 25 feet and cut both engines. We got a line to the raft, but the pilot was unable to do anything about it. Ken Adair, my co-pilot, volunteered to go after him. With a Mae West and a line attached he went into the water and swam to the raft. We tried to pull the raft back to the aircraft, but the wind and the six foot waves prevented us. Ken then pulled the pilot into the water and we started pulling them to the plane. The pilot broke away from my co-pilot and drifted behind the aircraft where he caught hold of the JATO rack on the right side. We opened the hatch and tried to grab the pilot but he let go. Ken jumped back into the water and the pilot fought him till Ken "cold-cocked" him and we brought them aboard. By this time we had about a foot of water in the rear of the cabin. We bailed out the water while the flight surgeon stripped the pilot of all his wet gear to examine him. The surgeon washed him off with our five gallons of emergency drinking water, dried him off, and put a dry flight suit on him. Then, after he was strapped into a litter, he was given a morphine injection as he was in shock.

With my co-pilot dried off I fired up the engines to attempt a take-off. On the first try, the aircraft pitched up severely so we aborted the attempt. We made two more tries with the same results. Ken and I are both over six feet tall and weigh over 220 pounds. Even with our combined bulk and "full down" elevator trim we couldn't hold the yoke forward to stop the pitch-up. We

then made a tail surface check and found that the inboard side of the right elevator bent downward. This had the effect of "up elevator" trim. We knew then that take-off was impossible, so we started to taxi to the nearest land. The nearest land was Bizerte, Tunisia, which was 65 nautical miles SW of our location. We had been on the water about an hour at this time and it was 1530 hours.

Taxiing was slow with waves breaking over our bow and carrying away our windshield wipers. We put a commercial radio station on our radio compass to maintain our correct course. Shortly after 1800 hours we made contact with the British heavy cruiser, HMS *Birmingham*. In order to make a rendezvous, she steamed crossways to the wind and stopped dead in the water. We taxied into the lee of the ship, about 150 feet away, and I can only say she was big and beautiful. They put a long boat over the side to pick up the pilot and the surgeon whom we had sent out in a raft.

The *Birmingham* went back to the site of the bail-out and sunk the raft and F-100 wing tanks and then returned to escort us. We had started back for Bizerte and since we were only making about six or seven knots of headway, the *Birmingham* caught up with us in just over one hour. While she was gone, a small Greek freighter crossed our path and then turned parallel and offered assistance. We didn't need help but thanked them and they resumed their course. As a crew we laughed about it as we were getting very tired and giddy by then. We said that a ship's captain could be at sea all his life and the chance of seeing a seaplane making like a boat was about a million to one against the possibility.

When the *Birmingham* came back it was dark and the seas were calming somewhat. She was lit up and a beautiful and comforting sight. About 0100 in the morning, while 20 miles off

"Albatross," con't on page 4

"Albatross," cont'd from page 3

the coast of Tunisia, we were met by a French Navy corvette. The *Birmingham* turned about and went to Malta and the corvette took us in tow. It took us to the outer harbor and then a small tug took us through the outer and inner harbors and into a long canal to a French Naval Air Station, which was about ten miles inland. The corvette had taken Bob Thurston, our navigator who spoke French, and our flight engineer who had served a hitch in the Navy and then joined the Air Force so he wouldn't get seasick, on board before the tow started. Our voyage ended when we started our engines and taxied up the seaplane ramp.

We had spent three hours and 20 minutes in the air on the way to the rescue and 13 hours on the water before getting back to dry land, but later got flying credit for only the 3:20 because we shut the engines down during the mission. Because of this flight I hold the AF record for the longest taxi time on the water back to dry land.

We hadn't eaten since breakfast Sunday morning and hadn't had anything to drink during that time either. The corvette sent a six-pack of Heineken beer to us and no beer ever before or since tasted so good. When we finally put our feet on the ramp, it was 0300 Monday. The French took us to a mess hall where we were served burnt French bread with cherry preserves and red wine — some meal. We then went to sleep for about nine hours and when we went to the flight line we found the aircraft damage repaired, the bilges drained and flushed with fresh water and 600 gallons of fuel on board. At

noon that day we went to Bizerte and boarded the corvette for lunch with the ship's captain. We had a nice meal and a good visit with the ship's officers. We left Bizerte about 1900 that day to return to Tripoli.

On the trip back we had one incident of electrical/electronic failure after another. When we arrived at Wheelus we could transmit on VHF only and could not receive anything. On the post flight runup the engines died on one magneto and the next day neither engine would start.

Squadron and base maintenance

spent

six

weeks

to get the

aircraft

flyable

enough to

make it back

to the States

for a major

overhaul. She

had been so

thoroughly saturated

with salt that

complete chemical

desalinization and

rewiring was necessary.

26 November 1957

Dear Captain Colby,
I would again like to express my extreme appreciation for the effort you expended in pulling me out of the pond. Every time I have to relate the story (over beers) I always get a lot of ohs and ahs when I come to the part where you set of 295 to water out there in the middle of nowhere. If you felt as good about saving me as I did about you saving me, then I'm glad I bailed out because I felt very humble and proud that anyone would try so hard to save one little life.
Thank you again for everything and I certainly hope we meet again somewhere.

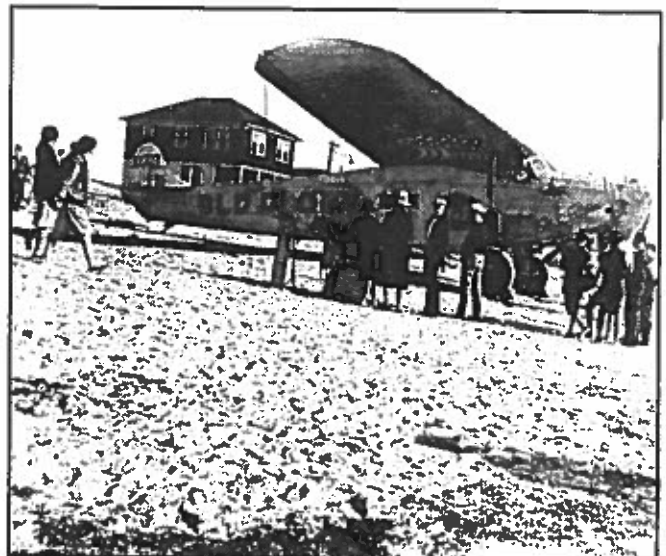
Yours sincerely,
H.F. Clements

"Old Glory" by the Sea



The Fokker monoplane "Old Glory" in September 1927 in front of Harry Jones' hangar before its ill-fated attempt to fly the Atlantic.

(Photos from Stu Chipman, taken by his father.)



Stories from USNAGA Winter Harbor, Maine: "The Night of the UFOs"

By Oscar Blue

One of the funniest things that happened during my tour of duty at USNAGA Winter Harbor was the night everyone saw the UFOs.

John Coolman was from New York state and had a Hudson Terraplane and a Model A Ford AA truck at home in New York but drove a late model Chrysler Imperial with radio antennas which made him look important.

John and I had a common interest in antique automobiles. John, however, liked to consume alcoholic beverages with a circle of friends who also like to, and it did not have to be a special occasion. One evening late in the summer of 1967, out for a ride in my 1936 Packard, John and I were returning to Main Site on the Summer Road which, at that time, was two way. It was just getting dark when we saw five or six bright lights in the sky falling toward the ocean to the east.

When going through the gate we told the guard what we saw. He told us that other people had reported seeing them also.

These sightings had caused so much interest that the Sheriff's Department and the State Police had been informed about them also.

John and two of his drinking friends obtained an ample supply of beverages, got John's camera with its tripod stand, got into his Imperial and drove out to Schoodic Point to wait for the UFOs to return, setting up the camera on the tripod out in front of the parked Imperial. They invited me along. While waiting for the UFOs to return, they consumed beverages and their conversation became less and less coherent.

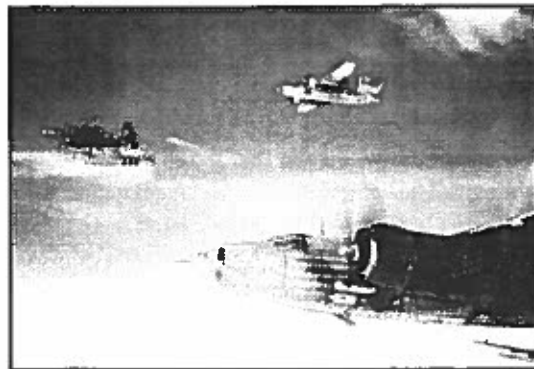
After waiting a reasonable length of time for the UFOs to return and becoming bored with the situation, I excused myself and got out of the car to walk back to the base. Remember that the camera with one big eye was sitting on a three-legged stand in front of the Imperial.

As I left the car, John switched on the parking lights which gave a sinister amber glow to the three-legged creature standing in front of the car in the fog. To the consumers of beverages in the car this appeared to be a creature from a UFO that could have landed in the area which upset them very much.

In a day or so it was determined that the bright lights in the sky were magnesium flares that were dropped by US Air Force planes on some kind of training maneuvers.

Martin B-26Bs and B-26Fs over France

... in 1944. These are the types flown by the Presque Isle reunion pilots featured in the last issue.



(Photo: Martin Aircraft 1909-1960)

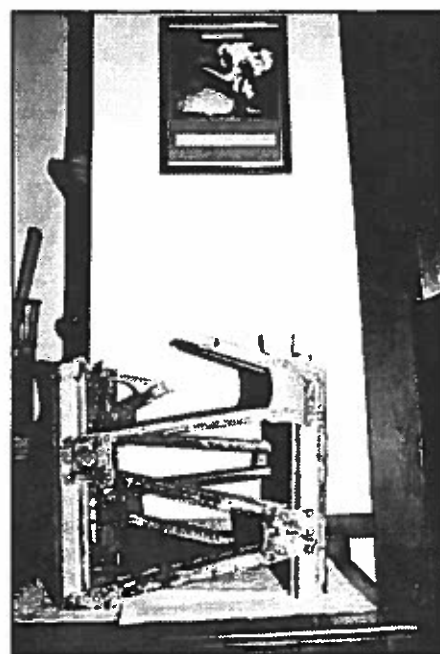
Wings, Parts and Pieces of Aviation History



Member Larry Webster (#7) at his stockyard of parts in Rhode Island.



The Stinson wings return to Maine via truck from the Quonset Air Museum.



A piece of a girder from the zeppelin "Hindenburg" at the Lee Historical Society.

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:

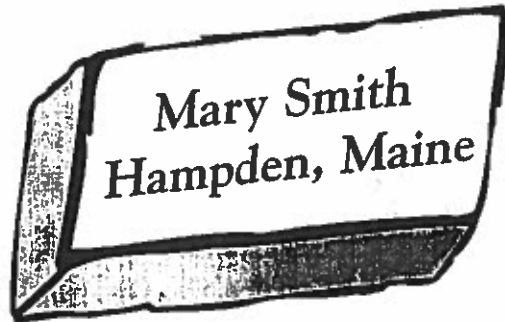
To successfully carry out and reach the museum vision, and to refurbish building 98, the Maine Air Museum needs the financial support of business and public community leaders and individual private citizens. Your interest in preserving the rich Maine aviation history will require funding presently not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

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See Order Form on Page 7

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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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Upcoming MAHS Meetings and Events

✈ ✈ ✈ 2004 — 2004 — 2004 — 2004 — 2004 ✈ ✈ ✈

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 Member

461. Susan Qualls (Charles Treat)
9172 Santiago Drive
Huntington Beach, CA 92646 714-593-6428

Got E-Mail?

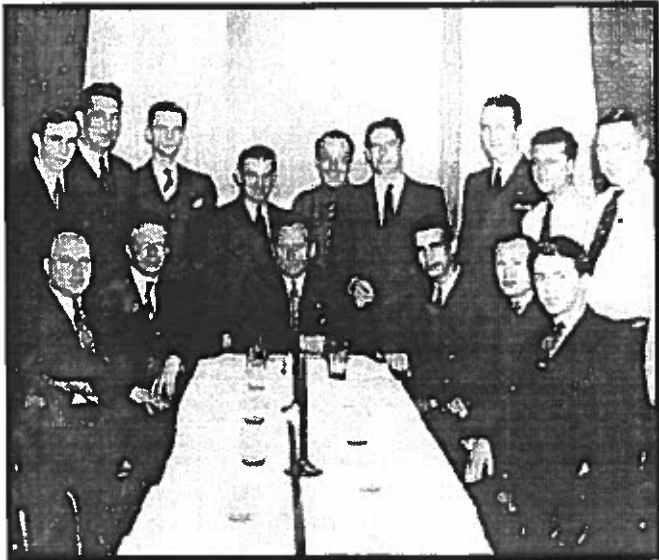
Don't forget to send us your e-mail address if you want it listed in the *Dirigo Flyer*. It's a great way to keep in touch with other members, share information quickly and stay current on aviation issues and happenings.

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

How Many Do You Remember?



This 1938 photo was taken at the Ritz-Foley Hotel, located on lower State Street in Bangor, and features a group gathered to honor Sam H. Paul and "Red" Gabry of the Boston and Maine Airways. How many do you remember?

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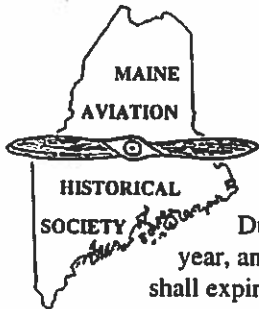


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Supporting	\$100 annual	Newsletter, Decal, Museum Admission, 4 Free Passes
Lifetime	\$500*	Newsletter, Decal, Lifetime Membership Number, Museum Admission, 10 Free Passes
* (2 annual \$250 payments)		

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

January Meeting

January 10, 2004
10 a.m.

Board Meeting to follow
Maine Air Museum
Bangor, Maine