



# *DIRIGO FLYER*

**Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society**

**Volume XXII No. 4**

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## **Amelia in Maine**

(By: Bob Umberger)

It's well known that many aviators of celebrity status have visited the State of Maine. During the early twentieth century, the nation's (indeed the world's) fascination with airplanes and young aviators grew steadily, especially during the period of the 1920's and 1930's. Although the field was mostly dominated by male pilots, Amelia Earhart attracted as much attention from the public and the news media as any of her male aviation contemporaries. Maine was fortunate to share some of the era's spotlight, thanks to several aviators – including Amelia.

With 2014 marking the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Amelia's "Grand Tour of Maine," it was a perfect opportunity for the Maine Air Museum to honor and showcase the renowned aviatrix, Amelia Earhart Putnam, and to re-educate folks about the connection between Amelia and Maine's early air service, the Boston & Maine Airways (BMA).

By way of a little background, Amelia's first visit to the Pine Tree State occurred on November 18, 1932, when she was the guest lecturer at Portland's City Hall Auditorium at an event hosted by the Church Federation of Portland and the surrounding town churches (reported by Portland Sunday Telegram).

Initial air service in Maine dates to the summer of 1931, when "seasonal" service was provided by BMA under contract with Pan American Airways. However, the first truly "scheduled passenger service" commenced on August 11, 1933, with service from Boston to Portland, Rockland, Waterville, and Bangor. Cheering crowds of 5,000 or more at each stop met the BMA Tri Motor planes flown by Amelia as guest captain in command. The inaugural flight into Portland (Scarborough Airport) included two local women returning from their vacation: Miss Madeline Jose and Miss Mildred Seavey, both employed by the New England Telephone & Telegraph Company. Also of interest, Amelia Earhart's stepson, David Putman, assumed the roll as one of Boston &

Maine's resident "dispatchers" for the air routes in Maine. At this point, Maine's air infrastructure was nearly non-existent. Airfield conditions were just starting to improve, but lacked night lighting. There were no weather stations, and few or no radio or navigational aids. The airline's service was fairly successful in 1933 - until late fall when winter conditions set in. New England's rugged weather, along with the primitive airfield conditions, presented a challenge for the airline and its pilots. For example, the planes were often fitted with tire chains to assist with traction. After the 1933 - '34 winter, BMA's operational headquarters were moved from Scarborough to East Boston for better, more modern accommodations, including a heated hangar!

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The Maine Air Museum is located at  
98 Maine Avenue adjacent to  
Bangor International Airport

By 1934, BMA's financial situation was much improved. That, along with other considerations, resulted in an exciting publicity event: famed aviatrix Amelia Earhart's "Grand Tour of Maine." Capitalizing on her star power combined with her standing as one of the founders and a Vice-President of BMA, Amelia would promote traveling by air as safe, as well as faster and better than other forms of transportation of the period. This event fit perfectly with one of Amelia's lifelong pursuits - interesting more women in aviation.

Men, women, and children all over Maine were thrilled about Amelia's arrival; especially the females in or near Bangor, Waterville, and Augusta who would have a chance to get one of the 200 free tickets available for the 10 minute flights with Amelia from each city's airport. Amelia was to personally mix with the delighted passengers on each short hop. In Bangor, August 12, 1934, was declared "Women's Day at Godfrey Field." According to news accounts, the day got an unexpected amount of attention, with as many as 10,000 spectators surrounding the airfield to catch a glimpse of Amelia and the Stinson plane in action. Each flight took Amelia and 9 passengers aloft.

On August 13 and August 14, the flight demonstrations were repeated at the Waterville and Augusta Airports respectively. There, local residents, and those women fortunate enough to garner the coveted tickets, mirrored the enthusiasm shown by Bangor residents. By all accounts, BMA's "Earhart Day" was a success for the airline in the three cities as well as across the state, as other communities soon set in motion plans for air service too.

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At the end of the 2013 museum season, MAM members discussed options for a traveling exhibit in 2014, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Amelia's visit to Maine. Some of our members

went into action over the winter months to make a display worthy of this historic event, significant both to Maine's aviation heritage and to the birth of air service in the Pine Tree State.

Through the efforts of several individuals, the exhibit came together during June and July, and was ready for its August debut. The 2014 Amelia Roadshow commenced Saturday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>, with a one-day exhibit in Maine Instrument Flight's hangar at the Augusta Airport. This outing was held jointly between MAM and Katahdin Wings (the Maine Chapter of the 99's, the all-female flying organization), and billed as an Open House/Fly-In and recruiting event. Earhart was, in fact, one of the original 99 members in 1929, and a leader that inspired the thriving International Organization of Women Pilots and its 99's Museum and International/Headquarters in Oklahoma City, OK. The fact that Maine Instrument Flight made their entire hangar available to both groups and to the public resulted in this day being all the more special for folks that came out to see what was on display, to

talk about Amelia, or to show off their own keepsakes which had been passed down through their families.

In this era, where all airport operations are high security zones, both young and old alike enjoyed getting up close and making contact with the planes on display for the event. By joining forces with the Katahdin Wings group, our Amelia exhibit got great publicity and was a significant focal point. Both of our small organizations benefited more than if each had attempted to bring the public out on its own. The event got advance news coverage plus



having Kennebec Journal reporters on-site throughout the day. There was a newspaper feature article that followed in Sunday's issue which was also carried by the Portland Sunday Telegram, titled "Remembering Amelia Earhart."

Moving the display on to the Bangor Airport (Godfrey Field) terminal, Amelia's actual first stop in her 1934 tour, was significant for our members in order to commemorate August 12<sup>th</sup>, "her day at Godfrey Field". After being on exhibit at the museum all weekend, the display was moved to the airport terminal on Monday the 11<sup>th</sup>. The display was a welcome attraction for those transiting to and from Bangor from 8/11 through 8/24, and we were pleased with the great cooperation we received from the airport's Marketing Manager, Risteen Bahr, and her staff hosting the Amelia display material. Again, the Maine Air Museum received noteworthy coverage with an article by the Bangor Daily News, Weekly Edition, plus many local folks that sought out the display.

Due to impending closure of the Waterville Airport for runway work in August, we opted to have the display on exhibit at the Waterville Public Library in the center of downtown. On August 25, MAM members accomplished the move to Waterville, where the library's director and librarian made prime space available to best showcase the exhibit. The Amelia display remained in

Waterville until September 8<sup>th</sup> and received both interest and favorable comments from the public and library staff.

Earlier plans had called for the next stop to be the Augusta airport in August as well, but the plan was altered to accommodate the Augusta airport manager; this presented a new opportunity. The exhibit went to the Lucerne Inn in Holden, instead, where it was on display from September 15 until September 22<sup>nd</sup>. The Lucerne Inn is the very same spot where Amelia rested overnight in the governor's suite during her 1934 tour, but it was known then as the "Log Lodge" in Lucerne. The Inn's management jumped at the opportunity to show off the materials and Amelia's connection with the Inn to its guests, and were sad to see the display move on.



*Amelia returns to the Lucerne Inn in 2014*

In 2014, as in 1934, Augusta would be the last stop. But, instead of having the display at the airport terminal in August, airport manager John Guimond proposed having the display as the centerpiece for the monthly Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce "After Hours" event to be hosted by the airport on September 24<sup>th</sup>. He assured us the event would be well attended. So, on September 22<sup>nd</sup> our members moved the display to Augusta where it was set up in a prominent spot in the terminal next to the permanent bronze statue of Vicki Van Meter. The young female had set several flight distance records: in 1992 at age 11, a transcontinental record; and in 1993 at age 12, a trans-Atlantic record, both originating from Augusta. In conjunction with the "After Hours" gathering, our member Bob Umberger gave a brief talk about the museum, the Amelia display, and the start of Air Service in Maine. He pointed out to the audience that not only was 2014 the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Amelia's visit, but also that the summer of 1934 was the first year of scheduled air service at Augusta. More than a hundred people turned out, including all the airport staff, airport businesses, and Cape Air



(the current air carrier), plus city officials and heads of the surrounding business community and chamber members. Without question, this venue was a great “outreach” opportunity for MAHS/MAM, and both the Amelia display and the talk were very well received. The display remained at the Augusta airport until October 11<sup>th</sup> when it was returned to MAM where it will now be one of the museum’s permanent attractions during subsequent seasons.



*Amelia next to the Vicki Van Meter statue in Augusta*



Our organization should be pleased and proud of the response we received. At each location, so many commented “I had no idea Amelia came to Maine”; so we surely exceeded our expectations, and met one of our goals of educating folks about Maine’s rich aviation past.

## Boeing KC-97 Stratotanker

(By: Chuck Byrum, MAM President,  
Deputy Fire Chief, USAF Retired)

The Boeing KC-97 Stratofreighter was a United States strategic tanker aircraft based on the Boeing C-97 Stratofreighter. It was succeeded by the Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker.



<http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil>

## Design and development

The KC-97 Stratofreighter was an aerial refueling tanker variant of the C-97 Stratofreighter (which was itself based on the Boeing B-29 Superfortress), greatly modified with all the necessary tanks, plumbing, and “flying boom.” The cavernous upper deck was capable of accommodating oversize cargo accessed through a very large right-side door. In addition, transferrable jet fuel was contained in tanks on the lower deck (G-L models). Both decks were heated and pressurized for high altitude operations.

## Operational history

The USAF began operating the KC-97 in 1950. It purchased a total of 811 KC-97s from Boeing, as opposed to only 74 of the C-97 cargo version. The KC-97 used piston engines, fueled by aviation gasoline, but it carried jet fuel for its refueling mission. It therefore used independent (transfer valves) systems for both types of fuel, and was able to transfer its aviation gas 145 to off-load to the receiver in an emergency (known as a “SAVE”).

These tankers were vitally important to the world-wide Boeing B-47 Stratojet strategic operations. An example was the support of Arctic reconnaissance flights from Thule Air Base.

While it was an effective tanker, the KC-97’s slow speed and low operational altitude complicated refueling operations with jet aircraft. B-52s typically lowered their flaps and rear landing gear to slow the aircraft enough to refuel from the KC-97. In addition, a typical B-52 refueling engagement profile would involve a descent that allowed the aircraft pair to maintain a higher airspeed (220-240 knots). In the early 1960s, the Tactical Air Command added General Electric J47 jet pods from retired KB-50 tankers to produce the KC-97L. The jet pods increased performance and made the KC-97 more compatible with jet aircraft.

In 1956, SAC began phasing out the KC-97 in favor of the KC-135. KC-97s continued operating with Tactical Air Command, the Air Force Reserve, and the Air National Guard. The KC-97 was finally retired completely in 1978, when the Texas and Utah Air National Guards exchanged their KC-97Ls for C-130s and KC-135s, respectively.

## Active Duty Operators (in Maine)

- 397th Bombardment Wing (Heavy) – Dow AFB, Maine (1963-1964)
  - 71st Air Refueling Squadron
  - 341st Air Refueling Squadron
- 4060th Air Refueling Wing – Dow AFB, Maine (1955-1962)

## Accidents and incidents involving the KC-97

- 14 December 1957 – KC-97G 53-0231 of the 384th Air Refueling Squadron, out of Westover AFB, Massachusetts, collides with a B-52 during a refueling mission at an altitude of ~ 15,000 feet. The aircraft loses the whole left horizontal stabilizer and elevator, the rudder, and the upper quarter of the vertical stabilizer. Crew makes a no-flap, electrical power off landing at night at Dow AFB, Maine, seven crew okay. “Spokesmen at Dow Air Force, Bangor, said the B52 [sic] apparently ‘crowded too close’ and rammed a fuel boom into the tail of a four-engined KC95 [sic] tanker plane.” Aircraft stricken as beyond economical repair. Two crew on the B-52 eject, parachute safely, and are recovered by helicopters in a snow-covered wilderness area. The bomber and remaining eight crew members continue to Westover AFB, where a safe landing is made.

## Specifications (KC-97) and General Characteristics

Crew: six (aircraft commander, copilot, navigator, flight engineer, radio operator, and boom operator)

Capacity: 9,000 gallons of jet fuel

Length: 117 ft. 5 in.

Wingspan: 141 ft. 2 in.

Height: 38 ft. 4 in.

Empty weight: 82,500 lb.

Loaded weight: 153,000 lb.

Max. takeoff weight: 175,000 lb.

Powerplant: 2x General Electric J47-GE-23 turbojets, 5,790 lbf each and 4x Pratt & Whitney R-4360-59 radial engines, 3,500 hp each.

Performance: Maximum speed 400 mph

Cruise speed: 230 mph

Range: 2,300 mi

Service ceiling: 30,000 ft.<sup>1</sup>

While I was stationed at Dow AFB in Bangor in the Base Department Fire Protection Branch, from December 17, 1962 to March 1, 1967, we had the KC-97 tanker. We had an area on the flight line of the base that was roped off for the alert area of the KC-97 tankers, which were guarded by the base Security Police Squadron. They had 15 minutes from engine startup to taxi to the active runway and take off for their mission. They were used to refuel the B-52Gs and other aircraft during the Cold War. We had all kinds of emergencies for the KC-97, such as: radio out; smoke in the cockpit; one engine feathered; and fuel spills on the ground in the alert area or on the flightline areas where they parked that needed to be washed down by the 10,000 gallon water tanker. When pilots used too much braking on landing, causing the plane to have hot brakes, we would have to approach the plane from the front of the plane and not at the side of

the wheel because of a possible explosion of the tire. We would use a heavy-duty fan to cool the brakes before it could taxi to its parking space. We trained on this aircraft, as well as other USAF aircraft, to learn all of the emergency procedures needed to make a successful rescue or to fight a fire on board as well as outside the aircraft.

1. Wikipedia contributors, "Boeing KC-97 Stratofreighter," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Boeing\\_KC-97\\_Stratofreighter&oldid=630531856](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Boeing_KC-97_Stratofreighter&oldid=630531856) (accessed November 23, 2014).

## 2014 Was a Great Year at the Maine Air Museum

(By: Hank Marois)

We converted our newsletter to digital and distributed it on the internet. You're reading it now. Thanks to Director Bob Littlefield we are now in living color -- can't hide our wrinkles! We now have a better, more modern product and we save on postage. It is a win-win situation.

We updated our web site. Never thought we looked that good. Director Matt Watkins and President Chuck Byrum get the credit for modernizing our image over the internet.

Opened and dedicated the Pilots Grill display and hosted a reunion of 19 former employees. Mr. Zoidis, the last owner and our special guest, now has a symbolic key to the museum. If he arrives first in the morning -- he makes the coffee! We thank the R M Flagg Hotel and Restaurant Co. for donating a place setting that is an exact replica of that used in the original eatery. This all came about when Bob Littlefield commented that the three paintings from Pilots Grill hanging in the museum office should be out on display for our visitors to enjoy. Artifacts were donated, and within weeks we had an exhibit commemorating the famed gathering place.

Modernized our interior lighting system. Never realized how great the museum really was. No more Braille System at the table saw! President Chuck Byrum worked closely with electrician Will Brown to bring us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Improved lighting and lower electrical usage plus a rebate will also enable new lighting in Bays #1 and #2.

Let there be light! And there was after Chuck Byrum contacted Emera Maine, the local power company, and we added a street lamp in front of the museum to illuminate our parking area and the museum entry way. It does a great job on our "Wicked good airplane whatchin'" sign.

Added "Amelia's Grand Tour of Maine" exhibit commemorating the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Amelia Earhart's grand tour of Maine in 1934. The exhibit traveled eastern Maine on a tour organized by Director Bob Umberger with assists from Matt Watkins, Don Finnegan, and Chuck and Deanna Byrum. The tour included stops in Bangor, Waterville, Lucerne, and Augusta. Many thanks to Bill Cook of the Bangor Public Library and to the Maine State Library for a wealth of information regarding the tour. We are indebted to Lt. Col. Debbie Kelley, Maine Air National Guard, for the donation of the "Amelia" mannequin featured in the



exhibit, Director Bob Littlefield for the construction of her two “arms,” and to Mary Marois who tirelessly scoured all the thrift shops in St. Petersburg, Florida to obtain “Amelia’s” period type clothing, spending a grand total of \$24 for the aviatrix’s attire. Thanks also go out to Lori Plourd of the Katahdin Wings and her friend for creating the replica aviation goggles and obtaining additional photos from the 99’s museum in Oklahoma City, and to member John Miller for loan of the vintage pilot’s helmet.

Hosted the annual Aviation Career Education (ACE) visit. We had 39 young students here for the day, and they enjoyed a picnic lunch on the tables and benches recently refurbished by Chuck and Deanna Byrum. It was a pleasure to host this group of vibrant and energetic future leaders. The future is in good hands with these young adults. See you all next year.

Memberships and attendance were both up. Much of this can be attributed to Chuck Byrum’s excellent relations with the Bangor Daily News and local TV stations and the publicity the museum received.

Added a weather station exhibit. Now we know which way the wind is blowing plus a lot more information dealing with the weather. Our thanks to Lonnie White, RainWise Executive Vice President, and Sonia Turanski, Marketing Manager, for donating this modern wireless system.

Upgraded the gift shop. Chuck and Deanna Byrum updated the merchandise and how it is displayed.

Director Deanna Byrum painted the floors in the sales area and the room leading to the latrine. A runner was also added to the sales area. Lot of work and it paid off. Thank you Deanna!

Made substantial financial savings by suspending some utility services during the months when we are closed.

We thank Tom Bernardi of Larson’s Locksmithing for his generosity in revamping our security lock system. Now we don’t have to emulate Harry Houdini when we enter the museum!

A professional overhead garage door company was called in to fine tune the door tensions. In addition, Chuck Byrum added new rubber seals to the bottoms of each door

The UH-1 “Huey” spends its summers on display at the museum. To Viet Nam war veterans it is a respected old friend indeed. We hope “Huey” summers with us for many more years. We thank Col. Brian Veneziano, Commanding Officer, U.S. Army Support Facility Bangor International Airport and his command for “Huey’s” annual visit.

Strike up the band! Tony DelMonaco ran speaker wires throughout the building so we now have classic Glenn Miller type big band background music everywhere!



Anyone out there know what is going on here? We need answers to “who”, “what”, “where” and “why”? “These two guys have some ‘splaining to do!” said Mary Marois of her husband, Hank Marois, and Bob Littlefield carrying the Amelia mannequin into the museum.

### **Looking for a few good stories**

If you think you have a newsworthy article – or even just an idea for an article you would like to see included in a future edition of the *Dirigo Flyer* - send your article or ideas to [rhlittlefield@roadrunner.com](mailto:rhlittlefield@roadrunner.com).



Maine Air

Museum

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Mail payment to: Maine Aviation Historical Society PO Box 2641 Bangor, ME 04402-2641	We need volunteers-docents, mechanics, maintenance, librarians and exhibit specialists, etc. ___ Please call me. I want to be active in the organization. ___ I cannot join now, but would like to help. I am enclosing a check for \$_____. Contributions over \$20 are tax deductible within the limits of the law. ___ I wish to support and obtain membership by purchasing a memorial brick.		

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