

# 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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## Remembering Northeast Airlines, 1941-1943

By Norm Houle

Norm Houle received the following reminiscence from Dick Stevens, former Northeast Airline Station Agent now living in Arizona. We reprint it here to remind you of the "glamorous" airline work just before and during World War II.

Going to work for Northeast Airlines in early Spring of 1941 was a great first experience for a young man that had not before this, worked away from home. Not only that, but to be working in aviation, a long dreamed of goal. Northeast Airlines at this time, 1941, was serving New England with Lockheed 10A aircraft, a ten-passenger twin engine aircraft with a cruise speed of perhaps 180 miles per hour. The routes they flew stretched northeast and northwest of Boston. Boston was the base of operations and maintenance

base. From Boston the first stop was Portland; continuing in a northeasterly direction they had stops at Lewiston-Auburn, Waterville, and Bangor.

Bangor served as a sort of secondary base, and that is where they assigned me. In order to work for the airline some of us agents had to first have a third class radiotelephone license and a weather observer's certificate. The radiotelephone license was quite easy; the weather certificate required a bit of study. One had to be able to distinguish types of clouds, determine visibility, use ceiling balloons, and take temperature and dew point readings.

Arriving in Bangor a room was found for three dollars a week, and not too far away meals were available for five dollars a week. Not having a car I relied on a friend's car, the streetcar, or walked. Occasionally the people with the room invited us to Sunday breakfast. The price for room and board was great for our eighty dollar a month starting wage, but when the first paychecks came we were told that the first month we were to be paid just for our expenses.

Another surprise was that I was to be the relief agent for the fellows on the Aroostook division. That meant Millinocket, Houlton, and Presque Isle, two days at each airport, every other week. Northeast flew one round trip a day to these cities with a turn around at Presque Isle. Another surprise (or perhaps I was so eager I didn't hear it) was that I was to be paid expenses

only for the first month probation period. How was I going to cope with that? The clerk at the Northland Hotel in Houlton was friendly and came out to the airport frequently. I explained the expenses only predicament to him. We solved that with receipts from the Northland, while I stayed at the YMCA for one dollar a night. At Presque Isle, the agent I relieved let me stay in his room.

The days were long on the Aroostook division, but not boring. There were always people coming to the airport to ask questions, inquire

about reservations and to see the "Airliner" arrive. Single-handedly the agent had to take the weather observations, make reservations, answer the phone, figure weight and balance, put the mail aboard, and drag along a little stool to help the passengers aboard, smile and tell them to have a nice trip.

At Houlton it was quite busy relaying weather to the one round-trip a day from Bangor to Moncton, New Brunswick, as very often the low frequency radio with only fifty watts of power would not be heard by Bangor due to sun spot activity. In the spring, sun spots caused all types of radio problems. I couldn't hear the aircraft fifty miles away, but I could hear a station several hundreds of miles away. There were times when Bangor would telephone Houlton or Presque Isle and ask me to relay information.

Another route started out of Boston with its first stop at Concord, New Hampshire, then on to Burlington, Vermont, and Montreal, Canada. These routes in 1941 were flown by



A Lockheed 10A airliner of Boston-Maine Airways prepares to depart East Boston Airport on a flight to Maine in 1940. (Photo via Leo Boyle)

"Northeast," continued on page 3

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Ed Armstrong (2001) #166L
Carl Sederquist (2001) #218L

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 President's Report Read at the May 2001 Meeting

This month we are back at our unofficial home of the Maine Air Museum located at the Bangor International Airport. During the past month the officers of your society and the Board of Directors have been working on programs for getting our message out to the public. We have also been busy planning for numerous events such as the Memorial Day Parade that is scheduled for Monday, May 28th, here in Bangor. We are planning on having a presentation for the parade which will feature our J-57 Jet Engine as well as World War II, Korea, and Vietnam era flight uniforms and gear. It should be a fun and exciting event.

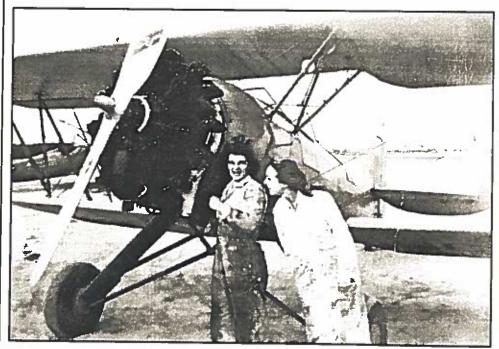
On Friday, April 27, 2001 the MAHS Board of Directors met for a special fundraising meeting. Many ideas were presented and discussed at length. Some of the ideas that were voted on and approved were the distribution of direct mail to potential contributors, the preparation and submittal of requests for grants, and the erecting of a sign at the museum for both fundraising and as a public awareness campaign.

I would like to thank Ed Armstrong for hosting the meeting as his place of business and for the hospitality he provided. I would also like to thank Jules Arel for attending the special Board of Directors meeting at my request. Jules provided some excellent suggestions and clarified a number of issues and questions concerning grants and grant writing.

We are at the beginning of a wonderful summer of fun and exciting events for the society. The museum is on its way to becoming a reality, and I invite you to join us for what will certainly be a memorable year for the society as a whole and the Maine Air Museum.

John Garbinski, President

#### **That Feminine Touch**



Mary Rice, left, works on a Waco UPF-7 biplane in Bangor under the CPTP Program about 1940. Mary was the daughter of Arthur Rice, President of the C.H. Rice Meat Company of Bangor. (Photo via Bill Robertson)

JOIN THE MAHS TODAY

"Northeast," continued from page 1

Lockheed 10A aircraft, which carried 10 passengers, two pilots and a two-way radio. There were no stewardesses; it was the job of the co-pilot to attend to any needs of the passengers. The co-pilot might appear after frantic pushing of a button at the passenger's elbow.

These Lockheed 10As, of which Northeast had three, cruised at three miles a minute, one hundred eighty miles an hour. That was considered good speed for the day, nearly as fast as some military fighter aircraft. With our new uniforms, for which a sizable deduction was taken, we thought we cut a rather dashing figure in these cities. Many times a young lady would give me a ride to the Houlton Airport. In Presque Isle, our "terminal" was housed in a WPA (Works Progress Administration) Office. At that time the Army Air Base in Presque Isle was being constructed. It was easy to get a ride back and forth.

The Millinocket Airport was shut down for construction improvements, but we still took weather observations. It was an easy walk to this airport. The Bangor terminal was a large Quonset hut, about twenty by forty feet. This terminal was attached to the Municipal Hangar. It housed the operations clerk, his desk, the radio operator, a ticket counter, and passenger lounge. The United States Weather Bureau had an office that was open twenty-four hours a day. It was attached to our terminal and had walk-through space.

Many times the aroma of hamburger and onions would drift through our passenger waiting lounge as these fellows cooked up their meal on a hot plate. In these days there no meals served aboard the aircraft nor was there a lunchroom on the airport. The only things a passenger might be handed were some cotton and some gum: cotton to protect their ears from the roar of those Pratt and Whitney R-985, 450 horsepower engines; gum for relieving pressure on the eardrums during altitude changes. Do any airlines still pass out gum to their passengers?

In the fall of 1941 we were issued a strange set of numbers which changed every four hours. These were used to encode weather observations as they were broadcast. Weather forwarded to pilots in flight was also coded. This was done before Pearl Harbor. We were so close to Canada, which had

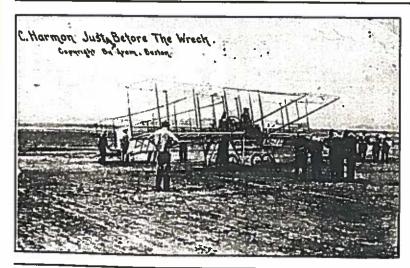


Northeast Airline station manager R.A. Stevens and passengers at Houlton, Maine in 1941. (Photo via Norman Houle Collection)

been at war for two years, weather drifting from our area of Maine would a little later be in the Canadian area. Several days later it would be weather for Europe and Great Britain.

About this same time an order came out to the coastal cities to extinguish all lights facing seaward, curtains in the homes and businesses were all pulled down, store display windows remained off. Automobile headlights had the top half covered over and speed at night was reduced. Before this the glare of city lights all along the East Coast had enabled German subs to silhouette ships, especially oil tankers, against these coastal lights and torpedo them. With the implementation of this order there were very few lights showing from the coast to fifty miles inland.

It was a very different sight flying from Bangor to Boston. Airport lights would only be lighted when the airliner radioed and said they were "in range." All of the cities on these northeasterly routes became busier. There were workers going to Presque Isle to build the Army Air Corps base. Ships docked at Halifax with people who had arrived from England. They took Trans-Canada to Moncton and boarded Northeast to Boston.



## Mystery Photo for June

Member Bill Robertson bought this postcard and donated it to the Society. We believe the aircraft is a British Bristol Boxkite and that the photo was taken at the 1910 Harvard Aero Meet.

Can anyone confirm this and tell us more about C. Harmon and his fate?

#### May Meeting Notes

The May meeting of the Society was held Saturday, June 12 at the museum in Bangor. Vice President Peter Noddin presided, as President Garbinski had to work. The President's Report was read by Peter and is reprinted on page 2. Treasurer Charles Brantner gave the Treasurer's Report, showing a good number of renewals and three new life members. Secretary Bill Townsend reported on the April meeting in Augusta, and Leo Boyle gave the Membership Report.

Les Shaw and Mike Cornett reported on work progress on the museum and the updating of the computer records. Jim Chichetto reported on the crash site hikes program, the first of which will be the feature of next month's meeting, and Peter Noddin updated us on recovery possibilities.

The primary discussion on new business was the float for the Bangor Memorial Day Parade. This float will feature our J-57 engine and people in World War II and Cold War period uniforms. Carl Sederquist updated us on our fundraising efforts, and Ed Armstrong spoke on his research into available grants and how to apply for them. Member #1, Norm Houle, then showed an FAA video on the arrival and departure procedures for the 2001 Sun n' Fun Fly-In at Lakeland, Florida.

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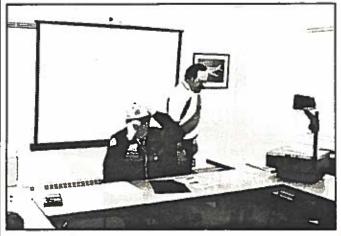
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## High Flyin' Dr. Millard Harmon

The April visit of Dr. Millard Harmon was a huge success. Dr. Harmon, who's flown numerous goodwill missions to Russia as a personal ambassador for world peace, appears below on arrival, on site and ready for take-off. (Photos by Mike Cornett)



Our May meeting speaker, Dr. Millard Harmon, is met by member Scott Grant who arranged his appearance.



Dr. Harmon tries on an MAHS cap after its presentation by President John Garbinski.



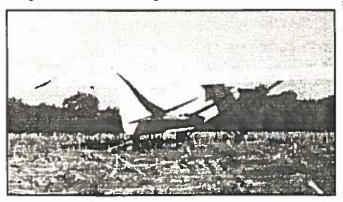
Dr. Harmon prepares to depart Augusta Airport in his Beech 36 "Ten Romeo" after the April meeting.

## A Late Saturday Afternoon, Wedding Eve Heart Thumper

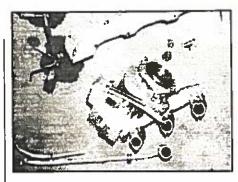
Story and Photos by Carl Sederquist

On 27 September 1981, on the eve of my oldest daughter's wedding, at approximately 4:25 p.m., I departed Freeway Airport with my son Arthur, age 11, for a local pleasure flight to Colombia, Maryland, landing at Hayland Field, an uncharted private turf landing strip. After landing, we taxied to the lake off end of the field, completed our run up and took off easterly into the wind. At the beginning of the climb out, my son informed me that the engine sounded different. I lifted my headset and noticed the engine was abnormally loud. We were about 80 to 100 feet above the runway at this time. As the manifold pressure and other engine indications were normal, oil pressure, oil temperature, etc., I speculated that the problem was in the exhaust system. At approximately 400 feet above the ground (800 - 900 feet MSL), I just started to reduce power, a quarter turn or so, when the engine quit with a loud bang. I pushed the nose down to gain air speed, made a fast attempt at restart and looked for a landing site ahead of me. I spotted the golf course at Harper's Choice off to the right as I set up my glide. As I approached the golf course, I realized that I could not stretch the glide. However, at about the same time, I saw a small cornfield, the other side of 80 foot trees and Route 108, between myself and the golf course. I lined up diagonally across the field, shut off the switches and fuel, pushed the nose down to gain air speed, pulled up over the trees, and when clear of the tree tops and over the road, I slipped the aircraft down and landed about one third of the way into the field. I bounced once, moderately hard, flared and rolled to a stop at the far corner after purposely braking one wheel and, in a cloud of dust, ground looping to reverse direction to prevent rolling out of the field into the bush. My son and I sustained no injuries and the aircraft, from all visible appearances, suffered no structural damage.

We were assisted on the ground by a passing motorist who saw us as we went overhead into the field. He said that we landed at 5:15 p.m. He then took us to the home of the property owner adjacent to the cornfield, a Mrs. Carroll of Jerico Farms, who advised that the aircraft would be alright where it was for a while. However she would like it removed as soon as it was possible. Mrs. Carroll assisted by letting us use her telephone to call home. After doing so I returned to the aircraft, tied it down using tie down stakes, arranged the sun shields in the windows



Carl's Maule as it came to rest in the comfield of Jerica Farm.



The culprit that caused this incident.

to block the view of the curious and locked the aircraft. We paced off the field corner to corner (our landing path) and it was 850 paces, toe to heel. We landed about a third of this length into the field. Thank goodness I had a Maule with its barn door flaps, 45 knot stall speed, several inches of dried corn stalk stubble and uphill!

Mr. Brown, the passing motorist, took us to the Harper's Choice Shopping Center where I called the regional office of the FAA and reported the incident at 6:55 PM and where we waited until my family arrived to pick us up.

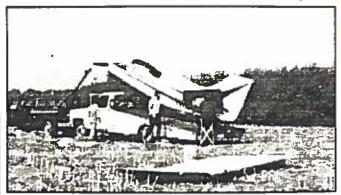
The FAA 8020-5 Incident Report narrative stated: "Pilot and son departed a private strip on Hayland Farms west of Colombia, Maryland. At about 500 feet on climb out, the engine failed completely. A landing was made on adjacent Jerico Farms with no damage to the aircraft. The engine was disassembled and found to have a broken connecting rod wrist pin.

An M and D report was submitted on the wrist pin. The company that produced this engine (Franklin) is no longer in business. This concludes this report. APS Concurs. Signed by APS Baltimore GADO."

Ironically I learned later that there had been five other incidents involving soft wrist pins installed in late production Franklin engined Maules, one fatal, and no FAA directive was ever issued on this failure mode.

Interesting side note: Mrs. Carroll, Jerico Farms, is the direct descendent of Charles Carroll, Maryland signer of the Declaration of Independence, and the namesake for which this county where the incident took place is named.

By the way, my daughter's wedding was a grand event, without problem. I guess it could have been worse if I had been flying a different airplane the evening before.



Loading the disassembled Maule for removal from the comfield.

#### **June Meeting**

The June membership meeting will be held at the Bernard Coro Post, Disabled American Veterans, in Medway at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, June 9th.

Following the meeting, we will go on an all-day driving/walk-in tour of the four Cold War era fighter crash sites in the Katahdin area. We plan to be back at the start point in the early evening. Wear sturdy shoes and pack a cooler. Remember to bring fly dope, too! We will stop briefly at a truck stop halfway through the tour.

The longest hike is about 400 yards. Some of the travel is on rough roads, so we will make room in members' trucks for those who do not wish to bring their cars in the woods.

Directions: Take the Medway/Millinocket Exit off I-95 and turn west toward Millinocket. The DAV Hall is on the right about two miles from the I-95, on the East Millinocket town line.

#### Four Katahdin Crash Sites

- The 1954 F-86F site in Molunkis. Lt. Al Lang successfully bailed out after losing control during simulated combat.
- The 1962 F-101B site in Macwahoc. Capt. Douglas Roe lost his life in this accident. The aircraft departed normal flight during a simulated "snap up" intercept.
- The 1952 F-86A site in Stacyville. Capt George Thomas died after suffering hypoxia during simulated combat.
- The 1950 "Sea Fury" site in T3R8. Lt. Mervin Hare RCN disappeared on a ferry flight. The crash site remained undiscovered for 18 years.

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#### **Book Review**

Hunting Warbirds by Carl Hoffman Ballantine Books, \$24.00

An excellent read for anyone interested in warbirds. Author Carl Hoffman was on site in Greenland when Darryl Greenamyer and Gary Larkins started salvage operations of the Kee Bird, a B-29 that crashed north of the Arctic Circle in the 1940s. The NOVA-TV documentary did not begin to show the tensions and personality conflicts between Greenamyer and Larkins which eventually led to Larkin's pulling out of the project. While everyone on the team was knocking themselves out, Greenamyer spent most of his time sitting in the cockpit barking out orders. His propensity for cutting corners is a major reason why he lost the Kee Bird. His agreement with the Danish government called for him to restore the site to its original condition. After the Kee Bird went up in flames, Greenamyer flew back to the States leaving the site looking like a dump.

The author tells us of Walter Soplota, who lives somewhere in the Midwest in a ramshackle house that is completely surrounded with WWII warbirds which he bought years ago for next to nothing and refuses to part with. His collection even includes a B-36.

According to Hoffman there are only twenty-nine B-29s and forty-five B-17s, including non-flyers in existence in museums, in the whole world. Included in the book are sketches of half a dozen warbird collectors and the unbelievable costs associated with salvaging these rare aircraft.

Though lacking an index, the book is well written and contains interesting reference material.

- Jules Arel

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## **Upcoming MAHS Meetings**

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June 9 ...... 10 a.m. ...... MAHS Meeting, Millinocket area, TBA.

July 14 .............. 10 a.m. ....... MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine.

August 4-5 ....... All Day ...... Transportation Spectacular and Aerobatic Airshow, OHTM, Owls Head, Maine.

August 11 .......... 10 a.m. ...... MAHS Meeting.

Sept. 8 ...... All Day ...... Greenville International Seaplane Fly-In, Greenville, Maine.

Sept. 22-23 ....... All Day ...... Great State o' Maine Air Show with the Blue Angels, BNAS, Brunswick, Maine.

Sept. 29-30 ....... All Day ...... Gadabout Gaddis Fly-In, Bingham, Maine

October 13 ....... 10 a.m. ......MAHS Meeting.

November 10 ..... 10 a.m. ...... MAHS Meeting.

December 8...... 10 a.m. ...... MAHS Meeting.

\* The Owls Head Transportation Museum will also have their Antique Aeroplane Show on the following dates: May 2 - June 10 and 24 - July 8 and 21-22 - September 2, 16 and 30 - October 14.

## With Deepest Sympathy

The publisher of Air News New England, Glenn Greenhalgh, died unexpectedly from a boating accident in Henniker, NH on April 22, 2001. Both Bev and Glenn had made plans to open a new office of Air News New England at the Howe Center in Rutland, VT. They had also made plans to make Vermont their home when tragedy struck.

The last words in Glenn's obituary in the Concord Monitor were, "In lieu of flowers, make a donation to your favorite charity and do a random act of kindness." Glenn's character and personality were reflected in this statement.

Member Ralph E. Mower, formerly of Bangor, Maine, died May 1, 2001.

Ralph was a World War II veteran and worked for a time as service manager for Webber Motor in Bangor. He took flight training at the Old Town Airport under the GI Bill and worked as pilot/instructor for Central Maine Flying Service at the Old Town Airport. He went on to fly for Northeast Airlines, as co-pilot, and then for American Airlines, from which he retired after 29 years.

We wish to extend our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Ralph Mower.

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June Meeting

Saturday, June 9, 2001 10 a.m. Bernard Coro DAV Post Medway, Maine