A PLACE IN THE SKY

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A History of the
Arnold Palmer Regional Airport
1919 - 2001

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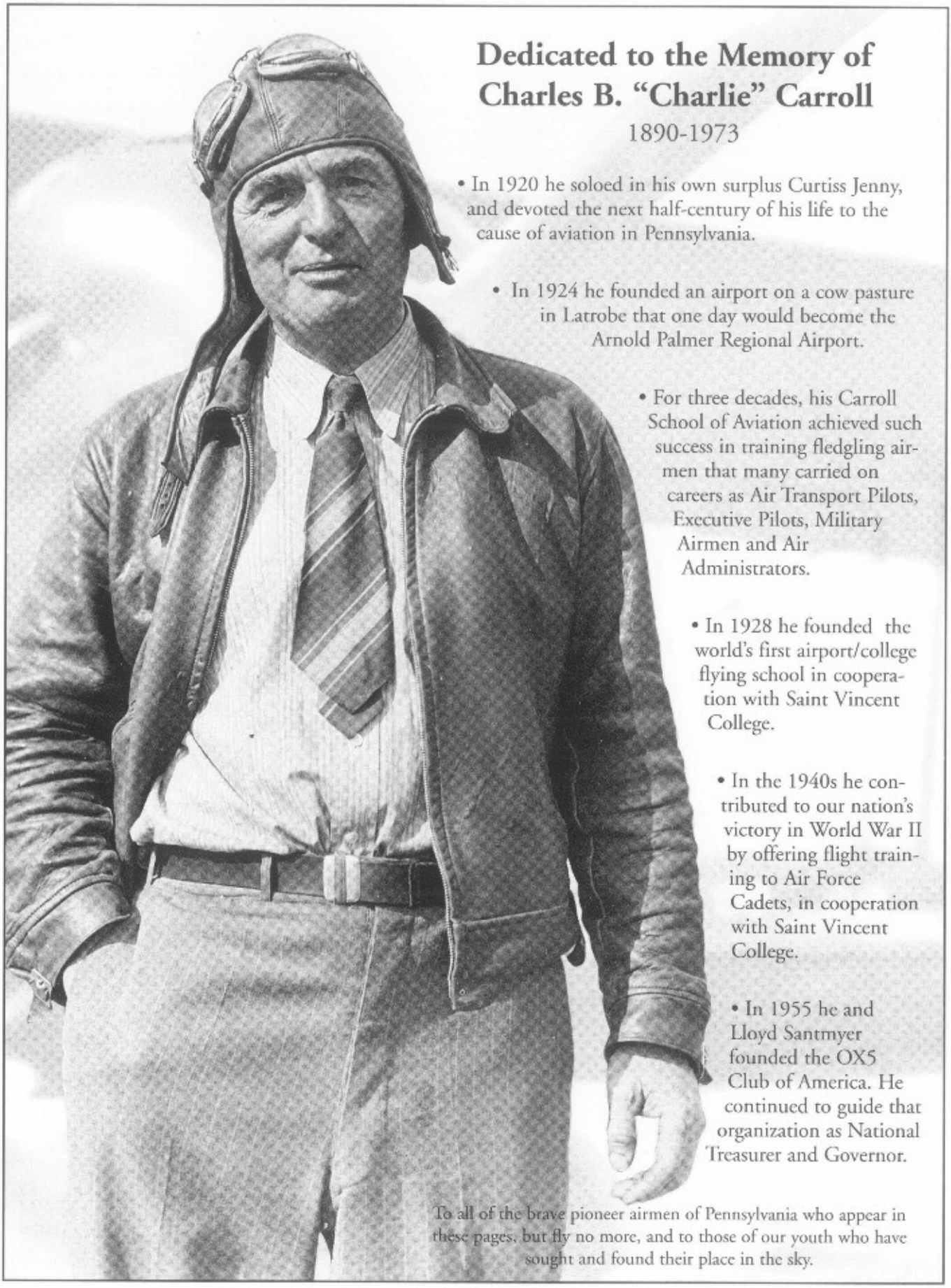

Dedicated to the Memory of Charles B. "Charlie" Carroll

1890-1973

- In 1920 he soloed in his own surplus Curtiss Jenny, and devoted the next half-century of his life to the cause of aviation in Pennsylvania.
- In 1924 he founded an airport on a cow pasture in Latrobe that one day would become the Arnold Palmer Regional Airport.
- For three decades, his Carroll School of Aviation achieved such success in training fledgling airmen that many carried on careers as Air Transport Pilots, Executive Pilots, Military Airmen and Air Administrators.
- In 1928 he founded the world's first airport/college flying school in cooperation with Saint Vincent College.
- In the 1940s he contributed to our nation's victory in World War II by offering flight training to Air Force Cadets, in cooperation with Saint Vincent College.
- In 1955 he and Lloyd Santmyer founded the OX5 Club of America. He continued to guide that organization as National Treasurer and Governor.

To all of the brave pioneer airmen of Pennsylvania who appear in these pages, but fly no more, and to those of our youth who have sought and found their place in the sky.

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THE KITTY HAWK MONSTER

I was walking my dog through the shifting sand one brisk December day,
When some men I'd never seen before ran out to block my way.
I'd climbed that hill a hundred times. I couldn't understand
Why anyone had any cause to bar me from the land.
And then I saw, up by the shed, a weird impressive sight;
I knew from pictures I had seen it was a huge box kite.
One man was stretched out in the thing while another stood and talked.
Then after a while, he looked around and to the back he walked.
He spun a funny looking fan that made an awful clatter.
In fact I think I saw two fans, but it really doesn't matter.
Above the din, I heard some shouts; I thought my ears would burst.
The man aboard blared, "Wilbur! I'm going to try it first!"
I couldn't think why grown up men would play with such a toy.
Then a man with a camera aimed at the kite called "Good luck, Orv, old boy!"
The monster started moving across the sand; it was headed straight for me.
I turned and ran down Kill Devil Hill as frightened as I could be.
I ran for miles. I never looked back. My feet scarcely touched the ground.
I made it home safely and locked the door just ten feet ahead of the hound.
There was nothing in the papers; I searched them through; and we had no radio.
I was NOT just imagination. Not at all!
I was there and I should know...

Years have come an gone since nineteen three,
and as I sit here reviewing,
I've often wondered to this day
what those two fools were doing.

- Russ Brinkley

Editor's Note and Acknowledgements

A Place in the Sky is about the aviation pioneers of Westmoreland County in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. They were a breed of courageous, adventurous, sometimes reckless men and women who flew "by the seat of their pants in aircraft that were little more than stiffened cloth stretched over wood and held together with baling wire. Their daring, their mistakes and successes, made aviation in the county what it is today. Moreover, this book is about the Arnold Palmer Regional Airport in Latrobe, and the role it played in developing and advancing aviation in Western Pennsylvania.

More than two years of research went into the publication of this history. Though our original purpose was to focus on the development of Latrobe's Arnold Palmer Regional Airport from the founding of Longview Flying Field in 1924, it was because the broader geographic area's early pilots and aviation pioneers were such a tight, mutually-supportive group that we found it necessary to include some of them, especially C.P. Mayer (Mayer Field, Bridgeville, Pennsylvania), and D. Barr Peat and Clifford Ball (Bettis Field, McKeesport, Pennsylvania).

By no means does this history purport to be exhaustive. It is, however, the most comprehensive one done to date on the development of the airport that today serves Westmoreland County and the region. Had we begun our work two or five years hence, what we have achieved in this volume would not have been possible.

Very little, if any, material on the days prior to 1980 was preserved in airport archives, and most of the principals involved in early developments had passed on around the same time Charles Carroll died in 1973. "Charlie" had preserved thirty-five years of airport history in an immense scrapbook, but it was lost after his widow, Grace, died in a nursing home in Florida some years after her husband's death. If we could have had that scrapbook, our task would have been much easier. Fortunately, six people (three of them in their nineties) who experienced the golden days of local aviation in the 1920s and 1930s were available for interviews; they were Lloyd Santmyer, Anna Mary Topper (widow of Carl Strickler), Ken Scholter, Frank Fox, Ed Blend, and Clyde Hauger, whose father, also Clyde, barnstormed out of the Longview Flying Field and J.D. Hill Airport in the waning years of the 1920s. Each presented us with extensive collections of photographs and other memorabilia. We are saddened that Frank Fox passed away before he could see himself and his old comrades honored in these pages.

We apologize for oversights and the kinds of errors that are sometimes unavoidable in historical reconstructions of this nature. We exerted every effort to contact people who could shed light on the airport's history. Among other approaches, our efforts included press releases, feature articles and advertisements in newspapers, public posters in the Palmer Airport terminal building, telephone contacts, and national and international outreach through the project's web site. Many came forward who were willing to share their memories and memorabilia. Many others supplied us with contacts. We examined more than 2,000 photographs and hundreds of letters, brochures, tabloids, newsletters, and holdings in county libraries, private libraries, and the archives of historical societies. We traveled Westmoreland, adjacent counties, and into other states to conduct research and interviews, and to spend endless hours in front of microfilm machines in libraries. Regretfully, we excluded material that we could neither identify nor corroborate. This material will be made available for public and scholarly examination in the Saint Vincent College Library.

With deep appreciation, we acknowledge the following:

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, The R. K. Mellon Family Foundation, The Westmoreland County Airport Authority, and Saint Vincent College for the funds to undertake and complete the project; Gene Lakin, Gabe Monzo, Linda Brasile, Dorothy Zello for allowing free access to airport files and archives, and for their patience through countless phone calls and unscheduled visits from Center staff; Don Orlando, Theresa Schwab, and the staff of the Saint Vincent College Public Relations Office for their timely and efficient placement of publicity; Rita Catalano, Christine Foschia, Marsha Jasper, of the Saint Vincent College Office of Grants and Research for their expertise and assistance while the Center sought funds for this project; Patricia Dellinger, Gina Nalevanko, and the Saint Vincent College Business Office for their work in managing the funds of the Center; Rev. Chrysostom Schlimm, O.S.B., Rev. David Kelly, O.S.B., Margaret Friloux, John Benyo, Jack Macey, and all the others at the Saint Vincent College Library for their usual graciousness in assisting Center staff with research problems and obtaining often obscure inter-library loan materials; Saint Vincent College faculty secretary Shirley Skander, Lee Ann Ross and Kim Bobnar, of the college's Mailing and Duplicating department for their invaluable assistance in providing copies of the manuscript for the editors.

We are especially indebted to Mary Ann Mogus for her contribution concerning the life of J.D. Hill. Though Charles Carroll in 1928 renamed his Longview Flying Field after that Scottdale, Pennsylvania, airmail pilot, memories of Hill and his contributions to aviation had entirely disappeared from local memory. Dr. Mogus also brought to light many historically critical articles from the Scottdale Independent Observer published in the 1920s. Without these our reconstruction of events in the lives of Charles Carroll, Carl Strickler and Raymond Elder would not have been as thorough as they are.

Above all, we thank the following, without whose generous and gracious assistance, especially in providing many rare photographs, documents, and oral histories, this project would have been impossible; Rev. Omer Kline, O.S.B. (Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives), Rev. Roland Heid, O.S.B., Ken Scholter, Frank Fox, Ed Blend, Lloyd Santmyer, Clyde Hauger, Earl Metzler, James Carroll, Don Carroll, Dorothy Carroll Sadler, Janet Matchett, Carolyn Peat, Marcia Nair, Josephine Smart, Bob Downs, Robert Fisher, Lou Beamer, John "Reds" MacFarlane, William Strickler, Barry Elder, Anna Mary (Strickler) Topper, Don Riggs, Kip Barraclough, Victor Gasbarro, Eli "Babe" Krinock, Mansel Negley, Gene McDonald, Don Kane, Eleanor Ashbaugh, Jean Loughry, Harry Garman, Bruno Ferrari, Ronald Jasper, Dr. Walter Hazlett, Cliff Naugle, the New York Public Library, the West Overton Museums, the Latrobe Historical Society, the Greensburg Public Library, the Greater Latrobe Senior High School, the Westmoreland County Historical Society, the Scottdale Independent Observer, the Latrobe Bulletin, the Greensburg Tribune-Review, and many others, too numerous to mention, whose comments, criticisms, and leads were of invaluable assistance.

A Note From Gene Lakin

Executive Director, Arnold Palmer Regional Airport

My history of the Arnold Palmer Airport began in 1980. Bob Cheffins, the airport manager, offered me a job in the maintenance department, and we both agreed that it would be temporary employment. My wife, Ginger, and I, along with our two-year-old son, Jeff, were making plans to move to a warmer climate. My daughter, Amy, was born on July 31, 1980, my first day on the job.

My history of the airport centers around the people with whom I have been associated these twenty-one years. Many individuals come to mind. Terry Stuck, longtime maintenance worker taught me how to plow snow during my first winter at the airport. Terry, along with Tom Stynchula, Mike Umbaugh, and Moe Haas, today make up a unique group of maintenance workers truly dedicated to our airport; Charlie Green and his team of air-traffic controllers bring with them each day the loyalty, efficiency, and professionalism that are so important to any airport operation. My history also includes Gabe Monzo and Linda Brasile, who, along with me, make up the airport administration staff. The importance of Gabe (named 1999's "Airport Manager of the Year" by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's Bureau of Aviation) and Linda to the airport cannot be adequately described except by those who experience their dedication first hand. The success of our airport is attributable to this group of employees and to other special people who have been connected with the Airport Authority. In 1980, I was in the right place at the right time.

The Airport Authority was established in 1951. This year, 2001, marks our fiftieth anniversary. One day, I was discussing our anniversary plans with Saint Vincent College professor Dick Wissolik, whose wife, Barbara, had just finished a series of interviews with Gene McDonald, the airport solicitor since 1951. Dick suggested that we record a history, not only of the airport authority, but also of the airport since its earliest days. I knew that a great deal of Pennsylvania aviation history involved the old Latrobe airport, but a good historical record simply did not exist. The authority agreed that this was a perfect opportunity to research, compile, and publish a book about the characters and events that make up the history of the Arnold Palmer Regional Airport.

As part of my own research, I started reading the minutes of authority meetings that began to be officially recorded in 1953. As I read about the people, the projects, the problems and triumphs associated with those days, I developed a deeper appreciation of my own position at the airport. I only hope those who will someday succeed me derive from the following pages the same appreciation.

Looking Up for Eighty Years

When once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return

- Leonardo da Vinci

More than eight decades ago, when the land had not yet been dug up, moved and shifted to suit the needs of commerce and progress, southwestern Pennsylvania was a quiet rural community settling down after the turmoil of World War I. Places like Greensburg, Latrobe, New Alexandria, Derry, Scottdale, Uniontown, Monessen, and Connellsville, had once been just towns on a map connected by miles of winding roads, and patched with cornfields and pastures. Automobiles were just beginning to change the lives of the American people. They were still a novelty of sorts, especially in rural communities where they still might turn a head or two, but they would not compare to what was about to burst upon the scene shortly after the end of the Great War. Suddenly, the new art of flying from town to town, practiced by discharged Army pilots flying surplus aircraft and giving the local populace a chance to touch the clouds, stirred the imagination of the inhabitants. No motor car, however strange or exotic, could ever manage to draw a thousand people of all ages to a roadside field or pasture, where a Curtiss Jenny in distress, or one whose pilot would sell rides for two or three dollars, made a landing. To pilots, especially, new realms became accessible by air, new lands were there to discover, new experiments and adventures possible to undertake.

In 1910, in Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania, Frisbee, "The Man Bird," made two flights a day at the Home Week Celebration.

On October 3, 1910, Wilbur Wright himself brought a new Wright Flyer to the Washington County Centennial Fair where his pilot, Walter Brookins, flew from Wallace Field to a height of 1,200 feet, a new record for Pennsylvania. Brookins' flight lasted twenty-two minutes.

Sometime in 1911, R.C. Jennings of Uniontown, Pennsylvania, got a second hand engine and fitted into a Bleriot-type monoplane. His engine was underpowered, so he switched to a forty-horsepower Gray Eagle, and made a few modifications to strengthen the plane's structure. Jennings claimed to have made flights lasting as long as forty-five minutes, using a golf course as a flying field.

In April 1913, Victor D. Herbster of West Newton, Pennsylvania, one of the first Navy aviators trained by Curtiss, set a seaplane altitude record of 4,450 feet.

On Columbus Day, 1913, in Connellsville, Pennsylvania, W.S. Minerly performed in a Kirkham tractor biplane, and Frank H. Burnside performed in a Thomas Pusher.

On April 16, 1916, at the height of World War I, DeLloyd "Dutch" Thompson of Washington County, dropped a paper bag filled with firecrackers over Washington, D.C., to demonstrate that American cities were vulnerable to air attack. Thompson also claimed to be the fourteenth man in history ever to pilot an aircraft.

At the end of World War I, a field in downtown Latrobe was used for passenger flights. The field eventually became the 800 block of Weldon, Spring, Chestnut, Walnut, Fairmont, and St. Clair Streets.

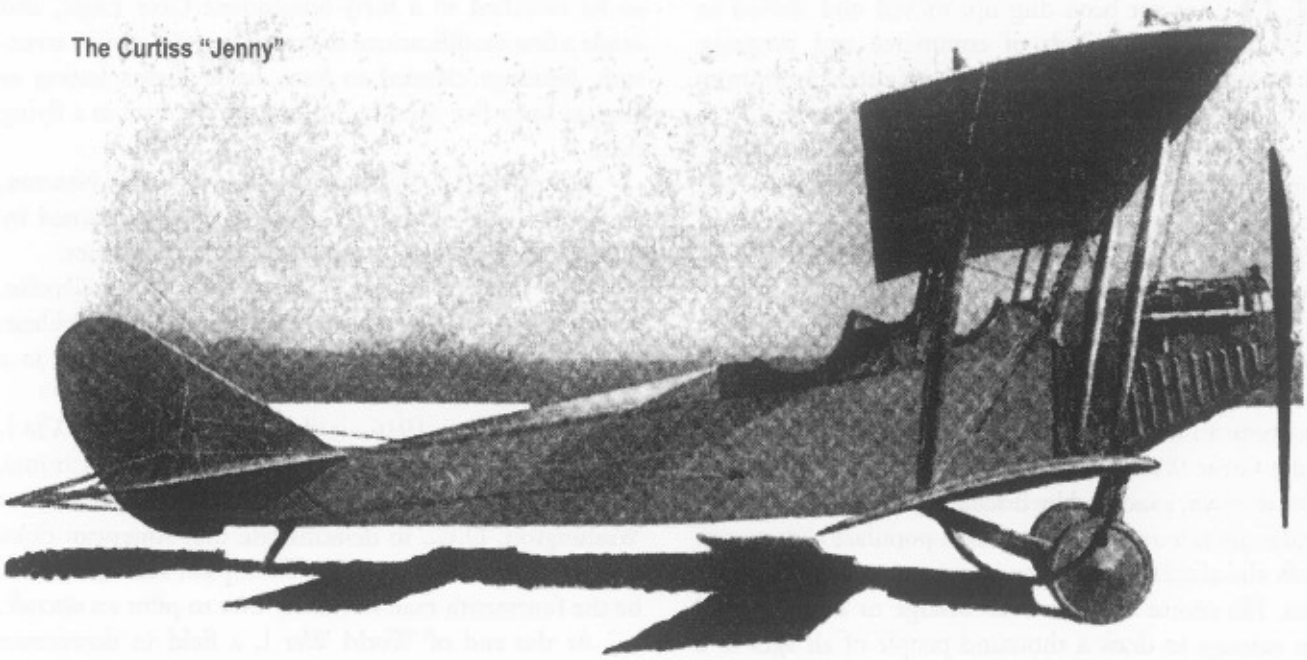
The Curtiss Jenny, the "Barnstormers," and the Air Mail Pilots

For three decades after the historic flight of the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk, the air belonged to the "Barnstormers," aerial vagabonds who purchased war surplus Curtiss "Jennies" for little more than a song, then bounced from cow pasture to cow pasture putting on exhibitions and selling rides for whatever price they could extract from the locals. Of all the early barnstormers, a young man named Charles Augustus Lindbergh was the most famous. There were no regulations in place concerning aviation, nor were flying licenses required.

Anyone with the courage to take up an airplane could do so.

The Barnstormers flew in open cockpit aircraft, behind engines that could malfunction at any time, usually when it was most inconvenient. Their aircraft had limited range, and ground facilities and navigational aids were sparse. Pilots looked for the names of towns carved out in pastures or painted on the roofs of barns and other large buildings, or they followed highways, rivers and railways. Then, once confident that they had reached their desired destination, the pilots would circle a likely landing place, then swoop low and slow in order to locate wet spots, ditches, rocks, tree stumps, and to chase off any livestock grazing in the area. They called it "dragging." If they did get lost, they would land anyway and ask a farmer for directions. They always drew a crowd. Later, the Barnstormers refined their performances with parachute jumps, wing-walks, and other dangerous stunts.

Any sort of flying in the early days was dangerous. The most noted of the professionals back then were the air-mail pilots. Thirty-one of the original forty were killed in crashes, many of them over the treacherous Allegheny mountains, an area most called the "Hell Stretch" and some called the "Death Stretch." Laurel Mountain and Chestnut Ridge, beginning just east of Latrobe, were especially feared.



The Curtiss "Jenny"

The Flying Fields

As aviation developed, it caught the attention of sundry people in the region, a number of whom had a clear understanding of the potential of aviation in the world of business and commerce. By the end of 1920, there were 271 airfields in the entire United States. Twenty-five were Army Air Corps fields, twenty-two were operated as mail service points and emergency fields (one of these was on the Saint Vincent College campus), and 224 were operated by individuals, companies, or municipalities.

In 1919, Bob Hancock helped form the Pittsburgh-based Kenny Aircraft Company with Roy Kenney and Paul Milnor. Pilots Joe Slater and Bob Dake flew the company's Jenny to Altoona with Pittsburgh newspapers and sold them to the Pennsylvania Railroad's westbound passengers. To augment the company's income, Slater and Dake barnstormed county fairs in this region. Their efforts were not enough, however, to keep the company from bankruptcy. Railroads were still the transportation power in the United States, and any sort of airline was hard-pressed to survive more than a year or two.

One person who was able to make a living was Casper P. Mayer, the owner of a brickyard, who set up a "flying field" in Bridgeville, Pennsylvania. Mayer obtained a Laird biplane, then hired a pilot to begin a flying school and passenger business. True to the times, and

in order to attract the public, Mayer held flying exhibitions on weekends. In addition to the usual aerobatics, G.H. "The Human Fly" Phillips, did headstands while his airplane did the loop the loop!

The 1920s brought more developments. An airfield opened in Ligonier in 1920. In 1921, the Irwin Aircraft Company, just to the east of Pittsburgh, started an air taxi, aerial advertising, and flying-school business on a small field. The dapper Neil McCray, who ran a flying school and passenger business in Erie, traveled the region selling used and new aircraft, and the Pennsylvania Aero Service stationed some Jennies at Latrobe, on the field that Charles Carroll established in partnership with Joe Maloy.

In June 1925, thirty-three-year-old McKeesport Hudson-Essex dealer, Clifford Ball, and D. Barr Peat, purchased a forty-acre tract just above Dravosburg, to use as an airport. Peat had been using the site since 1924 for an aerial sightseeing service, but had plans to develop a more permanent facility. With $35,000.00 in seed money, Ball and Peat built a hangar and machine shop on the field and named it the Pittsburgh-McKeesport Airport. According to form, they supplemented revenues with air shows, plane rides, and flying instruction. In November 1926, they renamed the field Bettis Field, after Lieutenant Cyrus Bettis who died in a plane crash near Bellefonte, Pennsylvania.

Also, in June 1925, the first municipal flying field was opened in the Fox Chapel area of Pittsburgh. The field was named Rodgers Field, after Calbraith P. Rodgers, a six-foot-four-inch aviator from southwestern Pennsylvania, and grandson of Oliver Perry, victor of the Battle of Lake Erie. In September 1911, Rodgers, piloting a Wright Model B, began what would become the first transcontinental flight, a promotional one for the Armour Company's soft drink "Vin Fiz." Rodgers christened the plane "Vin Fiz Flyer." Sixty-nine landings and fifteen crashes later (on November 5), Rodgers landed in Pasadena, California. He took the train home. Rodgers was killed two months later when he crashed into the Pacific Ocean after flying into a flock of seagulls.

Charles Bruce Carroll, Latrobe, and Longview Flying Field

In 1924 Charles Bruce Carroll established a flying field in Latrobe on a property that would evolve into the present day Arnold Palmer Regional Airport.

"Charlie" Carroll was a mechanic and automobile dealer from Scottdale, Pennsylvania. Like many of the aviation pioneers, Carroll's interest in flying led him to purchase an Army surplus Curtiss Jenny in 1919. Carroll half-flew, half-trucked the plane from New Jersey to Scottdale with Torrance Overholt, a veteran World War I pilot. The men organized the Scottdale Aerial Club soon after, and at five o'clock in the afternoon on September 2, 1920, Overholt dazzled the local citizens with a series of stunts.

Carroll's interest did not wane with a few hops into the air in his new plane. He had a vision. He knew aviation had a place in the rural areas of Westmoreland County. He began searching for a location among the rolling hills and pastures appropriate for a permanent aviation facility.

In 1920, the year of his solo flight, Charlie landed on a broad clover field situated on top of a hill on the Saint Vincent College Campus, now the site of the college's Rooney Hall. This clover field had been known as the Saint Vincent Aviation Field ever since two Army Pathfinders made an emergency landing there in 1919.

To the east of the Saint Vincent Aviation Field was the Kerr farm. According to maps of the day, the Kerr property bordered the Saint Vincent Archabbey farm. Before the historic Lincoln Highway was straightened in the 1930s and became US30, the road ran across the middle of the present-day airport, crossed the Manito Road (Route 981), and continued on through Youngstown, Pennsylvania. In 1924, with Joe Maloy as a partner, Carroll leased a cow pasture from the Kerrs exactly at the junction of these major highways. The word "airport" was not yet in use. Aircraft took off and landed on "aerodromes," "flying fields," "landing fields," or just plain "fields." Charlie called his leased field Longview Flying Field. It had easy access to Latrobe, Youngstown, Mt. Pleasant and numerous other towns. It was also close to the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Today, immediately after making a right onto 981 south, one can still see the overgrown area within the boundaries of the Arnold Palmer Regional Airport that marks the location of the old runway.

Carroll's "Hooligans"

With the help of his son Jim and joined by his friends, Scottdale pilots Carl Strickler and Raymond Elder, and Greensburger Lloyd Santmyer, Carroll built a hangar on the field. Within a couple years, Longview Flying Field would become home to Clyde Hauger of Donegal, Greensburgers Frank Fox, Dave Patterson, Lewis "Mickey" DeBurger, followed by Charles "Red" Gahagan, Russ Brinkley, Joe Crane, Dick Copeland, Clyde Goerring, Jack Frost and others. They would come

to be known as the "Longview Boys" or "Carroll's Hooligans," as one old neighbor still calls them.

The Longview Boys stunted at the air shows they sponsored on weekends, walked on wings, and parachuted out of airplanes. The wingwalkers and jumpers formed the "Tombstone Club," a gutsy bunch who had accepted the fact that their next barrel-roll, their next jump, their next wingwalk, could be their last. They chased trains, flew under bridges, and never abandoned a troubled plane once in the air. Three of the best of them–Carl Strickler, Mickey DeBurger, and Clyde Hauger–would die in crashes.

By 1926, Longview Flying Field had four aircraft, the fourth highest total in Pennsylvania. The field was also fourth highest in number of flights (1,483), third in number of passengers (1,408), and fifth in number of miles (25,000). All of this was achieved without a serious accident. Like most of the other owners of an FBOs(Fixed Base of Operation), Carroll supplemented his income through air exhibitions, mechanic services, and fuel sales.

According to those who knew him, Charlie was an excellent pilot and promoter. According to Lloyd Santmyer, he bought a carload of surplus Jennies and made them ready to fly. He cannibalized wrecks for parts. He sold cars and became an agent for various aircraft manufacturers, including Waco. In 1926, he would give Westmoreland County its first air race, and a major air show in each year of the remaining 1920s.

Aviation pioneer Ken Scholter says, "everybody knew Charlie." Earl Metzler, a friend of Carroll's from the early days says, "Charlie knew everybody." "Everybody" included Russell Brinkley, D. Barr Peat, Clifford Ball, Ken "Curley" Lovejoy, Merle Moltrup, Dewey Noyes, C.P. Mayer, and most of the other aerial pioneers of the day.

J.D. Hill Airport, the New Alexandria Airport, and the World's First College/Airport Aeronautics School

In June 1928, Longview Flying Field was renamed J.D. Hill Airport, after James DeWitt Hill, the "Bird Boy of Scottdale," a friend of Carroll's. Hill was an air mail pilot who was killed in an attempt to fly across the Atlantic to Rome.

The year 1928 also saw Saint Vincent College become involved in aviation. Carroll, Russ Brinkley, and Thomas E. Whiteman, the *Latrobe Bulletin* publisher, met with Archabbott Aurelius B. Stehle, OSB, president of Saint Vincent College, to establish the world's first college/airport curriculum in aviation. Stehle agreed, foreseeing what an asset such an enterprise would be for the college. He had the notion that aviation would give missionaries access to remote areas. He wanted Saint Vincent College to be the first to utilize this new machine to benefit Benedictine missions around the world, especially those in China.

After the meeting, Carroll applied to Rand-McNally to place the Saint Vincent Aviation Field on their aeromap as "Hill Airport at Saint Vincent College." Unfortunately, Carroll's association with Saint Vincent College ended after a few months because of personal financial exigency. Carroll traveled to Florida during the winters to work as a mechanic with Pan American Airways, and fly copilot with for his friend, Ed Musick.

In 1929, Saint Vincent College carried on without Carroll and soon acquired its own plane, a New Standard biplane designed by Charles Day that they christened *The Spirit of Saint Vincent*. The student body was introduced to their new mascot in dramatic fashion one fall afternoon when the plane cruised overhead before a football game, the pilot dropping the game ball onto the field. The flight school was moved to the newly opened Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport, where Lieutenant Jack Bessey and Jacob Lythe were the flight instructors. Unfortunately, the Great Depression intervened and the program closed in 1930.

Financial exigency became the least of Carroll's problems in 1930. In that year, Charlie nearly lost the lease on the Kerr property. The Kerrs made plans to either sell the property that housed the J.D. Hill Airport or allow it to revert to pasture land. The situation forced Carroll to look for a site in a good location. He and Lloyd Santmyer found one not far away on Route 22 (William Penn Highway) in New Alexandria, on property owned by Howard Cox and John Giffen.

Lloyd Santmyer describes what took place:

> It looked like the airport would revert back to being a farm. Right about that time, the William Penn Highway was getting more and more popular, and it looked like it was maybe going to be the main highway, instead of the Lincoln Highway. So Charlie and I decided that maybe we ought to go over there and find a field, which we did. We located the field there on the Griffin farm, east of New Alex, a couple miles on the right-hand side. The building is still there. It adjoined another farm, owned by the Cox family. So Charlie made a deal with the two families to take down a fence and make a strip. Actually, we made an X-shaped field there. Charlie had access to one of the Meadow Mill buildings down in Scottdale, where a steel factory closed down and left a couple steel buildings. Charlie bought one of these buildings and got Joe Reedy and

his brother, good metal workers, to go tear the building down and bring it to New Alex for a hangar. They built a refreshment stand there. Frank Fox managed the airport for a couple years.

Security at Last

For a couple of years Carroll and Lloyd worked both the New Alex and Hill Airports, but two events prompted him to lobby Latrobe Boro to transform Hill Airport into a municipal entity.

The first event occurred in the last week of April 1931, when the *Latrobe Bulletin* prematurely reported that the Howard Gasoline and Oil Company of Jeannette, Pennsylvania, had purchased the seventy-five acre J.D. Hill Airport site. The company's plans were to improve the property in anticipation of the straightening of the Lincoln Highway and its re-routing to the north of the airport. Carroll approached the Borough of Latrobe, doubly convinced of the importance of the Hill Airport's location to its success and benefit to the community.

Carroll met with Cyrus McHenry, secretary of the Chamber of Commerce and officials of the Howard Gasoline and Oil Company, to work out a suitable plan. Carroll pointed out that the Howard company's plan to remove a hump from the field would make it possible to expand the runway from 1,500 feet to 2,500 feet. For some unknown reason, the sale never took place. No record of it exists in borough or county records, and the company, still in existence, has purged all of its older records. At any rate, Carroll's visit to the Chamber of Commerce certainly must have planted a seed in the right places.

The second event occurred when Franklin Delano Roosevelt established the Works Progress Administration. The WPA would issue no funds for the development of any airport not under the auspices of a municipality. The borough, given the impetus of Works Progress Administration funds, purchased the airport site and much of the remaining Kerr property for the nominal sum of one dollar, with the proviso that it could buy the property fifteen years hence for an agreed upon sum of $22,500. J.D. Hill Airport was renamed Latrobe Airport on November 30, 1935. Two runways were put in and blacktopped. The main strip was 2,200 feet long and the secondary 1,400 feet. Today, these would not even qualify for taxi strips, but in the 1930s they were more than adequate for the type of aircraft using the airport.

The relationship between Carroll and Saint Vincent College resumed in 1939 with the Civilian Pilot Training Program. Furthermore, the United States entry into World War II a few years later transformed pilot training at the college into a military program. Air Cadets took ground school at Saint Vincent College and flight training at the Latrobe Airport.

All American Aviation and the World's First Air Mail Pick-up

In the mid-1930s, a few miles west of Latrobe on Route 30 in Irwin, Pennsylvania, another visionary of aviation had his own dreams. Dr. Lytle Adams, a dentist and aviation enthusiast, had been experimenting with a nonstop, airmail pick-up system in the 1920s, though some say earlier. Adams hoped that his system would provide airmail and express service to rural communities isolated from main roads and railroad lines. Dr. Adams' method was well-known.

On May 12, 1939, the world's first scheduled airmail pick-up by All American Aviation, using Adams' system, occurred at Carroll's Latrobe Airport. Lloyd Santmyer, Clyde Hauger, Raymond Elder and Dave Patterson, four of the Longview Boys, established solid reputations as pilots for AAA. The nonstop airmail deliveries would continue until 1949 when All-American Aviation converted to passenger service. Eventually, All-American Aviation would develop into All American Airways, then into Allegheny Airlines, and finally into US Air, an airline that is today a household word: US Airways.

Airports at Greensburg, Pennsylvania

The Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport was dedicated on September 20-21, 1929. At the time, it was Pennsylvania's largest airport, but it would have a short, sometimes exciting, but, at length, an undistinguished history. Though the airport was located in Greensburg, it was altogether a Pittsburgh project, inspired and developed by the Aeronautics Committee of the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce and the Main Aeronautics Company.

In June 1928, in response to overtures from the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, H. Raymond Mason, secretary of the Greensburg Chamber, sent to Pittsburgh a list of five sites in the Greensburg area that would be suitable for an airport. These sites were:

1. The McNary/John Robertshaw farm bounded by the Hannastown and New Alexandria roads (Rts. 819 and 119), 2.7 miles from Greensburg and consisting of 233 acres.

2. The Little Farm, consisting of 170 acres, located at the Radebaugh station on the Pennsylvania Railroad, three miles from Greensburg and close to the Jeannette Road.

3. The John C. Andrew property, consisting of fifty-two acres, located five miles from Greensburg on the Mt. Pleasant Road, near United, Pennsylvania.

4. The Keaggy property, consisting of seventy acres, located two miles from Greensburg on the West Newton Road.

5. The Youngwood Land Company property, four miles from Greensburg, and paralleling the Southwest Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad

The principals involved visited the sites. For a time the McNary property was favored, and a large air meet took place there on June 26, 1928. Eventually, Frank Wilbur Main of Main Aeronautics purchased a site at Dry Ridge, just southeast of Greensburg, and announced on May 29, 1929, that he would construct a $2 million airport there. The Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport had an auspicious beginning; not only did it host commercial, express, airmail, and private flights, but also the Main School of Aviation.

For many years, the Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport was managed by Norman ("Happy") O'Bryan. In the last few years of its existence, it was managed by Earl Metzler.

Increasing costs, the development of airports closer to Pittsburgh, the termination of airmail and airmail pick-up services, more efficient and aggressive planning at the Latrobe Airport through the decades of the 1930s and 1940s, reduced the Pittsburgh-Greensburg airport to use by weekend pleasure-flyers.

In early 1954, a Pittsburgh real estate agency, C.A. West, purchased the 700-acre Pittsburgh-Greensburg airport after the area was rejected as a home for a Nike missile battery. West then built a residential complex there that he called West Point. It would be surprising if more than a few of today's West Point residents know that their homes had been built atop the airport's runways.

Lloyd Santmyer and Clyde Hauger opened a second Greensburg airport in 1947 in the community of Carbon. Today, Greensburg Central Catholic High School occupies the site. Though opened with much hope for the future, the airport closed within a few years.

This was all happening at a time when local government officials believed that airports located close to small towns could be financially supportive to the community. This was certainly true for many communities, but many felt more could be done by converting one of those airports into a facility that would service an entire county or region. Such thinking was especially evident at Latrobe.

The Tri-City Municipal Authority

In the late 1940s, interest in pioneering a county airport brought together several important figures in Westmoreland County.

On November 30, 1950, Latrobe Borough purchased the Kerr property for $22,500.00, the amount agreed upon by the borough and the Kerr family in 1935.

Allan Scaife, Richard Mellon, and Jim Underwood, an industrialist from the Latrobe area, wanted the airport at Latrobe to become a facility serving all of Westmoreland County. There had been some interest in expanding the airport at New Kensington into a county facility, but the commissioners gave their approval to Jim Underwood's proposal in January of 1951.

Once this was done, Underwood, Scaife and Bruno Ferrari formed a seven-member airport authority called the Tri-City Municipal Authority encompassing Latrobe, Greensburg and Jeannette. In order to ensure a quorum, the group made a gentleman's agreement that members of the authority would come from the Greensburg, Latrobe and Ligonier areas. Eventually, Carroll, who had spent so many years building his airport, would get left out of this new era of expansion.

The authority knew that it needed to survey and purchase more land. Most state and federal money for aviation in Pennsylvania went to either Pittsburgh or Philadelphia. Jim Underwood and his companions in the airport authority had to become "scroungers." Much to the credit of authority soliciter Gene MacDonald's philosophy to purchase land at what it would be worth ten or fifteen years hence rather than at present value, the authority was able to avoid a considerable amount of litigation. Under the Tri-City Municipall Authority, the construction of the runway began to a specification of 3,600 feet. The length turned out to be too short. The authority added an additional 800 feet for an overrun to be used in case of emergency or overshooting by pilots.

Bruno Ferrari, Latrobe Construction, and Expansion

The construction and later expansion of the runways became a reality mainly through the auspices of one man, Bruno Ferrari. The Latrobe Airport was fortunate to have him. As many say, Ferrari was the godfather of today's airport. Ferrari started a construction business in 1928 in West Virginia called B. Ferrari, but he later moved it to the Latrobe area. In 1940 his company became Latrobe Construction. Latrobe Construction owned and operated a 2,700 acre bluestone quarry near Latrobe. The output of this quarry was immense. The quarry produced

one-and-a-half-million tons of stone a year. Other enterprises of Ferrari's were Latrobe Road Construction and Latrobe Aviation, Inc.

On October 30, 1958, the Westmoreland-Latrobe airport officially opened to the public with Ferrari and Latrobe Aviation as manager. Ferrari was selected because of proved financial responsibility, outstanding reputation in road construction and willingness to take on most of the operating expenses of the airport. Ferrari accepted a salary of zero dollars a year and the perk of having a place to park his airplane.

Ferrari made numerous improvements during his tenure. He renovated buildings, constructed new hangers, established a service and repair facility, installed an approach landing system, and built the framework for a state-of-the-art portable control tower, really a mobile home equipped with a communications center.

Ferrari's Latrobe Construction also made all the improvements and expansions to the runways over the years. Ferrari always managed to make the lowest bid, happy just to break even. When the airport went to 5,500 feet in 1968, Ferrari's company did the work. In 1985, when the runway was expanded to 7,000 feet and reinforced to accommodate jets the size of a 727, Ferrari again did the work. Not only was it fiscally convenient for the future development of the airport to have Bruno Ferrari manage it, he was a man who could get things done, and who had an interest in improving the operation of the Latrobe Airport.

The year 1978 was a milestone year in aviation. It was the 75th Anniversary of the Wright brothers first powered-airplane flight. Celebrations of the historic event were on the agendas of many aviation clubs and airports around the country. In that year, Latrobe Airport officially became the Westmoreland County Airport. Also in 1978 Saint Vincent College renewed its relationship with the airport by offering ground-school courses in cooperation with Vee Neal Aviation.

Recent Developments

From 1958, the date of the opening of the Latrobe-Westmoreland Airport, to the year 2000, the airport authority received $17,782,333 million in federal funds. In the late 1990s, the authority approved $1.75 million bond issue, thus completing funding for a $4.7 million project that doubled the size of the existing terminal.

In 2001, U.S. Representative John Murtha announced that the Arnold Palmer Regional Airport was awarded $1 million a year for five years to smooth plans to extend its primary runway by 1,500 feet.

Rostraver Airport

In November 1963, the Rostraver Township Board of Commissioners became keenly aware of the declining economic conditions in Pennsylvania's Monongahela Valley. Because of the dispersal or closing of mills, factories, mines and businesses, many once bustling communities fell into decline. Seeking a means to stimulate growth in the area, the commissioners requested that the Federal Aviation Administration investigate possible sites for the development of an airport, one that would provide suitable facilities for present and projected needs. The FAA had long recognized the need for an aviation facility in the valley, and had included a proposed airport in its National Airport Plan beginning in 1955.

The FAA completed its study in February 1964, recommending the Rostraver site over two others because of its proximity to the area to be served, its potential for expansion, its economy of construction, and its operational safety. Initially, the site was a privately owned field known as the J.S. Thompson Field with the FAA designation, Monongahela. The field had two grass landing strips, one running NE/SW for 1,750 feet, and the other running E/W for 1,600 feet.

Based on FAA recommendations, the Rostraver Township Commissioners solicited support from area municipalities and Westmoreland County officials. The county extended a grant of $75,000.00 over a three-year period. The local municipalities, however, though expressing support for the project, were unable to provide financial support.

Rostraver Township Airport Authority

In May 1965, the commissioners created the Rostraver Township Airport Authority for purposes of proceeding with the development of an airport at the Thompson field. The Authority included the following five members: Peter Buck, Chairman; J. Bachman Brown, Vice Chairman; Ignatius Mattes, Secretary; Michael Sweeney, Treasurer; John Porter, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer. Andrew Solan served as Deputy Secretary of the Authority.

The Authority accomplished three major phases of construction between 1965-1974. These included Project 01 (1965-1967) land acquisition, construction of a 3,200-x seventy-five- foot Runway 7-25, an apron and taxiway, an access road, and field lighting and rotating beacon; Project 02 (1967-1969) an 800-foot extension of Runway 7-25 to the west, turnaround taxiways, and land acquisition for the approach to Runway 7; Project 03

(1971-1974) a parallel taxiway to runway 7-25, and associated lighting and marking.

In addition, the Authority carried on interim work that included the construction of a hangar and administration building, fuel facilities, and utility lines. Private individuals also constructed hangars for their use on land leased by the Authority.

The Westmoreland County Airport Authority and management officially assumed operation of Rostraver Airport on February 13, 1986, aided by a $1.3 million grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

In 1987, a $650,000.00 Federal Airport Improvement grant made it possible to rehabilitate the runway, taxiways, and aircraft parking apron. Since that time, more than $6 million in Federal and State grants have transformed Rostraver Airport into the first-class general aviation airport that exists today. A recent study by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania calculated the economic impact of the Rostraver Airport to the communities surrounding the airport at nearly $8 million annually.

A Dream That Became Reality

The Arnold Palmer Regional Airport could not have come into being as the modern facility it is without the time and effort of many. Bruno Ferrari, Jim Underwood, Alan Scaife, Gene McDonald, Arnold Palmer, Jim Cavalier, Bob Cheffins, today's airport administrators, members of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority, and many others too numerous to mention were and are vital to the airport's continued success.

At some point along the way, Westmoreland County would have developed a regional airport in one of its townships. That it did so in Latrobe was because a thirty-four-year-old Scottdale aviation visionary leased a farm property at the junction of two major roads in Unity Township.

Charlie Carroll started his Longview Flying Field on a dream that turned into a landmark to the thousands who live in Western Pennsylvania. He was one of those pioneers who always looked up in expectation of the next flight and what new discoveries could be made in the sky.

Westmoreland County Airport Authority Members and Terms of Office

1951-2001

James Underwood (1951-1976)
Bruno Ferrari (1951-1957)
Francis J. Harvey (1951-1975)
Paul J. Abraham (1951-1975)
John W. Stader (1951-1970)
Charles Dobernik (1951-1970)
Alan M. Scaife (1951-1959)
Victor B. Stader, Jr. (1957-1974)
Leonard Bughman (1959-1977)
B. Patrick Costello (1965-1982)
Arnold D. Palmer (1970-1984; 1996-Present)
Charles A. Higgins (1970-1979)
Thomas A. Whiteman (1970-1979; 1982-1988)
George M. Blair (1970-1974)
Dean P. Nieman (1974-1975)
Richard B. Guskiewicz (1976-1984)
Michael Watson (1976-1987)
Donald C. Madl (1977-1991)
Earl F. Rectanus (1978-1986)
John H. Dent (1979-1984)
P. Benjamin Johnston (1980-1989)
Gerald A. Ficco (1985-1986)
Donald J. Rossi (1985-Present)
Dennis Manown (1985-1999)
Dorothy Zello (1987-Present)
Francis Barch (1986-1989)
Michael Salvatore (1988-1993)
C. Philip Weigel (1988-1995)
John R. Finfrock (1989-Present)
Mike Smith (1990-1995)
Philip Morrow (1992-Present)
Mark Gera (1992-2000)
Janice Smarto (1994-Present)
Oland Canterna (1996-Present)
J. Clifford Naugle (2000-Present)
Anthony Ferrante (2001-Present)

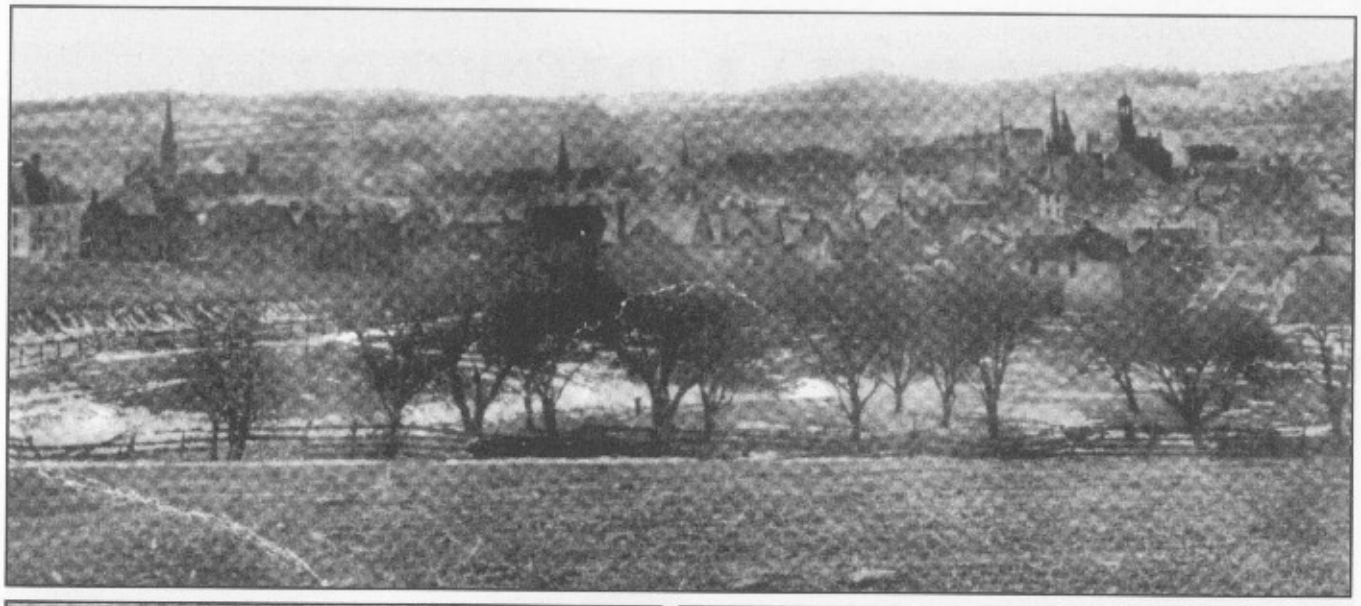
Airport Management

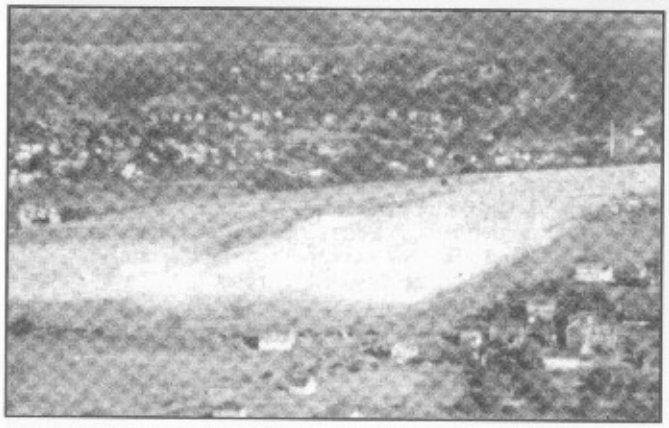
1924-2001

Charles B. "Charlie" Carroll (1924-1959)
Bruno Ferrari/Latrobe Aviation, Inc. (1959-1972)
James Cavalier (1968-1976)
Robert H. Cheffins (1976-1985)
Gene Lakin (1985-Present)
Gabe Monzo (1997-Present)

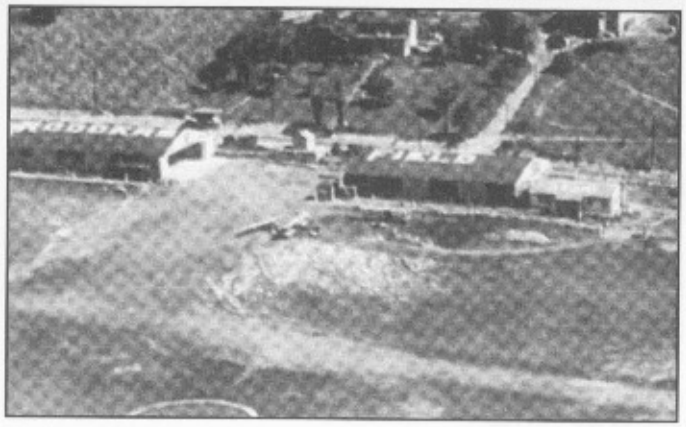
A SPECIAL PICTORIAL

ABOVE: The 1919 landing field in downtown Latrobe, now the 800 block of Weldon, Spring, Chestnut, Walnut, Fairmont, and St. Clair Streets, taken from the front yard of M.W. Saxman's residence on East Main Street. The field is where Lieutenant Grow sold rides in his Curtiss Jenny for three dollars per person. BELOW: The same general vicinity in 1900, taken from Fairmont Street.
(Courtesy of the Latrobe Historical Society).





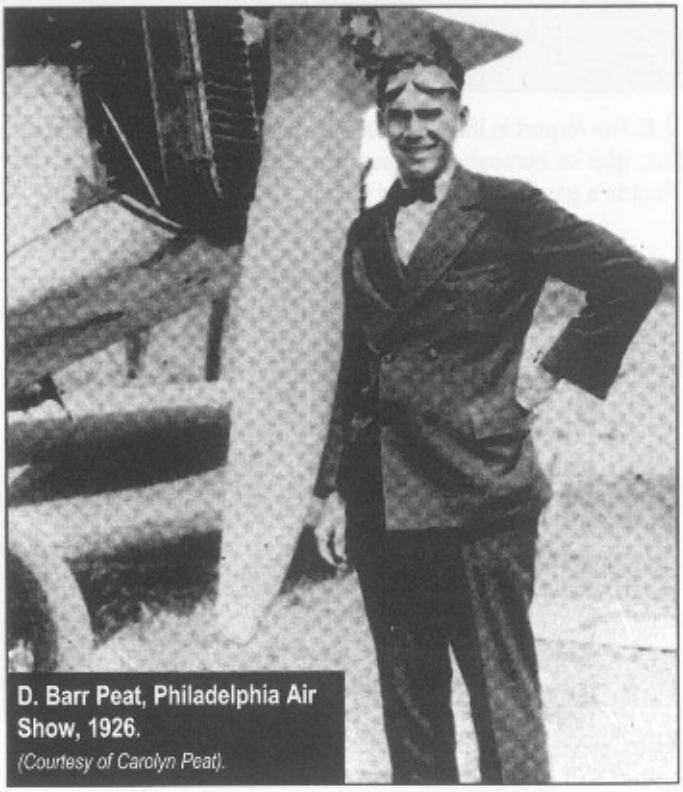
Lloyd Santmyer and Clyde Hauger's Greensburg City Airport at Carbon, 1947 *(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).*



Rodgers Field, Aspinwall, PA. Pittsburgh's first municipal airport.
(Courtesy of Ken Scholter).

C.P. Mayer at Mayer Field Bridgeville, Pennsylvania ca. 1922. *(Courtesy of Ken Scholter).*

Clifford Ball. *(Courtesy of Ken Scholter).*

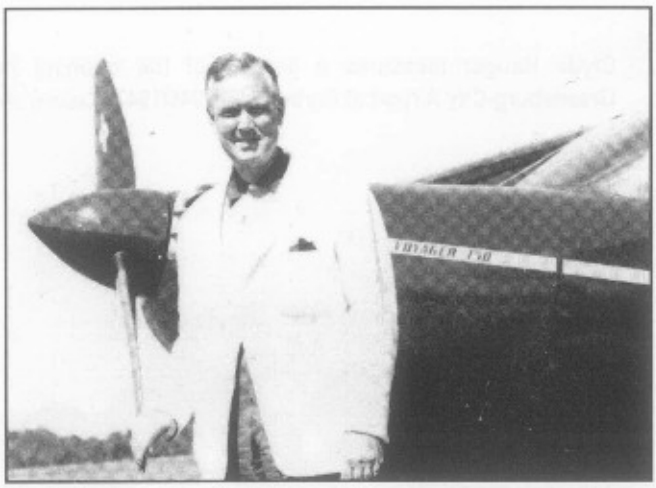


D. Barr Peat, Philadelphia Air Show, 1926.
(Courtesy of Carolyn Peat).

J. D. Hill Airport in the early 1930s just after the re-routing and straightening of US Route 30 (Lincoln Highway). The original Mission Inn, with its horseshoe-shaped dance and concert area, is in the foreground. At the east side of the junction of Rts. 30 and 981 Peretto's gas station. The old Lincoln Highway cuts across the airport property at the top of the photo. *(Courtesy of Don Carroll).*

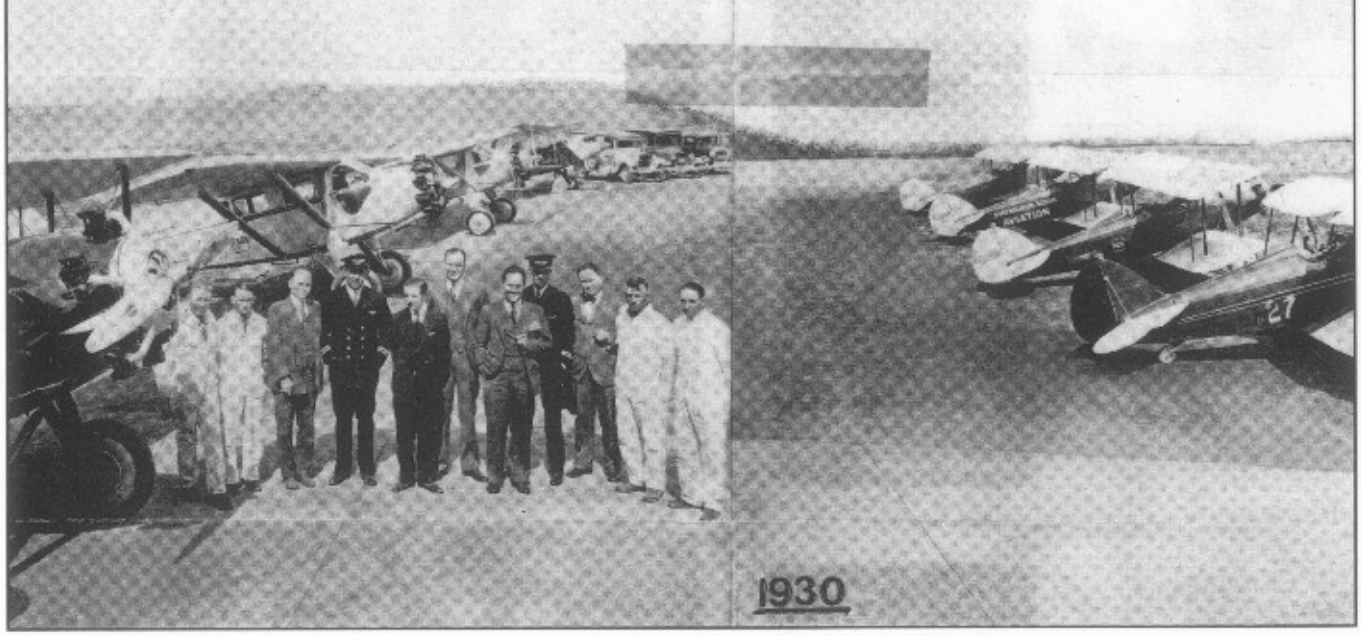
A DeHavilland DH-4 at Rodgers Field. *(Courtesy of Frank Fox).*

RIGHT: Alan Scaife in the 1940s at Latrobe Airport with his Stinson Voyager. While at Yale, Scaife was a classmate of Juan Trippe. In 1951, Scaife served on the Pennsylvania Aeronautical Commission under Governor Fine together with John Henry Leh, John "Reds" MacFarlane, Herbert Spencer, Ralph C. Hutchinson, Andrew J. Sordoni. Also a member of the Tri-City Municipal Authority in the early 1950s, he was instrumental in the establishment of the Westmoreland-Latrobe Airport. *Courtesy of Kenneth Scholter).*



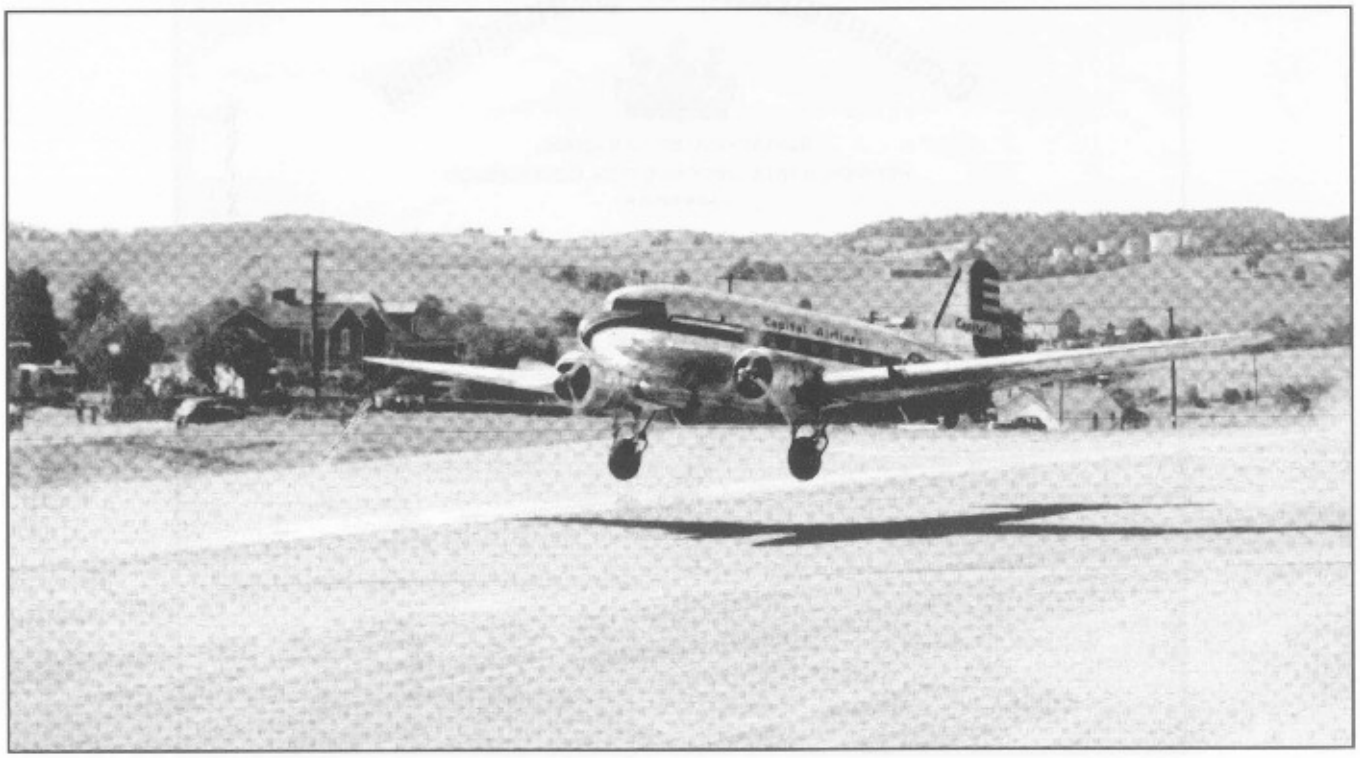
LEFT: Lieutenant Cyrus Bettis, U.S. Army Air Corps, after whom Bettis Field (Pittsburgh-Mckeesport Airport) was named. Bettis won the Pulitzer Trophy in 1925 with a world record flying speed of 249.342 miles per hour. He participated in the opening ceremonies for Pittsburgh-Mckeesport Airport in June 1925. On August 12, 1926, Bettis was leading a formation of three Army planes from Philadelphia to Michigan when they encountered poor weather near Bellefonte, PA. Lost in the fog, Bettis hit a treetop and crashed in the Allegheny Mountains. After regaining consciousness, he waited for search planes flying overhead to find him, but they failed to do so because of the dense woods. The injured Bettis crawled toward the sound of automobiles, but did not reach the road until the next morning. He finally made it to the road where he was rescued. He died from complications on September 1, 1926. *(Courtesy of Kenneth Scholter).*

Staff and Instructors, Main School of Aviation, Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport, 1930 *(Courtesy of Frank Fox).*



Clyde Hauger measures a portion of the quonset hut for the Greensburg-City Airport at Carbon, ca. 1946/1947. *(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).*

Lloyd Santmyer hands flowers to Westmoreland County Commissioner Mrs. Jean Whited on the day Greensburg City Airport opened in 1947. *(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).*



Captain Frank Fox makes the first landing at Greenburg City Airport at Carbon in a Capital Airlines DC3, September 28, 1947. Today's Greensburg Central Catholic High School is built on the site. *(Photo by Howard Smeltzer. Courtesy of Frank Fox).*

A group of Greensburgers at the opening of the Greensburg City Airport at Carbon. Frank Fox stands seventh from right. He and First Officer William Richey (center), also of Greensburg, took the group for a ride in the Capital Airlines DC-3. The plane still bears the Pennsylvania-Central Airlines monogram. *(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).*

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
PENNSYLVANIA AERONAUTICS COMMISSION
HARRISBURG

AIRPORT LICENSE

NO. 82

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT ON APPLICATION OF WESTMORELAND AIRCRAFT SALES
GREENSBURG CITY AIRPORT
LOCATED AT GREENSBURG, WESTMORELAND COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
HAS BEEN FOUND ADEQUATE AND PROPERLY QUALIFIED AND SAFE FOR PRIVATE OPERATIONS
AND IS HEREBY LICENSED TO OPERATE AS
A PRIVATE AIRPORT

THIS LICENSE IS ISSUED SUBJECT TO COMPLIANCE WITH THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE COMMISSION, THE PROVISIONS OF WHICH ARE MADE A PART HEREOF AS THOUGH WRITTEN HEREIN, AND WILL REMAIN IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT FROM THIS DATE AND WILL BE RENEWED ANNUALLY UNLESS REVOKED FOR CAUSE.

INSPECTOR'S RENEWAL	DATE
Robert E. Zook	1-1-47

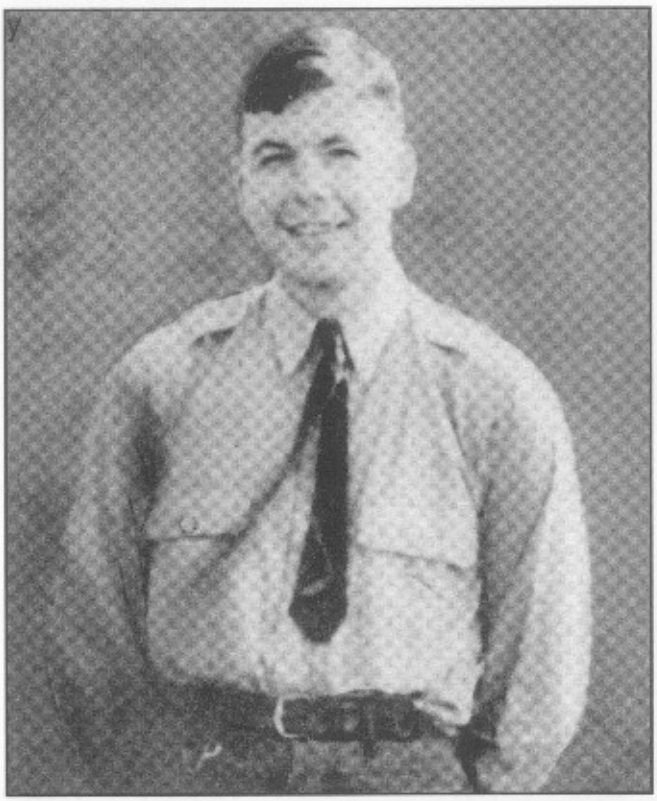
PENNSYLVANIA AERONAUTICS COMMISSION

BY Wm L Anderson
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NON-TRANSFERABLE

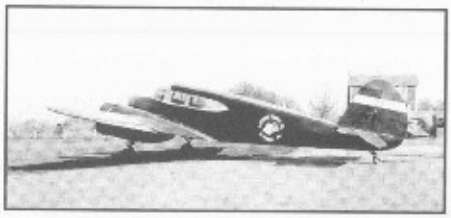
THIS LICENSE MUST BE CONSPICUOUSLY DISPLAYED AT THE ABOVE LOCATION

Clyde Hauger and Lloyd Santmyer's 1947 PCA license for the Greensburg City Airport, the year the airport opened.
(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).



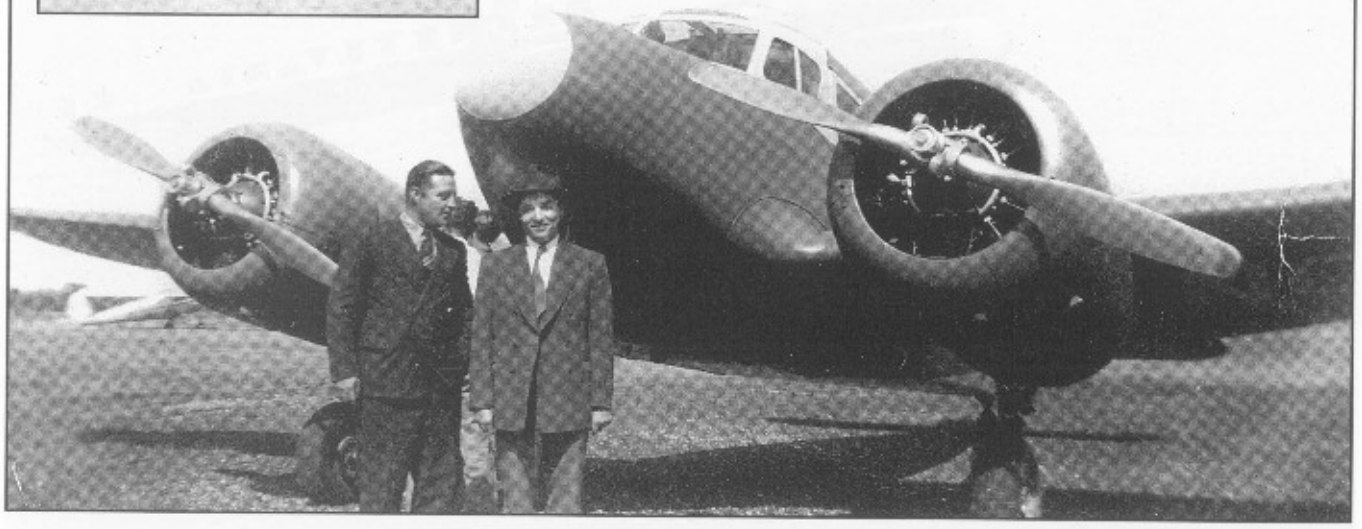
ABOVE: On the left is Greensburg's Dick Coulter, with his brother Jack, founder of Central Airlines, which merged with Cliff Ball's Pennsylvania Airlines in 1936 to become Pennsylvania-Central Airlines. In 1948 PCA changed its name to Capital Airlines. In 1960 the airline was taken over by United Airlines. Coulter died with a student pilot in a crash at Bettis Field when the controls on his Piper aircraft failed. Student pilots accidentally bent the framework on the rudder while moving the plane. They straightened the bent frame instead of reporting the damage, according to Lloyd Santmeyer, who was an instructor at Bettis Field at the time. On the right is Helen Richey of McKeesport, Pennsylvania. She was hired by Coulter in 1934. Richey became the first woman to fly for a regularly scheduled airline, and the first woman sworn in as a pilot flying the U.S. mail. As a woman, she faced discrimination from many male pilots and was denied membership in the Airline Pilots Union. She resigned in October 1935. BELOW: A PCA Douglas aircraft at the Latrobe Airport. *(Courtesy of the Latrobe Historical Society).*

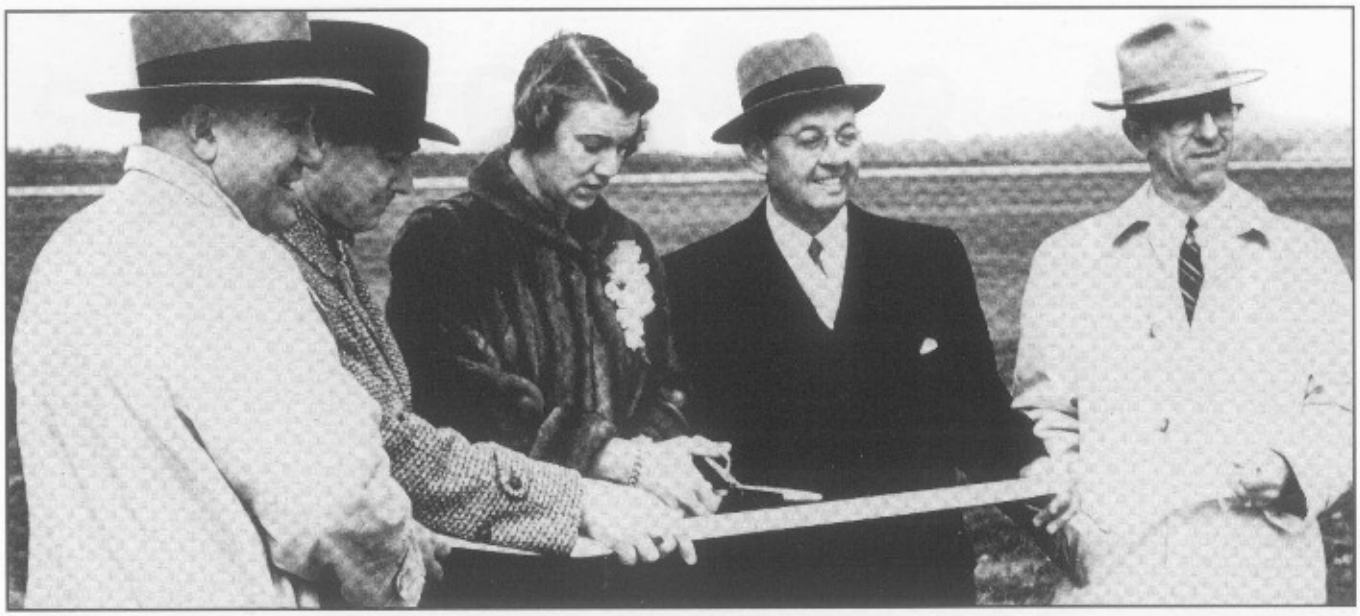
Bruno Ferrari in his office at Latrobe Airport, 1947. *(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).*



BELOW: Clyde Hauger, left, with Bruno Ferrari and his all-wood Cessna UC-78, the "Bamboo Bomb." The Latrobe Construction Company plane was housed at the Latrobe Airport in 1947. *(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).*

INSERT: The same plane in profile. *(Courtesy of Bob Downs).*



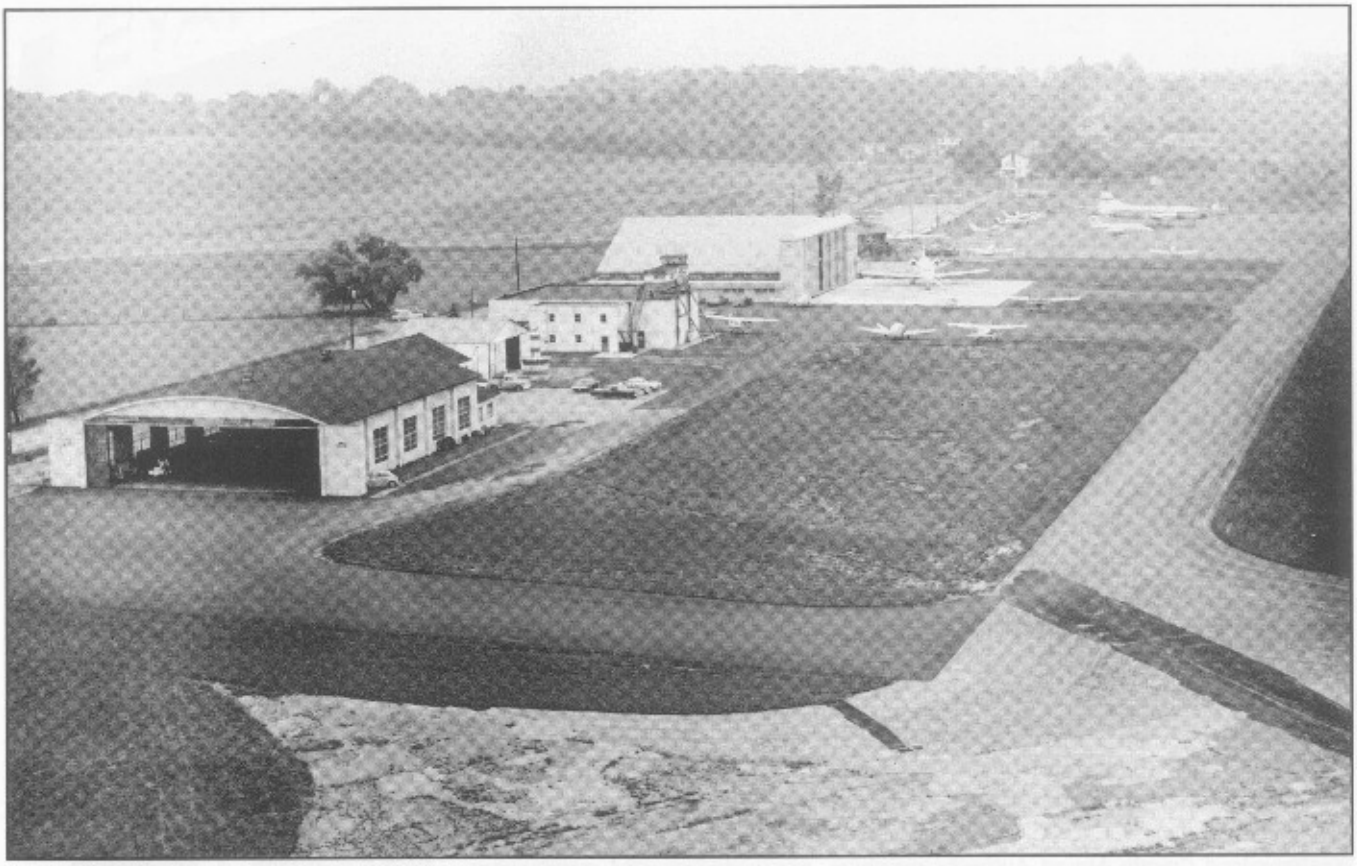


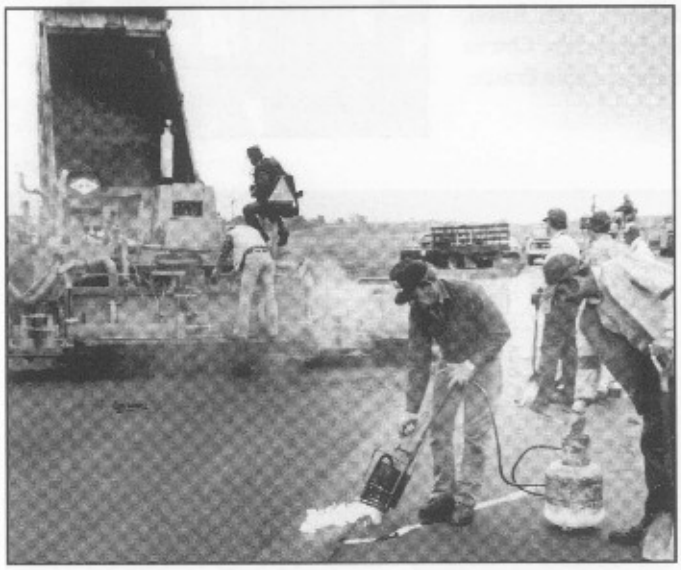
Official opening of the Westmoreland-Latrobe Airport, October 30, 1958. LEFT TO RIGHT: E.B. Elias, Mayor of Jeannette; Victor B. Stader, Burgess of Latrobe; Mrs. Cordelia Scaife May; James M. Underwood, Tri-City Authority Chairman; Homer Ruffner, Mayor of Greensburg. *(Courtesy of Latrobe Historical Society).*

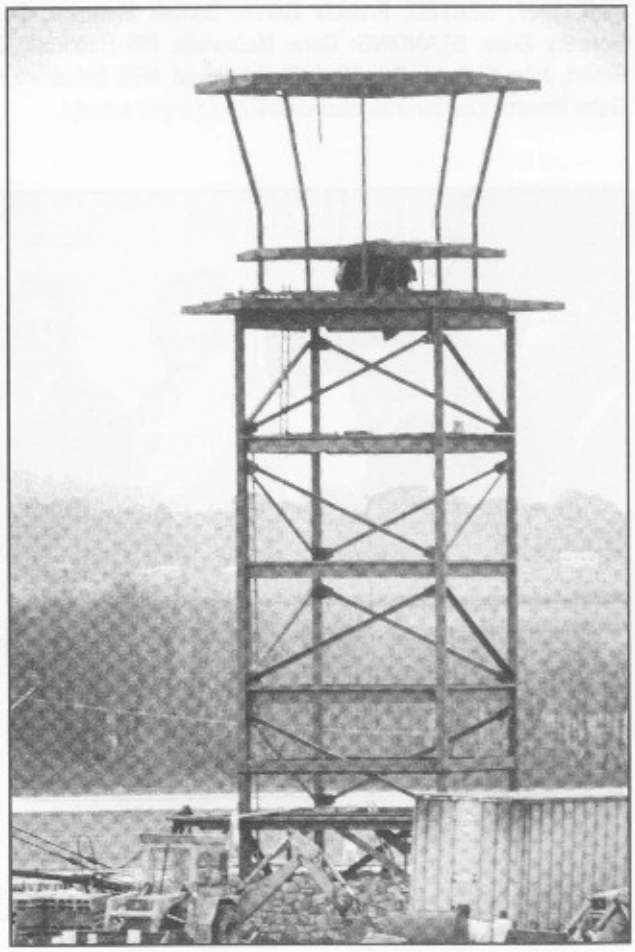
1970s. Members of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority pose after approving the airport's terminal bond issue. SEATED: United States Congressman John Dent. STANDING LEFT TO RIGHT: Ed McMillan, Richard Guskiewicz, Gene McDonald, Benjamin Johnston, Earl F. Rectanus, Mike Watson. *(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority).*

Westmoreland County Commissioners and members of the Airport Authority participate in the groundbreaking ceremony for the new terminal building which was dedicated on November 14, 1972. FRONT ROW (left to right); James Kelley, Bernard Scherer, Leonard Bughman, John Le Carte, Francis Harvey. BACK ROW (left to right); James Underwood, Tom Whiteman, Arnold Palmer, Robert Lightcap, Gene McDonald, Victor Stader, B. Patrick Costello, John Ridilla. *(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority).*

County commissioners, airport officials, and government officials at the ceremony opening the runway extension, May 1986. LEFT Bruno Ferrari with his dog, "Pepe," stands next to U.S. Representative John Murtha, who is ready to cut the ribbon. *(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority).*







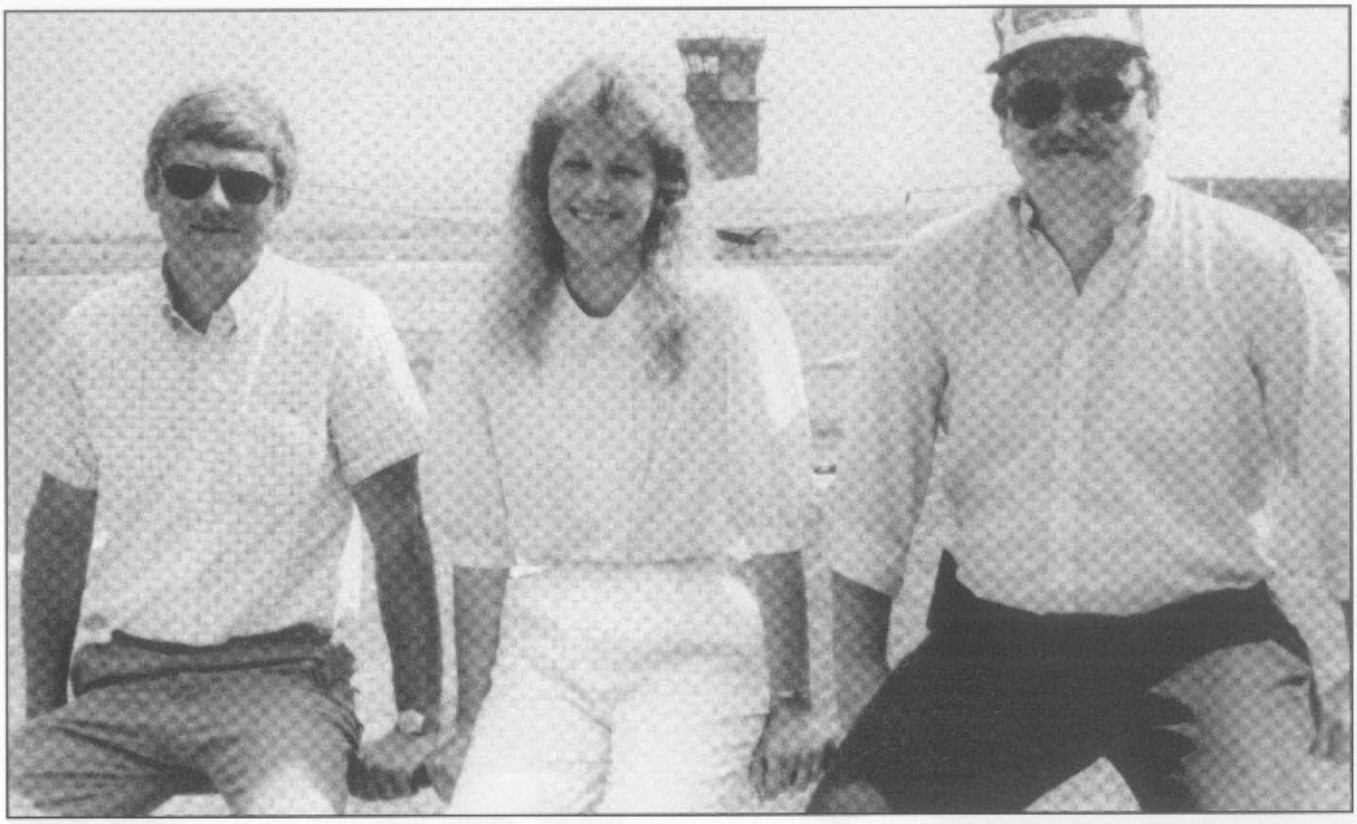
TOP: Westmoreland County Airport, ca. 1972, showing the North Hangar which dates from the WPA days in the mid-1930s. *(Courtesy of the* Latrobe Bulletin*).*

ABOVE: Construction crews at work, ca. 1970s. *(Courtesy of the* Latrobe Bulletin*).*

RIGHT: Early 1980s. construction of what will become the John Dent Tower.

Bruno Ferrari (insert) poses with his ever-present Chihuahua in front of his early mark Lear Jet. *(Courtesy of Bruno Ferrari).*

Westmoreland County Airport Authority members, administrators, and maintenance staff, 1987. SEATED: Francis Barch, Dennis Manown, Ben Johnston, Don Rossi, Dorothy Zello. STANDING: Gene McDonald, Bill Hallowell, Charlie Stockdale, Charlie Green, John Finfrock, Don Madl, Philip Weigel, Mike Salvatore, Gene Lakin, Linda Brasile, Gabe Monzo. *(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority).*



Today's Arnold Palmer Regional Airport front office trio at the 1989 air show. LEFT TO RIGHT: Executive Director Gene Lakin; Administrative Assistant Linda Brasile; Airport Manager Gabe Monzo. *(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority).*

Township, county, state and airport officials pose for a photo at the Ground breaking ceremony for the Rostraver Airport sewage project, December 9, 1995. LEFT TO RIGHT: Andy Temoshenka, Phil Morrow, Dennis Manown, Frank Irey, Gene McDonald, Dorothy Zello, Richard Vidmer, Gene Porterfield, Mike Smith, Herman Mihalich, Ted Simon, Nick Lorenzo, Jack Hazelbaker, Carl Russell, Regis Serinko, Austin Cratty. *(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Airport Authorityy).*

Westmoreland County Airport Authority, 2001. SEATED LEFT TO RIGHT: Anthony Ferrante, Arnold Palmer, John Finfrock. STANDING LEFT TO RIGHT: J. Clifford Naugle, Oland Canterna, Janice Smarto, Phil Morrow, Dorothy Zello, Donald Rossi. *(Courtesy of Dorthy Zello).*

Arnold Palmer Regional Airport maintenance staff, 2001. LEFT TO RIGHT: Mike Umbaugh, Terry Stuck, Moe Haas, Sean Phillips, Tom Stynchula. *(Courtesy of Dorothy Zello).*

Arnold Palmer Regional Airport control tower staff, 2001. SEATED (left to right); Bob Novitsky, Paul Salonick, Charlie Green. STANDING (left to right); Paul Johns, Greg Retallick, Rich Fleischer. *(Courtesy of Dorothy Zello).*

Don Rechichar (far left) and Jim Gavatorta (far right) maintenance staff at Westmoreland County's Rostraver Airport pose with Gene Lakin and Gabe Monzo. *(Courtesy of Dorothy Zello).*

A Beginning in Chance and Hospitality

It was five o'clock in the afternoon. The military Curtiss Jenny raced against the storm. A threatening, gray sky followed not far behind. Below, in the late afternoon light, among the rolling fields and hillsides, lush with summer crops and foliage, was the campus of the Saint Vincent College and Archabbey. Lieutenant Pearson was piloting the struggling Jenny. He could hear, even above the sound of the Hispano-Suiza engine, the thunder rumbling at his tail. Pearson tapped his observer, Sergeant Weidencamp on the shoulder. Weidencamp turned to the rear cockpit, and understood that the lieutenant wanted to land. Pearson was gesturing toward a broad clover-field on the college campus. It looked like a good place to hold up for the night. The Jenny would not last long in the storm rolling in from the west, toward Chestnut Ridge. Besides, the Benedictines were well known for their hospitality to travelers. Pearson banked toward the clover field, hoping there wouldn't be a crosswind. It could be murderous.

The Jenny caused quite a stir among the locals. Even though airplanes loomed in the public imagination, they were a rare sight in rural Western Pennsylvania. Only sixteen years earlier, the Wright brothers took their Flyer to the air at Kitty Hawk, and the Great War had just ended nine months prior. In that conflict, the actions of America's air hero, Eddie Rickenbacker had thrilled the American populace. Flying machines appealed to the adventurous spirit in all people, not least of all the monks who came out to watch the Jenny struggling to land.

Alphonse Farley, O.S.B. looked up. He saw the dark wings of the Jenny silhouetted against the graying sky. Alphonse, together with his confreres, Cuthbert Gallick and Ruppert Stadtmiller, made their way up a steep hillside on the northside of the college campus. As they neared the top, they saw the now silent Jenny in the clover field. Two men were standing in conference near the aircraft. The three clerics approached the two men in greeting. Some local farmers were approaching across the adjoining fields, a few from the Kerr farm less than a mile away. Little did they know it at the time, but the Kerr family would play an important role in the future of aviation in the area.

Pearson and Weidencamp explained their hasty landing to the monks. They were one of a squadron of All American Army Aerial Pathfinders that left Long Island, New York, a week earlier. Their mission was to map airmail routes and chart emergency landing fields. Without hesitation, and true to the reputation of their community, Farley invited the weary airmen to have dinner and spend the night at the college.

It was August 21, 1919. It was the first day Saint Vincent College became associated with aviation. Somewhere in Scottdale, PA, a young man named Charlie Carroll was taking flying lessons from Torrance Overholt, a veteran World War I pilot. The day also marked the humble beginning of the Arnold Palmer Regional Airport.

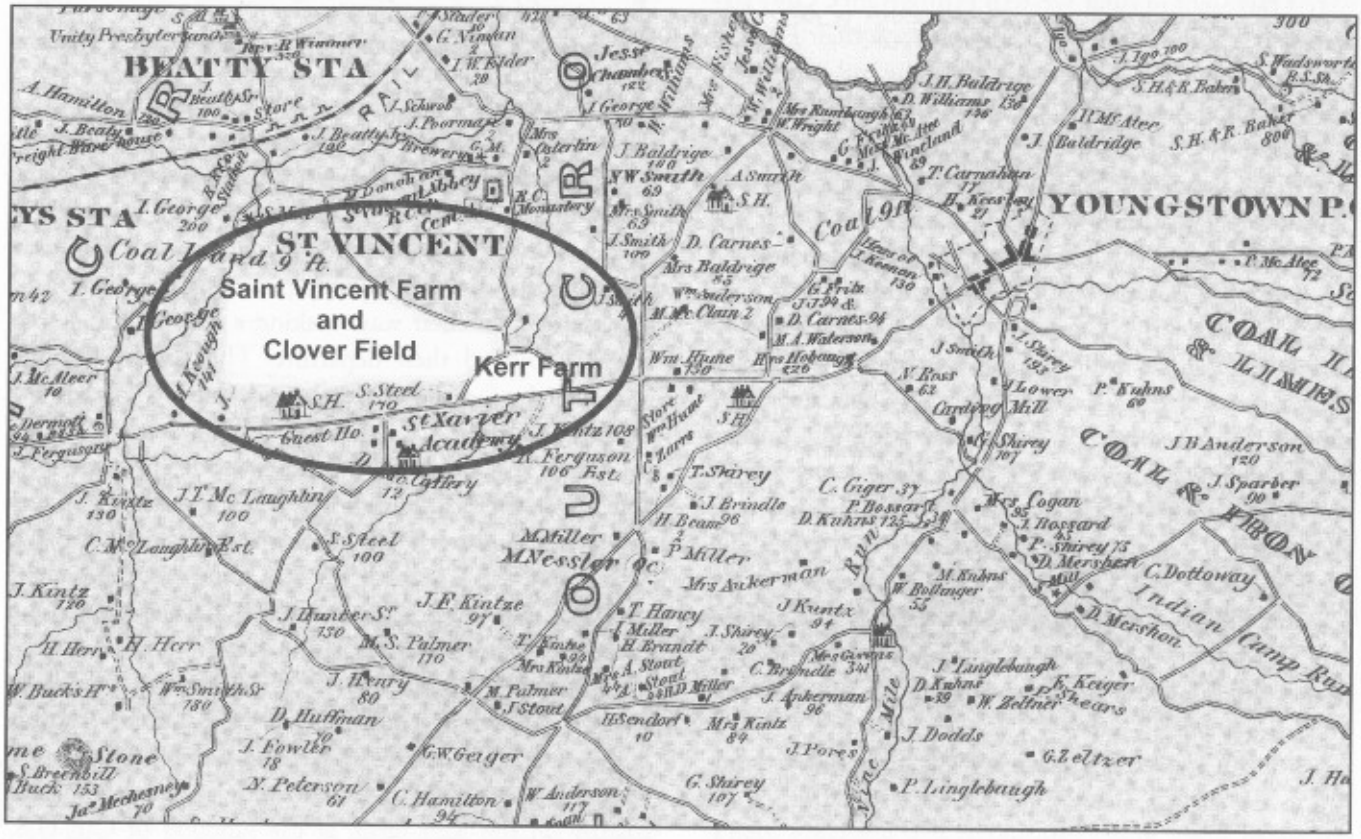
> *"The Jenny would not last long in the storm rolling in from the west, toward Chestnut Ridge. Besides, the Benedictines were well known for their hospitality to travelers. Pearson banked toward the clover field, hoping there wouldn't be a crosswind. It could be murderous."*

The *Latrobe Bulletin* next day reported, "As soon as the weather gave promise of turning fair, Lieutenant Pearson and Sergeant Weidencamp resumed their flight to Columbus, Ohio, yesterday. Accompanied by all of the residents of the Archabbey, the two fliers proceeded from the college to the field, tuned up the engine a little, and then started on their way, making a nice ascent. A big crowd witnessed their departure. The aviators headed immediately for the railroad, and followed it toward Pittsburgh."

Later, Pearson related his experience to his superiors, and the clover field at Saint Vincent became an official emergency landing area for the American Army Airplane Service and the Postal Air Service. Both Army and civilian pilots thereafter regularly used the field. It came to be called the Saint Vincent Aviation Field.

Charlie Carroll soloed in 1920. He had friends in Latrobe. When he came to visit them in his surplus Jenny, he landed on the clover field at Saint Vincent. It wouldn't be long before he saw some potential in a cow pasture on the Kerr farm, at the junction of Old U.S. Route 30 and State Highway 981, in the Borough of Latrobe.

This is the Curtiss "Jenny" JN4-H that landed on the clover field at Saint Vincent College, 21 August 1919. The plane contains a Wright-Hispano engine ("Hisso"). Planes of this type were retained by the military after World War I because they were considered to be too "hot" for civilians. Surplus Jennies with the OX5 engine were released for sale to the public. This model became the plane used by the "Barnstormers." Typical of the military type, this Jenny carries an auxiliary fuel tank under the center of the top wing. Together, the main and auxiliary tanks carried twenty-two gallons of fuel, sufficient for two-and-one-half hours of flying time. The Benedictine monks accompanying local farmers are (left to right) Alphonse Farley, Rupert Stadtmiller and Cuthbert Gallick *(Courtesy of the Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives)*



Portion of Unity Township on an early Westmoreland County map showing the location of the Saint Vincent clover field in relationship to the Kerr property.

Charles B. Carroll

Charlie Carroll was a thirty-year-old mechanic in Scottdale, in partnership with a man named Torrence Overholt. Anything with an engine in it appealed to Charlie, but he was developing a fascination with the Flying Machine. The Army had used the rugged Curtiss JN-4s during the Great War as trainers for its fledgling Army Air Service. With the ending of the war, the government offered their OX5 powered "Jennies" at a cheap price to anyone who wanted to buy one. Charlie jumped at the chance. Pilots' licenses were not required in those days; that would not happen until 1927.

Charlie, Torrance Overholt, and the First Jenny

Sometime in 1919, Charlie and his partner, Torrance Overholt, a pilot and World War I veteran, went to New York to pick up Charlie's new Jenny. On the way back to Pennsylvania, the Jenny developed magneto trouble, and the pair made a forced landing on a farm in New Jersey, running into a fence in the process. The damage to the plane was extensive enough that take off was impossible. Charlie and Torrence had a truck come out from Scottdale, loaded the plane on the flat bed, brought it home, and kept it on Felger's farm.

Charlie had gotten a little formal instruction from Torrance but presumably not enough to go it alone. He would learn much of what he knew through trial and error. One day, Charlie had the plane out, starting and stopping the engine and taxiing around trying to get the feel of the controls. Charlie pushed the throttle. The OX5 engine sputtered and the airframe shook. The Jenny bounded over the uneven pasture, gaining speed. A sudden, strong wind lifted the Jenny off the ground like a leaf. Charlie found himself on his first solo flight, all because of a whim of the weather, a whim that would secure his place in aviation.

To Find A Landing Field

Charlie made a safe landing. He practiced more and more, getting to know the Jenny inside and out. A plan developed in his mind. Charlie was quick to realize the commercial importance of aviation to Western Pennsylvania, and he believed an airfield in a rural community with easy access to a major road and railhead would benefit the area. He flew his Jenny over the rolling countryside in search of a field that would suit his purpose. He crisscrossed the skies many times, buzzing low over the small communities that dotted the landscape. The sight of his Jenny, moving like a slow, watchful bird across the sky had become familiar to those below.

Charlie often flew to Latrobe where he had friends. When he did, he made good use of the Saint Vincent Aviation Field. He knew well the story of the two airmen who had made a forced landing there.

The Kerr Farm

It didn't take Charlie long to realize the potential of the area, conveniently located near the Pennsylvania Railroad and two major roads US Route 30 (The Lincoln Highway) and State Road 981 (Manito Road). The roads provided easy access to a number of communities throughout Westmoreland County and beyond. Could there be, he wondered, a place nearer their junction?

Less than a mile away from the college field and located exactly at the junction was the Kerr farm. One day, Charlie landed in their cow pasture.

Perhaps in some dusty folder in borough or county archives are the legal details of Charlie's lease with the Kerrs, but except for Lloyd Santmyer's recollections, the human details would have been lost to us. Here is the way Lloyd remembers the day Charlie landed:

> So Charlie came up here and was flying around Route 30. It was the Lincoln Highway back then. It went right through Saint Xavier's, across the Kerr farm, and on into Youngstown. Charlie saw this pasture out there at the crossroads of the Lincoln Highway and 981, which was then the Manito Road. There were a couple of cows in the field. So he landed in there. Andy Berzda, who lived on a farm across the way (where they built Mission Inn later), came over to Charlie.

Charlie said, 'I'm Charlie Carroll from Scottdale. I'm looking for a field to fly out of around here. Is this your field?'

And Andy said, 'No. It belongs to the Kerr family right below here. That's their house and barn down below.'

Charlie said, 'Do you suppose they'd be down there?'

Andy said, 'I don't know. Why don't you just park here and go down and see.'

So Charlie walked down to see them. He introduced himself and told them what he was looking for.

They said, 'We farm the field. We plant corn there and everything. Right now, it's our pasture and we're feeding up our cows. We'll talk it over with our family and see if it's all right for you to fly in and out of here with passengers and stuff.'

So, that was the beginning of it, and that was 1924. So they made a deal with Charlie to come over and fly out of the field. Which he did. And I have been a part of the old airport ever since it was there, clear up to now. I learned to fly there. Raymond Elder taught me. And I worked with and for Charlie into the 1930s. We were buddies. He called the place Longview Flying Field.

Longview Flying Field

The roots of the first airport grew deep into the ground where they would remain and continue to grow. Longview Flying Field was exactly that. The word "airport" had not yet been coined, and the common terms of the day were "flying field" or "aerodrome." Charlie's field was the typical FBO (Fixed Base of Operation) of the time. Charlie's dream slowly took shape. He had established his flying field, now he needed to maintain it. To keep his flying field operating, he bought and repaired Jennies and other kinds of early airplanes; he sold airplanes, rented airplanes, did charter work and sold airplane rides to the curious and fascinated public. Almost from the day he opened the Longview Flying Field, Charlie put on air shows, complete with barnstorming, fly-ins, parachute jumps, wing-walks, and other kinds of exhibitions. All of Pennsylvania's aviation pioneers and promoters came to those shows. They included Dewey Noyes, Merle Moltrup, Al Litzenberger, Clifford Ball, D. Barr Peat, Russ Brinkley, Kenny Scholter, and others. Many of them became Charlie's friends and would remain so for the next four or five decades, until their deaths.

Welcoming Charles Lindbergh

The year 1927 was the year that Charles Augustus Lindbergh flew nonstop across the Atlantic in his Ryan monoplane *Spirit of St. Louis*. Aviation was never the same after that. Charlie and Russ Brinkley (together with thousands of others) wasted no time in getting to Washington, D.C. to welcome Lindbergh back to the United States. They piled into seventy-eight-year-old Scottdale First National Bank director Burt Keister's straight-eight Paige automobile and set off, with Charlie behind the wheel, Keister next to him, with Detroit parachutist Steve Boudreaux and Russell Brinkley in the back. Brinkley wrote of the trip in the June 14, 1927 edition of the *Scottdale Independent Observer*:

> Charlie Carroll at the wheel makes a Pullman car ride like an old time 'iron tire' wagon by comparison. We made the trip to Washington, over mountains and all, via the Lincoln route, in little less than seven hours, and came back via the National Pike in less than six hours, to Scottdale. And our seventy-eight-year-old aviation booster was as chipper as a 'sixteen year old' when we finished the trip. We wonder if the people of Westmoreland County believe that aviation is confined to the respective trips of Lindy, Chamberlain, Byrd, and Charlie Carroll's Long View Flying Field.

Florida, Ed Musick, and Pan-American

While business was good at times, it was difficult to keep the dream in flight. The winter months from 1926 to 1931 were the most difficult. Most people found it a chore getting around on the ground, let alone subject themselves to an open-cockpit Jenny in freezing weather. To make ends meet, Charlie traveled to Florida and flew copilot with Ed Musick for Pan-Am on Fokker Trimotors and Sikorsky S-38 Flying Boats. Early February 1929 must have remained a special time for Charlie. That was when he met Charles Lindbergh, who was blazing a route for mail and passenger service into Central America. Concerning that occasion, Mr. and Mrs. A.C. Farmer of Scottdale, in Florida at the time, wrote home to two friends, Teddy and Ellwood:

> I was sure glad to hear from you and am going to send you some pictures of "Lindy" and the aeroplane that he flew to Porto Rico. Charlie Carroll put all the gas and oil in the ship for him just before he took off. How would you like to be Charlie?

New Alexandria Airport

In the early 1930s, there arose the possibility that Charlie would lose the lease on the Kerr property, so he and Lloyd Santmyer started the New Alexandria Airport. Joe Reedy helped put up the metal hangar.

The "Longview Boys" shuttled back and forth between the two airports, performing their usual antics. A young Frank Fox became airport manager. A big attraction was Dr. Smith's big Ford trimotor flown by Al Litzenberger and Ken Scholter. On September 10, 1930, residents between the New Alexandria and J.D. Hill Airports felt what they thought to be raindrops. They were mistaken. The refreshment stand at New Alex had run out of ice, so Charlie hopped in *Miss Tydol*, his OX5 Jenny, flew to Hill Airport, then sent someone to the Latrobe Ice and Provision Plant for ice. Charlie loaded the ice on his plane and returned to New Alex. What the locals thought was rain, were really drops falling from the melting ice.

J.D. Hill Airport

A friend of Charlie's from the early days was J.D. Hill, an airmail pilot from Scottdale. Hill was a great pilot who pushed his machines to the limit. He earned the nickname the "Bird Boy of Scottdale" for his daring achievements in early aviation. The same year Charles Lindbergh made his historic flight, Hill was killed in his own attempt to cross the Atlantic to Rome, Italy. One imagines that Carroll realized early in his career as a pilot that flying was a dangerous profession, that there was always going to be something beyond the control of even the most skilled pilot. It was the price one had to pay to fly.

In early June 1928, amid great celebration, Charlie renamed Longview Flying Field in Hill's honor. It would be called Hill Airport at Latrobe until 1935, the year Charlie and Latrobe Borough expanded the runways with Works Progress Administration money and renamed it Latrobe Airport.

The End of the Glory Days

By 1935 the glory days were just about over. The rest was business. Apart from his other achievements, Charlie Carroll managed the same airport for nearly thirty-five years. He retired in 1959 at the age of sixty-nine. He would have gone on longer, but the Tri-City Municipal Authority that would create the Latrobe-Westmoreland Airport required that all interested in the position of manager should submit applications. Charlie's application was rejected. "Babe" Krinock remembers that day: "Charlie had tears in his eyes. 'They didn't take me, Babe,' he said."

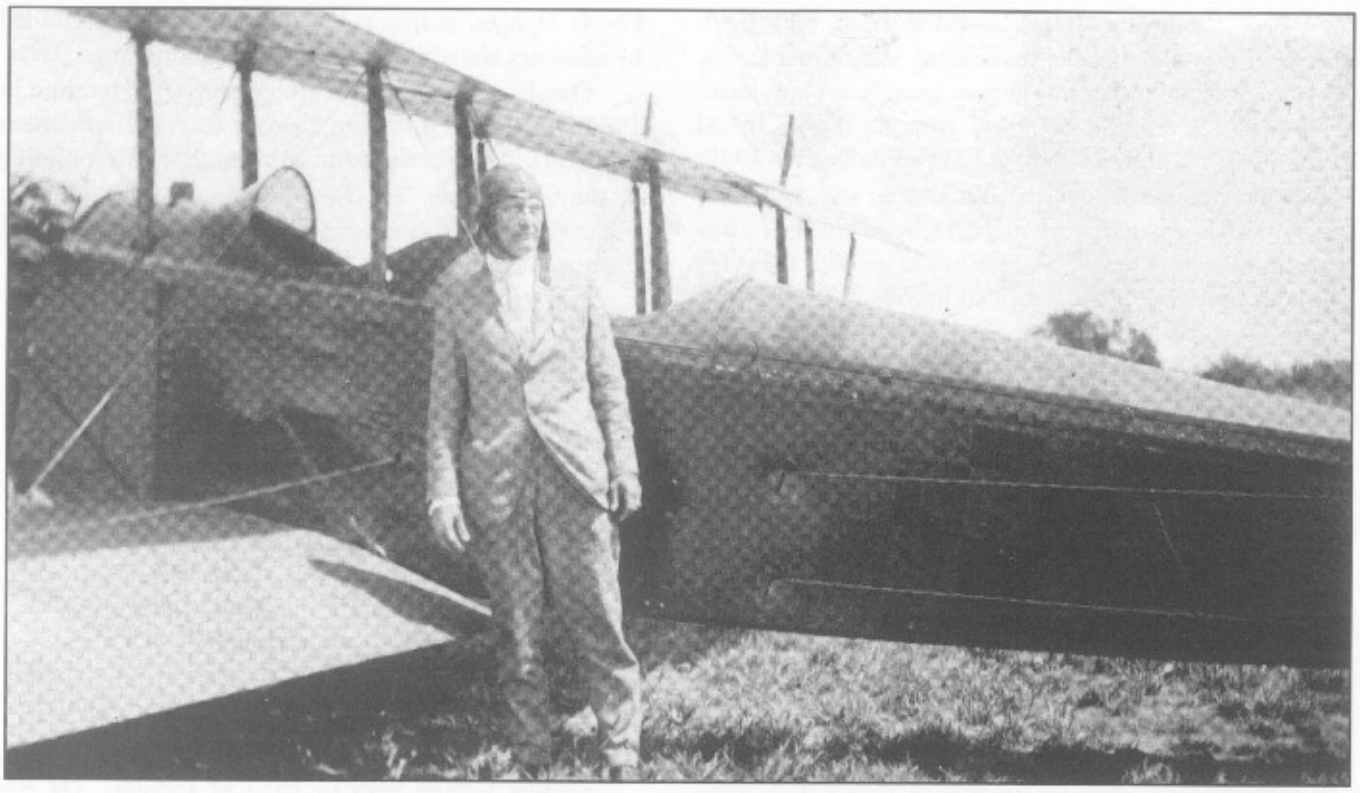
B. Patrick Costello, a prominent Greensburg attorney, former World War II pilot, and Airport Authority member for eighteen years, remembers Charlie, wearing a straw hat and sitting in a favorite chair just inside the North Hanger, managing, organizing and, surrounded by admirers seated in folding chairs, reminiscing.

Don Riggs describes the reception Carroll received in 1965, when he returned to Latrobe from his retirement in Florida to attend the tenth anniversary of his founding of the OX5 Club: "All those old timers said, 'Charlie, you're still around, and we're glad.' I mean. They revered the guy!"

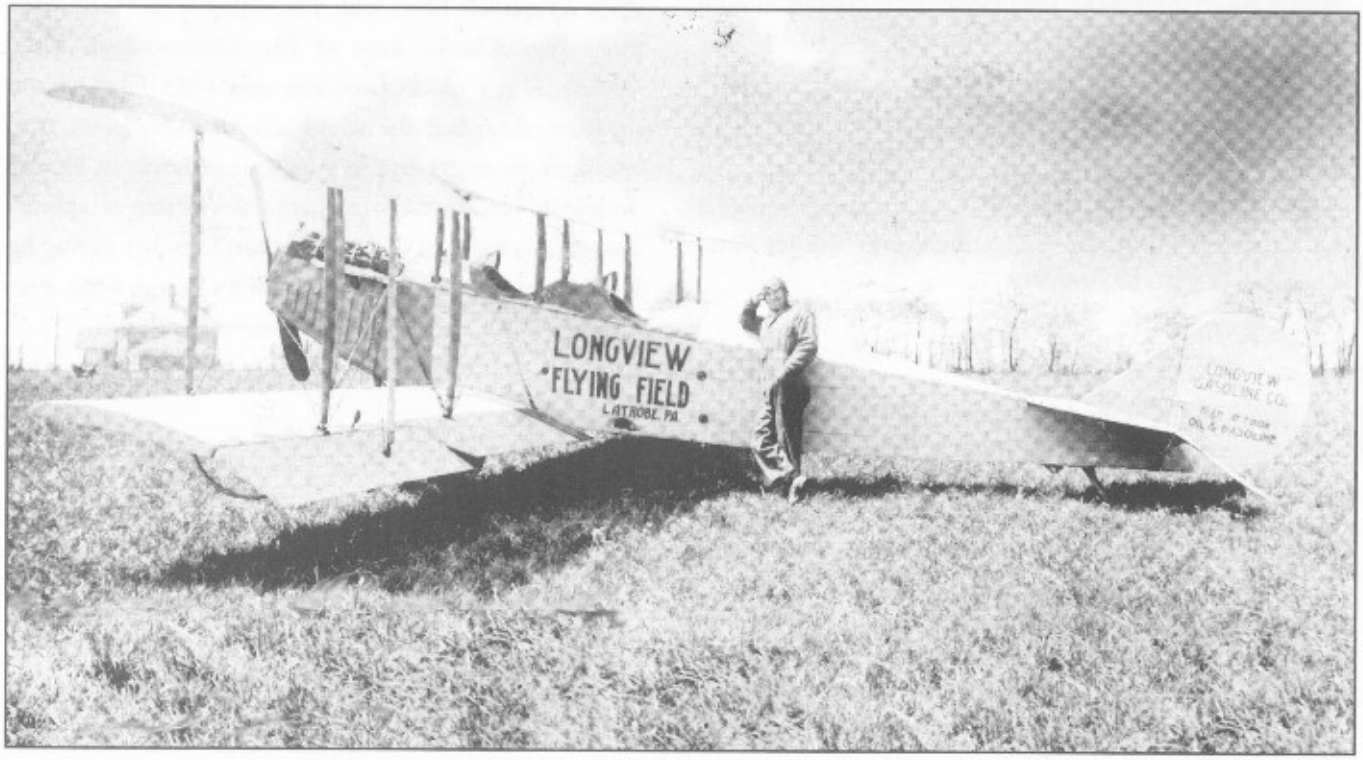
Earl Metzler tells this story:

> Charlie knew all the important people in aviation. All of them came out to his airport in Latrobe. He was a good mechanic. He must have rebuilt twenty planes out there. He would go down to Florida in the winters in the early days to earn extra money flying and maintaining engines. He was a chief maintenance superintendent at Pan-American in Florida. He always came back to run his airport, though. Around 1955 I asked him: 'Why didn't you stay with Pan-American, Charlie? You'd be a big-wheel by now?' He took his pipe out of his mouth, looked at me for a couple seconds and said: 'All my old buddies are dead.' I think I know what he meant.

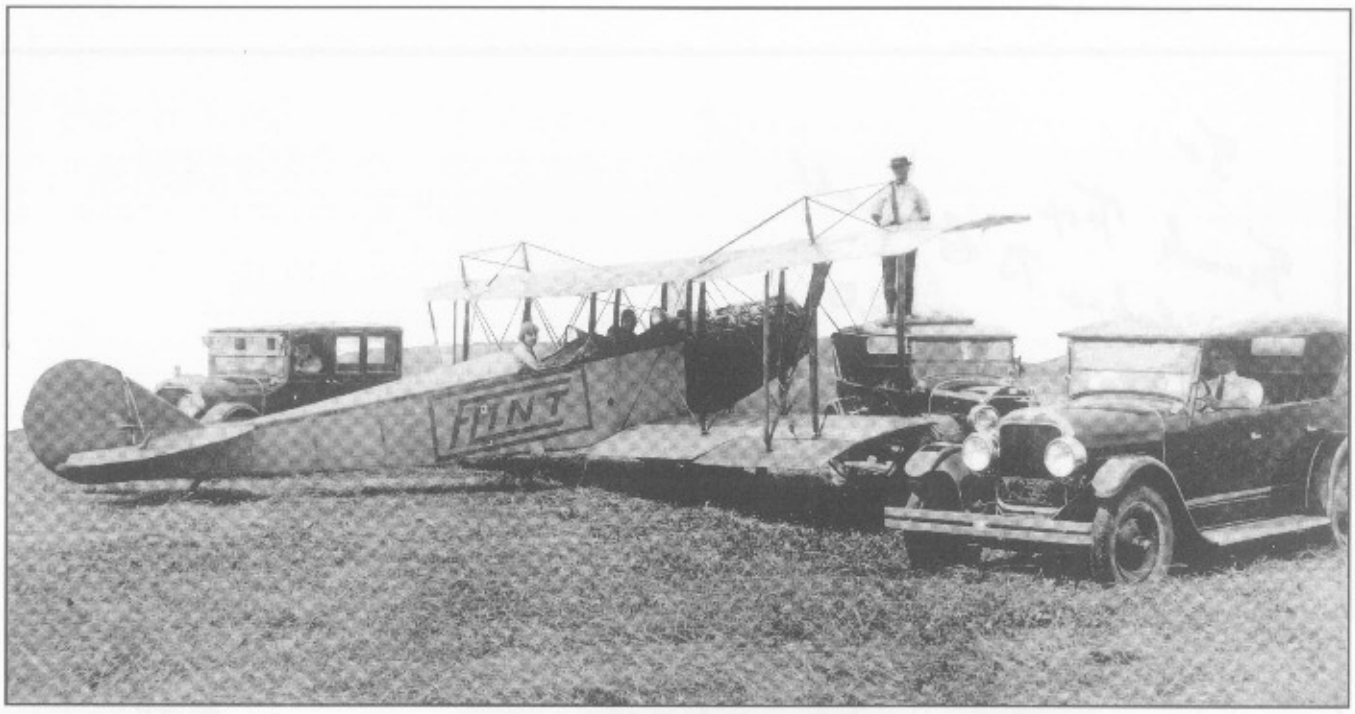
Charlie Carroll died in 1973 in Florida. He was eighty-three years old. Charlie's youngest son, Captain Don Carroll, a retired airline pilot, tells of an eight-inch-thick scrapbook filled with photographs and news clippings that Charlie kept of his aviation days. Grace Carroll, Don's mother, aviatrix and OX5 Club charter member, cherished the scrapbook for many years, until her death at ninety-five in a retirement home in Florida. Today, no one knows what happened to that scrapbook, though it is thought that it was taken from her during her last days by someone unknown. Who knows what treasures of aviation history were contained within it.



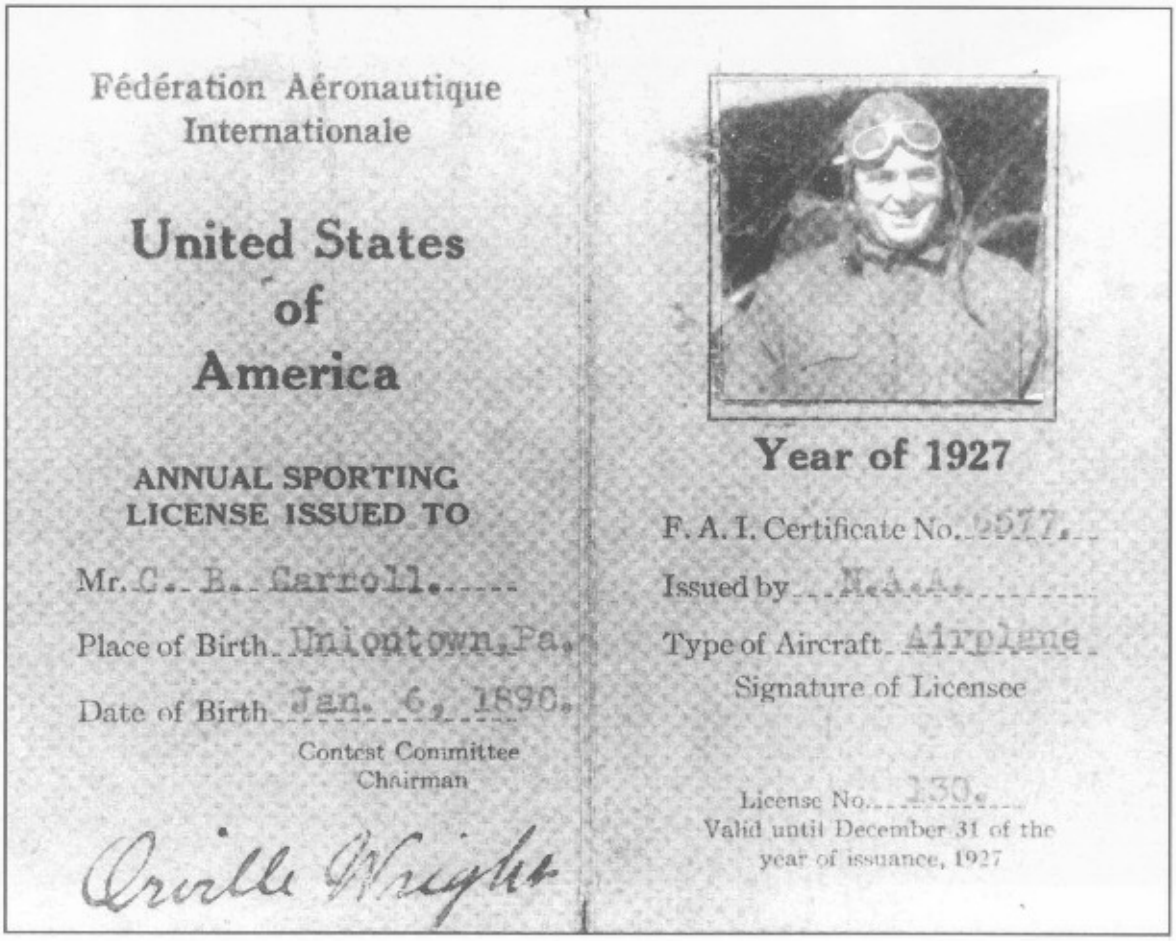
Charlie Carroll posing beside his war surplus Jenny at the time of his solo flight in 1920. He landed on the Saint Vincent Aviation Field, now site of present Rooney Hall. *(Courtesy of the Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives).*



Charlie Carroll in 1924, when he leased the Kerr farm cow pasture. He called the field Longview Flying Field. He has landed on the Saint Vincent Aviation Field. The farmhouse in the background, now the site of Green Meadows retirement complex, was then occupied by the Zuercher family, according to Rev. Roland Heid, O.S.B. *(Courtesy of Dorothy Carroll Sadler).*



Charlie Carroll sits in the front cockpit, and Carl Strickler is in the rear. The photo was taken in 1925 on Felger's farm in Scottdale when Charlie was a partner with Joe Maloy in a Flint automobile dealership. *(Courtesy of Frank Fox).*



Fédération Aéronautique Internationale

United States of America

ANNUAL SPORTING LICENSE ISSUED TO

Mr. C. B. Carroll.

Place of Birth Uniontown, Pa.

Date of Birth Jan. 6, 1890.

Contest Committee Chairman

Orville Wright

Year of 1927

F. A. I. Certificate No. 2577.

Issued by N.A.A.

Type of Aircraft Airplane

Signature of Licensee

License No. 130.

Valid until December 31 of the year of issuance, 1927

Charlie Carroll's pilot's license number 130, signed by Orville Wright. *(Courtes of Marcia Nair).*

Charlie Carroll greets Frank Fox just after Frank landed at the Latrobe Airport. The photo was taken in the mid-1950s. Frank wrote on the back: "Charlie always greeted me at the airport." Charlie inscribed photo and recorded the year of his solo flight. *(Courtesy of Frank Fox).*

PAN AMERICAN AIRWAYS, INC.

PILOT: MUSICK CO-PILOT: CARROLL

PLANE: NC-396-E DATE: 3-19-31 TIME: 9:00

WEATHER REPORT

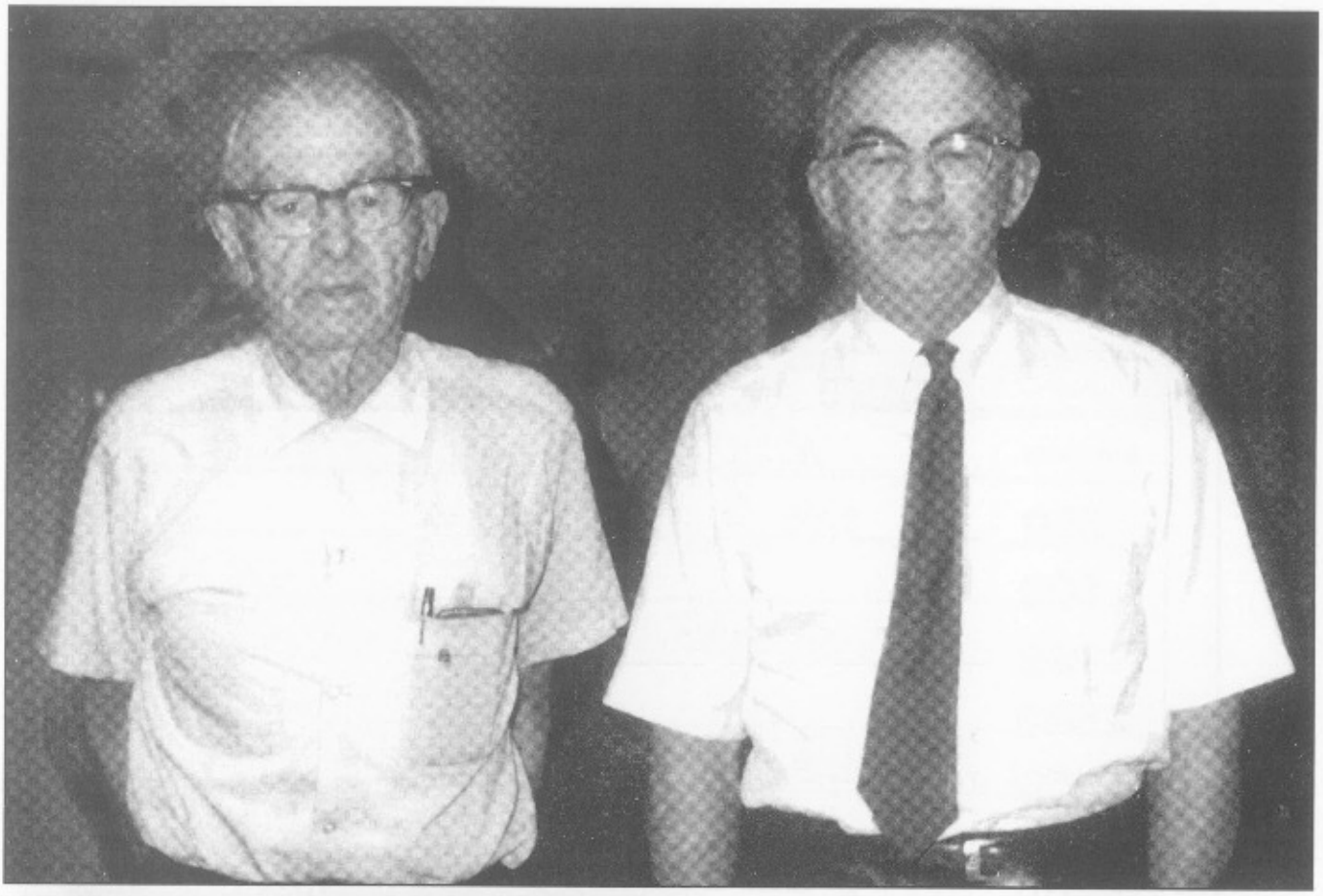
ALTITUDE	STATION		
	MIAMI	KEY WEST	HAVANA
SURFACE	N 2	N 10	NW 7
350	ENE 8	N 14	
600			NNW 9
700	SE 14	N 17	
1200			NNW 9
1350	1050 SSE 17	N 14	
1800	1700 SE 21		NNW 11
2000		N 8	
2400	2350 SSE 18		NNW 9
2600		NE 5	
3000	SSE 14		SW 18
3200		NE 4	
3700		NW 8	
4500	4200 S 10	WNW 12	WNW 8
6000	5000 S 11	NW 15	NW 15
8000		WNW 17	
CEILING		Unlimited	SC-2500
VISIBILITY		12 mi.	5 mi.

STEWARD: LAWRENCE OPERATOR: MURPHY

NO. OF PASS.: 10 NO. OF ALIENS:

LOAD: 4757 145

Charlie Carroll and Ed Musick's flight log for March 19, 1931 for Miami, Key West, and Havana. *(Courtesy of Don Carroll).*



ABOVE: Charlie Carroll and his son Jim, Sarasota Florida, 1969.

LEFT: Captain Don Carroll, Charlie's son, and Charlie's granddaughter, Tricia. *(Courtesy of Don Carroll).*

BELOW: 1965. Charlie Carroll holds the OX5 commemorative plaque presented to him at the ten year celebration of the founding of the OX5 Club of America at Latrobe on August 27, 1955. *(Courtesy of Don Carroll).*

J. D. Hill Airport: Dedication Day June 2, 1928

It was June 1, 1928. Charlie Carroll walked across the field toward the hanger. Dew soaked his boots. The cool June morning filled the air with a promise of a beautiful day. Across the rolling fields of the Kerr property, Carroll saw the spires of the Saint Vincent Archabbey glow with the first rays of the sun. To his left he heard an automobile on the Old Lincoln Highway. He hoped that in the next couple of days that road would be packed with cars coming to his airfield.

In the hanger, Carroll's Canuck biplane waited. He stood there for a moment staring at the silent aircraft. He thought about how just five years before he founded the Longview Flying Field, the first real airport at Latrobe. Tomorrow he would rededicate the airfield in honor of his friend, J.D. Hill, who had been killed the previous summer in an attempt to fly nonstop across the Atlantic to Rome.

It was going to be a big day for aviation in Pennsylvania. He wished J.D. could be there to see it.

June 2, 1928 "Angels Or Gods..."

Music from the American Legion band swelled as crowds of spectators milled around aircraft at the west end of the landing strip. Pilots from Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio and beyond stood around their machines, talking with fascinated people. A troop of boy scouts from Scottdale, there as part of the day's festivities, eagerly pressed the pilots for tales of adventure. The pilots in their flying suits, leather caps and goggles resembled to the scouts the romantic aces of the Great War as they were portrayed in films and books. For the younger people it must have been like meeting angels or gods.

June 2, 1928, the time of the dedication of the J. D. Hill Airport , Latrobe, formerly Longview Flying Field. This group is gathered by *The Pride of Pittsburgh*, a Ryan Brougham monoplane and replica of Charles Lindbergh's *Spirit of St. Louis*. The plane was owned at the time by C.P. Mayer, who brought it to Latrobe on many occasions from his field in Bridgeville. TOP ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT, as identified by Ken Scholter and Lloyd Santmyer: Unidentified, unidentified, J. W. Smith, Bill Day, C.P. Mayer, Charles Carroll, D. Barr Peat, Carl Strickler, Clyde Hauger. BOTTOM ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: Hub Morgan, Merle Moltrop, Curley Lovejoy, unidentified, Christenson. In 1928, Clifford Ball bought the craft for use on his CAM 11 mail route from Pittsburgh to Cleveland.
(Courtesy of Ken Scholter).

Charlie Carroll and Russ Brinkley, field manager of Longview Flying Field, were pleased with the turnout. The airport had grown in the consciousness of the local population for the past five years. The sounds of airplanes overhead had become almost commonplace. But the winters were still financially tough for the airport. Brinkley and Carroll knew those months would be difficult for the next couple of years, but they were sure that the airport would survive.

Charlie was admired by many aviators from the tri-state area, but after the weekend events of June 2 and 3, 1928 his reputation was sure to be enhanced. The pilots in attendance were the ones responsible for the array of aircraft present for the dedication. The public would see the likes of such aviation pioneers as C.P. Mayer, Clifford Ball, Carl Strickler, Dewey Noyes and Raymond Elder. The celebration was also because no one had yet been injured or killed in the airport's five years of operation. Considering the dangers of early flight, this was indeed an impressive figure.

It was a quarter till twelve. The aerial parade over Greensburg and Latrobe was to begin at noon. The time had come to get the pilots together and prepare their machines for flight. A tremendous excitement charged the cool June air. It was a dream come true for local aviation enthusiasts.

Engines pulsed to life. The odor of exhaust wafted into the crowd. Planes moved forward toward the runway. Carroll sat in the Canuck. He would be racing in the craft the next day in the twenty-five-mile race. He felt a moment of expectation mixed with a little fear. This was the biggest event ever to take place at his airfield. He hoped everything would be all right. He saw the boy scouts from his hometown of Scottdale enthusiastically waving to the pilots. Carroll smiled and hit the throttle of the biplane's OX5 engine.

The aerial parade marched into the sky. "Crates" of all types took flight. Jennies, OX5 Challengers, Wacos, Canucks and the Brougham Monoplane, *The Pride of Pittsburgh*. Some planes circled overhead waiting for others aircraft to gain altitude. Thousands of eyes turned upwards and followed the progress of the machines as they made their way toward Greensburg. In backyards, fields and roads, people stopped to look up, gesture in amazement or cheer. More than one spectator was with the planes in spirit as they defied gravity.

The spectacle drew people to the airport like pilgrims to a holy site. The *Greensburg Morning Review, Latrobe Bulletin,* and the *Scottdale Independent Observer* did their part, too. For days, the newspapers stirred up excitement over the events.

As the aircraft returned to the airport from the parade, workers made ready the speakers' platform. Speakers included Wesley L. Smith, manager of the National Air Transport; Frank Hill, brother of J.D. Hill; Clifford Ball, Charlie Carroll, C.P. Mayer and Russ Brinkley. After all the words were spoken, the aerial exhibition continued. One of Hill's airmail buddies flew Hill's airmail plane over the field and dropped roses.

The crowd heard a lone airplane overhead. Shielding their eyes, they peered into the bright sky for the aircraft. It came out of the sun like a pursuit plane of the Great War looking for its next victim. An Eagle Rock biplane descended low over the gathering, Carl Strickler in behind the controls. Strickler waggled the wings, then put the plane into a loop the loop. Carl filled the sky with Immelman turns, a maneuver made famous in the Great War by one of Germany's early air aces, Max Immelman. His expertise as a pilot was already well-known, but his flying display at the Hill Airport dedication amazed all present, even his pilot comrades. Not to be outdone, several performed stunts just as incredible, terrifying and breathtaking.

Russ Brinkley, relieved of his organizational duties, took to the air that day as well. He ascended with Raymond Elder, got to altitude, then stepped out onto the wing of the plane and gave a deft demonstration of wing walking. Other wing-walkers performed their stunts along with Brinkley. They were entered in "the daredevil program." There were prizes for the most daring, but history does not record the winners, only that all made it safely back to the ground.

Other daredevils included parachutist Clarence Brown of Kansas City. His exhibition was initially planned for the June 2 ceremonies but had to be canceled because of high winds. The following day, Clarence would live up to his reputation by amazing the crowds with his incredible free-falls.

After all of the speeches, aerobatics and aerial stunts concluded, Charlie hosted a dinner and reception at the nearby Mountain View Inn. Clifford Ball was master of ceremonies, and Russ Brinkley was toastmaster. Wesley Smith spoke about the importance of commercial aviation. Charlie Carroll, C.P. Mayer and Carl Strickler gave responses to Smith's speech. The evening wound down with performances by musicians and vaudeville acts.

The following day brought more excitement. The June 2 ceremonies caused quite a stir in the communities surrounding the airport. People were talking with awe and fascination about the aerial parade. Many wanted to get a closer look at the machines and the daring pilots who flew them. The next day the Old Lincoln Highway would be choked with cars just as Charlie Carroll had hoped.

June 3, 1928. Race in the Sky

The State Police patrolled the Old Lincoln Highway attempting to keep the traffic moving. Cars were bumper to bumper for four miles. Heat rose in eerie waves from the roofs of the vehicles.

The events lined up for Sunday, June 3, were very similar to the previous day's. Another noontime aerial parade passed over Greensburg and Latrobe. This time, however, many of the people who witnessed the parade the day before would now be seeing it from the fields surrounding the Hill Airport or from automobiles backed up for miles on the Old Lincoln Highway . After the conclusion of the parade, a demonstration of formation flying led up to the events everyone was talking about–the aerial races.

Commercial planes raced first. A ten-mile course took the planes out over the rolling hills of Westmoreland County. The next race of twenty-five-miles had the likes of Charlie Carroll and Raymond Elder in it. Carroll flew the Canuck and came in second. Elder also flew a Canuck and won the race. The highlight of the day was the fifty-mile race over a triangular course. The entries all exceeded speeds of 100 miles per hour, which for 1928 was faster than most people could imagine. The fifty-mile race had generated a lot of publicity in the newspapers. The rivalry between the Dewey Noyes, an airmail pilot on Clifford Ball's Cleveland-Pittsburgh route and Carl Strickler got special attention. Both of these men expected to beat the other in a "spite race," but they would have competition. Clifford March of Cleveland had won every high-speed race in which he flew. In his Whirlwind Laird machine he was the favorite.

As starting time drew near, the crowd became more agitated. The pilots revved their engines. The race was being called a "free-for-all," meaning that throttles would be wide open all the way. Carl Strickler sat in his Eagle Rock preparing for the flight. Dewey Noyes listened to the smooth action of the engine in his Whirlwind Laird. Clifford March calmly checked the instruments of his craft and waited for the signal to start.

The race was close. It concluded with Dewey Noyes as the winner taking home $500.00 cash. Strickler took $250.00 in prize money.

It is not known where the course took the pilots. It is plausible that at some point the planes roared over Greensburg and Latrobe like the aerial parades of June 2 and 3. The length of the race would certainly take the pilots over many other communities in Westmoreland County.

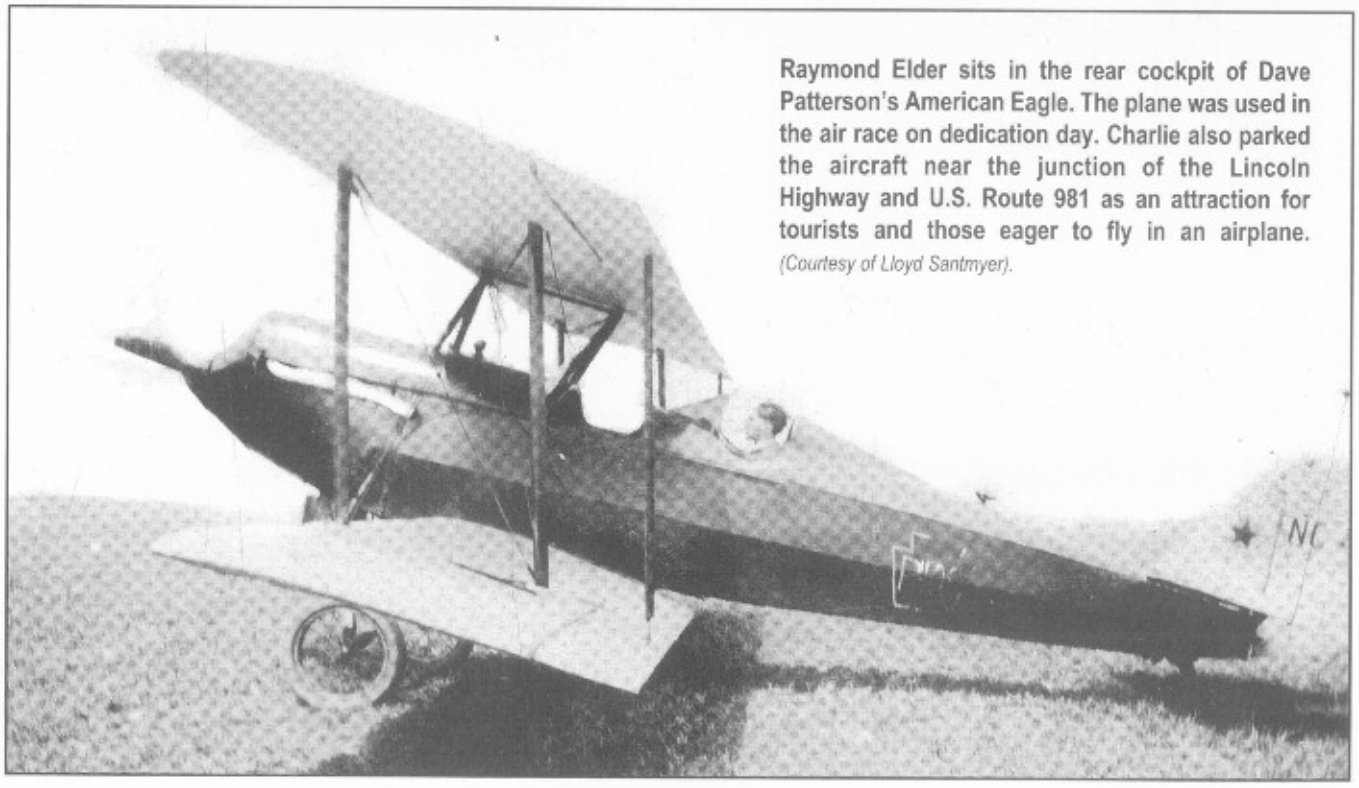
The opportunity for people to be a part of the dream Charlie had created with the Hill Airport was undoubtedly a reason for the fifty-mile race.

The airport had now become a part of the community. It supported the notion that almost anything was possible.

Charlie Carroll watches as an aircraft warms up on the J.D. Hill Airport dedication day. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*

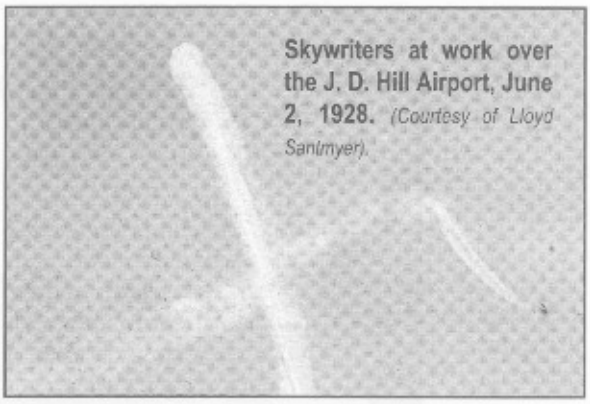
A Douglas O2-B at J.D. Hill Airport, June 2, 1928. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*

Fueling a Pitcairn Mailwing flown by Dewey Noyes in the J.D. Hill Airport dedication day air race. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*



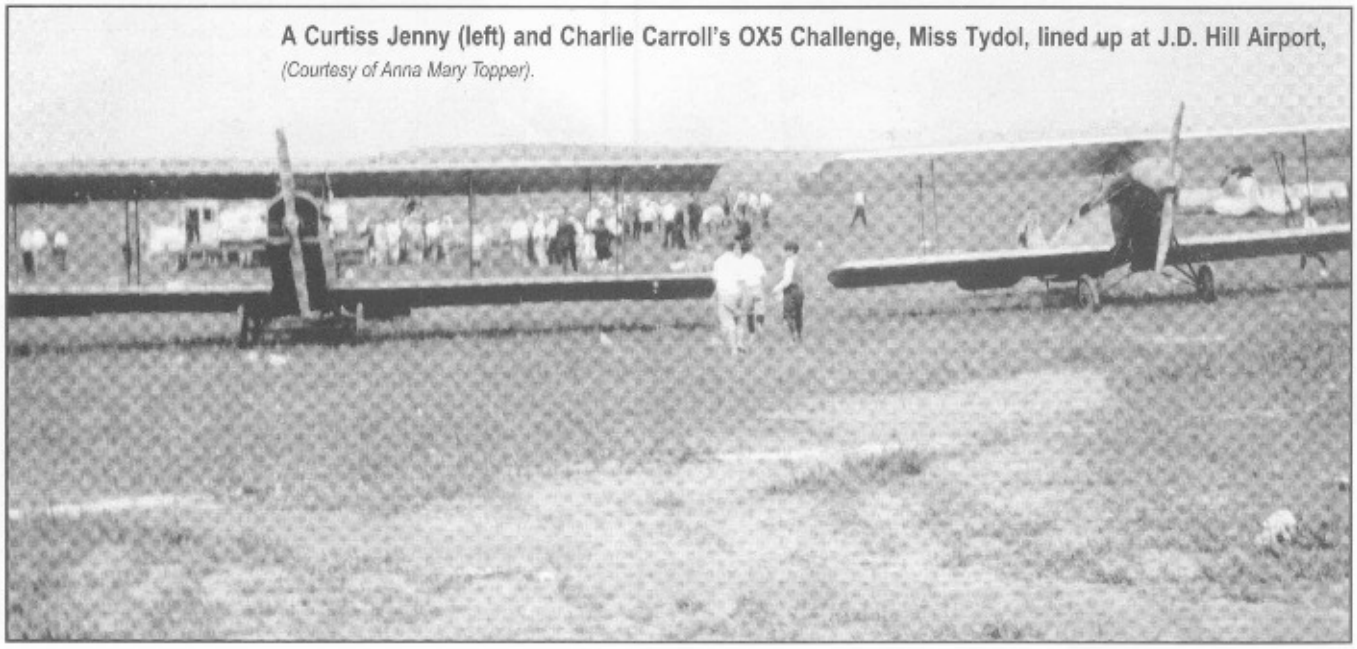
Raymond Elder sits in the rear cockpit of Dave Patterson's American Eagle. The plane was used in the air race on dedication day. Charlie also parked the aircraft near the junction of the Lincoln Highway and U.S. Route 981 as an attraction for tourists and those eager to fly in an airplane. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*

C.P. Mayer's Pride of Pittsburgh circles the J.D. Hill Airport, June 2, 1928. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*

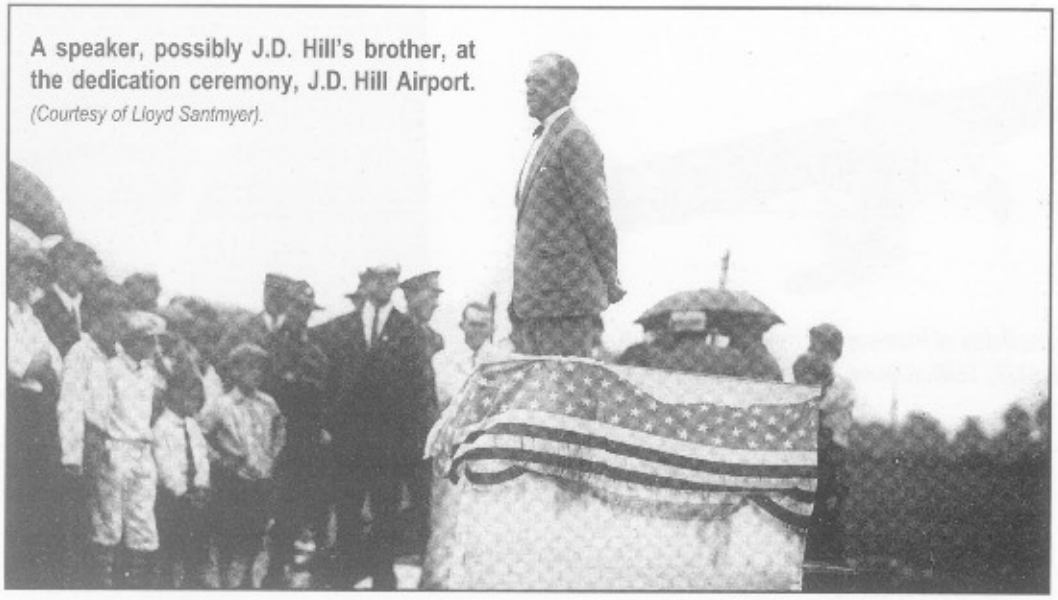


Skywriters at work over the J. D. Hill Airport, June 2, 1928. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*

A Boeing B-1 bomber brought in for the dedication of the J.D. Hill Airport. Military aircraft, then as now, were prime attractions at air shows. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*



A Curtiss Jenny (left) and Charlie Carroll's OX5 Challenge, Miss Tydol, lined up at J.D. Hill Airport, *(Courtesy of Anna Mary Topper).*



A speaker, possibly J.D. Hill's brother, at the dedication ceremony, J.D. Hill Airport. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*

Charlie Carroll and a group of young admirers on dedication day, J.D. Hill Airport. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*

James DeWitt Hill. *(Courtesy of Jesse Davidson Archives).*

James DeWitt ("J.D.") Hill

Old Glory stood ready on the hard-packed sand. She was a Jupiter powered Fokker monoplane, gold and silver, with an eagle-wreath insignia and her name painted beneath her wings. Forty-five year old James DeWitt Hill, from Scottdale, Pennsylvania, had won the toss from Lloyd Bertaud to pilot her from Old Orchard Beach, Maine, on a transatlantic flight to Rome sponsored by the publisher, William Randolph Hearst. The day was September 6, 1927. This would be the last flight J.D. would ever make.

J.D. had been flying since March 1909, when, at Hot Springs, Arkansas, he took up his airship, afterwards writing to his father about the flight. J.D.'s colorful career included training under Glenn Curtiss at San Diego, where J.D. earned his Aero Club Land Plane certificate number 234 in 1913. Later, J.D. worked for Curtiss at his Hammondsport, New York factory before and after World War I. During the war, J.D. was a civilian instructor, and a number of famous World War I aces received their training from him.

After the war, J.D. served a stint as test pilot with Air Service Engineering at Dayton Field in Ohio, then rejoined the Curtiss Company. J.D. flew in various air races, and for the Oregon, Washington, Idaho Airplane Company, a Curtiss branch. He joined the United States Air Mail Service July 1, 1924. At 42, he was the service's oldest pilot.

J.D. became famous for his cigar-chomping antics, using the cigars to time flights between refueling stops on the Air Mail Services "Hell's Stretch" over the Allegheny Mountains. There were many times when J.D. and his friend, Bertaud, passed each other in the air over the Alleghenies, J.D. flying west to Cleveland, and Bertaud flying east to Hadly Field.

When he was very young, J.D. borrowed his mother's favorite tablecloth and used it to parachute from the roof the family stable. The attempt failed. Then J.D. persuaded his brother to the same. Frank also failed. Paternal intervention finally put an end to the experiment. Perhaps that experience created in J.D. an aversion to jumping from a plane. He never parachuted from any plane he flew, even if it was damaged, preferring instead to ride the plane to a landing, something he was often forced to do. Once, during a 1919 air race to Canada, his Curtiss Oriole went into a spin. Too low to recover, J.D. braced for the inevitable crash. The plane was a total loss, but J.D. and his passenger walked away without a scratch. A week later, undaunted by his experience, J.D. chose the same Curtiss type to fly from Buffalo to Syracuse, with silent screen film star, Hope Eden, as his passenger.

J.D. was a colorful, well-known aviator and aeronautical engineer when he and Bertaud made plans to cross the Atlantic Ocean. This came after Charles Levine, owner of the Bellanca built Columbia (the same plane first considered by Lindbergh before his historic flight in the Spirit of St. Louis), bumped Bertaud from a flight designed to best Lindbergh's transatlantic record. Instead, Clarence D. Chamberlain, with Levine as passenger, successfully piloted the Columbia across the ocean to Berlin. Thus it was that J.D. and Bertaud made their own arrangements to fly the Atlantic to Rome. In June 1927, Hill contacted Columbia designer, Giuseppe Bellanca, and asked him to build a plane capable of flying nonstop to Rome. Bellanca, however, needed more time than J.D. could spare. So Bertaud made arrangements with Philip Payne, the managing editor of the Daily Mirror, a Hearst paper. In exchange for a plane, the Mirror could use the flight for publicity. Payne insisted on going on the flight, against the objections of Hearst, who was also beginning to object to the flight itself. Payne won out.

On that day in September, with festivities accompanying the takeoff, with J.D. at the controls, with Bertaud

on the radio, and Payne stretched out beneath the fuel tank (there was no passenger seat), the overweight Fokker monoplane rumbled down the hard-packed, natural runway at Old Orchard Beach, Maine. *Old Glory* flew low, maintaining a speed of about 100 miles per hour. To the uninitiated, this seemed excellent time. But J.D. must have sensed that the plane was far too heavy, and that altitude and speed were not enough to get them to Rome. If he had those thoughts, they probably would not have much concerned him. After all, J.D. had had experience landing on the sea. He trained in seaplanes as early as 1913, and though *Old Glory* was not a seaplane, it did have the latest in survival equipment, an actual radio station with the call letters WRHP (William Randolph Hearst), and a waterproof, automatic transmitter powered by a wind generator. On board, the transmitter was to send out the station's call letters in Morse code, allowing stations along the way to track the plane's progress.

Unfortunately, neither expertise nor equipment was enough to save *Old Glory* and her crew. Early on September 7, 1927, a cold, misty day, *Old Glory* and her crew went down in the rough waters of the North Atlantic. Though parts of the aircraft were recovered, J.D., Bertaud and Payne were lost forever.

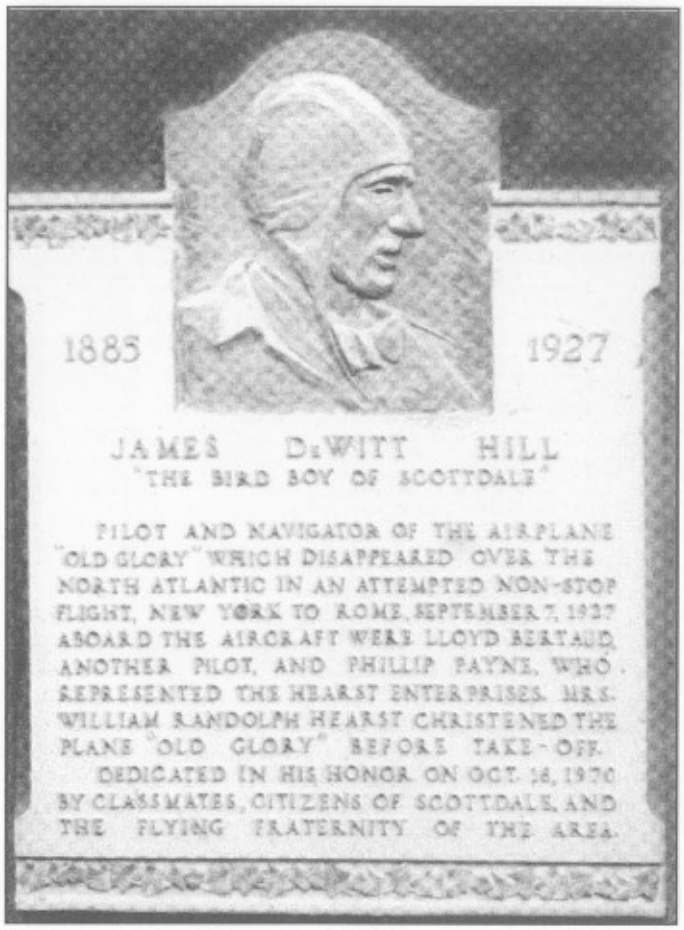
In June 1928, Charlie Carroll renamed his Latrobe Longview Flying Field after his friend and sometime instructor. In a couple months, people seemed to forget about J.D. J.D. Hill Airport in Latrobe came to be called just plain "Hill Airport," and visitors thought that was because it sat at the top of a grade of the Lincoln Highway as it came in from the west. That, too, would pass. Less than a decade later, J.D. Hill Airport would become the Latrobe Airport.

On October 18, 1970, a day perfect for flying, citizens, politicians, officials, old friends, aviation representatives and representatives for the Hill family gathered around the gazebo in Scottdale to dedicate a monument to James DeWitt Hill, the "Bird Boy of Scottdale." Within the stone monument, faced with a bronze plaque of J.D, they placed a speech written by J.D.'s old friend, A.G. Trimble, the names of the donors of the memorial, and a flag that had flown over the North and South Poles.

J.D. Hill preparing for a night airmail flight. Postmaster Harry New hands J.D. some commemorative covers.
(Jesse Davidson Archives).

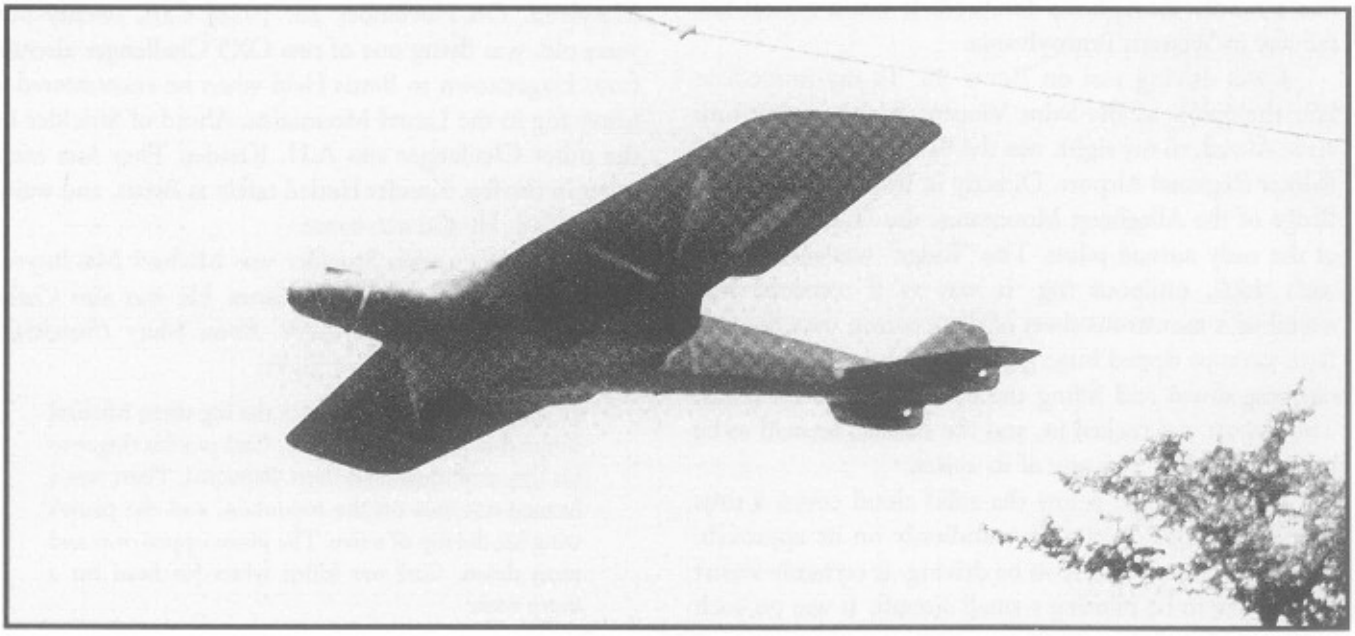
Navigation by Cigars

During his air mail days, J.D. Hill used a cigar as an instrument of navigation. A Pittsburgh newspaper dated Thursday May 19, 1938, in a series honoring National Air Mail Week, tells the story: "Hill...took off from Cleveland one day for Hadley Field, New Brunswick, with a load of mail and a pocket full of cigars. He was told that he would have clear weather until he reached the mountains and that he would have to fly over clouds while crossing the Alleghenies to the coast. Before he started down the runway at Cleveland he lighted a cigar. It lasted until he reached Mercer, PA....He glanced at his clock. It had stopped....He had to know the time so that he would know when to come down through the clouds....He recalled that his cigar lasted from Cleveland to Mercer. `Cleveland to Mercer,' said Hill to himself, 'that's 75 miles. I have about 255 miles to go. Let's see—75 into 255—is 3 and 30 left over. That's—let me see—30-75s..two fifths. If I smoke 3 and two fifths cigars, I should be over Hadley Field, if I'm on my course.' Hill took four cigars from his pocket. Three he placed beside him and the fourth he lighted. When it was finished he lighted another and on he went, chain-smoking over the clouds. When two-fifths of the fourth cigar was gone, he came down through the clouds and there, welcome sight, not far away, was Hadley Field." *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*



TOP: J.D. Hill's commemorative plaque in Scottdale, Pennsylvania. *(West Overton Museums).*

BOTTOM: Suspended from a clothesline outside the Hill residence in Scottdale is a model of an aircraft designed by J.D. *(West Overton Museums).*



Carl Strickler

It was not the kind of day to be driving. The wind kept trying to toss my car to the side of the road. The sky was gray. Rain spattered against the windshield. The heater refused to function, and the cold was like a needle through my forehead. It was a typical late fall day in Western Pennsylvania.

I was driving east on Route 30. To my immediate left, the spires of the Saint Vincent Basilica came into view. Ahead, to my right, was the flat plain of the Arnold Palmer Regional Airport. Directly in front was Chestnut Ridge of the Allegheny Mountains, the "Death Stretch" of the early airmail pilots. The "Ridge" was surrounded with thick, ominous fog. It was as if someone had stretched a monstrous sheet of dirty cotton over the top. Bare treetops ripped huge gaps in the sheet. The fog was creeping down and filling the bowl of the lower lands. The airport was socked in, and the Basilica seemed to be balancing a cloud on one of its spires.

Above me, just below the solid cloud cover, a tiny, single-engine plane moved soundlessly on its approach. This was not a good day to be driving. It certainly wasn't a good day to be piloting a small aircraft. It was on such a day that one of Western Pennsylvania's aviation pioneers was killed flying a Challenger aircraft from Maryland to Bettis Field. His name was Carl Strickler. I could not help but think of him when I saw that aircraft, alone against the leaden sky.

Back in my office I look at a collection of old photographs, portraits and vignettes from the life of Carl. In one of the pictures, he has on a leather flying cap and goggles, and is not looking directly at the camera. He is looking to his left, his eyes slightly raised as if in expectation of his next flight. It is a romantic photo of a man who led a romantic life.

Carl Strickler was from Scottdale. When he was a boy, his obsession was flight. He waited eagerly for the barnstormers to land their planes when they flew overhead. He learned to fly by watching these men and other pilots. He often persuaded them to take him up in their "crates" so that he could study how they mastered their machines. Later, when he began to fly on his own, he and Charlie Carroll built "homemade" planes out of the wreckage of crashed planes.

In the early 1920s, Strickler got a job at the Longview Flying Field as chief pilot. He developed a splendid flying record. He thrilled the local populace with his daring stunts and aerial exhibitions that Charlie and Russ Brinkley, the field manager, held on holidays and air shows. Undoubtedly, his death-defying displays inspired many young people to consider flying as a pastime, if not a career. Clyde Hauger was one of his student pilots, as was Carl's wife, Anna Mary, now ninety-seven years old. Carl continued instructing after the Longview Flying Field became the J.D. Hill Airport.

In the late 1920s, Carl became the chief test pilot for the Kreider-Reisner Aircraft Corporation of Hagerstown, Maryland. On November 28, 1928, Carl, twenty-five years old, was flying one of two OX5 Challenger aircraft from Hagerstown to Bettis Field when he encountered a heavy fog in the Laurel Mountains. Ahead of Strickler in the other Challenger was A.H. Kreider. They lost each other in the fog. Kreider landed safely at Bettis, and waited for Carl. He did not come.

In the plane with Strickler was Michael MacIntyre, an electrician from Kreider-Reisner. He was also Carl's mechanic. In her oral history, Anna Mary (Strickler) Topper describes Carl's last flight:

> They were flying low through the fog when Michael shouted to Carl to turn back. Carl put his finger to his lips, and must have been distracted. There was a burned-out area on the mountain, and the plane's wing hit the top of a tree. The plane tipped over and went down. Carl was killed when his head hit a sharp rock.

MacIntyre told all this to Anna Mary the day after the accident, while he lay in the hospital. He, too, would die of his injuries sometime later. The crash occurred somewhere between Ligonier and Laughlintown.

Carl Strickler's daring nature and love of flying influenced many other renowned local aviation pioneers. The list of men who were pallbearers at this funeral speaks for itself. They were: Charlie Carroll, Raymond Elder, Richard Copeland, Clyde Goerring, Clyde Hauger, and Jack Frost. Who can tell what the future held for Carl Strickler had he not died before his prime.

On the day Charles Lindbergh arrived in America after his historic transatlantic flight, Charlie Carroll and Russ Brinkley traveled to Washington, D.C., to witness the event.

Charlie Carroll sent a postcard to Carl, dated July 11, 1927 and addressed simply "Carl G. Strickler, Longview Flying Field, Latrobe, Pa." It said, "Your're [sic] next, Strick!"

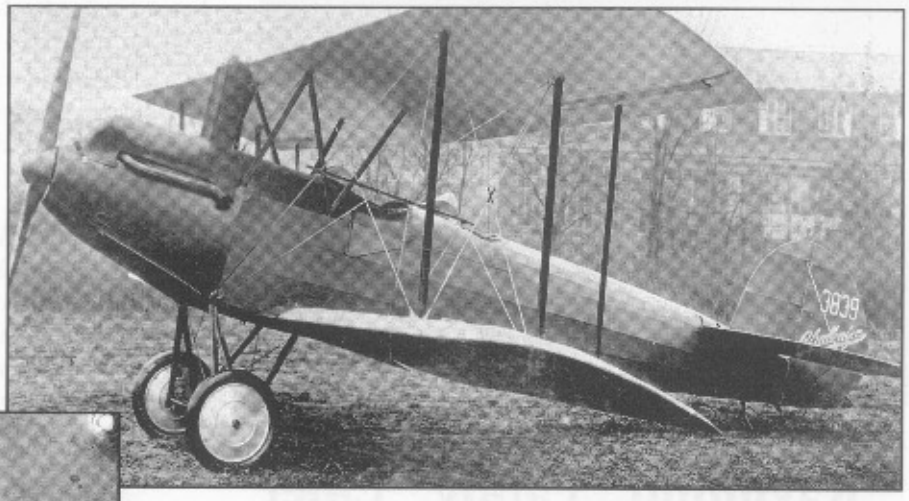
–David Wilmes

TOP: An OX5 Challenger of the type Carl Strickler flew for Kreider-Reisner.

CENTER: The identification plate from the plane in which Carl Strickler flew, retrieved and given to Anna Mary Strickler by Lloyd Santmyer.

BOTTOM: Carl Strickler's crashed OX5 Challenger in the Laurel Mountains near Laughlintown.

(Courtesy of Anna Mary Strickler Topper).



Raymond "Pappy" Elder

According to some biographical notes he sent to the All American Aviation newsletter *The Pick-Up*, August 1944, Ray Elder drove a truck for the Blue Ridge Gas Station in Blairsville, Pennsylvania, while he learned to fly on a Canadian built Curtiss Jenny, otherwise known as a "Canuck." He kept the plane on the family farm in Scottdale and, after his day job was over, he cranked up the Canuck and flew out to Longview Flying Field to meet the other original "Longview Boys," including Charlie Carroll and Carl Strickler, who was Ray's instructor. Ray, Carl and Charlie were also "Scottdale Boys," like J.D. Hill.

This is how Lloyd Santmyer describes Raymond's "flight training:"

> Raymond and Carl Strickler were school buddies. Strick was already flying. He learned from "Pop" Cleveland down at C.P. Mayer's field in Bridgeville. Strick could fly that Canuck Raymond bought, and he finally soloed Raymond. Raymond also had some time in with Cleveland. This was back before 1927, before the new license rules came into effect. Anybody who was already flying and had enough hours could automatically get a license if he could answer a little bit of rules and regulations. That's how Raymond and Charlie both got their FAA, CAA licenses. So Raymond had a lot of good experience flying locally. After Carl went down to Hagerstown, Charlie had a couple different guys flying for a little while to try out for Strick's job, and then Raymond started, and Raymond got the job. Raymond made a name for himself. He was a good instructor, a good flier, a good pilot. He was as good as the next guy, and fearless. Of course we did a lot of stump jumping, and he always was pilot when Russ Brinkley did his wing walks for the air shows.

Jim Carroll, one of Raymond's students who got his license in September 1929, relates this story:

> Raymond would yell at me, 'You're not getting your tail down when you go down to land.'
>
> I'd yell, 'Well, I have it back as far as it goes, right back so far that my elbow hits the cowling around the seat.'
>
> He'd yell, 'You're not supposed to do that!'
>
> It was a bucket seat, and it had a metal hinge on it. I hit that with my elbow and quit, thinking I couldn't go any further. After I got straightened out, Raymond said, 'Jim, now that you learned to get your tail down, I'm gonna let you go. You go on and take the plane up.'
>
> I said, 'Raymond, are you sure?'
>
> He said, 'I'm absolutely sure.'
>
> So I went up solo. While I was flying, my dad flew back from the New Alexandria Airport and landed. He saw his Challenger up there and he said (he told me later), 'Raymond, I see the Challenger is up there. Who's in it?'
>
> 'Jim,' answered Raymond.
>
> 'Jim who?'
>
> 'Your son, Jim!'
>
> 'Hell, he doesn't have enough time in.'
>
> Raymond said, 'Watch him land; then tell me that!'
>
> One time Raymond took me up and the magneto quit on the engine. Raymond said, 'Jim, we have to find a field to land in.'
>
> We were somewhere over Pleasant Unity, I remember. I saw this nice field and I yelled, 'Raymond! Right down there. See! There's a big, long field.'
>
> Raymond shook his head. Finally, he worked the plane down into another field.
>
> I asked him, 'How come you didn't land in the other field?'
>
> He said, 'It was a good field, but did you notice the grass was mostly brownish except for a big green patch. That meant there was water there. If we had landed there, we might have sunk into some mud and nosed the plane over. That's something you need to remember.'
>
> Another time Raymond and I were coming back from New Alexandria, and I smelled gasoline. I was in the front cockpit, and I could see gas dripping out onto the floor.

Raymond said, 'Jesus! I don't know if we can make it back to Latrobe!'

Raymond headed for Saint Vincent Lake. He skimmed the treetops and the water, got up in the air again and headed for the airport. We landed safely. When we got out of the plane, Raymond told me, 'I figured that we could catch a spark and the whole plane would have gone up in flames. I figured to ditch in the lake, but changed my mind.'

Old Raymond. He was a helluva guy!

In the early 1930s, Ray gave up passenger flying and instructing at Latrobe and moved to West Palm Beach to pilot flying boats between Miami and Bimini for Roosevelt Flying Service.

In 1934, Ray returned to Western Pennsylvania to become Pilot-Instructor at the Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport and Bettis Field. At Bettis he joined his former student, Lloyd Santmyer, an instructor there. When the airmail pick-up began in 1939, Ray signed on as a reserve pilot, becoming one of the company's respected pilots.

Clyde Hauger, pilot Clyde's son, was a flight engineer on AAA's pick-up planes. He describes one of Raymond's feats:

Raymond perfected what he called 'The Dipsy Doodle.' He'd come in and make a pick-up the regular way. Then he'd go into a steep climb, stall the plane, turn, then zoom down and make another pick-up! Everytime the AAA people had a banquet, that 'Dipsy Doodle' would be a topic of conversation. One time he lost the engine, and had to make a forced landing. He took the plane between two trees and took off both wings!

On January 29, 1942, Pittsburgh was, as usual, socked in with smog and smoke. Somewhere in the air was an Army plane, long overdue at the airport. All AAA planes had reached their holding points at the last pick-up stations nearest Pittsburgh, and were being held up by Airway Traffic Control until the lost pilot was located. Raymond had just made his last pick-up at the Pitcairn station, when he saw the Army plane apparently trying to make an emergency landing at a golf course. Elder immediately radioed the Pittsburgh Control Tower, suggesting that the Tower call the Army pilot and advise him to follow him to Pittsburgh. The Tower made the call. Immediately, the Army pilot pulled into close formation with Raymond, who led him to Pittsburgh Airport. The Army plane had less than five minutes fuel supply when Raymond found him.

Seven days later, Raymond "Pappy" Elder became Raymond "The Flying Fire Chief" Elder. Flying Route B near Gallipolis, Ohio, Raymond noticed a burning house, the residence, as it was later discovered, of one J. L. Coleman, of Bidwell, Ohio. Since he saw no activity on the ground, Raymond assumed that the owner was away, and no one had as yet discovered the fire. Raymond dove and circled, trying to attract attention, but without success. Finally, he radioed AAA's Pittsburgh radio operator, Jimmy Ray, and gave him the information. Ray called the Pennsylvania State Police, who immediately contacted the Ohio Highway Patrol, who sent fire trucks to the scene. Fire fighters managed to save much of the owner's personal property.

Many years earlier, in the mid-1920s, after a day at Longview Flying Field, Raymond took off in his Canuck, bound for the family farm at Scottdale. Lloyd Santmyer picks up the story from there:

Raymond used to come over to Longview in the evenings. That must have been around 1926 or 1927, when I used to come out here every evening. Raymond would fly up from his farm. He was driving a truck for a fuel company, and in the evening he'd get the Jenny out, and he'd fly it up to Latrobe here, and then pilots from different places around would congregate and come over.

Sometimes there'd be three or four strange pilots in the evening, and I rode with all those guys, and Raymond would come over, and about dark he would leave and go back to the farm and put the airplane in an old wooden barn. Raymond was on his way home this one evening, and the wind had shifted, and he was landing on the side of a hill down beside the barn, and it wasn't the best place in the world to fly, but it was good enough. By Gosh! He cracked it up going in. The cockpit fell in on him and knocked him out. I think his dad was always, more or less, against aviation. While they took Raymond to the doctor, the old man went down and chopped the thing up with an axe.

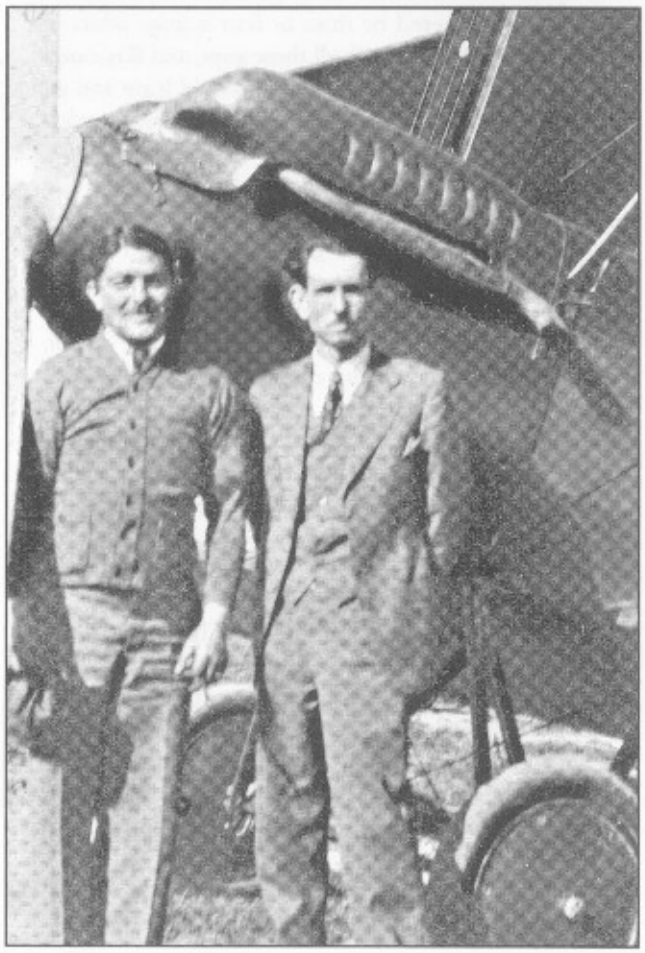
'That's the end,' his dad told Raymond. 'That's the last time you are going to fly in one of these damn crates!'

Raymond and his brother got out and collected the OX5 engine and the fittings and put it out in a shed. Later the shed became a sheep shed, and the engine and parts got covered over with straw and manure.

When we started the OX5 Club, Charlie and I got Raymond's permission, and I went down there to see if I could find the engine. I was at Allegheny Elizabeth at the time. I went down with my mechanic from Allegheny, George Markley, and Johnny Trunk from Clarion. Johnny was a contractor and had a pickup truck. Here, the farm had been sold. The sheep shed was still there, though, and so was the engine.

'Well, that's valuable to you is it?' the farmer asked.

I said, 'Yes, we want that for a keepsake for our club.'



And the guy said, 'If it's worth money to you, it ought to be worth something.'

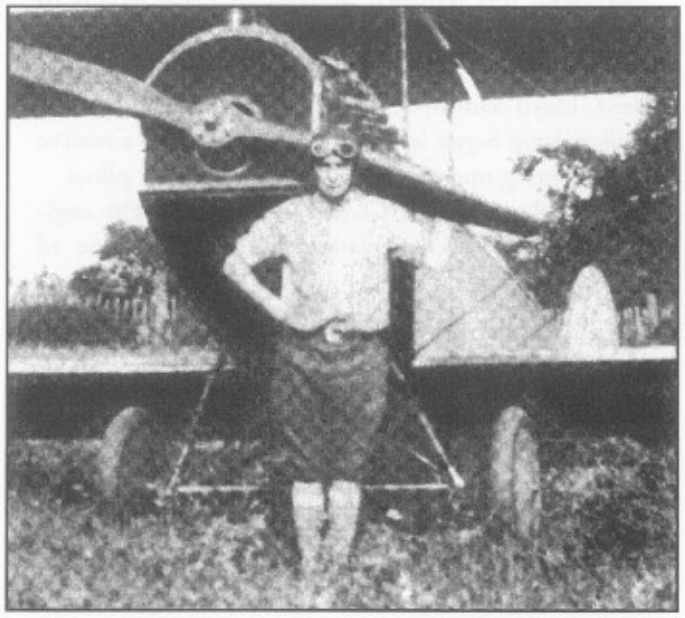
So, he wanted a hundred dollars for it or something like that.

I said, 'Oh, my goodness, that's junk, I couldn't do that.'

He said, 'Well, I'll take fifty, otherwise I'll sell it for junk.'

So, we gave him fifty dollars for it, and that's how the OX5 club got their engine. Johnny cleaned it up with steal wool, and built a display case for it.

Looking back, all who knew Raymond Elder will agree it was good fortune that he followed his own dream, rather than his father's stern wishes.



TOP LEFT: Captain Raymond "The Flying Fire Chief" Elder, All American Aviation. *(Courtesy of All American Aviation* The Pick-Up*).*

BOTTOM LEFT: Raymond Elder and a cousin at J. D. Hill Airport. *(Courtesy of Barry Elder).*

IMMEDIATELY ABOVE: A young Raymond Elder and his "Canuck" Jenny at Scottdale. *(Courtesy of Russell Brinkley,* Quadrant Aerographic, *July, 1962).*

Lloyd "The Saint" Santmyer

I never thought I would live to retirement. None of us, me, Raymond, Clyde, Dave, Carl, thought we would live very long.

Today, Lloyd Santmyer is ninety-one, a spry, humble, kind man who gets a twinkle in his eye whenever someone brings up the subject of airplanes; he has done as much for aviation as anyone in history.

Jim Carroll, Charlie Carroll's oldest son who is now in his nineties, tells of a conversation he once had with his father:

> Santmyer learned to fly right after I did. He had the same teacher, Ray Elder. He was a biscuit salesman for biscuit company in Greensburg, and he was a good boy, a good pilot, single. He left Latrobe and he went to work flying blind flying equipment for a company that made it. When the war broke out my dad met a friend named Larry Morrow in Export and asked, 'Where did Lloyd get to?' He left here and went south, but I don't know where he is.'
>
> Morrow said, 'He's down in Miami in the Air Force. He's pushin' a pencil.'
>
> My dad said, 'He's doing what? Pushing a pencil? He loves his airplanes. Hell! Lloyd had more blind flying experience than anyone in the country!'

Charlie was probably right. While in the Air Corps, Lloyd was given an "honorary" Doctor of Blind Flying degree by the Gore Field Institute for the Blind. In tendering the honor, James D. Rogers, Director of Instrument Flying of the 7th Ferrying Group at Great Falls, Montana, cited Lloyd's "unerring instinct to achieve the station in nocturnal and sub-weather conditions." A great deal of Lloyd's non-military blind-flying experience came without the benefit of instruments. He devised a way of getting past the dangerous ridges of the Allegheny Mountains by practicing on clear days a system of timing, then repeating the process when it was foggy. He also devised a method using signals from electric lines. Both methods are detailed later in the chapter on the air mail pick-up.

Carl Santmyer, Lloyd's son, describes a moment when, as a boy, he watched the air mail pick-ups at Latrobe:

> Once in a while my dad would be piloting the pick-up plane. If the fog was in, you could hear the plane, but you couldn't see it. Then, suddenly there it was, right between the posts. He'd drop a bag, and make the grab. Then he would disappear into the fog, and all you heard was the sound of the plane growing fainter and fainter. I was amazed that he even knew where he was, let alone be able to hook that rope.

Mail wasn't the only thing Lloyd and the other pilots picked up. Carl Santmyer continues:

> My dad flew through the apple growing areas during apple season, and often the people there would send up a second pick-up bag along with the regular bag. The second bag would have warm, apple pie and a tub of ice cream for him and the flight engineer. This was in appreciation of the good mail service these brave and dedicated pilots provided in all types of weather.

Boyhood in Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania

Lloyd grew up in Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania. His family home was next to the National Guard Armory. As World War I approached, Lloyd would watch the boys of Company E Militia drill prior to their departure for the fields of France. Too young to go himself, Lloyd followed the war from home, and was especially fascinated by the accounts and illustrations of early airplanes involved in dogfights. After the war, the Barnstormers began to make their rounds of America's rural communities.

By 1927, Lloyd's family had moved to Greensburg. Lloyd enrolled at Greensburg High School. His studies were important, but 1927 was the year of Charles

Lindbergh's transatlantic flight, and Lloyd, like many of his generation eager for similar adventure and glory, longed to fly. Only eight miles east on the Lincoln Highway was Charlie Carroll's Longview Flying Field. Nothing could keep Lloyd away from the place.

Lloyd started out at Latrobe as a "lineboy," selling tickets for rides, washing and fueling planes, and cranking engines. Occasionally, Raymond Elder would take him up for some "stick time."

Lloyd recalls those days:

> I graduated from high school in 1927, and Lindbergh flew in May of 1927, and I was still going to school and, cripes, I couldn't study those last days. I had been going to Charlie Carroll's airfield since 1926. I used to come out there all the time. That's when Charlie had just the Jenniess and the old LS-5. That's when Hodge Smith used to come out in the Jennies from Pittsburgh. I got to selling tickets and carrying gas and cranking the props, and helping Charlie work on them and all that stuff, and worked my way in. So I got to flying with all those guys, getting some stick time and everything, and while I was with the National Biscuit Company, I settled down in earnest and got enough time in to get my commercial license, and start teaching the students. But, up until then, I was hopping around pastures and stuff. But I'd be with Elder all the time. Elder and I flew a lot, barnstorming around the country, and going over to New Alex and everything. So, once in awhile he'd let me fly. So in order to do it, to get it done and over with, I said, 'Raymond, we gotta take enough time to get it going right.'

Elder honored Lloyd's request and began giving him full-time instruction. After Lloyd got both a mechanic and pilot's license, he stayed on at Latrobe as an instructor and mechanic, during which time he helped Charlie Carroll start the New Alexandria airport a few miles away on Route 22 (William Penn Highway).

Down to Bettis Field

Lloyd stayed on at Latrobe until 1935, when he went down to Bettis Field to help organize and instruct at a flight school owned by Becker Aviation. Among his many students were a couple of Lithuanians and some members of the Hitler Youth over here to get some flight training (the United States was still on good terms with Nazi Germany).

Lloyd always insisted that his students deliberately cause their aircraft to go into a spin, once to the right and once to the left, recovering each time. Today, Lloyd still believes that there are far too many licensed pilots who have never experienced a stall and spin, and wouldn't know how to recover if they did experience one. At Bettis, Lloyd met fellow Greensburger, Dick Coulter, founder of Central Airlines. The association would be a fruitful one for Lloyd.

The Instrument Landing System ((ILS)

In 1938, the U.S. Department of Commerce realized the need for radio instrument landings that would allow pilots to land in poor weather conditions. The Bureau of Standards issued a contract for such a system to the Washington Institute of Technology who developed the system in their College Park, Maryland lab. The system consisted of a directional beam that aligned an aircraft with the runway, and an inclined beam that guided it to a proper landing point. Air Track Manufacturing at the Allegheny County Airport built the first system. Lloyd, realizing that the system would have a significant impact on aviation, applied for and got the job of testing it. He spent the next year testing the system with a Stinson Reliant as his mount, flying with a shield placed over the windows of the cockpit. He was totally reliant on the ILS, or Instrument Landing System. Toward the end of the test period, Lloyd taught the famous racing pilot, Jacqueline Cochran, head of the U.S. Women Air force Service Pilots (WASP), to fly blind. The ILS remains in use today.

Pennsylvania-Central Airlines and All American Aviation

In 1940, after testing the ILS and completing reserve military duty at Wright Field in Dayton, Lloyd piloted Boeing 247s and DC3s for Dick Coulter's new Pennsylvania-Central Airlines. For anyone else, the job with PCA (later Capital, then United Airlines) would have offered security, but Lloyd couldn't resist a new aviation adventure. In the same year, he signed on with All American Aviation to do airmail pick-ups. Lloyd jumped at the opportunity to join his instructor, Ray Elder, on the pilot roster. "Besides," Lloyd says with pride, "It was a service second to none!"

Service in World War II

When World War II began, the Air Corps, impressed with his success in testing the ILS and his reputation as an instructor, activated Lloyd's reserve status, gave him the rank of Captain, and assigned him to train the first night fighter squadron at Fighter Command School in Orlando, Florida. Lloyd developed a curriculum that

combined instruction in the use of instruments, radio operation, and radar. Lloyd's squadron went to Italy in 1942, but Lloyd was asked to stay behind and work on a troop glider pick-up system that the Air Corps was developing at Wright Field.

The Glider Pick-up

Richard du Pont, owner of All American Aviation, had been appointed Civilian Advisor for Gliders on the staff of Air Corps Chief of Staff, "Hap" Arnold. Du Pont, a skilled glider pilot, had been asked to assist the U.S. government with glider assault and paratroop operations. Du Pont convinced Army brass that All American's air mail pick-up system would work just as well in picking up gliders. It was only natural that Du Pont remembered his former employee and recommended him to the Air Corps as test pilot. Norm Rintoul also worked on the project.

Lloyd describes the day of the first test:

> The All American engineers took the kind of equipment we used in the air mail planes and made it much bigger in size. Then they put it in the bomb bay of a B23 bomber. We set us a glider on the ground. Du Pont was part of the ground crew, all the brass was there, and a bunch of photographers and movie people. Fred Dent, the colonel who headed up Glider Test Branch, decided to fly the glider. It would be on his shoulders if the whole thing failed. I flew that B23 just like it was the old mail plane and grabbed up that glider on the first try!
>
> The B23 was just an interim airplane until the military could ready a Douglas C47 in time for the invasion of Sicily. When it was, Lloyd and a crew flew the Douglas to North Africa, where he trained men of the Troop Carrier Command in the new system.

Lloyd describes the trip over:

> I took the first big C47 that we had equipped for picking up the big gliders on the fly. On the way over to Africa, we were way overloaded. Between Greenland and Iceland, the weather came in, a bad front. We thought we left it behind in Greenland, but it was closing in everywhere. We were past our point of no return. No way was I going to try and make it back to Greenland. We were on an empty tank, and we were going down in the drink if we didn't do something. I told the crew, 'We're going down into Iceland.'
>
> Finally, we were at zero-zero, and still about half-an-hour from Iceland. I radioed in for clearance. What I did was use a little of the ILS beam system. The rain station was only about a mile from the airport, so the beam as narrow at that distance, and it lined up with the airport, and the altitude was right and everything. I figured out what my altitude was and how much descent it would take and how many minutes and seconds.
>
> 'We can't give you clearance,' they said. 'The field is closed.'
>
> I said, 'You call the C.O. and tell him we're coming in. Otherwise, I'm gonna have to declare and emergency, and they don't like that because there's a lot of paper work and everything!'
>
> They said, 'OK, OK. C.O. says you can have clearance to make one approach.'
>
> I reported my position, came in over the rain station, went back out, made my turn, got down low and up and everything, then came in, like we did in the B23. So many minutes, so many seconds, then BOOM! On the ground! We had to stop fast, because at our speed, we'd go off the runway pretty quickly. But I got us stopped. There we were, sitting in the fog. I call in, 'We're here. Send some Jeeps.'
>
> They answered, 'We can't find the Jeeps. We can't see them.'
>
> So we waited for about ten minutes. They finally came with some Jeeps. I said to the Army fellas with me, 'Don't say anything. Let me do the talking.'
>
> The Operations Manager asked me, 'What airline did you fly for?'
>
> I said, 'All American.'
>
> He said, 'Boy, You know your business!'
>
> Then we went on down to England, and landed for fuel. They told us about German fighters that were after our transports and ferry planes. Of course, we had no guns on the planes. We took off at night, in overcast, thinking they wouldn't find us. Just off the coast of Spain, one came out at us. We dropped down to about 6,000 feet, into the overcast, no lights, not even one to light a cigarette. After about an hour, we figured his fuel was low and he had to go back. I took one more look out of the astral hatch. It was all clear. We made it into Africa.

After North Africa, Lloyd returned to the States at the request of Admiral "Bull" Halsey, who was anxious to use the pick-up system in the Pacific island-hopping campaign. Lloyd met Halsey at Mustin Field in Philadelphia and gave him a demonstration.

Lloyd finished his military career flying supplies in the China-Burma-India Theatre for Air Transport Command. When the Allied Powers met at Potsdam, Lloyd flew the China delegation back from the meetings. His plane ran into heavy turbulence, and he became worried about his VIP passengers. Lloyd turned the aircraft over to his copilot, and went back to check on them. To his surprise, they were picnicking on wine and other provisions that they had packed in straw baskets. They gave Lloyd their broadest smiles and thanked him for the wonderful flight.

Return to AAA

After the war, Lloyd, now a major, went back to All American Aviation. By now they were using twin-engine Beechcraft, and were making pick-ups at 200 mph. Also, All American was slowly switching to passenger service. Lloyd was made chief check pilot. His duties included laying out service routes connecting small towns. He also advised airport owners on the sorts of electronic equipment that would complement receivers on the planes. When All American became Allegheny Airlines, Lloyd was made their Training and Civil Aeronautics Board Check Pilot for Douglas DC-3s.

Allegheny-Ludlum Steel

In 1951, Lloyd joined Allegheny Ludlum Steel Corporation as a pilot. Like many pilots of his generation, he learned in a Curtiss Jenny and finished his career in the jet age.

Lloyd's career was virtually accident free, but it was not for lack of trying. After all, he was one of the "Longview Boys," one of "Carroll's Hooligans." Once he tried to get permission from authorities in Washington to do a special stunt at an air show. What he wanted to do was secure a woman to the wing of a plane, then swoop in upside-down and have her pick up an American flag from the ground. They refused, adding, "And you're an airline pilot! What would people think?!"

Another time he cranked the prop on a plane. When the engine didn't kick over, Lloyd was set to make another attempt when suddenly the engine kicked in, prop spinning. "I was so close I couldn't even bend my knees. All I could do was sidle back a bit, then run like Hell! I was lucky the plane didn't lurch forward! All I could think of was the guy I saw once whose hat blew off after he started a plane. Without thinking he bent over to get it. You figure the rest!"

Once, while in Florida training night fighter pilots, his open-cockpit P-12 had a just-repaired brake system. On the check-out flight, the brakes locked when Lloyd was making a full-speed landing. The plane flipped over. When it finally came to a stop, Lloyd's flying helmet was worn through to his scalp.

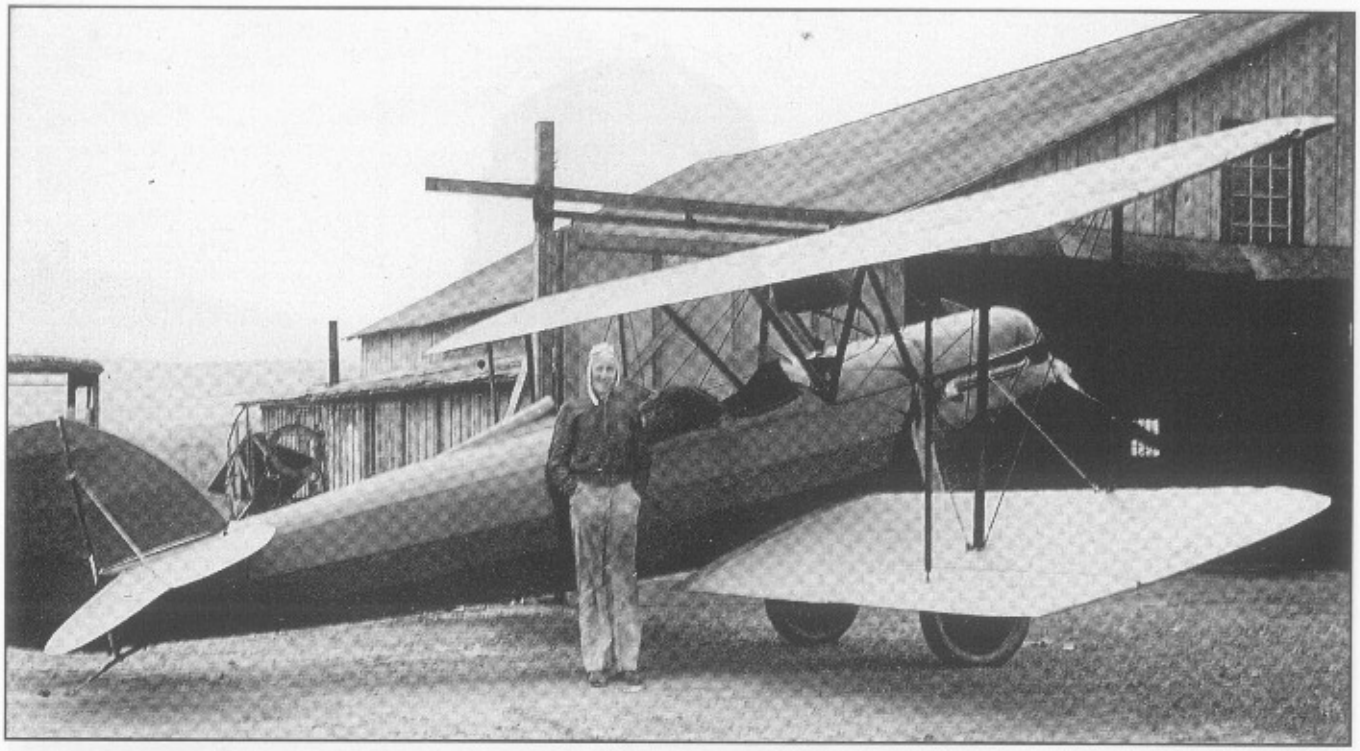
Also, Lloyd delighted in flying fighter planes low and upside down. He tells this story:

> We did a lot of upside down flying, close to the ground. I had one real good army plane that was real good at doing that, the Boeing P-12. Boy, was that ever a sweet plane. I'd go down along the highway there in Virginia, down below Washington, upside down, close to the ground, practicing, getting used to that thing, and the people would be sitting on their front porches, and they'd be waving. It would be in the cool of a summer evening. You just had to remember to push the stick forward!

"My God! I've Killed the Saint!"

One other time, during a glider pick-up, the glider pilot flew above Lloyd's plane instead of behind. The tail of his pick-up plane nearly destroyed, Lloyd released the glider. The glider pilot continued on his way, but Lloyd's plane went into a full-speed nose dive. Lloyd recovered barely 200 feet from the ground, a fact which was not known by the glider pilot, who radioed back to the field, "My God! I've killed the Saint!"

Captain Lloyd Santmyer, All American Aviation.
(Courtesy of Carl Santmyer).



TOP: Lloyd Santmyer poses with his OX5 Waco 10 at J.D. Hill Airport.
BOTTOM: Lloyd in the cockpit of the same plane. *(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).*

Lloyd Santmyer *(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger)*.

Clyde Hauger

Seventeen-year-old Clyde Hauger dashed down the stairs of his home in Donegal. He stopped in front of the hall mirror to adjust his collar. He had to look important. Clyde had been taking flying lessons from Carl Strickler, borrowing flight hours from the young pilot in an OX5 Challenger at Longview Flying Field. However, Clyde wanted to be able to take to the air anytime, anywhere.

Clyde's father called from outside. Clyde slung his bag onto his shoulder and hurried out the door to his father's waiting truck. Today, he was going to get a plane of his own.

Two years later, Clyde was flying in his Eagle Rock biplane, out of his own hangar on the Ulery Farm in Donegal Township. Clyde and his father had originally built the hangar in the middle of Donegal borough, much to the dismay of the residents of Donegal, who forced them to move it to the farm.

In 1934, while a huge crowd watched, Clyde flew over downtown Greensburg and dropped a wristwatch from one thousand feet. The Greensburg *Morning Tribune* had run an ad claiming that the watch would still run, even when dropped from such a distance.

In the late 1930s, Clyde developed a landing strip on property owned by the Niederheizer family in Donegal Township. The landing strip became somewhat of a local attraction, with stands selling beer and sandwiches to onlookers. On Sundays and holidays, Clyde would haul passengers out of the park in his Taylor Cub. However, these seemingly leisurely trips were not without peril. Once, Clyde flew in too low. While the crowds looked on, Clyde hooked the undercarriage of his airplane on a fence. The Cub was damaged, and Clyde's wife, who had been flying with him, broke her collarbone.

Clyde began flying the airmail pick-up for All American Aviation in 1941. Clyde quickly became a top pilot for All American. Along with flight mechanic Raymond Garcia, Clyde was chosen to staff the operations department of All American's Brazilian subsidiary. For months, Clyde and Raymond trained Brazilian pilots in Rio de Janiero to perform the air pick-up, while developing pick-up routes in Brazil.

After Clyde's return from Brazil, he moved immediately to another project. Along with his friend Lloyd Santmyer, Clyde founded the Greensburg City Airport on Carbon Hill, just a five-minute drive from the County Courthouse. The Carbon airport, developed in 1947, was built on property leased from the Repaski family, and included a converted barn for storage of airplanes. Eventually, Clyde and Lloyd built a Quonset hut hangar that held eight or nine airplanes. The Carbon airport offered flying lessons and classes, which were supported by funds from the GI bill.

Clyde and Lloyd acquired a Link Trainer and stored it in a rented building in Greensburg. The device, a small cabin-type affair containing an instrument panel, was used to simulate blind-flying. Clyde often instructed novice pilots in the state-of-the-art machine before taking them out into the sky.

In 1950, the Carbon airport came under consideration for development into a city-county airport. It looked hopeful. However, the closeness of the airport to the town caused some to complain about the noise, and the project was abandoned. Unfazed, Clyde and Lloyd transformed the airport into Westmoreland Aircraft Sales. The two men sold Cessna aircraft out of the airport until its dissolution in 1952. Today, the site is the home of Greensburg Central Catholic High School.

Clyde Hauger was notorious for crash landings. While flying for All American, Clyde's planes were forced down thirteen different times, whether from leaking oil, inclement weather, or stuck landing gears. After leaving All American Aviation following the end of the airmail pick-up, Clyde flew as the chief pilot for Bruno Ferrari's Latrobe-Dill Construction.

On January 16, 1957, Clyde was flying Bruno Ferrari's twin-engine Beechcraft over Charleston, West Virginia, on his way home from Florida. He and his passengers, John Stacio and Harry Ridilla, found themselves stuck underneath two heavy cloud layers. Ice was beginning to form on the wings of the Beechcraft, and the plane was losing altitude. Clyde spotted a nearby hillside, covered with snow. He tried a belly landing on the hillside. The plane crashed, gas tanks bursting immediately into flame. Clyde, just forty-seven years old, was killed.

ABOVE: Clyde Hauger's ID badge from All American Aviation. *(Clyde Hauger, Jr. Collection).*

RIGHT: Teenager Clyde Hauger. *(Clyde Hauger, Jr. Collection).*

BOTTOM: Clyde Hauger and his Eagle Rock biplane. *(Clyde Hauger, Jr. Collection).*

Russell Brinkley

Newspaper reporter, barnstormer, aviator, instructor, airport manager, public relations expert, promoter, air show announcer, author and editor, TV weatherman, first president of the OX5 Club, founder of Silver Wings Fraternity--Russ Brinkley was all of these. And he wasn't shy about it!

Russ started out writing for newspapers in Jamestown and Olean, New York, then drifted down to Clarion, Pennsylvania, where he did similar work. Or, it might have been the other way around. Apparently, Russ never talked much about his personal life. Even among his surviving friends, Lloyd Santmyer, "Reds" MacFarlane, and Lou Beemer of HarrisburgJet, such knowledge is hazy. Most of what appears in this biographical note has been gleaned from Russ's 1960s aviation magazine, *Quadrant Aerographic*, conversations with Lou Beemer, "Reds" MacFarlane, Lloyd Santmyer, and references in the *Latrobe Bulletin*.

Russ and Bettis Field

In 1925, Russ, just hired by the *McKeesport Journal*, talked his boss into letting him cover the opening of Bettis Field. On his first visit, Russ met pilot Merle "Mope" Moltrup, a friend of Eddie Stinson who was just then building his first biplane at Detroit. It was a cold day and Russ watched Moltrup try to take off in a old Standard biplane that had been sitting tied down during the first snow of the season. There was a steep embankment on the field. Moltrup headed down the field toward the embankment, but he was having great difficulty getting the right wing up. He stopped the plane, got out of the cockpit, pulled a knife from his flying suit, and slit the trailing edge of the lower right wing. Out poured a couple gallons of water. The rotted wing fabric, once covered by snow that had since melted, had allowed water to seep in. Only Moltrup's quick thinking avoided a potentially fatal crash. At Bettis, Russ also met a teenager who spent more time at the field than at school. The truant officers always knew where to find him. After a small building was erected on the field, the boy managed to create a hiding place in it, a small cubby-hole unknown to his searchers. The boy would grow up to be one of the most respected pilots in the area, an aviation historian of merit, and a successful airport operator. His name was Ken Scholter.

Shortly after covering the dedication of Bettis Field, Russ lost his job at the *McKeesport Journal*. He offended the higher-ups by selling an advertisement rather than referring the matter to the advertising department. Worse than that, he wrote nice things about the Postmaster, a mortal enemy of the City Editor, McDonald.

Russ got another job with a newspaper in Swissvale, a suburb of Pittsburgh, this time as an editor. The community was strange to Russ, and he was hard-pressed to fill up an eight-page weekly with local news. To compensate, he lifted stories from other neighborhood publications. One on unfortunate occasion, he reprinted a story about a couple who, as he says: ". . . had not undergone the benefit of clergy." After that, Russ was on the road again.

On to the Waco Factory

Turning his interest once again to aviation, Russ hitchhiked to C.P. Mayer's field in Bridgeville to seek advice from "Pop" Cleveland and Jim Wagner, two noted airmen of the day. They directed him to the new Waco factory in Troy, Ohio. Russ made his way there and was hired at the handsome wage of twenty-cents per hour, for as many hours a day he wished to work, and he worked many. He started by covering and sewing fabric on the wings of the final 100 Waco Nines and the first 100 Waco Tens. By mid-summer Russ had developed such a deep tan that he was accused of being a Negro by some

of his more racially motivated colleagues. In spite of that, or because of it, he was given a foreman's position, one that required harder work. He was given the task of supervising the cleaning of a barn-full of war-surplus Curtiss engines that were to be used to power the Wacos. With that task finished, Russ looked forward to once again joining the production line. He was disappointed. The chief supervisor had other plans. Russ was to remove rusted farm machinery, old automobiles, and assorted junk from the main floor of the barn to make room for wings and spare parts. As Russ tells it: "I took one long last look at the foreman, walked back to the factory office and drew my pay!"

Chance Visit to Longview Flying Field

The same night, Russ rode the electric tram to Dayton, Ohio. To pass some time, he went to the theatre to watch the famous Two Black Crows. As chance would have it, a old vaudeville act that had once played in Russ's home town was on the bill. Russ had become acquainted with them back then, and decided to relive old times. Backstage, the troupe invited him to ride along with them to New York. Russ took them up on it. That was 1927. He might have gotten there, too, had it not been for an empty gas tank, impatient traveling companions, and a hung-over driver.

This is how Russ tells the story:

> I held firmly to the door handle as we wended our way along the narrow Lincoln Highway, narrowly missing adventure at every turn in the snaking road. By 11 a.m., we had traversed approximately forty miles and the driver decided that we needed some gas. Fortunately, the first service station ahead [*owned by Michael Peretto*] was situated at the edge of a field [*Longview Flying Field*] where two World War I biplanes and a shiny, new American Eagle [*Dave Patterson's*] were parked in a line to attract passing motorists. While my companions had the car serviced, I wandered up to the airplanes and found a couple of men engaged in repairing a tire on the new airplane. On several occasions, I heard my party calling to me, but I ignored their summons. The next thing I noted was my bag being dropped out of the car as it sped off in the direction of New York. I was filled with mixed emotions. I was glad to be rid of the drunks and at the same time, I realized I was a long way from New York and with limited resources.
>
> Once I became acquainted with the men at the airport, I learned that they worked at other trades during the week, and spent their Saturdays and Sundays building up flight time [Raymond Elder drove a truck; Lloyd Santmyer worked for a Greensburg biscuit company]. They made no particular effort to attract passengers. If someone showed up and asked to be taken for a ride, they were accommodated. They had never been subjected to the kind of pressure I had learned to apply. In my opinion, the boys might have done well to go after more business. Since the Lindbergh flight, the public was becoming air-minded and many people were eager to get off the ground. Business was picking up at other small airports across the nation. I offered my services to see what could be done on the local level. My offer was accepted and my first act was to stand along the highway to attract passing cars onto the field. Visitors who weren't interested in taking a ride might at least want a drink or a sandwich, both of which were available at the field refreshment stand.
>
> Within a few minutes, I had a goodly crowd on the parking line and our guests were in a receptive mood. We set ride prices at three and five dollars, and by the time the sun went down, the two pilots [Ray Elder and Carl Strickler] were drooping in their tracks. I had my nicker pockets filled with crumpled banknotes, and all concerned were eager to get to the nearest beanery.
>
> By the time we had eaten and counted the day's receipts, all of us were ready to turn in. I found a hotel room nearby and, before by new associates had taken their leave, each of them had shaken my hand and left in my palm the equivalent of a week's salary at Waco. What was more, they invited me to stay around in hopes that I might effect permanent association with the field. That was my introduction to the airport at Latrobe, Pennsylvania.
>
> There was little or no weekday activity at the airport for some time after my arrival. It left me with plenty of time for other things, so I found time to renew my old practice of writing for the aviation magazines.
>
> During the year that followed, the airport became one of the most-extensively known aviation bases in the nation. Each weekend assured an air show for the visiting crowds that we gleaned from the Lincoln Highway. Our regular bill-of-fare included such attractions as parachute jumps by Joe Crane and Smiles O'Timmons, supplemented by wingwalking by visiting daredevils and aerial acrobatics by Carl Strickler and Ray Elder.
>
> All the aviators and promoters from the area were regular visitors to the airport during the heyday of the barnstormers; Cliff Ball, D. Barr Peat, Dewey Noyes and Blanch Noyes, C. P. Mayer, Merle Moltrup, and many others. There was a huge crowd when Longview Flying Field was renamed J.D. Hill Airport.

Russ took some flying instruction from the pilots at Longview Flying Field, but did not pass his pilot's test until 1934, after formal instruction at the American School of Aviation in Chicago. While at Longview Field, he took a job as a columnist with the *Latrobe Bulletin*. Through his columns, Brinkley played a major role in developing publicity for the dedication of the J.D. Hill

Airport. While in the area, Russ traveled to many airshows, including those at Elmira, Cleveland, and Teterboro. On some of these trips he was accompanied by Latrobe's young pilot, Lew Strickler, and Livingstone "Pops" Clewell, of the neighboring town of Kingston.

Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport and Beyond

In 1929, Russ became Commercial Manager for the Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport. He was back on the payroll at Hill Airport in 1930. From there, Russ moved on to New York where he edited several aviation magazines, including *Air Transportation Weekly.* In the years that followed he flew to nearly every airport in the United States, Canada and Mexico as a charter pilot, writer, and flying instructor. Eventually, he settled in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where he published his own aviation magazine *Quadrant Aerographic.* In 1960, at Harrisburg, Russ set a world record by flying forty different models of aircraft, including antiques and helicopters, all within a twelve-hour period. He eventually produced a manuscript for a book titled *Wings Over Main Street*, an account of his experiences in aviation.

Russ Brinkley at the Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport, 1929.
(Courtesy of Lou Beemer).

Russ Brinkley with Lou Strickler (left), Pennsylvania's youngest licensed pilot, at the Teterboro, New Jersey air show, 1930.
(Courtesy of Lou Beemer).

The book was never published, but it was serialized in issues of *Quadrant Aerographic*. Unfortunately, the manuscript has been lost and there are many gaps in the one remaining microfilm version of *Quadrant* in the New York Public Library.

Russ's relationship with Carroll and the airport at Latrobe would continue for many years, and his association with Latrobe and Saint Vincent College would continue into the 1980s. Russ was on hand on August 27, 1955, the day Carroll's brainchild, the OX5 Club was founded. Russ was elected president. A few years later, disappointed and angry at not being re-elected, Russ resigned and formed the Silver Wings Fraternity. By that time, Charlie Carroll, not included in the new plans for what had become the Latrobe-Westmoreland Airport, had retired with his family to Florida. Russ was back in Latrobe in 1962 publicizing his book. He came again in 1978 to award the Rev. Alcuin Tasch, O.S.B. a Silver Wings Fraternity certificate for Tasch's work in aviation instruction. Russ, Father Alcuin, and Charlie Carroll had started the world's first college/aeronautics school fifty years earlier at the J.D. Hill Airport.

Frank Fox

"Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work in your life."

A father and his two sons climb aboard a Curtiss OX5 Seagull. The year is 1921. The place is Atlantic City, New Jersey. The six-year-old dons a World War 1 pilot's cap. The pilot revs the OX5 engine, the Seagull takes the waves smoothly, then bounces, picks up speed, and is airborne. It circles over the boardwalk, banks, and heads out to sea. The six-year-old and his brother look over the sides of the flying machine, fascinated by the whitecaps and the tiny sailboats below. After about thirty minutes, the machine gradually loses altitude as the pilot prepares for a landing. The plane drifts down and seems to hover for a few seconds. Then, as if an invisible hand had taken charge of events, the machine gently sets down in the inlet and taxis to a stop. The six-year-old climbs out of the plane onto the quay and runs up to his father.

"Dad! You know what! I'm going to be a pilot!" he says.

And so he did. He became one of the best. The six-year-old was Frank Fox from Greensburg, Pennsylvania. A couple of years later, Frank and his brother George took to hanging out at Longview Flying Field in Latrobe where they watched the planes coming and going, never missing an air show, and getting to know Charlie Carroll. Charlie welcomed kids at Longview. They were ready to do a few chores in exchange for being allowed to hob nob with the pilots, or sit in cockpits, or even go up for a spin. Who knew? Maybe one of them would grow up to become another Eddie Rickenbacker. When he got old enough to fly himself, Frank and Charlie became friends, and they stayed friends until Charlie died in 1973. When Charlie retired in 1959, it was Frank Fox who bought Charlie's OX5 Challenger.

As a youngster, Frank and two buddies built a glider in the Fox basement. They took the contraption to the hill at the State Police Barracks in Greensburg. Frank, of course, was the pilot. There was some advance publicity and a large crowd was on hand to watch the demonstration. The wind was right, and Frank's friends pushed him off. Frank never got to enjoy himself because his first public appearance as a pilot lasted less than a second. The glider's wings folded, and the craft came to an ignominious end. It would be different next time. Next time his aircraft would have an engine in it.

Frank soloed in 1931, after four hours of instruction from Dick Coulter of Greensburg. Frank was sixteen. His plane was an E-2 Club. Frank's Atlantic City dream had come true, but he would go on dreaming.

Frank graduated from Greensburg High School in 1933, where he lettered in basketball and track. Then he attended Saint Vincent College from 1935-1936. At Saint Vincent they called him "Streaky," because he had great speed as a football and basketball player. But college wasn't for him. He couldn't stand "working on the ground," not when there was work to do "in the skies."

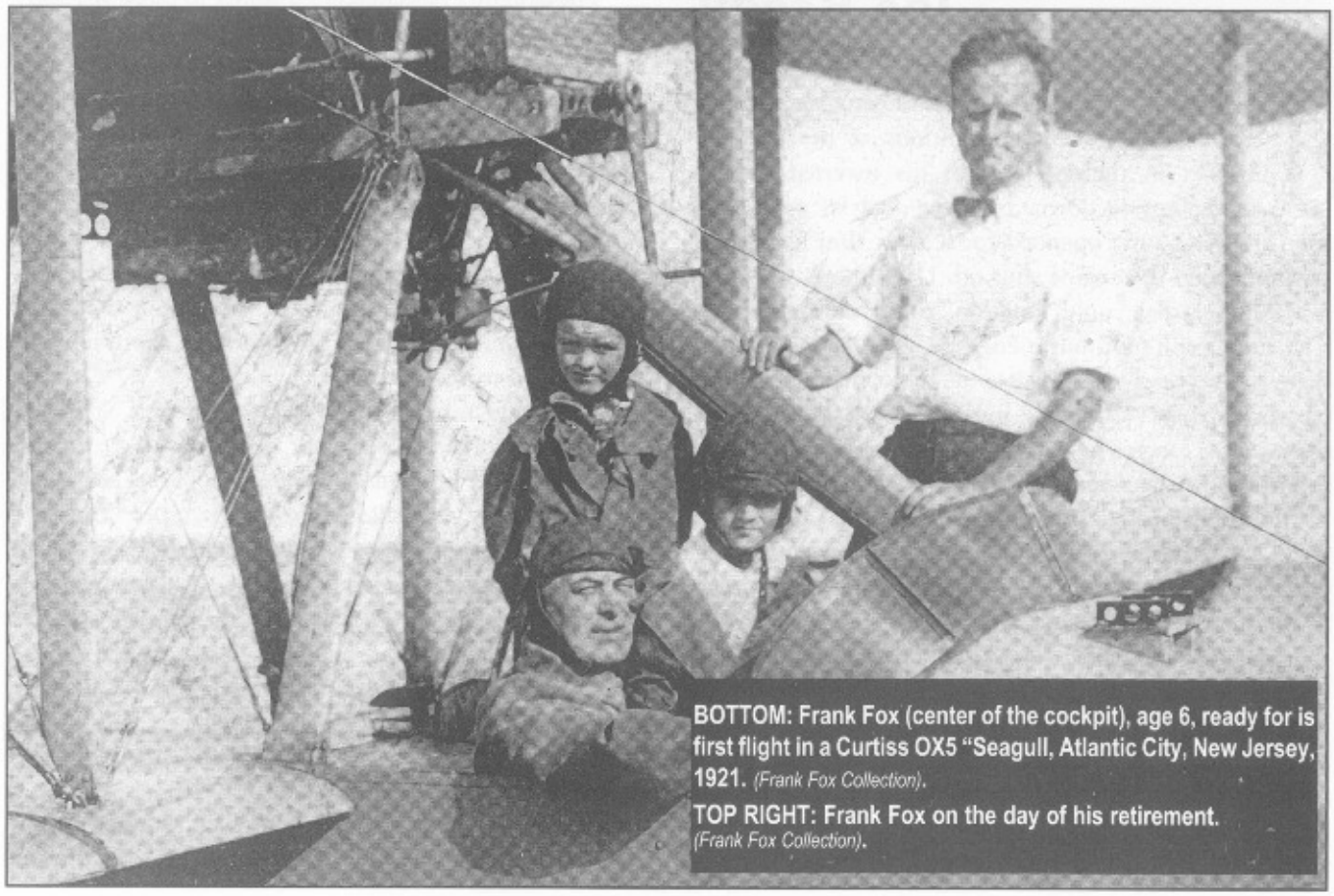
In 1936, Frank joined Central Airlines in Detroit as an agent. In 1941, Frank's good friend, Lloyd Santmyer, helped him get hired as First Officer for Pennsylvania-Central Airlines Detroit operation. It was the airline founded by his flight instructor, Dick Coulter. In Detroit, Frank flew DC-3s, then received his Airline Transport Rating for the Boeing 247-D. He became a Captain July 1942. Frank stayed with the airline during its changes through Capitol Airlines to United, and retired at the mandatory age of 60. He had come a long way from that rumbling OX5 in Atlantic City fifty-five years before.

Frank and Evelyn Fox finally settled in Rockville, Maryland, but the memories of those early years at

Longview Flying Field would never leave Frank.

He landed there a couple or times in the early eighties in his restored Waco. "I often thought what Charlie would say now!" Frank said.

There would be no retirement for Frank. He continued to participate in aircraft restoration, flying meets, and the activities of numerous aviation associations. In his lifetime, he logged 42,000 hours in one kind of airplane cockpit or another. He made nonstop flights from Baltimore to Hawaii in United Airlines DC-8s. He flew Lowell Thomas around for a week's tour of the United States. In 1942, he demonstrated a Harlow aircraft for his hero, Charles Lindbergh. He made five forced landings. He made a parachute jump at Kenny Scholter's Butler Airport in 1948. He was a charter member of the OX5 club and the OX5 Aviation Pioneers Hall of Fame, the Aero Club of Pittsburgh, the Antique Aircraft Association, the Experimental Aircraft Association, the Quiet Birdmen, the AOPA, the Aviation Historical Society, the Bonanza Society, the Soaring Society of America, the Wings Club, the Pennsylvania Pilot's Council, and the ALPA. In 1999, Frank was given the Wright Brothers Master Aviation Award.



BOTTOM: Frank Fox (center of the cockpit), age 6, ready for is first flight in a Curtiss OX5 "Seagull, Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1921. *(Frank Fox Collection).*

TOP RIGHT: Frank Fox on the day of his retirement. *(Frank Fox Collection).*

Joe Reedy

Joe Reedy loved to fly upside down. He thrilled crowds during aerial exhibitions at the Latrobe Airport in the 1930s with his inverted stunts. Flying upside down, however, had its problems; the carburetor only operated for a short time in such a position, then the engine shut off. Undaunted, Joe built a carburetor that could function in any configuration. The engine still quit, but it engaged again almost immediately. The brief pause was enough to make air show crowds anxious. With his invention, Joe flew upside down for as long as he desired, which was often, according to the recollections of his daughter, Janet Matchett.

Joe Reedy offered more to aviation than just a few tricks and thrills. A brilliant inventor, instructor, engineer and pioneer aviator, Joe Reedy is important to the story of the Latrobe Airport and aviation in Pennsylvania.

Joe came from a hard-working family. His father was a steel worker. Joe himself was a paradigm of the American self-made man, never having gone beyond the seventh grade, yet achieving an international reputation as an engineer. After suffering a debilitating injury on the job, Reedy's father had to stay home to recuperate. Joe and his brother picked up where their father left off. Joe became an renowned structural-steel worker and field superintendent.

Joe began flying in the late 1920s at the Hill Airport. He developed friendships and associations with Charlie Carroll, Raymond Elder, Russ Brinkley and Lloyd Santmyer. He taught George Allen, the first African-American commercial pilot in Pennsylvania, meteorology and navigation so George could pass his flight test. He taught Greensburg's Dick Coulter, the founder of Pennsylvania-Central Airlines, how to fly. In 1930, he helped Charlie Carroll set up a steel hangar at the New Alexandria Airport.

When the United States became involved in World War II, Joe offered his services to the U.S. Army Air Corps as an instructor, but his knowledge as an engineer proved too valuable. In 1939 he built the largest crane in the world. His designs for coal tipples got him involved in the coal industry during the war years. As a result of these great engineering feats, he stayed on the home front. It must have been difficult for a man like Joe Reedy, whose mind was always affixed on the next flight, to be told he was more valuable in an area other than aviation. Nevertheless, flying remained his number one passion, and on the weekends, when he was not busy with war work, he still did stunt flying.

His daughter remembers his ability to build airplanes from scratch. Cannibalizing parts from other aircraft, Reedy constructed his own creations at home. The glue and "dope" used on the fabric of these planes filled the house with unpleasant odors, but the end result carried Joe off on new adventures in the sky. Once, at the Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport, he crashed one of his "home-made" jobs. He came home unfazed by the accident to an anxious family that feared him dead. He suffered only a cut finger, and the incident had already slipped his mind. He was already thinking about his next flight, his next invention.

"You have to realize," says Janet Matchett, "this was a man who worked hundreds of feet in the air for a good bit of his life. Why would an airplane crash bother him?"

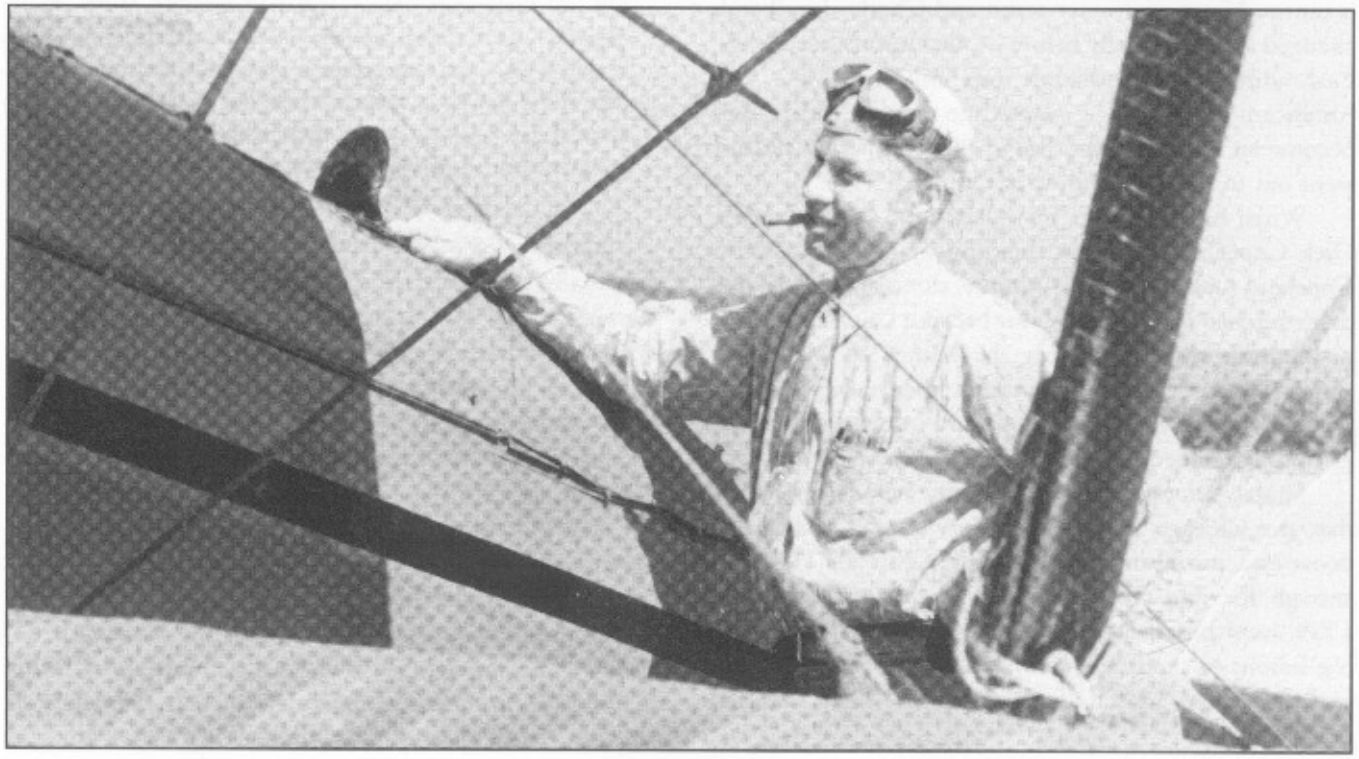
Most of the early pilots were like that, possessing the ability to shrug off danger and mortality like a shiver. Either that or they made a joke of it. Joe is reputed to have flown under more than one bridge in Pittsburgh. His upside-down feats are still well-known. When the era of the air mail pick-up was in full swing Reedy, jokingly unimpressed with the skill of the pilots, attached a hook to the tail of his plane and made a pick-up flying upside down! It was all in good fun!

Joe Reedy amassed more than 14,000 hours in the air. He remained a constant out at the Latrobe Airport

until his death at the age of seventy-five. At his funeral, a procession of aircraft flown by pilots who knew him well in his lifetime circled his grave site to honor a man who gave most of his life to aviation.

RIGHT: Joe Reedy as "Uncle Sam" at an early airshow, J.D. Hill Airport. *(Courtesy of Janet Matchett).*

BELOW: Joe Reedy with a Waco aircraft at Latrobe Airport, 1940s. Joe was seldom without his cigar, except on occasions when he quit smoking in order to save money to purchase parts for his homebuilt aircraft. *(Courtesy of Janet Matchett).*



Earl Metzler

I've been flying with the wing spring for years, and they won't even look at it.

Earl Metzler was born along Hill Creek in Somerset County a little more than ten years into the new century. In 1914, he moved with his family to Greensburg, went to school there, and helped his father and brother in the family ice and coal business. Nineteen-twenty-seven and Charles Lindbergh changed his life. Shortly before he died in February 2000, Earl admitted, "Lindbergh was my hero, the All-American Hero, and I wanted to emulate him, and become an airplane pilot. So, in the summer of 1928, I went out to the Hill Airport in Latrobe."

When Earl got there, he walked up to a young man, Dick Copeland, who was standing by a Curtiss Jenny. Copeland took Earl for ten-minute, three-dollar ride, one that stretched into half-an-hour because Copeland wasn't making the kinds of landings he wanted to. He would simply touch down for an instant, then take off again. When they finally landed, Copeland informed Earl that he had just soloed himself the day before.

Shortly after, Earl saw an ad in the newspaper stating that the Chicago Aeronautical Service was taking students and promising them jobs in Chicago. That was enough for Earl. He signed up, and in the winter of 1929, went to Chicago where he got a job and took flying lessons at the Cook County Airport, flying in open cockpits, often in ten degree weather. Then, as Earl describes:

> In the spring, my brother wanted to go away, so he asked me to come home and work the family trucks. I went back to Hill Airport and took more flying lessons. Ray Elder was my teacher. We flew a Waco 10, a nice-flying machine. On that humpbacked field it made nice landings. I flew for fifteen minutes at a time. It cost me seven dollars and fifteen cents. On September 25, 1929, Ray decided that I should fly alone. I soloed with three other men, one of them Charlie Carroll's son, Jimmy.

Though he soloed that day, Earl didn't get a license until much later. The Great Depression had set in, and he simply didn't have the money. He went into the long-distance trucking business with his brother, but aviation remained his first love. An idea slowly formed in his mind:

> I found out that the Ryan Lindbergh flew across the Atlantic was an unstable airplane. It didn't have the kind of dihedral angle that gives stability to an airplane. He actually wanted it that way so he didn't have to work to stay awake. Cliff Ball had one of these Ryans, and his mechanics were adjusting the dihedral by threading out the threads on the struts. I said to them, 'Why don't you just have a hydraulic jack there to give you any kind of dihedral you want?'
>
> I decided to get a patent on what I called a wing-adjusting device that would increase the dihedral in flight to give you exactly the kind you wanted. So, in 1931, I applied for and got a patent on a wing-adjusting device for monoplanes.
>
> Charlie Carroll and the people at Latrobe Airport helped me out. I got FAA approval and sold a number of kits to Taylorcraft. Then I started putting them on Cessnas. I got a 170-B, put the shock-absorbing struts on it, and it came out very stable. It practically flew by itself. The Army looked at it for a while, but became disinterested. I just couldn't do the two inches of paperwork to get grants for the project. All my patents ran out.

Earl Metzler stayed around aviation for a long time, eventually managing the Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport during its final days in the 1950s. He opened a machine shop in Pleasant Unity, Pennsylvania, which he called "Wings With Springs." He continued trying to market his invention into his later years, always without success, always with frustration. "No one will listen," he said. "No one will give it a fair try. Some are even afraid to go up in an airplane installed with the spring. Someday, someone will listen and respond."

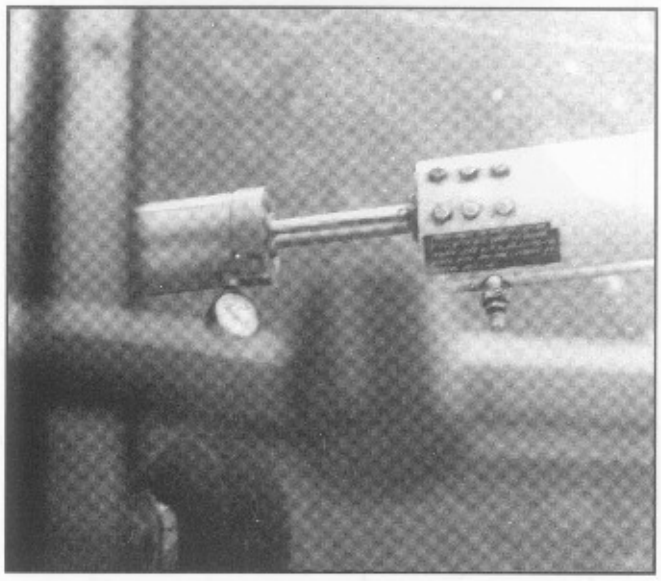
But few people did.

Among Earl's papers is a copy of the January 1985 issue of The Vintage Airplane. In it is an article by Ruby Garrett of Clinton, Arizona, a retired TWA captain. For thirteen years, Garrett flew his Cessna 180 from the

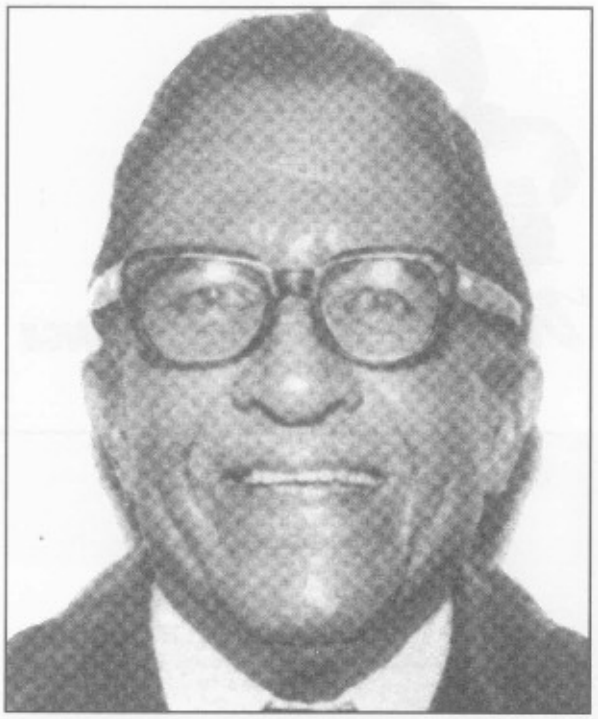
Midwest to California each January. On several of occasions, Garrett had to delay his flight because of dangerous mountain turbulence. His article reads in part:

> In 1981, my regular January flight over mountain and desert became a new experience in comfort and security. The flight was made in the same air of previous years, but this 1981 flight never required a power reduction in either rough air or in let-down from cruise altitude. My head didn't hit the headliner, the seatbelt never tugged my back to the cushion, and the cabin never sharply jolted me once during some thirty hours of flying desert thermals, crossing mountain ridges, and cruising beneath the overcast layers where the choppy air lives.
>
> The difference was a modification called 'Wings With Springs,' and oil-damped air spring built into the lift strut of the Cessna. The idea goes back at least to Waldo Waterson and possibly further, but the modern development and subsequent STC was accomplished by Earl Metzler of Pleasant Unity, Pennsylvania.
>
> We found no negative aspect to this modification, and now that I've been exposed to the benefits, I would honestly prefer not to fly a light plane over that route without 'wings with springs.' This has been an easy way to add utilization, comfort, safety and value to the grand old Cessna.

Earl died just short of his ninetieth year, refusing treatment for a heart ailment. Until the end, he visited his shop in Pleasant Unity every day. His files were full of correspondence with FAA officials, military departments, aircraft manufacturers, colleagues. In the corners of the shop stood his invention in various stages of assemblage. He loved to talk about his Wings With Springs, but even more, he loved to talk about airplanes and flying, and all the old-timers he got to know back in the days just after Charles Lindbergh flew the Atlantic. After all, he was one of them.



TOP: Logo for Earl Metzler's "Wings With Springs."
CENTER: Earl Metzler's shock absorber apparatus mounted to the wing of a Cessna aircraft. The shock absorber uses oil to slow the movement of the wing strut and compressed air provides the spring action.
BOTTOM: Earl Metzler's invention mounted on his Aeronca, pictured at the Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport in the early 1930s.
(Courtesy of Earl Metzler).



George Allen

George Allen was an African-American, and like many black citizens of his generation, he suffered for it. In the end, he triumphed. He was more than just an aviator. He paved the way for many other African-American pilots. He would become the first African-American commercial pilot in Pennsylvania, and one of the first in the country.

While a drummer with various dance bands from the Pittsburgh area, George managed to squeeze in some flight lessons. He made his first solo flight in a Waco 10 OX5 in 1933, at Bettis Field. His flight instructor was aviation Hall of Famer, Lloyd Santmyer.

Santmyer describes the day George got his pilot's license:

> I took George down to Bettis for his test. As George waited by the plane, the licensing official asked me, "Lloyd, can that boy fly?"
>
> 'Just watch,' I answered.
>
> Now, I always made sure my students could get out of a spin. Too many people are flying today who can't do that! Anyway, I had my students do two spins and recover, one from the right and one from the left. I had them get the hanger in their sights then climb, stall the plane, then recover. I had them do that twice. I told George to make sure to close the engine vents on the Waco because if it cooled down in the spin it would cut out. The first stall went OK. On the second one, the engine cut out. Now there wasn't really a place at Bettis where you could do a nice glide down. George got the plane righted and did a beautiful spiral all the way down.
>
> He got out of the plane and came over to me. I said, 'George, I told you to close the vents so the engine wouldn't cut out. Now go up and finish your test.'
>
> He went back up. I went into the office. The official asked, "Where's your boy?"
>
> I said, 'He's finishing his test.'
>
> He said, 'Hell, after what I just saw, I signed his license. It's back there on the desk!'

The same year he got his wings, George bought an old Eaglerock OX5 laying neglected in the corner of a hanger out at the Latrobe Airport for $300 dollars. He overhauled and repaired the aircraft to make it flight-worthy and was soon regularly logging in hours in the skies above Latrobe. In 1937 George acquired a transport license Number 32630. Then, Charlie Carroll hired him as an instructor at the Carroll School of Aviation, where George taught Civil Air Patrol students from Saint Vincent College. Among George's other students was Fred Rogers of the PBS television series Mister Roger's Neighborhood.

At the outset of World War II, the need for experienced pilots was tantamount. George served as Chief Pilot for Civil Pilot Training and Flight Examiner at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, the famed, segregated flight school for blacks. The airmen who graduated from Tuskegee went on to achieve legendary fame in overseas service during World War II, being feared and respected by German pilots in the skies over Europe. They were the only fighter outfit in World War II to never lose an escorted bomber to enemy fighter planes. In 1943, George was appointed Squadron Commander at Tuskegee's Primary Flight School. While at Tuskegee, George flew PT-17s, AT-6s and C-45s.

After the war, George returned to the Latrobe Airport to continue his work with Charlie Carroll. In 1955, he joined the OX5 Club as one of its charter members.

George Allen was a well-respected pilot. He was admired by all who worked with him at the airport and beyond. Lou Strickler, one of the local legends of aviation in Western Pennsylvania knew him well. He saw in Allen a kindred spirit. There's one story about the two men that speaks well for the camraderie binding these early pioneers of aviation together. Lou and George entered a restaurant once. Allen was refused service because of the color of his skin. Lou Strickler took George by the arm and left. If his fellow pilot wouldn't be served, neither would he.

ABOVE: Lloyd Santmyer (left) and George Allen at the Westmoreland County Airport, May 12, 1989, the fiftieth anniversary of the first officially-scheduled All American Aviation airmail pick-up. In attendance were members of the 49'ers, an organization of pilots and staff who were employed by AAA during the ten pick-up years, and the OX5 Club, founded at the airport on August 27, 1955. Lloyd and George flank a plaque commemorating the first 100 charter members of the OX5 Club. *(Courtesy of Dorothy Zello).*

RIGHT: George Allen (right) and his former student, Mansel Negley at the Westmoreland County Airport. *(Courtesy of Mansel Negley).*

Dave Patterson

Dave Patterson had a chance connection to aviation from the moment of his birth. Born in 1903, the same year the Wright brothers took their first hesitant steps in powered flight, Dave seemed to have had wings waiting for him in his future. With an astounding 27,000 hours of flying time and more than four million miles traveled upon his retirement in 1962, Latrobe's Dave Patterson blazed some trails.

He earned his wings in 1927 at the age of twenty-four. Under the tutelage of instructor Raymond Elder at Longview Flying Field, Dave quickly learned the mechanics of flight. He barnstormed out of the same field in his own American Eagle biplane. He became a regular at the holiday and weekend air exhibitions at Hill Airport.

Flying was not all loops and daredevil stunts for Dave, though. He began giving flight lessons at the Latrobe airport and became one of Charlie Carroll's chief instructors at the Carroll School of Aviation in the 1930s.

His duties as instructor expanded with the times in the 1940s. After the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, the military suddenly and desperately needed pilots. Saint Vincent College became a training ground for these prospective aces, bomber pilots and instructors. The cadets got ground instruction at the college and flight instruction at the Carroll school. Dave Patterson taught hundreds of them before they were shipped off to overseas duty in all the theaters of operations.

The non-stop airmail pick-up began in 1939. By 1942, the year of Dave's first flight with Triple A, the routes were well-established, but still dangerous. That never changed. Flying through "Hell's Stretch," hopping over the ridges and skimming the valleys of Western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio and Maryland, Dave faced hazards on every flight. Improvisation was all a part of flying the non-stop pick-up routes, often making the difference in the mail getting delivered or even whether or not the next pick-up would result in a fatal crash.

One story tells of Dave flying a route through West Virginia when suddenly his Stinson's Lycoming engine just shut off. With only fifty feet of altitude to work with, Dave realized he had to bring the Reliant down immediately. Dave remained calm and quickly searched for a landing site. A little knoll presented itself between the trees and Dave made for it. With no room to spare, the Reliant came to a stop on the knoll without being seriously damaged. All-American Aviation, alerted that one of their planes had gone down, sent out the necessary parts for repairs. The next morning saw Dave ready to resume his flight. He wanted to fly the Reliant off the knoll, but realized some landscaping had to be done first. The locals cleared some brush and filled in ditches. When they were finished, Dave took off.

Dave's short lay-over on that hilltop in West Virginia stimulated the curiosity of the locals. When asked by the citizens of the near-by town if the knoll he landed on could be an airstrip, Dave replied in the affirmative. Following some advice from Dave, the townsfolk made some necessary improvements to the area. They called their airstrip Patterson Field, in Dave's honor.

Dave Patterson chalked up an impressive seven-year stint doing the pick-up. In 1949, All-American Aviation converted to passenger service and changed its name to All-American Airways. Dave's days of "trimming the hedges" in his Stinson Reliant were over. He made the transition to the larger passenger DC-3s and settled into calmer flights to Philadelphia and Boston.

Dave continued to fly for All-American Airways through its many transformations and developments. In 1953, All-American became Allegheny Airways. The company bought newer and bigger aircraft.. In 1959, the fast Convair 540 turbo-props were added to Allegheny Airways' inventory. Dave checked out on these as well

and flew the first flight of a Convair out of Greater Pittsburgh Airport. For the next three years, Dave flew the Convairs between Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Boston. To the passengers who frequented this service, Dave must have been a familiar sight.

In 1962, Dave decided to hang up his wings. For thirty-five years, Dave Patterson had an impact on aviation in Pennsylvania and beyond. He instructed both civilian and military pilots, was a pioneer airmail pilot and flew thousands of hours of commuter service. When he landed on his last flight for Allegheny Airways in 1962, dozens of fellow pilots were there to salute an impressive career in aviation.

RIGHT: Dave Patterson and Lou Strickler (right) at the J.D. Hill Airport, ca. 1930. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*

BELOW: March 30, 1962. Dave Patterson (right) with his copilot Captain John Semenko, on the day of his retirement flight with Allegheny Airlines.The flight was a Pittsburgh-Philadelphia round-trip. *(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).*

Lou Strickler

Lou Strickler was a Latrobe boy, the son of David E. Strickler, a prominent local druggist, who was credited with inventing the banana split. Lou had his own claim to fame. He started flying when he was in high school, and at sixteen, he became Pennsylvania's youngest licensed pilot, soloing at Parks Air College in St. Louis, Missouri. Some said he was United States' youngest pilot. Others said he was the world's youngest pilot. Whatever, Lou Strickler was flying solo in an airplane at an age when most young men and women today are just getting their drivers' licenses. And he was setting records in the sky, and winning races. At New Jersey's 1930 Teterboro Air Show, Lou, chaperoned by Russ Brinkley, was featured as the "World's Youngest Exhibition Pilot" by the sponsoring organization, the Hackensack Lodge of Elks. On July 19 and 20, Lou succeeded in breaking his own junior altitude record of 14,000 feet. He donated his fee to the local "Crippled Kiddies Fund."

Lou's father liked pilots, and had no objection to his son being one, even though, as he said of a temporarily insolvent Tony LaVier, later a Thompson Trophy winner and Lockheed test pilot who stayed a couple of nights at the Strickler's, "Boy, these flyers don't make enough money to buy their own salt!"

On June 26, 1931, Lou's father purchased an Aeronca monoplane for him through the Morris Flying Service in Aspinwall, Pennsylvania. Lou and Ray Elder went out to Cincinnati, Ohio, to get the plane and fly it back to Latrobe, where it was hangared. Lou's ambition was to enter government service as a mail or transport pilot, and he needed the plane primarily to practice flying and increase his air time. Four months after he got the plane, Lou flew it from Bettis Field in McKeesport, Pennsylvania, to the J.D. Hill Airport, covering the thirty-mile air route in just six minutes. Eventually, he and Charlie Carroll managed the Aeronca agency in Westmoreland County.

Bill Strickler, Lou's brother, remembers that the Aeronca had only a forty-horsepower engine that went:

> Putt, putt, putt. It was like a lawnmower with wings. The old pilots would say, 'Hey, Lou, wind up the rubber bands and let 'er go! One time we flew to New York. I was only about twelve or thirteen. Bill wasn't more than seventeen. We were flying along and there was a car down below. We flew some more, and I looked down, and there was that car again. That's how slow we were going. We landed in Newark. I said, 'Holy Heck, Lou, somebody is going to land on top of us!' It was like a mosquito landing on a table top. 'No, we're all right. Trust your brother,' Lou said.
>
> When I went up with him, he'd do loop-the-loops, and whip-stalls. He'd whip, and the change would come out of his pockets. I'll tell you! Those pilots back then were a different breed!
>
> They say that Lou used to fly under the Kingston Bridge. They said that about quite a few pilots from the Hill Airport. Those things were just rumors, but nobody ever denied it. I think where it got started was one day when I was in a small boat fishing just above the bridge. Lou came down low, I stood up and the boat capsized. When I got my bearings, I saw Lou's Aeronca past the bridge and climbing. I asked him, 'Lou, did you fly under that bridge?' He just gave me a smile. I don't think he did, to tell the truth.

On November 23, 1931, a terrible thing happened to eighteen-year-old Lou Strickler. Although he had more than fulfilled the twenty-five-hour transport pilot requisite for night flying, Lou felt that an additional twenty-five hours would enhance his chances in securing a government pilot's position. Taking advantage of a clear, moon-bright night, Lou went to the J. D. Hill airport with a couple of friends, Jerry Smith and Edward Thomas of Greensburg. Lou took off at about 11:00 p.m. with Thomas in the passenger seat. Smith sat in a car near the hangar, waiting to drive Lou back to Latrobe.

The little Aeronca got to altitude and circled Latrobe. The townspeople had heard the plane on many

nights, and they knew who it was. Joe Roddy was still at work on a rush job at his garage when he heard the plane. "That's Lou Strickler," he said. With him were his twenty-four-year-old mechanic, Phil Duffy, Bob Pescatore and Allen Feathers, both employees of Vanadium-Alloys Steel. One of them suggested that they go to the field. Lou would surely give them a ride in the plane.

By the time they arrived, Thomas had gone home, and Lou was standing by the side of the Aeronca, talking with Smith. Lou agreed to take them up: first Pescatore, then Feathers, then Roddy. Duffy, Pescatore and Feathers watched the takeoff, but, despite warnings from Smith who had returned to his car, the trio remained on the runway, their backs to the approach lane.

No one witnessed the accident. Smith had shifted his attention to something else, and neither Lou nor Roddy saw the three men standing on the field as they descended. Lou felt a bump beneath the plane. "Joe," he yelled. "We've struck something, but we're not on the ground!"

Roddy yelled back, "Keep your head, Lou. Go up again and we'll see!"

The Aeronca nosed up. Roddy leaned out to check for damage.

"Lou, I don't see any problems, but I can't be sure. Bring it down and brace yourself, just in case!"

Lou brought the plane down to a gentle landing, and he and Roddy got out. To their horror they saw in the bright moonlight the bodies of their three friends sprawled on the runway turf. Pescatore had been decapitated, and Duffy's skull crushed. Feathers would die of a broken neck and fractured skull in the Latrobe Hospital. The next morning, Lou and Roddy made formal statements at the office of Justice George K. Braden.

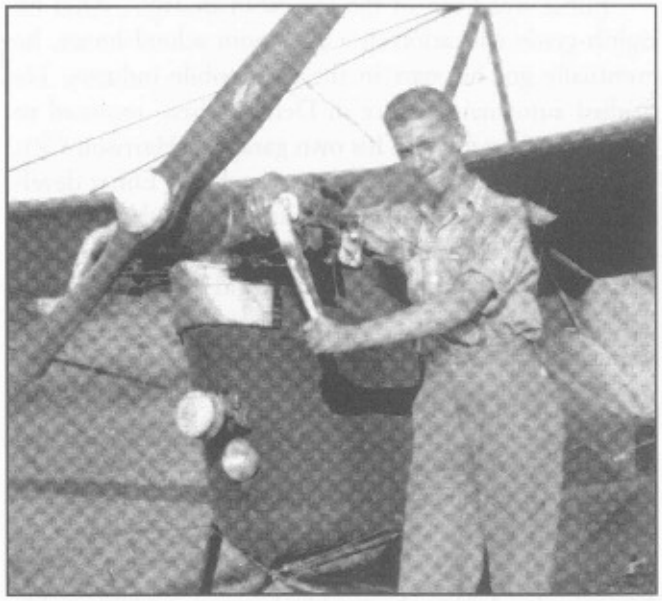
Bill Strickler remembers being awakened by his father on the night of the accident:

> The old man woke everybody up. We all were in a sweat. He said, 'Lou just had an accident up at the airport and killed three fellows!' We were worried. Everyone was worried. The old man was just sick. Lou got sick and had nightmares after that. I used to sleep with him. I couldn't sleep with him after that night. Jesus! He had to wait with the bodies until the coroner came. Next day this guy was selling Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraphs out on Ligonier Street in front of our house. We wanted to get him out of there. He was yelling, 'Crash! Three people killed!' My neighbor came over there and ran this guy off.

Charlie Carroll was over at the New Alexandria Airport and didn't hear of the accident until the next morning. Charlie, the State Aeronautic Inspector Larry Faurot, and Eugene Scroggy, Department of Commerce, concluded that the deaths of the young men were a regrettable accident, and that they violated airport rules by standing on the runway. Charlie determined that the landing wheel on the left side of the Aeronca, and the two rear flying wires on the left-hand side of the plane had struck the men and, with a few more inches of altitude, the accident would never have happened. Why they had not heard the approach of the plane remained a mystery to Charlie and other investigators. Sam Bigony, a pilot for Pittsburgh Airways and a friend of Lou's, flew down from York, Pennsylvania to, as the Latrobe Bulletin reported, "lessen the strain under which Lou is now laboring." Expert flyers commended Lou for the way he managed to land the damaged aircraft. The jury at the coroner's inquest exonerated Lou.

Lou flew for a long time after the accident, but he never really got over what happened that November night in 1931. He managed the New Alexandria airport for a time, and signed on as a pilot for the airport in Greensburg. He got to know Chalmers "Slick" Goodlin, the Bell XS-1 test pilot from Greensburg/New Alexandria. He ferried aircraft for the United States government in the early 1940s, and piloted for a time with Capital Airlines. He taught flying for the government in Baltimore. When the Naugles built their experimental plane in Latrobe, Lou was their test pilot. Lou finally married, and started to raise a family. One day he said to his sister, "I think my number's up. I'm going to get killed in a plane."

Then he quit flying, and opened a garage near Irwin, Pennsylvania. One night in 1953, as he was driving home, his car collided with a trailer rig. Lou was killed. He was forty years old.



Lou Strickler with his new Aeronca. *(Courtesy of Bill Strickler).*

Elmer Ashbaugh

The story of Elmer Ashbaugh and his daughter Eleanor begins in an old log cabin without electricity and ends with a Space Shuttle flight that almost was.

Elmer was born in the log cabin in 1897. After an eighth-grade education in a one-room school house, he eventually got his start in the automobile industry. He studied auto maintenance in Detroit, then returned to the area and established his own garage in Harrison City. After marrying and having three daughters, Elmer developed his interest in aviation. He frequented the J.D. Hill Airport, the new Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport, and associated with World War I pilots and the likes of Dave Patterson, Norman "Happy" O'Bryan, Clyde Hauger and Charlie Carroll.

In 1932 he started taking flying lessons from Dave Patterson. After his solo flight in 1934, Elmer flew on weekends, doing aerial exhibitions at the Greensburg Airport and giving sight-seeing tours for one dollar per person. He flew parachute jumpers in his Travel Air on Sunday afternoons. These spectacles brought large, curious crowds. Ashbaugh quickly became a recognizable name among aviation enthusiasts in the area. Seeing the potential for an airport near to his hometown of Harrison City, Elmer thought of building one. In 1935 he did. Originally twenty-five acres, the Harrison City Airport had an 1,800-foot runway that ran parallel to Route 130. The Ashbaugh home was within this twenty-five-acre plot. Elmer later purchased an adjoining farm, increasing the size of his airport to forty acres. He tore down the barn farm and remodeled the house for his family. Elmer often taxied his airplane right up to the front porch, went inside for lunch and took off from his front yard.

Elmer decided his runway was not level enough, and, soon after opening, he made improvements. He graded the property every morning at sunrise, much to the chagrin of neighbors trying to catch a few extra winks of sleep. He built a hanger at the east end of the runway which housed his Travel Air, a Piper Cub and a Piper Trainer. Crowds often gathered just to watch him maneuver his aircraft into the hangers.

Elmer knew many World War I pilots. He must have enjoyed their tales of the Great War and their death-defying feats. One of these men, W.F. Niedernhofer went into business with Elmer in 1936. They purchased a twelve-passenger Ford Tri-Motor with the intention of starting an airline in Florida. Elmer piled his family into the Tri-Motor and headed for the Sunshine State. They are today considered to be the first family to ever move by aircraft. Their airline did not last long, only from November 1936 to February 1937. The Depression kept many people grounded, they had competition from another airline in Florida, and the Tri-Motor consumed a gallon of gas a minute, producing a financial drag on Elmer. Fortunately, Elmer had maintained his airport and garage in Harrison City. He was able to return there with his family.

By 1939, Elmer received a flight instructor's license and began giving flight lessons. When the United States entered World War II, many of his young students went on to become aviators in the war, including his daughter, Eleanor. She soloed at the age of sixteen, becoming one of the youngest pilots in the state. Too young to join the WASPs, Eleanor became a member of the Civil Air Patrol. She was thus able to fill an important role for which the military could not spare pilots.

The war came home to the Ashbaugh family when federal regulations required a twenty-four-hour guard to be posted at all airports. Elmer hired a guard for the daytime, but took care of the night duty himself. He slept in the hangar.

Wartime gas rationing hindered the operation of the

Harrison City Airport and Elmer's garage business. Seeing no choice in the matter, Elmer enlisted in the U.S. Ferry Command at the age of forty-five and ferried aircraft all over the United States. After the war, he returned home to find his airport in disrepair. The months spent away had taken their toll on the runway. Threatened with being shut down for good, Elmer quickly repaired ruts and graded the runway. His airport continued in operation until 1953 when a water line was laid along Route 130 making the forty-acre site ideal for homes. He closed up the airport with an impressive twenty-year record of no accidents or fatalities. Elmer kept his home and a building at the west end of the airport where he operated a gasoline station, garage, storing airplanes on the top floor. Elmer Ashbaugh died in 1985 at the age of eighty-eight, in the same house he used to taxi up to at lunchtime.

Eleanor Ashbaugh continued making headlines as a pilot in the 1940s. In 1946 she entered the Powder Puff Derby. The race went from Bettis Field to Latrobe and back. Eleanor won.

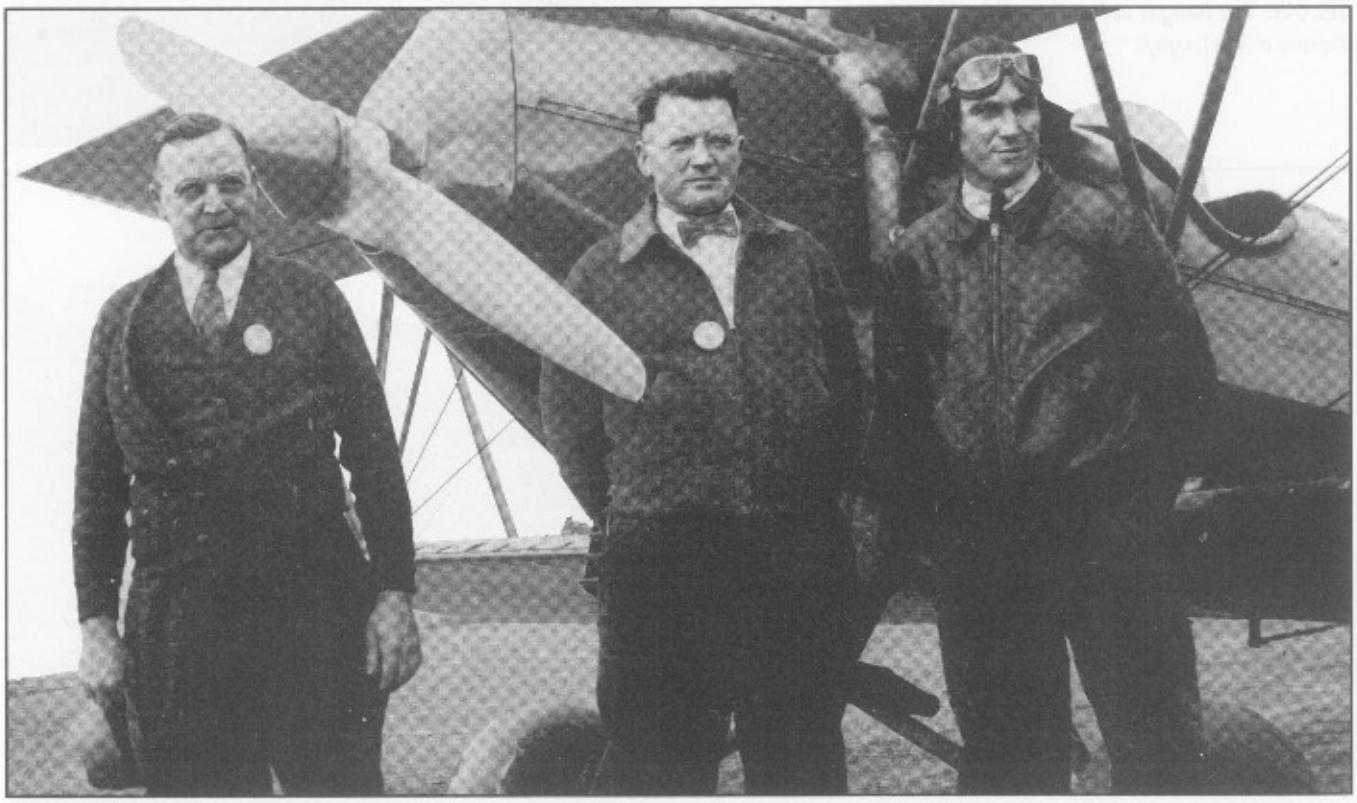
Flying may have been a passion for Eleanor, but her profession was teaching. She started her teaching career in 1953, the fiftieth anniversary of the Wright brothers' flight. She won a national contest on aviation education and flew to Washington D.C. for a ceremony to commemorate the event, where she got to hobnob with such aviation greats as James Doolittle and Chuck Yeager.

Despite her career as a teacher, Eleanor did not want to keep her feet on the ground. In 1985 she got an opportunity to explore both her loves. She applied to get on the "Teacher In Space" program. She completed a fifteen-page application essay that included an experiment to be conducted in space.

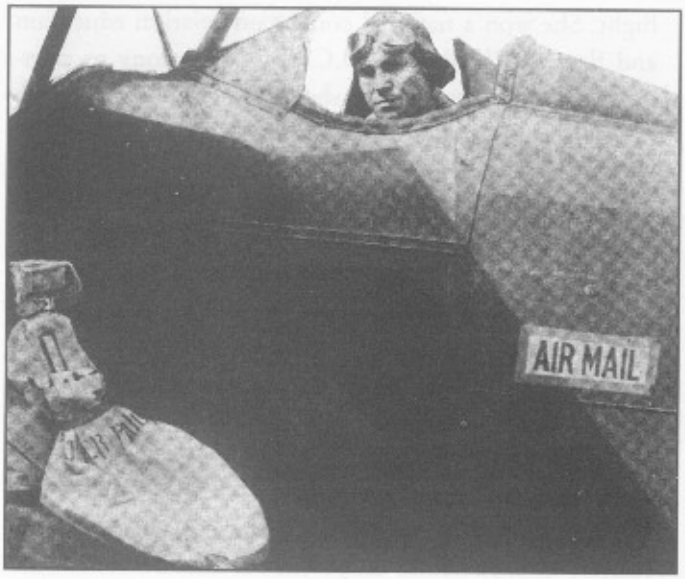
Fortunately, she did not get selected for the history-making flight. On January 28, 1986 the Space Shuttle exploded seventy-three seconds after take-off, killing all seven astronauts.

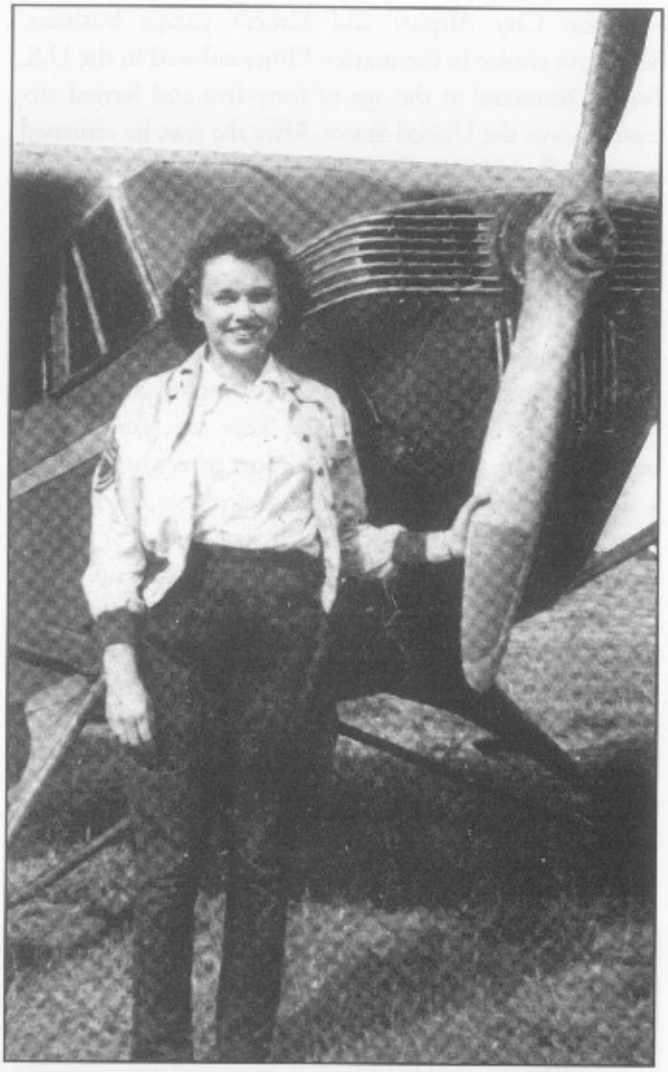
Eleanor Ashbaugh's contributions in the fields of education and aviation are profound. Like her father, she continues to see the possibilities of aviation. She saw this especially in the young people she taught for thirty-six years. Her efforts to educate young minds caused her to co-author the book *Aerospace Projects for the Elementary School*, published by the University of Miami.

Eleanor's father was proud of her achievements. In his later years, as Eleanor worked to get on the Shuttle Flight, he shared her enthusiasm and most likely wished he could go with her into space.



May 24, 1938. Elmer Ashbaugh (right) during National Airmail Week when he flew 500 letters from the Manor, Pennsylvania, post office to Bettis Field. With him are John Weightman, Postmaster at Claridge, and William Smith, Postmaster at Harrison City. *(Courtesy of Jean Loughry).*

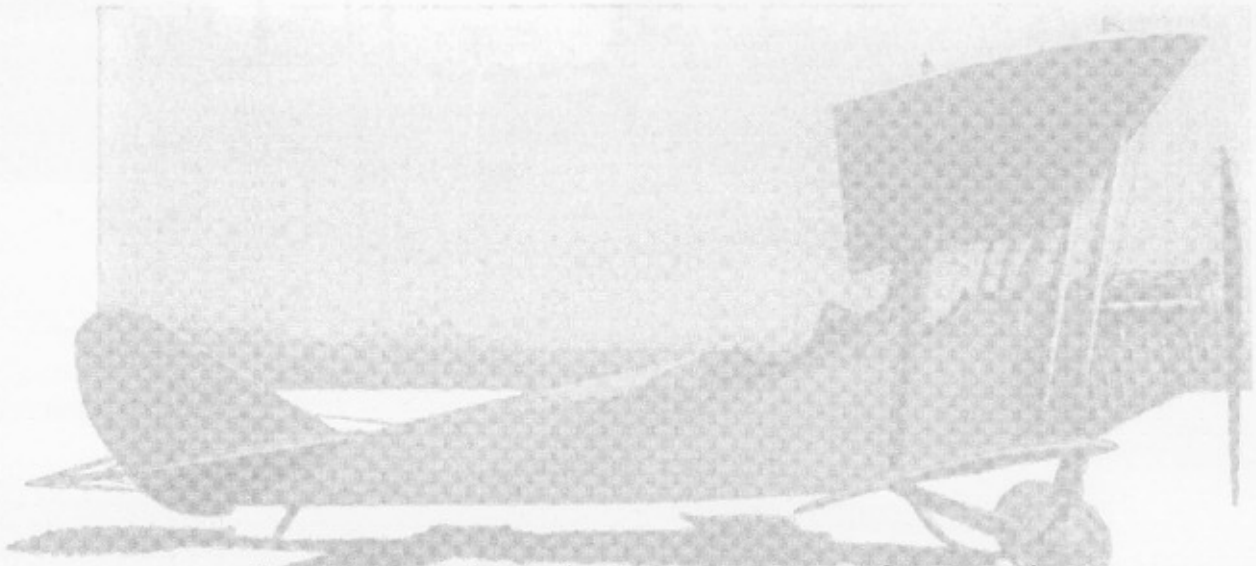




ABOVE: Elmer Ashbaugh ready to take off from his Harrison City Airport for Bettis Field, May 24, 1938, during National Airmail Week. *(Courtesy of Jean Loughry).*

LEFT: Eleanor Ashbaugh, Elmer Ashbaugh's daughter, who learned to fly at sixteen. *(Courtesy of Jean Loughry).*

BELOW: The hangar at Harrison City Airport.
(Courtesy of Jean Loughry).



A SPECIAL PICTORIAL

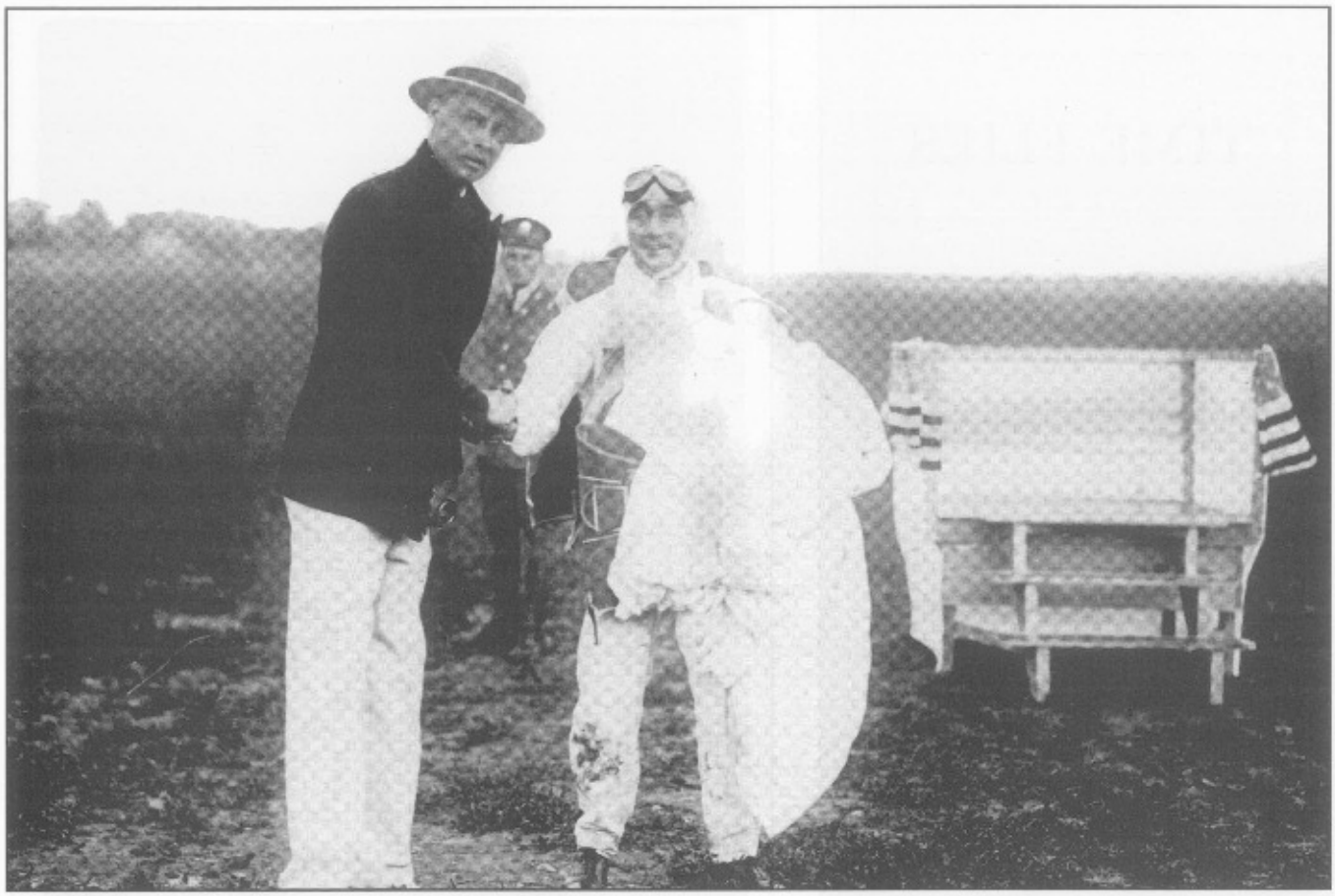
CURTISS MODEL JN4-B—MILITARY TRACTOR

DUE to the fact that this machine has been widely used for training aviators both here and abroad the JN type is probably the best known of all the Curtiss models.

It has a maximum horizontal speed of 75 miles per hour and a minimum of 43 miles per hour, and will climb 3,000 ft. in ten minutes. Powered with an 8-cylinder, "V" type Curtiss "OX" motor, which develops 90 H. P. at 1400 R. P. M. it consumes slightly more than one-half pound of gasoline per H. P. per hour. It is an economical machine for use in training students or general pleasure flying.

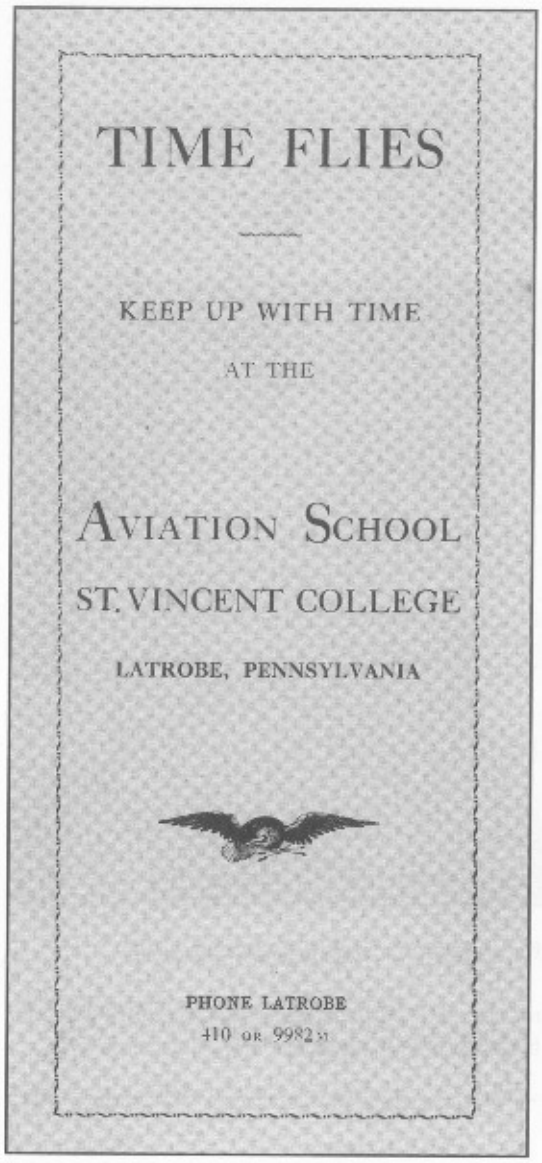
It is comparatively light and for its useful load carrying capacity, is very compact. With a wing span of 43 feet, 7⅜ inches and an overall length of 27 feet 3 inches, it weighs empty only 1,405 pounds but will carry a useful load of 485 pounds. It is equipped with dual control, carries two passengers "tandem," each in a separate cockpit.

ABOVE: Lloyd Santmyer poses with his Waco 10 at J.D. Hill Airport. To the right is Rich's Bar. It served as the airport's "terminal" in the early days, and was the site of many festive occasions conducted by the pilots. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*
BELOW: Carl Strickler (left) and "Pop" Cleveland at Bettis Field, August 1927, the time of Charles Lindbergh's reception there. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*



ABOVE: J.D. Hill Airport, June 1928. Russ Brinkley congratulates Joe Crane after another successful parachute jump. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*

BELOW: Raymond Elder sits on the cowling of a Ryan monoplane after gassing it up at Peretto's station on the highway at J.D. Hill Airport. Mr. Kefer, owner of the plane, advertised his ice cream and other foods on the fuselage. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*



TIME FLIES

KEEP UP WITH TIME

AT THE

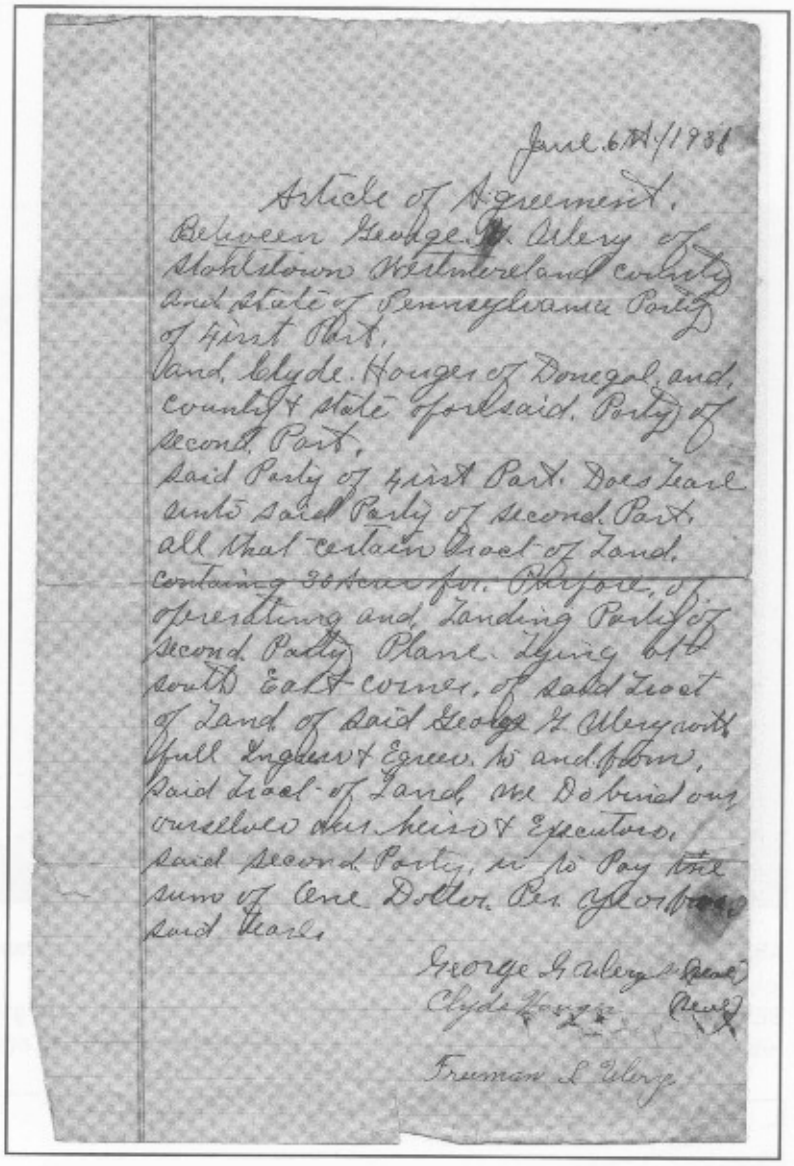
AVIATION SCHOOL

ST. VINCENT COLLEGE

LATROBE, PENNSYLVANIA

PHONE LATROBE

410 OR 9982-31



June 6th/1936

Article of Agreement.
Between George H. Ulery of Stahlstown Westmoreland county and state of Pennsylvania Party of first Part.
and Clyde Hauger of Donegal and county & state aforesaid. Party of second Part.
said Party of first Part. Does lease unto said Party of second Part. all that certain tract of land. containing sixteen for. Purpose of operating and landing Party of second Party Plane. lying at south East corner. of said tract of land of said George H Ulery with full Ingress & Egress to and from. said tract of land. we Do bind our ourselves our heirs & Executors. said second Party, in to Pay the sum of One Dollar. Per year for said Years

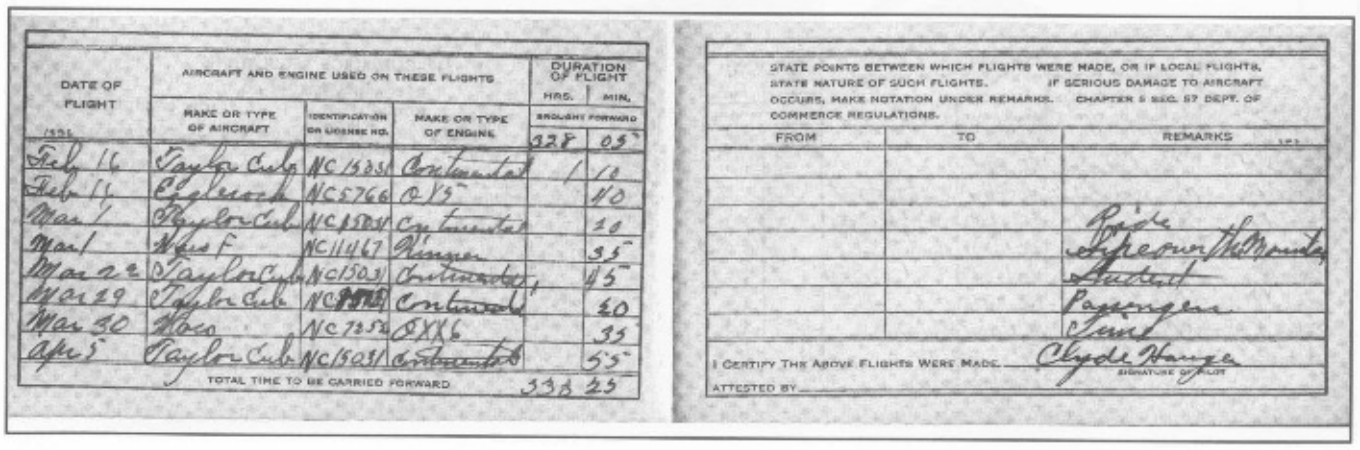
George H Ulery (Seal)
Clyde Hauger (Seal)

Freeman L Ulery

ABOVE LEFT: The front page of Saint Vincent College's brochure advertising its flight school.
(Courtesy of the Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives).

ABOVE RIGHT: The contract between Clyde Hauger and Freeman Ulery for an airport at Donegal, Pennsylvania.
(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).

BELOW: Two pages from Clyde Hauger's log book. *(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).*



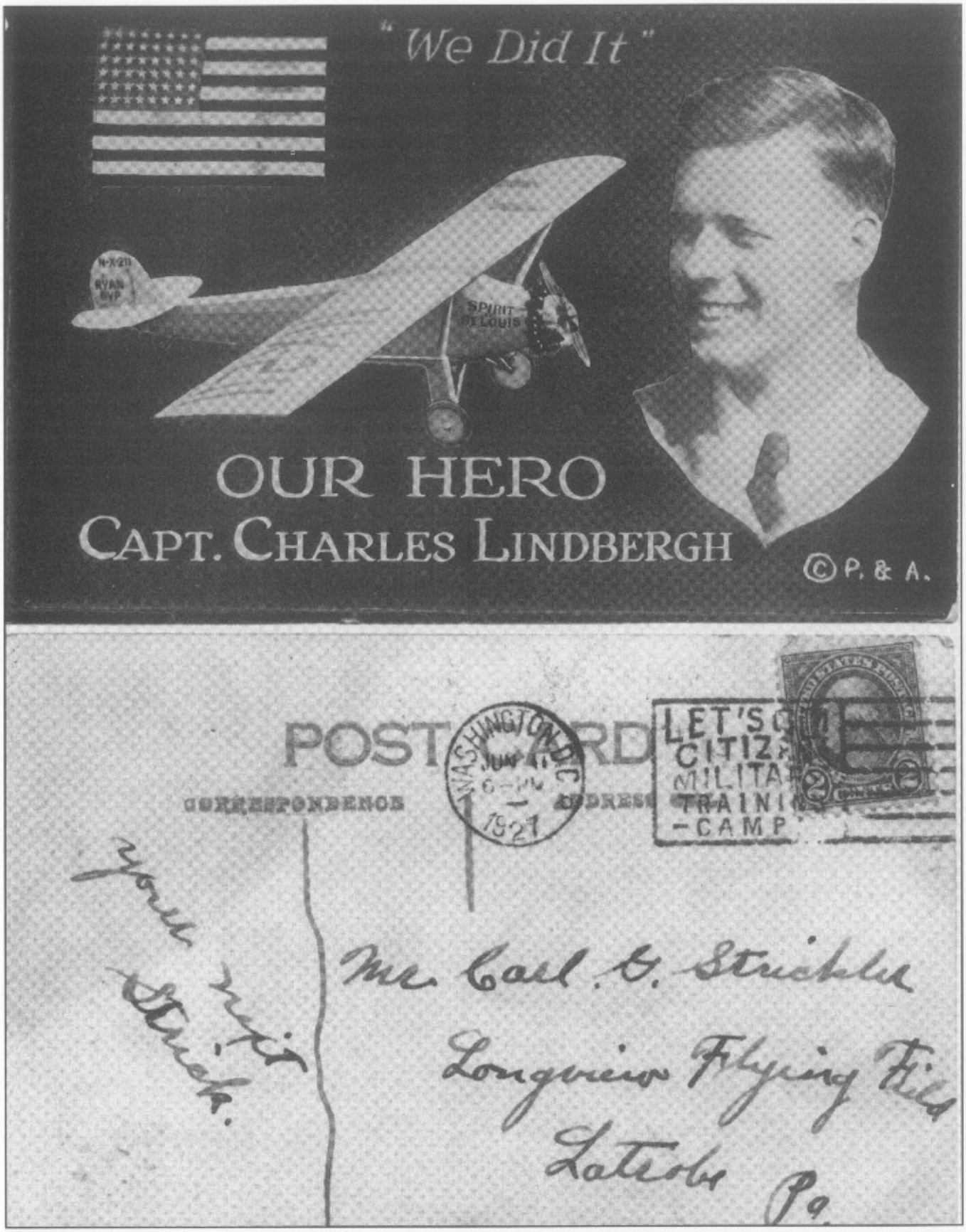
DATE OF FLIGHT 1936	AIRCRAFT AND ENGINE USED ON THESE FLIGHTS: MAKE OR TYPE OF AIRCRAFT	IDENTIFICATION OR LICENSE NO.	MAKE OR TYPE OF ENGINE	DURATION OF FLIGHT HRS.	MIN.
			BROUGHT FORWARD	328	05
Feb 16	Taylor Cub	NC15231	Continental	1	10
Feb 14	Eaglerock	NC5766	OX5		10
Mar 1	Taylor Cub	NC15231	Continental		10
Mar 1	Waco F	NC11467	Wright		35
Mar 22	Taylor Cub	NC15231	Continental		15
Mar 29	Taylor Cub	NC[illegible]	Continental		20
Mar 30	Waco	NC7252	OXX6		35
Apr 5	Taylor Cub	NC15231	Continental		55
	TOTAL TIME TO BE CARRIED FORWARD			338	25

STATE POINTS BETWEEN WHICH FLIGHTS WERE MADE, OR IF LOCAL FLIGHTS, STATE NATURE OF SUCH FLIGHTS. IF SERIOUS DAMAGE TO AIRCRAFT OCCURS, MAKE NOTATION UNDER REMARKS. CHAPTER 5 SEC. 57 DEPT. OF COMMERCE REGULATIONS.

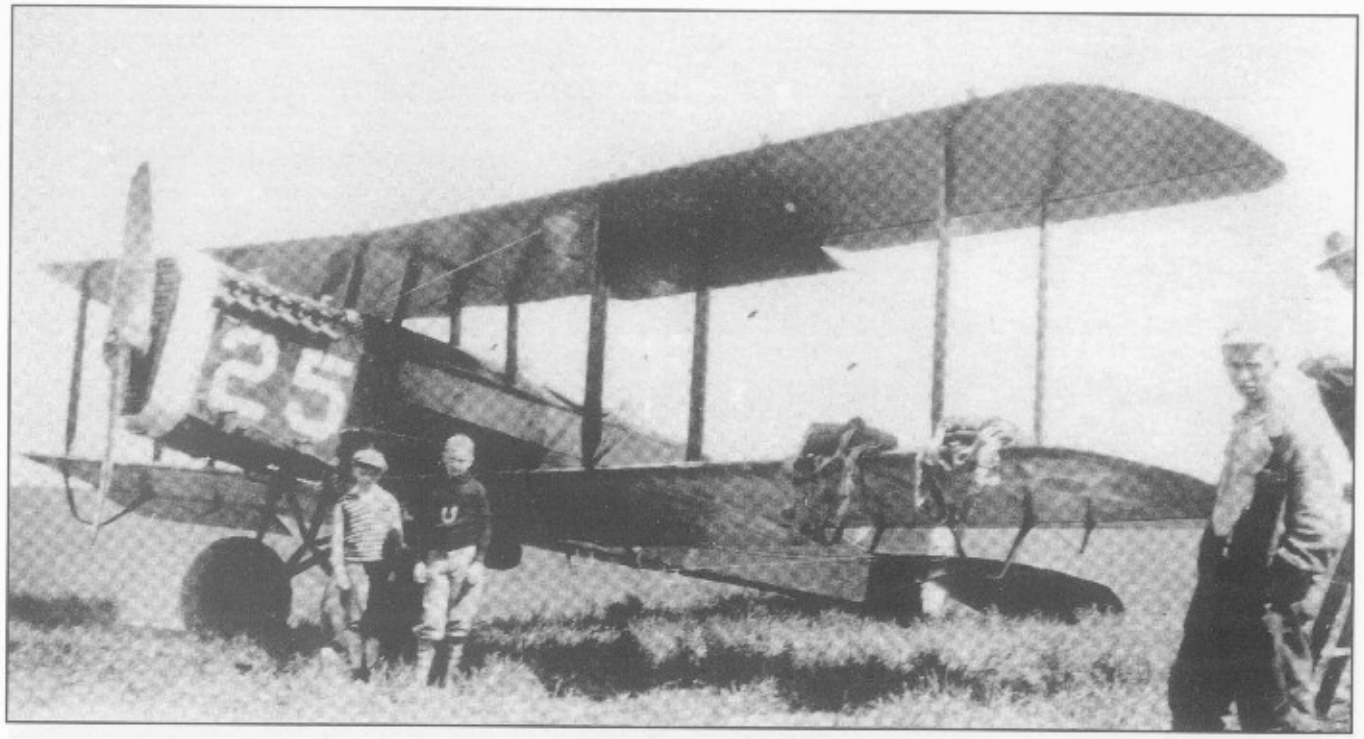
FROM	TO	REMARKS
		Ride
		Freeman H Ulery
		Student
		Passenger
		Time

I CERTIFY THE ABOVE FLIGHTS WERE MADE. Clyde Hauger (SIGNATURE OF PILOT)

ATTESTED BY

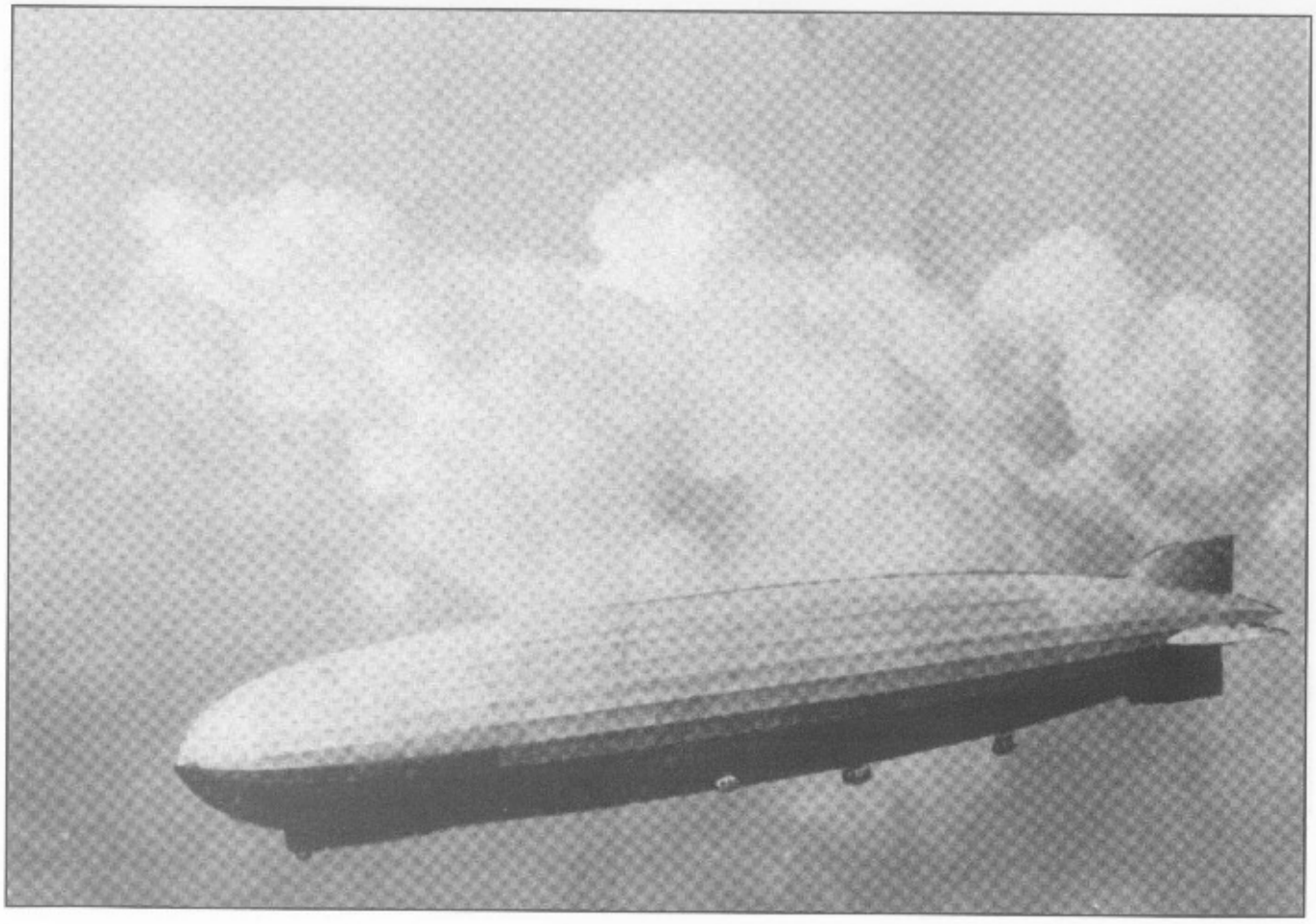


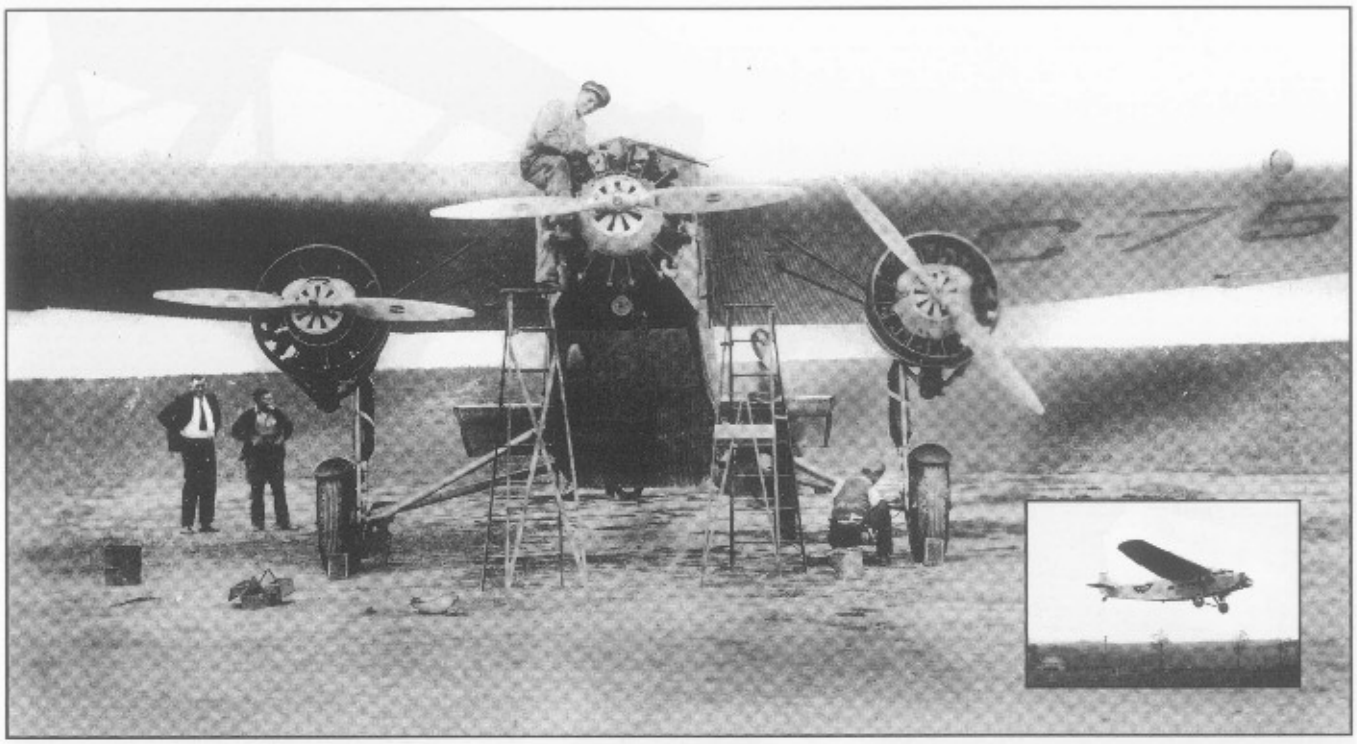
The front and rear of the post card Charlie Carroll sent to Carl Strickler from Washington, D.C. Carroll was there to welcome Charles Lindbergh back to the United States after the "Lone Eagle" made his historic, non-stop flight across the Atlantic Ocean. *(Courtesy of Anna Mary Topper).*



ABOVE: Frank Fox stands nearest this DH-4's number at Longview Flying Field, 1925. The plane was flown for an airshow by Greensburger Lieutenant Alwine. *(Courtesy of Frank Fox).*

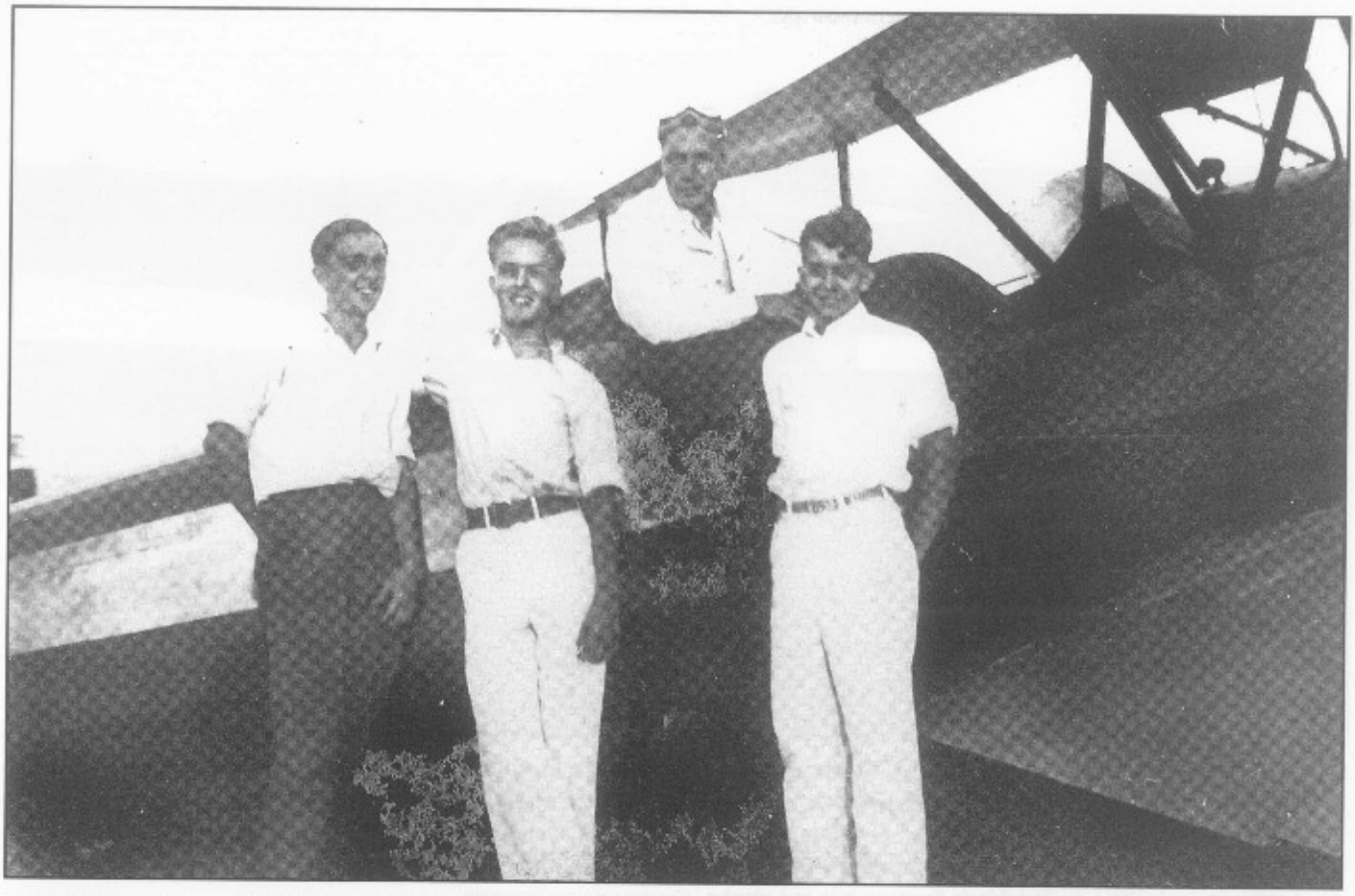
BELOW: Lloyd Santmyer took this picture of the Graf Zeppelin. He went up to greet the ship as it passed over Latrobe in the early 1930s. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*





Charlie Carroll (far left) stands next to Lloyd Santmyer under the wing of a Ford Tri-Motor owned by W.H. and Harold I. McAffee of Uniontown, Pennsylvania, at J.D. Hill Airport, ca. 1933-1934. The plane, known as *Mac's Air Palace,* was flown from California by Spud Manning with Tony LeVier (shown tinkering with the mid-engine) flying copilot. The plane barnstormed for a time in the eastern United States. Santmyer relates that LeVier would promote the tri-motor by doing some preliminary stunting in a Travel Air. LeVier stayed with Lou Strickler's family while in Latrobe. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*

Lloyd sits in the cockpit of his airplane. Myrle Baughman, an accomplished pilot, looks on. She was Santmyer's student and wife. She soloed in 1935, on the same day as did Charlie Carroll's wife, Grace. Both women were charter members of the OX5 Club. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*



J. D. Hill Airport, ca. 1930-1933. Lloyd Santmyer (in cockpit) poses with three student pilots. LEFT TO RIGHT: Chuck Zito, Cecil Smith, Bobby Mears. *(Courtesy of Lloyd Santmyer).*

Charlie Carroll (second from right) poses with his crew. Latrobe Airport, ca. 1938-1943. *(Courtesy of Josephine Smart).*