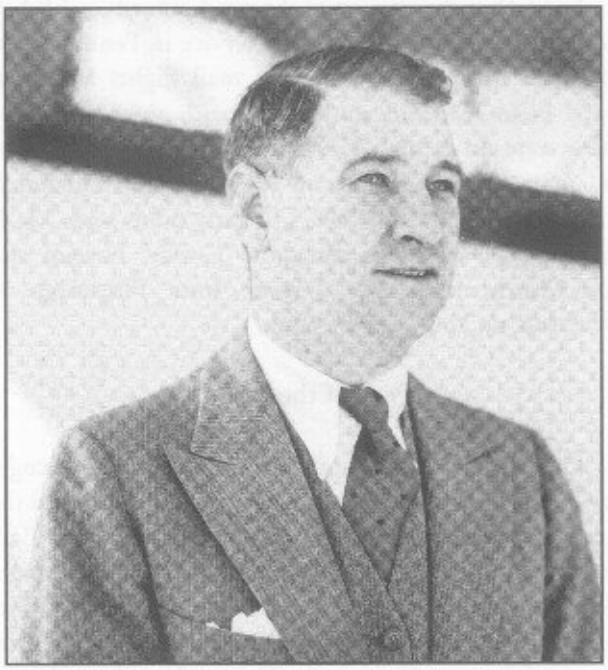
Clifford Ball, D. Barr Peat, and Bettis Field



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

D. Barr Peat. *(Courtesy of Carolyn Peat).*

The young man pulled his car to the side of the road when he heard the sound. It was the same kind of sound he had heard in France during the war. He got out of the car and looked up. He saw a flight of Jennies circling overhead. For a moment he thought back to those terrible days in the Argonne when the dawn patrols wheeled overhead scarcely audible amid the constant rumble of artillery fire. During those brief moments when this new weapon of war would appear, he wondered what it was like up there in the spaces of the sky. He watched the Jennies circle closer to the ground. He resolved to meet with the pilots. Perhaps one of them would take him up.

The Jennies landed in a nearby field. He walked towards the machines and waved at the airmen. One of them emerged from a cockpit. He introduced himself and his fellow fliers to the young man. The pilot's name was Eddie Stinson, and his companions were known as the Zephyr Fliers. They were barnstormers. Stinson, offered to take the young man up for a flight.

The year was 1919. The young man was Clifford Ball. He would soon become one of the most influential pioneers of aviation in the area, if not the country.

Clifford Ball was a native Pittsburgher. He got started in the automobile business with a Hudson-Essex dealership in McKeesport. The chance encounter with Eddie Stinson near Dravosburg that afternoon changed the direction of Clifford's life.

He always had a fascination for things mechanical, and the mechanics of aviation was not the least of it.

Clifford had a vision of airports. He imagined them dotting the landscape of rural Pennsylvania, servicing communities much like train stations did. He talked aviation with anyone who would listen, but there were few open ears in those days. One man who did listen because he shared a similar vision was D. Barr Peat. In 1924 the two men began an association that would bring aviation permanently to Pittsburgh.

D. Barr Peat

Like Clifford Ball, D. Barr Peat had a chance encounter with aviation. He was an engineer who worked as a foreman on the Liberty Tunnels in Pittsburgh. One day an airplane made a rough landing in the pasture on his land. The grass was so high the pilot crashed into a tree stump he couldn't see. D. Barr saw the airplane as it came down and ran out to help the pilot. Fortunately, the airman wasn't hurt. He helped the barnstormer fix his aircraft and got him on his way. It was like someone threw a switch in Peat's mind. He thought about building a landing field. He knew his property was not the ideal spot, but perhaps someplace close by would suit his purpose. There was a strip of land owned by a farmer named Harry Neel, Peat's neighbor and friend.

Together, they cleared Neel's land, opened it up and

made it available to any pilots who wanted to land there. D. Barr, along with his friend, William T. Richmond, used the site for air exhibitions and sightseeing. This would be the same field in which Clifford Ball would see Eddie Stinson and his Zephyr Fliers land.

In 1924 and 1925, the pair raised 35,000 dollars. Ball mortgaged practically everything he owned and they borrowed as much as they could. Then, in 1925, they purchased the forty acres above Dravosburg where they started their landing field. With their money, along with funds added by Harry Neel and Clifford's brother, Albert, they erected a hanger and a small machine shop to service the facility. It was an ideal spot, and one that already had a background in aviation.

Pittsburgh-McKeesport Airport

In June 1925, Clifford and D. Barr officially opened their airport, calling it the Pittsburgh-McKeesport Airport. That same year, Clifford started a flying school and Clifford Ball Airlines.

Pittsburgh-McKeesport Airport was only a little over a year in operation when it got a name change. It was rededicated Bettis Field in November 1926 in honor of Cyrus Bettis, a World War I flying ace killed in a flying accident near Bellefonte, Pennsylvania earlier that year. Bettis was a well-known pilot in Pennsylvania and had taken part in the opening ceremonies for the Pittsburgh-McKeesport Airport. Like Charlie Carroll at Longview Flying Field two years later, Clifford and D. Barr were honoring a fallen pioneer by naming their airport after him.

Kelly Air Mail Act

The air exhibitions continued, but the two men knew that their airport had more to offer than just entertainment and diversion. Ball was well connected politically. He knew there were other forces at work that would eventually help in the development of Bettis Field.

In 1922, a few years before the opening of the Pittsburgh-McKeesport Airport, U.S. Representative M. Clyde Kelly, presented the first air mail bill to the House. Later known as the Kelly Air Mail Act, it was signed into law by President Calvin Coolidge on January 17, 1925.

The original purpose of the act was to relieve the government of the responsibility for carrying the mail by air, but it also contained a clause that allowed the fostering of commercial aviation in the United States. The law would have a profound effect; it authorized the Postmaster General to negotiate contracts with private individuals and companies. Ball was awarded Contract Air Mail 11 on March 21, 1926.

Soon after the passing of the act, Clifford established the first privately owned airmail service in Pennsylvania. On April 21, 1927 the first air mail flights landed at Bettis Field. Clifford started out with three Waco 9s. These were christened, *Miss Youngstown, Miss McKeesport* and *Miss Pittsburgh*, now on display at the Pittsburgh International Airport. CAM 11's early pilots were Merle Moltrup, Dewey Noyes, Kenneth "Curley" Lovejoy and Jack Morris; they flew a route from Pittsburgh to Cleveland via Youngstown, Ohio.

Path of the Eagle

One success led to another. Clifford added passenger service to the route in April 1928. The next year saw the passenger service expand. In August 1929 Clifford Ball, Inc. created "Path of the Eagle," a passenger route from Cleveland to Washington D.C.. Around the same time, Ball acquired more aircraft. He bought a Ford Tri-Motor, a successful passenger aircraft. This was not the only reason he bought it. The aircraft's previous owner, W.C. Smith, had given the plane the name "Pennsylvania Airlines," and painted it on the side of the aircraft. This just happened to be the new name of the airline Ball first founded as Clifford Ball Airlines. It was a convenient purchase. Cliff also bought a Fairchild FC-2, a four-passenger monoplane, five New Standard D-27's, and acquired seven Waco 9 biplanes as payment for delinquent storage charges.

It is difficult to imagine in today's world how innovative Clifford Ball's airline was when something like the Air Bus will soon be in flight carrying close to 400 passengers. When Clifford Ball Airlines began, the Waco 9s took off with one passenger, who often had to sit on mail sacks during flight.

Charles Lindbergh's Visit

A major event at Bettis Field occurred on August 3, 1927, when Charles Lindbergh landed at the field in his Ryan monoplane during his 22,000-mile, 82-city official tour. More than 10,000 people greeted him when he landed, and 250,000 more lined his route from Bettis to downtown Pittsburgh, up Bigelow Boulevard to Pitt Stadium in Oakland.

The "Longview Boys," Charlie Carroll, Raymond Elder, Carl Strickler, Joe Crane, and several others from the airport in Latrobe, flew or drove to McKeesport for the festivities.

RIGHT: Cliff Ball (holding papers) stands next to Ken Scholter, taking delivery of mail from a National Air Transport aircraft, Bettis Field, 1920s. *(Courtesy of Ken Scholter)*

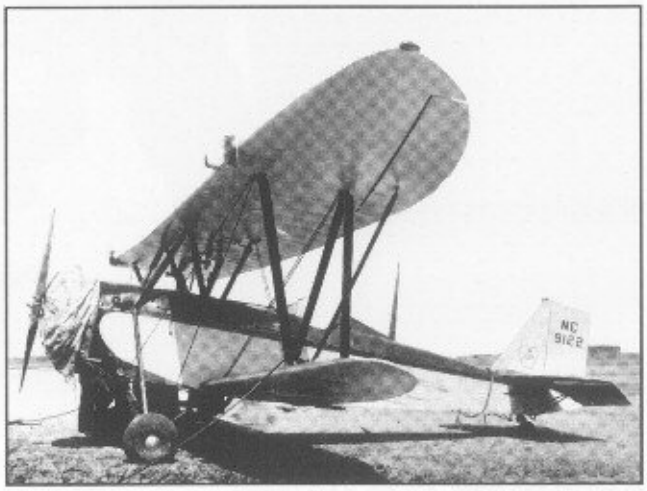
BELOW: The office at Bettis Field, 1920s. *(Courtesy of Carolyn Peat).*

Clifford Ball's Miss Pittsburgh over Cleveland, 1928. Pictured above, left and right: "Curley" Lovejoy and Dewey Noyes. *(Courtesy of Frank Fox).*

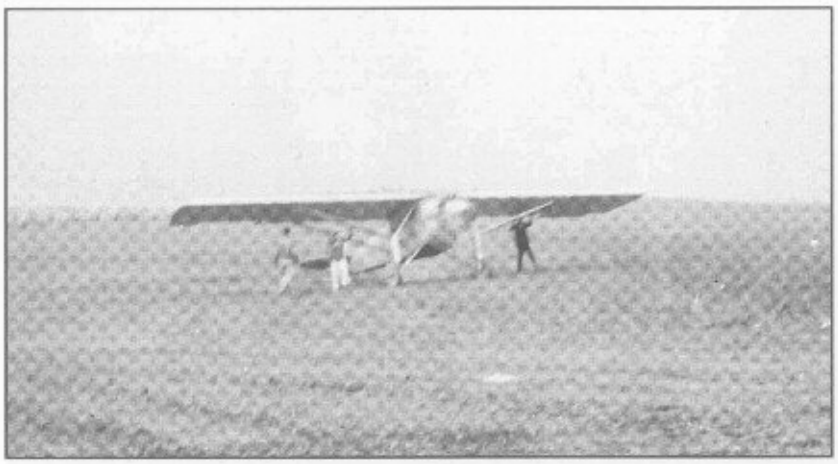
ABOVE: Ready for a night mail run are Merle Moltrup and Dewey Noyes. *(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority).*

BOTTOM LEFT: April 21, 1927. Ken Scholter accepts the mailbag for CAM 11s first delivery. *(Courtesy of Ken Scholter).*

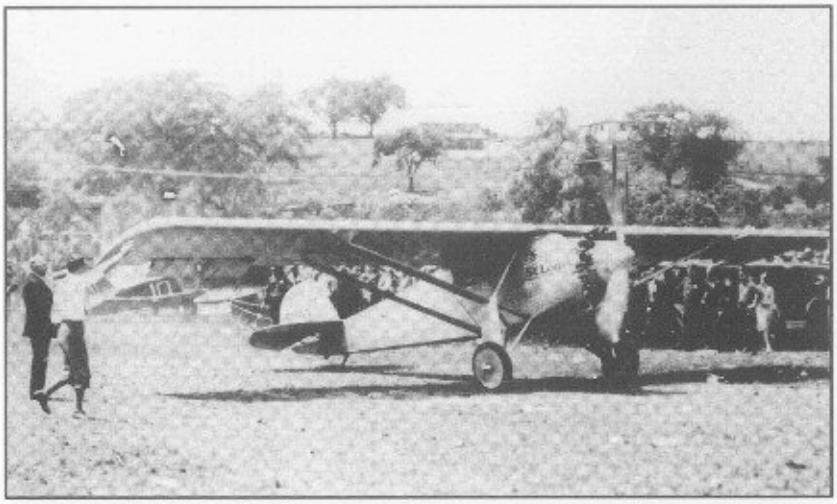
BOTTOM RIGHT: One of Cliff Ball's New Standard D-27s, NC9122. It later found its way to California in 1933 where it was converted into a crop duster. Ball had more of these aircraft types: 9121 (crashed October 1929, with Sievers as pilot); 9123 (crashed November 1933, Melvin Garlow, pilot. 9124, and 9119. *(Courtesy of Ken Scholter).*



Ken Scholter poses with Charles A. Lindbergh, Bettis Field, August 3, 1927, on Lindbergh's official tour with The Spirit of St. Louis to eighty-two cities. *(Courtesy of Ken Scholter).*

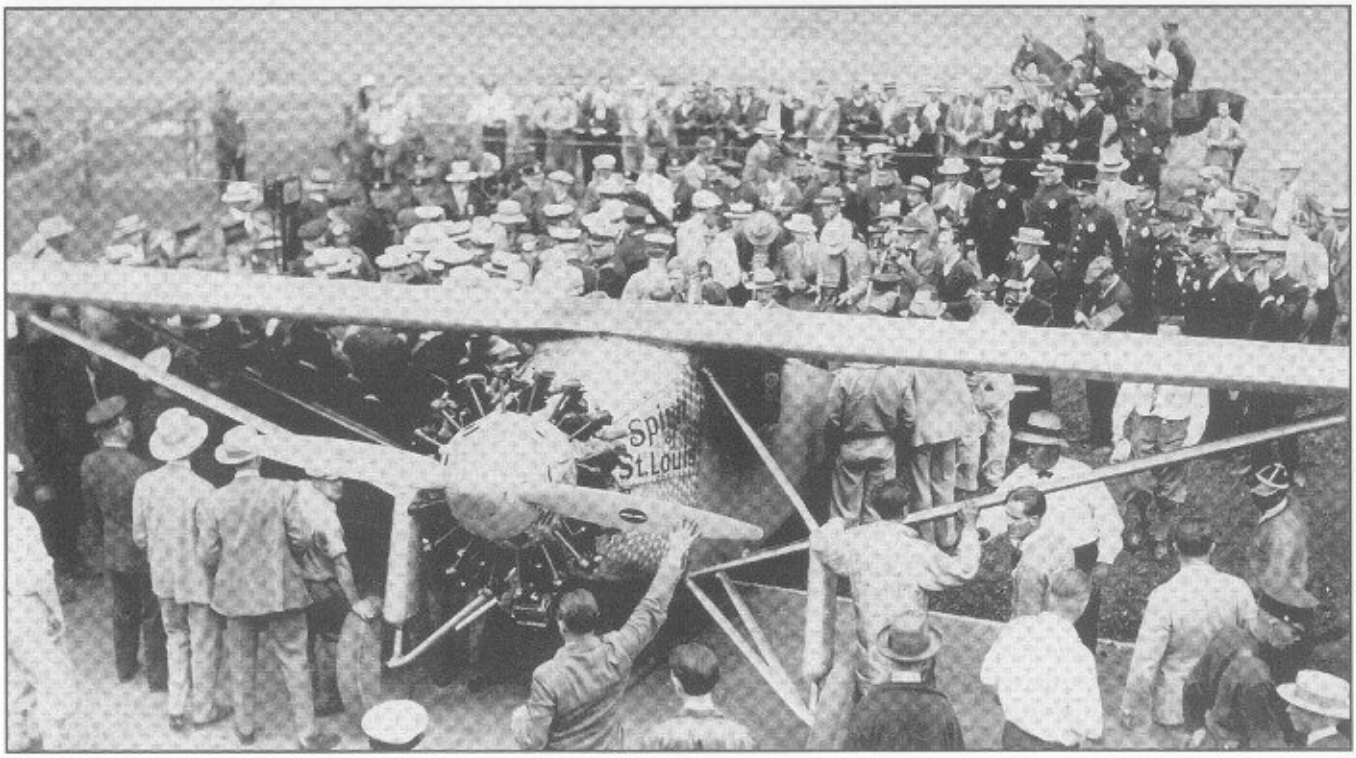


LEFT: August 3, 1927. The *Spirit of St. Louis* lands at Bettis Field. "That's me in the white pants!" exclaimed Ken Scholter, when shown the photo. All Ken had to wear were his "grease monkey" clothes, until D. Barr Peat prevailed upon oil-man Sam Brendel to purchase him a new suit of clothes. *(Courtesy of Anna Mary (Strickler) Topper).*



CENTER: The *Spirit of St. Louis* revving for take-off at Bettis Field. (Courtesy of Carolyn Peat).

BOTTOM: The crowd gathers around Lindbergh's Ryan monoplane he landed the plane. *(Courtesy of Carolyn Peat).*



Charles A. Lindbergh in an open touring car with Pittsburgh's Mayor Kline.

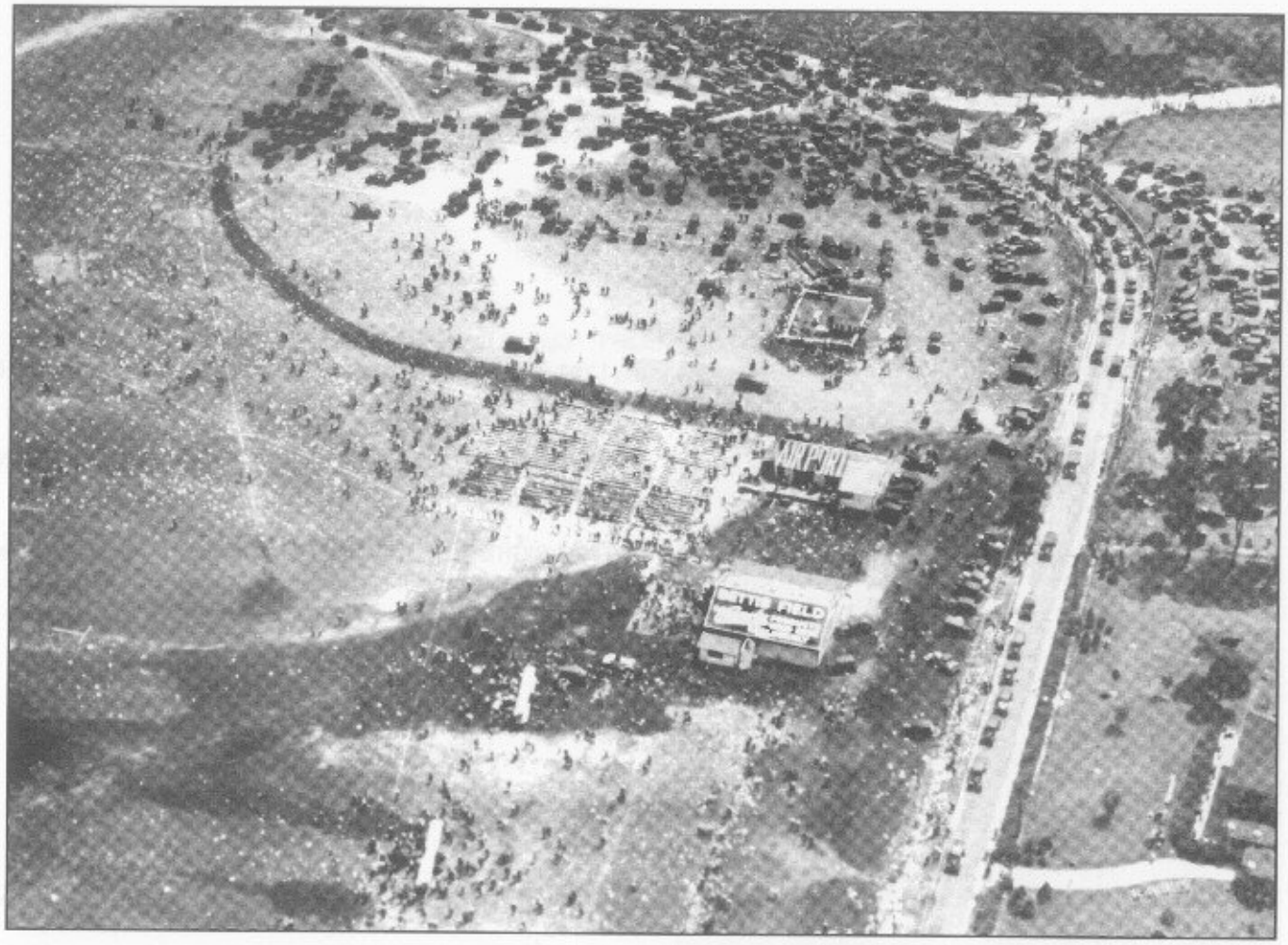
RIGHT: Lindbergh strolls toward the offices at Bettis Field.

(Courtesy of Carolyn Peat).

LEFT: "Curley" Lovejoy, "Playboy Pilot," poses with Ken Scholter the day Lindbergh landed. Ken proudly wears the new outfit bought for him for the occasion by Sam Brendel. *(Courtesy of Ken Scholter).*

BOTTOM LEFT: August 3, 1927. Carl Strickler, Charlie Carroll's chief pilot at Longview Flying Field, poses with "Pop" Cleveland.

BOTTOM RIGHT: August 3, 1927. Carl Strickler poses with his wife, Anna Mary, who flew with him to Bettis Field to greet Lindbergh.



ABOVE: August 3, 1927. The crowd at Bettis Field disperses as Lindbergh's motorcade makes its way to Pittsburgh. *(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority).*

BELOW: August 3, 1927. A crowd gathers outside a hanger at Bettis Field. A portrait of Lindbergh hangs above the door. Charlie Carroll, wearing a white flying jumper, looks on. *(Courtesy of Anna Mary (Strickler) Topper).*

Green and Gold in the Sky

Courtesy of the Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives

It was November 5, 1929. A New Standard Biplane designed by Charles Day had just been delivered to Saint Vincent College. It bore the Approved Type Certificate No. 216 from the National Department of Commerce, and, coincidentally, was painted in the factory livery of green and gold, the colors of the college. The plane was called *The Spirit of Saint Vincent*. Lieutenant Homer Fackler had flown the aircraft from Teterboro Airport, New Jersey, to Bridgeville, PA. Fackler and George Daws brought the plane to Latrobe, landing at Hill Airport around 11 o'clock in the morning. Before he landed, Fackler flipped the plane on its back, did several slow and snap rolls, barrel rolls, loops and stalls.

Later, Lieutenant Jack Bessey was in the cockpit, revving the engine. Archabbot Aurelius B. Stehle, OSB, president of Saint Vincent College, was in the passenger seat, totally fascinated by the machine rumbling around him. Despite his interest, the Archabbot felt some apprehension. He knew pilots had been killed flying in the area. Not long before, Carl Strickler, a well known aviator from Scottdale, was killed near Laughlintown. Interest and fascination, however, were the stronger forces in the Archabbot.

Bessey tapped the Archabbot on the shoulder and gave him the "thumbs up." The Archabbot nodded eagerly. Bessey pushed the throttle forward. The green and gold *Spirit of Saint Vincent* lumbered over the field, gained speed and took flight.

"So this is what it feels like," thought the Archabbot. The biplane gained altitude. The Archabbot marveled at the rolling landscape of Westmoreland County. It was beautiful. He smiled. "This is what we will be teaching," he thought.

Bessey circled the college football field where the Saint Vincent Bearcats and their opponents were waiting. Suddenly, Bessey put the plane into a dive, leveled off, and dropped the game's football to the players.

First Meeting With Archabbot Aurelius

One year before there was a knock at the Archabbot's door. He looked up from his desk. He expected visitors that afternoon. Some people from J.D. Hill airport were coming to propose a new program they wanted to start with the college. He did not know all the details, but he was fascinated with anything that had to do with aviation. "Come in," he said.

Father Alcuin W. Tasch, OSB, the college dean entered. He had with him the *Latrobe Bulletin* publisher, Thomas E. Whiteman, Russell Brinkley, field manager of the J.D. Hill Airport, and Charles Carroll, the airport's owner and founder.

The Archabbot immediately recognized Charlie

from all the times Charlie had landed his old Jenny in the clover field on the campus. During the next few hours the group discussed something totally new in the academic world. They wanted the Hill Airport and Saint Vincent College to establish a joint school for aeronautics. It would be the first of its kind in the world. They made final arrangements. Charlie proposed a new name, Hill Airport at Saint Vincent College, and later applied to Rand-McNally to place it on its aeromaps. Plans fell through, however, when Charlie left the area to work in Florida flying co-pilot to Ed Musick for Pan-Am. Saint Vincent College, however, decided to continue with the program.

Move to Greensburg

In 1930, through association with the Mayer Aircraft Corporation of Bridgeville, Pennsylvania, the Greensburg School of Aviation opened at Main Aviation's Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport.

The college moved the flight instruction component of the program there. Father Bernard Brinker, O.S.B., would teach ground school courses at the college. Twelve students enrolled in the first class. It was a modest beginning to an innovative program. Flight instructors at the Greensburg Airport included Dick Coulter, Dick Copeland, Norman "Happy" O'Bryan, Dick Laughlin, "Bo" Phelan, E. Henriquez and Bob Trader.

The Great Depression Interferes

But these were the early years of the Great Depression, and expenses for the new program could not be justified. The program was discontinued in 1931, after only two years of operation. This would not, however, be the end of Saint Vincent College's association with aviation. In 1939 the college entered he government's Civil Air Patrol program. Instructors at the Latrobe Airport, now a municipal entity, provided the flight instruction. Charlie Carroll's staff of flight instructors included Cecil Smith, George Allen and Dave Patterson.

The Army Air Corps

Two years later, in May 1941, the United States Army Air Corps recognized the convenience provided by the close proximity of the Latrobe Airport to Saint Vincent College. Here they had an opportunity to both train and educate pilots for military service. The National Aviation Training Association certified Saint Vincent College to teach ground school for glider pilots receiving flight training at the Latrobe Airport. The program was a modified version of the one begun in 1939. It was especially designed for the Army Air Corps Enlisted Reserve. Under the direction of Father Ulric Thaner, O.S.B., the program included courses in mathematics, physics, civil air regulations, navigation, radio and morse code.

Courtesy of Clyde Hauger

In March 1943, by order of the Army Air Force Flying Training Command, Saint Vincent's aviation program expanded to suit the needs of the military. A full compliment of 350 students arrived at the campus. They marched in formation up what is now Monastery Drive. The tunes of the military marching band came with them. If there were doubts before among the Benedictines about the reality of the war, they ended with the last notes of the band. Even the College was going to war.

Roland Heid, O.S.B.

Father Roland Heid, O.S.B. had to postpone his graduate studies and return to Saint Vincent College as soon as possible. The Army wanted to expand the aviation program presently being offered at the college, and the college needed Father Roland to return and instruct the cadets.

Father Roland first arrived at the Saint Vincent College Seminary in 1928, the year Archabbot Aurelius started his aeronautics program. Thrust into the forefront of the college's aircrew training program, Father Roland taught hundreds of cadets over the next eighteen months. Father Roland, Dr. Daniel Nolan and Father Bernard Brinker taught physics to the new cadets. The physics course required four months of study. After the fourth month, the cadets entered one month of flight training.

Father Roland taught four sections of physics, each section at a different level of preparation. Each month, one group of seventy would graduate to flight school, and a new group would come in to take its place. Consequently, Father Roland taught the entire physics course every month. Once the cadets graduated from flight school, Father Roland rarely heard what happened to them. They went off for further training and eventual overseas duty.

In the fall of 1944, with the war winding down, the Army Air Force Flying Training Command ended its program at Saint Vincent College. The college revamped the military program soon after its cessation. Father Michael F. Carmody offered a two-month course in the fundamentals of aviation. The new program put an emphasis on peace-time needs in aviation, new developments in aviation, civil air regulations, aeronautical meteorology, navigation and flight training. One of the texts used in the classes was Russ Brinkley's best-selling *Your Post-War Place in Aviation.*

The 1970s and Vee Neal Aviation

In 1978, to coincide with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Wright Brothers flight, the college offered ground school courses, with flight school under the direction of Vee Neal Aviation. Once again Father Roland was called upon to teach the prospective pilots. This time he decided to become a student pilot himself. He never went on to get his pilot's license, but when asked how he did on his flights he answers, "Well, I guess I did something right, I'm still here!"

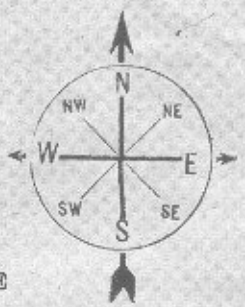
Silver Wings

1978 was a milestone year for Saint Vincent College's association with aviation. That year the college was honored with a memorial plaque by the Silver Wings Fraternity, an international group of aviators who made their first flight more than twenty-five years before.

The fraternity was founded by Russ Brinkley, the former manager of the Hill Airport at Latrobe. Many years before, Russ Brinkley sat down with Archabbot Aurelius B. Stehle, OSB, Charlie Carroll, Thomas E. Whiteman and Father Alcuin W. Tasch, OSB to discuss the possibility of starting an aviation school at Saint Vincent College. The possibility became a reality many times over.

Ruth Frey in 1979. Ruth and her husband, Neal, founded Vee Neal Aviation in 1967. From its beginnings as a flight school and aircraft rental operation, the company became in the 1970s the largest Cessna dealer in the North Eastern U.S. In the 1980s and 1990s the company emerged to the forefront of developments in the aviation industry. *(Courtesy of Ruth Frey).*

RAND McNALLY & CO.,
AEROMAP DEPT.,
536 S. CLARK ST.,
CHICAGO, ILL.



AIRPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name of Airport Hill Airport at St Vincent College Latrobe Pa
2. Class: municipal; commercial; government; aero club;
   Commerce Department intermediate; emergency only.....
3. Is field of permanent nature?.....
4. Is field under construction?....If so, when available?.....
5. State distance and direction FROM business center of city.....
6. State size and shape of field.....
7. State altitude or elevation of field, if known.....
8. Does field have standard or other markers?.....
9. Is surface leveled and improved?.....
10. Are repairs available?..... Fuel?..... Hangars?.....
11. Is telephone available?.....Telegraph?.....
12. Is weather information available at field?.....
13. Does field have standard 24" revolving beacon?.....
    Beacon of other type?.....Flood lights?.....
14. Is there a wind indicator at field?.....
15. Name of owner.....
    of operator...C B Carroll.....
16. General remarks:.....

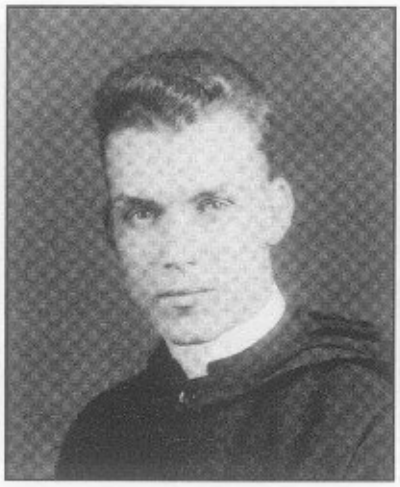
17. Name and location of other airports in your vicinity:.....

OUR published location and description of YOUR AIRPORT can only be as good as the information YOU SEND US.

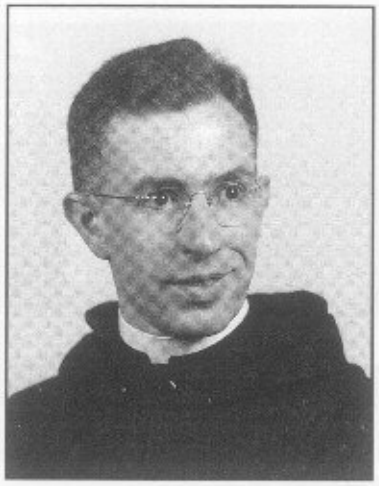
Charlie Carroll's application to Rand-McNally requesting that Saint Vincent Aviation Field be listed on their aero map as "J.D. Hill Airport at Saint Vincent College."

(Courtesy of the Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives).

Archabbot Aurelius Stehle, O.S.B.
(Courtesy of the Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives).



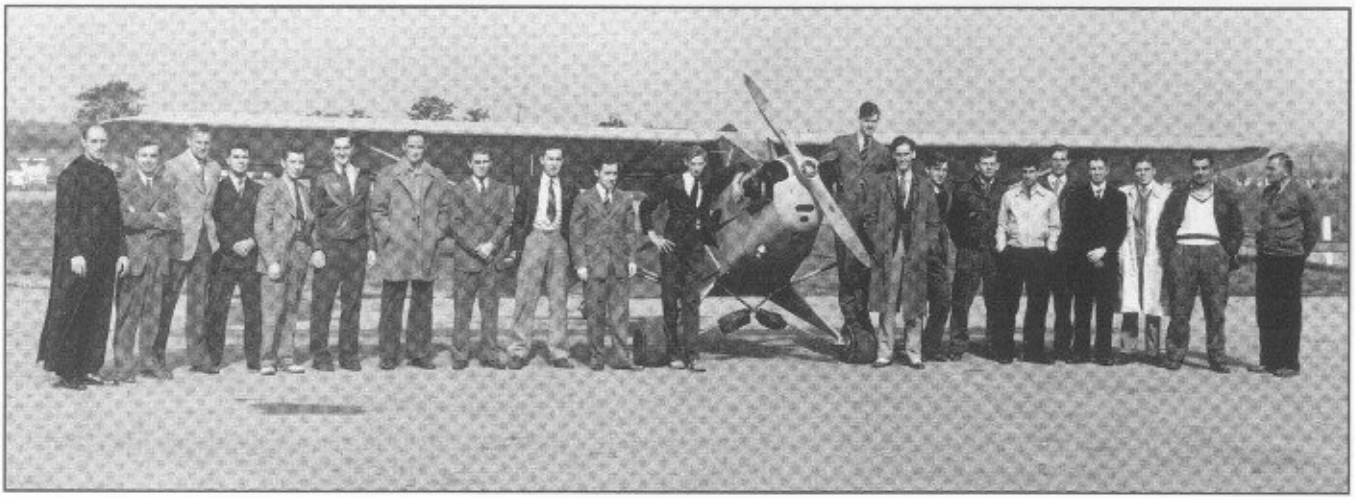
Rev. Bernard Brinker, O.S.B.
(Courtesy of the Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives).

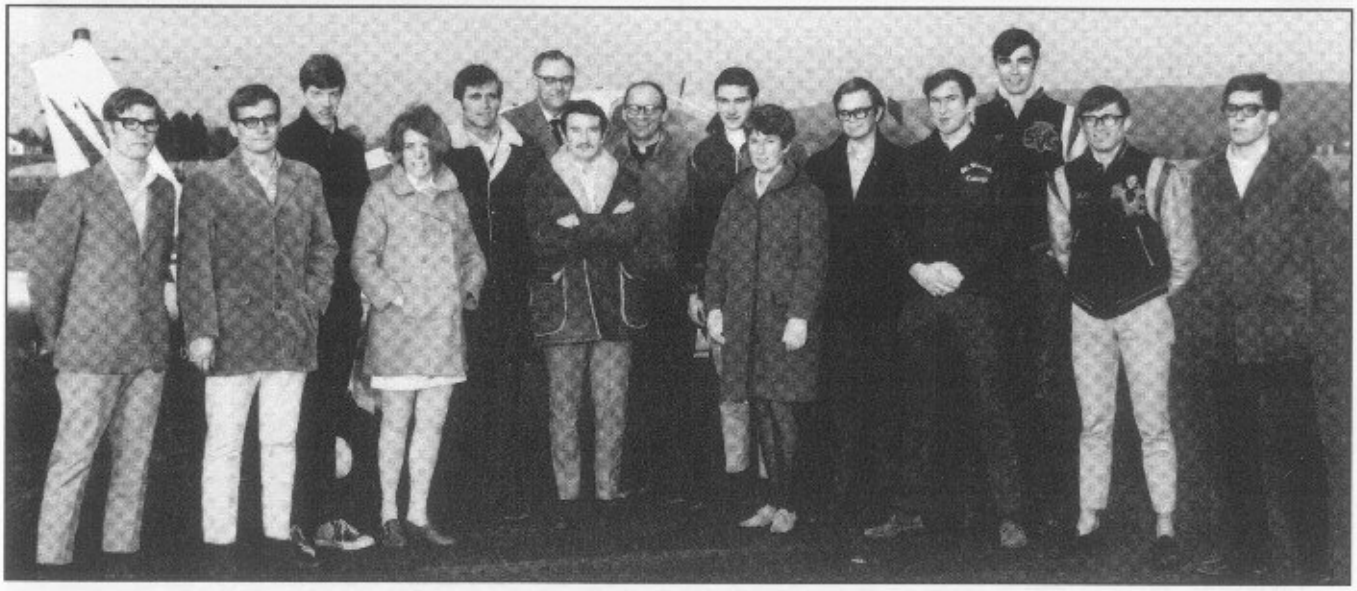


Rev. Roland Heid, O.S.B.
(Courtesy of the Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives).

RIGHT: Fr. Alcuin Tasch receives his Silver Wings award from Russ Brinkley [center] as Bob Cheffins, Westmoreland County Airport manager, looks on. *(Courtesy of the Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives).*

BELOW: Army Air Corps cadets line up in front of their Piper Cub at the Latrobe Airport. *(Courtesy of the Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives).*





TOP: 1939. Saint Vincent College Civil Air Patrol student flyers at the Carroll School of Aviation, pose with "Cubby," Charlie Carroll's collie and airport mascot. *(Courtesy of the Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives).*

CENTER: Army cadets at the Latrobe Airport. *(Courtesy of the Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives).*

BOTTOM: Saint Vincent College student pilots at the Westmoreland County Airport, ready to receive instruction from the personnel at Vee Neal Aviation. *(Courtesy of the Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives).*

"Doc" Adams, the Airmail Pick-up System, and All American Aviation

Dr. Lytle Schuyler "Doc" Adams, primarily a dental surgeon, but also an inventor of extraordinary talent, first got the idea of an air mail pick up system in 1923 when he was a real estate agent for the Long Bell Lumber Company in Longview, Washington. Adams needed a road for his Longview clients as much as the town needed one in order to progress. With donations of explosives and heavy equipment from the lumber company, Adams collected volunteer labor from among the townspeople, and together they completed the Ocean Beach Highway. While the road was under construction, Adams took note of how the workers employed grappling hooks attached to tractors to hook and drag away the fallen timber. Why couldn't a similar system be employed on an aircraft for picking up various items, including mail?

W.E. Boeing and Seattle

After the road was finished, Adams moved to Seattle to practice dentistry, having been qualified in that profession since 1905, but he did not forsake his idea of an air pick-up system. In his spare time he built and tested numerous models. In 1925, W.E. Boeing, a man destined to create one of the world's greatest aircraft companies, arrived in Seattle. Boeing bought a small air field, Gorst Field, where he set up a small aircraft factory. Boeing became interested in Doc's ideas and allowed him to use his facilities and staff to develop the ideas for air pick-up. Soon Boeing was ready to test Doc's cumbersome prototype.

Doc acquired an OX5 Travel Air biplane and two young pilots, Clayton Scott and L. Van Rawlings. In August 1928, after rigid and exhaustive tests, Adams conducted the first public demonstrations of his system. With Charles Lindbergh, W.E. Boeing, William P. McCrackin Jr., Chief of Aeronautics of the Department of Commerce, and C.M. Perkins, Seattle postmaster among the observers, Clayton Scott swooped down in the Travel Air and snagged thirty-five pounds of mail. The plane maintained course and speed after the pick-up.

More Demonstrations and Some Financial Backing

Soon after, Adams exhibited his models at the Chicago Post Office. Officials there, duly impressed, submitted favorable recommendations to W. Irving Glover, Second Assistant Postmaster General in Charge of Air Mail. Adams traveled to Washington where he showed his models to Postmaster General Harry S. New, Glover, and an assortment of senators and congressmen.

In September 1928, seeking financial backing, Adams went on to New York where he displayed his models at an aviation show in Grand Central Palace. This time, his model aircraft flew across the room and picked up a small bag of mail. Among the spectators were representatives from the McClure Jones Company, whose directors later helped Adams with financing to demonstrate his model at air shows in Buffalo and Cincinnati. The McClure Jones Company also financed Doc's first companies, the Adams Air Express, an operating company, and Airways Patent Corporation, a patent holding company.

Relieved of financial pressure, Adams refined his system to include in-flight fueling. For subsequent demonstrations, Adams purchased a Travel Air 6000 monoplane. On December 10, 1928, at Hoover Field in Washington, D.C., Mrs. Harry New, the wife of the Postmaster General, christened the plane *The Postmaster General.* Harry New, speaking on the occasion, said:

> This is the last word...for the benefit of air mail....If successful, as we all hope it may be, as it bids fair to be, Dr. Adams will have made a most substantial contribution to the transportation of useful loads through the air.

On December 14, 1928, pilots Don Brown, Captain John O. Donaldson and L. Van Rawlings, operating from Roosevelt Field, Long Island, used Adams' pick-up system to transfer food, letters, oil and fuel. Two men who were watching the demonstration offered Adams contracts. They were Cliff Ball of Bettis Field, owner and president of Clifford Ball Airlines, and P.W. Chapman, president of United States Lines.

Ship-to-Shore Pick-up: The *SS Leviathan*

Chapman, hoping to establish the world's first permanent ship-to-shore service, financed a demonstration on the *SS Leviathan*, flagship of the United States Lines fleet. The same ship was used in a similar demonstration on July 31, 1927, when the first ship-to-shore flight was made by Clarence D. Chamberlin. Chapman treated Adams royally, providing him not only with intensive public relations support, but also with accommodations for his staff.

The caption for this photo from the *New York Evening Journal* reads:

"Bitterly disappointed over the failure of the amphibian to find the *Leviathan* Friday, Dr. Lytle S. Adams, who was aboard the steamer, is busily working on plans to demonstrate his air-mail pick-up invention on the next voyage. Everything on the *Leviathan* is in readiness for the pick-up, the inventor said, and he is confident it will succeed."

(Courtesy of Ed Blend).

Doc's serviceable but unwieldy trap was increased from a width of twenty-one feet to thirty-five feet and placed 100 feet above the water line at the ship's stern.

The first pick-up attempt was scheduled for June 6, 1929. Unfortunately, the Burnelli monoplane which was to be used, crashed at Keyport, New Jersey, on June 5. Adams hurriedly installed his equipment in a Loening amphibian. At 2:00 p.m. on June 6, Lieutenant Commander George R. Pond took off from Newark Municipal Airport, stopped at Roosevelt Field for a wireless test, then flew to New Bedford for refueling. *Leviathan* stood ready off Nantucket Lightship, but the Loening was struck by lightning. Pond aborted the flight.

The next morning, Pond made another attempt, this time with Adams who was armed with a camera. Adams hung dangerously out of the hole made for the pick-up equipment, a position he assumed would be conducive for a good photo. Pond encouraged him back into the plane. Pond aborted this attempt as well. Dense fog obscured the ship.

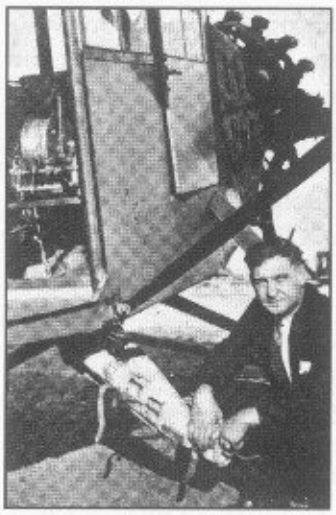
Doc arranged still another attempt, this time with two planes, a Fairchild monoplane to make the pick-up, and the Loening to carry a bevy of photographers. At 3:30 p.m., June 12, the Leviathan proceeded in an easterly direction. Adams was on board. Two hours later, Pond, toting a forty-pound bag of mail, climbed into the Fairchild. Both planes took off from Keyport, New Jersey, and reached the liner around 6:50 p.m. Pond circled, swooped down, dropped the bag of mail into the trap, and picked up the ship's mail. They landed at Newark about one hour later.

When he arrived back in the United States, Adams was confident that he would receive a permanent contract, but Chapman's public relations efforts had backfired. The Post Office Department canceled Chapman's contract, charging that his line had used the contract to sell stock in the company, stock that had risen considerably in price during the demonstrations.

Clifford Ball Enters the Picture

Gravely disappointed, Adams transferred his equipment to Youngstown, Ohio, where Truscon Steel was to redesign the trap, hoping to reduce its cost and increase its effectiveness. It was there that Clifford Ball arranged to conduct tests of Adam's equipment. The tests, which began on August 30, 1929, lasted for nearly one month. During this time, Adams reduced the width of his trap apparatus to twenty feet, increased the height, and added a guard rail in the slot to decrease the possibility of the steel cable fraying.

By March 1930, Ball and Adams were ready to demonstrate the system in the nation's capital. From March 6 to March 11, they made nearly 500 successful pick-ups and deliveries for Congress and the Post Office Department. Still, the Post Office Department required a further six months of service testing before it would allow air-mail contractors to use the system. The tests, which began August 4, 1930, were conducted over Ball's C.A.M. 11 route between Pittsburgh and Cleveland, with mail pick-ups at Beaver Falls, New Castle, Pittsburgh, and Youngstown, for delivery to Cleveland. In anticipation, Adams and Ball ordered the building of nine additional traps.



In 1929, Clifford Ball, operator of airmail route C.A.M. 11 between Pittsburgh and Cleveland, tried out Adam's pick-up system. After the Post Office Department agreed to a demonstration of the system, Ball and Adams established pick-up stations in Pennsylvania at New Castle and Beaver Falls. In the photo, Ball poses with the pick-up device, installed on one of his Fairchild FC-2 monoplanes.
(Courtesy of Ed Blend).

The tests lasted two weeks, then the contract was canceled. Ball was pressured to sell his company, and there was no stipulation in the sales agreement concerning Adams. It was not a happy moment for either man. Adams did not venture to negotiate a contract with the new owners, whose company would eventually become Capital Airlines. Over the next year, Adams would become involved in patent infringement lawsuit lodged by a man named John P. Jacobs. Jacobs' claims turned out to be spurious, but the episode drained Adams' resources, and he was left once again to seek financial support for his pick-up system.

Braniff and the Fair in Chicago

It was 1933, and though the Great Depression had begun for the nation and the world, the "Century of Progress" was in full swing in Chicago. The great fair was an opportunity for Adams to once again demonstrate his pick-up system. He began by acquiring two sponsors, the New York Central Railroad and Braniff Airways. Tom Braniff and Adams managed to have the Post Office Department extend Braniff's C.A.M. to the fairgrounds. The government required them to obtain special insurance protection and set in place measures to ensure the public safety.

On September 20, 1934, Trow Sebree, a pilot formerly with Clifford Ball Airlines, and Eddie Gerber, carried 4,000 pieces of mail. They made the trip in six minutes, ten percent of the time it took by mail truck. Though the Chicago pick-ups were thrilling and successful, and though Adams had begun making plans to establish feeder routes in the small towns surrounding Chicago, enthusiasm waned and died along with any plans when the fair closed.

Though disappointment once again clouded Adams' horizon, something did happen in Chicago that would significantly change the future for him and for his air mail pick-up system. A man named Richard Archbold, who had been making expeditions into the forests of New Guinea to collect bird specimens and small animals for the New York Museum of Natural History, became interested in Adams' system and its potential for picking up and transporting his specimens from the interior of New Guinea to the coast.

The "Goal Posts"

In the spring of 1935, Adams traveled to Archbold's family plantation in Thomasville, Georgia. Together, they tried to redesign the pick-up trap to make it easier for New Guineans to carry and assemble it. It wasn't long before they realized that, even with their modifications, the apparatus would still be too clumsy and complicated. Adams hit upon the idea of using two bamboo poles set apart like goal posts with a loop between, replacing the trap. That way, only the poles and rigging would need to be transported and set-up would be easy. A simple grapple, suspended from the plane, would make the pick-up. At that moment, Adams relegated his cumbersome trap system to history. In less than five years, his "goal post" air mail pick-up system would be servicing 121 communities in the Mid-Atlantic Region of the United States.

Adams Moves to Irwin, PA: Tri-State Aviation

After Thomasville, Adams took up permanent residence in Irwin, Pennsylvania, halfway between Pittsburgh and Latrobe, on a property he purchased during his association with Clifford Ball. In Irwin he established a small field and hanger and began a new round of seeking financial backing for his new system. The new "goal post" apparatus impressed William P. Wilson of Wheeling, West Virginia, president of the Ohio Valley Industrial Corporation and past chairman of the board at Fokker Aircraft. Wilson had been following Adams activities for several years. Through Wilson, Adams gained the confidence of Jennings Randolph of West Virginia's Second Congressional District. Randolph witnessed a demonstration of the pick up system at Morgantown in late 1935, after which he became air mail pick-up's most vocal Washington advocate.

Though Adams welcomed such support, little was done to alleviate his financial situation. Hoping to gain the President's interest, he contacted Eleanor Roosevelt, who passed his letter on to her brother, G. Hall

Roosevelt. Nothing came of the overture. Finally, Adams made contact with Arthur P. Davis, president of Army Engineering Corporation of Brooklyn, New York. Davis, believing that the pick-up system had potential, agreed to lend Adams a substantial amount of money. On May 5, 1937, Adams, along with W. Edgar Leedy, Jr., and Arthur P. Davis, formed two companies, Tri-State Aviation, an operating company, and All American Aviation, a patent holding company. Adams was elected president. Davis became vice-president and board chairman. All American was to engage in air operations involving passengers, freight, mail lines, pleasure flights and industrial flights. Tri-State Aviation at Adams' Irwin Field would replace the work undertaken by Adams Air Express. It would undertake pick-up experiments, and engage in the development and airmail network. In return, Davis received a one-half share in Adams patent for the pick-up apparatus.

Operations in Morgantown

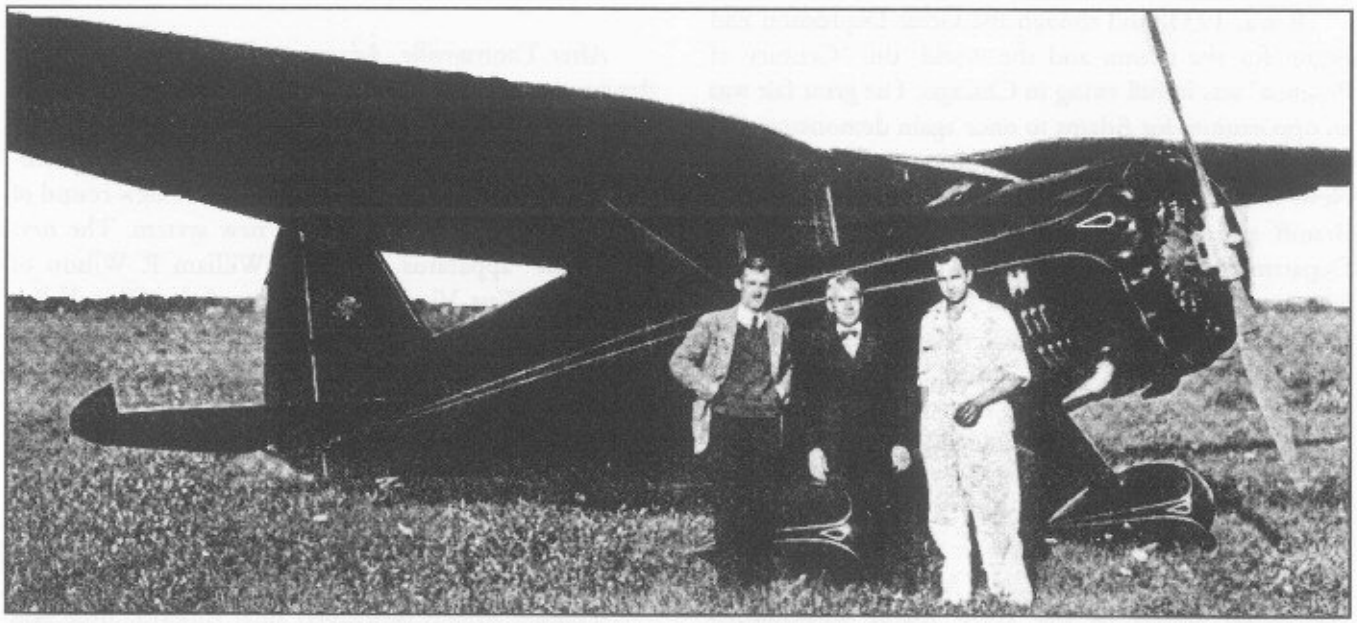
Congressman Randolph, dismayed that existing airlines had largely ignored establishing routes in his constituency, urged Adams and Davis to move operations to Morgantown, which they did do. In 1937, they moved to the new municipal airport in Morgantown, hiring in the process pilot Norman Rintoul and mechanic Vic Yesulaites. The pair flew pick-up experiments and express routes.

Express operations began on September 9, 1937, with Kaufmann's Department Store in Pittsburgh the first customer. Soon, other stores and mail order houses such as Montgomery Ward took advantage of the speedy air shipments. By 1938, Tri-State had three Bellancas and one Stinson servicing Morgantown, Pittsburgh, Charleston, West Virginia, and Baltimore.

Despite some success, sporadic as it was, Adams knew that airmail contracts would be the life's blood of the company. He continued with demonstrations and experiments. One demonstration became the stuff of local legend. On June 3, 1937, a Tri-State pilot, Norman J. ("Happy") O'Bryan, field manager of the airport at Dry Ridge in Greensburg, Pennsylvania made a "special delivery" to members of the House Post Office and Post Roads Committee. Happy swooped down, dropped a container of six quarts of Scotch whiskey, picked up a bag of mail, and climbed into the clouds. History has recorded neither the disposition of the whiskey nor the influence, if any, that it generated.

Less than one week later, at any rate, Pennsylvania congressman Harry Haines introduced H.R. 7448, a bill designed to authorize the postmaster general to receive proposals for experimental airmail to isolated rural areas. After some delay, Congress passed the Experimental Air Mail Act of 1938, and the Post Office Department opened rural airmail pick-up and delivery to bids.

Though Tri-State was in a good position to obtain an experimental airmail contract, finances were still a prob-



Tri-State Aviation's Stinson Reliant 21107 fresh from the factory in 1938. This plane, piloted by Norm Rintoul with Vic Yesulaites as Flight Mechanic, would make the first, officially scheduled All American Aviation airmail drop and pick-up at Latrobe on May 12, 1939. The plane was painted maroon, with blue stripe and gold trim, colors AAA would maintain during the experimental period 1939-1940. Left to Right: Norm Rintoul, Lytle Adams, Vic Yesulaites. *(AAHS Journal).*

lem, despite the capital investment by Arthur Davis. Adams once again approached the Roosevelts. On June 25, 1938, Norman Rintoul and Adams flew to Hyde Park where they spent the evening with Mrs. Roosevelt and her family and friends. Mrs. Roosevelt agreed to let them transport her to a luncheon at a homestead in Arthurdale, West Virginia, just south of Morgantown. The President's wife, through her association with Congressman Randolph, had developed an interest in the mountain folk of West Virginia and in projects involving homesteading and self-help among those who lived in remote and depressed areas. At the evening meal, at breakfast, and during the flight down, Adams explained his system, especially as to how it could service isolated communities with manufactured goods and give them access to distant markets. He must have struck a responsive chord in the First Lady. Accompanying them was New York state trooper, Earl R. Miller, Mrs. Roosevelt's bodyguard and personal friend of the family. Miller promised Adams that he would talk to other members of the Roosevelt family about financial support.

Enter Richard du Pont

After years of frustration, Adams was wary of placing too much hope in his discussions with Mrs. Roosevelt or Miller. Present at the dinner at Hyde Park, however, was the wife of Franklin Roosevelt, Jr., the former Ethel du Pont, of Delaware. She spoke to her cousin, a glider enthusiast and aeronautical pioneer, about Adams system. The cousin expressed an immediate interest. His name was Richard du Pont. The two men met in September 1938.

At last, Adams found the financial backing he had sought for so many years. His association with Richard du Pont, however, would result in his losing control not only of his company, but of his invention as well.

Experimental Routes 1001 and 1002

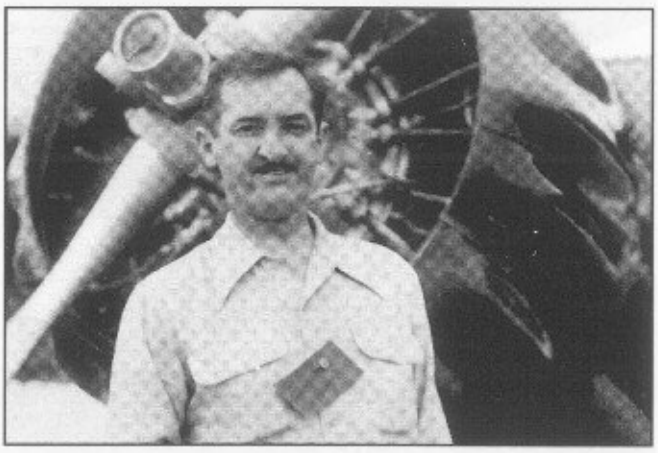
By December 27, 1938, du Pont signed contracts for air mail pick-up routes 1001 (Philadelphia to Pittsburgh) and 1002 (Pittsburgh, Irwin, Jeannette, Greensburg, Latrobe, Mt. Pleasant, Connellsville, Uniontown, into West Virginia, and return to Pittsburgh). Stinson SR-10C Reliant aircraft with Lycoming 680 engines would make the pick-ups. Norman Rintoul was made chief pilot. In early 1939, the company hired five others: Holger Hoiriis, Camille D. ("Cammy") Vinet, Thomas Kinchelhoe, Gerald E. McGovern, and Jimmy Piersol. Later in the year, Raymond Elder of Scottdale and longtime associate of Charlie Carroll at Latrobe Airport was hired as a reserve, along with Lloyd Juelson. Pilot requirements were stringent; all were required to have years of experience and thousands of hours in the air. This was little wonder. Not only would they be required to make difficult, low-level pick-ups at high speed, but much of their territory took in the notorious "Hell's Stretch" over the Allegheny Mountains, the graveyard of many regular air-mail pilots, and a place of dense fogs and unpredictable weather changes.

Before the pick-ups could begin, changes needed to be made in the pick-up apparatus. Adams was excluded from the process. Some of the changes incorporated elements of other pick-up systems, such as Cabot's. Most were designed and implemented by Vic Yesulaites. Du Pont had serious doubts about Adams' ability to correct problems inherent in the present system. He also considered him to be too emotionally involved in the process to be amenable to change. In this he was correct. Adams' resentment deepened. The final breakdown of the relationship in 1940 is documented in detail in Lewis and Trimble's *The Airway to Everywhere.*

To give its personnel valuable training, All American staged pick-ups and deliveries along its proposed routes. The first occurred at Coatesville, Pennsylvania, March 6, 1939. Other demonstrations took place in Oil City, Warren, Franklin, Corry, and New Kensington.

Latrobe, PA: May 12, 1939

All American's first officially scheduled air mail pick-up took place at Latrobe, Pennsylvania, May 12, 1939, Route 1002.



Norman Rintoul in 1948 at Irwin, PA, the day he performed a human pick-up with Irwin's Bernie Cain as the subject. Rintoul is pictured with All American Aviation Stinson NC2311, the "Black Stinson," or "Black Bess." He later purchased the plane and donated it to the Smithsonian Institute, where it hangs today. Rintoul made the AAA's first official pick-up at Latrobe in 1939, and the last at Jamestown, New York, in 1949. *(Courtesy of Ken Scholter).*

There is no known record as to why Latrobe was chosen for the honor, but it is reasonable to assume that Charlie Carroll's promotional abilities and far-reaching friendships had something to do with it.

On May 13, 1940, the government suspended pick-up service, largely because financial returns were disappointing. Yet, the record was impressive. In twelve months of operation All American completed nearly 450,000 miles in the air, made over twenty-thousand pick-ups of eighty-two thousand pounds of mail and air express, all without serious accident.

Permanent Service: August 12, 1940-July, 1949

In 1940, the Civil Aeronautics Board granted All American Aviation a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. Air Mail Route 49. Eventually, 139 towns and cities would receive direct service. August 12, 1940 saw the inauguration of the permanent service. The experimental year had served a good purpose; all the pilots and mechanics knew their jobs, and there would be few slip ups. There were many refinements to the apparatus, especially to the pick up hook cable and modifications in the height of the pick-up station, which gradually became portable. Power driven units would replace the old hand crank. The wheel pants of the 1939 planes were replaced by wire cutting devices that were supposed to cut through pick-up lines rather than having them get tangled in the wheels. Over the next nine years, the Stinsons would be augmented by the more modern Beechcraft twin-engine D-18C's.

By May 25, 1942 , AAA planes had flown 2,700,000 scheduled miles, made 225,000 pick-ups and deliveries, carried 750,691 pounds of airmail, and 172,801 pounds of air express. Astonishingly, the pilots did it all without damage to equipment or injury to personnel. Leighton Collins, editor of *Air Facts*, speaks of flying with Norm Rintoul, Clyde Hauger and Dave Patterson, and called the AAA system as being comprised of "iron men and SR-10s." The perfect record, however, would soon be tarnished.

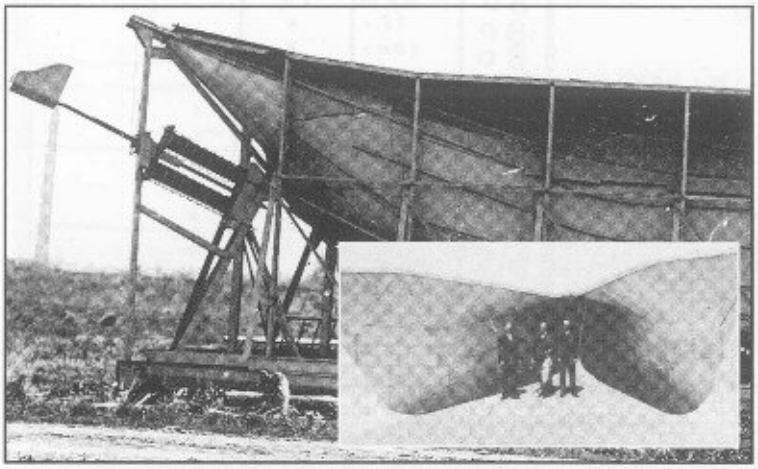
On April 12, 1943, Russ Crow encountered a vicious downdraft on Tuscarora mountain and plowed into some scrub oak, severely damaging his aircraft. On October 25, on a flight from Chambersburg to Gettysburg, Tommy Bryan and Flight Mechanic Vic Gasbarro went down on Piney mountain. Both were battered about and the plane was damaged, but the cargo survived. On August 3, 1944, Red Lindemuth and Ralph Monaco crashed and burned at Yorkville, Ohio. This time there were some serious broken bones. The ship was a total loss, and thirty-one sacks of mail were destroyed. On September 29, 1944, Wilson Scott died in a crash at State College, Pennsylvania. It was the first fatality for AAA in 6,000,000 miles of scheduled operation.

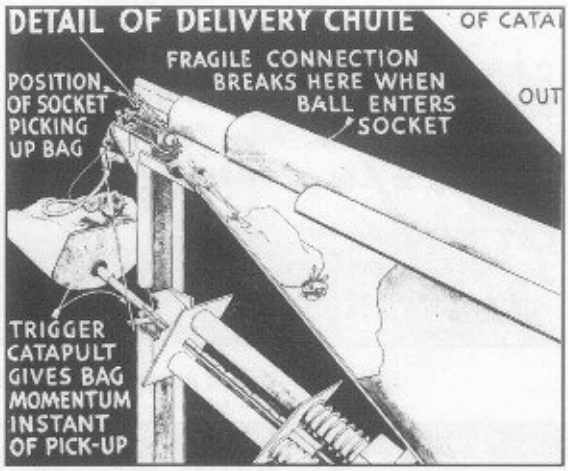
The scene above takes place in Jamestown, New York, June 30, 1949, the day of the last AAA airmail drop and pick-up from AAA's northernmost route. "Pop" Oberg, airmail messenger, shares "holding the bag" with Norm Rintoul and Vic Yesulaites. Rintoul and Yesulaite's share one of history's ironies. They were the first in at Latrobe in 1939, and the last out here in 1949. *(Courtesy of Ed Blend).*

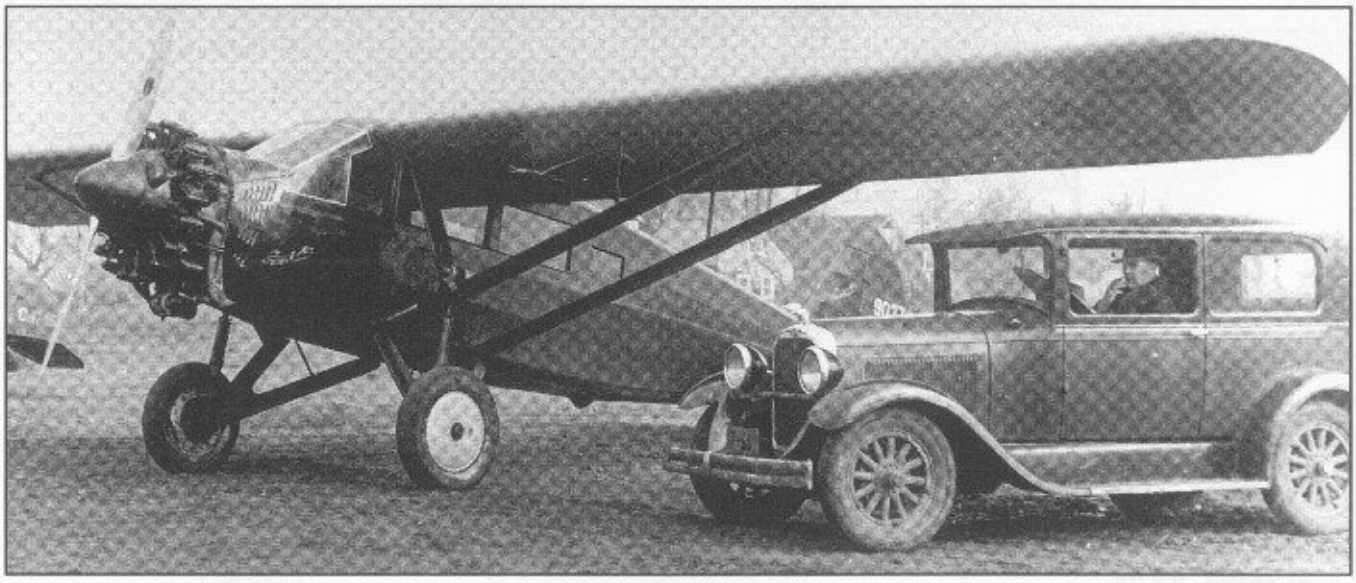
In the mid-forties, AAA expanded its interests abroad, organizing its own Brazilian company. Captain Clyde Hauger and Flight Mechanic Raymond Garcia became the operations department of Equipamento All America Aviation S/A, formed in Rio de Janiero. They were to develop short haul transportation through cargo and glider pick-up. AAA also was commended by the US military for its work in air pick-up, glider and human pick-up, and the development of the Brodie system, a portable rig for landing and launching aircraft on a cable.

In the late forties, the company began to move away from airmail pick-up to passenger and conventional air mail service. The old Stinsons were sold off, and the company acquired eleven, twenty-four passenger DC-3s. Passenger operation was headquartered in Washington, D.C., while pick-ups continued out of Pittsburgh. In July 1949, the last airmail pick-up took place in Jamestown, New York. The same pilot and flight mechanic who flew the first pick-up at Latrobe in 1939, made the last. They were Norm Rintoul and Vic Yesulaites.

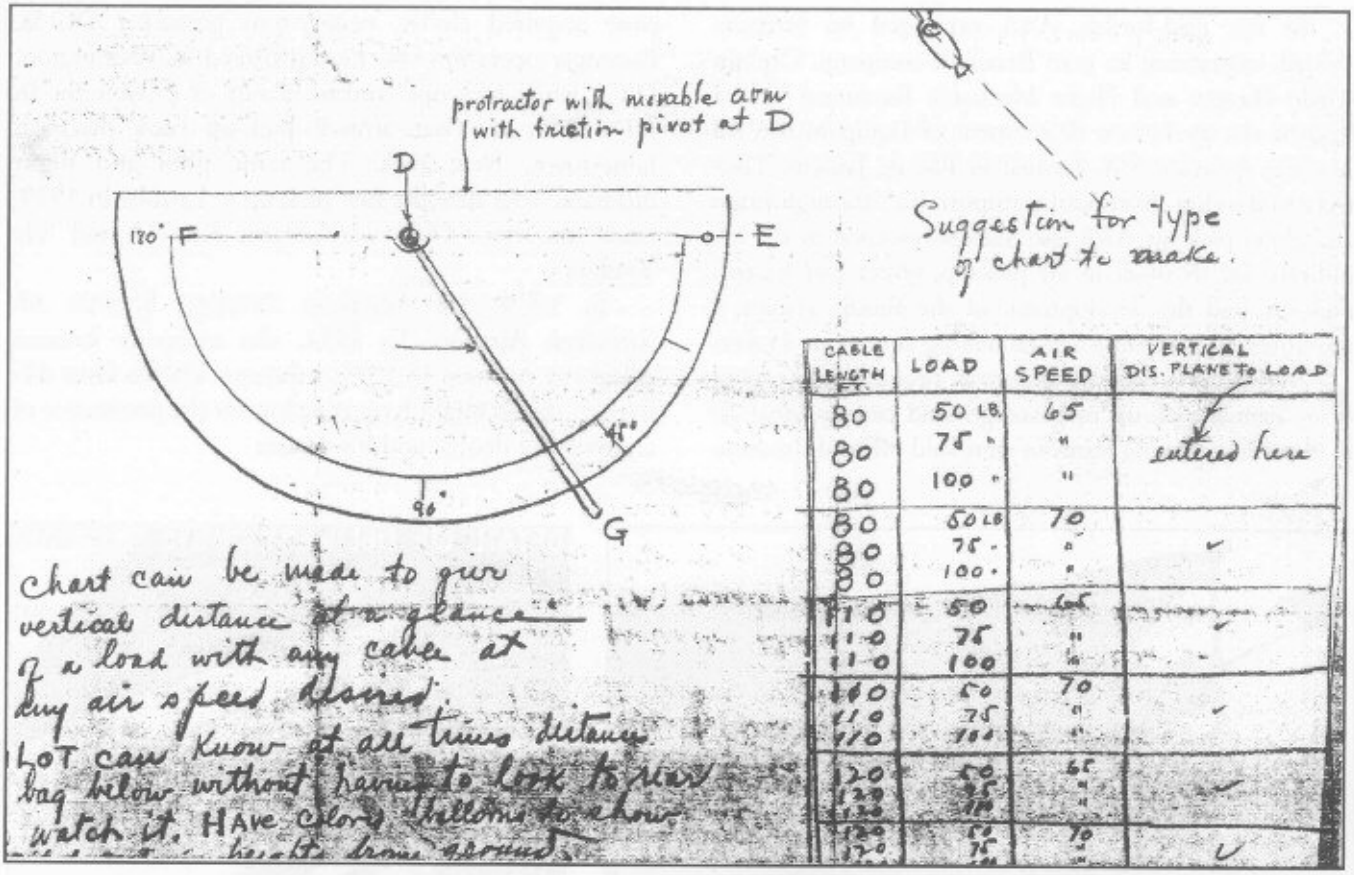
In 1949, All American Aviation became All American Airways. In 1951, the company became Allegheny Airlines. In 1979, it became USAir. How differently things might have gone but for the persistence of an inventive dentist and his dream.



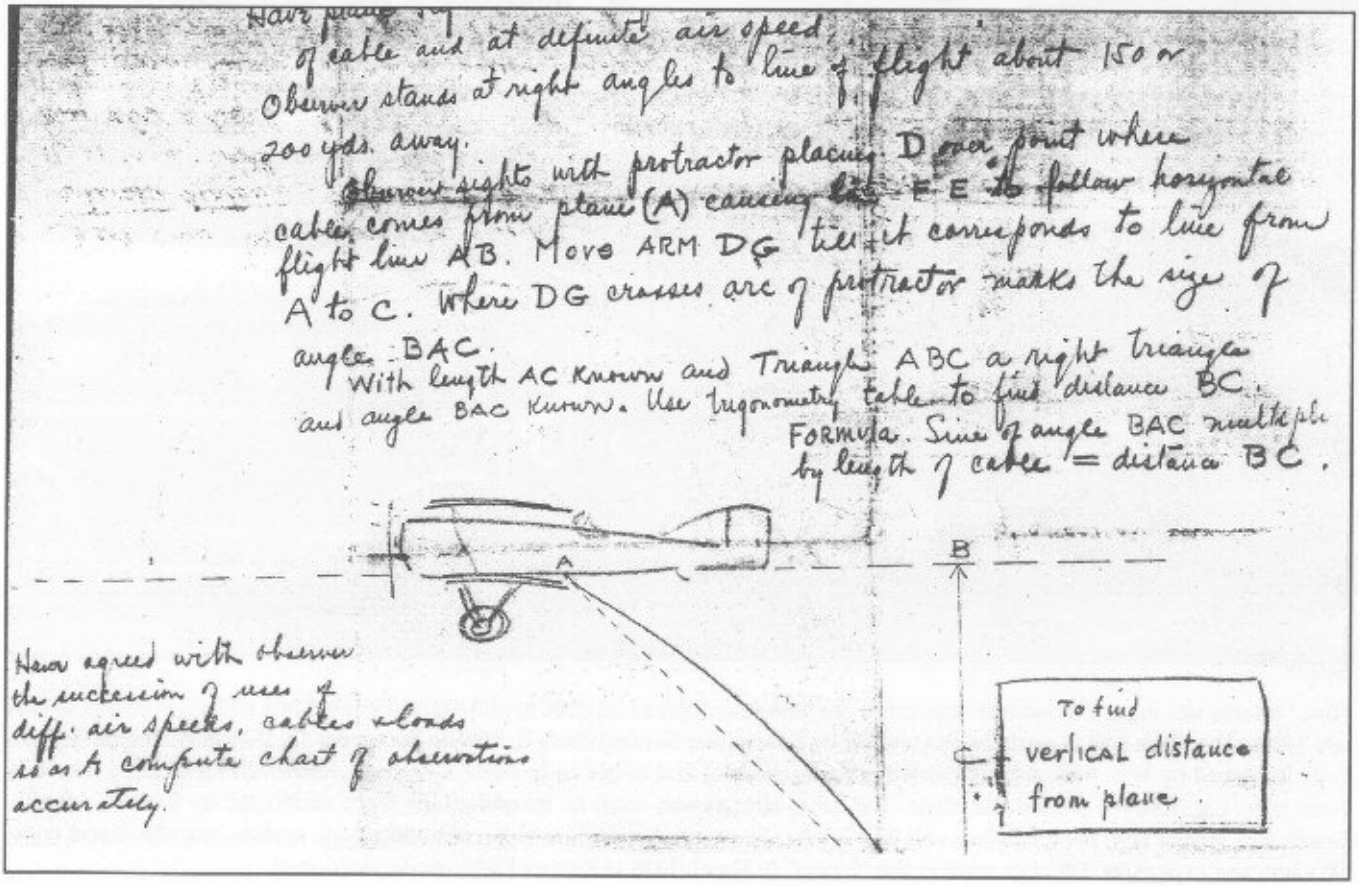




"Doc" Adams sits in his Studebaker next to the Travel Air monoplane he used in pick-up demonstrations and experiments in the late 1920s. The plane was named *The Postmaster* by Postmaster General Harry S. New on December 18, 1929 in Washington, D.C., and christened by Mrs. New. Adams carried out a successful test of his early chute system at Roosevelt Field, Long Island, a week later. L.V. Rawlins piloted the plane. The same aircraft was used on an endurance flight conducted by Captain John C. Donaldson, former WWI pilot, Rawlins, and Don Brown. Above are two photos of Adam's early chute system, one which was cumbersome and expensive. Officials pose in the "funnel" in March 1930 at Hoover Field. *(Courtesy of Ed Blond).*



Doc Adams notes and diagrams for the pick-ups. *(Courtesy of Ed Blend).*



In Their Own Words...

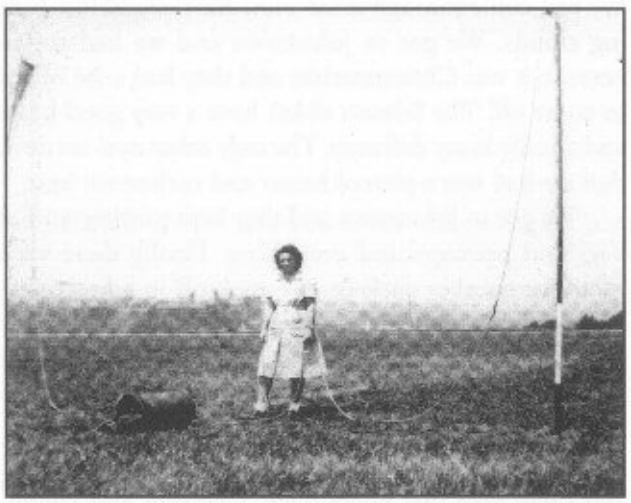
Josephine Smart

Whitney, Pennsylvania

Mail Messenger, Latrobe Airport

Charlie Carroll hired my husband as a mechanic. Charlie got this airmail business and he offered the job of getting the mail bags ready for the pick-up to my husband, Paul. Paul didn't have enough time to handle that on top of his job at the airport, so I got the job. I used to go to Latrobe or the freight office to pick up the mail. I used to take George's and Charlie's boy, Donald into town to pick up the mail. I'd make two trips a day into Latrobe and back. If there was freight that was too big for the airplane to pick up, the pilot would land and pick it up. He could see from the plane if I had freight that was too big for the pick-up. If not, I'd get the bag ready, set it between the two poles and he'd just swoop it up. A few times he would miss picking up the bag, then I'd have to go back and set it up again, but that didn't happen too often. They would drop a bag of mail for me, too. I'd take that into the Latrobe Post Office. They were good pilots. They'd wave at me as they were flying away with the mail.

The bags weren't too heavy. Sometimes we'd have a lot of mail, but it was manageable. The container was weighted on one end. The container was on the ground all the time, so I didn't have to lift it up into place between the two poles. It rested on the ground and then when the plane came down between the poles, the hook on the plane caught hold of the cable attached to the bag and picked it up.



Mail Messenger Josephine Smart readies the mailbag at Latrobe Airport in the early 1940s. She inherited the job from her husband Paul, who was busy with other duties at the field.

BELOW LEFT: Josephine poses between the pick-up poles.
(Courtesy of Josephine Smart).

The first year I did this was 1943. My son was in the service and sometimes I used to wear his coveralls while I was setting the bags up. I drove a Model A Ford. Once or twice I had to dig the car out from under the snow to get out to the airport and set up the mail bags. The mail had to get through! We got watches from the company. Earl Santmyer and I got out watches together. They have pictures of a Stinson making a pick-up on them.

It was exciting to see those planes swoop down and pick the mail up. Once in a while people would gather to watch. Sometimes the pilots would come down to the house and visit us. I never went up in one of the Stinsons.

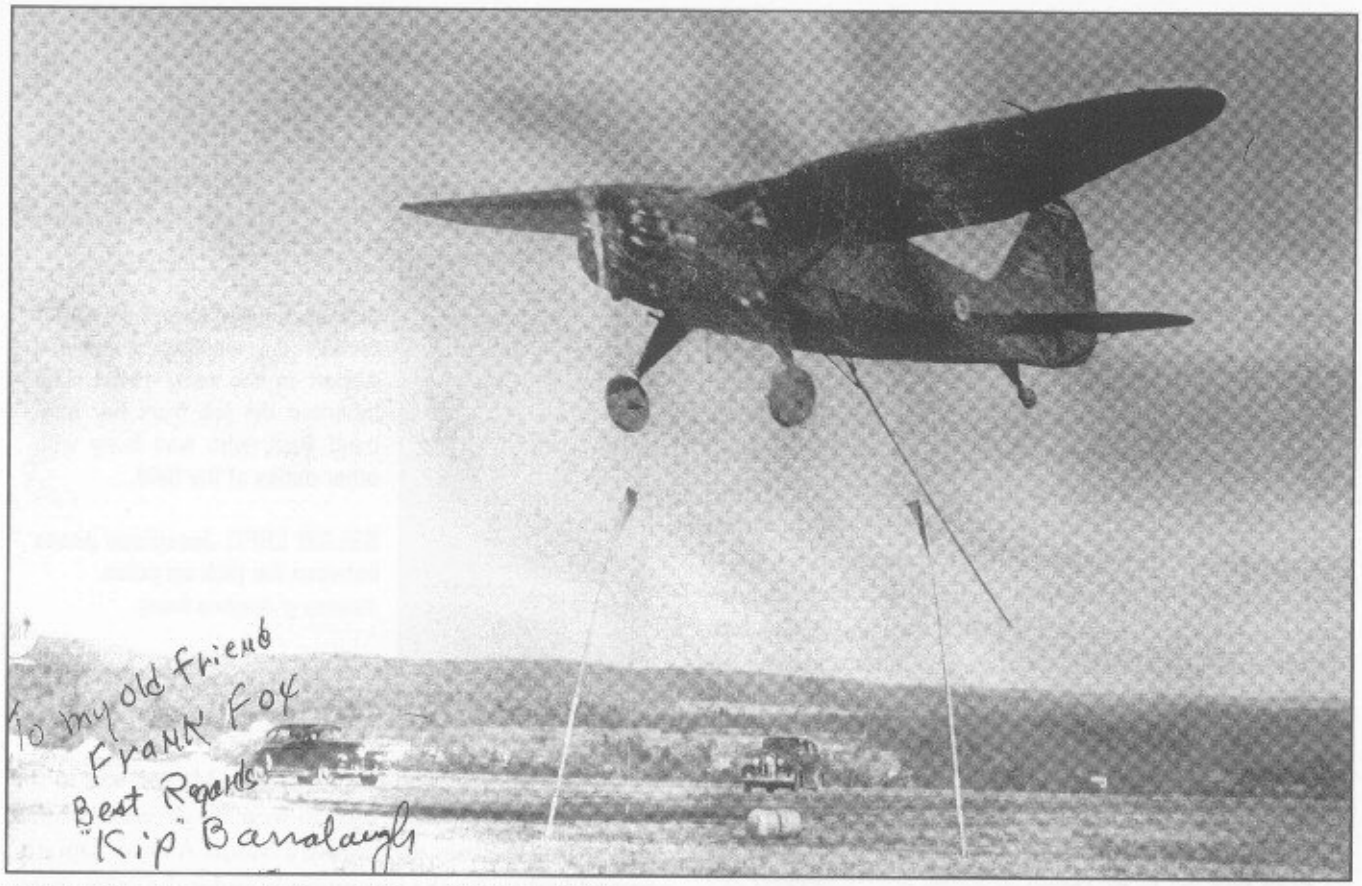
Kip Barraclough

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Pilot

As a young man, I lived in in Du Bois, PA, and they had a lot of publicity in 1939 about an airmail pick-up coming through the Du Bois airport. I was one of those up there watching that Stinson coming around with that hook. It hit the poles, and it wasn't very successful. Even so, from that day forward, I wanted to fly.

I got hired by All American in February 1943. They gave me an instrument rating in Wilmington, Delaware. I did that for about six months, then went into the military. When the war was over, I came back and started flying for All American. That was in 1946. In my mind, the



Kip Barraclough swoops in for a pick-up at Latrobe, 1948. *(Courtesy of Frank Fox).*

pilots that flew for All American were about the best there was, and I didn't know if I could measure up to what these guys were doing every day. Nobody ever said anything to me do this, do that when the weather's like this they just left you completely alone. I had to learn, more or less, by trial and error. The first time I went out on a run, I was with Roy Weiland, and we were on a West Virginia run, which meant you went from Pittsburgh down to West Newton, Mount Pleasant, Connellsville, Masontown, Fairmont, Clarksburg. Pittsburgh, in those days, was pretty smoky, to put it mildly. We took off from the airport and Roy made a turn, and he headed towards West Newton, and I'm just sitting there beside him. He's talking to me, and suddenly he nods his head, and I hear a noise in the back. The next thing I know, the airplane's up on its side, and we're diving down through this absolutely black hole. There's a couple of little flares down there. We go through the station, pick up the mail, drop off the mail, and I thought, "Holy s–! I could never do this."

By the time we got down to Mount Pleasant, we ran out of smoke. Eventually, I learned how to do what Roy did. It was the greatest flying in the world. You didn't really have any minimum altitude that you had to fly. If you wanted to fly 100 feet, fine or 200 feet. I rarely went above 300 feet. The only problem you had was if you had an engine failure, you had to work pretty quick to find a place to set it down.

As the days got shorter in the wintertime, they dropped the time that we were allowed to fly from seven o'clock to five o'clock, and in the wintertime, often it was dark before five o'clock. I was on this Harrisburg to Pittsburgh flight, around December 20, 1947 or 1948. We had come through some snow flurries and low-hanging clouds. We got to Johnstown and we had to land because it was Christmastime and they had a lot of stuff to come off. The Stinson didn't have a very good heater, and a really lousy defroster. The only other anti-ice device that we had was a phenol heater and carburetor heat.

We got to Johnstown and they kept putting stuff on, bags and packages and everything. Finally there wasn't room for another package. We took off in a low ceiling. As soon as I got off, I was on instruments. I climbed straight out until I got my bearings for Blairsville. I got to 3200 feet, made a turn, settled down to light a cigarette when the engine blew out. I had no idea where I was. I was somewhere between Johnstown and Blairsville, and there were two ridges there, Chestnut and Laurel. I

didn't know whether to go straight ahead and try to get into the valley of Ligonier, or whether to try and go back to Johnstown. I knew there was a strip right along the bridge there, Westmont or a little town that was just developed. I expected to run into the mountain. The flight agent was sitting in the back, and he had the hole open, so I said, "If you see anything, holler and I'll put the flaps on and suck it back, and we'll try to blend as low as we can." All of the sudden, I saw some light on the ground. To my left, I saw a white patch. So, I headed for this patch. Fortunately, the wind was such that we landed on this little knob, a cow pasture. We rolled upside the top of the knob, and then stopped. We found out later that it was four hundred foot drop a hundred feet from where we stopped. I sat there in the airplane, my knees knocking. I didn't want the flight agent to see that my knees were knocking. When I turned around to look at him, his knees were knocking worse than mine. "Let's get the Hell out of here," he said.

Well, we got out, and it was silent except for the wind and our voices. There were lights down in the valley coming toward us. This is what happened, we found out later. We had passed over this little mining town near Johnstown. Some kids who were playing outside went in and told their parents that the mail plane had crashed. One miner there, a Polish guy, took charge of everything. In that day and age, all the miners had safety kits to use in case of a mine accident, and they knew First Aid. This guy organized all these people and they came up this hill in kind of like a snake fashion, which is the way the cows would come up. It was too steep to come up straight. They're shouting, and this guy is leading the way. I said, "We've gotta get the mail, gotta get the mail, gotta get the mail."

So the Polish guy made each of the people grab a bag or parcel, take it down, and put in his truck. We go down to his house and sit down in the kitchen at a round table. He put two water glasses in front of us. He goes to a cabinet and brings his jug of whiskey over. He pours our glasses about a third full and says, "Drink this."

Then I said, "I gotta call the company and tell them we're safe."

He had to find his phone, ring the number, and call Operations. They were looking for us because we declared "May Day" before landing. Everybody then shuts up and listens to where you are. The landing ripped the antennas off, so I couldn't use the radio. Over the phone I told them we were safe, and they said, "Thanks. Well, come on home." The Polish guy puts us in the truck, and pours a little bit more booze out for us. Then down we went, roaring into Johnstown. At the Johnstown post office, they had a ramp for the trucks. He drives right up to the dock. People are yelling, "No, no, you can't do that!" He yells back, "The Hell I can't! Where's the Postmaster?"

They get the postmaster. In the meantime, Gordo Lang and I get out. We're standing there on the platform, and this guy tells the postmaster, "These are the airmail pilots, and they just crashed on so and so hill. We've got the airmail here, and we've got to get it to Pittsburgh." So the postmaster comes over to shake my hand. He takes one look, then turns to the Polish guy and says, "No wonder they crashed! They're both stewed!"

The Polish guy says, "No, no. I gave them the booze. They needed it!"

The postmaster says, "Well, come on in."

He takes us in his office, reaches down, opens a drawer, pulls out another bottle of whiskey and some paper cups, and we all have another drink. "I always wanted to stop the Broadway Limited, now's my chance," he says. The Broadway Limited went right through Johnstown, like s– through a tin horn. He wanted us to ride down in the mail truck and get the conductor to stop the train. We did. After we explained everything, the postmaster says to the conductor, "You take real good care of these pilots!"

We get on the train, and a porter takes us to a dining car. Then he brought us a drink. By the time we got to Pittsburgh, we were so drunk we could hardly stand up. But we were alive, and that was the important thing. Another time I was on the Huntingdon, West Virginia route, and there was lot of weather. We got down as far as Spencer and started for Charleston, and we started to get some ice. I couldn't continue that way, so I turned around and I headed for a little town called Gallup, where the Kanawha intersects the Ohio. I cut the power off, because we were losing air speed. We were down to about ninety-miles an hour and I had almost full power off, and we were still getting a little bit of ice. So I broke out into the Ohio river, maybe 200-feet above the water.

There was a hill on both sides. I head up the river toward Parkersburg, and a couple of pieces of ice blew off. I knew that I was getting into a condition where I was losing my ice. By the time I got to Parkersburg, the airplane was almost free of ice. I flew right over the old airport. I should have landed right there, but instead I made for the new airport. I was about halfway there when ice started to form everywhere. I knew we couldn't maintain that. I turned. All along the banks of the Ohio, are these little ravines that go down towards the streams. So, I went down one of these ravines and came out by Marietta, made a left turn and started for the airport that

I passed up about ten minutes before, and we were gradually losing altitude, and I had full power on, and I asked Gordo, "Can you swim?"

He says, "No, I can't swim."

I says, "Neither can I, so start throwing mail out."

He tossed a bag out, but we still lost a couple of feet of altitude.

I says, "Gordo, just sit tight." I could see the airport up ahead of me. I had full RPM. We were gradually losing altitude. When we hit, the tail wheel hit a barbed wire fence. I taxied it into the hanger, and when I went to shut the engine off, it wouldn't shut off, it was so hot. There's no way we could get it in if it was hot, so we finally shut the fuel off. I was on F Run most the time Pittsburgh, Irwin, Greensburg, Blairsville, Latrobe, Johnstown, Portage, Holidaysburg, Huntingdon, Mount Union, Lewistown. That run was the roughest! That was Hell's Stretch to the air mail pilots. You would get all kinds of weather on that one.

Downdrafts? We used to put rubber pads on the ceiling to keep from getting our brains beat out! Terrible! At the old airport in Latrobe, Runway 9, on a hill, we had to take off eastbound, uphill, and there used to be a nightclub sitting there, at the crossroads. There were also tension wires, and it was always touch and go whether or not you were going to miss those wires. Sometimes we would opt to take off downwind. When we took off downwind, we got to the end of the runway with our flaps on because we weren't at the speed we wanted to be, and then we'd float down the valley with our flaps up.

There were all those ridges that could get pretty hairy, like Laurel Ridge, or the one between Dubois and Clearfield, or the one between Gettysburg and Chambersburg. Many times it was overcast and foggy. We picked up on what Lloyd Santmyer did. What we'd do is pull out, get a safe altitude, and then time ourselves. Then we'd let down into the valley where the station had to be. The only problem with that is sometimes there would be an unusually strong, sudden wind. And a couple times, I ran into a wind of such power, that it screwed all my timing up. Fortunately, I made it down, and there were trees on both sides of me. It wasn't skill righting me out; it was just pure luck as far as I'm concerned.

When I was a new hire, I came out to do some routes. There was a captain [*the editors agreed with Mr. Barraclough that the captain in question should remain anonymous*] who was supposed to be ready at 6 a.m. for a 7 a.m. departure. I got there at six, and got all the forms made out. It gets to be 6:30, then 6:45

The dispatcher says, "Hey, Kippy, why don't you just go out to the plane. The captain will be there."

I trudge out the gate and go out to our airplane. Lo and behold! The captain was there, hanging on to a strut like a gorilla, two feet on the bottom and one holding on to the top. He's scratching himself and making funny noises.

I thought, "What the Hell is going on?!"

He gets down and says, "Okay, let's get this s–house on the road!"

We go down to West Newton, then down to Mount Pleasant. And when we get to Connellsville (the captain didn't like the station master), the captain says, "His elevator doesn't always go to the top floor. He always gives us funny motions and stuff."

The station master is standing about forty feet to the right of the pick-up station when we came in, and the captain, instead of making the pick-up, goes for the station master. The guy starts running. The captain pulls up and comes back around and releases the mail. The station master's out there lying on the ground. The captain makes the pick-up. Then he comes back around again for the station master. The flight mechanic takes a big wrench, taps the captain fairly smartly on the back of the neck and says, "Why don't you let Kip fly?"

The captain says, "OK." Then he goes to sleep.

We get down to a place called Crafton, the next stop after Clarksburg. At Crafton, the pick-up station was on top of a ridge, where there was a cemetery. It was a small town, and we knew the messengers' cars, and where the post-office was, but the station wasn't set up. So I flew down to where the post-office was and Bernie, the flight mechanic, says, "Hey, there's the messenger's car right there. He a little bit late."

So we kinda flew around, and we waited until the messenger got up to the cemetery. Then he had to run up this hill, and he put up the station. In the meantime, the captain wakes up and says, "Where the Hell are you going? You're costing me time. Why are you circling? We don't circle in this operation!"

I says, "Well the station's not set up."

The captain spots the messenger, winds the RPM as high as it will go, and goes for the poor guy. The mechanic breaks out his wrench again and says, "Hey, that's it. Let Kip fly!"

"OK," he says, and falls asleep.

He slept all the way to Huntingdon. In Huntingdon we had a layover. The captain kept on sleeping. When he woke up, he got some black coffee and a sandwich. After that, he was the nicest man you'd ever want to meet, except when he had some booze in him. When I got back I had a talk with a guy who was like my Rabbi. I told him about the flight with the captain. He asked me not to tell the operations manager because the captain was already

on probation for drinking. Anyway, they found out and the captain got suspended. When he came back he was a little cool to me.

One morning around two my brother Kenny calls me. He lived in Du Bois and was city controller, so he was had information on a lot of things.

He says, "Do you know a pilot named – ?"

I says, "Yeah?"

He says, "Well, he's in deep. He checked into the Logan Hotel, went into a bar, and there's this big Lithuanian and a Pole. Big guys. Anyway, your pilot gets into an argument with them and invites them outside. The guy says 'OK,' and goes out the door first. When your pilot gets out, the Pole decks him. Knocks him out." So they called the police and they took him to a doctor. He's got his All American uniform on. What should we do?"

And I said, "For cripes' sake Ken, don't let them arrest him. Get him out of there and let him get on the airplane in the morning and come back to Pittsburgh."

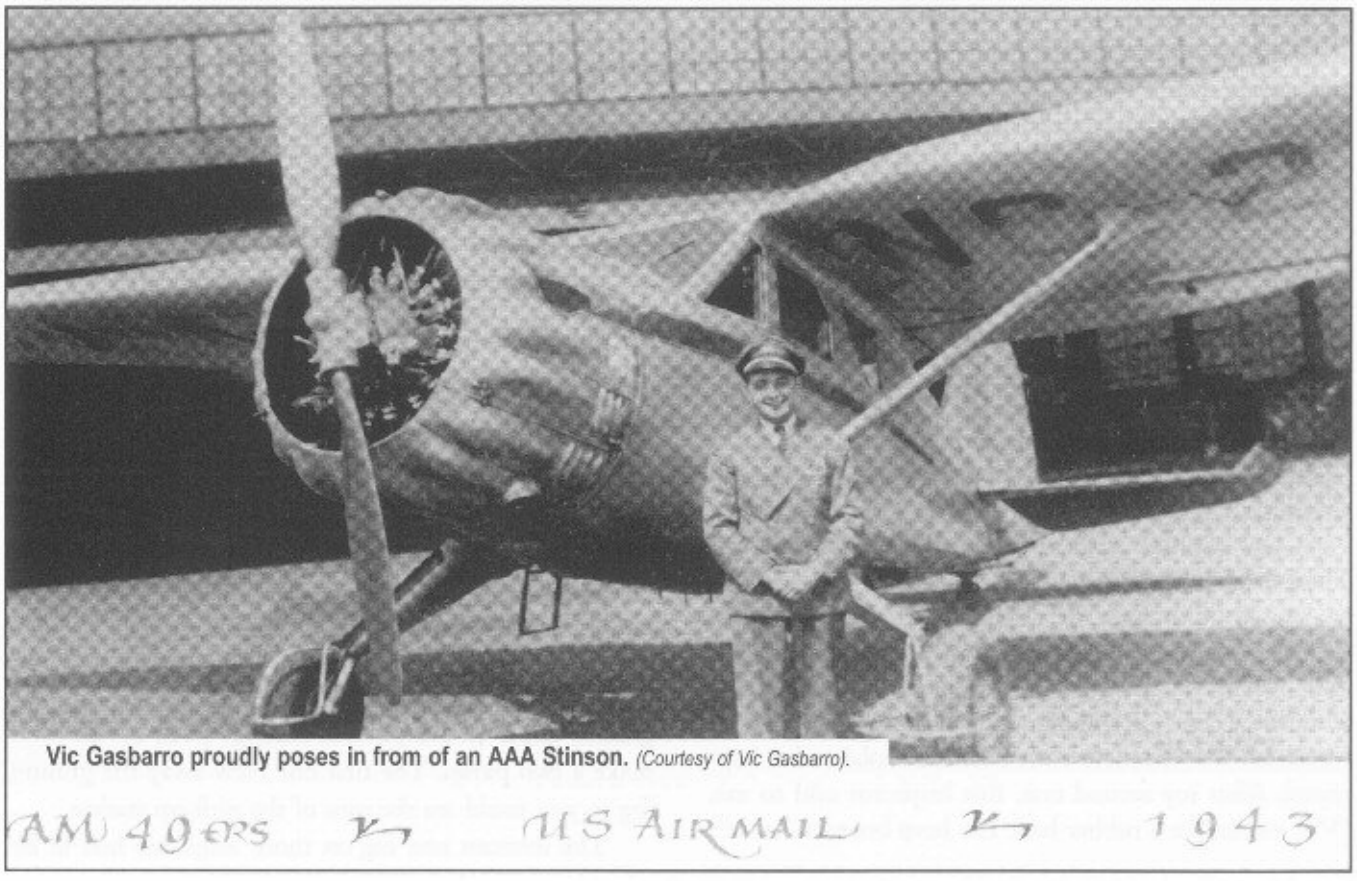
So he got the captain out of jail. The captain flew back to Pittsburgh. He gets out of the plane and nobody saw him for two weeks. He said his sister had died in Minnesota somewhere. He had to go.

When he came back he was sporting this great big black eye.

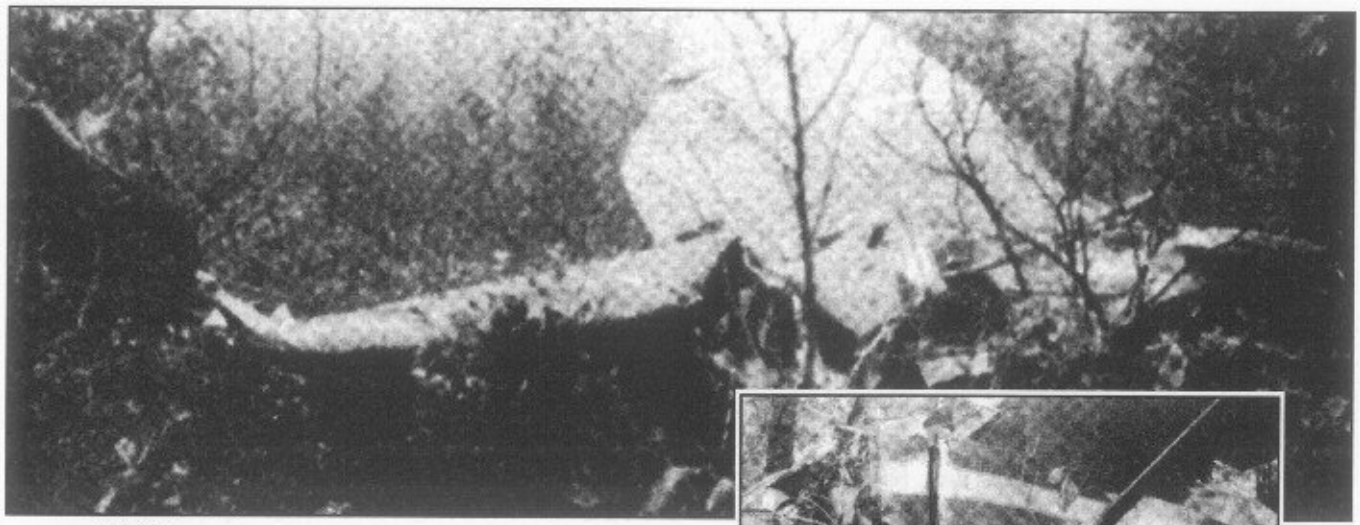
Vic Gasbarro

Connellsville, Pennsylvania
Flight Engineer

There was a messenger, someone who worked for the postal service and would come out every morning and every night with his mail bags. We would take off from the old county airport in Pittsburgh. Our first stop was Irwin and then Latrobe, and up to Johnstown and clear into Harrisburg, and into Washington D.C. and Philadelphia. The Stinson was modified with a big wedge inside. They had a nylon rope around the drum of this wedge which is about 100-feet long and almost 3/16 inches thick, and at the end of that rope there was a hook that slid down a pole on a small crack. When the man on the ground would put up his station which is two poles with another rope stretched across, attatched to the mail bag on the ground. We would come through there, snag up the rope off of these two poles, drop our mail before we got to that, and then pick up the bag. Inside the airplane, we would hit a switch, and it would guide the mail bag into the airplane. We made a run twice a day. We'd leave at 7:45 and get into Latrobe close to 8:00am. In the evenings we'd get in there around 6:30/6:45. All the airplanes had to be in the airport at 7:00pm.



Vic Gasbarro proudly poses in from of an AAA Stinson. *(Courtesy of Vic Gasbarro).*



The remains of the Stinson in which Vic Gasbarro crashed.

LEFT: Sketch of Vic Gasbarro.
(AAA Newsletter, The Pick-Up, November/December, 1942).

I had a couple of unfortunate situations, one in October of 1943, the 25th. Tommy Bryan and I had just made the pick-up at Chambersburg. Tommy wanted to make the Gettysburg pick-up before we stopped for the day. His instruments weren't working right. A low ceiling and strong winds moved in very fast. Tommy wrote down the time and climbed up. He watched the time until he thought we would clear Piney Mountain. He must have made a mistake, because we went in right on the peak. He tried to pull up at the last minute, but we went through that brush like a lawnmower. We wandered through the woods, until we found a hunter's cabin. I walked those mountains trying to get help. They had the National Guard and everybody else out looking for us. It was raining and cold, and they didn't find us until the morning of the 26th. My forehead was cut, and Tommy broke his foot. Tommy died about a year later in another crash.

I had another incident with pilot Millard Lossing. There was a snowstorm and Millard was using the Juniata River to find the next station. They put some high-tension wires we didn't know about between the hills. We flew right through them and damaged the windshield. The CAA had investigations when there were accidents. We went before the board to explain what happened. After my second one, this inspector said to me, "Vic, you're like a rubber ball. You keep bouncin' back!"

I said, "Well, Tom, I think I'm gonna have to look for other ways and means of making a living!" Anyway, my mother was on my back. She almost had a heart attack from the first wreck I had, and I was the only son she had. I was only twenty-seven years old. She talked me into becoming what they call a designated maintenance inspector. I took that job for awhile, until I got into the insurance business.

Lloyd Santmyer

Greensburg/Ligonier, Pennsylvania
Pilot

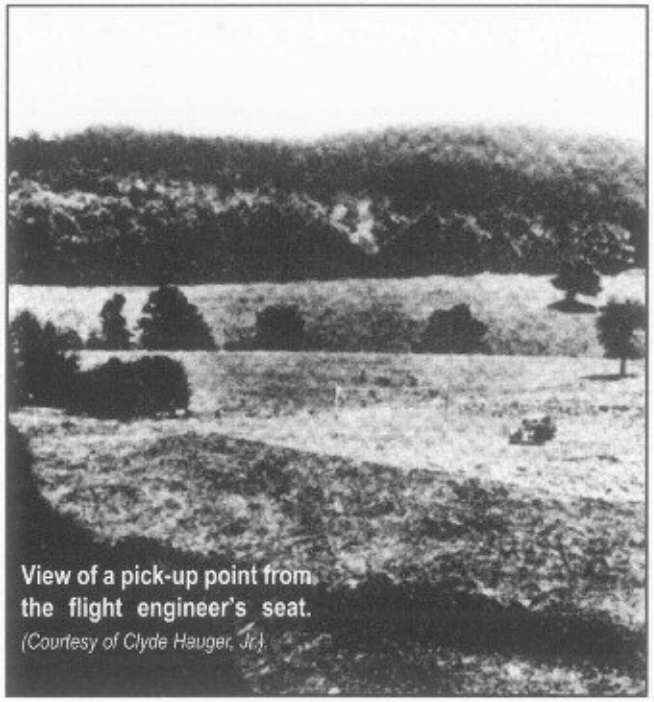
Flying the pick-up was the way every one of us pilots wanted to fly full tilt! We had regulations about flying the routes. They called for a 500-foot ceiling with a one-mile visibility. Nobody followed that. You couldn't. Not with what we had to fly over. You'd have nice weather, then get to the mountains, and suddenly it would change. If we followed those regulations the company wouldn't have lasted a year. Sometimes it would be so foggy you couldn't see where the pick-up posts were. Sometimes the ground clerks would put out smudge pots, or else we'd make a two passes. The first one blew away the ground fog so you could see the tops of the pick-up station.

The overcast and fog on those ridges we had to fly

was something. I worked out a system that a lot of the guys used later. I'd find a landmark I knew then climb to an altitude I already worked out, then I'd hold the plane there and keep time on my watch. Then I'd let down through the overcast into the valley. Of course, I practiced all this in good weather! So did the other guys for their ridges and valleys. I'm not too sure how legal all that was, but we kept the schedule!

We had names for the routes. The route from Pittsburgh to Huntington wasn't too bad, because it went right down the Ohio River. We called that "King's Row." Route 49A we called "Slave's Alley," and that one went down into the West Virginia mountains, down around Elkins. There were lots of hills around there, and the weather could change on you in five minutes. Another thing about Slave's Alley was that the hills weren't high enough to do the timing routine, and the pick-up points were closer together down there. So, I'd get between Spencer and Gransville and home in on the hum of the power lines. It was a 60-cycle hum. If you were in a car and your radio was on, you'd get interference. I figure I was pretty close to the top of those lines, maybe fifteen or twenty feet! Of course, I still needed my watch to time the distance between stations. I couldn't see them.

We'd get audiences down below. Sometimes there would be traffic jams at the Jacktown area near Irwin. People used to like to come and watch us pick up the mail. Sometimes we'd get stuff besides mail in the bags we picked up, things like soda pop and fresh pies. Ray Elder flew the pick-up. He was with Charlie Carroll and Carl Strickler and me at J.D. Hill back in the late 1920s. One day, Raymond spotted a house fire out in Ohio [Gallipolis]. He radioed back to Pittsburgh for them to call back to Ohio for help. Another time he guided an Army pilot to a safe landing at the Allegheny County Airport.



View of a pick-up point from the flight engineer's seat.
(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger, Jr.).

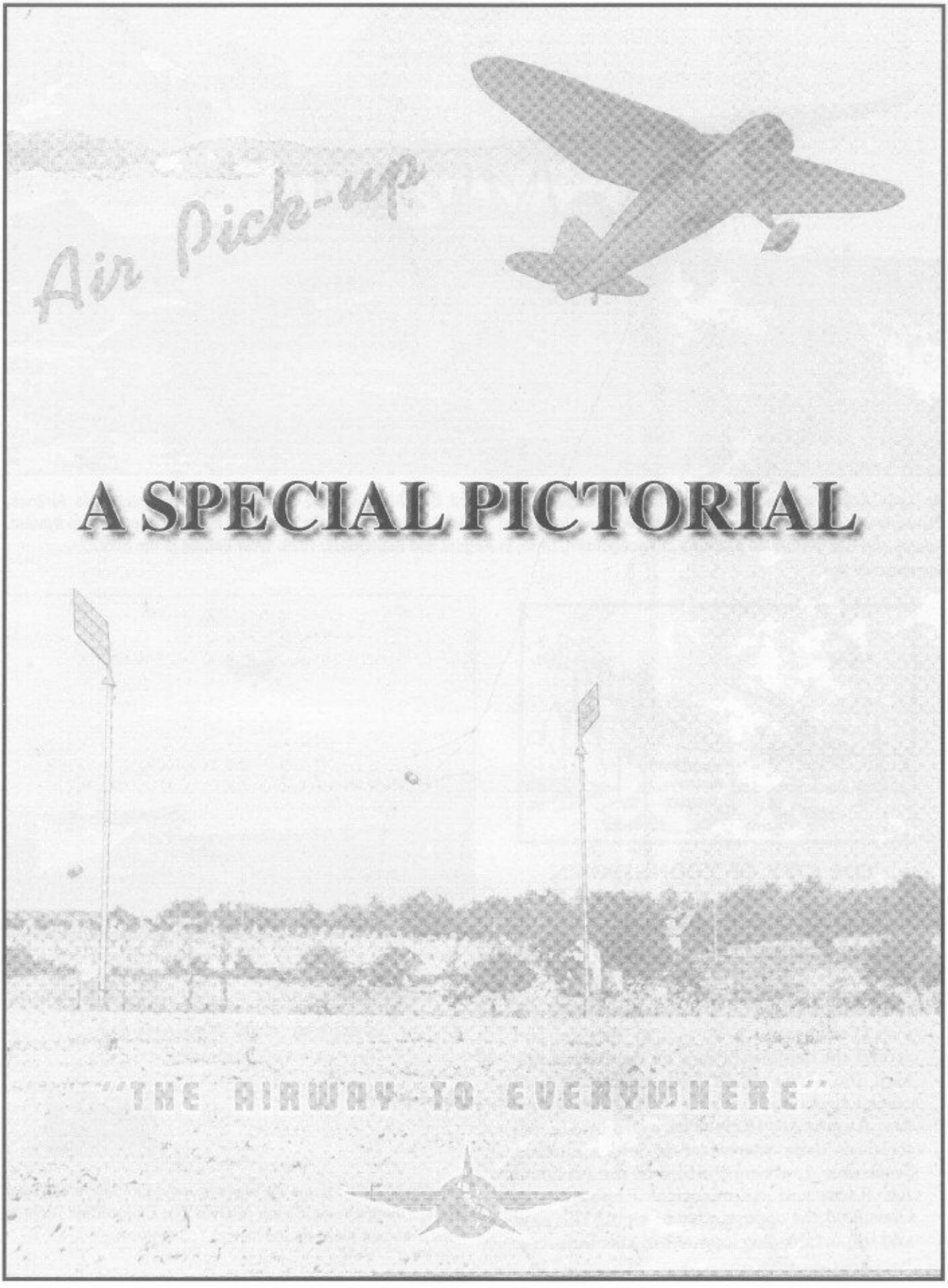
Orchids To Elder . . .

Sketch of Raymond "Pappy"/"Flying Fire Chief" Elder from AAA's newsletter *The Pick-up*, February and May, 1942, in articles complimenting his "extra-curricular" duties.
(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger, Jr.).

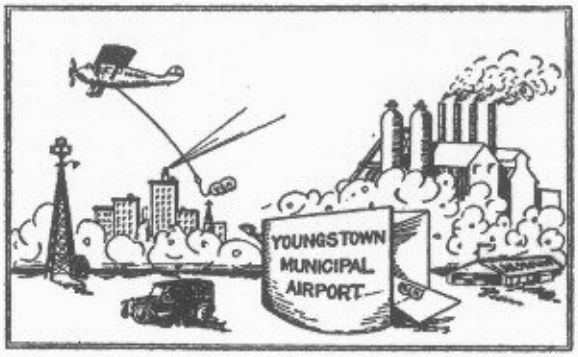
Clyde Hauger, Jr.
Donegal, Pennsylvania
Flight Engineer

It looked organized, but it was really a kind of orderly disorder. There was a lot of excitement to the job. We never knew what was going to happen next. We were all kind of close, like family. The pilots knew their routes like the backs of their hands. We had a raft of regulations like maintaining a certain ceiling and not flying unless there was a one-mile visibility. Now, we had to keep a schedule that was within three minutes of the stop. If we didn't we'd have to file reports when we got back. Nobody liked filing reports. Besides, if we had kept to all of the regulations the mail never would have gotten through.

There were times when those mail bags would have sandwiches and other great food in them. Relatives, friends, or just regular people down below would put that stuff in there.

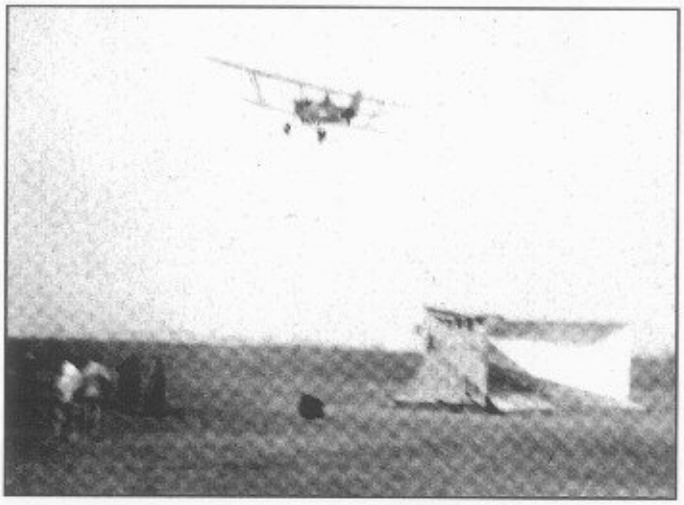

Air Pick-up
A SPECIAL PICTORIAL
"THE AIRWAY TO EVERYWHERE"

Dr. Lytle Adams poses with a New Standard biplane of Clifford Ball Airlines, Inc., a forerunner of Pennsylvania Airlines, Pennsylvania-Central Airlines, and Capital Airlines. In the late 1920s, Ball became briefly interested in the Adams pick-up system. Adams and Ball performed pick-ups at Youngstown, Ohio, in August and September, 1929. Trow Sebree is the pilot.
(Courtesy of Ed Blend).



THE CITY OF YOUNGSTOWN
TOGETHER WITH THE
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
JOINS DR. LYTLE S. ADAMS AND
CLIFFORD BALL

In extending to you a cordial invitation to visit Youngstown's Municipal Airport and attend the demonstrations of the Adams Air Mail Pick-Up, which will receive its first official application to an Air Mail route, Friday, August 30, 1929. There will be demonstrations daily thereafter to and including September 2, giving visitors to the National Air Races and Aeronautical Exposition at Cleveland the opportunity of seeing this new and important development in this industry.



ADAMS AIR EXPRESS Inc.
NEW YORK CITY

Letterhead from Adams Air Express, Inc. LEFT: Advertisement of the Youngstown pick-up. ABOVE: The Clifford Ball Airlines New Standard picks up the mail at Youngstown.
(Courtesy of Ed Blend).

Dr. Lytle S. Adams, Inventor, and Eddie Gerber, Flyer of remarkable Air Mail Service of Braniff Airways, at World's Fair.

Dr. Lytle Adams poses with Braniff pilot Eddie Gerber during pick-ups at the Chicago World's Fair in 1934. Braniff would lose interest in the Adams' system after the fair closed. Adams, however, met Richard Archbold at the fair, a man who would give Adams the idea for the "goal post" pick-up system that would replace his cumbersome and expensive chute. BELOW: Postcard of the Adams/Braniff pick-up at the 1934 Chicago World's Fair. The site is the World's Fair Lagoon. *(Courtesy of Ed Blend).*

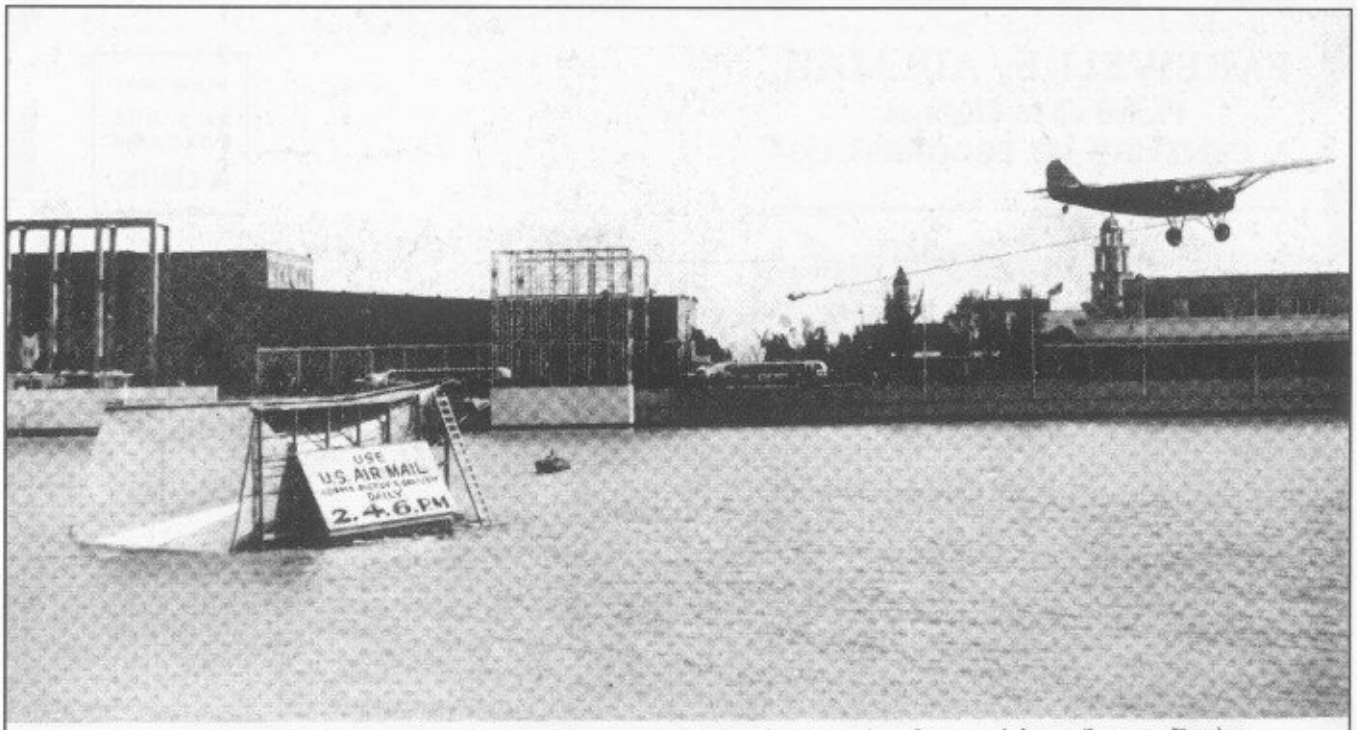
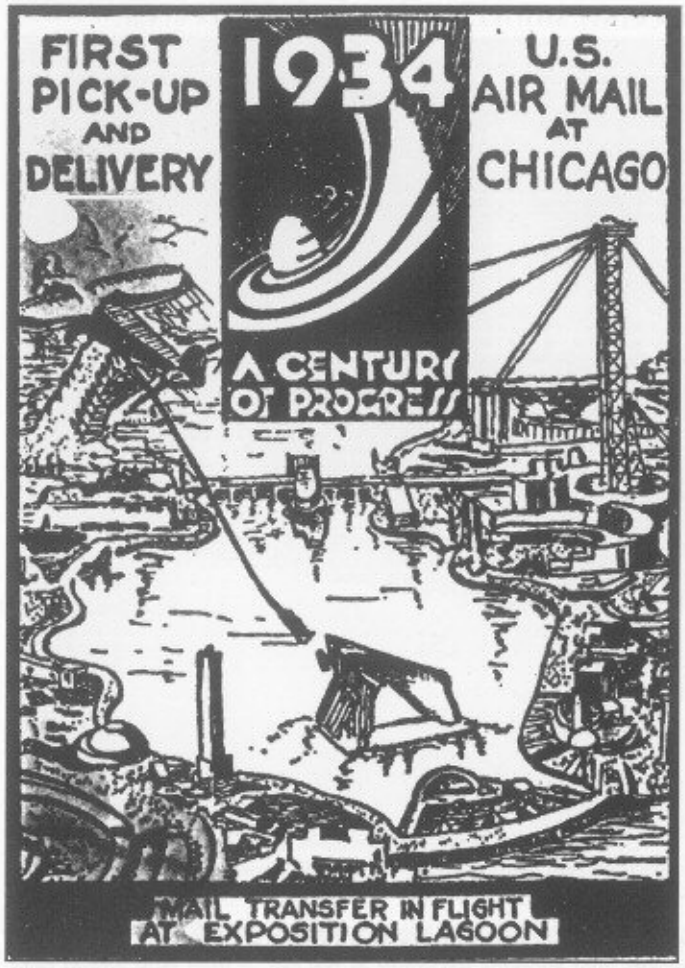
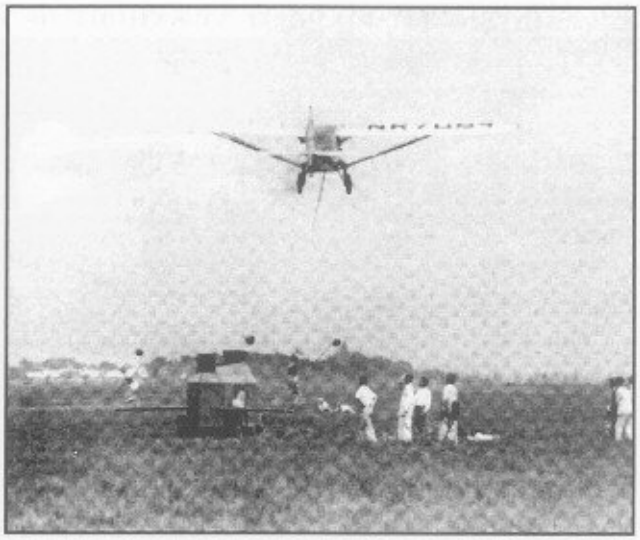


Photo of Braniff Airways Plane Taking Pouch on Cable After Leaving One at Adams System Device.

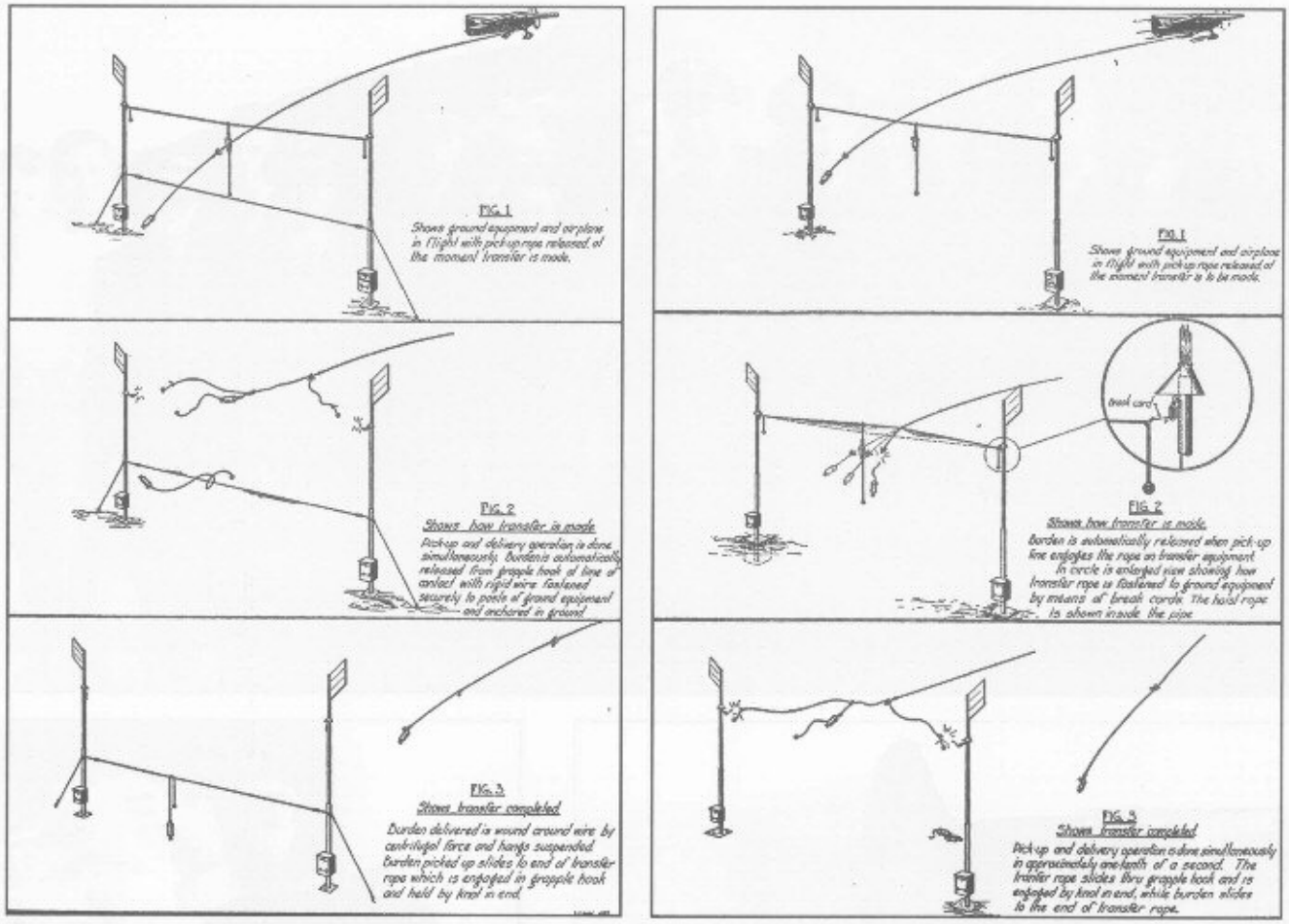




LEFT: Advertising poster for the Adams/Braniff pick-up, Chicago World's Fair, 1934. *(Courtesy of Ed Blend).*

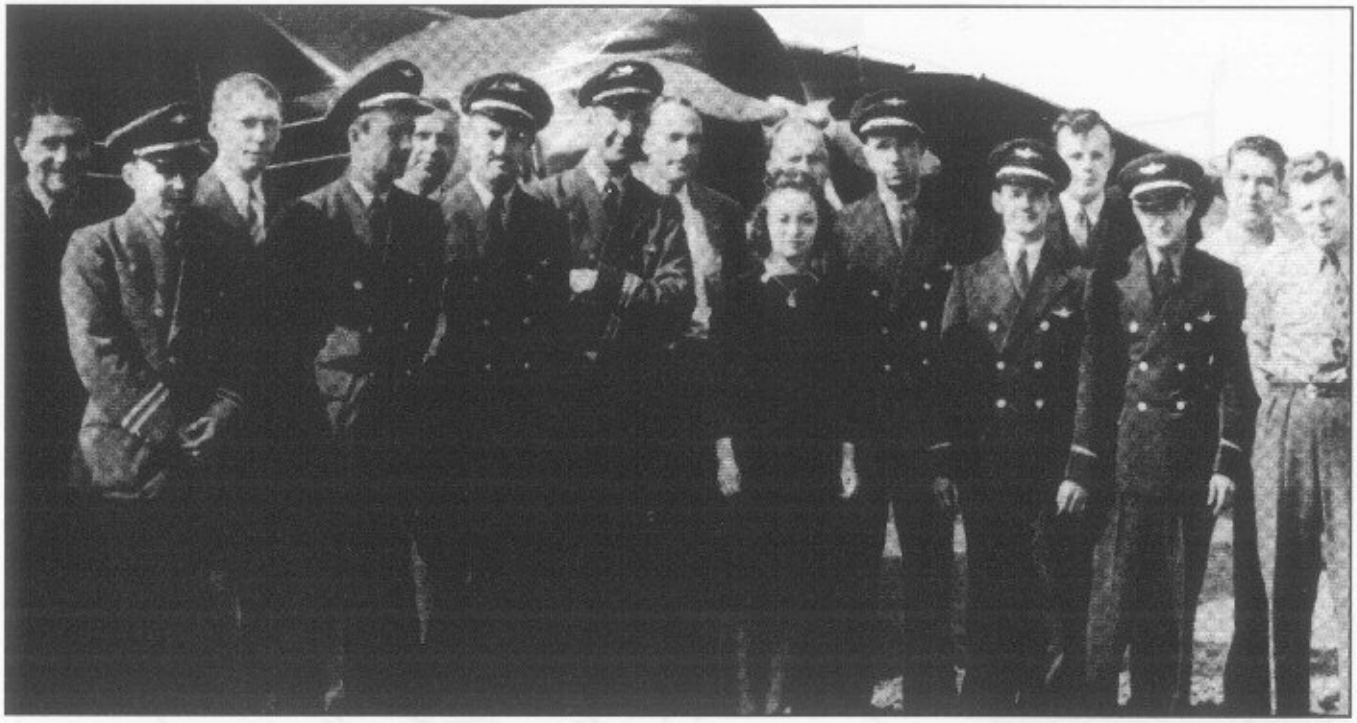
BELOW: First cover for the Adams/Braniff pick-up, Chicago World's Fair, 1934. *(Courtesy of Ed Blend).*

ABOVE RIGHT: Fairchild monoplane performs an experimental pick-up from a modified chute. Date unknown, location unknown. Possibly Irwin, Pennsylvania. *(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority).*



Pages from Adams' Tri-State Airways. brochure showing the "goal-post" process for air pick-up. *(Courtesy of Ed Blend).*

LEFT/RIGHT: Pilot Norman Rintoul and Flight Mechanic Vic Yesulaites who made the first officially-scheduled AAA pick-up at Latrobe, May 12, 1939. Their Stinson Reliant NC21107 delivered commemorative covers from Pittsburgh and picked-up commemorative mail bound for Morgantown, West Virginia. Pick-up of actual mail was carried out by Pilot Jimmy Piersoll. Yesulaites was responsible for designing more efficient and safer modifications to the Adams system. Rintoul and Yesulaites made the last AAA pick-up at Jamestown, New York in 1949. *(AAA Brochure, 1930-1940).*

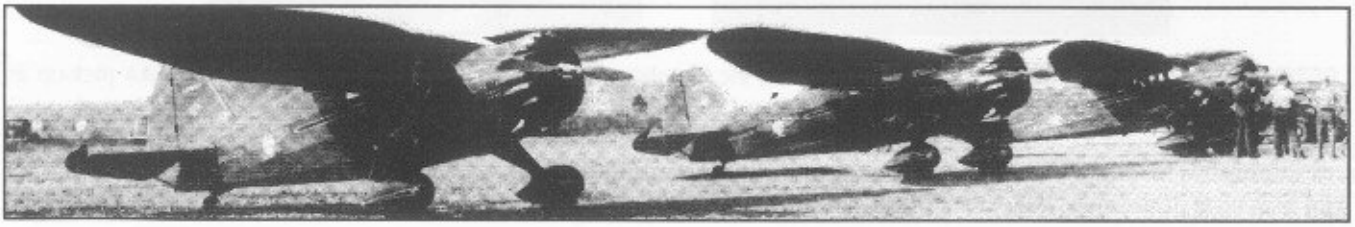


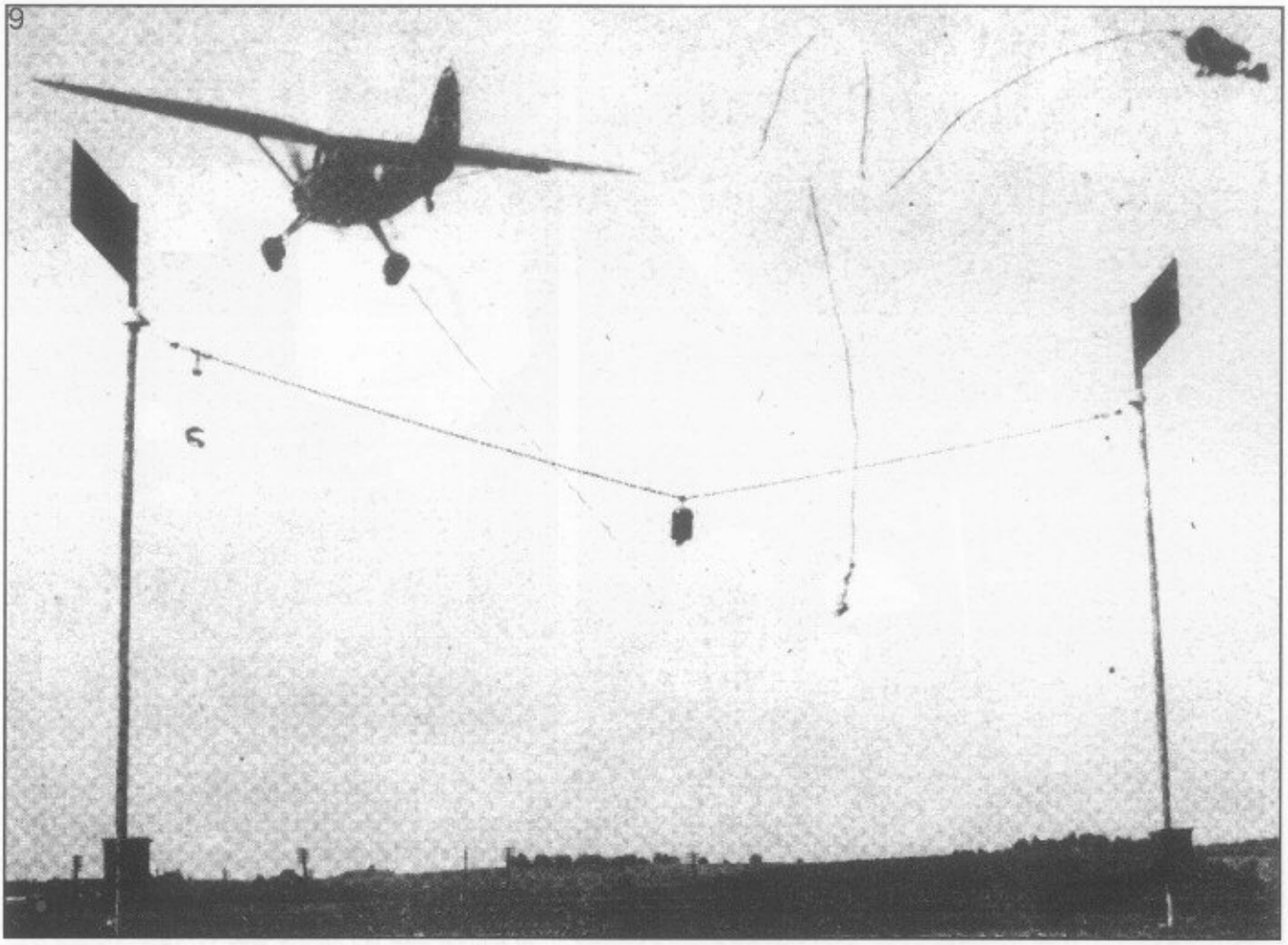
TOP: Norman Rintoul stands in the front row, third from left, with the original All American Aviation airmail pick-up team. In the front row, from the left, as identified by Lloyd Santmyer: Jimmy Piersol, Tommy Kinchelhoe, Rintoul, Holger Horiis, Peg Kiley, James Ray, ——, ——. Back row, left to right: Raymond "Pappy" Elder, Hal Basley, B. Moore, ——, ——, Vic Yesulaites, ——, Bill Burkhardt.

RIGHT: Vic Yesulaites with the mail.

BOTTOM: AAA Stinson Reliants lined up at Allegheny County Airport.

ABOVE: An AAA Stinson Reliant over Latrobe, headed for Chestnut Ridge and "Hell's Stretch." *(AAA 1939-1940 Brochure).*





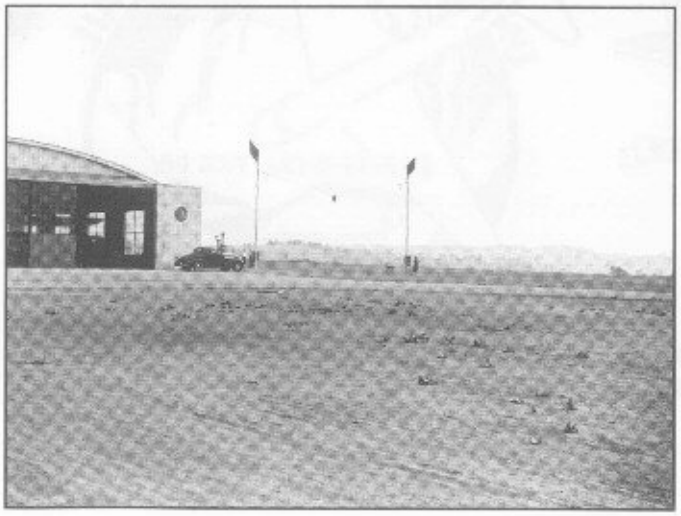
The first AAA pick-up at Latrobe, May 12, 1939. The caption to this Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph photo reads : "A plane dropping a bag of mail, seen in midair, and at the same time picking up another bag suspended between two 34-foot poles. The scene is at Latrobe Airport, where the first regular pick-up air service was inaugurated yesterday. Among hundreds present was Richard C. DuPont, president of All American Aviation, Inc., which has the pick-up contract. *(Courtesy of Ed Blend).*

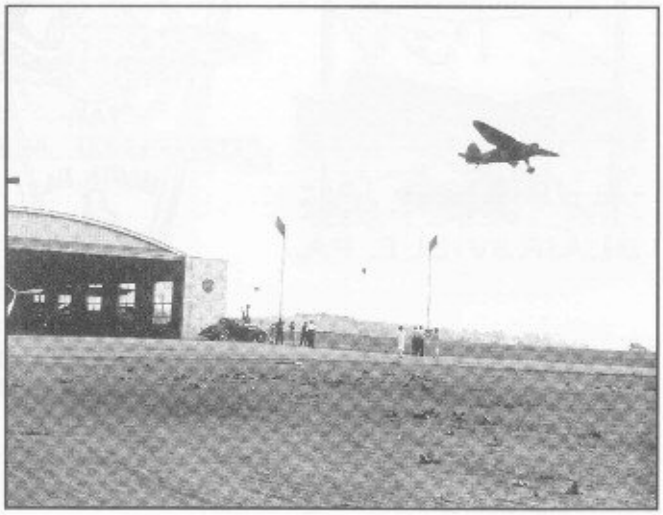
Commemorative postmarks published when other Pennsylvania towns were added to the AAA route system in the experimental year 1939-1940. *(Courtesy of Ed Blend).*

LEFT: The headline and caption on this Pittsburgh Press photo of May 12, 1939 reads: "Postal Service Passes Another Milestone." "Pilot James E. Piersol and Postmaster Steve Bodkin inaugurate world's first airmail pick-up service." Piersol made the the pick-up of regular mail at Latrobe, May 12, 1939. *(Courtesy of Ed Blend).*

TOP: Ed Blend, of Irwin, Pennsylvania, poses with an AAA mail canister he restored. *(Courtesy of Ed Blend).*

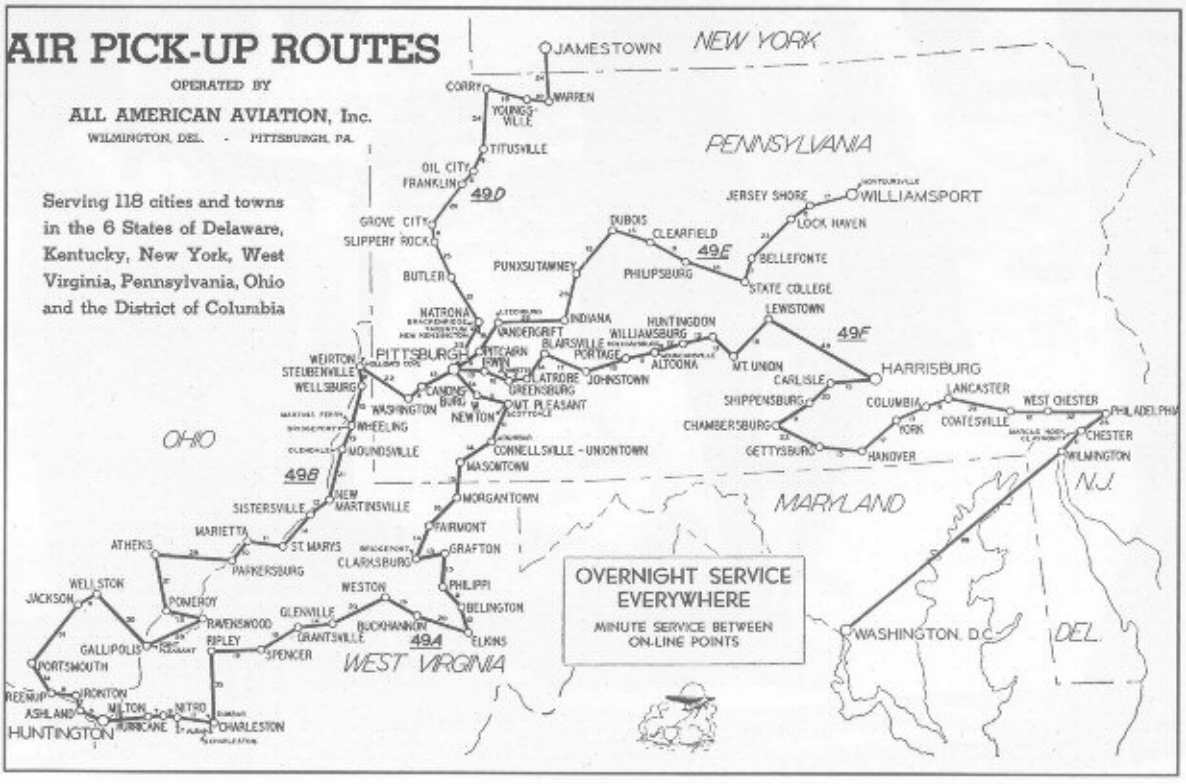
BOTTOM: Outside the North Hanger at Latrobe, the early 1940s. Before and during a pick-up.
(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority).

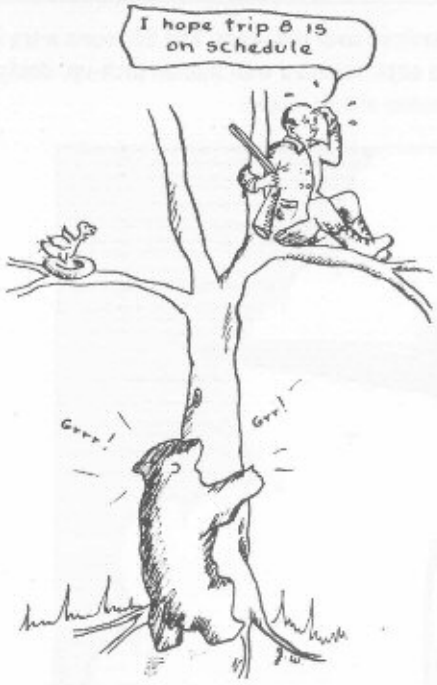




May 12, 1939, Latrobe, Pennsylvania. Charlie Carroll readies the mail bag for All American Aviation's first officially-scheduled airmail pick-up as Mrs. Carroll and Richard DuPont, president of AAA, look on. *(Courtesy of the Latrobe Historical Society).*

Norm Rintoul lines-up AAA Stinson NC21107 for the first pick-up at Latrobe. *(Courtesy of the Latrobe Historical Society).*



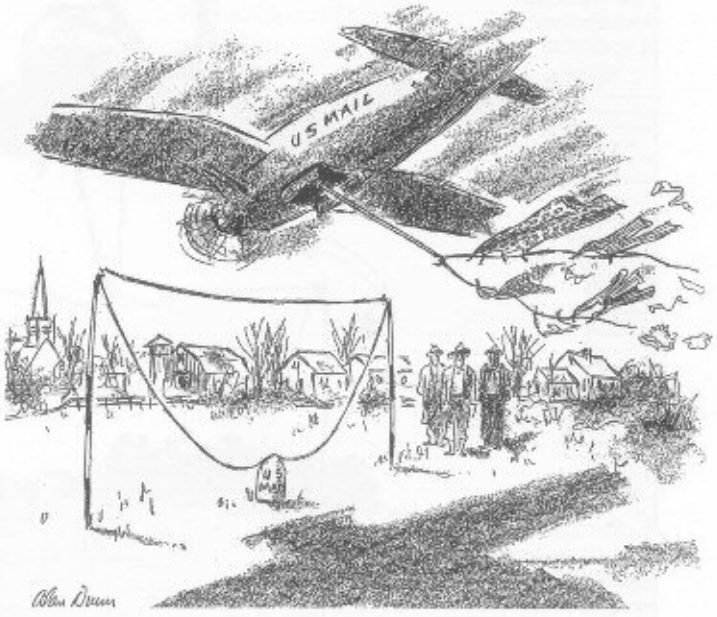


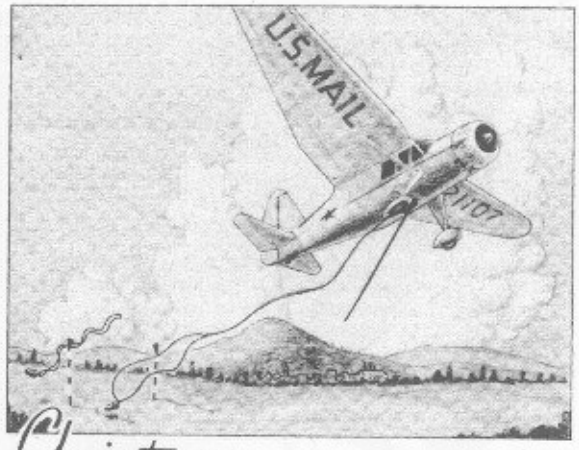
As indicated above, the season is at hand and Dave Patterson has packed his rod for his annual bear-hunting sojourn to the deep woods. With rationing and rugs the way they are—we wish him luck!

ABOVE: Postage stamp designed by Clyde Hauger to honor Richard DuPont, who was killed testing gliders for the U.S. military.

LEFT: An AAA cartoon concerning Pilot Dave Patterson, an avid hunter.

BELOW: A New Yorker Magazine cartoon. Often called "The Treetop Line," AAA pick-up planes sometimes belonged to the "Clothesline Line."
(All courtesy of Clyde Hauger).





Christmas 1942 - -

Over a greatly improved and expanded Air Pick-up System, now serving 115 communities, in 6 states,

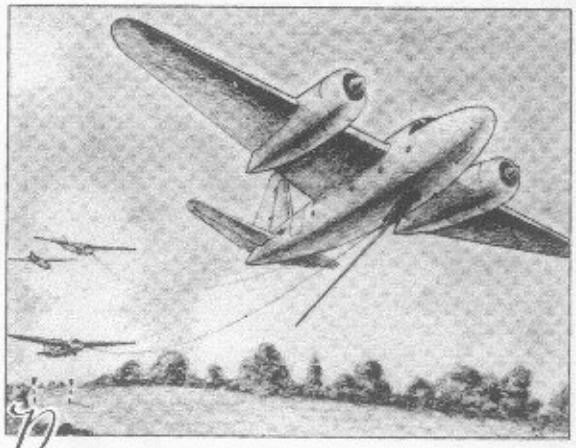
ALL AMERICAN AVIATION, INC.

sends sincere wishes for a

Merry Christmas

and a

Happy New Year



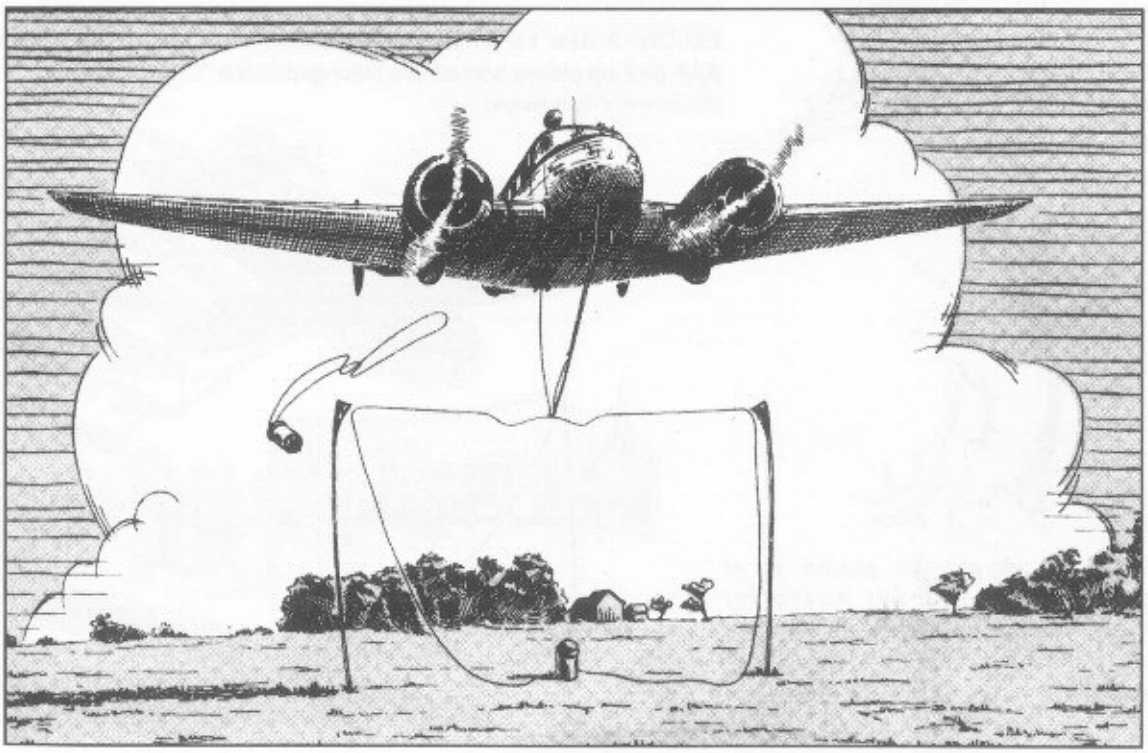
Preview OF THE FUTURE . . .

Of immediate importance to our present war effort and with a bright post-war future in the transportation of mail, freight and passengers, is the Glider Pick-up System, developed during 1942 by All American Aviation in cooperation with the Army Air Forces.

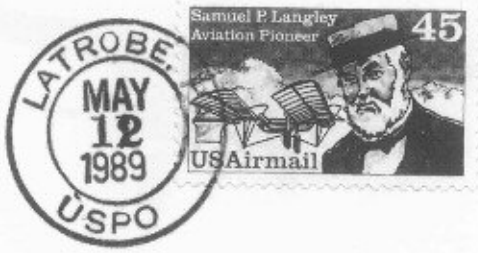
An adaptation of the Air Mail Pick-up System it permits loaded gliders to be picked up, from the ground, and towed by an airplane in full flight.

Clyde Hauger

All American Aviation greeting cards showing the development of the company's services over the years. The Stinsons were supplemented and replaced by Twin Beechcraft and Douglas DC-3s. The company also experimented with human pick-up, designed to rescue Army Air Force pilots downed in enemy territory, and glider pick-ups. *(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).*



Judy Blend
802 8th Ave.
Irwin, Pa.
15642

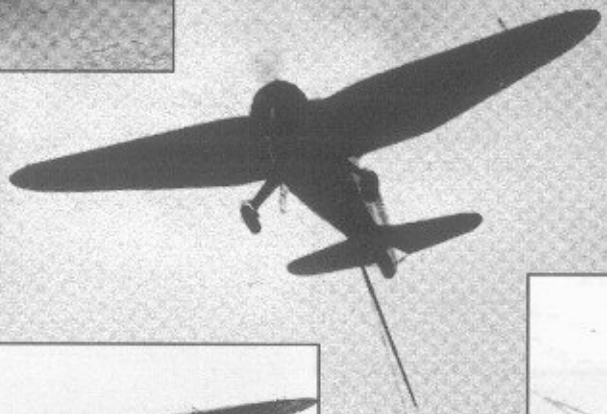


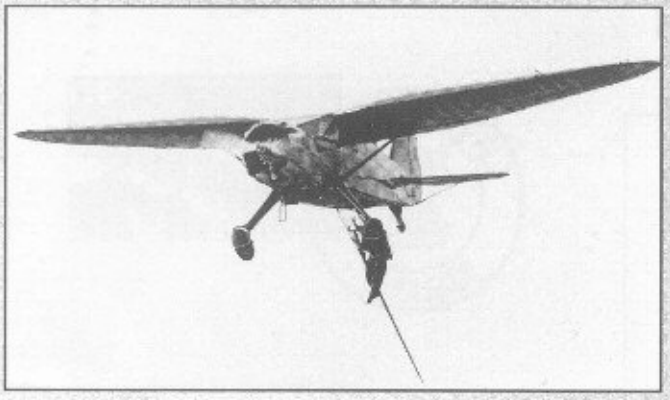
Celebrating the
50th Anniversary Inauguration
of Air-Mail Pickup Service.
The A.M. 49'ERs

ABOVE: 50th Anniversary commemoratives of air-mail pick-ups. *(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).*

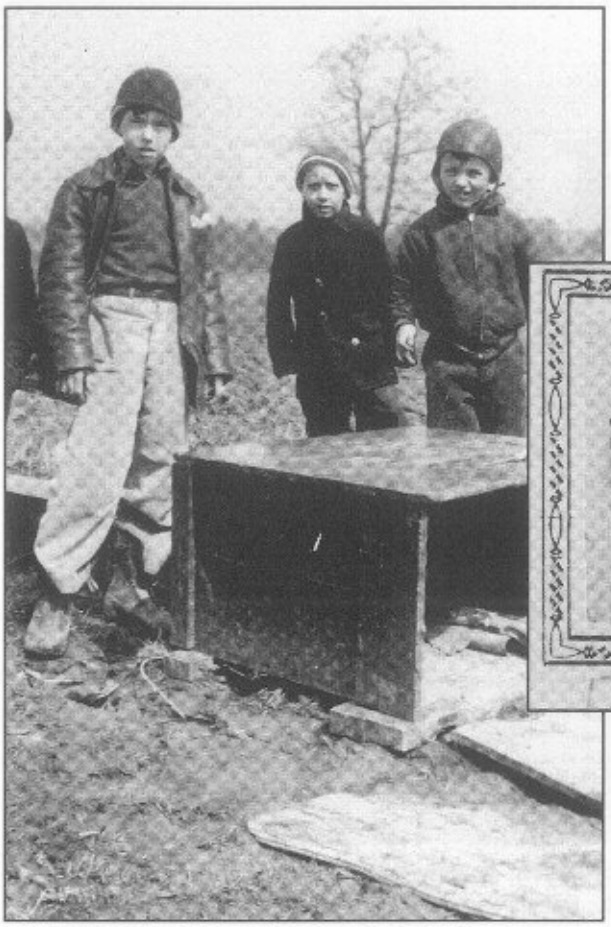
LEFT: This Stinson Reliant made a forced landing in a Blairsville cow pasture sometime in 1943.
(Courtesy of Ronald Jasper).

LEFT: "Black Bess," Norman Rintoul's "Black Stinson" NC2311, now in the Smithsonian, rests on an Irwin, Pennsylvania field in 1948 just before Rintoul performed a AAA human pick-up with Irwin's Bernie Cain as the subject. The sequence on this page was photographed by Ken Scholter. *(Courtesy of Ken Scholter).*





To Ken
From
Bernie Cain
1949



The Kids Loved the AAA Pilots

Slippery Rock
May 5th 1947

Dear Pilot
I am the little girl who wrote you your letter on Saturday. We will send our pictures on the ourevening pick-up

Yours truly
Second Grade
Here is a [illegible] stamp.

Please circle the pick-up several times if you see us watching from below.
Can you pick up some "dummy" bags so we will be sure to see just how you do it?
Please answer our letter by Wednesday.
We are very anxious to take the trip and hope it is a nice day.

Your friends
Second Grade

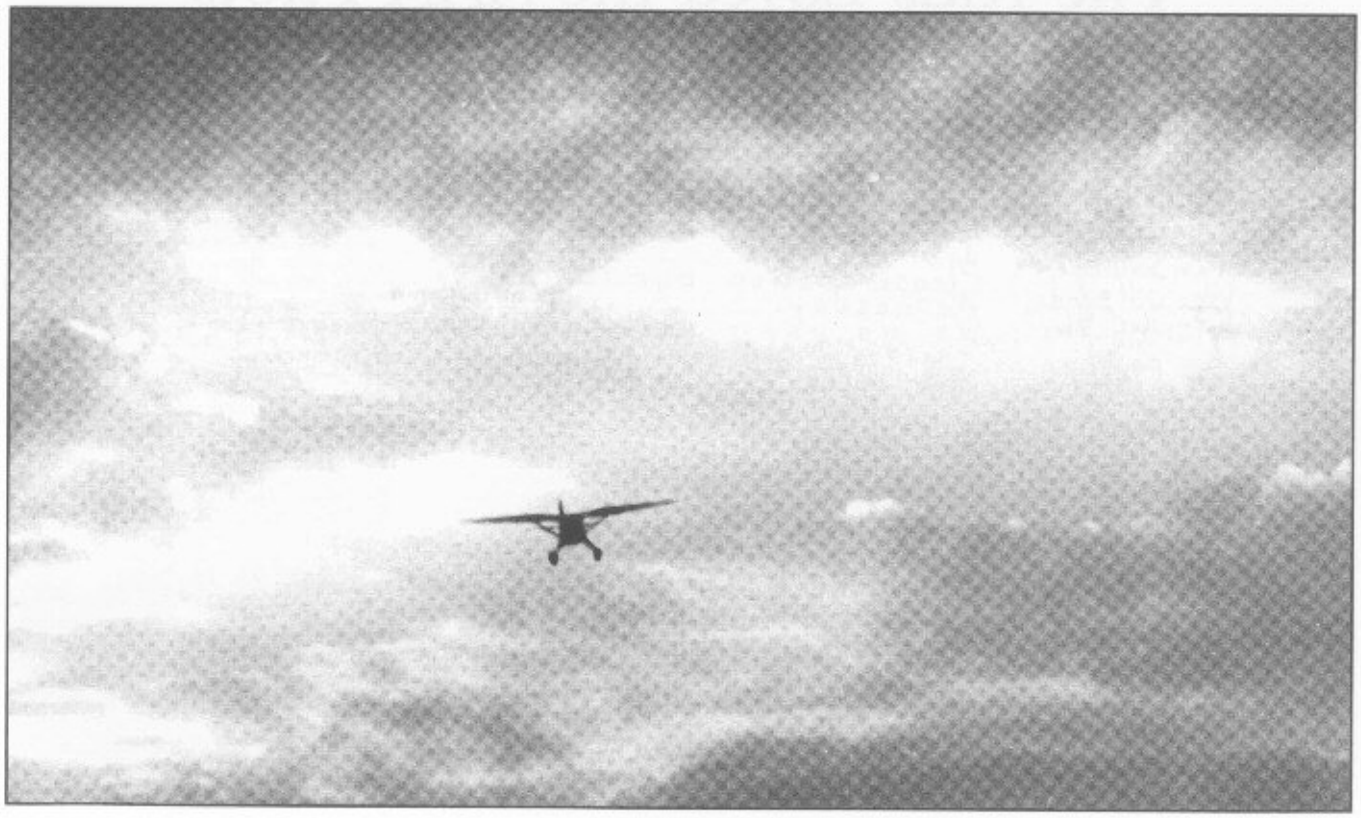
Second Grade
Slippery Rock Pa
April 3, 1947

Dear Clyde Hauger.
We have been studying about mail for a long time. We have found it very interesting. We want to go out to the [illegible] pick up on Wednesday, if it is a nice day.
May we ask you some questions?

1. Where do you live?
2. Do you have children?
3. How many men are on your plane?
4. How long have you been a pilot?
5. How many trips a day do you make?
6. How many hours a day do you work?
7. How far do you travel?
8. How many sacks will your plane hold?

ABOVE: Clyde Hauger and Ray Garcia (left) were chosen to staff the operations department of AAA's Brazilian subsidiary. For several months, they trained Brazilian pilots in Rio de Janiero to perform the pick-up, while developing pick-up routes in Brazil. *(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).*

BELOW: Clyde Hauger comes in out of the clouds in his Stinson and lines up for a pick-up at Latrobe. *(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger).*



The Naugle Mercury: The Model T of the Sky

The Naugle Mercury was a step forward in light commercial aircraft design. Powered only with a modest 4 cylinder, 75-horse-power, Lycoming engine, the Mercury achieved speeds over 140 miles per hour. Similarly powered aircraft of the day reached only 100 miles per hour before the Mercury's flight. The Naugle Mercury attained the greater speeds through light construction and improved aerodynamics. Designed to be fast, light-weight, strong, easy-to- handle, safe (it was reputed to be spin-proof) and inexpensive, the Mercury was "everyman's" aircraft. It was called the "Model T of the Sky" after Henry Ford's reliable and inexpensive automobile. Like the Model T, there were hopes of the Mercury one day supplanting the automobile as a dominant mode of private travel.

Such innovations in a light aircraft should be well-known, but they are not. Outside of a few of the older local pilots and people in the aviation industry, not much is known about the Naugle Mercury. Like many unique designs in aeronautics, the Naugle Mercury seems to have faded away with time and technology.

The Mercury's developers were two brothers from Ligonier, Richard C. and Harry Naugle, both highly skilled aeronautical engineers. Richard graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harry attended Culver Military Academy, Leigh University and Parks Air College. Richard was associated with numerous engineering companies (Piper, Fairchild, Waterman, McDonnell and Laister-Kaufman) before branching off with his brother. The brothers started their Latrobe-based Naugle Aircraft Corporation with backing from Al Williams and Richard King Mellon, setting up shop in a an abandoned factory once owned by the Vanadium-Alloys Steel Company building. Richard Naugle became president of the corporation, Glenn Cook, secretary-treasurer, and Harry Naugle, vice-president. The board of directors consisted of Richard Naugle, Cook and Harry Naugle. Later, James H. Rogers, president of Greensburg's First National Bank, and Ben Kerr, president of the Railway and Industrial Engineering Company of Greensburg, came onto the board.

Having been in the design stages for years, the idea for the Naugle Mercury took shape in December 1939. That year Richard Naugle applied for a patent on the wing construction for the Mercury aircraft. The model submitted to the patent office employed a novel wing spar and rib construction that improved wing strength and provided a method of fabrication and assembly that was practical and economical. But it was the performance in relation to the small engine of the Mercury that made it stand out.

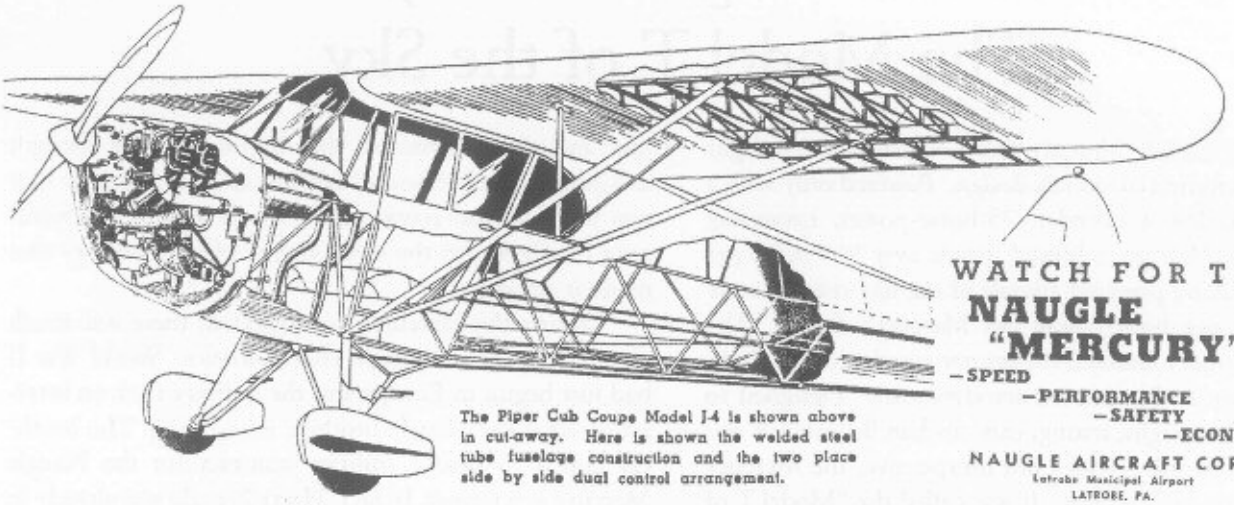
During the Mercury's construction, there was much speculation about its flight characteristics. World War II had just begun in Europe and the military took an interest in what the Naugle brothers were doing. The brothers hoped to land a military contract for the Naugle Mercury as a trainer. In fact, Harry Naugle was already in the Army and stationed at Langley Field, Virginia at the time when the Mercury was ready to fly. It is possible he promoted the benefits of the airplane to the military.

A week of test flights took place at the Latrobe Airport sometime in 1940. Latrobe's Lou Strickler put the Mercury through its paces. Strickler achieved a speed of 142 miles per hour. The previous record for a plane powered with a 75-horse power engine was only 118 miles per hour. After a successful series of test flights, the Naugles went ahead with plans to produce more airplanes.

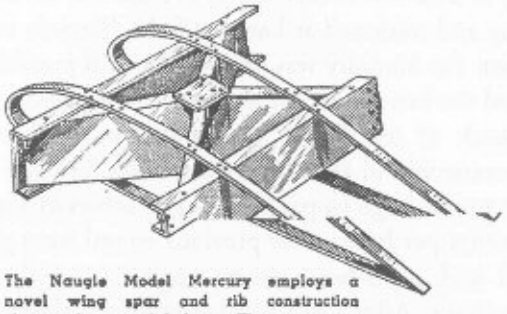
Supplies of aluminum and other materials needed to begin construction were not assured; national defense came first. Even though the United States was not yet at war, the possibility of being dragged into another European conflict loomed larger every day. Supplies of aluminum were eventually approved and construction began on a second Mercury. During the original flight tests the brothers discovered that the design did not have to be as strong and heavy as previously thought. Minor improvements were made to the second Mercury with an expectation of speeds exceeding160 miles per hour.

The Naugles made final refinements of their aircraft at the Latrobe Airport, and were working on the plane's major flaw–a disturbing flutter of the tail–when World War II intervened.

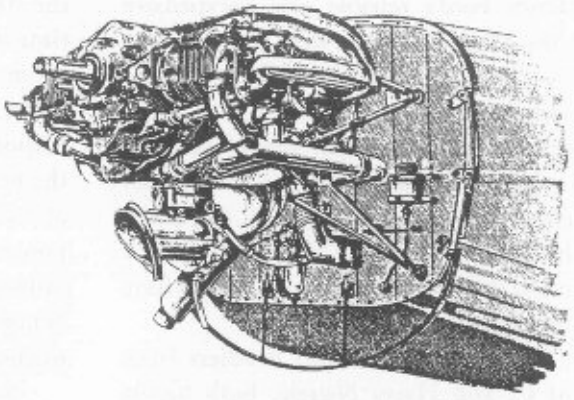
Soon after the test flights, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Richard Naugle went on to serve at Wright Field with the Air Service Command. Richard, along with his financial backers Richard Mellon and Al Williams (who had been called up and was a major in the Army), had plans to continue with post-war production of the Mercury, but the war changed these plans, like it did to many other things.



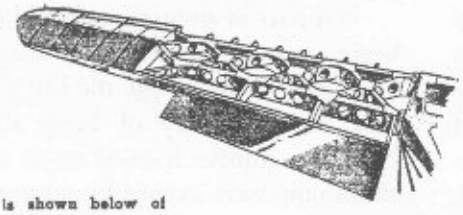
The Piper Cub Coupe Model J-4 is shown above in cut-away. Here is shown the welded steel tube fuselage construction and the two place side by side dual control arrangement.



The Naugle Model Mercury employs a novel wing spar and rib construction shown above and below. The wing spar is made up of two main spar sections joined by X members around which the ribs are built attaching fore and aft as shown.

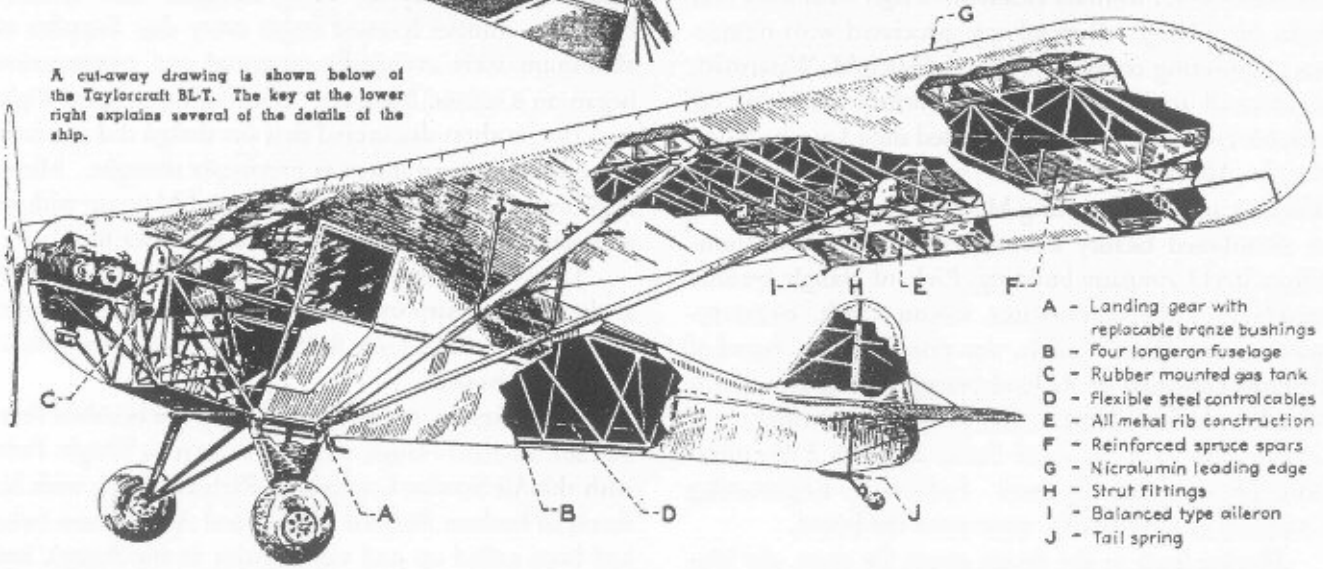


A Continental engine is shown above installed in a Piper Coupe, whose cut-away drawing is at the top of the page. Notice the exhaust system.



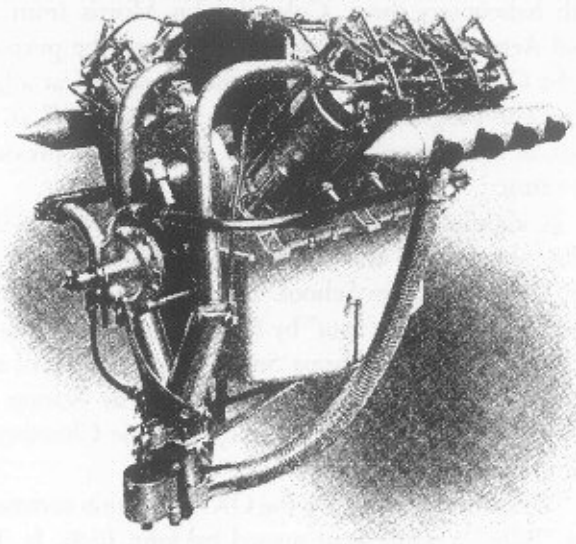
Another view of the Naugle wing spar construction.

A cut-away drawing is shown below of the Taylorcraft BL-T. The key at the lower right explains several of the details of the ship.



A - Landing gear with replacable bronze bushings
B - Four longeron fuselage
C - Rubber mounted gas tank
D - Flexible steel control cables
E - All metal rib construction
F - Reinforced spruce spars
G - Nicralumin leading edge
H - Strut fittings
I - Balanced type aileron
J - Tail spring

OX5 Club of America



An OX5 engine from the 1917 Curtiss catalogue.
(Courtesy of Ken Scholter).

A way of life has made us brothers.
Let none now tread the road alone.
Let's seek out and share with others
All the friends we once have known.

Care not for temples not for creed
One thing alone holds us firm and fast,
The mem'ries the OX gave us,
A precious heritage from a golden past.

The OX5 Club of America, with the OX5 Club of Pennsylvania as the parent organization, was founded on the afternoon of Saturday, August 27, 1955, at the Latrobe Airport. In June 1955, Charlie Carroll presented to the Aero Club of Pittsburgh his idea for a reunion of Pennsylvania aviators who flew behind the OX5 engine between the years 1918 and the outbreak of World War II. The idea for the formation of the OX5 Club arose earlier at the Latrobe Airport in a conversation between Charlie and Lloyd Santmyer. Lloyd Santmyer is the one who actually came up with the name "OX5 Club." Earl Metzler was at the Latrobe Airport that day and confirmed the substance of the conversation when he was interviewed.

For years afterward, John "Juny" Trunk, who was president of the organization in the 1960s, pointed out that Lloyd never got proper credit for his role in the formation of the club. Lloyd initially recruited many members from the Aero Club of Pittsburgh, and continued recruiting many new members for years after the OX5 Club's founding.

With some strong motivation from "Juny," he, Lloyd Santmyer and George Markley traveled to the old Elder farm in Juny's pick-up truck and retrieved the OX5 engine from Raymond Elder's "Canuck" that Raymond cracked up years before and Raymond's dad chopped up for firewood. Juny cleaned up the engine and got Johnny Evans to have a display case made for it by the fellows at the Duquesne Beer Shop. The engine went on display at the Latrobe Airport, where it remained for many years. Then Gene Lakin sent the engine down to Pittsburgh to be cleaned. Then it was put on display at the Pittsburgh International Airport where it remains. Just recently, the OX5 Club agreed to return it to the Arnold Palmer Regional Airport for ten-year renewable periods. Few disagree that Latrobe is the right place for it.

Lloyd Santmyer describes the day when Charlie Carroll and he developed the idea of a club that would honor the "early-bird" aviators:

> Charlie and I had the idea of starting that OX5 Club. We said we were gonna put our original office over there at the airport and hang a propeller above the door and have a place for the old-time flyers to congregate, a place for them to come and visit. So I said, 'We should call it the OX5 Club.' Anybody who flew an OX5 here would be qualified to be a member, because it was the Curtiss OX5 that flew all these commercial airplanes, all these biplanes, and the old-fashioned planes. So I said, 'Yeah! Let's call it the OX5 Club!'
>
> So we talked to guys from the Aero-Club, and to Clyde Hauger, Ray Elder, and Dave Patterson, and some of those fellas, and we thought we could have an air meet and get a bunch of guys in. They all said, 'Yeah! Why don't we do it?!'
>
> So Charlie got on the phone and called Cliff Ball. Right away, Cliff was all for it, because he was the one who started the first airmail here.
>
> There was a well-known fella that used to fly across here on those early mail flights and passenger flights out of Pittsburgh named Sam Bigony. Cliff called him. He was all for it. And we got Russ Brinkley, who was in Harrisburg at the time. He became first president of the thing. More than a hundred came to that first meeting. We didn't expect that many, but they came.

And they did come, more than 250 pilots, aviation pioneers, wives, family and friends. The event was officially called "The First Annual Pennsylvania Aviation Reunion." They represented thousands of years of flying

experience. The White House and Pennsylvania Governor, George M. Leader, sent best wishes. Later in the festivities, 100 of them became charter members of the OX5 Club. The organizing committee was comprised of Charlie Carroll, Sam Bigony, Clifford Ball, Blanche Noyes, Ken Scholter, John Kratzer, Henry Noll, Oscar Hostetter, Ralph McClarren, Earl Southee, Don Rose, John MacFarlane, William T. Piper, Joe Field, Roy Clark, John Bartow, Ed Chadderton, and Wesley Price, with Russ Brinkley as chairman.

Hundreds of others witnessed an air show at the Latrobe Airport, a show that included fly-bys of World War II Corsair fighter planes, Sabre Jets, Air National Guard fighter planes, civilian demonstrations of commercial, experimental and unusual aircraft, helicopter stunt flying, and a parachute jump by the perennial Otto Hoover, of New Alexandria, Pennsylvania, one the nation's oldest jumpers. Hoover had participated in air shows for thirty-three years, and this was his 3,019th jump. Dr. Lynn Bollinger, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology flew the Helio Courier; Charlie Carroll took up his OX5 Challenger; Guy Miller demonstrated the Bell helicopter; Earl Metzler gave a demonstration of his Wings With Springs. Father Edmund Cuneo, O.S.B., of Saint Vincent College, blessed the ceremonies.

Charlie Carroll hosted the event, and the group held a twelve-hour formal program and dinner at the nearby Mission Inn. Dozens of planes flew singly and in formation over the inn's outdoor patio. Then the organizing committee honored several of the participants with awards.

They named William T. Piper, who fathered the Piper Aircraft Corporation, "Mr. Pennsylvania Aviation of All Time," and John "Reds" MacFarlane "Mr. Pennsylvania Aviation of 1955." Piper, known in aviation circles as "The Henry Ford of Aviation," also received the Edward Chadderton Award, presented to him by Chadderton himself, owner of the Sharon Airport in Pennsylvania. In addition, MacFarlane received the Pennsylvania Aviation Trades Association Award, presented to him by Oscar Hostetter, of York, Pennsylvania, president of the Association.

Russ Brinkley presented awards of his own invention. The "Oldest Active Pilot Award" went to Harry M. Jones, of Washington, D.C., flying for forty-three years, and George Scragg, flying for forty-six years. Russ gave the "Pilot Who Flew the Greatest Distance to Attend the Reunion Award" to Harrison Doyle, of Washington, D.C. Charlie Carroll took honors for owning a 1927 Challenger aircraft, "Miss Tydol," the oldest OX5 aircraft still parked at Latrobe Airport.

The organizing committee also honored Doctor and Mrs. D. E. Strickler, parents of Lou Strickler; Brigadier General Laurin Faurot, commander of the Air National Guard, and Charles "Red" Gahagan, a regular at the Latrobe Airport who was engaged in experimental work with helicopters there. Colonel John Morris from the Civil Aeronautics Administration outlined the purposes of the OX5 Club, which was to be formalized at a later date. The program ended with an Aviation Ball at the Mission Inn. Jimmy Brunelli and his orchestra provided the music.

A highlight of the festivities was the selection of a "Miss Sky Queen" chosen from eleven models from the Earl Wheeler Charm School. The judges for the contest were selected "on the spot" by Russ Brinkley from among the veteran airmen. Norma Small won the contest, and was presented with a bouquet of roses by Semon H. Stupakoff, president of the Greater Latrobe Chamber of Commerce.

The official mascot for the OX5 induction ceremony was "Billy," a white goat owned by John Rich, Jr. The official song for the event was "Wait Till You Get Them Up in the Air, Boys," by Albert von Tilzer and Lew Brown.

Little had changed since the old days. Russ Brinkley reported that attendance would have been much greater had it not been for the fog over Chestnut Ridge that turned several airmen away.

In 1959, Charlie Carroll retired and left the airport he had managed for thirty-five years. On the last day of the year, a Saturday night, the old-timers honored him with a dinner at the Jacktown Hotel in Irwin, Pennsylvania. One-hundred-and-fifty people showed up.

Those who remained with him in life were all there: Al Litzenberger, Joe Fields, Joe Reedy, Lloyd Santmyer, Dave Patterson, Herb Morrison, "Red" Gahagan, D. Barr Peat, Earl Metzler, Johnnie Evans, Kenny Scholter, Sam Bigony, Cliff Ball, and "Reds" MacFarlane.

Three groups planned his tribute: the WESPEN Group of the OX5 Club; the Westmoreland Aviation Association, which included B. Patrick Costello and Arnold Palmer; the Aero Club of Pittsburgh. Sam Bigony outlined Charlie's contributions to the OX5 Club of America; "Reds" MacFarlane talked about "Charlie, The Fixed- Base Operator;" Colonel John P. Morris reviewed Charlie's role in the United States' Military Training Program; Ralph Sloan spoke of Charlie's place in local aviation activities.

Charlie posed for a picture with Lloyd Santmyer, Al Litzenberger, Frank Fox, and "Curley" Korb.

They ended the ceremony with "Auld Lang Syne."

In 1959, Charlie moved to 708 Pearl Street, Sarasota, Florida with his wife, Grace, and his fourteen-year-old

son, Don. In 1962, the OX5 Club of America honored Charlie with its Distinguished Service Award. At the awards ceremony, organization president E. A. "Pete" Goff said:

> It is with the greatest possible pleasure that I call Charlie Carroll up here to receive an exceptional award.
>
> Charlie was the instigator of the original meeting that resulted in the formation of the OX5 Club. As one of the original board members, he served for five years, during which time he expended limitless time and energy in the interest of the organization.
>
> Charlie is still recruiting members and supplying assistance and counsel in untiring efforts to assure our success. It is doubtful that any other member has so taken the welfare of the Club to heart or contributed more to its success. There are four members of the Carroll family who are OX5ers: Mrs. Grace Carroll, Charlie, and two sons.
>
> Charlie, you're a grand guy and I can't think of anything more appropriate than presenting you with this plaque in recognition of your efforts. The plaque reads: 'In grateful recognition of his wise leadership, devoted service, and unselfish efforts on behalf of our organization.'
>
> Best of luck to you, old timer. I'll see you at then next reunion.

In 1965, the OX5 Club held its tenth anniversary in Latrobe. Charlie Carroll was the guest of honor.

In 1970, a few years before Charlie's death, they formed the OX5 Aviation Pioneers Hall of Fame. Inexplicably, Charlie was not elected to it.

On May 12, 1989, Westmoreland County Airport held a reunion of OX5'ers and All American Aviation 49'ers. It was the fiftieth anniversary of the airmail pick-up at old Latrobe Airport. After the ceremony, they placed a plaque in the terminal building honoring the first 100 charter members of the OX5 Club. The plaque states that the OX5 Club was started by Charles Carroll and Sam Bigony. Before time erases all memory of the original events, let this history show that the idea for the OX5 Club came from Charlie Carroll and Lloyd Santmyer.

Charles "Red" Gahagan sits on the wing of Charlie Carroll's OX5 Challenger *Miss Tydol* around the time of the founding of the OX5 Club. Charlie steadies the club mascot "Billy." Charlie's son, Donald, is in the cockpit. Charlie's plane took the prize for "oldest aircraft" at the Latrobe Airport. At the time of his retirement, Charlie sold the plane to Frank Fox. *(Courtesy of Frank Fox).*

PROGRAM

WELCOME TO LATROBE ..... Charles B. Carroll, Host

Introducing:

MASTER OF CEREMONIES ..... Russ Brinkley, WHP-TV

CROWNING OF PENNSYLVANIA SKY QUEEN OF 1955
Direction of Mr. Earl Wheeler

AVIATION AND THE PRESS ..... W. Lowrie Kay, Editor, Latrobe Bulletin

PENNSYLVANIA AVIATION ..... John W. MacFarlane

AWARD: MR. PENNSYLVANIA AVIATION OF ALL TIME
Direction of Mr. Oscar Hostetter

AWARD: MR. PENNSYLVANIA OF 1955
Allegheny Airlines Flight To National Air Races

INTRODUCTIONS ..... Responses by honored guests

AWARDS: To oldest pilot present. Owner of oldest airplane on field. Pilot who came the greatest distance to attend the reunion.

★

OFFICIAL ORGANIZATION

Mother Chapter of the National OX5 Club. Membership open to every pilot who ever flew behind the famous Curtiss engine of World War One vintage.

INITIATION TEAM UNDER DIRECTION OF SAM BIGONY

★

INTERLUDE

For reunion with old friends and meeting newcomers to aviation.

★

FLYING - DEMONSTRATIONS - STATIC

Dr. Lynn Bollinger, M.I.T., flying the Helio Courier
C. B. Carroll and his 1927 OX5 Challenger.
Guy Miller of Pittsburgh, flying the Bell Helicopter
Earl G. Metzler, flying Wings with Springs.
Ball Airlines Firth OX5 WACO 9.

★

GRAND FINALE

9:30 P.M.

AVIATION BALL:—MISSION INN BALLROOM

Music by

JIMMY BRUNELLI and His Orchestra

PROGRAM

12:00 Noon:—Fly-in and registration.

1:00 P.M.:—Aviation Banquet. Mission Inn.

STAR SPANGLED BANNER

SILENT TRIBUTE TO DEPARTED AIRMEN

INVOCATION:—Rev. Edmund Cuneo, O.S.B.

★

OFFICIAL SONG

WAIT TILL YOU GET THEM UP IN THE AIR BOYS

by Albert Von Tilzer & Lew Brown

★

REUNION COMMITTEE

Clifford I. Ball
Blanche W. Noyes
Kenneth Scholter
John B. Kratzer
Henry Noll
Oscar Hostetter
Ralph McClarren
Earl Southee
Don Rose
John W. Macfarlane
William T. Piper, Sr.
Samuel Bigony
Joe Field
Roy W. Clark
John Bartow
Ed Chadderton
C. B. Carroll
Wesley Price

Russ Brinkley, Chairman

Semon H. Stupakoff, President, Greater Latrobe Chamber of Commerce.

Press Host: W. Lowrie Kay, Editor, Latrobe Bulletin

Radio & Television: Joe Harper, WHP-TV

Public Relations: William Laughlin and John Hasson.

Secretary: Grace Carroll

First Officers and the First One Hundred

President, Russell Brinkley
1st Vice President, John P. Morris
2nd Vice President, Blanche Noyes
3rd Vice President, Asa Roundtree
Secretary, Clifford Ball
Treasurer, Charles B. Carroll

Albright, Harry S.
Alexander, Menges
Allen, George W.
Andress, Vincent T.
Arthurs, Addison E.
Backenstoe, G.S., M.D.
Ball, Clifford
Barbour, B.K.
Barclay, W. Buril
Bartow, John B.
Booth, W.W.
Bower, A.R.
Bradley, James C.
Breene, Dan A.
Brooke, Pat, Sr.
Brooke, Pat, Jr.
Brown, Nancy
Brown, Douglas, Jr.
Buehl, Ernest H.
Burke, S.L.
Burroughs, W.E.
Caldwell, Paul C.
Carroll, Kenneth E.
Carroll, James P.
Carroll, Charles B.
Carroll, Grace S.
Chambers, Joseph W.
Clark, Leroy W.
Corbin, George
Covey, Bernard
Crane, Joe
Culbertson, Bill
Davis, Harry
Dell, Thomas H.
Donnelly, Hugh J.
Doughty, Stewart E.
Doyle, Harrison
Elder, Raymond
Ensley, Chester K.
Evans, Johnny
Field, Joe
Fitch, Milan W.
Fox, Frank M.
Fradel, John F.
Gahagan, Charles
Gingell, Thomas
Goff, E.A., Jr.
Hahn, Colonel B.C.
Hancock, Robert H.
Jones, Harry M.
Keck, Stanley
Keffer, Walter M.
Kratzer, Jack
Kratzer, Blair S.
Laedlein, Robert
Lease, Kenneth
Litzenberger, Carl
Litzenberger, Al
Lossing, Millard
Lutz, Sherm
MacFarlane, John W.
Martin, Willis H.
McMullen, A.B.
Moltrup, Merle
Moore, O.A.
Morris, John P.
Morrison, Herbert O.
Murphy, W.J.B.
Myers, Gilbert K.
Neely, Honorable Wm. H.
Noyes, Blanche
O'Connor, Walter
Oat, Frank, Jr.
Patterson, David
Peat, D. Barr
Peters, Ralph B.
Peterson, Paul
Pilley, Frank E.
Piper, William T.
Planck, Charles E.
Post, M. Wilford, Jr.
Ricker, Joseph P.
Russell, Howard J.
Santmyer, Myrtle
Santmyer, Lloyd
Seiler, Arthur J.
Sheffer, Helen
Slavin, Kenneth P.
Smith, Russell K.
Smith, J. Wesley
Stefanik, Emil
Stitley, Arthur E.
Stockdale, Floyd W.
Strouss, Harry D.
Thomas, T. Foster
Thomas, W.S., Jr.
Trunk, John E., Sr.
Voelter, Karl E.
Weiland, Leroy C.
Wetovich, Charles W.

1965: The OX5 Club Tenth Anniversary - Don Riggs Remembers

Ten years after Charlie Carroll, Lloyd Santmyer, Russ Brinkley, Sam Bigony, Clifford Ball and others met at the Mission Inn in Latrobe on the day the OX5 Club was formed, they all got together again and had a party at Latrobe Airport, the airport Charlie Carroll nurtured for so many years. In 1955, Charlie had been the host. This time he was an honored guest. And what a party!

Corporate and retired airline pilots, mechanics and just plain friends of old-timers descended on the grassy part of the airport that manager Paul Bradley had carefully divided with a snow fence. The crowd could get close enough to smell the castor oil but be safe from the propwash of both the Nieuport 28 and the Fokker D-VII. Yes! World War I fighter planes! And not re-creations. Both were originals direct from Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome in Upstate New York. They were there in honor of local World War I pilots who were members of OX5. There was also a 1910 Thomas Brothers Pusher powered with the old V-8 OX5 engine. That one was pre-World War I. You should have seen the Gypsy trucks that hauled all those pieces of flying relics (soft, thin mattresses and clothesline galore!)

The inspiration to bring Cole Palen and his Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome Flying Circus to Latrobe came from Jim Fisher, VP of Public Relations at the very-aware Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics. P.I.A. had always been a true friend of OX5 and didn't mind the expense. In fact,the next year the school brought Palen and Dave Fox back to Pittsburgh to do a real-history dogfight over the Allegheny County Fair.

It was a lousy day to fly, especially for those old "rag-and-tube" creations with tail skids and no brakes. The wind speed was about thirty miles per hour with gusts. It was far too windy to fly the old pusher, so they recruited some wing walkers and just taxied the old ship around a bit just to hear the engine, the ubiquitous OX5-V8-water-cooled-single-magnetoed-mill that weighed 360 pounds and put out ninety horse power maybe.

The engine was a wonderful example of advanced technology and practical design for its time. Designed by Glen Curtiss, the OX5 powered the famous Curtiss Jenny of primary training fame. You could buy an Army surplus JN4D with an "oh-by-five" engine for five hundred dollars or less back in the 1920s. Lindbergh did. So did Charlie Carroll and other intrepid airmen from Scottdale, Latrobe, Greensburg, Mt. Pleasant, Ligonier and beyond. "EVERYBODY" had a Jenny with a five-gallon gas can, a grease gun, extra rags, a flying helmet, goggles and a dirty, white scarf, sometimes even a couple extra engines. Jodhpurs, boots, and leather coat were optional. Everybody also had hairy stories of a leaky water pump shorting out the magneto over Chestnut Ridge, or maybe throwing a pin from a rocker arm right through the windshield over Pleasant Unity, Pennsylvania. It's a fact that Raymond Elder and Jim Carroll did just that in the late 1920s.

Back to that sunny-but-windy day in 1965. Cole Palen had just taxied the French Nieuport up close to the fence so we could see everything, including the famous "Hat in the Ring" insignia of Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, and the "guns" mounted on the sides of the fuselage. The guns were a piece of pipe with a glow plug on one end which ignited propane fed from a handyman canister. It sounded like a machine-gun where half the shells were duds. But it WORKED, and it was VERY CLEVER. Just like Palen.

One of his Old Rhinebeck Kids spun the Le Rhone rotary engine and Cole was off! ACROSS the runway, right into the stiff wind! RAT-TAT-TAT. RAT-TAT-TAT! Suddenly he was Snoopy chasing the Bosch. Now comes the German Fokker D-VII with the Mercedes straight eight out front. Dave Fox also takes off across the runway and joins Cole in a friendly dogfight. Call it a puppy fight. The crowd loved it! Dave and Cole made passes over the guests that would give an FAA Safety Monitor fits today. Close! But now came the time to land.

Fox in the Fokker tries it first, crosswind on a hard runway with no tail wheel and no brakes. It's a skid. He needs quick, violent rudder action to keep it straight until he can get over on the grass and dig in. He makes it, and everyone says, "Whew."

Now it's Cole's turn. (How do you say "chicken out"in French?) Palen makes one pass and flies out of sight. About ten minutes later we hear, faintly, "Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines." Here comes Cole with a bunch of helpers pushing the plane, tail held high, across Route 981 and into the airport. He had landed safely in some lady's cow pasture, and was bringing the plane home by hand! We never knew where the music came from.

What a party for the tenth anniversary of an organi-

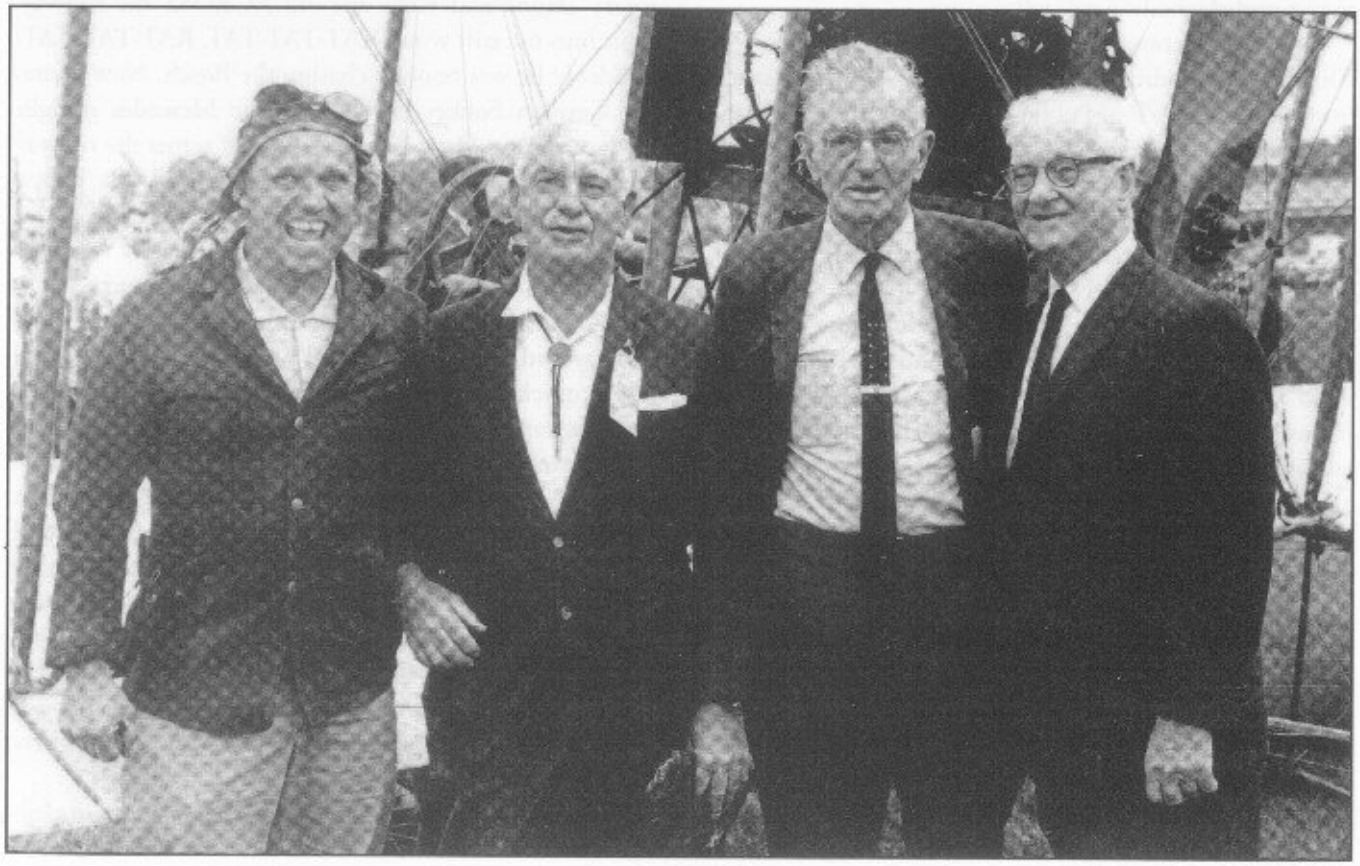
zation started in Latrobe that grew quickly to over one-hundred-thousand members nationwide. The camaraderie was rampant, the remembrances exciting, and everyone who attended, even the wives, had a great time!

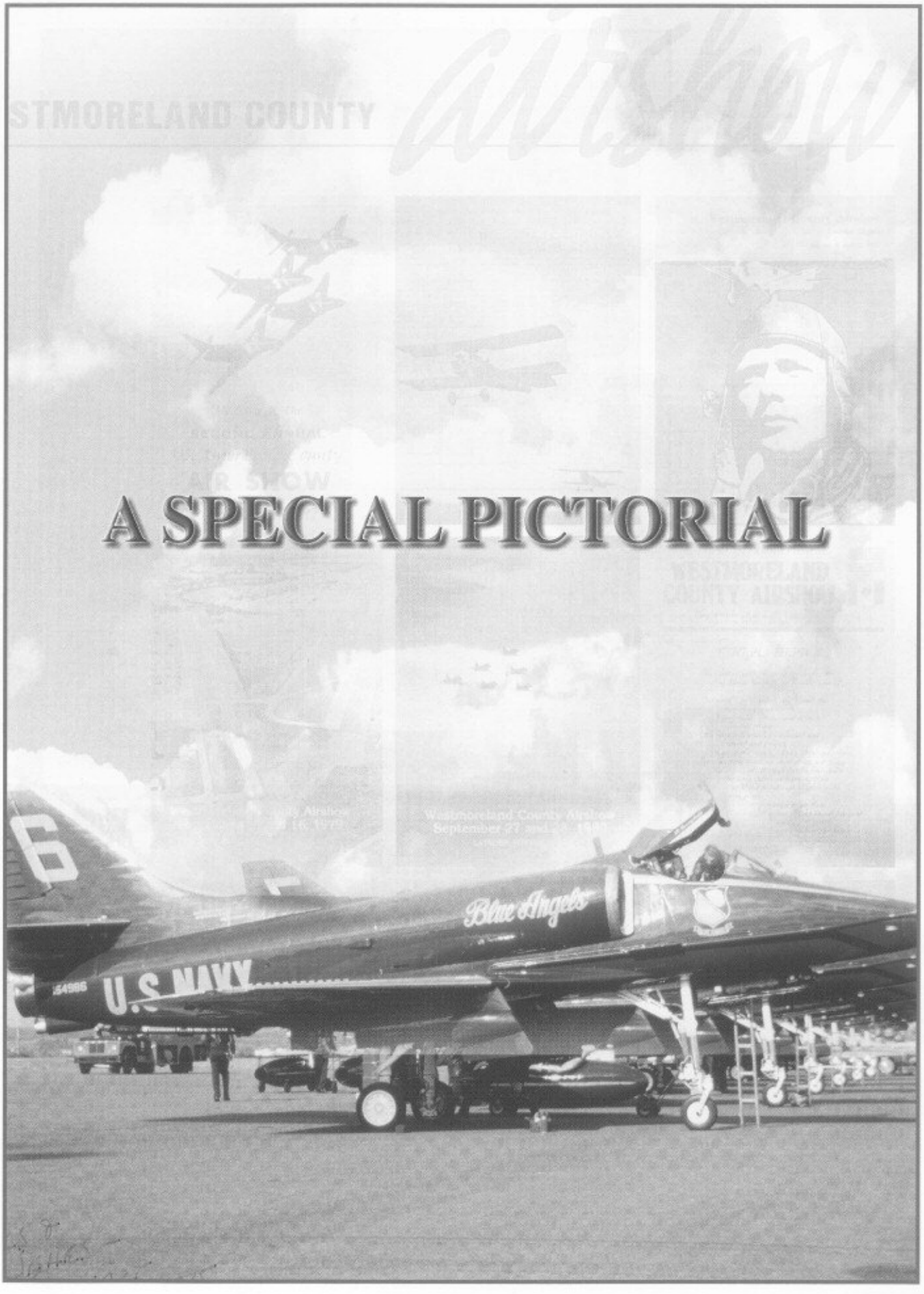
The "capper" for the day, however, was flown in a DC-3 by "Curley" Korb, retired chief pilot for Westinghouse. It the spirit of those below, Korb dove the plane down to pick up speed and, just as he got to the crowd, rolled the left wing down, stood on the right rudder, and HELD IT for what is called a "Knife-Edge Pass." Beside him, helping with the rudder, was his new boss, a young wealthy Texan who owned the airplane and who had a grin as big as Curley's. They rolled the old "3" level and headed for Texas. Those rascals! Korb, of course, was an OX5er. Of course!

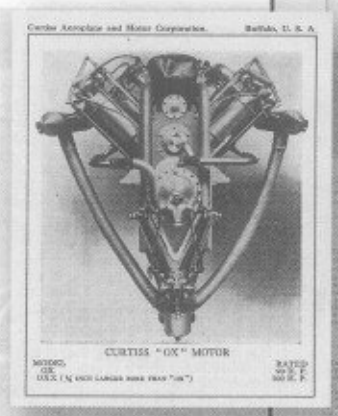
ABOVE: Bob Hancock, Carolyn Peat, and D. Barr Peat at the OX5 Club's tenth anniversary, Latrobe, 1965.

LEFT: Paul Garber of the Smithsonian (holding microphone), Charlie Carroll, Clifford Ball, and Pete Goff, National President of the OX 5 Club, pose with a plaque commemorating the tenth anniversary of the founding of the OX5 Club at Latrobe on August 27, 1955.

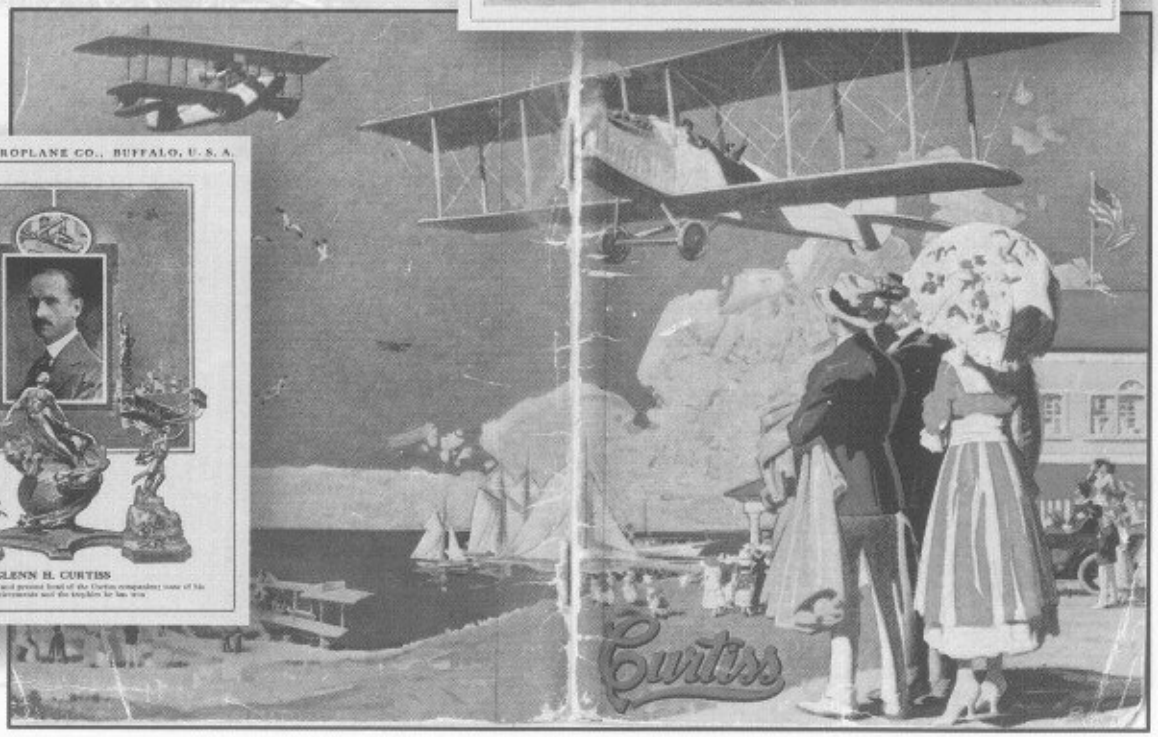
BELOW: Cole Palen, Bob Hancock, Charlie Carroll, and Cliff Ball pose with Palen's Thomas Brothers pusher at the OX5 Club's tenth anniversary. *(All photos courtesy of Carolyn Peat).*

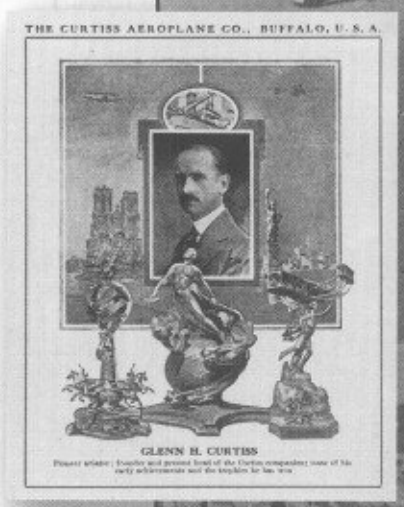



A SPECIAL PICTORIAL
Blue Angels
U.S. NAVY

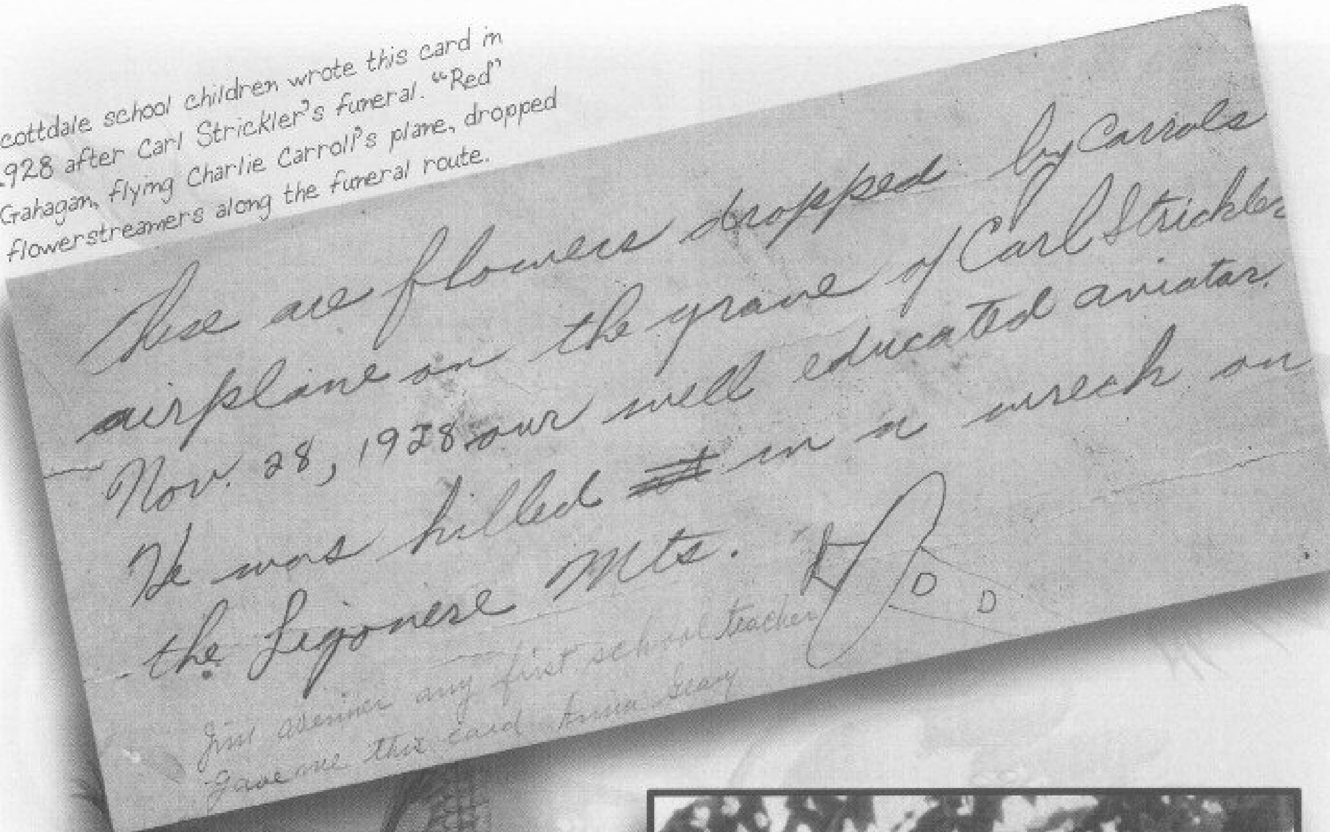


Pages from the Curtiss catalogue of 1917 and the EagleRock catalogue of 1927.

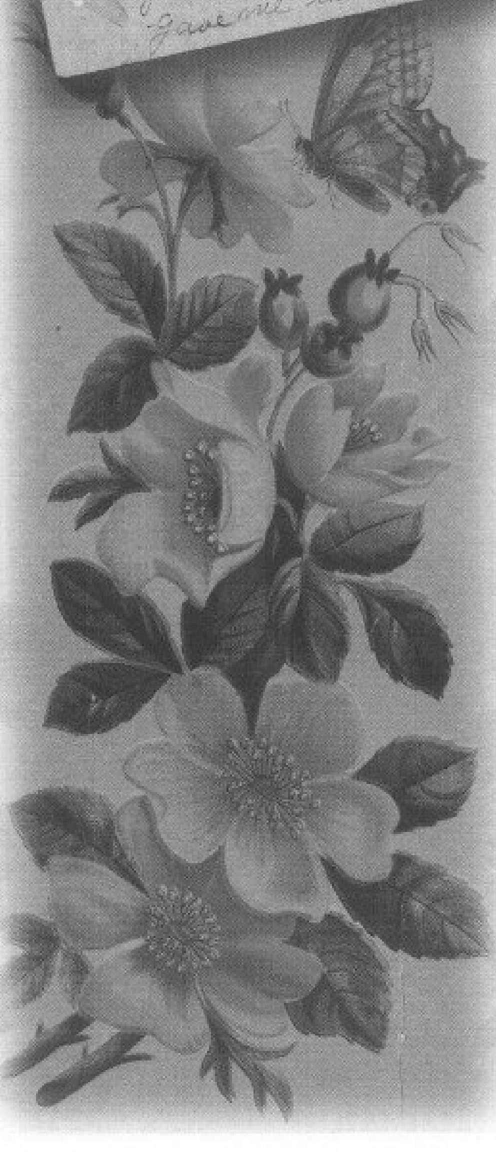


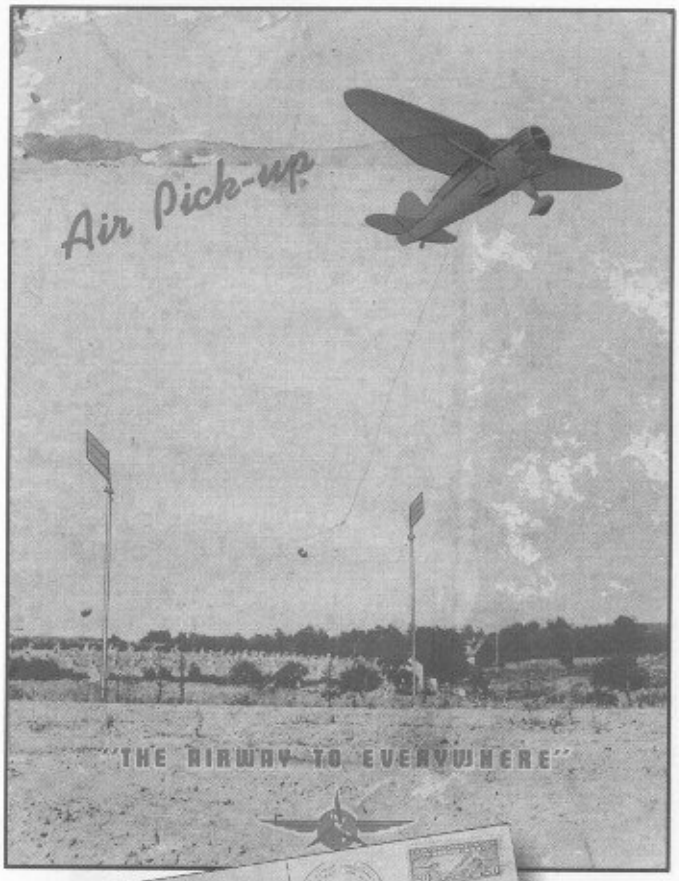


Scottdale school children wrote this card in 1928 after Carl Strickler's funeral. "Red" Grahagan, flying Charlie Carroll's plane, dropped flowerstreamers along the funeral route.

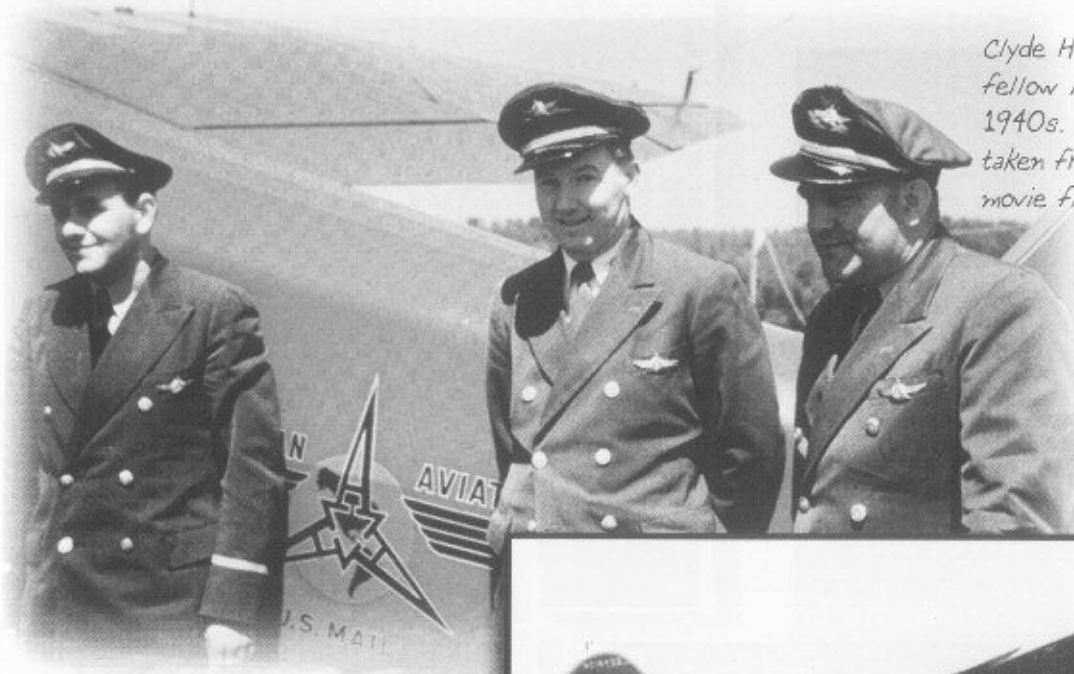

These are flowers dropped by Carrols airplane on the grave of Carl Strickler Nov. 28, 1928 our well educated aviator. He was killed in a wreck on the Ligonese Mts.

Jim Adenier my first school teacher Gave me this card Anna Gray





A collection of airmail first covers, air mail pick-up first covers, an All American Aviation logo. At the top left is the cover of AAA's first brochure, published in 1939. The bottom cover is from the late 1940s.

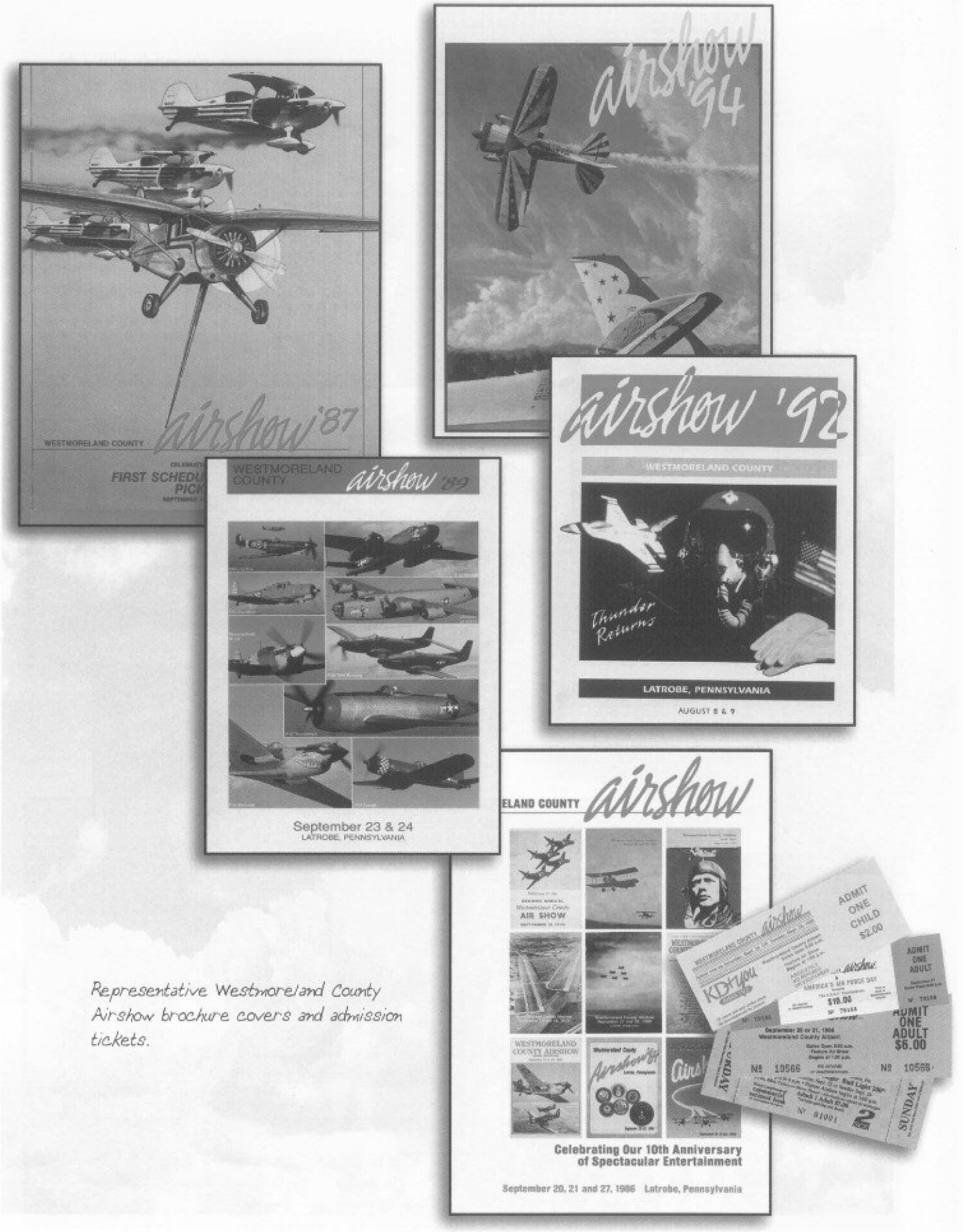


Clyde Hauger (right) with fellow AAA pilots, ca. 1940s. The photo was taken from 8mm home movie film.

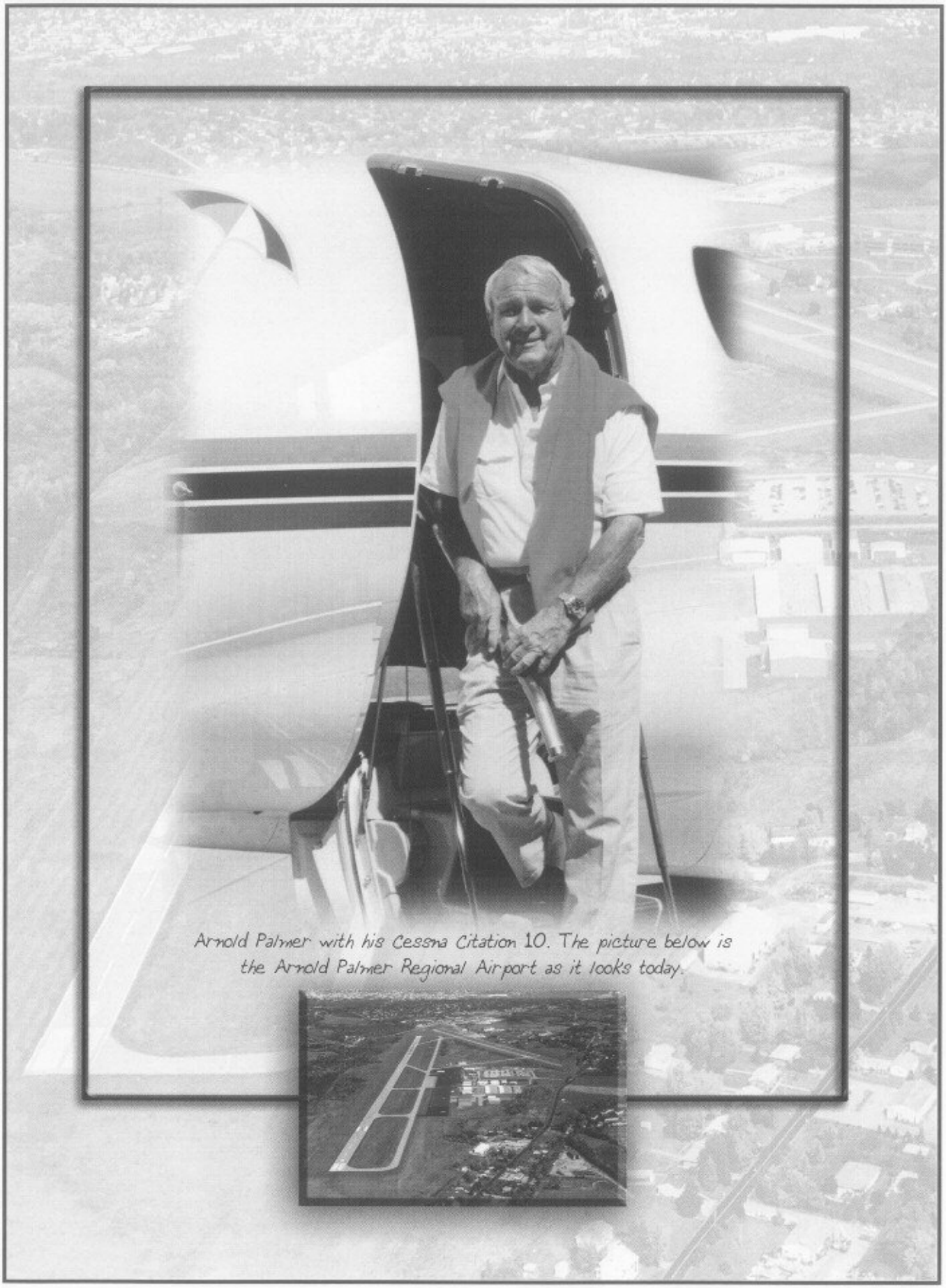
Old Blue painted in one of the several mid-1940s AAA livery. The 1939 colors were cherry maroon with navy stripes and gold trim.

Fabric from an AAA Stinson Reliant

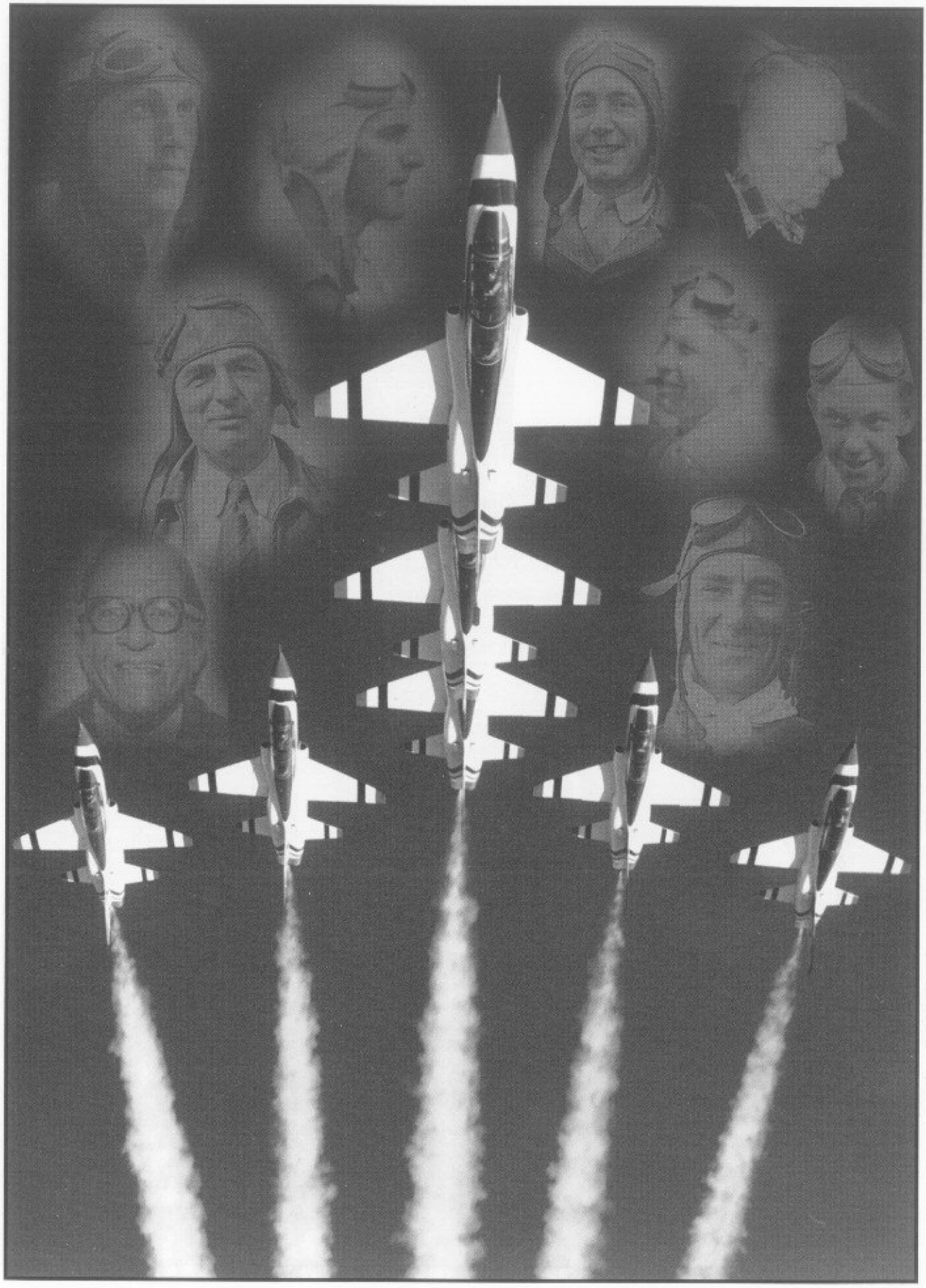
1989 Airshow "Red Shirt" volunteers pose with Old Blue.



Representative Westmoreland County Airshow brochure covers and admission tickets.



Arnold Palmer with his Cessna Citation 10. The picture below is the Arnold Palmer Regional Airport as it looks today.



The Westmoreland County Airshow

It was 1981. They pulled the station wagon into a field above the airport. A young boy about seven-years old and his father got out of the car. The boy looked up at the sky as if waiting for a miracle. He had a pair of binoculars around his neck. They seemed ridiculously large compared to his thin frame, but he held them firmly in both hands. Periodically, he stared through them at the sky and at points on the horizon with all the importance of a general viewing enemy positions.

While the boy played with the binoculars, his father unpacked a cooler from the trunk of the station wagon.

The boy asked his father a question.

"Are the Flying Tigers going to be here, too?"

His father grinned.

"I don't know. We'll have to wait and see," he responded.

"Here, have this," he said to his son.

He handed him a carton of orange juice.

At that moment, beyond the slope of the hill, there came a sound that seemed to emanate from everywhere. The boy felt the sound rising up out of the ground and into his chest. It almost frightened him. The boy turned and looked in the direction of the sound. He dropped his orange juice. He recognized the sound as it got louder. He had heard it going over his house many times before, but he had never heard it this close before. It was what he had been waiting for.

Over the rise of the hill three airplanes roared into view, suddenly appearing as if willed there by the boy's enthusiasm. They seemed so low to the ground he felt he should duck. One was a brilliant yellow and the two flanking it were silver. The aircraft banked to the left and headed towards the horizon like huge, growling birds.

The boy remembered the binoculars in his excitement and hurriedly peeked through them at the now distant aircraft. This was the closest he had ever been to airplanes. He would get a lot closer as the day progressed. Over the hill lay the Westmoreland County Airport. This was the boy's first air show.

That day I would see aircraft up close that I had only seen in books or admired in the old World War II movies. John Wayne in *The Flying Tigers* was a personal favorite of mine while I was growing up. The first air show I attended featured a vintage P-40 Warhawk with the shark mouth painted under the engine cowling. I thought "The Duke" himself was going to spring out of the cockpit of that monster, swagger over to me and give me a ride in his war bird.

In 1981, the Confederate Air Force flew its vintage planes and re-enacted the bombing of Pearl Harbor, minus the battleships of course. The pyrotechnic display put on to simulate that horrific attack awed me. A lifelong interest in World War II aviation followed. The glamour and dash of the World War II fighter pilot kept my younger self glued to books on aviation and clouded my days with dreams of flight. However, as I grew up, I realized the closest I would ever come to that era would be to talk with the men and women who were there or see the airplanes they flew. I have since done both and feel very privileged to have had those opportunities.

I see air shows as one of the living manifestations of childhood dreams. Where else could a person go and see airplanes from nearly all the decades of flight take to the air once more? But when did these living dreams come to life? One could argue the very first air show ever was when Orville and Wilbur Wright made their first successful, powered flight on December 17, 1903. Soon after this flight the possibilities of flight began to expand in the minds of the public who watched in awe the aircraft and the pilots who flew them.

One man in particular began to experiment with how airplanes handled turns, dives and other more dramatic maneuvers. This was Glenn Curtiss, of Curtiss Jenny fame. He and pilots like Lincoln Beachey began to do "stunt flying." According to Johnny Evans:

> Glenn Curtiss popularized early flying exhibitions in a craft of his own invention, the Curtiss Flying Machine known as the 'June Bug.' In 1906 and 1907 he built more aircraft and began to teach others to fly. From this the Curtiss Exhibition Team was created. A pilot from the Curtiss Team would sometimes travel one hundred miles with an airplane in a box car of a train to perform at a County Fair. Much like today's Blue Angels or Thunderbirds, these early pioneers would put on flight demonstrations to thrill and ignite the imagination of the audience.

World War I, despite all of its fruitless slaughter, was a stage for great advancements in aviation. The dogfights that took place over the Western Front throughout the war furthered ideas of what airplanes and pilots could and could not do. Acrobatics and daredevil maneuvers were not exhibitionism for these men. It was staying alive. Who could turn the tightest or roll out of an attack the fastest, lived. However, knowledge gained through conflict migrated to peacetime aerial demonstrations. A whole new generation of pilots with tremendous experi-

ence were coming out of the military into civilian life. Many of them still wanted to fly. The Golden Age of the barnstormers was about to begin.

Glenn Curtiss had designed a magnificent aircraft shortly before the United States entry into World War I. This was the Curtiss Jenny, the workhorse of the fledgling United States Army Air Service in the Great War. Used as a trainer, the Jenny proved to be a rugged and easy to handle aircraft. At the end of hostilities, the Army wanted to unload its surplus Jennies. Taking advantage of the growing interest in aviation, the Army offered them for sale to the general public. The Jenny became synonymous with barnstormers. The pilots returning from the war who could not keep their feet on the ground bought these aircraft up as did numerous other civilians, Charlie Carroll being one of them.

Throughout the country, aerial parades, air circuses and air shows drew crowds. The barnstormers were the kings of the sky at these events. They would take people up in their Jennies and give them a look at the world below. Wingwalkers, parachutists and other stunt fliers thrilled those who never dared leave the ground and inspired those who had.

Air shows have been a part of the airport at Latrobe ever since 1925, when Charlie Carroll and his gang of daredevils thrilled and inspired the populace of Latrobe and the surrounding environs with their acrobatic displays and air races. These were well-attended and well-publicized gatherings. However, air shows at the airport that we know today did not officially begin until 1974, the year of my birth.

The first air show was organized by the Westmoreland County Airport Authority. Leonard Bughman, chairman of the Airport Authority, and James Cavalier, airport manager, were instrumental in putting it together.

The purpose of the first show was twofold. First, the airport was backed by tax money. By providing a service to area residents and stimulating the economy with jobs and income, these same residents had a right to tour the airport and know how it functioned. The second reason for the air show was the same as when the early barnstormers hopped from town to town, and that was to give people a chance to see airplanes up close and be a witness to the advances in aviation technology. Perhaps there was a third reason–publicity for the airport.

The airport had grown considerably in the previous ten years. It was considered a sophisticated, first rate facility by many pilots who stopped to refuel. It was time all the hard work was shown off to everyone, and an air show seemed the best way to do this.

The first air show in 1974 brought together more than 15,000 area residents. The success of this event made the members of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority look more closely at the possibilities air shows could offer to the community and the airport.

The 1975 show was even bigger. Military pilots parked airplanes, and flew many of them. Household names like The Blue Angels, the Navy's Flying Demonstration Team, made their first appearance at the annual air show. Names that would become regulars at the air shows over the years included: Clancy Speal and his Pitts Special, Bob Hoover and his Mustang and later on his sleek, twin-engine Areo-Commander Shrike. All of the pilots, parachutists and aircraft thrilled crowds with their acrobatic skills, courage and maneuverability. It was and still is a place for families to gather and witness what was once thought impossible–flight.

Don Riggs was the master of ceremonies for the first seventeen air shows at the airport. His memories of these events are vivid, and Riggs waxes poetic about them. Of the first air show in 1974, he says:

> How about as nice and friendly an air show as we could possibly put together? How about honoring the aviation-pioneer OX5 Club that Charlie Carroll and friends started in 1955? How about inviting every aviation organization to participate? Let's make it a big, happy party with only a three-dollar admission and free parking. Then everybody will know about the new airport and will have had an exciting time there. And so they did. And grabbed a tiger by the tail! Today, pilots and aviation performers who meet every year at the International Council of Air Shows want to come to Latrobe. The hospitality at Latrobe has become renowned throughout this organization. The enormous crowds don't hurt either.
>
> ***—David Wilmes***

Don Riggs, first airshow emcee.
(Courtesy of Westmoreland County Airport Authority).

Damien at the Airshow: 1975

It was just past three o'clock in the afternoon. A nine-year-old boy wiped the sweat off of his brow. It was hot for late September. He had been waiting all day. He let go of his father's hand, and pushed through the crowds to the front, until it seemed as through there were mere inches between him and the runway. Half-thrilled, half-scared, he wouldn't have to wait any longer. This was the moment.

Carefully clipped from the pages of a magazine, a photograph clung to the bedroom wall, taped just above Damien's bed. A diamond of A-4F Skyhawk II's, their crisp navy bodies branded with gold, seemed less than a breath apart on the azure slice of sky. As they hung suspended in their paper rectangle, Damien thought of them as some kind of dream, unreal, disbelieving that the planes could stay so close without collision. He tried to make the diamond with the model planes he and his father had built–a shiny blue F4U Corsair, a Curtiss P-40, a Japanese Zero. He measured the distance between the wings with his fingers, but the bellies brushed against the cockpits no matter how hard he tried to keep them apart.

The magazine was worn from constant reading and re-reading. The team consisted of six men, young fighter pilots, volunteers, who practiced thousands of hours just for a chance to make that diamond. Six planes, beautiful Skyhawks, screaming from just above the treetops, all the way to 60,000 feet. Damien had always wondered how the clouds looked from up above, wondered if they were soft to the touch. He decided that the Blue Angels had to know this. One day he would know. One day he would dance in the clouds.

Damien's father touched his head, and hoisted him up onto his shoulders, just as the Blue Angels started their ascent. They flew towards the crowd, closer and closer, in absolute silence. Only after they had gone by did Damien hear the shriek of the engines. Then, they were up again, six Angels abreast in a line, curved effortlessly into a loop, trailing garlands of smoke behind to mark the path. Next, a lone plane coasted inches from the ground, then shot skyward, like a Roman candle, barreling into a spin. Suddenly, four planes locked into the diamond, their wings breathlessly threaded together, like the dance of four giant marionettes, guided by the hands of one master. Finally, all six planes stacked like cards into a triangle–the Delta. They looped together, curving like a single brush stroke, and then swooped up into a roll, a twisting drill of blue, with a funnel of smoke spurting behind, from the earth to the sky.

It was over all too quickly. Damien brushed the dust from his face as his father helped him down. As his father led him toward the autograph booth, Damien turned his head, unable to take his eyes off of the planes, off of the ground controller who saluted each pilot as he stepped out of the cockpit. He let go of his father and turned around. Damien, standing at attention, raised the edge of his hand to his forehead, paused, and brought it down again, in salute. *[Today, Damien Wissolik is a pilot in East Africa].*

Once again . . .

DON RIGGS -- "The Voice of the Westmoreland County Airshow

DON RIGGS
"The Voice of the Westmoreland County Airshow"

We are enthusiastic to have Channel Eleven's all-pro man-about-television call all the action for the seventh Westmoreland County Airshow. An accomplished pilot, Don belongs to the Aero Club of Pittsburgh, the Experimental Aircraft Association and many other aviation-related organizations. He has helped create the highly successful Westmoreland County Airshow, and has served as its announcer since 1973.

Don's career in broadcasting began in Columbus, Ohio, while he was majoring in music at Capital University. He was a disc jockey for WHKC, then a singer/announcer/puppeteer and part-time Santa Claus for WBNS-TV. He came to Pittsburgh in 1960 to co-host the popular "Daybreak" program with Marcy Lynn and Johnny Costa. It ran on KDKA-TV for seven years. So did "Safari," which Don hosted and produced as "B'wanna Don."

Presently, Don is producer and host of WPXI's early morning talk show, "Starting Today." This half hour program airs at 6:30 A.M., and features local and national guests discussing subjects of current interest to TV viewers in the tri-state area.

Before joining Channel 11, Riggs produced and hosted several programs for WQED-TV and the Public Broadcasting System. His "Close-Up" series achieved the highest audience rating of any locally-produced cultural series in Public Broadcasting in 1969. For PBS (then NET), Don produced "Pittsburgh: A Festival of Folk," which received Golden Quill and AFTRA Awards for excellence and was selected by the U.S. Information Agency for worldwide distribution.

In 1975, Channel 11 received a Freedom Foundation Award for "On Final Forever," a nostalgic look at how a B-25 bomber was laid to rest in a Washington County, Pa. cemetery. This documentary, (which Don claims is his favorite so far), also won the 1975 James Steibig Memorial Trophy from the Aviation/Space Writers Association, this organization's top national award for excellence in aviation writing.

Don and his wife, Joan, have four children. The Riggs family resides in Mt. Lebanon.

BOB CHEFFINS
Airport Manager & Airshow Coordinator

AND . . . once again the star performer nobody gets to see -- BOB CHEFFINS

In the air or on the ground at the Westmoreland County Airshow, the man behind the scenes is Bob Cheffins. Since 1976 when he became airport manager at Latrobe, Bob Cheffins has been quietly and efficiently directing the extensive daily operations at the airport, always working to develop new and better services. And when it comes to putting together an exciting and memorable annual Airshow, Bob Cheffins is the star! We said it before and we'll say it again with Bob behind the controls the shows keep getting better each year.

This page was a favorite in several airshow booklets. *(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority).*

TOP: 1989 Air Show. Volunteers and Latrobe Hospital Aid Society members pose with *Old Blue*, the Stinson Reliant used that year to commemorate the air mail pick-up. LEFT CENTER: ca. mid-1970s. Jim Cavalier, airport manager, (top row, left) poses with Lenny Bughman and the Airshow Hospital Aid Society.
RIGHT CENTER: 1992 airshow. Congressman John Murtha (left) and Bruno Ferrari. Murtha is instrumental in bringing military pilots and aircraft to the airshows. BOTTOM LEFT: 1998 airshow. The organizers *(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority).*

An airshow crowd gravitates to a military transport. *(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority).*

When Don Riggs announces an airshow, everybody looks up. *(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Authority).*

TOP: The late Dan Speal of New Alexandria, Pennsylvania. BOTTOM: Dan's son Clarence ("Clancy"). Both father and son were renowned and beloved stunt pilots at the airshow. They were among the best in their profession. To the sorrow of all who knew him and watched him perform, forty-three-year-old Clancy was killed in a crash at the Pittsburgh Regatta when his Pitts Special suffered structural failure. *(Courtesy of the Westmoreland County Airport Authority).*

In Their Own Words...

James Carroll

I was in high school when Dad opened the airport at the Kerr farm. I drove the truck back from Scottdale with lumber and stuff to build hangars. I was brought up in airplanes. I remember I went over to Uniontown one time with Dad and some men to see a race at the speedway. Dad liked to go there because he had a chance to look over the race cars. He was a real mechanic. A little white plane came in and landed in the infield and Dad was all eyes. That did it for Dad. Then he got hold of someone in Pittsburgh to get a surplus Jenny. He bought one, but had to go to New York to get it. It was 1919, and he and Torrance Overholt flew it back. They got as far as New Jersey when the engine developed magneto problems. They landed in a field and ran into a fence. Dad had to send back to Scottdale to get a truck to haul the plane back. Torrance was a World War I pilot, and he took that plane up for stunts over Scottdale. He and Dad started a flying club there.

Truth is, Dad never had any lessons, except a couple from Torrance. He kept his plane out a Felger's farm in Scottdale. One day, Dad got the motor going and was taxiing around Felger's big field. A big wind came and picked him up. Before he knew it, he was flying. Oh, he didn't intend to fly that day!

I was ten when I had my first flight. There was a fair down near Scottdale. Overholt took me up. It was a World War I plane. I did it just to fly. When I got my license, I could take up a plane from Dad's field anytime I wanted to, as long as I put in gas. One day a guy said to me, "I'd like to go over to Uniontown to see my brother. Could you fly me over in the plane that you're allowed to use out there?"

I was working at an ice cream store in Latrobe. I was the manager, so I could take off whenever I wanted. I told the guy, "How about tomorrow?"

Next day, we took off and we went over to Uniontown, and the field over there was right along the mountains. When we came in to land, I said "What the hell is going on here?!"

The wind was like a hurricane. We didn't have that kind of wind in Latrobe, even though it was the same mountain. We got down and onto the long runway and I was pretty much going sideways because of the wind. I remembered my early training about keeping your rudder turned so that your tail wouldn't be blown backwards. I had it under control. I had the left wing down because I was running along opposite the mountain, and we started to drift. I kept the power on. We were headed down the runway and all of a sudden the left wing came up and the left wheels underneath the fuselage were on the ground. Then the left wheel came off the ground, I realized it was because the plane was tilted. So I told Kenny to jump out and grab a hold of the end of that wing, but don't let us get blown away. So he jumped out and ran out and grabbed a hold of the wing before it was lifted off the ground. He held on up to the hangar. We cut up to the hangar and the guy there said, "Who the Hell are you and what are you doing landing in the crosswind? Did you see our new runway?!"

I said, "I didn't see a new runway. I used to come in right by the mountain."

He said, "Oh, we have a new runway. Why didn't you use it."

I said, "How come Latrobe never got a notice that you had a new runway?"

He shut up real quick because he was in violation for running an operation like that and not telling other airport operators. He realized right away that he was in trouble.

Kenny called his brother, but his brother wasn't home, so we got in the plane, cranked it up and went out over the new "runway." All it was was a big, grassy field.

Marcia Nair
Latrobe, Pennsylvania

Charlie Carroll was my father's brother. Dad always took us out to the airport on Sundays. Charlie was always so busy. Even his daughter Dorothy said I hardly ever saw him, he was so busy with the airport.

I was born in Scottdale. For a while we lived in Florida. Dad couldn't find enough work and my brother developed asthma and we moved back to this area and settled in Greensburg. Then we started going back to the airport.

Once, in the summer time, Charlie took me up in an open-cockpit airplane. I don't know if it was a Jenny, but

I'm thinking it was. It was 1928, when I was about eight. I was scared, but now when I think of that airplane I'm more frightened! Children rarely know fear. We flew around the landing field. I'm surprised my mom and dad let me do it. At that time, flying was a thing for men. Women rarely had a part in it. Although, I never felt left out, I think I just accepted the fact that it was something for the boys.

Thomas E. Smith
Greensburg, PA

In the 1930s, when I was a young boy in the village of Carbon, "Happy" O'Bryan used to fly over Greensburg and the surrounding area on Sunday afternoons, playing music over a loudspeaker on his plane an announcing airplane rides and other events. He played "Deep Purple" by Gene Austin.

Also in the 1930s, there was airmail pick-up at the Carbon airstrip located on the hill that is now between Greensburg Central Catholic High School and St. Paul's Church.

Joe Boerio
Latrobe, PA

In the early 1920s, I was in grade school at Loyalhanna School, Derry Township. We heard that there was a plane landing in McChesneytown. I was too late to see the plane, but it landed on a large, open field a little beyond Latrobe's Sylvan Avenue out toward McChesneytown and between East Main and Walnut Streets. Later on this became a football field for independent football.

In the middle twenties, there was a landing field at what was referred to as Toner Farm. That would be the area within the loop of the Loyalhanna Creek as it winds from First Bridge (Lymer Street at Latrobe Brewery) to Second Bridge.

Eleanor Johnson Kenny
Crabtree, PA

In the Fall of 1932, Oscar D. Johnson was the night watchman at J.D. Hill Airport. During the Summer of 1933, Oscar had a stand located at the corner of Route 30 and 981 on airport property. He sold ground chicken sandwiches with gravy and lots of caramel corn. Otto Hoover parachuted every Sunday, and the kids held signs on Route 30 east and west advertising it. Lots of cars filled with families stopped to watch it. The signs read "Parachute Jump in One Hour;" Parachute Jump in One-Half Hour;" "Parachute Jump in Fifteen Minutes."

Joseph D. Assini
Greensburg, PA

I was a youngster fourteen years old in 1939, before World War II began. The New Alexandria Airport used to be one-mile out off old Route 22 (William Penn Highway) from New Alex, where I lived.

I remember pushing planes out of the hangar and gassing them up to be flown by the pilots. My friend, Jim Wandless, and I used to do all this work for one dollar a day, mostly because we liked the planes.

We liked Sundays the best because that is when Otto Hoover used to parachute. Jim and I would hold up signs on Old Route 22 that would say "Parachute Jump in Fifteen Minutes," but it would usually take him an hour to get ready.

Before he went up, Otto would wait for fifty or sixty people to gather. Then he would mount a step ladder and make a speech. "I can spell my name the same way backwards and forwards. O-T-T-O. If this chute doesn't open, I will take it back and get a new one!"

He would then ask for a donation from the people. He kept an eye on me and Jim while we collected the change. Otto told us to shake our heads "yes" if we got twenty-five cents from anyone. Then he would say, "Thank you!" If someone gave only ten or fifteen cents Otto would say, "Much obliged." We usually collected about twenty dollars. We got paid twenty-five cents.

One day, while we were at the gas station where the planes got gas, the owner came out and told us, "Hey, the Japanese just bombed Pearl Harbor!" We had never heard of the place.

Robert Fisher
Greensburg, PA
(Air Traffic Controller,
Pittsburgh-Greensburg Airport)

I was the first air traffic controller in Greensburg in 1929. There were three of us when it opened, there were so many planes. They only let us out there one at a time for two hours at a time. Then, they would take us in for a rest.

They gave us each a pole. It was fairly long, with two great-big flags on it, red and white. The planes would be flying around up there. If the runway wasn't clear, we'd hold up a red flag. They listened! If everything was clear, we'd hold up a white. Then we'd get down out of the way, because they'd come right in. Then things died down after about two weeks, and the pilots could take care of themselves. Of course, there was no night flying there at the time.

When it got slack, they'd give us a ride in a Ford Tri-Motor. They'd load all the airport workers in that plane. That was my first flight. Later, I went up in the Taylorcrafts and the Wacos.

"Happy" O'Bryan would go up an stunt. One day he forgot to take one of the seats out of a Waco, and when he turned upside down, the seat fell out! I found it, and took it up to him. "Thanks," he said. I knew I lost it somewhere."

Mansel Negley
Greensburg, PA

My first experience with an airplane was when word got out that there was going to be an airplane coming into Salzburg Extension. There was a little field in there. The pilot was going to haul passengers. Children rode for free. I went down with my dad, my aunt, and my sister. It was just a little biplane and it was only a dollar or two for each passenger, and they gave you a pretty good ride. I really loved the experience. If an airplane flew over any of the towns, people would get so excited and come running out of their houses to see the plane.

Otto Hoover would parachute jump at all the little airports. He sometimes had a monkey that would make the jumps with him.

A guy named Cecil E. Davis had an American Eagle biplane that he finally took over to the Latrobe Airport. Davis bought a little Aeronca. They were dangerous airplanes. They had very little lift, and Davis and the airport mechanic and Davis' student, Andy Sivak, from Westmoreland Homesteads, went up in that plane on a really humid day. About five or six miles from the airport, the plane wasn't climbing at all. He couldn't get more than about 1,000 feet, and instead of nosing it down to get a little speed, like we were all taught to do later, he hit the rudder pedal to make a turn, went into a power spin, and hit the ground nose-first. They both got killed. They were both only twenty-seven.

I was flying one day, and a similar thing happened. I had a nurse in my plane, and I took her for a ride, and I was making my final approach at the Leechburg Airport. The runway was across the river. There was also a steel mill with the open hearths. We always got updrafts there, but never any downdrafts. While I was leveling out, the airplane got hit by a downdraft and just settled. So, I opened the throttle and nosed-down. About twenty feet from the ground, I pulled up, and went in for a landing.

The nurse laughed. "Boy-O-Boy," she said. "What you did out there. Do you do that often?"

I said, "Oh, Yeah. I do that occasionally just to give someone a thrill."

"Boy, that was really good. I enjoyed that! Next time we go for a ride, I want you to do that again"

The poor girl! She didn't know that that was my only method of survival. Had I not learned how to do that, both of us would have been dead!

I learned to fly around 1939. I fell in love with a girl, and asked her to marry me. She dumped me, instead. I never found out why. Anyway, I got lonesome and started to think about flying. On August 9, 1939, I took my first lesson at Latrobe Airport from George Allen. George was the chauffeur for the Rogers family. Eventually, he would teach young Fred Rogers to fly. George and I got along pretty well. As a matter of fact, I started landing and taking off in my first hour of instruction. Charlie Carroll gave me a little instruction, too. As a matter of fact, Charlie was the last one to give me flight instruction. That was December 25, 1939. After that, I went over to Leechburg Airport an soloed from there.

I managed to save a little money to buy a used Piper Cub E-240, license number 15312. That was in 1940. I soloed on that. I liked that little plane. I made a forced landing in it once, when I went back to visit the guys at the Latrobe Airport. That plane just had a skid on the tail, and I had to always land it in the sod. It was like a pig-on-ice on any other kind of surface.

I enjoyed years of flying. But I finally gave it up. The actor, Jimmy Stewart, had a plane just like mine. He wrote to me once and said, "I, like you, have given up flying. I miss it, and I know you do, too."

One time I taught a ten-year-old kid to fly. Of course, that wasn't to be known then, but now it's too late to do anything about it.

Mrs. Norman J. Micher
Belle Vernon, PA

My husband Bernard worked for Mr. Carroll at the Latrobe Airport. He swept out the hangar, cut grass, painted all the fence posts around the airport, and set the mail bag for pick-up by the Stinson Reliant.

One time, around 1945, there was a storm pouring rain, thunder and lightning and a two-engined airliner

made a landing. The actress Zazu Pitts got off the plane!

Then a P-47 Thunderbolt fighter plane landed, and when he came to the intersection of the runways the pilot thought he was at the end. He slammed on the brakes and the plane flipped over and caught fire. The rain put out the fire, and the pilot was not hurt.

Bob Downs
Murrysville, PA

In 1945 through 1948 I pedaled my bicycle the three miles from my home in Latrobe to the airport where airport manager Charlie Carroll allowed me to be around the airplanes. He employed me as a mechanic and go-fer. I worked full time in summer and part time in the spring and fall while I was in high school. I made thirty cents an hour for two years, then fifty cents!

Paul Smart was the mechanic and was assisted by Tom Rankin. I washed down the engines while they did repairs. I held the J-3 cowling, while they riveted patches on the incessant cracks. I rode the mower that they pulled with an old Ford dump truck. Gasoline fuel was scarce, so they resorted to running the truck on dry-cleaning fluid. After several days, I developed severe nausea and headaches and left one day at noon, pedaling my way home. I painted the office and sold airplane rides. I was happy because I was around planes.

Airplane tail wheels wore down and had to be replaced. Tom discovered that we could roll the wheel on the hangar floor where the usual taper on the worn tire caused the wheel to roll in large circles. The game was to see how long the wheel would roll before it collided with a wheel of a hangared airplane. One day Tom took aim on a barrel and rolled the wheel with a lot of force and cried out, "Bowling!" The wheel hit the barrel and bounced far into the air. It descended through the wing of Charlie's prized Waco. Tom had a cloth patch on the hole and was almost ready to put the color coat on when Charlie walked up and asked, "What happened, Tom?"

Then there was the day Tom decided to get rid of the old paint thinner and other flammable materials that had accumulated. We put the material into a fifty-five-gallon drum located some distance behind the hangar. Then Tom and I took turns flipping big kitchen matches at the barrel from what we thought was a safe distance. One of us finally flipped a match onto the rim of the barrel and it dropped inside. You should have seen the genie that was unleashed! A huge ball of rolling black smoke interlaced with orange flame when up into the sky as we ran away. Meanwhile, Charlie was eating his lunch a short distance away in his home in Lawson Heights. He happened to glance out his kitchen window. All he could see was the hangar and the ball of fire. He made the trip to the airport in record time. He ran up and asked, "What the Hell are you doing, Tom?"

We used to burn the grass off the airport periodically. Spreading a line of gasoline, we torched it and controlled the fire line by beating the fire with brooms. We were covered with soot at the end of the day. Soon, I found out that the best way to clean up was to stop at Murphy's Hole in the Loyalhanna Creek. I carried soap, and was able to get home without being yelled at for getting the bathtub dirty. But the farmer across the road from the airport, where Big Lots is now, yelled at Charlie because the smoke from the fires made his milk go bad.

We didn't have an electric pump for fuel. We turned a crank connected to a gear that engaged and lifted a rack. This pumped the fuel up into the hose. A large, clock-like dial with a big pointer indicated how much fuel had been pumped. Only five gallons could be pumped before it had to be reset. This wasn't so bad when refueling a Cub or and Aeronca or a T-Craft. It wasn't my lucky day when three, old, dirty yellow Navy N3N biplanes with their comparatively huge, empty tanks landed for fuel.

There was an annex attached to the back of the hangar. At one end was the shop-parts room. At the other end was a classroom. Adjacent to the classroom was the rest room, the ceiling of which contained a 200-gallon rain-storage tank. This was the only water for the field. It definitely was not drinkable, even on the hottest day. It was used for toilets and airplane washing. The furnace room was in a sunken center section of the building. Above the furnace room was a small, one-room apartment with a bed and coal-burning stove used for cooking and heating. Bill (I don't remember his last name) lived there. He was an airport guard of a sort. He made his rounds walking with crutches. He was friendly to all persons, and the airport dog, "Cubby," a Collie, was his friend.

One day, "Cubby" learned a valuable lesson. Paul Smart transferred the air mail from the Latrobe Post Office to the airmail pick-up site. Usually his wife did the driving, and Paul set up the poles. "Cubby" was very protective of the mail bags. He ran circles around them, and didn't let anyone come near. Finally, "Cubby" got in the way of a bag that was being picked up and got picked up with it, or was thrown by it. He survived, but for several weeks hobbled around. He also kept his distance from the bags after that.

Once there was a severe storm at Allegheny County Airport. Three airplanes were diverted to Latrobe. The Stinson Reliant air mail pick-up plane landed first. It was

the most vulnerable to weather. A military Douglas C-47 loaded with troops was next. Then a Republic P-47 made its run. As it passed over the end of the runway, the storm hit and the plane disappeared from sight. I will always remember seeing the fighter's red wing-tip light just before it disappeared. A short time later, there was a flash and a noise where the airplane should have been. People ran toward the flash and noise, some of them carrying fire extinguishers. A few of the more level-headed drove to the site in cars or the old Ford truck. It was a scene from a Marx Brothers movie! The pilot thought he had reached the end of the runway and spiked the brakes, putting the plane on its nose. He emerged unscathed. What excitement for a high school kid!

Tom and Paul were practical jokers. One of their tricks was to wait until I was jockeying a plane (they were all fabric covered) into position in the hangar. One of them would sneak up behind me and rip a sheet of newspaper. Oh! The sinking feeling as I thought I had ripped a hole in the airplane!

One day, while I was stocking parts into the bins, Paul's wife drove up to the door with the mail sack. Paul proceeded to tell her about a B-25 bomber that flew into the side of the Empire State Building. I was rolling in the aisle as Paul embellished his story. A short time later, I found out that this was not one of his jokes. It really did happen!

One day the manager of the New Alexandria airport flew in to talk to Charlie. The conversation turned to birds in the ceiling of the hangar at New Alex. Charlie said that he didn't have a problem with that at Latrobe; he just shot them. That sounded like a good idea to the New Alex manager. A few weeks later, he came back and unhappily described to Charlie the leaks in his hangar roof. It turned out that his hangar had a thin, metal roof, while Charlie's was made of thick wood and covered with roof paper.

To me, at that time, any pilot was a super-special person; they could fly. A flight instructor was next to God. One of Charlie's instructors was George Allen. I liked George; he talked flying with me. Some forty-five years later, I found out that George was the first black commercial pilot in Pennsylvania. He was still flying in the Toledo area, well into his eighties. Kenny Walters was another instructor. Kenny was spit and polish. He wore riding pants, leather leggings, and he had a thin mustache, must like Smilin' Jack in the comic strips. Kenny's brother Skip took for an occasional ride in his two-cylinder, house-trim green Aeronca.

I had heard about Lou Strickler. The guys told me he did all kinds of things with an airplane, like how he used to go out to Keystone Lake and drag the wheels of his airplane in the water, to impress his girl or somebody, or how he dropped a roll of toilet paper from his plane. It would drop like a streamer, and Lou would cut through the streamer as many times as he could before the roll hit the ground. One day, a glistening, brand-new Beech Stagger Wing landed, and out climbed Lou Strickler himself. He was ferrying the plane through for somebody from the factory, and he stopped by to visit the guys. The next morning he moved this beautiful plane out, started it up, and moved down the runway for his usual takeoff roll. He never lifted the tail. He just did a three-point rise, and immediately did a steep, climbing turn. He had a lot of power in that plane. I never saw a plane take off like that. It impressed the heck out of me!

Latrobe used to have a non-precision instrument approach radio on field for instrument landings in bad weather. It was decommissioned and another station on the mountain near Seven Springs was assigned the same 108.2 frequency. A pilot without the latest charts, thinking he was clear of the mountains, let down toward the station and was killed.

One time the state, or somebody, wanted to provide an emergency lighting system for the airport. Charlie was the recipient of four dozen six-volt, batter-operated lanterns like the trouble lights used on highways. We were to put them on cars or trucks. If someone had to make a night landing, we would drive the vehicles out to the side of the runway and provide some sort of landing light. I'm not sure whether or not they could even be seen from the air. I'm not even sure if they ever got used. I just remember storing them, and Charlie shaking his head and saying, "I don't know what the Hell we're going to do with those!"

The hangar at Latrobe held a great number of aircraft because of the way the "tail-draggers" were stacked. The planes were pushed nose-first into the hangar. Then the tails were lifted, using a handle on the fuselage near the tail. At a certain height, the planes became nose-heavy, so we used a pole with a hook on the end. This helped control the easing down of the nose. The horizontal prop was eased into a sort of low sawhorse with padded slots that took the prop. By standing the planes almost on their noses, we could store many planes. We always hoped the guy in the back of the hangar didn't want to use his plane!

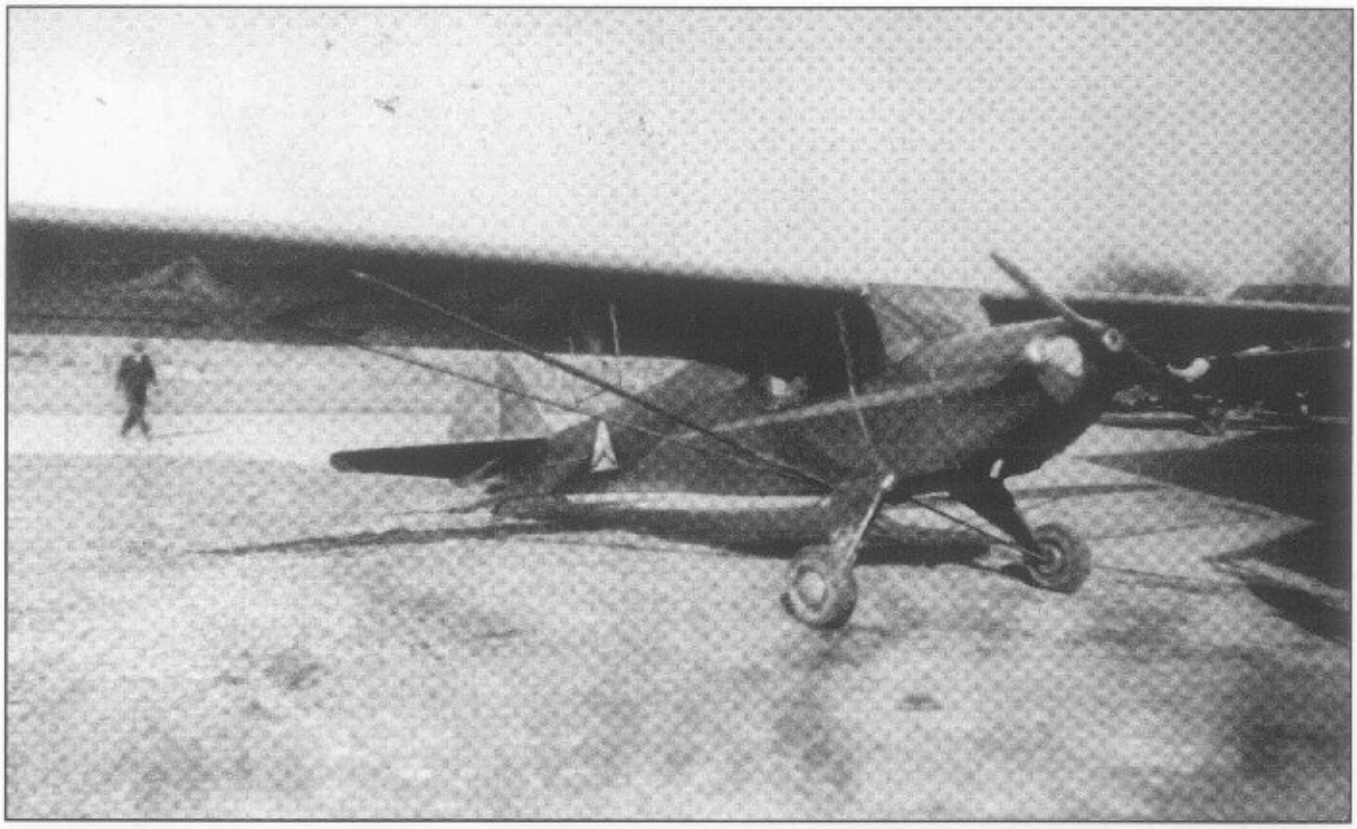
The old bike of mine saw a lot of miles on the road and on the grass at the airport. I carried several "monkey links" to repair the frequent chain breakage. I also kept a spare front axle at the house. The half-moons in the Morrow coaster brake also were subject to frequent breakage, so I kept a spare set at the house.

In those days, I dreamed of flying. I couldn't afford

ABOVE: "Cubby," Charlie Carroll's collie dog and airport mascot. Cubby knew the times when the pick-up pilots were due over the field. He considered himself to be "Protector of the Mailbags." *(Courtesy of the Saint Vincent Archabbey Archives).*

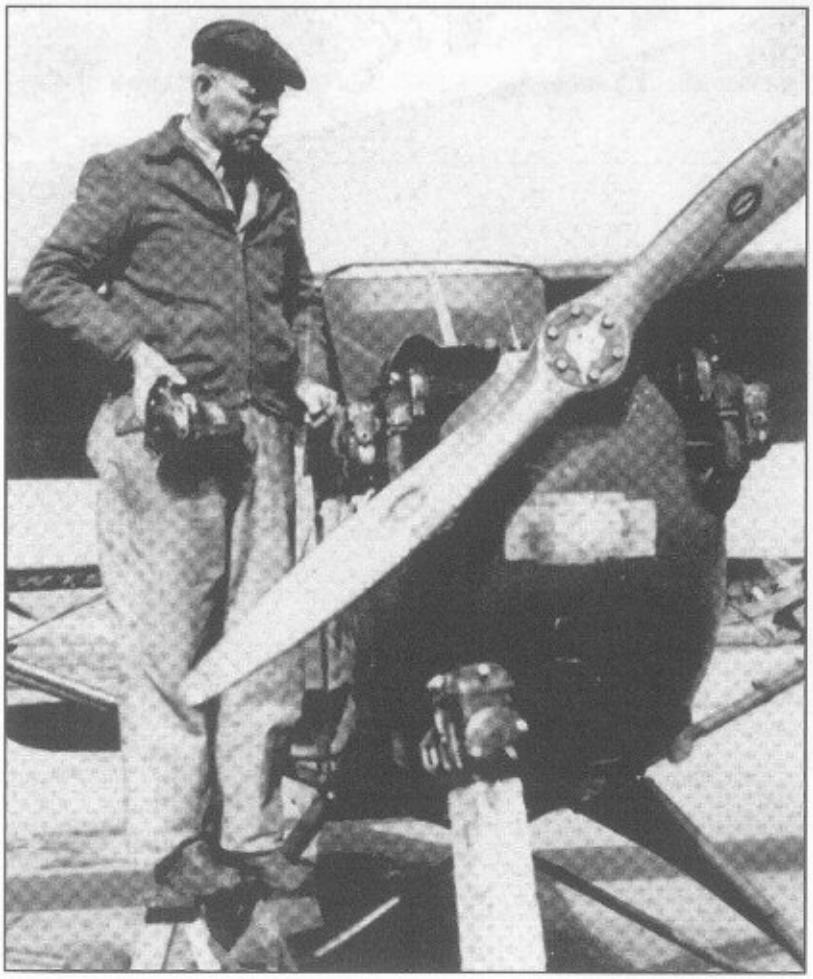
LEFT: Bob Downs, ca. 1945 at the Latrobe Airport. *(Courtesy of the Micher family).*

BELOW: Pilot Bob Downs today, posing with his Piper aircraft at the landing strip in Bouquet. *(Courtesy of Bob Downs).*



ABOVE: O.C. Harrold's Taylorcraft at the Latrobe Airport, 1947. Harrold developed the dangerous habit of smoking cigars while in flight. *(Courtesy of Bob Downs).*

BELOW: Skip Walters, brother of Kenny Walters, flight instructor at Latrobe Airport, 1947. Skip was the proud owner of a two-cylinder, bright-green Aeronca K. *(Courtesy of Bob Downs).*



ABOVE: 1947. The Consolidated BT-14 Valiant that made a forced landing on the Mellon family's Rolling Rock estate. The staff at the Latrobe Airport built a cradle into the bed of the airport's 1929 Ford dump truck, obtained the necessary permits, then towed the damaged plane back to the airport where it was repaired. *(Courtesy of Bob Downs).*

LEFT: Paul Smart, mechanic at Latrobe Airport in the 1940s, gasses up a plane. Paul helped Charlie to handle the mail for the pick-ups, then handed the job over to his wife, Josephine. *(Courtesy of Josephine Smart).*

it. Later, I received a degree in mechanical engineering from Carnegie-Mellon and became a mechanical design engineer (now retired), a pilot, and an airplane owner. Today, I keep my small plane at Arnold Palmer Regional Airport. Many years ago I became a flight and ground instructor. The FAA named me Flight Instructor of the Year 1999 for the Allegheny Flight Standards Office. It all began for me at the Latrobe Airport!

Don Riggs
Pittsburgh, PA

John Trunk Jr. is an important name in the history of OX5, simply because he was the Pennsylvania president, and in 1960, Channel 2 had committed Paul Long to go to Clarion and emcee a banquet that John Trunk had put together honoring bold airmail pilots, government airmail pilots, like Terry Smith and Jack Knight, people like that who were still alive. He felt that we should honor them simply because Clarion, Pennsylvania was an airmail stop, and emergency field for an airmail, and it was the base for a big search for one of the airmail planes that went down in the 1920s, so Johnny had always been an airmail fan he was an aviation nut, and a wild man, too, by the way. The things those guys did to airplanes in those days! He's the guy who provided the motivation to go down to Scottdale and resurrect Elder's old OX5 engine.

Paul Long couldn't make it, so the station said, "Riggs, would you go?"

And I said, "Yeah." I'm the short man on the totem pole. I was just a new guy in those days, and so I called Trunk, and Trunk said, "Okay, I want you to do the banquet, if Paul can't do it, you'll do it fine, but, caveat, I want you to come up with your wife and stay a day and a night, and the next day we'll do the banquet."

And I said, "Oh, okay." And I did. And we went up, and he put me in the breakfast nook, and he filled me with the aviation history of Clarion county for a whole day, and then he filled me the next day with the exploits and the achievements of the people, one by one, right down the list: "This guy invented the system where you buzz the field and turned on the lights; this guy invented the first weather information that you could see, like three lights on the hangar. One white light meant, so-so. Red light meant the weather was terrible. Green light meant go ahead."

Then he told me the story of an airmail pilot. He parks his plane and gets into a little Thomas Morse Scout, spins the prop, and starts off. But there's no wings on the plane. It was just a fuselage. Then he drives the thing down to the barbershop in Clarion. Underneath the doormat is a key. He opens the door, goes in, gets in the barber's chair and goes to sleep. That was standard procedure in Clarion. Can you see that? That old fuselage taxiing down the main street in Clarion! God! Those guys! They were a bunch.

Anyway, that's the beginning of my involvement with OX5. Then, in 1963, I made a movie called *The Seat of Your Pants.* It featured OX5ers, old-timers flying antique airplanes, and kids pulling their own homebuilts. And it was a good little film, honoring Clarion, the first municipally owned airport in America.

Juny Trunk died in 1966, hauling a staff photographer in the back seat of a J-3. The photographer had a speed graphic camera.Juny took off, and the engine coughed or something, and the photographer leaned forward with the camera, and forced the stick forward. The plane crashed. The photographer walked away from it for a minute, but he died about two hours later from internal injuries. That's what killed my friend John Trunk.

My association with Latrobe began in 1960s. I knew Jim Cavalier. I went out and shot some film of Jim and Dave Fox in their homebuilt airplane. That's why Cavalier knew to call me when they were ready to do an airshow, because I had done other air shows in the area. The first really modern one at Latrobe was in 1974.

We had a reunion of the OX5 Club in Latrobe in 1965. Jim Fisher of the Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics said, "I'll tell you what, I think it's worth it to honor these guys, we'll bring Cole Palen and his old World War I group down to Latrobe from his place in Rhinebeck, New York. We'll fly these for the old-timers and the World War I pilots." And he did.

Charlie Carroll was there. The guys just loved Charlie, and Charlie's sons were there. It was more a party for Charlie than it was a party hosted by Charlie, as he had done ten years previously, at the founding.

The Mellon family did a lot for the airport in Latrobe. Alan Scaife and Prosser and R.K. One day, R.K. Mellon and Lenny Bughman were out on the field when a jet landed. The pilot had to burn rubber to get the plane stopped because the runway was so short.

R.K. said to Bughman, "Is that normal?"

And Bughman said, "No sir, that's not! But he had to do that to get the airplane stopped, the runway's so short."

And R. Kay said, "Well, that's dangerous! Can we extend that?

Bughman answered, "Not unless you tunnel under Rt. 981!"

R.K. said, "Give me some figures. look into what we have to do to make a longer runway, to make it safer."

That's how a lot of the airport expansion started in the early 1970s.

Don Kane
Greensburg, PA

I graduated from high school, got a job at Sears and Roebuck, and like any young kid I was looking for something to do. Students from Greensburg going out to Saint Vincent would hitchhike from in front of the YMCA. I used to come out to Saint Vincent a lot, and the airport was right near there. During World War II, we used to build a lot of models and things, so I got interested in flying. I started taking lessons.

At the time, it was expensive; ten dollars an hour for dual, and probably seven-fifty if you went solo. I never told my folks I was taking flying lessons. I was the last of six, so you had to be careful what you said. You'd have not only your mom and dad on your back, but also five siblings older than you.

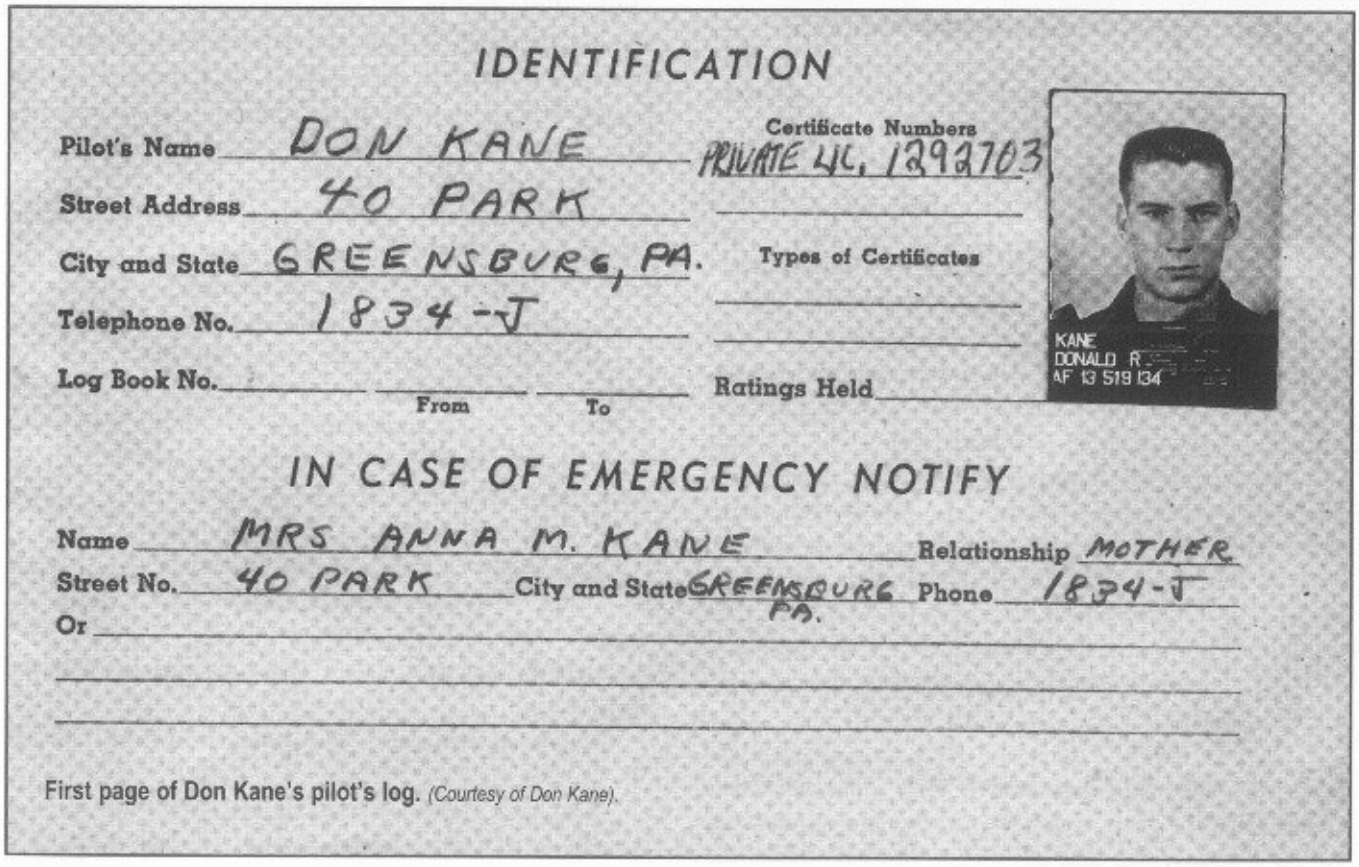
I learned to fly in a J-3 Cub. My instructor was Babe Krinock. It had no radio, no starter, and you propped it by hand. Sometimes those planes would not start, then suddenly kick in. A lot of pilots lost a digit or worse when that happened. The plane had no lights, no electrical system, no fuel gauge, and weighed only six hundred pounds. I had my first lesson in an hour on February 11, 1954, and I soloed on May 10, 1954. The first time you see that stick, and the instructor is not in the plane with you. . .wow!

The day I soloed, we were landing the opposite way, which I never did. That's upsetting to find something different. I came in and touched down. The J-3 was a tailwheel airplane. It was tricky to land. I made a heck of a big bounce. I decided to salvage the landing. I pushed the power in. Babe was standing off the runway, watching. This time I paid more attention to what I was doing, and the landing was good. Nowadays, I think they have a tradition where they take the shirt that you're wearing, put the date on it, cut a patch out, put it in the office or wherever took your lessons. It wasn't anything like that in those days. I didn't take classes. It was just me and Babe.

Gene McDonald
Latrobe, Pennsylvania

I was a boy when they had the J. D. Hill Airport at Latrobe. They'd have parachute jumps and so forth. Charlie Carroll leased the land from the Kerr family.

The WPA, during the Great Depression did a major



IDENTIFICATION

Pilot's Name DON KANE
Certificate Numbers PRIVATE 4C, 1292703
Street Address 40 PARK
City and State GREENSBURG, PA.
Types of Certificates
Telephone No. 1834-J
Log Book No. From To
Ratings Held

KANE DONALD R AF 13 519 134

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY NOTIFY

Name MRS ANNA M. KANE Relationship MOTHER
Street No. 40 PARK City and State GREENSBURG PA. Phone 1834-J
Or

First page of Don Kane's pilot's log. *(Courtesy of Don Kane).*

project with Latrobe and Charlie Carroll to improve the airport. They built a double-cross runway. They also built the main north hanger out of concrete block. Prior to that it was just a small building where they housed planes and offices. In 1939, the air mail pick-up made the airport doubly famous.

My involvement with the airport started in the early 1950s. Jim Underwood, an industrialist from Latrobe, was very interested in getting the county airport located here. Back in 1935, Latrobe made an agreement with the Kerr family that they could buy the Kerr property for $1.00 with the proviso that, at the end of fifteen years, the land could be purchased for about $22, 500.00.

There was a gentleman named Clinton Burns, an heir of the Kerrs, and Underwood worked through him. Underwood convinced Latrobe Borough council to buy the site of the airport. That was a major feat. It might sound that it was a little selfish on his part, but really, he was from the generation interested in the growth of Latrobe. He saw a real growth possibility in that little twenty-three acre one-man operation.

I came out of law school in 1949. In 1951, I became associated with Attorney John Lightcap, who was associated with Latrobe Borough. Underwood had contacted the Westmoreland County Commissioners and the Mellon family, especially Alan Scaife.

Underwood's team negotiated with the commissioners. He told them that Latrobe would contribute to the effort if the county would use the airport as the county airport. At the time, the county was looking over in the New Kensington area as a possible site.

Underwood was a good leader and a good salesperson, so the county accepted, and the borough handed over the airport site to Westmoreland County. Then, Underwood, Scaife, Bruno Ferrari and others suggested that an airport authority be formed under the provisions of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Authorities Act so that the commissioners wouldn't have to worry about it on a day-to-day basis. They formed the Tri-City Airport Authority consisting of Latrobe, Greensburg and Jeannette and five members. They made a gentleman's agreement that at least the majority of the members had to come from the Greensburg, Latrobe, Ligonier. That made it easier to get a quorum. Later the name was changed to the Westmoreland County Airport Authority.

I got a call one morning from Jim Underwood. "Gene," he said, "how would you like to be the solicitor for the airport authority?"

I said, "What airport authority?"

He said, "The Tri-City Municipal Airport Authority."

I said, "I'm interested."

I didn't know the meaning of navigation or airports, but I said I'd do it. That was in 1951, and I'm still with it after fifty years!

We got engineers to lay out a plan. Our earliest engineers were predecessors to the now-international firm of Michael Baker. They came out, took a look, and gave us a quote on doing a master plan. I traveled to Washington with the engineer and learned the ropes on Capitol Hill and the Civil Aeronautics Board, the predecessor of the Federal Aviation Administration.

We were trying to find out how to bring in commercial aviation. We learned early on that that was going to be a most difficult thing to do. Underwood flew us to places like Jamestown, New York, and Philadelphia, and Richmond, Virginia, where there would be hearings of different types and you could make applications with the CAB. We worked to get funding for improvements. We worked on getting commercial service. We're still working on that.

We got to be well known in Congress, in the different transportation departments, and by the FAA. We learned the avenues of fund raising.

Our first major project was to eliminate the those old WPA runways, and put in totally new ones. To do that we had to acquire more land. We called that Project Number One, but we still didn't know where we were going to get the money. We knew that there was money available from the federal government for grants of fifty-percent of the cost of land acquisition. We needed a master plan and survey showing where the runway was, where it was to be, and how much land we needed. We needed land to construct the runway, supporting facilities, and navigation needles. In addition to land, we needed lighting.

When we started, Mr. Mellon was influential in getting help from the state. State authorities made a very substantial grant to the airport authority to acquire the land and the navigation easements for that first major project. We made a proposal and they accepted it. We condemned parts of farms, and this without money in the bank! I wouldn't recommend that today. At the time I believed that just with the offer of a grant, the money would be there when we needed it.

Usually, we negotiated successfully with the farmers, and never had a court trial. My theory was to figure what land was going to be worth five to ten years down the road and pay that amount. I said to the authority, "If we can acquire any piece of land that we need within the price or less than what we prospectively think it will be worth ten to fifteen years from now, do it. Don't spend it on litigation fees, do it. In the long run, we'll be ahead."

They accepted my theory. We offered reasonable prices, and we got all that we needed to build the runway,

and then we negotiated and got lights for the runway.

We discovered that a 3,600-foot runway wasn't going to be enough. We didn't have enough room on the south end of it, and we needed those navigation easements. Then we designed an overrun, which meant that heavier aircraft could come in and land on the regular runway, and they'd have 800 feet more of safety area. The overrun extended the runway to 4,400.

Bruno Ferrari was very active in the construction business, and he wanted every project we had, but we had to competitively bid it. He bid, and he got the work. It was years before anybody would beat him on a price. Why? Well, he just took a loss in order to get that work. He was interested in the welfare of the project.

We had our application into the Pennsylvania Bureau of Aviation and the FAA. Bruno went ahead and started construction, but the authority said to him, "We don't have the money to pay you. We need to get the money."

"That's all right. I'll take a note!"

We signed off on a note, would you believe!

Then we changed engineers from Baker to Simpson. We kept filing for project after project. By this time the county commissioners knew what we had gotten into. We completed the first land-acquisition project, and we didn't have to ask the county commissioners for any money at all.

Gene McDonald. (Courtesy of Westmoreland County Airport Authority).

Alan Scaife suddenly died around 1958.When we opened the Tri-City Municipal Airport in October 1958, his daughter Cordelia cut the ribbon in his honor. The county commissioners appointed a man by the name of Leonard Bughman in his place. He was very close to Mr. Mellon. He was also a famous World War II pilot, and prisoner of war. At the time he was working for Gulf Oil in Pittsburgh. Lenny became an active advocate for the airport. This was also the time of Congressman John Dent's tenure in Harrisburg. He eventually became a U.S. Congressman. Through his seniority he became very active in helping the airport get the funds it needed.

It became apparent that the way we had built the runway restricted us. We couldn't extend it any more than we had without going across Route 981, which would have meant a major change in the location of the highway.

So, we had the engineers design the runway that we now have, the long runway called "523." We needed it if we wanted to be a commercial reliever airport. That meant that, under the definitions of the FAA, you had to have to have specific facilities that would accept large plans, or even if you wanted to apply for more money. So, with the funds that we had, and again, with the help of contributions from others, the authority authorized the engineers to design the location of a runway that would give us maximum prevailing-wind coverage. We got that done with the help of Mr. Mellon and others in Pennsylvania. Mr. Mellon even had Bughman get estimates of what it would cost to move Rt. 981 or tunnel it underneath the runway!

So now we're on land acquisition Project Number Two. By this time, instead of fifty percent grant money from the federal government for land acquisition and navigation easements, federal funding had risen to the point where it was on the basis of ninety percent and ten percent. That meant we had to come up with only ten percent of the cost. It also meant another master plan!

We got what we needed, plus we had some money left to use as seed money. Then the authority made another basic decision. We talked about all these farms that we'd have to condemn. We decided to take whole farms rather than pieces of them. If we could touch a piece of land, and if we could justify it, we'd condemn the whole farm. I forget how many farms we condemned, but we had forty-seven separate condemnations of land in that area, small parts of farms, and so forth. We litigated only eight cases. We settled all the rest, which was an economic feat, although sometimes we got criticized for paying too much. But we used our old theory of thinking ahead of what it's going to cost us ten, fifteen years from now.

Eventually, we had more than 1,000 acres. We didn't

need that much, but airport dreams aren't built on short runways. We dreamed of one day having a 10,000-foot runway. FAA wouldn't quite let us go full way.

We had a farm at the southwestern end of that runway that we wanted to acquire, because with that, we would have enough land to actually build a 10,000-foot runway without ever leaving our own land. They wouldn't consider that an eligible part of our land acquisition.

We had gone to the bond market to raise the money for the land acquisition project and the major runway project. We allocated so much of that to land acquisition to cover the ten-percent cost and whatever. This master plan came to fruition in that 1966-68 era. Those were the days of high interest, and our bond money was earning great interest. We built a new control tower out of our earnings on the bond issue, and we did it with own money.

By this time, Mr. Mellon had died, but his widow still remained very interested in the airport. Through her knowing Lenny Bughman, and flying in and out of the airport, she raised some questions about a control tower, and Lenny was interested in getting a control tower for the safety factor alone.

In those days, somebody had developed solid-state circuitry. They had put all the instrumentation in this mobile home. They slanted the roof, and it looked like an elongated, narrow control tower. Mrs. Mellon bought it for us.It cost twenty-five-thousand dollars. We didn't know where we were going to put it, and the engineers said that it would go very well on Mr. Ferrari's land at that end of the airport. They designed the ironwork, put it up, and lifted this mobile home, set it down, and we had our control tower. That was the first solid-state circuitry control tower in a mobile home anywhere in the eastern United States.

Our major runway got completed in the 1970s, without complication. We bought the land the FAA wouldn't allow us to buy. Today the runway is 7,000 feet. Its length and strength allows it to take a Boeing 727.

Once that runway was built, we knew we needed an approach landing system. We got funding for that. There was an outer marker, a middle marker, and an inner marker. Now we're modifying that and improving it, and we've just applied for and received a grant for an entirely new approach lighting system, which will be coming on stream a few years from now. [*Editor's note: Mr. McDonald's interview was conducted in 1999*].

We get a lot of questions like, "What are you doing, or why haven't you done it yet, or why haven't you gotten commercial service?"

Well, commercial service is a tough nut to crack. The airlines basically control it. We worked very hard in order to get commuter service, and we have had several.

In the early days, we had a commuter that came in but it failed, and then Neal Frey, who is the founder of Vee Neal Aviation, started his airline, and then they sold that out to an operation in Erie, and then they gave it up.

We continued to work with everybody that we could. US Air was really interested in coming in, primarily because one of the vice-presidents of US Air was a gentleman by the name of Bruce Jenkins who was born and raised in Bradenville. We became good friends with him. With Bruce's help, and the help of many others, the Chamber of Commerce, Kennametal, Latrobe Steel, local industry, the county commissioners banded together with Larry Larese's county planning group. Bruce helped us get US Air Express, now owned by Mesa Airlines.

"Use it, or lose it," was their attitude.

That still is the expression today. The service has grown from three round trips a day to six or seven. Each time they close the Parkway from Pittsburgh, it gives a boost to the commuter service. Do we want more than that?

Yes!

The airport during the Gene Lakin's tenure has blossomed. Arnold Palmer, grants from the state, the help of our state legislators, Jess Stairs, Joe Petrarca and Senator Alan Kukovich, have advanced our cause. Other legislators have been very helpful, even though the airport may be on the other end of the county, out of their districts.

Our present US Congressman, John Murtha, never loses a beat. He learned the congressional ropes from the knee of the master, John Dent. John Murtha has helped us get grants for our master projects. Our air shows wouldn't be what they are without his influence with the military and their jet performance teams.

For the future, I see the possibility of the runway being extended at least another 1,500 feet to 8,500 feet. It's 100-feet wide now, so I don't see any widening being required. It's what's required for commercial traffic, and the air freight carriers like United Parcel Service. Do I see it going to 10,000 feet? Yes, if we become a major commercial hub, and I don't think we'll do that. We'll continue to be an airport like we are now, a regional airport, one that serves a region and feeds to the major hubs. I think within five to ten years we will see a change, but I think it will come sooner.

In The News: 1919-2001

Local Pop Calls

(*Mt. Pleasant Journal*, October 9, 1919)

A low-flying aeroplane passed over the East End northbound Friday afternoon. It landed in a field on the Isaac Horner farm east of town and was joined there soon after by a second flyer, both pilots having been compelled to come down from the clouds for more gasoline.

The machines quickly drew a crowd of hundreds of people. Mr, Horner wanted to take a fly and would have gone along to the Somerset county fair, but the operator couldn't promise that he'd get back by Sunday and "Uncle Isaac" would run no chance of missing church.

Air Exhibition at Latrobe

(*Latrobe Bulletin*, October 19, 1919).

At 11:40 a.m., a Curtiss Jenny, en route from Berlin, Somerset County, landed at the newly named Saint Vincent Aviation Field. The plane made a "splendid landing" on the field, and the two occupants, Jack Webster and R.R. Deckert, went to the Archabbey where they enjoyed lunch. After lunch, the aviators returned to the plane where 1,000 people had gathered to see the "workings" of the plane. The plane was owned by W. L. Kreps of Youngstown, Ohio, and was one of two he owned and used for aerial exhibitions. After lunch, the fliers took off, did several stunts over the field, and made their way to East Liberty in Pittsburgh.

Latrobe Aircraft Company Sponsors Exhibition

(*Latrobe Bulletin*, August, 1920)

The Latrobe Aircraft Company on Depot Street, Latrobe, sponsored flights for the locals. The planes landed and took off on a plot of land on Latrobe's South Side, in the neighborhood of No. 1 School House..

Lieutenant Jack Grow

(*Latrobe Bulletin*, Tuesday, July 27 and August 14, 1920)

Lieutenant Jack Grow, a former government flying instructor, who was at this time an employee of the Irwin Aircraft Corporation, brought his Curtiss Jenny to Latrobe and gave fifteen minute flights to interested townsfolk. V. J. Rogers, of Weldon Street and a friend of the pilot, was the first passenger. Grow hoped to take his aircraft to Idlewild Park on August 26th, the day of the Latrobe Community Picnic, where he planned to sell flights to the picnickers. Plans for the even were formulated by M. W. Saxman, Jim Hughes, W.S. Jones, John Stader, Clark Dalton, Ralph Anderson, Ed Yealy, Fred Underwood, H.E.Frampton, Joe Harkness,, Roy Eiseman and Ralph Conrad.

Daring Stunts Done By Local Pilot

(*Scottdale Independent Observer*, Thursday, September 2, 1920)

Piloted by Lieutenant Torrence Overholt of this place, and witnessed by hundreds of people thronged on the grounds above the hangar at East Home Place, the new Curtiss airplane of the Scottdale Aerial Club made its trial flight over the town at five o'clock Sunday afternoon. Spectators began to gather on the hills around North Chestnut Street and on the lawns of homes near there about 3 o'clock, but owing to some engine trouble the flight was delayed several hours. Finally, when the plane began gradually to rise into the air a cheer from the enthusiastic crowd of men, women and children, rent the air. It was with a feeling of awe, and one big thrill that they watched for the first time a Scottdale plane, driven by a daring young Scottdale aviator, do a series of stunts, the tail spin, falling leaf, loop the loops, etc., above town at a height of several thousand feet.

On the first flight, the plane carried only Mr. Overholt. The second ascent, about a half hour later, Earl Loucks, of Hawkeye, made the flight with him, and on the last successful trip into the clouds, Frank Kenney, of this place, was the thrilled passenger.

The first young lady passenger to make the flight was Miss Florence Copley, of this place. At probably one of the greatest heights by which Lieutenant Overholt has so far taken passengers, Miss Copley experienced the thrill of looping the loop five times. She can be commended on the so-called nerve which she possesses.

Flights will be made by Lieutenant Overholt during the three days of the Fireman's Fair at Loucks park, beginning today, and if all goes well the plane will be seen soaring in the clouds again.

Old Quiet Observer Comes to Town

(Scottdale Independent Observer. Thursday, September 2, 1920)

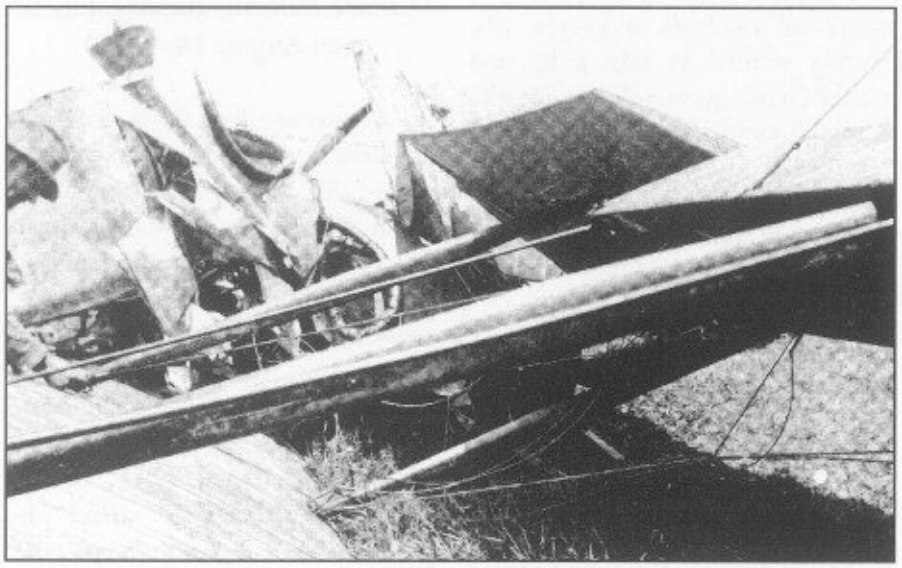
An old quiet observer comes to town and arrives just in time to attend the first evening of the Scottdale Fireman's Social Outing being held at Loucks Park. . . .

"Howdy, Joe, howdy. . . .I allows to Mandy that I would like to see one of them aryplanes or just about bust, and she said, 'Get out o'hare quick and take no chances!' "What's that?"

"That? Why that is just the aeroplane warming up for the grip around town. Get your glasses wiped off, Q.O."

Pulling out his red bandanna kerchief, Q.O. gets busy just as the plane comes low across Loucks Park.

"By cracky, she's bigger'n a big eagle, haint't she now? My what a fuss! Sounds like the battle of Gettysburg all over again, except it's much worse. There she goes, up, up, up! Now what's wrong! She's fallin', by Jiminy, she's fallin'! No she ain't nuther. She's going up again. Didja see that? She turned clear over, and no buddy fell out. By gumps. I wish Mandy could have seen this! There she comes again. Now she is coming down! Look out! Well, what do you know about that? Fell over four times and then lit right out again. Well, that is some bird!"



Carl Strickler and Jerry Elder take an ax to Raymond's rebuilt Canuck Jenny after they crashed the plane on Christner's field in Scottdale, Pensylvania. *(Courtesy of Anna Mary Topper).*

Two Boys Injured in Aeroplane Wreck

(*Scottdale Independent Observer*, Thursday, May 21, 1925).

Tuesday evening Carl Strickler and Raymond Elder were flying over Scottdale in the aeroplane that they had recently built when the control refused to work and the boys were forced to land in the Christner field west of town. Strickler was piloting the machine and was about 100- feet in the air when the control refused to work. He circled over Scottdale and managed to keep just above the trees until he reached the Christner field. Here he made a drop of thirty-five feet, the front of the plane burying itself in the soft mud. Neither Strickler nor Elder were seriously injured. Strickler was in the rear seat and when the plane struck the ground was thrown about ten-feet clear and with the exception of a few bruises was all right yesterday. Elder, who was in the front seat, was struck with the gasoline tank and was injured about the head. He was taken to the home of this parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Elder near Scottdale, and Doctor Arthur Waide was called to attend him. For a short time he was unconscious and, while he was stiff and sore yesterday, he seemed to have had a loss of memory from the accident, arguing with Strickler and members of the family that the plane

had not been wrecked.

Yesterday morning, Jerry Elder, father of the injured boy, with Strickler, went to the Christner field and dismantled the plane, hauling it in.

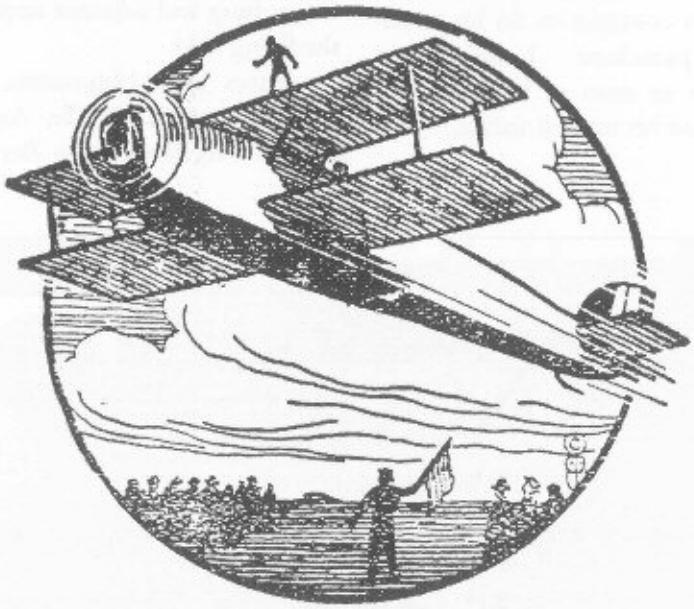
It was miraculous that neither of the young men in the plane were killed. [*Editor's note: Ray Elder rescued the engine and stored it in the family sheep shed. More than three decades later John Trunk, Lloyd Santmyer and George Markley retrieved the OX5 engine and brought it back to Latrobe as a trophy for the OX5 Club. Then, it was placed on display at the Greater Pittsburgh Airport. In 1973, Johnny Evans brought it back to Latrobe where the OX5 Club was founded. It was sent back to Pittsburgh in the late 1980s for repair and then placed on display at the Pittsburgh International Airport. The motor was returned to the Arnold Palmer Regional Airport in 2001, where it will remain on display for renewable ten-year periods*].

LONGVIEW FLYING FIELD

Eight Miles East Of Greensburg

Each Sunday afternoon at 3:30 and 6:30 o'clock there will be an exhibition in flying.

Passenger Flights $5.00 A Trip



"King" Joe Le Boeuf, a former lieutenant with the British Royal Flying Corps will leap from the wings of the plane and make a drop in a parachute and many other stunts. Something different every Sunday.

(Courtesy of Scottdale Independent Observer).

King Joe Le Boeuf At Flying Field

(*Scottdale Independent Observer*, July 30, 1925).

On Sunday, August 2, at Longview Flying Field, exhibitions if flying will be given. Joe Le Boeuf, a former lieutenant with the British Royal Flying Corps, will leap from the wings of a plane and make a drop to earth in a parachute. Le Boeuf will also do other stunts. His machine will be piloted by E. C. "Pop" Cleveland, of Mayer Field, Bridgeville, who taught Eric Nelson, one of the World's Flyers.

New Parachute Artist Engaged Longview Field

(*Scottdale Independent Observer*, May 21, 1926)

According to Charlie Carroll, of this place, one of the owners of the Longview Flying Field, announces that Joseph Crane, of Detroit, pictured in Sunday newspaper sections as the only living man to drop from an airplane in a parachute, is to give such an exhibition at the Lincoln Highway field east of Greensburg this Sunday afternoon at 3:30 without fail.

Crane, who is an ex-army parachute jumper, drops the dizzy height of 2250 feet before opening his parachute. He is not the "King Joe" scheduled for the opening of the base ball season here and who failed to appear, but an entirely different personage.

This daredevil of the air who has had all kinds of offers to do movie stunts, but prefers to be a "lone lance" has performed on flying fields and at special occasions all over the United States. A syndicated press has sent out a full page of illustrations to chains of newspapers for magazine

Joe Crane, barnstorming parachutist of the 1920s and 1930s at J.D. Hill Airport. He was the founder of the National Parachute Jumpers-Riggers Association, which later became the Parachute Club of America, which evolved into the United States Parachute Association.
(Courtesy of Anna Mary Topper).

sections, in which it tells of Crane's unique exploits and experiences with the public. A record breaking crowd is expected at the Flying Field Sunday afternoon.

Drops 1400 Feet of Sure Death, Parachute Opens

(Scottdale Independent Observer. June 21, 1926)

"Why not?" was the calm interrogation of Joe Crane, 23-year-old parachute wonder, lying on a cot in the Latrobe hospital, after his parachute failed to open for 1400 feet and finally at the last 100 feet opened and cheated death of another victim, at the Longview Flying Field at 6:45 last evening, when asked if he "ever expected to do stunt work again."

Charlie Carroll, manager and one of the owners of the Longview Flying Field . . . had a thrill all of his own last evening when in the presence of thousands of Memorial Day spectators his stunt artist, Joe Crane, launched himself from the airplane piloted by Bob Clohecy . . . and at the expected point when the parachute should have opened and brought his performer gracefully to the ground it failed to function and he with a few others of the great assemblage, realized that there was an apparent death scheduled in a few minutes.

"Charlie," in talking over the telephone this a.m. from the flying field said that "when the parachute finally did open at 100 feet from the ground, and he found Crane a very much alive man, he had that grand and glorious feeling as expressed by the cartoon." The injured man was immediately rushed to the Latrobe hospital where it was found that is sole injuries consisted of a cut above the eye and two stove ankles, swollen, but not broken.

Mr. Crane was scheduled to appear in Michigan next Sunday, and this engagement only will be broken as a result of the accident as he expects to continue to do his sensational parachute jumping at Longview as soon as he can again navigate on his injured ankles.

First Annual Air Races To Be Staged Saturday

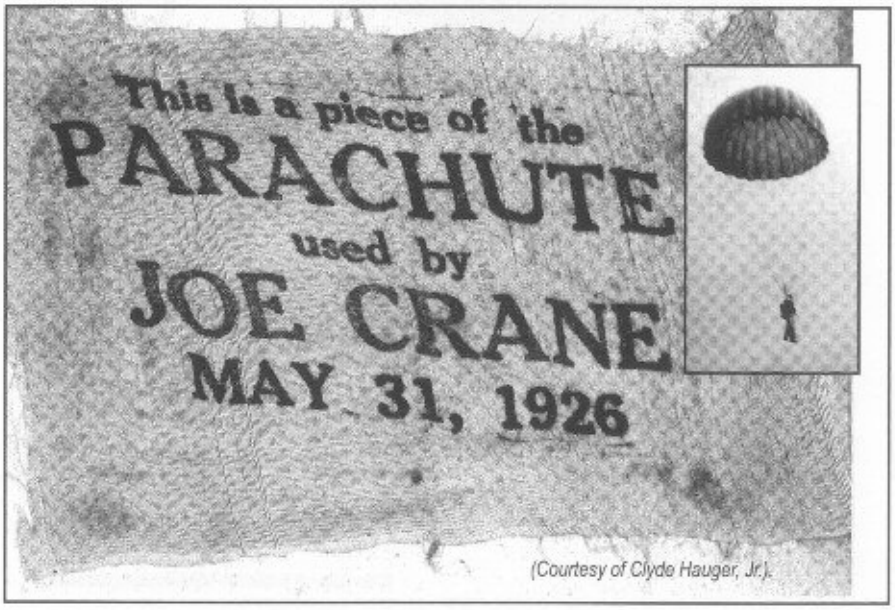
(Scottdale Independent Observer. Tuesday, October 5, 1926).

The First Annual Air Races at the Longview Flying Field and possibly the first similar event conducted in Western Pennsylvania will take place at the Longview Flying Field this Saturday afternoon beginning at one o'clock.

Real air races with twenty different planes participating, in an aerial triangular course marked off by miniature balloons similar to that floating at the North Side Service Station, will give Westmoreland County a new thrill that will put auto racing into the shade.

The course will be fifteen miles and the planes will fly close to the ground in order to get the atmospheric conditions conducive to speed. As a preliminary to the new speed event, it is possible that the airmen, driving the twenty or more planes will fly over Greensburg and adjacent territory to the flying field.

Planes from Hagerstown, Maryland, Altoona, Bridgeville, Aspinwall, Punxsutawny, Brownsville, Beaver and



(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger, Jr.).

other points will be present and compete for the trophies.

The "dead-stick landing," a new aerial contest will also be staged. This event includes planes soaring to an altitude of 1,000 feet and stopping the engine and gliding to the ground where a special spot is marked out and the plane coming nearest to this goal wins the prize.

Saturday afternoon will be a gala day at the popular Flying Field, eight miles east of Greensburg, on the Lincoln Highway, when an admission fee of fifty cents will be charged for adults and twenty-five cents for children. Parking space is free.

Boxing bouts, vocal numbers by Waide Weaver of Scottdale, orchestra, parachute dropping, etc., will add to the attraction at which fully 10,000 people are expected.

A banquet will be tendered the flyers at the Mountain View hotel Friday evening, the day before the aerial races, at which time the kings of the air will be given due homage. Many of the men participating are army fliers. Several pursuit planes will be present from Washington.

Fourth Accident Results in Death of Girl

(*Scottdale Independent Observer*, Tuesday, March 15, 1927).

The series of mishaps which have followed the aeronautic experiences of local civilian aviator Carl Strickler has ended in the death Saturday afternoon of Miss Pauline Reynolds, a twenty-one-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. B.E. Reynolds of Market Street, while Strickler has again escaped with slight injuries.

Carl Strickler, licensed aviator of the Longview Flying Field, who lives at Hawkeye and has had varied experiences in the building and flying of airplanes in this neighborhood, had just reconstructed a new airplane and prior to the fatality had been giving lessons in flying to Rayburn Jordon, a brother-in-law of Miss Reynolds.

Part of Saturday morning was devoted to flying with Jordon. At 11:30, Strickler had as his passenger, Pete Lutman, of this place, and the plane apparently was in good condition.

The first trip after lunch was at 1:45.

Mr. and Mrs. Rayburn Jordon, Mrs. Jordon's brother, B.E. Reynolds, Jr., Pauline and Strickler, were grouped about the plane when the question came up as to who would be the first passenger in the afternoon. Mrs. Jordon had intended going up, but conceded to her sister, Pauline.

The plane arose to an altitude of possibly 700 feet, and was up about three minutes when the pilot started to make his landing.

The aviator suddenly found his control out of commission. Miss Reynolds sat in the front cockpit with a hand on each side of the plane. Strickler asked her if she was afraid and she replied, "No."

The plane then went into a nose-dive, landing in a pit-hole close to the Elder farm. The shock threw Strickler a considerable distance of the machine, but Miss Reynolds is believed to have caught one foot in the bottom of the plane and, when it hit, was held in the cockpit.

Miss Reynolds was rushed to the office of Dr. W.H. Fetter, and then to the Memorial Hospital in Mr. Jordon's car, and did not die until reaching that institution, contrary to reports that she had died en route. Her neck was broken, skull fractured, arm broken, and suffered many contusions to the body

This photo of Lindbergh at Bettis Field was found in the collection belonging to Clyde Hauger, Jr., and was taken either by his father or Lloyd Santmyer.
(Courtesy of Clyde Hauger, Jr.).

When the few spectators had covered the intervening mile to the scene of the accident, they found Strickler some distance from the plane, staggering about in a dazed manner, while Miss Reynolds was crumpled up in the wrecked plane.

Flying Field Is Proving Popular With Motorists

(*Scottdale Independent Observer*, May 31, 1927).

The Longview Flying Field is now going full tilt on the Lincoln Highway east of Greensburg, with three airplanes in daily use and parachute-drop exhibitions by a former army expert.

Motorists from all parts of the United States are daily visitors at the Longview Flying Field, and much attention is being attracted to Westmoreland County through motorists who witness the modern, aviation-field activities, hundreds of passing tourists becoming air passengers.

Not only is the Longview Flying Field under ownership and management of a Scottdale man, but local boys, qualified aviators, are pilots of the three airplanes that skim along the huge field and soar aloft with passengers from time to time. Charles Carroll, owner; Raymond Elder and Carl Strickler are the regular pilots, and with the latest safety passenger planes and perfect landing field there is practically no danger to the many passengers who enjoy the latest thrill of a "trip to the clouds."

Longview Boys to Fly to Reception of Colonel Lindbergh

(*Scottdale Independent Observer,* August 2, 1927)

Four airplanes from Longview Flying Field under the leadership of Charles Carroll, owner and manager, will fly in formation over Greensburg and this vicinity enroute to Bettis Flying Field, McKeesport, this Wednesday morning, leaving Longview at 11 o'clock, to participate in the reception to Colonel Charles Lindbergh, Wednesday afternoon and Thursday. Those piloting the planes will be: Charles Carroll, civilian; Lieutenant Robert Clohecy, ex-army; Raymond Elder, civilian; Carl Strickler, civilian.

Each plane will have one or two passengers, not definitely decided upon at this time. The pilots will be photographed with other flying men and Colonel Lindbergh.

The air hero will land at Bettis Field at two o'clock Wednesday afternoon. His plane will be roped off with 400 policemen to keep the crowds back. He will then be rushed to Pittsburg by automobile and take part in the program as outlined for Wednesday and Thursday morning in the Pittsburgh papers.

The parachute men, Joe Crane and Mickey DeBurger, of Longview, were both in the Independent Observer office today at noon and explained that they had been called upon to fill a rather distinct place at the big reception to Lindbergh.

Crane has been asked to jump directly after the arrival of Colonel Lindbergh and just after his departure Thursday morning to help hold the crowd to the Bettis Field and avoid a jam of humanity and automobiles. De Burger will also make jumps during the two days.

Will Scottdale be Selected as Site for Airport

(*Scottdale Independent Observer*, Tuesday, August 30, 1927)

Since Scottdale men, C.B. Carroll and others, have been the pioneers in aeronautics in Westmoreland County, and J.D. Hill, a Scottdale boy, is expected to hop off any minute for a non-stop air trip to Rome, under international limelight for publicity, the question arises as to

whether Scottdale will not eventually be chosen as an airport and landing field location.

The proximity of Scottdale to the Yough river and the fact that air men prefer to follow river courses, with the additional inducement that an airplane can cut off a considerable distance in this route by flying over Scottdale, still keeping the trail of the Yough, is very much in favor of Scottdale as an airport. The increased interest in airports in the United States arouses the question.

More than 1,000 airports and intermediate fields will dot the United States from coast to coast and from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico by the end of 1927, according to the aeronautics branch of the Department of Commerce.

A survey just completed by the Air Information Division shows 865 permanent fields now in use, with 187 cities definitely considering the establishment of municipal airports. Of present fields, 207 are municipally owned. Chambers of Commerce, business clubs and other civic organizations are cooperating in the effort to build up a complete airway and airport system, it is stated.

Many authorities are urging permanent construction for airport buildings and especially for fields and runways. Planes for projected passenger lines, such as the Ford line between Chicago and Los Angeles, and seven or eight ton freight planes will require rigid landing surfaces. Turf and cinders, it is claimed, will not stand the wear.

Captain Donald E. Keyhoe, flying aide to Colonel Lindbergh on his tour of 75cities, recommends runways of concrete 100 feet wide, and Commander Richard E. Byrd, U.S.N., suggests that entire fields be of concrete, particularly since this permits landing and taking off regardless of weather conditions [*Editor's note: Unfortunately for Scottdale, airfields situated near major roads and railroad junctions would prove to be more viable sites for airports, a fact which Charlie Carroll realized when he founded his airfield in Latrobe*].

Not the Log of the "Sally Ann" But A Modern Airplane

(*Scottdale Independent Observer*, September 13, 1927)

Raymond Elder, of this place, pilot at Longview Flying Field made a quick trip to Beaver Falls the other day with parachute jumper Lewis DeBurgeer keeping "log" of the trip.

When it comes to speed note the difference in chronicling is a matter of minutes, not hours:

5:14 p.m.-Left Longview, flying wide.

5:24 p.m.-Greensburg, open climb, 2,000 feet.

5:25 p.m.-Throttle motor, getting bumps, bad fog ahead.

5:27 p.m.-Making straight to McKeesport.

5:28 p.m.-Jeannette on the right, Grapeville under us.

5:31 p.m.-Adamsburg, all is well. Motor cut down.

5:32 p.m.-Can see tank at Irwin.

5:34 p.m.-Irwin to our right about one and a half miles; a little cross wind from the right. Wind going south.

5:35 p.m.-River to our left about two miles, must be Youghiogheny.

5:39 p.m.-Flying at 2,500 feet. Can't see a damned thing. Fog.

5:42 p.m.-Trafford, Pitcairn, Wilmerding, off to the NW.

5:46 p.m.-Bettis Field. Air time, 32 minutes.

5:57 p.m.-Can see Bridgeville smoke.

5:59 p.m.-Strong headwind, ground speed only 55 miles per hour.

6:03 p.m.-Headwind getting stronger.

6:14 p.m.- 100 out.

6:19 Can see Big Beaver River.

6:20 Over field, Beaver Falls, can see car in field.

6:31 Landed

6:32 Stopped motor

6:40 Start motor and at 6:43 take off and start on homeward air trip.

The plane arrived back at Longview at exactly 7:45 the same evening

This will give prospective air flyers an idea of the overhead perspective. No traffic cops. No bad roads. No nothin' except watch the ground doesn't fly up and hit you.

Local Aviators to Hop Off From Denver, Colorado

(*Scottdale Independent Observer*, September 13, 1927)

Raymond Elder and Carl Strickler, of this place, pilots of the Longview Flying Field, will "hop off" from Denver, Colorado, next Tuesday, September 29, in an Eagle Rock, single-motor airplane for an overland trip to Longview on the Lincoln Highway, east of Greensburg.

The plane will be a brand new one made by the Alexander-Eagle Rock Company of the Biplane type. It will be the first demonstrator plane whereby Longview Flying Field, under the direction of Charles Carroll, will become an airplane sales center, Mr. Carroll being agent for the Eagle Rock biplane.

Elder and Strickler will alternate flying the new plane to Pennsylvania from Colorado. The machine has the new principle of high lift wings and a pay load capacity of 800 pounds,

with two passenger and pilot accommodations.

En route the plane will stop at Kansas City, Missouri; Indiana, Indiana; Columbus and Zanesville, Ohio and Bettis Field, McKeesport, from where the arrival will be telephoned to Longview....

Carroll, Elder, Strickler Will Try for Aerial Honors

(*Scottdale Independent Observer,* Friday, October 7, 1927)

Three Scottdale air pilots are entered in the air races scheduled for Longview Flying Field tomorrow and Sunday. The events begin at one o'clock each afternoon preceded by an air parade over surrounding towns.

With such competitors as Captain E.W. Day, with a Woodson plane, of Pittsburg; Lieutenant Jack Morris, Eaglerock plane, of Pittsburgh; Jack Smith, Ryan plane, of Bridgeville; George Autland, Eaglerock plane, of Pittsburgh; Lieutenant F. J. Ambrose, Eaglerock plane, of Pittsburg; Colonel D. I. Lamb, Waco 10 plane, of Bettis Field, McKeesport; Lieutenant W.H. Emory, Travel Air plane, of Bradford, three local pilots, Charlie Carroll, Raymond Elder and Carl Strickler will compete for air honors.

The events at Longview will be unique in the annals of racing in this section and the prospects are that the automobile and horse racing crowds will be but a drop in the bucked as compared to that at Longview. The air courses will be so laid out that there will be no danger to the many thousands of spectators expected present for the second annual event, much larger than the one of last summer at Longview Flying Field . . . .

There will also be parachute jumping, wing walking on airplanes aloft, and other air stunts to keep up a continual thrill for the two afternoons.

Saturday evening will witness a banquet of aviators in the new Masonic Building at Latrobe at 8 o'clock.

Of special interest will be the presence of many other planes, two Ryans, and an M-1 monoplane, the twin to that of Lindbergh's in appearance, from the Bridgeville field.

The fact that a Scottdale man is owner of the Longview Field, Charles B. Carroll, should draw a large crowd from Scottdale, to say nothing of the three pilots who will participate.

Wrecked Plane Not C.B. Carroll's As First Reported

(*Scottdale Independent Observer,* December 2, 1927).

The report published in Connellsville newspapers yesterday that an airplane belonging to Charles Carroll of Longview Flying Field had been wrecked by the high wind of Wednesday evening is all in error. The plane wrecked was that of an unknown pilot flying East. Carroll's planes are all intact in hangars today.

Wednesday, Mr. Carroll and Carl Strickler flew to Uniontown to take pictures of the wrecked plane in the mountains in which two army pilots were killed this week. En route at Matthew's Field, along the Connellsville-Uniontown road, the Longview crew came across the strange aviator and his plane and advised him to put his plane under cover or "tack" it down with ropes to avoid the heavy wind then blowing up.

The strange flyer evidently failed to take heed for his plane was practically demolished by the strong gale which caused havoc in many sections of Westmoreland and Fayette counties.

List 5 Flying Fields in County

(*Scottdale Independent Observer,* March 21, 1928)

By June 1, five aviation fields will be operating regularly within Westmoreland county, according to a recent survey made by Russ Brinkley, of the Longview Flying Field. These fields are located at Latrobe, Scottdale, Donegal, Mt. Pleasant, and New Kensington.

There are 12 pilots in the county and 15 planes. Of the planes, only four are new production jobs. Six are rebuilt army planes, and the others specially built machines.

On January 1, there were 32 students listed at the different fields, and two of these were women. Two Westmoreland men were listed as professional parachute jumpers and three others were listed as capable mechanics.

At present there is not an aeronautical organization active, although a chapter of the National Aeronautical Association is being organized in Latrobe.

To Drop Watch From Clouds

(*Greensburg Morning Review,* Monday, May 28, 1928)

Did you ever see it raining watches?

Well, if you happen to be along Main Street between Otterman and Second streets about 12:45 tomorrow afternoon, you may find a watch

(Greensburg Morning Review, Monday, May 28, 1928)

dropping at your feet and better still, it will be yours.

DeMay Brothers, Pennsylvania Avenue jewelers, have planned this unique demonstration. Clyde Hauger, aviator from Longview Flying Field, flying at a height of 1,000 feet, will drop a Bruner Master Built Wrist Watch to the street below.

The purpose of this demonstration is to prove that this make of watch will withstand any severe shock and that it will keep time as accurately after, as it did before the drop.

The finder of the watch will turn it over to Mayor Yont for examination, and after it has been on display in DeMay Brothers store for two weeks, can have either this watch or a duplicate selected from the regular stock free of charge.

Many Planes Coming Saturday

(*Latrobe Bulletin*,
May 31, 1928.
By columnist Russ Brinkley)

All the way from Seward to Bettis Field, the Los Angeles was escorted by two Latrobe Flyers.

Carl Strickler and Russ Brinkley, flying in one of the planes from the local field, flew to Seward to meet the big dirigible and blazed the way for it over Derry and Latrobe. They did stunts all the way.

At Bettis Field they made arrangements for several additional planes to come to Latrobe, Saturday and Sunday, for the big air meet which is to mark the dedication of the field as Hill Airport.

George F. Bischop, a former friend of the late J.D. Hill, is flying here from Forth Worth, Texas for the dedication.

An American Eagle plane, from Sharon, carrying Robert Mason and his mechanic J. P. Reed, already has arrived at the field.

The big monoplane which passed over Latrobe yesterday morning is to be used to carry mail between Cleveland and Pittsburgh. It was en route from the Fairchild factory, at New York, and was flown by Pilot Dewey Noyes, with Clifford Ball as a passenger. It is to be here for the air meet, Saturday and Sunday.

Due to the fact that so many inquiries have been received from outsiders concerning the aviators' banquet to be held at the Mountain View Hotel, it has been decided to make it a public affair instead of for fliers and their friends only. Preparations are being made to care

(Greensburg Morning Review, Monday, May 28, 1928)

for 200 guests and the following program has been adopted: Master of Ceremonies: Clifford L. Ball, air-mail contractor from Bettis Field, McKeesport. Toastmaster: Russ Brinkley, field manager of Hill Airport. Feature Address: Wesley L. Smith, manager of the National Air Transport, eastern division, air-mail service, who will speak on Commercial Aviation. Responses from the following: C.P. Mayer, of Bridgeville, the first man to operate and airport in this part of the state; Frank Hill, brother of the late pilot in whose name the field is being dedicated; C.B. Carroll, operator of Hill Airport; Carl G. Strickler, chief pilot and instructor of the Carroll School of Aviation.

Hill Airport Dedication Ceremony is Appropriate: Huge Crowd at Field Yesterday

(*Latrobe Bulletin*, June 4, 1928).

It is now the Hill Airport, it's complete title being The Hill Airport at Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, Pa . . . The Rt. Rev. Aurelius Stehle, O.S.B., Archabbot of Saint Vincent College . . . made a brief address, his presence marking the new relationship between Saint Vincent College and the airport, with the field having been adopted by the college as a training place for students in aviation.

Between 10,000 and 15,000 persons jammed one side of the field and threatened to cover the entire field, but for the vigilance of the police and attendants. Over 500 cars were parked in the field and fully 1,000 more were in the strings which stretched along both sides of the neighboring roads.

The race for the Curtiss production planes was the first event on the program. Of the ten entries listed, only four passed the inspection of government officials, and these planes were piloted by C.B. Carroll, Carl Strickler, Ray Elder and J.D. Jones.

J.D. Jones, of Lancaster, Pa., nosed out Carroll by barely fifty yards, after five laps of strenuous competition. Elder took the lead in the first lap with Strickler a close second, Jones following in third place and Carroll trailing the field because of a bad start. In the second lap the positions began to change. Jones went into the lead by passing both Strickler and Elder. But Jones failed to hold his lead as Carroll came up fast in the second lap and took the lead as the third lap ended. Jones regained the lead in the fourth lap and held it to the end. Elder finished in third place, with Strickler trailing the field.

The high-speed race with only three entries did not offer much competition and Dewey Noyes, Pittsburgh-Cleveland air-mail pilot, roared down the home stretch two-thirds of a lap ahead of Carl Strickler. Noyes piloted a six-cylinder Pitcairn plane, which averaged around 110 mph for the fifty-mile race. Strickler piloted an Eaglerock to second place two laps ahead of an American Eagle, piloted by Ray Elder.

Between races the big wing-walking stunt was offered to the public. A new dare-devil was introduced in the person of Russell J. Brinkley.

"Daredevil" Brown of Kansas City made two successful drops in his parachute during the afternoon. On both occasions he landed on the field to the north of Hill Airport, as a jumper can no longer land on the airport itself, by a ruling of the Department of Commerce.

Plane Makes Forced Landing On A Hillside

(*Latrobe Bulletin*, June 4, 1928)

The only near-accident to occur in connection with the big doings at the Hill Airport, occurred Saturday afternoon, when a big, four-passenger monoplane, owned by Clifford Ball was forced down, by lack of fuel, on a hillside of the Ferguson farm, near the airport.

None of the four occupants of the plane suffered injuries of any kind, and the plane itself escaped damage, except for a fitting on the fuselage, which was broken, and which put the big ship out of commission for the time being. One of the department of commerce officials present at the field, said he had never witnessed a better landing, under the circumstances. Dewey Noyes was at the controls and was responsible for the avoidance of an accident in the high wind which prevailed.

The failure of the fuel supply was due to the fact that only one of the two feed pipes had been opened at the time, and the motor suddenly stopped. The other supply line was turned on at once, but not in time to get back into flight.

Mr. Ball was one of the passengers. A niece of the late J.D. Hill was another, and Carl Strickler's father was the third.

Many Planes Coming Here For Meet

(*Greensburg Morning Review*, June 21, 1928).

From acceptances being received for Greensburg's great air meet, to be held on the George R. McNary farm, on the New Alexandria road, next Tuesday afternoon, this city and surrounding country will have an opportunity to witness a larger variety of planes than has seldom been gathered together in one spot.

It is apparent that Western Pennsylvania and other pilots have been pleased to receive the invitations from Greensburg and while all acceptances have not yet been received, enough are on hand to assure a most successful afternoon.

Charles L. Semans, of Uniontown, will be present with his Ryan monoplane, which is a duplication of that of Col. Lindbergh's, now in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. Capt. Voss, of Rogers Field, will bring his new Curtiss "Hawk", an official army pursuit plane and one which has been seldom seen except at government fields. Two army training planes will accompany Capt. Voss.

Clifford Ball, of Bettis Field, will drive over here in his five passenger Fairchild cabin monoplane, which is the largest airplane ever to visit Greensburg.

William A. Gardner, of the Gardner Sign Co., Pittsburgh, will bring his new Eagle Rock and his new Lincoln-Paige while C. W. Beckman, of Mount Oliver, will also be present in his plane.

Additional invitations are being issued and an attempt is being made to have one of the Ford all metal planes used by the Stout representatives present while Assistant Attorney General

Thomas G. Taylor, of this city, member of the Pennsylvania Aeronautical Commission, is hopeful that a squadron of United States army fliers from Middletown will be present. Other members of the commission are also expected that day.

Charles Stanko, of the William Penn Flying Field, at New Alexandria, will also be present.

Weather Not Expected to Delay Meet

(*Greensburg Morning Review*, June 26, 1928).

The whine and drone of airplanes during this afternoon forecast somewhat the activity which may be Greensburg's within a very few months if contemplated plans arising from the special air demonstration scheduled here today materialize.

While threatening weather prevailed during most of the morning hours, the disturbance was purely local, according to weather observers and every indication was given that the meet will go along during the day as scheduled.

The landing field on the George R. McNary farm, on the New Alexandria Road, was in good condition this morning, despite the inclement weather. The field was being marked early this afternoon for the landing of the planes and also for the parking of automobiles.

But the western Pennsylvania airmen who will put on the aerial demonstration this afternoon are Thomas J. Hilliard, president of the Waverly Oil Works of Pittsburgh; William M. Gardner, president of the Gardner Sign Company of Pittsburgh who will have two planes in the meet; C. W. Beckman, president of the Beckman Chevrolet company of Pittsburgh; Charles L.. Secans of Burgess field, Uniontown; Captain Thomas S. Voss, executive officer of the 324th Observation squadron, Rogers field, Pittsburgh, who has entered three planes;

Clifford A. Ball, air mail contractor of Bettis field, McKeesport; D. Barr Peat, manager of Bettis field, McKeesport; Kenneth "Curley" Lovejoy, air mail pilot of Bettis field, McKeesport; John P. Morris, Morris Flying School, Rogers field, Aspinwall; Col. Harry C. Fray, Jr., Pittsburgh; C. P. Mayer of Mayer Aircraft corporation, Bridgeville; Walter Stewart, Freeport; James D. Condon, Pittsburgh; and C. B. Carroll of the Hill airport, who will enter two planes.

Air Pilot Knocked Out by Bolt

(*Latrobe Bulletin*, July 5, 1928)

Robert Parnell, chief pilot at the Hill Airport was unconscious for half an hour after being stunned by a lightning bolt at the flying field yesterday. He was standing by his plane, preparing to place a rubber blanket over the motor to protect it from the downpour.

A bolt of lightning crashed to the earth a short distance from him, and the pilot was so seriously stunned, that he was rendered unconscious, and did not recover his senses for half and hour. A physician was summoned and Mr. Parnell was revived. He had sufficiently recovered in the afternoon that he was able to pilot his plane.

With Blacksnake as Passenger, Legless Flyer Flies East

(*Latrobe Bulletin,* July 12, 1928)

With a blacksnake mascot as the only other passenger, "Dinger" Daugherty, New Martinsville, West Virginia flyer, hopped off from the Hill Airport this morning at 9:50 o'clock, with Roosevelt Field, New York, as his destination. His snakeship was presented to the aviator by an admirer and has been fed on bread and milk for the past few days.

It was a perfect day for the flight, with a bright sun shining, which forecast good visibility in the mountains, which always present a menace, even to the best flyers.

Quite a large number of spectators, mostly Shriners, en route to Idlewild Park, who had parked their machines along the road to witness the hop-off, saw the "West Virginian" speed across the field, her engine roaring, then rise gently into the air.

It was not long till they had lost sight of the plane as it disappeared into the bright sun to the east.

Departing from a field named in honor of a flyer [*J.D. Hill*] who had given his life in an attempt to link the United States and Rome by air, Daugherty was bound on a journey with a similar end in view. Once at New York, he intends to seek backing for a projected trans-Atlantic flight to Italy.

Failing in securing the necessary support, he will attempt a non-stop flight to Mexico, similar to the one in which Emilio Carranza, Mexican ace, lost his life, several days ago.

Daugherty left the airport unaccompanied, although he was to be joined later at McConnellsburg, by Pilot Carl Strickler, in his speedier plane. A little more than a half hour after Daugherty took off, Pilot Strickler was tuning up his plane, making ready to start.

Makes Forced Landing When Engine Halts Fine Handling Saves Plane and Passenger

(*Latrobe Bulletin,* July 28, 1928)

When his plane started earthward like a plummet, causing a woman passenger to faint, C.B. Carroll, of the Hill Airport, remained cool and came down safely in a forced landing, near the Guidas greenhouse at Manito, about 4:15 yesterday afternoon. A wing was smashed and a tire blown out.

Mr. Carroll had taken off from the airport, with a woman from Greensburg as a passenger in the cockpit, a short time before.

As the plane soared over Manito, about a mile from the flying field, the engine suddenly stopped and the plane started earthward.

Overcome with fright, the woman lost consciousness, as the pilot worked coolly to coax the motor back into operation.

He gained control when but a short distance from the ground, and then brought the plane down in a field, a short distance from the greenhouse. The woman was revived a short time later.

Local Flyer Is Killed in Plane Crash

(Hagerstown *Herald-Mail,* November 28/29, 1928)

Carl G. Strickler, 26, test pilot for the Kreider-Reisner Aircraft Company, this city, was fatally injured Wednesday afternoon when the new Challenger plane he was piloting crashed at Laurel Ridge, PA, near Laughlintown, during a blinding storm of snow and sleet . . . .

George W. West, a road worker, witnessed the accident, and was the first to reach the spot. The injured