

OX5 AVIATION PIONEERS TEXAS WING NEWSLETTER

September, 2010 No. 46 George Vose, Editor-Secretary PO Box 908, Alpine, Texas 79831

432-837-5788

Message from the Editor/Secretary

Where have all the OX5-powered airplanes gone? Well, there still are a few in museums in the U. S., Canada, and a few are still actually flying. And I guess that countless numbers have gone to "OX5 Heaven". Little by little the mentions of OX5





activities in newsletters have become infrequent. (Probably as a result of the diminishing number of OX5 pilots and mechanics in OX5 ranks). We will try to offer more stories about Glenn Curtiss' famous engine. We OX5ers have merged together because of our mutual interest and intrigue with the engine that crystallized

aviation. Once the Texas Wing had five OX5 airplanes registered to members. They were an OX5 Curtiss Robin owned by Nick Pocock, Bill Haddock's Kreider-Riesner Challenger(owned since he was 18 years old), a Jenny JN-4 owned by Roger Freeman of Kingsbury, a Waco 10 owned by Southwest Airlines Pilot Don Marek, and an Alexander Eaglerock donated by Jack Brouse and partners.

Now the Waco 10 has left Texas and is on display in an Oregon air museum and the Alexander Eaglerock hangs in the rotunda of the Science Spectrum Museum in Lubbock. (Jack Brouse said it could be made flyable within a week). The Curtiss Robin, owned by recently deceased Nick Pocock, perhaps is still in the Waco area. The Jenny JN4 and the KR-31 are still hangared and flyable in Kingsbury and San Antonio.

The Kreider-Riesner biplane (KR-31), shown above left, is from the cover of the January 2010 Antique Airplane Association publication <u>Antique Airplane runway</u>.

No minimum solo age in those days

There was a time when general aviation was governed by the Bureau of Air, Department of Commerce. In the early 1930s there were no "instructor ratings". If a pilot held a Transport Pilot's License (commercial license) he held the key to every avenue of commercial aviation without hindrance. The hazards of flying were admittedly grave. Engine failures were commonplace, planes were lazy on the controls and communications between cockpits were mostly done by hand signals. The old Gosport system helped some but conversation had its mumble-jumble aspects.

There were, however, many fine instructors and they accomplished a great deal under very trying conditions, and there was no age limit for flying in those days. At the Teterboro Airport in New Jersey in the summer of 1930 a twelve-year old boy named Joseph Shehan was being taught to fly in an OX5



powered Bird biplane. His instructor was "Okey" Bevins. Little Joe Shehan sat on a soap box and several cushions and was able to peer over the cockpit edge.

On one particular day Bevins climbed out of the front cockpit and gave last minute instructions to the boy. The 12-year-old pulled his goggles down over his eyes and taxied back down the sod runway. The Bird biplane took off, made its slow way around the airport and lined up with the runway. He cut back on the throttle and glided in for a neat three-point landing. He thus became the youngest pilot in the world to solo

an airplane at that time. His story and photos appeared in New York Metropolitan area newspapers. Within a year another even younger pilot had soloed. Instructor Bill Turso soloed 11-year old Jackie Chapman in Westhampton, Long Island, New York. A short time later orders came down from the Bureau of Air in Washington that there was to be no more solo flying by anyone under the age of sixteen.

<u>NOTE</u>: This story is condensed from BILL RHODES, "AERIAL ANECDOTES", ANTIQUE AIRPLANE NEWS, SEP-OCT 1973

This issue's Mystery Airplane

From time-to-time an OX5 powered classic will be our "mystery airplanes". The airplane below is of the post-OX5 era but is still a classic.

IS THE LOW WING SINGLE ENGINE MONOPLANE ON THE RIGHT A ...

- 1. Vultee V-1
- 2. Harlow PJC
- 3. Spartan Executive 7-W
- 4. Welch OW

Description and information on page 4

Member writes about JATO



NOTE: The June 2010 issue of the OX5 Texas Wing Newsletter presented an article by former airline captain George Chandler telling of Braniff Airways' use of JATO to assist DC-4 take-off at high South American airports. (It was used experimentally, but never used on an actual commercial flight). We have received an interesting letter from OX5 member John Jenista of Fort Worth who flew Navy PBM-5s when JATO assisted take-offs were routine. Here is John Jenista's letter:

"8 July 2010: The article on JATO in the newsletter was interesting to me. The airplane I flew in the Navy back in the early1950s used JATO on a regular basis. The airplane was a Martin PBM-5 "Mariner"

seaplane. It was a flying boat weighing 62,500 pounds, with two Pratt and Whitney R-2800 engines. The plane was designed for longrange cruise on two engines, staying up as long as 24 hours, and as a result, the single-engine performance was almost non-existent. After a takeoff at the maximum gross weight, you would have to burn off 15,500 of fuel before the airplane could barely sustain itself on one engine at sea level, in ground effect, on a standard day. It had two fuel jettison pumps



that could pump 180 gallons of fuel overboard per minute to reduce the weight quickly in the case of an engine failure".

"With that limited power it was always a problem to get the thing airborne when it was near the maximum gross weight. There are two critical areas that require lots of power in flying boat take-offs. The first is to get on the step, planning, to reduce the water drag and allow the airplane to gain speed. The second is then to break the suction of the water and allow the airplane to get airborne. The PBM-5 carried



four JATO bottles which were solid fuel rockets developing 1000 pounds of thrust each. They were mounted on the outside of the water waist hatches in the after part of the hull".

"On a heavy load take-off when the engines were at full power the first two bottles would be fired to push the hull over on the step. Then, as the first bottles burned out the second two bottles would be fired to continue the acceleration and lift the plane into the air. The mounting for the JATO could be released from inside the airplane. The bottles could not be reused so they were usually dropped into the sea after take-off".



"One of the safety requirements that I remember with this installation was a very careful no-voltage check conducted on the igniter wire before it could be plugged into the bottle. This was to prevent accidental ignition. In the cockpit there was what is now called an 'ergonomic problem' with the installation. On the pedestal between the pilots there were four covered switches, each colored

red. These were side by side in a space about five inches wide. Two of these fired the JATO bottles in pairs, one for the lower bottles and one for

the upper ones. The other two switches, unfortunately, were to feather the Curtis-Electric propellers on the R-2800 engines. Every now and then the co-pilot would fire the first two bottles and then feather the starboard propeller. This would cause a great amount of consternation in the cockpit and some wild water maneuvers before things got sorted out"



"My most exciting JATO experience was taking off from Japan one night for a combat patrol over Korea. The plane was heavily loaded with ammunition and depth charges for anti-submarine warfare. On take off, just as the second bottles of JATO were fired, the port engine had a massive internal failure, twisted out of the mounts, and fell off the airplane !! The large diameter fuel line was ripped off, so the boost pump spewed high octane gasoline at 27 PSI all over the port side of the airplane. The burning JATO ignited this fuel so that we had a very large moving fireball alongside as the plane slowed to a stop".

"The crew abandoned the plane from the starboard side, but the battery switches were not turned off so the boost pump kept spewing fuel into the fire. We could hear the machine-gun ammunition going off like firecrackers as the plane burned up and sank. The crash crew would not approach the area until well after the plane sank because they were afraid the depth charges would go off when they reached their set depth. The bombs would not go off because they were not armed, but the crash crew did not know that. Fortunately no one was hurt but the plane was a total loss".

JOHN E. JENISTA

NOTE: Thanks, John, for this interesting experience during the Korean War. (John Jenista had his first airplane ride with his father in a Canuck when he was three years old. Did he remember that flight? Indeed he did. See next page).

John Jenista's first airplane flight was in his father's OX5 Canuck when he was three years old. We responded that he probably did not recall the flight. His answer:

"Hey George: I <u>do</u> remember some things about my flight in that Canuck. During the flight I remember seeing what I thought was a beautiful toy fright train right outside the front cockpit. I wanted to



pick it up and play with it, but every time I reached for it the slipstream blew my arm back into the cockpit. I started to cry in frustration, but my father thought I was frightened and flew back to the airport and landed. It was only as he was unfastening me that he learned what I was crying about. I was bawling, "I can't pick up the train".

"Many years later a doctor explained that small children do not have depth perception. He said that the ability develops in the brain later. Small children cannot tell the difference between something big that is far away and something small that is close up. The fright train that I thought was right outside the front cockpit of the Canuck was really on a track next to what is now Midway Airport. My Dad kept his Canuck at the Laird aircraft flying field which was a short distance from Midway".

The Mystery Plane On page 3

For the second newsletter in a row the "mystery plane" is a Vultee. Last time is was a military basic trainer, the Vultee BT-13. In this issue it's the **Vultee V-1**, a single engine transport of the 1930s. In 1934

American Airlines was commissioned to put the prototype model on one of its routes while an initial order was being completed. The new transports were placed on the Fort Worth-Saint Louis-Chicago run. Canadian Colonial Airways used the airplane on its New York-Albany-Montreal run. Jimmy Doolittle established a Burbank-New York speed record and veteran airline pilot Dick Merrill flew one from New York to England and return.



In its day it was considered a high speed transport. It was

powered by a Wright "Cyclone" SR-1820-F2 engine rated at 735 h.p. with a maximum speed of 225 mph and a cruise speed of 205 mph. In December 1934 a twin engine version of the transport passed engineering stages but production was stopped. The production of military aircraft held more promise, so in the late 1930s Vultee spent most of its time developing attack bombers based on the design of the V-1.

Via OX5 to Oshkosh

Suspended in the rotunda of the Lubbock Science Spectrum Museum is the superbly restored 1929

Alexander Eaglerock NC6601. Texas Wing members Jack Brouse and Reagan Ormond flew the airplane to Oshkosh in 1973. The flight was a triumph in itself. In the early days of flying, forced landings in OX5 powered airplanes were quite common. (The editor recalls one flight in 1939 when the young pilot bought a Waco 10 in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania and had nine forced landings on his trip back to Colorado).

For their Texas-Wisconsin flight Brouse and Ormond made special plans in case a forced landing happened. They used a ground/air caravan with a pickup truck and a Cherokee 180 chase plane. A 12-volt battery was installed in the



Eaglerock that operated a radio transceiver. Jack said "From Iowa we laid out a course straight north to Hwy 80m in Nebraska. Then we followed the highway east to Dubuque, Iowa, then we headed northeast to

Fond du Lac, and finally straight north to Oshkosh. We had made up three sets of maps with marked increments of ten miles. On each half hour the Eaglerock pilot would radio report his mile marker to the ground chasers Then, if nothing was heard for a time period, they would know the approximate area where they should start looking for the downed airplane. Brouse and Ormond piloted the airplane for two hours each. Jack Brouse later said, "That is all you could stand". The flight took three days with sixteen stops.

The cross-country flight from Texas to Oshkosh by Jack Brouse and Reagan Ormond was long and tedious. No cash awards for flight completion or workmanship were made. But the airplane earned three distinctive awards of the year -- The restored Alexander Eaglerock was Grand Champion in three major flyins in 1973: The Texas AAA, The AAA-APM Invitational in Iowa, and the EAA Grand Champion at Oshkosh.

The pictures below show Jack Brouse wing-walking NC6601 in Blakesburg, Iowa and Jack, Reagan Ormond and Douglas Boren with their three awards at the AAA HQ in Ottumwa, Iowa.





Self-taught OX5 pilot

The man standing beside the tail of NC6601 is Reagan D. Ormand, OX5 9635. While he flew many hours in this Alexander Eaglerock (a "primitive" airplane when compared to modern standards), the "aircraft" he first flew was considerably more primitive than the real 1929 biplane. In fact it was constructed with 2X4s and had cardboard wings. The contraption was tethered to a fencepost, and in the near-constant strong winds of the Texas Panhandle Reagan learned how to hold the wings level and control pitch, bank and yaw.



In the meantime Reagan constructed a glider and with the factors he had learned from his fencepost contraption he gradually learned to fly the glider. His motion power was supplied by his mother who drove a Model T Ford with a rope attached to the glider. In west Texas there was plenty of room for a "lesson". The road past his house went for 16 miles before it made a turn.

The first real airplane Reagan owned was a "long wing" Eaglerock. (It had no center section between the wings). In 1935 the owner flew from Lubbock to Littlefield, Reagan's home town. He picked up Reagan and they flew back to Lubbock. The flight was the only dual instruction that Regan ever received, and he soloed the Eaglerock back to Littlefield. As owner and pilot of an OX5 powered airplane prior to 1940 he became eligible to join the future OX5 Aviation Pioneers.

Regan Ormand, OX5 9635, "Flew West" a number of years ago, but his aviation spirit and enthusiasm remain.

Message from the Wing President



As this year is flying by, I just realized that this will be my final message as President. I want to thank all members for your great help and your terrific support over the years. We have a much larger and stronger Texas Wing than we did some years back and this will continue for many years to come. I will continue to support the Texas Wing and its new President. Being President of this group has generally been easy ... set up some meetings during the year and write a few messages ... not very hard but a little time consuming. I think that the toughest time of being an OX5 member is the loss of good

friends that I have admired. I will greatly miss Nick Pocock and Bud Johnson. I had some interesting conversations with both of these gentlemen. I can strongly say: Come to the meetings and visit with everyone. Your flying experience is invaluable and will never be duplicated. Pass this on to younger pilots and OX5 enthusiasts: **Come and hear the stories – there is fun in the stories, and wisdom**.

Our next meeting will be November 12-14 in Fredericksburg. We will have an "OX5 Hangar" at the Howard Johnson hotel on Friday and Saturday nights. On Saturday forenoon we will tour the National Monument of the Pacific War and then spend the remainder of the day visiting historic Fredericksburg on your own. There are some great Texas wineries in the area that you might want to see. On Saturday night I would like to set up a group dinner at one of the fantastic German restaurants in downtown Fredericksburg. Following this will be our yearly Brat Fest meeting.

Our annual meeting and election is due. Consider taking the job of Wing President, Wing Treasurer, or a vacant Governorship. **Below is the information for making your reservations.**

1220 N. US Hwy 87, Fredericksburg, Texas 78624-4200 Phone 830-990-4200 Howard Johnson Fredericksburg-Hill Country (Formerly the Holiday Inn Express).

Room rate, King or double \$80.10 per night (use our group code OX5) Dates: Nov 12-14-2010 Handicap rooms and King Suites available Make reservations before October 18.

SEE YOU AT THE NOVEMBER MEETING, DAN BROUSE

A Loyal Member flew west (Message by Wing Governor Jack Brouse)

Meredith G. "Bud" Johnson flew west on June 24, 2010. At an very early age Bud was an avid airplane enthusiast and planned to become a pilot. In 1948 he enlisted in the U. S. Marine Corps and while he was stationed in Honolulu he was selected for service in Naval Intelligence. After discharge he studied aeronautical engineering at the University of New Mexico. He leaned how to fly using the GI Bill and gathered flight hours the hard way. His first airline opportunity was flying for Capitol Airlines out of Nashville. From there he went to American Airlines.



Bud told me an interesting story about flying for American Airlines on the Honolulu to Australia route. He happened to know from celestial navigation that the Southern Cross Constellation was in a direct line along that route. From Honolulu, when they reached cruise altitude these stars would peak above the horizon. All Bud had to do was to keep a

certain star on the nose of the airplane and they would get there. He used no other form of navigation. None of the flight crew could figure out how he did this, and he didn't tell them.

I became friends with Bud when he joined the Texas Wing OX5. Some things we had in common were that we were both Marines, we both served in Hawaii, and both saw duty on the island of Engebi in the Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshal Island group. (However, my time served was several years before Bud's). While still a Marine Bud was involved in the atom bomb test preparations at Engebi. I told him that the Seabees had built runways on the island by digging up coral, spreading and compacting it to keep it alive and firm with constant sea watering. When Bud arrived a few years later the runways had disappeared and he told me that there was no suggestion of them ever being there. Of course there would not be any runways left after a few weeks of non-watering. We had a laugh over vanished runway and became really good friends. Bud was an OX5 member for many years, attended almost all reunions and meetings, and last served as a Texas Wing Governor.