



# OX5 AVIATION PIONEERS TEXAS WING NEWSLETTER

**JUNE 2008**

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## Message from the secretary:

This time the secretary's message will be part of the "mystery airplane" slot. Usually, on page one of this newsletter, a photograph of an early airplane has been shown for identification by OX5 members. It's been a fun thing to do.



Our first "mystery planes" were OX5 powered classics, such as the Waco 10 and the



Travel Air 2000. But this Texas Wing Newsletter (June, 2008) happens to be number 36 of the quarterly letters, and we have just about run out of OX5 aircraft to identify. Many members recall the WWII primary trainers and, in fact, a number of our pilots probably trained or instructed in "PTs" during WWII. Most members will know that the airplane on the left is a Ryan. So this time the trick will not be to identify the manufacturing company, but to decide which PT number was assigned to it. (The photo appeared on the front page of a recent Trade-A-Plane, and we thank them for its use).

Of the WWII primary trainers, what was the designation number for this Ryan PT?

- |       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|
| PT-13 | PT-17 | PT-19 |
| PT-22 | PT-23 | PT-26 |

**NOTE:** The aircraft description and PT number are given on page 5, as well as the aircraft models for which the other PT numbers were assigned.

## **They almost grounded Lindy**

An officer of the Texas Wing (in fact, our treasurer, Kaye Brouse) came across this TIME-CNN item. The newsletter editor is aware that Charles Lindbergh made several parachute jumps to escape a malfunctioning airplane. In fact, this editor, as a boy, avidly read and re-read Lindbergh's book, "We", and thought that parachute jumping was a standard requirement for becoming a pilot. (The result: Many running leaps from the shed roof to land on a hay-filled burlap bag below on the ground .... with no sprained ankles).

Following is the TIME-CNN item telling of a situation that might have canceled the Spirit of St. Louis flight:

Was Charles Lindbergh a reckless flyer who should have been grounded for his own good? Or was he a skilled pilot who prevailed, with a bit of luck, over the hazards of poor aircraft and sloppy maintenance of the 1920s?

These questions are raised in an intriguing exchange of letters between Lindy and William P. McCracken Jr., the first head of the Commerce Department's former aeronautics branch. The letters have only recently been disclosed by McCracken's widow. (McCracken died in 1969 and Lindbergh died in 1974).

Lindbergh readily agreed with McCracken that he had to parachute from planes no fewer than four times in his barnstorming and mail piloting days before his solo flight to Paris in 1927. But he explained to McCracken that he had been flying army salvage aircraft with "rotting



longerons, rusted wires and fittings, badly torn fabric, etc.” “Once”, he wrote, “my rusted rudder bar post broke while I was instructing a student during a low altitude turn in an OX5 Standard.” Another time, “My wooden propeller threw its sheet metal tipping on a southbound flight from Chicago. Again, “My DeHavilland throttle mechanism closed a few hundred feet above the ground over Illinois.”

The only lighting equipment his plane had in those days consisted of “a flashlight (pilot furnished) and a compass light attached to a button on the end of the stick.” So Lindbergh did not consider it unusual when he had to bail out for varied reasons: (1) Colliding with another plane in a sham combat attack over Texas , (2) Running out of fuel in a fog near Chicago when no one told him that his 120-gallon tank had been replaced with an 80-gallon tank, (3) Losing sight of the ground in a storm in those pre-radio years, and (4) Finding that his only illuminating flare had failed.

He wrote that he accepted his job as chief pilot on the Chicago-St Louis mail run “with the understanding that each pilot be furnished with a new seat-type silk parachute and that no criticism be made if the parachutes were used.”

In a letter from McCracken after Lindy’s fourth jump, “I was thinking of grounding you so you wouldn’t be taking anymore chances.” He did not do so only because of Bill Robertson, one of the owners of the mail service for which Lindy was flying, “came into my office in the Department of Commerce while I had the report on my desk” [on Lindy’s last bail out]. Bill persuaded McCracken not to ground Lindy because he said they



were trying to get the last \$2000 or \$3000 to build the Ryan plane, and if he were grounded for any reason they would never get the last of the money. The plane that Robertson referred to was the Spirit of St. Louis. McCracken said that “Robertson assured me that there would not be another repeat performance and that Lindy should phone St. Louis and get instructions so he would not take off from Chicago if there was the slightest doubt of the weather on that end of the route. In reply, Lindbergh wrote to McCracken that “If I had stayed on the ground when there was doubt about the weather I’m afraid the air mail would have just about stopped overnight.” But he added, “Naturally I’m deeply grateful to you for not having grounded me after that fourth jump.”

**Maj. Bill Robertson**

*Indeed, if McCracken had grounded Lindy, there might never have been a Spirit of St. Louis, a hero’s welcome in Paris, a ticker tape parade in New York, or a legend that inspired a generation.*



*While Charles Lindbergh was not a member of the OX5 Aviation Pioneers, (the OX5 was not organized until 1955), he certainly was more than adequately qualified to be a member. He flew OX5 powered Jennies, Standards, Curtiss Robins and many others.*

*Lindbergh was inducted into the OX5 Hall of Fame in 1979.*

**Ed. Note:** Is this a true story? Perhaps it is, or it may have originated somewhere out there in cyberspace. Would four parachute escapes be sufficient reason for grounding a pilot?

This editor was five years old when Lindbergh made his solo flight to Paris in 1927. But he remembers the occasion, and was given a toy Spirit of St. Louis airplane (hard steel, not plastic) that could be assembled and disassembled with nuts and bolts by small fingers. Through the years George Vose heard rumblings that Lindbergh’s sponsors, as the departure date approached, began to feel that Lindy, with the relatively low flight experience of some 600 hours, might not be qualified to make the voyage. After all, the French pilots Nungesser and Coli had just failed somewhere over the Atlantic, and U. S. pilots Clarence Chamberlain, and several other experienced U. S. pilots were already planning their take-offs.

Surely Lindbergh’s flight is recalled in detail by some OX5ers. Please let us know your thoughts.

## Doug McGuire, Texas OX5er and Vietnam “Huey” pilot

A United States pilot’s certificate assigns a rating of “Airplane” or “Rotorcraft” (or both). And there is a world of difference. An airplane cannot hover, fly backwards, or land in almost zero space. A rotorcraft cannot travel long distances at hundreds of miles an hour. The machines have different purposes, and we need them both.

The helicopter was a legend of the Vietnam War. Armed and unarmed helicopters transported troops to and from combat areas, helicopters evacuated battlefield wounded, and transported supplies, ammunition, and food to sites all over South Vietnam. These assignments could not have been completed with fixed wing aircraft.



**A “Huey” departing.**

He said, “Typical cargo to outposts included ammunition, mail and C-rations. When leaving the outposts we carried the injured, the dead in body bags, and those lucky ones who were rotating home.”

The UH-1B “Huey” or “Iroquois” was a single rotor turbine powered helicopter. The normal crew consisted of a pilot, a co-pilot, crew chief and door gunner. The helicopter provided rapid transportation on combat assaults. And once the battle was over, the chopper was the infantryman’s ticket to home base.

During Doug’s one-year tour in Viet Nam, he flew 480 combat hours and was awarded the Air Medal with eight Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Commendation Medal with an overseas bar, the National Defense Medal, and the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal.

We asked Doug to tell us about any mission he flew in his 480 combat hours. He thought a bit, and then told us of one experience he called a “Bad Night”. He was ordered to take some military officers to Ashau Valley near the border of Laos and west of Da Nang. The outpost was manned by the South Vietnamese military with U. S. Special Forces advisors. It was located near the Ho Chi Minh Trail, a busy supply route from North Vietnam to their troops operating in South Vietnam. Approximately one hundred soldiers of the Army Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN) and seven U. S. Special Forces manned the outpost. Their assignment was to observe traffic along the well-known supply line.



**Doug in the pilot’s seat**



**Off-loading combat troops**

With the military officers aboard, the flight was routine with good weather all the way. But such good weather was not to last. At about mid-afternoon low clouds and fog moved in, and the mountains all around the outpost were obscured. “Neither I nor my co-pilot were instrument rated, so we could not depart. We advised the ranking advisor of our predicament, and we told him we would have to remain overnight. He was apprehensive, and said that with a military helicopter in the compound we would expect to be attacked during the night.”

**“Our quarters for the night were underground bunkers with bamboo mats lining the ceiling and walls. While we could have eaten our meal with the South Vietnamese, we preferred to eat the C-rations that we carried. Every thirty minutes during the night the 105 mm Howitzers were fired into all quadrants to prevent an attack. It was a long, dark and noisy night. At the first light of dawn we had clear skies, and we got out of there pronto.**

(Next page)



Doug McGuire, OX5 22640, graduated from Hardin Simmons University in 1961. After completing four years of ROTC he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Army.

In 1963 he graduated from Primary Helicopter School at Fort Wolters, Texas, and was ordered to the I-Corps Aviation Company in Viet Nam.

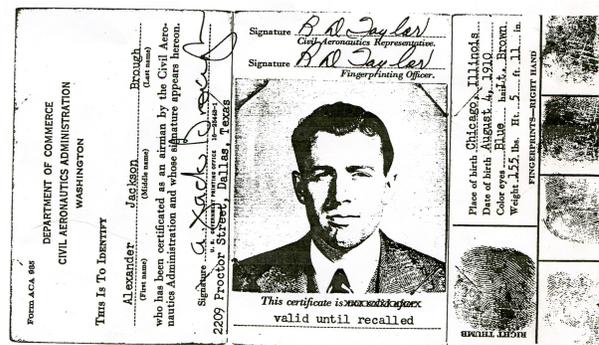
In recent years Doug has maintained his flying skill in fixed wing aircraft and served in the Civil Air Patrol. He resides in Alpine and is a member of the “West Texas Squadron” of the OX5 Texas Wing.

**A cargo drop to South Vietnam troops.**

## More about OX5er Jack Brough (Aug 1910 - Sep 2007)

A number of OX5ers were in aviation at the beginning of World War II.. Some were flying commercially, some were private pilots, and some were training to be pilots. Suddenly there were hurdles blocking the way. All civilian flying was grounded within 150 miles of either coastline. This editor, who was training in Maine, had to move to central Pennsylvania to continue flight training. And, en route to Pennsylvania, a stop-over was made at Augusta State Airport to obtain a CAA Identity Card. Finger prints and a photograph were required, and it was necessary to carry the card on all flights. While the editor’s ID card is long missing, below is a copy of Jack Brough’s card, signed by a CAA representative. Jack, residing then in Dallas, was about 30 years old.

Before Jack Brough “flew west” last September at age 97, we had made an appointment to interview him in Kerrville. But Jack passed away two weeks before the interview. The following paragraph excerpted from the Kerrville Daily Times was sent to us by his daughter, Pamela Matthews, of Arizona and long-time friend, Jimmie Lee Huckins, of Kerrville.



**Jack Brough: A pioneering career with Braniff Airlines was followed by his association with Trans World Airlines and RCA/Hertz Corporation. In both corporations he served as Executive Vice President overseeing expansion of domestic and international operations. Jack recorded many “firsts” in the exploration of service in South America for Braniff. Cutting through jungles with machetes to create a landing strip or negotiating with cannibalistic tribes was all part of a days work. During his efforts in tribal relations he agreed to become the first “white man” to cross a piranha engorged river by canoe. Ultimately, locating and negotiating for land and overseeing construction of airline terminals became his passion. He relished learning the customs and business protocols of each country. Over the course of his career he did business in six of our seven continents.**

Although Jack Brough flew many classic airplanes, including the Lockheed Vega and the Lockheed Orion, it is a surprise that he made only one flight in an OX5 powered airplane. Here is the story from his archives of that flight, as relayed to us. (His exact words):

**“In Braniff there was a Captain Art Mills who was a good friend and took an interest in my flying. He rode with me several times and was most helpful in correcting some of my bad habits or improper handling of the planes we flew. Art was one of the original Navy carrier qualified pilots and had many a story to spin”.**

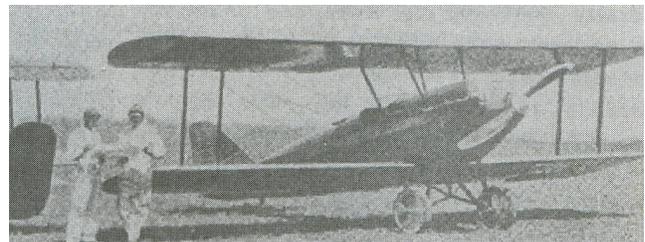
**“Art’s brothers operated an automobile parts business in Muscatine, Iowa, and made a bid to buy an OX5 Laird biplane that had been tied down for several months near Rensselaer, Indiana. Rensselaer is just about 120 miles south of Chicago, and in an area with which I was familiar”.**

**“Art asked me if I’d be interested in bringing the plane to Chicago. Of course I would! So, one Thursday I gathered up a mechanic and in a pickup truck we took along four five-gallon cans of aviation gas, a couple gallons of oil, and ten gallons of water for the OX5 engine”.**

**“We arrived by mid-morning and really didn’t have much trouble getting the engine started. So I took off, and everything went well until I leveled off at about 3,000 feet when the engine started to miss badly. I immediately turned around to head back to the Rensselaer pasture. But when I put the nose down the engine smoothed out. I knew that the mechanic had already gone, so I started back north again. At about the time I was in the vicinity of the Ford Company Airport the engine again acted up. We (the mechanics and I) could not find the cause. So I took off again, heading for Chicago Midway Airport. Nose up the engine ran OK -- and nose down it ran OK, but in level flight it missed. I reached Midway and landed. So it had to be a fuel problem. We removed the center section fuel tank from the upper wing and discovered that some of the old fuel had jelled and was floating across the gravity feed opening when I was in level flight.”**

**“That was my sole experience with an OX5 engine but it qualified me to become a member of the OX5 Aviation Pioneers. I joined in 1956 [ Ed note: When OX5 was one year old] and hold membership number 3942 which is now a relatively low number .... most of the older pilots have “gone west”, so to speak.”**

**“I was secretary of the New York Wing and Gerry and I participated in a State Convention at Glenn Curtiss’ home. Since I moved to Texas I’ve been a member of the Central Texas Wing [now combined with the Texas Wing]. When a bunch of those old pilots get together with a couple cocktails under their belt, the flying stories start. You’ve never heard the likes!”**



Probably the OX5 “Laird” that Jack Brough flew was a 1924 “Laird Swallow”

## The “Mystery Plane”



The mystery plane on page one is a Ryan **PT-22**. As WWII was developing, the U. S. Army Air Corps considered the sleek Ryan ST as a possible military trainer. The cockpits were enlarged, all streamlined metal fairings were eliminated, and the Menasco engine was replaced by a 160 h.p. Kinner R-56. Its empty weight was 1,278 lbs with a useful load of 547 lbs. Max speed 128, cruise 116, stall speed (no flaps) 64. Thousands of young men, indoctrinated by the PT-22, became good military pilots.

The **PT-13**, designed by Mac Short and Lloyd Stearman, was a fabric-covered tubular biplane powered by 215 h.p. Lycoming engines. After more than 1000 airplanes were produced, it was replaced by the **PT-17** Stearman-Boeing “Kaydet” in 1943. The **PT-19**, produced by the Fairchild Aircraft Company, was a two-place low wing monoplane

with tandem, open cockpit, seating. The **PT-23**, a similar low wing monoplane also built by Fairchild, was powered by a Continental W-670-6 radial engine rated at 220 h.p. The **PT-26** was heavier than the PT-19 and the PT-23 and was powered by a 200 h.p. Ranger engine. It was produced in Canada under U. S. "Lend-Lease" in large numbers. It was fabric-covered over its wood veneer and was known as the "Cornell". It had a closable sliding canopy more suitable to the Canadian climate. **(Information from Juptner, Joseph, U. S. Civil Aircraft Series, Vol 7, McGraw-Hill, 1964**

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## A message from Wing President Dan Brouse

We decided to get the June newsletter out a little early along with the Gainesville invitation. Yes, that's correct. The Gainesville summer meeting is upon us again. Time flies when you're having fun.

I remember several years back when Kaye went to her first OX5 meeting in Gainesville. My Dad talked with Don Marek and he gave Kaye a ride in his OX5 Waco 10. When I heard this, it scared the hell out of me. Not because I was afraid of Don's flying, or the age of the Waco 10. Kaye is afraid of heights. She can't even stand on a stool without it bothering her. She has been OK when flying, but that's been in an enclosed cockpit. The good news is that she loved it, and thinks that we should have an open cockpit biplane.

This brings me to every pilot's dilemma, buying or renting. All of us would like to own the airplane of our dreams. In my case it's the airplanes of my dreams, but that is dictated by how much money we are willing to part with. And that's the easy part. Then comes hangar rent, maintenance and, of course, the gas that has always been too expensive. It sure seemed a lot easier when I was young, lived at home, and just went to the airport and flew one of Dad's airplanes that he maintained and put the gas into. (Please don't ask him about this – I'm not sure he is over what it cost him).

So rent. But wait a minute. How well has the airplane been maintained? Or can you even get the airplane you prefer to fly? I guess I'm not partial to renting, and I have a tough time parting with my money, especially when it's a lot of it. So I guess until I win the Mega Lottery I'll just fly whatever I can get my hands on, or if there's one of you out there who has an airplane you don't need and would like me to take it off your hands.

I told you all that, to get to the point of this month's message, Gainesville is a great meeting place because you get to ride around in a golf cart and look at all the really cool airplanes. This is where the list of airplanes that I would love to own gets longer. You meet the owners and talk with them about how their airplanes fly. You get the flying bug all over again, and it's a great feeling. But, most of all, I get to visit with my OX5 friends and hear their stories. And the history of the OX5 never dies.

See you all in Gainesville, **Dan**

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## Texas Wing member Dan Dinsmore (From New Hampshire) will be missed

We regret to report the Westward Flight of loyal member **Dan Dinsmore** on February 20, 2008. Dan often traveled from New Hampshire to Texas to participate in our Wing activities. For many years, since his retirement as an aircraft power plant engineer, he diligently gathered hard-to-locate parts to assemble a running OX5 engine. His engine was almost ready to start. All he needed was a strong person to pull the propeller through. We hope that Dan's OX5 engine will soon roar its pretty sound, and then be viewed by many people in an OX5 museum in New England or elsewhere.

