



OX5 AVIATION PIONEERS TEXAS WING NEWSLETTER

March, 2010

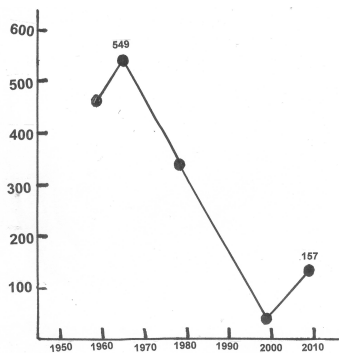
No. 44

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Message from the Editor/Secretary

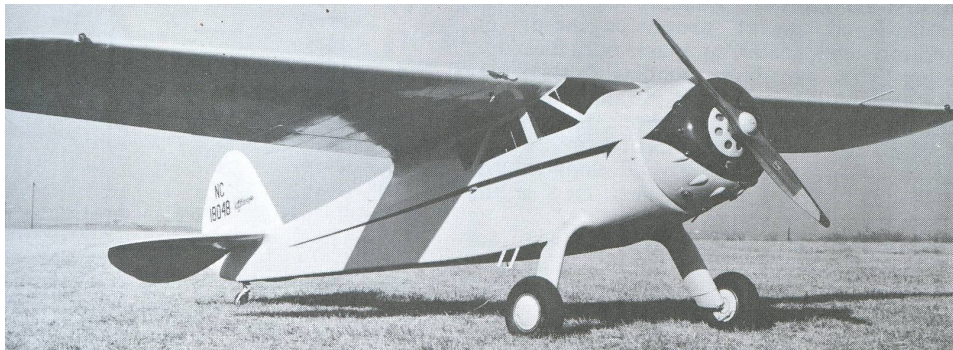
Question: Is the Texas OX5 Wing recovering from its progressive loss of members beginning in the late 1960s? Perhaps it is recovering. I have looked over five membership rosters between 1959 and 2009. The Texas membership peaked at 540 in 1969 and decreased gradually to only 38 members in 1999. Ten years later we have regained to 147 members. The drastic membership decrease from 1965 to 1999 reflects the loss by mortalities and non-articipation through aging. Indeed, had the steady decrease continued, our Wing would have been completely dissolved by the year 2001.



The turning point occurred after the By-Laws were changed by not requiring actual experience in flight or maintenance of the OX5 engine. Membership requirements now specify only a sincere interest in the history and the contributions of Glenn Curtiss' great engine. OX5 powered airplanes no longer fly the sky and few OX5 engines exist outside of museums.

All of us recently received a national dues notice for 2010. If you have not paid your 2010 dues, please do so. If you have forgotten your OX5 membership number, send your dues payment anyway – The Pittsburgh office will look it up. Also, this year, you will receive a wallet size membership card showing your name, number and participation period.

This issue's Mystery Airplane



What is this uncluttered high wing monoplane? Clues: It was powered by a 145 hp Warner "Super Scarab" engine and was manufactured in Wichita, Kansas.

A. Harlow PJ6

B. Howard DGA

C. Fairchild 45

D. Cessna "Airmaster" C-38

(Information and description on page 6)

The 1988 Texas OX5 Aviation Pioneers Day (The event that failed to happen)

Twenty-two years ago the Texas OX5 Wing scheduled a special celebration in Dallas: "The OX5 Aviation Pioneers Day". The scheduled date was December 17, 1988. What had originally been planned as a modest OX5 celebration of the 1903 Kitty Hawk flight turned into an extra special occasion – Jimmie Mattern (OX5 499) was to be the guest speaker. Guests signed in and assisted from many aviation groups including the Air Force Association, the Braniff Silver Eagles, the Daedalians, the Quiet Birdmen and the Aviation Writers Association. In 1984 Mattern had been honored by induction into the OX5 Hall of Fame.

FAA Inspector George Haddaway (OX5 9956) would be the event chairman, Robert Gettelman (OX5 9254), President of the Texas Wing, was to be coordinator, and Ben Towle (OX5 12816) was in charge of reservations. *(Note: Two of these members, Gettelman and Towle are still active in the Texas Wing).* A reception was to be held followed by the showing of historical films and the dinner honoring Jimmie Mattern. Guest speaker Jimmie Mattern, a long-time Texas aviation pilot and businessman had completed, after Lindbergh, the next successful solo flight across the Atlantic.

But the celebration was not to be. In a very short time Jimmie Mattern, age 83, became severely ill and passed away on December 17, 1988, the day of the scheduled event in Dallas to honor his life.

(We thank Texas Wing Historian Hazel Fehmel for providing the above information).

Pilot Jimmie Mattern of the "Golden Age of Flying"



Jimmie Mattern (OX5 499) has been described as "the last of the Golden Age solo long distance pilots". He was born in Illinois in 1905 but in early life Jimmie moved to Texas. He was a member of the U. S. Army Air Corps Reserve based at Hensley Field in Dallas. He completed many record breaking world-wide flights prior to World War II. In the late 1930s he flew commercially out of San Angelo where he assisted in establishing Cromwell Air Lines, one of Texas' pioneer air operations. He also operated a Stinson dealership on Meacham Field in Fort Worth.

Jimmie Mattern made most of his famous flights prior to World War II. In the early 1930s, in a Lockheed Vega, he made two attempts to fly around the world. The second was solo and is described on the next page. Here are a few of Mattern's record-making flights:

Mattern in Germany 1932

With a single engine Lockheed Vega he completed the next solo Atlantic crossing after Lindbergh from Newfoundland to Berlin in 29 hours 31 minutes.

Established a trans-Atlantic speed record of 10 hours 50 minutes. (The record was held for eight years).

During his first attempted circum-global solo flight in 1932 he established these records:

- First flight from New York to Norway
- First man to fly the Atlantic solo after Lindbergh
- Longest solo flight over water without an automatic pilot
- First flight from New York to Moscow (two legs)

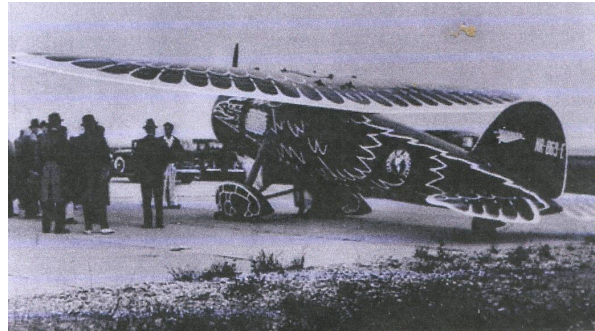
In the later 1930s:

- Made a non-stop flight from Oakland to Fairbanks
- Flew from Fairbanks to North Pole and returned to Barrow
- Operated first scheduled airline from the US to Mexico.
- Held the record for the most hours flown in a P-38. (3,000-plus hours)

In 1929 Jimmie became a pilot for Texas oil wildcatter Carl Cromwell of San Angelo. Cromwell decided to start a Texas Airline using Lockheed Vegas that would operate between Oklahoma City, Dallas, San Angelo and Brownsville. The line folded in 1932 and Jimmie purchased Vega NC869E in which he would attempt to break the round-the-world record established by Wiley Post and Harold Gatty. He teamed up with a friend, Bennett Griffin, who would serve as Navigator and co-pilot of the Vega they had named the "Century of Progress". On June 4, 1932 they departed Floyd Bennett Field in New York and set a speed record to Berlin.

They departed from Berlin, but as they approached Moscow the hatch on the plane broke loose. It damaged the tail section and forced Mattern to set down near a rural village. Although they had arranged for permission to fly over Russia they were arrested by local officials. They were taken to Moscow and the Kremlin where they were interrogated as spies. The U.S. government eventually secured Mattern's and Griffin's release and they returned to the U.S., leaving their airplane behind. Eventually the Russians crated the wreckage and shipped it back to Mattern.

Not content with failing to set the around-the-world flight record, Jimmie decided on an even more ambitious project. He would fly solo around the world. Armed with a rebuilt and modified plane, and permissions to fly over Europe and Russia, the new "Century of Progress" departed Floyd Bennett Field on June 13, 1933. Forty-eight hours later he reached Oslo. From Oslo he flew to Moscow and proceeded toward Khabarousk. Without suitable charts or navigational help, he lost his way and set down near the Andmir River. There local peasants filled his plane with tractor fuel and he finally made it to Khabarousk, Siberia.



Lockheed Vega N8696



On June 14th he took off for Nome. But only four hours from Alaska and over the vast wastes of arctic Siberia the crude fuel he had taken on caused an engine failure and he was forced to land on the tundra, knocking off the landing gear. He spent the next two weeks surviving alone in the wilderness. Headlines in U. S. Newspapers reported that he was missing and hopelessly lost. Finally he was found by Siberian natives who carried him to the settlement of Andiyar where he was nursed back to health. He spent several weeks in the settlement trying to bring in a plane so he could continue his solo flight. At this time, and with no information on his whereabouts, the pilots at Floyd Bennett Field flew a search Bellanca to Alaska thinking that he might have gone down there. In the meantime Russian pilot Levensky received permission to fly him to Nome. From Nome he flew the Bellanca solo on to Floyd Bennett Field, thus completing his solo round-the-world flight except for the unfortunate gap in Siberia. Citizens of New York City, exuberant that he had finally returned, held a hero's ticker tape parade for him.

Before take-off on the 1933 flight

In 1938 Jimmie moved to California to work for the Lockheed company test flying the P-38. He flew many different types of aircraft for Lockheed and finally accepted the task of being the personal pilot for Lockheed's president. But he felt that something was wrong. He was having unusual spasms and shakes. The Mayo Clinic diagnosed that he had a ruptured blood vessel in his brain. Jimmie was told that he could never fly again for fear of aggravating the rupture. Several years later Jimmie passed away on December 17, 1988 -- the exact same day he had been scheduled to be guest speaker at the OX5 Pioneer Day Celebration in Dallas.

Although Jimmie had been forced to retire from flight he never lost touch with aviation. He was instrumental in organizing the California Wing of the OX5 and helped to host the 1958 OX5 national convention in Los Angeles.

Jimmie Mattern and Will Rogers were good friends



Update on Bob Gettelman Past Texas Wing and National President

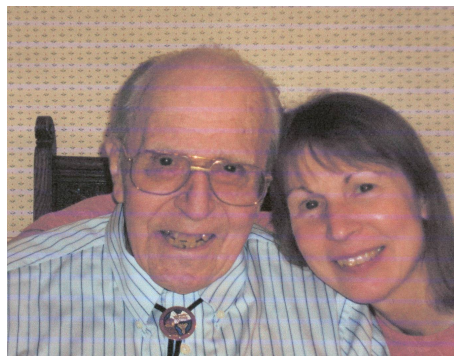
Robert "Bob" Gettelman, now a hearty 96 years old, recently ordered an OX5 bolo tie and he promised to send a picture of him wearing it. A bolo tie was sent to him in Wausau, Wisconsin as a gift from the Texas Wing friends. And below are the promised pictures, one with his wife Margarita and one with his daughter Robin.

He became an OX5er in the early 1960s and says, "That was the beginning of some great experiences with many wonderful people".

Bob was 16 years old when he and his older brother taught themselves how to fly in a water glider towed behind a 30 hp Elto Quad boat. This was followed by flight time in a Curtiss Junior and an OX5 Travel Air. 2000. Bob has owned and flown many airplanes since those classics.



In 1965 he moved to Mineral Wells and went back into the business of manufacturing powered aircraft movers. Bob was National OX5 President in 1999 and served for many years as Texas Wing President. OX5ers remember many pleasant reunions at his manufacturing hanger on Mineral Wells Airport. Members at his "brat fests" were treated with all fixin's flown from Wisconsin.



Finally, an OX5er in farthest west Texas

Texas is a large state and the OX5 membership is spread widely. Texas is smaller than Alaska but while their members are located mainly in the Anchorage and Fairbanks areas, Texas members are scattered all over the place. It would be difficult for our Wing to have monthly luncheon meetings at a place convenient to everyone. But somehow we manage to hang together with recent meetings in the big cities and such far-flung places as Gainesville, Tyler, Brownsville, Alpine and the *Olde Kingsbury Aerodrome*.

The map below shows where we are. The Dallas-Fort Worth "Metroplex" is the home of many members. Others live in Houston, San Antonio and Austin. Others are scattered throughout the state – the Rio Grande Valley, the Hill Country and the Panhandle. And a membership surge has happened in the Brewster-Jeff Davis-Presidio tri-county area.

Until now there has never been an OX5 member in or near our farthest west city of El Paso, but two months ago Robert (Bob) Wier of that west Texas city joined our ranks with the OX5 number of 23009. "Bob" is a pilot of 45 years. During his career he has instructed Air Force cadets in primary training and flew cooperate jets before flying for a major airline Air West airline. After his recent airline retirement he is once again back into corporate aviation in the petroleum industry.

So now the membership map of the Texas Wing covers almost a 700-mile spread. Perhaps we will soon have more members in the El Paso area. Now, how about Midland? Odessa? Lubbock? San Angelo? Amarillo? There are potential OX5ers in those five cities and all over Texas.



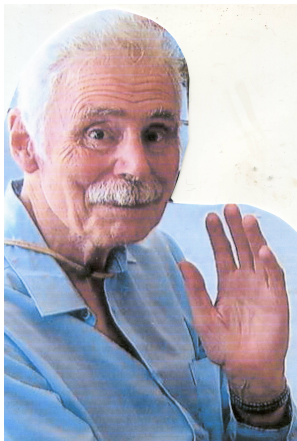
Members flown west



Nicholas “Nick” G. Pocock 1934-2009

Nick Pocock departed on his Flight West in December 2009. He will be missed. He was born in London, England in 1934. One of his childhood memories, he told us, was the “special treat” of sheltering under the stairs with a young neighbor friend where they drew pictures of Spitfires and Hurricanes while German bombs dropped all around them. After World War II, in 1947, at age 14, he and friends cycled all over England visiting aerodromes and taking pictures of “older relics”. His first flight was in a Miles Messenger at Croydon Airport where he sold tickets for passenger flights by two lady pilots who were former Air Transport Auxiliary ferry pilots. His work was in exchange for rides in DH89 Dragon Rapides twin engine airplanes.

In 1951 Nick was awarded a scholarship by the Air Training Corps to learn to fly in Tiger Moths at the London Aero Club. This made him eligible for the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve for further training in de Havilland Chipmunks.



In 1956 he started with the National Service in the RAF as an instrument fitter working on Hunters, Meteors, Javalinas, Ansons, Vampires and Dakotas. He said “We even serviced some Battle of Brittan’s Spitfires whether they needed it or not”.

In 1959 he checked in with a group operating Tiger Moths. Aerobatic flying became his hobby and he practiced every day, weather permitting. In 1962 he represented the United Kingdom in the World Aerobatic Championships in Hungary. In 1963 he won the Pearl Harbor Trophy for the best British performance in the Lockheed International Aerobatic competition. There he was invited by Frank Price of Waco to fly his modified Great Lakes in an air show. Price, at the time, was promoting at Waco-Scott Field. Thus began his life in the United States.

For Two years he did agricultural spraying in Texas, Nicaragua and Mississippi in A-Model Snows and 600 hp Snow S2Cs. Back in Texas for the winter he instructed aerobatics for Frank Price and the American Tiger Club. During his spare time in the next 16 years he said that he “dabbled in skywriting, gliding and towing, importing European aircraft and wrote magazine articles and a book.

In recent years he taught drafting and design at Texas State Technical College in Waco. And during that time he also meticulously restored his beautiful red OX5 Curtiss Robin.

Tom Henry Frye 1918-2009

Tom Henry Frye flew west on December 25, 2009. As a boy he knew that he wanted to fly, and after his first spin around the airport as a college student in Stillwater, Oklahoma he knew that he had made the right choice. He quit college to become a pilot. He bartered flight time by working as a mechanic at the Stillwater Airport. After receiving his commercial pilot and instructor certificates he served as a civilian flight instructor during WWII.

After the war he began to fly for Braniff Airways in DC-3s. This was to become a thirty-year career. He flew the DC-4, the DC-6, the DC-7, the Lockheed Electra, the Boeing 707 and the 747 for Braniff. He was based in Dallas and later moved with his family to California to transport troops to and from Vietnam and the Pacific. He made many flights to Hawaii in Braniff’s Orange Boeing 747, “the Great Pumpkin”, and flew on the company’s inaugural flight to London in March 1978. He was also picked for other select assignments.



He was one of five Braniff Pilots selected to ferry dignitaries from Dallas Love Field to the opening of the Dallas/Fort Worth Regional Airport in 1973. He retired in September 1978 and later, in 1980, he and his family moved to Cedar Creek Lake and then to a family ranch in Wheeler County in 1995.

Tom Frye OX5 #13045 was a dedicated member and an OX5 promoter and recruiter. One day in a two-hour period at an annual Braniff Silver Eagles Fly-in he enlisted two fellow Braniff pilots, Gene Clark and George Chandler into the OX5. Capt. Gene Clark is now deceased but George Chandler remains very active in the Texas Wing.

Tom Frye's helpfulness and friendliness will be missed by all of us.

Message from the Wing President



Time to shift gears. The North Texas Antique Airplane Association (NTAAA) has decided NOT to have their Gainesville Fly-In in June this year. They will have their Fly-In in October. An October Gainesville Fly-In would interfere with our Kingsbury Brat Fest. So, now for the shifting of gears: The NTAAA, the Short Wing Piper Club, and the International Biplane Association will be attending the Ranger Fly-In and Air Show on May 28 through May 30 at the Ranger Airport (F23). Therefore I decided to change our summer meeting to the Ranger Fly-In in May.

The Texas Wing OX5 meeting will be Saturday at 11 a.m. at the airport just prior to the air show which starts at 1 p.m. I have been in contact with the La Quinta Inn and Suites in Eastland on I-20, about seven miles from the Ranger Airport and they are giving us a very good room rate. We will get that information to you as soon as possible so you can make your reservations. (Free shuttle from motel to airport).

If we book enough rooms we will get the hospitality room (OX5 Texas Hangar) at no charge. I have invited the other airplane clubs to join us. We will provide snacks, munchies and sodas and the rest is BYOB. We are thinking about a dutch treat dinner Saturday evening at a local restaurant. We are still in the planning stage. MORE LATER.

THIS IS GOING TO BE MORE FUN THAN WE HAVE HAD IN A LONG TIME. BE SURE TO BE THERE.

Dan Brouse, Texas Wing President

ED NOTE Dan has sent this additional information: Official HQ La Quinta Inn: King room \$70, double bed room \$79 Mention "Ranger Air Show" for this \$20 discount rate before May 21. Tel. 1-254-629-1414

MORE LATER

The Mystery Plane



The "Mystery Airplane" on page 1 is a Cessna C-37 "Airmaster" certificated on February 8, 1937. It was designed after the earlier Cessna model C-34, but by 1937 requisites for private owned airplanes had gone up considerably. So it was necessary to provide changes just to keep up with competition. Hence the "Airmaster".

The interior was enlarged and the cabin was made quieter and more comfortable. It carried four and had a good performance on a 145 hp Warner engine. It had two wing tanks holding 17.5 gallons each providing, at 2050 rpm, a cruise speed of 143 mph at sea level. Price \$5,490 at factory. (The "deluxe" version sold for \$6,000).

(Photo and information from J. P. Juptner, US Civil Aircraft Series. Vol 7, McGraw Hill 1978)

