



OX5 AVIATION PIONEERS TEXAS WING NEWSLETTER

March 2013 No. 56
George Vose, Editor/Secretary
PO Box 908, Alpine, Texas 79831

Message from the Editor/Secretary



I left the Dallas-Fort Worth area in 1977 and moved to the far west Texas Big Bend Country. On an earlier visit to the Brewster-Presidio Counties, from Highway 90 between Alpine and Marfa one could see the deserted structures of the Marfa Army Air Field. The large hangars and buildings were still there, and it really did not look all-that-abandoned. But it was. Soon the structures were sold by the War Assets Commission, disassembled and moved elsewhere. But the runways, taxiways and parking ramps were still fairly intact. OX5 member David Sanderson recently sent some pictures of the remains of the “ghost” airfield, and its story starts on page 2.

By this time, all OX5 members have received a notification of their 2013 annual dues. Please send your \$30 dues to National Headquarters. (OX5, PO Box 769, Troy, OH, 45373). By agreement, in order for Texas members to continue receiving this free Texas Wing Newsletter, your national dues must be paid. Thank you !

This issue’s “Mystery Airplane”

Here is a pretty monoplane flying over Kansas City in 1930.



What model is it?

- A. American Eagle E-430
- B. Nicholas-Beezley NB-41
- C. Kari-Keen 90
- D. Aeronca C-3

(Answer and information on page 4)

Message from Texas Wing President, Mike Lawrence

Dear Texas Wing Members:



As I begin the last few months of my term as your President, I can report to each of you that the Texas Wing remains financially sound and robust. We have added new members, some of whom are younger than most of us. One of our younger members, who also serves on your Board, will almost certainly be your next President. He is a commercial pilot/flight instructor, does aerial wildlife telemetry and monitoring, and was instructed by George Vose, your newsletter editor.

As most of you know, I also serve on the National Board of Governors. I am pleased to report the changes instituted recently by the National Board will insure the financial security of OX5 for the foreseeable future. Also, I and others believe that if these changes result in the savings we anticipate, the national dues may be reduced next year.

(Continued, next page)

WING OFFICERS: Michael Lawrence, President Cade Woodward, Vice President George Vose, Secretary/Editor
Michelle Lawrence, Treasurer Hazel Fehmel, Historian

GOVERNORS: Jack Brouse Susie Brouse Barbara Kraemer Michelle Lawrence Michael Lawrence
Cade Woodward George Vose

(Continued President's Message)

The only serious official duty left for me to perform is to pick the spot for our next Texas Wing meeting in May or June. The meeting will be held in Midland/Odessa and details will be provided to you shortly. It has been some time since we've had a meeting in West Texas, and I hope all of you will make an effort to attend. We always have a great time, and the debriefings at the hospitality room provide an opportunity to hear experiences and stories you won't hear anywhere else.

Anyway, this old man's time as your leader is winding down. I'm actually astonished that I might actually get through this without some major faux faux or mistake on my part. Just lucky, I guess.

In closing, I wish each of you good health, good luck and safe flying

Sincerely,

Michael Lawrence

A "ghost" WWII Army Air Field

Perhaps Marfa AAF should have remained open as a memorial museum of the WWII era. The Marfa Army Air Field (as it was then named) can no longer be seen from the highway. But if one looks carefully and drives slowly, there is a sign at the old main gate. All of the major runways, taxiways, parking ramps and base streets, although disappearing slowly by encroaching trees and brush, are still there. They still can be seen quite well from the air. OX5 member David Sanderson recently sent some of his air views of the old Airfield and two early photos from Wikipedia.



Marfa Army Air Field during WWII (Looking south)

Construction began in June 1942, and enough construction was finished for the first cadets to arrive on December 5, 1942. It consisted of six asphalt runways with a system of taxiways and ramps. To the north was an extensive street grid, with about 250 buildings including a hospital, barracks, chapel, theatre, mess halls, control tower and hangars.

Here is a bit of the history of Marfa AAF:

Planning for the construction of Marfa Army Air Field began in 1942. The Marfa area was selected for a site for training U. S. Army Air Corps advanced multiengine pilots. Marfa and nearby Alpine each voted \$10,000 in bonds to buy the land for \$6.50 an acre with the plan to lease it to the War Department for 25 years at one dollar a year. However, the Military decided to purchase the 2,748 acres directly.



Parking ramp, WWII

In November 25, 1942, the first shipment of Cessna UC-78 twin-engine trainers arrived. The first class completed their course on February 6, 1943, several weeks ahead of schedule. The flow of aircraft continued to be delivered as training increased. Each month a class completed their training until training ceased in May, 1945. At its peak, Marfa AAF operated a total of 500 aircraft. When the base finally closed the Marfa townspeople held a number of going away parties, dances and barbecues for the departing airmen.



Fritz Kahl addressing the Texas Wing, 2003

As one might expect, many men of Marfa AAF married local girls. One of these was 1st Lt./ flight instructor Fritz Kahl who married Georgie Jones of a ranching family in 1944. After the war, Fritz continued to operate commercially the Marfa Municipal Airport until 1987. Fritz, who had often flown his older brother's Waco 9, joined the Texas Wing of the OX5 Aviation Pioneers in 1999. On the left is a picture of Fritz when he addressed an OX5 Wing meeting in Alpine in 2003. Fritz was a great public speaker, and his wife, Georgie, recently told us that this occasion was his last speech. Fritz Kahl flew west on May 30, 2004.



Present day air view of Marfa AAF looking west



The main gate entrance, 2013



(Left)
Only a small sign in memory of Marfa AAF

A flight engineer who toured the world, CMSgt Stephen Sullivan

OX5 member CMSgt Stephen Sullivan, USAF flight engineer, at age 94 flew west on June 30, 2012. We regret the delay in reporting this. His loving wife, Beverly, sent us some information that will interest OX5 members. In her words, "I hope this information will give the OX5 Aviation Pioneers an insight into what kind of a patriot 'Sully' was".

Stephen Sullivan followed his father in military duty. He arrived in San Antonio in 1939 when his father was transferred from Scott Field, Illinois to Duncan Field, Texas (presently Kelly Field Annex).



At Brooks Field in 1940, age 22

A year later he joined the Army Air Corps, serving at Randolph Field, then he transferred to Brooks Field. There he served as a crew member on aircraft utilized by AAF Generals Walter Kruger, Courtney Hodges, William Simpson, John Lucas and other top military figures. In January 1948 he was stationed in Sofia, Bulgaria with the Military Attaché System, and in July of the same year he was transferred to Athens, Greece with the duty of crew chief on aircraft used by Air Attachés of the two countries.. Then CMSgt Sullivan served as crew chief on aircraft assigned to Brigadier General L. Wade, the Air Force Attaché in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He became accustomed to flying with Generals, dignitaries and Shahs. That was the job he wanted. "He was told he'd have to be ready at a moment's notice, at two in the morning or four in the morning." said his step daughter, Carrie Itchner. "He was on call 24/7 but he loved his flying duty."



U. S. Legation C-47 in Sofia, Bulgaria

During his 32-year career, Sullivan clocked more than 15,000 hours of flight engineer time and had intelligence assignment in Bulgaria, Iran and Viet Nam. A proud moment for Sullivan was in helping Randolph AFB acquire the Cessna T-37 "Tweety Bird," which was used to train jet pilots. CMSgt Sullivan served our country well, and he will be missed by many.

The Mystery Airplane, Page 1 The "Mystery Plane" is an American Eagle E-430. While one usually associates American Eagles with biplanes, the model B-430 was a four-place high wing monoplane. Designed by Stan Wallace and built by American Eagle in 1930, it was felt that a cabin monoplane would eventually replace the open cockpit biplane – "Ideal for Dad, Mom and the kids". The power plant was a 7-cylinder Continental A-70 of 165 h.p. Empty weight 1875 lb. Gross wgt. 3008 lbs, max speed 115, cruise 100 and landing speed 50. Factory price \$6,995, lowered to \$5,995 in 1931.



(Photo and picture from J.P. Juptner, U.S. Civil Aircraft Series, Vol 2, McGraw Hill 1978)

Airplanes engines prior to the OX5

Editor Note: OX5 member John McCrory of Marfa has been researching early airplane engines that eventually led to Glenn Curtiss' OX5. The following is Part III of the series. (For Parts I and II, see OX5 web pages <http://ox5.org> that include the March and December 2012 Texas Wing Newsletters).

John McCrory's Part II article in the previous December 2012 newsletter closed with the forced landing by Lt. Foulois and Phillip Parmalee in the Rio Grande, followed by their return trip by train to San Antonio. The author's Part III continues from that point.

(See next page)

Military Aviation in Texas – A century ago

Part III

By John McCrory

Lt. Benjamin D. Foulois remained in charge of aviation at Fort Sam Houston when he and Phillip O. Parmalee returned by train after the dunking of the Collier-Wright Model B in the Rio Grande on the banks of the El Indio Ranch in far west Texas in early 1911.

The Army aeroplane inventory at Fort Sam was now back to only one machine, the old Wright Model A that had been S. C. No. 1 and accepted in late 1909. However the old ship had logged so many hard landing that it was considered too far gone for continued airworthiness. On 4 May 1911, the Signal Corp officially retired the pioneer military aeroplane and sent it back to the Wright brothers in Dayton where they restored it to its original configuration. The Army then donated it to the Smithsonian.



Lt. Foulois in Wright – Note telegraph key mounted on control stick, field radio mounted in seat. In flight transmissions, air to ground, were made to the Maneuver Div. in Texas.

Meanwhile the Collier-Wright Model B, which never belonged to the Army but was inexpensively leased, had the mud cleared off and was shipped back to the Collier estate in New Jersey. A replacement Model B arrived at Fort Sam along with another aeroplane, a Curtiss Model D, that was also a pusher biplane but with a different control system – it had ailerons. The ailerons were connected through cables to the Curtiss seat, a sort of cradle with arm rests, which responded to the pilot's leaning into the turn, a natural response. Elevator control remained on the wheel yoke, along with rudder control to coordinate the turn. The Curtiss Model D became the second aeroplane type accepted by the Army.

The replacement Wright Model B still had a wing warping system with the pilot sitting between two control sticks. The one on his left was for elevator control, and the one on his right was for wing warping. Pulling the right stick back created a right turn, pushing it forward started a left turn. In addition, a short lever on the top of the right control stick was for rudder coordination in the turn. Those early Wright flight controls took some getting used to. The Wright flying school in Dayton had a crude flight control simulator in the Dayton hangar that helped students overcome those unnatural motions. Both civilian and military students became proficient in operating the wing warping system.

These differences between the Wright aeroplane control and the Curtiss aeroplane controls presented problems for flight instructors. Therefore, the flying applicants at Fort Sam were divided into two separate groups. Lt. Foulois now became a flight instructor for the Wright Model B in addition to his command responsibility at Fort Sam. He had flown nine hours and ten minutes during the 64 attempts in old S. C. No. 1.

General Allen continued as the Chief Signal Officer of the U. S. Army, but was continually denied funding by Congress during this period. This unfortunate political misfortune was one of the reasons the army entered WWI without a suitable American manufactured military aircraft, and why a great deal of money was wasted in the process of catching up. When Congress finally provided the first funds directed toward Army aviation in 1911, the amount was \$125,000. General Allen bought five aeroplanes, including the Curtiss sent to Fort Sam. General Allen also ordered that a Provisional Aeronautical Company be established, this being a prelude to the concept of a flying squadron.

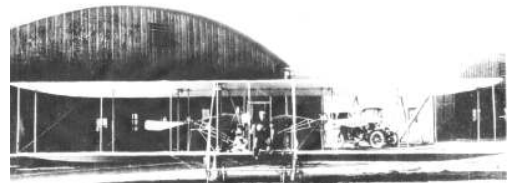
More officers were now assigned to flight training. One officer was 2nd Lt. George E.M. Kelly. He came to Fort Sam Houston from the flying camp Glenn Curtiss had set up in 1910 at Coronado Beach, California, for experimental purposes.

This camp was primarily for the benefit of the Navy, however Curtiss encouraged Army pilots to attend as well. With reduced horsepower training planes, the art of handling on the ground was extensively practiced. Lt. Kelly had been exposed to this procedure at the California school. This was called "grass cutting" in Curtiss trainers limited to 40 hp engines which allowed about 15 mph ground speed through a restricted foot throttle.

The Curtiss Model B at Fort Sam, S. C. No. 2, had more power than the Wright machines – a 50 hp water-cooled V-8. Curtiss was considered to be the leading designer of aviation engines, having built them for several years. However, none of these early machines had flight instruments. Only a short string, trailing from the front strut, denoted a skid from a slip, or from an impending lack of airspeed. In addition, the Curtiss Model D did not have dual controls, although it had a second seat behind the pilot for an observer.

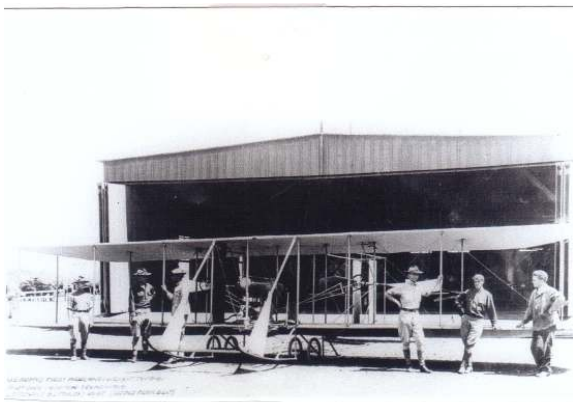
Three partially trained officers from the California school, Capt. Paul W. Beck, 2nd Lt. John C. Walker Jr, and 2nd Lt. Kelly, arrived at Fort Sam Houston. During the first attempted solo flight in the Curtiss, which was called a Type 4 Curtiss Model D military aeroplane, 2nd Lt. Walker made a steep turn at low altitude and lost speed, but survived with a very hard landing. Capt. Beck then took off and, instead of climbing to a safe altitude, flew low around the area until he landed short, badly damaging the plane.

After repairs were made, 2nd Lt. Kelly was scheduled to fly on May 10, 1911. He attempted to land but was too fast, bounced on the nose wheel, then on the main wheels before going around for another attempt. Repeating the steep approach with too much speed, he bounced up again and was headed for a group of tents on the other end of the field. He attempted a steep left turn to avoid the tents and crashed on the parade ground. He was killed when thrown forward out of the seat, experiencing severe head injuries. 2nd Lt. G. E. M. Kelly was the first Army officer killed while flying an aeroplane, and the second military fatality after Lt. Selfridge in 1909. General Wm. H. Carter, the Division Commander, issued orders that no more flying would take place at the post. Another flying field would have to be found.



Lt. Kirtland in Wright Model B at College Park

All of the Provisional Aero Company equipment was shipped to College Park, Maryland, along with personnel, including Lt. Foulois who was assigned to the Division of Militia Affairs at the War Department. The College Park school was now being improved with hangars and new aircraft. Other recently trained pilots arrived from the Wright school in Dayton, including Lt. Henry H. Arnold, Lt. Thomas DeWitt Milling and Lt. Roy Kirtland, all of whom had received personal instruction from the Wright brothers and their company pilots earlier in 1911. With weather improving, flying activity increased. Altitude records were broken, night flights were initiated and experiments with the Lewis gun were made aloft. The weapon was a low-recoil machine gun that Capt. Chandler fired from a Wright aeroplane. Later it became standard equipment. At this time, a former Army officer named Riley E. Scott invented an early bomb sight that was also tested. However, the War Department refused to buy it so Scott took it to Europe. The good news was that more cross country flights were successfully made and even some night flying was initiated. All this was accomplished at College Park, however it would not be long before the Army would return to Texas. (To be continued.)



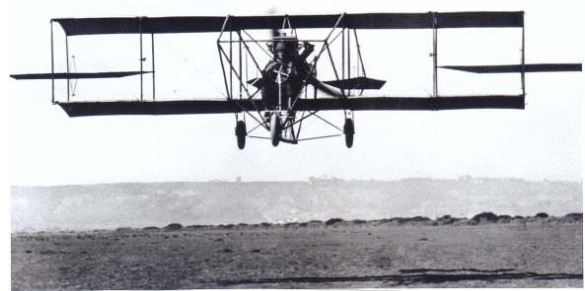
Old Aeroplane S.C. No. 1 modified with wheels at the Ft. Sam hangar.



Lt. Foulois and Pharmalee warming up the Collier-Wright, Ft. Sam, 1910.



Curtiss E Military S.C. No. 6 – Note control seat cradle and steering wheel on the yoke.



Curtiss Model D S.C. No. 2 landing.

