



OX5 AVIATION PIONEERS TEXAS WING NEWSLETTER

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Message from the Editor/Secretary



The month of September will be an important one for the OX5 Aviation Pioneers. The 57th Annual Reunion will be held in St. Louis on September 20-23, and also in September the membership will vote on **important By-Law changes**. Both events will be covered in the November National OX5 NEWS and in the December TEXAS WING NEWSLETTER.

Recently we received generous contributions for newsletter printing and circulation expenses from Texas Wing member Joan Buerschinger of San Antonio, and from the OX5 National Headquarters in Pittsburgh. These contributions are appreciated. Donations of any amount from members are vital and do help with the Texas Wing Newsletter expenses. Remember, our Wing charges no dues.

Please notice that PAST newsletters can be accessed or copied from the National OX5 web page. To see any back issue since 2008, enter: <http://www.ox5.org>; click on WELCOME TO OX5; click on NEWSLETTERS; click on TEXAS; click on DATE. (Allow a bit of time to load – there's a lot of info). At this time there are 18 newsletters in the national file.

This issue's "Mystery" Plane

For the September issue we have again selected a nice picture from the Antique Airplane Association's magazine, "The Antique Airfield Runway" for our "Mystery Airplane".

The model was constructed and flown in the late 1930s and flew until the approach of WWII slowed production. What is this pretty white cabin biplane?



- A. Beech C-17 B. Waco YKS-7 C. Howard DGA D. Curtis-Wright A-19

(For aircraft description and information see page 2)

TEXAS WING OFFICERS: Mike 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

Message from the Wing President, Mike Lawrence



It has been an interesting year for me so far. The Texas Wing, as usual, just continues to hum along like a well oiled machine, thanks to the work of your Board of Governors, and of course, George Vose, the editor of this newsletter, who somehow continues to be willing to write what many, me included, believe to be the finest newsletter in the club.

Unfortunately, the National organization on whose Board of Governors I am willing to serve as Vice President, is struggling to operate under a rather archaic and outdated set of bylaws. Others and I have toiled for the past year and a half rewriting the bylaws under which the National Board must operate. The finished product was presented to the membership a few weeks ago. So far less than 275 votes have been returned. For these much-needed new bylaw to pass required approximately 320 yes votes. This brings me to the real purpose of this message.

A small group led by a disgruntled Governor is trying to block the passage of these bylaws by sending e-mails, which some of you may have received, intimating all kinds of ridiculous, untrue and almost paranoid accusations regarding the need and purpose for new bylaws.

I can assure each of you that the overwhelming majority of your National Board of Governors supports the much needed and long overdue rewrite. Our only agenda is to pass a set of bylaws to which this and future boards can adhere.

There are actually very few changes and only a few additions. A couple of examples are allowing electronic or teleconference meetings to allow our aging membership, me included, to attend board meetings and reducing the size of the National Board to 9 from 15 since our total national membership is down from over 5,000 members when the original bylaws were written to less than 640 today, including Life members.

Please join me and the vast majority of your National Board along with George Vose and George Chandler, both former National and Texas Wing Governors in voting yes for these new bylaws. If you have not yet voted or voted no, for whatever reason, consider changing your vote or voting yes by e-mailing me your name and yes to mg.lawrence@att.net

Thank you,
Mike Lawrence, President

The “Mystery” Plane (on Page 1)

Is a Waco YKS-7. The Waco model YKS-7 was first offered in 1937 and was powered with a Jacobs L-4 engine of 225 h.p. It cruised at 130 mph with a wood Hartzell 146 propeller and at 150 mph with a Curtiss-Reed metal 140 propeller. Landing speed (with flaps) 50 mph. Empty weight 1,182 lbs, useful load 1,368, gross wgt. 3,290.



The pictured model is owned by Jerry Barto, the 28th owner since it was sold new in 1937. During the restoration he was assisted by Jim and John Nelson with sheet metal work, Hualdo and Mando Mendoza on fabric and paint, Roy Mangus for interior work, along with the major assistance of Bill Hill. These men, with others, made a vintage airplane look better than new.

Test pilot Ben Towle – still doing great at 102 years

We have written about Ben Towle before, and he is doing very well in Fort Worth at age 102. His OX5 number is 12816 and he is well remembered by OX5 members from the many reunions that he attended with his humor and spirit. Ben planned to attend our June meeting in Mineral Wells, but had to cancel at the last minute. We telephoned Ben this week and had a pleasant conversation. Ben (his full name is Benjamin Milo Towle) flew OX5 powered airplanes for several years out of the airport he owned in Milwaukee, the “Brown Deer Airport”, including the Waco 10 and the American Eagle



We asked him if we could re-run his story about his test flights of the Chance-Vought Corsair and his need for bailing out of a crippled Corsair. To our knowledge Ben is the only Texas Wing member who is authorized to wear the wings of the Caterpillar Club, the membership limited only to those who have survived a life-saving parachute jump.

Following is the story that we asked him to write and which appeared in the December 2004 Texas Wing Newsletter.

Ben Towle’s story

A long ago Sunday: Weather zero-zero. A group of pilots lounged around the flight office in that universal sport – hangar flying. The talk had turned to the Caterpillar Club, an informal organization of those who had saved their lives by resorting to the parachute – a product of the silk worm. Just what would it take to make us jump was the question of the moment. It was purely academic with us since we had no intention of ever leaving a safe, well-protected cockpit for the unknown swinging beneath a bubble of silk. But “bailing out” was still a fascinating subject. The conclusion appeared to be that either a fire or a major structural failure would be required to force any of us to jump.

Several years later I found the answer. I was employed by Chance-Vought in Fort Worth as an experimental test pilot of Navy fighter planes. We were running tests to select the proper propeller for a more powerful model of the fast shipboard Corsair fighter. Once, while climbing to the assigned altitude, I realized that radio communication with the home base had been lost. Then, when atmospheric conditions deteriorated to unsuitable, I cut the power. Lost radio contact and bad weather were not unusual occurrences, but never before, for me, had they occurred on the same flight.



Finding unsuitable conditions for the test I revised the flight plan and started a speed run at 28,000 feet. At the end of the run I took a final check of the readings allowing the automatic recorders to make one more cycle, and then reduced the power. The throttle had barely moved from the full open position when I heard a muffled explosion from the engine compartment. A stream of smoke started to pour from the left side of the engine cowling accompanied by a vibration which was strong enough to roll the seven ton airplane violently from side to side. Smoke completely blanked the cockpit and shut out all outside vision.



Up until now, a matter of only a few seconds, my only thought had been to bring the airplane back as nearly intact as possible. But as signs of fire appeared in the cockpit, I doubted the wisdom of staying there.

You approach an impending parachute jump with reservations, knowing that your chances of clearing the airplane are slim. You also know that staying in the cockpit is sure death. So you select the lesser of two evils and resign yourself to whatever fate is in store. As the flames appeared to be more than a flash fire I cracked the cockpit cover open, took a deep drag from the oxygen supply and pulled my feet up onto the seat. Then, pushing up against the safety belt and slamming the control stick forward, I released the belt holding me there hoping there would be enough catapult action to throw me clear of the plane.

Ben Towle in flight test wear

As I started past the hatch I realized it had jammed only partly open. A couple desperate kicks and I was out. When I saw the airplane off to one side and knew that I was clear, I pulled the rip cord and then passed out from the lack of oxygen. Reviving, I became aware of the rip cord ring still clutched tightly in my hand. I placed this souvenir in my pocket and was relieved to find that I had cleared the plane without serious injury.

As I became conscious enough to know what was happening I saw that I was not descending by the time-honored smooth and steady action, but was turning over and swinging in a very uncomfortable manner. In an attempt to stop this wild oscillation, I grasped the shroud lines on one side and at the same time looked up at the canopy. Instead of a neat white canopy spread above, I saw broken shroud lines dangling in the breeze and a canopy as full of holes as a sieve. The opening shock at the speed I was traveling was more than the chute could stand. Steadying my descent was impossible in this condition, so I resigned myself to the motion of the chute and would try to make the proper corrections at the last minute before hitting the ground

During the fifteen minutes it took to come down, I had ample time to study the terrain below me. Nearing the ground I was able to locate the probable landing place in a clump of burned-over trees. They looked to me like an army of knights marching to battle with upraised spears. I grazed over the trees and landed face sideways instead of with my direction of travel, ending up flat on my back with both ankles sprained.

I limped down the road to the nearest farm house where my knock was answered by a woman whose expression of casual curiosity rapidly changed to one of horror. She had reason to be frightened. My face was badly burned. My skin was hanging in strips. My eyebrows were gone. The fur collar of my jacket was burned away. And I was generally dirty and disreputable. My mumbled explanation that "I just fell out of an airplane" did nothing to reassure her. She had no phone or keys to the car parked nearby, so I went along the road where I met a crew from a power company who had found my chute and were looking for me. They loaded me into a truck and took me to the nearest hospital.

After phoning the plant, I was taken to a doctor who bandaged my face, then turned me over to the State Police who had arrived in the meantime. While waiting for the company transport plane we retired to a nearby lunch room. It is often stated that we make our own luck, but I am firmly convinced that Someone Else certainly helped. As we were finishing lunch, word came that the company plane had landed. Arriving later at the plant airport I was greeted by a laughing, happy group of people I had wondered about ever seeing again.



Irvin Caterpillar Club pin

An amazing story, Ben. We thank you for telling it

Texas Wing ladies in the Power Puff Derby



Edna Gardner Whyte (left) and Martha E. Wright (right), both of the Texas OX5 Wing, won first place in the 1961 Woman's International Air Race from Fort Meyers, Florida to Nassau, Bahamas. Edna, who lived in Fort Worth, was the pilot, and Martha (wife of the late 555556/ Linley Wright), who lived in Glen Rose, was co-pilot.

The Woman's International Air Race was an off-shoot of the original Powder Puff Derby. This is some of the organizations's history: In 1929 there were only 70 licensed women pilots in the United States, and in that year 20 of these women got together to fly in the Powder Puff Derby. Then came Black Friday and the Stock Market Crash of 1929. The flying of airplanes, always

expensive, got more and more out of hand for the average person and prevented many women from learning to fly. But in late 1942 the realities of war were hitting home and the military command formed the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron. (The WASP). In 1944, when WWII was over, one thousand women pilots did not want to be grounded and during that year the Powder Puff Derby was resurrected. For 30 years these women flew across country each year to great acclaim and celebrity.

In 1977 a scaled down version was formed called the Air Race Classic. The end of the races was due to rising costs, diminished corporate sponsorship, and air traffic congestion.

Edna Gardner Whyte and Martha Wright have both flown West – Edna Whyte in 1992 and Martha Wright in 2012. They established a firm notch for the OX5 Texas Wing, and we are proud of these lady OX5ers.

Tom Neyland, OX5 long timer, flew west on June 9th 2012



Thomas :“Tom” Ross Neyland was one of the Texas Wing’s long-time members. His assigned number of 4,008 indicates that he became an OX5er many years ago. Tom was jovial, yet he freely expressed his opinions during OX5 meetings. He was qualified to do this. He had lots of flying time in OX5 airplanes in the early part of his aviation career that spanned more than seven decades. Tom was hesitant, at first, to accept the policy change when “historian” members were welcomed into the OX5. He strongly favored the original rule that, prior to December 31, 1940, all members were required to have either flown or maintained OX5 powered airplanes

Later, after the membership rules were changed, Tom agreed that the OX5 organization would have withered away as its members aged and “flew west”. He now realized that the bottle of Old Crow whiskey, locked in its glass case, would now never be consumed by the last OX5 member. At the present time there are less than 100 OX5 members (unofficial count) who entered under the original rule, down from the many thousands of members of the mid 1900s). We are glad that Tom Neyland changed his mind.

Tom was born on May 3, 1920 in Teague, Texas. During World War II he served in the Army Air Force as a 2nd Lt. Flight instructor. After the war he moved to Milwaukee where he flew a B-25 and a Beech Bonanza for Trostel Tanneries. In 1954 he returned to Texas to fly a Lockheed Super Lodestar and a Twin Beech D-18 for Clint Murchison (Dallas businessman and founder of the Dallas Cowboys). His last flying vocation was with Cockrell Industries of Houston flying a Super Lodestar, Aero Commander, Grumman Widgeon, Lear jet and Gulf Stream. Tom indeed flew quite an array of airplanes. We will miss his input at OX5 meetings.

A unique airplane

Here the tables are turned. An OX5 reader sent this “Mystery” Airplane photo for us to identify. OX5 member David Sanderson is the Texas Wing’s farthest-flung member who flies and mechanics in Alaska. David writes:



“Howdy, George: Here are a few photos I made while on the job in Iliamna, Alaska. This airplane arrived, piloted by a young man who was flying around Alaska building time for his commercial pilot certificate. The airplane belonged to the lad’s father who happened to be a senior captain with FedEx. I thought you may want to use this plane for your “Mystery Airplane” in one of your OX5 news letters”.
Cheers, David in Umiat. Alaska.

So the challenge is for Texas readers to identify this airplane. (Very frankly it is possible that even David does not know the correct answer).

(Next page)

Here's our guess:

The double-strut landing gear assembly passing through the wing struts then braced to the wing root was a Fairchild configuration. Anyone who has flown a Fairchild 24 remembers the soft landings made possible by the long outer gear hydraulic struts.



The pictured airplane may have been a Fairchild Model 24-G manufactured in 1937. The model was generally powered by a 7 cylinder Warner "Super Scarab" engine, but, strangely, the model could be purchased without an engine.

The model in question may have a substitute engine. The Warner engine was completely cowled, while the pictured engine is uncowed, but we cannot identify the engine type. Perhaps some members can make a positive



identification. (Dr. James Hays of Brownwood is skilled in vintage aircraft identification and may help us). We think David Sanderson's "Mystery Plane" is a Fairchild Model 24-G. What is your opinion?

The cockpit (Back to the basics)

TEXAS WING SCRAPBOOK (A PHOTO OF 2007)



We came across this photo which proves that members will travel great distances to enjoy Texas brats and German fixin's. Dan Dinsmore (above left) flew by American Airlines from New Hampshire to San Antonio, rented a Hertz car, and drove to Seguin to attend an OX5 meeting at Old Kingsbury Aerodrome, and obviously enjoyed lunch with other members.

Until David Sanderson of Alaska (previous item) joined us, Dan Dinsmore, of Plymouth, New Hampshire was our most distant member. While Dan had been rebuilding OX5 engines in his home shop, he had never actually heard a running OX5 engine until this meeting. We drove to Bill Haddock's nearby hangar and hand propped Bill's KR-31. It purred beautifully. We regret that Bill passed away three years ago, but his son, Steve, of East Lyme, Connecticut, joined the OX5 in his father's memory.