

# OX5 AVIATION PIONEERS TEXAS WING NEWSLETTER

December 2013 No. 59 George Vose, Editor/Secretary PO Box 908, Alpine, Texas 79831



### Message from the Editor/Secretary

Our new Texas Wing President, Cade Woodward, at age 26 may be the youngest Wing President in the entire OX5 organization. In his President's Message, starting below on this page, he promotes an invitation to Texas Wing members (with their guests) to a meeting next April in the Big Bend Country.

When we held the last Wing meeting in Alpine in 2002, Cade was my 14 year old student pilot. Now he is a commercial pilot, a flight instructor, and has taken over my tracking work with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and other agencies. Cade has exactly the thing the aging OX5 organization needs -- <u>enthusiasm</u>. Please read the President's Message below

# This issue's "Mystery Airplane"

According to our OX5 categories this model is listed under "Ugly Airplanes". But it did its job.

Is the airplane on the right a .....

- A. Security-National "Airster"
- B. Pilgrim Model 100A
- C. C-W Travel Air 12-Q
- D. Bellanca "Aircruiser"

Answers and information on page 6





### Message from the Wing President, Cade Woodward

Dear Texas Wing members:

I have been informed that it is the job of the Wing President to select the site of our annual Wing meeting. I recall that last June, Wing President Mike Lawrence recommended that the 2013 meeting be held in west Texas, specifically in Odessa or Midland. Mike was not aware that the Permian Basin is the center of the Texas oil boom where hotel rates are sky high. So, after a quote of \$200 a night, the meeting site was

quickly changed to Wichita Falls. There the accommodations at the Days Inn Rooms and Suites were very nice at only \$85 a night.

#### (Message continued next page)

WING OFFICERS, 2013-14	ard, President	Colton W	loodward, Vice President	George Vose, Secretary
Michelle Law	rence, Treasurer	Hazel Fe	hmel, Historian	
GOVERNORS (Expiration dates shown)	Jack Brouse 2014 Michelle Lawrenc George Vose 201	e 2015 5	Robert Clark 2015 Jack Nelson 2014	Barbara Kraemer 2014 Cade Woodward 2015

#### (President's Message continuation)

It has been over ten years since a meeting was held in far west Texas. We are remote but, surprisingly, in 2002 thirty-six members came to Alpine in Brewster County. Every one enjoyed visiting the McDonald Observatory and the interesting communities of Alpine, Fort Davis and Marfa. But the two-hour drive to Big Bend National Park 100 miles away, was disappointing with only a brief lunch at the Basin restaurant, and then the return to Alpine's Ramada Inn.

There is no way one can see the Big Bend National Park in only one day. After our activities are concluded here, including the business meeting and the election, we might depart in private cars to the Park and stay at the hotel in the Chisos Basin at 5,400 feet elevation. We can hike trails, drive to Santa Elena Canyon, and some may want to cross the Rio Grande into Mexico. Now, with the newly completed U. S. Customs Station on the river, one can cross into Mexico legally and enjoy the quaint village of Boquillas. (Bring your passport or passport card).

Less than twenty miles away is the historic and long-abandoned WWII Marfa Army Air Field. (Once called the "Bomber Base" by the locals). The old runways, taxiways and parking ramps are easily seen from the air – but not from the highway. We will even provide free sight seeing flights in Cessnas and Pipers to all those interested in flying over the WWII Air Field.

Because of our remoteness, we need to get the feel of how many members would be interested in visiting this beautiful mountain area. Enclosed with this newsletter is a sheet to be returned in the addressed envelope to let us know how many people would come here for a great experience. I hope to hear from you.

Sincerely, Cade Woodward

## Flight instructors during WWII (Mostly in Texas)

NOTE: At least five Texas Wing members flew as civilian or commissioned flight instructors during WWII. These were: H. B. "Benny" Benninghoff, George Chandler, Fritz Kahl, George Vose and Linley Wright. (If there are other Texas Wing members who instructed during WWII, please let us know). This newsletter includes a story by <u>GEORGE CHANDLER</u>. The others will follow in later newsletters.

### George Chandler's story

#### (George is a Past President of the Texas Wing)

Early in 1942, soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor, all civilian aviation was stopped on the east and west coasts, and I lived in eastern Massachusetts -- so I was "grounded". I had been sending applications for employment to flight schools all around the country. The drawback was that I did not yet have my flight instructor's rating. I was turned down by Parks in St. Louis and by Spartan in Tulsa for that reason, although they would reconsider my application if I would purchase a flight instructor course at their school. The exception was Dallas Aviation School at Love Field. They offered to give me an instructor's rating if I would sign a contract to instruct at their school for one year. Included with their letter was a tempting picture of a blue and yellow Stearman biplane. <u>Great</u>! I was on my way to Texas!

I was met at Love Field by Bill Hill, one of the chief flight instructors. We later became good friends, and Bill went on to become a CAA flight inspector. The school was located on Love Field Drive on the west side of the Field. I was impressed by the huge wood hangars that had been built there during the First World War. Dallas Aviation School was owned by "Major" Bill Long who also operated other flight schools, including the British operation at Terrell, a few miles east of Dallas

It was a cold and windy day – not the warm southern climate I had expected. I saw a line of red and yellow biplanes on the ramp, and I asked what they were. "Those are our trainers. They are Fleets". "Where are the Stearmans?" I asked. "We don't have Stearmans here, the British School in Terrell has them". <u>Surprise</u>! After settling down in my room in the sheet iron barracks, I had one thought: "What have I done?"



This Fleet Model 2 is hood-equipped for instrument training

The next morning I received another surprise when I went out for my check ride in a Fleet, which I had never seen before. It was a 1929 Model 2 with a 100 hp Kinner K-5 engine. It had a tail skid, no brakes, and one single straight pane of glass for a windshield, and I would later see why – it was easy to teach coordination because if you slipped or skidded, the side wind would let you know. The Waco 10 I had flown in Massachusetts had a tail skid and no brakes, so I was ahead of the game. The ride went well, and a week later I had my instructor's rating.

The head of the school was Hart Bowman, an old barnstormer who was as full of bull as anyone I have ever met. (When I much later joined the OX5 Club in the 1990s I found that Hart had been a Past-President of the Texas Wing). Rules, regulations and promises were there, but were meant to be pushed aside or ignored. I am sure that airplane and engine logs were kept, but I never saw one. The Fleets flew all day and were worked on all night.

The school had leased a pasture west of Love Field off Marsh Lane. It's hard to imagine that Marsh Lane was paved for only about a mile from Northwest Highway, and then it turned to black dirt. The pasture was called "Marsh Field". The Fleets were flown from Love Field to Marsh Field in the morning, then back to Love Field before sunset. Most students were bussed out and back. The rule not broken was: <u>Only instructors will taxi Fleets across runways</u>. Any wind at all would put the Fleets into a series of ground loops, and if one happened, it was hard to taxi it off the runway and onto the grass. I have seen students get out and wing-walk the plane to grass. One instructor, who got caught in so many of these, was nick-named "Loopy". We taught stalls and spins in the Fleets, but were not to do aerobatics. Some Fleets with different rudders and engines had been known to get into "flat spins", but no one got into one while I was there, although we did "play around" a little.

The commercial flight test required spins -- two turns to the left and two turns to the right. When the inspectors gave flight tests they would ride with the student through the air work at Marsh Field, then watch from the ground while the applicant went back up and did the spins. (I wonder why they did that?)

Forced landings were not uncommon. (I had just two). One, that I remember very well, was when a student was doing S-turns across a road. The Kinner swallowed a valve and we landed in a cotton field. It had not been plowed and was fairly smooth with just shallow furrows. The farmer came running out to see if we were all right, and we went to his home and called Love Field. It was noontime, and his wife fed us chicken and dumplings, iced tea and pie. The mechanics arrived, and they changed the "jug", fired up the old Kinner and it purred as much as a Kinner can purr. We pushed the plane to the edge of the field and I flew it back to Love.

Another rule that was not broken: <u>If the airplane is flyable after a</u> <u>forced landing, the student will not ride in the airplane</u>. So my student rode back in the truck. Later I ran into him again at Hamilton Army Air Field in California. He had completed 25 missions in B-24s and had been transferred into the Air Transport Command. He remembered that day.

Dallas Aviation School was quite an experience. Those 1929 Model 2 Fleets were good trainers. You had to fly them as soon as the old K-5 fired up, and until you parked it and cut the switch.



Ed. Note: After WWII George Chandler remained in general aviation for a while, then joined Braniflying airliner

### Military Aviation in Texas – A century ago Part VI

#### By John McCrory OX5 23016

#### The U.S. Signal Corps: Creation of the Aviation Section

In July, 1914, Congress passed the law that created the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps, superceding the old Aeronautical Division. This was a big step for the Army. All costs for aviation development prior to this event had come from the Signal Corps, and Congress had repeatedly denied adequate funding to the Chief Signal Officer. European nations were spending millions annually on aviation development and during this period America lost its lead in aeronautics. The First World War was about to begin and we did not have even a satisfactory training plane -- America was "safe" on this side of the world.

Mexican political turmoil again appeared. A portion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Squadron was mobilized for operations in Texas, and designated as Co. A with Foulois in command. The small contingent consisted of five pilots, 30 enlisted men, and included three aeroplanes of the early type. Equipment was once again crated at North Island, San Diego, and sent across the country on the Santa Fe Railroad for duty with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division at Galveston. This was in response to the Vera Cruz incident. But the troop transportation did not wait, and the Navy sailed away without Co. A. They had their own Navy fliers and planes aboard. Co. A never unpacked, and left after four months in Galveston.

Back at North Island in California, the development of the Signal Corps Aviation School had begun. From July to December 1914 the Signal Corps troops built the structures of the school. No significant flying took place during this period. Because the grounding orders of the old aeroplanes were in effect, only five serviceable aircraft were left in San Diego at one point.

### Funds finally appropriated by Congress

With newly appropriated funds the Aviation Section placed orders with Curtiss for JN-1 trainers that were now stating to be produced. The increased need for aircraft attracted other manufacturers. Glenn Luther Martin came to San Diego from Los Angeles to interest the Army in his latest model, the Martin TT (tractor

trainer) that had an early Curtiss OX engine. This was one of the first American military airplanes purchased with an engine built by another manufacturer. Martin had built this airplane in 1908, which was essentially a knock-off of the Curtiss models. He would eventually sell 17 of the Martin TT models before moving on to bigger and better designs. These early tractor airplanes were basically hand built prototypes and seriously underpowered with the earliest OX engines. The United States Army was to discover this the hard way.



Glenn Martin's TT (tractor trainer) on the beach, Signal Corps Flying School. San Diego

The 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Squadron reorganized in September 1914 at San Diego, with the strength of 16 officers, 77 enlisted men, and less than a dozen airplanes. This was the entire Signal Corps Aviation Section at the time, (next page) and almost everyone was in the school or were active instructors. There were only a handful of experienced airmen in military service in the U. S. Army, and although the United States was not yet involved, the war in France had begun.



First Aero Squadron, North Island, San Diego, October 1914

In April 1915, border incidents occurred at the southern tip of Texas at Brownsville. Lt. Thomas D. Milling and Lt. Byron Q. Jones, along with eight enlisted men, traveled by rail express with their equipment to Fort Brown and set up on the Calvary drill field. Recon flights were conducted in their one airplane (the Martin TT with a Curtiss "O" engine). During a flight, the plane was fired upon by Vallistas, probably from Matamoras across the border. No one was hurt, but the airplane was eventually taxied into a ditch and was not repairable. A replacement was sent from North Island by rail and flown several times. After only one and a half months, the small detachment was ordered back to San Diego. (And again, the railroad made some money).

#### Army aviation expands – New aircraft orders

The Jenny was now in mass production at Buffalo, NY, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Squadron received eight newly manufactured Curtiss JN-1 aircraft. The "state of the art flying machines" arrived at the Signal Corps flying school in San Diego in June1915. They were equipped with basic instrument panels and a wicker seat for



the observer. Pilots at the school were unfamiliar with the new tractor design, and this was the beginning of a long period of questionable confidence in the airplane.

LEFT: Early Curtiss JN-1 over North Island, summer 1915. (Note early rudder design and the front skid under propeller).

Fort Sill, the home of the Field Artillery School just north of the Texas border, was one of the old Army posts that opened after the Civil War. The Signal Corps sent Capt. Foulois and the 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Squadron to Fort Sill soon after the Jenneys were received in San Diego. All equipment was loaded onto railroad cars and sent to Oklahoma. The mission was to provide observation experiments with the Field Artillery. After everyone arrived in late July, it was necessary to build a camp with a mess hall, storage buildings and telephone lines. The camp was the beginning of Post Field at Fort Sill. Finally, the aircraft were reassembled and prepared for flight. Almost immediately there was a fatal accident in front of a large group of civilians who had come to witness the flying. The pilot, Lt. R. B. Sutton, survived, but his passenger, George H. Knox, a Fort Sill officer, was killed.

Foulois had a serious meeting with his pilots. Ten of the twelve officers felt that the plane was unsafe. Morale had been deteriorating for some time. No doubt that the engines were underpowered, especially in the hot Oklahoma sun. Density altitude was not appreciated at this time, and airspeed indicators were primitive. In addition, the plane was not completely stable and considered to be difficult to control. Foulois grounded the planes until the Curtiss factory sent a load of improved components that included new upper wings, stabilizers, rudders and newer engines.

Glenn Curtiss was concerned about the airplane's reputation. So modifications were made, including shortening of the lower wings and putting ailerons on only the upper wings. (These modifications in the field at Fort Sill turned the airplanes into JN-3s). It was now the middle of October and some flights were again conducted with the Field Artillery. Lt. T. D. Milling, one of the most experienced military aviators and especially adept at navigation, flew several test flights using a new Brock camera to produce a successful photo mosaic that could be used by the military.

### Early cross countries, Fort Sill to San Antonio

As described in the last Texas Wing Newsletter (September, 2013), General Scriven, the Chief Signal Officer, approved the construction of a new flying field in San Antonio. Work was proceeding well, and the Army expected the early arrival of the 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Squadron to their new permanent base. Capt Foulois began detailed flight planning for the entire unit to depart Fort Sill en mass.

The movement could not be done non-stop, but it was to be the first long squadron cross-country in Army aviation history. The route would be from Fort Sill to Wichita Falls, then Fort Worth, Waco, Austin and the final landing at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, a distance of 439 miles. All ground equipment was loaded onto trucks with the plan to use both roads and railroads for the whole distance. An advance party, consisting of Master Sergeant Stephen J. Idzorek assisted by Private Westmark, was dispatched in the Squadron automobile. Their job was to select the best landing field in Wichita Falls. The airplanes were to follow the railroads -- the traditional method of navigation since airplanes first flew across Texas in 1911. There still were no aviation charts, the flight rules were visual, and they were down to six airworthy JN-3s.

On November 19, 1915, they were ready to go. Foulois took off first, followed at one-minute intervals by the other pilots. All of the planes arrived at Wichita Falls, along with the loaded train of men and equipment, creating quite a bit of excitement. The planes had to be protected from souvenir hunters. The routine was repeated daily without incident, except between Waco and Austin when a strong cross wind blew the leaders off course while flying in reduced central Texas visibility. When the error was discovered, each pilot had to land and ask directions, then take off and complete the flight to Austin. Significant lessons were learned from this operation. There were eight heavily loaded trucks that had to use some unimproved dirt roads, and the mechanics, equipped with their tools, rode motorcycles in order to work on airplanes wherever they landed. This took long hours and hard efforts in inclement winter weather, but apparently nobody was hurt. All airplanes successfully reached San Antonio, landing on the same old Fort Sam Houston parade ground that Capt. Foulois had used in1909 with the first military airplane.

### The 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Squadron reaches its permanent site

The 1<sup>st</sup> Aero Squadron was soon situated on the new permanent landing base four miles north of the main fort. It was named Dodd Field in honor of LT. Townsend F. Dodd, one of the early North Island pilots. The promised "Great Air Center" in San Antonio, that Gen. Scriven envisioned, was now being staffed. The Squadron had 15 pilot officers, six JN-3s, and three Burgess tractor airplanes to bring them up to strength. Very soon their capabilities would be severely tested in "foreign operations".

### The Mystery Plane, Page 1

The "Mystery Airplane" on page 1 is a Bellanca Aircruiser. Because U. S. regulations had prohibited large single engine aircraft in airline service, this model made a name for itself in neighboring Canada. When it came to load-carrying ability, or operations from a "primitive area", this airplane had no equal. When powered with the Wright "Cyclone" CGR-1820-F3 engine its useful load was greater than it's empty weight of 6983 lbs. Max speed 165 mph at 6,500 feet. Cruise speed at 85% power 155 mph.



Landing speed (with flaps) 64 mph. In Canada it was used as a 15-place seaplane on Edo Floats. Initial price at factory \$31,600, raised to \$35,800.

(Information and photo from J. P. Juptner, McGraw-Hill 1997, U. S. Aircraft Series, Vol 6)