



OX5 AVIATION PIONEERS TEXAS WING NEWSLETTER

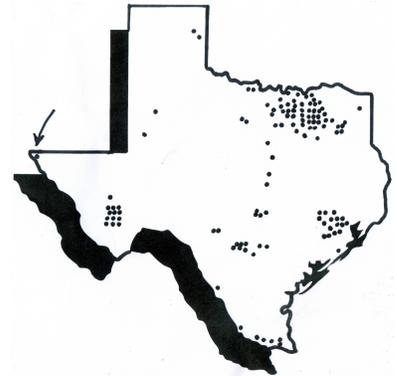
March, 2012 No. 52
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Message from the Editor/Secretary



The Texas OX5 Wing is overdue for its second annual meeting. According to National By Laws, each Wing must hold a minimum of two meetings a year to conduct Wing business and to elect officers and new governors.

A few Wings are able to hold frequent meetings, usually at a central location available to all members. The area of the Texas Wing is large, although not so large as the 600,000 square mile Alaska Wing. But the membership of the Alaska Wing is centered mainly in the Anchorage area, facilitating quite convenient travel distances for most. On the other hand, Texas members, while located mainly in the Dallas-Fort Worth-San Antonio, and Houston areas, also live in many far-flung places. As the map on the right shows, some of our 121 members may live more than 600 miles from each other. In the past, winter meetings have been in sunny Brownsville where palm trees grow. A summer meeting in the Texas Panhandle would be convenient for some, but probably not well attended by others.



We do need an OX5 Wing meeting soon. Where should it be held? We are open to suggestions. It seems that the pole of our membership spread would be somewhere around San Antonio, Austin or Kerrville. A meeting is needed soon, and it will be scheduled. Your input will help.

This issue's "Mystery" Plane

This issue's Mystery Plane is an Aeronca. But what model is it? It has the lines of the Aeronca Chief, a popular airplane built during the years 1939-1948. But the engine looks like that of the Aeronca C-3 "Bathtub", flown during the years 1934-1937. The pictured airplane was a high wing monoplane with side-by-side seating for two. The empty weight was 590 pounds, gross weight 1,040 pounds, and it sold for \$1,745.



The pictured airplane is an

Aeronca KCA

Aeronca Model L-C

Aeronca K

Aeronca 65-TC

Aeronca Chief 50-LA

Answer and information on page 6.

TEXAS WING OFFICERS: George Chandler, President
Michelle Lawrence, Treasurer

Robert Clark, 1st Vice President
Hazel Fehmel, Historian

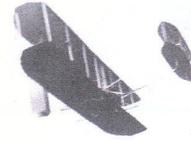
George Vose, Sec/Editor

GOVERNORS: Jack Brouse 2013, Barbara Kraemer 2013, Susie Brouse 2012, Cade Woodward 2012, George Chandler 2011

Aviation in Texas – A century ago

By John McCrory

Ed Note: John McCrory, OX5 23016, is an experienced aviator. He is also an "aviation historian", a QB, an antique airplane owner and a loyal member of the Texas Wing.



Early aviators made some remarkably long cross country flights during the first years of the twentieth century. Two transcontinental journeys crossed West Texas in 1911. The first was by Calbraith Rodgers who entered Texas from the northeast near Dallas and eventually reached California by way of El Paso. The second aeroplane, belonging to Robert G. Fowler, departed Los Angeles in October 1911, entering Texas at El Paso and continued east by way of New Orleans, Florida and the Atlantic coast. Both aircraft were manufactured by the Wrights who also provided the new pilots with instruction.

There were no airports, only pastures, parade grounds, or city parks, some not very suitable for landings. Railroads provided the necessary navigation and the necessary travel for the support personnel, spare parts and communication. Fowler flew east from El Paso by following the Texas & Pacific Railroad through Van Horn, Pecos to Midland. His Wright Model B was powered by a straight four cylinder Cole auto engine which produced 30-40 HP and was provided by the Cole Motor Car Company of Indianapolis. Approaching Midland, Fowler landed near the railroad south of the original downtown area on November 20, 1911. School was let out and folks crowded around to see the first airplane to land in Midland.

Two Midland men, John V. Pliska and Craig Coggins, were in the crowd that witnessed Fowler's arrival. Mr. Pliska was an experienced and well-known blacksmith, and Coggins was an auto mechanic and an experienced automobile driver. Pliska had previous aeronautical knowledge and a strong interest in building an airplane. After seeing the arrival of the Wright flying machine he was inspired to immediately start construction, and he enlisted Coggins to help him do this in his large blacksmith shop.

The two men worked evenings through 1911 into 1912 on an original well-constructed aeroplane which looked very similar to a Curtiss design. They selected the Roberts Motor Company of Sandusky, Ohio as the source of the four cylinder two cycle engine previously used in marine applications. It weighed 165 pounds and produced 40-50HP at 1400 RPM at sea level. Main bearings were lubed by grease cups. The cost was high in 1911 dollars at \$1,500.00. Quality wood was obtained for the airframe, and strong piano wire for internal bracing. They constructed a laminated oak 88-inch pusher prop and applied metal backing to the blades to protect it from mesquite and other desert vegetation. The wings and tail surfaces were covered with canvas, which at first did not work well until shellac was applied to improve performance. They were in a hurry to start flying.



The 1912 Pliska airplane now displayed at the Midland Air Terminal

In the spring of 1912, test flights were conducted six miles northwest of Midland on a dry lake bed with no mesquite. Early morning temperatures and calm air allowed short hops of about a quarter mile. An encounter with a barbed wire fence dampened their enthusiasm, but with only minor damage to the airplane or to Pliska, repairs were made and flight operations were moved to the Half Polo Field, southeast of Midland. Several residents including family members witnessed these early flights. Neither of the men had

any previous flying instruction but knew that the throttle was controlled by the left foot pedal. The brake, which was similar to an arresting hook when contacting the ground, was operated by the right pedal. Mid-wing ailerons were controlled by leaning in the cradle seat, Curtiss style. The big control wheel allowed up or down elevator and rudder control. A switch under the seat turned off the magneto.



The 30-40 HP Roberts engine

The aviators soon made flights of one to two miles with shallow turns around the polo grounds. However, it was decided that the Roberts engine was underpowered. Correspondence with the manufacturer revealed that 1400 was guaranteed only at sea level. The Midland terrain is almost 3000 feet in elevation, and the density altitude is almost always higher. The monthly engine payments were a financial burden, so it was returned and hope was held out for a larger powerplant. However, as is usually the case, Mrs. Pliska, having had reservations for some time about the welfare of both men as well as the family business, protested and further flying activities were ceased.

The Pliska pusher biplane, with its 33 foot wing span and 27.5 foot fuselage, was disassembled and placed in the rafters of the blacksmith shop where it was built and where it would remain for 50 years. In 1962 it was endowed to the city by the Pliska heirs and restored by the EAA with assistance from the Abell-Hanger Foundation. Today it hangs in the north wing of the Midland International Airport terminal building.

The remarkable 100 year-old airplane, advanced in its time, and once flown successfully despite the very limited flying experience of its two builders in primitive conditions and in the hot dry climate of West Texas, is an inspiration for all to see in this new 21st century.



Wing ailerons, a new development

Kelly Field, Texas The long-ago base of OX5 airplanes

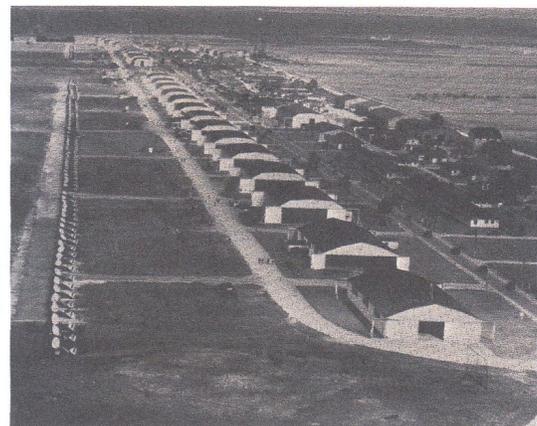
Today, Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio has been downgraded to "Kelly Field Annex" with control transferred to Lackland Air Force Base. Once a giant military station, it now mainly supports flight operations for the Air Force Reserve. It is also a Class A Cargo Terminal and contains the Kelly Field Historical District where antique World War I OX5 Jennys are among the many displayed airplanes. Kelly has a remarkable history, going back 93 years when, on June 1917, it became Camp Kelly. Its name honored Major George E. M. Kelly who died in an airplane crash in 1912.

During 1917-1918 Kelly Field organized approximately 250,000 men into aero squadrons. Those who became pilots learned to fly in OX5 powered Jennys.

Between WWI and WWII the majority of American-trained pilots learned to fly at Kelly. One of the 6,800 pilots was Charles Lindbergh.

After the United States entered WWII, 6,800 pilots graduated from Kelly Advanced Flying School.

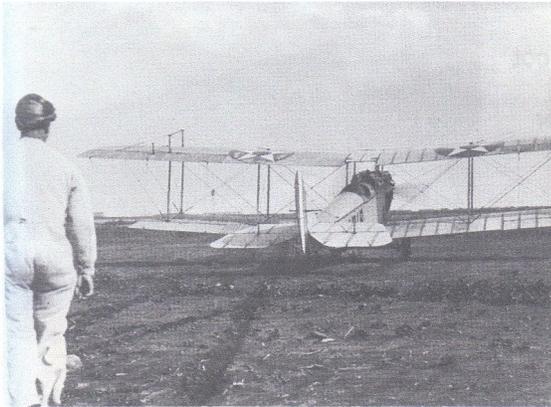
The picture on the right was made in the early 1930s with more modern (for that day) pursuit planes parked on the flight line.



First solo at Kelly Field in an OX5 JN-4, Jenny.

Many OX5ers have experienced the same exciting moment that this cadet is feeling at Kelly field in 1918. May the same feeling last for a long time.

Okay, I'm going to solo you. After takeoff, fly straight toward those trees, turn left when you clear the field, make your next turn downwind, and when you are in position, cut the gun, turn onto your final approach and land. Watch out for other airplanes.



The Jenny has him in her clutches now. If all goes well, he will win the battle of wits; a wrong guess, however, and he'll wear a halo.

The instructor watches him on downwind leg



No, the cadet did not crash. He made a good landing. But a classmate crashed and lived to tell about it.

Thanks for the pictures from Jack Linke's, "Jenny was no lady", Norton and Company, 1970

Bill Burkhart's endurance flight

A recent article in the Kansas Wing OX5 News, the bi-monthly newsletter of the Kansas Wing, caught our attention. It told of an endurance flight in Yuma, Arizona in 1949 by pilots Bob Woodhouse and Woody Jongeward in an Aeronca Sedan. They remained airborne for 47 consecutive days in their airplane, the "Yuma", and broke the previous record of 42 days.

Then, during July-September 1958 their record was broken by Bill Burkhart, one of our Texas Wing members flying a Cessna 172 with fellow pilot Tim Heth, broke the 47day record by remaining airborne for 50 days.



Their flight was sponsored by Gordon McClendon who owned radio stations in Dallas, Houston and Shreveport. The pilots took turns at the controls of the Cessna 172 from which all seats, except the pilot's seat, had been removed and replaced with a 50-gallon gasoline drum. While one pilot flew the airplane, the other pilot rested on a floor mat.

Refueling was done by hoisting fuel cans by winch from a pickup truck or from a Chevrolet Impala driving at the same 70 mph speed beneath them on the runway. Frequent radio progress reports were made to the public as the Cessna cruised to and from the three cities.

The fifty-day, 1200-plus hour flight was equivalent to 144,000 miles or six times around the world. Bill Burkhart's only physical damage from the ordeal was a lifetime partial hearing loss resulting from fifty continuous days of engine roar without a headset or ear plugs.

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Unfortunately, their endurance record did not last very long. At the time of their landing after 50 days in the air, two Nevada pilots were already flying in an attempt to establish a new record. From McCarran Field in Las Vegas an attempt was being made to make a new record, and pilots Bob Timm and Frank Cook, flying a Cessna 172, remained in the air for 64 days. So Bill Burkhart's record lasted only a couple weeks.

About pilot Bill Burkhart: In the early 1940s he graduated from SMU and joined the Army Air Force. He received his pilot's wings, flew P-40s in

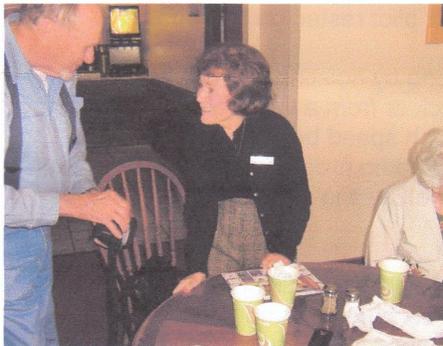
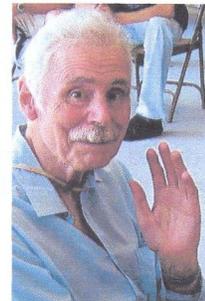
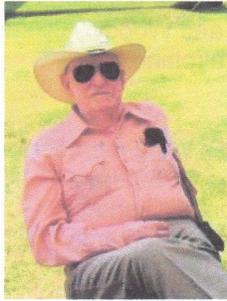
Europe during WWII, and flew jet B-47s in the Korean War. Bill once told this editor that the preflight inspection on the B-47 took as much as four hours.

Bill Burkhart passed away at age 88 in Alpine, Texas in July, 2011. As a loyal OX5 member, he will be missed, and his endurance flight will be long remembered.



From left: Sandra and Jim Heth, Bill Burkhart holding the award, and Bill's son Stevie below.

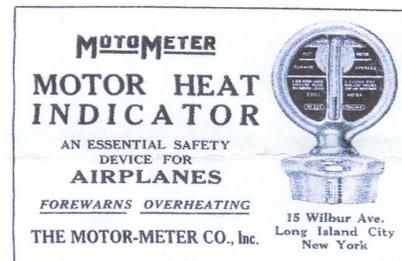
Pictures and people from some past meetings (Gainesville, Kingsbury, Kerrville, Fredericksburg, and Denton)



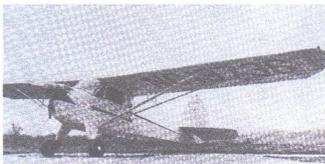
Above we see Harry Whitman, Dr. Jim Hays, Hazel Fehmel, Nick Pocock, Woody Haston, Barbara Kraemer, Susie Brouse, George Vose, Jack Brouse, Benny and Lenore Benninghoff.

The MotoMeter heat indicator

Here's an item necessary for all OX5 engines – a radiator cap. We came across this advertisement in the January 1917 issue of Aviation and Aeronautical Engineering. When flying an OX5 powered airplane, be it a Jenny, a Waco 10 or a KR-31, the pilot checked carefully the radiator water supply before each flight and checked the temperature continuously during the flight. Many airplanes landed in farmer's fields when the temperature reached the red line. Some cool water was added and the flight continued.



The “Mystery Airplane” Page 1



The airplane shown on page 1 is an Aeronca K. It was a link between the ugly C-3 (“Flying Bathtub”) and the Model KCA which evolved into the attractive Aeronca Chief. It made its formal debut in January 1937 at the New York Air Show, and by November of that year the factory was producing three airplanes a day. At first it had the same Aeronca engine as the earlier C-3, the E-113, producing 42 h.p., later upgraded to 46 h.p. It had a 30-foot wing span, empty weight 590 pounds, useful load 450 pounds. Cruise speed 85 mph, stall speed 39 mph. Price\$1,745.

Picture and information from J. P. Juptner, U. S. Civil Aircraft Series, Vol 7, McGraw-Hill, 1978