



OX5 AVIATION PIONEERS TEXAS WING NEWSLETTER

George Vose, Editor/Secretary
PO Box 908, Alpine, Texas 79831
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From the Editor/TX Wing Secretary: Several Wing members and National Officers have asked for the email addresses of the Texas Wing officers. They are:



Cade Woodward	cade260172@yahoo.com ,
Colton Woodward	woodwardlc@hotmail.com ,
Michelle Lawrence	wingsmich@att.net ,
George Vose	gvose@yahoo.com ,
Hazel Fehmel	fehmelplanes@sbcglobal.net

It does seem early to consider possible sites for the Texas Wing's annual reunion in 2015, but time (like old OX5ers) does fly. As Cade notifies us in his message, send your suggestions on where our next reunion might be held. Thanks, *George Vose*

This issue's "Mystery Airplane"



Here's a spiffy low wing monoplane. Not many were built, and the photo actually is a newly-constructed replica of the original airplane. The editor liked this color picture so much, it is used instead of the black and white picture of the original airplane.

It is a replica of a

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|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| A. Swallow "Sport" HC | B. Gee Bee "Sportster" Y |
| C. Verville "Sportsman" AT | D. Inland "Sportster" R |

Answer and information on page 6

From the Wing President, Cade Woodward

Last month, while flying for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department to monitor pronghorn antelope in the Texas Panhandle, I had the pleasure of spending a night with OX5 members Robert and Penni Clark at their ranch near Miami, Texas. They have a great place with a long turf runway, a pretty home, ranch buildings, guest accommodations and vast acres of cattle grazing land. Robert and Penni have been OX5 members for a long time, and Robert's father, Willis Clark, was an OX5 Pioneer who flew Curtiss Jenneys in the 1920s. Thanks for the hospitality, Robert and Penni.



It is now time to select a location for our 2015 Texas Wing Reunion. Last April it was held in Alpine, and it was successful and well attended, in spite of the long travel

(Message continued on next page)

WING OFFICERS, 2014-15	Cade Woodward, President	Colton Woodward, Vice President	George Vose, Secretary
	Michelle Lawrence, Treasurer	Hazel Fehmel, Historian	

GOVERNORS (<i>Expiration dates shown</i>)	Jack Brouse 2016	Robert Clark 2016	Barbara Kraemer 2016
	Michelle Lawrence 2015	Jack Nelson 2015	Cade Woodward 2015
	George Vose 2015		

distance. So far there has been one recommended location – Lubbock – the home of the Silent Wings Museum (WWII gliders), and the Science Spectrum Museum where Jack Brouse's OX5 Alexander Eaglerock biplane is suspended over the rotunda. Please send your suggestions for our 2015 reunion site. (My email address is in George Vose's message, page 1).

In addition to OX5 affairs, I am currently tracking Bighorn Sheep for Sul Ross State University – the tachometer in my Cessna 180 shows 275 hours flown in June and July.

Sincerely, *Cade Woodward*

National Reunion Sites – Texas and Elsewhere

Below is an interesting picture, sent to us by Texas Wing Governor Jack Nelson. The panorama shows the good turn-out during the 1975 National OX5 reunion at the Menger Hotel in San Antonio. It is difficult to count the number of members and guests who attended. We estimate that 350-400 people are standing in the picture. In recent years the number of members attending National Reunions has been only 50, or less.



The 1975 reunion was held on October 7-10, a bit later in the year than usual. In October the Texas weather is usually very nice, with a touch of autumn in the air.

In 1975, when the picture was taken, the original rules were in effect – then, to become an OX5 member one must have flown or maintained an OX5-powered airplane prior to 1940. By the early 1990s, as members aged in years, our membership had lessened considerably from the peak of 4,000-plus in the late 1950s. The OX5 organization was planned to be, a “last man” organization. (That reserved bottle of Old Crow whisky was to be savored by the last surviving member).

Then, when Clifford Pleggenkuhle was National President and Elmer Hansen was National Secretary, it was decided to open the membership to all those who had a genuine interest in OX5 engines and the airplanes powered by them. The new group would be known as “Historian Members”. In time, as Historian membership began to outnumber the original members, the term, “Historian”, was dropped and both groups merged as one. Now the only way to spot an original member, who joined under the old rules, is when the membership number is below 14,000. There are very few of these members left.

During the 58 years of our organization 58 National Reunions have been held. (This number does not include the 2014 reunion to be held in Lakeland, Florida this coming November). At nine, the Texas Wing has hosted the largest number of reunions, followed by California (now with no active Wings) with eight reunions, then by Missouri with six reunions. The nine Texas reunions have been held in Dallas (1960), Fort Worth (1969), San Antonio (1975), San Antonio (1981), San Antonio (1988), Midland (1999), San Antonio (2000), San Antonio (2005) and Grapevine (2009). It might be noted that, during the 2002 National reunion in Charleston, South Carolina, two members whispered into this editor's ear, “We like San Antonio”.

The following Wings have hosted 1-3 reunions: Alaska, Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Washington, and Wisconsin.

The 2014 reunion will be held in Lakeland, Florida on November 6-8. It will be a good one. Let's all make a real effort to go there.

Comment: There remains only a handful of surviving "old time" members (of which this editor is one). Perhaps, after all, the reserved flask of Old Crow will be enjoyed by the last original "old time" OX5 member, man - or woman.

Flight instructors during WWII (Mostly in Texas)

NOTE: At least nine Texas Wing members flew as civilian or commissioned flight instructors during World War II. They were: H. B. "Benny" Benninghoff, George Chandler, Fritz Kahl, George Vose, Linley Wright, Tom Frye, Gene Clark, Robert Taylor and Edna Gardner Whyte (If there are other Texas Wing members who instructed during WWII, please let us know). This newsletter issue includes the story of **H. B. "BENNY" BENNINGHOFF**. Three others have been published. (Chandler, Vose and Wright). The others will follow in subsequent newsletters.

Born on November 12, 1919, H. B. "Benny" Benninghoff was fifteen years old when he worked for Pierce Flying Service in Fort Wayne, Indiana, washing Waco 10, Waco cabin and Kinner Fleet airplanes, and helping with their maintenance. At age 16, after three and one half hours of instruction he soloed in a Kinner Fleet biplane. He received his private pilot certificate at age 17, and his transport pilot certificate one day after his 18th birthday. He continued to build flight time by instructing and carrying passengers, and one weekend he flew as co-pilot with "barnstorming" pilot Clarence Chamberlain in a Conqueror powered Curtiss Condor. During this time he joined the Army Air Force Reserves. Then, in April, 1939, Benny began instructing at Purdue University in the first Civil Pilot Training Program of 50 students.



A really mangled DC-2 in Quito, Ecuador

The following year in June, 1940, because at age 20 he was too young to fly for a U. S. airline, he was hired by Pan American Grace (Panagra) as a co-pilot. Based in Lima, Peru, he flew DC-2s and DC-3 aircraft. But, in Quito, Ecuador, he was involved in a serious take-off accident in a DC-2. The Quito airport elevation was over 9,000 feet and the DC-2 did not have feathering propellers. On take off, the left engine quit at 100 feet because of a broken cam ring, On only one engine they were unable to gain altitude as the terrain increased, so they banked the aircraft, left wing down with the nose up, and cut the switches.



Upon hitting the ground the left wing telescoped inward to the engine nacelle, then the aircraft rolled upon its nose, spun 270 degrees and threw the three cockpit crew members to the ground. (The cockpit crew consisted of pilot, a co-pilot and a radio operator). They suffered serious injuries and spent six weeks recuperating at the Gorgas Hospital in the Canal Zone. Fortunately the one passenger and the attendant in the cabin were not injured.

Left: Benny in retirement, Pottsboro, Texas

(Continued, next page)

Returning to the States in January, 1941, Benny was hired by American Airlines, flew as co-pilot on DC-3s and was promoted to captain in 1943. As a member of the Air Force Reserve he was called for active duty in April, 1943. But, before reporting, he was discharged from the Reserves to be assigned as a C-54 captain for the Air Transport Command that was on contract with American Airlines. He flew many wounded soldiers from the African Command, and later those injured during the invasion of Europe.

During the winter preceding D-Day, Benny was assigned to Weather Reconnaissance, and en route weather reports were sent every 30 minutes. Adverse weather reports gave General Eisenhower the reason for delaying D-Day for two days. After The invasion Benny continued to fly the twice-weekly military route out of New York to Prestwick, Scotland, Morocco, Brazil, Venezuela, Puerto Rico and return to New York.

After the war, Benny returned to American Airlines in Chicago and flew as captain on DC-3, DC-4, and DC-6 aircraft, then in 1968 he was transferred to New York as Assistant Vice President for Flying. In 1970 American Airlines transferred to a new training facility in Fort Worth where he remained until retirement February, 1982. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the FAA, and was inducted into the OX5 Hall of Fame in October, 2005.

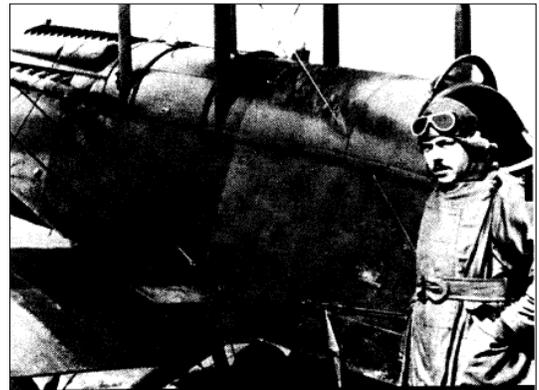


One of Benny's C-54s

“The Importance of Being Lost” (Opinion on Dead Reckoning)

The above title is that of an article by Peter Garrison in a recent issue of FLYING magazine (July 2014). He writes of the fading art of Dead Reckoning and Pilotage in air navigation. His article tells about the 1920s airmail pilot, Jack Knight, whose mastery of basic navigation skills probably was the difference between his life and death.

It is unfortunate that beginning aviation students now are immediately thrust into airplanes with glass cockpits and I-Pad screens to learn the basics of flying and navigation. It appears that the requirement of looking out of the airplane has vanished. In the early flying days of this newsletter editor, there was rarely a radio-equipped airplane in the sky, and on the very first flight the student pilot was taught to keep the airplane level by looking outside. This was the “back to the basics” way the 1920s pilot, Jack Knight, learned to fly.



Airmail pilot Jack Knight, 1924, beside DH-4 mail plane

On February 22, 1921 four de Havilland DH-4s took off at dawn, two from New York and two from San Francisco. One crashed in Nevada, killing the pilot. The two westbound airplanes gave up in the face of a snow storm near Chicago. By evening the remaining eastbound plane, piloted by Jack Knight, delivered the mail to Omaha. Bad weather lay ahead, with snow still falling between Omaha and Chicago, and the pilot who was to fly the Omaha-Chicago leg declined to go. Instead, Jack Knight took off and flew through the night's freezing cold in his open cockpit, guided by bonfires lit by postal employees and farmers. He refueled in Iowa City. By morning he reached Chicago where another plane took his cargo and continued to the east coast, successfully completing the trans-continental airmail trip in 33 hours.

Knight navigated by Dead Reckoning and Pilotage. Dead Reckoning means calculating your position from time, speed, and direction of travel. The predetermined heading is held, and, in time, the destination should appear. If it does not, the same heading is continued and eventually the next land mark will appear.

Jack Knight's night flight, according to Garrison, “must be, to new pilots who have trained in the era of GPS, all but unimaginable”. Dead Reckoning and Pilotage worked – and brought aviation to where it is today.

Military Aviation in Texas a Century ago

Part Nine

By John McCrory

Ed. Note: In John McCrory's previous article (June 2014) he told of the nightfall flight of eight airplanes led by Capt. Foulois from Columbus, New Mexico to Ascension, Mexico. Three pilots, Lt. Willes, Lt. Dargue, and Lt. Gorrell became separated from the others and overflowed Ascension where wood fires had been built for landings. The situation resumes here.

As the sky grew darker, the four lead planes landed at Ascension with the aid of wood fires marking the landing site. Three others did not see the fires, and continued on.

Lt. Willis flew on in continuing darkness for 40 miles and finally attempted a landing in the open desert near Pearson, Mexico, badly damaging his landing gear. He walked all night, and the next day finally reached Casas Grandes. In the meantime, Mexican bandits found the plane and destroyed all but the engine.

Lt. Dargue continued on as well, but was lucky to set his plane down on a suitable field near Janos, where he stayed with his plane all night, and flew it out the next day.

Lt. Gorrell also was lucky and, when low on fuel, landed near a small lake near Ojo Caliente. He attempted to walk out of the area, but decided to return to a stream near the airplane for water. Then he found and hired a cooperative Mexican who guided him to nearby U. S. Troops. He proceeded on to Ascension on horseback. The next day he was driven back to the plane with fuel, and made a successful takeoff.

Shortly after their fateful desert flights, Dargue and Willis, while on a reconnaissance mission northwest of Chihuahua City, lost another Jenny in a bad accident in which Willis was severely injured. The two began to hike back to their unit despite Willis having a broken ankle, severe bruises and lacerations on his head. They were lucky to find water in a small stream. They had set the wreckage on fire, which created a forest fire that kept moving in their direction. Reaching San Antonio, Mexico, 48 hours later, they were safe with U. S. troops.

Meanwhile Gen. Pershing ordered Foulois to fly with Lt. Dodd on a flight to locate Mexican soldiers moving south toward the Sierra Madre Mountains. While climbing through these high peaks they reached the performance limit of the OX5 engine and, at about the same time, they flew into turbulence and had to turn away from rising terrain. When flying back to Headquarters at Colonia Dublan, it became obvious that that the JN-3 did not have the horsepower to surmount the mountains, high winds, blowing dust, and the high desert altitude. The elements were the real enemy.



Brig. Gen. John J. Pershing in the field in Mexico.

The OX5 engine was rated to be 90 h.p. (According to "Dykes Aircraft Engine Instructor"). However, the engines brought from San Antonio had suffered heavy use during the Fort Sill operation, followed by the long cross country flight from Oklahoma to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. Possibly the engines were earlier OX models of less than 90 h.p to start with. In any case, in the high Mexican summer temperatures they were unable to produce their rated horsepower. Capt. Foulois began to realize that it was only possible to fulfill the squadron missions by flying in valleys in order to support the moving Cavalry and Infantry. He thought it prudent to inform Gen. Pershing of the facts, and he also insisted on eventually receiving ten new planes in the hope that someone could manufacture more powerful engines.



Two JN-3s being refueled deep in Mexico from converted Jeffrey fuel trucks.

On March 25, 1916 Lt. Dodd flew 165 miles from Headquarters near Colonia Dublan back to Columbus, N. M. with an important message – the troops faced a serious shortage of food. The supply lines were now inadequate and the Mexican regime would not cooperate with the use of their rail lines. The political situation

was deteriorating as the Army moved deeper into Mexico. Now, with only two of the original Jennys airworthy, the pilots continued to fly only dispatches and mail, mostly along non-mountainous routes.

By April the Punitive Expedition into Mexico was nearing its end, and the last of the JN-3 airplanes were flown back to Columbus and taken out of service. Pershing was ordered to turn the Army around and return to New Mexico. (Without Pancho Villa).

With the demise of the eight Curtiss JN-3s that had been transported by railroad from Dodd Field in San Antonio, there was little chance for replacement aircraft. The only Army aircraft were in California at North Island and were being used for training and were not considered to be service airplanes. Curtiss was moving into mass production in Buffalo, N. Y., but the OX5 engine shop was still at Hammondsport.



Group of 1st Aero Squadron JN-3s preparing for a mission in Mexico. (Note star on tail, originally red)

America was moving toward war in Europe, unprepared in the aviation department. Newspapers picked up the story, and Congress was pressured to appropriate over thirteen million dollars for aircraft development. However, time ran out and America did not have a suitable combat airplane to fly when WWI began.

The record of the 1st Aero Squadron in Mexico was disappointing, with one exception – no pilot had been killed in all of the accidents that occurred in flying operations conducted in rough terrain.

The Mystery Plane, Page 1



All four planes listed on page 1 as possible “Mystery Airplanes” have “Sport” suggestions in their names. But the real Mystery Airplane replica shown is the **GEE BEE Sportster Model Y**. The replica was constructed by Ken Flogler and Bob Kelly which, in 1984, won the Best Civilian Replica award at the Antique Airplane Association Fly-In at Ottumwa, Iowa. Many models of the Gee Bee were designed and built by the Granville Brothers of Springfield, Massachusetts, although usually only one or two of each model were produced. Being a single place airplane and designed for the sportsman pilot, its market was limited.

With a versatile basic airframe it could be fitted by any number of inline or radial engines. The first Gee Bee airplane came out in 1930 with a 110 h.p. Cirrus engine, followed shortly by the 90 h.p. Menasco in the Model C, and then the model D, powered by a 125 h.p. Menasco. While the Granville brothers had no interest in building a racing airplane, the Gee Bee Model E was soon winning such events as the Thompson Trophy Race and the National Air Races in Cleveland.

The Gee Bee Model Y replica in the picture, known as the “Flaglor Gee Bee, Senior Sportsman”, powered by an R-680-13, 300 h.p. Lycoming engine had an empty weight of 1792 lb, gross wgt 2520 lbs. Max speed 175 mph, cruise 140, stall speed 64, rate of climb 2500 fpm. The “Senior Sportsman” model V was a two-place airplane, the front cockpit capable of being closed and sealed, as pictured.

Information and photograph from Antique Airplane Association News, Vol 38, 1st Quarter, 1985

New Texas Wing Member

Gary Lawrence of The Colony, Denton County, who joined us on March 28, during our Wing Reunion

Welcome aboard, Gary Lawrence

A recent newsletter contribution from **Charles “Chuck” Heide** of Kenosha, Wisconsin. Thank you, Charles, for your \$50 contribution.