



OX5 AVIATION PIONEERS TEXAS WING NEWSLETTER

John McCrory, Editor PO Box 847, Marfa, Texas 79843

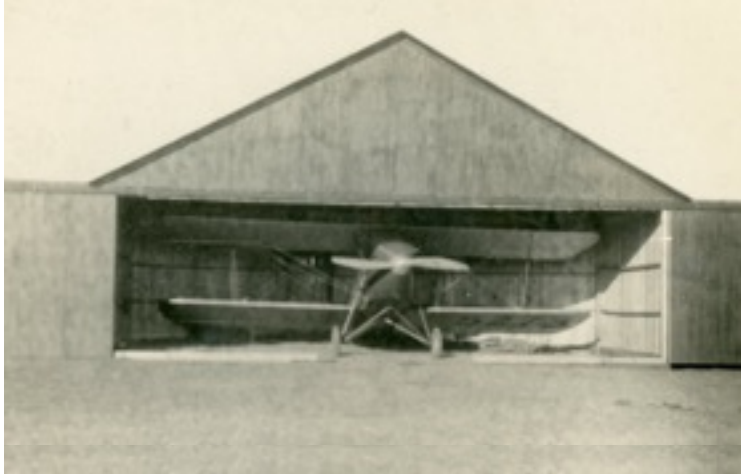
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No. 75



Tim Barrow starting the Waco 10 at the hangar in Castroville, TX in preparation for a local flight on Jan. 31, 2018.

A couple of months ago I was convinced that Texas OX5 subjects were a thing of the past. However, I heard that there was a fine Waco 10 at Castroville - and better yet, it was flying! I remembered what Cole Palen told me many years ago at Rhinebeck, NY — “If an airplane can’t fly, it isn’t an airplane”. So when it started to warm up a bit in late January, we jumped in the plane and with a little tailwind Marilyn got over there in two hours, hoping to see the Waco. Actually we got to meet the whole Castroville contingent, a really fine group of vintage airplane owners, in time to have lunch together downtown, a real treat. After lunch the owners of the Waco pulled the immaculate biplane out of its hangar and serviced the OX-6 engine. The upper cowl was unstrapped and removed, and the rockers were lubed. The engine start was about to begin. Tim Barrow pulled the big prop through. It was several swings before the OX-6 coughed and then tried to idle in the cool midday air, while Brian Hayne in the back seat caught it and kept it running. My wife, Marilyn, was honored to ride to the takeoff runway in the big front seat. Using the parallel taxiway grass, the run-up



was completed and with no traffic in sight, the takeoff began. With that distinct OX engine audio performance the Waco was off and climbing into a very light central Texas breeze. After a generous ride, Brian began the landing approach back to the parallel grass and a proper wheel landing was accomplished. There is a Scott tailwheel on the tail rather than a skid, and a bit of rudder flapping before the ship slows down on the big 26 in. main wheels. After a couple more lucky folks got rides, we fueled up at the pump with the always reasonable Castroville Muni rate and started home.

Waco 10 in hangar on the Nemmers farm in Dell Rapids, SD.

Soon after the visit to the Castroville Airport I received some information describing the early history of the Waco airplane. It was in the form of letters by a younger brother to later buyers of the Waco which was built by Advance Aircraft Co. of Troy, OH, in early 1928. The first owner was Northwest Airways of St. Paul, MN and they applied for a temporary license, receiving wing number 5273 which has remained on the airplane since then. The Nemmers brothers of Dell Rapids, SD, purchased the airplane for \$3,000 in August 1928 and applied for a permanent license, again receiving 5273, and flew the plane to the family farm near Dell Rapids. The older brother was Roman J. Nemmers and his younger brother was Aloys. Roman learned to fly in the mid 1920's in Kansas City and Aloys probably took lessons soon after. At the time of the sale they were, respectively, 21 and 19 years of age. They decided to take a long cross country flight. Lindbergh had made his flight the year before, which inspired a great expansion of civilian airports and an interest in aviation. If Lindbergh could fly a long cross country, they could too.

After servicing the engine they departed for the short flight to Council Bluffs, IA, on December 28, 1928. After a stay with relatives for two days, they flew to Kansas City where they visited former instructors and probably showed off the plane. The next leg was to Wichita, KS, with a head wind resulting in a flight time of almost 3.5 hours. They continued on to Oklahoma City where they took on fuel: then flew on to Ft. Worth, TX, landing at 5:50 pm on December 30.

Tired from a long day of headwinds, they checked into a hotel with New Years Eve entertainment underway and fireworks in the street. The airport may have been Meacham Field as it was described as a "well lighted air mail field".

The next destination was Midland, TX, an "oil man's town with a first class airport". They had stopped for fuel in Abilene and it took six hours that day to reach Midland.



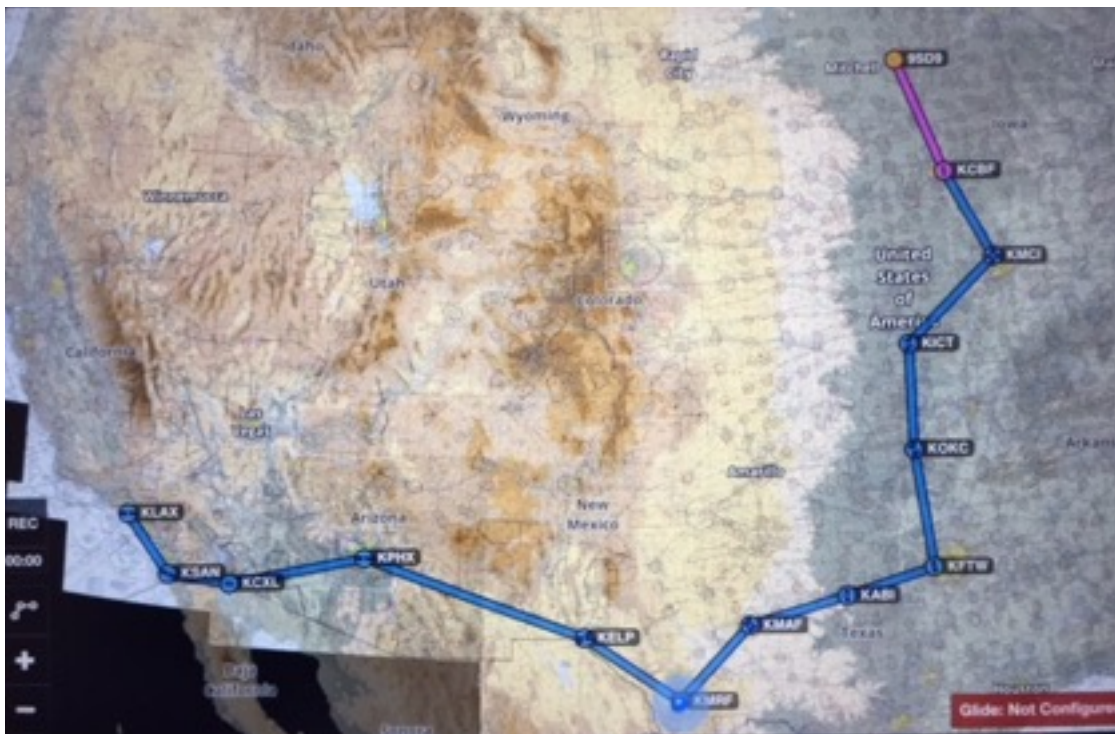


Roland and Aloys Nemmers with Waco 10 5273, in proper flying apparel, 1928.



Tim Barrow, Eddic O'Connor and Bryan Hayne with Waco 10 5273 on Nov. 5, 2017, the first day of flight with the OX-6 engine.

They continued southwest to Marfa, TX, on January 2 and landed near the present day golf course which had a dirt runway and a hangar used by the U.S. Army at Fort D.A. Russell. The Army had patrolled the Rio Grande in DeHavilland biplanes for several years after WW I. A local rancher took them to his ranch for some rest. They probably ate at Borunda's Restaurant where they had some Mexican food which they described as "hot but good". The next day they flew on to El Paso and spent the night again. The terrain was described perfectly as they went through the mountains and on to land at the airport near Ft. Bliss. The next destination was at the end of a long flight to Phoenix, AZ. They now enjoyed the warm climate "where there are trees and things grow". After visiting with friends they left on January 6 in a clear sky, but soon encountered a strong headwind and stopped at Calexico on the border with Mexico. After refueling they continued but ran into IFR conditions and turbulence, landing again at a small town called Campo, which had an open field surrounded by mountains. They considered it a "resort area" and left the next day when it cleared up, soon arriving in San Diego for more fuel. It was only a short hop to Los Angeles, their ultimate destination.



Screen shot of ForeFlight map page showing the known stops on the Nemmers Bros' flight from Del Rapids, SD to Los Angeles, CA. Airport identifiers are current in the area of the landing sites.

Airport identifiers did not exist in 1928. We don't believe there were many civilian maps either. We do know that certain city airports were established in 1928 and that air traffic control was a city responsibility, e.g., Oakland, Cleveland and Newark. AM radio stations with their 4 letter call signs were famous navigation aids, but the Waco 10 did not come with an electrical system. We know that the flight was a significant example of "dead reckoning" navigation, a lost art today. We hope to add a second installment to this story.