A Day For the History Books!

Many interested citizens were on hand to help celebrate the museum's long-awaited groundbreaking for its Cottage Grove storage/restoration facility. The event took part on March 14 and attracted the attention of the news media (above). Mayor Darrell Williams was also present to welcome the museum to the city.

Those who came were able to enjoy a presentation on the museum's Great Lakes by board member Tim Talen and witness the unveiling of a framed Tex Rankin poster (see inside). Rankin also became the first inductee into the Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame®. Another highlight was the naming of Ron Bartley as OAM's Volunteer of the Year.

Featured as well was a model of the hangar planned for the museum site (right). Won't you help bring this exciting project to reality? It's not too late to make your contribution.

Director Al Grell fashioned this model of the museum's planned storage/restoration hangar.
Random Flight

By Roger Starr

As can be seen from the photos in the newsletter, our groundbreaking this past March 14th was very well attended. Our thanks must be given to the weather guru for a perfect day! We are also most appreciative for the refreshments and the tent provided by the Siuslaw Valley Bank. Directors Wil Heath and Royce Beatty deserve a big thank you for coordinating both the ground breaking and the very successful annual meeting.

A very special treat greeted those attending the annual meeting. Director Al Grell constructed a very impressive scale model of our storage and restoration hangar. Please take a close look at the picture on page one. Al is a master aircraft model builder. His specialty is examples of early free flight models. I had no idea Al was building the hangar model until it made its appearance at the annual meeting. And he did it without plans! Thanks Al.

Speaking of plans, the last word from the City of Cottage Grove is that our approved building plans are within a day or two of being ready to pick up, along with the permit allowing for the construction of the full size hangar at the Cottage Grove airport. The next step is to provide a copy of those documents to the Oregon Aeronautics office for their review. Aero will then be able to place stakes at the site prior to the commencement of construction. If you are not available to swing a hammer, your financial assistance is still needed. Please contact us for a pledge form.

The Oregon Aviation Museum requests recommendations for worthy aviators with an Oregon connection as candidates for induction into the Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame®. Nominating forms are available from the Oregon Aviation Museum, Roger Starr, President, PO Box 553, Cottage Grove, OR 97424.
I Saw Tex Fly!

By Ron Bartley

It was one year plus a few months ago that the OAM decided to acquire the remnants of Tex Rankin’s Great Lakes N315Y. One of the first questions that arose was: How will we fund the acquisition and restoration? It was quickly suggested we form an exclusive club consisting entirely of people who had “seen Tex fly” because, after all, they are the ones who realize and appreciate the tremendous contributions to aviation made by Tex during his career. It made perfect sense.

When we contacted people who met the requirements for membership, many responded generously with contributions, memorabilia, and memberships in the club. Many wrote wonderful letters about their relationship with Tex, and about their own aviation careers which, in numerous cases, were inspired by simply seeing Tex fly.

After the club was formed and more information about the history of N315Y became available, it was clear that Tex’s Great Lakes was the very same airplane that was given to Dorothy Hester by the Great Lakes Aircraft Company in 1931. This was a very nice surprise, but it wasn’t just a coincidence. Tex had been involved in the construction of N315Y when it was built for exhibition stunting at the factory. During the late 1930s Tex needed a better aerobatic ship to replace his Ryan. He found N315Y in Montana and promptly bought it for $1,500.

Being an aircraft both owned and flown by two of Oregon’s most famous pilots, N315Y has greater historical significance than initially realized.

The I SAW TEX FLY CLUB has now grown to 88 members in 17 states. The Club includes Rankin family members as well as many airshow spectators who became lifelong Tex Rankin fans when Tex took time to visit with them and sign autographs at airshows. Many members are retired professional pilots, both military and civilian. Examples include:

- a pilot who flew airshows with Tex during the late 1930s, and whose license was signed by Orville Wright
- a Rankin-trained pilot who once attempted an outside loop in N315Y
- another Rankin pilot and well-known Rankin historian
- retired airline pilots with tens of thousands of hours in the cockpit
- many military pilots who were trained at the Rankin Academy, including a Rankin family member
- Tex’s mechanic at Tulare who kept N315Y flying

New members are still needed. We hope that readers of this newsletter will send names and addresses of potential members to the museum.

Preliminary work toward the restoration of Great Lakes N315Y is underway. Parts are being inventoried and potential sources of donated aircraft hardware and supplies are being contacted. Also, a Menasco engine similar to the one Tex installed in N315Y has been located. It is currently being rebuilt, and will be available this summer. If anyone would like to help purchase this Menasco (tax deductible donation), contact the museum, attention Tim Talen.

Stay tuned - more news and happenings from the I Saw Tex Fly club will appear in future issues of this newsletter.
The USAAC detachment at Medford was on hand to service a variety of military aircraft that flew into the field, providing them with fuel and basic repairs. Shown here are a group of Navy Curtiss SOC scout planes. Above is a group of Boeing P-12 fighters, presumably on a delivery flight from the plant in Seattle. Airways communication was another important task, and the interior of the radio hut is shown below.

Part of the Medford detachment, 1938. Standing L-R: John Nagley, Allen Cross (NCO); sitting, Raymond Kalbfleisch, Pete Christenson.
Prior to World War II, the U. S. Army Air Corps maintained a communications station and repair facility at the Medford Airport. One of those stationed at Medford was Pvt. Raymond Kalbfleisch. Through his kind assistance, we are able to share with you these images from his collection. They provide an interesting background into the pre-war army presence in Southern Oregon.

These two photos show longtime Medford aviation personality Tommy Culbertson with a cabin WACO circa 1930's. Anyone having information concerning the mail operation he seems to have been involved in at the time is encouraged to contact the museum.

Army Airways Communication System (AACS) transmitter station 1938, about a mile east of Medford Airport.
Rankin Poster Unveiled

Attendees at the annual meeting were fortunate to witness the unveiling of this Tex Rankin poster, painted by Rankin's grandson John G. Rankin and donated by him to the museum. On hand to celebrate this occasion was Tex's nephew Bob Rankin (above, on left. director Hal Skinner on right).

Rankin made history again by becoming the inaugural member of the Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame. His is the first name of many Oregon notables that will be recognized through this new project, and his many and varied accomplishments will set the standard for future nominations.

JOIN THE I SAW TEX FLY CLUB!

YES, I want to join the I Saw Tex Fly Club! I hereby declare that I saw Tex fly at:

City and State on: (date)

The event was: (airshow, race, etc.)

My most vivid recollection was:

Name (please print): Signature

Mailing address: City: State: Zip

Amount of donation: (minimum $25.00) No. of hours (if a pilot)

Please make checks payable to the Oregon Aviation Museum. If you know of others who have SEEN TEX FLY, please help by sending their names and addresses to the museum.

Thank You for supporting the NX315Y restoration project!
Watzit?

Hint: it's part of the museum collection. More details in the next newsletter.

Marion Carl
1915 - 1998

As this issue was going to press, it was disclosed that Maj. Gen. Marion Carl USMC (ret.) had passed away under tragic circumstances. Born November 1, 1915 at Hubbard, Carl was a graduate of Oregon State College. He went on to become a legend, winning his first Navy Cross at the Battle of Midway in 1942. He fought with distinction at Guadalcanal and finished the war with 18.5 victories.

Carl later became a distinguished test pilot, setting world speed records in the Douglas D-558 Skyrocket. He also served in Korea and in Vietnam. His biography is *Pushing the Envelope* with Barrett Tillman.

Carl is remembered by many not only as one of Oregon's most talented and distinguished aviators but as a fine American as well. Our deepest sympathies go out to his family and all those who knew and respected him.
ABOVE: This sign greeted visitors to the Medford Airport. Note the Standard Oil building to the right.

Right top: This view shows the hangar at the field.

Right: The AACS under construction, 1937.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY RAYMOND KALBFLEISCH