OAHS Celebrated at Fly-In and Open House July 16-18

The Society Open House was held in conjunction with the Oregon Antique & Classic Aircraft Club’s biennial fly-in July 16-18 and attracted approximately 200 people. The Model A, driven by Jim Davis with trailer (above) was an impromptu entry in Cottage Grove’s Bohemia Days parade on Saturday. The fuselage of a George Yates geodesic airplane was the main element. This “float” was very well received by the parade-goers, with membership brochures being handed out.

The picture of the vintage John Deere tractor pulling the trailer shows Paul Stock’s rendition of ground transportation from the airport ramp to our OAHS facility. He ran all afternoon on Saturday. The trailer, with four chairs on it, really added to the atmosphere and was a great boost to attracting visitors to the open house.

Besides the geodesic fuselage, also on display was Tex Rankin and Dorothy Hester’s Great Lakes biplane project. This included one of the original wings and new ribs fabricated by Ron Bartley and friends in Ashland, as well as historic photos. Thanks to Ron for obtaining and displaying these on behalf of the Society. Art and Pam Lumley of Gold Hill displayed a sample of their original aviation art pieces. These were very well received.

OACAC held a continental breakfast at the History Center on Sunday morning. Many complementary remarks were heard regarding the Center and its potential. More than one local citizen stopped by and expressed appreciation for our being there, indicated an interest in becoming a member and volunteered to help with building construction or artifact restorations.
IN MEMORIAM:

Elwood Hedberg lost his well-fought battle with lung cancer on June 2. He was at home surrounded by his beloved family at the end. Elwood was a life member of the Society and its corporate secretary. As various members noted, Elwood was always in the middle of whatever the Society was doing. He provided the glue that held the organization together during some difficult times.

Elwood was committed to the goals of the OAHS and gave freely of his many talents in the furtherance of those goals. The Storage/Restoration facility is a tribute to his commitment. He led the way in securing the site, the permits, the design, the contractors and the funding. Elwood was named Volunteer of the Year this past March at our annual meeting of the membership. The award was in recognition of the many hours and dollars Elwood committed to the building project over recent times. As I mentioned in my presentation of the plaque, it was more appropriately an award for the Volunteer of the Years.

Although family life was his highest priority, Elwood dedicated untold hours to his church and various community activities. He enjoyed flying and participating in events with others who shared his enthusiasm. His organizational ability was amply demonstrated in his leadership role with the Society as well as with the Oregon Antique and Classic Aircraft Club and Newberg's Vintage Celebration.

Elwood and I spent many hours together in the car or cockpit traveling to Society and various aviation activities. During these trips, we talked about a broad range of topics. It never ceased to amaze me the number of subjects Elwood could discuss with obvious insight and forethought. His thirst for knowledge was evident right up to his last days. He could describe his medical condition and the procedures and accompanying terminology as if it had been his life study.

The family has suggested that memorial contribution be made to the Society. We are most appreciative of this honor. At its June meeting, the Board of Directors of OAHS directed that such donations be used to establish the Elwood Hedberg Endowment Fund. The income from this fund will first be dedicated to the normal operating costs associated with the Storage/Restoration facility. I know Elwood would be pleased with this decision since he mentioned on several occasions the need for just such an endowment fund.

Our sincere condolences are extended to the family. We miss Elwood greatly and find consolation in remembering all that he did for those who had the pleasure of knowing him and for the Oregon Aviation Historical Society. Thank you Elwood.
Down in the Drink

by William Villani

World War II saw Oregon skies filled with fledgling military pilots training to go off to war. Every now and then a glitch would happen, and a plane would end up in a lake or river, or in the Pacific. Hellcats, Helldivers, Avengers, and Wildcats were among the types that endured such dunkings.

One non-Navy craft that went for a swim was this North American O-47A observation plane, s/n 38-308. 2nd Lt. Walter McLeod of the 70th Observation Group, 116th Observation Squadron was out on a training flight from Corvallis AASB on March 19, 1943 when something went wrong. Fortunately, he was over Fern Ridge Reservoir west of Eugene and was able to drop his reluctant mount into the water.

Even more fortuitously, his misfortune was witnessed by Mrs. Bessie Jeans, chief observer of the Veneta air observation post. Jeans and her husband had a lakeside home, and after calling in the sighting they set out in a small boat. The craft’s propeller caught an obstruction on their way out, shearing its pin. Mr. Jeans, however, was a logger, and like many loggers was handy in a pinch. He cut a nail in two for an impromptu repair and had the engine going in “nothing flat.”

Lt. McLeod was fished out of the lake in rapid fashion. His plane had to wait until March 23, 1943 - sans propeller, which had sheared off in the crash. Perhaps it sits on the muddy bottom to this day, fouling the fishing lines of cursing sportsmen.

References: Report of Aircraft Accident, USAAF;

- USAF Photos
Annual Meeting Successful

The Society's first annual meeting March 27 in its new facility and with its new name was a rousing success. Those in attendance were able to view the building and due credit was given to Wil Heath, Doug Yarbrough, Royce Beatty, Walt Duneden and Rex Hume for their many hours of work to get the internal framing done in time for the gathering. A special event was the presentation of the Volunteer of the Year Award to longtime board member Elwood Hedberg. Hedberg received the award for his persistence and dedication shown in planning for the long-awaited hangar building. Elwood received a handsome framed first-day issue set of the 1977 Spirit of St. Louis stamps.

The next item on the agenda was the announcement of results for the board election. Elected for four-year terms expiring in 2003 are Allen Alsing, Al Grell, Wilbur Heath, and Lloyd Williams. Re-elected by acclamation were President Roger Starr, Vice President Royce Beatty, Treasurer Annette Whittington, and Secretary Elwood Hedberg.

Jim Wright and his crew then gave a well-received discussion of their recreation of the world-beating Hughes Racer of the 1930's. Completed sections of the plane were on display, and the retractable undercarriage was demonstrated. As no original drawings survive, the team has worked with the Smithsonian to measure and photograph the original plane, now in Washington, DC with NASM. It is exciting that this project is ongoing at Cottage Grove and a warm thank-you is extended to Ron Englund, Steve Wolf, Mike Mann, and Jim Wright for spending some time with us and giving an excellent presentation.

All in all it was a pleasant gathering for the 45 or so in attendance, and a good start for what will be many more gatherings in the same place.

ISTF News

by Ron Bartley

We now have 105 ISTF members. Also, 36 wood wing ribs have been completed for the Great Lakes, all with 100% donated materials and labor. These ribs duplicate the ones that Tex added between the factory-made aluminum ribs so as to maintain the wing profile at high speeds (like a vertical dive going into an outside loop). Compression struts and intermediate ribs have been completed for all four wings.

Get Your Annual, Help the Society at the Same Time!

The Society is very pleased that William Robinet of Veneta has agreed to allow his clients to designate one-half of his fee for performing annual aircraft inspections and the total biennial flight reviews fee as a donation to OAHS. Society members are encouraged to take advantage of this offer to help meet our fund-raising goals.

Contact Bill at 541-935-3223. Thank you, Bill.
ALBANY AIR DAYS - THEN AND NOW

On Saturday, July 31st, Albany hosted an "Airport Day" which included a display at a local mall. OAHS was there with a booth - perhaps you saw us!

The day may have brought back memories to some of the airport's dedication in July 1931. Albany was quite proud of its then two-year-old field and celebrated with a special cacheted postal cover, some 2,200 of which were issued (above, author's collection.) The dedication speech was by Congressman Hawley, who would achieve a footnote of historical ignominity as cosponsor of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff, an act that many believe deepened and worsened the Great Depression.

The 12,000 spectators were treated to a display by many talented fliers, including Tex Rankin and Dorothy Hester in the Great Lakes now owned by the Society. Among those impressed by the pair's aerial prowess was the Albany Democrat-Herald. That paper opined the following in an editorial:

Seems to us that Dorothy Hester and Tex Rankin have a queer idea about proving how safe airplanes are by doing things with them that no one else dare attempt. Still they may be right. Any plane that will hold together under their control should be safe enough for a fellow who just wants to take a buggy ride.

TIME, DISTANCE & MATERIAL

What do 1,034 hours, 12,976 miles and 5,509 dollars have in common? They all add up to the tremendous progress being made on the interior improvements of the Storage/Restoration facility at the Cottage Grove Airport. They represent the number of volunteer hours worked, the number of miles those volunteers have traveled to do the work and the value of donated material & equipment used by the volunteers through July.

Rex Hume and his crew of dedicated volunteers can usually be found working on the project Fridays and Saturdays. If you are in the area, it is well worth the time to stop by and view the progress. Do not be shy about asking if you can lend a hand!

A well deserved thank you goes to the following organizations who have donated material or equipment use:

Davidson Industries
D Stake Mill, Inc.
E & S Hardware & Supply, Inc.
Mountain West Resource Management, Inc.

Shamrock Lumber Co.
Willamette Industries, Inc
Witts Building Supply

Thanks again!

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