Oregon's Trails in the Sky:
Flying the Airways in Southwestern Oregon - the Old-Fashioned Way

By Ron Bartley
The terrain and weather in southwestern Oregon did not contribute to the longevity of early-day pilots. This mountainous region is heavily forested and characterized by narrow valleys and relatively high mountain passes. From November to March, ridge crests are commonly obscured by low, ragged clouds; snow; or rain. The fear of ice building up on wings and flying wires was always there. Ernest Gann knew the region and wrote, “… the route has the worst flying weather in the United States.”

Travel through southwestern Oregon has always been predominantly in a north-south direction. Today, motorists drive Interstate 5, which closely follows the route of the San Francisco to Seattle Airway. Not surprisingly, the first pioneer wagon train to enter southern Oregon in 1846 also followed this same sequence of valleys and mountain passes.

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RANDOM FLIGHT

By Roger Starr

Occasionally, the answer to a seemingly simple question is an equally simple answer. Such was the recent query posed to me by a person planning a trip from his east coast home to the west coast via the Oregon Trail in his private airplane. My immediate reply was, "at the beginning." Seemed obvious to me. It would make for easier planning if one were researching significant sites to see and stops to make along the trail. After all, all of the material available, and it is considerable, begins at Independence, St. Joseph or other jumping off points. Certainly much easier to follow the pioneers’ progress from the beginning rather that start somewhere along the trail and miss the significance of what transpired along their journey prior to that point.

So what is the point, you ask? As an organization dedicated to collecting and preserving what has transpired in the realm of Oregon aviation history, OAHS started well after the jumping off point. We have to look both ways along the trail when fulfilling our goals. We do not have the ring to one source, sources, to answer that has transpired history prior to any times it becomes do not have infor- curred prior in or- understanding of why subsequent events occurred, or did not occur.

It is one of my personal goals to help provide a more complete resource of our aviation history through research and publishing of a single source reference. The traditional mode would be through a book. This could also be supplemented, and in some cases supplanting, by audio and visual references.

This is a very large undertaking and will without doubt take considerable time to complete. In the meantime, you can assist by continuing your support of OAHS, encouraging others to become members and providing any, and all, information you are aware of relating to Oregon aviation history. Your stories, pictures and other memorabilia can play a great part in answering some of the questions relative to what happened along the trail. We now have the physical facility in the form of our Oregon Aviation History Center to organize and preserve the trail story. Now, it is up to all of us to utilize this asset for its intended purpose of being the central repository for Oregon aviation history.

Unlike the emigrants whose journey had a known terminus, Oregon’s aviation heritage continues beyond the horizon. Remember, history never stops.
Annual Meeting Big Success

The Society's annual meeting on Saturday, April 22, celebrated the dedication of the History Center and was enjoyed by a large crowd of attendees. It coincided with the gathering of the Oregon Antique and Classic Aircraft Club.

Speaker Katherine Miles gave a well-received presentation on her activities as a World War II WASP. Many informative interpretive exhibits were also enjoyed by the members and the general public.

A popular event was the dedication of the History Center in the afternoon. This was followed by a tour of the facility.

(See photos beginning on Page 6.)

I Saw Tex Fly News

by Ron Bartley

This photograph shows restored aluminum compression tubes and related attachments, a wing tip bow, braces, and various pieces from the upper left Great Lakes wing. Although not visible in a black-and-white photo, the compression tube indicated by the arrow clearly has red, white and blue overspray paint, apparently from Tex's 1939 paint job for his World's Fair aerobatic performances over Treasure Island in San Francisco Bay. Currently there is a need for the drag and anti-drag wires, and various other fittings. As always, donations for the project are encouraged and welcome!

Folded Wings

Sadly, it is necessary to note the passing of several friends of the Society.

Robert Hofer passed away in July. A former husband of Dorothy Hester and owner of the Society's Great Lakes, he was an invaluable source of first-person information and restoration support.

The Society was shocked and saddened by the loss of Paul Meyerhoff in an airplane accident in May. Paul had been a member of our board of directors since 1997. Our condolences are extended to Paul's family. He will not be forgotten.

Northwest journalism legend and former aviation editor of The Oregonian Leverett Richards has died. Known for accurate, quality reporting, Richards covered virtually every important aviation story in Oregon from the late 1930's to the 1990s. He was profiled in the March, 1997 issue of the Newsletter and headlined the annual meeting.
AIRWAYS BEACONS IN SOUTHWEST OREGON

By the late 1920s, the route "through" the mountains of the area was well-established. It was marked by electric-powered, fixed and rotating beacons (and one acetylene beacon) to guide pilots at night. The beacon towers, which were about 50 feet high, were built and maintained by the Department of Commerce. They could be identified individually by a line of red flashing lights. These course lights marked the direction of an airway when viewed from above. They also flashed to identify a letter in Morse code for positive identification. Each letter also indicated the distance from the start of the airway. This beacon system, generally referred to as the "light line," marked designated visual flight routes.

At least 27 or 28 beacons, including those at airports, were installed between Eugene and the California border. The beacon at the top of Canyon Mountain near Canyonville was No. 38 (380 miles north of the start of the airway) and flashed —... (B). During the late 1930s, it was maintained by a man who borrowed a local horse so that he and his small dog could both ride up the steep two-mile trail to the beacon.²

Emergency or Intermediate landing fields were established at strategic locations along the airway. Apparently, five such fields were present in southwest Oregon. The southernmost field was located on the Ed Barron Ranch a few miles southeast of Ashland. It was used mostly by airmail pilots during winter months when the Medford Airport was obscured by fog.

The Cow Creek Emergency Field near the town of Glendale was a welcome sight to many early-day pilots who were in danger of being trapped in the valley as the ceiling lowered behind them.

In April of 1929, a nationally-recognized aviatrix by the name of Louise Thaden landed at Cow Creek when "forced to... on account of heavy snow storms in the mountains."³

From late 1928 to 1931, the West Coast Air Transport Company followed the light line as they provided daily passenger service between Portland and San Francisco with their eight-passenger "Tri-Motored Ships."⁴ On one occasion

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Pioneer Mailplane to Fly Again

Addison Pemberton and Society President Roger Starr ink the agreement.

The remains of OAHS’s Pacific Air Transport Boeing 40C mailplane, which were recovered several years ago from its 1928 crash site near Canyonville, have been transferred for restoration to Addison Pemberton of Spokane, Washington. Mr. Pemberton will use whatever possible in a flying restoration and the remnants will return to the Society for interpretive purposes. It is a win-win arrangement for both parties. The museum received a Hamilton-Standard 2B20-9 propeller and generous cash donation from Mr. Pemberton, and will be able to create an exhibit from those remains that prove of no use to the restoration. The general public will be treated to the sight of a fully operational Boeing 40, a plane that did much to open the West to aviation progress. We look forward to seeing it at future Oregon air fairs, open houses, and aviation events, and we doff our hats to Addison Pemberton for taking on this ambitious project and Ron Bartley for spearheading the archaeological and recovery effort.

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A third emergency field was located near Myrtle Creek (about 1.5 miles southwest of the of the present Tri-City State Airport.) It was designated Site 39A, SF-5 Airway. This field could be used for barnstorming if permission was granted from the Lighthouse Service of the Department of Commerce. However, “aeronautical exhibitions including aerobatics, parachute jumps, wing walking, airplane changing, etc. (were) strictly prohibited.”

Emergency fields were apparently also built near Yoncalla and Cottage Grove. (The Editor remembers seeing mention of an emergency field south of CG. Can (Continued on Page 6)
As this issue goes to press, preparations are underway for the OAH’S presence at the Oregon Air Fair in Albany. Watch this space for a report in the next issue.

DIRECTORS LOST... AND FOUND

Hal Skinner chose not to stand for reelection to the board at our April annual meeting. Hal’s involvement with and support of the Society extends from its beginning. His thoughtful insights as a member of the board will be missed. The next time you see Hal, please join us in saying thanks for all his dedication to the furtherance of our goals.

We welcome Doug Kindred as our newest board member. Doug was appointed at the July board meeting. He lives in Eugene where he owns and operates an irrigation design, service and installation business. Doug is a past president of the Oregon State EAA/Sport Aviation Association. His leadership skills will be put to good use as a member of the Board. Roll up your sleeves Doug!

Left: The Annual Meeting attracted a large and diverse crowd. MIDDLE: Rex Hume (right) receives his Volunteer of the Year award from Roger Starr, President. Volunteer of the Year awards were also received by Wil Heath and Doug Yarbrough. RIGHT: Katherine Miles was our feature program.

TRAILS IN THE SKY
(Continued from Page 5)

anyone confirm this?)

By 1930, Boeing radio phones were being installed in Pacific Air Transport mail planes, which were now able to carry four passengers. This, for the first time, allowed pilots to occasionally fly directly to their destination above a cloud or smoke layer, and let down through the overcast while the station agent directed the pilot to the airport by listening for the sound of his engine. But it was the radio range navigation system, established in the late 1940’s, that allowed pilots to make regularly-scheduled flights over the mountains of southwestern Oregon, instead of between them.

NOTES
2. One of the original beacons has been retrieved by the Oregon Aviation Historical Society, and will be placed next to the OAH’S Aviation History Center at the Cottage Grove Airport.
3. Medford Mail Tribune.

WISHES CAN COME TRUE

As a result of the wish list published in the December, 1999 Newsletter, the Society has been fortunate to have several of those items donated. Thanks to Malcolm Buffum, we now have an air compressor, metal working lathe with bench & tooling, bench grinder and oxygen-acetylene welding outfit.

Other recent donations include a bookshelf and table from Jack Coshow; upholstered chairs for the Elwood Hedberg Aviation Resource Library courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.

Remember, your donation to OAH’S of non cash items may help reduce your income taxes for this year. Please review this list for any items you are able to part with.

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<th>Item</th>
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<td>Small Milling Machine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parts Cleaning Tank</td>
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<td>Shop Cabinets</td>
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<td>Small Forklift</td>
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<td>Golf Cart/Tow Tug</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planer/Joiner - 6”</td>
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<td>Toolbox/Rollaway</td>
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<td>Chain Hoist/1-Beam/Trolley</td>
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<td>Portable Air Tank</td>
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<td>Portable Tool/Parts Cart</td>
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<td>Solvent Spray Gun</td>
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<td>Small Oven</td>
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<td>Drop Work Lights (2)</td>
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<td>Metal Brake</td>
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<td>English Wheel (or kit)</td>
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<td>Carpet Vacuum</td>
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<td>Small Riding Mower</td>
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<td>Mini Blinds (3 windows)</td>
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<td>Computer and Printer (not too old!)</td>
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ABOVE: Rex Hume serves up dessert to a hungry Wil Heath at the ice cream social held at the History Center July 22. This was in conjunction with the OACAC meeting.

TOP RIGHT: Rex again, checking out the new sign that graces the Center's front. This is one of two recently installed.

RIGHT: Al Alising and Ron Bartley answer questions at the OAHIS booth during the Grants Pass Air Fair held July 8.

The Society Would Like to Thank the Following Individuals and Companies that Helped Make the Oregon Aviation History Center a Reality:

Al Alising
Royce Beatty
Thomas Bedell & Gretchen Bencene
Boyce & Son
Blanche Bross
Malcolm Buffum
Robert & Margaret Carey
Ray Costello
D Stake Mill, Inc.
Davidson Industries
James Dittmer
Walt Dudenh
E & S Hardware & Supply, Inc.
William & Erlene Elam
Verda Giustina
All Grell
Dee Grell
Wil Heath
Betty Hedberg
Elwood Hedberg
Jan Hedberg
Margaret Hennan
Rex Hume
Jerry's Home Improvement Center
Douglas Kindred
Elizabeth Johnson
Edwin Lamb
Mark Ladendorff
Art Lumley
Mountain West Resource Management, Inc.
Newberg Chamber of Commerce
Oregon Community Foundation, Robert & Jeannette Hofer Fund
Richard Redlin
Bill Robinet
Shamrock Lumber Co.
Siou Lawson Valley Bank
Carol Skinner
Hal Skinner
Roger Starr
James Stearns
Swanson Brothers Lumber, Inc.
Tim Talen
Terry Weathers
Larry Well
Annette Whittington
Williamette Industries
Doug Williams
Lloyd Williams
Wits Building Supply
Wright Machine Tool, Inc.
Doug & Joy Yarbrough
Harold Yarbrough
Walter & Elaine Rankin Zolezzi
**REMEMBER THE ENDOWMENT FUND**

Since being established in June 1999, the Elwood Hedberg Endowment Fund has grown to more than $12,000. The purpose of this fund is to help provide funding for the normal operating costs associated with the Oregon Aviation History Center. The Fund's assets are invested to provide maximum income with minimal market risk. Income generated from the investments is then transferred to the operating fund to pay such items as rent, insurance, utilities and routine maintenance of the Center.

Since donations to the fund are not expended on current requirements, but are added to the investments, they continue to give for many years to come. The Fund was initiated as a tribute to Elwood and a lasting memorial to his dedication to the Society. We have received several memorial contributions in memory of Society members. This is truly an appropriate way of recognizing the life of such members.

Our thanks to the families who have been kind enough to suggest the Society as the recipient of such remembrances.

If you have not made a commitment the endowment fund, please consider doing so. We will be reminding members of this opportunity as part of the year-end membership renewal.

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*ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED*