Patton, Beaverton Outlaws Highlight Annual Meeting April 20

Come to Cottage Grove April 20 for the 2002 Annual Meeting!

The program will begin at 1pm April 20 at the History Center. It will feature John Patton (left, atop Table Rock in Spring 1976 with his J-4 Cub purchased from Harry Eyrely), creator of "The Beaverton Outlaws", the story of Bernard’s Beaverton Airport and the pioneering aviators who worked there, built some of Oregon’s first homebuilt airplanes and flew in the face of federal regulations. Brownies and ice cream will help round out the day’s events. Show your membership card at the Village Green Inn for a discount on lodging.

(Photo courtesy John Patton.)

John Patton was born in Medford and graduated from Medford High School in 1957. In the mid 70's he was working as an Avionics Technician for Logan and Reavis at the Medford Airport where he also took flying lessons. On his first student solo cross country he flew to Lakeview where the airport was managed by a Mr. Myron Buswell. John's flight instructor had warned him that Buswell would want to see his log book and sign it which was uncommon at that time. Sure enough, Buswell did sign his log, and as time went on John heard more stories about Buswell and the strange airplanes flown at Bernard Field in Beaverton in the 1930's. Finally John decided to take a tape recorder and a camera and locate as many of these old-time pilots as he could. He managed to find about 90% of the "Beaverton Outlaws" and record their stories and make copies of their photo albums. All of these materials were donated to the Oregon Aviation Historical Society. John is now a full time RV traveler who spends a little time every day mountain biking or open water rowing.
RANDOM FLIGHT

By Roger Starr

In my last column, I made mention that volunteering to assist in our artifact cataloging project would offer an opportunity to see firsthand some of the interesting artifacts in our collection. Even though I was not working on the cataloging effort, I recently took the opportunity to sample one of the more interesting artifacts in the archives.

In the late 1970’s, John Patton of Ashland interviewed early birdmen who flew and/or worked out of the famed Bernard Field in Beaverton. This included owner Charlie Bernard, Danny Grecco, Ed Ball, our own Myron Buswell and several more familiar names from the early days of Oregon aviation. I listened to all 30 audiotapes during my daily driving routine. What a treasure trove!

John also took over 2,000 slides of these pioneers and their photo and artifact collections. He then produced a videotape, “The Beaverton Outlaws.” OAHS is indeed fortunate to have been the benefactor of the fabulous collection.

While driving about and listening the audiotapes, I began to wonder what be came of the gifted creator of this treasure. Wouldn’t it be great to contact John and at least say thank you for all his efforts that can never be duplicated? Even better, wouldn’t it be great to get together with John and have him reminisce about the adventures he encountered in collecting this material? It was obvious from listening to the tapes that there was another story running parallel with the interview. I made a couple of attempts to locate him in southern Oregon via telephone book listings and internet sources. All to no avail.

Then, at our December executive council meeting, our trusty Secretary, Royce Beatty, mentioned that a new member by the name of John Patton had recently joined OAHS. After waking up to what Royce told us at the meeting, I called this John Patton with high hopes. It was he. We had a tremendous conversation that evening. I was thrilled. Then I popped the question. Would he be available to speak at our annual meeting this April? John allowed as how he had a standing commitment on Saturdays, but would give it some thought and get back to me. John is a fast thinker! The next day he sent me an email accepting my invitation. I can not wait!!

I would encourage you to make a special effort to be on hand April 20th to enjoy John’s tales and see his fantastic video. Hope to see you at the History Center!

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I SAW TEX FLY NEWS  By Ron Bartley

Sadly, we note the passing of Ray Varney, Member No. 2 of the ISTF Club. Ray was one of many members with notable aviation careers. His obituary, reprinted here, provides insight into the aviation career of this remarkable pilot who lived the early days of aviation.

Raymond Varney
ARTOIS — At his request, no formal services will be held for Raymond H. Varney, 95, of Artois. He died Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2002, in Willows.
He was born Jan. 15, 1906, in North Bend, Neb., to Cash and Marie Varney.
He moved to Thermopolis, Wyo., when he was six years old.
After finishing high school, he was accepted into the Army Air Corps Cadet Program. After graduating from training at Brooks and Kelly Fields, he was accepted into the Navy in 1933 as an aviator.
He flew off the USS Langley, the Navy's first aircraft carrier, and later became a flight instructor at Pensacola, Fla.

At one time he held the top instrument rating in the Navy. He barnstormed with Tex Rankin in early aviation barnstorming. His airman certificate was signed by aviation pioneer Orville Wright in 1926. During World War II, he flew PBYS, retiring as a lieutenant commander after the war. He started crop-dusting prior to the war with the Willows Flying service. In 1946, he started his own agricultural cropdusting business. Varney Air Industries. In 1956, he was one of the original nine pilots who formed the first air tanker squadron in the nation to fight forest fires from the air, and were based in Willows. He was one of the oldest pilots still flying in the world.
He married Mildred Brown in December 1928. She died in 1989.
He was a member of many organizations, including the Quiet Birdmen.
He is survived by one daughter, Carol Hetzler of Stigtomta, Sweden.
Burial took place beside his wife at Orland Cemetery Jan. 3.
Ray Varney (no relation to the Varney Airlines founder) arrived at Kelly Field for Army Air Corps flight training in the mid-1920s, just a few months after Lindbergh departed. After Ray finished flight training, he got a job flying for a man in Wyoming who was exploring for oil by aerial mapping.
He later barnstormed, flying a Hisso Jenny and a "Lincoln Standard with Dixie mags on a 150 h.p. Hisso." After receiving his AI Certificate in 1926 (signed by Orville Wright) he painted "LICENSED PILOT" on the fuselage, and business improved. At other times he flew a Liberty-powered DH-4, and once mentioned an exciting trip ferrying an "OX-Rock out of Denver."

During the late 1930s, Tex Rankin invited Ray to perform an aerobatic routine in Ray's Fleet biplane at air shows where Tex was the main attraction. Tex told Ray how to get into an inverted flat spin ("roll inverted into a stall with the stick and one rudder firewall"). Ray held Tex in high regard, not only for his flying ability, but also for his generosity.

A few years later, Ray was teaching flight instructors at the Pensacola Naval Air Station how to do inverted flat spins. While stationed at Pensacola, Ray's good friend and neighbor was Marion Carl.

(continued on Page 5)

Can You

Small Milling Machine
Shop Cabinets
Golf Cart/Tow Tug
Planer/Jointer - 6"
Toolbox/Rollaway
Portable Tool/Parts Cart
Solvent Spray Gun
Drop Work Lights (2)
Metal Shear
Metal Brake
English Wheel (or kit)
Small Riding Mower
Variable-speed Bandsaw
Infocus-type Projector
Digital Camera
Photocopy Machine

Fill a Hole?
The above items are still needed by the Society. Give now for a good feeling and a tax deduction!

Black Cats and Outside Loops

Tex Rankin: Aerobatic Ace

By Walt Bohrer

Foreword by Jimmy Doolittle

The Society is still offering a supply of Black Cats and Outside Loops: Tex Rankin, Aerobatic Ace by Walt Bohrer for sale at only $25. Proceeds are dedicated to the restoration of Tex Rankin's Great Lakes biplane. They make great gift items for that aviation-minded friend!

Need an announcement for the annual meeting.

I am forwarding John's bio. to work into this piece.
How many of us are fortunate enough to have our local aviation history developed? If it had not been for a prolonged discussion among Corvallis pilots in the late 1970s regarding the origins of the present day Corvallis airport, one of the participants, Jerry Davis, would not have dug into and written about the history. However, like the proverbial bulldog who wouldn’t let go, Jerry not only found out the military history of CVO, which in itself is interesting, but delved into the long-forgotten past and developed a full-blown book entitled Balloons to Blue Angels—80 Years of Aviation History in Benton County, Oregon, 1905-1985. Jerry interviewed dozens of people, found virtually hundreds of photographs, and made this labor of love into a living publication.

But, Jerry passed away before he was able to publish it although he did have a few copies of the original manuscript made. In 2002, another Corvallis pilot, Bill Gleaves, and I were fortunate to obtain permission from Mrs. Jerry Davis to edit and print the manuscript. In the process we added a few pages of update to the present. The book now is available for purchase. My wife Gretchen and I have donated one copy to the OAH/HS collection.

The first recorded flights in Benton County were in the summer of 1905 on a hot air balloon from the courthouse lawn in Corvallis. Rides were 25 cents. The first airplane flights were in September 1914 from the baseball practice field south of Waldo Hall on the Oregon Agricultural College campus. After World War I in 1919, a pasture on Taylor’s Cloverleaf Dairy, now the site of Corvallis High School, was designated as the first landing field. Five Curtiss JN-4s and a DeHavilland DH-4 were brought to Corvallis in June 1919. Later that year the location was moved to McFadden’s farm, now part of the site for Hewlett-Packard. These two locations were the first of what were ultimately 12 different public use airports in and around Corvallis.

Joe Chamberlin, a Corvallis boy, learned to fly in the Army and was shot down in France. He had graduated from OAC in 1914 and after the war returned to Corvallis becoming a professor of entomology. Chamberlin is mentioned prominently in the early history. Another military friend, Oakley Kelley, joined Chamberlin in the Willamette Valley and together they promoted aviation. Chamberlin designed a dusting hopper to be attached to a JN-4 and in 1925 Oakley Kelley piloted the plane and dusted an apple orchard near Monroe with a mixture of sulfur and lead arsenate, probably the first aerial agricultural application in Oregon.

If you think about it, the only place one could learn to fly was in the military at that time. So, how did people get flying lessons? Davis serves up a fascinating history of the Langmack brothers, Dave and Charlie of Lebanon. In 1919 when they were 15 and 12 years old, they had saved up enough money to buy a Canadian ‘Canuck’, essentially a Curtiss Jenny that had aerialons on both bottom and top wings. It came in crates. They put it together and literally taught themselves to fly. The story as told to Davis by Charlie is that they were taxiing across the fields getting the feel of it when they hit a hump and were caught by a wind gust becoming airborne. They had to fly it and they did! Within two days both had soloed. They gave flying lessons and one who learned was Elbert Parmenter.

Elbert started the first flying school in Corvallis with a JN-4 bought from Langmacks and a Waco 9 biplane bought from Tex Rankin. Elbert persuaded the city in 1928 to lease 88 acres of land bounded by Grant Street on the south and Highland Way on the east for $25/month. This became known as the Grant Street airport and operated until 1933. Air Derbies were held in 1928 and 1929 with Tex Rankin prominently featured with his Waco 10 ‘Veedol 13′ in...
1928. Unfortunately, the citizens of Corvallis never really supported any airport improvement. A bond issue was on the 1930 ballot and was defeated. Then, the city council gave up paying the $25 a month rent so the Grant St. airport died in 1933.

Meanwhile, Dick Lyndon, who had learned to fly in 1929 from Elbert Parmenter, established an airport in 1931 on the site of an old racetrack two miles south of Corvallis. It has been the home of B&R Auto Wrecking for many years. Lyndon operated the race-track airport with two planes, an American Eagle and a 1931 Fleet. The depression just about killed general aviation. Lyndon was going to pack it in in 1937 because the landowner increased the rent. But, he found another location just to the west of the railroad tracks across the highway. It became known as the Herbert Avenue airport. Since it was not improved at all (it was really just a pasture) it wasn’t very usable in winter. Nevertheless, there was some activity there by Corvallis boys wanting to learn to fly. Dick Lyndon got involved in the Civilian Pilot Training program in 1939 operated out of Albany. Then, Cal Keinle operated the Herbert Avenue airport for a year but also left for the CPT program. The airport was abandoned in 1942.

To finish up this short expose, I will just cite the development history of the present day Corvallis airport. The people of Corvallis finally passed a bond issue in November 1939. In 1940, the city bought 491 acres four miles south of town. The federal government said it would make more funds available for airport construction in the event of war. A little progress was made by the city in 1940-41 but not enough for planes to land and take off. All that changed after Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941). Civilian flying was prohibited and the Army Corps of Engineers started building the airport in February 1942. Additional funds were appropriated to enlarge the airport to 1597 acres. There were three runways, parallel taxiways and aircraft dispersal hardstands around the airbase perimeter. The first plane to land and take off was an Army O-47 Owl (shown here) on September 10, 1942.

The Army Air Force operated the field from 1942 until May 1944 when Marine Air Group 35 took over. Marines operated out of Corvallis until May 31, 1945 and the U.S Navy took it over the next day. The war was soon to be over and the navy base was decommissioned on February 1, 1946. This complete history is on pages 78-90.

**ISTF (Continued from Page 3)**

When WWII ended, Ray was C.O. of Operation at the Navy’s facility on the island of Guam. He was already thinking about acquiring surplus N3N Navy trainers to start a crop dusting business, which he did.

Ray was looking forward to seeing our Great Lakes N315Y fly again and contributed to its restoration.

In one of Ray’s last letters he mentioned the small plane he built a few years ago. These words tell us a lot about Ray Varney.

"My flying isn’t what it used to be as I’m getting up pretty well into the senior bracket—94. I brought my plane home where I have been keeping it up in Orland and have it in my hangar here. I don’t fly it too much or go places. I do fly close to home and when I do, I feel like a new man. It is awfully good therapy just to have it around, and though it is for sale, I’m not telling anybody about it.”
The exhibit "Aviation: The Coming of the Birdman" at the Museum of the Oregon Territory in Oregon City from April through September will chronicle exciting aspects of the history of aviation in Oregon. Through an emphasis on personalities, the colorful role of aviation will be surveyed. Hundreds of models will be exhibited alongside many other original artifacts, and extremely rare photographs will be exhibited for the first time. There is enough to make for many interesting stories, all highlighted throughout the run of the exhibit.

The exhibit features many artifacts on loan from the Society collection, including several items depicting Tex Rankin's career, models, propellers, engines, aircraft license plates, and numerous photographs, so be sure to stop by and enjoy the interpretation.

**N315Y News**

All four wings have now been assembled and are ready for leading edge aluminum covers and fabric. The center section of the top wing is being assembled and a suitable fuel tank is being considered. The steel tubular fuselage, now in the shop at the History Center, is being sanded and primed by volunteers.

Member George Genevro is looking for information on the Lenape and Sekely radial engines. Anyone having drawings, manuals, articles, etc. is urged to contact George via phone, 503-363-5032 or email, georgegenevro@cs.com.

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**Address Service Requested**

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