Charlie Langmack, HOF Celebrant #4, To be Highlighted at Air Fair 2002

by Tom Bedell

On September 14, 2002, Col. Charles J. Langmack will become the fourth inductee into the Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame. From all that I can gather, it would have been a great privilege to have known Charlie Langmack. He truly was an Oregon aviation pioneer. Not many people then or now start their careers at age 12, but Charlie did.

Born September 24, 1907 on a farm near Lebanon in Linn County, Charlie was still in grade school when he and oldest brother Dave got started flying. And, what a start it must have been! Numerous stories exist concerning Charlie’s exploits over the course of his civilian and military career, starting with this one.

Dave and Charlie bought a World War I surplus Canuck, the Canadian version of the famous Curtiss Jenny. It was shipped to them in spring of 1920. They spent weeks assembling, tweaking and tuning it. (Remember, they were both in school during this time.) Finally it was ready for taxi tests. Remember also, there was no one available to teach them to fly, but that apparently didn’t faze them. They did taxi practice one day in June but it became windy in mid-day so they put off the next exercise. The next day, with Dave in the back seat and Charlie in front holding the choke wire as the engine was faltering, they got up almost to flying speed when a wind gust caught the Canuck throwing them 30 feet into the air. What could they do but keep flying? They flew in a big circle and got it back on the ground safely and, after fixing the engine problem, flew some more that day. Dave soloed very soon and Charlie followed with his first solo June 10, 1920. What a beginning and entirely self-taught!

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RANDOM FLIGHT

By Roger Starr

The next time I encourage you to attend a great program at our annual meeting, please take heed! Those that did were very pleased with our April meeting. Having John Patton give us some background and insights into his “Beaverton Outlaws” history project was as big of a hit as I could hope for. John also “reinterviewed” Myron Buswell for our enjoyment. Thanks John and “Buzz” for a great time.

I was especially buoyed by the tremendous turnout for the annual meeting. The pictures included in this issue tell most of the story. Unfortunately the pictures are back or side views of the audience. I was able look out over the group and witness the faces which reflected the enjoyment generated by our program. This was the largest number of attendees for an annual meeting that I have witnessed. Thanks to all who came and enjoyed.

I am very pleased to report that the John Patton audio tapes are now on compact discs. All 64 of them! This is currently the best archival storage media available. We will of course keep the original tapes and a copy, but the CD’s allow us to better access the oral interviews. The project of recording the many hours of tapes to CD came to us courtesy of Matt Simek of Pacific Standard Television in Newberg. Thanks, Matt, for this extremely valuable archive.

As can be seen from other articles in this Newsletter, OAHS will again be participating in the Oregon Air Fair September 14 and 15 at the Linn County Fair & Expo in Albany. If you would like to help staff our display, please let me know. Otherwise, stop by and say hello!

Join the OAHS!

If you’re reading this, you have an interest in Oregon’s rich aviation past. If you’re not yet a member, please join the Society in its efforts to preserve and celebrate Oregon Aviation History. Fill in the blocks below and return to: Oregon Aviation Historical Society, PO Box 533, Cottage Grove, OR 97424.

Contributor - $100  Sustaining - $50  Family - $35  Associate - $25

Title____  Name________________________  Home telephone____________________

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MEMBER PUBLISHED
The July/August 2002 issue of The Home Shop Machinist magazine contains an in-depth article about the Continental A-40 aircraft engine written by member George Genevro. Having recently rebuilt one of these historic engines, George became intimately familiar with its design, engineering and manufacturing techniques. He describes in great detail each component's material composition and machining process. Several photographs aid in the understanding of this "simple" little workhorse. If you would like a copy of this article or more technical information about the A-40, contact George at 503-363-5032 or georgegenevro@cs.com.

OAHS RECEIVES GRANT
Your Society is very pleased to report the receipt of a grant this past May from the Dorothy Hester Stenzel Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation. The $5,000 award will be used for our cataloging project and to help fund the ongoing Great Lakes project. Funding for the Great Lakes airplane is especially appropriate since this is the aircraft originally given to Dorothy in 1931 by the Great Lakes Airplane Company. We are very appreciative of the efforts of Dorothy's family in helping secure this grant.

POLY-FIBER DONATION RECEIVED
This past spring, Poly-Fiber, Inc. of Riverside, California donated a significant quantity of materials to finish and paint our 1935 Stinson SR-5E project. Poly-Fiber is a major supplier of fabric, fabric application supplies and paints for the aircraft building industry.

OAHS members who are not also members of the Oregon Antique and Classic Aircraft Club (OACAC) may not be familiar with the Stinson project. Even though the airplane is owned by the Society, OACAC has undertaken the funding of this project over the past several years. The club allocates a portion of membership dues to the restoration as well as special fundraising projects.

The restoration is being carried out by Society director Rex Hume at his Williams home. He has completed the reconstruction of all of the major components with the exception of the fuselage interior. Rex has also overhauled the engine. We are indeed extremely lucky to have Rex undertake this project.

As with any restoration effort, money is always needed. If you wish to assist with the restoration of this unique aircraft through a pledge or donation, please let any board member know.

"Coming of the Birdman" Going
If you have not had an opportunity to visit the exhibit "Aviation: The Coming of the Birdman" at the Museum of the Oregon Territory in Oregon City, you need to hurry. The exhibit runs through September. Roger Starr says, "I have been through it a number of times and still find something not discovered in a previous visit." Several artifacts on loan from the Society for this event are prominently displayed. That is one of the primary reasons we exist; to exhibit Oregon's rich aviation heritage.

Check A Box!

Small Milling Machine
Shop Cabinets
Golf Cart/Tow Tug
Planer/Joiner - 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
DVD Player
Metal Shelving Units
Office-size Paper Cutter

The above items are still needed by the Society. Give now for a good feeling and a tax deduction!
Later that year, only 13 years old and still in grade school, Charlie contracted with an Albany farmer to rent 104 acres of a flat wheat field for what was to become the Albany airport. He was the founder of that airfield, running it until 1928. He barnstormed all over Oregon and Washington and gave flying lessons, giving many people their first exposure to the fascinating world of aviation.

Charlie got the first Oregon pilot's license on August 3, 1928 while still 20 years old. The next year he received a National Aeronautics Association pilot's license signed by Orville Wright and in July 1930 got his transport pilot license. Charlie took on a number of flying challenges in the late 1920s until 1933, flying for others as test pilot and commercial pilot.

In July 1933 Charlie took advantage of an opportunity to be commissioned as a 2nd Lt. in the Army Air Corps. He stayed with the military until retirement in 1968 as a full Colonel. He was in the Reserves 1933 to 1938 so could fly in a civilian capacity which he did commercially including a stint for United Airlines in 1937. As with all military service, he was transferred all over the world in later years. However, during the early years including World War II, he test flew planes constantly including 1200 new B-17s. In 1942 he was assigned to the Lockheed factory at Burbank, CA on test pilot duty and aircraft procurement. He flew every type of plane Lockheed made including the Constellation. He also taught and trained many pilots, including those who became known as the Doolittle Raiders in the famous 1942 bombing of Japan in B-25s. He remained at Lockheed until 1947 and after that flew in Okinawa, Japan, the Berlin Airlift and for the Military Air Transport Service before retirement. He earned Command Pilot rating, the highest possible in the U.S. Air Force.

Charlie's autobiographical notes show 32 different types of military aircraft he had flown and 16 civilian ones, mostly of antique character. Charlie's brother Dave unfortunately was killed in a passenger plane crash in Canada in 1943 on the way home on leave. His other brother, Robert, known as the Flying Doctor, started flying in the mid 1930s and Sweet Home's Langmack Field is named for him as that was where he kept his planes.

During Charlie's military career when he was able to find the time, he returned to the home farm to organize the Langmack Seed Company and Farms. After retirement he helped his son Chuck run the grass seed business and flew his brother Doc's planes out the Sweet Home airport when he had time. His little office at the farm was a treasure trove of memorabilia and information. Several people recall hours spent with Charlie reviewing past exploits.

Charlie died January 30, 1999 at age 91. His wife, Ruth, whom he married in 1929, passed away in 1986. Charlie's aviation memberships included the Quiet Birdmen, OX-5 Aviation Pioneers, the Air Force Association and the Northwest Antique Aviation Club. He was a charter member of the McChord Air Force Museum. Charlie's life exemplified the character and spirit of pioneers. The Oregon Aviation Historical Society is proud to induct him into the Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame.

Myron Buswell and John Patton spoke at the Annual Meeting. The Air Fair program promises to be just as interesting.
Flying Tiger Jernstedt to Headline Air Fair

By William Villani

Flying Tiger ace Ken Jernstedt will highlight this year’s Oregon Air Fair at Albany. He is scheduled to speak at 10:15 AM on September 15, and is expected to be available at the Society display for a period after his presentation. He will also be available at our display Saturday morning for one-on-one conversations.

Jernstedt was born July 20, 1917 at Carlton. After graduating with a degree in business administration from Linfield College in 1939, he became a pilot for the Marine Corps. Commissioned a 2nd Lt. on June 7, 1940, he spent a year with the 1st MAG before resigning to join the nascent American Volunteer Group.

The AVG had been set up by Franklin Roosevelt to support Nationalist China in its war against Japan. Its leader was Claire Lee Chennault, a onetime Air Corps Tactical School instructor who had been branded a maverick for his advocacy of pursuit tactics over bomber doctrine. 100 P-40’s had been diverted to the Chinese from a British order, and American military pilots were recruited to fly them against the Japanese. Jernstedt was one of these fliers.

As a member of the 3rd Pursuit Squadron (Hell’s Angels), Jernstedt was in Burma in December 1941 when the Japanese onslaught fell upon that jungle country. Fighting under challenging conditions, Jernstedt and his comrades established an enviable record. Flying a shark-mouthed P-40, the Oregon pilot claimed 10 enemy planes destroyed (both in the air and on the ground) plus another 2 probables, according to fighter ace historian Dr. Frank Olynyk.

In July 1942, the AVG was disestablished and the USAF’s 23rd Fighter Group instituted in its place. AVG pilots were disinclined to join the 23rd by the behavior of Gen. Clayton Bissell, 10th Air Force commander, who treated the veteran fliers with unconcealed disdain. Choosing instead to return to the US, Jernstedt hitched rides with airline pilots to get home and eventually spent the balance of the war as a test pilot for Republic, doing much flying of the P-47 Thunderbolt.

After the war Jernstedt settled in Hood River, serving as mayor of that town and also spending 22 years in the Oregon Legislature. The airport at Hood River was renamed in his honor in 2001. Please come out to the Air Fair to catch what will surely be a most interesting presentation.

REFERENCES

Thoele, Mike. "Maverick Pilot Kept Hopes High." Eugene, OR Register-Guard, date unknown.
As can be seen, progress on Tex Rankin's Great Lakes N315Y is coming along apace. Contributions are, however, still welcome!
(Roger Starr photo)