

Oregon Aviation Historical Society

Newsletter

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The Maytag Interceptor

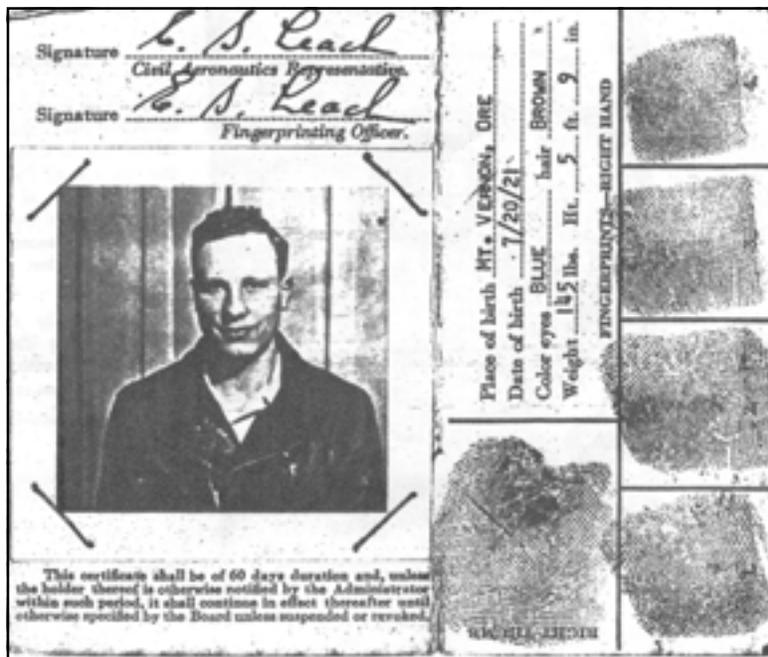
By Dennis Smith

For those of you who have attended an airshow or air museum, especially a good one, and wondered or marveled at the old antique classic airplanes on static display, this story should interest you. For those of you with a special aviation interest, that is a foregone conclusion, since this story also has a local flavor. The old airplanes you see at these shows or museums, like old classic automobiles, are for the most part the very few left of those produced, many of them still capable of flight. Practically all are the products of untold hours and many dollars spent in years of restoration work. Some have been salvaged from boneyards or from the bottom of lakes, but more often from a pile of junk after years of storage in an old barn somewhere. The first part of this story is about one of those planes. While not in the same class as a Beech Staggerwing—after all what can compare to one of those beautifully restored bi-planes, especially when the pilot fires up the big radial engine and taxis out -- the story,

nonetheless, is well worth telling.

The plane, built in March of 1938, was a Piper Cub J-3, powered by a 40 HP Continental engine. It was built at a time just after Taylor and Piper split up and went their separate ways. William Piper went on to make famous the air version of Ford's Model T, the Piper Cub J-3 and later the Super Cub. Taylor formed another company and built the Taylorcraft. Both played an important role during WW2 when

the military bought and used them as reconnaissance airplanes. The little 1938 J-3 plane, focus of this story, was so underpowered that it probably received more than a few rubberband jokes. In fact, somewhere during its early years someone had painted the words, "The Maytag Interceptor" on its fuselage, obviously a reference to its undersized



The pilot of the "Maytag Interceptor." Willis Woods' pilot license. (Author collection)

powerplant and the little gasoline engines used to power washing machines in the non-electrified parts of rural America. It had no brakes, no electric start (it had to be prop started from outside the airplane) had no tail wheel but rather a tail skid, no radio, no compass and few, if any, other navigation instruments—a very basic, but arguably affordable, airplane. While it sold new for around \$2,000, not

(Continued on Page 4)

RANDOM FLIGHT

BY ROGER STARR



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benefit of its members. Member contributions are
welcome but should relate to Oregon aviation
history. Contents © 2003 OAHS.

As can be seen from a couple of pictures included in this issue, your Society has been fortunate to obtain some very interesting additions to its list of artifacts. Both of these items hail from Oregon's very early aviation history. The single-cylinder engine dates from sometime in the 1920's. The "Mystery Plane" is documented as 1930-vintage. Both of these items came to us as a result of vigilant members. I would ask that all of our members be alert to the possibility of our obtaining artifacts to help tell the story of aviation history in Oregon. We have been very successful in following up on such leads. We only ask that you obtain all relevant information available and pass it on to one of our board members. We will take it from there.

Who knows what would have become of these items if OAHS were not available to accept them? We know that many very interesting and valuable artifacts are lost nearly each day. What a shame! The reason the Society exists is to preserve that heritage through its collection. Please help by passing along to others that we are available as a repository for items that may otherwise be discarded or left to deteriorate.

Once again, I wish to remind our members how much your continued commitment to our goals means to OAHS. Without your support in the way of membership dues and contributions, we would not be able to accomplish as much as we do. One way of expanding that support is through gift memberships. You do not need an excuse such as Christmas. Birthdays, anniversaries or just as a thank you for someone special in your life will do.

I hope everyone has a great 2003. What an interesting 1st one hundred years it has been!



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 553, Cottage Grove, OR 97424.



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

Title _____ Name _____ Home telephone _____

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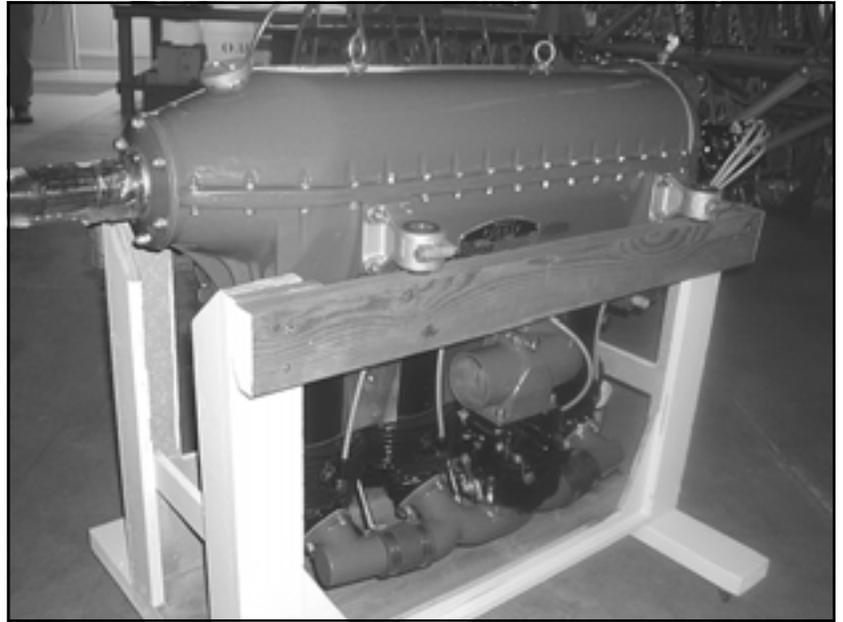
Current/former Occupation _____

Skills and Interests _____

Great Lakes update

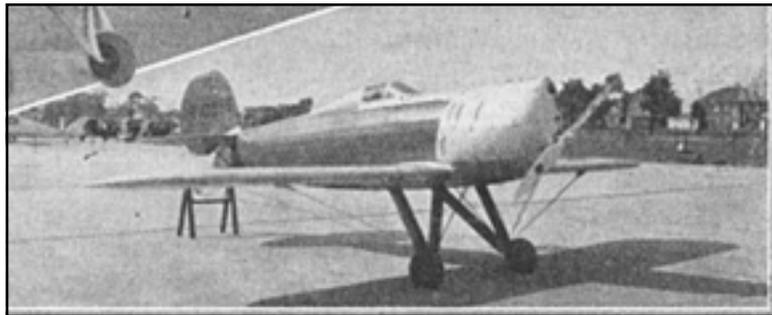
Brad Ball of Santa Paula, CA delivered the Menasco engine for our Great Lakes in early October. No, it is not resting upside down! This is the way they were designed to be mounted. A bit more work is needed on 315Y before it is ready to accept the Menasco. Ron Bartley has taken a pair of wings to his Ashland shop to fit the ailerons into their wing bays. They will then be ready for the fabric covering.

(Roger Starr photo)



Presenting - The Mystery Plane!

??????????



Your Society has just aquired the above aircraft.
What is it, you ask?
We know and will reveal it in the next issue! In the meantime, we welcome your guess as to its identity and any information about it you may have. (Hint: it is a one of a kind racer built in Oregon!)
(Photo: Roger Starr Collection.)

??????????

Still needed!

- 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
- DVD Player
- Metal Shelving Units
- Office-size Paper Cutter
- Laser Printer
- CD Burner
- Portable Tape Recorder
- Jet Engine Thrust Reverser
(non-airworthy is ok)

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

Interceptor (Continued from Page 1)

quite the \$295, FOB Detroit, that Ford sold his Model T for, it did have some people thinking that lots of folks will soon have an airplane and be flying. The "T" came in one color, black. The Cub came in one color, yellow. What a great time to live with all these marvelous new inventions: the telephone, radio, moving picture shows, automobiles, electric lights, airplanes, even pasteurized milk.

On July 17, 1945 the little J-3 was laying in the sagebrush, bent and broken, the result of an accident, the fifth, at a little 2,000 foot dirt airstrip behind the high school between Burns and Hines. The airstrip, no longer there, belonged to Roe Davis who operated an auto wrecking business and also worked on airplanes. The owner and pilot of the J-3 had flown in from the John Day Valley to have some work done and was taking off to return home. The airstrip, east to west, was located in a little gully and was upsloped to the west with prevailing winds out of the west. Conventional practice anywhere is to takeoff into the wind. This day was a hot one and it turned out that the winds were more than the pilot and the little plane could handle. After climbing to about 200 feet above ground, the pilot hit a downdraft, lost half his altitude, managed to do a 180 degree turn in an attempt to avoid the hillside, and then again entered another downdraft which dumped him hard on the ground, short and to the side of the runway. The left wing collapsed and the other had some slight damage; the landing gear was also damaged. The wooden

prop had a ground strike with some tip damage. But there was no fire, even though the pilot had an extra five gallon tin of fuel strapped down in the front seat.



Conversation Piece

Director Ray Costello examines the unique one-cylinder engine at the Oregon Air Fair in Albany. This recent donation to the Society is described in Roger Starr's column on Page 2. More Air Fair photos are on Page 8. (Roger Starr photo)

As for the pilot, although probably disgusted, he walked away with no more than a bump and a scrape under the chin. As they say, any landing you can walk away from is a good one.

The locals using the Davis' airstrip often took off to the east and downslope, even with a tailwind. Undoubtedly, hangar talk has centered for years around this topic: rather than which one is better, which one is worse—taking off with a tailwind or taking off upslope! The pilot had no hull insurance and so his \$1,200 purchase price of a few months earlier became forfeit, except that he did take the prop home as a souvenir. The wrecked plane

was left with the wrecking yard owner for whatever he chose to do with it. And that was the last he ever heard about his little J-3 Cub, serial number NC20815, until September 30, year 2000.

Meanwhile Davis disposed of the Cub to a man named Carl Lemke in Eugene. Lemke was in charge of the Aviation Technology Dept. at Eugene Vocational Technical College, now known as Lane Community College. He made the plane a class project.

Fast forward about 12 years to 1958 when the project was finally completed, but in a state not quite as the original version. Lemke had removed the little Continental 40 HP engine and replaced it with a Franklin 60 IIP. (In 1939 the manufacturer had upgraded to the Franklin 60 HP engine). He also

"The Birdman" Comes to Oregon City



As can be seen from these photos, the "Coming of the Birdman" exhibit at the Museum of the Oregon Territory in Oregon City was a great success. The exhibit, now closed, featured a number of artifacts, including Bob Brown's fine Stinson and Ryan models. The Society is fortunate to have five of Bob's models in the collection. (Roger Starr photos)

changed the instrument panel, with questionable "improvements." The original had a tachometer, oil pressure and temp gauges and an airspeed indicator that was a tab out on the wing that spun in the wind, pointing to the airspeed. That year Lemke was in an accident in another aircraft and apparently decided to end his flying. The J-3 did fly after the school finished the repair project, about 15 hours. It was then put into a Eugene-area barn for storage. There it sat for nearly the next 40 years, neglected and likely all but forgotten.

In 1997 Lemke's widow decided to sell the old thing. The wings had been removed and stored apart from the fuselage; the fabric was rotting and hanging off the plane in clumps—it was little more than junk. But a man named Jim Demings heard the plane was for sale, took one look at it and saw it differently. The logs indicated the total time at 320 hours. The next day he owned it.

For the next three years Demings worked on restoring the Cub to a condition as near as possible to the original, except for the Continental 40 HP engine. And it has not been easy. He stated that it took two years to find all the instruments and have them rebuilt and certified—some have not been built new in the past 30 years. Because of his involvement in a new business operation, the project is stalled but nearing completion—the Cub is ready for control

cables and covering. All the materials needed to finish the project have been purchased and assembled. He even has the logbooks, some blueprints and the 1938 Piper manual. But reluctantly, he has decided to sell the Cub. If anybody is interested—the asking price is: \$25,000? Call Jim Demings at (541) 344-1243.

Part II: **The Pilot of the Maytag Intceptor**

In the September 15, 2000 issue of *The Flyer*, an aviation tabloid published bi-weekly in Seattle, there was an article about an old J-3 that had been stored away in a Eugene area barn for almost 40 years and was being restored and was now for sale. While reading the article my attention was suddenly aroused a notch as I read that the plane had been owned and piloted by a Mt. Vernon, Oregon man, with no name given. It had been wrecked at Burns and then acquired by a Eugene man. Who was this Mt. Vernon man, I wondered? Del Raymond in Prairie City had read the article and was also curious.

As I had been working on local aviation history, off and on, for some time, I couldn't just wonder and dismiss it. I had to try, at least, to find the identity of the man. I put on my detective cap and with a call or two the answer came back from Demings in Eugene, the owner and the man doing the restoration work: the mystery person was **(See p. 6)**

Maytag

(Continued from Page 5)

Willis W. Woods. What do you know about that. I had never picked up on his name as being one of a rather large group of men, and one woman, in the 1940's who made that decade very special in the history of aviation in the John Day Valley.

Just before WW2, in 1940, a flying club had been started and enthusiasm around John Day was sky high to learn how to fly, if you didn't know how already. The newspaper called their new plane a "Cub Trainer" and they had an impressive membership of about 20 to 25. Some of the names that may be remembered are: Jim Lyons, Dr. Hugh Fate, Phil Boyer, Tony Peterson, Clarence Kilburn, Dr. Alden, Les Meyers, Freddie Cliff, Earl Brent, Pat Smith, Orval Yokum, Buck Smith, Bob Smith and Glen Vanderhoff.

Other names of interest that were flying during that decade, some as accomplished pilots with planes of their own and some as starting students with the Lyons' John Day Flying Service, were Wiley Howell, Charlie Oliver, Lloyd Ogilvie, Grub Allen, the Welch brothers (Elwood, Harry, Oscar and Jeff), Lloyd Hudspeth, Jack Frost, Sid Cardwell, A. C. Bond, Marvin Parsons, Ward Renwick, Harvey Ringen, Jack Baucum, and Carlos Ogilvie. Undoubtedly there are many not mentioned here, and they are not meant to be slighted—I just don't know who they all were.

I reserved one person until last to mention because she was a very accomplished and "gutsy" pilot—"Cookie" Lyons. She gave me my first airplane ride. She also was a member of quite an aviation family. She and her husband, Jim, built the 2600' airstrip out of the dredge tailing piles that is now a mobile home park on the ground behind Chesters Thriftway. Together they operated the John Day Flying Service during the 1940's and 1950's. Cookie started flying in 1944 and soon graduated from Private Pilot to commercial and flight instructor ratings. She gained fame and notoriety for her cross country all-womens air races. The Lyons family also had other family members who contributed to local aviation history during this period: Clayton and Austin. Terry, who was FBO at John Day State

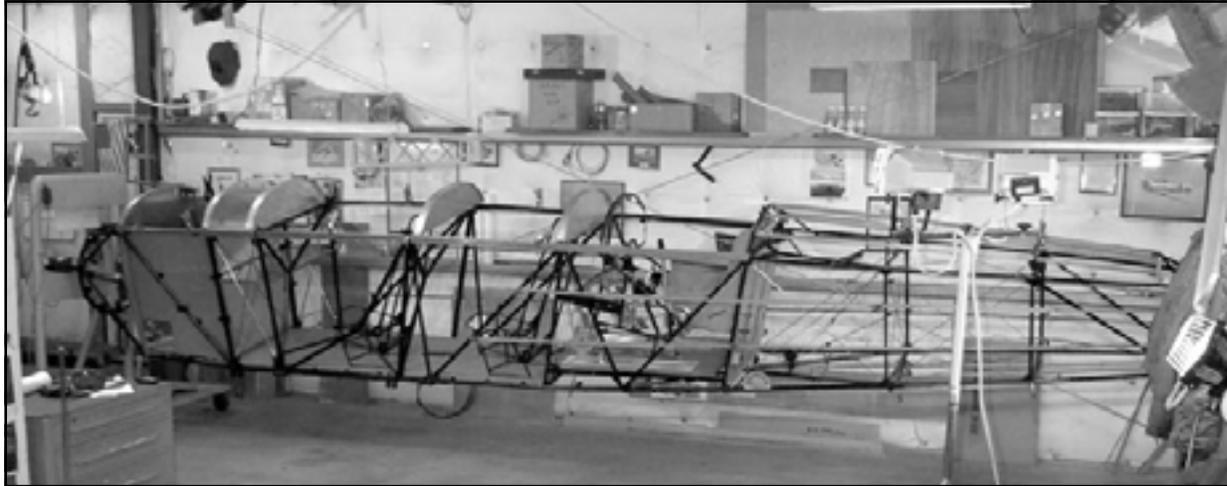
Airport from 1967 to 1972, came a little later.

But enough of the background, and back to Willis and his story. He started flying October 19, 1944. His first instructor was Keith Province, who along with partner Merlin Johnson later became FBOs of the LaGrande airport. His training with Province was done in two different 65 HP Interstate Cadets, and before he stopped flying on June 20, 1948 at which time he officially received his Private Pilot certificate, he had accumulated 121 hours of flying time in eight different airplanes. These first dual flights with an instructor mostly were of 30 minutes duration and cost \$10 an hour—\$3 to the instructor and \$7 for the airplane. By the early 1970s the cost had inflated to \$19.50 per hour for plane and instructor. But don't drool too much. Everything is relative.

Willis soloed after eight hours, 15 minutes. Undoubtedly the instruction with Province was done from the old dirt strips on the west hill above Canyon City, very near the intersection of the two present modern runways at John Day State Airport (oops, that's Grant County Regional Airport). The strip was initially east-west but later the Flying Club added a couple of cross-wind strips and a T-hangar. A few old weathered boards on the ground are all that now remain of the hangar. The field was variously called the Gundlach field or the Stockwell property for early landowners.

By January 31, 1945 Willis had purchased his first airplane, a 65 HP Aeronca, flying it down from Pilot Rock.. On February 19, 1945, after 14 hours flying time, he decided to get rid of the Aeronca and get the 40 HP Taylor Cub J-3. It had been owned by a flying club in Tacoma, who during the first seven years had logged about 260 hours of flying time. It must have been that bad weather in Tacoma because the 1940 John Day Flying Club logged about 500 hours before they had their plane a full year! Willis logged about 45 hours on the Cub before his accident at Burns on July 17, 1945. His flying in both the Aeronca and the Taylor Cub J-3 was all solo.

Besides using the landing strip above Canyon City he also used a meadow at the family ranch of his father, Fred Woods, on Moon Creek Road, west of Mt. Vernon. Willis and his wife, Iris, have some interesting and amusing stories about flying the Cub. It flew at about its horsepower—40 MPH climb, 40



Boeing 40 progress

As can be seen in this December photo, great progress is being made on the Boeing 40C at Addison Pemberton's shop in Spokane. (Addison Pemberton)

MPH cruise and 40 MPH descent for landing, and you didn't glide it in for a landing. You flew it with power on if you wanted to get there. If Willis was flying from the Moon Creek ranch and someone left in a car at the same time, the car generally arrived in John Day before he did.

Willis said the name "Maytag Interceptor" had been painted midway on the fuselage. Someone had applied the name as a slap at the under-powered engine—a reference to the little gasoline power plants used on washing machines and marketed to rural farm families with no electricity. Occasionally these little washing machine engines were recycled as the power-plants for home-built powered bicycles. But I never heard of one used as an airplane engine.

On the initial flight down from Yakima where he took possession of the plane, Willis stopped at Pilot Rock. Julius Farmer was there at the time and wanted to hitch a ride to John Day. Willis said OK, so off they went. The weather turned ugly with lots of turbulence. About Battle Mountain it really got bad so Willis turned back and landed in a wheat field. Julius was sure Willis was trying to kill him. They left the plane in Pilot Rock and both returned to John Day by stage, which probably suited Julius just fine. Later Jim Lyons retrieved the plane. I guess you

can laugh about things like that now, but when it happens it doesn't seem funny at all.

After a hitch in the service Willis flew again until June 20, 1948. Much of his remaining flight time was dual instruction with Jim Lyons as instructor. Cookie also had several hours of dual time as his instructor. The four Lyons' trainer planes that he flew, both dual and solo, were—a 65HP Taylorcraft, a 85 HP Cessna 120, and two different 85 HP Cessna 140s.

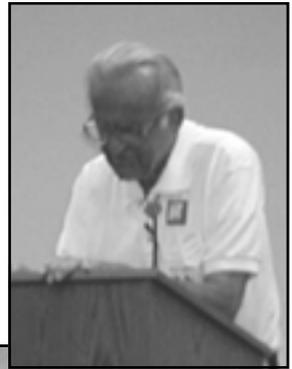
When told that Willis' old J-3 Cub was being restored and would fly again, Iris could hardly believe it. What a surprise. She had flown with Willis one time in the Cub from the ranch field, as did her brother. Willis said they both were inclined to raise their feet as he flew over the trees barely above their tops. She has been especially helpful in finding Willis' old records, a couple of photos and his logbook.

These days Willis, at age 79, flies "right seat" as an occasional passenger with Larry Armstrong, a Mt. Vernon resident. Larry flies out of the John Day airport.

Dennis Smith is a Canyon City resident and can be reached at: 541-575-0276 or dcsmith@oregontrail.net.

Air Fair 2002

September's Air Fair at the Linn County Fair and Expo was a great success. Visitors enjoyed a presentation by Flying Tiger ace Ken Jernstedt (right) and also saw Charlie Langmack inducted into the Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame®.



Special thanks to those who staffed the booth:

Tom Bedell
Royce Beatty
Gretchen Bencene
Jack Coshow
Ray Costello
George Genevro
Al Grell
Jan Hedberg
Doug Kindred
Roger Starr
William Villani



See you in 2003!

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