



# Oregon Aviation Historical Society

Newsletter

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## The Baby Fleet at the History Center

*By Daniel Cathey, from a June, 2005 conversation with Clarence Saville*

One of the more interesting displays at the Oregon Aviation Historical Society History Center is the small red and silver biplane listed as a "Baby Fleet." This aircraft is a true part of Oregon aviation history. The plane was built by Jim McManiman in the large hanger at the Springfield Airport and was first flown in 1931. The airport at that time was about one block wide and located on Main Street between 19th and 29th with the large hangar (about 100 to 110 feet long) north and south along the railroad to the east of the field. Jim McManiman was a flight instructor on the field and used the plane for his personal use and as a rental to his 'better' students. The aircraft was originally named "The City of Springfield."



In early 1931, Cecil Steen who had a 1926 Ford Model T, asked Clarence (C.R.) Saville to take a ride from his house on 6th Street in Eugene over to the Springfield Airport. C.R. said he wasn't interested in the airport but would like to take a ride in the Model T. Upon arriving at the airport, Cecil talked C.R. into taking a ride with him the the front seat of a Travelair piloted

by Jim McManiman. C.R. was so enthralled with the flight that fifteen minutes after its completion he was in the air again taking his first flying lesson. This was in a 1928 Travelair powered by a Curtis OX5-8 engine producing a (hoped for) 90 horsepower.

C.R. began taking one lesson a week at \$2.00 a lesson until he soloed after about 5 hours. Jim McManiman apparently thought he was a good pilot and immediately let him begin flying "The City of Springfield." It was about this time the name of the plane was changed and thereafter it was listed for rental as the "Springfield Cadet."

From 1931 to 1934 the plane was powered with a flat, horizontally opposed four-cylinder Continental Model A37 engine Serial Number 156 producing 37 horsepower. The engine was constantly blowing head gaskets and as a result had quite a bit of down time.

During this period, C.R. continued renting the plane along with several other students. Meanwhile, Jim McManiman had become a part time instructor along with Carl Lemke at the Eugene Vocational School located on the Eugene Airport at 18th and Chambers Street. To remedy the engine problem the school rebuilt and remodeled the engine as per Continental specifications with new cylinders and pistons into a Model A40. This seemed to solve the engine problems.

In mid 1934, Jim McManiman was in need of an automobile and offered to trade the "Springfield Cadet" to C.R. for a 1931 Studebaker automobile he owned and \$300.00. The deal was made and since the "Springfield Cadet" was originally designed and had the appearance of a miniature Fleet the plane as transferred to C.R.

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## Random Flight

*by Roger Starr*

Those in attendance at our annual meeting in April were introduced to a new display at the History Center. It is the beginnings of a memorial to Jim Wright of Cottage Grove. As I explained at the meeting, Jim broke a world speed record in his reproduction Hughes H-1 Raced at Reno in 2002. The propeller used in that flight is the centerpiece of our display. Since April we have added artwork depicting the historic flight. OAHS is indeed honored by being allowed by the family to exhibit artifacts and information in memory of Jim.

Jim's wife Betty desires to keep Jim's memory alive and inspire young people to fly. She has therefore established the James Wright Memorial Endowment Fund. It is administered within the Lane Community College Foundation. Jim was a graduate of the Eugene institution's manufacturing technology program.



Your board was moved by this tribute to Jim and decided that a \$500 contribution to the fund was in order. The endowment will provide scholarships to deserving students at LCC. We encourage individuals and groups to consider a donation to this

endowment. We can provide further information as necessary or you may contact the LCC Foundation.

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I am thrilled to report that we recently received word that the "Wimpy" is returning to its Oregon roots and will be owned by OAHS. After several discussions with the owner of many years, he agreed that it should be added to the Society's collection of early homebuilt Oregon aircraft.

The "Wimpy" was built in the 1930's by aviation pioneers Swede Ralston and Ed Ball of Hillsboro. It is a low wing version of the popular Les Long designed aircraft collectively referred to as the Longster. It was purchased by Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame inductee Myron "Buz" Buswell in 1940.

The "Wimpy" will join our vintage homebuilt fleet consisting of the Rupert Special, Anzani powered mid-wing Longster replica, Yates geodesic, PS of E racer and the Baby Fleet.



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in 1934 was listed as a “Baby Fleet” and has retained that name since.

In the following years, C.R. based the plane at the Eugene Airport, flew it extensively throughout Oregon, and became very familiar with its’ flight characteristics. He became so confident at flying it he would attach a short wire with a hook in it to the left wing tip and pick up handkerchiefs from the ground with it during a fly-by. In the fall of 1939 he flew the Baby Fleet under the covered bridge which crossed the gorge between Highway 58 and Lowell. The span between the piers of the bridge were 30’ while the wingspan of the “Baby Fleet” is 20’, five feet per side clearance at 85 mph in a 40 horsepower airplane! C.R. has a picture of himself when as a motorcycle riding Deputy Sheriff he attended the dedication of the Dexter Dam in 1955. This dam brought the water level up to within about ten feet of the bottom of this same covered bridge he had flown under in 1939. At the time he flew under it in the Baby Fleet, there was a canyon that provided a vertical clearance of almost 100 feet.

In 1945 the A40 engine was replaced with the A65 which is currently in the plane. Also during that year, C.R. moved the Baby Fleet to a hangar at Walker Field, just south of Creswell. He also purchased one of the first Piper PA-12 Super Cruisers through George Coffee and Joe Harrel, the owners of Eugene Flying Service that was the local Piper agency. The Piper was transhipped to Eugene by Art Whitaker, who was the Piper distributor in Portland. After purchasing

the PA-12, the Baby Fleet was relegated to a corner of the maintenance hangar at Walker Field and flown very infrequently. C.R. used the PA-12 and later other multi-seat planes to fly himself and family around the country.

In March 1983, C.R. purchased Walker Field, then following a bout of sickness, transferred the airport to his son Bob in January of 1997. Bob discussed having the Baby Fleet rebuilt several times but decided it was better to use his limited funds maintaining and upgrading Walker Field. When Bob died in January 2003, the field, along with the Baby Fleet reverted to Bob’s daughter, Deborah Merideth. During this total period the Baby Fleet remained in the corner of the maintenance hangar on Walker Field accumulating dust and deteriorating from normal “hangar rash.”

When the field, all the equipment and the Baby Fleet were sold at auction in 2003, the

OAHS bought the plane, transported it to the Society History Center and currently has plans for a total restoration as funds become available.

C.R. Saville is now in his 95th year and loves to reminisce about the good times he had flying around the Oregon countryside in “his” Baby Fleet.



### Join the OAHS!

If you’re not yet a member, we invite you to join the Society in its efforts to preserve and celebrate Oregon Aviation History. Fill in the blanks and return to:

Oregon Aviation Historical Society  
 PO Box 553  
 Cottage Grove, OR 97424

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Current/Former Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

I am Interested in Volunteering \_\_\_\_\_

Skills and Interests \_\_\_\_\_

## OAHS Annual Meeting Report Tower dedication and program highlight gathering

By Hal Skinner

Fly-ins were not the order of the day as a low ceiling relegated most to a very rainy April 23rd highway trip to the History Center. The reason was to hear of the activity and accomplishments of the Society for the past year. We were incorporated in June of 1983 as the Oregon Aviation Museum, and the year was our twenty-second.

Preceding formal activities about 70 people sat down to a no-host luncheon. Then the newly erected airway beacon and tower were dedicated to all those who flew and navigated the West Coast route by the welcome sight of the beacon signals on C.A.M. 8 towers.

A commemorative plaque acknowledges the



efforts of Jack Erickson and Guy Martin for their assistance in moving the tower from the original location on Creswell Butte to the access of the History Center.

Business items covered financial reports and director elections with Rex Hume, Doug Kindred and Tim Talen re-elected to four-year terms.

The Hedberg Aviation Resource Library was dedicated to Elwood and Betty Hedberg with the unveiling of a portrait of the couple.

A Society brochure was created, website brought online and the archival storage room completed with climate control and shelving. The 2004 Hall of Fame appointee was Maj. Gen. Marion Carl. Artifacts were displayed at the

Southern Oregon Historical Society, the Lane County Historical Society and the Super V transferred to the Bonanza-Baron Museum. Presentations were given at various organizations.

Volunteers were recognized with the presentation of a Special volunteer plaque given to Carol Skinner, and the continuing efforts of Wilbur Heath and Doug Yarbrough were reported by the President.

Permanently mounted directly behind the podium, is the recently acquired H-1 propeller donated by Betty Wright. It has the blades that Jim Wright used to set the class speed record at Reno.

The program was presented by Addison Pemberton of Spokane, Washington. His presentation covered the re-enactment of a part of C.A.M. 18. He, in the Sr. Speedmail along with Ben Scott of Reno, Nevada in the Jr. Speedmail flew from Reno to Iowa City, carrying mail along the way. Addison purchased and is restoring the Boeing 40C that the Society recovered several years ago.

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### Did you know?

OAHS has an archived collection from the Medford Aircraft Corporation, which was incorporated July 21, 1919?

George Palmer Putnam, husband of Amelia Earhart at the time of her disappearance in the Pacific Ocean, was owner, editor and publisher of The Bend Bulletin from 1910 to 1919?

Milton Wright, father of Wilbur and Orville Wright, was the first teacher and president of Sublimity (Oregon) College in 1857?

Silas Christofferson flew off the top of Multnomah Hotel during the Portland Rose Festival in 1912?

### Here is one we don't know:

This apparently is an aircraft data plate. General Aviation News published the photo submitted by Dale Schmidt of Salem, Oregon in 2003.



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## How to Donate an Artifact or Collection to OAHS

*By Carol Skinner, Archivist*

Can you imagine the excitement I feel when OAHS receives a collection or artifact that is part of Oregon aviation history, and we are given the responsibility of archiving it? To know that OAHS has been entrusted with the care of something that furthers the Society's goals to "collect, preserve and restore aviation artifacts for interpretive and educational display to insure the preservation of Oregon's rich aviation heritage for future generations" is an enormous responsibility and one we gladly accept.

OAHS is a relatively young historical society and we have only begun to scratch the surface of collecting artifacts and make them available for present and future generations to study and enjoy. We must rely on the help of our members and friends who know about what artifacts and collections need to be preserved to inform us so we can encourage their placement in the OAHS archives. We understand that not everyone is willing to part with family treasures and that they may want to pass them on to later generations in their own family. On the other hand, some people just don't know about OAHS or what to do with their collections, but want them preserved for Oregonians to enjoy.

With funds from donations and grants, OAHS has created a climate controlled area at the History Center in which artifacts are stored for preservation. When a collection comes to

the History Center, it is carefully organized and cataloged not only for preservation, but also so it can be accessed by persons wanting to do research or just browse through the collections to become more familiar with Oregon's aviation history. The archival storage room was open for visits during the annual meeting.

Not all donations are accepted for archiving because they do not further the Society's mission of preserving Oregon's aviation history. Identification of the donation, its relation to Oregon and the name of the donor are very important in the archiving process. However, OAHS also accepts saleable items to provide funding for its activities. A process has been established whereby persons who wish to donate items may learn before they are brought to the History Center if they can be accepted for archiving, preservation or sale.

If you, or someone you know, has something they would like to donate to OAHS, please contact us by mail at P.O. Box 553, Cottage Grove, OR 97424 or by going to our website, [www.oregonaviation.org](http://www.oregonaviation.org) and clicking on CONTACT US. We will send you an "Acquisition Review" form to fill out so that the Society's Acquisition Review Committee can assess whether or not it can be accepted. If we cannot accept it, we may be able to suggest another museum or institution that would be more appropriate.

If you have questions concerning material, or monetary donations, please contact us so we can help you make a decision.

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We've seen nothing of it since. Though it is difficult to read, we can make out "Swanson Aircraft Co. Springfield, Ore." While the Model "CO2" is interesting, it's the "Serial No 29" that excites us the most. The date built is possibly 12-9-26, but difficult to be certain. If you can add to either our knowledge or our confusion, please contact us.

### **And another:**

This engine is a real mystery. Can you shed some light on the manufacturer?

### **Then, on a more current note:**

Are you checking in on the OAHS website? Every once in a while a photo album is added. See [www.oregonaviation.org](http://www.oregonaviation.org), and click on "photo gallery."



## The Society is in Need of These Items

Easels

Solvent

Variable Speed Band Saw

Spray Gun

Belt/Disc Sander Combo

In-Focus Projector

Mannequins

Metal Brake/Shear

6' Rollaway Toolbox

Die Grinder

Drop Work Lights

Milling Machine (sm)

English Wheel

Maybe other stuff, too !

Please join OAHS board members Ray Costello and Doug Kindred in reducing the wish list of items. Very generous donations of a scroll saw and jig saw by Ray, along with Doug's response to the request for a DVD removed three more of our needs. Will you read over our requests and search for any of the above that might be just gathering dust in your storage. Thanks a lot!

Here is another way that you can help. We have a limited edition print of Marion Carl and a photo of The Rankin School of flying. Additionally, we have two poster prints painted by John G. Rankin (grandson of Tex). All need framing for proper display. Would you like to sponsor one or more? If so, contact us. That's just one more way you can be involved.

**Oregon Aviation Historical Society**  
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**Cottage Grove, OR 97424**

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