



# Oregon Aviation Historical Society

Newsletter

Vol. 18 No. 1

• P.O. Box 553 • Cottage Grove, OR 97424 •

April 2009

## Our Mission:

The Oregon Aviation Historical Society was incorporated as the Oregon Aviation Museum in June 1983 through the efforts of a group of aviation enthusiasts who recognized the need to preserve Oregon's rich aviation heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

Its purposes are to collect, preserve, restore and exhibit aviation artifacts; to develop facilities for the restoration and preservation of artifacts, public viewing and exhibition of the collection; to establish and maintain an Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame; establish a resource center for Oregon aviation historical research and to disseminate information about Oregon aviation history.

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## ANNUAL MEETING AND PROGRAM SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 19TH

The annual meeting of the Oregon Aviation Historical Society will be held in Cottage Grove, Sunday April 19, 2009 in the Cascadia Room of the Village Green Resort. Attendees will gather for a no-host luncheon at 11:30am followed by a short business meeting and program.

The cost of the hardy luncheon is \$18.00 and includes coffee, dessert and gratuity. The extensive gardens at the Village Green can be seen from the large windows in the comfort of the Cascadia Room. Members are encouraged to invite interested guests.

Please assist us in the planning of this event by mailing your check for \$18 each to: OAHS Annual Meeting, c/o Annette Whittington, 555 West A Street, Creswell, OR 97426 BY APRIL 9th.



Hank Troh with his first airplane

Our program will be presented by Lorraine Gabel, Ph.D. of Independence, Oregon. Lorraine is the daughter of "Hank Troh, Pioneer Aviation Enthusiast," Gresham Outlook, 1959. Lorraine has just written a book, *Troh's Air Taxi, Time Flies, Why Don't You?* It covers her dad's aviation career from just before 1930 through 1960 and includes people, places and planes of a special time in Oregon's aviation history.

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## RANDOM FLIGHT

By Roger Starr

We hear and read a lot about the need for the aviation community to encourage potential new pilots to take the plunge into the world of aviation. This is important to most of us who are already involved to ensure that what we have accomplished or archived is carried through to the next generations.



It takes someone who is unselfish to take that next generation by the collar and lead them through the trials, tribulations and joys of aviation for a hobby or perhaps a career. Take a good look at the picture below. What do you see? Yes, there is the Boeing 40C airplane and Addison Pemberton, second from left. Most of the other folks are probably from around Bellefonte, Pennsylvania where this shot was taken at the first stop on the trip Addison and others took last September to recreate airmail travel in the early part of the last century.



George Perks photo

the cockpit. Not Addison. That is called an extremely unselfish act in my book. I am just completely “blown away” by what this image represents.

What about the young “pilot” in the cockpit? This is probably the most apt photo I have seen that speaks loud and clear of what Addison espouses. He enthusiastically shares his wonderful creation with as many people as possible. Some restorers of such rare machines would be aghast if a mere child even asked to climb up and look inside

To a similar degree, I view anyone who volunteers to make an organization such as your Society a thriving worthwhile effort. One can not thank them enough. From the volunteer board to the volunteer sweeper, they are all essential.

When you read Carol Skinner’s article about our recent receipt of many artifacts from the family of an Oregon born WASP, reflect back on how this came about. Not by happenstance, but by a solid foundation being laid by Carol and others that demonstrated to the family that we were worthy of this gift. So it is now up to us to ensure that our legacy is passed on to the next generation. That means more unselfish volunteer effort from even more and different volunteers.

Is this another plea for you to consider volunteering? Sure, but maybe you are not able to for a number of reasons. Could you encourage those who are able through your continued financial support? Yes, and I have seen and felt what that does to help buoy the moral around the History Center. Maybe you know someone who would enjoy volunteering but is not aware of the opportunity. Encourage them, or let us know of that person so we can make a contact.

Remember, Addison and the Boeing 40 are coming to the Oregon Aviation History Center this summer. Look inside, plan to come and ask him about the flight mentioned above.

*The following is part of an article appearing in Air Classics, Volume 45, Number 3 and is reprinted by permission. Ken Jernstedt is a 2003 inductee of the Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame®, sponsored by the Society. For the service to his country, partly related in this article, and a lifetime of service to his community and state we are proud to be able to bring you this article. Ken resides in Hood River, Oregon.*

## TIGER ATTACK AT MOULMEIN

By Bob Bergin

Ask which American Volunteer Group (AVG) Flying Tiger actions were the most significant and three come immediately to mind: The Battle of Rangoon where the Tigers won their fame; the Tigers' surprise raid on the Japanese Air Force Headquarters at Chiang Mai; and the Salween River Gorge where the Tigers stopped the Japanese Army from advancing into China. There are other actions, not as well known perhaps, that should also be remembered. One that should be put near the top of the list is the Tigers' attack on two Japanese-held airfields in Burma near the city of Moulmein.

The Moulmein raid was not a planned operation like the Chiang Mai raid, but a quick strike on a target of opportunity. It took place on 19 March 1942, and was carried out by two Third Squadron pilots, Flight leaders Bill Reed and Ken Jernstedt. Reed was an Army pilot when he signed up with the AVG; Jernstedt was a Marine. Both had participated in the early air battles over Rangoon in December 1941; each was credited with three aerial victories.

In March 1942, Moulmein was a city of about 50,000, sited near the mouth of the Salween River, across the Gulf of Martaban from Burma's capital at Rangoon. It was the center of the teak and the rice trade, and the British had been there since the 1820s. In January 1941, when the Japanese Army came across the hills from Thailand, it was at Moulmein where the British Army decided to make a stand. The Japanese took the city in 24-hrs, and continued their march up the peninsula. By the end of the first week of March, they were in Rangoon.

On 27 February, with the Japanese Army approaching the city and the British evacuating, the AVG moved its P-40s out of Rangoon. The AVG's new base of operations in Burma would be the British RAF airfield at Magwe, 200-mi to the north. Reed and Jernstedt were among the Third Squadron pilots sent to reinforce First Squadron pilots who had been briefly based there.

Magwe was distant from the main action, and Ken Jernstedt was recently asked if the raid on Moulmein came about - as sometimes suggested - to escape the boredom that set in after the Third Squadron arrived at Magwe. Jernstedt said, "I don't recall anything like that. What I remember is that the flight was a reconnaissance mission. Our commander, Gen. Chennault, wanted to know what the Japanese were doing down on the Peninsula along the Gulf of Martaban. He had information that they were getting ready for something and talked with "Oley" Olson and Bill Reed. Oley was our Squadron Leader. He didn't particularly want to go on the mission, so Bill Reed asked me to go along. Oley was a different kind of squadron leader, a very good one, I thought. He left a lot of things up to the flight leaders, let them make their own decisions." (continued on page 4)



Ken Jernstedt seated at center with fellow Flying Tigers

Bill Reed was from Marion, Iowa, and Jernstedt from Hood River (Carlton ed.), Oregon. As AVG pilots they often flew together and were great friends. “Bill Reed was a good pilot,” Jernstedt remembered. “Very personable and well-liked. We played together in the AVG’s softball league. We were both pitchers and alternated pitching and playing first base. The Third Squadron won the AVG championship. We had a great time.”

Jernstedt may not remember all the details of the raid on Moulmein – it was a fast and furious action – but he does recall the mission. “The day before, on 18 March, we flew to our old training base down at Toungoo. The Japanese Army’s advance had not reached there yet, and the area along the gulf that we wanted to look over was within easy striking distance from there. We stayed over the night to be ready for an early takeoff”

“We got up about five o’clock in the morning. It was pitch dark when we took off. There were lots of stars and the North Star was sitting right above the end of the runway. I just kept my eye on the old North Star, and when I got up to flying speed, I pulled off and joined up on Reed and we headed out.”

The two Tigers flew south at 20,000-ft on a course that took them along the east side of Rangoon. When they saw the city, they turned east, across the Gulf of Martaban and in the direction of Moulmein. In his combat report, Reed noted that, “just before going over the gulf, we encountered a thick overcast.” They kept under the clouds and the mist to keep an eye on the gulf below, and “headed for a point about 120-mi south of Moulmein.” When they got there, they picked up the road and railroad that led into the city and started following them. About ten miles south of Moulmein, they spotted a small airfield.

Jernstedt remembers: “It was still early morning, and we had everything to ourselves. As we made out the airfield, we could see that the Japanese were preparing for something. They had their airplanes lined up on either side of the runway, a whole flock of them. Bill and I went right down. We took turns going up one side and down the other. It was amazing! All those airplanes were lined up so that you just couldn’t miss. It was just like shooting pumpkins.”



**Ken Jernstedt, left, reminiscing with Myron “Buz” Buswell at their 2003 induction ceremony**

In his combat report Reed estimated at least 30 Japanese airplanes parked on either side of the airstrip. On his first pass, he strafed up one side of the field and set two fighters on fire. He thought they were Army Type 98s. Then he crossed over and strafed down the opposite side of the strip. He concentrated his fire on what appeared to be a camouflaged transport and saw strikes from both his .30- and .50-cal guns on the transport, but he could not set it afire.

At the end of the runway, he crossed to the other side of the field that he had hit on first pass. He concentrated on the lined-up fighters, but again could not get a fire going. At the end of that line he crossed over again to the opposite side and headed back for the transport he had hit earlier. It was not burning, but the gear had collapsed. Reed thought he had probably gotten a hit in the hydraulics. As he passed over the line of fighters, he concentrated on one airplane, watched pieces fly from it and saw the canopy tear apart. When he crossed again to the other side, he once again focused on a single plane and pieces flew in the air as the landing gear collapsed. After this pass, Reed turned to the north toward Moulmein. When he looked back there were five airplanes burning.

*(continued on page 5)*

When Reed was flying up one side of the field, Jernstedt was flying down the other, heading in the opposite direction – a racetrack pattern. As the attack was not planned, what had determined that tactic, and how did the two pilots coordinate? “That was just our learned tactics,” Jernstedt said, “an automatic thing that we would do in that kind of situation. We picked our tactics up from Chennault. He taught us a lot, and he was always right.”

In his combat report, Jernstedt notes that on his first pass, he set one fighter alight and “scattered lead up the line of planes.” On his second pass, a transport plane “folded up on the ground after receiving the main part of my fire.” On his third pass, Jernstedt hit several planes and watched pieces fly from them. On his fourth pass he set one bomber on fire and saw other planes take hits. On his fifth pass he saw a fighter “crumple to the ground” and watched parts fly from the engine. On his sixth and last pass, he set another fighter on fire and “sprayed up the line.” As he turned north to join Reed he saw at least five large fires on the field.

After they turned north, Reed had just enough time to charge his guns when he saw the main airfield at Moulmein. There were at least 30 Japanese airplanes parked on the field. Jernstedt saw them and thought most were bombers. Reed turned west to make his first run. He does not describe the results of that run in his combat report, but notes that there were “four airplanes ablaze on the field” when Jernstedt completed his pass.

There were “quite a few anti-aircraft bursts” now, but Reed decided to try again. On this run he had only one .50- and two .30-cal guns firing,” but set an “Army 98” fighter on fire. He looked for the anti-aircraft gun emplacements firing at the fighters, but could not find them. The closest burst was about 100-yds away. As he pulled up from the field, he counted five airplanes burning. He looked for Jernstedt then, but could not spot him. He picked up the road and railroad line heading north, and followed them, continuing his reconnaissance mission. He landed at Toungoo, and found that Jernstedt had landed just before he did.

When Jernstedt started his pass on the Moulmein airfield, he saw a fighter warming up, concentrated his fire on it and saw it burst into flames. As he passed over a hangar, he tried to hit it with a small incendiary bomb he carried in the P-40’s flare compartment. It was the first test of a new idea, and it worked. The bomb fell short and missed the hangar, but it struck a Type 97 bomber parked in front and set it on fire. He also saw the anti-aircraft fire, “the shells bursting as low as 200-ft.” He saw Reed making his second pass, and then, as Reed pulled away, he spotted two Japanese aircraft taking off.

Jernstedt turned north and started back toward Toungoo. He saw five airplanes burning on the field and did not see Reed again until after he landed at Toungoo. Once on the ground, Jernstedt found he had a single bullet hole in his left wing while Reed also found one bullet hole in his airplane.

“When we got back, we put in for destroying 15 Japanese airplanes between us,” Jernstedt said. “We thought we probably destroyed and damaged more than that.” In his combat report, Jernstedt claimed one transport, two bombers, and four fighters destroyed. Reed claimed one transport, two bombers and five fighters.

“Chennault thought we did a heck of a good job,” Jernstedt recalled. “He sent us a cable that said: ‘Congratulations, you set a new world record in airplane destruction.’ Bill and I felt very good about the whole thing.”

The AVG paid bonuses for all 15 aircraft at \$500 each. Jernstedt noted that for the AVG pilots to get paid bonuses at that stage of the war, the British had to be involved in; the confirmation process and the British agreed with the number he and Reed claimed.

Chennault described the raid in his memoir, *Way of a Fighter*. He wrote that Jernstedt and Reed were credited with “the highest individual bags ever scored by AVG pilots,” and adds “the Japanese apparently never suspected our fighters could penetrate so deeply into their territory.”

## UPCOMING EVENTS

The 31<sup>st</sup> annual Stearman fly-in hosted by your Oregon Aviation Historical Society will take place July 31 - August 2 at the Oregon Aviation History Center located on Jim Wright Field, Cottage Grove Airport. Early indications are for a large turnout of Stearman biplanes originally used to train aviation cadets during WWII.



Addison Pemberton and his 1928 Boeing 40C returning from another flight back in time

An extra special attraction will be the appearance of the only flying Boeing 40C. Restored, owned and flown by Addison Pemberton of Spokane, Washington the Boeing will be on display for all to enjoy. We will also be offering two flights of two people each in the 40C. The proceeds from these flights will help support the Society. If you have a suggestion of how best to promote and administer this fund raising opportunity, please let us know. Watch our website, [oregonaviation.org](http://oregonaviation.org), for details.

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The Oregon Antique and Classic Aircraft Club will again hold its fly-in and annual meeting at the History Center on July 17-19. Come see some unique aircraft and visit with their owners. Cottage Grove will be holding their annual Bohemia Mining Days plus an Oregon Sesquicentennial celebration at the same time. This would be a great opportunity to take in both events.

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## AN OREGON WASP

By Carol Skinner

In 2003 the remains of a BT-13 were recovered by four OAHS members from the mountains of southern Oregon. The basic training aircraft was piloted by Paula Loop, a WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots) who died in the crash while on the ferry flight. Her friend and fellow WASP, Jerry Hardman Jordan, accompanied the body home to Oklahoma. At the time, the WASP did not qualify for military funerals or death benefits.

The Society was recently contacted by Melissa Jordan, Jerry Hardman’s daughter, to inquire if OAHS was interested in receiving her mother’s WASP artifacts. Of course, the answer was an immediate ‘yes’. Arrangements were made to meet with some of Jerry’s children at the Aviation History Center on February 7<sup>th</sup>. Daughters Melissa Jordan, Bethesda, MD; Betsy Jordan-Montgomery, Cambridge, IL; and son Michael Jordan, Frankfurt, Germany were received by OAHS board members Wilbur Heath and Hal Skinner, and archivist Carol Skinner. The group spent two and one-half hours talking about Jerry and the WASP.

Jerry Hardman was born in Haines, OR in a log cabin on property homesteaded by her great-grandfather. She learned to fly in a Stearman at Ontario, OR and joined the WASP at the age of 20.

Several important artifacts were delivered to OAHS by Jerry’s children, including a very rare graduation announcement in excellent condition for Jerry’s class 43-W-5, the 5<sup>th</sup> class to graduate from WASP training in 1943. Melissa indicated she had much more memorabilia that will be sent to OAHS later.

OAHS is extremely grateful to the Jordan family for choosing the Oregon Aviation Historical Society as the repository for their mother’s WASP items. We plan for them to be included in an exhibit dedicated to Oregon women who served as WASP during World War II.

...continued from page 1

Here is a brief history of her parent's unique career in aviation. Please come listen and see the entire story as told by one who witnessed the story she tells.

Henry (Hank) Troh and wife, Gertrude (Ruth) Valentine, married just four days after Hank bought his first airplane, a CK Bird. He started flying in 1931 with Cecil Pounder Flying Service in Parkrose. Hank and Ruth partnered building a business from barnstorming at county fairs to establishing one of the Portland area's oldest flight training schools and aviation service businesses. They operated Troh's Airport at 181st and Division Street from 1934 until 1946. When the war shut down general aviation on the west coast and the Air Defense Zone was established (1942), the airport was one of only two that could store aircraft without disassembly. During the years that general aviation was grounded, Hank took a job with Tex Rankin Flight Academy in Tulare, California, where he instructed primary flight skills in Stearman aircraft for more than fifty cadets in the two and half years there, early 1942 to mid-1944.



Hank Troh, center, and cadets at Tex Rankin Flight Academy in front of Stearman primary trainer

Upon resuming operation of his airport in the spring of 1945, he met Harold Wagner. Together they developed a new airport on a one hundred acre parcel, about two miles closer to Portland, described as a "\$100,000.00 Airport to Serve You." The new airport, Troh's Skyport, stayed in business for thirteen years until it closed in July 1959. Hank then built his "Airport in the Sky", which he named Troh's Nest, located in Clackamas County. Hank can be credited with developing and operating three airports with plans for a fourth.

Hank provided first rides to thousands of Oregon residents during his thirty-four years in business. His flight school instructors assisted him in licensing hundreds of pilots in the northwest. As a Piper Aircraft Dealer and advocate for general aviation, he demonstrated innovative uses for aircraft in the region. He had tallied up far more than 10,000 hours in the air with an estimated 7,000 as instructor. Hank received many awards from his students claiming he was "The Best Instructor in the Northwest from all the students of the Airport." His greatest legacy is reflected in the growth of aviation and the wide range of uses his students put to the skills and ideals they obtained in his tutelage. Hank died at an early age from a brain tumor in 1968, which prevented his realizing even greater achievements.

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For membership information, please go to our website: [www.oregonaviation.org](http://www.oregonaviation.org)

# Join 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: OR Aviation Historical Society

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

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