Our Mission

The Oregon Aviation Historical Society was incorporated 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.

It’s 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 APRIL 17, 2010

This year’s annual meeting will again be held at the Village Green Hotel and Resort’s Cascade Room on Saturday April 17. It will be a waitress-served roasted tri-tip luncheon at 12 noon followed by the annual Society update by President Roger Starr and program. Location is 725 Row River Road in Cottage Grove just off I-5. Please come at 11:30 AM for the get together fellowship.

We need to pre-register for this. Cost is $18 per person which includes the tip. Please send your check payable to OAHS to Annette Whittington, 555 West A Ave., Creswell, OR 97426 by Friday April 9. If you don’t send it to be received by April 9, please call Annette at (541) 895-3910 so you will be counted.

The program will be in two parts. Maybe you have heard that the OAHS 1934 Stinson SR-5E was completed and flown from Grants Pass to Scappoose last August 28! It was a momentous occasion. Oregon Aero at Scappoose re-upholstered the interior for us and that was completed in February. We hope to have the Stinson back at the History Center for the annual meeting. Rex Hume of Grants Pass painstakingly did the Stinson restoration over a number of years. Many pictures were taken during the process and a power point presentation narrated by Rex and those who participated with him will be highlighted.

The second part of the program is the 2010 Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame induction of Danny Grecco and our own Tim Talen. Please see the next article by Hal Skinner on this.

So---please try to make this annual meeting. We want it to be a historical event!
2010 HALL OF FAME INDUCTIONS
By: Hal Skinner

A long time aviation builder and mechanic and an award-winning restorer of antique aircraft will be inducted into the OREGON AVIATION HALL OF FAME in a ceremony during the OAHS annual meeting April 17th at the Village Green Hotel and Resort in Cottage Grove.

DANNY GRECCO’S career with airplanes spanned the period Silas Christofferson’s 1912 flight when he helped assemble his pusher-type airplane on the roof of the Multnomah Hotel, through the introduction of the rocket with the flight of the Bell X-1. He established a maintenance program in China but spent most of his life in his home town of Portland, where he was the chief mechanic for Tex Rankin’s Flight School and later worked across the River at Vancouver’s Pearson Air Park. The FAA named Danny “The Best Mechanic in the West” in 1968.

TIM TALEN is a rebuilder of outstanding antique aircraft. His work and historical knowledge is respected throughout the nation and across U.S. borders as well. Beginning in 1960, at 15 years of age, Tim, along with his father, began building an airplane from the plans published in Popular Mechanics magazine. The result was the completion of a Corben Baby Ace that Tim still owns and flies today. His artistry can be seen from museums, where the wings of a like-named “Tim” Collegiate is displayed, to an advertising display hung from the ceiling of a Seattle terminal clothier, to the award of a Bronze-age champion selection at EAA’s AirVenture in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Please make every effort to attend this ceremony and support the work of Oregon Aviation contributors like Danny Grecco and Tim Talen. The inductions are a part of the annual meeting of the Oregon Aviation Historical Society April 17th. Pre-registration is required to reserve your place at the festivities. A luncheon will be served and we must know just how many places to count. Full details appear in the lead article of the newsletter about the annual gathering. I hope to join with you there!
Only in retrospect do we see clearly what it means to be in the right place at the right time. I just happen to be involved with your Society during a time when a great deal is happening and those “happenings” give me opportunities. Such was the case when OAHS made the decision to transfer ownership of our Boeing 40-C mail plane bones to Addison Pemberton. I was privileged to sit down with Addison at the formal consummation of this transaction in 2000.

Then came 2009 and the opportunity to again be in the right place. In July Addison was going to bring the now completed Boeing right past Lenhardt Airpark on his way to Cottage Grove to display and fly his creation for the folks attending the annual Stearman fly-in. So I showed up at the right airport at the right time, all prearranged, and was again privileged to sit down with Addison. This time he was in the pilot’s seat of the Boeing and I was in one of the four passenger seats in front of him. We passed over the same ground this same airplane and its other mail plane buddies had passed over in the 1920’s & 30’s. It was not hard to imagine what passengers in those days were feeling because I was having the same experience. Pure joy!

Two days later I was returned to Lenhardt’s to make it a true round trip flight in that magnificent machine. No TSA, no baggage fees, no in-flight food, no in-flight movie. Now that is the way to fly!

In late August I found myself in the right place again. This time it was at Scappoose, Oregon to see our 1935 Stinson SR-5E which had just arrived from its first post-restoration flight from Grants Pass. Oregon Aero of Scappoose was going to begin the installation of the interior of the Stinson. That job is now complete and it is magnificent! The next trip for the Stinson will be to Cottage Grove for display in the History Center. That is the right place for you to come spend some time enjoying this wonderful artifact.

Thanks to all of you who have done the right thing at the right time and renewed your 2010 membership. I urge those who have not done so to take the time to honor us with your continued support.

One difficult item to report is the passing last Fall of lifetime member and long-time director Al Grell of Tangent. Al continued to been a tremendous supporter of your Society from the beginning. He offered many ideas and suggestions to help sustain the organization. We really miss him at our meeting table.

**Strategic Planning**

During the past several months, your Directors have worked diligently on some strategic goals for the Society. These goals help keep us focused on our mission and purpose as stated on the first page of the newsletter.

**Goals:** 1) **Maintain** and enhance current assets of the History Center including its archives, resource library, aircraft, both restored and yet to be restored, and many Oregon aviation physical artifacts; 2) **Achieve** financial security; 3) **Improve** communication to members, potential members and the general public to result in increased visibility of and membership in OAHS; 4) **Improve** the capacity of the Board of Directors, Executive Council and Society officers to more effectively manage OAHS affairs; 5) **Maintain** the Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame program; 6) **Restore** and operate Oregon Historical Aircraft; 7) **Develop** and carry out plans to meet space needs through carefully examining alternatives to meet current and potential future needs.
The Boeing 40 C Mail plane-Its History and Its Future

(Note: The following is a composite of material from the November 1994 OAHS newsletter, the May-June 2009 OPA PropWash, and a short conclusion by the editor.)

The Canyonville Mail Plane Crash
By Ron Bartley

As Grant Donaldson, pilot, approached from the south, he saw low clouds hanging over the mountains north of Canyon Creek Pass. It was Tuesday morning, October 2, 1928. As an airmail pilot for the Pacific Air Transport Company, flying the route between Portland and Oakland-San Francisco, this was a familiar weather pattern. He knew he had a difficult decision to make.

If he descended into Canyon Creek canyon below the clouds, he could probably continue down the canyon and into the South Umpqua River Valley, which is usually clear. If he continued northward over the cloud-covered mountains, he might eventually be forced to descend through the clouds, low on fuel, and would not know if clear sky were present below.

The dilemma facing Grant Donaldson was further complicated by the presence of a passenger seated in the enclosed cabin along with the mail sacks of the Boeing 40C mail plane. There could be no thought of parachuting to safety if trapped on top of the cloud layer.

The decision was made. He entered Canyon Creek Canyon at the Pass, flying the big biplane in the narrow space between the treetops below, and low clouds and fog above. As he flew down the canyon, he looked downward from his open cockpit to keep the Pacific Highway in sight. As he approached the Pioneer Bridge, two and a half miles from the Pass, it happened.

Excerpts from the Roseburg News-Review told the following:

Mail Plane Crashes at Canyonville

A Pacific Air Transport company plane flying from Medford to Portland crashed this morning on the summit of Canyon Mountain, 9 miles south of Canyonville, seriously injuring H.G. Donaldson, the pilot. A passenger said to be D.P. Donovan of Los Angeles, was reported to be missing. Donaldson was brought to Roseburg in a semiconscious condition, suffering from bruises, concussion and burns and was taken to Mercy Hospital.

The accident occurred about 10AM this morning when the plane flying at a small elevation because of low hanging clouds, was caught in shifting fog in the canyon south of Canyonville and crashed.

Despite his serious injuries, the pilot made his way to the highway, about a hundred yards away, where he was picked up in a semiconscious condition. He gasped about incoherent details of the wreck before lapsing into an unconscious state. Men were immediately sent out to the scene to seek for the passenger who was supposed to have been in the ship at the time of wreck.

Rev. H.C. Messerli, Lutheran minister at Albany, who with his wife and two children on the way home from a trip to Michigan, was nearing Pioneer Bridge from the south at the time of the wreck and heard the crash as the machine struck the hillside. He thought that a car ahead of him had hit the bridge railing, but as he came down to the bridge he heard someone calling and saw Donaldson running out of the brush.
“The flier was a mass of blood.” Rev. Messerli said. “He did not seem to be so badly cut, but the flesh of his face, hands and feet was terribly burned and swollen. He did not talk coherently, but kept muttering about the fog forcing him down. We took him to Canyonville and stopped at the drug store, and a Dr. Patterson was called to treat him. They said they would get an ambulance from Roseburg and so I came on.”

Donaldson was unable to talk after reaching Canyonville except to mutter incoherently of the wreck. A report was immediately sent into the Pacific Air Transport company and an answer received at once requesting news of the passenger, D.P. Donovan of Los Angeles. This was the first information that the pilot was not alone in the ship. Men immediately hastened for the scene but spent considerable time vainly seeking the wrecked ship.

While men were searching for the wreck of the plane and the passenger, people in Canyonville devoted their attention to caring for the injured pilot.

Information received from Portland was to the effect that L.G. Hubble, division superintendent of the Pacific Air Transport Company, left Vancouver, WA for Roseburg immediately after being notified of the accident. He plans to see Donaldson at the hospital and take charge of the search for the passenger.

The place where the accident occurred is one of the worst portions of the coast airway. The mountains are high, and when there is much fog the canyons are filled with low hanging clouds that completely obscure vision. Searchers for the wrecked plane reported to Canyonville that the fog was so dense at 1 o’clock that they had not been able to find the wreckage, and had secured no trace of the passenger, who, it was reported, might have been killed in the crash.

Roseburg News-Review
October 3, 1928
The body of D.P. Donovan, of Los Angeles, passenger in the ill-fated P.A.T. mail plane wrecked yesterday south of Canyonville, was found late yesterday afternoon in the cabin of the burned plane. The body was charred beyond all recognition, the extremities being completely burned away. Searchers were greatly handicapped by brush and fog, and did not find the plane until several hours after the accident. Pilot Grant Donaldson who was terribly burned about the face and hands was taken to Portland yesterday evening in a plane piloted by Lt. J.R. Cunningham.

Donovan apparently was killed by the impact when the plane struck the mountainside. At least it is quite certain that he was knocked unconscious before being burned.

The plane was finally discovered by the fact that it had mowed the tops from several large trees before it crashed on the hillside. Noticing the broken tree tops, searchers made their way to the spot where they found the wrecked plane and the body of the passenger.

Pacific Air Transport inaugurated airmail service between Seattle and Los Angeles in September 1926. At the time of the Canyonville crash, the company had experienced at least three other mail plane accidents. It was being operated as a division of Boeing Air Transport, In., and eventually became a part of United Airlines in 1934.

Grant Donaldson recovered from his injuries but did not resume his career as a pilot. The severe facial burns he sustained while trying to get his passenger out of the burning plane after the crash were with him the rest of his life. By 1931 he was the Pacific Air Transport station manager in Bakersfield, CA. He retired
about 1969 as a dispatcher for United Airlines, spending most of his career in the San Francisco area. He was very well liked, and highly respected by fellow employees. An unspoken agreement existed between Grant Donaldson and close associates not to discuss the crash; consequently relatively few details are known today.

Most of the wreckage at the crash site has long since vanished. It remains an interesting, but little known event in the early history of the U.S. Airmail Service and the Umpqua region.

Excerpted from a May-June 2009 PropWash article by Carol Skinner

Through the efforts of Ron Bartley, OAHS received salvage rights to the Boeing from the Bureau of Land Management, and piece by piece (see picture) the aircraft was moved to a storage area by members Bartley, Al Alsing, Tim Talen and Ron Englund. While at the 1998 fly-in at Oshkosh, Addison Pemberton, Spokane, WA (“we fly the old stuff”) let it be known he was looking for a Boeing to restore. Pemberton arranged to purchase the Boeing wreckage from OAHS and in April 2000 he drove to the Oregon Aviation History Center in Cottage Grove and left with 2,000 pounds of remains for the trip back to Spokane.

On February 17, 2008, eight years to the day after buying the project, Pemberton test flew Boeing 40C 5339. He estimates 61 volunteers spent more than 18,000 hours on the project. One day, while he was working on the plane, a woman from Salem came to his hangar because she had read about the restoration and had to see it for herself. She showed Pemberton a diamond ring on her finger that she said was found at the crash site by her father who had it made into an engagement ring for her mother. (Passenger Donovan was reputed to be a gem dealer!)

Two sections of the Boeing 40-C mail plane fuselage as it was “skidded” approximately 1/2 mile out to the road. This represents the largest surviving artifact remaining from the 1928 Canyonville mail plane crash. Pictured from left are Ron Englund, Al Alsing, Tim Talen, Ron Bartley. (Bartley Photo)

The main show MC (AKA Roger Starr, OAHS President) with Restorer Addison Pemberton at the August 2009 Stearman Fly in, Cottage Grove.
Afterword by Tom Bedell

In August 2009, Addison Pemberton flew the Boeing 40C to Cottage Grove in conjunction with the annual Stearman Fly In. Several rides were awarded through a raffle. As it turned out, most if not all the OAHS directors who were there received a ride. There is room for four passengers in the enclosed cabin but Addison carried three in the interest of safety, i.e. weight. The weather was clear and beautiful and the 40C attracted many spectators who, we believe, were thrilled to see an 80 plus year old in all its glory and large stature. What a marvelous job Addison Pemberton and his volunteers had done. The 40C spent the winter of 2009-2010 at Terry Brandt’s Western Antique Aircraft and Automobile Museum in Hood River on display. No doubt, it will continue to tour the country under the very capable piloting of Addison Pemberton.
Join the OAHS!
If you’re not 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____________________
Current/Former Occupation____________________________________
I am Interested in Volunteering _________________________________
Skills and Interests ___________________________________________