

WINGS OF FREEDOM

The Official Newsletter of the Delaware Valley Historical Aircraft Association

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DVHAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT - Ron Nelson

E-Mail: rnelson117@verizon.net

VICE PRESIDENT - Joseph Breslin

E-Mail: jrbreslin1@verizon.net

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E-Mail: jdemlaw@aol.com

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E-Mail: jflyskiguy@aol.com

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E-Mail: brent@asplundh.com

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E-Mail: jkbeaver@comcast.net

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E-Mail: bbeavis@optonline.net

Raymond Brown

E-Mail: rjb8417@hotmail.com

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Email: huntglen@verizon.net

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E-Mail: sadie120@verizon.net

Gordon Krauss

E-Mail: gordankrauss@earthlink.net

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E-Mail: pmallon400@aol.com

John Rehffuss

E-Mail: jhnrehf@aol.com

Kurt Wecker

E-Mail: kurtwecker@comcast.net

From the Cockpit

of Ron Nelson, President



The New Year is here again and DVHAA has much to be thankful for:

1. The continued blessing of our dedicated volunteers in restoration, museum, library, office, and Board—all of whom are the lifeblood of the organization.

2. The fact that wiser heads prevailed, led by Governor Rendell, Senator Specter, Congressman Murtha, Congresswomen Schwartz, and the rest of our State and Federal politicians who recognized the egregious mistake made by the BRAC Committee in closing a strategic facility like the Willow Grove Naval Air Station. They introduced and passed legislation to keep the base open, and set the wheels in motion to establish a prototype Homeland Security Hub that can be employed across the Country. This is a win, win for America. H.R. 2638 Section 8115 also establishes The Horsham Joint Interagency Installation with the airfield carrying the name "Pitcairn-Willow Grove Field." Section 8115 lays out the transfer of property from the Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of the Air Force and finally provides for conveyance of the Navy property and any excess Air Force property to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In addition, we are most fortunate to have two superb professionals handling the transition in JII managers Colonel Don Carmeans and Navy Captain Ken Lewko.

3. The project oversight of Brent Asplundh. Thanks to him, we

now have a heating system in our soft Hanger, which along with a new lighting system, will open up opportunities for continued restoration work during the winter and at night.

4. The anticipated upgrade to the outdoor lighting system at the museum. Special thanks go to Rob Kees for his assistance in its purchase and installation.

5. The energy saving ceiling fans that are being installed to keep winter heat circulating at visitor level.

6. The ongoing support of Base Commander Captain David Opatz and his staff.

7. Two state representatives from the local area, Tom Murt and Rick Taylor and their staffs, who have gone the extra mile to help us apply for and receive funding for enhancing the office and library computer systems and some additional funding to start the restoration of the rapidly deteriorating F7U Cutlass.

8. A very successful Golf Outing at Five Ponds Country Club in Warminster Township on September 15th and we are looking forward to next year's Outing on September 14th. It certainly would be an even greater event if we could attract more of our membership in soliciting hole sponsorships and players. Plan ahead and join us for a great afternoon of camaraderie and fun!

9. A museum committee and docents whose tireless efforts in promoting the museum may set a new visitor attendance record this year.

10. A special time of year that gives me the opportunity to give personal Thanks. I wish you all a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Statement of Policy

Materials submitted and printed in the Wings of Freedom newsletter are presented for the information of members. No responsibility is claimed for accuracy. Opinions expressed are those of the DVHAA. Articles, letters, and photos are welcomed and returned, if requested. No remuneration is made. Articles printed in the Wings of Freedom newsletter may not be reproduced or used in any way without the express permission of the editor.
Bud Galow, DVHAA newsletter editor



Visit our website at www.dvhaa.org



museum News

by Susan Halteman, Curator



ALL GAVE SOME SOME GAVE ALL

During this month of November, we celebrate two very important holidays. The first is Veteran's Day, and the second, Thanksgiving. What a great opportunity to both celebrate our dedicated servicemen and women and to give thanks for their sacrifices. We would not enjoy the freedoms we have today without them.

The majority of our staff and volunteers here at the DVHAA are veterans, from WWII to the present. I know I am honored to work with so many men and women who have given so much for our country, our freedoms and our way of life. I am thankful that all of you choose to spend some of your free time here with the DVHAA and continue to make use of your skills in service to our mission of preserving and sharing aviation history.

Within the next few months, I plan to focus on some exhibits in the museum honoring our veterans and the sacrifices they have made. We are planning a new exhibit case on the Vietnam War featuring the collection of Capt. Sam Flynn, a Navy F-4 pilot and MiG-killer. Flynn is credited with coining the fighter pilot's slogan "Speed is Life". His Phantom is now in the collection of the Smithsonian. This collection of uniforms, flight suits and memorabilia was given to the DVHAA through the generosity of his widow, Melynda and facilitated by Hank and Joe Waga.



I would also like to put together an exhibit on POWs of all wars. I have some interesting artifacts in storage which I plan to use, but am seeking the input of members who may have any additional items. Possible things to include would be letters home to loved ones, wartime souvenirs and diaries.

We will also be bringing in some new simulators for the aspiring pilots that visit the museum. Earlier this year we instituted a new policy of rotating our simulators out every 6 months. This ensures that we always have something new for our repeat visitors and it also saves wear-and-tear on our equipment. This is an important part of our educational mission, because opportunities to climb in a vintage fighter or helicopter cockpit are few and far between.

Another aspect of our educational program, our 2008 "Profiles in Aviation" Lecture series wrapped up on Veteran's Day. We had a great turnout to hear P-38 pilot Col. Brad McManus talk about Operation Bolero and Glacier Girl. October's program, with George Stifinger, and September's program with Greg Marston were also very worthwhile. Please join us in March, April and May of 2009 as we continue with the third annual installment of the lecture series. Watch the website for speakers and dates!

Col. McManus gives his presentation as part of the final installment in the 2008 Fall Lecture Series.

Photo by Bob Fisher

Visit our website at www.dvhaa.org



RESTORATION & MUSEUM UPDATE

*by John Rehfuss
Director of Operations*



As we move into the winter months the activity level has definitely stepped up in the Restoration area. We continue to move forward in the restoration process on the F84 and the F8.

The F84 team has finally finished putting the aircraft together and is now preparing it for its final paint scheme. The team has approached this is an unusual way. After stripping the aircraft body, they employed a Baking Soda technique that is environmentally safe and finishes the skin of the aircraft off preparing it for the next phase of having it buffed out to the original aluminum surface. And for everyones information we have decided to paint it the Pennsylvania Air National Guard colors based on a couple of facts.

-First the Air National Guard at JRB Willow Grove has always stepped up and supported us in our mission of restoring and maintaining our current fleet of aircraft.

-Secondly the F84, from what I understand did fly out of NAS Willow Grove. (I will stand corrected if any of our historians can advise me otherwise).

Our F8 is progressing nicely. The aircraft is 100% better than it was a couple of years ago. The team is still re-skinning it and we continue to sand and prepare it for paint. Over the November 8th weekend, we had a group of distinguished visitors that were brought in from Bob Beavis (Board member). These Marine aviators actually flew the F-8. They spent time with the Plane Captain Derek Bacon- our resident British Airman) and the rest of the Restoration team, sharing stories and admiring the work that has been performed on the aircraft.

Also, we have received funding from State Representative Rick Taylor of Pennsylvania. He has given us a grant for \$10,000.00 to begin work on the Cutlass. We will be assessing what needs to be done over the next few months. This is a one of a kind aircraft and we need to ensure that what we do is in keeping of our restoration mission. By the way if we have anyone who is interested in becoming the Plane Captain for this aircraft let me know. You are more than welcome to join the team.

In closing we are well on our way to getting the Restoration soft hangar ready for the winter months. The electrical installation is completed. We have

lighting for working in the evenings and we are finalizing the installation of the heating.

As the New Year begins, I personally want to thank each and every one of the team that has and continues to make every effort to ensure that we move forward in our restoration mission. Happy New Year.

Final Flight

Ethel B. Clark,
Captain United States Naval Reserve

Ethel B. Clark, a resident of Springhouse Estates, lower Gwynedd, Pennsylvania passed away Saturday, October 18, 2008. She was 84 years of age.

Born in Philadelphia on September 26, 1924. She was a lifelong resident of Glenside Pennsylvania.

A 1942 graduate of Abington High School, Ethel enlisted in the U. S. Navy and severed her country honorably during World War 2. Upon completion of her enlistment, she enrolled in the University of Pennsylvania and graduated in 1951 with an Economics degree from the College of Women.

Ethel continued her military career in the U.S. Naval Reserve as a commissioned officer, serving in various units and capacities at Naval Air Station Willow Grove. She achieved the rank of Captain and retired in 1984.

She joined The DVHAA on March 1st 1987 and has been a member ever since. Ethel continued her involvement and commitment to the military and its veterans by being engaged as a Docent in the Wings of Freedom Museum.

Please join us all in giving our condolences to her family and friends.

Final Flight

John M. Miller
(1905-2008)

Long-time DVHAA member and aviation pioneer Johnny Miller passed away on June 23, 2008 in Poughkeepsie, N.Y at the age of 102. John's 83 year aviation career started in 1923 when John was 18 and continued until John was 101 years old, when he finally stopped flying his 1969 Bonanza. He was known as the oldest active pilot in the United States. According to the Poughkeepsie Journal, John's last words to his nephew were. "I guess my flying days are over".

John credited Glenn Curtiss for getting him interested in flying when, On May 29, 1910, Curtiss flew an airplane into a field across from his home in the Hudson River Valley. From obtaining his flying license on his 18th birthday, John had a varied aviation career. He barnstormed in the 1920s. He watched Lindbergh depart Roosevelt Field on May 20, 1927. He joined the US Marine Corps in 1930 as a civilian pilot and qualified as a naval aviator. John started flying Pitcairn autogiros at Pitcairn Field in 1931 when he was the first individual to purchase a Pitcairn PCA-2 autogiro (Serial No. 13). In 1931, he was the first person to fly transcontinental in an autogiro. Miller took great pride in being the only person performing loops and rolls in an autogiro at airshows across the country, including the National Air Races in Los Angeles and the International Air Races in Chicago in 1933. He often said that other pilots thought he was crazy for performing such stunts in an autogiro but, as a 1927 engineering graduate of Pratt Institute in New York City, Miller was confident that the autogiro could withstand the maneuvers, and he wanted to prove that it was a safe aircraft.

In 1936 he took a job with United Air Lines, flying as a Boeing 247 copilot. In 1937, Wallace Kellett, president of the Kellett Autogiro Company, approached Miller to finish the flight-test program for the world's first wingless autogiro. While Kellett was developing the wingless KD-1, Miller often accompanied him on trips to Washington, D.C. Miller stated that he would land the autogiro in streets and parks throughout the capital. He took senators and congressmen on flights all over the city. He recalled that only the White House was restricted. On the morning of July 6, 1939 Miller started flying the mail from the rooftop of the Philadelphia Post Office to Camden Airport in Philadelphia for Eastern Airlines under a one year contract. The schedule consisted of five flights a day, six days per week. At six miles, it was, and still is the shortest scheduled air route in history.



In 2005, John shared his memories of flying Pitcairn and Kellett autogiros with the DVHAA. The following is an excerpt from John's writings at that time.

"I was the first individual person to purchase a Pitcairn autogiro; it was a PCA-2, with a Wright 330 hp R975E engine. It was originally serial number 12 and I had advised Mr. Asplundh, of Pitcairn, that I intended to make the first transcontinental flights in each direction with it. Delivery was to be on May 1, 1931. In April, the factory notified me that my autogiro would not be delivered until May 15, which would cost me two air show appearances at quite a few dollars apiece. However, in the meantime, I read in the NY Times that Amelia Earhart was at the Pitcairn factory awaiting the delivery of an autogiro and intended to make the first transcontinental flights. I flew to the factory to investigate and quickly found that Earhart originally was to receive the next autogiro in the production line after mine but that the nameplates had been switched and I now had serial number 13 and she had serial number 12.

Continued to page five



John Miller,
Transcontinental
Flight, Tucson, AZ
May 28, 1931
Pitcairn PCA-2
Autogiro

Continued from page four

Amelia had made an altitude flight in a prototype PCA-2, flying it airplane style, but she was still undergoing instruction in how to land properly, autogiro style. They were having difficulty instructing her and she said to me (evidently not knowing who I was) that she was not interested in "all this aerodynamics stuff, but just want to fly to California and back". I kept quiet and let the factory know that I had a lucrative contract to appear at the Omaha Air Races by May 17 and did not wish to miss that race. They let me have my autogiro on the afternoon of May 14 and I promptly took off and flew to Omaha, arriving on the 17th, it was a lot of flying but the weather was perfect. After the show at Omaha, I took off and demonstrated along the way and arrived at the San Diego Naval Air Station on May 28. Later, I returned, thus making the first transcontinental flights in a rotary wing aircraft. Amelia Earhart took off on May 29 for her transcontinental flight and arrived in California about two weeks after I had arrived and already left. On the way back, Amelia tried to take off over a large crowd but the wheels struck the steel wire fence holding the crowd back and she flew over the heads of the people and crashed into the parked cars behind them. She and her mechanic walked away uninjured but the PCA-2 was totaled. After all that, I did more than 4,000 hours flying my PCA-2 at air shows etc. without ever scratching its paint.

The PCA-2 autogiro I owned and flew so much all over the US was a really wonderful aircraft, easy to fly if done properly, and extremely safe. Many pilots apparently never did learn to really fly the autogiro correctly and considered it a "comedown" from other aircraft they were flying. It never was given a chance to show its real flying qualities by fixed wing pilots. If flown properly, it had wonderful flying characteristics that I am sure many pilots never discovered.

I made all autogiro landings without power and with almost no forward roll and I flew it in winds as high as 73 mph. I also flew a lot of aerobatic demonstrations, some of which would have collapsed the wings of almost any fixed wing airplane. I owe my very life to the PCA-2. When I was towing a huge 9 foot high banner of 37 letters, made of muslin, cotton ropes, and bamboo spreaders and trying to get above 1000 feet, the engine, without the slightest warning, quit cold and the airspeed instantly went to exactly zero! I cut the banner loose. The autogiro went into an automatic vertical descent at about the same vertical speed as a parachute. I looked around and there was nothing but resident houses under me. I was quickly down to about 500 feet when I saw a slight open space behind the right-hand wing and made a diving right

turn toward it. It was at the North edge of a cemetery and I landed in it gently without an inch of roll, in zero wind and no damage whatever. There were gravestones all around me. If I had been towing the banner with a fixed wing airplane, it would have instantly dived straight down into the houses and I would have been dead on January 26, 1934. My gravestone would be thoroughly weather beaten by now.

Of course, several experimental autogiros were built with Jump takeoff systems, but none were ever advanced to Approved Type, for WW-II stopped such development. So, both the Pitcairn and Kellett autogiros made takeoffs with forward speed on the ground, but short ones. As for landings, they could be made airplane style too, but properly flown, the autogiros have the ability to make power-off birdlike flared landings with little or no forward roll at all, by pilots properly trained. All of the landings made on the roof of the Post Office building in the center of Philadelphia were made in this manner, entirely without power or roll, except when the wind was very strong, such as 40 to 55 mph, when landings were most conveniently made with power to prevent being blown backward. Those flared, no-roll landings are one of the greatest advantages of an autogiro in the case of a power-off forced landing, and contributing to the extreme safety of autogiros.

The Pitcairn PCA-2 is a wonderful aircraft. I wish there had been a controllable propeller available at that time, for it would have cut the takeoff distance almost in half. It was a sad day in my life when I had to sell my PCA-2 to a crop duster who later left it out in a hurricane without even tying down the blades. It was a noble aircraft."



Be a part of the wings team

by Charly Reinhardt, Chief Docent

Everyone says they'll help. It's hard to find the time. Volunteering is a dying art. It takes a special type of person to give of his time. We have these types of people on the DVHAA Team. Come join us! We need storytellers to work in the museum. The restoration team needs help to restore our aircraft. We need a public relations expert who knows the Philadelphia area to spread the word about our hidden gem. We have gained a few new volunteers this year, but we lost a few also. We need your help.

“Make a Difference - Volunteer join our winning Wings team!”

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Imrana Ali
David Ascher Jr.
Alfred Barbano Jr.
Jerry Byrnes
Kenneth Curl
John DeLong
Robert Foy
Kristina Gans
Marion Heckler
Len Holmquist
C.B. Bud Hyatt
Robert Kelly
Joseph Kornspan
Peter McConnell
Maj. Michael
McGurl
John Rice
John F. Risley
Patricia S. Risley
Augustine Salvitti
Frank L. Smith
Ronald A. Wagner
Marc Wexler

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

DVHAA office: 215-443-6039

DVHAA office fax: 215-675-4005

Wings of Freedom Museum:

1155 Easton Rd Horsham, PA 19044

215-672-2277

Museum Hours

Wednesday: 10:30am to 3:00pm

Friday: 10:30am to 3:00pm

Saturday: 10:30am to 4:00pm

Sunday: 10:30am to 4:00pm

From the DVHAA Archives

by: Hank Waga

The First Flying Baseball Team By Annemarie Berg

On a Sunday morning August 7th, 1921 Baseball history was made--- not on the playing field, but on an airfield.

At 6am that day, dusty black Model T's from all over the county congregated at Friesley Field in a small town of Gridley, near Marysville in northern California. Patiently, the early morning spectators waited, sitting on the running boards of their cars discussing the upcoming event. Shortly, a small cavalcade of cars arrived and out scrambled the Marysville Merchants baseball team.

Smiling tensely, they lined up in front of a huge plane for newsreel photographers. These nervous athletes were pioneers; they were adventurers, doing something that had never been done before. And they weren't quite sure they liked it. For the first time, a complete baseball team was traveling by air, flying 80 miles to Woodland for the day's game. They would never wear big league uniforms nor make the Baseball Hall of Fame, but they were a baseball first.

Since dawn, Grafton Reed, mechanic had been checking out every moving part of the 12- passenger Falcon. Built right

there in Gridley, the "giant of the Clouds" was the largest plane in the United States except for the Martin Bombers.

Promptly at 7 the intrepid ball players called "human cargo" by reporters, boarded the twin - engine biplane. Pathe Newsreel cameramen cranked furiously as they took pictures of "this novel performance of employing an aeroplane to transport a ballclub."

The crowd cheered while Model T's honked wildly as the Falcon trundled down the field and lifted off. Captain M. Spencer, the pilot had designed and built this great passenger ship, was at the stick. With him was Roy Francis, friend and fellow pilot. These two men were acclaimed the foremost aviators of the day, and San Francisco paper even went so far as to give them sole credit for whipping the great fleet of American planes into shape during World War 1.

Nearing their destination, Captain Spencer gave the ball team an extra thrill by flying over Sacramento before turning back to land at Woodland. The 80 mile trip took 43 minutes of flying time.

At Woodland, another crowd waited to greet the flying ball team. Again, newsreel cameras recorded the event as players emerged from the plane grinning with relief.

Oh- Yes the game. Seems like flying must have been just too much for the Marysville Team. Woodland won, 16-4



Delaware Valley Historical Aircraft Association
Naval Air Station - Joint Reserve Base
Willow Grove, PA 19090-5010
215.443.6039

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Check OUR website for the new online newsletter in full color

Delaware Valley Historical Aircraft Association
and
The Wings of Freedom Museum
Annual
Golf Tournament

Monday, September 15, 2009

4 - Person Scramble

Sign-in 12:00 pm.

Shotgun starts at 1:00 p.m.

Five Ponds Golf Club

1225 West Street Road

Warminster, PA 18974

215-956-9727

Contacts

Kim Johnson 215-489-8895

Jack Beaver 215-794-7745

Visit our website at **www.dvhaa.org**