



# Oregon Aviation Historical Society

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## Newsletter

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## Hall of Fame Highlights



July's combined Hall of Fame induction and OACAC Fly-In was well-attended, as can be seen from these photos. Clockwise from top left: **Myron Buswell** entertains the audience with a few remarks after accepting his Hall of Fame plaque. Top right: the OACAC Fly-In attracts a number of antiques and classics to Cottage Grove. Below: **Ken Jernstedt** tells war stories fit for the Hall of Fame. Left: Auctioneer **Roger Starr** sees what he can get for (what else!) a Piper Cub print.





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*Newsletter Editor:*

**William Villani**

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## ***RANDOM FLIGHT***

By Roger Starr

As we come to end of another year, at least a couple of relevant thoughts come to mind. The first is a "thank you" to all of our supporters and friends. The financial commitment and volunteer time given to the Society is sincerely appreciated. It takes both to keep the ship afloat. The second is a reminder that every member has a chance to be of further assistance in advancing the goals of OAHS by either signing up a new member or perhaps starting a new member off with a gift membership. This would make a nice Christmas present or show of appreciation for someone.

OK, so I have one more thought! The Society is always interested in receiving donations of saleable items. We have been fortunate in the past to receive, among other items, a vehicle that we sold. The donor was rewarded by not having to deal with the hassles of selling a vehicle and benefited from a tax-deductible contribution with very little effort.

I failed to report in the last newsletter the addition of a new board member. We are indeed fortunate to have the several talents of Life Member Gretchen Bencene available to the Society. Gretchen was appointed to the board at our April meeting in Portland. She and her husband Tom Bedell live in Philomath. Gretchen is a retired Certified Public Accountant as well as a licensed pilot. She has served on a number of boards and committees for various local and statewide non-profit organizations. Gretchen was put to work right away by accepting the position as our treasurer. Thank you Gretchen!

Another thank you goes out to member Bob Brown for donating a very nice collection of general aviation aircraft models. We have had many remarks regarding the quality of these models that are displayed in the glass display cases in the History Center entry hall. We were again fortunate to recently acquire surely one of Bob's most unique models, that of the Hughes H-1 racer. We intend to utilize it in our memorial display to the late Jim Wright. When you visit the Center, please take note of the quality and care that goes into each of Bob's creations.

### ***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 \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Out in the Sun**

*The Rupert Special frame enjoyed an outing at July's OACAC Fly-In.*

## ***GREAT LAKES RESTORATION UPDATE***

Progress continued on the Great Lakes in spite of summer fly-ins and airshows. The upper wing center section has now been fitted with an aluminum leading edge and plywood bottom to form the fuel tank bay. Mike Brown is continuing work on the landing gear, and has welded brackets which support the fuel tank. Aluminum baffles have been made for the new fuel tank which is nearly eight feet long.

An original old Great Lakes fuel tank made of tin plate (very heavy), has been donated, and will be used as a guide for building a new and much lighter tank. New Great Lakes fuel tanks are available for \$5,000 which is well beyond our budget.

*Ron Bartley*



*Photograph being sent by regular mail: Our new center section wing, and the donated tin plate fuel tank. The aluminum parts in the new fuel tank bay are baffles for the new tank.*

## **FROM THE ARCHIVES**

By Carol Skinner

### **DANNY GRECCO**

Part II

In the fall of 1923, Danny signed with a company for six months and shipped out to China with 28 surplus training ships. The effort was organized by a group of prominent Chinese merchants from the west coast who were making a gift of the airplanes to their homeland to train young Chinese pilots at the Canton School of Aviation. The group from the U.S. consisted of four pilots, four mechanics and two interpreters.

Danny's job was to assemble the aircraft and serve as chief mechanic. He returned to the U.S. in the spring of 1924 and joined Tex Rankin, whom he had met in Pendleton in 1919 when both he and Tex were barnstorming up and down the west coast. They attracted people to the flying field where they sold airplane rides by wing walking and parachuting. The rides sold for as low as \$2 a ride and sometimes for one cent a pound. Things were pretty tough in those days, according to Danny.

In 1925, Danny became Tex Rankin's chief mechanic, a position he held for nine years. At that time Tex had a flying school at Mock's Bottom next to what is now Swan Island. Aviation was starting to take hold with the public but it was only after Charles Lindbergh's flight to Paris that aviation really blossomed all over the world. In 1927, Charles Lindbergh brought his 'Spirit of St. Louis' to Portland and Danny was given the responsibility of servicing it. He had come a long way from the little boy who launched his homebuilt hot air balloon.

The following is taken from a short feature in a Portland newspaper, probably sometime in the middle to late 1920s. The headline reads "Live Turkey Shower Planned at Beach." The article goes on to say,

Among the unusual features being planned for the Sunday and Labor Day program at Columbia Beach, is

a live turkey shower. The birds will be taken up by Danny Grecco, stunt aviator. With parachutes attached, after the manner of balloonists, the birds will be dropped from the plane and are expected to sail gracefully right into the arms of expectant watchers at the Beach. Grecco maintains that his aim is unerring and he will be able to land every bird on the island in good shape for 'Thanksgiving dinners of lucky finders.'

However, the event never happened, as Danny was threatened with arrest by the president of the Oregon Humane Society. The park management decided it would be best to cancel the turkey drop even though Danny insisted that the birds could fly and would be harnessed in miniature parachutes.

In Danny's taped interview, he relates how the CAA

(forerunner of the FAA) did their best to catch Oregon pilots flying without a CAA license. In 1920, Oregon was one of only two states that issued its own pilot and aircraft licenses. As long as Oregon pilots stayed within the state they didn't need a CAA license, according to the State of Oregon.

In 1929, the CAA sent an

inspector by the name of Wiley Wright to Oregon to check out a flying school operated by Ed Ball and Swede Ralston at Hillsboro.

The local newspaper headline read, "New Air Cop Assigned to Investigate This Area." The pilots got wind of Wright's efforts to ground them for not having CAA licenses and when he went to Bernard Field, he was "taken by the nap of the neck by George Yates" and told to get off the field. This was the beginning of

the federal government challenging Oregon's licensing of its pilots and airplanes. This meant any suits brought against Oregon pilots had to be defended by the state attorney general. Oregon pilots continued to fly with their state licenses until the start of World War II.

Wright later went to Tex Rankin's flying school and informed Danny, Tex's chief mechanic, that the wires on the school's recently acquired Waco 10s were



*Danny Grecco, age 24. (OAHS Collection)*

rigged too tight. Tex had rigged airplanes while in the service during World War I and told Danny just how

at Swan Island.

To try to prove his point on the incorrect rigging of the Waco 10s, Wright damaged the struts. Rankin reported him to the region director who held a hearing that proved Wright wrong and he was told to pay for the damage. He was soon transferred out of this region for assuming more authority than he actually had.

Danny Grecco was still flying at the age of 76 but long before had given up barnstorming and stunting at the request of his wife, Genevieve. However, he never gave up his love of aviation.

Danny died in Portland at the age of 86, one of Oregon's premier aviation pioneers.



*Danny Grecco, 1978. (OAHS Collection)*

they were to be done. Wright said he also had violations again Tex, who performed for the public each Sunday

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## Chipmunk Query

**From DH Chipmunk researcher Bill Fisher comes an inquiry concerning an Oregon example.**

During my research into the DHC-1 Chipmunk I have found a problem with N112BW which was, according to the FAA, first registered to William C. Warren, 735 Palm Street, Medford, OR 97501 in January 1980. They show no earlier registration date. At that time the FAA called it a Warren DHC-1 Chipmunk and quoted a c/n of 5-176. This is not a Chipmunk c/n. The only photo that I have is this one (*above*); it was taken at Evergreen Airfield, Washington in August 1974 according to the source ! The aircraft is either a DHC-1B-2S3 or a DHC-1B-2S5, so the 5 part could come from the latter. DHC changed their c/n's as 63 was initially 101 (possibly to denote a bubble canopy) so 176 could be either 138/176 or 176/214. 138/176 was CF-CXH which was damaged in a hangar fire at Lakehead Airport, Fort William, Ontario on 29/11/57 and deleted from the register 16/12/58, which does not seem very likely. 176/214 is RCAF 18038, sold as CF-BNB and current as N58038. I have seen that aircraft myself. There are no other -2S3 or -2S5 aircraft that are unidentified - which means my records are wrong ! William C. Warren



still resides at 735 Palm Street, has an unlisted phone number, and does not reply to correspondence. For that reason I need to find somebody who can talk to him face to face and try to establish :

- > a) When did he purchase the airframe that became N112BW
- > b) Where did it come from and was it complete and flying, complete but less engine ( it has been fitted with a Ranger ), dismantled but with all major parts or damaged either by fire or accident.
- > c) Did it carry any identity.
- > d) If not, and it came from Canada, was it silver (which implies it was probably Canadian civil) or yellow, (which implies it was ex-military).
- > e) When did it first fly (the photo date may be incorrect)
- > f) Does he have any photos of the aircraft under conversion, or complete and if so could I purchase 7 x 5 glossy

copies for my files ?

N 112BW forms a very small part of the Oregon aviation history and it would be nice to get it correctly recorded. If you can help I would be more than grateful.

Bill Fisher,  
billfisher@enterprise.net

Chipmunk Historian for Air-Britain and the DHC-1 Chipmunk Club;  
Author of *Chipmunk: the First 40 Years* and *Chipmunk: the First 50 Years*

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The Society still has a wish list - please review and see if you can help!

***Small Milling Machine - Shop Cabinets - 6" Toolbox/Rollaway - Solvent Spray Gun - Drop Work Lights (2)***

***Metal Shear Metal Brake - English Wheel (or kit) - Variable-speed Bandsaw - Infocus-type Projector -***

***Die Grinder - CD Player - Digital Camera - DVD Player - Metal Shelving Units***

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