



Volume 19, Issue 2

# OREGON AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

July 2010

## 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.

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.

## "TEX"

By Carol Skinner

John Trtek is an artist, an OAHS member and a supporter of the Oregon Aviation Historical Society. He lives in Concord, California but his heart is in Oregon, namely at the Oregon Aviation History Center.

John has donated a 40"x30" oil painting of Tex Rankin flying his Great Lakes 315Y over Sauvie Island, near Portland. This airplane was returned to Oregon from Pennsylvania a few years ago after OAHS Board Member Tim Talen saw it advertised for sale in an aviation publication. Tim, an award winning antique aircraft restorer, and a few volunteers, have returned the airplane to the configuration it was when Tex Rankin flew it in his air shows and it resides at the Aviation History Center. However, a lack for funds has put the completion of the restoration on hold.

In 1930, the Great Lakes Aircraft Corporation and the Cirrus Motor Company gave the airplane to 20-year old Dorothy Hester, of Milwaukie, Oregon, who flew it in her record setting aerobatic routines. In 1934 Dorothy sold the airplane to a pilot in Montana before Tex acquired it a few years later. Tex made several modifications to the airplane, including the installation of a Menasco engine, which is the same kind of engine in the OAHS restoration.



Now, OAHS is offering 18"x24" limited edition prints of the painting for sale. Signed and numbered by the artist, they are available on either paper at \$195.00, or canvas at \$245.00, plus shipping and handling. This is an opportunity to acquire an excellent painting of an historically significant airplane that was owned and flown by the first two inductees into the Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame, Dorothy Hester and Tex Rankin.

Anyone interested in acquiring one of these paintings should contact OAHS at [oregonaviation.org](http://oregonaviation.org) for further information.

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## RANDOM FLIGHT

By Roger Starr

The Hedberg Resource Library in our History Center has a great number of books relating the history of aviation. However, there are not very many that deal with Oregon's rich aviation heritage. Lorraine Troh Gabel of Independence, Oregon has bolstered that number by one. And a great one it is.



Lorraine is the daughter of Henry (Hank) and Ruth Troh, both pioneers in bringing aviation to the east side of Portland and beyond. Lorraine grew up in the cockpit of numerous small aircraft and became a licensed pilot. Ruth claimed that her daughter's first flight was at age two weeks. Her father claimed it occurred several times before her birth! In either case Lorraine is certainly eminently qualified to compile the story of her family and in particular her father's contribution to aviation.

*Troh's Air Taxi* recounts the many adventures and achievements of Hank Troh from the early 1930's until his death in 1968. His first aircraft was a 1931 CK Bird manufactured by Bird Aircraft Corporation of Long Island New York. Hank purchased the Bird four day before he and Ruth were married. That was one way to ensure that it became part of the family from the start! Hank used the Bird for competition, barnstorming up and down the Willamette Valley as well as instruction.

From the mid 1930's until he died, Hank developed and operated three airfields east of Portland where he provided the full spectrum of aviation services. The war years took him from Portland as a civilian flight instructor to Tex Rankin's Flight Academy in Tulare, California. Judging by the numerous correspondences and awards Hank received, it is obvious that he had a tremendous impact on both civilian and military students. He instilled a love of flying and stressed safety.



Hank inherited the innovative genes from his ancestors. Examples include attaching a single cylinder engine to a bicycle for transportation at Tulare, devising a stretcher to transport patients in small aircraft and producing a moving map machine.

We are indebted to Lorraine for organizing the accumulated memorabilia and publishing this book so that others can appreciate the life and times of one of our early pioneers in aviation. In order to understand the phrase a "\$100,000 Airport to Serve You", contact the Society to purchase your copy of *Troh's Air Taxi* for only \$20 plus \$3 shipping. Enjoy. (2009, 358 pages, soft cover)

*Note: Evelyn Burleson lived and flight instructed in Albany for a time. She was the only female commercial pilot to fly on the 1939 Oregon Air Tour.*

*The following is her account of her border to border solo non-stop flight in 1941.*

### THREE FLAG VACATION

BY Evelyn N. Burleson

Do you have a secret ambition to make an unusual flight? A non-stop distance record, a speed, endurance or altitude record? I believe nearly every pilot has let his thoughts stray in that direction. A few of us fulfill that ambition, many do not. Most of us dismiss it with a shrug and say to ourselves, "Oh well, there's nothing to be gained by it—it's too expensive—I haven't the time." But when we read of a new Earhart, Corrigan or Cochran, we experience a little feeling of envy and the ambition returns for the moment.

That's the way it was with me. When Elinor Smith, Bobbie Trout and Louise Thaden were setting endurance records back in 1929, I longed to join in the fun. But, unfortunately, I had very little flying experience, less money and no airplane, so that sort of thing was out of the question. Later, Amelia Earhart flew the Atlantic, solo.

"Gee," I thought, "I'd like to trade places with her. She's the luckiest person in aviation."

As the years passed the ambition for that kind of flying wore off. Came a transport pilot's license, now known as a commercial pilot's certificate. Came passenger hopping, student instructing, charter and finally the Civilian Pilot Training Program. Those things were interesting and worthwhile. They compensated for earlier disappointments.

This summer, after having instructed 45 students in the first four CPTP's, I found myself with some free time on my hands. How to spend a vacation?

"Why not," I asked myself, "make a flight of some kind before you go back to work, and in so doing, get that old secret ambition out of your system?"

The first thing I did was to take my white Lycoming Taylorcraft De Luxe up to Roy Hubert of the Hubert and Dillon Air Service in Tacoma, Washington, and tell him: "I would like you to equip this ship with tanks to carry sufficient gas to fly non-stop from Canada to Mexico."



Burleson with her class

Was he pleased about it? Not exactly. He took a look at the airplane and at me and groaned. His approved repair shop was swamped with work. People were daily clamoring to bring in more airplanes for motor majors, periodic inspections, repair jobs and the like. School operators had to have their ships out at a specific time. The shop was filled to capacity, and here to add to the work was a gal with a yen to fly someplace! However, after some persuasion, Hubert took the assignment. He and his mechanics worked on the ship in their spare time. Mostly at night. They did a fine job. The ship was polished until it fairly glistened, a blue stripe was added to the red one that already decorated the fuselage and wings and a sign painter put the desired emblem of the Statue of Liberty on the sides of the fuselage and the name "Miss Liberty" on the cowling.

Then came the planning. How much gas will it take and where will we put it? The distance from Vancou-

ver, B.C. to Tijuana, Mexico, was at least 1500 miles, possibly farther, over the course I was to fly. It would be a contact flight, with no radio on which to follow the beam, therefore I couldn't go as the crow flies. I would follow the safest course, through the valleys. Figuring conservatively, a speed of 75 m.p.h. would take 20 hours. Also figuring conservatively on gasoline, the motor would use 4 gallons per hour. It usually operated on a little more than three, but we took into consideration the gas ordinarily saved on glides to landings. So, it was decided to make the tanks large enough to hold 80 gallons of gasoline. How much would that weigh? Four hundred and eight pounds. Wow! Then there would be the weight of the tanks themselves, the parachute about 22 pounds, the extra oil and the pilot, not to mention incidentals such as wobble pumps and the dump valve.

When I presented these figures to the CAA Inspector who was put the NX on the airplane, he scratched his head and figured.

"Well," he said, "your airplane will be overloaded about 300 pounds. That's an awful lot--." He tried to discourage my making the flight, to no avail. When he found he couldn't change my mind, he promised me all the help he could give and explained that, of course, his only interest in the flight was to make sure that it would be made with the highest degree of safety. A flight of this kind, if it is not completed safely, does no good for anyone and none of the aviation industry in particular.

Roy Hubert designed an odd-shaped 49 gallon tank that would go in through the door and rest partly on the seat and partly on the floor. A 19 gallon tank was installed in the baggage compartment. The regular fuselage tank in the nose brought the total gallons up to eighty. The tanks were constructed of black iron and had baffle plates all through them, to prevent the gasoline from splashing. Hubert spent evening after evening at the shop, welding the seams and rivet holes in these tanks. He tested them thoroughly for leaks before he installed them.

No changes had to be made in the ship to accommodate the extra gas tanks. When the tanks are removed, the ship will be back to normal and there was little expense involved in restoring the NC certification.

Two wobble pumps were improvised to transfer the gas from the auxiliary tanks to the regular fuselage tank. One was mounted near the door and the other directly ahead of the pilot's seat. Both were within easy reach and both operated from either tank. I could use either of them, or both, but the second pump was there as a spare, in case one should fail. A shut-off valve determined which tank the gas would be drawn from.

An extra oil tank was designed to fit under the cowling, on the same level with the crankcase. The oil in the crankcase and in the extra tank kept themselves equalized. The filler spout for the oil was within handy reach inside the cabin of the ship. An accurate measuring stick showed exactly how much oil was needed.

A three-fourths inch dump valve was provided for the 49 gallon tank. This would release about 20 gallons of gas per minute. It was not expected that I would have to use this dump valve but it was a gratifying feeling to know it was there.

After the installation was completed, a "CG" test was run on the ship. She balanced up beautifully! I believe Mr. Hubert told me that the center of gravity was only an inch off the original CG.

The day arrived for the test flight! Permission was obtained from the U.S. Army to use McChord Field, near Tacoma, for the test, as the field has a 6000 foot paved runway. I took off from Mueller Harkins Field with about half the load of gas and hopped over to McChord. The control tower gave me a green light. It was thrilling to land my pint-sized plane on the enormous field and taxi up to the line of huge Army bombers. Officers gathered around "Miss Liberty" and peered inside. One asked: "Where is your radio?" I re-

plied that I wouldn't be equipped with a radio. Then he asked in amazement: "Are these ALL your instruments?" He was much surprised to think I would start out with only an airspeed indicator, compass, bank indicator, altimeter, tachometer and oil pressure and temperature gauges.

About that time Hubert arrived with a truck and filled "Miss Liberty's" gas tanks to capacity. The landing gear spread out some and he was glad that he had put heavy shock cord in the landing gear and new tires on the wheels. "Miss Liberty" had been through two CPT programs since she was purchased a year ago and has upward of 600 hours. Hence the necessity for new tires.

An ambulance stood by while I taxied out for take off. The tower gave me the green light and, with a thrill such as I have never experienced before, I pushed open the throttle. I eased the wheel forward into take off position and it stayed there. Not the slightest tail heaviness or nose heaviness was apparent. The only unusual thing I noticed was a slight tendency for the ship to veer left or right. "Miss Liberty" got off in an easy 1000 foot run. Her climb surprised me. I held the airspeed at 80, but the little plane gained altitude fast. Then, I turned on the dump valve for 2 minutes, dumping about 40 gallons of gas and headed back for Mueller Harkins Field. The test flight had been a huge success! The next day I headed for Vancouver, B.C., stopping in Seattle enroute to clear customs and bid farewell to a large delegation of 99'ers and Associated Women Pilots of Boeing Field.

The reception at Sea Island airport in Vancouver was friendly and courteous. Everyone was so kind and helpful. It was thrilling to see the yellow RCAF training planes with the red, white and blue bulls-eyes on their sides taking off and landing. There I met RCAF instructor Jimmie McNeece, who hails from Portland, Oregon. He and several other RCAF instructors autographed my gas tanks. A group of Canadian women pilots, the "Flying Seven," who are the equivalent of what the 99'ers are in the United States, took me in tow. With them, I visited their ground school. A theory of flight class of about 60 women were in attendance. Their instructor was in RCAF uniform. The next evening we visited another ground school. This time it was a parachute class. The uniformed instructors, each with a parachute taught the girls the art of packing parachutes. I don't know how many times they packed and repacked their parachutes that evening.

On Wednesday, October 1, the weather was favorable and I decided to take off that day. I had planned the departure for two o'clock in the afternoon. By the time the gas tanks were filled, oil checked, newspaper men took their pictures and the farewell wishes from Flying Seven, RCAF Officers and Vancouver's congenial airport manager, Mr. Templeton, had been completed, it was 2:30. They charged no hangar rent for the two nights I hangared "Miss Liberty" there, no landing fee, and they deducted four cents per gallon from the gasoline, because I was taking it out of the country. That is only an example of the nice treatment I received during my visit there.

The control tower called all the RCAF trainers in out of the air and cleared the runways for the take off. There wasn't a ship in the air when I took off, but I had hardly gone three miles before there were two RCAF trainers on each side of me. They escorted me to the American border at Blaine, Wash.

Bellingham, Washington, passed under me, as did Everett and Seattle. At Tacoma, a plane piloted by Vernon Hubert and carrying a photographer came alongside and took pictures at intervals all the way to Kelso. In less than a half hour later I was over Swan Island airport in Portland, Oregon. About a dozen airplanes came by and wagged their wings in salute. Forty minutes later I was over the airport at Albany, Ore.

Then on to Eugene, Cottage Grove and Roseburg. Near Roseburg, I had to go around a small storm. It was clear at Grants Pass and Medford, but I had an encounter with fog or low hanging clouds a short way south of Ashland that turned out happily enough. Mount Shasta loomed up and finally I was over Redding, California, and the Sacramento Valley. The air was somewhat hazy with 5 to 7 mile visibility, but I could see the beacons all right. The trip over Fresno and Bakersfield was uneventful until I reached Los Ange-

les. There the city was shrouded with a ground fog, as was the coastline down toward San Diego. The sun came up somewhere between Los Angeles and San Diego and the ground fog disappeared like magic.

I had never been south of Sacramento before and was curious as to what kind of scenery I would find in Southern California. It was different than I had pictured it, but it was fascinating. There were brown hills to the east, the blue ocean to the west and beautiful white sandy beaches below me. I saw San Juan Capistrano, Del Mar, Bing Crosby's race track and later San Diego. There I saw palm trees, Spanish style homes and San Diego Bay. On the east side of the bay was a railroad that I followed into Tijuana, Mexico. There was no mistaking Tijuana. At least a dozen driveways led to the customs building. Farther on was the town itself and to the right of it, I found the Agua Caliente race track and bull ring. Directly across the road from the bull ring was the airport. It was hangarless and had three Vought Corsairs standing there. When I landed at 7 a.m. October 2, 1941 I was just 16 ½ hours out of Vancouver. I still had enough

gas on board for 5 or 6 hours flying and had used only one extra quart of oil on the trip. I was met by four Mexican soldiers, carrying rifles. They couldn't speak English and I couldn't speak Spanish. Regardless, I chattered away at them, and they answered me. It was good to have someone to talk to, even though they couldn't understand. The soldiers watched while I took stock of my appearance.

Before I left Vancouver, the Flying Seven has presented me with a pair of knee length woolen stocking and heavy gloves. They feared I would get cold during the night and they were right. These I donned while flying over the Cascades and they felt good at the time. The soldiers watched while I took off my shoes and stocking and changed back into lighter weight anklets.

Just then the reception committee drove up, followed by a huge bus. The reception committee brought an interpreter. The bus driver could also speak English. They were so sorry I had arrived four hours ahead of schedule as they had planned a big reception. They told me the soldiers had been sent out to guard "Miss Liberty" when and if she arrived. This they did and they immediately began dusting out the cabin and washing the entire airplane. She really didn't need washing, but they evidently considered this an act of courtesy and I didn't object.

I accepted the invitation of the bus driver to ride into Tijuana to a hotel. Before going to bed, I sent telegrams to friends. I learned later that the hotel clerk had taken these telegrams across the border and sent them from San Ysidro, California, to save me time and money. This left the impression with some of those receiving the telegrams that I had landed in San Ysidro. After a three hour sleep I was awakened and found newsmen from San Diego waiting for me. There were telegrams from friends up north and a note from the American Vice Consul John A. Calhoun. The newspaper men accompanied the committee and myself to the customs office, where I turned over 11 envelopes to the Mexican authorities. Then we went to the office of Tijuana's Mayor Manuel Quiros, Jr.

Another short nap after luncheon then came an exciting three motorcycle escort to the airport. People lined the sidewalks on the way out and a large crowd had gathered at the field to watch "Miss Liberty's" departure for San Diego. The reception committee made speeches, which were interpreted, and one at a time the soldiers and motorcycle escort saluted and I answered the salute. When I took off the three Mexican fliers took off immediately behind me and escorted me to the American border in a good V formation. They dipped their wings and turned back as I passed over onto the American side. That's how I ended a trip that was both thrilling heart warming.

**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:  
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