

The View From Runway 17-35

BY GEORGE COMTOIS,
*Director of Collections
and Programs, Aviation
Museum of New Hampshire*

First, let me explain the title of this column. From where I currently sit as the Director of Collections and Programs for the Aviation Museum of New Hampshire I have a clear view of Manchester-Boston Regional Airport's runway 17-35. This means I get to see lots of airplanes, of all shapes and sizes, takeoff and land. Thus, the title "View from 17-35."



This brings me to a second matter. A few weeks ago I was hired by the NHAHS Board of Directors to serve as the Society's Director of Collections and Programs. I have had a long and fulfilling career in the museum field beginning in nineteen something-or-other at the New Windsor Cantonment (a Revolutionary War museum on the Hudson River in up-state New York near West Point). Then I wandered into New Hampshire back in 1979 to fill the post of Executive Director at the Manchester Historic Association (MHA), next moving on to the same title in Lexington, Massachusetts at their Historical Society. Most recently I have "landed" here at MHT in this beautifully restored 1937 Terminal Building with the exciting view.

Both my other Director/Curatorships were at organizations with long histories. The MHA began in 1896, and the Lexington Historical Society got started in 1886. The NHAHS, as you know, was born in 1995. So, here, for the first time in my professional life, I have the opportunity to help set the course of a new organization rather than finding myself at the helm of a ship that's been at sea for a century or more. And that's really exciting.

THE Aeronaut

It is pleasant to find a storage room with actual "storage room" and not stuffed to the gunnels with the accumulation of decades of donations, some of which have lost their relevance to the mission of the organization, not to mention some of their parts.

Of course, all museums need things to exhibit if people are going to want to make more than one visit. So, until we acquire a large and varied collection of our own we are going to have to borrow from other organizations and individuals in order to maintain a healthy schedule of changing shows designed to teach people about aviation in general and New Hampshire's aviation history in particular. So, goal number one is to establish a schedule of changing exhibits—professionally designed and installed—which will entertain and educate. Which brings me to the very critical second goal...finding the funding to do this.

Do you remember the Steve Martin bit about how to become a millionaire and not pay any taxes? It goes something like this: First go out and get a million dollars. Second, when the IRS comes knocking on your door asking why you haven't paid your tax bill, simply say, "I forgot." Well, given the importance of and the obvious interest I've seen in the subject of aviation, I don't think finding the money is an unrealistic goal. In fact, I would be dumbfounded if we can not raise the required funds through grants, donations, sales and special projects. The subject is just too exciting and its aficionados too numerous.

The third goal concerns the collections already in hand. Here, we sit in the cat bird's seat given that no one has yet compiled a complete filing and finding system. There are no

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From the Cockpit

“So, that’s why people are excited about the New Hampshire Aviation Historical Society!”

I found myself thinking about the reasons people get involved with NHAHS as I enjoyed our most recent member event where Bob Martens mesmerized the audience with his presentation and analysis of the notorious Lear Jet disappearance from 1996. That same day, the NHAHS recognized Gene Slusser for his unwavering support of our organization. We presented Gene with a beautiful custom built model of the Gee Bee that distinguishes our NHAHS logo. The room was packed with members and guests, pilots and non-flying enthusiasts alike, sharing their passion for aviation. You’ll read more about the event in this issue of the Aeronaut, but I would like to share a couple of personal observations.

I enjoyed the opportunity to connect with friends sharing in conversations about everything from kids to FAA regulations. As I listened to the friendly conversation around me I was impressed by the community that NHAHS members create when we gather for fun, stories and to make sure New Hampshire’s aviation heritage is safely preserved so that it can be studied by future generations. Our “community” has more to do with connecting with others who share our values and interests than it does with aviation. Our events provide the chance to continue teaching and learning.

The NHAHS community will be strengthened this fall, when we work with The Collings Foundation to bring rare (and in one case the only!) and beautiful WWII bombers to Manchester as part of the Wings of Freedom tour. Personally, I can’t wait to see what conversations these important aircraft and their crews spark. As part of the event, NHAHS will be preserving another incredible community as we provide the opportunity for WWII veterans to re-



cord their stories and recollections as part of the Aviation Museum of New Hampshire collection. This is will be a great opportunity to learn directly from the Greatest Generation, and to thank them once again for their service.

Speaking of the museum, I want to take a moment and officially welcome George Comtois, our new Director of Collections and Programs for the Aviation Museum of New Hampshire. With help from George and our volunteers, we look forward to opening the museum on a regular basis later this summer.

I hope that you have enjoyed our past member events, and that you put future events on your calendar.

Remember to bring a friend, and don’t be surprised if you hear them say...

“so, that’s why people are excited about the New Hampshire Aviation Historical Society!”

Jack Ferns

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mistakes to correct—we are completely free to make our own! My hope is that we will do it right from the first, as we have the tools and the time.

The older I get, the more I crave simplicity and directness. I think these three objectives are more than enough to keep us productively busy for the next few years until we, like the other institutions I’ve had the honor to serve, become venerable. But best of all, ours will be the very first foot prints on the beach. And I just love that.

If you have suggestions about your museum, I would love to hear them. Please contact me at (603) 669-4820 or gcomtois@nhahs.org.

Grants Awarded to NHAHS

New Hampshire Aviation Historical Society has recently been awarded two grants:

- The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for establishing files, cross-referencing and creating a database to include aviators, aircraft, aviation and airfields.
- The National Endowment For The Humanities for a preservation assessment of the NHAHS humanities collection.

Member News

Welcome New Members!

Summer 2006

Stephen Taylor	Rochester, NH
Ted Trevor	Moultonborough, NH
Bob Martens	Bridgewater, NH
Leonard Hooker	Meredith, NH
Jake & Barbara Johnson	North Port, FL
Ron Valpey	Concord, NH
Sofia Byrne	Manchester, NH
David Devries	Windham, NH
Laverne & Robert Reid	Burlington, MA
Peter & Joyce Bruckner	Cambridge, MA
Ed Goodin	Tilton, NH
Robert & Cecille Safford	Hillsboro, NH
George & Louise Comtois	Candia, NH

Notice to All Members

The new membership directory is scheduled for October 2006 distribution. If you have any additions or corrections to your listing as it currently appears please mail information no later than September 1, 2006 to:

NHAHS
P.O. BOX 3653
CONCORD, NH 03302

Did You Know?

To become a member, you can visit www.nhahs.org and click "members," or you can fill out the membership form on page 6 of this newsletter and mail it in to us?

Member Event—March 25, 2006

At the Cat 'n Fiddle Restaurant in Concord, NH, retired FAA Safety Program Manager, Bob Martens, presented a riveting program on the Learjet 35 that went missing in New Hampshire on Christmas Eve 1996, thus beginning the longest missing aircraft search in NH state history.

The Executive Committee and Board of Directors also recognized Gene Slusser of Hopkinton, NH for his generous donation to the "campaign to save the 1937 terminal." Mr. Slusser was presented a custom made model of the Gee Bee Model A sport plane that is the logo of NHAHS.

Ed Josephson of Rochester, NH was acknowledged for his years of service as a member of the NHAHS Board of Directors and Paul Jacques of Londonderry, NH was the lucky raffle winner of two round trip tickets anywhere Southwest Airlines flies.



TOP: Dick Ludders, NHAHS Secretary, presents Gee Bee model to Gene Slusser.

CENTER: Bob Martens presents "The Missing Lear" accident review.

BOTTOM: Ed Josephson receives thanks from NHAHS President, Jack Ferns.

ALL PHOTOS BY DAVE BLANCHET



Meet Director Stephen Lord

After serving in the United States Navy, Steve Lord joined Stead Aviation in 1980 as an Avionics Technician while attending New Hampshire College. In addition to his experience as an Avionics Technician, Steve has held senior management positions with



Jet Aviation and Wiggins Airways. Steve became involved with the NHAHS by assisting with the relocation of the archives to the Wiggins Airways facility in 2002.

Recently, Steve assumed the duties as Chair Person for the NHAHS Membership Committee and will be working closely with the other board members to expand the society's membership base.

Currently, Steve is employed by Portland, Oregon based Max-Viz as a Field Sales Manager. Max-Viz is a leading manufacturer of Enhanced Vision Systems (EVS) for business and commercial aircraft. Steve is a private pilot who enjoys flying, skiing, winter hiking, and sailing. He resides in Londonderry with his wife Susan, daughter Allison, and son Eric, a Flight Operations student at Daniel Webster College.

We Appreciate Your Donations

The executive committee and the board of directors of NHAHS would like to recognize the following individuals and businesses who have so generously supported the Campaign to Preserve the 1937 Terminal.

CAMPAIGN GIFTS/PLEDGES

FOUNDER
(\$50,000 OR MORE)
E. A. Slusser

BENEFACTOR
(\$25,000 - \$49,999)
Wiggins Airways

SPONSOR
(\$10,000 - \$14,999)
Hoyle, Tanner & Associates, Inc
Harvey Construction Corp. of NH
Lavallee/Brensinger, P.A.,
Edwards and Kelcey

AIRCRAFT COMMANDER
(\$5,000 - \$9,999)
Jack & Carla Ferns
Patrick Duffy
Hebert & Uchida, PLLC
Dick & Ann Ludders
Joe & Cathy Champagne-Jutras Signs

SENIOR PILOT
(\$2,500 - \$4,999)

FIRST OFFICER
(\$1,500 - \$2,499)

FLIGHT ENGINEER
(\$1,000 - \$1,499)
Barbara Miles
Charles Crathern
Maurice Quirin
Mike Zompetti
Joseph and Catherine Brigham
Dean S. Edmonds Foundation
Vincent & Paulette DeVino

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
(\$500 - \$999)
Charles & Martha Farmer
Robert Hough
Entergy Nuclear/Vermont Yankee
Manchester Aircraft Owners and
Pilots Association

GROUND SUPPORT
(UNDER \$500)
David & Deborah Blanchet

Thank you

...to the following for their donations during 2006 in support of NHAHS:

John & Sally Bowkett
Paul Jacques
Charles & Kathleen Crathern
Philip Labombarde
AIA-NH; Carolyn Isaak,
Executive Director
Cargex Ammon, LP; Angela Sullivan,
Operations Manager
Kenneth Weyler
Dave Thomas
Entergy/Vermont Yankee
Ron & Margaret Brender
New England Section of 99's, Inc.
Eastern New England Chapter 99's, Inc.

Aviation Museum Unveils New Outdoor Sign

Thanks to the generosity of Joe and Cathy Champagne, owners of **Jutras Signs**, the Aviation Museum now has an identity. The Champagnes donated the entire cost of the design, construction and installation of the sign. Thank you Joe and Cathy!!

NHAHS FILE PHOTO



Aero Club of New England Honors Kevin Dillon

The Aero Club of New England recently presented Manchester-Boston Regional Airport Director Kevin Dillon with the NH State Award for 2006. The citation reads "For simultaneously supporting the past and present of New Hampshire aviation through the successful management of the state's modern, air passenger hub and support for the establishment of THE AVIATION MUSEUM OF NH in the airport's 1937 terminal building."

Annually the Aero Club of NE hosts a New England States award night to recognize significant contributions to aviation within each state. Kevin Dillon was nominated by NHAHS Secretary Dick Ludders and the award was presented by NHAHS President Jack Ferns.

Recent past New Hampshire honorees were 2005 Joe Brigham, 2004 Ed Lappies and 2003 Daniel Webster College.

Volunteers?

Members often ask, "How can we help?" There are several rewarding volunteer opportunities available, from working in the Aviation Museum of New Hampshire to "hitting the road" and participating in aviation events...places that your love of aviation would probably take you anyway!

Currently the NHAHS is seeking volunteers who are interested in building membership by working with the Membership Committee. The committee will meet once a month and members will perform administrative duties, assist with mailings, collect data, and plan membership drives and events. Director Steve Lord is in charge of the committee, and he promises the work will be fun and rewarding. According to Steve, "This is an opportunity for members to meet new people who share our passion for aviation and history. We'll have fun, and we'll be helping to preserve New Hampshire's flying history. Some of the events on the horizon are truly amazing...it's not every day that we get to work with the Collings Foundation and bring WWII aircraft to Manchester!"

Anyone with the time and desire to help out can contact Steve Lord at (603) 434-3666.

Mystery Insignia

We need your help!! Can you identify this tiled insignia found in the floor of one of the T-800 buildings, also known as Area C, at Manchester Airport from the era of Grenier Field? The insignia is of a top hat, cane and white gloves done in the colors red, black and white.

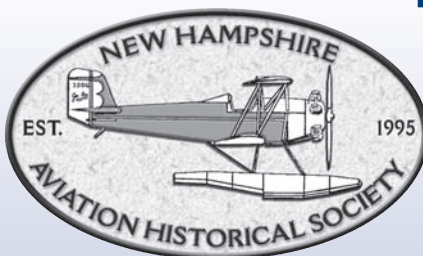


As part of the WWII Exhibit being developed for the museum, we would like to include its origin and history.

The museum is also interested in any photos, posters, letters, postcards or 3-dimensional items relative to Grenier Field. Oral histories of veterans who either worked, trained or passed through Grenier Field are also needed.

If you can help, please e-mail to nhahs@nhahs.org or forward the information to NHAHS, P.O. Box 3653, Concord, NH 03302.

Volunteers Needed to Open "Aviation Museum of NH"



Hopefully you have all had an opportunity to visit the Society's "home" in the beautifully restored 1937 Manchester Airport terminal building. As you know, the Society has a 15 year lease with the Manchester Airport to operate the building as the "Aviation Museum of New Hampshire." Exhibits have been placed inside and more are under development. But it won't really be a museum until it is open to the public on a regular basis. To do that takes PEOPLE and the Society Board of Directors is asking members to let us know when and how much they can help to "staff" the Museum. Formal training will be provided on all procedures. This is a great way to extend the reach of your Society, meet people with an interest in aviation history (like you!) and have some fun time hanging out at the airport! Please contact George Comtois (603) 669-4820 or gcomtois@nhahs.org or Vinny Devino (603) 491-6118 or wnalfred@netscape.net.

Silent Auction Items Needed

As part of this year's annual meeting and banquet the customary raffle will be replaced by the ever popular SILENT AUCTION. The event committee is currently soliciting auction items. If you, your company or any of your associates are able to donate for this fundraiser, remember NHAHS is a 501 (c) 3, non-profit—it's tax deductible. Items need not be solely aviation related. If you can help please contact Carla Ferns at (603) 798-3915 or at jcspringhill@tds.net.

Wings of Freedom to Land in Manchester

BY KENNETH MILES, Director of Operations, Collings Foundation

The Collings Foundation was founded in 1979 by Robert and Caroline Collings in Stow, Massachusetts. The purpose of the Foundation is to organize and support “living history” events that honor the veterans and enable Americans to learn more about their heritage through direct participation.

Since 1989 the major focus of the Foundation’s resources has been the Wings of Freedom Tour. The tour consists of the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and the Consolidated B-24 Liberator visiting more than 120 cities a year. We offer the opportunity for people to get an up close look at the aircraft during walk through tours, \$8 for adults, \$4 for children, as well as the opportunity to take a 30 minute flight

The aircraft then changed hands several times before the Collings Foundation purchased the aircraft in 1986. It was restored to its original wartime configuration by Tom Reilly Vintage Aircraft and started to tour the country in 1987.

Our B-24 #44-44052 “Witchcraft” was built at the Consolidated Aircraft Company’s Fort Worth, Texas plant in August of 1944. Shortly after production, the aircraft was transferred to the Royal Air Force where it saw service in the Pacific Theater. At the end of WWII it was abandoned by the RAF at an aircraft graveyard in Khanpur, India. The Indian Air Force was successful in restoring 36 B-24s to operational status including #44-44052. They utilized the aircraft until 1968. In 1981 the aircraft was recovered from India by a British aircraft collector, then advertised for sale “as is.” The Collings Foundation

purchased the aircraft in 1984 and completed a very thorough restoration where every foot of control cable, hydraulic tubing, and wiring were replaced. The restoration was completed in 1989, and the Wings of Freedom Tour was born.

Since 1989 the B-17 and B-24 have visited more than 2000 cities in 49 states.

Since 1989 the B-17 and B-24 have visited more than 2000 cities in 49 states. It is estimated that 2-3 million people come out to visit the aircraft every year.



experience on the aircraft for a tax deductible donation of \$425 per person.

For the first time we will visit the Aviation Museum of New Hampshire in Manchester, New Hampshire this September. During the three-day stay at MHT, we will honor the local veterans by showcasing two of the most recognizable aircraft of WWII.

The Collings Foundation’s B-17 #44-83575 “Nine-O-Nine” was built by the Douglas Aircraft Company in Long Beach, CA early in 1945. It was produced too late to see combat in WWII and was used in various roles by the US Air Force.



Events Past & Future

Upcoming Events

Eastern New England Chapter 99's Meeting
SATURDAY, JUNE 24, 2006

Hosted by the Aviation Museum

Hoyle-Tanner Associates Client Reception
Northeast Chapter-American Association
of Airport Executives

MONDAY, AUGUST 28, 2006

Hosted by Aviation Museum

"NH Aviation—The WWII Years"

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 thru

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2006

The Collings Foundation B-17 and B-24 visit the Aviation Museum at Manchester/Boston Regional Airport. Aviation Museum's WWII exhibit opens to the public (scheduled hours to be published at a later date)

Annual Meeting and Banquet

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2006

Manchester Country Club

Tour of Manchester Area Museums

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 24, 2006 NOON-5:00 PM

Aviation museum open free of charge as part of "Culture Keepers" tour of Manchester area museums

Thank You

Thanks to Pat Duffy, Dick Ludders, Mike McKendry, George Comtois, Steve Berardo and Jack and Carla Ferns for staffing the NHAHS table at the Daniel Webster College Aviation Expo on Saturday, April 22, 2006.



Dick Ludders and George Comtois "manning" the table at DWC Aviation Expo.

PHOTO BY JACK FERNs

Aviation Museum Exhibit at the Millyard Museum

Friday, April 21, 2006 marked the opening of the "culture keepers" exhibit celebrating the 100th anniversary of the American Museum at the Millyard Museum in Manchester. The Aviation Museum of NH is one of seven area museums participating in this project. The exhibit will run through the end of September 2006 and culminate with the "tour of museums" on Sunday, September 24, 2006. Museums on the tour will offer free admission from noon-5:00pm.



Millyard exhibit — "A flight thru time"
PHOTO BY CARLA FERNs

Aviation Museum Hosts AIA, NH

The New Hampshire Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) held its monthly meeting at the NHAHS museum in Manchester, NH on March 30, 2006. Enthusiastically attended by approximately 50 architects and their guests, the crowd was wowed by a presentation of the relocation of the structure across an active runway – and then enthralled by the architectural and engineering process of the rejuvenation.

Architect Karl McKinster AIA, then of Warrenstreet Architects located in Concord NH (now of Edwards and Kelcey), engineer Dick Ludders of HTA Engineering, and Fred Mock from McFarland Johnson provided visuals and commentary on the entire project. NHAHS board president Jack Ferns rounded out the evening with information about the Society. The evening began with everyone enjoying a spectacular sunset across the runway and behind the current terminal, and ended with all having a new respect for an amazing, old building. A wonderful evening!

Thanks to NHAHS member Phyllis Stibler for suggesting the museum host this catered event.

NHAHS Membership Application

YES! I want to become a member of the New Hampshire Aviation Historical Society!

Please check the appropriate box and enclose your check for dues made payable to the NH Aviation Historical Society.

☐ \$25 Individual

☐ \$100 Gift

☐ \$500 Life Member

☐ \$40 Couple

☐ \$150 Gift

☐ \$500 Corporate (annually)

☐ \$50 Family

☐ \$200 gift

☐ Other _____

All memberships & gifts are tax deductible.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Special interests _____

MAIL THIS FORM & PAYMENT TO:

NHAHS

PO BOX 3653 • CONCORD, NH 03302-3653

EMAIL: nhahs@nhahs.org

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The Gee Bee Model A Sport Plane (pictured in the society's logo) was the first plane built by the Granville brothers in Boston, Massachusetts. They built nine in Springfield, Massachusetts, followed by a series of sportsters (monoplanes) and finally leading to the famous Gee Bee supersporter racers, one of which established a new world land-air speed record. It was flown by James Doolittle.

Concord, NH 03302-3653
PO Box 3653

