

Welcome to

# FLIGHTLINE

Newsletter of the American Aviation Historical Society

No. 26-01

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## Welcome to 2026. What's in it for AAHS?

The short answer is that it's too early to tell. There is action on several fronts, but how it'll all shake out remains to be seen. The following are the editor's personal observations and opinions. They do not represent a statement by or the official position of the American Aviation Historical Society.

Looking first at the "what we know" parts, the people in the wheelhouse, or on the flight deck, to go with an aeronautical metaphor, remain unchanged. CEO Jerri Bergen and President Tyson Smith will remain in those positions. Within the support echelon, a replacement must be found for long-time AAHS and Board of Directors member John Lyon, whose declining health prevents further service to the Society. *FlightLine* editor Joe Martin (yours truly) will take John's place as Society Secretary. Howard Butcher has also stepped away from the BoD to support his wife as she fights through her health issues. Treasurer Les Whittlesey, Carl Scholl, Michael Mau, Caroline Mah, and Tim Williams (AAHS Prez, 1991-2000) remain in their BoD spots. The bylaws allow for additional BoD members, so a search for prospective candidates may be on the 2026 agenda.

*AAHS Journal* editor and one-man IT department Hayden Hamilton continues his invaluable efforts in both areas. Adam Estes, whose work frequently appears in *Vintage Aviation News*, has signed on as associate editor. Other commitments have forced Steve Johnston to throttle back his involvement.

Which brings us to what we see as AAHS's most critical concern. We think it's accurate to say that to 95% or more of the membership, the *Journal* is AAHS. It's why they sign up—and hopefully re-up. As those folks well know, the *Journal* is chronically 90 days or so behind our desired publication schedule. The reason for that has been explained numerous times, most recently in Jerri's message in the Fall 2025 *Journal*. But those repeated pleas have had no discernable effect. The flow of material for publication, never a raging torrent, is now barely a trickle. AAHS will continue to produce a print *Journal* as long as possible, but it's a struggle that gets more difficult with every edition. If the publication gap widens even further or, in a worst case scenario, there's no longer a print *Journal* at all, how would that affect AAHS? It's an issue we have to face, and soon.

*FlightLine* can continue with only moderate effort and requires no external input. But "the face of AAHS" it is not. Thanks to the efforts of Office Manager Charlie Shaw and volunteer Heather Wilson, AAHS has established (and maintains) a considerable Social Media presence. (Facebook and Instagram accounts—check 'em out.) The impact of Social Media on general public awareness of AAHS and our mission is hard to measure, but it can't help but be positive. Elsewhere in cyberspace, a primary objective of the Society for 2026 is a major overhaul of the AAHS website, <https://www.aaahs-online.org>, including the long-awaited "blog" platform for *FlightLine* and other enhancements. Hopes are to have this done by mid-year.

Previous *FlightLine* numbers have lightly covered the ongoing construction/renovation of the AAHS office at Flabob Airport. There has been much more to it than we've reported, and not all of it has gone smoothly. As of this writing the building contents, except for the climate-controlled "vault" holding the Society's crown jewels, have been removed so that the interior can be completely revamped. Four 40 ft. cargo containers, with internal lighting and a/c, are in place behind the office building. The ultimate office configuration has not been finalized and as yet there is no estimate of completion date, but the result will no doubt be a much enhanced environment for the conducting of AAHS business. All this is being financed by a benefactor who for now will remain anonymous.

Meanwhile, day-to-day operations are very much in *ad hoc* mode, but regular meetings of the "HQ crew" and twice-monthly Zoom conferences continue to be held. The office phone and all email accounts remain active and monitored. Among the HQ Crew regulars are Collections Manager Bob Palazzola and volunteer Heather (already mentioned), who strive mightily to evaluate and catalog the many and varied aviation history collections that AAHS continues to receive. One of the most successful AAHS efforts is the eBay "sales department" run by volunteer Julie Oppen. The library shelves are being thinned, and sales of duplicate books bring in around \$250 a month. Other income is derived from book and "merch" sales at airshows AAHS attends. (Five during 2025.) Klara Smith handles the accounting chores as well as membership liaison. Steered remotely (from the Seattle area) by volunteer Matt Miller, the *Plane Spotter* project has made good progress, but many slides remain to be identified. We're looking at trying to harness AI to assist. That one will be interesting!

In summary, 2026 shapes up as a make or break year for AAHS. Coincidentally, it's our 70th anniversary. We're planning a celebration in the fall, so stay tuned for more on that. In the good news column, the organization is on sound financial footing, thanks to some very generous donations, and the HQ crew are looking forward to getting back to work in their renovated home. On the downside, membership numbers have declined over the past few years, and we need to do a better job of attracting newcomers and retaining old timers. But the fact is that less than a dozen people—most days way less—are keeping AAHS going. There simply aren't enough hands to tend to all the buttons and levers that have to be pushed and pulled, so things are put on hold and good ideas never get implemented. We'll "keep on keepin' on" as best we can, but we could use some help.

So for this first newsletter of 2026, here's the same message that closed out 2025: Share your ideas, gripes, or suggestions with any of the AAHS team. Go to <https://www.aaahs-online.org/about/contact.php> and select your target. Alternatively, ping us here at *FlightLine* [FlightLine@aaahs-online.org](mailto:FlightLine@aaahs-online.org). We'll see that your message gets into the proper hands. →

Joe Martin  
AAHS Newsletter Editor

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As stated in previous numbers, we're no longer attempting to produce *FlightLine* on the first and fifteenth of each month. The intent was and remains to transition to an online "blog" format but as noted in the lead-off editorial the disruptions of the past year have pushed that and much else to the back burner. Meanwhile, we'll continue in this "pseudo-blog" format.

In this number, we'll go with a teaser for an upcoming *Journal* article about one-time ATSC pilot Karl Baur and his involvement in Operation PAPERCLIP, the "importation" of German scientists to the U.S. after VE Day. In Baur's case, it was the collection of the latest German aircraft by the USAAF team known as "Watson's Whizzers" and the testing and exhibition of those jets at Freeman Field, Indiana, and other locations in late 1945. The *Journal* should be in your mailbox not long after you read this.

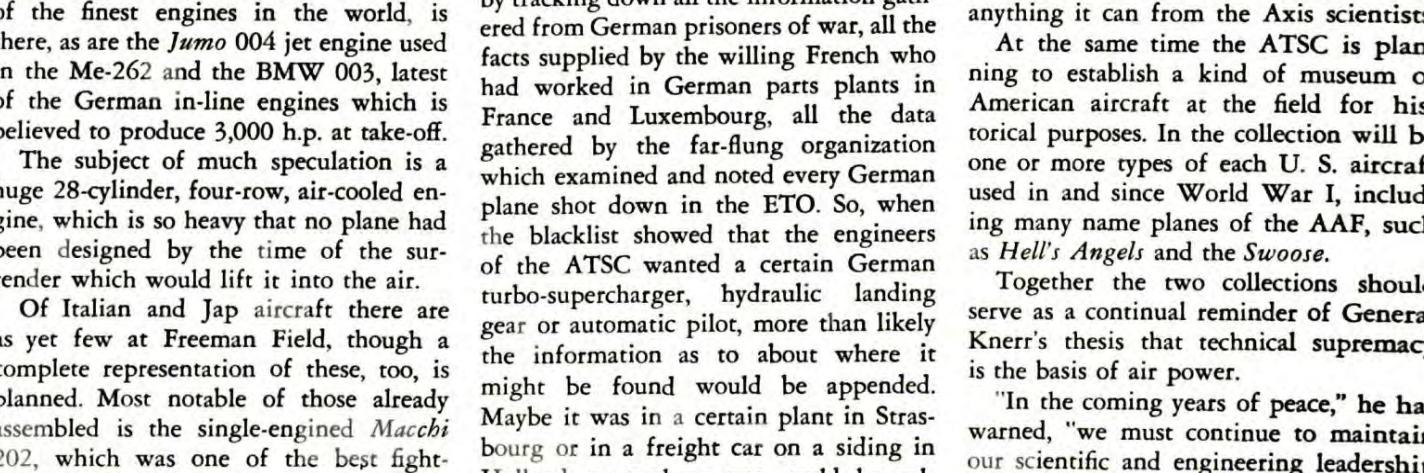
Baur's exploits while in American service more properly fell under another project called "Lusty"—an acronym for LUftwaffe Secret TechnologY. A pair of those specimens, the Me-262 and Arado Ar-234, are today well known stars in the National Air and Space Museum's galaxy. Sadly, others were scrapped before they could be saved as museum pieces. AAHS members can view a great three-part series, "ATC and Operation Lusty" that appeared in the 1995 *AAHS Journal*. Seventy years of aviation history are in that archive—another reason to join AAHS!

As we dusted off a couple of our books relating to LUSTY and the German jets, we were curious about what was printed about them at the time. We found a very interesting article in the November 1945 edition of *U.S. Air Service* magazine. It's surprisingly detailed, so we clipped it. Here 'tis.

26

November, 1945

### U. S. AIR SERVICES



## Freeman Field: Aircraft Morgue

### Enemy Aircraft Prove Necessity of Continued U. S. Research and Development

CIVILIANS MAY BE INCLINED TO UNDERESTIMATE THE technical ability of German aeronautical engineers. Not so the Army Air Technical Service Command. At the beginning of the war German aircraft design and manufacture were superior to the best of Allied scientists and engineers, and the ATSC knew it.

In an effort to know its enemy and to learn from it, the ATSC began early to collect captured enemy equipment as best it could, to study and evaluate it. All this equipment has recently been transferred to the newly activated Freeman Field in Indiana, where, in the words of Maj. Gen. Hugh J. Knerr, Commanding General of ATSC, it serves as a living memorial "of the long and difficult race which the AAF and the RAF were forced to undertake to catch up with and finally surpass German research and engineering achievements."

Airplanes, engines, engine accessories, instruments, armament, radar equipment and photographic devices—all have been brought to Freeman Field for evaluation, and all were on display at a national press conference held at the field on September 29 and 30.

The collection of German aircraft bears ample testimony to the Germans' ability to design entirely new types of

aircraft, as the *Jumo 004* jet engine used in the Me-262 and the BMW 003, latest

of the German in-line engines, which

was the first jet engine in the world.

With the liquid rocket unit similar to that used in the Me-163 and having a wing area of only 1,250 square feet, the plane can climb to more than 37,000 feet in about 625 m.p.h. at 16,000 feet. At full power it will fly for 80 seconds. Its armament was to be 24 7.92-cal. rocket projectiles in the Me-163, which had close range.

Unlike the Me-163, which had close range,

it was heavily protected in the cockpit.

Getting a headstart in this country, jet-propelled aircraft, too, the Germans

designed and built the *Heinkel He 162*,

which was the first jet fighter in the world.

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