



AAHS FLIGHTLINE

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American Aviation Historical Society

Established 1956



Those Secret Drones in the Desert

by Tom Butz

Lockheed-Martin photo

It was a Saturday tour of the Davis-Monthan “boneyard” in late 1976. Our guide that time was a somewhat disgruntled Rhino pilot who could no longer fly and was delegated to be the bus driver/guide for the AAHS people. Had something to do with his status as a POW or something about the Greater Southeast Asian War Games.

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At one point he asked us if we wanted to “see the drones.” Thinking them to be Firebees or older types, no one was greatly interested. But a couple of us had done some research and were fascinated by some of the “special duty” BQM-34's, etc., that we had seen one time at Edwards, camouflaged and with many mission markings on them, so we persuaded the disinterested parties (mainly Danes and Brits who wanted to run up and down rows upon rows of aircraft recording their tail numbers) to go do their thing while the rest of us went with the Major to see the drones.

When we came over the small hill and saw this little depression containing a number of canvas covered objects, and a few of small aircraft that looked for all the world like a collection of “Batplanes” (all black, with bright red trim), we became very intrigued as none of us had any inkling of what they were—except two guys in the back who were keeping their mouths shut.

Turned out they were two USAF guys who had been there the day these birds came in on a couple of C-5's and

assisted in unloading them. From their final conversation we could determine that they had come in a couple of days after the last of our aircraft were pulled out of Thailand (in roughly August of 1976).

Anyway, the Major parked the bus, opened the door and told us to have at it and he expected us back aboard the bus in thirty minutes. As we walked among these beauties, with no interference from anyone, we could see that they looked very similar to, and had the “rough” finish of the Blackbirds some of us had seen at earlier Edwards events. The more we looked at them the more convinced we were that they were Lockheed products, probably via the Skunk Works.

Finally some of us got brave and crawled underneath them, and much to our surprise we could look up into an open access hatch under the nose that looked very much like a camera or other data gathering type aperture. Inside the “bay” there was some paperwork, and as best I can recollect (and I am really quite sure of this although I didn't have anything to write it down on) there was

the plastic info bag that all aircraft have with what looked like a T-1 sheet inside, and on it there was

Lockheed GTD-21B

Serial No. -----

Contractor No. -----

and then a bunch of other writing. The entire sheet was signed off on August ---, 1976, by S/Sgt. Garcia, Norton AFB.

In all of the “official” stories I have heard about the GTD-21B, these drones were supposed to be in storage in Palmdale before they came to DM, but why transship through Norton, and what about the coincidence with the withdrawal dates from Thailand ? . . . but that’s merely speculation on my part.



Anyhow, we proceeded to click away. I got the slides developed and had some copies printed. Now it gets interesting. I sent some of the copies to *Air International* (I think that was its name back then) over in England with a short write-up and raising the question—does anyone know anything about these drones?

They printed the pictures and my letter in one of the Letters to the Editor sections of their magazine a couple of months later, with the speculation that they sure looked like products of Lockheed’s Skunk Works, but nothing was definite.

The sidebar is that I was living in Redlands, Calif., at the time. Redlands is just a few miles from Norton AFB and many of the workers on the base lived in Redlands. Four or five of them were members of my church. What a lot of people don’t know to this day is that much of the logistic support for the SR-71 program was provided through a detachment—you guessed it—that was housed at Norton AFB.

Most of the guys I knew that worked on the base were attached as civil servants to that detachment, so I had three very close friends who were well acquainted with the Blackbird, and at least one of them was quite often “out-of-the-country” either in England or Okinawa. But back in those days no one talked about where he went, what he did, or even recognized the existence of that detachment from Beale.

Back to the drones—knowing some of these guys quite well I showed them my pictures and asked if they had any idea of what they were. Talk about poker faces and blank looks! None of them would admit that these things even existed, and would not answer any questions. Now another member of my church was an FBI agent who was a part of a counter-intelligence group and at a party one night he came up to me, and said very

few words, but I will always remember them: “Stop asking questions.” So, somehow I had rattled a few cages.



Not wanting to give up that easily and being the stubborn German extract that I am, I took some of the pictures and put them in the window of a local San Bernardino hobby shop. A couple of weeks after I put them there I went to see if anyone had any comments. The worker in the shop that I knew pretty well, a fellow modeler and member of IPMS, “Big Bad Bill,” told me that he had lost the pictures to a couple of USAF types who came in, flashed their OSI cards and demanded to know where he got them. He was able to come up with a believable story without revealing my name or whereabouts, so they just confiscated the pictures and disappeared, never to be heard from again.



On another tour at DM, I asked to see the drones and this driver gave the classic reply: “What drones?” So they obviously had been put back on some sort of classified list. On one of my last tours, probably in the mid-1980’s, I asked to see them again, and got the same blank stare and question: “What drones?”

Today, most of their history is known—at least the parts that anyone will admit to. According to the “official” story they were a colossal flop; no pictures recovered, no drones brought back, etc. Supposedly 32 of these craft were built. One or two were lost in testing, and one was lost in the tragic collision with the M-21. Three were expended on over flights of Lop Nor in China. Between the info that’s been released and the fact that there were only 17 when I first saw them at DM, leaves nine GTD-21B’s unaccounted for. Maybe the facts will come out in another thirty years, but I won’t be holding my breath—after all I’m 70 now! Meanwhile, here’s a rambling but somewhat interesting story from an old aviation aficionado who’s been into strange aircraft for a long, long time. ➔

CEO's Message

As we close the Huntington Beach office, a cost saving measure, and consolidate the Society's assets at Flabob, we have to take a serious look at our holdings. What material is useful? What is duplicated? And the tough question, what material will be of most value to our members? Addressing these issues will allow us to make better use of our resources and to find new homes for material we can't use.

With space limitations, what should AAHS be preserving, as part of our mission, and what can we pare away? We also need to consider how technology has changed the way we access information. Historically, our members have accumulated personal files of magazine clippings on subjects of interest. Today, much of this is now stored digitally on our personal computers, or is easily found through searches on the Internet. Should Society keep and store multiple file cabinets of magazine clippings that we have accumulated over the years?

With due diligence, we've been taking a hard look at exactly what IS in our file cabinets, and realize that we need to be smarter about what we hang on to. For example, the AAHS periodical collection includes all the published *Air Trails* magazines (with its various titles) from 1937-1955. Similarly, we also have file folders with many clippings from *Air Trails* publications, sorted by a particular airplane manufacturer or model. It's a straightforward decision to keep the *Air Trails* magazine collection, and jettison the clippings. Using this approach, we can downsize a couple of bankers boxes of information. .

But how to tackle the other 90% of paper materials we have? Taking advantage of current technology, we've been sampling the kinds of materials we have on hand versus what could be found digitally, via Google, library database subscription services, CD collections, etc.

We've found much of the information in our paper files is available digitally, and more is becoming available all the time. Internet data is only as reliable as the owner of the website, however. And digital information has its own storage issues. While we won't solve all our storage issues overnight, the AAHS will continue to retain older, original publications as we look to digitally store other material that is important to our collection. We are also committed to acquiring access to reputable online information services, to better assist members in researching aviation history topics.

Have some ideas or suggestions to support our mission of aviation history preservation? Let us know at prez@aahs-online.org!

Jerri

Jerri Bergen
AAHS CEO

Updated AAHS Contact Info

Effective 30 September 2023 AAHS Headquarters will relocate to Flabob Airport

**4130 Mennes Ave., Bldg. 56
Riverside, CA 92509**

NOTE: Do **NOT** send mail to the physical address! Use the USPS P.O. Box below:

**P.O. Box 483
Riverside, CA 92502**

Email addresses will remain unchanged. Flabob telephone: (951) 777-1332

Show Time !

*March Air Reserve Base
22 & 23 April 2023*



On The Road With AAHS

(Above) The USAF Thunderbirds four-ship diamond, with Moreno Valley's "M" in the background north of the base.

(Below) AAHS set up shop in the exhibitors area next to CEO Jerri's Victory Girl tent.





(Above L) Charlie Shaw answers questions. AAHS Volunteers Bianca Garfunkle and Howard Butcher also helped run the book booth, which rang up over \$600 in sales. (C) Jerri Bergen chats with “Eduardo,” who spent his lunch money on a book instead! (R) Carl Robinson browses aviation history. According to the March ARB Public Affairs office, an estimated 450,000 people attended the two-day event. On the ramp were 141 aircraft, flying and static, samples of which are shown below.



(Above) A trio of Mustangs. The ones with propellers came from the Palm Springs Air Museum and Planes of Fame Air Museum in Chino. At left is “Bunny” in the red tail markings of the Tuskegee Airmen. On the right is a rare P-51A, “Mrs. Virginia,” replicating the real deal that flew with the 1st Air Commando Squadron in the CBI during World War II.



(L) An F8F Bearcat, another Chino resident, flies with an FA-18 of VFA-121 out of NAS Lemoore. (R) A decked-out F-15 from the Calif, ANG's 194th Fighter Squadron, 144th Fighter Wing. (All aircraft photos by Larry Grace Photography.)

Museum Meanderings

The Palm Springs Air Museum

Whenever we're on the road, if there's an aviation museum anywhere nearby we make it a point to stop, even if it's for only a couple of hours. Palm Springs is a convenient stopping

place on the way to and from LA—and a welcome I-10 stress reliever! There's always something going on, and docents are happy to talk airplanes. [Click](#) to visit the museum's website.



This static display honors the late Brig. Gen. Ken Miles, long-time supporter and benefactor of the museum. Miles flew the F-86 in Korea and later the F-100 in Vietnam. The airplane itself is an unusual specimen. See p.15 for an explanation.



(Above) Many of the museum's aircraft are airworthy. A couple of years ago we dropped by as the C-47 "What's Up Doc" was unbuttoned for a major inspection, offering a seldom seen view of the Gooney Bird.

(Left) The beautiful P-51D "Bunny" (44-74908/N151BP), once a static display item, was restored to flying status then painted in the markings of the aircraft flown by Tuskegee Airman Robert J. Friend in WWII.

Bob Friend went on to serve 28 years in the USAF, retiring as a Lt. Col. He died in 2019 at the ripe old age of 99. (Photos by Joe Martin)



Photo via <https://www.rodbearden.com/>

Restorations and Reproductions

The Granville Brothers Gee Bee R-1

For this number's R&R feature, we go back to the New England Air Museum (NEAM) and their 1:1 scale reproduction of the Granville Brothers R-1 racer, the famous "Gee Bee" in which Jimmy Doolittle won the Thompson Trophy during the 1932 National Air Races.

The museum already had a Laird Solution and a couple of other racing types. A Gee Bee would complete the collection but the one and only original, rebuilt and modified after a 1933 crash, was demolished in another crash two years later. The only way to get a replacement was to build one.

In 1961, the Granville family donated the original Gee Bee plans to the museum—with one stipulation. Because of the challenging handling characteristics of the genuine article, if a reproduction were ever built it could not be flyable. The museum took on the challenge, cutting the first parts in November 1984. The crew worked one night a week in an old WWII building on Bradley Field.

"Re-Production," as the museum's restoration team points out, means exactly that—built from scratch, and as close to the original as it's possible to make it. Howell "Pete" Miller, chief designer on the original, was still very much alive when the project got underway.

Pete would drop by the NEAM facility, look at something, then recall, "Oh yeah, I did draw that. We never built it that way though. Down in the shop, the brothers would say, 'We can't build that,' and they'd build it differently." Miller would

approve the deviations, structurally, but the plans didn't necessarily match the airplane. The museum's Gee Bee was constructed accordingly, guided by Pete Miller's "this is how we did it" inputs.

In 1987, the museum opened a new restoration hanger, where the Gee Bee skeleton was moved in November. By then, 6,500 man-hours had gone into the project. The team spared no effort to ensure authenticity, even making a trip to Maine

to examine Eva Granville's doilies, made from the original Gee Bee fabric, some of which she'd kept. Gordon Agnoli, who did the lettering on the 1932 machine, made sure that part of the job was correct.

There was more. NEAM shop volunteer Tom Palshaw takes up the story: "The R-1 won the 1932 Thompson race with a Smith variable pitch propeller. One

The Smith Controllable Prop



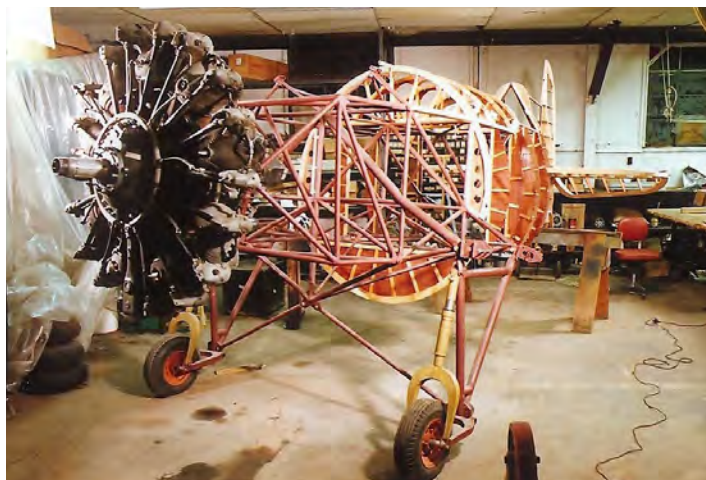
The Smith prop was a Gee Bee innovation. This shot appeared in the Dec. 1932 issue of Popular Aviation. (NASM photo, cropped)

day Harold Smith, the prop maker, visited the museum. After seeing the progress, he said he would get the museum a Smith propeller. He found one in Alaska.”



Bob North “at the controls” in the welded fuselage.

There are four levers on the left side of the cockpit. A museum volunteer asked Harold which one controlled the propeller. ‘None,’ he said. The volunteer then asked, ‘Well, how did you control the propeller?’ Smith answered that there was a T-handle on the instrument panel. The only one he knew of that still existed was in the ‘Winnie Mae’ at the National



A Pratt & Whitney R-1340 powered the R-1.



Two members of the original cast, Gee Bee engineer Howell “Pete” Miller (L) and prop guru Harold Smith made major contributions to the project.

Air and Space Museum. The NEAM got permission to climb into the Winnie Mae to take photos and measurements.”

The finished product, nine years and 13,500 labor hours in the making, was unveiled on June 17, 1993. The celebration was attended by more than 150 invited guests, including members of the Granville family and Pete Miller, Harold Smith, and Gordon Agnoli, whose personal connections with the 1932 original, coupled with the dedicated crew who did the work, make the NEAM Gee Bee R-1 one of the most authentic aircraft reproductions to be found anywhere. ➔

Got a Match ?



Why was there a book of matches taped to the Gee Bee instrument panel? The cover is off and there are 10 matches in the book. Each time Jimmy Doolittle passed the start-finish line, he would fold down a match, and when the last match was pulled down, the race was over!



The lap-count matchbook is at the right edge of the photo. The reproduction T-handle prop control is at upper left.

More on the Gee Bee R-1

The [Fall 2006 AAHS Journal](#) contains a reprint of an address on the design and development of the R-1, presented by “Pete” Miller and Zantford Granville at a meeting of the Society of Automotive Engineers in 1933. In addition to many technical details, some interesting discussion on design rationale is included. The NEAM website contains a brief history of the R-1 and notes on the museum’s Gee Bee.

A short, very informative video about the construction process can also be viewed. Click [here](#) then scroll down the page to the Aircraft section and click on the + sign by the bar labeled Granville Brothers Gee Bee R-1 Replica. ➔

Is the museum’s Bee Gee a reproduction or a replica?

Take your pick. For our thoughts on these terms as they relate to aircraft, see “One more thing . . .” on [p.15](#).



(Above) Good view of the Gee Bee work area. Circled at the far left are the aluminum doublers attached to the wing spars on the original aircraft, the result of a structural failure in the crash of the Model Z Super Sportster in 1931. These could not be seen once the wing was covered, but the fact that the restoration team included them illustrates NEAM's level of commitment to authenticity.

(Right) Gordon Agnoli, who did the lettering on the original, duplicated his fine work for the reproduction.



Our thanks to NEAM volunteer Tom Palshaw for his help with this article and for furnishing the photos of the restoration project. Tom handled some of the complex tasks on the Gee Bee. His association with aviation goes way back—his father served on the Hartford Aviation Commission in the late '30s. In his early years, Tom began flying and working on homebuilt airplanes. He began volunteering at NEAM when he was 14.

After a stint in the Army as an aviation mechanic, Tom got his A&P license, followed by commercial ratings in single and multi-engine aircraft, seaplanes, and helicopters. He retired from Bombardier Aviation Services after 31 years. He's a recipient of the FAA's Charles Taylor "Master Mechanic" award and is the author of *Bradley Field, the First Twenty-Five Years*. Tom tells us he's looking at other projects in the museum shops, so stay tuned! ➔

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Joe Martin photo

The Lockheed A-12 (60-6940, aka Article 134) featured on page one was one of a pair of M-21 “mother ships” converted to tote the D-21 drones that were the subject of Tom Butz’s story. When that picture was taken, the drone had frangible cones placed fore and aft for flight testing. The view above shows the aircraft as it is now displayed in Seattle’s Museum of Flight.

Those “Tagboard” drones, to use the Cold War cover name, are an interesting sidebar to the search for a U-2 replacement. The CIA and National Reconnaissance Office websites contain a wealth of declassified material on the project, much of which relates to inter-agency wrangling over manned aircraft like the A-12/SR-71 versus the recon satellites that were just coming on line. If we can find the time, there’s an AAHS *Journal* article in there somewhere. ➔

✧ ✧ ✧

Beginning with No. 203, *FlightLine* has kept an eye on eVTOL developments. Despite setbacks and uncertainties, the major players appear to remain on track. Joby Aviation has secured a \$55 million DoD contract extension calling for the company to

deliver a pair of aircraft to Edwards AFB in March 2024. Four pilots have remotely flown Joby’s prototype under the USAF’s Agility Prime program. ➔

✧ ✧ ✧

In other Air Force news, once the Commercial Engine Replacement Program (CERP) for the B-52 (*Flightline* No. 203) is complete, the 76 re-engined H models will become B-52Js. Other refinements will include a new electrical power generation system, radar, and cockpit displays. Total program costs are estimated at \$1.32 billion.

Elsewhere, classified specifications have been distributed for the USAF’s Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) platform, the sixth-generation replacement for the F-22 Raptor. The NGAD will include “a mix of crewed and unmanned aircraft and feature complementary cyber and electronic systems.” ➔

✧ ✧ ✧

Another closely watched project is Boom Supersonic’s Overture, which *FlightLine* first looked at in 2017. (No. 196) Boom recently moved its 1/3 scale XB-1 demonstrator to the Mojave (Calif.) Air & Space Port, where Issei Kobayashi snapped the shot below. Engine run-up tests are reportedly underway, but no first flight date has been announced. ➔



Paso Robles BBQ Fly-in

By Jerri Bergen

A Fly-in BBQ at Paso Robles airport on June 3, hosted by longtime aircraft builder and enthusiast Chuck Wentworth, was an excellent opportunity to enjoy the company of fellow fliers, airplane nuts, and some good wine. Chuck has generously hosted the fly-in for nearly 30 years, where pilots come in from around California to socialize for the day. Kids from the Estrella War Museum Youth Aviation Club got an eyeful of new aircraft on the ramp, while AAHS

member Les Whittlesey shared some excellent wines from the local Thatcher, Pau de Terre and Volatus vineyards. Clyde Crouch, an Indian motorcycle collector, also displayed the Indian Arrow Streamliner, the aerodynamic shell fitted to an Indian Arrow, in an attempt to break the speed record in 1937. Below is one of Chuck Wentworth's rare vintage aircraft, a Curtiss J-1 Robin that itself broke the endurance record in 1929. ➔



A record-breaking Robin.



AAHS Members Phil and Barbara Schultz' Lockheed Lodestar, flown in from Bakersfield for the day. The Navy paint scheme was applied by the previous owner.



AAHS members Susan Whittlesey, F-18F WSO Liz 'Linda' Merlino, AAHS CEO Jerri Bergen, and AAHS member Klara Smith smile for a gang shot under the F-18 wing.



The F-18F, a trainer from VX-9, China Lake, is swarmed by members of the Estrella Warbird Museum Youth Aviation Club. An excited youth is in the hot seat, with pilot Andy 'Hush' Lacross giving some instruction. WSO Liz 'Linda' Merlino (facing the students) is giving an overview of the jet. On the far right is Mary Allmon, coordinator for the program.

Questions, Comments, Squawks?

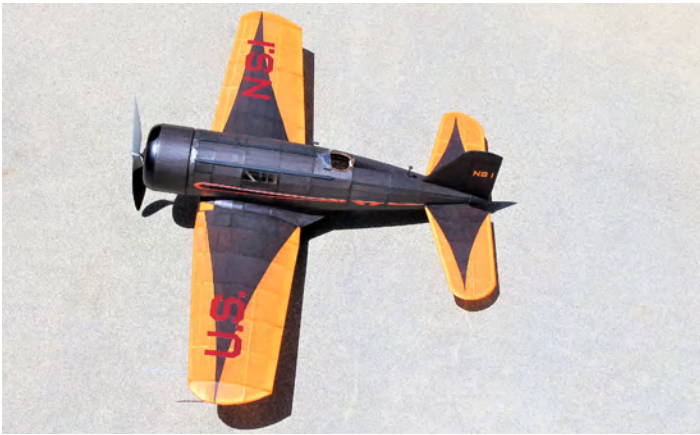
Be sure to let us know: FlightLine@aahs-online.org

A Different Northrop Alpha

And a throwback model of it

Occasionally AAHS gets questions about airplanes or some aspect of aviation history outside the realm of common knowledge. Long-time member Steve Johnston recently asked about the Northrop Alpha, in particular the one purchased in 1930 by the Aeronautics Branch of Department of Commerce, the great-grandpappy of the FAA.

According to a contemporary article, the government purchased the aircraft, specially registered as NS-1, direct from Northrop. Most sources state that it was the #3 Alpha produced. Reregistered as NC-11Y, it ended up as an Alpha 4A cargo conversion with Transcontinental & Western. Beginning in 1935, the airplane passed through several non-airline owners before being rebuilt by TWA in 1975 and presented to the National Air & Space Museum, where it resides today.



Steve says he selects unusual subjects to model. What he doesn't say is that this model is itself unusual, at least by 21st century standards. It's an old fashioned balsa wood and tissue type that could easily date from the same era as the Alpha. Actually, it's a readily available Dumas kit of the Alpha 4A, roughly 1:16 scale, with 110 die-cut balsa parts, some vacuum molded pieces, and comes complete with rubber strands and a not-to-scale 9" plastic prop.

Yep, this baby was meant to fly, but Steve builds mostly for his "dream catcher air force in my shop of yesterday's aviation." The Alpha model construction was "very 1930s-1940s," wood glue for the balsa, with butt joints avoided wherever possible to increase strength. Wing tips and so forth are laminated. The completed skeleton is covered with domestic tissue paper, attached with nitrate dope—the same stuff used in real fabric covered aircraft, but thinned. The tissue is dampened and dried to stretch taunt, then sealed with 2 or 3 coats of dope.

Steve attempts to "minimize the use of paint so as to give the appearance of a stick and tissue model." This model got additional enhancements such as scale rubber main wheels, new landing gear, addition of fuselage windows, planking of the engine nacelle, and a new prop and tailwheel.

All fine, but what color was the NS-1? As anyone who has tried it knows, attempting to determine aircraft color schemes based on black and white photos is a frustrating and usually

inconclusive experience. AAHS found a couple of photos that clearly showed the NS-1's marking patterns, and even located a Dept. of Commerce bulletin that provided some guidance as to colors.

Based on that, Steve went with a black fuselage, tail, and portions of the elevator and wings, with orange on the wings



and elevator, fuselage trim, agency logo and NS-1 lettering on the tail. The N numbers, fuselage trim and agency logos are adhesive backed shipping labels, spray painted in the appropriate colors and applied over the tissue.

As this article was being finalized, new info unexpectedly came to light. The 1930 article mentioned earlier states that the plane was finished in maroon and cream, the fuselage



and fin being "maroon with cream trimming, while the wings and horizontal tail surfaces are cream with maroon trimming."

More than 90 years later, it's impossible to say for certain what the colors were. Regardless, we thank Steve Johnston for sharing some insights on this historic aircraft and the building of his "old school" model of it.



There's more in the works. See a note about Steve's next project on the following page, and how you can help. ➔

THE COLORS OF AVIATION'S GOLDEN AGE



(AAHS d107272)

The Northrop Alpha that Steve Johnston modeled as it appeared in its initial Commerce Dept. livery.

A New Project — And You Can Help!

The age may have been golden, but with rare exception aircraft photos were black & white, which makes determining color schemes a tough proposition, as noted in the story of Steve Johnston's Northrop Alpha model on the preceding page.

But Steve is nothing if not determined. His next model will be of an even more obscure subject, the Alexander Eaglerock Bullet, specifically the lone Model C-7 of 1930. (NC-309V)

We're trying something new with this project. Info on the Bullet is sparse. If you can help with a likely color scheme or anything else about this vintage flying machine, please contact Steve at: rsj.aero@yahoo.com, with a cc to us here at *FlightLine*: FlightLine@aahs-online.org.

We'll follow up with what we learn and pix of the model in No. 210, which you'll receive around Oct. 1, 2023. ➔

AAHS Photo Archive CDs Series

The Society has recently started development of a series of photo CDs. These CDs contain high-resolution scans of negatives, slides and prints from the AAHS Image Library. The resolution of these scanned images is sufficient to make an 8"x10" photographic quality print. Each CD focuses on a particular aspect of American aviation history - be that a particular manufacturer, type or class of aircraft.

As of this date, the following CDs are available. Each CD contains between 70 and 140 images depending on content.

- 1001 Douglas Propeller-Driven Commercial Transports
- 1006 Lockheed Constellations, Part I
- 1007 Lockheed Connies in Color
- 1009 Lockheed P-38/F-5
- 1011 Curtiss Transports
- 1021 Boeing Propeller-Driven Commercial Transports
- 1031 Golden Age Commercial Flying Boats



These CDs are available to members for \$19.95 (\$29.95 non-members) each plus shipping (\$2.50 U.S., \$10.00 International - add \$1.00 for each additional CD). Order forms are available online and on request, but a note along with your donation specifying your particular interest is sufficient.

Proceeds go to support the preservation of the photo archives. Do you have a particular interest or suggestion for a CD in this series? Drop us a line or email the webmaster (webmaster@aahs-online.org). We are currently researching the possibilities of offerings covering the following areas: Connies Part II, XP-56, Northrop X-4, Bell Aircraft, and Early Lockheeds.



2023 *Members' Choice – Best of the Best*



Each year the AAHS asks its members to vote for the best article and best artwork published during the year. Members are sent a ballot and/or an online link to submit their votes. As in previous years, the voting for best article was neck-and-neck with every article getting at least two votes. Only three articles managed to nudge out ahead of the pack. These were “My Uncle’s Plane,” by Larry Lapadura, “The Aircraft Standard of the World, 1930 Stinson SM-8A,” by Jim Reider and “Sentimental Journey: The Air Fields of the Sixth Air Force—the Pacific Arc,” by Dan Hagedorn. Dan’s article managed to garner twice the number of votes as the next closest article. Congratulations to Dan for the Best Article of 2022.

The Best Artwork for 2022 goes to Larry Lapadura for his painting of his uncle’s B-17 crash landing on a Pacific beach during WWII. In the case of the best artwork, it wasn’t even close. Larry’s painting, which graced the back cover of the Spring 2002 edition, was selected by just under half of the members casting ballots. Congratulations to Larry and thank you for sharing both the painting and the story behind it.

The Society appreciates the effort made by those who submitted ballots this year. Recognition of the efforts of our authors and artists plays an important part in helping the AAHS editorial board manage the content of the AAHS Journal, AAHS *FlightLine* newsletter, and the website. We love getting feedback from members, so don’t hesitate to let us know what you are thinking. ➔

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One more thing . . .

Like TV detective Columbo of bygone days, there are times when we need to check just one more thing. The New England Air Museum's Gee Bee "duplicate" (p. 7); is it a replica or a reproduction?

The museum's website link is labeled "Granville Brother's [sic] Gee Bee R-1 Replica," but the linked text describes the nine-year project to *reproduce* the airplane, culminating in the R-1 *reproduction* finished in 1993.

The accompanying NEAM video puts it this way: "Reproduction says you build it from scratch but some of the original builders are involved. [Since] Pete Miller was involved, that airplane becomes a reproduction."

We chose "Restorations and Reproductions" as the title for our semi-regular *Flightline* feature, but we could've just as easily used "Replica." We won't pretend to define either one. ➔

A Sabre of sorts

That F-86 on p.6 isn't really, but it would take a pretty sharp eye to detect that. It's a Sabre, alright, but it was license built in Australia by Commonwealth Aircraft Corp. as the CA-27. The Aussie version differed from the F-86F primarily in having Rolls Royce Avon engines, necessitating a deeper inlet very similar to the F-86H.

A number were later passed to Indonesia, including the museum's example. Vintage F-86s are hard to come by, and the museum's tribute aircraft stands in very well. ➔



A CA-27 Sabre in Indonesian markings. (Wikipedia photo)

Moving, or changing email address?

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