



## Emily Warner 1939 - 2020

Hall of Fame laureate and long-time friend of CAHS, Emily J Warner, passed away on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020.

Emily was born in Denver on October 30, 1939. After graduation from Holy Family High School she took a trip on a Frontier Air Lines DC-3 from Gunnison to Denver. She knew right then that she wanted to be a pilot and started flying lessons the next week. She soloed in 1958, and became a flight instructor with Clinton Aviation. She later gained Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) instrument and airline transport ratings, and became the Director of Flight Training at Clinton Aviation.

She began her airline career with Frontier Air Lines in 1973, flying as a crewmember on the Boeing 737 aircraft. Emily later advanced to co-pilot the DeHavilland DHC-6 and Convair 580 aircraft. In 1976, she became the first woman to become an airline Captain in the United States. She later flew for Continental Air Lines, and United Parcel Service (UPS). Emily finished her career working for

the FAA as an Air Crew Program Manager for the 737 aircraft. Emily's success as a commercial pilot was a major milestone in aviation history and opened the door for thousands of women who became commercial pilots after 1973. Emily Warner was recognized for her achievements with many prestigious awards including induction as a laureate of the Colorado Aviation Historical Society Hall of Fame in 1983, the National Women's Hall of Fame in 2001, and National Aviation Hall of Fame in 2014.

Wings over the Rockies Air & Space Museum hosted a celebration of Emily's life on Friday, July 17 which was attended by over 150 people including a large contingent of current airline pilots inspired by Emily's lifelong achievements.

## 2020 Hall of Fame Banquet Canceled

The continuing COVID-19 pandemic has forced many events around the country to cancel or be postponed as the public continues to follow states' mandates to limit public gatherings. The 2020 Hall of Fame Banquet, originally scheduled for October 10<sup>th</sup>, will not take place as originally planned due to safety concerns. Honoring Colorado's aviation greats is a major activity of the Society, and we have celebrated the accomplishments of these people for the past 51 years. The Directors of CAHS deeply regret that we must cancel the 2020 ceremony. We thank you all for your continued support of our organization through this challenging time, and we look forward to seeing you in person in 2021.



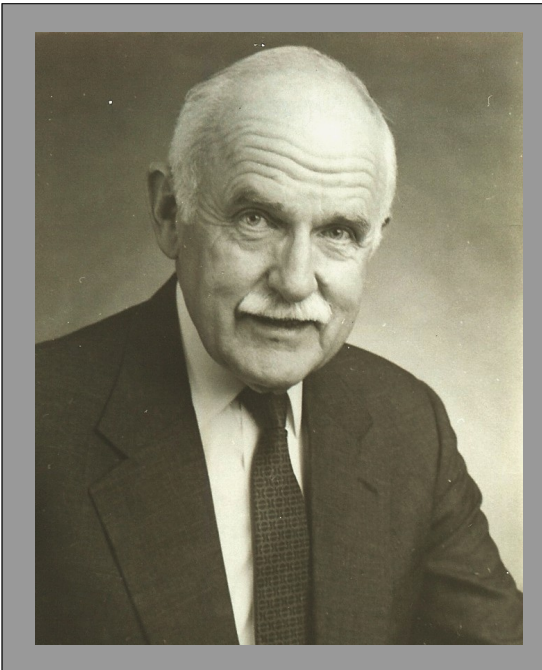
# In Memorium-Harry Blout

Hall of Fame Laureate Harry Dean Blout passed away March 6, 2020. Born in Berwyn, Illinois, on January 12, 1931, Harry Blout began flying in earnest when he soloed a Super Cub in Malden, Missouri in December 1953. He made major contributions to aviation in Colorado since coming here in 1962. Harry had long been associated with the United States Air Force Academy, where he was the airport manager, president of the Aero Club, instructor of cadets in the T-41 trainer and in gliders and sailplanes. He was instrumental in making physical improvements at the Academy's airfield.

As a Lt. Col. in the Air Force, he was the personal mission and check pilot for the Academy Superintendent in the VT29 transport during 1965-68. He received the Bronze Star for service in Thailand when he was an Air Staff Officer. This was in addition to twelve other awards and decorations he received from the USAF and the South Vietnamese government.

At the time of his induction into the Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame he had amassed an impressive 11,818 flying hours in airplanes, 375 hours in gliders, and he had flown a large number of types of aircraft. Harry held the Gold C Badge for altitude in sailplanes, and the Diamond for distance Harry was employed by Jeppesen-Sanderson as a technical writer and was a regional manager for Piper Aircraft in Denver and Sonora, Mexico.

Harry was active at the Black Forest glider port in Colorado Springs through the years and was its first president. He was also active in the Daedalians, the Soaring Society of America, the Antique Airplane Association, and the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA). He was a Life Member of the Colorado Aviation Historical Society and a past member of the Colorado Aviation Historical Society Board of Directors. He has also been a leader in the Silver Wings, where he served as its president. Blout was a longtime Wings over the Rockies volunteer, beginning his service in 1994. He led Wings as the President of the organization and also served on the Board of Directors. He was inducted into the Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame in 1993.



*Harry Blout 1931-2020*

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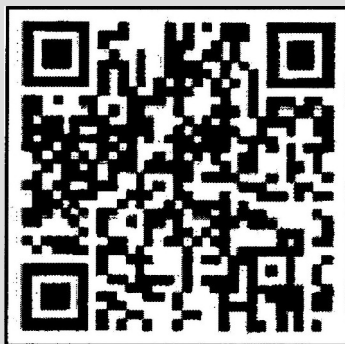
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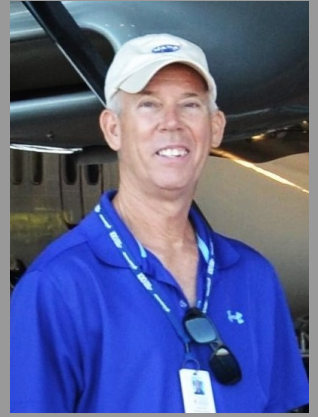
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## President's Message:

# Society Transits Turbulent Times



Steve Kelly  
President

2020 has turned out to be a challenging year for our Society in many ways. We have mourned the loses of some dear friends: Laureates Emily Warner, William Bredar, and Harry Blout, and long-time Society member Tony Bornhiem. They are commemorated in the pages of this issue and will be deeply missed.

The ongoing COVID-19 problem has meant the cancellation of our March annual meeting, the summer membership meeting, and the Hall of Fame banquet. Our weekly work and planning sessions at the CAHS office at Wings over the Rockies, has definitely been affected by the restrictions put in place for access to this site. It has also disrupted the production of this journal, which hopefully, will be getting back on track with this issue.

Thanks to the great assistance of Melissa Berg, the CAHS Board has been able to meet using Zoom virtual meetings, which I am sure many of you are now familiar with. We will continue to meet using this method in the future as it has allowed us to conduct our routine business and work on future planning.

We really did not want to loose the momentum generated during the past year, and in spite of many restrictions, we have still been able to make progress on some big projects. Jim Kelly has done an exceptional job in the organization of our artifacts collections. He has set up a professional quality museum data base program which will record details of artifacts and identify their location within the "Wings" museum and other sites. This process has led to a complete reorganization of our upstairs office/storage area in the museum which maximizes our space and has created a much enhanced working environment.

Phase Two of the Hall of Fame project has moved along, even with the restrictive working conditions that we have faced. Our exhibit committee, headed by Keith Shaddox, has completed the install of the center section display panels which highlight 60 of our laureates from 1969 to the present. The individual laureate profiles will be rotated on a continuing schedule (similar to that of the large display cases along the room's perimeter). Included in this work has been the addition of more lighting and a new display case.

A research project continues in the Durango/Cortez area (story pages 12-14). Additional History of Flight story panels were installed at the Pueblo Weisbrod Museum this spring and some great volunteer work was put in by Lance Barber and Laurie Tune to clean our Eaglerock and Skybolt aircraft, along with our aviation displays at the Weisbrod museum.

In addition, the Aviation Archeology group has completed several field work excursions this summer, which have provided valuable knowledge of several Wyoming crash sites. The latest news on AvAr activities can be found on page 6.



A limited quantity of CAHS 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Challenge Coins are still available

Contact Keith Shaddox

Email: [Keith.Shaddox@gmail.com](mailto:Keith.Shaddox@gmail.com)

# Tuskegee Airmen and the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of WWII

by CAHS Laureate, Penny Rafferty Hamilton, Ph.D.

As we celebrate the September 2 anniversary of the end of World War II, CAHS wants to highlight the significant contributions many of our citizens made during those years. Several African-Americans volunteered to join the famed Tuskegee Airmen training program in Alabama.

According to the list of Tuskegee pilots found in the book, **Black Knights-The Story of the Tuskegee Airmen**, seven were from Colorado: Richard L. Biffle, Jr., Joseph E. Gash, Joe A. Lewis, John W. Mosley, Sanford M. Perkins, and Harris H. Robnett, Jr., all from Denver. Samuel Hunter hailed from Colorado Springs. Leon W. Spears was from Pueblo.

In all, almost 1,000 African-American pilots and crews were trained from 1941 to 1946 at the historic Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. The aviation graduates were called “The Tuskegee Airmen.” They flew more than 15,000 sorties between May 1943 and June 1945. American bomber crews often requested the “Red Tails” to escort them which was the nickname for these outstanding aviators who painted the tails of the fighter planes a distinctive deep red.

Their primary mission was to escort bombers striking targets in Southern Europe. Tuskegee Airmen earned a stellar reputation for bravery and aerial skills. In 2012, Hollywood produced a block-buster movie, *Red Tails*, to dramatically honor these brave Americans.

Way back in 1915, after the death of founder, Booker T. Washington, Robert Russa Moton, a distinguished African-American educator and author, became Tuskegee Institute principal. Moton was a visionary leader committed to aeronautical training and engineering. Moton died in 1940, before the Tuskegee Airmen took flight. In 1941, the new training base began teaching African-American men now known as the Tuskegee Airmen. They were the first African-American aviation unit in the US Armed Forces.

In 2005, CAHS presented a Special Organization Award to Tuskegee Airmen. On April 12, 2006, a section of I-70 between Brighton Boulevard and Tower Road was dedicated as “Tuskegee Airmen Memorial Highway.”

1991 CAHS laureate Fitzroy “Buck” Newsum, became a cadet at Tuskegee in 1943. He was later flight leader and squadron operations officer for the 477th Bomb Group. Newsum came to Colorado in 1959 as chief of the missile training branch of the 703 Strategic Missile Wing at Lowry Air Force Base.

In 2012, James H. Harvey, III, a Tuskegee-pilot, became a CAHS Laureate. Harvey, a distinguished military aviator also became the first Black-American jet fighter pilot to fly in Korean airspace during that war. After a stellar 22-year military career, Lt. Colonel Harvey chose Denver for his retirement home.

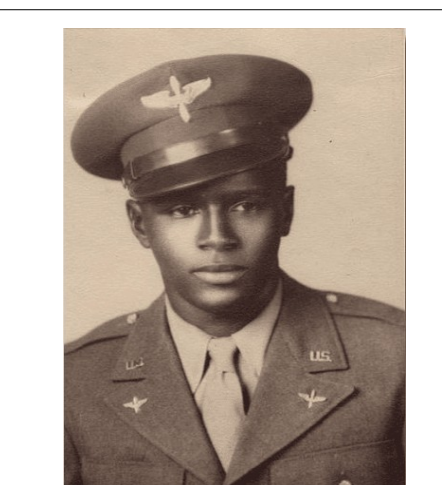
As CAHS commemorates the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of World War II, it is important for us to reflect on the triumphs and sacrifices which made “winning” WWII possible. Moton Airport and the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site are also featured in *America’s Amazing Airports* book.

Today, our National Park Service hosts the Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site with an excellent museum. Virtual tours are available at this museum.

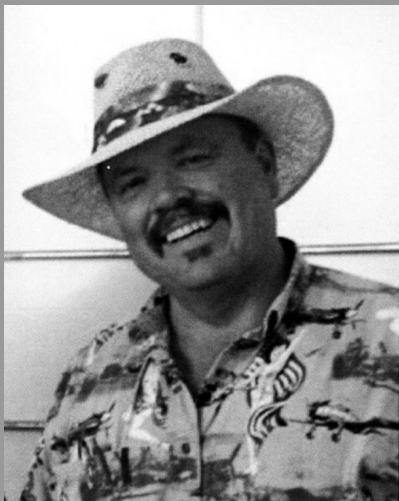
See: [https://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee\\_airmen/index.html](https://www.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee_airmen/index.html)



Tuskegee airman were the first Africa-American aviation unit in our WWII armed forces. (Photo: Library of Congress Archive)



CAHS Laureate (2012), retired Lt. Colonel James H. Harvey, III, trained as a Tuskegee Airmen, graduating in October, 1944. He flew P-47 and other military fighters during his stellar career. (Archival photo)



Brian Richardson AvAr  
Program Director

## Aviation Archeology – Notes from the Field

# United Air Lines Flight 610

by Brian Richardson

At approximately 2:00 am on Friday, June 30, 1951, United Airlines Flight 610, a Douglas DC-6, registered as N37543, while flying in instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) impacted terrain about eighteen miles west-southwest of Ft. Collins, Colorado. Mercifully, all fifty occupants of this flight (five crew members, forty-four adult passengers and one infant) met their end instantly as the aircraft slammed into the northeast face of Crystal Mountain in full-flight configuration.

Captain J. R. Appleby, a high-time, respected airline pilot was acting as pilot-in-command (PIC) of this flight. Serving as his first officer, H.G. Tower was also a veteran airline pilot, well qualified and accomplished in DC-6 aircraft operations. According to available maintenance records, N37543, a relatively new aircraft, was well maintained and in an airworthy condition when it departed San Francisco, at the outset of this trip.

Although never proven, popular conjecture has it that the cockpit crew selected an improper switch configuration on the avionics control panel, then failed to correctly interpret the appropriate heading information for the Amber 3 Airway between Cheyenne, Wyoming and Denver, Colorado.

Another, more sinister cause for the crash was suggested by Janet K. (Appleby) Smith, the daughter of this flight's PIC, in 2001. It is her contention that Flight 610 was "caught in the crosshairs of the desperate espionage war going on over atomic secrets and Russian moles." She believes that the cause of this crash was sabotage. Although this theory has yet to be proven, it is certainly a compelling twist in the ongoing investigation of this tragedy.

The official Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) determination was that the probable cause was; *for undetermined reasons, the crew failed to follow the prescribed route and continued beyond the airway boundary to the west, maintaining a course which resulted in the aircraft striking mountainous terrain.*

Whatever the reason, Flight 610 veered well right of course, heading into the mountains at night and impacted steeply rising terrain. The mystery continues to this day!

AvAr team member Ron Miller has visited this crash site numerous times, posting a substantial report on his website at <http://coloradowreckchasing.com/>.

(continued on page 6)



A 2014 image of the UAL Flight 610 debris field. (Courtesy Alan Gionet, KCNC TV4 Denver)

*(Continued from previous page)*

Some of his previous trips included introducing new **AvAr** field agents to this dynamic debris field, as well as escorting an award-winning television personality, Mr. Alan Gionet to this historic scene for important media opportunities. Current plans are to escort family members of the victims of Flight 610 back to this historic crash site sometime in the very near future. We'll keep you posted.



Wreckage still litters the UAL 610 crash site.  
(Courtesy Alan Gionet, KCNC TV4 Denver)



**AvAr** Field Agent Ron Miller identifying debris. (Courtesy Alan Gionet, KCNC TV4 Denver)

## **AvAr** Program Updates – Summer 2020

The society's **AvAr** teams got off to a late start this season due to the Covid-19 virus. Once the official "protocol" mindset set-in, our team members set out to record as many of the targeted sites as possible. You can look forward to reports of the following expeditions in upcoming Journal editions.

### **Murchison B-24**

After two years of arduous searching, **AvAr** team member Mark Milliken, finally narrowed down the search parameters and located the Murchison B-24 crash site, only a few miles from where it was supposed to be. This was a project initially requested by the Yankee Air Museum, nearly two years ago.

### **Trail B-24**

With an engine on fire and losing altitude, Lt. Donald Trail refused to bailout with a man still aboard. Both of these airmen were fatalities in this tragic accident, which ended up in the desert wastelands northeast of Edgerton, Wyoming.

### **UAL Flight 409**

A scheduled United Airlines DC-4 flight from New York to San Francisco ended abruptly on the southern face of Medicine Bow Peak on October 6, 1955. Just a few hundred feet short of the 12,005 peak, **AvAr** team members began finding remnants of the wreckage.

### **Stormy Peaks B-17**

A perennial favorite, the 1943 Stormy Peaks B-17 crash site has served as an **AvAr** training site, a routine observation platform for determining levels of vandalism and disturbance, as well as an annual endurance test for **AvAr** team members. The 2020 fire season may have changed all that.

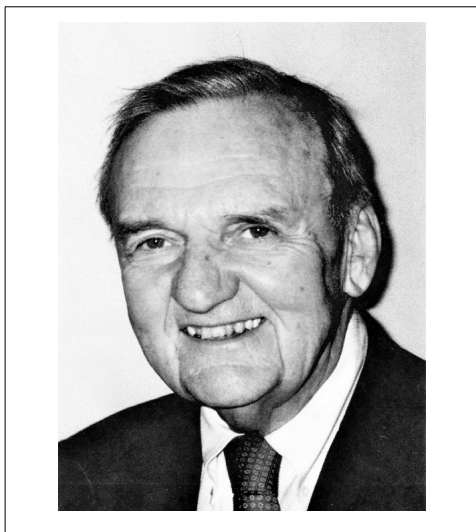
### **AvAr Training Course**

Originally scheduled for this past spring, the annual 2020 **AvAr** Indoc course has been postponed until a later date. Please continue to watch for updates in future Journal editions.

## Flown West

# William Bredar

Bill Bredar passed away on April 24 of COVID 19 and complications associated with pulmonary disease. He was born in Davenport, Iowa on August 6, 1924. During the Second World War (WWII) he enlisted in the U.S. Navy, and soloed in flight school in 1944. After the war, he attended Iowa State College (now Iowa State University) and graduated with a civil engineering degree. Bill opened the very first branch office of the Omaha-based engineering firm HDR, Inc. in Colorado Springs in 1957. Six years later he began the use of small aircraft to extend his company's reach to rural areas of Colorado. He also used the company's aircraft for aerial photography of potential sites. Bill flew into 62 different Colorado airports during his career. He helped lead the firm in developing a thriving business with clients including the United States Air Force Academy, U.S. Air Force Accounting and Finance Center, and Denver International Airport. Bill Bredar received the Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in 2002. Bill was inducted into the CAHS Hall of Fame in 2002.



*Bill Bredar 1924-2020*



# Tony Bornheim

Edwin Anthony "Tony" Bornheim passed away on Monday, May 11th, in Denver. Tony was a long-time member of CAHS and was involved in many of our recent projects. During the last several years he assisted with the creation of aviation displays at the Colorado Department of Transportation and the Pueblo Weisbrod Museum. He was also an active volunteer at "Wings over the Rockies Air & Space Museum" for many years. Tony had recently received special recognition for his contributions to the new Hall of Fame construction at the opening day celebration on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

*Tony Bornheim 1941- 2020*

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# Missile Move

## Nike Hercules Missile to Pueblo Weisbrod Air Museum

By Mike Paradise

In October 1968, a Nike Hercules missile from the Pueblo Army Depot was erected at the new Goddard Middle School in Littleton. A big ceremony was held including a speech from an Air Force Colonel, music from the Lowry Air Force Base Band, and fireworks.

The rocket would serve as the symbol of the school named after rocket pioneer Robert Goddard for over 50 years. But, in 2019, plans to upgrade the school building and parking area necessitated removal of the missile. Initially, it was to be scrapped, but public reaction scrapped that plan and a new home was sought. It seemed no facility wanted to bear the expense of moving it until the Pueblo Weisbrod Museum curator, Shawn Kirscht, got wind of it. He and museum volunteer Dick Wood made a reconnaissance visit in early March to determine its condition and what would have to be done to move it. The school board needed it moved by June when work would begin. Then, the pandemic intervened and the school was closed.

With the school closed, construction was moved up to May, so Shawn and Dick started removing the booster stage fins on 11 April. They returned on 18 April with two cranes and a flatbed truck. My house is just around the corner, so I was a participant representing the CAHS. It took 3 hours to dismantle and move the 41 ft Nike Hercules while the Thunderbirds flew over the Denver area. The second stage was lifted easily from the booster stage, but the first stage required a great deal more work since it was secured to a big 4 inch square channel that rose 40 feet above the welded steel base plate. The second stage easily slipped off that big piece of steel since it was just sitting by its weight on the boosters. The second stage weighed about 2,100 lbs, but the four boosters weighed in at around 2,300 lbs. After the booster stage was secured with the cranes, the cutting torch came into play to release the missile from the base plate. When it came loose, the cranes held it horizontally as Dick Wood cut off the remaining 20 feet of steel channel. The flatbed truck drove off to Pueblo around 1500 local. An operational MIM-14 Nike Hercules ready for launch weighed 10,710 lbs, but this shell still weighed in at 4,400 lbs.

Past students, present students, and neighborhood locals will very much miss the familiar landmark, but the Nike Hercules will be back home in Pueblo where it will be restored and displayed along with a Hawk and a Pershing missile.



The Nike Hercules was an air defense missile deployed by the U.S. Army to defend major cities and priority targets beginning in 1958. (Photo: Mike Paradise)



Loading the booster stage on the trailer. (Photo: Mike Paradise)



Second stage being loaded on the trailer. (Photo: Mike Paradise)



# Reflections of a WWII Navy Fighter Pilot

By Dan Puleio

As part of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorating WWII's Victory in Europe (VE Day) and Victory in Japan (VJ Day) I was asked to document the thoughts, actions and experiences of an old friend, and recently deceased at 98 years of age, Lt. Cmdr. Robert. B. "Bob" Brunson, USNR (retired), who flew the first Navy Night Fighters to see combat. In the later years of his life Bob was an honorary EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association Middle Park Chapter 1267) member living in Estes Park, Colorado. Being a retired Naval Aviator, and civilian rated pilot myself, I was astounded to see, through Bob's eyes, the roots of our aviation culture, both military and civilian. It has been said that Aviation is hours of boredom punctuated with moments of sheer terror. This is borne out in reviewing Bob's journals in preparation for writing this story.

Brunson was an agricultural college student at Kansas State College, Manhattan, Kansas prior to the Fall of 1941. Here he learned that flying lessons were available to college students, particularly engineering students. His father had been a WWI aviator and Bob was fascinated by his stories. He was accepted to the Civilian Pilot Training (CPT) program and learned to solo in the Aeronca tandem trainer.



Bob Brunson – 1944  
(Photo courtesy of Bob Brunson)

When the U.S.'s involvement in WWII seemed inevitable, Bob received his dad's permission to sign up for military service. He learned of the attack on Pearl Harbor while eating breakfast at his boarding house on December 7, 1941 and immediately applied to become a Navy pilot. He was accepted although the process took six months before he entered flight school. It was to be three additional years and many different aircraft to include the Spartan NP-1, N2S Stearman, Vultee "Vibrator", SNJ-5 Texan, Brewster F2A Buffalo, Grumman F4F Wildcat, and F4U-1 Corsair before he was assigned to Navy Fighter Squadron, VF(N)-101, the first Aircraft Carrier-based night fighter squadron, flying the AN/AP-4 airborne radar equipped, F4U-2 Chance-Vought Corsairs.

Bob had a talent for instrument and night flying, while many pilots of the day found this environment very unsettling. Cockpit instrumentation was still evolving from its infancy and was often unreliable. The training culture of the day, was primarily to take the pointers of a more seasoned pilot, or to become a "statistic". This approach varied dramatically from the strict protocols now largely standardized in pilot training. From my perspective it appeared that Bob saw more aircraft crashes among his peers during training flights than in actual combat.

While still in flight training, the Brewster F2A Buffalo was his first combat aircraft. "It had no back seat, no dual controls, students were told to read the Pilot's Handbook and Flight Operations Instructions, ask questions of those who had flown it, then grab a parachute and take off", stated Brunson.

Bob recalled, "At VF(N)-75 we had some of the first Corsairs off the production line. In fact Charles Lindbergh delivered the first #02153 to our squadron prior to my arrival. We didn't recognize it at the time, but we were flying junk and did not realize it. We were flying planes first off the production line, with the 'bird-cage' cockpit canopy, stiff landing gear shock absorbers and a right wing low-speed stall characteristic that could surprise the unwary on landing. We wore them out in training, then flew them into combat. The aircraft carrier ground crews called these early models 'grasshoppers' for the way they bounced down the deck upon landing."

*(Continued on page 10)*

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Brunson's aircraft #10 ready to roll. The AN/AP-4 Radome is visible on the starboard wing of this F4U-2 night fighter version of the Corsair. (Photo courtesy of Bob Brunson)

He continued, "On the 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1943 my VF(N)-75 detachment was on the move to the Pacific theater. We flew the planes across the U.S. from Philadelphia to San Diego, not without mishap. We were craned aboard the USS Enterprise (Big "E") CV-6, enroute to Pearl Harbor and Naval Air Station Barbers Point, Hawaii, and on January 1, 1944 designated a new squadron to be known as VF(N)-101."

At this point in the war the primary carrier-based fighter was the F6F Hellcat. Brunson writes, "One month after embarking aboard USS Enterprise, on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, I had the opportunity to fly the F6F Hellcat with the "Grim Reapers" of VF-10. The mission was Combat Air Patrol (CAP) covering the strike on Kwajalein. The flight was uneventful except for the fact that my first flight in this single seat fighter was a *Carrier-based* take-off and landing!"

The following are some noteworthy excerpts from Brunson's diary from 31 December 1943 to July 16, 1944:

### January (1944)

29<sup>th</sup>-Saturday: Task Group struck (attacked) Taroa of Maloelap Atoll.

30<sup>th</sup>-Sunday: Task Group struck Kwajalein and Ebei islands of Kwajalein Atoll. Flew CAP.

### February

16<sup>th</sup>-Wednesday: First carrier raid on Truk (Japanese island fortress) (USS) Intrepid took a fish (stuck by a torpedo).

19<sup>th</sup>-Saturday: USS Enterprise and USS Langley made a raid on Jaluit. Flew CAP.

### March

17<sup>th</sup>-Friday: Air Group supported landing on Emirau (island).

26<sup>th</sup>-Sunday: On catapulting developed a (gasoline) leak. Couldn't get (back) aboard for three & half hrs. Landed with 20 gallons.

28<sup>th</sup>-Tuesday: Carrier strike on Palau (island) under night torpedo attack.

31<sup>st</sup>-Friday: Struck Yap (island). Predawn hop 3.7 (hours).

### April

1<sup>st</sup>-Saturday: Struck Woleai (island).

21<sup>st</sup>-Friday: Struck Hollandia (New Guinea). Started in on rescue mission but was called back.

29<sup>th</sup>-Saturday: Raided Truk. A Jap plane tried to fly into the ship but was shot down before he could do any damage.

30<sup>th</sup>-Sunday: Went in on two rescue escort missions. Last one was at dusk. OS2U's (Kingfisher seaplanes) did the work. One Judy (Yokosuka D4Y Suisei) attempted to drop bombs on Lex (USS Lexington).

### May

17<sup>th</sup>-Wednesday: Landed aboard Enterprise. Ran practice interceptions & radar torpedo runs on ship (very dark night flight). Running lights were out except for port wing light. Flew into gun mounts, fire control, catwalk on after end of island, and bounced over a couple barrier(s). Plane was a total loss. #02710 (production line number).

(Continued on page 11)

## June

15<sup>th</sup>-Thursday: D-day landings (Saipan) Under heavy torpedo attack during twilight. Planes (Jap) dropping (torpedoes) on all sides. One fish (torpedo) missed us by a scant 30 feet. Had dogfights with bomber's escort.

16<sup>th</sup>-Friday: We hear scuttlebutt (rumors) of the Jap fleet coming out. Burial at sea for the gunner killed the night before. News came that Japan has been bombed by B-29.

19<sup>th</sup>-Monday: Marianas Turkey Shoot and Battle of the Philippine Sea. Air Group shot down nineteen planes, lost one pilot under dive bombing attack in morning. Over three hundred Jap planes shot down. More planes today than any other day of the war.

20<sup>th</sup>-Tuesday: Contacted Jap task force and attacked. (Our) planes got back after dark. (I) could see planes running out of gas and going into the drink. A couple of crashes on deck delayed landing. One plane landed while fighter was in the rear.

21<sup>st</sup>-Wednesday: Keeping up chase of the Jap fleet. Survivors of water landing were picked up by the cans (Destroyers).

July was filled with smaller skirmishes and night radar intercepts while "Big E" headed from Guam to Eniwetok to Pearl (Harbor) arriving on Saturday the 15<sup>th</sup>. Brunson left the Enterprise and boarded the USS Salamonie for (Naval Air Station) Alameda, California.

Brunson remained in the Navy several more years as a Night-Fighter Instructor at NAS Westerly, Rhode Island and as a Flight Test Officer at NAS Vero Beach, Florida. He remained in the Naval Reserve until 1950, when family responsibilities forced him to resign. Of interest is that his Naval Reserve squadron was subsequently called up for the Korean War. It was fortunate for Brunson that he was no longer in the Naval Reserve. His former squadron, VF70A lost one third of its pilots in that conflict.



Aircraft of VF(N)-101 ready for launch. Bob Brunson's squadron mate "Smitty" is in the cockpit of #10. (Photo courtesy of Bob Brunson)

*Editors note: Estes Park resident Bob Brunson flew west on August 8, 2019. In his later years, Bob was a Co-Organizer of the Honor Flights of Northern Colorado. The generation that liberated the world from the horrors of facism is passing away. Their history must never be forgotten.*

*Editors note: The following is an update on research being conducted on the development of aviation in Southwest Colorado by Lance Barber, Chairman of the Society's Southern Colorado Outreach Committee.*

# Preliminary Aviation History Review of Durango and Cortez

By Lance Barber - Southern Colorado Outreach Committee

Southwest Colorado has had limited aviation publicity or notoriety with CAHS or in current day media. CAHS Journal did do an article on the Air Force U-2 aircraft that had an emergency landing at Cortez Airport, 04 August 1959. This article summarized the event from information provided to the Society from the Cortez Aviation Heritage Society and the Air Force Magazine, August 1989, page 90. Research has begun on these two cities for old airports and fields, local aviators, and notable events; to provide CAHS and its Aviation Archaeology (**AvAr**) Program future field investigations. Research began with computer searches at the Durango Public Library on their link to the Durango Herald newspaper scanned publications database. Also, meetings with Gerald (Jerry) Vincent of the Cortez Av Heritage Society and Russ Machen, Cortez Airport Manager.

## CORTEZ

Currently, there are 3 known airports/fields in Cortez: the current day Cortez Municipal Airport, 22874 County Road (CR) F/Airport Rd, via US-491, Ute Field, its abandoned no-longer used field across the CR with one remaining building and high weeds of the field area, and the original field in town on the north side of Main Street, US-160, off of N Texas St, fenced private property with very tall weeds. An airstrip has been mentioned in an article, east side of town.

A woman aviator, Polly Usher made her mark in Colorado from Cortez. She was the first woman flying student in Western Colorado to solo, May 29, 1937. The signed book, *Flying Joyfully, The Polly User Story*, has been donated to CAHS by Jerry Vincent.

Two aviators flew a Beechcraft Bonanza "City of Cortez", with wing tip-tanks, around the world in 11 days, 23 minutes: Harold Benham and Jack Rodd, 24k miles, with 15k miles over water. Rick Hampton, KVFC radio tracked their program, and Durango Harold had daily updates.

## DURANGO

The preliminary research of the Durango Herald publication database provided interesting airports/fields, persons, and events. Much more database searches are needed to expand the research. Five airports/fields: Two locations above Durango on the mesa where the Ft. Lewis College is located, 1950s off of SH-172, La Plata Field now Durango La Plata County Airport, and Animas Air Park. Research began at the Animas Museum, La Plata County Historical Society, providing numerous snap-shots of Durango aviation.



View of Reservoir Hill where early Durango Airport was located. Now the site of Ft. Lewis College. (Photo courtesy of Durango Herald)

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Significant aviation events in this area include:

1913 – First recorded flight in Durango at the Fairgrounds, currently Ft. Lewis College mesa area, a Curtiss Model D biplane flown by Ralph McMillen.

1914 – First Wright Flyer Model B flown over Durango by Eugene “Bill” Heath

1917-1918 – First Durango combat pilot, Airman Adolph Soens, flying in WWI

1919 – Durango Fair and Round Up, event, September 23-26, 1919, where Larry Brown did flyovers for the crowd

1920s – Original Fairgrounds became unsatisfactory, so moved to Reservoir Hill over Durango, new fairgrounds and airport dedicated October 12, 1929; a Douglas bomber crash-landed during the ceremonies, aircraft totaled but pilot survived

1932 – Improvements began with leveling, graveling, and adding diagonal runway

1935 – Will Rogers and wife visited airport

1937 – A dirt strip was created and Dick Young landed his low-wing Aeronca for the Durango Airways Club, near the Fairground field

1938 – Airmail service began in Durango

1946 – Monach Airlines began service with a DC-3

1950-1953 – Airport revamped its location off of SH-172, La Plata Airport

1986-1988 – New modernization, \$2.5 Million cost, Durango LaPlata County Airport

(This timeline snapshot was provided by Neil Davis Sr., of the Mountain Living Magazine in Flagstaff, AZ., detailed history article available.)

## ANIMAS AIR PARK

Animas Air Park was created by the late James “Jim” Gregg south of Durango, September 1976, off of River Rd/La Posta Rd. This small general aviation airport is busy daily and is supported by Del Gregg’s Flying Service and other companies.

## FLORIDA FIELD

Florida Field, pronounced flor-ee-da, was the site of the July 8, 1940 gathering of current and prospective pilots to serve in the Army Air Corp. Two women pilots landed their planes to help organize the event, Alma Stransky, 30, and Marian Nixon 21, both of Durango. Alma future commandant of the Marine Corp League, and Marian, future executive of Continental Airlines. Seventeen men, some pilots were present for orientation. Interesting note, searches on the 17 men, one man became a civilian instructor pilot in California and died in a crash, another received a 4F from the Air Corp, another an Air Corp cadet and veteran, another got drafted, and finally, another a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Elwin C. Smith and flew 22 B-17 missions, injured and received an Air Medal with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster. I have not been to determine the exact location of Florida Field, even Del Gregg has no idea.

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JIM GREGG looks over his new airfield, Animas been one of 13 stockholders putting together the Air Park, five miles south of Durango. Gregg has new field. See story. Herald Photo

## 9-29-76 Air park progressing

Article from the Durango Herald from September 29, 1976 describes progress on the Animas Air Park. (Photo courtesy of Durango Herald)

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Further research is being done on Florida Field, plus research at Ft. Lewis College, Cortez Public Library, Montezuma County Historical Society, Gregg family of LPC Airport, and more research at Durango Public Library. Jay Gates of Wings over the Rockies Museum and CAHS flew 5 years for Jim Gregg, owner of the post-commercial La Plata County

Airport. Jay will provide CAHS a history story of Jim Gregg and LPC Airport. Laurie Tune purchased for CAHS a copy of *Time Flies, Memories of One of the Last Veterans of WWII*, by Raymond F. Schaaf, of old Animas City, now part of Durango; story of flying B-17s, B-36s, and missile support of Titan Is at Deer Trail, CO. A great edition for CAHS Archives.

Photocopies of various newspaper clipping, photos, and documents of aviation events and airports have been provided to CAHS from the Animas Museum and snapshot captures from the Durango Herald online publication database.

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