

REUNION EDITION

THE

NOON



BALLOON

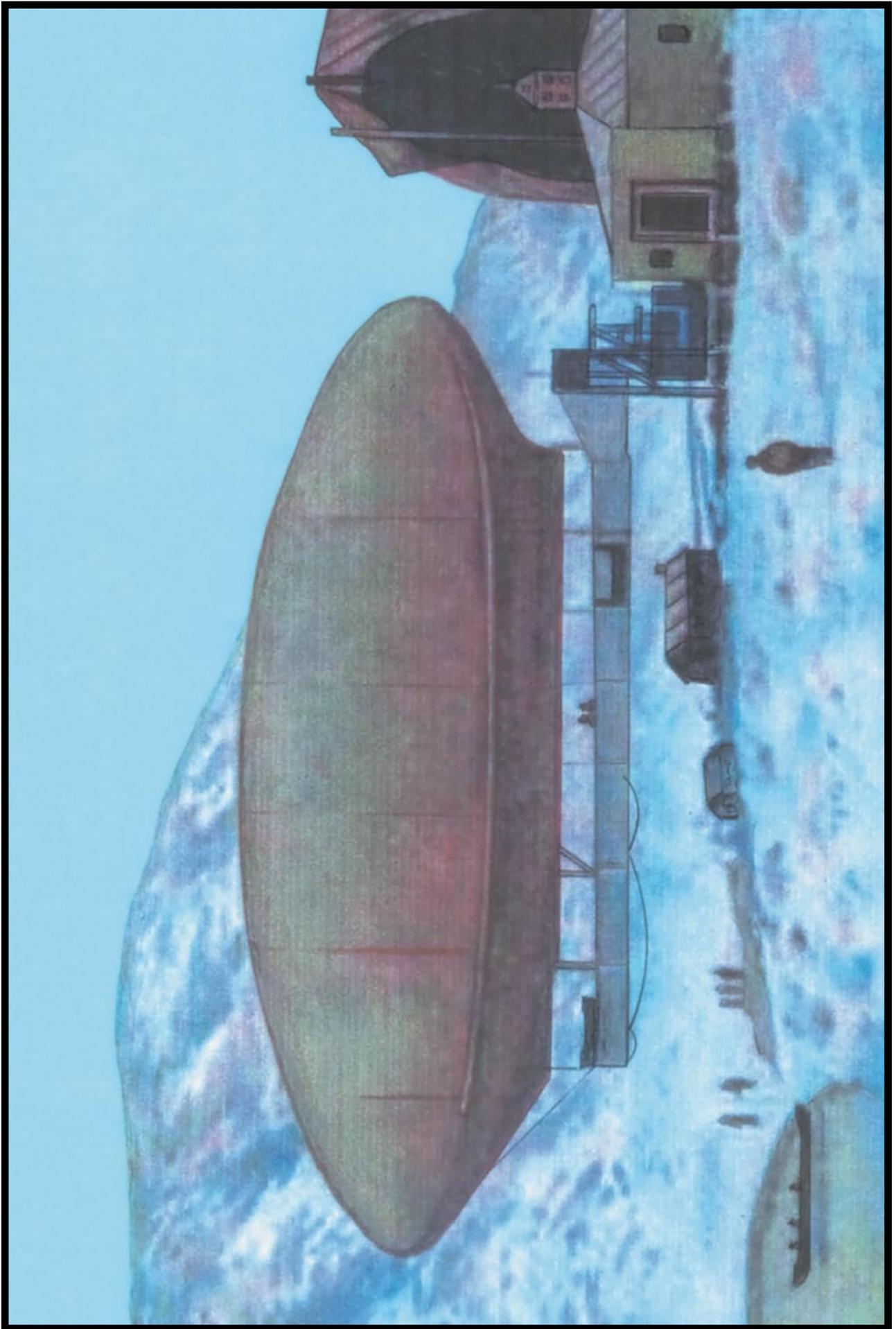


The Official Newsletter of THE NAVAL AIRSHIP ASSOCIATION, INC.

No. 74

Summer 2007





THE NOON BALLOON

Official Publication of the Naval Airship Association, Inc.

ISSUE # 74 Summer 2007

Editorial	2
President's Message	3
Reunion 2007	4
Pigeon Cote	5
Treasurer's Strongbox	10
Shore Establishments	12
L-8 Mystery: 65 years	14
European Report	18
Short Lines	19
Media Watch	22
USS Akron: 75 years	24
History Committee	25
Black Blimp	30
Lighter Side of LTA	32

Front Cover: L-7 at Lakehurst 1942. U.S. Navy Photo via Eric Brothers and David Smith.

Opposite: *America*, Model 2 by Herman Van Dyk: "As mentioned elsewhere in this magazine, expeditions to the North and South Pole were in the center of public interest during the years around the turn of the previous century. All expeditions by sled, ship or skis had failed. As early as 1845, M. Dupuis Decourt suggested to the French Government to use a dirigible and years later the American Dr. De Bausset announced his plan to build a stainless steel clad airship, capable of transporting 200 passengers to explore the Polar region. However, the announced departure date of June 1, 1888 came and went without an airship. The very first attempt to try to fly over the Arctic was made by Solomon Andree. On July 11, 1897, he left his balloon shed at Virgohamna, on the island of Danskøve, Svalbard (Spitsbergen), never to be seen alive again. 33 years later his remains and those of his teammates were found on the island or Kvitoya together with their diaries and photographs. Walter Wellman, a reporter for the Chicago Record-Herald newspaper, and a veteran of two unsuccessful arctic expeditions, managed to raise enough public interest and capital to attempt to reach the North Pole by dirigible. He traveled to France and met with the famous experts in Paris and chose Louis Godard to build the airship *America*. On July 8, 1906 the airship was delivered to the island of Danskøve, where a huge airship shed was being erected close to Andree's balloon shed. Trial runs, after assembly of the dirigible, revealed failure of the driving gear, collapse of the propellers and other faults. (Continued next column)

All material contained in this newsletter represents the views (and sometimes typos) of its authors and does not necessarily represent the official position of the Naval Airship Association, Inc., nor its officers or members.

The Naval Airship Association
www.naval-airships.org

President - Robert L. Ashford
 389 Harvard Ct. - Naples, FL 34104
 Tel. 239-353-1306

Email: rlashford6@yahoo.com

Vice President - Donald E. Shorts
 1495 Main St. - Crete, IL 60417-0481
 Tel: 708-672--0136

Email: fourstacks@aol.com

Secretary - Margret M. Hinrichsen
 653 Alvarado Lane - Cottonwood, AZ 86326
 Tel.& Fax: 928-634-0727

Email: hinrich@comspeed.net

Treasurer - Peter F. Brouwer
 1950 S.W. Cycle St. - Port St. Lucie, FL
 34953-1778 Tel: 772-871-9379

Email: peterfbrouwer@bellsouth.net

NAMF Liaison - Mort Eckhouse

Email: mortusn@aol.com

NMNA Liaison - Joe Hajcak

Email: jghajcak@juno.com

Webmaster - Michael Vinnarick

Email: michael_vinarcik@email.msn

Technical Committee Chair -

Norman Mayer

Email: normanmayer@juno.com

Small Stores - George W. Allen

Email: cdra@juno.com

A new airship *America* (Model 2) was designed and built in France by the American Melvin Vanniman and was delivered to 'Camp Wellman' at Virgohamna in the summer of 1907. Bad weather conditions delayed the attempt of the *America 2* until Sept. 2, 1907. Shortly after take-off, technical difficulties forced Wellman to make an emergency landing on a glacier and the airship was returned to Paris for modifications. It was not until August 15, 1909, that Wellman was able to try again. A few hours into the flight, the *America* lost its 'equilibrator' (drag rope) and was forced to make a landing at sea. A small ship was able to rescue the crew and salvage the airship. It was the end of Wellman's Polar expeditions. The next year he would try to cross the Atlantic in the *America Mod. 3*." - Herman Van Dyk

EDITORIAL

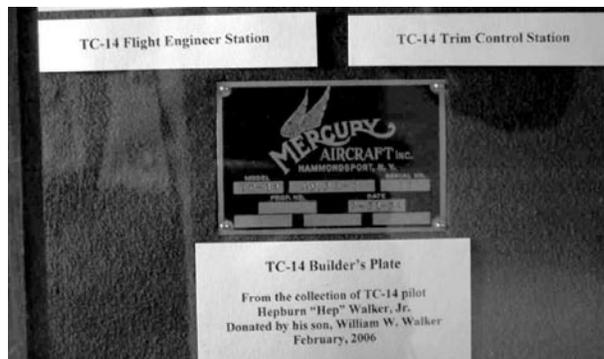
R. G. Van Treuren, rgvant@juno.com
Box 700, Edgewater FL 32132-0700

This issue marks the first anniversary of your “new” TNB production team (no one is under 55). Speaking for Dave and myself, we appreciate your encouraging words, e-mails and photo-rich submissions. You’re keeping the quality high – and let’s keep it going!

NAA Secretary **Margret M. Hinrichsen** kindly donated her large collection of airship photographs, manuals and books to the NMNA via the H.C. Chair. Allowing us the privilege of scanning the material before it is entered into the Pensacola library was most useful; in fact, it immediately led to the L-8 history in this issue being more complete.

Jim Hughes wrote to say he appreciated the K-72 case being made public; no one else seemed to be interested. If anything, one e-mail message suggested it didn’t matter if an airship sank a sub (!) That got me to worrying – and led me to add, to my History report, my own Father’s HTA ASW story (see page 26).

Our efforts to preach the LTA word should extend beyond the choir's pews, yea, even unto the valley of... the disbelievers, that is to say HTA oriented museums and periodicals. Recently **Bill Walker** decided one item from his Dad's collection, the last known remaining piece of the Army-Navy airship TC-14, could be entrusted to a non-Navy museum. A recent *Air & Space Smithsonian* article devoted to Glen Curtiss visited his hometown of Hammondsport, New York, but the resulting article made no illustration of Curtiss' LTA work. It left the reader doubtful there is even a museum there. Indeed there is, but in spite of its rich LTA heritage, the Curtiss Museum seems to have little demand for that side of his story. Their gift shop won't carry **Jim Shock's** mostly-Curtiss Army Airship book, nor do they want to sell the Curtiss Sparrowhawk-dominated DVD, *THE FLYING CARRIERS*. However, reflecting their close ties with Mercury Aircraft, museum director Trafford L-M Doherty not only accepted Mr. Walker's donation of the TC-14 manufacturer's tag, but they built a small display around it (photo).



Next time you're upstate NY in the Keuka Lake area, drop by and encourage them to expand on their LTA heritage. Their team built an entire ‘Jenny’ airplane from scratch – how much easier it would be to build a ‘B’ ship car.

Milking the LZ-129 cash cow this 70th anniversary finds TV producers playing Herb Morrison’s record while showing the spliced-together newsreels. (See pg. 25) I decided to turn tables on them. Again thanks to Mr. Walker, I have managed to put his Dad’s radio recording made aboard the USS *Macon* in 1933 together with *Macon* footage. The result is a rather interesting and positive audio-visual mix. In keeping with ‘Hep’ Walker’s wish, I also (finally) got around to putting together a collection of USS *Akron* footage not on the other DVDs. Hopefully the folks from Germany’s der Spiegel TV that contacted us last winter about a *Macon* show will appreciate the accomplishments rather than the crashes.

Maybe not. If life were fair, there would be no questionable cases like the K-14’s loss. Good news is, there is still plenty of time for you to register for the Reunion! Let’s talk it over then. See you at Lakehurst, - R G Van T

THE NOON BALLOON Volunteer Staff

Contributing Editors: **NAA Members**
Masthead Artwork: **Bo Watwood**
www.navyblimps.tripod.com
Editor: **Richard G. Van Treuren**
www.airshiphistory.com
Publisher: **David R. Smith**
www.gyzep.com

View From The Top: PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

My dear friends in the Naval Airship Association (NAA), this is probably the next-to-last time that I will get to address you in this current issue of "The Noon Balloon" (TNB) since my term of office will be over with the next issue, #75. In fact, if I don't hurry up and get this copy to our editor, I may "miss the boat" altogether.

My two years as President have literally whizzed by at warp speed. Part of that has been our problem since my wife, Phyllis, and I have been consumed with moving our household from the lovely retirement community of Charlestown on the outskirts of Baltimore and dividing it between our two homes in Naples, FL, and Powhatan, VA. Now we have established ourselves as residents of Florida and we qualify as bona fide "Snowbirds" in that we spend 7 to 8 months in Florida and the other 4 to 5 months in Virginia. To help compound the issue, Phyllis broke her hip almost exactly a year ago (the end of May 2006). It was patched together with bolts, screws and plates but left her with one leg 1_ inches shorter than the other. In February of this year she had a total hip replacement to get rid of the temporary hardware and to restore her leg to the proper length and is now just about "back to battery." Our latest move from FL to VA was completed a week ago.

On the other end of the spectrum, NAA activities have kept us busy. Your elected officers and other volunteers make up the Executive Council (EC) of the Naval Airship Association and we have met our scheduled goal of meeting every six months to hash out our problems and plan for the future. We met in March 2006 in Sarasota, FL, and were hosted by our now departed "Mr. Ed" Higginson, formerly the editor of TNB; again we met in October of 2006 at the "Dome Home" of our current TNB Editor in Edgewater, FL; and in March 2007 we gathered at the home of Naval Aviation, the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, FL. The council meetings have been invaluable in helping us to assess where we have been and where we are going. Mainly we have used those meetings to plan for the future and, in particular, for our upcoming reunion in Lakehurst/Toms River.

My term as President of NAA has been marked with a several events of sadness. Just a few days after our last reunion our long-time Treasurer and our friend, John Kane, passed away in his sleep. Several months later the former editor of

TNB passed away after a long term illness, which forced him to retire from the editorship of our newsletter. The entire two years has been marked with the death of many of our long time and faithful members, which has served to make us all more aware that airshipmen of World War II vintage are a "dying breed."

On the bright side, it has been an exciting journey. We saw Pete Brouwer "appear out of the woodwork" to become our new treasurer and we have been pleased beyond our wildest dreams with the new look of TNB, the work of our new production team. A stout and hearty Bravo Zulu to Pete, as well as Dave and Rich for their splendid work. I want to thank our recent past President, Norm Mayer, who has always helped so much in keeping us going in the right direction, and to George Allen who has continually prompted me about what needed to be done so that nothing slipped into the cracks.

My thanks to the Executive Council members who have traveled from afar at their own expense to attend our EC meetings – Margaret Hinrichsen from Arizona, Norm Mayer from Virginia, and Vice President Don Shorts from Illinois. And thanks to our Florida troops – NAMF Liaison Mort Eckhouse from Pensacola, TNB Editor Rich Van Treuren from Edgewater, NMNA Liaison Joe Hajcak from Pensacola, Treasurer Pete Brouwer from Port St. Lucie, and Small Stores Manager George Allen from Jacksonville. Without the faithful help of all of you we would be "dead in the water."

Also, the thanks of all of us goes to Walter Ashe who once again chaired our Nominating Committee which has selected an outstanding slate of candidates to lead the NAA into the future [*see page 11*]. The one huge highlight (and "Swan Song") of each NAA President's tour of duty is the biennial reunion which will occur September 4 through 6, 2007 in Lakehurst and Toms River, NJ. There is no way that a reunion can happen unless someone close to the scene steps up to chair the Reunion Committee. Rick Zitarosa, the Historian of the Navy Lakehurst Historical Society, is the man. I had never met Rick until about a year ago at the Motel in Toms River which will be our reunion headquarters. Rick has done an absolutely outstanding job of making the arrangements for our gathering in September. Thank you, Rick.

See you all at NAA Reunion 2007. Don't miss it!
- Bob Ashford, NAA President

Naval Airship Association Reunion
Tues-Thurs September 4, 5 and 6, 2007
Toms River, (Lakehurst), New Jersey



Quality Inn, Toms River, New Jersey

Preliminary Schedule:

- Sept 4 -Tuesday Afternoon – NAA Executive Council Meeting. Registration opens. 1800: Welcome aboard cocktail party, heavy hors d'oeuvres, cash bar.



-Wednesday, Sept 5 – NAA business meeting at 9:00 AM followed by Bus trip tour of NAES Lakehurst. (See page 13) Lunch at the base.

A reminder about Lakehurst: Foreign Nationals are not allowed on tours of the base. At time of this writing, military ID and/or a picture driver's license or picture ID are usually required to gain access to NAES Lakehurst. Depending on Security Conditions, Social Security Numbers of all visitors *may* be needed as well. In any case, these are handled through the Base Security department and no outsiders see the information. We will only ask for this information if it is absolutely required. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause, but security conditions at Lakehurst are very stringent since 9/11/01.



Late Afternoon Sept 5: Memorial Service at the Cathedral of the Air



- Thursday, Sept 6 - Bus trip to appropriate establishment(s) in Atlantic City for refreshment, pleasure and Financial Planning

(World - famous Boardwalk, below)



- Thursday Evening Sept. 6 – No host cocktail party followed by Reunion Banquet.

Attached to this issue is a Registration Form. This is your last chance to sign up; do it now! Life is uncertain; Lakehurst, like all bases, is subject to closure with a change in Government. We might not get the chance to meet here again! Please sign up as soon as possible so that you will not miss out on the Quality Inn room discount.

Hope to see you all at **NAA Reunion 2007!**

Pigeon Cote

Dan Brady reflected on the loss of **Bob Shannon**: “I flew with Bob on most of the last flying wind tunnel flights, the #559 at Lakehurst. This was the joint project with Princeton. He was command pilot. I was the crew chief. We also ground handled together. Whenever we had bad weather, winds snow etc **Walter Ashe** would have us put the ship into the barn. We were a team. Bob Shannon was in my estimation the most cool, calm and best airship aviator that I ever crewed for. He was the command pilot of the last airship flight I at Lakehurst. In the video I gave to [Chapter Five] in one shot the 559 is making low flights over hangar one for observation of the flying wind tunnel. Bob is at the controls and it shows all the movement necessary to airship control.



Bob was really liked by all who served with him and in the inner circles who partied with him, he was nicknamed “The Silver Fox.” It was with great sorrow to hear of his passing. I really lost a great friend, and the NAA lost a great member.” (Photos from Bob’s daughter Claudia) Ω

Robert F. Martin, who is patiently waiting for anyone to respond to his request for photos and info requested in previous issues, sent a clipping from the *NY Times*. It contained a photo of a large crowd taken from an airship, during a July 14th celebration, this one in 1911. It looks to be one iteration of the *Adjutant-Vincenot*, the craft that a few years later actually made the first air-raid of World War One. (No, not a Zeppelin.) The article describes an art exhibit at Paris’ *Jeu de Paume* entitled “Historic Moments and Their Representations.” Ω



Responding to the History Committee Chairman's phone call (which had resulted from a local author looking for information on Florida air crashes and contacting our treasurer), member **Ronald P. Stevens**, a 2nd class Sonarman at the time, wrote about his 5K experience, not in the published histories: "Thanks for the clipping... I was unable to find anyone who remembers the incident so I'll just tell you what I remember. On 05 DEC 57 at 0930 we lifted off for a routine ASW flight. At 1700 we started back when we got a contact on our MAD gear. We had to stay and check it out but it didn't amount to anything. At 1900 we started back again when both engines stopped. After several attempts to restart the engines the batteries went dead. I remember how quiet it was free ballooning over the Atlantic 60 miles off the Georgia coast. We saw some lights on the horizon so we fire our flares. In a few minutes there were about 10 or 12 ships below us. They were the *Forrestal* and her escorts, and the *Essex* and her escorts. After communicating with the *Essex* by blinker light for a few minutes, the *Forrestal* and her escorts departed. After discussing the situation for a while the men in charge decided to try and hook us to the fantail of the *H. G. Ellison* (DD-864) and be towed to the shore. We did come down and hook up with our lines, but just as we did a gust of wind came up and blew us all over the ship. They cut us loose and we floated back up. After a while they decided the only thing to do was to ditch. After letting some helium out we floated down to the water. When we hit the water we sailed along like a sailboat for about 5 or ten minutes. The *Ellison* had sent out their whaleboats and they were right beside us. After coming to a reasonable stop we got the order to evacuate. One by one we jumped from the starboard engine right into the whale boat without getting wet. I was the

third of eight crewmen to get off. Only one crewman got wet. Just as **Billy Pembelton** was going to jump, the wind picked up and the engine went from five to twenty feet high. So instead of jumping into the boat he jumped into the water, but was picked up immediately. The last man off was LCDR **Tom Madagin**. He pulled the zipper and then jumped into a whale boat, but the zipper didn't go all the way. All of the blimp sank except the tail section which stood up in the air about 30 feet. The *Ellison* had to shoot it down as they thought it would be a navigation hazard. We spent the night on the *Ellison* and we transferred the next morning by highline to the USS *Essex* (CVA9). We pulled into Mayport Florida about 1700 on 5 DEC 57. There was a lot of media and we stayed there for about 1.5 hours. We were back at Glynco at 2100. About a month later we had to fill out a lot of forms and answer a lot of questions to people from Washington. I never did know why the engines stopped. (Bermuda Triangle?) I got out of the Navy 3 months later so I don't know if there was anything new on that or not. I really enjoyed my tour of duty in ZP-2. I was only there for 17 months but I racked up over 840 hours in LTA. It's funny but.. the transfer from the *Ellison* to the *Essex* by highline officially designated me an 'old salt'..." **Ω**

Franklin Schroer (dutchschroer@juno.com) e-mailed our treasurer: "I saw your entry in the log of VP Navy. I was a member of ZP-1 from March 1951 to Sept. 1952. I was the CPO in charge of the HTA aircraft (F6F, SNJ & SNB) and have many favorable memories of the squadron. I did not have any ground handling duties or experience until March of '52 when we were deployed to Roosevelt Roads, PR for ConVex III. Some of the squadron had already gone back to Weeksville when a blimp crew sighted a disappearing radar contact, of a Russian Sub (?). We chased that around for more than a week and they got short of Chiefs for ground handling. One day they said "Schroer, you have the ground handling duty tomorrow". I really didn't know what I was doing as I had never handled the lines during an event, but I muddled through and had to take a regular shift until I left the squadron. I have attached a photo of our CPOs and a Flight Crew list for 1951. I don't suppose any were left when you were there but you can check. CPOs: back row: Henry AMC; Mizveski ADC; Kline AMC; Dozier ADC; Nicholson TMC; Peet AMC; Oversltreet AKC; Berry AMC; Streeter BMC. Front row; Schroer ADC; Davis ADC; Hash ADC; Mossman AEC; Verbonic ADC; Caudel ALC; Kinser AMC, Beyer ADC (Leading Chief) We also

had a BMC who had lost his right hand in a docking accident and was the permanent OD but I do not remember his name.

After I left the squadron I went through TD B school and changed my rating to TD. I retired in 1961 as TDCM." **Ω**



Dan Toleno e-mailed, "A few of us who served in Airship units at NAS Glynco and NAS Lakehurst from 1958 thru 1961 were happy to find out that there would be a reunion at Lakehurst in September. Since the announcement we have encouraged many people to attend. Thus far we have made contact with **Ed Pietrzak, Warren Winchester, Don Davidson, Ben Hughes, Don Champlin, Taylor Sanford, Ben Fish, Stan McNaab, Joe Hajcak, Dave Venn, Bill Hunter, WW "Woody" Smith, Ernie Anderson, Bill O'Hea, Jim Brodes, Chief Brewster, John Chilcoat and George Mulligan.** Many of these people will attend and the rest will try.

~~Hope~~ that others might read about our efforts in the Noon Balloon, contact us and make an effort to attend. We are particularly hoping to hear from Phil Dawson, Paul Platt, George Bruen, Jim Christopher, Ed Mayfield, Pat Henry, Dave Abner, Dick Sirch, Gerry Macomber, Lee Roach, Charlie Davis, Walt Thomas, and "Red" Claussen. If anyone has an email address for these people or others from the 1958-1961 era, please contact me at torptoleno@aol.com, or 619-469-6412... For the September Reunion, I am putting together a scrapbook of pictures and articles I collected from 1958 thru 1961..." Ω

Robert C. Muller of Bidwell, Ohio wrote, "While reviewing some WWII photos I came across this picture I thought the Noon Balloon readers might be interested to see. I took this picture from the flight deck of the USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) as we came up the Hudson River to dock. We were there with the 7th Fleet to celebrate Navy Day on October 27, 1945. My duty at that time was Air Navigator with

Torpedo Squadron VTN-55. All of the Air Navigators were ex-LTA pilots that had been reassigned to Air Navigation school following the surrender of Germany and the end of the U-boat threat. We had never seen a "M" ship before so this was quite a sight for us." Ω

Mort Eckhouse wrote, "I sure did enjoy the NB. It was an eye opener to get a "White Hat's" perspective on the *Snow Bird's* journey. It was also quite a surprise to see the Nan Ship photo on page 18. If I read the BuNo correctly (135446) she was MY ship ca. '55-56. I had CAC 3, inherited it from **Jack Piper**, and the ship had JG's stripes on the prop spinners. At the time she was the only sonar equipped (except for ZX-11) blimp. Ah, the memories!" Ω

New member **Marc Frattasio** AW1 USNR-R, reports his VP-92 book is ready. "Although this is primarily a book about fixed-wing maritime patrol aviation, I did manage to throw in quite a bit of LTA material including many blimp photos." (See Fred Morin's review, pg. 23) The primary way to obtain a copy of this book is to order one on-line, using your credit card, at <http://www.lulu.com/content/757344> or by sending a check for \$24.50 to Marc J. Frattasio, PO Box 30, Pembroke MA 02359. Ω



Renewing member **Mark Lutz** stopped by the editor's domicile for a fruitful visit. He shared many things from his Dad's collection, including this impossibly rare photo of mail being delivered by wartime blimp - in a late-model, stern-clamshell door K-ship. Mark writes, "I remember Dad said I wasn't to show it to anyone. The back of the photo has a stamp saying something like: Not for release by order of The Chief, Aeronautics. Dad said the Navy didn't want to give the idea that Blimps were available for mail delivery. I've wondered if maybe the Navy didn't want to give the idea that Blimps had so little to do they had time for mail delivery. Blimps were rather expensive



according to my father. Dad said the Navy made a big deal about how expensive the Airship was each time he signed one out as skipper, and that they wanted it back intact, and he was personally responsible for that Airship. My guess is the mail-drop photo was taken in a NAS Santa Ana Airship in 1945 as Dad was made a Command Pilot before he was transferred to NAS Santa Ana.... Dad's logbook corresponds to 2 of the 1943 night radar contacts in the Richmond records you sent me a few years ago. Dad reported one such disappearing night radar contact to me. Dad said they marked their best U-boat location estimate with a central flare and then 4 more flares to form a cross, ran bombing runs over both arms of the cross, and stayed on site a while hoping to see some piece of a U-boat, or some oil, or some bubbles come up. Nothing did... Dad had some stories about being sent out to meet up with a Naval task force in the Pacific, and being pleased he flew right over the ships without having to make any corrections. He also described being impressed seeing Destroyers in the Pacific take off from a dead stop, as though

they were motor boats - I suspect he saw this during other flights, probably to record performance of new ships for the Navy. As you know, the Blimps fairly often went out on photo flights (code P) Dad's log shows he made 18 "P" flights from March 1945 through July 1945, all out of Santa Ana. I'm guessing one of these is when the mail-drop was made. Dad said he made a point of making friends with the photographer(s) so he could get prints he wanted. After 26 July 1945 Dad was sent to Hawaii, where he processed paperwork to send Navy men home. In December 1945, he was made a full Lieutenant and discharged from the Navy. In late 1949, Dad took a job in Madison, WI, where he lived for the rest of his life. He was in the Navy reserves in Madison until 1955..." **Ω**

John Ferguson not only e-mailed some of his ZPG-2 photos, but printed and mailed them as well, and when we had trouble scanning some, he had a big print made of Bu No 126717 in Bermuda in '61. John writes (in part): "We had been on a mission to Wallops Island to be an airborne radar platform for a missile shoot out in the Atlantic. After they were through with us, we were returning to Lakehurst and over Cape May, N.J. we encountered a snow storm. We contacted Lakehurst and found they were socked in so we were diverted to Bermuda... we arrived early the next morning and the Air Force inquired as to our fuel status as it was going to take a while to get the ground handling crew there from the NAS. We informed them we could use some fuel and they arranged for us to pick up 1000 lbs. They inquired if this was enough to last us until we landed - we said that was plenty (we could throttle back to burn only 75-100 lbs. an hour). We had to stay there 5 or 6 days before we could return to Lakehurst. Can you imagine being in Bermuda with only winter flight suits and no toiletries along... I had arrived at ZP-3 in August 1958 from VR-3 at McGuire AFB for duty. I was sent to LTA school at Hangar #5... I was assigned to CAC 306, where I flew the entire 3 years I was with ZP-3, as flight rigger. Shortly after LTA school the squadron deployed to Gitmo for 2 months operations...One [local] mission was to refuel from an aircraft carrier. We managed to pick up the bag of fuel from the carrier but the bag swung so hard it hooked on one of the aft station cargo doors and busted it...we continued on patrol and during the night our MAD antenna broke loose and was swinging below the props...one of the crew managed to pull it in and we made our way to Glynco..." **Ω**

History Committee member **Robert E. Hunter** writes: Not long ago, I was stunned to learn of the "Snow Bird" (ZPG-2 BuAer No. 141561) gondola's imminent disposal in Pensacola. Unbeknownst to me (and probably the majority of Naval Airship Association members), the National Museum of Naval Aviation apparently had chosen to junk the aft two-thirds of this aeronautical relic following its decision to restore the car's forward section. Given that the "Snow Bird" was the only surviving ZPG-2 car and the embodiment of the basic Nan-ship design, I am appalled that the NMNA thought it best to destroy most of this artifact 50 years after the ship's record-setting flight of March 1957. Was the Naval Airship Association consulted about this? If so, when, and in what manner? Who exactly made this decision, and according to what criteria?

The remainder of the car (the section being scrapped) reportedly was "in terrible condition," but I wonder if that is a relative term. After all, the entire car was not that dilapidated when removed from Lakehurst in 1992. The "Snow Bird" then spent over a decade and a half outside at Pensacola, exposed to the elements with only minimal protection, so its physical deterioration became a self-fulfilling prophecy. The decision makers also reasoned that most of the car was "gutted of anything useful" and "not practical...to restore," yet those responsible said that the same was true for the cockpit section *which they did restore!* I recognize that the Museum may not have felt they currently had the space or funds to fix the entire car, but their supposed logic that justified destroying most of the gondola doesn't fit: either the entire car was useless, or it *all* had the potential for future restoration.

As you know, I am quite sympathetic for personal and professional reasons to the idea of preserving the last of the first production (ZP2N/ZPG-2) Nan-ships, and I simply cannot accept that the best option was for this rare artifact to be thrown away like a broken washing machine. This ship, and the men who served aboard her, deserved better. Selling the "Snow Bird" for scrap may very well have been the *easiest* path, but I think those involved owed it to the history of Navy LTA and future generations to explore other possibilities. I can't imagine the U.S. Air Force Museum chopping the nose off the legendary B-17 "Memphis Belle" and junking the rest of its fuselage in this day and age. In fact, I think very few museums would now treat *the only remaining example of an aircraft type* as disgracefully as the NMNA has. Would the Museum have behaved similarly if the object in question had been a Convair R3Y-1/2 Tradewind (of which only 11 were built) or a McDonnell F3H Demon (of which only 3 remain) rather than a Goodyear ZPG-2 (of which 12 were produced and just 1 was left)? There is also a huge difference between deciding not to restore the whole car but keeping it in storage (or donating it to another group which might have the interest or ability to restore the remainder) and trashing the rest. (It would seem to me that if the NMNA could restore the forward section, then

someone eventually could have gotten the rear two-thirds of the car in presentable order. Even if most of the "Snow Bird" had been mounted against a wall, an exhibit that focused on the aft-compartment operations would have made a pretty impressive display!) The "Snow Bird" was also a record-breaking aircraft, much like the Douglas D-558-1 Skystreak or Lockheed P2V-1 Neptune *Truculent Turtle* on display in Pensacola. Given such historical importance, the entire "Snow Bird" gondola was therefore even more worthy of preservation. For all these reasons, the Museum's narrow-minded and parochial treatment of the only surviving ZPG-2 car went against the spirit if not the letter of just about every custodial standard I know.

I have visited Pensacola on more than one occasion, and have generally been impressed at the variety and quality of artifacts on display at the National Museum of Naval Aviation. The Naval Airship Association and the NMNA have accomplished much together, including the K-47 and L-8 restorations. These commendable successes make the Museum's recent treatment of the "Snow Bird" that much harder to fathom. Such disposals happened regularly in the last century, but curators and restoration staff are more enlightened in their approach than they were 50 or even 25 years ago. To me, this deplorable episode raises troubling questions about the Museum's stewardship of LTA history. If this is how the NMNA treated the last remaining example of a Navy ASW airship, what is its attitude toward other LTA artifacts? When de-accessioning other historical items, will it choose to destroy such materials rather than make an effort to find another good home for them?

This unfortunate incident also raises the question as to whether more positive action should now be taken to preserve the only surviving N-ship car, that of the ZPG-3W (BuAer No. 144243) at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. While the car officially belongs to the National Air and Space Museum, it appears that the Smithsonian has no immediate plans to restore this aircraft. Perhaps another institution would be willing to undertake such a project, much as other Smithsonian Affiliates have done. In the past, schoolchildren donated pennies to support great American monuments. Would it be that hard to ask airship enthusiasts, veterans, or relatives of those who worked on or served aboard the blimps to raise a few thousand dollars for the cause? Corporate assistance may also be available. While it seems that we can no longer expect to save the entire "Snow Bird" for posterity, there may still be a chance that we can keep her sister ship intact for subsequent generations, and in so doing provide a more fitting tribute to her crews, the company that built her, the naval airship service, and the future potential of lighter-than-air flight. **Ω**

(Mr. Hunter is a historian who has twice served as a Guggenheim Fellow at the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum.)

TREASURER'S STRONGBOX

Congratulations! Great job! Everyone's dues are paid! Your response and donations have been exceptional. We had a good response to the renewal letter and with a few phone calls, the remainder of the list was checked. Sorry to say, some phones and e-mails were disconnected, and letters returned. All in all, everyone is accounted for.

We can also report that our total NAA membership is 866. We have 687 regular members and 179 honorary members. Since January of 2007, we now have 40 new members. Thanks to our regular members efforts, gift memberships, web page and advertising in the VFW and Legion magazines by George Allen. If anyone you know is interested in joining, the application is located on our web site: www.naval-airships.org

You will be receiving your dues renewal notice the first week of November for the year 2008. (Membership expires: December 31, 2007) We have a few members who are paid for 2008 and beyond. These folks will not receive a notice. Please check with me if you have any questions pertaining to your status. There are no longer dues reminder forms in The Noon Balloon.

WELCOME ABOARD - NEW MEMBERS!

Hall, Charles, Brookfield, IL; Davidson, Donald, Stuart, FL; Hughes, Ben, Charlotte, NC; Lynch, Maureen M. Glens Falls, NY; Adams, Paul A, Las Vega, NV; Weiss, Len, Jackson, NJ; Grech, Christopher V., Moss Landing, CA; Geoghegan, John, Kentfield, CA; Applegate, Henry, Pennsauken, NJ; Szoboszlay, Zoltan, San Jose, CA; Bowser, David R., Windsor, PA; Blagbrough, Norman, Hatfield, PA; Gillis, Elizabeth A., San Juan, PR; Mellberg, John, High Point, NC; Lutz, Mark, Minneapolis, MN; Albi, Michael F., Gresham OR; Stinnett, James A., Palmyra, NJ; McClung, Scott A. Ellicott City, MD; Hochstetler, Ronald D., Arlington, VA; Rolander, Bertil W. Spartanburg, SC; LeCompte, Gary, Hurlock, MO; Jones, Stan, Murrieta, CA; Halke, Peter W., Blackwood,

NJ; Champlin, Don G., Irvine, CA; Clark, Ernest W., Brockton, MA; Munn, George L. Brick, NJ; Jackson, Max B., Donthan, AL; Yiin, Philip, Malaysia; Partridge, Rowan, Queensland, Australia; Bock, Juergen, Germany; Weigand, Edna, Irvington, NJ; Jablonski, Carl S., Beachwood, NJ; Yates, Charles W. Jr., Naples, FL; Sullivan, Gerald E., Tomah, WI; Platt, Paul, Plymouth Meeting, PA; Jisi, Christopher, Whitestone, NY; Clough, Philip E, Waupaca, WI; Dubois, Ricardo S., Prairieville, LA; Dean, William J. Sr., Hamersville, OH.

DONATION LIST - 5 JAN thru 17 APR 2007

\$5 - \$49

POULIOT, LEONARD B.
SMITH, DAVID R.
ROSENBERG, PAUL
HORAN, HELEN M.
JENNISON, MYRA
GANTZ, BEVERLY S.
JAMES, DON
KARADIN, LAURENCE
MOFFIE, MARVIN
SPARKS, BOB
FIKE, RALPH "DICK"
YULE, FRANKLIN J.
OERZEN, ROBERT L.
SNIDER, WENDELL
WHEELER, JEAN F.
LINKENHOKER, WILL W.
MCDOUGALL, CHARLES
PIETRZAK, EDWARD
SHRIVER, CHARLES E.
SORRENTINO, ROBERT L.
Troxell, MRS. SHARON
WALL, KATHRYN
KIEFER, ROBERT
FOULKE, ROBERT P.
VAN NOSTRAND, ARTHUR
GORDON, NINA J.
ADAMS, PAUL A.
SAPP, CHARLES 'CHUCK'
ADAMS, GORDON T.
BLENN, JESSE
BRAUN, RAYMOND F.
COATS, BARRY W.
LINDSAY, DAN J.
LILLEY, JOHN T.
MAHNE, FRANK
FREER, CHARLES H.
KEENE, ROBERT W.
KOSCICA, MARIAN A.
SCHERER, RUSSELL J.

MARTINI, MARIO
HARVEY, WALT
CONOVER, DON
YANEY, JOHN C.
VINN, DAVID J.
VON FECHT, KENT C.
WALLACE, REUBEN J.
(IN MEMORY OF
NELLINE, MYERS)
FRAZEN, BILL H.
ZIDBECK, WILLIAM E.
BIEDEBACK, DAVID H.
CLARK, ERNEST W.
HALKE, PETER W.
NASSIFF, DON
PFEIFER, MATTHIAS
ROLLANDER, BERTIL W.
McNAMEE, PETER J.
MUNN, GEORGE L.
VINARCIK, MICHAEL J.
PATRONE, ROBERT T.
ROBECK, ARNOLD
COLEMAN, GARY G.

\$50 - \$99

KLINGBERG, FRANCES
SPANGLER, JOHN H.
VAUGHN, JOHN W.
ROCHE, JOHN R. 'JACK'
AZZARETTO, EVELYN
'EPP'

\$100-\$499

SMITH, DAVID R.
GANTZ, BEVERLY S.
JAMES, DON

On Behalf of the NAA,
Thank you all! See you
at Lakehurst! -

PETER F. BROUWER

**NAA EXECUTIVE
COUNCIL MEETING**

6 MARCH 2007 NMNA PENSACOLA
CALL TO ORDER 0915

PRESENT:

P-CAPT BOB ASHFORD
VP- LCDR DON SHORTS
SEC- BETTY BROUWER (ACTING)
TREAS-PETER BROUWER
PP-NORMAN MAYER
NMNA-JOE HAJCAK
NAMF-MORT ECKHOUSE
SM STORES- GEORGE ALLEN

SECY-
MINUTES OF OCT 06 WERE PASSED
TREAS-
CHECKING \$9014, MM \$29,140.05,
REUNION \$7556, report filed.
USS *Akron* stamp sales 1/03 through 4/19
\$2,455.75

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1. VP lead discussion on membership and submitted a idea for a flyer to be sent to military oriented magazines advertising NAA
2. ZP squadron history program for purchasing same. No history purchases without prior Council approval.
3. Small stores selling caps, patches and postage stamps
4. Sec'y to coordinate obits and maintain file for Memorial service..
5. USS *LOS ANGELES* plaque to be placed in airship museum in Freidrichshafen, Germany
6. Briefs by CAPT Bob Rasmussen, museum director thanking NAA for their continued support and CAPT Ed Ellis from NAMF
7. Bank of America account set up for reunions.
8. Nominating Committee established: Walt Ashe, Chmn, Bob Keiser, Dick Crosby, Ed Kasner
9. TNB name change, tabled.

MOTION: The Council voted to support a membership price increase to \$20. Motion to be made at the membership meeting in Lakehurst.

MEETING ADJOURNED 1500, NEXT MEETING SEP IN Lakehurst. NJ

Submitted: Betty Brouwer (acting)
Condensed for TNB by George Allen

NEW OFFICERS NOMINATED

Walt Ashe and the committee has the following nominations:

President - Herman Spahr
Vice-Pres. - C. C. Moore
Treasurer - Pete Brouwer
Secretary - Margaret Hinrichson

Reference: PAST PRESIDENTS

1985-1991.....M.H.EPPES.CAPT USN
1991-1995.....G.W.ALLEN..CDR USN
1995-1997.....J.A.FAHEY.....CDR USN
1997-1999.....L.W.PROST.....CDR USN
**1999-
2001.....H.E.BIEDEBACH.....CDR USN
2001-2001.....F.N.KLINGBERG....CDR USN

2001-2003....H.E.BIEDEBACH....CDR USN
2003-2005.....N.J. MAYER.....CIV
2005-pres.....R.L.ASHFORD.....CAPT USN

** W.W. MOORE ELECTED
/RESIGNED(HEALTH)

*** FRANK KLINGBERG DIED (CANCER)

Editor's Note: If does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that, by renewing one's membership now, before the vote is taken, you'll be helping out NAA, making our treasurer's job more even, saving having to send out a renewal notice at year's end, and you'll save the five bucks besides!

SHORE ESTABLISHMENTS



Above: Crew of U.S. Navy MZ3A airship #167811 paused at Lakehurst after flying most of the day in unseasonably warm temperatures.

As part of their status in the LTAV (Lighter Than Air Vehicle) Unit, they decided to go for some unique identifications on the backs of their individual cranial gear. LIMA- Lieutenant Commander Brian Stephens, USNR; TANGO- Lieutenant Commander Robert Pudlo, USNR; ALPHA- Jim Dexter, Senior Airship Pilot ISSI Corp.; VICTOR- Senior Chief Petty Officer Dave Dickson, USN. Ship's callsign is "Waterbug 811" individual callsigns are "Lima Waterbug, Tango Waterbug, etc."

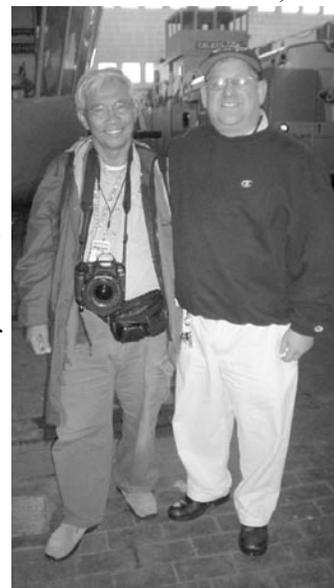


Hydrogen powered Toyota and Ford 20-passenger shuttle bus were joined later by a GM "hydro-generator" auto at the Hindenburg crash site [historic hangar #1 in b.g.].

Hydrogen powered vehicles made a "public debut" in "Nor Easter" winds at Lakehurst April 16 for a New York *Times* article on hydrogen and the stigma remaining from the *Hindenburg* disaster. The *Hindenburg* crash site seemed like a good place to show that, under the right circumstances, the gas which proved so unsuitable and dangerous for lighter-than-air travel in the legendary airship disaster can, in fact, be used as a viable, available fuel for vehicles in the near-future with very little modification. The full story will appear in New York *Times* [29 APR 07]. (My own take, when

interviewed, was to say that it would be a very good fuel and I will certainly own a hydrogen car someday, but it is the lifting gas of last resort for lighter-than-air craft and all the postulating about the *Hindenburg* outer cover flammability being responsible for the disaster is the stuff of "cranks.")

During the initial shooting for the story, the photographer kept moving around the room quickly, grabbing dozens of "shots" for the *Times* article... was none other than Mr. Dith Pran, legendary survivor of the "The Killing Fields" of Pol Pot following American and French evacuation from Cambodia. Pran was very kind and very humble. And so, in historic Hangar #1 it became my good fortune to have my photo taken with legendary news photographer Dith Pran.



We had a turnout of over 200 people at the *Hindenburg* crash site to mark the 70th Anniversary of the disaster, May 6 1937. Among the more noted guests on hand were: Siegfried "Sig" Geist, a good friend and LTA supporter, whose Father helped build the *Hindenburg* and LZ130 in Friedrichshafen; Mrs. Mary Alice Dolan Noone, granddaughter of J. Burtis Dolan who was killed in the *Hindenburg* disaster; Chery Ganz, Postal Artifacts Curator for the Smithsonian; Lou Prost, former President of the NAA, Navy WWII and postwar LTA pilot; Robert Buchannan, who was a 17-old-civilian line handler and is one of the very last (if not THE last) living ground crew left from the disaster at age 87; and Addison Bain, researcher and author of the controversial IPT "Inflammable Paint Theory" regarding the disaster.

In the meanwhile, I made sure that Addison got his proper due for traveling 1200 miles to be here and he was asked to bring forward the *Hindenburg* Memorial Wreath with Robert Buchannan, Mary Alice Noone and Sig Geist. Lou Prost and I took up the Navy Lakehurst wreath. Everybody had a "positive" experience... we can disagree tomorrow. For the 36 unknowing victims of May 6, 1937, there were no more "tomorrows."

--Rick Zitarosa

Lakehurst (con't): NLHS Newsletter "The Airship" reports the Society received two letters of commendation from senior officers overseeing the new airship effort. Remembering the NMNA *Fly-By* also mentioned the Navy's visit to the Pensacola Museum Library, it is clear that all our historical efforts are doing some good in the real world! Bravo Zulu to the NLHS activists who made it happen. Ω

Moffett Field:

Mercury News reports: "High-tech companies are talking with NASA about paying for the rehabilitation of historic Hangar One and using Moffett Field as a landing strip for company aircraft, NASA officials say.

In one of the scenarios under discussion, a company would take on the cost of rehabilitating the hangar to service some planes there, said Marv Christensen, deputy director of the NASA/Ames Research Center. Christensen declined to name any of the companies or groups because discussions are informal at this stage. A representative of the Mountain View-based search engine company, Google, said the company is not involved with the talks. The Navy has estimated that removing toxic materials from Moffett Field and Hangar One would cost around \$30 million. The Navy has spent more than \$100 million on clean-up projects at Moffett Field and an additional \$78 million has been budgeted for future projects, according to a recent report released by the federal General Accounting Office.

"At this time, the Navy has not been approached by NASA regarding this issue," John Hill, Navy base closing manager for Moffett Field, said in an e-mail. If NASA does receive a formal proposal from a company, Christensen said, that proposal must offer a "pragmatic partnership." "If someone came to us about wanting access to the airfield but they didn't have a technological or synergistic partnership with us, we wouldn't consider it," he said. "It has to be relevant to NASA's mission." Ω

Santa Ana (Tustin):

Oddly enough the blimp hangar you are most likely to see today is the one most likely to disappear soon. One of the former NAS Santa Ana hangars just appeared in another Taco Bell commercial where the excitement caused by a new product supposedly blew the doors' windows out. Evidently, renting it out as a location is not lucrative:

"Tustin OKs Razing WWII-Era Blimp Hangar for Homes" - February 22, 2007 - The giant blimp hangar where military blimps were stored during World War II will be razed to make room for a 2,105 home development. The City Council unanimously approved the move Tuesday, saying other proposals that would have kept the wooden Hangar [Bldg] 29 in place weren't economically viable or properly planned. The development will include homes, businesses, parks and schools. The council rejected proposals for a motocross facility, a culinary complex, shops catering to the elderly and a futuristic airship building center. Those proposals would have preserved the hangar. "Overall, they were very poorly done," Councilman Tony Kawashima said. "They were not specific and didn't comply with our questions." Hangar [building] 29 is one of two blimp shelters on the former Tustin Marine Corps Air Station that are on the National Register of Historic Places. The hangars are more than 1,000 feet long, 300 feet wide and 170 feet high. The hangars were built in 1942 for Navy blimps that prowled the Pacific coast for Japanese submarines. The base later became the Marine Corps' primary West Coast helicopter base, which closed in 1999." The second hangar is being turned into a sports and entertainment complex.

Having said that, we just saw the hangar again, this time in a Ford commercial, with Ford SUVs driven about the deck with the distinctive wooden trusses in the background. One might say it's not unlike the last days on USN LTA: cutting funding, questioning the need for the program, while at the same time demanding more from it. Ω

LONG LINES



The Flying Dutchman: The Mystery of the L-8
By Jeffrey Cook

The story of the U.S. Naval airship L-8 remains to this day one of the most mysterious incidents in the history of lighter-than-air. The L class ships, 22 of which were purchased by the Navy between April 1936 and September 1943, were used primarily as training vessels for new airship crews. Early in the war, however, there were not yet enough of the larger K class ships to fulfill the Navy's desperate need for patrol vessels, and as a result some of the little L's were pressed into temporary service in this role. The most famous of these was L-8, of Airship Squadron 32, stationed at Moffett Field, California.

Construction of L-8 began early in 1941. She was originally intended as a replacement for the NC-10A *Ranger*, which had been sold to the Navy as L-2 on February 1, 1941. But war came before she flew, and upon completion of her envelope (D-166) on January 27, 1942, she was shipped directly to Moffett Field. Erection was completed on February 22, and after several test flights on the 23rd and 25th, she was turned over to the Navy as L-8 on the 26th of that month. [*Opening "stock" photo, top.*]

The L-8 was stationed at Treasure Island, inside the Golden Gate Inlet, during her temporary assignment to patrol duties. Early on August 16, 1942, she was made ready for a routine patrol mission carrying two Mark 17 depth bombs on her external racks. A thick morning dew had made the ship heavy, so assigned mechanic J. Riley Hill was given the Sunday off. Lieutenant Ernest Dewit Cody, USNA '38, and recently commissioned ten-year LTA man Ensign Charles Ellis Adams, a

USS *Macon* vet, performed a heavy rolling takeoff from the Treasure Island parking lot at 0600. [*Additional photos of the L-8 at T.I. are in the NARA collection, but all show her prior to the spring 1942 Navy-wide edict that all designation letters be blotted out. Previously published images – like the one at left – which claim to be from the time of her loss, are not correctly captioned. All photos of her famous last flight clearly show the "blot."*]

At 0750 a message was received from L-8's crew. They gave their position as five miles east of the Farallon Islands, or about 25 miles west of San Francisco. "Investigating suspicious oil slick," the message continued, "stand by." Oil slicks were often seen in that area, and there was always the fear that they meant an enemy sub was lurking somewhere below the waves; Moffett Field waited. But the follow-up message never came. The radio crew at Moffett tried to re-establish contact with L-8 at 0805, but after repeated attempts there was no reply from the little blimp. Two OS2U 'Kingfisher' seaplanes were sent out from Alameda to look for the missing airship. There was a 500-foot cloud ceiling, and the two planes' pilots decided to conduct their search from above the clouds rather than descend beneath them.

In the meantime, L-8 had been seen by several surface vessels which were in the area where the oil slick was sighted. There were a Coast Guard boat, a Navy vessel, and several fishing boats, all of which saw L-8 come down low over the water and drop two smoke flares. (One report mentions the *Albert Gallatin*, later involved with K-34 off Georgia.) One of the boats was so close to the airship that they felt compelled to remove themselves to a safer distance, for fear that she was preparing to drop her bombs! This did not happen, of course, and after dropping the flares, L-8 ascended and flew off into the overcast. It seemed clear to all who saw her that she was under the complete control of her crew during the whole incident. She was last seen by witnesses on the surface vessels sometime between 0900 and 0945. The derelict ship was next sighted at 1020 by a Pan Am clipper. At

1030, she was spotted rising out of the clouds at 2000 feet, well above her 1000 foot ceiling, by one of the OS2U seaplanes which had been sent out to search for her. She was drifting, and clearly not under control. She quickly descended back into the clouds and disappeared again. The L-8 was next seen by two bathers on the beach about a mile from Fort Funston. She drifted slowly in to shore, her engines still and the gondola door open, and two witnesses later swore they saw a crewman aboard. She came down on the beach, so close to the two bathers that they attempted to grab the forward handling lines. But upon striking the sand, one of the airship's depth bombs was knocked off its rack; relieved of the weight, she rose again, back up into the clouds. (This incident was later reported to Moffett Field by telephone—incorrectly, it turned out; for the telephone report stated that the airship had landed at Fort Funston, where two crewmen got off before the airship took off again. It was later confirmed that the "landing" was on the beach a mile from the Fort, and that the "two crewmen" were the two bathers who tried to grab the ship's landing lines. Another source says the depth bomb actually fell on the Pacific Grove gold course.) She was tracked by a Navy photographer who took the photos seen in published articles, though his film was also initially confiscated, like that of bystanders. (His photo below, from the author / NAWC Warminster, has never been published before.)



L-8 finally drifted to earth again in Daly City, a few miles from where she had touched down near Fort Funston. She descended slowly and silently, sagging badly in the middle from the loss of gas during her excursion above pressure

height. At 1100 she made a perfect landing on her landing wheel right in the middle of Bellevue Avenue. Except for the loss of lifting gas, the L-8 was essentially undamaged at this time. Unfortunately, she was quickly attacked by a gang of local firemen who, apparently unfamiliar with the principles of the non-rigid airship, slashed her envelope open with axes in order to reach the "men up inside." By the time Navy officials reached the scene, the envelope was completely deflated, the gondola left resting on its after end. (Photo below courtesy Margret M. Hinrichsen)



The salvage party, sent from Moffett Field, found the car in good condition. The propellers were bent, apparently when the envelope deflated and the car tipped back on its stern. One depth bomb was missing; this was later recovered from the beach near Fort Funston. The motors were stopped, but there was plenty of fuel in the tanks, and the valves to the engines were open. The ignition switches were in the "on" position, and one throttle was full open and the other half open. The gondola door was open, as reported by the bathers near Fort Funston. The radio was found to be in perfect operating condition. The crew's lifejackets were missing, but this was not surprising, since the crew always wore them while flying over water. The inflatable life raft was in its proper place, as was the confidential portfolio. There was no sign of a fire, nor was there any evidence that the car had come into contact with the water. The crew had simply vanished without a trace. The damaged envelope was detached from the fins and gondola, and all were brought back to Moffett Field in trucks. A search was begun for the missing crew of the airship, but their bodies were never recovered. In spite of beach patrols made for a year

afterward, no clue was ever found which might explain what happened to them. They were officially listed as missing and presumed dead.

There are several theories as to what happened to Lieutenant Cody and Ensign Adams, but none has yet adequately explained the mystery. Whatever really happened, it seems to have taken place between the time L-8 was last seen by the surface ships near the Farallon Islands between 0900 and 0945, and the time she drifted to earth near Fort Funston between 1000 and 1015. One possibility is that the airship encountered an enemy submarine after leaving the area where the crew spotted the oil slick. This does not seem likely considering the number of surface ships which were in the area; a surfaced enemy sub would almost certainly have been spotted. If the L-8's crew had been captured or killed by such a submarine, there should have been some record of the incident, unless the submarine was later destroyed by American ships. In any case, there were no bullet holes in the envelope, nor any other evidence that an altercation had taken place.

A more likely explanation is that one of the crew accidentally fell out of the gondola, and that the other also fell out while coming to the assistance of the first. Normally, if both crew members had to leave their seats for any reason, the throttles would first be closed all the way down. That this was not done in L-8 suggests that the engines might have gone dead for some reason, and that one or both crewmen had climbed out onto the outrigger while trying to restart them. Then again, it is possible that the engines had been idling and simply choked out, and that throttles were moved by the Daly City firemen while attempting to rescue anyone who they thought might be aboard. In an interview, J. Riley Hill suggested the engines may have carbon fouled; another report points to carburetor icing.

Both crewmen knew that if their engines failed, the prevailing winds would drive them back towards land, so it is unlikely that they would abandon their ship intentionally, especially since they had two 325-pound depth bombs to drop as ballast if necessary. In any case, they

would not have intentionally abandoned the airship without the life raft.

If both men had fallen from the airship accidentally, they might or might not have survived the fall into the water. If they did, they might have drifted out to sea and died of exposure, or been attacked by sharks which frequent the area. Any of these possibilities would explain why no evidence of their fate was ever found.

None of the above theories, however, explains why the L-8's crew failed to respond to Moffett Field's repeated efforts to contact them between 0805 and the time they left the scene of the oil slick an hour or more later, or why they never followed up on their initial report at 0750. Because no concrete evidence was ever found which might explain the disappearance of the crew of the L-8, the incident was officially classified as "100% Unknown-/Undetermined." Sixty-five years later, the mystery of the "Flying Dutchman" is still just as much a mystery as it was on 16 AUG 1942.



[Ed, Caption: NASM's entire inventory of basic trainer "L" ships were sent aloft in what is probably the largest mass flight of airships in history – ten "Ls" and what appears to be a "K" taking the pictures -- when the MGM crew was at Moffett to film "This Man's Navy." We are going to assume (until we are told differently) that the large tail numbers painted on the lower fins corresponded to their original "L" numbers, meaning this ship maneuvering to appear over the field parade is L-8. Largest number see in any photo is "122" which would jive with the last L-ship built, L-22. This NARA photo via Eric Brothers and David Smith has not been published before.]

Following the salvage of L-8's remains, the envelope was laid out in the USS *Macon's* shed, Moffett's Hangar One, and L-8 was rebuilt. She was the first airship to land at the new Santa Ana Naval Air Station (later Tustin MCAS) on 19 October 1942. Turned over to training after the arrival of the larger K-type patrol ships, L-8 was fitted with a new envelope, D-219, and erection was completed in July, 1943. The ship served for nine months before being dismantled on March 25, 1944.

After the war was over, Goodyear reclaimed those ships commandeered and bought several former L-ships from the Navy. The latter were all stationed at Moffett Field during the war, and included L-8 with the newer envelope. She was not immediately re-erected by Goodyear, the car instead being stored at Wingfoot Lake for the next twenty-odd years. (The D-219 envelope was used to erect *Mayflower IV*, which was completed May 24, 1948.)



The first GZ-20, *America*, at Wingfoot Lake at the time of its first flight, April 25, 1969. The *America* was christened Sept. 23, 1969 at Wingfoot Lake by Mrs. Charles Hooks, Jr. of Houston.

[Ed. caption: This image and caption is lifted from "The Goodyear Airships" by Zenon Hansen, updated by James Shock and David Smith, Airship Int'l Press, 2002. America worked like any other member of the Goodyear fleet.]

In 1966, the L-8 car was taken to Goodyear Aerospace in Akron and rebuilt to GZ-20 standards. Fitted to envelope D-640 of 202,700 cubic feet at the Wingfoot Lake hangar, she became the *America* (N10A). This ship flew from April, 1969 until late 1973. A new GZ-20A envelope was then fitted, D-643, and the "Flying Dutchman" continued flying until mid-

1982, when the N10A *America* was dismantled and replaced by the N3A *America*. Again stored, car serial number C-64 was finally donated to the National Museum of Naval Aviation where, following restoration to L-8 wartime trim, she joined the LTA exhibit in 2007. *[See back cover.]* **Ω**



[Ed. caption: # C-64 aka America was available for viewing at the last NAA Reunion in Pensacola. Shortly afterwards volunteers began work restoring her to its wartime trim and colors. See back cover. NMNA photo via Mort Eckhouse]

Sources:

The major sources of information used in this monograph were two U.S. Navy chronologies of airship accidents during World War II. The first is entitled "Airship Accidents World War II", and was compiled in September, 1945- It reports in detail every airship accident which resulted in the deflation of the bag during WWII. The report on the L-8 was written on 8 August 1943. The second source is entitled "Airship Accident, All West Coast", and was assembled by Moffett Field and forwarded to Lakehurst on March 26, 1944. Two of the photographs herein are from this report, the others as credited.

These two compilations contain several discrepancies regarding the times at which events occurred in the L-8 incident. The first of the above reports is assumed to be the more accurate, as it was based on conversations with the Commanding Officer of Squadron 32 at the time of the accident. Both reports were originally classified "Confidential", but were declassified by authority of OPNAVINST 5513.5A-5 of 10 Dec, 1981. Both were obtained from the Lighter-Than Air library of the Naval Air Warfare Center, Aircraft Division, Warminster Pennsylvania.

The history of the L-8 car and the envelopes to which it was fitted was obtained from *The Goodyear Airships* (Zenon Hansen, 1977, updated by James Shock/David Smith 2005), from Jane's All the World's Aircraft from various years, and from a compilation entitled "Army, Navy, and Commercial Airships Manufactured by Goodyear." The latter, also located in the NAWC LTA library, was assembled by Goodyear in 1966, in part for historian Clyde Schetter, who had requested a record of airship deliveries for a Goodyear company history. J. Gordon Vaeth's *Blimps & U-Boats* and James R. Shock's *US Navy Airships 1915-1962* also contain good accounts of the L-8 mystery.

News from Friedrichshafen Composed and Submitted by Sig Geist, Mendenhall, PA

**Zeppelin Museum Fridrichshafen
Museum Needs New Director**

It was a surprise when during late October 2006 the regional press reported that Zeppelin Museum director Dr. Wolfgang Meighoerner was leaving his post to assume the directorship of the 'Landesmuseum' (state museum) at Innsbruck, Austria by January 01,2007. Its genre bears no resemblance to the Zeppelin Museum. Meighoerner first came to Friedrichshafen in 1989 to accept the position of archivist at Luftschiffbau Zeppelin GmbH. Then in 1991 he was given the temporary post of museum director. It became final in 1993. During his tenure Dr. Meighoerner played a pivotal role in the reconstruction of the 'Hafenbahnhof' building, the conceptualization and execution for the new Zeppelin museum. In between, he contributed richly to the public's knowledge of Zeppelin and Lighter-than-Air history through his many well-staged exhibitions and scholarly writings. He leaves behind an excellent staff, a museum with a world-class reputation that's attracting about 300,000 visitors a year. "For him", he said, "the switch to Innsbruck after 15 years of building up and leading the Zeppelin Museum means a new challenge one more time". Following the city's advertisement for the position of director, it may well be mid-year 2007 before a new director is in place. Until then, an interim team is in charge and the museum's high level of excellence is continuing uninterruptedly.

Museum Receives Rare Award

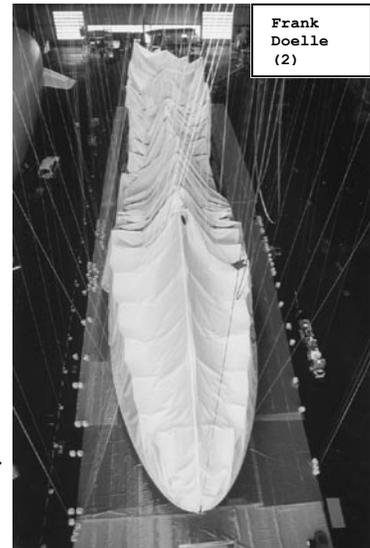
On April 22, 2007 Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen was awarded the rare title "FAI-Recommended-Museum" by the "Federation Aeronautique Internationale" (FAI). Worldwide, only 24 museums have been honored this way. The title is indicative of outstanding collections in aviation and especially valuable exhibitions that further educate the public, but especially the young people in the area of air and space travel. Over the years the Zeppelin Museum has drawn attention to itself through a series of exhibitions on the history of aviation. FAI, founded 1905 in Paris is an international, non-governmental, non-profit organization that worldwide organizes and

coordinates activities in the areas of air and space travel in some 100 member countries.

***Schoener Fliegen-Faszination Zeppelin NT
(Flying in Style - Zeppelin NT Fascination)***

To commemorate the tenth anniversary since a modern day airship, the Zeppelin NT (New Technology) took to the air on September 18, 1997, Friedrichshafen's Zeppelin Museum is staging a special exhibition to let visitors discover the NT airship's fascinating technology. The show is scheduled to run from June 29 - September 30, 2007. Using original parts, models, exhibits and visual media, the temporary exhibition illustrates

how a Zeppelin is built, how it works and what applications it is suited for due to its flight characteristics. Its use as a flying research and measuring station and its special missions, such as diamond prospecting in southern Africa, are an additional theme of the exhibition. Staging effects and 3D



film projection let the visitor experience that slow movement through the air which is typical of the Zeppelin, along with the change in perspective from a height of a thousand feet, the normal operating altitude of the Zeppelin NT. In addition, the use of a webcam lets visitors watch the construction of a Zeppelin NT live. The exhibition displays varying original parts of this airship - until they are needed at the shipyard and substituted by others. Thus part of the exhibition area is changing constantly - like a stockyard. With a flight simulator, visitors can get behind the wheel themselves and make their own first



attempts at flying. Prior arrangements required. (Left: Hauling out prior to test flight.)

Since the TNB #73 article “Zeppelin NT involved in climate research”, Zeppelin Luftschifftechnik (ZLT) announced the successful completion of additional test flights with its mission-modified NT airship. Briefly reiterating the mission: Zep NT will be used as an aerial platform to measure the lower atmosphere during a 10-day period in July 2007. The project will be carried out in cooperation with Juelich Research Center. The announcement also made clear that together with Juelich Research Center, ZLT is not only entering technologically new ground, but also new areas in the field of climate research. Said ZLT's manager for development: "Our test flights have demonstrated that Zeppelin NT's 'Platform' mode offers a suitable infrastructure for this and additional complex demands", and he added: “preparations for deployment in July went well.”

(Portions of this article were excerpted from Zeppelin Museum press releases. Photos: ZLT) Ω

Short Lines

Following up on Sig’s ZEP NT/DeBeers diamond search story from TNB #71, the 24 JUL issue of FORBES magazine reports, “At



the heart of the scheme is Bell Aerospace's gravity gradiometer sensor. “Its technology,” says Bell President Scott Hammond, “was first developed for the US Navy and used for navigation on Trident submarines. The sensor detects, in three dimensions, minute variations in the Earth's gravitational field. Deployed by air, the sensor can determine the size, shape and density of underground anomalies, since the presence or absence of them minutely affects gravitation... The technology on the Zeppelin is the only airborne system of its type in the world.” The article explains why

airplanes were not suitable for this mission. Dr. Bernard Straeter told the 6th Annual AA Conference in London the combination of gravity and magnetic data provides virtual complete discovery of buried economic kimberlites. In particular, larger kimberlites that have higher propensity to be non-magnetic usually possess a strong gravity response. Ω

Arctic Heating Up for Airships

Barry Prentice reports the Canadian mild winter complicated ice road construction with the corresponding increased demand for air cargo, with more impetus to develop cargo airships. Those with a LTA cargo interest can visit www.isopolar.ca for further info. Ω

Airship Expedition Will Survey Sea Ice In The Arctic



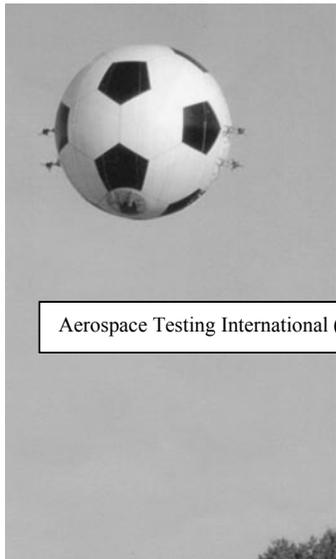
Photo composition of the airship "Dirigeable," carrying the EM-Bird, being built in Moscow.

“In 2008, scientists will, for the very first time, create a continual profile of ice thickness in the Arctic, extending from the Canadian coast across the North Pole to Siberia. At the core of the project lies the crossing of the North Pole by zeppelin. The airship will be equipped with an electromagnetic sensor developed at the Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research, one of the 15 research centers within the Helmholtz Association. The sensational project of French physician Jean-Louis Etienne is financed by the French oil company Total.... During the crossing, the so-called EM-Bird, an instrument specifically developed at the Alfred Wegener Institute to measure ice thickness, will be able to collect ice thickness data for the

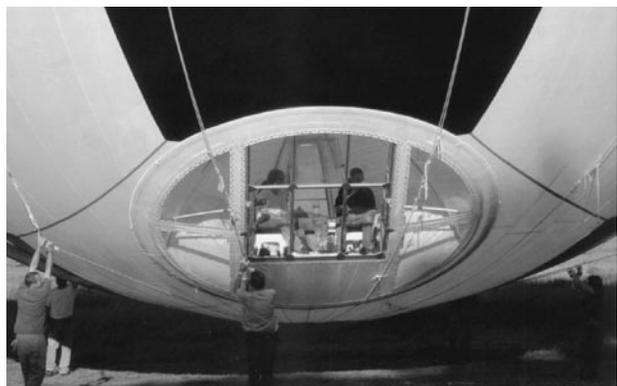
first time continually and across extensive regions of the whole Arctic. In April of 2008, the airship will fly from Spitsbergen to the Canadian coast via the North Pole, and then on to Alaska, whilst surveying the main sea ice regions in the Arctic.” Their website also reports, "The current team will later be joined by 2 experienced pilots and 6 future airship pilots who will receive specific training for the expedition, as well as a mechanic, two electrical mechanics and a ground-staff chief who will handle landing, take-off and mooring. **Dominique Manière** is a very experienced airship pilot, with 8,300 hours (Zeppelin, Goodyear, Skyship, etc) in America and Asia. A test pilot for Zeppelin, he is also providing back-up during construction of the airship and will act as instructor for our future pilots.” Ω

Canadian Has Big Balls:

‘Aerospace Testing International’ March 2007 issue carried a photo-rich report on 21st Century Airship’s progress on their spherical airships, running several photos including the ones shown here. There is news that Hokan Colting’s company is building the round-the-world ship, and of course making progress on the high-altitude communications relay airship. (Hokan already holds the world’s altitude record for helium filled airships.) Also mentioned is the fact they’ve designed a more conventional-looking airship for possible passenger use. Ω



Aerospace Testing International (2)



Hugo Chavez: Big Brother?



Reuters reports: “Venezuela launched a Zeppelin [sic] on Thursday to patrol Caracas, seeking to fight crime in one of Latin America’s most dangerous cities but also raising fears that President Hugo Chavez could be turning into Big Brother. Around the hot-dog stalls of the run-down suburb where the airship took its first flight, most people felt the unmanned eye-in-the-sky could help counter routine hold-ups, shootings and carjackings. "It is a necessity," said street vendor Pedro Marin when asked about the 15-meter helium-filled blimp that had been looming silently over his stall beside a busy highway.

The \$465,000 Zeppelin, built by South Korean firm HanGIS, is the first of three such craft that will beam images into a command center. Police will be able to control the blimps remotely, steering them over the city of about 5 million. In the refined cafes of east Caracas, there was more cynicism, condemning the blimps as a waste of money that would not work in bad weather or at night, when Caracas is at its most risky, resembling a shuttered-up ghost town...” Ω



Photo: HanGIS

LTA Science lacking in public schools?

Recently an ABC new program interviewed a man who'd sponsored a program for teachers to promote math & science in public schools. Wouldn't it be great if we could promote teaching the math and science of LTA? We have, at least helped, to make this happen! Several members of the history committee have assisted the Akron Ohio PBS station in their creation of "Math & Science of the Blimp," an interactive teaching program for educators that uses LTA technology to teach principals used therein. The lesson plans are free and available to be downloaded at:

><http://www.pbs4549.org/floating/index.html><

Be sure to let every teacher you know to be aware of this free yet excellent education aide! Meanwhile, if you are interested in your Editor/History Committee Chairman's effort to translate the best LTA text book in the world today from its native German, please call or drop a line and perhaps we can each sponsor a chapter or two. Right now even Embry Riddle Tech, put on the map by Jack Hunt himself, does not offer an LTA or aeronautic course. The major problem there as everywhere is lack of a textbook. Money makes the world go around, and if we don't do the translating and publishing in English, you can bet your bottom dollar no one else will. We could break up the work into more affordable chunks. Does the expertise stay in Germany? If we do nothing, it certainly will. Ω

Most Active Oxygen-Reducing Catalyst Ever

The development affordable of hydrogen fuel cells for all vehicles is another step closer. Researchers with the U.S. Department of Energy's Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (Berkeley Lab) and Argonne National Laboratory (ANL) have identified a new variation of a familiar platinum-nickel alloy that is far and away the most active oxygen-reducing catalyst ever reported. The slow rate of oxygen-reduction catalysis on the cathode - a fuel cell's positively charged electrode - has been a primary factor hindering development of the polymer electrolyte membrane (PEM) fuel cells favored for use in vehicles... A challenge has been the platinum. While pure platinum is an exceptionally active catalyst, it is quite expensive and its performance can quickly degrade through the creation of unwanted by-products, such as

hydroxide ions...The researchers identified the platinum-nickel alloy configuration Pt₃Ni(111) as displaying the highest ORR activity that has ever been detected on a cathode catalyst - 10 times better than a single crystal surface of pure platinum(111), and 90 times better than platinum-carbon... The next step will be to engineer nanoparticle catalysts with electronic and morphological properties that mimic the surfaces of pure single crystals of Pt₃Ni(111). Ω

...and the Navy is already experimenting...

The April 2007 issue of AEROSPACE ENGINEERING devotes three pages to NAVAIR's efforts to study and develop "next-generation propulsion." Like many aerospace players, the Navy looks to placement of fuel cells aboard aircraft to meet increasing electrical power demands independent of engine speed. Unlike other efforts already reported in these pages, this Navy program seeks to create the necessary hydrogen by reforming the liquid fuel already at hand around airplanes, JP-5. Since JP-5 contains sulfur, poisonous to fuel cells, and reforming it creates detrimental coke in the form of carbon whiskers, the experiment turned to synthetic JP-5. S-JP-5, already in limited use in the Navy, is not dependant on foreign oil and does not require as much pre-treatment process before reformation. Airship applications are certainly possible, toward the day when a nuclear powered vessel, using its unlimited power to split abundant seawater, could produce all the fuel needed for an escorting radar airship without the services of an oiler. History would not be repeating itself, exactly, because the on-board hydrogen generators on tending vessels of old (ranging from Lowe's portable on the Civil War barge, to the British cruiser supporting H.M.A.#1 in 1910, to balloon ships, to the USS *Patoka* even after helium) were for lift, not fuel. Ω

JLENS Making Progress

USN Institute *Proceedings* reports Raytheon Network Centric Systems is developing software to integrate the Navy's Cooperative Engagement Capability (CEC) with the Army's Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense Elevated Netted Sensor System (JLENS). This is a major step in intra-service cooperation to extend area-wide the aerostat-based netted sensor system. Ω

MEDIA WATCH

TV Program Review by **C.P. Hall II**

The T.V. Cable network, "The Discovery Channel" has a program called "Mythbusters." The purpose of the program is to dissect "urban legends" to see if they are true, or even possible. The basic format of the program is to examine two completely unrelated "urban legends" during a one hour episode, switching back and forth from one topic to the other on multiple occasions. Presumably, if you are interested in one topic but could not care less about the other, you will sit through the entire hour, including commercials, to see the half of the show about which you care. On January 10, 2007 the topics were: "A." If one is pursued by an aquatic reptile, should one run away in a straight line, or attempt to zig-zag? "B." Was the inferno destroying the *Hindenburg* caused by the chemicals on its skin? (This review will not concern itself further with escaping from aquatic reptiles.)

The *Hindenburg* episode was hosted by two motion picture special effects artificers, Adam Savage and Jamie Hyneman. The program's starting point was the thesis put forward by Dr. Addison Bain citing his article which made several points regarding static charges in an airship, fabric ignition as a result of static discharge, the speed and nature of a fabric / chemical conflagration, and the likelihood of hydrogen having a small or minimal part of such a conflagration. This is a complex, multi-faceted thesis which Savage and Hyneman quickly reduce to an initial question, was the inferno caused by the chemicals on its skin? The inquiry is further reduced in scope to questions of relative, comparable fabric sample burn speed in the air; later with or without hydrogen present. To me, the interesting question is, can the situation be recreated where either St. Elmo's fire, or some other static phenomenon can be made to ignite fabric comparable to the outer cover of *Hindenburg*, in comparable circumstances? As this question is neither simple, nor the stuff of good T.V., it was never considered in this venue. The first test which is undertaken is to compare the burn rate of 6 inch square samples of cotton cloth. One sample is plain, a second has a replication of the *Hindenburg's* dope compound covering it and a third is painted with "thermite paste." The samples were burned and it was decided that larger samples might yield more meaningful results. The point was confirmed when hydrogen - pumped into a 1 foot square box with a fabric top - exploded when ignited demonstrating little more than hydrogen

contaminated with air will explode when ignited in a confined space. The final tests were three 16-foot long wire and cloth proximate replications of the *Hindenburg* frame and outer cover. The first two units' covers were painted with comparable dope to the original; the third was coated with "thermite paste." #1 was burned with no hydrogen. #2 was burned with hydrogen being fed into the model. As #2 burned faster than #1, the conclusion was that Dr. Bain's "myth" was "busted." #3 was unashamedly for show. It burned magnificently filling out the time allotted and, once again, proving that "There is no business like show business."



Ed. Caption:
Mythbusters model set alight before hydrogen was injected into its interior from a welder's K-bottle. New York Times photo thanks to Walter Lion.

Since May of 1937, the qualified and the not-so-qualified have attempted to prove, either something did happen, or something did not happen, regarding the *Hindenburg* disaster by staging some sort of laboratory experiment testing one theory or another. While my lack of expertise in chemistry, physics, static electricity and related atmospheric phenomenon may disqualify me from undertaking such experiments, my knowledge of airships and their history allows me some claim to being able to spot flaws in the work of others regarding this topic. I regret to inform that Hyneman and Savage have added their names to the list of those who have undertaken flawed efforts yielding meaningless results regarding the points in question.

Ω

Airships in the Arctic by John Duggan, Published by the Zeppelin Study Group. London, 2006. Hardcover, 8 1/2 x 11 inch, 302 p.; 112 photographs; 4 diagrams; 5 maps; dustjacket. Reviewed by **Herman Van Dyk**

For several decades before and after the turn of the 19th century, the 2 great geographical mysteries left on Earth were the Arctic and the Antarctic. Many unsuccessful expeditions, by different means and from different directions, and at great costs, were undertaken to explore these regions. As the name of the book implies, it describes the various attempts to accomplish this goal by, the seemingly, easy way of using a dirigible. After mentioning

Andrée's tragic attempt to fly over the North Pole in 1897 in his hydrogen balloon *Omen* (Eagle), the book describes in great detail, and beautifully illustrated, the unsuccessful expeditions by the American reporter Walter Wellman in his dirigibles *America* in 1906, 1907 and 1909, as well as the successful flight of the Italian built *Norge*, the first aircraft to fly over the North Pole, during the Ellsworth / Amundsen / Nobile expedition in 1926. An extensive account of the next expedition by Umberto Nobile in his airship *Italia* and the subsequent rescue of Nobile and other surviving crew members is fully covered. The unfortunate controversy between Amundsen vs. Nobile is, finally, fully explained.

A major part of the book is devoted to the Polar flight of the LZ-127 *Graf Zeppelin* in 1930, when it exchanged mail with the Soviet ice-breaker *Malygin*. Plans to use the British R-36, the USS *Shenandoah*, as well as special airships to be designed by Parseval and Schutte-Lanz are certainly not left out.

A chapter devoted to the Arctic expedition of Sir Hubert Wilkins in the submarine *Nautilus* in 1931 seems somewhat out of place in a book about airships. The successful Soviet semirigid V6 *Osoaviachim* is not mentioned. In 1938 it was ordered to rescue members of a Soviet scientific team marooned on breaking Polar ice floating towards Greenland. It left its base near Moscow on its way to Murmansk and to the ice. The *Osoaviachim* flew into a mountain, killing 13 of its crew. The V6 may not have been designed for Polar exploration, but it came closer to the Arctic than either Parseval or Schuette-Lanz. It would have been the third airship in the Arctic designed by Umberto Nobile. Mr. Duggan picked up the omission of a lifeboat on a line drawing of the *America 2*, made by this reviewer (since corrected). The author also refers to the extensive archaeological research conducted by Dr. Capelotti at the launching site of the Andrée and Wellman expeditions on the island of Danskye, Svalbard (Spitsbergen), where large remains of the airships and sheds can still be explored, a century later. (Capelotti, P. J. , 'The Wellman Polar Airship Expeditions at Virgoamna, Dansk Oya, Svalbard. Oslo, 1997)

The author's fluency in German and convenient location to the vast archives in Friedrichshafen, gave him an ideal opportunity to research countless primary and original sources denied to most other English and American historians. Thoroughly

referenced and indexed and richly illustrated, with clear maps and beautiful photographs, many or most of them published for the first time, make this book a "must" for anyone interested in the exploration of the Arctic or the development of airships. Ω

The Minutemen Of VP-92: The Story of New England's Naval (sic) Air Reserve Patrol Squadron
By Marc Frattasio, AW1 USNR-R Self Published,
Printed and Distributed by Lulu Press
Reviewed by **Fred Morin**

This book is primarily about Navy Reserve Squadron VP-92 from it's commissioning at NAS S. Weymouth through it's BRAC-95 mandated transfer to NAS Brunswick in 1996 and ending with the BRAC-05 decision to deactivate the squadron. The ten chapters cover NAS S. Weymouth's beginnings, VP-92's predecessor squadron, also designated VP-92 in WW II, VP-92's history at S Weymouth with P-2 and P-3 aircraft, the Brunswick years, a very good selection of photos of Vp-92's aircraft, and a lengthy selection of personal recollections from VP-92 personnel. A six section Appendix covers aircraft assigned to the squadron including bureau nos., key personnel, deployments and awards.

Of interest to NAA members is the NAS S. Weymouth and Squantum sections. The book describes the origins of S. Weymouth in good detail, includes many fine airship and hangar photos (many from your editor's and James Shock's files), and a good description of NAS S. Weymouth's mission and activities during the war. NAS Squantum is covered only in regard to it's closure and move to S. Weymouth. Since VP-92 had no connection to Squantum there is very little regarding activities there relative to the airship operations after WW II when S. Weymouth was in caretaker status and Reserve airship operations were conducted there.

Of interest during the 50's and through 1961 was the assignment of a regular Navy Naval Air Development Unit (NADU) that included ZPG-2 and ZPG-2W airships among other HTA aircraft. The NADU supported research projects in air defense and anti-submarine warfare with MIT.

All-in-all a fine book on the VP-92 history and it's role in Navy Reserve Aviation. A lot of technical data, photos, great personal recollections and a fine closing section on a day in the life of VP-92 at NAS Brunswick. Ω

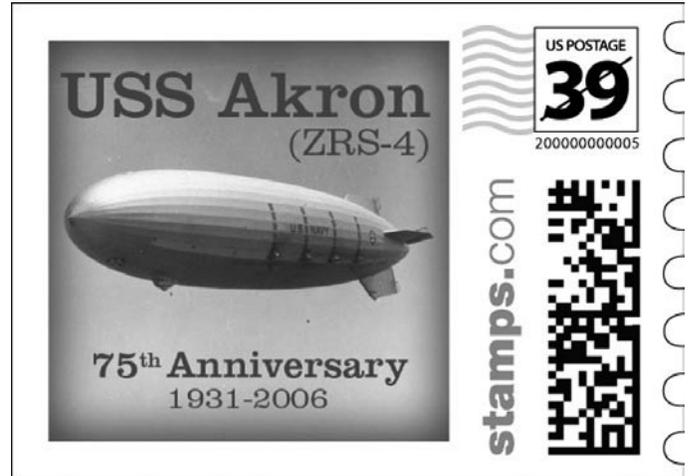
NAA Foots Bill For USS *Akron* 75th Anniversary Postage Stamp

The Naval Airship Association chose to mark the USS *Akron's* Silver Anniversary with a unique offering: a commemorative US postage stamp. No airship has graced a USPS stamp since the *Graf Zeppelin* nearly 80 years ago, and the NAA officers felt it long overdue to have a US Navy Airship grace the US mails.

Seventy-five years ago, as Dr. R. K. Smith put it, “The summer of 1932 held an almost inevitable turning point in the *Akron's* career. The feverish and premature efforts to force the airship to prove herself came to an end, and there began a cautious program of training which was aimed toward the development of search tactics which corresponded to the original promise of the airplane-carrying airship. Most important, these tactics began to focus upon the exploitation of the airship's hook-on airplanes. This shift in emphasis coincided with four more pilots joining the Heavier-Than-Air unit, the delivery of her F9C-2 airplanes, and a change in command.” Following the west Coast flight, NASL engineers begin to install the superior MK IV water recovery apparatus, making helium operation more practical with a more efficient condenser design that was much easier to clean and maintain. It saved weight, in addition to delivering *greater* than one pound of water back for each pound of gasoline burned.

We were saddened by the loss of Mrs. **Marie Graves**, last of the *Akron* widows (see Black Blimp). However we were thrilled to get a letter from Mrs. **Esther Porter**, who wrote, “Enclosed is my check for \$35 for the [2 sheets of] *Akron* memorial stamps... My daughter and I are the last of **Leon D. Liles'** immediate family, and we are grateful for what NAA went through to get these stamps.”

Indeed, our Treasury was heavily burdened to make this memorial possible, so members are urged to visit ‘Small Stores’ and order a few sheets. A gift people would actually use, you’d be helping the NAA, and showing your respect for the pioneers of the rigid airship all at once. See you at the Small Stores! **Ω**



ATTENTION! COLLECTORS. PHILATELISTS, GRANDPARENTS

The ZRS-4 stamps are the best deal you will find. I bought each one of my six grandchildren a sheet of stamps for a Christmas present. Each child received a lengthy explanation on the value these stamps would have in years to come. They’re also a history lesson. If you need talking points direct them to our web site www.naval-airships.org.
- **George Allen**

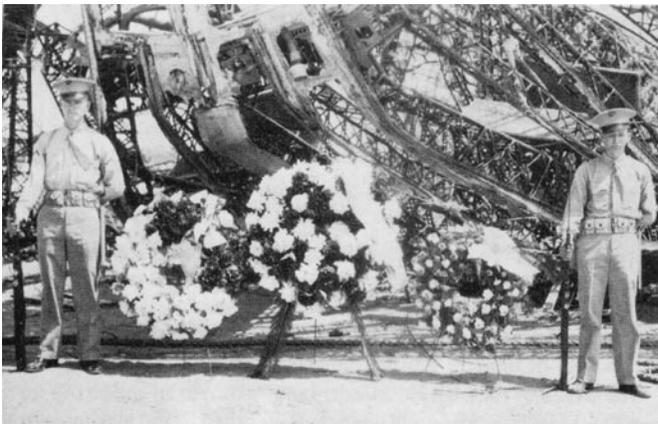


Sheet of 20 each USS *Akron* self-adhesive US Postage Stamps \$15, plus shipping. Includes photo banner which can be used to broadcast both the USS *Akron* and the NAA website on your packages.

Please enclose an address label with your order to George – one of your small return address labels would be fine.

HISTORY COMMITTEE

John Geoghegan noted from the internet: “Crashed Hood Blimp Garners Agency Top Print Award” Last September the famed Hood blimp crash landed... After the crash the dairy company placed an ad thanking the residents of the town for their patience and cooperation during the blimp's clean up. Either out of sentiment or true adoration, the ad, created by VIA, was handed The International Dairy Foods Association's “Best Overall” award in the print ad category at the organization's Smart Marketing 2007 conference. If VADM Rosendahl were still with us, he could have restated what he once wryly observed, “Airship casualties have always been headlines; those of airplanes only statistics.” All that serves to remind us of the passing of the 70th anniversary of LZ-129, taking time to note what's being said about history's most replayed accident (owing to its film being public domain):



National Archives photo via Eric Brothers and David Smith

Mark Schubin, columnist for *Videography* magazine, says in the March 2007 issue: “In disasters, there were the *General Slocum* and the *Hindenburg*... Everyone knows about the *Hindenburg* disaster. There are newsreels of the giant airship bursting into flame and audio recordings of announcer Herbert Morrison crying to his radio audience, “Oh, the humanity!” Certainly, it was a tragedy, with 36 people losing their lives, most because they leapt to the ground, not because they were consumed by fire. But, of almost 100 people on board, most survived, relatively unharmed. More (73) died in the crash of the airship *Akron*. The *General Slocum* disaster, on the other hand, killed 1,021 people, the vast majority of the passengers on a river excursion on the steamship, all from one small neighborhood. It was the worst peacetime

maritime disaster in U.S. history and the most deadly event in New York City before 9/11.” Schubin then discusses a DVD that sold half a million copies the first day of release. “What did the *Hindenburg* have in common with Chappelle's DVDs? Both had available recordings. The *General Slocum* and the *Akron* didn't...”

A long piece on NP Radio had the usual recording and commentary... but the final tag admitted that passengers who stayed on board survived. Herb Morrison, upon realizing many of the passengers and some crew were running toward him, says into the microphone, “I sincerely hope that... that you don't think it was as bad as I made it sound there at first.” (If you don't recall that part, it's because they never play the last part of his record.)

Ward T. Van Orman wrote in *Wizard of the Winds*: “...The *Hindenburg* was inflated with hydrogen, a gas inflammable beyond imagination... The crew wore asbestos suits and sneakers whenever they worked near the hydrogen-filled gas cells...”

By contrast, the report of Germany's Wireless Telegraph and Atmospheric Electrical Station stated in August 1938: “The basic cause of the catastrophic fire is ultimately to be regarded as the poor conductivity of the aluminum paint coating on the outer skin and the good insulation of the blue anti-corrosion paint of the framework. Also, if the landing tow ropes had been attached to the ship's hatches directly, then the total conductivity value of the tow lines probably could not have reached the required amount for discharge, or only then after the ship had been hauled down to a lower height, when the field strength would not have been sufficient.”

Robert Wise, producer of the Universal Studios film “Hindenburg,” told Van Orman, “You can't make static electricity very dramatic.” *NY Times* 21 NOV 06 report on the ‘Mythbusters’ TV show: “Mr. Hyneman said that he sometimes worried about 'glorifying explosions,' which could send the wrong message to young and impressionable viewers. ‘If I had my druthers, we wouldn't be blowing stuff up,’ he said. Mr. Savage appeared behind him. ‘But then we wouldn't have a show,’ he said with a cackle, and darted away.” Ω

War Story

One not-so-encouraging e-mail message questioning our team's combat history efforts left me a bit shaken. It got me to thinking about my dear old Dad. (Now comes a long story, prepare yourself.) Philip Van Treuren was so old (30!) in JAN 42 only the Civil Air Patrol would have him. Leaving his successful automobile shop and a partnership at the Asheville NC airport, new CAP Master Sergeant P.V.T. started flying patrols out of Daytona Beach, Florida.



(In the '42 photo above, looks like their July 4th parade featured a trashcan drum simulator. Note bombs.) CAP reimbursed gasoline cost and paid eight dollars a day. The Gov't had paid for bomb racks to be added to the private planes, their Fairchild 24 capable of carrying two 100 pounders. Dad (below) posed with the formidable ordnance, which certainly could have



really scared the submariners if it went off nearby. The U-boats were having their way off Florida – blimps would not appear there for many months – and one night a torpedo hit a merchantman not far out to sea. Dad's outfit responded and joined in searching for the sub for days; he snapped a photo of vessel salvage efforts (right, top).

On one patrol they spotted what they thought was a periscope and lined up for an attack. After 'bombs away' it was full throttle for home. That marked the highlight of Dad's ASW experience, since in '43 "they were getting to the bottom of the barrel" when the Navy was accepting 'old-fossil' 31-yr olds.



Soon Aviation Chief Machinist Mate P.V.T. was a plank owner in VR-1, the first Navy transport squadron. As flight engineer he flew the duration in DC-4s into Rabbat, Bizerte, etc.

Like blimps, no CAP plane was credited with sinking a sub during WWII. Not something to be ashamed of, exactly; the entirety of Coast Guard Aviation was awarded only one, and that turned out to be wrong. Yet, late in his life, Dad occasionally seemed emotionally troubled that his charges might have hurt someone who wasn't a fanatical Nazi. My assurances, that men in uniform doing their duty aren't offered much choice, seemed no more comforting than the fact his little airplane probably caused nothing worse than heartburn.

Quite by accident our team, while looking for airship photos in the Nat'l Archives, stumbled on an official photo (below) of a vessel that



resembles Dad's snapshot; the date and location jive. Yet Clair Blair's definitive study of subs and ASW does not list a SS *La Paz*. A website, U-boat.net, says "A torpedo from U-109 hit the SS *La Paz* on 1 May, 1942. She did not sink." If that last is correct, one could then invest some money in obtaining a copy of the U-109's log book, pay someone who understood the jargon-rich German lingo to

translate every page of their time off Florida in 1942, all in hopes they recorded seeing a small airplane through their periscope. Hardly any point; Dad is long beyond caring, having gone to his reward short of his 81st birthday.

I only bother you with all this to give you some idea what an ASW researcher is up against. Without financial support, one *must* have belief in purpose. The role of the airplane in ASW is not in question. The US built 300,000 of them during the war; they could not, as a technology, fail. The ASW role of the US Navy airship, whose total number 1915-thru-today number less than 300 *period*, would seem to have been addressed by previously published histories. Trouble is, the actual combat records of WWII were classified years after those books were compiled. Many questions remain unanswered.

The troubling e-message I received criticized my effort to update ZP histories to include combat records, classified years after today's LTA histories were published. The gist of the message was "What difference would it make if Van Treuren uncovers some dubious report that states a blimp sank a submarine?" Flabbergasted, I had no quick answer. I always assumed everyone would like to know.

The Nat'l Archives photo (below) is captioned Walter P. Ozesky, ARM3, killed in the crash of the K-14." The gut-wrenching photo of one of the victims' bodies being recovered from the submerged K-14 is all the more upsetting knowing we have no realistic way of researching what really happened.



So we will present what we do know in hopes of shedding some light on this dark episode.

What Happened to the K-14?

Our team's most baffling action began off Bar Harbor, Maine, on 2 JUL 44 when (per ZP-11 War Diary) a fisherman used his Navy-supplied radio to report he had "sighted the wake of a submerged submarine." Already aloft, "The K-14 had been ordered to make a MAD search for a submarine..." At 2115 hours "The K-14 was conducting a MAD search at an altitude of between 200 and 250 feet..." A vessel nearby, the APc-94, recorded in its log that her crew felt two depth charge concussions about 2130. The Board of Inquiry's (BoFI) Finding of Facts stated "...the arming wires were still attached to the bomb racks, indicating that the bombs left their racks armed..." Three fishing vessels in nearby waters reported feeling the detonations. ZP-11 Diary recorded "...the two Mark 47 bombs which the blimp had carried outboard were missing. The fuse arming wires were still secured to the bomb rack, proving that the two bombs sank armed, and undoubtedly detonated." Eastern Sea Frontier - Northern Group Reports (ESF-NG) noted later "No offhand explanation could be given for the failure to find two known depth charges in the after racks and no [other] accounting was given for the dead fish in the area..."

Machine gun fire was also noted. A Coast Guard watchman ashore reported hearing gunfire and seeing flashes. Inside the K-14, the 5th of July salvage diver reported... "a lot of .50 caliber shells all strewn around..." inside the car. ESF-NG Reports: "There have been numerous reports of heavy explosions and gunfire and machine gun fire at or about the time the K-14 crashed which may have been responsible for the crash."

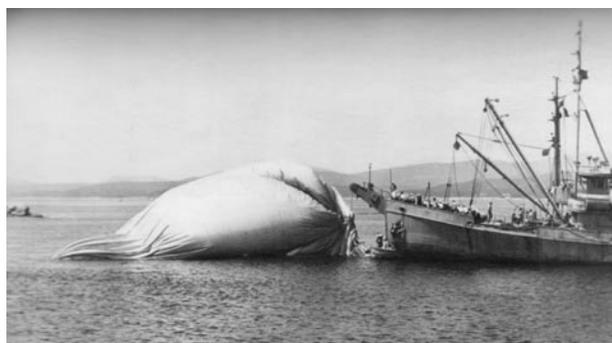
Though it does not speculate why, the ZP-11 Diary states: "Ensign Sharp shouted that the ship was going to crash. The ship crashed into the water, throwing Ensign McDonnell against the Navigator's table... The blimp car immediately filled with water..." Kluber, Oldar, Ozesky and Powles were trapped inside the sinking car, and drowned.

When the K-14 could not be raised on radio, the Ypc-94 proceeded toward her last known location, logging that it encountered a half-mile long heavy oil slick. When they found the K-14 wreck, two more crewmen had perished. An Army crash boat photographed the bow of the envelope lying on the surface (below) later scribbling the caption on the photo's back,



“Wreckage of the Navy blimp K-14, was shot down by a U-boat.” (Dairy) “...the four remaining survivors were taken aboard the *Patriot*.”

ZP-11 scrambled to the scene: K-25 flew out from South Weymouth and joined the K-34 to continue the search into the night of 4 July. “The K-15 on hove Patrol sighted what resembled a periscope and beather [breather] 200 yards astern for a period of approximately 20 seconds...” Rumors abounded back at the base. Shipmate **Lou Prost**: “The skipper CDR Bolam... informed us that we should not blame [pilot at controls] Ernie for the crash but he could not tell us any more... Ernie Sharp was transferred out of the squadron immediately.” Command pilot McDonnell’s roommate **Bob Forand** told us, “While at Bar Harbor, I observed a lot of activity going on, with meetings in small groups, with dignitaries and reps from the Eastern Sea Frontier, the Squadron, and Bar Harbor command.”



Meanwhile the car was cut loose and the envelope towed back to shore (below).



Whenever a ship is lost, a Board of Inquiry is formed to determine the cause. Their ‘Finding of Facts’ also states “...examination of the bag showed there were about 40 feet of the after section missing. Numerous small holes were found...” The Diary repeats, “The entire tail section of the envelope was missing.” ZP-11's **Grant Southward** found and examined holes in the envelope, cutting out samples for tests submitted to a Navy facility. Test results to determine the weapon caliber, if run, were never released.

The Board of Inquiry nonetheless ruled K-14’s loss and her crew’s deaths an accident, specifically ‘pilot error,’ blaming command pilot McDonnell. The decision was not unanimous and did not sit well with some people aware of the action. In 1977 Commander Alex W. Moffat, USN (Ret.) published his memoir *A NAVY MAVERICK COMES OF AGE* (Bantam Books, 1977): “It was obvious that the court wanted no record of any sub attack in those waters. At the hearing they admitted no evidence except that obtained from interrogating the survivors. It would not even accept in evidence the written statement of the technicians that they found many bullet holes in the fabric... When the bag was spread out on the field they were able to determine that the bullets entered the bag aft of the car and exited at the top amidships.”

Member **Fred Morin**, a South Weymouth activist, had pursued the K-14 case with the Navy. In November of 2003 W. S. Dudley, then the Navy Department’s Director of Naval History, wrote to Fred discussing the case. A strong argument is made based on various records showing there is no record of a U-boat in the area of Bar Harbor, Maine 2-4 JUL 44.

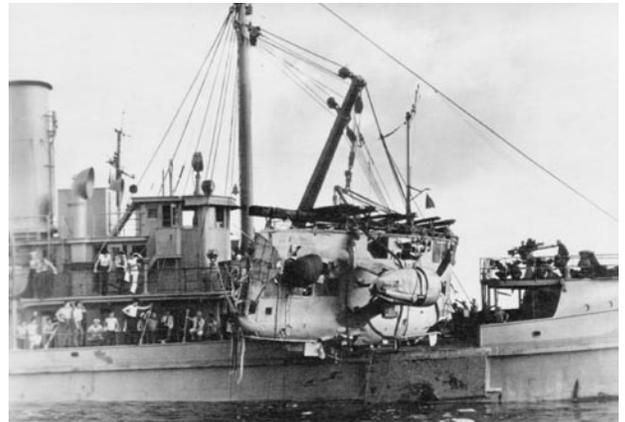
U-107, which had been there, was mid-Atlantic by then and U-233, while inbound, never got close. (Survivors of both boats were reached directly or indirectly by the chairman and both verified they were not involved in a fight with an airship.) However those cited records also showed no U-boat was lost in Atlantic waters not far from Lakehurst – but one was found there anyway, torpedoed. It turned out to be the U-869, long “known” to have been sunk a thousand miles away. In fact, submarine history is one of continual revision as new information (and wrecks) comes to the surface.



The Dudley letter states, “In reading the survivor’s statements, it appears that the consensus was that the blimp simply crashed into the water.” Many K’s struck the water accidentally, flying low for MAD, but they recovered. Heavy takeoffs knocked off wheels and whole fins in the dirt, let alone water, without ship loss. K-ship history would seem to have no case where an intact blimp buoyant *in the air* could quickly sink *in the water*. In his arguments over the crash of the ZPG-3W years later, experienced command pilot **Lundi Moore** pointed out an airship could not be deliberately nosed down and flown into the water with such speed as to burst a good bag. Can we detail a combination of actions where McDonnell worked his wheel, pedals, dampers and throttles to cause “The entire tail section of the envelope was missing” when Ernie Sharp was at the controls? Though at the radar, McDonnell was blamed; what specific inaction of his caused the stern come off so the car would sink like a rock, drowning four men? Unlike airplanes, the K-34, K-57, and even

shot-up K-74, settled slowly into the water and allowed the crew to egress. Not surprisingly, investigators suggest K-14 was not only pilot error, but that in combination with ‘mechanical failure,’ though the Navy never suggested such. Yet even when the K-60’s rotten patches caused a fin loss, again the ship only settled.

The Dudley letter suggests the “...blimp arrives on station the weapons were cleared from the safety position and test fired. Perhaps, this could account for the gunfire heard by several fishermen that were interviewed.” By day, certainly; at night, with fishing vessels known to be about, firing the .50-cal into the darkness just to see if it worked seems rather irresponsible. Next, in spite of the literature stating the witnesses heard gunfire and felt concussions, the Dudley letter sidesteps any connection. So, in total, by co-incidence we had a test-firing of the gun just before some undefined miss-piloting and some unexplained mechanical failure caused the stern to separate, setting up what Dudley describes as “...the two Mk 47 bombs, carried by K-14 and torn off by the impact. Evidence found shows that the bombs sank armed and most likely detonated when they reached the preset depths.” Take a look at the K-14 car, (below) with stern damage from dragging on the bottom while suspended from the bag nose:



Does this car look like 700 pounds of Torpex bombs exploded about 50 feet away? And what of the little pink bodies inside, escaping into the water? Not even a headache?

If the twin 350-lb Torpex detonated near their intended target, then a U-boat was likely damaged; indeed, the APc-94 logged

encountering a _ mile long heavy oil slick as it approached the scene hours later. The Dudley letter sets that aside, and further suggests the holes in the envelope were caused by a grappling hook - that obviously came *after* the ship lost most of its helium so as to plummet.

Several years ago your chairman joined a group of submarine fans based here in Florida, *Sharkhunters*, and started enjoying their monthly magazine. When I asked for help on our mystery of 22 JAN 42, they ran my piece and one of their activist members, attorney Paul Lawton, responded with a plausible explanation that we could verify, solving the mystery. Lawton, you may have heard, spearheaded the fight that resulted in the Navy finally reclassifying the loss of Eagle boat #56, supposedly lost the following year to a “boiler explosion,” to a torpedo attack. K-14 was under the same sea frontier command, and when I asked, *Sharkhunters* again devoted space to the inquiry and discussion. The fact no U-boat is shown in the area at the time was revisited. Further, Mr. Lawton writes in their following issue, “Had the other four survivors taken the truth of some big cover-up to their graves? I believe not, particularly since my experience with the PE-56 survivors not only proved their willingness to set the record straight, but to doggedly pursue the correction of the official record... What possible national security concern could keep those men quiet for sixty years, that none would have made a deathbed confession that their mates died as a result of enemy action? As a practicing attorney for 16 years, I know that silence of such a tragic event is not genuinely within reasonable human nature.”

Hard to argue with that; since it’s unlikely someone from Germany will come forward as in the K-74 case, we are beaten. Fred and I may be the only non-ZP-11 members who refuse to believe the K-14 was lost due to pilot error, but we have to admit we have run out of ideas to get the Navy to award these brave men the Purple Heart. That, plus the complete lack of response to the K-72 case, means we are less likely to completely correct the airship’s score in World War II. Ω

Black Blimp



Robert Shannon, 87, passed away 1 APR 07. Shannon was born in 30 MAR 20, and enlisted in the US Navy in 1937 (age 17). Severed on the USS *Detroit* and USS *Plymouth*. Assigned LTA School at Lakehurst April 42, served as a rigger until OCT 43. Attended flight school, earned LTA wings and received a commission 6 JAN 44, served with ZP-23 until OCT 44; served in Brazil remainder of the war. Assigned NAS Moffett '45'-47, NAS Glynco '47-49. CDR Shannon was Command Pilot of the last Navy airship flight, 31 AUG 62. (Below, Dan Brady photo.) He is survived by wife Kimiko Shannon, daughter Claudia Shannon-Romans, sister Ila Thoensen.

Robert was preceded in death by his son, Robert Conrad Shannon, who died in Viet Nam on Jul 20, 1968.



James A. Earley, 89, of Whiting, Manchester, died Feb. 18, 2007. Mr. Earley was born Oct. 27, 1917, in Tottenville, N.Y. He attended Tottenville High School and graduated in 1936. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in October 1942, where he attended radio school in Boston and lighter-than-air school at Lakehurst. He flew out of South Weymouth, Mass., as well as Trinidad and Dutch Guiana as a member of U.S. Navy Squadron ZP-51. He was honorably discharged as a radioman second class petty officer in October 1945. He retired from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey in 1975 with 26 years of service. He was predeceased by his wife of 63 years, Doris J. Hahn; and his son, Richard Joseph Earley. He is survived by two sons, James F. Earley of Leesburg, Fla., and Dennis P. Earley of Rumson and two grandchildren.

Marie Graves, 97, of Manchester NJ died February 12 at Community Medical Center, Toms River. She had been in poor health and living in a Nursing Home facility for several years. Marie was, as far as we know, the last living widow left behind from the crash of the USS *Akron*, (ZRS4) at sea off Barnegat NJ April 4 1933 which took the life of her husband, Aviation Machinist's Mate 3rd Class Hilbert N. Graves and 72 others aboard. Marie was born in Trenton, NJ and met Hilbert Graves when he was just starting Rigid Airship duty. It was her intention that as a Navy wife married to a man in a glamorous branch of the service flying the great dirigibles, she would eventually get to "see the world." As it turned out, she never got much beyond Lakehurst, NJ, some 35 miles from her birthplace. In their short married life together, they never had children and she never remarried. Marie got a teaching degree from Trenton State Teacher's College and settled in to a 30 year career as an elementary school teacher in the town of Lakehurst, where she also served as something of an unofficial historian, Girl Scout leader and a pillar of the small community. She was a Member of the Naval Airship Association, the Lakehurst Elementary Education Association and the Lakehurst Borough Historical Society as well as a parishoner at St. John's Roman Catholic Church, Lakehurst for over 70 years.

Edward J. "MR. ED" Higginson III, 81, died 18 February at his home in Sarasota. Born Feb. 9, 1926 in North Tiverton, R.I., he was the son of the late Edward J. Higginson Jr., and the late Dorothy (Brown) Higginson Garels. He spent his youth in Fall River, Mass., graduating B.M.C. Durfee High School in 1943. During World War II he served his country in the Navy, attending radio service schools in Pennsylvania and at Texas A&M University to prepare for the Joint Communication Activities unit in the Asian theater, where the unit maintained liaison with Admiral Halsey's Seventh Fleet. Honorably discharged as Radioman 2/C, he earned a bachelor's degree in business administration at Boston University in 1951. A long-time member of The Elks, he was also a life member of the Sarasota Veterans of Foreign Wars and a committed participant in the Naval Airship Association. He is also survived by several nieces and nephews and preceded in death by his brother Col. Leonard E. Higginson.

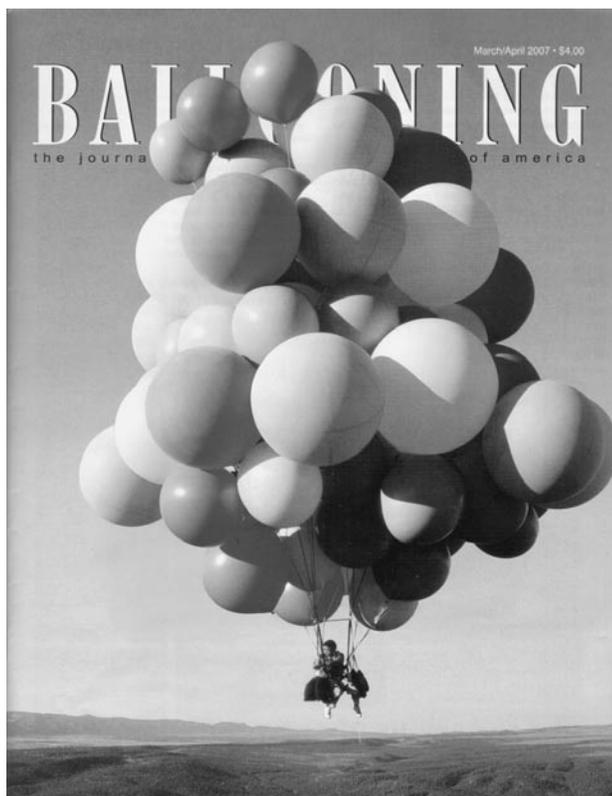
William A. Langen, Jr., 85, formerly of Doylestown, PA, passed away on February 10, 2007 at his home in Woodbury, NJ. He was born January 20, 1922, in Union City, NJ, to William A. Langen and Carla (von Kuewnick) Langen. Bill grew up in Hoboken, NJ, graduating from A.J. Demarest High School in 1940. He met Helen Falls there as a student; he married her in 1943



on the same day that he got his Navy wings in catapult seaplanes at Pensacola, Florida. Bill spent time as a flight instructor at Bunker Hill NAS in Indiana before being sent to seaplane training at Pensacola and a squadron in Jacksonville. Following a serious crash with a student pilot and for the rest of his life he called himself 'Lucky Langen'. Bill flew "everything except jets". After the war, Bill returned to New York University for his aeronautical engineering degree graduating in 1951. His first professional position was designing airships for Goodyear at their North Canton, OH, plant; he returned to active Navy duty for airship pilot training at Lakehurst, NJ in 1953. He considered himself lucky to accumulate over 3200 flight hours prior to his 1982 retirement as a Commander. Bill continued to work for the United States Navy in a civilian capacity, first at the Naval Air Engineering Center, Philadelphia and later at the Naval Air Development Center (Johnsville), Warminster, PA, retiring as Director of Air Vehicle Technology in 1980. Bill and Helen moved to Hilton Head, SC, in 1991; she died there in 1994, and he returned to his beloved Doylestown, becoming an integral part of many military and engineering associations. He also served on the board at Westwyk, his residence until his move to Woodbury Mews in late 2006. Three daughters and sons-in-law, six grandchildren, five great-grandchildren and his brother-in-law survive him.

Alan H. Foster, former PHOM3, passed away on 10/18/06.

DRIFTING TOWARD THE LIGHTER SIDE OF LTA



(Above) Have B-B gun, will travel. (Below) Delsey Luggage, Inc. "Helium" luggage line. "Unbelievably light weight yet fully featured."



Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. Thomas Edison invented the Light Bulb. Joseph Lucas invented the intermittent wiper, the self-dimming headlight, and the short circuit. Lucas systems actually use AC current; it just has a random frequency. When Lucas was told he had a problem with short circuits, he made the wires longer. A typical Lucas panel has two three-position switches: one is Dim, Flicker, and off. The other has Smoke, Smolder, and Ignite. Rumor has it Lucas bribed several members of Parliament to get them to repeal Ohm's Law.

They withdrew their efforts when they met too much resistance. Ω



The 70th anniversary of the *Hindenburg* accident passes during this issue's period, but in happier times the year before found a group of rich & famous & glamorous dignitaries aboard for what has come to be called "the Millionaire's Flight." (Eddie Rickenbacher was particularly taken with the airship's bar.) Story has it one attendant, so enamored with the rich and beautiful Lady Ashley (above) that he forgot his prepared spiel about the hope for more business travel. Instead he blurted out, "Uh, I hope you've enjoyed giving us the business, uh... as much as we have enjoyed taking you for a ride." Ω

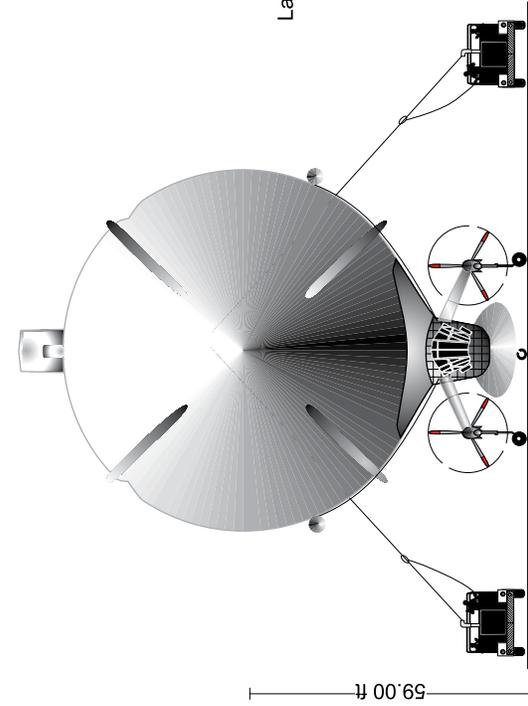
ZPG-2W

ZPG-2W, ZPG2.5W 1952 - 1961
141335

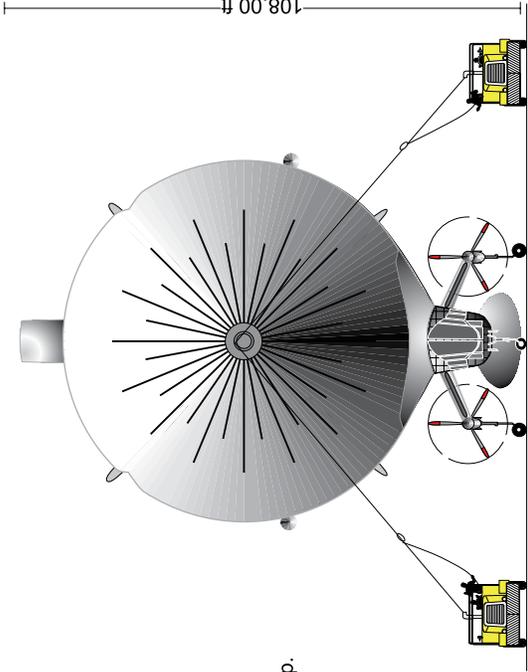
Built by Goodyear Aircraft Corporation.
ZP2N re-designated ZPG-2 (1954).
W model for Airborne Early Warning picket duty.
Length 343 ft.

Helium capacity 1,011,000 cu.ft.
Powered by two 700 hp Wright Cyclone engines.
Max speed 80 mph.

Cruising speed 57 mph.
Record flight of 8,216 miles in 264 hours.
Lakehurst NJ to west Africa to Key West FL non-stop.
In service until Navy lighter than air program
discontinued on 30 November 1961.

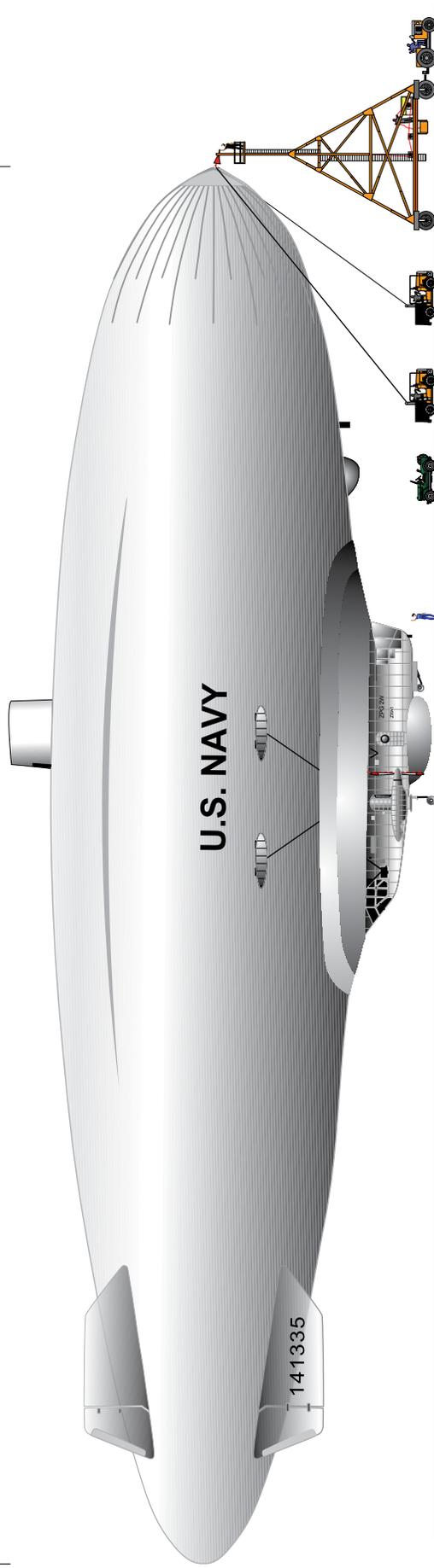


STERN

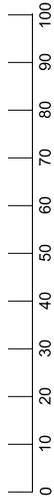


BOW

343 ft .00 in



83 ft .00 in



SCALE: 1" = 40' as an 8 1/2" x 11"

Drawings by:
B.L. Watwood:
© 2001. Rev.10/03.
Rev.2/07



(Above) L-type airship circa spring 1942 following the order to blot out airship designations. NARA photo via David Smith and Eric Brothers. (Below) Restored car of the L-8 as it appeared in the NMNA LTA display early this year, prior to cowlings being made. NMNA photo via Mort Eckhouse.

