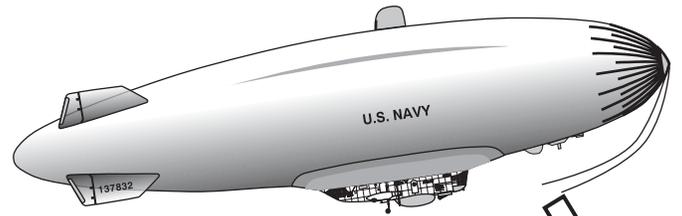


THE

NOON



BALLOON



The Official Newsletter of THE NAVAL AIRSHIP ASSOCIATION, INC.

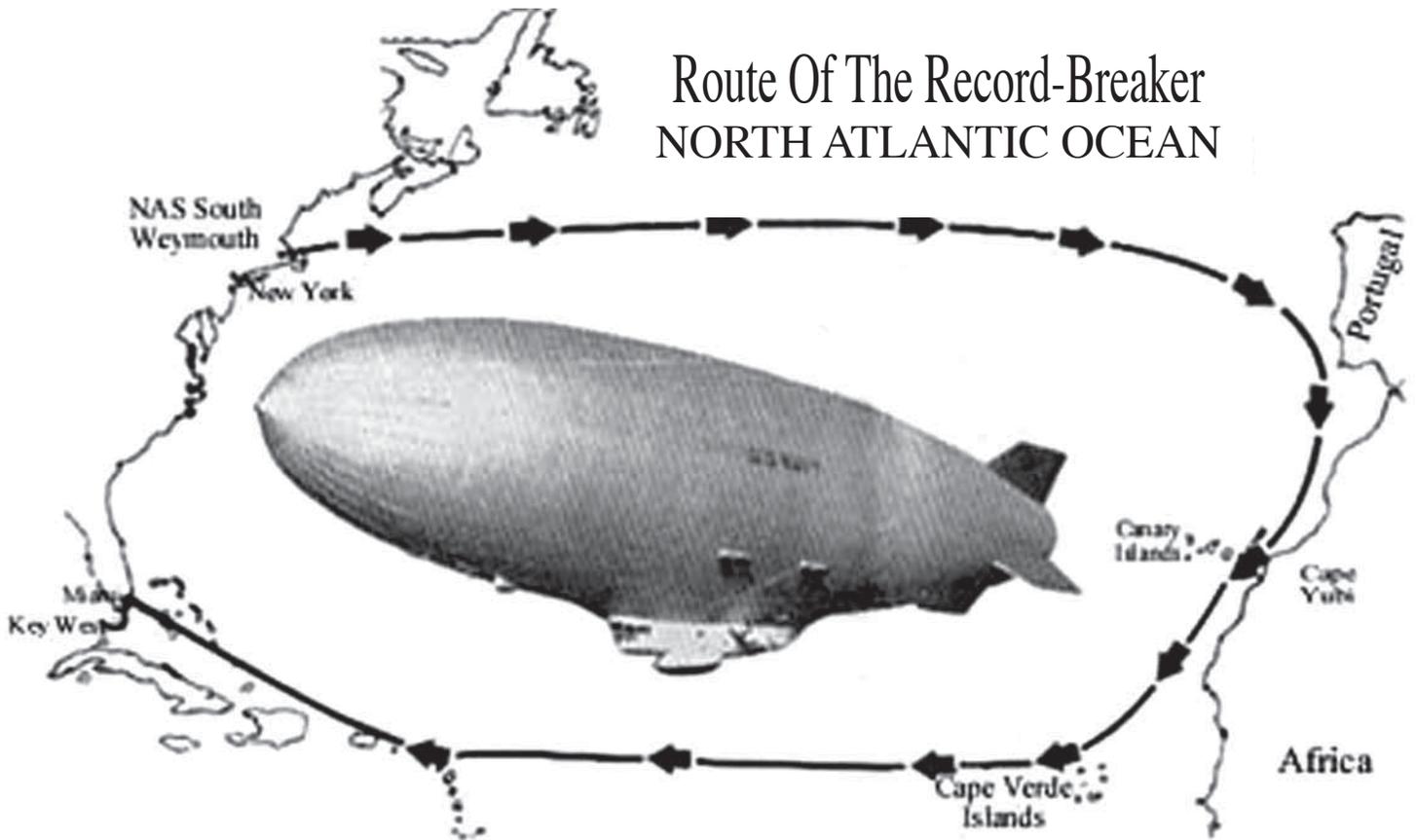
No. 73

Spring 2007



**“Celebrating 50 Years of ZPG-2
Record Flights”**

Route Of The Record-Breaker NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN



Fully capable of refueling from fleet oilers like any other Navy unit, the men of the ZPG-2s sought to demonstrate independent longevity with endurance performance flights. Records were made and broken, until the crew of ZPG-2 #561 – nicknamed “Snow Bird” during the all-weather winter operations of “Project Lincoln” – 50 years ago set a combined time/distance record that shattered the great rigids’ marks. Equipped with its own relief crew, the airship could track a submerged submarine by rotating its crew on ASW watch somewhat like the submarine crew was relieved below. In the later all-out effort “Operation Whole Gale” demonstrating the 1951 design’s capability against submarines, one operational one-station time record was established, followed by another and another, until the still standing record – 95.5 hours of operations – was set by Lundi Moore and crew eight years after the first ZPG-1 flight. One can only wonder what a crew with the proposed ZPG-3 could have achieved!



THE NOON BALLOON

Official Publication of the Naval Airship Association, Inc.

ISSUE # 73 **Spring 2007**

Editorial	2
President's Message	3
Pigeon Cote	4
Treasurer's Strongbox	11
Technical Committee	12
European Report	14
Shore Establishments	17
Cover Story – 50 years	18
USS Akron – 75 years	26
Short Lines	27
History Committee	28
Ready Room	31
Black Blimp	32

Mr. Ed Higginson

As this issue of The Noon Balloon was going to press output, we received the sad news that long time NAA friend, supporter and printer, "Mr. Ed" Higginson had passed away on February 18, 2007. We will pay tribute to "Mr. Ed" in our next issue.

On the Covers of TNB #73: The *Graf Zeppelin* of the Navy non-rigids, the ZPG-2 was the most successful postwar airship, flying tropics and Arctic, mountains and oceans, and criss-crossing the Atlantic. We mark the 50th anniversary of *Snow Bird's* smashing that famous blugas-powered rigid's endurance record – as well as the Russian record that followed – and even the 200 hour mark set by one of its own.

Inside Back cover: Warren Winchester provided the ZW-1 officers' photo inside back cover, and he writes: "Almost all were very successful in their later lives, many have stayed in touch, and even the youngest of this group are now well into their Medicare careers! They include major bank chairmen, doctors, elected office holders and even restaurateurs! I am sending this blind to a number of them, and while I think I've covered the picture, I might get some feedback on other things. Several have not yet joined NAA, and maybe if they want to see the picture, they'll dig for the \$15!"

Back Cover: L-M 'Skunk Works' allowed us publication of this photo of their flying prototype cargo airship. See [Technical Committee](#) Page 12.

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



L-8 car nearing completion, placed in LTA exhibit. NMNA photo via Mort Eckhouse

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

NMNA Liaison - Mort Eckhouse

Email: mortusn@aol.com

NAME Liaison - Andrew Granuzzo

Email: Granuzzo.andy@att.net

Webmaster - Michael Vinnarick

Email: michael_vinnarick@email.msn

Technical Committee Chair –

Norman Mayer

Email: normanmayer@juno.com

Small Stores - George W. Allen

Email: cdra@juno.com

EDITORIAL

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

Welcome to 2007's extended-length first effort, in which we are blessed with a first-person account of an epoch-making flight. As you enjoy **Frank Maxymillian's** article, pat *yourself* on the back because, as a dues-paying member of this organization, you helped preserve this history. The ZPG-2 has been too long underappreciated.

Controversial though they may be, I think it's also high time we discussed the two major problems I have with the published WWII combat record. In this issue we will examine the K-72 case; in the next issue the K-14 case. If you find that difficult to live with, sound off. My position is that the ASW airship was an effective combat tool in two World Wars. I had set off to prove this in a series of articles for the sadly missed AIRSHIPWORLD magazine (Editor-Publisher-NAA member Lorrie Soffee had to give up preaching to the choir). The work has expanded into a larger study of the airship and submarine, two vehicles that share an amazingly parallel developmental history up to, I perceive, about 1928. I don't know that I'll ever have the resources to finish it, but more recently I targeted six specific WWII cases whose parameters are so detailed as to make research practical - perhaps even affordable. These are in pursuit by employing a researcher. If you have anything to add, or have specific details (not just scuttlebutt) about a possible submarine encounter, don't wait for a deathbed confession (as may have happened in the K-14 case). Get it on paper or even better, e-mail us now, before there is no one left to tell the story.

Don't mind if I do say so, our magnificent *Macon* expedition report was best in class last year. The mighty magazine AIR & SPACE SMITHSONIAN was limited to one page featuring one illustration. (The March issue notes the F-9C is on display at NASM-U/H.) Happily new member **John Geochegan** will also be preaching outside the choir box; his *Macon* expedition story will grace the May cover of AVIATION HISTORY, on news-

stands as you read this. Speaking of other publications, NAMF has been generous with ink for LTA, taking an entire page in the 'Fly-By' Newsletter to describe recent LTA-related donations and activities with L-8 in the museum. The FOUNDATION magazine noted the 75th anniversary of the USS *Akron*, and they will run my piece on CAPT C.V.S. Knox in their spring issue. (That was made possible because **Eleanor Knox** so kindly ran her NMNA donation past the History Committee first.) Likewise consider writing your own story for them, or other publications as well.

This is an exciting time to be in LTA, not only with the Navy's return, but with more new projects and applications of new technology that perhaps any time since the 1920s. Sadly only very brief mentions are made in mainstream tech publications. Our Technical Committee Chair **Norm Mayer** is given only two pages but once a year in AEROSPACE AMERICA, for example. It is therefore my intention to also cover as much real-world LTA and related development as practical in these pages, hoping to find the balance that pays proper respect to our history while simultaneously covering what's happening right now. It's not an easy job, because with so much quality and relevant material out there, your editor is constantly suffering *the agony of delete*. Don't hesitate to complain if you don't like the resulting mix - and we'd really like it in the form of you providing superior substitute material! See you in #74, 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

Recently I have been getting a flood of e-mails from our good friend **Rick Zitarosa**, the Chair of our NAA Reunion 2007 in Lakehurst. He and his friends in the Navy Lakehurst Historical Society have been "photo-documenting" the activities of the navy's new airship, the MZ3A, BuNo. 167811. In addition to the present day blimp photos, he had unearthed quite a few historical pictures that I had never seen before as well as many of the old favorites. [*Below, Suchcicki's welcome.*]



Along with the modern day stuff, Rick includes stories and pictures of accidents and incidents involving the *Los Angeles*, (ZR-3, formerly LZ-126) and the *Graf Zeppelin* (LZ-127). I'm hoping that a lot of this very interesting folklore finds its way into print in our TNB in a later issue. Meanwhile, the real reason for introducing the subject of e-mails from Rick is to relate to you our excitement about your early response to NAA 2007 Reunion plans. We expected to get some early responders, but we are elated at the magnitude of your response. If you keep going in the manner which you have started, we will fill up at least two motels in Toms River well before the response deadline.

This week I have had the privilege to appoint the Nominating Committee for the selection of Officers to lead the Naval Airship

Association for the next two years beginning in September 2007. A dear friend and faithful member of the NAA since its very inception, Walter Ashe, has agreed to head up the committee and we are in the process of selecting four other members to serve on the nominating committee with him. If we fill out the roster in time to get it to our TNB Editor, the entire committee will be listed in this issue. In any event, the nominating committee will be searching among all of you to select the slate of officers for the next two years. Any suggestions? Call Walt Ashe: (423) 968-3312.

I don't have any idea how many of you have had an opportunity to see, buy or use the special \$0.39 U.S. Postage Stamp commemorating the 75th anniversary of the first flight of the U.S.S. *Akron*. The special issue of this stamp was the initiative of our TNB Editor, Richard Van Treuren. Rich arranged to have the stamp printed by a company that specializes in unique postage stamp productions and he was able to have 1000 sheets of the stamp produced exclusively for the NAA. Each sheet contains 20 stamps and the sheet is sold through the NAA Small Stores (George Allen). As a collector's item, these stamps should be a very tempting value since there will be no second printing of the stamp. I was able to get 7 sheets right off of the top of the stack before they even got to George, but I expect to get quite a few more sheets of these unique stamps because I am using them for all of our mailings. The cost of one sheet is \$15.00 with a nominal charge for shipping in a hard Priority Mail envelope. That comes out to be a cost of \$0.75 for a 39 cent postage stamp, but what a great advertisement for the NAA and for Navy Airships. The NAA makes about a buck per sheet of stamps. Depending on your acceptance of this first venture into the postage stamp business, we will make a decision to continue the stamp series for a future U.S.S. *Macon* or other airship commemorative issue.

Make your plans now to attend NAA Reunion 2007 at Lakehurst (Toms River), NJ. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

- **Bob Ashford, NAA President**

Pigeon Cote

Letter from **John Rice**, Canon, GA: "As a member of the crew blimp K-74, I was saddened to read of the death of CDR **Nelson G. Grills**. He was a man of courage. I was witness to Lt. Grills' courageous action on the fate of the K-74 as he chose to take the time to gather confidential material to place them in the lead folder provided to sink classified documents to the bottom of the ocean. I left the ship (K-74) almost immediately on impact and found myself alone in the ocean. After a few minutes, I noticed the forward section of the car was still above the water. I swam to the blimp with the idea to retrieve the 38 cal. revolver carried aboard. When I entered the car - with some difficulty, it was nearly vertical - I was startled to see LT Grills there placing papers in the lead container. He asked me what I was doing and I advised him I was returning for the 38 pistol. He ordered me to leave with these parting words, "I'm right behind you." I jumped back into the ocean and I never saw Lt. Grills again until the crew subsequently returned to ZP-21 NAS Richmond. It's my belief LT Grills never left the car of K-74 on impact but stayed on board to make certain all classified papers were placed in the lead folder and thrown overboard to sink to the ocean floor. He was very much aware that the depth charges were still attached to the car; nevertheless he remained on board to destroy classified information. This was first on his mind, his action not only courageous but duty bound. As Captain of his ship, he performed his duty in accordance with Navy tradition."



(Ed note: U-134 returned in daylight to photograph the K-74's hull, verifying the importance of Grill's protecting the classified folder. The fuzzy Photostat reproduced at the bottom of this page, from the 10th Fleet action report of K-74, shows John was on radar that night. It also shows ZP-21 was in transition between two types of depth charges, Someone PLEASE tell us what the difference was, the addition of TORPEX in the Mark 24 perhaps?)

E-mail from new member and balloonist **Jim Winker**: "The two issues of TNB have been received and read. Very impressive. I particularly noted the concern about memberships in "President's Message," Issue #71. It seems that every organization I belong to has the same problem (or I might say "belonged to" as some no longer exist). I do have one feeble suggestion: Put a box somewhere in the publication telling interested people how to go about becoming a member/subscriber. *(Our treasurer reports Jim had a lifetime career in lighter-than-air from 1951 to today, mostly free balloons, firstly high altitude scientific, then added hot air sport starting in 1960. Jim has about 20 hours as pic in airships. Welcome aboard, Jim!)*

<i>Pilot-</i> Navigator	Lt. Nelson G. Grills	Mech.	SCHMIDT, J. L.	AMM3c	
Elevator	Ens. Darsley Eversley	Radio	BOURNE, R. H.	ARM3c	
Rudder	JANDROWITZ, J.	AP1c	RICE, J. F.	ARM3c	
Gunner	ECKERT, G.	S1c	Aft. Look.	KOWALSKI, J. W.	S1c
Bombardier	SESSSEL, I.	AMM2c	Photo	GIDDING, J. M.	AMM3c

(cont. Bombardier omitted)

Letter from **Robert Vales**: "TNB is an outstanding success, thank you so much for renewing my interest in LTA... I was presented these balloon pilot's wings at a retirement ceremony in my honor at the 'O' Club, Naval Station Rodman, Canal Zone, in 1969..."



Needless to say it created an enormous amount of laughter. At the end of the ceremony I was given the other wing. The wing(s) were made of a single piece of mahogany by an artist on Bogotá, Columbia. When viewed from the front you cannot tell the wing comes in two pieces.



This came about as a result of my association with HTA aviators on the staff of Naval Forces Southern Command."

Letter from **Liz Kelsey** (**John Kane's** daughter) via our treasurer: "...we received the latest TNB, and once again you all did a great job. It's a very nice publication and fun to read. I was pleased and interested to see the letter/story from **Andrew Papageorge** regarding his training and the experiences he shared with Dad. But I was particularly pleased to see that someone has suggested a memorial for my Dad. I just can't thank everyone who thought of this enough... it means so much to me and my family. If there is anything we can do to help please let me know..."

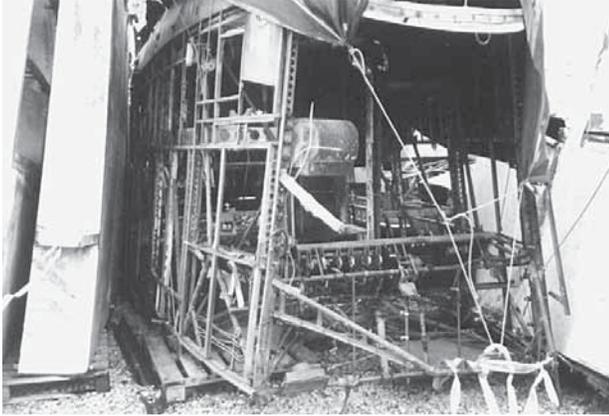
Past President **John Fahey** mentioned, "For NAA members only I have a limited number of copies of my book, "Kremlin Kapers," which sells for \$16.50 on my web site -

www.johnfahey.net - and \$15.30 on Amazon.com. 'Kremlin Kapers' contains adventures during many trips (1970 - 1989) to the USSR after my tour behind the Iron Curtain with the Soviet Army in the sixties. There are twenty chapters, including "How to Avoid Nude Bathing with your Professor and Still Get an A" (This occurred on the Black Sea coast and wasn't easy. She was gorgeous!), "Shaking Tails" (more complex than losing STASI secret police by vehicle in East Germany), and "On Strike in the Kremlin" (making the Soviets pay in a big way). The book (soft cover) has 186 pages with 36 photographs.

For NAA members with a USA address interested in a copy, send a check for \$8.00 (which includes S&H) to B & J Books, 901 Pillow Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23454-2624. Virginia residents must add \$0.30 for VA sales tax. If you desire a special inscription (for giving the book as a gift to another, etc.), please include a note with your check."

E-mail from NAA Pres. **Bob Ashford**: "Got my TNB yesterday. Great job! I must gig **Andy Papageorge** on his description of the second set of ferry flights in 1945: Andy and I were the navigators on the K-89 piloted by Lt. **George Bowden**. We took off from NAS Weeksville (not Lakehurst), flew to Kindley Field, Bermuda and waited for the proper weather then took off for Lages (then named Lagens) in the Azores. The trip was 1,881 nm and was the longest non-refueled, non-stop, non-rigid [K-type] airship flight ever recorded. It lasted for 29.7 hours. We were a flight of two airships; the flight leader was Lt. Warren Townsend and the navigators on that ship were John Kane and Ben Levitt. Believe-it-or-not, we used celestial navigation (using bubble horizon sextants) and the very first airborne Loran sets, I think they were XAPN-1. After landing in the Azores we were flown back to Bermuda to await the next two airships (six were intended), but only the first two made it since the war in Europe was over a few days later."

E-mail from DIRIGIBLE editor **Giles Camplin** reveals K-88 Keys in danger of playing no more: The remains of the ZP3K-88, used as a "parts car" when restoring the ZP3K-47 for NMNA, is in danger of being junked for want of a good home and the resources to move it there from the United Kingdom.



Your editor is fully aware of the near-starvation efforts to do something with other airship known cars (more 3Ks exist than all others combined) and wishes only to pass the word that if one has such resources and interest for the ZP3K-88 they can contact Peter Davison pkgdavison@btopenworld.com. Giles closed with the advice for your editor, "Keep taking the punishment."

E-mail from member and LTAS' *Buoyant Flight* editor **Eric Brothers**: "I worry that the repeated use of the words "we" and "our" in TNB 71 by the Editor, Mr. Van Treuren, will confuse many readers into thinking that he means "NAA members" or "the NAA organization" when, in fact, he means only "I" or "my" (and sometimes a small group of his associates).

For example (italics for emphasis), p.2: "...the only blimp *we*'d found so far to have attacked and driven off a U-boat..."; p.12: "*We* had our first premiere at the NAA reunion in 1991..."; "The *Flying Carriers* remains *our* most popular documentary..."; "*We*'ve already argued what would have happened had the LZ 129 made a normal approach..."; "... a terrific novel *we* just had to publish."; "*we*'ve measured up kit planes..."; "...*we*'ve even had an animator do some test footage..."; "The

Navy says *we* can use the Santa Ana (Tustin) hangar..."; p.13 "*Our* efforts to raise funds to translate..."

The first reference seems to credit the findings of the ad-hoc Naval Airship History Team, but the rest refer only to Mr. Van Treuren and/or his Atlantis Productions – and not the NAA, Inc. In future, I hope Mr. Van Treuren will be more careful in his choice of pronouns and adjectives, and not give the impression of NAA, Inc. involvement in efforts that are his personal projects.

[Ed. Van Treuren responds: How can we spread the blame when hydrogen explodes in our faces? Seriously, Mr. Brothers is correct and the editorial 'we' will go, but I would beg readers to remember producing anything LTA is a team effort. I would never presume sole credit for what really begins with the rank-and-file members making this all possible.]

Our Treasurer also faxed a letter from **Ralph Jeffers**, who wrote: "Some time ago in March 1959, I was fortunate to fly in the last flight of the "King" type airship. During WWII when there were over 120 of these 'lighter-than-air' workhorses that were engaged in ASW patrol and convoy duty. As I have the 'Yellow Sheet' from that last flight, with VADM **C. E. Rosendahl** as Pilot, and many other ranking officers too numerous to mention. I wonder if the organization would be interested in seeing a copy of that yellow sheet? The end of an era - the last of the 'K-birds.' I was the mechanic assigned that day to the airship that was to be deflated and 'laid to rest.' It was indeed a flight to remember in my career in Navy aviation."

[Editor can't speak for the whole organization, but the history committee would sure appreciate having a copy on file!]

Letter from **James Hughes** concerning his and **George Roberts'** K-72 homing torpedo action will be included in the piece on page 30. (Other members continue to pursue the K-14 case, which H.C. will summarize in TNB #74.)

Treasurer reports **Les Breeding** is still active in corporate aviation and about 6 months ago celebrated his 50th year of climbing into cockpits. He is associated with Mid America Aviation Services of Oxford, Mississippi. Les has enjoyed reading material from **Jim Kissick's** article in TNB #71 and the incident surrounding his airship at Glynco. Les states: "I was a young aviator in ZP-2 from March 1957 until the squadron was being decommissioned. I was assigned as the Airframe Office at the time of Jim's flight. I recall there had been expressions of how heavy he might be at the time of takeoff. Some of us were gathered outside the wardroom watching his departure. As he passed by, we noticed his rudder making some erratic movements. We chuckled, thinking Jim was "waving" at us. Imagine to our surprise when a few minutes later the ship started going in circles, which we later learned was due to a malfunctioning rudder system. The circling continued for a short time, but with the circles always moving further away from the airship landing area. Finally, before the ships circles were beyond the airport boundaries, it was decided to attempt a landing on the jet strip. That would have been good with one exception - due to the path of the circles. The only part of the jet strip that could be used was perpendicular to its length. What a short field landing - some 150 feet of runway available to Jim. The landing attempt eventually resulted in Jim and his crew doing some free ballooning before everyone could get close enough to the swamp firma to evacuate the ship. I spent the bigger part of 2 weeks babysitting the deflated ship in the swamps before we could complete salvage operations.

What an experience for a young aviator to be assigned to a squadron with such "Helium Heads" as **Dewey Crowder** and others. I spent many pleasurable hours having my head filled with tall tales of yesterday - such as using pigeons when radio silence was in effect, and the resulting meals when some of the pigeons would mysteriously become injured before they could depart the ship with messages back to home base." [*Luckily this one got through to the cote. Ed.*]

Letter from **Robert Von Zeppelin**, Toccoa, Ga: "You have really put new life in "The Noon Balloon"...Returning to the [*Macon's*] resting place must have been a real experience. Many people in the United States have never heard of the *Akron* and *Macon* and their aircraft capabilities... I hope...that the cause of the crashes are not sugar-coated...Recently I read a reprint of Earnst Lehmann's book which I believe was first published in 1936. The title of the reprint is just 'Zeppelin.' In it he claims the German Naval Zeppelins in WWI sank six British submarines..."

Ford Ross promises yet another 5K crash story, and recommends flying into Atlantic City, NJ, and renting a car for the drive to the Reunion, much nicer drive on highways than Philadelphia PA and closer than Newark, etc.

E-mail from **Simon Beattie**, Eureka, CA, on the passing of his shipmate **Mike Szot**: "I meet



up with him in '43 at Watsonville, Ca where we were off base from Moffett. There was a golf course just across the road and we would go over and play until we saw the ship coming for landing. (Photo of Mike in 1943 from his wife **Mary**.)

He was a very good radio-man and with his gift of speech, make the long hours in the air pass a lot quicker, beside that he had a hellva nice grin. I was sent to Eureka when that base opened, but when they came up this way, we always got together. We are both two transplants from the East Coast, Mickey from Pennsylvania and I from Virginia."

Sy also included this photo from Eureka, CA:



The person next to me [on upper step] is **Ray Lay**, now deceased, taken on the entrance of barracks and the radio room at the Eureka blimp base of ZP32, 1943 [including] K-47. Ray was also a radioman and we made a number of flights together. We were a tight crew here in Eureka and we all have some nice times and memories and still are in contact with some that are left. Isn't that what called camaraderie? The barracks has been turned into a bed and breakfast, still standing, also the strip is still usable for small planes and drag races. Enjoy going over and visiting.”

Rick Zitarosa posted notes on the loss of **John Lust**: “John entered the Enlisted Men's Rigid Airship Course in 1930 as a Aviation Machinist's Mate 3rd Class. He trained aboard the rigid airship USS *Los Angeles* (ZR-3) and was selected for duty aboard the new USS *Akron* (ZRS-4) making many of the latter ship's early flights. "Didn't get to make the West Coast flight in '32" he told me once with tears coming to his eyes. "I remember Chief

Bill Russell putting his hand on my shoulder and telling me, ' Not this time, Kid. Maybe next time when you've got more experience! " For John Lust, life took a decidedly different turn. In the summer of 1932, he was "out late one night " with some friends ("one of those two, three a.m. deals" he would say.) They were out riding around North Jersey in a Model A Ford. John was riding as a passenger, they went off the road and had a bad wreck. Badly injured with severe head trauma and scarred for life, John spent months in rehabilitation and his injuries invalidated him out of the Navy. Bill Russell and 72 other friends, shipmates and passengers went down with the *Akron* off Barnegat the following year. John was active in many functions very well past his 90th birthday, but had slowed down very much in the past year and was in the Nursing home the last nine months of his life. He is survived by his wife of 40 years, Jane, as well as two twin sisters, several nieces and nephews and a great many friends who remember this particular former "Sky Sailor" as a great man sit and talk with about airships, human nature and the gifts of life. But from the large turnout of friends and family from all through his town and around the country, we got to see a picture of a man who was not just something of an LTA legend in recent years, but a favorite son and pillar of his community and a man highly regarded by seemingly all who ever knew him. (NLHS photo from their website.)



e-mail from **Dan Cavalier**: In July of 1945, I was ordered to return to the Richmond Naval Air Base. The Flagler Hotel, on Miami's inland bay, was taken over by the navy. They had a two-story group of one bedroom apartments facing south on the grounds of the hotel. Naomi (my wife) and I were assigned a first floor apartment. We were flying patrols around the Miami area and occasionally into San Julian, an American base near Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In September, I was on duty at the Richmond base when we received word that a hurricane was heading towards the coast of Florida. The center of the storm was to cross the south end of the state. Our three hangars were supposed to be hurricane proof. Planes (over 400) flew up from Boca Chica and Boca Raton and were batten down in the three enormous hangars. We also had three blimps moored in each hangar. A navy requirement was that all the aircraft had to be fully fueled and crews had to standby the ships in order to fly them out to safety in case of an emergency. As the hurricane approached the commanding officer decided that some married men, mostly pilots, could go home and single men would stand their duty. He also gave us permission to pull the cars we would not need for transportation into the hangars. So there were over 400 cars stored in the hangars as well as the 400 plus aircraft and blimps. A friend, who lived in the same complex, suggested I drive my car into the hangar and he would drive us home. Another friend, **Sandy Leff**, a Lieutenant Commander in the Hedron (maintenance squadron), was the duty officer and remained on the base. Because the base would have been shorthanded, several of the married officers like Sandy had to remain on duty as well. Upon arriving home, my wife and I had dinner while we listened to the news on our radio. The storm was moving fast and gaining momentum. Suddenly the winds changed and the eye of the storm was heading straight through the base. Winds increased up to 150 miles an hour. We were concerned, but not terribly worried since the hangars were hurricane proof. After dinner, Naomi and I gathered the wives living in our complex whose husbands had the duty in our apartment. About ten o'clock we heard over the radio that there had been a fire at Richmond Naval Air Station, but no details were given as to where the fire was located. Around 11:30 pm word came over the radio that one of the hangars was in flames. Needless to say, we were all very agitated, the situation with the wives became extremely tense over the safety of their husbands. We went up to

the second floor balcony of the building to look in the direction of the base. Even in the raging storm we could see the fire thirty miles away to the south of us. I had tried a number of times to call the base to find out what was going on, but all telephone connections were down. My friend and I decided to drive to the base and call home as soon as we knew what happened. We tried to assure everyone that their husbands were safe. We left about midnight and drove through the storm all night, dodging trees that were down and all kinds of debris flying across the road in front of the car. When we finally arrived at the base, about six o'clock in the morning, it looked like an atomic bomb was dropped on top of it. All three hangars had disappeared. The place was in shambles. The only building standing, was the BOQ (the building I believe is still standing) and a large number of service personnel were huddled inside. Otherwise the base was completely destroyed. One of the men, standing by a ship in one of the hangars, saw the roof start to peel off. He immediately notified the duty officer (Lt. Comdr. Sandy Leff) and all the personnel were immediately ordered out of the hangars. A number of the men were stretched prone on the mat, or holding on to the trunk of Palm trees, as the wind blew the fire and debris flew over their heads. It was a miracle that [only] one man was lost. When the ceiling beams fell and struck the aircraft, all the planes, loaded with high-octane fuel, blew up and nearly all of the cars were lost by fire and falling beams. Tucked in the corner of hangar number one were five automobiles, one of which was my car. A beam had flattened the roof, but miraculously the tires were still inflated. Around the end of the week of the storm, the Navy got the pilots together and offered us assignments in the regular Navy. In other words, we would not be reserve officers and could build a career as Naval Officers in the regular Navy. It really was an exceptional offer, considering that most Naval Officers spent four years at the Naval Academy, in order to receive commissions. The Navy had established an ALNAV (policy) that pilots would earn flight points for every year they flew, and if they reached 49 points, they could not be transferred to another base. I had earned 49 points, so I could not be transferred. I decided that I did not want a career in the regular Navy, so within 30 days I was out of the service. Although I was not really released, I was assigned to inactive duty, awaiting active assignment. I received my Honorable Discharge on 17 December, 1957.

Our Treasurer reports “**Don G. Potts**, NAA long time member, enlisted in the USNR on December 9, 1941 (2 days after Pearl Harbor) as Apprentice Seaman and went on active duty January 11, 1942. Boot camp, Hospital Core School at Norco Naval Hospital, Phm/3. Don was appointed to St. Mary's Pre-flight in March of 1943. Flight training at Moffett and Lakehurst. Commissioned on December 7, 1943 at Lakehurst, ZP-21 and ZP-51. Air navigation school at Shawnee, VR11. Any of you fellas with Don?”

Treasurer also reports **Dan Toleno** of San Diego, CA has joined us. Dan graduated

Rutgers University, 1955; received his Naval Aviator wings, NAS Glynco, 1958; ZP-3 Lakehurst 1959-62; VW-11, Argentina, Newfoundland 1962-43; NATTC Glynco 1963-66; Naval Station Midway Island, 1966-69; Naval Reserves at NAS North Island and NAS Miramar 1969-83; Recreation supervisor for the City of San Diego, 1969-98. Dan hopes to attend the September 2007 reunion at Lakehurst. He also tries to remain in close contact with some of the airship people from the 1968-82 timeframe. He plans to contact as many as possible and encourage them to attend. Welcome aboard, Dan!



K-135 was the last fully assembled K-ship delivered by Goodyear. (It is believed K-136 had been pulled from the line to replace K-113, whose original car had burned while being shipped to Moffett Field for erection. There is some evidence a few later uncompleted cars were broken up for spares following the Navy's canceling orders.) This photo (whose original owner is not known to the editor) shows K-135's crew as they served in Brazil, but nothing else is known – squadron, date, exact location, and of course the crew's names. Founding member and author **James Shock** is working on one final update to his landmark book “US NAVY AIRSHIPS 1915-1962” and would happily include this and any other relevant information in the third printing. Drop Jim a note or e-mail anyone in the History Committee.

TREASURER'S STRONGBOX

We are very pleased with the results of the returns of the renewal memberships and the generous donations from the membership, including honorary members. A reminder to those who have received the dues renewal letter. If they haven't been paid, we would appreciate your doing so as soon as possible. This will save us from sending notices. You will be notified by letter each year when your dues are due. Some are paid thru '08 and higher. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Aviation Day, Witham Field, Stuart, FL, was advertised for Saturday, Jan. 13. I called last minute and they reserved a table for my wife and me. I gathered all the materials; The Noon Balloon, stamps, my old pictures, membership applications, calendar etc. What a great day! Many folks enjoyed the presentation. We visited with folks who saw the *Hindenburg*, others who live near Richmond Field, families who lived near Lakehurst, fellows who ice skated near the tarmac of So. Weymouth and were chased by the yellow security truck. We passed out the extra Noon Balloons with applications to the "fly boys." Others were just very interested in airships and what makes them tick. We hope this information will inspire you to "talk - up" the NAA and have some fun too!

We would like to welcome our newest members since October 2006:

Sevola, Charles J. Jr., Randolph, NJ; Winker, James, A., Sioux Falls, SD; Toleno, Daniel R., San Diego, CA; Bennett, Charles, Jr., Louisburgh, NC; (gift of Dad, Charles Bennett) Colting, Hokan, Newmarket, Ontario Canada; Wolfrom, Kenneth, Lumberton, NJ; Frattasio, Mark J., Pembroke, MA; Kushma III, George, Sunrise, FL; (brought in by Ford Ross) Ashford, Richard R., Johnson City TN; Ashford, Robert J., St. Simons Is, GA; Conrad, Daniel, Powhatan, VA; Molz, Norman, Annapolis, MD; Schoolmaster, Jeffrey, Lewisville, CO; Schoolmaster, Timothy, Evanston, IL; (previous 6 are family gift memberships of Pres. Bob Ashford) Fish, Benjamin L; Mickleton, NJ; (brought in by Dan Toleno) Troxell, Sharon H. Medford Lakes, NJ. (Gift of Dad, Wayne Hastings) WELCOME ABOARD!

Any questions, please call. Happy Spring!!

- Peter F. Brouwer, Treasurer

DONATION LIST MEMBERS OF THE N.A.A. NOVEMBER 1, 2006 THRU JANUARY 4, 2007

\$5-\$50.00

ADAMSON, F. B.	CHRIST, C. J.
ANDERSON, G. R.	KLIBOFSKE, VIRGIL
JOUTRAS, RICHARD	KOLL, WILLIAM
BARKER, DONALD E.	KLEIN, NANCY
BELSITO, ROSEANNE	MCCARTHY, JOHN
BETLESKI, ADRIAN F.	PETTIGREW, RAY
BURLIN, CHARLES W.	ROBSON, JOHN
CARMICHAEL, GEORGE	SEVERS, PHILIP
CLARK, EDWARD B.M	BOHL, BRUCE
CROWLEY, JIM	BRENNAN, DAVID
CYR, PAUL E.	CRAGGS, JOHN
GARRISON, JOSEPH H.	GOLDMAN, WILLIAM
GIBSON, WILLIAM A.	HOOVER, DON
GRIFFIN, W. E. JR.	HENZE, ROBERT
HANNAM, JOSEPH P	CLARK, ROBERT A.
HASTINGS, WAYNE C.	DAWSON, PHILLIP
HAYES, DAVID E. .	KLINKER, WENDELL
HENNIGAN, MARGARET C.	MARTEL, JOHN D.
HERBERT, CHARLES E.	BROOKS, JACK
HINRICHSSEN, MARGARET	HAWLEY, PAUL
HOSELTON, TED, JR.	JEFFERS, RALPH
HURLEY, LAWRENCE E.	KOZA, FRANCES
IANNONE, PHILIP A.	BRANDEL, MILROY
KELLER, HUGO	EARLEY, JAMES
LANSDOWNE, MARY A.	GOSNELL, JAMES
LARCOM, PAUL J.	KUSHMA, GEORGE
LIBERA, EDMUND	SWISTAK, WALTER
LITTLE, IKEY	STADTER, GEORGE
LYON, ROY	YARNELL, JAMES
MEYER, DONALD E	ASHFORD, ROBERT
MOLLANDER, O. GLORIA	AMPHEIN, JEROME
NASSIFF, DON.	DEHLER, CONNIE
NEVIN, PAULINE	HAMMOND, JOHN
NEWSOM, J. W.	KILLION, ROBERT
NOLTE, CLIFTON J.	KELLY, PAMELA
O'HEA, WILLIAM	SNIDER, JEAN
OVERSON, LARRY	STURGES, MANUEL
PASKOW, MRS. CHESTER	SMITH, JOSEPH F.
PIERCE, HARLEY	WEITHAUS, CHARLES
REED, EUGENE L.	WEICK, RAY
REINHARDT, PAUL W.	PETERSON, NORMAN
RUSITZKY, LOUIS M.	SMITH, DONALD E.
SARGENT, WILLIAM	ALBRO, EUGENE
SHRIVER, CHARLES	HARKIN, WILLIAM
SMITH, ROBERT W	HARTLEY, JACK
SMITH, DAVID A. SR.	MATHIS, SLIM
SOHN, WILBUR	MODZINSKI, CHARLES
STALEY, CECELIA T	SHAMONSKY, EDWARD
TOPPING, MRS. DALE	SMITH, WILLIAM H.
VALES, ROBERT F.	TUGGLE, DAMON
VANDENBERG, LARRY E	VACANTI, SALVATORE
WALTERS, PATIENCE.	ZULUETA, ALFRED
WEAVER, LOWELL "TEX"	BOWE, MICHAEL
WILLIAMS, JOHN C.	WARTMAN, A. C. "BUD"
WILCOX, KENNETH A.	\$50-\$99
WILSON, HARLAN M.	CHRISTOPHER, BETTY B.
WINKER, JAMES A.	JOUTRAS, RICHARD
WOOSNAM, WILLIAM F	SOUTHWARD, GRANT
ZAPKE, FRANCIS R	\$100-\$499
BELL, EDWARD	BRAUN, KENNETH
ECKHOUSE, MORT	ULRICH, STEPHEN
FRECKER, DAVID	SIMMONS, GUSTI
FREEDMAN, JACK	KANE, DOROTHY

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

High and low altitude unmanned systems continue to receive the majority of government funding support primarily for defense applications. A large part of this effort is concentrated on the development of sensing equipment that is uniquely suited for lighter-than-air aircraft.

U. S. Activities: The Missile Defense Agency awarded a \$149 million contract to Lockheed Martin's Maritime Systems and Sensors Division (LM) in Akron, Ohio in December 2005 to continue work on the third phase of a program to build and demonstrate a prototype unmanned High Altitude Airship (HAA). The prototype will carry a 400 lb. payload whereas an operational version would support a 2000 lb. payload.

- A related project at Lockheed Martin (LM) Akron is the development of an advanced hull material to allow adherence of radar arrays and solar panels. This \$10.3 million contract, let by the Air Force Research Laboratory, is part of the DARPA Integrated Sensor Is Structure (ISIS) program. A separate \$8.8 million contract was awarded to LM at Littleton, Colorado which will work on development of novel power systems. The DARPA ISIS program includes a total of five awards totaling over \$42.5 million. The goal is to develop a stratospheric, airship-based, autonomous unmanned sensor system capable of long endurance surveillance and tracking of air and ground targets. Other contractors are Northrop Grumman's Electronic Sensors and Systems Section and Raytheon Systems Co., El Segundo, California. These companies will pursue different approaches to developing dual-band radar to be bonded to the hulls of airships.

- The Southwest Research Institute flew a powered unmanned "High Sentinel" 146 ft. long nonrigid airship to an altitude of 74,000 ft. in November 2005. A 60 lb. power and equipment pod was carried. The flight was the first one conducted as part of the Composite Hull High Altitude Powered Platform program. The joint effort by Southwest, Aerostar International and the Air Force Research Laboratory was sponsored by the U.S. Army Space and Defense Command. The goal is to develop long endurance autonomous solar-electric

stratospheric airships to lift 20-200 lb. payloads with durations of more than 30 days.

- Sanswire Networks LLC, a subsidiary of GlobeTel Communications Corp., is planning to fly its Sanswire 2 high altitude demonstrator at the Edwards Air Force base during the last quarter of 2006. Both tethered and free flight tests will be conducted. The work is part of their development of a wireless broadband network using high altitude airships called "Stratellites."

- The Department of Homeland Security is planning to demonstrate an unmanned airship to fly above 18,000 ft. for at least 24 hrs. for border surveillance. It will use current sensor technology.

- Techsphere Systems International's SA-60 spherical airship participated in test flights of "paint-on antenna" technology during June 2006 in the Nevada desert. This was part of an effort by Applied EM, Inc and Unitech, LLC to develop new high altitude communications and surveillance platforms. The airship also was used to test NASA's GPS Reflective Experiment for soil moisture remote sensing.

- TCOM, L. P. delivered its first Off-Road Tactical Aerostat System (ORTAS) to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The system is designed to provide surveillance on-the-move while traveling through road-less desert border areas. The system consists of two UAE military trucks; one carrying a TCOM 17m aerostat and mooring system and the other serving as a mobile operations center and also carrying a helium supply. The aerostat flies at 1000 ft. and carries an EO/IR camera and communications relay. More UAE orders are being placed for ORTAS. The Australian military took delivery of three 17m trailer mounted systems to be used for surveillance and communications relay.

- ILC Dover delivered two 420,000 cu. ft. aerostat envelopes to TCOM for use on the L-Martin/USAF TARS system. A third envelope is on order. ILC Dover has redesigned the LM 275,000 cu. ft. aerostat envelope to incorporate improved lighter and stronger fabric. Two units have been ordered. Two 56,000 cu. ft. aerostats were delivered to LM and two additional have been ordered. ILC also delivered a major subassembly to TCOM for a 71-meter aerostat.

- Phase II of the DARPA sponsored aircraft concept, Walrus, was cancelled. The Phase I effort was redirected to studies and tests of

various systems which, when developed, would make the concept feasible. These included heating of the lifting gas, compressed gas and air storage, ballast recovery from fuel cell operation, improved hull fabrics, and air cushion landing systems.

- Lockheed Martin's Advanced Development Programs Division in Palmdale, California, developed an experimental hybrid airship as an in-house project to study certain features of aircraft that combine heavy and lighter-than-air flight. The P-791 airship is 120 ft long and has a volume of 120,000 cu. ft. It is controlled and propelled by 4 fully vectorable propellers and has an air cushion landing system. It was first flown in January, 2006. [See back cover photo-Ed.]

- Ohio Airships has completed construction of its prototype DynaLifter hybrid aircraft. It has received its experimental certificate, which will allow flight tests to commence. The aircraft holds 17000 cu. ft. of helium and is 120 ft. long.

- The American Blimp Corp. (ABC) delivered one of their A-170G airships to the U. S. Navy in May 2006 to be used for experiments with and evaluation of advanced sensor systems. This is the first airship the Navy has owned since 1962. The envelope, built by ILC Dover, is opaque in contrast to those used in Lightship advertising airships. ABC has leased an A-60+ airship to the U. S. Army for airborne sensor testing.

- ABC's subsidiary, The Lightship Group, has developed with the Sanyo company an advanced high resolution, full color and full motion LED "Lightsign" mounted on the side of an A-170 envelope. The display is 30 ft. high and 70 ft. long and is visible in day or night. It provides TV quality commercials, athletic events, movies, and any other type of broadcast topic. Following a demonstration in Las Vegas, the first A-170 was leased to an Australian firm. ILC Dover delivered two A60 and one A170 envelopes to ABC during 2006.

- Digital Design and Imaging Service in Falls Church, Virginia operates a balloon borne imaging service that provides pictures from planned building sites. The cameras are raised to altitudes at which intended views are to be checked such as tops of planned tall buildings and stadiums. The 12 ft. diameter balloon is housed in a trailer and flown through its opened roof.



International Activities: Airship Management Services (AMS) affiliate, Skyship Management, has leased two of its Skyship 600 airships to the government of Trinidad for police surveillance. The airships were flown from Miami to Trinidad via various Caribbean islands. The second airship is powered by external Lycoming engines [photo above] in place of the original Porsche engines inside the car. AMS also is commencing operations in the United Arab Emirates by leasing a Skyship 600 airship to Nakheel, a UAE property developer.

-Zeppelin's Deutsche Zeppelin Reederei division is continuing its sightseeing flights in Germany with its NT-07 airship. Over 10,000 passengers were carried in 2005. The airship also participated at the 2006 World Games as a platform for DLR traffic monitoring. A second NT-07 continues to be engaged in geological surveys for the DeBeers diamond company in Africa. Zeppelin will construct another NT-07 (number 4) to be ready for flight early in 2008. ILC Dover in the U.S will furnish the envelope.

-Nautilus, an Italian firm in Genoa, has developed a sub-scale twin-hulled unmanned demonstrator airship 52.4 ft. long called "Electra Twin Flyer." The hulls are connected by a central structure which houses batteries, fuel cells, two fixed vertical ducted fans, four steerable horizontal fans, avionics and communication equipment. It will be flown at low and medium altitudes. A full-scale prototype will be built following the demonstrator tests.

-A Russian aeronaut set a new world's altitude record in August 2006 of 8150 meters using a hot air inflated blimp. The flight was sponsored by several Russian government agencies.

-Norman Mayer, Chairman

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

Deutsche Zeppelin-Reederei (DZR)

Dresden visit: During October 2006, Zeppelin NT flew from Friedrichshafen to Dresden for a three-day "commercial" engagement. It was carried out in partnership with the world-renowned watchmaker firm A. Lange & Soehne. The company wanted to celebrate the launch of its new watch, the RICHARD LANGE with a Zeppelin cruising over Dresden.

Announcing the event were impressive looking posters proclaiming "A great Legend returns - Lange brings the Zeppelin to Dresden" while also drawing attention to the historical link between the Saxon watchmaker and Zeppelin Luftschiffbau (LZ) on Lake Constance. This connection - in addition to the attributes that both enterprises shared (like exclusivity of product and clientele, engineering excellence, world-wide name recognition, etc.) - can be traced back to 1935 when LZ obtained from A. Lange & Soehne two high precision observation watches that provided their airship crews with reliable navigation and time keeping. Moreover, Dresden's Zeppelin history dates back almost a century. It began with the 1913 opening of the world's first airship hangar and facility. Later on, Dresden's populace partook in the heydays of Zeppelin airship travel when great airships like the *Sachsen* and *Graf Zeppelin* were seen over the city, also known as "Florence of the North."

Highlighting Zeppelin NT's visit to Dresden on behalf of A. Lange & Soehne, the Reederei (DZR) carried out a number of VIP flights over Dresden and to the watchmaker's manufacturing site in nearby Glashuette, Saxony. City fathers made an exception and allowed the airship to take off and land from the "Elbwiesen" (River Elbe Flats) site, situated in close proximity to the city's Baroque Center. In a generous gesture, lottery-selected passengers who were kept from taking their Zep flight due to high winds, were given a rain check redeemable at DZR's Lake Constance terminal. At an event for invited guests at Castle Eckberg, Walter Lange, the

great-grandson of the company's founder presented the new RICHARD LANGE watch to Wolfgang von Zeppelin, former co-manager of the new Zeppelin Luftschifftechnik (ZLT) and a distant relative of the Old Count von Zeppelin.



What's ahead for 2007: DZR is again offering a wide choice of attractive round trip flights ranging from beautiful Lake Constance shores to the picturesque regions in neighboring Switzerland and Austria. The season is scheduled to begin March 27 and end by November 05, 2007 (for more details go to www.zeppelinflug.de, choose the English version and click on "Booking"). Zep NT passengers choosing any of DZR's West route flights in 2007 will enjoy a special treat when they pass over Lake Constance's famous Isle of Mainau. The reason: the island's attraction as the flower isle of Germany is going to be enhanced even more when it will be transformed into a spectacular art project. Among its highlights will be a "golden fleece" waterfall cascading into Lake Constance and fields of vibrantly colored flowers. They are sure to be enjoyed by the island's "earthbound" visitors, but perhaps more so from above when Zeppelin NT passengers can view the spectacle below from the comfort of their cabin as the airship passes leisurely over the isle. DZR is partnering with the project sponsor for a time. It seems certain, the Mainau project will hardly go unnoticed when between April and July 2007, DZR's Zeppelin NT will be in the skies drawing attention to it with its artsy, attention-getting fresh coat of paint [above]. DZR has plans for a Zep NT to be engaged in a similar project in Holland in the fall of 2007, no further details are known at this time.

(Note: Portions of the above article were based on info from DZR and A. Lange & Soehne.)

Zeppelin NT involved in climate research

In November 2006 Zeppelin Luftschifftechnik (ZLT) announced that Juelich Research Center's "Institute for Geospheric Chemistry and Dynamics" will be conducting climate-specific measurement flights in the lower atmosphere. The two-week mission will be carried out with the Zeppelin NT airship in the summer 2007 over select regions in the south of Germany. Use of the airship makes it possible for researchers for the first time to directly examine the lowermost, about one kilometer (0.6 mile) thick layer of the atmosphere with extensive onboard measurement systems and to consequently acquire new results in climate research. A landing field near Baden-Baden will serve as the staging area during the mission.



Photo courtesy W. Boller, SK

The Institute, in a similar announcement confirmed it was making use of a specially adapted Zeppelin NT (see paragraph below) as measurement platform in order to examine the distribution of trace gases and radicals in the atmosphere's lowest strata. It is in these layers and up to an altitude of one kilometer - the so-called planetary boundary layer - where the researchers want to examine the vertical distribution of hydroxyl radicals. Said the Institute's director, hydroxyls are the "atmosphere's detergent" and break up most of the trace gases that pollute the atmosphere's lower layer. With their analysis the Institute's scientists want to explore the photochemical processes at this very reactive, strong trace gas gradients-marked altitude and experimentally evaluate proposed models.

In the weeks following the announcements, the airship was to be adapted for its later use. Based on reports from the regional print media and ZLT, modifications were to include the installation of an exterior instrument platform from where among other measurements, readings for sun irradiation were to be taken. The topside-mounted platform is supported by the airship's internal structure. Platform access for maintenance and instrument calibration is via masted vehicle, rope ladder and tether. In addition, the metemast, a slender sonde-equipped boom for the capture of three-dimensional wind currents is to be attached to the bottom of the cabin nose from where it protrudes straight out (see photo). Additional instruments will be placed in the cabin. All together, the instruments weigh 600 kilograms (1,320 lbs.) and require an extra eight kilowatt power (kw) which will be provided by an additional generator driven by the airship's tail engine. ZLT estimates it will require an additional two to three days beyond the two-week long project to install and un-install all mission-related equipment. The entire project costs about one million Euro (1,3 Million USD), two-thirds of which is funded by Germany's Federal Ministry for Education and Research.

Together with its motivated development team, ZLT says they are looking forward to work with the Juelich Research Center. For Zeppelin NT having been chosen for this "special mission" project shows anew that ZLT's (business) strategy to market the airship's unique flight characteristics for such missions, is paying off. What is likely to have persuaded the Research Center to reserve additional flights right up to the year 2013, is Zeppelin NT's ability to provide the scientific community an aerial platform that is mission-adaptable, weather hardy, free of vibration, has excellent maneuverability (hover and turn, go straight up and down), operates over a wide range of speeds and altitudes, accommodates high payloads, has an ample energy supply and enjoys low noise levels inside and out. Not to be overlooked is

Zeppelin NT's outstanding safety record and proven all-around reliability.



With the prototype Zeppelin NT continuing its special mission in Africa (DeBeers just completed a hangar for it [*above & right*]) and the Friedrichshafen-based airship looking forward to a very busy 2007 flying season (which is already heavily booked for tourist flights and all but sold out of advertising space and event appearances), ZLT's three-pronged approach providing passenger flights, advertising in the sky and "special missions," appears to be headed in the right direction. The imminent build of a fourth Zep NT, reported to join Deutsche Zeppelin Reederei's (DZR) flying season by mid 2008, is expected to alleviate some of the tight scheduling the Reederei faces due to increased business. The new airship will have room for 12 paying passengers and will cost about 8.5 million Euro (11.3 million USD).

Zeppelin NT in Africa

Since well over a year ago when the prototype Zeppelin NT began its diamond-seeking mission for the DeBeers Group in South Africa's Botswana, it had to face mother nature's elements in the air as well as on the ground. While the mostly nighttime flying missions presented their own challenges, keeping the unprotected, non-sheltered airship safe and sound on the wide-open grounds was a big concern. However, with the just completed hangar facility in Botswana's Gaborone, courtesy of DeBeers, a good portion of the risk has now been eliminated. Besides being shielded from the often brutally hot and dusty climate, airship maintenance and annual

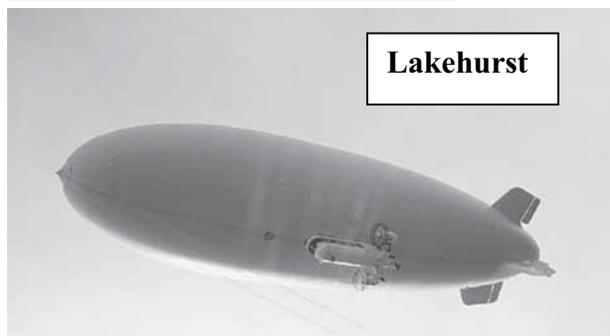
inspections can now proceed in unfettered fashion inside the hangar. Not only have the more than 900 hours of operational flying (as of 11/2006) produced results that DeBeers said were five times better than those previously reached with HTA-aircraft flyovers, the rest of the mineral exploring world is taking notice of DeBeers's innovative use of a Zeppelin NT airship. In a tribute to DeBeers last November in London, the company was given Mining Journal's Pioneering Award "for the company that has shown the greatest originality in the search for mineral". Furthermore, the Journal added: "DeBeers Group was selected for its Airship Gravity Gradiometry Project.



The company has successfully married the Full Tensor Gravity Gradiometer (FTG) technology with the use of a Zeppelin airship in a ground-breaking project. Tests in Botswana have demonstrated significant improvements over fixed-wing aircraft in terms of reduced 'acceleration' noise and flight pattern flexibility." Even with promising next generation airborne surveying technology looming on the horizon, DeBeers is staying the course and is continuing its multiple-year lease with the prototype Zep NT. As had been reported earlier in another LTA newsletter/bulletin, ZLT is not bringing the airship back to Germany. It's logistically and financially not doable. To round out its useful life, the airship may well be seen in the skies over South Africa carrying out various missions and televising games during World Cup Soccer 2010.

(Note: both photos this page are copyright "ZLT M Cierpka")

SHORE ESTABLISHMENTS



Above: U.S. Navy MZ-3A airship #167811 assigned to Squadron VX-20 Lighter Than Air Vehicle (LTAV) Detachment NAES Lakehurst, NJ has the call sign " WaterBug 811." - Rick Zitarosa

Navy LTA is taking advantage of every available weather opportunity and a relatively mild January has been a big help in the test/training process for the MZ3A #167811... relatively clear and calm in the morning, they did a morning brief at 0700 and they were off by 0830, heading for coast and climbing to 5000 feet. Air temperature on the ground was about 30 degrees, humidity was about 35% and rising, making it feel a little bone chilling.

The airship dropped came in and over Hangar #1. The engines were throttled back once or twice and forward motion slowed, then they proceeded across Mat 1 and the landing area at Mat 2. This looked like a landing worth watching, so it was back into the car and out to Mat 2...Down she came, a new 4x6 American flag fluttering from the stern. Silently, a gentle touch down and then a "whoosh" as the props were reversed briefly and then the ground crew had the lines out and taut and a few orders could be heard being barked over the radio monitor speaker. The nose locked into the cup at the top of the wire-braced "stick" mast. It was 1135am. Time from touch down to masting was under five minutes.

The engines stopped, there was a "clink" of various gear being moved around, the auxiliary blower could be heard to start and the words could be heard loud and clear "Set Pressure Watch One Point Six Inches! Secure the Ship! WELL DONE!"

(Could "Bull" Tobin have done any better?)

- **Rick Zitarosa**

Moffett: The Christmas star atop Hangar One may yet shine again.

The Navy softened its stance in late January on holding a public meeting on Hangar One after it announces its decision to demolish or save the historic Hangar of the USS *Macon* this late Spring or early Summer.

In December the Navy had insisted there would be no public meeting, only written comments after the report is made. But at the January Moffett Field Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) meeting, Navy spokesperson Rick Weissenborn said "We have to provide the opportunity for written and oral comments. It is under consideration with out a doubt". Weissenborn explained why the Navy was revising its Environmental and Cost Analysis, a report evaluating 15 options for dealing with the hangar. He said there were mistakes made the first time. "We need to tell a story. The revised recommendation is going to tell a complete story". RAB co-chair Bob Moss said at the meeting, "The least controversial way to approach it would be to have another public meeting. If the recommendation is to fix it, I can't see them hesitating to do so". But the last time the Navy had a public meeting, "They got blasted by the hundreds of people there", Moss Said. So we wait and hope. Stay tuned.

-**Ben DeBolt**

Pensacola: Greetings once again from your "Guy on the Scene" at the National Museum of Naval Aviation. In the last issue of the "Noon Balloon" I reported that the restored L-8 "Ghost Ship" Car was within weeks of being installed in the LTA Exhibit. It was installed as expected, in full view of our visitors but awaiting installation of its engines and associated equipment. The engines, engine mounts and props have been completely restored but the cowlings, exhaust collector rings and stacks as well as carburetor air intake stacks all have to be replicated. This exacting and time consuming operation is well underway. **Dan Owczarczak**, who's a genius with sheet metal, has the two cowlings (about two weeks work for each one) completed and estimates at least 6 weeks (plus?) to complete the rings, stacks and air intakes. Once the engine assemblies are completed they will be attached to the car and it placed in it's final exhibit position. While I'm casting kudos I must mention **Harry Brandt**, **Ernie Brousseau** and **Les Fowler**. While almost every restorer in the department had a hand in the L-8 job, these three had primary responsibility. Ernie and Harry did the Car and Les the instruments and radio equipment. A daunting job for all three completed with no Irish Pennants. As with any job, it's the little picky things that take the time, such finding an L Ship automobile type spot light. It's on the Car! Y'all come on down and see us. Bright Blue Skies to you and yours,

- **Mort Eckhouse**



Photo: Zoltan Szoboszlav

**Cover Story: 50th Anniversary: Flight
Of The *Snowbird* March 4-15, 1957**

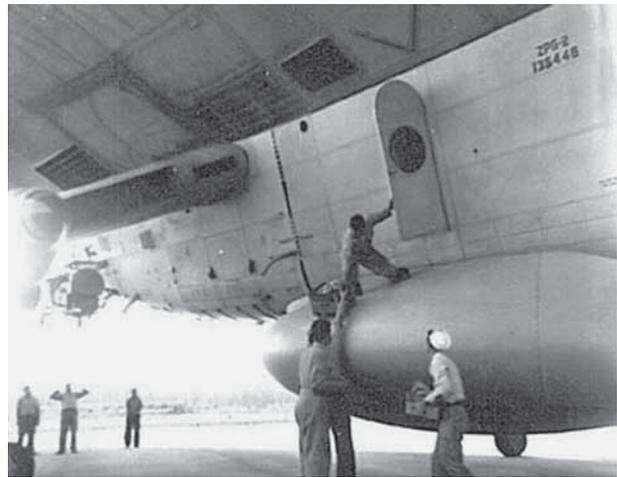
By Frank Maxymillian bluemax4@verizon.net



Preface: These comments are in no way to be construed as a factual history of events as they occurred. Instead, they are simply the memories of one of the *Snowbird* crewmembers on this historic flight some fifty years after the event. The trip section will be a collection of random thoughts. As the flight wore on things seemed to run together and at this point in time I can recall incidents but would not have a prayer of putting them into any kind of chronological order except where the geographical location is known.

One afternoon, probably in January 1957, I was approached by our Electronics Shop Chief Lee Stephen, Aviation Radioman Chief (at the time an E7 chief, or CPO, was the highest rank attainable by an enlisted man) and invited to go for a walk on the hangar deck. He told me about the *Snowbird* trip being in the planning stages and asked if I'd like to go along as 2nd radio...I told him, without rancor, that I was not interested in the flight... I don't remember at this point who it was that I met with, but I think it was the Executive Officer. In any event, after a less than minute of discussion he demonstrated why he was the "Exec." With a terse "OK Max, let's knock off the bullshit. Pack your ditty bag and climb aboard. And remember! We're all volunteers on this flight. Right?" To which I snapped to attention and responded smartly "Aye Aye Sir"... and let Chief Steffen know that I had been persuaded to "volunteer" and climb aboard.

The next couple of weeks were spent in a confusion of preparations, making a spares list, gathering materials, checking and tuning equipment, a short TAD (Temporary Duty) assignment at Sanders Asc. in Nashua NH to pick up and learn how to use a new drift meter system. (This equipment worked on a Doppler radar scheme, picking up motion in four axes and summarizing it in an audible signal and a meter readout that showed drift velocity and direction. I quickly learned that it would let out a very loud squeal if I fired a paper clip from a rubber band through the radar field, which I did routinely while at Sanders to signal coffee breaks etc.) [Rodrigues photo ZP-3 '55]



Back at NADU the engineering group, to make sure we'd be able to get off the ground, continuously monitored preparations. If we had been allowed to take along everything we wanted we'd have never made it... (One interesting thing at this point was that the flight crew had to go out and purchase electric shavers. The feeling was that they would be lighter and more practical for the expected duration of our flight than providing water with which to shave on a daily basis. It seems that no one gave any thought to simply not shaving.) The flight crew was given some time off to get organized with family commitments. (I took my wife and son out to Logan Airport and put them on a flight to Florida where they would vacation with her parents on the gulf coast.) The word finally came down that we were ready to go and as soon as we hit the right weather conditions we'd load the frozen foods and launch.

Departure: In order to take advantage of the colder, denser air, which would provide more lift, we had been scheduled for an after dark launch. With the aircraft moored in the hangar, last minute preparations were made. I recall that I couldn't believe that there was that much frozen food in existence. Remember, this was 1957 and frozen foods were considered tasteless, overpriced and by some, to be dangerous. We were loading enough frozen dinners etc to get the crew of 14 men through 4 days. Canned goods, including things like ham and turkey were loaded by the case. The flight crew's "carry on" luggage was weighed and checked for contents. With no way to bathe on board deodorant was a required item.

[Ed. photo:
Project Lincoln]



Lightweight jackets and new ball caps were loaded. We were all required to have a pair of flight shoes, which were confirmed before boarding. The crew had also packed parachute bags with dress uniforms, work clothes, skivvies etc to be placed on the Super Constellation Planner 3, which would precede us carrying a portable mooring mast in case we got in trouble and had to make an unexpected landing somewhere. Finally, all set for flight and still attached to our mooring mast we were towed out of the hangar. It had begun to snow lightly but was cold enough that the snow was not sticking to the bag. We launched into the dark sky at about 6:30 PM, experiencing some difficulty with cross winds, and were on our way.

The Flight: - A decision was made in the planning stages that we would not change our clocks at all during the flight. I don't recall whether we went to Greenwich Mean Time or

stayed on Eastern Standard Time. Whatever it was it made it a lot easier to maintain watch schedules, meal times, etc. once you got past the idea of the sun coming up at midnight or setting at noon or whatever.

- Our radio call sign for routine voice communication was "Planner 12." For CW (Continuous wave transmission using Morse code) reports it was 12D (dog) 48, which was a real pain. It represents 23 strokes on the telegraph key.

- An hour or so after we launched, Chief Steffen and I tossed a coin to see who would have the pleasure of sending the first position report. I won the toss but yielded to the chief's career status and the fact that he just wanted to do it and my reluctance to screw it up due to my excitement and inexperience as a radioman. I did, however pay, very close attention and made the proper log entries.

- I was standing a routine radio watch and was unable to contact the station I was trying to send our position report to. Whatever the station was it should have been almost right underneath us when a voice came in very clearly. Conversation went like: "Planner 12, Planner 12, this is Goose. You copy Goose?" I bounced on immediately with "Goose, this is Planner 12, I have you five square, over" "This is Goose, can I relay for you? Over." "Roger Goose, what is your location? Over." As it turns out it was Goose Bay Labrador and was quite a ways away from our location. They could talk clearly with the station close to us and to us but we couldn't contact the close in station at all.

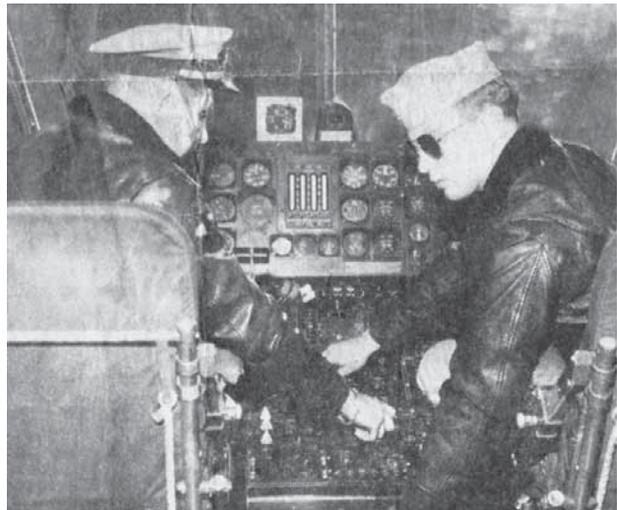
- Being an experienced technician but a novice radio operator I did not have access to all the tricks of the trade that the experienced operators had. Chief Steffen had brought a florescent tube aboard that was about 6 inches long and a half-inch in diameter. He'd taped it to the conductor leading from our HF ART-13 (ART for Airborne Radio Transmitter) to the external long wire antenna and showed me how to make use of it. Whenever you changed frequencies on the ART-13 you had to retune the TX to that frequency. You did this by twisting knobs and peaking two meters in the face of the TX. Chief Steffen, not watching

the meters, would instead, tune for maximum brightness of the tube, which, while a little less accurate, was much simpler and quicker. Every time I transmitted while on a night watch the copilot would get up and close the drapes between the radio compartment and the flight deck.

- Standing a routine radio watch at night when the co-pilot summoned me to the flight deck. "What's he saying Max?" the co-pilot asks. I looked forward and could see a blinking light on the water a mile or so ahead of us sending what appeared to be Morse Code. I grabbed the Aldus Lamp (a powerful light with a shaped beam used for vessel to vessel communications in lieu of a radio) and sent him a Morse Q signal (a radio operators short hand) to repeat, which he began doing. I started mumbling letters, heck, I could just about copy Morse by hearing it let alone seeing it. I called topside to the bunkroom and summoned Chief Steffen. He came down the ladder in his skivvies and did an excellent job. It was a surface vessel asking "What Ship?" Just for the practice the chief handed me the lamp and told me to send "United States Airship Snowbird on record-breaking cruise." I did an acceptable job I guess because after the ship rogered for the message and the chief slapped me on the shoulder and said "OK Max don't wake me up again."

-We were fully operational for the first 72 hours or so with both engines running, all equipment fired up and standing by with all stations manned. The night we switched over from being fully operational and went into our fuel-conserving mode we shut down one engine and were running both props from a drive shaft connected to the one running engine. I was in the rack for my six hour rest period when the pilots tried to lean out the engine just a little bit more. They lost it. It started backfiring and then accelerated rapidly in response to the throttle being jammed forward. I was half way down the ladder to the flight deck, in my skivvies, when I noticed that no one there seemed alarmed. I sheepishly went back up the ladder and retired. No one ever mentioned it. Great crew.

-I was standing a daylight watch when the pilot passed the word to look out the port side close in. I went forward to look out the windows on the flight deck and saw a pod of about 7-8 whales swimming along in the same direction we were going. We closed on them rather slowly indicating that we were traveling very slowly or they were quick. They were always on the surface or just three or four feet below. We must have had them in sight for 20-30 minutes causing them no apparent concern. I guess they knew that they had nothing to fear from anything in the air.



-I was standing a daylight watch and was quite bored and had gone forward to sit on the flight deck with the pilots. Sea conditions were smooth and as was our habit, we were flying quite low, perhaps 3-500 feet, to take advantage of the denser air in the heat of the day. I noted that the pilot in the command chair was talking quietly into his mike on the UHF radio system. After a moment or two he turned around to me and quietly said "watch over there" nodding to the port side. There was just a little bit of mist so visibility was pretty good at maybe a couple of miles or so. As I was watching, a shape, lower than we were and closing on us materialized in the mist. It was Planner 3 heading to our next emergency landing point. They passed from port astern to starboard forward and then climbed steeply, disappearing into the mist. I'm sure there is no notation in the pilots log from either aircraft about that one. I have never seen a photo of the event from either

crew. Perhaps the two pilots cooked it up and everyone was taken by surprise.

-I was standing a daylight watch on a clear pleasant day when we passed off the coast of Africa. It was so pleasant in fact that the pilots had the windows open on the flight deck. We were a few miles out but had a clear view of Cape Yubi, the western most point of the Dark Continent. All I could make of it was a gathering of huts and what appeared to be some low buildings, which may have been made of clay bricks. Everything appeared to be a dull, pale red. There was no evidence, from where I was, that there were any trees or other vegetation. The most memorable point of that day was a few hours later when I came back on watch. Chief Steffen claimed to have captured a genuine African Sea Bat that flew in one of the open windows on the flight deck. He had it closed up in an empty cardboard box which had been placed on one of the tables in the galley, labeled with black crayon (see photo) and had a peep hole cut into it. Us young, uninitiated, inquisitive sailors were invited to take a quick look and encouraged to hurry with the explanation that the poor beast had to be released soon before we got too far away from its home. I, of course, had to have a look. While bent over to look into the peep hole, leaving my lower cheeks in an extremely vulnerable position, I was smacked soundly on each cheek with a broom being swung by a couple of the older, more experienced crew. I just figured Chief Steffen had too much time on his hands.



-While standing one of my six hour watches at night the copilot came back and asked me to come forward to the flight deck. The pilot asked me if I wanted to drive the airship for a while to which I responded "Yes sir, let me at it". He got up out of his chair and motioned for me to sit down. He gave me a brief description of the controls, pointed out the course on the compass and told me he'd break my arm if he saw me reaching for the throttle.



The Nan type of airship differs from regular, heavier than air fixed wing aircraft in that there are no rudder pedals. Everything is done with the yoke. Since it was after dark and the air was a little cooler we were flying at a little higher altitude so I guess the pilots felt they had plenty of room to recover if I did something stupid. It was a really bright, moon lit night so visibility was superb. I had no trouble seeing the long lines which acted like a plumb bob and as the aircraft moved about its axes they would give a good indication of what was going on. Of course, in my infinite arrogance, it only took a few minutes for me to have complete control, in my mind at least. It only took a little while for the pilot to tell me to get up with the explanation that he was getting complaints from the guys in the bunks getting seasick from us rolling all over the sky. I was reluctant to give it up but he was bigger than me. I don't understand it, but I was not invited to drive again which I attributed to the fact that they understood that I was much too busy and had no time to fool around with that kind of nonsense.

-I'm standing a night watch just East of the Canary Islands and the pilot calls me to the flight deck. He explains that there's some fog and mist around the islands making visibility sketchy at best and that there are a few high peaks associated with these islands. He does

not want to gain altitude to a point where he would clear the peaks because that would necessitate venting helium, which he didn't want to do. He ordered me to fire up the radar and navigate through the islands. We agreed that I would just give him directional orders, like "easy left" or "easy right." He told me that if I waited long enough to have to give him a hard left or hard right order he would pitch me into the ocean without a life jacket and wait three days to pass the word about a man overboard. After all he didn't want to wake up the guys that were off watch. I snapped off an "Aye Aye Sir" and went about the business of getting the radar fired up. The additional load on the engine was detectable, to me at least. It was interesting in that I had complete control of our safety for the half hour or so that we were passing through the islands. I never got a chance, or didn't want to leave the radar long enough, to go forward and look out the windows to see how bad it was. I prefer to sit here and believe that they couldn't have done it without me.

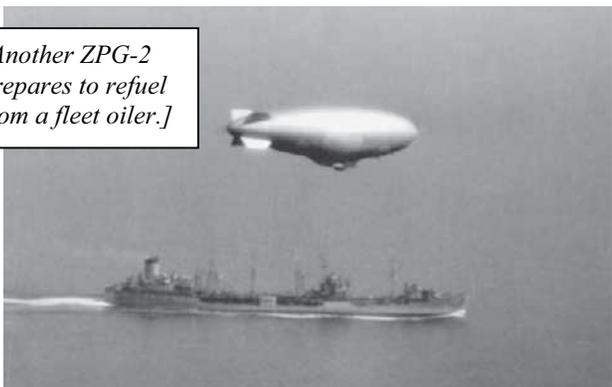
-I was standing a daylight watch on a very still, bright afternoon when the aircraft commander got up from his nap and relieved the pilot. He announced that he was going to pick up some seawater and for everyone to stand by in case we got in trouble.



Hoisting Water Aboard

He called me on the intercom and told me to stand by to drop a smoke flare. I immediately went into panic mode, looked around for some one who would know what the pilot was talking about and spotted one of the mechanics that was a long time airship crewmember. I motioned him over and told him what was up. He chuckled a little and showed me where the drop tubes and flares were and how to get them out of the airship without setting fire to everything. I managed, with the mechanics help, to get a smoke flare set up to drop. On the pilots order I dropped the flare and stood around with my thumb in my mouth waiting for some one to tell me what else to do. Looking forward I could see that the pilot was making a large circle and coming up down wind of the flare. Using the flare as a marker he kept his nose into the wind, kept throttling back and losing altitude until he was absolutely motionless, or at least relatively so. Two men back aft, wearing safety harness, (see photo) had a large canvas bag with a capacity of about 50 gal. or so attached to the crane boom. They lowered the bag into the sea and when it filled, lifted it free and hoisted it into the airship. I could feel the airship settle down by the stern when the crane picked up the weight of the bag. The pilot accelerated, regaining some

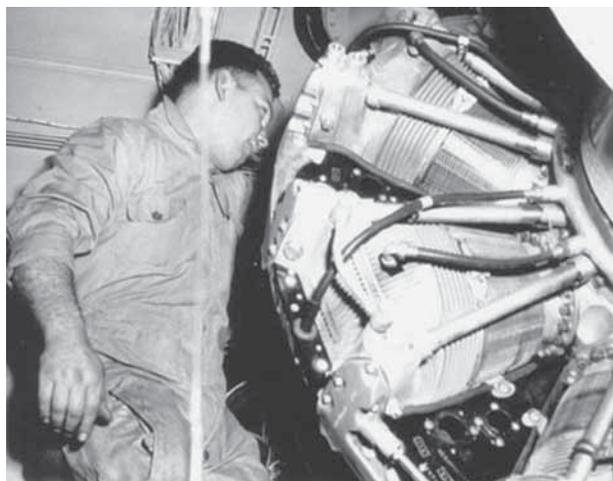
[Another ZPG-2 prepares to refuel from a fleet oiler.]



-We were just West of the Canary Islands. I was standing a nighttime watch and was in voice contact with our base radio at South Weymouth, whose call sign was Planner Base, when we started getting a lot of Teletype noise. ...“12, this is Hickem Field Hawaii. Over,” “Roger Hickem, this is the United States Naval Airship Snowbird flying just West of the Canary Islands on our way to setting a new worlds distance record for non-refueled flight. Over.” The unique thing about this incident is the fact that here we were in March 1957, talking to another unit half way around the world as though they were across the room - before satellite communications.

speed and altitude, told me to drop another flare and repeated the process. The water was pumped into an empty tank to act as ballast to replace the weight of the burned gasoline so we wouldn't have to valve out helium.

-While puttering around the radio compartment on one of my six hour watches I heard the idle engine start and take over the job of providing power to the ship. The two flight mechanics were both up and about gathering tools, spark plugs, oil cups, grease guns and other paraphernalia and setting up near the now idle engine. As soon as the engine cooled down they started servicing it (see photo). I don't know how many times this occurred during the flight but it took place at regular intervals.



Servicing an Engine

-During a daylight watch I was having trouble finding someone to give a position report to. I had already missed two reports and it was my understanding that if we missed three in a row that Air-Sea Rescue would be alerted. I just started dialing the receiver trying to pick some one up. My correct assumption was that if I could hear them I could talk to them. I stumbled across a very charming feminine voice with absolutely no radio discipline chatting with someone else about how "absolutely beautiful the water was." I broke in with a similar lack of discipline and asked for help. It turns out the lady was on a boat in the Caribbean talking to a shore station. I couldn't hear the shore station. I explained who we were and what we were doing, gave her our BU. No and asked her if she would take my report, pass it on to the shore station

she was talking to and ask them to either radio or phone it to the nearest military establishment. She turned breathless and in a very excited voice agreed to do as I asked. I lost contact with her immediately after I heard her give the report to the station she was talking to. I've often wondered if she got excited all over again when she saw our story in the papers. I can just see her telling her friends "I talked to them" and having them agree with a great deal of skepticism.

-The word was passed one morning that we'd be making land fall about lunchtime that day and we would be back over land for the first time in 10 days. It had been determined that we would go in directly over Miami Beach. Being the middle of the day and coming in from the Atlantic we had to transition from the relatively cool air over the water to the hot, rising air over the sands of the beach. This caused the helium in the envelope to expand at an alarming rate, in turn causing the airship to start rising rapidly. The pilots reaction to this was to nose the ship over to a very steep angle, apply max power to the engine, pump air into the ballonets and start, for the first time in the flight, to valve helium into the atmosphere. Somewhere in my limited data bank on airships was the knowledge that the car is suspended from the envelope by a number of cables. If one were to exceed some specific angle of nose up or nose down the weight of the car would be transferred to only two cables which would rip out of the envelope causing the car to separate from the envelope and fall. With my limited airship experience I had no idea what that angle might be but felt sure that we were about to exceed it. The pilot regained level flight after a couple of moments and we proceeded inland over the hotels.



-As we approached the hotels it was noted that many of the rooftops had been sectioned off into private booths for sunbathing and were generously occupied by nude people, mostly women. We were flying at about 20-30 mph at an altitude that took us about 100 or so feet over the roofs. At this point the pilot very generously took a turn to the North, which carried us parallel to the hotels keeping the roofs in view for a longer period. A mad scramble ensued to locate and bring into use all of the binoculars on board to mumbled curses and grunts like "gimme those" "get out of my way" and "my turn." The sunbathers, for the most part either pulled towels over themselves or as in one case, just sitting up and tucking her knees under her chin. A large portion of them just waved. We liked the ones who waved and did a lot of waving back. I don't recall seeing any photos of this event. I guess the photographers were too busy carrying out their assigned duties.



-As we got North of Miami Beach we turned west and proceeded out over the Everglades. We were flying quite low and slow, just wasting time and sight seeing, staying away from civilized areas. I don't know if this was on purpose or just the course the pilots elected to steer. We saw a lot of swamp with trees covered with Spanish moss and an occasional very tall stark looking tree. An occasional deer would get spooked out of its hiding place by our noise and size. These were very small deer, Sitka I think. We watched the sunset that night over the Gulf of Mexico.

-We arrived in the vicinity of Key West just about sun set and made an uneventful landing. I learned several years later that a squadron of

S2Fs from Quonset Point RI was trying to get off and were held up waiting for us to come in. Part of the squadron had gotten off and others were waiting. Among the ones waiting was a lieutenant, whom I met several years later at Sprague Electric where we were both employed. He and I became good friends. After landing we were boarded by an officer who I believe may have been the base personnel officer who said that there were bunches of dignitaries waiting and that the enlisted men could not possibly be seen in public without white hats. He produced some in record time and there was a mad scramble to make them look "salty." Admiral "Bull" Halsey was there to pin the Distinguished Flying Cross on our Aircraft commander, Cdr. Jack Hunt. The crew was standing in a line abreast and the admirals and other people came down the line shaking hands and congratulating us. Mosquitoes that I felt were large enough that if three of them had gotten together they could carry off a good-sized man were plaguing us relentlessly.



Snowbird flight crew

-After the arrival ceremonies the crew retrieved their parachute bags from Planner 3, took showers, got into clean whites and headed into beautiful down town Key West. We stopped in a local watering hole where the tables were just large enough to set a drink down on and were joined by a couple of local damsels who were bragging about their own records which didn't impress us old married salts so we sent them over to entertain the younger inexperienced sailors.

-We gathered, as ordered, at the Key West operations shack bright and early the day after we landed (see photos). It had been determined that a relief crew would drive the airship home to Weymouth while we, the celebrities, would travel in style aboard Planner 3. It seems there was only one radioman who arrived in Florida on Planner 3 so it was left up to Chief Steffen and I to decide who would fly as radio operator for the flight back to Weymouth. I'll bet you'd never guess who said "OK Max you do it". So I did. The base galley loaded us up with box lunches (see photo below) and we took off for Weymouth.



*Maxymillian, Frank AT-2
Enjoying a box lunch aboard Planner 3*

[Ed. Caption: The last major expedition of the #561 tested "Clinker" gear for tracking nuke submarines by their heat trails, but little has been published about the work. #561, with its large NADU number '12' on its car side, is seen here with crew at Santa Ana, California, in 1961. CAPT M. Henry Eppes, NAA founding father and senior LTA officer at the time (extreme left, standing), had in April 1954 established a 200.2 hour record with his crew in the first production ZPG-2, BUNo 126716. Brewster photo, information from Jim Shock's "US NAVY AIRSHIPS, 1915-1962."]



All in all it was a great time. After a couple of days in the air I was glad I had been persuaded to "Volunteer." Two months later I had been released from active duty and was on the outside trying to earn a living as a civilian. Several months after being released I received an air medal and citation through the mail. I also received a model ZPG-2N from the Goodyear Company, the people who manufactured the airship. It's plastic, mounted on a base and engraved with my name, rank and the details of the records we set. I'm very proud of it. Ω



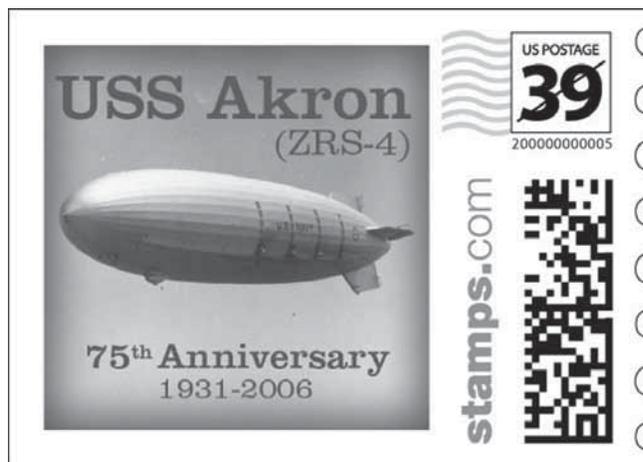
[Ed. Caption: Upon arrival at South Weymouth the press greeted the crew, including CDR. Hunt (in khakis) but the story was backpage news with all the attention paid to the space race. Hunt received the Harmon trophy.]

USS Akron 75th Anniversary Noted With Postage Stamp and Saddened By Loss

On the crisp bright morning of May 3, 1932, 75 years ago, some half-dozen airplanes bounced down the Lakehurst field in pursuit of a great silver rigid airship. Captured by a rear-cockpit movie cameraman cranking away, three silver Consolidated N2Y biplanes peeled off and took turns 'hooking on' the USS *Akron's* extended trapeze. Additionally, the largely aluminum, much heavier and more powerful XF9C-1 Sparrowhawk gave it a try. The successful on-the-fly recoveries and launches were history's first operations with a purpose-built "Flying Aircraft Carrier."

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. Our treasury was heavily burdened to make this possible, so members are urged to visit 'Small Stores' and order a few sheets. It would be 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.

We had no more opened the stamp shipments than word came of the passing of John Lust (see Black Blimp). No doubt on that chilly morning 75 years ago John had launched with the *Akron* to be dutifully standing watch in an engine room, oiling the exposed rocker arms and responding to the telegraph's call bell. One could only imagine the noise level at flank speed, and the fume-laden heat of the cramped metal enclosure. However, John probably thought it luxurious since he'd crawled out in the slipstream to train in the USS *Los Angeles'* exterior engine cars, which had no luxuries like a cooling duct over the exhaust manifold. Since we no longer have the ability to talk to a man who actually tended an engine on a rigid airship - the last LZ-127/129/130 engineman is gone as well - and the only remaining Maybach VL-2 in this country continues to gather dust at



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**

NASM, Silver Hill, MD, we of the NAA should be proud of our efforts to preserve this unique history. With John's passing comes the sad end of an era. In this editor's opinion it is entirely fitting that NAA members celebrate these pioneering achievements by so decorating their personal correspondence.

See you at Small Stores!

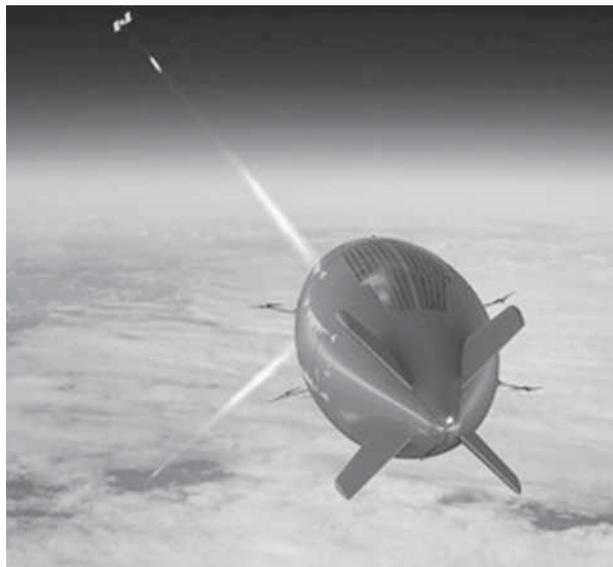


Sheet of 20 each USS *Akron* self-adhesive US Postage Stamps \$15, plus shipping, includes photo banner which can be used on packages.

SHORT LINES

Quantum Awarded Contract to Supply Aerospace H2 and O2 Storage Systems

“Irvine, CA - January 12, 2007 - Quantum Fuel Systems Technologies Worldwide, Inc. today announced that it has been awarded a contract by Lockheed Martin to supply its new state-of-the-art hydrogen and oxygen fuel storage tanks for a regenerative power supply system to be used in a stratospheric airship application. This award is due to the successful performance in a previous award from Lockheed Martin for Quantum to design and develop the next advancement in ultra-lightweight hydrogen and oxygen tanks. Utilizing its expertise in ultra-lightweight all-composite gaseous fuel storage, Quantum developed unique compressed gas storage systems for oxygen and hydrogen with higher system weight efficiency than has been demonstrated in the past. Additionally, the storage systems have been designed and tested to withstand an extreme range of conditions from sea level to high altitude...”



We have heard that company's name before, as in making tanks for GM, which rolled out a radical prototype called the AUTonomy. “General Motors Corp. has achieved a milestone in its quest to bring a hydrogen fuel cell-powered vehicle to market.” The next logical step has been taken: AP NEWS DETROIT – “The Hydrogen Electric Racing Federation was unveiled on Wednesday,[10 JAN 07] the first step toward on-track

competition for hydrogen electric fuel cell-powered racing. HERF plans on beginning that on-track competition, dubbed the "Hydrogen 500," beginning in 2009...AP, 23 DEC 06: “The Environmental Protection Agency has cleared the way for major automakers to produce hydrogen-powered fuel-cell cars to meet zero-emission vehicle requirements in California and 10 other states, officials said.” AEROSPACE AMERICA reports the Georgia Institute of Technology has conducted successful test flights of its fuel cell based unmanned airplane. The 22-foot wingspan UAV was not merely a record setting exercise, but an effort to pave the way for fuel-cell powered aircraft. Ω



Blimp Ride for Critically Ill Children of Naval Medical Center 12/19/2006 By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Daniel A. Barker, Fleet Public Affairs Center, Pacific
“Children from Naval Medical Center, San Diego participated in a blimp ride over San Diego sponsored by SANYO and the Believe in Tomorrow National Children's Foundation. The blimp ride is part of a program that is intended for children with life-threatening illnesses, providing them with "positive, unique experiences," according ‘Believe in Tomorrow National Children's Foundation,’ which launched its flagship blimp in July 1997. "For the kids that we serve, that are dependents of armed service members, it's just a small way of giving back for everything that everyone in the Navy gives us," said Brian Morrison, founder and CEO of the non-profit children's foundation. Many of the parents on board said the birds-eye view of San Diego was one that most of the pediatric patients would otherwise never have a chance to see.” Ω

Rick Wallace, Airship Chairman, Balloon Federation of America, offered these observations about the Nachbar hot-air airship



(left) recently seen in two publications: "Over the years we have witnessed many airship and blimp projects

and we wish this one every success... there are certain facts about airship design and operation that can stymie a project... Dreams however are not flight-tested... After 300-flight hours and testing many modifications one develops certain opinions about what will work, and what is needed... The Nachbar design is novel in that it uses aluminum tubes running from the nose to the tail. A cable pulls the nose and tail cone together and the tubes bow outward to give rigidity to the fabric. It is claimed that the aircraft has flown more than 10 hours. However, no airship pilot member of the Balloon Federation of America Airship Committee has been present to report the flights as an unbiased observer... The first type certified production hot air airship was a Thunder Colt AS 80 model built 1980. The airships produced today can fly 3 times faster, turn in 1/3 the space and pilot skills are easily 10 times better today. " Ω

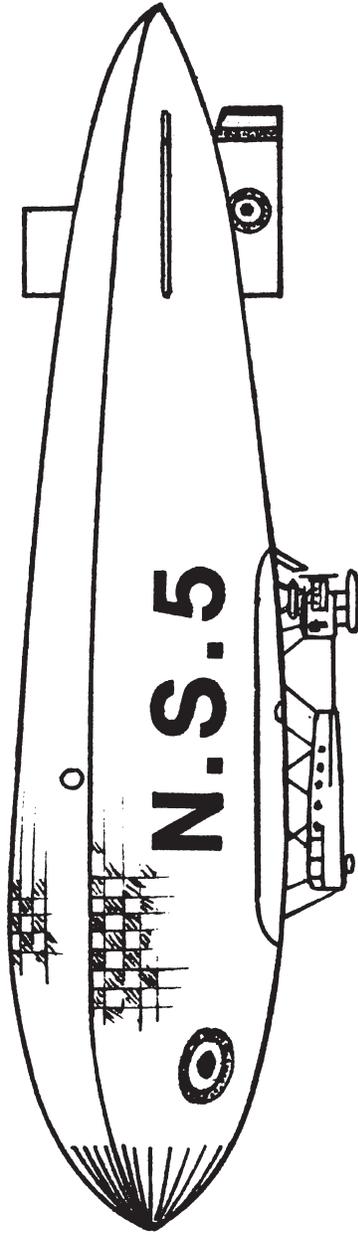
Akron site wins Army work: Akron Beacon-Journal reports, "Lockheed Martin's Akron facility has won a \$77.5 million Army contract to make small, tethered blimps called "aerostats" that will be used for round-the-clock surveillance in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Production has already started at the Akron Airdock, and the aerostats are expected to be delivered within several months... Lockheed Martin calls its aerostats Persistent Threat Detection Systems. The 64,000-cubic-foot helium-filled blimps carry such things as optical and infrared sensors and communications equipment...[and] float as high as 5,000 feet while remaining tethered to the ground... Lockheed Martin is not disclosing how many of the aerostats it plans to assemble in Akron. The company's previous aerostat contract was for \$1.6 million in 2004... "The Army came back [for] the ability they gave the war fighter." Ω

HISTORY COMMITTEE

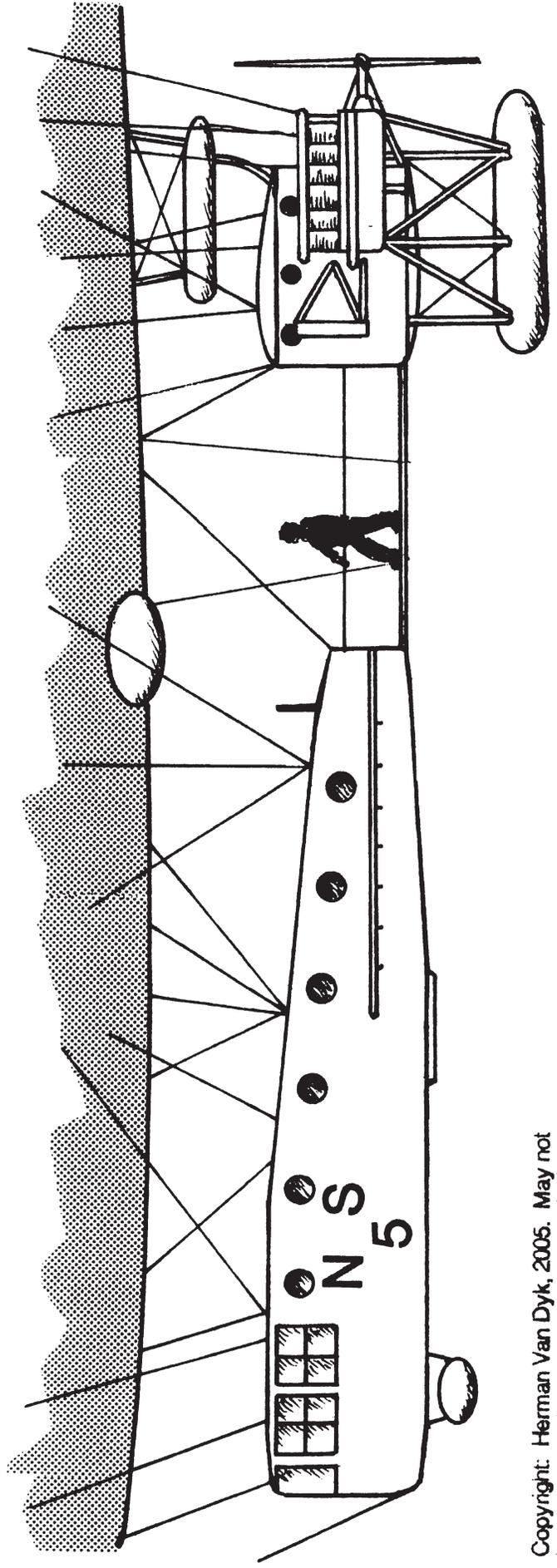
Bob Ashford was the first and only to respond to our mystery photos, in this case last issue: "The inside front cover picture is indeed a towed MAD bird. The guts in the housing (and, indeed, the housing itself) is the same as the MAD pods hung on the envelope. Originally, only one MAD pod was attached well forward of the car on the bottom centerline of the bag. Sometime in 1944 they changed to two pods, one on each side of the bag up near the equator and forward of the car. The two pods were supposed to give a differential signal and thus an indication of which side of the airship track the submarine was. However, putting the "birds" higher on the bag served to further remove them from the surface of the water and thus reduce the signal. Max range was on the order of 500 to 600 feet and was greatly influenced by airship motion. The towed bird as shown in your picture was an effort to do two things: a. get the detection head further away from the airship influence and, b. get the sensitive magnetometer closer to the water surface. I think that it was never incorporated in fleet airships because of swinging problems on the cable, which induced a signal not unlike that of a submarine. Of course today we would be able to use active means to stabilize the bird. To tell the truth, I am not sure that the MAD of WWII ever worked as it was supposed to do. It used an Esterline-Angus strip recorder to plot any signals. Most of the time the ink in the recorder pens either flowed all over the place or not at all. The recorder was on a shelf about eye level at the Navigator's table and was not continually being observed and there was no alarm system installed to alert the crew if a signal was received. Furthermore, the recorded paper tape was wound onto a take-up spool such that if a signal was received it would only be visible for about 30 seconds before it was wound on the spool. The tapes were turned in after each flight and more than once, after post-flight examination, a signal was seen on the recording - most likely from a ship that was being escorted. So much for MAD!!! BUT they were the good old days. Oh what I wouldn't give for a Mark 1, Mod 0, K-ship today. They were simple, they worked, they were noisy and uncomfortable, but they always got me home." Ω

While we celebrate the endurance flights of the ZPG-2s, our friends in the U.K. would point out that the North Sea non-rigid airship of World War One exceeded 100 hours endurance—nearly *ninety* years ago! The North Sea airship purchased by the US Navy could fly higher, longer and with a greater payload than the K-2 of 1939. NS airships also did at-sea refueling hose method and underway remaining. Although we've never found a photo of the car interior, we know they also have early dipping hydro-phones which, with engines stopped and on the sea anchor, allowed them to hear U-boats underwater. Enjoy Herman Van Dyk's drawing exclusive to TNB.

'North Sea' Class



Length	:	260 ft,	79 m
Diameter	:	57 ft,	17.4 m
Height	:	60 ft,	18 m
Speed	:	57 mph,	91 km/h
Volume	:	360,000 cft,	10,200 m3
Engines	:	2 x 250 hp	Rolls Royce
Endurance:		22 hrs	



Copyright: Herman Van Dyk, 2005. May not be reproduced without written permission.

Was the K-72 Victorious?

The files of COMINCH in the daily Submarine Estimate for 17 APR 45 lists "One unlocated since attack on the 14th, may be patrolling general area south of HATTERAS." On the 18th, it says: "Sound contact attacked by surface craft at 2037 in 36-56N, 74-27W (off CAPE HATTERAS). Bomb dropped by blimp at 2219Z, on positive contact." (This record indicates the blimp had a sound contact, the earliest record found that suggests a blimp was using sono-bouys in action.)

According to 10th Fleet file #8343, on 18 APRIL 1945, 1821 hrs, the ZPNK-type airship K-72 was believed to be at 36-56[N] and 74 - 27[W]. At 1910 hrs a PBM [flying boat] reported a disappearing radar contact at what they gave as 36-17[N] 73-48 [W].

That much is in the printed record, made public in 1998. **Jim Hughes** and **George Roberts** of the K-72 recall their airship and the Coast Guard cutter USS *Annapolis* were dispatched to the scene. K-72 dropped a square pattern of sono-bouys and received a good audio track of a submarine, "clear as a training recording." The *Annapolis* was ordered to fall back and stop engines, which she did. At 2215 hrs the K-72 launched its homing torpedo. Minutes after it entered the water the sono-bouys registered a single loud explosion, and then silence. Well after sunset, it was not possible to see debris in the water. Following a positive debriefing in which the crew was assured they hit a submarine, pilot James Hughes noted "sub attack" in his logbook on that day's flight. The 10th Fleet evaluators later rated the attack higher than most, as 'F,' meaning not sure of damage to the submarine.

The 10th Fleet envelope #8343 includes a letter from Commander, Eastern Sea Frontier that states, "... the surface craft was not familiar with the blimp's attack procedure nor with the equipment and ordnance used by the blimp...There is no indication that attacks by the ANNAPOLIS [PF-15] caused any damage to the target if the target was a submarine....

Subsequent favorable indications as a result of the airship's attack were not informative to the surface craft." (**Below: Message in file**)

```
MY 182100 POSITION SHOULD READ 36-56 74-27 X
AT 2215Z K-72 MADE ATTACK ON POSITIVE CONTACT
IN SAME AREA X EXPLOSION OBSERVED PBM REPORTS
DISAPPEARING RADAR CONTACT AT 1910Z IN 36-17
73-48 X NEGATIVE RSB X EVALUATION DOUBTFUL
```

In 1968, during the search for the lost USS *Scorpion*, a U-boat wreck was found at coordinates commonly rounded off to 36.34N x 74.00W. (NOAA chart #12200 shows the wreck of the "U-548" at Lat. 36° 34' 00.58" and Lon. 73° 59' 58.41". Steve Verry of NOAA explains this information comes from a sketchy "Navy Wreck List" and is believed accurate to 3-5 miles.)

The *Virginian-Pilot* of 2 June 1968 stated the wreck found might be U-548, based on a report of three destroyers attacking a submerged target on 30 APR 45. Another newspaper reported: "The submarine *Pargo* detected the hulk last Friday 70 miles east-northeast of Cape Henry. Divers descended 180 feet to the ocean floor from the submarine rescue ship *Sunbird*. They reported the hulk was about 250 feet long. One of the divers, Chief Machinists Mate Ronald C. Hall, told CAPT John Caruso, a physician aboard the *Sunbird*, that the barnacle-encrusted sub appeared to be in an upright position and partially embedded in the ocean floor... Although Navy officers at Norfolk declined to speculate on whether the hulk is the U-548, Hall's description of it fits the IX-C submarine type to which the U-548 belonged."

In 1990 German expert Axel Niestlé proved the U-548 was actually sunk off Halifax. Given the "best guess" accuracy of aircraft in motion and the old wreck list, we find that K-72's position of 36-56 x 74 -27 compares favorably with the location of the unknown Type IX-C at about 36.34 x 74.00. The History Committee Chairman strongly suggests this boat is actually the U-857 or U-879, and it was put there by the K-72. That would mean a K-ship sank a submarine unassisted – and history would have to be revised. Ω

THE READY ROOM

Naval Airship Association Reunion Tues-Thurs September 4, 5 and 6, 2007 Toms River, (Lakehurst), 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 Bus trip tour of NAES Lakehurst.

>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. <

-Lunch served at NAES Lakehurst

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

Attached to this issue is a Registration Form. (If it is missing, enlarge the form below on a zerox machine.) Please sign up as soon as possible so that you will not miss out on the room “discount.” Hope to see you all at **NAA Reunion 2007.**

LONG RANGE PLANNER

15 - 16 June 2007 - DGLR LTA Conference, Stuttgart University, Munich, Germany

18 - 20 September 2007 - 17th AIAA LTA Systems Technology Conference, Belfast, Northern Ireland

15 -17 January 2008 - 1st Airship Investors Conference, Cape Town, South Africa

Spring 2008 - International Symposium in Aerospace Valley: Inflatable Solutions for Aeronautic and Aerospace Applications, Acquaitaine, France

July 2008 - 6th Airship Association International Conference, Friedrichshafen.

2007 NAA LAKEHURST REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ E-mail (if any) _____

Emergency Contact (Name and telephone) _____ Number Attending _____

What names on badges? _____

Choice(s) of Dinner Entrée: (a) Prime Rib _____ Chicken Francaise _____ Broiled Salmon with Dill Sauce _____

Early-Bird Room Rate at Quality Inn - \$79 per night, \$237 for all three nights. Early-Bird cut-off date is July 1, 2007.

Local residents can ignore this paragraph if you will be commuting to the Reunion Headquarters from your home.

Registration Fee for NAA Reunion 2007 (no hotel) - \$70 per person. Includes banquet, Welcome Aboard Party, Lunch at NAES, Transportation to and from NAES and Reunion Headquarters. Total Reunion Package - \$307 for one or \$377 for two persons.

Please make check payable to NAA and mail with this form to:

Rick Zitarosa

Chair, NAA Reunion 2007

2213 Rogers Road

Point Pleasant, NJ 08742-3837

Black Blimp

CAPT **Norman V. Scurria**, U.S. Navy Ret., died Nov. 15, 2006, at age 89. A merchant mariner, naval aviator and veteran, diplomat, professor, he is survived by three children, Susan, Norman "Jr.", and James.

A native of Philadelphia, he began his adventurous career in 1934 at the Pennsylvania Nautical School. After graduation in 1936, he



I served as a third mate in the Moore & McCormack Steamship Lines. He left the Port of Narvik, Norway the night before the Germans arrived. With war for the U.S. on the horizon, he met his soon to be bride, Charlotte, also a native of Philadelphia, and began his career in the U.S. Navy, serving first aboard the USS *Raven* based in Norfolk. The war introduced him into aviation as a Lighter Than Air pilot flying blimps in anti-submarine warfare. Following the war, he transitioned into heavier than air flight, and spent the rest of his flying career back and forth between blimps and conventional aircraft. Later in his career, he served as Naval and Military Attaché for much of North Africa, based in Cairo, Egypt. He then became involved with the then newly formed Defense Intelligence Agency, retiring from the Navy in 1965 after serving 26 years. He joined the staff of Ocean County College in Toms River N.J. The family planned a private service and burial at sea.

A note was forwarded from the publisher from **Meyer Myers**, Haines City, FL indicating that his wife **Nelline** passed away 9-15-2006.

Clayton Janecky of Hudson, FL passed away on Thanksgiving Day, 2006.

Goodyear Florida Blimp Public Relations man **Jerry Jenkins** died unexpectedly just a few days before Christmas, 2006.

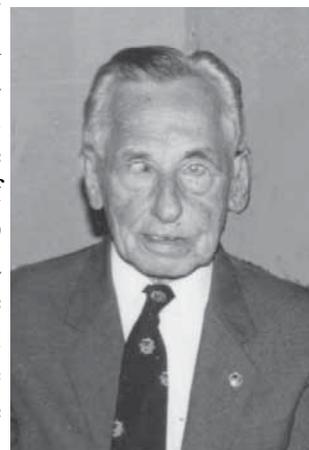
Michael E. Szot, age 83, died peacefully at home on Monday, Nov. 20, 2006. Born in 1923 in Dupont, Pennsylvania, Mr. Szot grew up in a small coal mining town with five brothers and three sisters.

Mr. Szot volunteered for the Navy in World War II, serving as a radioman for the Airship group patrolling the west coast in a Navy blimp - with all six of the Szot brothers serving in the war at the same time. After the war, Mr. Szot began his career in Corrections in New Jersey and started his community volunteering with the YMCA and as an official for the VFW. Mr. Szot is survived by his wife Mary, and sons Kevin and Keith.



John Anthony Lust, 94, of Butler, NJ peacefully passed away Friday, Dec. 29, 2006, after a brief illness. Born on Feb. 4, 1912 in Cuba, the son of the late Leo and Anna Lust, Mr. Lust married Jane Ahrens on Dec. 28, 1963. He honorably served in the United States Navy, trained on the rigid airship USS *Los Angeles* and was a crewman aboard the USS *Akron*, stationed in Lakehurst. He was the last remaining crewman of the USS *Akron* and was devoted to the preservation of the heritage of the Naval Airships.

Mr. Lust was a member of the U.S. Power Squadron, the Navy League, the Lighter Than Air Society, and was a life member of the Naval Aviation Museum. He was a charter member of the Naval Airship Association, and a charter member of the Lakehurst Historical Society. Surviving are his devoted wife, Jane Lust, and his seven sisters. Memorials may be made to the Navy Lakehurst Historical Society, P.O. Box 328, Lakehurst, N.J. 08733



EARLY WARNING SQUADRON ONE (31 MAY 57)



Bruce Smithee, Tom Edwards, Bill Wilson, Will King, Jim Yarnell, Jack Reardon, Ron Chapman, Brad Giffard, Warren Winchester, Dan Hopkins, Dave Hayes, Steve Kutner, John McGillicuddy, Jack Morgan, John Cabral



Dr. Lloyd Carnahan (flight surgeon) Harold Eberly (in Khakis), Ronald Knobel, Vincent Sylvester (Supply Officer), Roy Belotti, Dennis Lee, Ron Chapman, Charles Cook, Dan Gholson, Paul Neher, Joe Kniely, John Wise, John Hofmockel, Les Smith



Ray McDannold, David Lawrence, Fred Butler, Don Benn, Don Patterson, Bob Gill, George Gillings.



Ernie Babb, Tom Griffith, Wally Turner, Lew Moats, George Allen, Bill Hartman (CO), Charlie Mills (XO)

Others who were in the squadron 50 years ago, but not photographed as they were mostly likely flying on station southeast of NYC: Neil Harris, Joe Wood, Bob Appleby, Bob Kiefer, Dick Nye (AP), Don Hartman, Bud Meissner, Al Furtek, Clayton Perry, Bob Pauls, Tom Markley, Lee Twarog, Mickey Meifert, John Ambrose, David Olmstead, Bob Bowser, Ron Anderson, Bill Nicholson, Bill Bocim, Al Atkins, Bob Clancy, Bob White, Bill Eastham, Gerry McOmber, (?)Costigan and AMC(AP) Willoughby. Bill Zidbeck was on the wing staff but did fly with ZW-1.

W. Winchester



(Above) The record setting ZPG-2 *Snow Bird* on the mast at Lakehurst.

(Below) Lockheed-Martin Advanced Development (Skunk Works) P-791 cargo airship prototype.

