

ROTARY RAMBLINGS

from Old Rhinebeck

official newsletter of the Rhinebeck Aerodrome Museum

Number 45, Spring 2012

CONTACT...

Thank you for continuing to support Cole Palen's Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome. I recently watched a video of a show at Old Rhinebeck from the very early 1990s. What I was most impressed about was Cole Palen. I met him a few times when I was a youngster, but I don't remember air shows vividly. I met Cole for the first time late one evening on the runway while "the adults" were in the gift shop having a "Model Master's" airplane club meeting. Cole was flying a rubber-band model and I was tossing around a hand launched glider. He gave me some friendly advice but didn't say too much.

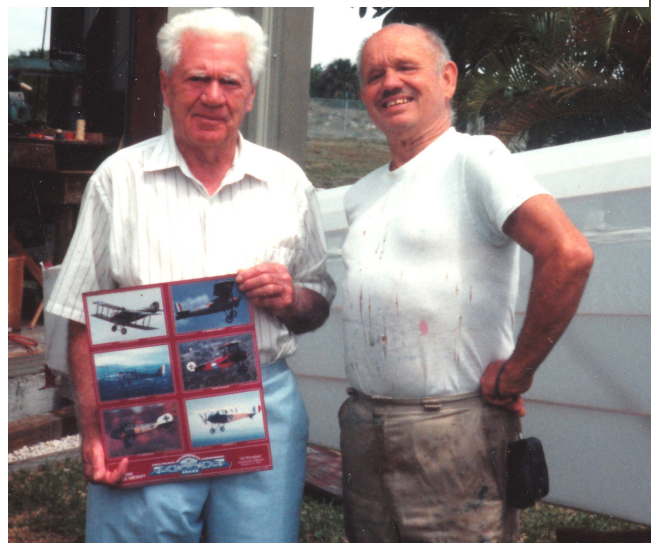
As I was watching the video, what impressed me most was Cole's flying. He climbed into the Sopwith Camel and his flying was spectacular. A very tricky aircraft to fly but he was truly a pro. It was obvious he still had a passion for aviation and even though he ate, drank and lived aviation his whole life, he was still totally enamored by what he did. Also he wouldn't trust the aircraft to anyone else until he personally worked the bugs out. The passing of Pete O'Brien and Earl Hall reminds us that unfortunately many of the people who helped make Old Rhinebeck the world-renowned aviation Mecca it is are no longer with us. We continue to pursue their goal of passing on the trials and tribulations of early aviation.

To that end we have many projects in the works. We are working to improve Old Rhinebeck with modern bathrooms and a new gift shop, and a fundraising dinner is planned for June 2. Please call Carol in the office for more information.

Thank you,

Michael DiGiacomio

Rhinebeck Aerodrome Museum President



Above: Pete O'Brien and Cole Palen beside Cole's KR-31 in the early 1990s (photo courtesy of the O'Brien family). Below: The essence of the Aerodrome captured in a photo by Earl Hall, featuring the Davis, Ford "T" Speedster and high-wheeled bike.

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Rotary Ramblings

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MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Your membership support is vital to our museum!

For only \$50, an individual membership entitles you to a 1-year pass to the museums and airshows, Rotary Ramblings newsletter and a 10% discount at the Aerodrome gift shop. Please spread the word about the Aerodrome and consider giving a gift of membership to someone you know.

Family memberships and Lifetime memberships are also available.
Please Consider Becoming a Member Today!

Winter activity...



We've had a fairly mild winter in Rhinebeck this year, but we did get a few dustings of snow throughout the season. A little bit of snow didn't keep us from making progress moving some of the items that had been in storage to safer locations on the premises as part of our collections cataloging process.

We were lucky to have use of President Mike's personal equipment for such occasions! Here are some of the items that were moved into safer storage thanks to Mike, Patrick Walker and Kurt Muller. Included among the items were three Kinners, two unidentified V-8s and two partial Menascos. These engines are in rough shape, but each is still a piece of aviation history that we treasure.

We are continuing to make progress in our efforts to organize and catalog the collection.



Headed West

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Earl Hall, a longtime friend of Cole and Rita Palen and the Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome. Earl and his wife Shirley began visiting the Aerodrome back in the mid-70's, and were regular guests for over twenty years. They would make three or four long-weekend trips from Tonawanda, N.Y., to the Aerodrome each airshow season. Earl served with the United States Navy during the Korean War. He was then a manager for the W.T. Grant Department Store until he began a 28-year career with the Tonawanda Police Department. He retired as captain in 1990.

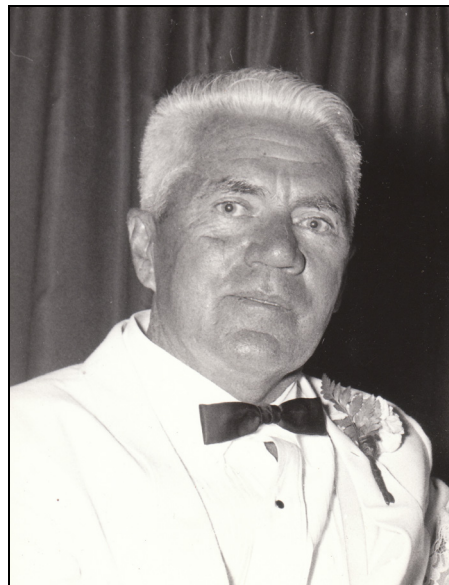
In his spare time, Earl had a professional photography business, aptly named the Hall of Photography. He photographed most everything, but vintage aircraft were his favorite subjects. He obtained his private pilot license, and became involved with the Friends of the Canadian Warplane Heritage in the early '80s. This group began the restoration of the CWH Westland Lysander. The CWH completed the Lysander restoration in 2009, and it now flies regularly for the museum. He also had the opportunity to work on and fly their Fleet. He and Harold Schultz made at least one cross-country flight in the Fleet to Old Rhinebeck. Earl was also a familiar figure at the Geneseo airshows for many years. He was also involved with the formation of the Niagara Aerospace Museum and cataloged a substantial amount of early Bell Aerospace footage.

It was always a pleasure to have Earl and Shirley, and sometimes his "big" brother Hoss visit Old Rhinebeck. Earl always brought along 8 x10 color prints from his previous visit. As much as he enjoyed photographing Cole's aircraft, he was even more pleased to share his photos of the people who were involved with the airshows. He generously handed out these prints to many of the airshow participants. They remain as wonderful memories for many of us. He also would put together a slide presentation for the end-of-season Spandau Award Dinner, and always had a few surprise shots that were humorously embarrassing. During one extended summer visit, Earl received flight training in Cole's Curtiss Fledgling from Pam Barker, and went on to solo that big old bird. He also spent quite a bit of time in the rear cockpit for air-to-air photo work. Earl was certainly one of the Aerodrome's official photographers for many years.

Earl lived his life large in some ways. He would arrive in his big Lincoln Town Car or his motorhome, and usually stayed at George Yantz's home, just east of the airfield. You could bet there would be big barbeque and gathering of the Aerodrome crew after the airshow.

Earl is survived by his wife, Shirley, four sons, one daughter, their spouses, and three grandchildren. He will be missed and remembered with a smile.

Jim Hare



Earl Hall and Pete O'Brien

The Passing of an Era

A local aviation era is closed with the death of James Peter "Pete" O'Brien, owner and operator with his wife, Rose of the Stormville Airport. Stormville, known in recent years for its huge summer flea markets, was in the late 1950s and 1960s the busiest general aviation airport east of the Mississippi. It was there that Cole Palen got his start in the sense that Pete encouraged Cole to keep his flyable or near flyable antiques at Stormville as the county airport was less than hospitable to the idea. It was at Stormville that Cole first flew the Bleriot (and I believe also the SPAD), much to Pete's great delight. That day is etched in my memory. Cole was "getting the feel" of the Bleriot by taxiing at various speeds, at times coming close to lift off. Pete, myself and an IBM engineer were the only ones watching and the engineer was explaining to Pete that he had examined the Bleriot, taken measurements, and had determined that the plane could not possibly fly. Pete listened and said nothing, his eyes fixed on the plane. Just then the Bleriot became airborne. Pete turned toward him and said one word... *"Bull\$#t,"* and then exuberantly said to me, *"Hey Bodeen, I knew ole Cole could do it!"* The engineer quickly left.



Cole Palen defies gravity in his Bleriot at Stormville Airport.

Pete and Cole were like two peas in a pod. They couldn't do enough for each other. It was mutual trust and respect. And Rose, who acted as business manager for the airport operations made it a threesome. Pete's first love was rebuilding airplanes. He always had a project going. It was through Cole that I met Pete, but the interesting story was how Cole met Pete. Cole was trying to earn a little extra flying money. He had a J-2 Cub at the old Wappingers airport. He took aerial photos of people's homes and property with the idea of selling the images, which he developed in his lab. As fate would have it, he wound up in a Danbury, Conn., jail for flying too low because Cole not only didn't have the funds for a telephoto lens, but also didn't have enough cash to bail himself out of jail. Pete, upon hearing of a fellow airman in trouble, immediately drove to Danbury and bailed Cole out of jail. He hadn't known Cole prior to that. He was just that kind of guy. Cole

was forever grateful, and thus blossomed a lifelong friendship. A lot of people thought Cole would crash one of his "junkers," but Pete emphatically decreed that Cole would never die in an airplane. And he didn't.

Stormville was different from other airports. No fences there. People had free access to come and watch the planes take off and land "up close and personal" as they say. There was always friendly conversation, a casual atmosphere, no "security" and no one had to shoo you away from anything, not even the big old house which served as flight school, snack bar and the O'Brien home. And if you got the notion, you could even go for an airplane ride. Rose often let us young pilots who worked there fly some of the rides because she knew how much we appreciated the free flying time. In addition many of us took some of our pay out in flying time. The aircraft owners, the instructors, and all who worked there were treated as family. It was truly a happy place to be, a home away from home.

Our dear Rose died in 1988 after a long battle with breast cancer. All of us who worked for her quickly learned the meaning of the word "respect." Rose was strictly no nonsense when it came to business. But she was at the same time a most kind and caring soul, mother to us all. We were her extended family, thus we welcomed her strict management. Following the loss of Rose, Pete moved to Florida, where he lived near his daughter Patricia and her husband Tommy, returning for a stay at Stormville during the summer. There he enjoyed the times when old friends would visit him and reminisce while sitting at the picnic table under the old maple tree. As time passed, Pete no longer wanted to make the long ride up from Florida and chose to remain in the south. I suspect it must have been too painful for him to see his beloved airport turned into a flea market with not an airplane in sight. On occasion I spoke with him on the telephone and even in advanced age, he continued to be upbeat.

It was reported that Pete died on Friday, Feb. 16, at the age of 102 after a long and incomplete recovery from an operation to repair an aortic aneurism. His daughter told me at his wake that his mind was sharp right up to the end. Pete's last restoration was a 1926 Kinner Bird biplane, his first airplane. When he was rebuilding it he would say it was to be his last, commenting, "I'll finish with the airplane I started with." He named it "The Spirit of Stormville." It now rests at a museum. Yes, with the death of Pete and Cole, truly a local aviation era has passed, never to be seen again.

Dr. Donald Bodeen

Recent Events

WRAM show

Thanks to the generosity of the Westchester Radio Aeromodelers, we were able to participate and share a booth with the World War I Aeroplanes Inc. organization at the 44th annual WRAM show. This year the show moved from its longstanding stay at the Westchester County Civic Center to the Meadowlands Expo Center in New Jersey. The change was a positive one and the attendance is said to have been the best it has been since the mid-1980s. Thanks and congratulations to Danny Corozza, Lou Scarlino, Fred Penichet and the entire WRAM organization!



Karl Sipperly mans the RAM booth at the WRAM show in February. Also pitching in to help out at the booth over the three-day weekend were Tom Polapink, Chris Bulko, Barbara Fritts, and Michael Maniatis.

Birthday party!

On March 10, Jack Alfaro had the unique opportunity of celebrating his third birthday at the Rhinebeck Aerodrome Museum. Nearly 50 of his friends and family members converged at the Aerodrome's History of Flight building to play "pin the propeller on the Aeroplane" and eat lots of birthday cake for what was a very memorable day for all involved!



The museum is available for private parties if you would like to celebrate a birthday, a retirement party or even a wedding! If you are looking for a unique place to host your special event, contact Carol in our office for more information: (845) 752-3200.

New Standard D-25 progress

Bill Gordon has been chipping away at the restoration of New Standard D-25 and is making great progress. The Aerodrome is seeking suitable spruce for the upper wing spars. The lower wings are nearly ready to be covered.



H. Knick Staley elected to Rhinebeck Aerodrome Museum Board of Trustees

On March 12, The Rhinebeck Aerodrome Museum announced that H. Knickerbocker Staley, owner and principal broker of Staley Real Estate LLC has been elected to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees for Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome. Mr. Staley is a native son whose family has lived in Rhinebeck for six generations. His father, Homer Knickerbocker Staley Sr., brokered the sale of the farm to Cole Palen that became the aerodrome in 1959. His personal involvement dates back to 1973 – 1980 when young Knick, as a 15-year member of the Rhinebeck – Red Hook Jaycees and director of the District and Regional New York State Jaycees, staffed and helped manage the concession stand at the Aerodrome for Cole and Rita Palen. His return to volunteer at the aerodrome during the fall of 2011 was most welcome. In making this announcement, Mike DiGiacomio, President of the Rhinebeck Aerodrome Museum, said "Knick Staley's commitment to local business and 40 years of experience as a driving force in Ferncliff Forest Inc., makes him uniquely qualified to maximize the benefit of these two landmark non-profit assets for the region." Mr. Staley commented, "As a Trustee for the Rhinebeck Aerodrome Museum I hope to leverage the brand recognition of the aerodrome that extends across the nation and overseas to attract more visitors to Rhinebeck and the Hudson River Valley. Facility improvements and promotional alliances with local businesses and Hudson Valley attractions are essential toward that end."



“Knick” Staley is also a member of the Rhinebeck area Chamber of Commerce, past president of the Rhinebeck Rotary Club and served as president of both the Dutchess County Board of Realtors and Columbia/Northern Dutchess Multiple Listing Service. Knick was named Realtor of the year in 2009. He served on the Rhinebeck Town Council 1992-1996 and is treasurer for the Rhinebeck Republican Committee. Mr. Staley is a U.S. Army veteran and retired from IBM after 30 years of service in 1993.

Don Fleming

Fokker D.VII

Last fall Cliff Daly of the Aerodrome’s ground crew took delivery of a Fokker D.VII wing to go along with the rest of his Fokker D.VII project.



Cliff Daly (right) and his brother Joe take delivery of the one-piece Fokker D.VII upper wing.

Cliff acquired the Fokker through Brian Coughlin, who flew regularly at Old Rhinebeck in the 1980s and 1990s. This particular D.VII is a reproduction, and is likely one of the very first WWI fighter reproductions ever built, being constructed by Ed Brennan in 1959. Ed was the first to flip an in-line Ranger engine so the cylinders sat upright instead of pointing downward as designed. This opened the doors to allow other repro builders of WWI aircraft to use the mass-produced and relatively easy to find Ranger engine to power their home-built fighters over the years.

Cliff is actively restoring the aircraft will eventually finish the aircraft in the colors of Ernst Udet’s red and white candy-striped machine. While this D.VII is not part of the Aerodrome’s collection, we hope to see Cliff flying it here at Old Rhinebeck in the years to come alongside the Aerodrome’s D.VII.

Work parties

Thanks again to the generous efforts of the hard-working Mid-Hudson Radio Control Society and members of the Westchester Radio Aeromodelers, work parties that took place throughout the fall and winter, and which are continuing on into the spring, have allowed us to increase our parking space in the first lot, nearest the entrance.



Warren Batson (center) and members of the Mid-Hudson R/C Society and Westchester Radio Aeromodelers take a short break from clearing trees to pose for a photo.

The Mid-Hudson group is also offering a matching grant program for up to \$3,500 for improvements to the Aerodrome’s facilities to encourage other R/C modelers to contribute to the Aerodrome.

To take advantage of this generous offer, we urge you to send a check to the “Rhinebeck Aerodrome Museum” at PO Box 229, Rhinebeck, NY 12572, and write “**Gift Shop Project-RC Modelers**” on the memo line, by April 15.

March 2012 Work Weekend

On March 11, 10 members from Mid-Hudson and five Aerodrome volunteers came together at the Aerodrome to work on the center parking lot brush area. A few of us arrived at 8 a.m. and it was in the low 20s but the day quickly warmed up and was a beautiful spring day.

This brush area was at the top of the island in the main parking lot and was full of many 20-foot junk trees and dense multiflora thorn bushes some reaching 7 feet in height.

Many of us said there was no way we would get this all cleared in one day. Well, once again the MHRCS modelers work weekend volunteers pulled off an amazing amount of work in about six hours. People teamed up in groups of three to four people and started working at many different areas of this island. No one was tripping over anyone else and work progressed very quickly. By the time Aerodrome board member Mike DiGiacomio arrived with his truck and chipper there were big piles of brush and about one-third of the area had already been cleared.



Before the team cleared the brush in the parking area, and after.



At the end of the day the entire area was cleared of brush and all the piles of debris from the previous two brush work parties were also chipped and the area received a quick cleaning up.

Many thanks to the following people:

Bob Schultz, Larry Kunz, Jer Milosek, Eric Milosek, Lloyd Quick, Rick Rizza, Joe Mrennen, Warren Batson, Nick Batson, Patrick Walker, Forrest Walker, Mike DiGiacomio, Bryan Batchelor, Ed Batchelor.

Photos by Rick Rizza & Article by Warren Batson

Special Thanks

Bill Gordon - WWI Tank engine & Transmission, Tires & tubes for Fleet, Lycoming starter for Spad VII, Concorde battery for Spad VII

Balsa USA - \$1,000 toward Bathroom/GS Project

The Estate of Dick Lawson - Magnetos, aircraft plywood, rivets, swaging machine, & other various engine parts.

Wants and Disposals

Wants:

Your email address! We need your email address so that we can deliver future issues of Rotary ramblings to you via email. This will save postal and printing costs and will allow us to stretch your membership dollars further toward covering other expenses relating to the museum and keeping our vintage aircraft flying. Send your email address along with your name to carol@oldrhinebeck.org

An Ackerman or Atlas Spring type wheel to match the existing wheel in our collection for eventual installation on the Albree Pigeon Fraser Pursuit.

Copies of old home movies and photographs shot at the Aerodrome over the years for our archives.

Set of Stampe SV4 wing panels.

One pair of 6.50 x 10 wheels, brakes and tires for Velie Monocoupe 113 restoration. Also seeking a donation of \$1,600 to cover expenses for new spar material for this aircraft.

Disposals:

Old chairs, vintage vanity dresser, old lamp, old books and other barn items. Please contact us for further information.



RHINEBECK AERODROME MUSEUM

the original living museum of antique aeroplanes
P. O. Box 229–Stone Church Road • Rhinebeck, NY 12572 • 845/752-3200

2012 Air Show Schedule

Saturdays: Pioneer and barnstorming airplanes featured

Sundays: WWI Airplanes featured

May 12: Museum Opens for the 2012 season

June 2: Fundraising Dinner and Silent Auction

June 9 & 10: First Air Shows of the Season

June 10: British Car Day

June 16 & 17: Fathers' Day Special Weekend

June 23 & 24: Open Cockpit Weekend

June 30: Pioneer and Barnstorming Air Show

July 1: Red Hook Bicentennial Celebration Air Show

July 14 & 15: Meet The Fokkers Weekend

July 21 & 22: 100 Years Ago Weekend

July 28: Pioneer and Barnstorming Air Show

July 29: WWI Air Show

August 4 & 5: Planes Built in New York Weekend

August 11: Pioneer and Barnstorming Air Show

August 12: WWI Air Show

August 18 & 19: Artists-Authors-Photographers Weekend

August 25 & 26 Open Cockpit Weekend

September 1: Pioneer and Barnstorming Air Show

September 2: WWI Air Show

September 8 & 9: Radio Controlled Model Weekend

September 15 & 16: World War I Weekend

September 22: Antique Biplane Fly-In

September 23: WWI Air Show

September 29: Pioneer and Barnstorming Air Show

September 30: WWI Air Show

October 6 & 7: Pumpkin Bombing Festival

October 13: Pioneer and Barnstorming Air Show

October 14: Final Air Show of The Season

Visit www.ldrhonebeck.org for details on each event



Anson DiGiacomo...future Aerodrome pilot!