

100th Anniversary Dinner

“Wright Experience” provides simulator

By James A. Kilduff and Debbie Harding

The Wright Experience is a nonprofit organization founded by Ken Hyde of Warrenton, Virginia, to preserve, reproduce and promulgate the work of the Wright Brothers (www.wrightexperience.com).

Ken has reproduced many different Wright Flyers, most notably, the 1903 reproduction that was flown at Kitty Hawk, NC on the 100th anniversary of the First Flight of a powered, piloted airplane. Wright Experience reproductions are in the College Park, MD Museum of Flight, the Seattle Museum of Flight, and the National Air & Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institute on the mall in Washington, DC. A similar version of the simulator used at the 100th anniversary is at the NASM Udvar Hazy Museum at Dulles Airport.

Ken Hyde also reproduces/rebuilds other early airplanes. Ken owns a Jenny Curtiss JN4, which he restored. It is currently on loan to the Virginia Aviation Museum in Richmond, VA. The Udvar Hazy Museum is the recipient of another airplane from Ken Hyde, a 1924 Farman Sport. This particular plane was imported by ACPA members C. Townsend Ludington and Wallace Kellett. It flew in a cross-country air race to Dayton, Ohio. Later, it was damaged and sat abandoned for years until Ken rescued and rebuilt it.

In this day and age of video games, one might think it would make for an easy transference of skills to the simulator, one with rather basic graphics of ground, building and sky lent favourably to imagining what it was like to fly in the early 1900s. Then you get a bunch of pilots together and the competition kicks in. You gotta love pilots! For our group, it was a timid start - nobody wanted to be first, nobody wanted “to fly” without a practice shot, but everybody wanted to know how many minutes they flew!

Two of Ken's staff, Bill Hadden and Steve Thal-Larsen, demonstrated the simulator and tried to keep hapless pilots from crashing. None of the Wright machines had excess power, and required great skill to keep them airborne. Lack of coordinated flight created drag quickly. Get coordinated or prepare to land! Some celebrants did well; most discovered that it was way harder than it looked!



AOPA President Craig Fuller flies the sim with the help of the Wright Experience's Bill Hadden.

Brave Craig Fuller, the first to take the plunge, set a high bar, 5:07 minutes. Steve and Bill were quite impressed. It wasn't until 8 more attempts by others that he was “de-throned” by Aero Club member and 99, Allison Chalker with a time of 6:06 minutes. That record stuck for five more seatings when Steve Kitko took up the stick and ended up flying over the Washington National Monument. What a great ride, 8:36 minutes. Steve had the high score, followed by Vernon Walkman 7:58 and Don Anderson 7:26

But Steve and Bill were most impressed with George Watson's successful landing. After each go they would say that nobody ever lands successfully! But George did!

It was a fun experience for all that made the attempt and for those that watched. It definitely allowed for some new friends to be made. That mild competitiveness quickly turned to camaraderie. You gotta love pilots! And all for a great cause as all of the \$500 raised will go directly to this year's scholarship recipients.

We are most grateful to Ken for helping to support our 100th anniversary by sending the simulator and his two team members. It added a unique dimension to the festivities. Attendees showed where their priorities were by abandoning the dance floor in droves to get more sim time after dinner. Maybe we can get it again next year and dispense with the dancing!

100th Anniversary Dinner

Groups send delegations to dinner

By James A. Kilduff

Two weeks before his first anniversary as only the 4th president in the 70 year history of AOPA, Craig Fuller and 3 colleagues attended our 100th anniversary celebration: Julie Summers Walker, managing editor of Pilot magazine, Greg Pecoraro, vice president in the government affairs department, and Sandi Turkelson, director of development.

The evening featured a 70th anniversary video of AOPA, identifying the 5 Philadelphia area aviators who started the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association in 1939. They were Philip Sharples, Laurence Sharples, John Story Smith, Alfred Wolf, and C. Townsend Ludington. These five men were members of the Aero Club of Pennsylvania.

In his book, *The History of Aviation in Pennsylvania*, Frank Kingston Smith recounts an anecdote that galvanized the fledgling general aviation industry. The Sharples brothers were hunting waterfowl in South Carolina on the eve of WWII with the new Secretary of Commerce of the United States. The Secretary, on learning that the men were pilots, complained to them about the fragmented nature of general aviation, wondering aloud why it was so hard to find a spokesman for private pilots. The brothers went home, mulled over some solution, and the rest is history.

Before the evening was over, Craig Fuller presented the Aero Club with a plaque honoring the importance of the evening and of the Aero Club of Pennsylvania. ACPA was honored to have this representation from its most successful offshoot, the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association!

We were also honored to have representation from the **Delaware Air National Guard**. General Bruce Thompson, Colonel Jonathan Groff, Colonel Carol Timmons and Captain Stacy Culton all attended in uniform. General Thompson is a board member of ACPA and also a U.S. Air Captain. Captain Culton is a past recipient of a scholarship from the ACPA Memorial Scholarship Fund, and a past speaker at the annual scholarship dinner.



AOPA President Craig Fuller, AOPA's Greg Pecoraro, and guest speaker Connie Tobias

Of far more significance than the contributions to the Aero Club, these brave men and women have been serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, flying C-130's, being away from home 4 months at a time, while still holding down civilian employment. We were honored to have these aviators join us at our celebration.

If there's ever a party celebrating aviation, you can always count on members of the 99s to be there. The **Eastern Pennsylvania Chapter of the Ninety-Nines** filled an entire table at the dinner. Helping us celebrate were Mary Wunder, Nancy Kyle, Kate Macario, Canivet Macario, Linda Evans, Alison Chalker, Rachel Anderson, Gayl Henze, and Ethel Bailey. And our speaker Connie Tobias is also a Ninety-Nine. They all changed out of their aviation duds and adorned their best evening gowns and jewels to help us celebrate. They were clearly the most glamorous table there! A unique quality of the 99s, even among the pilot population, is camaraderie, and it was in this spirit that the 99s showed up to support the Aero Club and to celebrate a truly unique milestone.

Some other groups represented at the dinner included **Wings Field, Brandywine Airport, Doylestown Airport** and **Angel Flight East**. We at the Aero Club were honored to have all these great aviation groups join us for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of our organization.

100th Anniversary Dinner

Reaching across the pond

By Nancy Kyle

A chance internet search early in 2009 yielded the glimmer of an idea which subsequently ballooned (for-give the aviation pun) into a spectacular event. We had been visiting various aviation museums up and down the east coast for over a year for ideas for our 100th anniversary celebration in December 2009. Looking for yet more ideas, we stumbled upon another 100th anniversary celebration. It was a planned re-creation flight of a replica of the Bleriot XI on the exact day, 100 years later, from Calais, France to Dover, England on July 25. So, we said, let's go!

We contacted the organizer, Paul Tipple, and in late July, several members of the Aero Club of PA traveled to England. We were on hand to watch, in the wee hours of the morning, the little aircraft take off across the channel in Calais and make its way to a perfect landing on a cliff high in the hills of Dover, a delightful seaside town. The 2009 landing was like a soft kiss while the original one in 1909 was a drop from 50 feet or so. So the legend goes.

While in the planning stages for the U.K. trip, Board member and consummate idea-man Al Beerley, proposed an idea. He knows Erik Lindbergh and invited him to come along with us to meet the Bleriot folks. Al thought it would be historically significant for Erik to be there since Louis Bleriot happened to be introduced to Charles Lindbergh after HIS historic flight across the Atlantic. As it turned out, Erik could not come along but not to be deterred, Al had another thought. Erik, grandson of Charles, happens to be a sculptor. Many of his works have an aviation theme, and he just happened to have an unsold sculpture at the time: a contemporary rendition of the Spirit of St. Louis. Al said to me, "Say, wouldn't it be a wonderful gesture to present the sculpture to the Royal Aero



Erik Lindbergh sculpture



Nancy Kyle, Al Beerley and Bleriot in Dover, England

Club of the UK in commemoration of the centenary of the Bleriot flight?" But, of course, Al, why didn't I think of that? So, generous human being that Al is, he bought the sculpture from Erik, and trundled it across the pond.

After the re-creation flight, we attended a black tie dinner on the spectacular grounds of Dover Castle. We alerted Paul Tipple and his staff that they would have to add yet another item to an already full agenda. The event organizers were not particularly pleased, the agenda was already printed, there were multiple, long-winded speakers on the program, etc., etc. But the Brits are nothing if not polite, especially to us revolutionaries from America. So they, somewhat skeptically, consented to allow us to make the presentation to David Roberts, President of the Royal Aero Club of the UK, if we promised to keep it to 5 minutes. Of course we can do that!

We sat at a table with Royal Aero Club members and had a grand time chortling over various aviation



Certificate from Royal Aero Club

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escapades on both sides of the pond. Al got all of the Aero Club of Pennsylvania members to sign the letter of Provenance that accompanied the sculpture, Erik was there in spirit, and Al and I awarded the Spirit of St. Louis to David. We made some wonderful friends that evening: our brothers in flight across the pond, and managed to keep our remarks to 5 minutes! It was the highlight of the evening for us and I know I will treasure it in my heart forever. The subsequent fireworks finale just added to the exuberance we all felt.

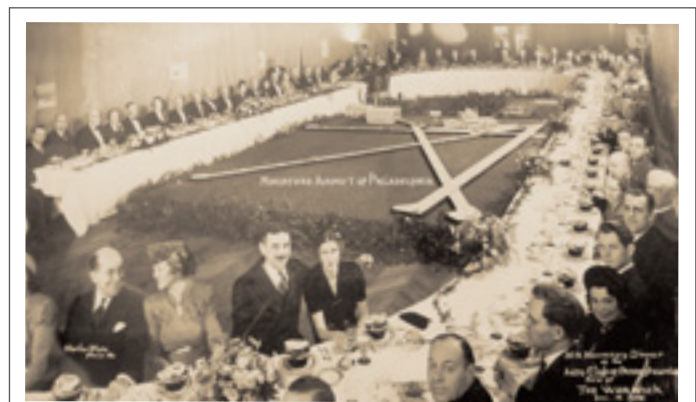
But, the story continues...

Members of the Royal Aero Club, which incidentally dates back to 1901, were quite touched by our gesture of friendship and consulted among themselves for suitable reciprocity. We invited them to attend our 100th anniversary celebration in December. David had planned to come but was called to Slovenia on business. Now, they have some interesting archived aviation documents and memorabilia, so they decided that giving us something from the collection would be a wonderful way to commemorate our 100 years. They decided on an original admittance ticket, dated 1912, to the London Aerodrome in Hendon. The last time they gave one away was to Prince Andrew. So they took two from their dwindling supply, had one matted and framed, and sent it to us with all the proper authentication paperwork and the second ticket (so we could see what was printed on the back of the ticket).

Some of you might have seen the artifact displayed at our gala dinner. Since we do not have a physical clubhouse location, we asked the Philadelphia Aviation Country Club at Wings Field in Blue Bell to display it along with several other framed works of ours, which they graciously agreed to do.

It was a grand year of celebration. I have had a lot of fun in aviation but 2009 was by far the best yet. I saw more museums and more airplanes than I ever could have imagined; I worked with the best team that ever came together to execute on our 100th anniversary; I met many new aviator friends, especially those brothers in flight across the pond. A simply awesome year!

Website: www.royalaeroclub.org



30th Anniversary Dinner, Dec 14, 1939
Warwick Hotel, Philadelphia



100th Anniversary Dinner, Dec 15, 2009
Desmond Hotel, Malvern, PA



Anniversary Dinner Planning Committee:
Ray Noll, Robert Dant, Debbie Harding,
Nancy Kyle, Mary Wunder, and Jim Kilduff

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