

Order of Daedalians



Aloha Flight #28

3 April 1990

Colonel Glenn L. Nordin
Editor, Daedalus Flyer
Building 1635
Kelly AFB, TX 78241

Dear Colonel Nordin,

The attached article is lovingly and respectfully submitted in memory of Louis L. Gowans Sr., former founder member of Aloha Flight #28. Lou passed away last April but memories of his exploits live on at Aloha Flight. We hope you share this article with the membership by publishing it in the Daedalus Flyer.

The author of the attached article is LtCol Dion W. Johnson, USAF, 1989 Aloha Flight Captain. Col Johnson has been a Daedalian since 1979 and has also served as Flight Adjutant, Provost Marshal and Assistant Flight Captain of various flights.

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JAMES F. HINKEL
Brig Gen, USAF
Flight Captain

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ALOHA! Out here in Paradise, Daedalians of Aloha Flight 28 dearly miss one of our our most active founder members. Louis L. Gowans Sr passed away on 2

April 1989 71 years after receiving his wings. Lou activated his founder membership in 1962 and for at least the last dozen years was one of the most active flight members. He was undaunted about attending conventions making his last soire at Charleston in 1988 with a broken rib. Lou rarely missed a monthly meeting and was usually accompanied by his son Louis L. Gowans Jr., a hereditary member and himself a WWII naval aviator. The two were a formidable team usually at the center of all the activity. For us more junior members of Aloha Flight, we knew we were in the company of greatness. Listening to Lou recant his flying adventures was on the par of being blessed with some sacred trust by the Pope except Lou was a lot funnier than His Eminence. We hung on Lou's every word about piloting early Curtiss HS-2L flying boats out of Ford Island. Lou said it was also pretty good sport for the ground crews to winch, push, shove and otherwise manhandle those early amphibis up the concrete ramps that still exist today across the island from the Arizona Memorial.

A Daedalian like Lou doesn't live 95 years without some darn interesting flying experiences. We believe he would have winced a bit over his obituary which focused on his business and philanthropic deeds. I think Lou would have better liked us to mention more about him flying airplanes. Louis L. Gowans was raised in Logan, Utah where he attended the Weber Academy. He later graduated from the university of Utah in 1916 majoring as an electrical engineer and subsequently received specialized electric motor training at General Electric in Schenectady, NY.

Lou began his introduction into the military via the Naval Reserve. On a month's leave of absence from his studies and while drawing full pay, he

cruised from New York on the USS Battle ship Kentucky, "to acquaint himself with electric propulsion apparatus and operations on warships". He participated in a mock battle wherein the "red" invaders (even back then) alas sunk the "blue" defenders (oops) and secured a base at far Rockaway, NY with a unit of marines.

Because of acute sea sickness the sea service was not to be Lou's forte. In 1917 the U.S. was firmly embroiled in WWI. Answering to the lure of aviation, Lou was off to San Francisco for aviation service exams. He joined the army and received his basic aviation training at Rockwell Field, NAS North Island, San Diego.

Lou was commissioned as a second lieutenant on his birthday, 22 April 1918 and then proceeded to mobilization camp for aviators at Dallas Tx as a pursuit pilot, Class A. On October 5, 1918 Lou married his longtime sweetheart Miss Helen Taylor of Odgen, Utah whom also attended Weber Academy. Without much time for a honeymoon, Lou proceeded to New York City for advanced aviation training at Columbia University. He was in New York when the armistice was signed on November 18th.

Lt Gowans was then posted to Sacramento, CA in 1919 flying mainly forest patrol. He was assigned with the 4th Aero Squadron which was organized at Mitchell Field and on 23 June 1919 the unit moved to Luke Field on Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, HI. Lou fell in love with Hawaii and made it his home for the next 68 years.

By January 1920, there were 20 officers and 9 enlisted men assigned to the 4th squadron. The Army Air Services Airplane Distribution Report as of 19 June 1920 lists the following airplanes assigned to Luke Field.

6 CURTISS JN4HG (active training)	1 CURTISS HS1L (obsolescent tng)
12 CURTISS JN6HG (active training)	9 CURTISS HS2L (obsolescent tng)
68 DEHAVILLAND DH-4 (service)	2 CURTISS N9 (obsolescent tng)
3 CURTISS JN4D (obsolescent training)	1 CURTISS RG (obsolete)

Lou Gowans made Hawaiian aviation history for a couple of daring aerial firsts. On 13 April 1920, Lou and another 4th squadron pilot (later Col) Douglas Johnston "bombed" a major naval vessel of the British Admiralty, the 700' cruiser HMS Renown. Aboard at the time was his Royal Highness Edward Albert, the Prince of Wales, (later King Edward VIII). No damage was reported for the bombs were only flower leis heaved out by Johnston from the rear cockpit as Gowans swooped their Dehavilland DH-4 low over the royal battle wagon. Johnston remarked proudly, "I hit the quarterdeck quite a few times". The flower bombing was so unusual and memorable an experience for the ex-British monarch that he told Johnston, when they met 23 years later, he vividly recalled the experience.

The U. S. Army was also interested in more serious uses for airpower. In the spring of 1920, the army began an adventurous exploratory program to visit and survey the Hawaiian Islands for possible landing fields and refueling depots. Under the leadership of Major John Curry, commander of the 4th Aero SQ, these flights helped familiarize the flight crews with interisland flying and various island terrain including mountains reaching to 13,000 feet. On 8 May 1920, Major Curry led a flight of two HS2L Flying Boats to the garden isle of Kauai 97 air miles west of Honolulu. This was the first time airplanes ever visited Kauai. The crews consisted of Major John F. Curry, Lieutenant Ralph Wooten, Lieutenant John Lanfall and Lieutenant Lester Maitland (pilots);

Lieutenant Louis L. Gowans, radio officer and corporals Black and Foster (mechanic).

The record 100 minute flight began at 0745 hrs from Pearl Harbor. After making the longest single hop over water yet attempted by the Army, the mission ended with spectacular water landings at Hanaumalu Bay. Twenty minutes after the HS2L's departed for Kauai, Mr Charlie Fern, a commercial aviator flying a land plane, hopped off Luke Field with his mechanic Mr Johnson. Fern's craft caught up and kept company with the military aircraft and landed near the harbor's beach at nearly the same time. Fern's time was 80 minutes. The flight weather was reported "ideal with a southerly wind astern". Constant wireless communication was maintained by Lou Gowans with the base at Luke Field.

The arrival of the three aircraft was marked by great excitement among the inhabitants, most of whom had never seen an airplane. The military party remained for three days making demonstration flights and gathering information of military value. Mr Fern immediately inaugurated a commercial flying service flying state Senator Charles Rice as the first passenger.

Most of us Daedalians have flown with various items of survival gear. But I wonder how many recall flying with carrier pigeons in the cockpit. Lou Gowans and his squadron mates took pigeons along in case they experienced emergencies. Pilots in distress were to dispatch the pigeon home with a note requesting assistance. I asked Lou if this idea really worked. Being a man of few words he replied, "sure did!" Sure wish I could pass along more details on that story.

In 1921, after his army experience, Lou made Hawaii his permanent residence serving with the Honolulu Gas Company for 38 years retiring as a director. He also was very successful in other ventures including real estate.

Lou was always an strong proponent of education. He not only encouraged his children to attain their degrees, and was a significant benefactor to Punahou School but also helped educate service personnel. After WWI, Lou was assigned to educate the Hawaii shore defense gun battery crews, some of whom could not read well enough to absorb the technical manuals for shoot their guns. So he set about organizing educational opportunities enabling these young GIs to complete their schooling.

Lou remained a steadfast proponent of scholarship throughout his life. in his memory, his son Louis Jr. endowed our Aloha Flight Air Force ROTC scholarship awarded annually to a senior at the University of Hawaii.

Aloha Flight #28 toasted the memory of Louis L. Gowans Sr during a special ceremony, 22 Mar 1990 and placed his portrait and biography on permanent display in the Hickam Officers Club Daedalian Room.





