

AIR SERVICE AND AIR CORPS NEWS LETTERS ILLUSTRATED

FRIENDS OF THE AIR FORCE MUSEUM who remember the News Letters published by the Army Air Service and Army Air Corps are aware that, for the most part, they contained no photographs. As an experiment the FRIENDS BULLETIN offers the following News Letter article as it might have appeared had photographic reproduction been permitted at the time of its original publication. Your response to this experiment will determine whether it will be repeated in future issues of the Bulletin. The narrative appeared in AIR CORPS NEWS LETTER, Vol. XI, No. 10, published on August 9, 1927.

A LANDING REPLETE WITH THRILLS
By Lieut. John F. McBlain

A twin-motored Martin Bomber, piloted by Lieutenant George W. Polk, Jr., Air Corps, with Staff Sergeant Philip Monroy, Privates Raymond L. Cyr and Harold L. Valentine as crew, crashed in the water of Pearl Harbor, southwest of Luke Field, Hawaii, at 12:10 P.M., June 23rd. No one was injured, but the plane was a total loss.

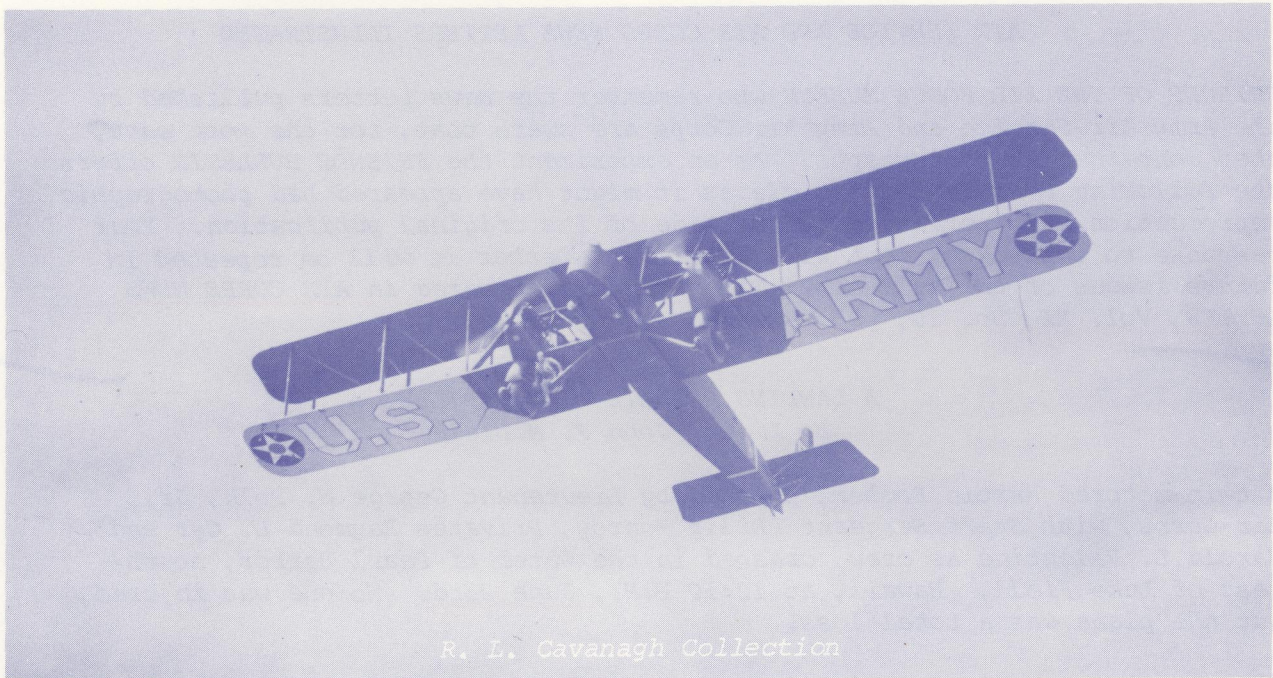
Thus may be summarized an incident at an Army flying field which was as replete with thrills as the most blase could desire. At eight o' clock in the morning Lieutenant Polk took off from Luke Field as a member of a five-ship formation to simulate bombing of objectives on the northern part of Oahu in connection with Army maneuvers then going on. Immediately after taking the air the pilot learned that his landing gear was damaged. Investigation showed that four bolts connecting one of the struts to a wheel had sheared off.

Circling the field, Lieutenant Polk dropped a message asking that four new bolts and some rope be sent up to him and then went on to participate in the scheduled mission. A DeH plane immediately took off, piloted by Lieutenant J.D. Givens, with Lieutenant Phillip Schneeberger as observer. They picked up a formation of bombers and dropped the supplies on the end of a rope to one of the ships only to learn that it was the wrong ship. The rope was lowered and the package retrieved. The fastening broke under the strain, however, and the package was lost.

Lieutenant Givens landed at Luke Field, secured more supplies, a more complete identification of the plane in trouble, and took off again. In the meantime, Lieutenant Polk had completed his tactical mission with the rest of his formation. Lieutenant Givens located the disabled plane but was unable to pass the supplies to the men in either the forward or rear cockpit, due to the fact that both men at each of those stations were recruits taking their first ride and were not familiar with air work.

Realizing that the situation required energetic measures, Lieutenant Schneeberger climbed out on one wing of the DeH with the supplies. His slippery-soled shoes added to the perils of a normally very precarious footing.

OVER



NBS-1, Army Air Corps Serial Number 68455, in flight over Oahu, T.H., photographed at 10:45 A.M. on June 23, 1927. Staff Sergeant Philip Monroy can be seen in the fork of the right main landing gear unsuccessfully attempting to repair the damaged gear. The airplane was assigned to the 23rd Bombardment Squadron, 5th Composite Group, and flown by 1st Lieutenant George W. Polk, Jr., Air Corps.

Sergeant Monroy, crew chief of the bomber, walked out on the adjacent wing of his ship and while the two pilots maneuvered the ships within an arms (sic) length the supplies were transferred. Returning to his seat, Lieutenant Schneeberger faced an additional peril when his parachute opened. He narrowly escaped being pulled off from the plane with the danger of the parachute fouling the tail surfaces.

Then began the second chapter of thrills. With the ship flying at altitudes varying from 1,000 to 8,000 feet, Sergeant Monroy climbed down on the landing gear, and, in a position normally almost impossible to maintain without including the additional handicaps of altitude and windstream of 90 miles per hour, endeavored with the aid of Private Cyr on the wing to repair the damaged landing gear. The position they worked in prevented the use of the parachute, further adding to the hazard.

Finally, at 12:00 o'clock, it became evident that the landing gear could not be repaired, and Lieutenant Polk decided to land in the water. While flying over the field to drop the parachutes and thus save them from being damaged by salt water, one of the chutes caught in the propeller of the left motor, causing it to cease functioning. This materially increased an already hazardous situation. Flying down wind with a 30-mile wind adding considerably to his ground speed and losing altitude every second because of the loss of one motor, Lieutenant

A LANDING REplete WITH THRILLS (cont.)

Polk was confronted with the problem of putting down his ship in a narrow strip of water before his speed carried him to a jutting tree-covered peninsula where a landing would undoubtedly have proved fatal to the crew.

The bomber hit the water with terrific impact and turned completely over. Army and Navy boats standing by in the vicinity, immediately took off for the scene of the crash, and a rescue of the crew was effected. Except for a brief ducking the airmen were none the worse for their experience.

This is the second plane Lieutenant Polk has put in the water at this identical spot, the other occasion being when one engine went dead too far away to enable him to make a landing at the field. His only comment was that he now seemed fairly well qualified for submarine service. Sergeant Monroy was active on the job in the 23rd Squadron hangar the same afternoon and refused to consider that he had done anything unusual. It is safe to say that the two recruits, Privates Cyr and Valentine, consider their initiation into the air game quite adequate.

So far as is known, this is the first time actual use was made in the Hawaiian Department of plans of the Air Corps matured sometime ago for the transfer of supplies from one plane to another in the air. It will be recalled that this has been carried so far as to include refueling ships in the air. Captain Lowell H. Smith, now at Wheeler Field, piloted a DeH plane both in duration and a long distance flight sometime prior to his flight around the world when he was stationed at Rockwell Field, the experiments of refueling his plane during flight proving eminently successful.

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ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL NOTES

During the 1920"s and very early 1930"s it was the practice of the U.S. Army Air Service and Army Air Corps to supply the newest airplanes not only to units stationed in the continental United States but to those stationed in our overseas territories and possessions as well. In accordance with this practice new NBS-1 (Night Bombardment, Short Range, Model 1) airplanes carrying serial numbers 68442 through 68446, 68448 through 68456, and 68460 and 68461 were delivered to the Hawaiian Air Department on January 12, 1923 for use by the 23rd and (shortly to be activated) 72nd Bombardment Squadrons of the 5th Composite Group. These airplanes were part of the batch built by the L.W.F. Engineering Company under contracts 367 and carrying serial numbers 68437 through 68471. With the exception of 68447, which was delivered to Aeromarine as a model for their contract for 25 NBS-1s (22-201 through 22-225), the L.W.F. NBS-1s were crated and shipped to Hawaii and Panama.

Examination of microfilms of scattered Master Aircraft Record cards for this batch of airplanes discloses that 68455 was wrecked at Pearl Harbor on June 23, 1927. The pilot was "1st Lieutenant George W. Polk." The cause of the wreck was "Damage due to flight" and the result was "Washout."

ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL NOTES (cont.)

The airplane was surveyed on November 30, 1927 by Hawaiian Department Form 161. At the time of the accident the airplane had been in service for 57 months, had received one overhaul, and had accumulated 221 hours and 7 minutes of flying time. The McCook Field Project Book for the MB-2/NBS-1 series of airplanes, on file in the Air Force Museum's Research Division, shows that 68455 carried the L.W.F. Manufacturer's Number 19 and was accepted by the Air Service on September 12, 1922.

The staff of the FRIENDS BULLETIN would be delighted to hear from anyone who can supply further information concerning the crew of 68455 and the "DeH" and the Luke Field News Letter correspondent. Photographs of 68455 or any other NBS-1 serving in Hawaii, Panama or the Phillipines would also be welcomed. Photographs will be handled carefully, copied, and returned promptly. Submitted material and prints from the copy negatives will be placed in the files of the Museum's Research Division for the benefit of future researchers.

FRIENDS ARTICLES

We've had some help with this issue from outside FRIENDS, namely the quiz from our astute Base Historian, Shelby Wickam, and Bob Cavanaugh, of Kettering, Ohio, who assisted with not only some fresh and original ideas, but also provided the articles on the Air Service Bulletin and our two mysteriously marked P-12s. We would like to solicit stories or manuscripts for the newsletter from other FRIENDS. Maybe squadron histories or an episode of personal experience that we can share with all. We're over 10,000 strong now. . . . so there must be some good stories and photos out there which will not only be of interest to our readers, but maybe fill some voids in our Research files as well. So keep us in mind if you have something pertaining to Air Force history. You can see our format, so keep it fairly short and include a picture or two. We'll take care of them, get copies, and get the originals back to you. Input deadlines for the remainder of the year are 15 May, 15 August, and 15 November.

COLUMBIA PATCH COLLECTORS

Serious patch collectors should be advised that Columbia 1 through Columbia 5 patches are now available as a set. Cost is \$16.50 (FRIENDS \$14.50), and 75¢ for mailing. Ohio residents add 6% for state sales tax.

CHARM AND TIE TACKS

At long last we have finally obtained the B-25 sterling silver charm and tie tac. We have been able to hold our price at \$7.95 for the charm and \$8.95 for the tie tac. FRIENDS cost are \$6.36 and \$7.16 respectively. Check you Air Force Museum Gift Catalog for mailing order information.