

Wright "B" Flyer, Inc.

WRIGHT LANDINGS



Issue 4, 2009

Dayton, Ohio

Fall, 2009

William A. Sloan 1921—2009

By Rich Stepler

Bill was a long-time Wright "B" Flyer pilot. He began flying the Wright "B" Flyer right after its first flight. He was a member of the "Golden Chain Award," having made at least one forced landing after a chain break. Bill passed away this summer and will be sorely missed by his Wright "B" family.

Bill grew up in Alabama and decided early in life to become a pilot. In the spring of 1938, Bill was a line-boy at Auburn, Opelika Airport, a 2000 foot grass strip, making \$40.00 a month and using



"First Lieutenant" Bill Sloan

most of it to pay for pilot training. One afternoon a P-36 Army Air Corps (AAC) airplane landed, needing gas. Bill topped off the airplane and found out that the pilot had a girlfriend in town and wanted to go see her, but couldn't leave the P-36 at the airport overnight without a guard. Bill got the job! The officer unstrapped his pistol belt and handed it to Bill; complete with a loaded 45 Cal. pistol. Bill, then 17 years old, became a guard for the AAC for one night and earned his first AAC pay check; \$11.00.

As a private pilot, Bill wanted to fly for the AAC but at that time an aviation cadet had to have two years of college and be 20 1/2 years old. Preparing himself, Bill completed two years of college by June 1941 and was waiting for the age requirement. The attack on Pearl Harbor changed everything. Bill went into the service in Jan 1942 and went directly into pilot training. Twenty-one-year old 2/Lt. Bill Sloan graduated at the top of his class, earning the honor of having his wings pinned on by General Hap Arnold, and just before Christmas of 1942 was ordered to report to Tampa FI to learn to fly the Martin B-26.

Bill was flying the Martin B-26 out of Italy when he completed his 25th combat mission, the traditional time to rotate back to the states, but his commander explained the new rule; now he needed 35 missions. One of those additional missions, the raid on Monte Casino, was recently documented and aired on the History channel. Eighteen months and 72 combat missions later, Bill returned to the states.

Bill retired from the USAF as a full Colo-

Wright "B" Flyer Annual Membership Dinner October 20, 2009

Spaghetti by Chef Walt Election of Trustees

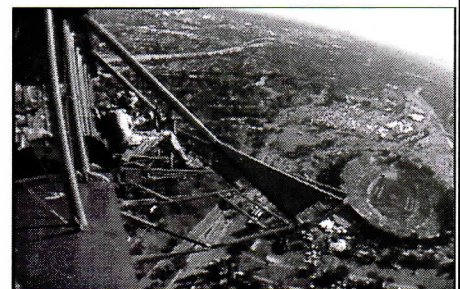
Guest Speaker:

Lt Gen (Retired) Dick Reynolds

RSVP by October 15th

nel in 1971, and to the envy of all pilots, he flew all of his 30 years, either training, in combat, or in the test community. After retirement Bill continued flying by becoming an FAA flight instructor affiliated with the Wright Patterson Aero Club and later an FAA designated flight examiner. In 1982 Bill Sloan began flying the Wright B Flyer. Bill continued flying at the aero club and with the WBF until health issues forced him to retire from flying. Bill died 9 Jul 2009. God needed a copilot.

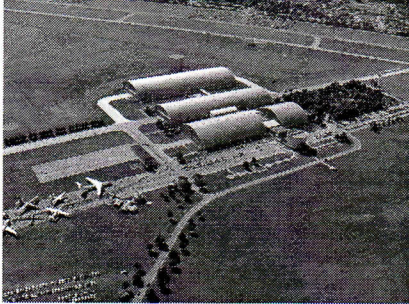
(Special thanks to Bill Arnold Jr. for his help recounting the stories and life of Bill Sloan.)



Bill and John over the Rose Bowl

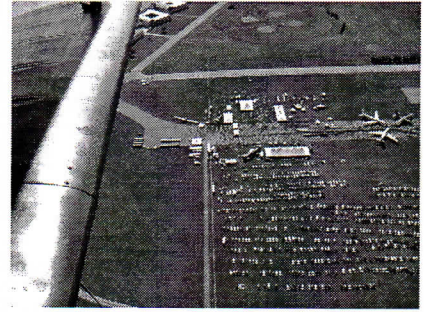
AIR FORCE MARATHON

For the past few years the WBF has overflowed the runners participating in the annual USAF marathon, making it a very special event for both the run-



ners and the crew of the WBF. This year is no exception; Don Gum and Rich Stepler flew the WBF to WPAFB to overfly the marathon course and honor the athletes whose commitment and training enable them to run just over 26 miles in several hours.

From both the pilots' and runners' perspectives it is an impressive event! For the runners, it must be a near "Twilight Zone" experience to be distracted from the marathon by the shadow, sound and sight of aviation's progenitor flying overhead. For the crew, flying a look-a-like in the airspace that long ago hosted the only machine in the



A view of the start/finish line

world capable of practical flight is both a privilege and honor.

DAYTON AIR SHOW - AGAIN!

At this year's Dayton Air Show we shared display space with NAHA, an idea promoted by John Bosch, a member of both organizations. The NAHA tent contained booths and static displays from all of NAHA's constituent members to include the Wright B Flyer simulator. On static display outside the tent was the Wright B Flyer airplane and the Grimes Beech 18 flying laboratory. The weather cooperated and the crowds were large; lots of interest in flying the simulator and talking to the pilots and crew of the WBF. Don Gum and Rich Stepler flew the airplane Saturday just before the official opening of the air show and Greg Carter and Rich Stepler flew Sunday.

After our flights, to get to the NAHA tent location in the center of the static display area we had to be towed through the crowd. I'm not sure who enjoyed our trip through the crowd more, the people who just watched us fly and were now getting a close up look and photo opportunity or the pilots and crew who got to hear the applause and see the faces of the kids light up when they saw the WBF move by up close. Karin Kuhbander and Linda Madaffer helped with the WBF display inside the NAHA tent. Bill Simpson and Phil Beaudoin kept activities both inside and outside the NAHA tent running smoothly for the WBF organization.



Photos in front of the Wright "B" Flyer are always popular

The static display of the WBF is a tiring but rewarding time for the pilots and crew. WBF ground crew this year included: Barry Shaw, Syl Kerstansk, Frank Goepferich, Joe Tyler, Richard Holt, John Kennedy, Sam Tippey and John Callender. The people attending the air show make it interesting. Some questions are recurring; yes it flies; yes, we flew it here from the Dayton Wright Brother's Airport; no, we are not part of the Air Force Museum; and the big question, yes, if you join our museum as an Honorary Aviator Member you get an orientation ride in the WBF. That answer is usually followed by a "Wow" and a quick glance at the nearby parents (or spouse) to see if there is any

hope of taking the next step in the process. Some of the people that stop to talk are very knowledgeable about the history of early flight and ask about an issue or a detail of an event. Some are interested in the performance aspects or construction of the WBF and how it differs from the original. Pilots always ask how the WBF flies. As a pilot and volunteer for about five years with the WBF organization I enjoy seeing the WBF for the first time again through the eyes of the air show crowd; Wow is the right word!



Wright "B" Flyer Crew

Courtesy of Rich Stepler

A Reminder: Visit this Website

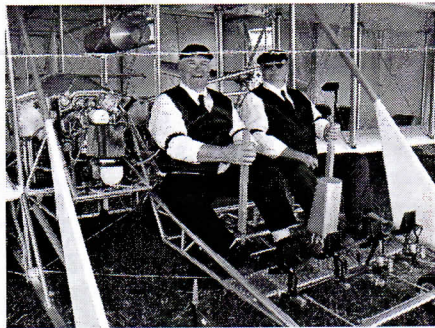
Wright "B" Flyer Trustee Tim Gaffney is now editor and publisher of a new online news and information service, **AviationDayton.com**. (<http://www.aviationdayton.com>). It's a one-stop Web portal for anyone with an interest in aviation in the 12-county Dayton region, from aviation heritage to aerospace and defense. Its Clubs and Groups section includes a page devoted to Wright "B" Flyer Inc., with a link to our website. Tim welcomes information about aviation news and events of all kinds. Contact him at editor@aviationdayton.com.

SILVER BIRD VISITS OSHKOSH

by Don Stroud

In late July the Silver Bird was disassembled and folded up as designed and secured in the trailer transporter for a stay of nine days of static display at the world's biggest air show in Oshkosh Wisconsin. The trailer was hauled by C. H. Robinson Transport Company.

Don Gum arrived early at the air show site and made arrangements for the trailer to be repositioned near our shelter, on Aero shell Square West, where the airplane could be easily unloaded. Unloading and assembly went smoothly and the SB was rolled into the shelter. Our crew consisted of Richard

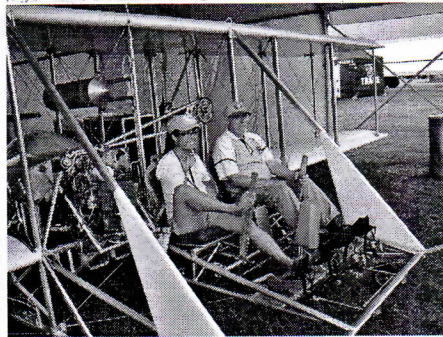


Richard and John in the Silver Bird

Holt, John Kennedy, Don Stroud and Don Gum. We also were aided by NAHA's able assistant Jessie Duckro. Chris Mathews from the Grimes crew and Tim Gaffney also pitched in and helped with the unloading. The two simulators were set-up for the final arrangement under the Silver Bird show tent. Amanda Wright Lane was also there for a large part of the show. Don Lane and John Bosch flew in for a few days also. Even though the display tent was not on the main thoroughfare the airplane drew quite a few people wanting to take a closer look.

John and Rich were the two main spokesmen maintaining positions in front to take

most of the questions from the onlookers who ventured into our tent. Three of us dressed in the period dress for a few days and then determined it was way too hot for that. One highlight of the show was when a young lady showed up and mentioned that she was the great granddaughter of Glen Curtis. Amanda and Sarah Curtis had a fine time comparing notes and many pictures were taken of the two sitting in the SB. Amanda was interviewed quite a few times and Don Stroud was talked into an EAA radio interview on one occasion. There was an Ercoup aircraft parked near our shelter that was flown in from Tucson by a very courageous young lady, Jessica Cox, who qualified as a sport pilot by us-



Jessica Cox with Don Gum

ing only her feet-- you see, Jessica was born without arms. She sat in the SB and showed us how she was sure she could fly this airplane. We told her that she was welcome anytime and we would sure give it a try. She was just a wonderful young lady with such a positive attitude and a ready smile for everyone around her. She keeps busy as a motivational speaker inspiring others to look at limitations as "things we put on ourselves".

We also had a group of Canadians visitors who had just completed a replica project of the Silver Dart, which was the first Cana-

dian built aircraft to fly. The airplane was constructed mostly of bamboo with twine connections and was very substantial. The original project was aided by Glen Curtis

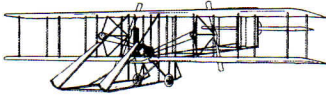


Jessica and her plane

and Alexander Graham Bell. It first flew from a lake in 1909. We struck up quite a pleasant relationship with the Canadians and invited them to visit us anytime. Dean Alexander, the recently appointed Superintendent of Dayton Aviation heritage National Historical Park, spent lots of time with us helping out—answering questions and helping with the simulators. He was a great help relieving our crews. NAHA's Jessie Duckro made all the arrangements for the air show display and housing (she also fixed us some very good meals). She rented a private home in Appleton to house NAHA, WBF, Grimes crews and a few stragglers like Don Lane and John Bosch. The house was a lovely old home in a very quaint neighborhood. It had lots of bedrooms (at one time we had at least a dozen people sleeping there) and a big kitchen—just what we needed. The first few days were typical mid-west weather days with humidity and afternoon thunderstorms rolling through. After that the weather cleared and we had mostly clear dry reasonably cool days—for Oshkosh that was truly a blessing.

Wright "B" Flyer, Inc
10550 Springboro Pike
Dayton Wright Bros. Airport
Miamisburg, Ohio 45342
Phone: 937-885-2327
Fax: 937-885-3310

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Wright "B" Flyer

A Busy Summer

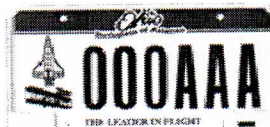
As another flying season winds down I want to thank all of you who made this past season a success. This was arguably our busiest summer in years. Our volunteers were busy finishing the Silver Bird, preparing the Brown Bird for flights and conducting the flights, taking the 1/2-Scale to events and parades, giving tours to visitors, manning the new simulators, and a host of other things necessary to keep the operation running. Many thanks to all for giving so much of your time.

I had hoped that we would be well into the test program on the Silver Bird by now. That didn't work out. We have definitely committed to be a part of the Centennial Celebration of Benjamin Foulois' first flight in San Antonio on March 2nd. The Silver Bird should have been the ideal plane to take to that venue. That now appears unlikely, unless the Silver Bird begins flying soon and we have a VERY mild winter to continue flight test well into the winter season. It appears likely we will take both the Yellow Bird and the Brown Bird.

I hope all of you in the local area can make it to the annual Membership Dinner. You will get to see the progress of the Silver Bird in person, eat Walt's spaghetti, vote for trustees, hear our plans for the upcoming year, and hear a superb speaker, Dick Reynolds. I hope you can make it.

Mitch

Please purchase our "Leader in Flight" license plates!



http://bmv.ohio.gov/vehicle_registration/leader_in_flight.htm