HAC Receives Air America Grant

Brian Johnson, president of the Air America Association, announced a grant of $10,000 to the History of Aviation Collection (HAC) which will be used to establish an endowment fund for the continuing acquisition of newsletters, photos and documents detailing the experiences of personnel assigned to Civil Air Transport (CAT), Air America and Air Asia airlines that were operated by the Central Intelligence Agency in Southeast Asia.

On hand for researchers are bound volumes of CAT Bulletin, The Air Asian and Air America Log. The extensive collection also contains diaries, correspondence and reports dating from the beginning days of the American involvement in Southeast Asian operations. The HAC is the official repository for the Civil Air Transport and Air America Associations.

Milton Bludworth, one of the HAC/Doolittle Library volunteers, has been responsible for collating and organizing the collection since 1992.

Airline Files Available For Research

Airline historians and researchers may not know that the History of Aviation Collection contains several airline historical files that are available for study. For example, there are 46 boxes of American Airlines records on hand that include Civil Aeronautics Board and National Transportation Safety Board reports, aircraft operations and maintenance training manuals, and service reports. There are also a number of transcriptions of interviews with company employees that were made in the 1960s.

The airline collections also include bound copies of B-Liner, a number of newspaper and magazine clippings and photos from Braniff International (formerly Braniff Airways) that have been donated by the company or former employees since 1978. All Braniff inaugural flights between 1928 and 1979 have been documented by clippings, photos and news releases from the company’s public relations department.

There is also a collection of 72 oral history audio cassettes donated by R.H. Carlson of United Airlines. Other individual collections, memoirs and photos donated by former employees of other airlines of their heirs have been added in recent years. These valuable holdings reflect the growth of the airline industry from its earliest days. Airline employees who have collected materials about their companies and wonder what to do with them can donate them to the HAC/Doolittle Library where they will be carefully preserved and available for future researchers.

Ormer L. Locklear

Stunt Pilot Remembered

Ormer L. Locklear was one of the famous stunt pilots of the era immediately after World War I. Born in Como, Texas in 1891 and reared in Fort Worth, he learned to fly in the Army Air Service and began wing walking and stunting as soon as surplus military aircraft such as the ubiquitous Curtiss Jenny's were made available to barnstormers.

Nationally and internationally famous for his hair-raising acrobatic stunts hanging from an aircraft, Locklear earned as much as $3,000
a day stuntmg in Hollywood films. He starred in several early motion picture thrillers in which aircraft were featured; most memorable was changing planes in mid-air, hanging by his hands from the landing gear of one Jenny and letting go to sprawl atop the upper wing of another. Another stunt was called the “Dance of Death” in which he and another pilot flew with their wing tips overlapping, then changed places.

Locklear was killed in August 1920 while filming a night scene. Despite his momentary 16 months in the headlines, few Americans ever went to their graves with such fanfare. His death was headlined from coast to coast and 50,000 people turned out in Los Angeles and another 35,000 in Fort Worth for his funeral. The files in the collection relate Locklear's exciting but brief life as one of aviation’s early barnstormers.

Aviation Writer/Artist Files Available

Few writers have the skill to be illustrators for their own books and magazine articles but Jim Ray was one of those whose work spanned both crafts. Nationally recognized for the authenticity of his work, he had literally a lifetime association with aviation beginning with active service with the French during World War I. His books, written mostly for young adults, brought factual information to the American public as well as furthering aviation activities in the nation’s schools.

In the 1950s, Ray created and supervised the production of "Wings Over America," a radio program that inspired many young adults to join the flying services or embark on flying careers. His books include "The Story of American Aviation," "The Inside Story of the Flying Fortress" and "Flying Time." Ray's original art and dummies of his books and articles are available for study.

New Volunteers Join

Two new volunteers have arrived for duty with the HAC/Doolittle Library. They are C. France McCoy and Gay Orczy-Barstow.

France McCoy is an attorney whose particular interest is French military aviation in the 1919-1940 period. Retired from the Dallas-based Southwestern Legal Foundation, he served as an associate general counsel for General Dynamics at Fort Worth during the B-58 and F-111 programs, and in the USAF Security Service during the Korean War.

Gay Orczy-Barstow, a graduate of UTD in 1980, worked on a grant to the History of Aviation Collection as an assistant for 2-1/2 years. She then functioned as a registrar for the women's health care processing program at Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. She retired in 1995 and has volunteered as an archivist.

Who Was Joe?

Jimmy Doolittle dedicated his autobiography "I Could Never Be So Lucky Again," to his wife "Joe." This was not a misprint. He explains:

"She was known as ‘Joe’ spelled with an ‘e’ which she claimed was because she had a favorite uncle named Joe and the family called her ‘Little Joe.’ I always said it was because her father named her Joseph before she came into the world. In view of her equipment, they changed the name to Josephine but still called her ‘Joe’ and spelled it that way."

Hac/Doolittle Library Volunteers
Bohn Scrapbooks

Five large albums from the estate of the late Delphine Bohn, former Beech demonstration pilot and salesperson, are among the hundreds of files that have been donated to the History of Aviation/Doolittle Library. Delphine was one of the original 28 woman flyers who joined the Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS), the organization that preceded the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) of World War II. She was a commander of a WASP squadron based at Dallas Love Field and served as pilot-in-command ferrying all types of single- and twin-engine fighters and attack planes and four-engine bombers.

The materials include letters and orders from superior military officers, 400 photos, more than 300 news clips of the 1942-1960 time period, and manuals, rosters and programs relating to her activities in the WAFS, WASPs and civil aviation after World War II.

Plaque Honors CIA Crews

A large brass plaque mounted in the Special Collections section of the McDermott Library at UTD is dedicated to the air crews and ground support personnel of Civil Air Transport, Air America, Air Asia and Southern Air Transport airlines who died while serving the cause of freedom in Asia from 1947 to 1975.

There are 240 names on the plaque. Five brass renderings at the top show the areas where the men served: China, Dien Bien Phu, Korea, Laos and Vietnam. Many family members of those listed on the plaque visit the library to see it each year. Jesse Walton, a pilot for CAT and Air America, was instrumental in its creation.

Bob Buol’s Flag

One of the interesting artifacts in the CAT and Air America collections is a small American flag knitted by Lawrence Robert “Bob” Buol during his imprisonment in Kunming, China by the Chinese Communists from January 1950 to September 1955. Some Civil Air Transport wives in Canton had taught him how to knit and he was said to annoy his fellow pilots by continually having the ball of yarn in the cockpit.

Bob also knitted himself a sweater during his imprisonment but unraveled it to make a new one at the time he was released. He obtained the yarn for the flag from clotheslines in the compound where he was held. He died May 26, 1956 as a result of his treatment while in the Chinese Communist prison.

Air America Association Founder Dies

Leon V. LaShomb, former president and one of the founders of the Air America Association, died on January 5, 1996 at his home in Marion, Texas. A paratrooper in Korea and a former helicopter pilot in Laos and South Vietnam for Air America, he was responsible for the formation of the association in its present form.

Leon’s widow, Carole, may be reached at Rt. 1, Box 39B, Marion, TX 78124. She asks that donations be made to the archives in lieu of flowers.

Bob Buol’s Flag