Four Worthy Aviators Inducted into the Hall of Fame

Paul E. Galanti, Richmond, Virginia
Inducted in 2005, Paul E. Galanti began his flying career at the U.S. Naval Academy, from which he graduated in 1962. In 1963 he received his Naval wings. In November 1964 Paul was assigned to the Navy Light Jet Attack Squadron 216 (VA-216), flying the A-4-C Skyhawk. In November of 1965 the USS Hancock departed for Southeast Asia. On June 17, 1966 while conducting an attack on a railroad siding near Vinh, North Vietnam, Paul was shot down and taken prisoner on his 97th combat mission. He received several high military awards for his service as a POW. Following rehabilitation and return to flight status, he became executive officer then commanding officer of the Navy Recruiting District in Richmond which set new records under his tutelage. In 1982 Paul retired from the Navy and in 1983 became the first non-pharmacist Executive Director of the Virginia Pharmaceutical Association in its 100 year history. He then became the deputy, then Executive VP of the Medical Society of Virginia in 1991. He is author and webmaster of the NAM-POW webpage and holds many combat awards for his military service, including the Silver Star, Bronze Star for combat, nine Air Medals, and two Purple Hearts. He has received many accolades for his work in the private sector and is an accomplished motivational speaker.

William Knox Martin, Roanoke, Virginia
Inducted in 2005, William Knox Martin began his flying career in 1912 at the Sloane Flying School. In 1916, Martin joined the newly formed Pacific Aero Products Company of Seattle, Washington as Chief Instructor for William E. Boeing at their new flying school. He later conducted initial flight tests of some of the new Boeing planes, staying there until the outbreak of WWI. During the war he was commissioned as Lieutenant in the Aviation Section, U.S. Marine Corps. In the spring of 1919 he sailed for South America taking a Curtiss OXX-powered “Jennie” for sales demonstrations. He flew to Puerto, Columbia with a bag of mail and a passenger, both firsts for that country. Martin then took his plane to Bogotá and on August 9, 1919 made the first flight ever over the capital city. After eleven months of flying in Colombia, Martin returned to the U.S. to pick up a new Curtiss “Oriole”. While in the United States, Martin organized the Campania Bogotana de Aviacion. Upon his return to Colombia, he opened a Curtiss Flying School. Martin remained in South America for some time where he was credited with laying the very early foundation of aerial service in that part of the world.

John P. “Jack” Reeder, Hampton, Virginia
Inducted in 2005, John P. “Jack” Reeder began his aviation career in the 1930s at the University of Michigan. Upon graduation in 1938, he went to work for the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA) at the Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory, where he was assigned to the Full-Scale Wind Tunnel staff. In 1939, he received his CAA Private Pilot License. In August 1942 Jack was recommended for in-house flight training, and then transferred to the Flight Operations Branch where he flew and conducted tests on many of the latest Navy and Army fighters and bombers, and other NACA modified airplanes. In 1944, Jack became NACA’s first helicopter test pilot. Jack is best known for his pioneering work in establishing basic flying qualities requirements for helicopters and later V/STOL vehicles. In 1962 he was invited to England to fly and evaluate the forerunner of the Harrier jet VTOL fighter under the NATO Mutual Weapons Development Program. In 1964 he was selected to a joint German, U.K., and U.S. team to evaluate the P-1127 Kestrel. During his 42 years of service, including 38 years on flight status, Jack flew 235 different types of aircraft. Jack authored or co-authored 78 NACA/NASA Technical Reports. He received many honors and awards for his test piloting accomplishments and leadership.

Joseph Mathews Mathias, Jr., Windsor, Virginia
Inducted in 2005, Joseph Mathias began his flying career in May 1939 and received his private certificate in 1941, just before graduating from Maury High School. In 1942 he enlisted in the Reserves and in 1943 earned his flight instructor certificate and began instructing for Woody Edmondson in Lynchburg, Virginia. He was activated into the Army Air Corps in 1944 and entered instructor training at Brooks Field, Texas. On March 24, 1945 he participated in Operation Varsity, flying across the Rhine River in Germany in a CG-4A towed by a C-47. After WWII, Joe flew for Norfolk-Cape Charles Airlines and was a corporate pilot for the Smith-Douglas Co., Norfolk Motor Co., and Southern Concrete. Joe was hired by Piedmont Airlines and during a 25-year career he flew the Douglas DC-3, Fairchild 27, Martin 404, YS-11 and Boeing 737. He has been an active member of the EAA since 1955 and was a co-founder of EAA Chapter 156 in 1957. He also co-founded Chapter 339 and is a Charter Member of Chapter 1377. In 1964 Joe co-founded the Tidewater Soaring Society and served one term as chairman of the Norfolk Air Safety Committee for the ALPA. Following his retirement from Piedmont in 1976, Joe and Al Jenkins founded Custom Antique Aeroplanes in Virginia Beach where they have restored many aircraft. Joe’s lifelong passion for aviation has helped promote civilian aviation in the Commonwealth and has greatly contributed to the development of others in aviation.
Virginia’s Avi on History
Is Calling……… YOU!

Join VAHS Today………

VAHS Membership Application
(Virginia Aeronautical Historical Society)

Please indicate shirt size: T-shirts – L - XL - XXL
Polo-shirts - M - L - XL - XXL

Add your spouse for $15 at any level

Thanks to the Science Museum of Virginia and the Virginia Aviation Museum, you can now view the Virginia Eagles Newsletter on the Web.

Visit us on the Web at vahs.smv.org
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Contact us by mail at:
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5701 Huntsman Road
Richmond International Airport, VA 23250-2416

e-mail us at vahs@smv.org
Telephone (804) 222-8690
**Approaches by Air Al**

**Tricolor**

At our last Board Executive Committee Meeting, those in attendance at the Virginia Aviation Museum were treated to a cabin and cockpit tour of Dolph Overton’s AT-4 Trimotor Ford (“City of Richmond”). This early transport (built in 1929) exemplifies the Golden Age of Flight. The snug cockpit is a study in simplicity with only the very basic instruments installed. To check on the status of the left and right engines, the pilot and co-pilot had to have very supple necks and eagle-like eyesight.

These gauges are located outside and aft of the cockpit on the sides of the respective engine mounts. This is the Trimotor that had been previously displayed (unassembled) at the VAM for years. The fuselage and wings were not together and were being worked on in the shop. Most notably, Admiral Witt Freeman, our past chairman, did a lot of detail work on this aircraft. It is now restored meticulously and is available for your viewing pleasure at the Museum. I hope that you will find, at another spot in this issue, a picture that shows our appreciation of this new exhibit. If you are so fortunate to get a cockpit tour, you will see that ground steering was accomplished with a Johnson Bar – this was a new experience for me.

**Technically Advanced Aircraft (TAA)**

Our organization, by virtue of its charter and mission, is focused largely on the past, preserving history, airplanes and artifacts of the Golden Age of Flight and this is as it should be. A perfect example is the Trimotor Ford now on exhibit. Some of our board members (this writer included) are from older eras of flight. While I can not claim to be from the Golden Age, most aviators in my age group grew up flying with round instruments, a minimum of electronic contact with the ground bound and little current information on weather and other airborne traffic. Now, however, by way of personal experience, I report to you from a new aviation world. This new aviation world contrasts greatly with the Golden Age of the AT-4 and Johnson Bars. A friend and I, during November 2005, picked up a new Cessna 172SP in Independence, Kansas at the Cessna Aircraft factory. Not only was this the first new airplane I had ever flown, it is the only one I had ever flown that has what is commonly referred to as the “glass cockpit.” It is equipped with the NAV III Avionics Package which includes the Garmin G1000 Integrated Avionics System. I had previously had an introduction to GPS through a hand-held Garmin 90. This cigarette lighter plug-in device, about the size of a cell phone, had been an eye opener for me for the last ten (10) years. It is, however, so archaic now, in this fast changing field, that it is no longer updated. At the Cessna factory I was treated to a concentrated course in the G1000 System which was hampered somewhat by sideways snow and wind gusts at 48 knots. Frankly, I told the instructor that since there were no mountains to make it bumpy, the wind was down the runway and the snow was being blown off to Oklahoma, it should not be a problem. He was not amused. Nevertheless, by flying at night (and a little bit longer than the syllabus allowed), I was able to get
to the point where I knew most of the buttons to push and almost all of what needed to be twisted, toggled and menued in order to display the large amount of information that would appear on the two flat screens (a Primary Flight Display and a Multi-Function Display). I am now the holder of a Certificate of Attendance for the FAA/Industry Standards TAA transition course. Between these two screens, all of the engine instruments, the fuel state, the attitude of the aircraft, localizers, glide slopes, position over the ground, current weather, and location of other aircraft, is depicted. There is even an XM radio system that allowed my friend and me to listen to 60s music on the two hop, seven plus hours, IFR direct flight back by way of Bowling Green, Kentucky to the Chesterfield County Airport. I must have learned enough: we did not die. I also heard the term “cursor” used in an airplane, for the first time, not in reference to the colorful word usage of a pilot who had just discovered a dead battery. We delivered the aircraft to Chesterfield where it will be placed in a Flight School for use by students.

Of course, the normal flight controls are all the same. The challenge was to learn how to fly the airplane using the autopilot. That may sound strange. But the inter relationship between the autopilot and the two flight displays was a conceptual barrier for someone who did not grow up playing video games or using computers. One of the most useful navigational tools was a punched up window on the Multi-Function Display which, in real time, depicts the actual winds aloft acting on the airplane, along with true air speed, ground speed, and the wind direction. This display allows the pilot to climb or descend to find the absolutely best conditions for the planned route. This ability turned out to be a great feature because out of Bowling Green at 5,000 feet, we were only making 90 knots. I was able to climb to 9,000 feet and produce an occasional spurt up to 140 knots. We simply had to engage this window and watch the numbers improve as we climbed. During these seven plus hours of flight, I only handled the controls for maybe twenty minutes—largely on take off and landing. For all of you corporate pilots out there, and others who have experienced this, it may be old hat. To me, this was like a miracle. It was like flying into a cloud with Lucky Lindy and the Spirit of St. Louis and exiting on the other side with Han Solo hyper spacing the Millennium Falcon.

So, I commend to you the experience of taking a flight in such an airplane. But you will find that when you go back to your old ride it will look pretty shabby.

**Hall of Fame**

There will be a write-up in this issue on this event, so, I won’t give you a detailed description. I can only tell you that each year it amazes me that our staff, headed by Mike Boehme and principally fueled by the energy of Jen Melton, puts together a great celebration of Virginia aviation talent. This year was no exception with a group which numbered 180 in attendance. We were particularly lucky to have Don Murray as the program narrator to celebrate the four honorees. For those in the Richmond area it was especially meaningful that Commander Paul Galanti (USN Retired) was among this group. Even more pertinent to the collection of the Virginia Aviation Museum, it will shortly have an A-4 Skyhawk in Paul’s Squadron colors and markings (as of the day he was shot down over North Vietnam) displayed at the Virginia Aviation Museum after the process of rejuvenation and restoration is completed. Look for that coming up.

**April Fool’s Day**

On the 1st of April, 2006, the VAHS will again celebrate its mission and have a little fun at its Annual Auction and Meeting. At our last gathering we had the extraordinary privilege of being the beneficiaries of substantial gifts from Phoenix Aviation Managers, USI Insurance Services and from our former chairman and his wife, Neil and Sara Belle November. There were many others who contributed to make that event both pleasurable and profitable for the VAHS. We raised over $6,000 and this year promises to be an equally great event. It is scheduled a little earlier in the year than normal in order to avoid various conflicts with NASCAR runnings and other competing events. Please put it on your calendar. Just as importantly,
Are you ready for a New Year? Of course it comes whether we are ready or not, but I think 2006 is going to be exciting! General Aviation appears to be on a positive roll and the interest seems to be strong for the aviation museums. I believe the momentum is growing and it will be like a tailwind for the VAHS.

Congratulations to our new inductees into the Hall of Fame. The November ceremony was a full house and a very special night indeed. Paul Galanti and Knox Martin will be further recognized this Spring. Paul with the dedication of the A-4 at VAM and Knox will be featured in a publication by Fork Union Military Academy as the first graduate to earn his wings.

We owe many thanks to Norm Crabill for so many contributions of time and money. He continues to devote many hours of support each month to the VAHS, but has asked to step down as chairman of the Historical Marker Committee and reduce his time spent on the newsletter. Norm is committed to finish his work on the Va. Tech and Yorktown markers which will most likely take until early summer.

We need your help in finding the right person for the marker committee. Please contact me if you are interested or have any suggestions. It may be someone who is on another committee and would like to make a change, so put your thinking caps on. We are fortunate that Bill Schultz is going to take over the mystery airplane contest and Linda Burdette has volunteered to help with articles for the newsletter.

Van’s Vectors

Remember to send in your Renewals!

Add your spouse for only $15 more at each level!

Van Crosby
VAHS President
Meet the Board of Directors

Tom Woodburn, Vice Chairman

Tom Woodburn, Vice Chairman of the VAHS Board of Directors, has been a Society member since 1978. A life member of the Society, he has held several officer positions and has served on the Board of Directors since 1995.

Tom is a native of Richmond, Virginia and lives in Glen Allen with his wife Jane, daughter Anna and son Thomas, who attends Christopher Newport University.

A pilot by trade, Tom has been flying since 1973. Currently employed by American Airlines as a Captain flying B737-800s, he wanders about North, Central and near South America and the Caribbean Sea in a never ending search for the perfect layover. Prior to AAL Tom flew for Henson Airlines and several small freight airlines, including one operating DC-3s in the US, Canada and Mexico. He also worked as a flight instructor for Aero Industries on Byrd Field. Tom began his professional career in 1977 at Barnstormer’s Airshows, Inc. as a hangar floor sweeper, Stearman oil changer and balloon flunky, before eventually being promoted to banner tower, skydiver hauler and Stearman driver.

When not hauling passengers in the Boeing, Tom flies his 1946 Luscombe model 8A that he has owned since 1982. He also owns a 1935 WACO model YOC custom cabin currently under rebuild.

Calendar of Events

**VAHS Annual Spring Get-together**
April 1, 5 p.m.
VAHS Annual Spring Get-together and auction. Hors d’oeuvres and cocktails. For reservations call Jen Melton (804) 222-8690 or see a Board Member to purchase tickets. $15 per person.

**Festival of Wings**
Date TBA, 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.
Sponsored by the Virginia Aviation Foundation. A salute to our aviators who have served. Cocktails, BBQ, country music band. There will be a recognition ceremony for Paul Galanti and the A4-C Skyhawk. Tickets are $50 per person. Reservations are required. To make your reservation, call Pamela Hall, (804) 833-2677.

Committee Reports

**Historical Marker Committee Report**
Norm Crabill, Chair

The text for the historical marker for the airport at Virginia Tech was approved at the December 7 meeting of the Board of Historic Resources, after review and approval by Virginia Tech, the Virginia Department of Aviation and the VAHS Historical Marker Committee. As soon as the exact site on the airport has been worked out between the Airport Authority, VDOT, and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, production of the marker will begin by the contractor. A dedication ceremony is planned six months after that. The marker for the Yorktown Flying Field is being further researched and approval is expected at the next meeting of the Board.

I will no longer be chair of this committee after these two markers are approved, and the Society is looking for someone to fill this position. All those historically knowledgeable aspirants please petition Al Orgain, Board Chairman. The successful candidate can count on becoming involved with Virginia Aviation History in a very real way, and will meet many, many others with similar interests.
Virginia Aeronautical Historical Society

Fourth Annual Auction and Society Social

Saturday, April 1, 2006
5:00-9:00 p.m.
Virginia Aviation Museum

Last years’ Auction Items Included:
Golf outings
T-28 and Hot Air Balloon Rides
Dinner at Tobacco Company and Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse
1903 Wright Flyer Replica Wing Rib
Kitty Hawk Week at the Beach
and Many, Many More!

Lots of Door Prizes!

Tickets are $15.00

Call Jennifer Melton at (804) 222-8690 or email her at vahs@smv.org to purchase tickets or donate items.
I have had the pleasure for the past few years, with my wife, to attend the Virginia Aviation Hall of Fame Induction Ceremonies! This is a time when aviation aficionados can rub elbows with the Greats of Virginia’s Aviation Stellar Performers who have made their respective professional marks in Virginia’s aviation history!

This 2005 event was once again an evening to remember! Annually, in early November, four Virginians are honored by being inducted into this august fraternity. An early social, some of us used to call it “Happy Hour” in our youth, is held for about an hour so that all attendees can smooze with their friends and the honorees amidst the grandeur of the aircraft of the Golden Age of Flight. These aircraft are professionally displayed at the Virginia Aviation Museum, collocated appropriately, at the Richmond International Airport! At an appropriate time the host will request those in attendance to make their way to their respective tables for dinner after which the Chairman and President of the Virginia Aeronautical Historical Society offer their opening remarks.

The four individuals honored this year were Paul E. Galanti, William Knox Martin, Joseph M. Mathias, JR., and John P. “Jack” Reeder. I was especially excited about this year’s event when I heard that a fellow Retired U.S. Naval Aviator whom I have known for several years and has tested the air with me on a few occasions had been nominated for induction. You bet I was excited! I knew one of these guys personally!

Don Murray, a Virginia radio personality, did the honors of narrating each inductee’s accomplishments, while on the BIG screen, so all could see, pictorial evidence was shown of their individual historical aviation achievements! When one has the opportunity to witness these outstanding individuals aviation accomplishments it is indeed an honor to be in attendance!

NEXT YEAR, do yourself a favor and attend! I know that many of you would like to be there, but just can’t get up and get out in the evening! The event is usually over by about 9 PM except for those of us who just like being in this Aviation Museum, then it lasts a little longer! The VAHS personalities and Virginia Aviation Museum Staff work long hours to put this show on and it is truly appreciated!

I don’t know the actually attendance figures this year, but if you put eight at a table and the open part between the displayed airplanes are full of fine looking people, then we have a bunch of folks having a good time!

I hope to see you all there next November!!
Mark your calendar for April 1st!!

The Virginia Aeronautical Historical Society will hold its Spring get together including your 4th annual fund raising Auction and short annual meeting on Saturday evening April 1, 2006 at the Virginia Aviation Museum. We need your help and support to make this year’s auction bigger and better than ever. The auction is a great time to socialize with other aviation enthusiasts. Plan to bring a friend for some friendly bidding competition.

We are off to a great start with some fabulous items up for bid. However, your help is needed in soliciting or providing donations for the auction. Aviation related items are great but not necessary. Last year we raised over $6,000.00 to help support the VAHS. This year with the help of your imagination and enthusiasm, we can raise even more money to support our Historical Society in its mission to preserve Virginia’s rich aviation history.

Contacts for auction donations or questions are:

Scott Gross: j3cub@cox.net
David Tyndall: wacoc8@aol.com
Charlie Williams: cw4cjh2@aol.com
Tom Woodburn: wacoc5@comcast.net

If you prefer, you may leave a message at the VAHS office 804-222-8690. Also give us a call if you need help transporting a donated item. We request that all donated items be at the museum by March 23, 2006. All donations are tax deductible. Receipts will be provided.

We are elated to announce, after some arm-twisting and threats of bodily harm, FAST TONGUE AL has once again agreed to be our auctioneer. He is a sight to behold so come on out and have some fun.

Thank you for supporting The Virginia Aeronautical Historical Society.
Ray Tyson can’t sit still, unless he’s in the left front seat of his beloved 1946 Cessna 140 NC77341. But he did sit still at the computer long enough to describe the recent “Idiotic Odyssey” he and Jack Pettigrew made in pursuit of the prize offered by Randy Burdette of the Virginia Department of Aviation, and that story, with his Odyssey route map and a few of the pictures they took at each site, is told herein. It must have been fun, ‘cause each succeeding place or person they met became their “favorite”!

Charlie Kulp’s amazing flying antics are well known to us, but his life story is just as amazing and Linda Burdette has captured it in her second article for us. Just as amazing to me, Linda has agreed to take over the fun of compiling, editing and sometimes writing the stories for this feature in the newsletter. Her enthusiastic agreement to do this eased my trauma in finding my replacement after these seven years on the job. Thanks Linda.

Must Reads:

“Aviation in Hampton Roads” by Patrick Evans-Hylton, Arcadia Publishing 2005. This small volume covers a lot of Hampton Roads aviation history we didn’t get to cover in our own “Virginia Airports”.

“Aviatrix” - an autobiography of Elinor Smith, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1981. She was voted one of the two “Best Pilots” in the US in 1930 by the American Society for the Promotion of Aviation. The other one was Jimmy Doolittle.

“First Man” - the biography of Neil Armstrong, first man on the Moon, by Jim Hansen, who wrote the bio of Fred Weick and nominated him to our Hall of Fame in 2001.

And to all of you patient readers and helpful writers, and masters of the computer who have so generously given of your time and inspiration to make this feature what it is, my thanks.

- 30
Ray Tyson and Jack Pettigrew’s
Idiotic Odyssey
Or
The $2000 Pursuit of $200 Jackets

Day 1
August 2, 2005
2 Airports

Fellow Cessna 140 owner Jack Pettigrew and I decided upon hearing about the Ambassador Program that we would love to visit all 67 airports and the people that man them, since both are among our favorite things. After attending the kick-off on July 18th at the Virginia Aviation Museum we were so anxious to get started that we probably jumped the gun a little as we waited at the counter at Hanover Airport on August 2nd, while one of our favorite airport front desk people, Jenna, opened the package and put the first stamp in our passports.

We then fired up our two 1946 Cessna 140s and headed for Shannon Airport and one of our favorite airport owner and managers, Billie Toombs. She was up to speed on the program and ready with EZFs stamp and a warm welcome.

Day 2
August 3, 2005
8 Airports

Next day we launched early into the haze and heat and made our first stop at Wakefield where Sandy, one of our “new favorite airport people” was ready with AKQs stamp and friendly conversation. Second stop, Hampton Roads Airport, home of one of our favorite avionics shops, Jim Miller Bay Avionics. Here I left my ailing transponder for him to lay healing hands upon. Jack meanwhile located PVGs stamp in operations, next to one of our “favorite on-airport restaurants”. Good as it is, it was too early for lunch so we decided to push on to Chesapeake Airport, where we were met by one of our favorite airport managers, Joe Love and the staff of one of our favorite FBOs, John Beaulieu’s Horizon Aviation, who made us welcome. Somehow the stamp had not made it into their kit, but Joe came forth with an official Chesapeake Airport authority seal. Most official looking, so we hope it passes muster. Next stop, Suffolk, and another of our favorite on-airport restaurants, where we had lunch and visited the Fighter Factory, home of more military aircraft than some countries have. They had acquired a beautiful P-51 since our last visit, which incidentally is one of our favorite airplanes. The front desk had just received the Ambassador Kit, which we by now could identify by the carton. We helped with the unpacking and got our SFQ stamp before launching for Franklin Airport where we once again aided the very helpful attendant, who quickly became one of our favorites, unpack the kit and...
along with a pleasant visit got our FKN stamp. A call to Emporia-Greenville revealed a very personable attendant named Bob, who was filling in for the day and had no information on the program. We surmised the kit went to the Airport Commission office on Main Street, something we would encounter several times over the next days. Jack and I had devised a plan for unattended airports which we put into play here. We keep with us an August 3rd Richmond newspaper, which we hold standing in front of the airport name or identifying building, while we take each other’s picture. (Pioneering can be a challenge.) In this case Bob signed our passport and showed us his surgical scars and became one of our new favorite airport characters.

Next stop Lawrenceville-Brunswick, where a very lovely lady who was sitting in for her brother made us welcome and added LVL to our passport and became a new “one of our favorite airport people”.

Final stop of the day was Mecklenburg-Brunswick, where we were sorry to hear that one of our favorite monthly fly-in breakfasts was no more. A victim of hot summer haze, I suspect. I can still smell that bacon on a cold winter Saturday, though. The airport attendant, another new favorite, fueled my 140 and added AVC to our book. He is a “come here” from Pennsylvania and seemed to be enjoying the quiet beauty of south side Virginia.

A final leg home left us time to reflect on, among other things, what a wonderful country we live in. For two retired dudes, in two 59-year-old airplanes, to be able to experience a day like today, meeting really nice people, viewing the beauty of the land from low and slow and having great airports to use makes us want to do one of our favorite things tomorrow, go airport hopping.

Day 3
August 4, 2005
9 Airports

So we did – 9:30 found us bound for Lake Anna Airport, which we knew to be unattended, but whose 25 ft. wide runway is one of our favorite skinny airports. The airport is in good condition and is located near beautiful Lake Anna. A photo of us, our newspaper and Runway 26 (the 26 takes up the entire width of the runway) and we were on the way to Louisa where one of our favorite airport managers, Dawn Pickard was ready with a warm greeting and an LKU stamp for the passports. Dawn had returned from Las Vegas only hours before but was her usual sunny self. Tearing ourselves away we headed for one of our favorite tower controlled airports, Charlottesville, where the friendly controller let us perform our flight of two formation landing (only on wide runways). One of our favorite FBOs Piedmont-Hawthorne had the unopened kit so we again identified the carton, helped unpack and got our CHO stamp. Our flight of two departed for Gordonsville, one of our favorite unattended (mostly) airports. GVE is a very old airport that has a neat old hangar with the name and elevation in fading paint which served as backdrop for our proof of visit photo. While there a Luscombe and Aeronca Champ shot touch and goes. It could have been 1946 there for a little while. I remember the 1960s when Gordon Whitmore had an active operation there; shop, instruction, rental, charter and he did it all, was an icon in his day, and lived to retire to Florida. Next stop Orange, one of our favorite airports featuring falling
bodies (via parachute). Good things are underway there, full length taxi-way, new hangars, ramp, etc. Alas no one had any info on the Ambassador Program; however a young man located a stamp with Orange county Airport on it, thereby becoming one of our favorite airport people. Next stop Culpeper, one of our favorite growing airports, with about 100 hangars and out of the DC ADIZ. The friendly airport staff was ready with the CJR stamp for a quick turn and on to Warrenton-Fauquier another of our favorite growing airports, new taxiway ramps, etc., and out of the ADIZ. A very hot walk across new ramp found more friendly airport staff up to speed on the program and ready with the W-66 stamp. Our next stop, Hartwood, one of our favorite special use airports, (more falling bodies), prompted us to heed the “Suggestion for Pilots” section in the brochure concerning runway length, etc. Density altitude being a factor we chose the 2470 foot runway (by 35 feet). We found no activity on this hot hazy Thursday, so we did our photo routine and considered our best route of escape. 2470 is plenty for our 140s but we have gotten used to looking down 5000+ feet of runway.

Our suggestion for this stop is to pick your day and load. Last stop of the day was our favorite “new” airport, Stafford County. A long time in planning, it is located alongside I-95 just south of the DC ADIZ and is destined to become very busy as facilities are added. We found a friendly staff who greatly admired our vintage Cessnas thereby becoming some of our “new favorite airport people.” The short ride back to Hanover County paralleled I-95 and made us very grateful to be viewing the crawling traffic from our lofty (2000 ft.) perch.

Day 4
August 5, 2005
1 Airport

We decided to lay off a few days as the temperature continued to climb into the high 90s. However as luck would have it, on Friday the 5th I needed to fly into my favorite “close to my river place” Hummel Airport. Since this is my second home, I have many favorites there: Oscar, Leo, Moe, Mike and Denise among them. Again the kit went to the county offices; however, the county gas guy called them and they delivered the kit while I was doing my chores. They were quickly added to my favorite airport people list. This put me one stamp up on Jack, but knowing him from 140 trips to Texas, New York and Florida, this won’t last long. We await with much anticipation our next flying day. (My one-up lasted 48 hours as Jack snuck in a quick flight to Hummel on Sunday).

Day 5
August 8, 2005
2 Airports

Monday the 8th found Jack and I joining my old business associate Van Crosby in the Arrow he flies to conduct his business, which on this day included both Manassas and Leesburg. I have flown my 140 into Manassas since the ADIZ and found no problem, however my transponder lay unhealed in Hampton Roads. Manassas, being my favorite tower controlled General Aviation only airport, is always a pleasure to visit, and see old friends from my working days. After a little confusion about who had “the stamp” on the east side we got our HEF stamp, had a nice visit and departed, again IFR, to Leesburg. I was at the Leesburg Airport dedication and it has always been one of my favorites, probably partly because I remember the “old” airport’s dust and mud, never in-between. The new terminal is beautiful and the counter folks had the JYO stamp and added number 22 to our passbooks. What fun.
Day 6  
August 12th  
8 Airports

August 12th found me back in town and ready for some more hot hazy touring. At 10 a.m. we were airborne for Tappahannock, our favorite airport with a water tank. There were two very friendly gentlemen who filled us in on the new airport to be built soon. We will miss the water tank. Passports stamped, we departed for West Point’s Middle Peninsula Airport, where one of our favorite airport managers, Jim Gaylord, holds forth in their new (air conditioned) terminal. The combination of nice people, good conversation and above mentioned air conditioning made it difficult to leave. However with passport stamped and exit visa granted, (Jim was busy) we headed for New Kent, home of one of our favorite airport managers, Bill Kelly. Since this is close to home and one of our “Let’s see what’s going on at New Kent” stops, and with passports in order we were soon airborne for Dinwiddie County, home of one of our favorite fly-ins, the State EAA affair set for October 2nd and 3rd. Another stamp and another departure, this time to Blackstone AAF being careful to stay clear of the restricted area, making sure the military was not using the facility and getting no response on UNICOM (or phone), we chose Runway 1. On short final, I observed very faint yellow Xs on the runway so executed a go around to right base to 22, a “big” concrete runway. Taxiing to some WWII era buildings past a big old hangar with many broken windows we shut down and located a gentleman who informed us we were on the “military” side of the field. A 50 ft. walk put us on the “civilian” side and sure enough a much more modern brick building facing another ramp was open and occupied by a nice young man who, believe it or not, was unpacking the Ambassador Kit. Five minutes either way and this would have been a photo stop. Instead he became a new favorite airport person, stamped our passport and informed us the Xs were from some project of years ago, but the black paint had worn off. We couldn’t resist getting our photo in front of the tower however. Cool. Next stop Lunenburg County, one of my favorite unoccupied airports. The nice terminal building, which I had never found unlocked on previous visits, was in fact open, clean, cool and had the Ambassador Kit and stamp laid out on the flight planning desk. Since not a single airplane is based there, I call it unoccupied but not unattended since someone must open and close the terminal. If you are looking for a beautiful airport with lots of grass and shade to have a picnic on a cool fall day, this would be it. Self-stamped we made the short flight to Crewe, home of my favorite aircraft tire recapper, Bill Wilkerson. The terminal was open but no one around. A call to the number posted quickly brought the airport manager to the airport with the Ambassador Kit and W-81 stamp, thereby elevating him to one of our favorite airport managers. Old friend Tom Trump showed up as did Bill Wilkerson who departed in his beautiful Baron. Full of honor system snacks and cold drinks we took our leave for our favorite Richmond airport with a restaurant, Chesterfield County. We have many friends at FCI and were greeted this time by our genial English friend, Mike Jewel, CFI, etc., etc., and alumni of Hanover County Airport. This completes a day with eight new stamps when would have bet on at least two photo ops. All that was left was a hop over Richmond to OFP, put ‘em in the hangar and make Happy Hour. Can it get better?
Day 7  
August 14, 2005  
3 Airports

Sunday, August 14th, another hot hazy day, but what better thing to do than go flying? Jack finished his church duties and arrived for take-off by 1:30. This was to be a short day to re-visit some “local stops”. First stop Newport News/Williamsburg, (forever in my mind to be Patrick Henry), with Jack leading my “transponder-less ship” flight of two. Even with two FBOs we didn’t locate one who had any knowledge of the Ambassador Program. Rick Aviation staff, one of our new favorites, made a great effort including a ride to the airline terminal information booth. No luck, we had to settle for signatures in our passports. Next stop, one of our long time favorites, Jean and Larry Waltrip’s Williamsburg-Jamestown Airport, and long time favorite on airport restaurant, Charleys. Their stamp was well used and added to our passport, as we overate as usual. A great visit and inspection of a Taylorcraft undergoing restoration to “like new”. Jack once owned one that he flew to California and back, as he has his 140. We left for Richmond International into the late afternoon haze. This is our favorite airport with a museum on it. This was a short flight which the tower did its best to prolong as it practiced vectoring our flight as I once again followed Jack. Old favorite FBO, Aero Industries Sunday counterman located RIC’s stamp and sent us on the way, all 13.5 NM of it, to Hanover and home for the day.

3 Museums  
August 16, 2005

Our next venture out was by Malibu, Chevrolet that is. Tuesday the 16th was an IFR day so we headed for the Tidewater and a museum(s) visit. First stop was the Virginia Air & Space Center. Jack and flying buddy Roy Nichols had not been there before so I acted as informal guide. Stamped and hunger chased by lunch on the waterfront, we set out to find the Airpower Museum, a collection of jet fighters in an outside setting. They were in much better condition than on my last visit years ago. The very nice staff had to look hard for their stamp, but didn’t give up until it was located and we departed after an enjoyable visit. We decided to stop by Newport News Airport to check on the status of the stamp. Rick Aviation had received it and we got the PHF stamp over their signatures. Happy that we had made the effort we departed for the Fort Eustis Transportation Museum. Easy to locate, a little harder to access. Security required us to open all doors, trunk and hood, exit the car and show photo IDs. No real problem as everyone was very courteous and we were soon in the main building where a nice lady searched down the stamp in an inner office and our fourth museum was in the book. There were L-19s, helicopters and some really strange vehicles from Army transportation’s past. Outside are other army aircraft and copters under an open sided building. We beat the p.m. traffic up I-64 and put this in the book as a good and fun day.

Day 8  
August 18th  
3 Airports

I received word that my transponder had been healed so we set out in the 140s Thursday the 18th to retrieve it. Knowing we had this trip to make we planned on visiting Norfolk International to check the transponder. I
got to lead, it worked, we got to land as a flight of two and visit one of our favorite FBO chains, Piedmont-Hawthorne, where we got our ORF stamp and admired all the big iron on the ramp. We had two more airports in Eastern Virginia to visit, Accomack County and Tangier Island. Norfolk departure gave us straight out on course so we got to admire the Bay Bridge Tunnel and the ship traffic of Hampton Roads on the best day we have flown in weeks. Our favorite Eastern Shore airport soon came into view and as we landed an Arrow held on the midfield taxiway where we joined him so a Baron on a straight in would not have to break off. Soon all four of us jockeyed on the runway so we could go our respective ways. More traffic than we saw at ORF, and a welcome sight. A friendly counter guy stamped our passport in the beautiful terminal which is a unique structure. There were brochures for local restaurants but on this day we were looking for a Tangier Island crab cake. We soon departed for our favorite Virginia Island airport in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay. No one was on duty but the building was open and the stamp in sight as well as a sign requesting visiting pilots to leave the $5 landing fee on the desk. This we were happy to do, since this airport provides access to what Jack described as the best crab cake he had ever eaten. If you haven’t been there you should go. It’s an off-the-beaten-track spot that offers a little something different. Sometimes PAX River approach can let you depart west through the restricted area bombing range but not today. This is where a moving map GPS is nice as you can proceed down the bay until south OFR6609, turn west and, in our case, head for home.

Day 9  
August 22, 2005  
11 Airports

We were occupied with more mundane pursuits until the 22nd, which turned out to be by far the best weather day in a month. 8:30 a.m. Monday we headed for Chase City where I was prepared to do a photo proof of visit. Instead we encountered a very down to earth lady in the airport office that wasn’t. Instead she ran the office for a trucking company out of the building and had “the stamp” thereby becoming another of our favorite airport characters. We departed for the short flight to Clarksville’s Marks Municipal, again a nice airport but unattended. The big tobacco warehouse on the end of the runway somehow gives the illusion of landing up hill. All we could do was take photos of the sign proclaiming Clarkesville as the only Virginia town on a lake. We took the sign’s word for it and added Clarkesville as our favorite town on a lake. Another short but beautiful flight found us on South Boston’s William Tuck Airport. Unfortunately we were the only people to be found on the airport. Building open, but no sign of the Ambassador Program. A cell phone call to the “number to call” resulted in the phone at my elbow ringing. Jack answered it but was of absolutely no help. Another photo, my printing bill mounts. We did add their grass runway to our list of favorite grass runways before we departed for Danville. Mike Rembold, son of Paul Rembold, Virginia Aviation Hall of Famer, runs General Aviation, a long time FBO there. Even though we didn’t buy anything, they gladly loaned us a crew car to go to a very nice lunch at a nearby restaurant, thereby being added to our favorite FBO list. Next stop Martinsville’s Blue Ridge Airport, where we had planned to eat before we found the restaurant is closed on Mondays. No matter, we were met by two very helpful airport personnel, one of whom owned a Cessna 120. They helped us with refueling and added the MTV stamp to our passports and became two of our favorite airport good guys. More beautiful flying to Joe Burgess’s Smith Mountain Lake Airport. Joe and I go back many years to when he employed my son on weekends when he attended Ferrum College 20+ years ago. Joe showed us a beautiful condo right on the ramp that is available for short term rental. A great set up, so we added this to our favorite condo on an Airport/Lake. Very short list. Passport stamped and ready for some more great flying, we headed for Virginia Aviation Hall of Famer Rucker Tibbs’ New London Airport. Rucker ranks high on my all-time favorite aviation people list and you’ve got to visit New London to see what a down-home airport is all about. It’s like a time warp to leave New London and arrive moments later at tower controlled Lynchburg Regional, home of another favorite FBO, Jim Lampman’s Virginia Aviation. We go back through many years
of business relations. Always a pleasure. The next and shortest of our flights today put us on downwind for the one-way runway 28 at Falwell Airport. This is our favorite airport with a hill. We were fortunate to find Virginia Aviation Hall of Famer Lawrence Falwell and his son Jimmy in the office and have them stamp our passports. I also go back many years with Falwell Aviation and Calvin and Lawrence are our favorite brother team in the Hall of Fame. We departed down the hill (fun) on the way to Brookneal/Campbell County, another nice airport, unoccupied and unattended and no based aircraft. What a great place to shoot landings. We did our photo trick and headed for an old favorite stop, Farmville. Tommy and Kim Grimes’ Heart of Virginia Aviation runs not only Farmville but Martinsville and our home field, Hanover County. Definitely among our favorite FBO owners. Passport stamped all that was left was the fifty mile flight to OFP for our 12th landing of the day. I even managed a couple of good ones. Even though Jack made the short turn off at Brookneal and I didn’t, nothing could detract from such a great day of flying, visiting and the great scenery from low and slow.

Day 10
August 25, 2005
7 Airports

We wanted a pretty weather day for our Shenandoah Valley visits and we got in on Thursday the 25th. 8:30 found us airborne to Winchester, our favorite northernmost Virginia airport. It is also run by a favorite airport manager, “Renny” Manuel, who was honored at the Aviation Conference earlier this month as “Airport Manager of the Year”. Renny gave us a Winchester Airport cap on condition we wear it when visiting another Valley airport and convey a message. A great way to start the day’s visits. Next stop, Front Royal and Reggie Cassag of Cass Aviation. Reggie remembered me somewhat pleasantly from my salesman days, thereby insuring his place on our favorite FBO list. The terminal lobby is a mini museum and worth a visit. Folks were launching a sailplane to enjoy their version of fun flying as we departed for Luray, our favorite airport near caverns. A new parking ramp is just being completed, a needed improvement, and the friendly attendant stamped our passport. It being too early to enjoy their airport shuttle to lunch, we departed for New Market, a favorite airport with a pilot shop. Unfortunately no one was home and the doors were locked. The only instruction was “In Case of Emergency Dial 911”. Even the need for a passport stamp did not seem to justify that, so we did our photo trick with August 2nd newspaper, looked longingly through the window at the goodies on the shelves inside and departed for Bridgewater Airport, an old favorite “Airport near a son’s college”. My oldest graduated from Bridgewater in the early 70s. Karl Stoltzfus’s operation is something to behold, as is his three-story headquarters building. In the lobby is a coffee table made from a radial engine that once powered one of his dad’s crop sprayers. Neat stuff.

By now hunger was a factor, as well as the need to deliver Renny’s message to Greg Campbell, manager of Shenandoah Valley Airport. A Cirrus landing ahead of us asked if the restaurant was open and was informed it was “Double Cheeseburger Day”. Music to a pilot’s ears. Greg, a favorite airport manager, was in a meeting so I had to deliver Renny’s message in writing. Her instructions were to wear the caps and inform Greg that we had started at the top and were working our way down. We are certain she meant the Shenandoah Valley. Even though we were only the messengers, we were pretty sure we wouldn’t be getting a Shenandoah Valley Airport cap so we, full of double cheeseburgers, headed for Eagle’s Nest, our favorite public use airport fly-in community. There are beautiful homes overlooking the runway and had we not just eaten we could have used their crew car to visit a local restaurant, something we have done in the past. A nice visit but a hasty retreat was in order since we were blocking the gas pumps and a just-landed Skylane needed fuel. We got a quick exit visa to go with our stamp and climbed out toward the Blue Ridge Mountains and a smooth ride in to ever-increasing visibility. A great way to end another fly-for-fun day.
Day 11
September 2, 2005
2 Airports

After being grounded for about a week by real world obligations, we planned a two airport day before the Labor Day weekend got underway. Our first destination was our favorite “highest airport east of the Mississippi River”, Ingalls Field at Hot Springs, elevation 3792 feet. A beautiful flight into a beautiful location, even though the haze made visibility a little less than hoped for. Airport manager Rebecca Mann made us welcome although she was facing a broken water line problem, which rendered certain facilities inoperative. She and her equally friendly lineman, who refueled us, told of a bear sighting on the taxiway earlier in the morning. They were definitely added to our list of favorite airport people.

Jack led our flight of two through very thick haze on the short flight to Roanoke, our favorite airport with a star on the approach. Piedmont-Hawthorne FBO was quickly added to our favorite list when counterperson Rita arranged for a line service vehicle to take us to a local restaurant and later retrieve us. They were enthused about our 56 passport stamps, and made us feel welcome amid the corporate jets. A 1.3 hour ride home, again into unlimited visibility, was a treat and made us feel very fortunate indeed.

Day 12
September 9, 2005

On September 9th, we finally got good weather and our family obligations under control at the same time. We departed for Virginia Tech Airport, the western-most airport left in our odyssey. A beautiful flight and, even though it wasn’t a home game weekend, it was still a favorite college town airport. We spent some pleasant time with airport staff, got our passports stamped and departed for New River Valley, our favorite “once an airline airport”. I was present when it was dedicated in 1962, and it brought back memories of Piedmont Airlines and Steve Shelton who was the driving force behind the airport being built. Another pleasant visit, although no rental car was available to drive to Twin County Airport in Galax. The airport was closed for reconstruction and the manager not on site and off for the weekend. We settled for circling the field while I took photos of Jack’s 140 with closed runway in the background. It then became our favorite closed (for now) airport. We departed the area for Mountain Empire airport. We got our stamp but not much conversation at this stop. Still it was our favorite airport while we were on it. Next stop was Tazewell, forcing us to leave the beautiful New River Valley and I-81 behind for some real mountain flying. The airport is pretty and well kept and staffed by friendly
folk, one of which was from the Richmond area. He gave us advice on gas prices (all cheaper than the Richmond area) and, after a pleasant visit with our new favorite airport people, we again went mountain flying to Grundy, a 2258 foot airport, 2300 feet above sea level. The drop-offs at both ends are breathtaking and thousands of feet. The airport is unattended and phone calls non-productive so we resorted to our photo routine. This has to be our favorite airport on a tabletop. This makes Ingalls look like Dulles. As we departed a Jet Ranger flying up the valley was what looked like a thousand feet below the runway. Neat. Next stop, Lonesome Pine Airport in Wise, Virginia, our favorite airport with loaner bicycles with automatic transmissions. We took a short ride looking for Happy Hour material but came away empty-handed. We decided on fuel instead and the friendly attendant made some calls to our next stop, the new but unattended Lee County Airport. He had no more luck so we departed our favorite airport built on a strip mine and headed for Lee County. As we taxied out I had memories of a stagger-wing Beech I once took in trade from the Dodson Brothers on a new 1962 Cessna Skylane. I get heartburn remembering what I sold it for. Our next trip through the mountains took us over the closed Pennington Gap Airport (another 2200 ft. strip) and on to the new 5000 ft strip at Lee County. This quickly became our new favorite airport in the middle of nowhere. We had traveled from the self proclaimed “Center of the Universe”, Ashland, Virginia, to what appeared from the apron to be the exact center of nowhere. As we parked (plenty of room) a state trooper drove up, took one look at us and left. I guess we, with our tinker toy airplanes, were not a threat to blow up a coal mine. Again a photo deal with the August 2nd newspaper and it was decision time. Where to spend the night? Jack voted for Middlesboro, Kentucky because he had enjoyed an earlier visit and the P-38 Glacier Girl is based there. The afternoon haze was very thick, the terminal was unattended, there was no transportation available, and the county was dry. Glacier Girl was in her hangar but both of us had seen her before so I cast my vote to fly an hour to Virginia Highlands Airport at Abingdon where conditions were sure to be friendlier. Serves us right for leaving the Old Dominion for foreign soil. Besides, Virginia Highlands is our 65th and last airport we can fly into on this odyssey and we can celebrate in style there. The haze was better looking east as we skimmed over the Clinch Mountain Range and into Abingdon a little after 6 p.m. After tying down and inquiring about transportation, etc., the nicest thing happened. Local flight instructor, Susan Van Fleet was just finishing her last student and offered us a ride to a motel, which the counter man had already called for us. People do make the difference and they were added to our favorite airport people list. We had a great dinner in a restaurant within walking distance, topped off with an Italian ice cream in a shop half way back up the hill. A wonderful finish to a wonderful day-of-fun flying.

We have visited 65 airports in 39 days. The flight home Sunday the 10th featured low visibility but a smooth ride and the satisfaction of completing a really fun task. Jack and I have enjoyed each and every airport and all the people we met. We strongly believe this program can provide you a reason to do something different when you get the chance to do some fun flying. Visit all the airports in your home region, draw a circle on a chart and visit those airports, or get your credit cards out and aim for a flight jacket. Any way you choose to participate, you will enjoy meeting new people and airports. All that’s left for us is a drive to Reagan and Dulles. The drive to Northern Virginia will make us appreciate our 140s even more.
Ray and Jack's Aeronautical map showing the routes they took to complete their odyssey.

All photos courtesy of Ray Tyson.
Charlie Kulp: A Man Born After His Time
by Linda Burdette

The little yellow plane heads for the ground. The narrator in the tower cries “Pull back on the stick, Silas! Pull back!” Just in time, the plane’s nose begins to rise and as the plane slowly rises and does a graceful backward loop, the narrator screams “not that far back, Silas!” And the crowd at the Flying Circus Aerodrome in Bealeton goes wild. The newcomers in the crowd have just realized that Silas is not the simple bumbling farmer he appeared to be. At the end of the performance, the narrator introduces Charlie Kulp, one of the finest aerobatic pilots in the world. Today is Charlie’s 80th birthday and he’s celebrating it by doing the thing he enjoys most – flying and performing.

Charlie developed his love of aviation at an early age. Growing up in Spotsylvania County, Virginia, his family passed Shannon Airport whenever they went to town. This was the old Shannon Airport, founded after World War I by Sidney Shannon, Sr. The old Shannon Airport was located on a site near what is now the Fredericksburg Fairgrounds, about ½ mile NW of the current Shannon Airport. From the road, Charlie and his brother, Harry, could just see the windsock and the tops of the hangars. Once in a while they could actually see an airplane taking off or landing. However their father was not interested in flying and never stopped at the airport to let the boys visit. Not deterred in the least, both brothers eventually became airplane mechanics and flight instructors. Charlie relates that he finally convinced his mother to take one flight with him, but his father’s feet remained firmly on the ground his entire life.

In 1942 at age 16, Charlie became an apprentice mechanic at VPI Airport (Virginia Tech Airport) in Blacksburg, Virginia. This job paid $10.20 a month with housing, food, and medical care provided. Even though Charlie wanted to learn to fly, the aircraft at the airport were reserved for the cadets training at Virginia Tech. He had to hitchhike to Woodrum Field in Roanoke to pursue his ambition. He worked at various odd jobs, from cutting corn to picking apples, for 25 cents an hour to make money for flight lessons. The first time he went to Woodrum Field, the sign said that an airplane ride was $2.50 and a 30 minute flight lesson was $5.00. Charlie had never been in an airplane, but figured he’d go ahead and pay for the lesson. He figured if he liked flying he’d have one lesson under his belt and if he didn’t like it, he would be no worse off. The problem was that the instructor pilot kept him so busy during his first flight that he didn’t look around or enjoy the ride at all! It wasn’t until his third or fourth lesson that he finally settled down enough to actually look around and realize that he really enjoyed flying. At that time, Charlie’s older brother, Harry, was working in Nashville as a mechanic and occasionally would send Charlie $5.00 to help out with his flight lessons.

Charlie and Harry Kulp in front of the Aeronca C-3, the “flying bathtub.” This was Charlie’s first airplane and was discovered at Zieger Field in Warrenton.

Photo provided by Charlie Kulp.
training. Charlie points out that when you’re working for 25 cents an hour, receiving $5.00 was like winning the lottery. Years later, when Charlie returned from the Navy, he took Harry flying and got him started on his flying instruction.

He made his solo flight in 1943 at Hicks-Kessler Flight School right before going into the Navy. Eyesight problems eliminated a flying career in the military so he chose to become an aircraft mechanic – he says because he didn’t want to sleep in a tent in one of those islands. He continued his flight training while in the Navy and received his private pilot license in 1946.

Charlie fondly recalls his first airplane – a 1936 Aeronca C-3. It was 1946 and he and his brother had just returned from their tours of duty with the U.S. Navy. They rented a plane from Sidney Shannon, Sr. at the old Shannon Airport to visit a friend in Winchester. On the way, they landed at Zieger Field in Warrenton. This field was owned by Clifford Zieger and the only facilities at the field were at Zieger’s home. As Charlie and his brother walked to the house, they saw the Aeronca languishing behind the barn and Charlie was immediately taken with it. He had built models of that plane as a boy. He soon bought the C-3 from Zieger and after fixing it up, he flew almost 400 hours in it.

The Aeronca C-3 was a 36-horsepower, 2 cylinder screaming machine. It was so low slung that there was only 6-8 inches of clearance on landing and the hull looked for all the world like an old-fashioned tin tub. Of course, it was called the “Flying Bathtub.” On one occasion, it lived up to that name. A thunderstorm had hit the night before and, unknown to Charlie, the bottom of the hull filled with water. The next morning, Charlie took off, or at least tried to. When the nose of the plane lifted, all the water ran to the tail and the weight caused the plane to go nose-up. Charlie didn’t know what was causing the problem, but realized that the aircraft was in danger of stalling. He pushed the stick forward to lower the nose. Of course, when the nose dropped, the water in the tail shot forward and drenched Charlie. Charlie immediately landed, with visions of the newspaper headline “Pilot Drowns in Airplane during Take-off”. He drilled a small hole in the bottom of the hull and drained the water. Ever the pragmatist, he left the hole so that he didn’t have a recurrence of this situation.

In 1947 Charlie worked as an A&P at the Springfield Airport in Springfield, Virginia. This airport was located in what was then the rural Virginia countryside. The airport was there before Shirley Highway was built and the Highway actually took one end of the runway. I-95 eventually replaced Shirley Highway and this area is now the intersection of I-95 and Telegraph Road. After Charlie left that job in 1950, the owner of the airport and his wife were killed in an airplane crash. The airport closed after that and developers purchased the land.

In 1950 he took over management of Shannon Airport in Fredericksburg. Dave Payne of Aero Industries at Richmond’s Byrd Field had been managing the airport as a favor to Sidney Shannon, but in 1950 felt that he couldn’t divide his time between Richmond and Fredericksburg. He hired Charlie to manage the airport and in 1951 Sidney Shannon hired Charlie directly.

While working at Shannon, Charlie worked on many of the planes for which he is so well known. In 1953, he contracted with Butler Aviation to re-cover the Texaco Eaglet Glider currently on display at the Smithsonian.

Charlie also for a time managed the Old Manassas Airport located at the current site of the Mattaport Shopping Center. While there, he purchased and restored the 1929 Fairchild KR-34 which now belongs to the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum.
Charlie’s career seems to read like a who’s who of airplanes in museums. In addition to the two already mentioned, he was involved in Sidney Shannon’s purchase of the 1917 Standard E-1 and the 1927 Pitcairn PA-5 Mailwing currently on display at the Virginia Aviation Museum. He oversaw the restoration of the Pitcairn Mailwing and later flew it to Dulles Airport for the grand opening.

Charlie was one of the founders of the Flying Circus Aerodrome in Bealeton and the Flying Circus gave birth to Silas, the Farmer. Originally the Flying Circus focused on military aircraft from World War I and the airplanes were owned by the Flying Circus Company. They leased a local farmer’s land with an option to buy. After two years, they faced a decision that they could not pay for the airplanes and exercise the option to buy own their planes and were invited to develop their own acts. In no time, the Flying Circus show included 12 planes, mostly Stearmans, WACO’s, and Fleets. The goal was to recreate acts that might have been flown in the post-war barnstorming shows. Charlie loved the idea of an aerobatic show and decided to train to do the Flying Farmer act. By the Circus’ second season, the Flying Farmer was part of the show. Charlie also agreed to manage the Flying Circus, a position that he held for 20 years. He resigned in 1990 to devote himself to the Flying Farmer act full-time.

The basic Flying Farmer act had been performed in an assortment of styles since World War II. At various times, the pilot was portrayed as a convict escaping the police, an absent-minded professor, or a drunken farmer. Charlie particularly disliked the drunken farmer image; he felt it was a bad example to set for children in the crowds and decided that his alter-ego would be Silas, the farmer. At first, the set-up for the act was that the narrator would pretend to pull a raffle ticket and the “winner” of the “free ride” would be Silas. Once as he made his way over the fence to claim his ride, he overheard a lady say “Oh, I am so glad that old man won that ride.”

Charlie later portrayed Silas as the man who cuts the grass and wants to fly so badly that he inadvertently takes the controls. The decision was pure genius – Charlie fit the image and the crowds recognized the sincerity behind the role.

As a matter of fact, Silas was patterned after Charlie’s neighbor, Silas Hicks, an elderly farmer who always wore plaid shirts and overalls and smoked a corn cob pipe. When Charlie was putting together his costume, he asked Silas’ wife for an old pair of overalls. She promptly brought him a new, starched set of overalls. He said “thanks, but I really need an old pair.” She returned with a pair only slightly less worn that the first and he

Charlie performs the famous one-wheel landing during his Flying Farmer act.
Photo provided by Charlie Kulp.
Charlie entertained the crowd at his 80th birthday party by playing the harmonica. He also performed his Flying Farmer act that day.

Photo by Norm Crabill.

Charlie said “I need a really rough pair.” As a joke, she brought him a very worn pair with a few patches and he said “Now that’s what I need!” Silas himself never got to see Charlie perform. His frail health kept him indoors. But Charlie had a friend tape his show and took it to Silas, saying “I thought you’d like to see what your overalls were up to.” Silas was delighted. Over the last 35 years, Charlie has given over 800 performances and every time, he has worn that original pair of overalls and the shirt Mrs. Hicks gave him.

Charlie has had many remarkable experiences while doing his act. Once in Augusta, Georgia, while waiting to begin his act, he was told two ladies wanted to speak to him. The two ladies explained that when they were girls, their father had a Piper Cub just like Charlie’s which he kept in a grass field near their home. Some of their fondest memories were of flying with their father in that airplane. Their father had recently passed away and they asked if Charlie would take their father’s ashes up for one final flight in a Piper Cub. Charlie said yes, and put the plastic bag in his overalls. He carried it through his act and afterward walked back to the two ladies. They were all sobbing and thanked him for bringing back such warm recollections of their father.

Charlie is particularly proud of his appearances in England and that, when he was a small boy, Prince Harry (younger son of the Prince of Wales) saw Charlie’s Flying Farmer act. Charlie made a friend there who collected old tractors and this gentleman brought one of his tractors to use in Charlie’s show. He also became friends with the Duchess of Beaufort. The Duchy of Beaufort hosted a fox hunt in the winter and an air show every summer; Charlie performed in this air show numerous times. The Duchess invited him to visit and he toured Beaufort Manor. The following year, Charlie’s mother passed away and he discovered that her effects included a collection of royal memorabilia from England. He was amazed when he picked up a book and it fell open to a page on the history of the Dukes of Beaufort. On his next visit to England, he presented the book to Duchess Caroline.

Charlie reports that in 35 years of doing this act, he’s had a lot of “goof-ups” but most people think his mistakes are part of the act. In the early days of the act, he would end by landing, cutting off the engine, and running from the plane with the crew in hot pursuit. Then he would return to hand-prop the airplane and move it off the field. Once when he was hand-propping the plane, he tripped over the ends of his overalls and fell flat on the paved runway. The reaction from spectators was “Hey, that was so funny! You should really keep it in the act!” Suffering a terrible headache from hitting his head on the pavement, Charlie’s reply was “The heck with that!” (Or words to that effect.)

On another occasion when Charlie was performing at the Flying Circus, he landed on one wheel. This was part of the act and all went well until the wind got under the upper wing and Charlie could not get that wing to drop. He taxied all around the air field and still couldn’t get the wing to drop. Finally he blasted the throttle and
the wing settled gently down. Afterward everyone told him that was a great ending to the act and he should certainly keep that one-wheel taxi in the act. He didn’t tell them it was all a mistake.

Charlie has also had some harrowing experiences while doing his routine. Four years ago in Peachtree, Georgia, many of the acts in the air show were unable to perform because the ceiling was too low. However since Charlie’s act is executed so close to the ground, both he and the people running the air show thought he would be able to perform. As he took off, he saw a dark spot in the distance, but thought it was just a shower. As he completed the first turn of the performance, he looked back and the dark spot had become a solid wall of water. He immediately wrestled the small Cub to the ground and a 60 mph wind whipped toward him. The wind spun the plane around and pushed it backward between the taxiway and the runway. Six big guys grabbed the plane and held it as the storm passed over. The next year, the air show planners placed red and green flags on golf carts to give pilots a heads-up if the weather began to turn. They called them “Charlie flags”. During the pre-show briefing, this announcement got a lot of laughter, but the pilots really howled with laughter when Charlie stood up and said “The only problem with those Charlie flags is that I’m color blind.” Luckily, the FAA representatives in the room were familiar with Charlie’s sense of humor.

When asked if there is one particular fellow aerobatic pilot that he admires, he replies that he respects all the pilots he’s met. He has flown in shows with almost all the notable aerobatic pilots today and appreciates that the flying community is so close, especially the aerobatic community. He says “You know, to have been able to mingle with the people I’ve been able to mingle with and to get paid for it has been wonderful. I have respect for every one of them.” His advice to a young pilot embarking on this type of adventure is to be a decent sort and remember those who support you. At an air show, Charlie spends most of his time with the ground crew. He points out that the people running the show and the performers are in the limelight, but it’s the ground crew that are working overtime to keep everything going smoothly.

How long will Charlie keep flying? Well, he’s the first to point out that there’s difference between flying and performing. Each winter, he takes stock and makes a decision on whether he will retire or perform the next year. At the end of November 2005, he hadn’t decided about 2006. But as for flying, Charlie reckons he’ll keep flying as long as he possibly can. Asked what he considered his greatest accomplishment he’s quick to say “Learning to fly.” He’s proud of all the young people he’s introduced to aviation and of all the young parents who loved the Flying Circus when they were children and are now bringing their sons and daughters to see it. So when you see a small yellow Piper Cub flying erratically, it’s probably just Charlie practicing – or not practicing – his renowned inability to fly.

This is Linda Burdette’s second article for the Virginia Eagles Newsletter. She is enjoying this new pastime so much that she has agreed to take on the job of Feature Articles Editor. She and her husband, Randall, are pilots and live at Dogwood Air Park, a residential air park in Fredericksburg.
What do fighter flight operations from a carrier, NASA research flights seeking lightning strikes and DOD-sponsored flight research in an instrumented Romanian aerobatic aircraft have in common?

Phil Brown of Williamsburg has flown all these missions and many more. Born in 1940 and the youngest in a family of six sons, he was surrounded by brothers who were aviation enthusiasts. WWII aircraft identification books and flying magazines circulated in the Hampton family home. Langley AFB and NAS Norfolk air traffic could be seen from the yard. The brothers were often at Langley, either delivering Coca-Cola for their father or attending air shows. Their uncle, a Pennsylvania airport owner, occasionally flew into the Peninsula Airport on Shell Road. In all, four of his brothers were to become pilots.

Enthusiasm for still and motion photography was another widely shared family interest. Brown received his first camera as a gift at age seven, learned film processing and printing from his brothers and by the time he was ten did his own darkroom work. Other family hobbies to which he was exposed included airplane model building, ham radio, boat building, sailing, engineering, art and music.

Brown was especially inspired by an older brother who was first a private pilot and aircraft owner and then a Naval Aviator. In 1960 during his second year at Davidson College, he took flying lessons in nearby Mooresville, NC at Jimmy Miller’s farm airfield. J-3 rental was a reasonable $4.50 per hour. His plan had been to become a Naval Aviator through the Navcad program which only required two years of college. Since he was only 19, however, and Navcad enrollment required approval from a father who was unwilling to sign the papers, that plan was stymied. His father’s reluctance to grant Navcad program approval stemmed in large part from the death of his Naval Aviator brother in a jet transition training accident at NAS Kingsville in 1953.

By late summer 1961, he had earned a private pilot license, attended two academic summer sessions, and graduated with an AB degree in economics. Though still not 21 years old and able to sign for himself, his father now gave his approval and Brown entered Navy flight training via the AOC program. He was awarded his wings in May 1963 upon completion of advanced training in F-9’s and F-11’s at NAS Beeville, TX. F-4B replacement air group training was conducted by VF-101 at NAS Key West, FL,
commanded at the time by VAHS’s Witt Freeman. Active duty with VF-74 on the Forrestal in the Mediterranean and with VF-114 on the Kitty Hawk in the Gulf of Tonkin led to logging 485 arrested carrier landings and 93 combat missions.

Brown requested orders to the Navy’s test pilot school at NAS Patuxent River, MD but was rejected due to lack of a suitable academic background. Determined to find another route into test flying and buoyed by newly discovered competence in math revealed through correspondence courses taken on cruise, Brown decided to leave active service in 1967 and earn an engineering degree.

He flew NAS Atlanta-based F-8’s and A-4’s with the Navy Reserves while studying engineering at Georgia Tech. After graduating from Tech with a BS in aeronautical engineering in 1971, he coped with a stagnant job market by pursuing an MS in aeronautical engineering at Princeton University. Their flight research lab was using two variable stability Navions for contract work with NASA, the Navy and the FAA. Brown’s thesis work involved improving A-7E autothrottle performance for carrier approaches and landings. While completing the writing of his thesis he moved to Florida to earn a FAA mechanic license. After earning the powerplant license but before completing his airframe license he accepted a hoped-for but unanticipated take-it-or-leave-it-now job offer from the NASA-Langley Research Center.

In July of 1974 Brown began his career as a NASA fixed wing research pilot at Langley. Rotary wing training and qualification were provided shortly after his arrival. It was then standard practice for NASA centers to hire research pilots with the desired engineering and military flying backgrounds and send them to a formal test pilot training school if not already so trained. Budget constraints, however, delayed Brown’s orders to the Navy’s school for over a year. When training funds were finally allocated, family circumstances prevented his attendance. His flight operations branch head, Jim Patton, graciously allowed him to pursue an in-house training program with the wide variety of airplanes available at Langley. During his 27 year tenure there Brown participated in flight research which included stall and spin behavior, helicopter acoustics, storm and lightning hazards, agricultural aviation, natural laminar flow, advanced fighter aerodynamics and handling qualities, and airport traffic capacity and safety.

From 1983–85 Brown flew a lightning-hardened F-106B for the NASA Storm Hazards program run by VAHS’ Norm Crabill. The pilot’s mission was to penetrate electrically active thunderstorms and obtain as many lightning strikes as possible. In addition to recording detailed information on the electrical, magnetic and atmospheric conditions surrounding strikes, interest was high in determining the extent of damage to different types of non-metallic aircraft structural materials and visually observing how lightning behaved. Brown devised a very high speed, multiple exposure still camera system and improved motion camera installations which captured many of the 420 aircraft lightning strikes he experienced. These equipment development efforts provided him unique opportunities to utilize his knowledge of and interest in photography.
NASA Storm Hazards program data were utilized to rewrite international standards of lightning protection for aircraft. The detailed analyses required for these new guidelines were possible because of high quality aircraft instrumentation and unique techniques developed to locate areas and altitudes with a high lightning strike probability. This work has also led to better operational understandings of the behavior, location, severity and probability of encounter of storm-produced lightning, hail, icing, heavy rain and turbulence.

Brown escaped government bureaucracy when he retired from NASA in early 2001 to start Williamsburg Aeronautics, Inc., a provider of research and flight testing services. Present and former NASA employees with whom he enjoyed working in the past provide technical assistance and aircraft maintenance.

In 2002 Brown took delivery of a built-to-order YAK-52TW research airplane from its Romanian manufacturer, S.C. Aerostar S.A. The airplane’s appearance is perhaps best described as a “SNJ on SlimFast”. Design features include two-place tandem seating, a low wing, a 400 HP, 9-cylinder radial engine, inverted oil and fuel systems and permissible flight loads of +7 to –5 g’s. Modifications incorporated during manufacture permit the carriage of a wide variety of research equipment, both internally and on external hardpoints. Conduits throughout the airplane allow easy routing of power and signal wiring to these locations. The airplane will operate in an Experimental-Research & Development certification status granted for each specific project.

The company is currently engaged in flight research for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to find new methods for identifying, locating and destroying terrorist networks. Brown’s interest in imagery methods is directly applicable to this effort. Other project team members are the Carnegie Mellon Robotics Lab in Pittsburgh, PA and AVID LLC of Blacksburg and Yorktown, VA.

Basing the YAK at the Williamsburg-Jamestown airport affords close proximity to potential customers such as NASA and the luxuries of an excellent hangar, enthusiastic and innovative airport management, a good restaurant, spacious conference facilities, a location only minutes away from home and a dog-friendly atmosphere for his West Highland terrier, Caleigh. Jan, his wife, is also only a short distance away at Walsingham Academy where she works as a guidance counselor.

All photos courtesy of Phil Brown
As usual, Bill Schultz was the first responder to last time’s mystery plane. He identified it correctly as the Daimler Benz Project A designed to bomb New York in WWII. A one page article describing it appeared in the May 2004 Atlantic Monthly. More details can be found by Googling <amerikabomber>. It was one of several design studies conducted by the Germans for that purpose. A second, but later, correct responder was Tom Tyndall, who is VAHS’s Dave Tyndall’s “big brother”. For his unparalleled record in winning all the Mystery Plane contests this year, Bill Schultz now gets the honor of doing this feature from now on. Send your responses to him henceforth.

**Acronomions**

No responses to last time’s VHFY, so I’ll offer this:

Very High Flying Yankees (In Virginia??!!)
New Mystery Plane

Well, you now have a new Mystery Plane Editor. Norm Crabill got tired of me jumping on his offerings so early that he did the only sensible thing to end the frustration. He gave me the job. No good deed goes unpunished.

I had hoped to find strange aircraft consistent with of our organizations title, The Virginia Aeronautical History, and stay with those aircraft unique to Virginia history but to be honest I really don’t know beans about that distinguished history. Give me time and maybe my research will find those unique aircraft closer to your interest level. In the meantime let’s press on with this issues offering.

This submission will take a little research and some close attention to detail. It isn’t what it first seems and I need the EXACT name of the aircraft.

As a tie-breaker, should it be needed, also submit what you know, or believe, is the significance of the aircraft in question. In aviation history it is a true “FIRST”. You tell me what that first is.

The winner will receive two (2) tickets to the Annual Dinner/Auction to be held in spring 2006.

You may submit your entry to me at sbill@wans.net or by phone at 757-258-8875.

Respectfully,
Bill Schultz
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