

Antique Stearman goes home

ANCHORAGE — A 1928 Stearman C2B, tail number NC5415, is on its way home to Alaska following a lengthy stay in Montana.

Ted Spencer, executive director of the Alaska Aviation Heritage Museum, searched for the elusive aircraft for 12 years.

Later this year, the Stearman will become Spencer's "crown jewel" this summer at his Lake Hood museum.

What's the story of this old plane? It arrived in Alaska in the fall of 1928, the property of the Arctic Prospecting and Development Co. After only one flight, it crashed on the ice at Walker Lake about 80 miles northwest of Bettles.

When Noel Wien, the dean of Alaska bush pilots, heard about the crash, he purchased the Stearman sight unseen. He had it repaired near the crash site and flown to Fairbanks, where he added it to the fleet of Wien Alaska Airlines.

In the fall of 1929, Carl Ben Eielson purchased the rugged bird for Alaskan Airways, Inc. That plane was among the scores of aircraft that participated in the search for Eielson, who was lost out on the Siberian ice following a crash in November 1929.

The pilots of the Stearman during the search was Harold Gillam. Another pilot,

Joe Crosson, flew a Waco 10 biplane in the search. Gillam and Crosson located the wreckage of Eielson's wrecked Hamilton on Jan. 27, 1930.

Eielson had crashed 90 miles from the ice-locked, three-masted Nanuk after he had flown out a load of furs and passengers from the trapped ship.

Joe Crosson was the pilot of the open-cockpit Stearman on a flight to Point Barrow seven months later to deliver anti-toxin to combat an outbreak of diphtheria.

The plane made the first glacier landing on Muldrow Glacier in 1932 to rescue a climber on Mt. McKinley.

In 1934, Joe Crosson flew the Stearman with Wiley Post as his passenger on a hunting and fishing trip.

The Stearman was sold to Cordova Air Service in 1938 and later crashed after running out of fuel. The wreckage went untouched on the banks of the Dadina River near Mt. Wrangell for nearly 30 years. It was retrieved by Jack E. Wilson, who turned the wreckage over to Alaska Airlines.

Les Kares of Stevensville, Montana is the current owner. Kares sold the aircraft to the Alaska museum for an undisclosed price. In 1988, the Legislature was asked to allocate \$150,000 to purchase the plane for the Division of State Museums.

GLORY DAYS: One of the few examples of its type still in existence, this 1928 Stearman model made the first landing on Muldrow Glacier in 1932 to rescue a mountain climber. Shown are Jerry Jones (left) and Joe Crosson. The same aircraft has been acquired by a museum at Lake Hood.

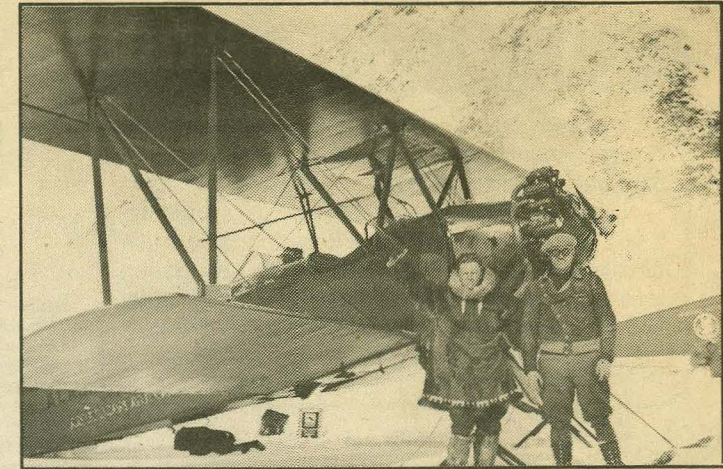


Photo courtesy of the Crosson Family Archives



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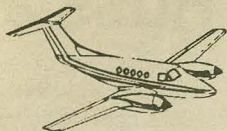
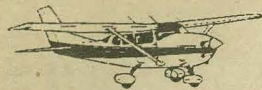
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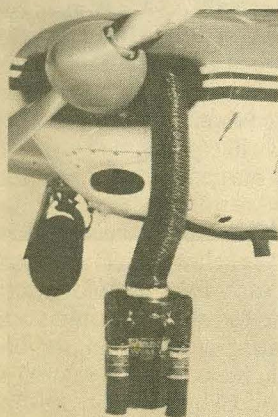
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MEETINGS

The Association continues its move to generate greater involvement in Association affairs by members from all part of Alaska.

Last year, establishment of a regional representative in Fairbanks was a precedent-setting move in this direction. Continuing this movement, the Association is establishing a regional representative in Talkeetna.

In April, Fairbanks will help sponsor the FAA/Air Safety Foundation Seminar scheduled for April 22-25.



Care of U of A Aviation Complex
1515 East 13th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99501

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FLY-INS

The fly-in season has long since ended, meaning the Airmen have switched to their traditional indoor role during the winter months. A host of special-interest meetings and seminars are planned. Details of those meetings are placed in the two Anchorage newspapers under the "Aircraft for Sale" section in the classifieds. They are found on this page as well. The Merrill Field Air Show, Trade Show and Safety Seminar is schedule for June 17-20.

4-TIME WINNER: ALASKA PRESS WOMEN AWARDS/NFPW

Senate Bill 433 sends Alaska Airmen's Association into orbit

JUNEAU — A federal bill introduced by US Sen. Al Adams (party, where from) at the request of the Alaska air Carriers Association would impose a new tax on private aircraft.

The bill came as an upsetting surprise to the board of directors of the Alaska Airmen's Association.

If passed, the bill would require all private aircraft to be registered with the state for a fee that "(1) may not be less than \$100 or more than \$250; and

"(2) should reflect the value of the aircraft based on factors set out in (b)(2)-(4) of this section."

The bill also provides for a 5% monthly penalty for late registrations or for paying less than the full amount of the fee.

The final section of the bill reads, verbatim:

"(h) This section does not apply to
(1) aircraft used exclusively for commercial purposes; an aircraft is used for commercial purposes if it is used exclusively for activities for which the person receives direct monetary compensation and activities incidental to and done in furtherance of the person's primary business; or
(2) public aircraft."

The Airmen's Association encourages all pilots to look carefully at this bill and let their legislators and Senator Adams know their feelings about it (also, let us know at the Association).

The bill, as written, has technical flaws and raises questions that airmen should note. The registration fee (really a tax) is to be based on aircraft value. As the bill is written, a regulation establishing the tax amount could specify that the fee will be \$100 plus \$50 for

each \$5,000 of value over \$10,000 to a maximum fee of \$250. Calculating the fee would be easy: \$250 for any airplane worth more than \$25,000. This is not the intention of the bill (we are sure) but it could be the effect.

Introduction of the bill without consulting the Airmen's Association was unfortunate, in that it created a potential rift between the Air Carriers Association and the Airmen's Association — something that no one wants. There are far too many aviation issues we need to work together to resolve. We all will be losers if miscommunication and misunderstanding break down the constructive relationship that exists between the Associations.

There is, perhaps, another issue to look for in all this. Recent political rhetoric frequently has addressed the "taxing of the rich" to be fair to those who are not rich. Airplane

owners are always rich. Just ask anyone who does not own one. (Most of us who have owned an airplane usually credit that as the reason we are not rich, but that's another issue.)

This is a divide-and-conquer tactic. When government agencies provide services we don't need at a cost we can't afford and fail to provide those we do need, or to provide minimal service at maximum cost, they claim there is not enough money available. From this, then, comes the idea that they must raise taxes or user fees. This diverts attention from the real issue of whether or not we are getting the services we need and want at a reasonable cost.

Is the problem that general aviation is not paying enough, or is it that government agencies are spending too much?

Merrill Field Air Show will feature Russian plane, top speakers

June 17-20 will be Air Week in Anchorage. So far, 20 organizations or companies have committed to participate in the Aviation Trade Show, including such names as Aviall and II Morrow. This will be an exceptional opportunity for Alaskan pilots to see

turboprop.

Bill Signs of Dallas, Texas and Yuri Kharitonov plan to fly a Mooney around the world arriving in Anchorage on June 20 to join in the air show celebration. Yuri Kharitonov is vice-director of operations for

pilot certificate in 1949 and has been airborne ever since. He now holds a full bank of ratings, including lighter-than-air and a Beech Starship I type rating. Cutter's brother, Sid, dubbed him the "world's second greatest balloonist" after he placed second a couple of

makeup often leads us into unsafe behavior.

Dr. John K. Lauber is a member of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and is a research psychologist. He previously directed NASA's Human Factors Research Office at Ames Research Center.

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Among the 100 aircraft participating will be the Blackhawk helicopter with a flight demonstration by the Marines. Those who haven't yet had a chance to see a Russian plane up close will get the chance. The air show will feature a Russian Antonov An-24

turboprop.

Bill Signs of Dallas, Texas and Yuri Kharitonov plan to fly a Mooney around the world arriving in Anchorage on June 20 to join in the air show celebration. Yuri Kharitonov is vice-director of operations for the Magadan, Siberia Department of Civil Aviation. This flight is to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Soviet-American Lend-Lease Program during World War II (known in Russia as the Great Patriotic War).

The Air Safety Foundation will feature two dynamite speakers at the safety seminars.

William R. Cutter, chairman of the board of Cutter Flying Service received his private

pilot certificate in 1949 and has been air-borne ever since. He now holds a full bank of ratings, including lighter-than-air and a Beech Starship I type rating. Cutter's brother, Sid, dubbed him the "world's second greatest balloonist" after he placed second a couple of times and third once in the US World Balloon Championship.

Since Bill Cutter's business is located in New Mexico, Arizona and Texas, it is understandable that with the impressive list of ratings he holds, the one he is missing is a seaplane rating. When he gets to Alaska, we are sure he will join the ranks of those who believe the reason the Lord created water was to give floatplanes a place to land.

Bill Cutter has served two terms on the board of directors of the National Air Transportation Association (NATA), and presently serves on the board of visitors of the Air Safety Foundation. In 1983, Beechcraft named him "Man of the Year."

In addition to his devotion to aviation, Bill — in his own words — "continues to serve as Gwen's first husband." Maybe a guy that can do that much flying and still get his wife to stay with him doesn't need a float rating. He probably just walks on water. Be sure to attend the seminar to hear how to get all those ratings and hang onto your wife as well.

In recent years, the emphasis in air safety has shifted from a position of blaming pilots (the infamous "pilot error") to trying to find out what factors, both within and without the pilot, caused those errors. It's not enough to tell a pilot to be careful. We must be told how to be careful because our psychological

makeup often leads us into unsafe behavior.

Dr. John K. Lauber is a member of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and is a research psychologist. He previously directed NASA's Human Factors Research Office at Ames Research Center. He also was a member of the National Academy of Sciences panel, which reviewed scientific evidence about mandatory retirement at age 60 for airline pilots.

Dr. Lauber is a general aviation pilot with a commercial certificate, fixed wing and rotorcraft ratings and is type-rated in the Boeing 727. (We believe this is a modernized version of an early Ford trimotor aircraft.)

Lauber also has extensive on-site experience investigating and analyzing major aviation accidents, including the mid-air collision at Cerritos, California and the crash of Northwest Flight 255 in Detroit, Michigan. He will be able to tell us what we are doing wrong, what we should be doing, and perhaps most important of all, why we do things wrong and how we can overcome the psychological factors that lead us into some of these errors. One factor we always should bear in mind is that no matter how large the aircraft is, there still is one small human being at the controls.

While the number of people affected by the tragedy of an accident may be greater when an airliner is involved, the tragedy to each individual affected is the same whether it is a fully loaded Boeing 747 or a Super Cub with one aboard. Most of the time, it is human behavior and error that cause the accidents. Dr. Lauber's presentation could truly be one you can't live without.

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