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**Tenkiller Airpark**  
**WILD ONION & EGGS**  
**FLY-IN BREAKFAST**  
**March 29**



# The Oklahoma Aviator

Your window to Oklahoma Aviation...Past, Present, Future

Vol 21, No 3

March 2003

Oklahoma Aviator, 32432 S. Skyline Drive, Cookson, OK 74427

## Lee Fish, Pioneer Aviator— Firsthand Witness to 99 Years of Oklahoma Aviation History

by Mike Huffman

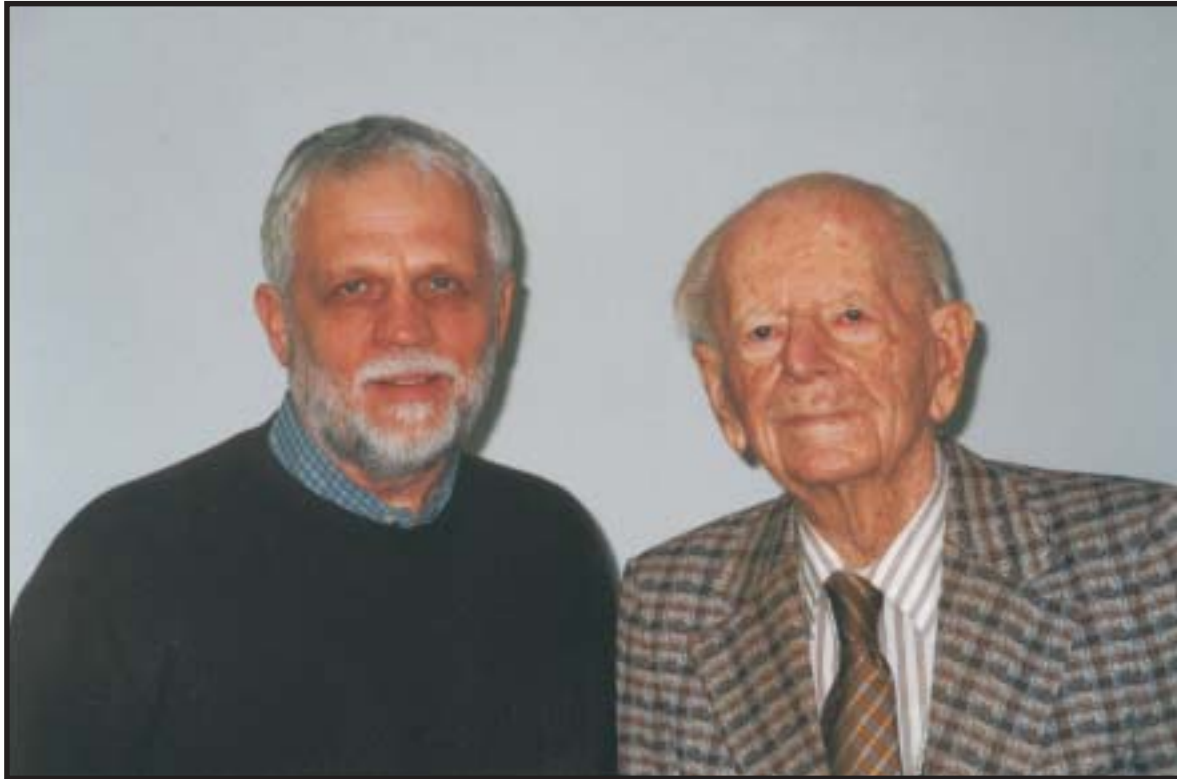
It was a humbling, mind-expanding experience for me. In this Centennial of Flight year, we tend to think of aviation as being old. But in reality, there are still a few folks around who witnessed its beginnings.

On March 20, 1910, ninety-three years ago, a barnstormer named Charles F. Willard flew a Curtiss Biplane from a wheat field in Oklahoma City, the first powered airplane flight in Oklahoma. An awe-struck six-year-old boy named Lee Fish witnessed those flights.

And now that same "boy," still very vital and celebrating his 99th birthday, was sitting in front of me relating the story.

"I never will forget that," said Fish, "To me, the airplane sounded something like a motorcycle. The pilot was sitting out there in front with his feet on the pedals. I couldn't imagine sitting out there in the air. I can just see that plane right now."

Raymond Lee Fish was



**Lee Fish, at 99 years of age, has witnessed all but one year of powered aviation history.**

born in Kingfisher, OK in 1904 in a dugout sod house. His mother and the midwife attending his birth made the land run of 1889 together. In 1909, the family moved to Oklahoma City.

Fish was present in 1927 when Charles Lindbergh made a tour stop in Oklahoma City following his transatlantic solo flight; he proudly shows a black-and-white photo of him and his brother with *The Spirit of St. Louis*. Inspired, Fish began flying in 1927, shortly after Lindbergh's tour stop. He went on to solo an OX-5-powered CommandAir biplane in 1928, after about three hours of instruction (at \$1 a

minute!).

"I was soloed by Duke Walker. We took off one day from the old Municipal Airport at SW 29th and May and went out north to Edmond. It was all

wheat fields, full of stubble after the harvest. Duke hollered at me to go down and land in one of the fields. After we landed, he got out and stepped off the wing. I said, 'Where in the heck are

you going?' He said, 'You are going to solo this thing!' I was scared to death, but I went on out for takeoff. Then an amazing thing happened-- just as the tail came up, everything came to me-- it was all natural."

His voice cracks and tears well in his eyes, but he quickly recovers. "I went on up, circled around, came in, and made a perfect landing. I asked him if I might go around again, but he said no, you might crack it up."

"And you know, whenever I get in a plane, it all comes back, just like typing. When I sit down at a typewriter, my fingers just fall into place-- I can still do a pretty good job at it!"

Fish is that way-- a story about one aspect of his life prompts another about some other aspect. And he has plenty to choose from. Not only was he a pioneer aviator, he is one of those individuals who just naturally gravitate toward adventure and accomplishment, prompted not by a desire for fame or at-

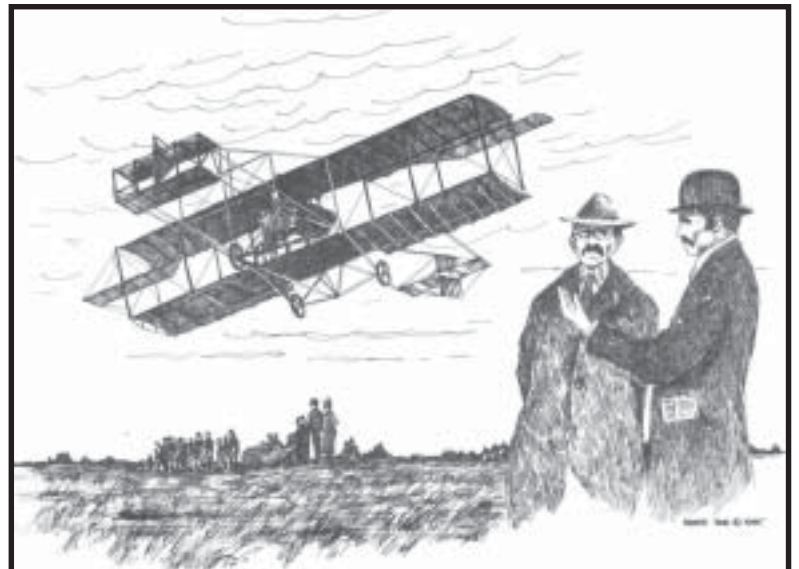
*continued on p. 9.*

### Historic Oklahoma Aviation Art Series Now Available

In the mid-1980s, Joe Cunningham and noted Tulsa artist Monte Toon teamed up to create a series of twelve pen and ink drawings depicting significant events in Oklahoma aviation history. Joe made the prints available through *The Oklahoma Aviator*.

Now, in this historic Centennial of Flight year, we are offering them again. We will feature one or more prints each month. See the story of this one on page 6.

Each 13"x16" print is signed by the artist. Single prints are \$20 each. Any six prints are \$90 or the full set of twelve is \$170. Add \$6 S&H for each order. Make checks payable to *The Oklahoma Aviator*.



**In the scene personally witnessed by Lee Fish, Charles F. Willard takes off from a wheat field near Capital Hill on March 20, 1910, the first powered airplane flight in Oklahoma. Perhaps one of the small figures in the background is Lee Fish.**



**Early Oklahoma aviators in their classic garb. Left to right: Miles Westall, Lee Fish, and Cheebee Graham.**



# Ask the Doctor

by Dr. Guy Baldwin, AME



## Monocular Pilots

Recently, an airman who has just started flight training applied at my office for a Second Class medical. Even though he met all other requirements, his distance vision in his right eye was only 20/70. He stated that he has been to several eye specialists, but

they cannot correct the eye any better than 20/70.

As you probably know, First Class and Second Class medicals require that the applicant's vision be 20/20 in each eye, either corrected or uncorrected. By comparison, Third Class medicals require only 20/40 vision (which, by the way, is not very good eyesight-- it would be advisable for even Third Class applicants to obtain correction to 20/20 so they can see the traffic while flying!)

Thus, the airman in question is, by FAA standards, monocular-- "one-eyed." As such, some additional steps will be required for him to finally receive his medical.

After the otherwise successful examination, I issued his medical certificate with the limitation, "Valid for student pilot privileges only." I told him that he may continue flight training through solo and the remainder of his private pilot training. However, he will need to do a medical check ride with the FAA Flight Standards District Office to obtain a waiver for his vision problem. I explained that once the waiver is granted, he will receive a Statement of Demonstrated Ability (SODA), which will remove the limitation on his medical.

Sometimes these situations raise questions at the FAA. In this case, both the airman and I received requests for further information from the FAA. At first they thought I had made a mistake in issuing his medical at all, stating that his eyesight would need to be retested and the results resubmitted. However, I submitted a response saying that we knew he was monocular and that a medical check ride would be scheduled. Based on my response, they agreed that was an acceptable way to handle the situation.

If you have any questions regarding this subject matter or any other questions, do not hesitate to contact my office.

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# The Higher Plane

by Barbara Huffman



## February Aviation Fun!

One does not normally think of February as a big aviation month, due to the cold, snowy, rainy weather and frigid temps. But not so for me! This month has been filled with aviation fun. Michael and I are becoming more involved in helping plan celebrations and educational events to commemorate this special year - the Centennial of Flight. We are joining with friends old and new in projects that have the potential of continuing the state's 100 years of excitement for aviation.

Some good news on a personal note: I took a Private Pilot Ground School course with the great guys at Fast Forward Aviation and, thanks to them, some good study books, and a generous bit of study time, I passed my FAA written exam! After recovering from the shock, we made preliminary arrangement for my formal flight training to begin, right here at home at Tenkiller Airpark in Cookson. Be assured you will receive updates on this frightening and exciting process in the future.

During the past few weeks we had the privilege of interviewing the good folks at Air Evac Lifeteam in Oklahoma City, where I took my first helicopter flight. Though I understood the dynamics of helicopter flight, I was still totally amazed

at the feelings of hovering and approaching for landing at about five miles per hour! Read their article, and you will realize what a crucial, life-saving job this great group of folks is doing here in Oklahoma.

Our travels this month also included a trip to the OSU Center for Aerospace and Hyperbaric Medicine at Riverside Airport in Jenks, where we learned about their special ETC GAT II simulator, which can duplicate many of the disorientation effects pilots experience.

And, if you read the front page, you know about the historic aviation art we are offering. This is a must have for every FBO, aviation business, airport manager's office, and every pilot in the state. What better way to celebrate the Centennial of Flight and your love for aviation than to display these beautiful pen and ink drawings, each numbered by the artist? Look for a feature articles on the prints as the year progresses.

Last, I can't resist a shameless plug for our Wild Onion and Egg Fly-in Breakfast here in Cookson on March 29th from 8:00a.m. to 11:00a.m. We sure hope to see you all here!

I often wonder if we are just having too much fun. But rather than waiting for the other shoe to drop, our attitude is to let the good times roll. Hope you're all anticipating some wonderful aviation experiences this spring and summer! Keep a close watch on our Calendar of Events - and enjoy reading about the Centennial of Flight celebrations in the works.

Blessings to you all!

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# Up With Downs

by Earl Downs



## A Safe Breakfast

Have you ever been to one of the major fly-ins such as AirVenture at Oshkosh or Sun 'n Fun at Lakeland? The volume of airplane traffic is so heavy at these events that special arrival and departure procedures are established for them. Well, we have almost reached the point where we need similar procedures at our "home town" event at the Ponca City Regional Airport (PNC) on the first Saturday of every month. The Ponca City Aviation Booster Club (PCABC) monthly breakfast fly-in has turned out to be a major regional event. It is not unusual for more than 150 airplanes to arrive at PNC in a two to three hour time span. The airport does not have any special arrival procedures for the hungry masses and this means that every pilot is responsible for maintaining traffic pattern safety. Let's review a few safety considerations we can use when we fly in to this "breakfast bash."

### Weather

PNC is an uncontrolled airport; however, it is in Class E controlled airspace. For VFR traffic, the visibility must be at least 3-miles and the ceiling must be at least 1,000 feet. If the weather is below these VFR requirements, you must have an IFR or special VFR clearance to operate in the surface area of the class E airspace. Scud running can lead to a dangerous mixing of VFR and IFR airplanes.

### Traffic Pattern

According to the FARs, we are supposed to fly the published traffic pattern. At PNC, this means that the downwind leg is always on the west side of the airport. This results in a right pattern to runway 17 and a left pattern to runway 35. The published pattern altitude at PNC is 2,000 feet MSL. Using the published pattern may not always be convenient or expeditious, but it does provide all pilots with a certain level of predictability regarding the location of other airplanes.

Straight-in approaches are a bad idea in this heavy traffic situation. We sometimes think a straight-in is safe if we make lots of radio calls, but this does not help the no-radio planes that cannot hear us. Extended and straight-in

approaches are the most common cause of mid-air collisions on final approach.

Airplanes approaching from the east at PNC are the ones who really get the raw deal. Over-flying the airport west-bound in order to use a standard pattern entry from the west takes more time; however, it does comply with the standard, predictable, pattern. Over-flights should be made at least 500 feet above the pattern altitude, maintained far enough to the west to assure that the 45 degree entry to the downwind leg will be at pattern altitude.

### Speeds

The more similar the pattern speeds, the better. Sure, various planes have different performance characteristics, but we can at least try to keep them close to the same. It has been found at the big fly-ins that a target pattern airspeed of 80 to 90 knots works well as a baseline. Slow planes should speed up, and fast planes should slow down as much as possible and still be safe. When Pat Smith and I fly his Bonanza in to PNC, we use 90 knots as our target, which allows leeway to adjust up or down easily. When I arrive in my Aeronca Champ, I don't use my normal gliding Aeronca approach; I keep it as fast as I can until on close final. Some planes must maintain higher speeds but that should be the exception, not the rule. Be flexible, but remember; you should always be on a normal stabilized approach as you pass through 500 feet AGL on final.

### Radio Use-CTAF 123.0 MHz

If you have a radio, use it, but keep the calls short and concise. Include altitude information and be accurate about your location. If you don't have a GPS, plan ahead by picking some measured points on your chart so you are not guessing at distances. Remember, radios are not required or used by all pilots at PNC. Don't let your radio give you a false sense of protection.

### Other Thing to Consider

Use all resources available. Listen to the AWOS on 134.075 MHz. Use your passengers as airplane spotters. Keep your cool-- this is no time for "air rage!" Be very careful while taxiing in the parking area. Carefully consider the safety of fly-bys and formation flying-- airshow stuff may not be safe in this high traffic environment. Corporate jets and a regional air carrier use this airport-- help them out in the pattern. If you don't feel comfortable in a rapidly changing traffic situation, get some refresher training with your instructor to relearn how to vary your pattern procedures (this training could count towards a flight review or the wings program).

Last but not least, after gorging on the irresistible Booster club breakfast, be sure to check your weight and balance. It is very easy to have gained a few pounds!

# Letters To The Editor



Dear Mr. and Mrs. Huffman,

I am so pleased that you are keeping *The Oklahoma Aviator* alive. I have been a subscriber for many years, even before I met Joe and Mary about ten years ago.

That was a day I will always remember. They were two of the friendliest people I ever met. I left Tenkiller Airport feeling like I had been visiting with two lifelong friends. My wife and I used to visit my sister and brother-in-law, for about fifteen years, who live on Balentine Road in Tahlequah.

I spent a lot of time at the Tahlequah airport and one day, Dutch Wilhelm and I were talking about *The Oklahoma Aviator*. He suggested I go out to Tenkiller and meet Joe and Mary. I am so glad I did, that very day.

I was shocked and devastated when my brother-in-law, Jim Justice, called to tell me Mary had died in a crash. It was so hard to believe. I never learned the official cause, but it has always been in the back of my mind that the student did something so drastic and sudden that Mary did not have time to recover. Joe died of a broken heart. I know what he lost. I lost two great friends.

I started flying when I was eleven years old in 1932, in a Waco 10. I don't fly anymore; I have been priced out of the market.

Keep up the good work and keep 'em flying. If I ever get to Tahlequah again, I will come out to Tenkiller to meet you.

Sincerely, Cecil E. Simpkins,  
Waymouth, MA

Dear Oklahoma Aviator,

When I received my copy of *The Oklahoma Aviator* in December 2002 and found the writeup on the front page about Horse Apple International, I about decided to cancel my subscription.

But I decided to give you one more chance to write and stick to common sense aviator material. Enclosed find check for \$20.

(An Exasperated Reader)

Hi Mike & Barbara,

Saturday, the 1st of February, I set out for Ponca City at 0800 with the O.A.T. at 30 degrees. I was dressed for cool weather and felt comfortable in the Hatz.

Heading west, I noticed a bit of drift to the right which would indicate the south breeze that I had on take off-- 5 to 8 mph. A check of the ground speed however was startling as I was making 45 to 50 knots over terra firma while indicating 90 to 95 knots. I was at 2000' MSL which is only 1500 AGL and the wind was huffin' and puffin,' but the air was relatively smooth. I flew on thinking (hoping) for any improvement all the while remembering the forecast for strong winds in the afternoon. Stronger than 40 to 45 knots ???

After better than 30 minutes and still looking at the same real estate, I did a 180 and arrived back over SkyHaven in less than ten minutes, with a ground speed of 125 to 130 knots-- total flying time: 0:48. I will try again next month; it might even be warmer.

This proves out what I used to teach my primary students: always plan the first leg of your cross country upwind, it makes the trip home so much shorter.

Lorin Wilkinson, Collinsville, OK

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# GAT II Disorientation Trainer at OSU Aerospace Medicine Center

by Mike Huffman

Raise your hand if you remember the old FAA "Vertigon" disorientation trainer. I feel my stomach lurching just thinking about it. Designed to demonstrate the "coriolis effect," one of many disorientation effects pilots may experience, it did a very, very effective job.

Picture this: you are attending a summer fly-in and notice a cockpit-looking device on display. Unsuspecting, you ask the white-shirted-and-tied host what it is for. He tells you he is with the FAA and is here to help you experience vertigo such as you might encounter on an IFR flight in the soup.

You are game, so you climb in and close the door. The inside looks like a simplistic cockpit and a video begins to play on the windscreen. Unbeknownst to you (or at least that was the theory), the whole thing begins to slowly rotate, gradually picking up speed. At some point in the video, you are told to copy an ATC clearance on a pad of paper in your lap. Of course, you must lower your head to do so, at which point the internal "gyros" in your head literally tumble. "Earth" and "sky" change places phantasmagorically, so you immediately raise your head back up, whereupon it gets worse. That, of course, is what you were supposed to experience.

Thankfully, the ride is over and you

stumble out into the bright, hot summer afternoon, a cold sweat gluing your shirt to your back and saliva building up in your mouth. Mumbling "thanks, I think" to the FAA man, you dizzily walk away. That is when your kid asks you to buy him a funnel cake. From then on, you shy away from the Vertigon and the kindly gentleman attending it.

Fortunately, there are now better devices to demonstrate pilot disorientation. One such is the ETC Corporation GAT II simulator, recently put into service at the OSU Center for Aerospace and Hyperbaric Medicine at Riverside Airport. The GAT II is a fully-functioning flight simulator equipped with a good out-the-windshield visual display system and a motion system.

We visited with Dave Moyers, who operates the GAT II. He explained that, although the GAT II demonstrates coriolis effect much better than the Vertigon. Says Dave, "We haven't had anybody get sick yet!" It can also demonstrate a dozen other recognized pilot disorientation effects, with names like leans, autokinesis, false horizon, dark takeoff, black hole, nystagnus, sloped runway, runway width, graveyard spins/spirals, and occulogyral (whatever the heck that is). Many of those effects are visual, and the ability of the GAT II to be specially programmed helps to dem-

onstrate them.

At Dave's invitation, I climb in for a demonstration, nervously remembering the Vertigon. He instructs me to just fly around for a while to get the feel of the simulator. At first, I tend to overcontrol a bit, particularly with the rudder pedals-- Dave says this is due to the "latency" of the computer system-- the time it takes for a control command to wind its way through the computer system and result in a motion of the simulator.

Soon, though, I have gotten the hang of it. The motion system is actually very effective in simulating G-forces during taxi and normal flight-- that is one of the features that keep trainees from getting sick. Dave then takes me through the coriolis illusion. Unlike the old Vertigon, I am not aware that the simulator has begun to rotate, because the normal motion system movements mask its onset. And, after the "gyro tumbling" effects have been demonstrated, I feel fine.

We go on to other visual illusions including auto-kinesis, dark takeoff, and black hole. Some of them are easier to experience than other. Massaging my ego, Dave says this is probably because my vast piloting experience has already taught me to disregard them.

The Center for Aerospace and Hyperbaric Medicine regularly trains air-

line and corporate flight crews, including Wal-Mart, Hallmark, Southwest Airlines, and Great Plains Airlines.

In addition, they also do research using their altitude chamber-- a current study in progress is investigating the effects of long-duration airline flights on passengers. Simulating a flight to the Far East, volunteers spend 20-hour shifts in the chamber, which is outfitted with airline seats. During the entire 20-hour "flight," the cabin altitude is maintained at 8000 feet and the volunteers are required to perform various tests to evaluate the effects of the cabin altitude on them.

Starting in May, the Center plans to offer Saturday disorientation training sessions that will be open to any pilot wishing to participate. For more information, call the Center at 918-828-4076.





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# Air Evac Lifeteam's Air Ambulance at Expressway Junction Airport

by Mike Huffman

On a recent trip to Oklahoma City, we noticed activity at the old Expressway Junction Airport at NE 63rd and I-35. We thought the airport was closed, so we dropped in to find out.

Turns out we were right-- it is closed to the public. Air Evac Lifeteam, an air ambulance service headquartered out of West Plains, MO, recently purchased the airport. With other bases in Lawton, McAlester, and Tulsa, the company uses Expressway Junction as their regional maintenance and operations base and to also provide air ambulance service for the Oklahoma City area.

Air Evac Lifeteam was formed in 1985 to provide air ambulance service to West Plains, which is located in a hilly, remote region of the Ozarks more than 100 ground miles away from a major hospital. At the time, air ambulances typically were based in metropolitan areas. The company goal was to provide a quality service that was affordable to the public.

They realized that in order to provide affordable service and still survive, they would need other sources of funding besides traditional fee-for-service billing. So, they modeled their operation on a Swiss air ambulance service, offering low-cost memberships similar to ground-based ambulance and fire services. During its first year, more than 5000 area residents became members, and Air Evac Lifeteam flew hundreds of patients during their times of critical need.

Since then, they have expanded, now operating 29 bases in Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Illinois, Kentucky, Iowa, Alabama, and Indiana. Air Evac Lifeteam now has over 250,000 members and has flown over 50,000 patients since 1985. Their goal is to add 10 new bases a year during the next three years-- a new base in Tahlequah is in the works.

The Oklahoma City base employs about 30 people. The day we visited, things were quiet. Pilot Jeff Scorze, Lead Flight Nurse Sherrie Faulkner, and Lead Mechanic Ron Hall showed us around. The facility is what you might expect for a fire station, with comfortable sofas, chair, television, cooking facilities, and sleeping rooms. Crewmembers work two-day shifts and then are off two days.

Unexpected touches are present because of the coed nature of the flight crews; for instance, the bathroom is decorated in a distinctly non-male fashion and a sign over the toilet politely reminds male crewmembers that the way to a woman's heart is by closing the lid. In fact, the atmosphere is not unlike a home-- the team members confirmed that they spend so much time together they feel like a family. One of the most contentious hour-to-hour issues is who has "clicker control" of the television. Sherrie Faulkner jokingly says that pilots tend to hog the remote. Barbara asks if there are any women pilots. Sherrie says there is one in McAlester and "I heard she hogs the remote, too!"

Unlike other air ambulance services that fly more expensive helicopters, Air Evac Lifeteam settled on the Bell 206-L, as a cost-effective alternative. Says Ron Hall, "It's got millions and million of hours worldwide - one of the most commonly produced helicopters - very reliable and easy to maintain. Its direct operating costs have shown it to be, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the best helicopter for this particular mission." Ron is passionate about this.

The copilot's seat is removed to make room for a patient litter. The patient's head is toward the rear, providing access by the flight nurse and paramedic who sit in the rear seats. Medical equipment is mounted in the passenger compartment in a very space-conscious way. Among other things, they can perform advanced airway procedures, administer a wide variety of IV fluids and medications, and perform defibrillation/pacemaker treatments-- a sort of mini-emergency room in the sky.

Team members speak of the "Golden Hour" following an injury or sudden illness during which treatment often makes a critical difference. Says Sherrie Faulkner, "When time is the critical element to someone surviving, we can provide that with the helicopter. You've trimmed at least half the amount of time going by air. When you have participated in saving a life - there's just no greater reward!" Sherrie is passionate about this.

Air ambulance crewmembers are unique. They combine a love of aviation with a sincere desire to help. They enjoy the atmosphere of being required to respond to crises. However, unlike emergency room medical personnel, they get the opportunity to be independent, concentrate on one patient at a time, and respond to whatever situation is presented them.

I ask how they keep the life-and-death business from warping their minds. Sherrie thinks for a moment and then says wryly, "Good question-- who says we do?" Then she quickly adds, "You know, you develop an appreciation for life, I think, that other people don't think about, because we see so many tragedies on a daily basis. Through this work I have learned to value every day that I have. I cherish my family-- my relationships mean a lot to me.

"Then the other side is you develop a kind of a strange sense of humor. But it keeps you sane..."

She stops abruptly, her voice shaky and tears forming.

Jeff Scorze continues, "Over time you do kind of get used to it, but there's always patients where it shocks you. For me, I go home and let it all out to my wife-- she listens, consoles me, helps me get it off my chest."



**Sherrie Faulkner with the Air Evac Lifeteam bear, often given to children transported by the crew.**

Sherrie, now recovered, says, "We're following up with a teenage girl in Seiling that was in an extremely bad car accident; she wasn't expected to survive. She not only survived, she's doing extremely well. When we transported her, she was unconscious, so we're going to take the helicopter to visit her on Valentine's Day-- just sort of love on her a little bit. Without a helicopter, she may have had a different outcome."

They explain to us that Air Evac Lifeteam memberships are \$40-\$50 per year. Beyond that, members pay no further fees, whether or not they have medical insurance.

Afterward, Jeff gives us a ride in the Bell 206. It is a bright, warm winter day and we fly over downtown Oklahoma City downtown, seeing the buildings, Bricktown, and the new Bricktown baseball stadium. As pleasant as the experience is, my mind goes to the scene of some accident or illness, knowing how welcome the sight of that helicopter would be.



**OKC Air Evac Lifeteam crewmembers, left to right, pilot Jeff Scorze, nurse Sherrie Faulkner, and mechanic Ron Hall.**



**The patient station of the Bell 206-L, with a full complement of equipment to serve as a mini-emergency room in the air.**

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# Gold Rush to the Clouds: The 1910 Cha

by Keith Tolman  
Oklahoma Historical Society

"I'll believe it when I see it!" More than mere cliché, by 1910 this exclamation represented the general attitude of the public toward manned, powered flight. The skepticism was not without merit. Earlier in the decade, the most prominent scientist of the day, Professor Samuel P. Langley of the Smithsonian Institution, had failed utterly in his efforts to build a flying machine. Consequently, the announced success of two upstart brothers from Ohio was frequently shrugged off as a hoax. Indeed, no description or even a photograph of an airplane in flight would substitute for witnessing the miracle of flight firsthand.

One of the early aerial experimenters and a competitor of Wilbur and Orville Wright was Glenn Curtiss of New York. By 1910, he had mastered flight using aircraft of his own design and, recruiting pilot hopefuls, embarked on a career to

show off aviation at county fairs, Fourth of July celebrations, and old soldiers' reunions across the nation.

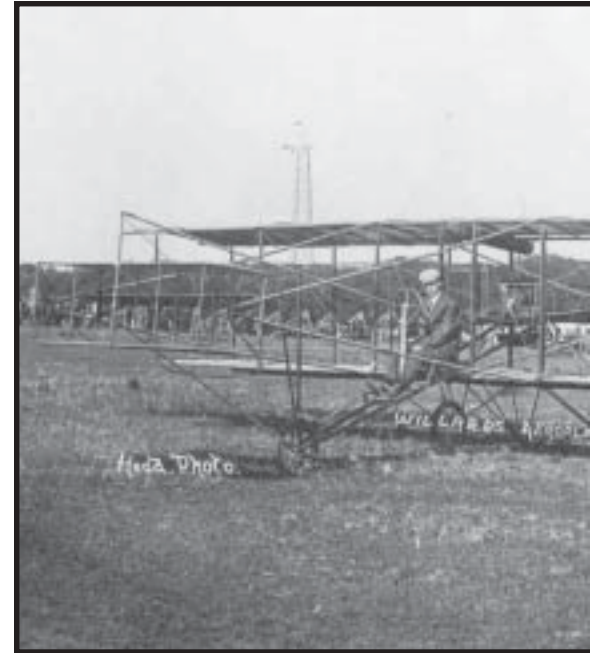
A young Charles F. Willard turned out to be one of Curtiss' most promising students. He was given a short briefing about the operation of an airplane, then turned loose to learn by trial and error. The previous student having wrecked one of the machines prior to his first flight, Curtiss admonished Willard, "Don't go too high, just up and land; and for God's sake, don't break it up again. It is not all paid for." During late 1909, Willard became an accomplished pilot and a valuable member of the Curtiss Exhibition Company.

The debut of American aviation took place in January 1910, at the nation's first aerial meet held at Dominguez Field, Los Angeles, California. Noted aviators from around the world, including Curtiss and Willard, converged for the public extravaganza of aerial feats. At the conclusion of the meet, Curtiss arranged for Willard to make exhibition flights at towns along the return

rail trip to New York. One of the scheduled stops was in Oklahoma City, where promoters had hired the Curtiss Exhibition Company to stage flights over the course of several days.

Oklahoma newspapers described the aircraft to be used in the exhibition as the "Golden Flyer," so named for its golden yellow silk covering and the orange shellac applied to the struts. Advanced for the period, the 550-pound biplane had a wingspan of 29 feet with a 4-foot 6-inch chord. The power plant developed 22 horsepower at 1,300 rpm, for a mind-boggling airspeed of 30 mph. The control system was of the Curtiss control-yoke-type, in which the ailerons were actuated by the pilot leaning against a shoulder yoke in the direction of the intended turn. Turning a steering wheel operated the rudder, and pitch was controlled by pushing forward and aft on the wheel column.

As was standard practice during the Exhibition Era, Willard arrived in Oklahoma City by train in early



**Charles F. Willard with the Curtiss "Golden Flyer" on May 28, 1910. Apparently Joplin was still in the time, he had apparently repaired the craft. Photo courtesy of the Capitol Hill Library, Oklahoma City.**

March 1910. It was quickly determined that the intended exhibition site, Oklahoma City fairgrounds--the present site of Douglass High School-- was inadequate, so another location was selected on state land at SW 26th and Hudson, where the Capitol Hill Library now stands. A tent hanger was erected and Willard and his assistants began to uncrate and assemble the aircraft.

Oklahomans were less than impressed by the goings on. As skeptical as the rest of the country, they took a wait-and-see attitude and declined to purchase advance tickets to view the flights. Instead, many stood atop distant rooftops, while others attempted to watch from a distance. This prompted promoters to erect a temporary board fence to keep the non-paying public away.

According to newspaper accounts, for the first two days, March 18 and 19, engine trouble and high Oklahoma winds kept Willard from



**"Start 'em out early in the correct ways and they will grow up right!" That's Amanda Mages, daughter of Doug and Rebecca Mages, volunteers on the CAF "Diamond Lil" maintenance team. Photo by Tom Voytovich.**



**Charles F. Willard in 1909**

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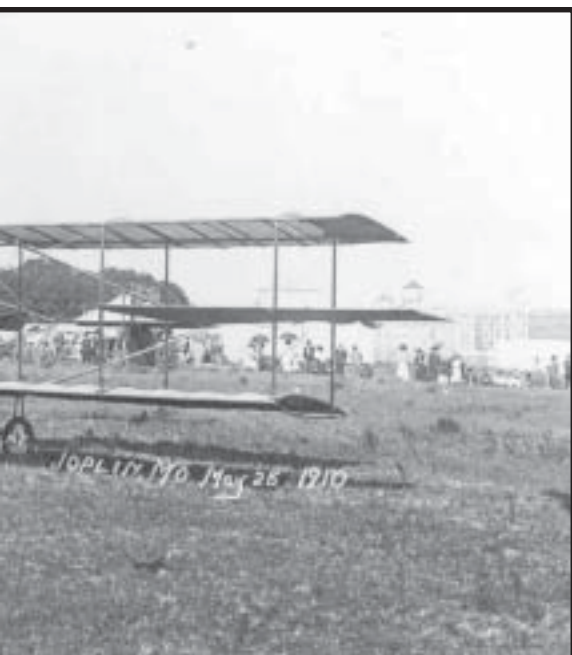
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# Charles F. Willard Flight In Oklahoma City



**"Golden Flyer," as it appeared in Joplin, MO as the next stop on Willard's tour. By that time following its crash in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma City.**

arrest non-paying onlookers.

On the third day, March 20, the wind abated. Willard started the engine and made a careful final check before beginning his ground run. After a short takeoff roll, the aircraft lifted into the air and flew several hundred yards. A second attempt brought an even longer flight, but the third ended in a splintering crash, though Willard escaped serious injury. Willard loaded his broken machine into its crates and soon departed.

Even though manned powered flight had taken place in Oklahoma, reviews were mixed. Some newspapers gave forth with at least reserved accolades combined with a "they still have a long way to go" tone. Not understanding the limitations of early aircraft and the effect Oklahoma winds had on them, others harshly noted that "Willard failed to deliver the goods."

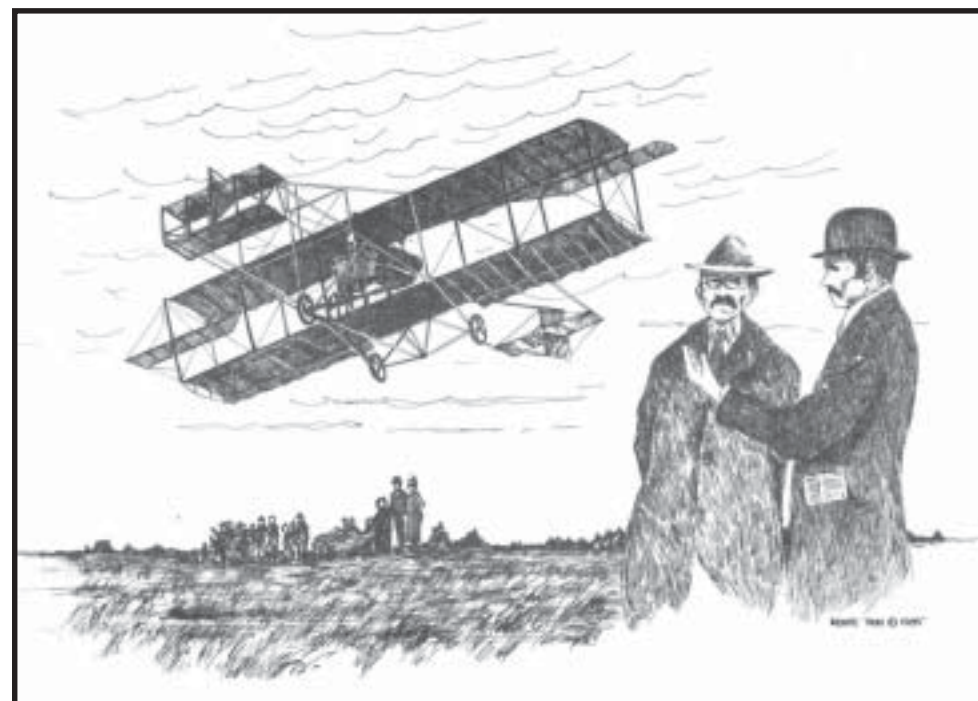
It was an inauspicious start to what turned out to be an exciting era in Oklahoma aviation. With the rapid advancement of airplane design and performance, by the First World War exhibition flying was standard fare at public events across the state. Some Oklahomans them-

selves joined in, including Clyde Cessna of Enid and Billy Parker, later to lead aviation and aviation fuel development for Phillips Petroleum. The exciting antics of these early pioneers also inspired future aviators, including Oklahoma's own Wiley Post.

Willard went on to become the chief engineer for Glenn Martin, and designed flying boats with Glenn Curtiss. Willard stayed involved in aviation until his death in

1977 at age 94.

On May 21, 1960, Willard came back to Oklahoma City for a ceremony in which a bronze plaque describing his 1910 flight was placed on the side of the Capitol Hill Library. The plaque is still there. Willard was joined by Oklahoman aviators Burrell Tibbs and Horace Keane, all of whom were members of the Early Birds of Aviation-- pilots who soloed prior to December 17, 1916.



**Monte Toon's drawing depicting Charles F. Willard's flight in Oklahoma City.**

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# Calendar of Events

For a free listing of your event, email us at [oklaaviator@earthlink.net](mailto:oklaaviator@earthlink.net) or call 918-457-3330. To allow time for printing a publication, try to notify us at least two months prior to the event.

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE	CONTACT	DETAILS
1st Thursday	Dinner Meeting- Oklahoma Pilots Assoc dinner and meeting	Wiley Post Airport, Oklahoma City, OK	Helen Holbird- 405-942-6308	
1st Saturday 7:30AM-10:00AM	Fly-In Breakfast- Ponca City Aviation Boosters Club	Ponca City Airport, Ponca City, OK	Don Nuzum- nuzum@poncacity.net Bruce Eberle- 580-762-5735	Held rain or shine
1st Saturday	Aerobatics	Claremore Municipal Airport Claremore, OK	Sheri McKenzie 918-343-0931	Go to Ponca City for breakfast, then come to Claremore for hamburgers and aerobatics!
2nd Tuesday 6:30PM	Meeting- Women In Aviation	Spartan School of Aeronautics Jones/Riverside Airport, Tulsa	Laura Yost- 918-850-1499	
2nd Tuesday	Meeting- Spirit of Tulsa Squadron- Commemorative Air Force (formerly the Confederate Air Force)	Tulsa Technology Center Jones/Riverside Airport, Tulsa	Jim Dagg 918-224-6293	Restoring 1942 PT-19. Hangar space and workers needed
2nd Tuesday	Meeting- EAA Chapter 24	Aviation Tech Center OKC Airport	Martin Weaver- 405-376-5488 pacer31a@earthlink.net	Start 7:00PM
2nd Wednesday 7:30PM	Meeting- Tulsa Cloud Dancers Balloon Club	Contact Frank Capps	Frank or Cheri Capps- 918-299-2979 aerosportballoon@hotmail.com	
2nd Thursday 7:00PM	Meeting- EAA Chapter 1005	Ada Municipal Airport Ada, OK	Terry Hall 580-436-8190 or adairprt@wilnet1.com	Call or email for exact location for monthly meeting. We occasionally meet off airport.
2nd Thursday 7:00PM	Meeting- Oklahoma Windriders Balloon Club	Metro Tech Aviation Career Center, Oklahoma City, OK	Ron McKinney- 405-685-8180	For all balloon enthusiasts
2nd Saturday	Fly-In Lunch Meeting Kerr County Aviation Association	Poteau Municipal Airport Poteau, OK	Brian Hoggett- 918-647-4719	
3rd Saturday	Meeting- Green Country Ultralight Flyers Organization (GCUFO)	Call 918-632-6UFO for location and details	Bill Chilcoat- 918-827-6566	
3rd Sunday	Tulsa Cloud Dancers Balloon Flight	Contact Frank Capps for time/location	Frank or Cheri Capps- 918-299-2979 aerosportballoon@hotmail.com	
3rd Monday	Meeting- IAC Chapter 10	Contact Joe Masek for time/place	Joe Masek- 918-596-8860 jmasek@tulsacounty.org	
3rd Monday 7:30PM	Meeting- EAA Chapter 10	Gundy's Airport, Owasso, OK	Bhrent Waddell- 918-371-5022 bwaddell@tulsa.oklahoma.net	
3rd Tuesday	Green Country Women in Aviation Meeting	Spartan School of Aeronautics Jones/Riverside Airport, Tulsa, OK	Dena Schafer - 918-831-5337	Men and women supporting women in aviation
3rd Thursday 7:00PM	Meeting- EAA Chapter 323	Sherman Municipal Airport Sherman, TX	Billy Dollarhide- 903-868-7609 dollarhide@ti.com	For more information, visit our website: <a href="http://www.eaa323.org">www.eaa323.org</a>
Saturday following 3rd Monday	Pancake Breakfast- EAA Chapter 10	Gundy's Airport, Owasso, OK	Bhrent Waddell- 918-371-5022 bwaddell@tulsa.oklahoma.net	
4th Tuesday 7:00PM	Tulsa Chapter 99s Meeting	Robertson Aviation, Jones/Riverside Airport, Tulsa*	Charlene- 918-838-7044 or Frances- flygrl7102@aol.com	*Unless otherwise planned. All women pilots including students are welcome to attend.
4th Thursday 7:30PM	Meeting- Vintage Airplane Association Chapter 10	South Regional Library, 71st & Memorial, Tulsa, OK	Charles Harris- 918-622-8400	
Mar 3-Mar 14	Registration for Spring II 2003 Term	Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University- Oklahoma City	Russ Tresner - 405-739-0397 or oklahoma_city_center@cts.db.erau.edu	Call or email for more info or to get your name on our mailing list.
Mar 17 7:00AM-7:00PM	Trip to the Kansas Cosmosphere Tulsa Air & Space Museum	Hutchinson, KS	Loretta Jones- 918-834-9900	
Mar 20-22	14th Annual Women in Aviation Conference	Cincinnati Convention Center Cincinnati, OH	386-226-7996 <a href="http://www.wiai.org">www.wiai.org</a>	
Mar 21	Tulsa Engineering Challenge Tulsa Engineering Society	Tulsa Technology Center Jones-Riverside Campus Tulsa, OK	Scott Phillips- 918-760-1875	For 7th & 8th graders. Bridge building with toothpicks, airplane building.
Mar 21 10:00AM-5:00PM	Spring Break Friday "Weather" or Not To Fly!	Tulsa Air & Space Museum 4130 E. Apache, Tulsa, OK	Kathy Holecek- 918-749-4350 or cell 918-798-7079 Email: Holecek@cox.net	Introducing a new exhibit that will educate the community about the importance of weather forecasting for pilots
Mar 29 8:00AM-11:00AM	Wild Onions & Eggs Fly-In Breakfast	Tenkiller Airpark (44M) Cookson, OK	John Sevier- 918-457-4183 jsclyde@aol.com	
Mar 29 6:00PM-11:00PM	M.A.S.H. Dinner, Dance, & Auction Fundraiser Tulsa Air and Space Museum	7130 E. Apache Tulsa, OK	Katheryn Pennington 918-834-9900	
Apr 2-8	EAA Sun 'n Fun Fly-In	Lakeland, FL	863-644-2431 <a href="http://www.sun-n-fun.org">www.sun-n-fun.org</a>	
Apr 6-8	Annual Spring Convention Oklahoma Airport Operators Association	Lake Texoma State Park Resort Kingston, OK	Debra Coughlan- 918-838-5018	Our theme is "Oklahoma Airports doing it Wright!"



# Lee Fish, Pioneer Aviator

continued from p. 1.



**Lee Fish with his restored 65-hp Velie-powered Monocoupe.**

tention, but because of genuine interest and an abiding passion for life.

In 1928, Fish made a five-month 6,000-mile trip in a 1923 Ford Model-T from Oklahoma City north to Canada, west to California, and south to Mexico. For much of the trip, he traveled over unimproved trails, camping beside the road. Near Yuma, AZ, he found himself negotiating a mountain pass at night on a dirt road notched out of the side of a mountain, with a sheer cliff just inches away from his wheels. As darkness approached, his headlights failed; however, he had a flashlight with wires that he could attach to the Model-T electrical system.

"Man, that saved my life that night. I tied the flashlight to the right hand fender and connected it to the magneto. As you probably know, the T-Model did not have a battery. But when you were going slow, the voltage would be low and the flashlight so dim you could barely see it. It furnished me enough light to drive

30 miles off the mountain pass that night."

He pulls the flashlight and an ignition coil from the Model-T out of his well-worn briefcase to show me. He also shows me his Eastman Kodak No. 2 Folding Automatic Brownie camera, which he bought in 1925 and which he carried in his hip pocket for many years, documenting many adventures.

Later, in the Mojave Desert, a sandstorm clogged his engine, freezing two connecting rods to the crankshaft. "I pulled over to side-- couldn't see much over 100 feet, the sand was coming in so fast and hard. There I was, all by myself. It was 2:00 in the afternoon when the storm was over, and I knew I'd have to overhaul the engine. I had a few tools, so I took the head off, drained the oil, and took the pan off. I knew I was in bad shape, so I walked to the nearest town-- I don't know, several miles-- and picked up a couple of connecting rods and pistons. Then I walked back, slipped the old connecting rods and pistons out, and put the new ones in. Course, the pistons didn't quite fit right-- I didn't have anything to ream the ridge off the top of the cylinders. Well, anyway, when I got it back together, it was too tight to crank. The next morning, a man came by driving a Mormon automobile-- did you ever hear of a Mormon car? I flagged him down and said, 'You know, I'm in a bad spot; will you push me to get it started?' It worked, but it was running on only three cylinders. I went ahead and drove it 150 miles to the LA suburbs. On some of those hills, I had to go in low gear. You know, when you are young, you just accept it."

In 1931, Fish bought a basket case 65-hp Velie-powered Monocoupe for \$125 and, with the help of other pilots, rebuilt and flew it regularly. Aviation in the late 20s and early 30s was an amazing mix of technological advancement, record setting,

and circus-like barnstorming exhibitions. Fish recalled the story of Roy Hunt, a pilot he knew who, along with his wife, barnstormed in a Jenny. One of them would fly the airplane and the other would crawl out to the end of the lower wing and jump to another Jenny flying alongside, catching the wooden bow mounted on the bottom of the lower wing. On their last flight, however, one of the airplanes hit an updraft just as Hunt's wife jumped and she missed, falling to her death. Said Fish, "After that, it seemed like he just lost all respect for airplanes-- he would go out and do crazy stuff. It looked like he was trying some way to commit suicide."

Fish flew with many other early Oklahoma aviators, including Burrell Tibbs, Sam Coffman, Benny Griffin, Miles Westfall, Wiley Post, and others. He was present in 1933 when Wiley Post returned from his solo flight around the world.

Besides aviation, Lee Fish was interested in many other things. As a Boy Scout in high school, he developed an interest in radio, earning a merit badge in electricity and getting an amateur radio license. After he graduated from high school in 1923, Fish built a transmitter, receiver, and antenna system of advanced design that allowed him to transmit to Australia-- only the fifth person in the U.S. to do so. Shortly thereafter, he obtained a commercial broadcasting license and worked at the predecessors of KOMA and KLPR radio stations. By the early 30s, Fish had opened a radio shop in Oklahoma City.

At about that same time, Fish buzzed a farmhouse near NW 23rd and MacArthur and saw a girl, Marvel Johnson, standing in the front yard. A few days later, he had secured a date with her and they were married two years later. They have now been together almost 70 years.

As WWII approached, Fish's skills in electronics were in demand. He set up the first radio training classes at Central High School and at Tinker Field, and worked in the Procurement Section of the Civil Aviation Agency (CAA), the forerunner of FAA. During the war, he flight checked radio and radar systems of C-47s, C-54s, C-117s, and B-17s at Tinker Field.

In the 50s, he began working as an electronics teacher at Capitol Hill High School. My father was also an Oklahoma City vocational teacher during that time. Growing up, I would hear Dad's stories about close-knit friendships with Fish, Bob Jardee (now an airport planner for the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission), and many others. Dad liked to



**Miles Westfall's homebuilt airplane project, photographed in the early 30s by Lee Fish, using his beloved Kodak Folding Automatic Brownie camera.**

kid Fish about being a "wild man" since at age 75, Fish was still riding motorcycles.

After retirement in 1969, Fish continued as a substitute teacher into the mid-90s. Mom said students really liked Fish, because they quickly found they



**Lee Fish, as a teacher in the 1950s.**

could get him telling aviation stories and thus avoid doing their assignments.

Along the way, Fish traveled all over the U.S. and much of the world, including Central Europe, Northern Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Mid-East. His love for documenting his travels never abated-- he has over 7000 slides.

Already enshrined in the Oklahoma Aviation Hall of Fame, Fish is due to be further honored by the Oklahoma Historical Society, who plan to create a permanent exhibit that will be a reproduction of the Lee Fish Radio Shop, which will include the Dodge panel truck Lee has owned for over fifty years.

Lee and Marvel fish still live in the house they built 68 years ago. Asked if he thought he had lived an unusual life, he said, "Oh, yes. You know, you have your ups and downs, but I've enjoyed my whole life, really."

An understatement I dare say. Happy birthday, Lee Fish! You inspire us to fully live and enjoy our own lives.



**Fish' Monocoupe basket case project, purchased for \$125 in western Elk City, being transported to Oklahoma City for restoration. Note the one-piece wing.**



## OAOA Spring Convention at Texoma

On April 6-8, the 17th Annual Oklahoma Airport Operators Association (OAOA) Spring Conference will be held at the Lake Texoma State Park Resort. The theme will be "Oklahoma Airports Doing it Wright."

Activities begin Sunday at noon with a golf tournament for those wishing to participate. Registration and exhibit setup will continue Sunday afternoon, followed by a welcome reception and hospitality suite Sunday evening.

On Monday presentations will be made on topics of interest throughout the day. Meanwhile, spouses may take advantage of

a local winery tour and shopping. After a late afternoon reception, a surprise evening is planned for participants.

Tuesday's schedule includes presentations during the morning, followed by an awards luncheon. After the luncheon, participants will be treated to a Lake Texoma cruise on the Virginia Belle paddleboat, followed by a reception. Later that evening, a chuckwagon cookout will be held, featuring Kent Rollins, cowboy cook and poet.

For more information, contact Debra Coughlan by phone at (918) 838-5000 or by email at [DebraCoughlan@ci.tulsa.ok.us](mailto:DebraCoughlan@ci.tulsa.ok.us)

## Wild Onion & Eggs Fly-In at Tenkiller

The Tenkiller Airpark (44M) will once again be the scene of the Annual Wild Onion & Eggs Fly-In Breakfast on March 29. This year's later-than-usual date should allow the last vestiges of winter to finally be gone and a good crop of wild onions to be available. With good weather, as many as 100 airplanes often show up.

Airpark residents and neighbors pitch in to cook up eggs, onions, potatoes, and sausage for fly-in guests.

Radio-equipped arriving aircraft should plan to contact the airport on 122.8 MHz about ten miles out for an airport advisory, then plan to enter a standard traffic pattern

for the active runway. If winds are light, landings will likely be conducted on Runway 05 (uphill), with takeoffs on Runway 23 (downhill). After landing, plan to taxi as quickly as practical to the east end of the field near the airport office; airplanes will be parked on both sides of the runway. Volunteers will be present to direct you to a parking spot.

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