

February

WITH THE WEEKDAY WARRIORS

Okay, what is with the Weekday Warriors? Granted, I was away for two weeks in January. Granted, I have been making a big push to finish a new model and thus have been spending a lot of time in the shop. Granted, the weather has been a bit cool and somewhat breezy when it hasn't been raining. But I have been down on the field a couple of times when it was sunny and very near calm and I have been alone! Okay, you are just going to have to endure one of my bits about full-size aircraft - or you could just flip to another page.

All of you WWII fans, here's a quiz for you: What navy operated two coal-burning, paddle-wheel, aircraft carriers during the Second World War? Was it a) Argentina b) Burma c) Sweden d) Nepal e) none of these. If you answered e), go to the head of the class; the United States Navy was the operator of those anachronistic vessels. The Navy needed to train fliers in carrier landings, but the Atlantic Ocean was full of German and Italian submarines which would welcome the chance to put in their 2 cents. The Pacific had its complement of Japanese subs which would be equally disinclined to butt out. So the U.S.S. Wolverine and the U.S.S. Sable plied the waters of Lake Michigan for three years, qualifying pilots from N.A.S. Glenview, just north of Chicago. They had been the former Great Lakes excursion steamers Ceenbee and Queen of Detroit which had been requisitioned, equipped with flightdecks and islands in place of their superstructures and put to work. They had no elevators, hangar decks, or catapults. The planes flew out from Glenview in the morning and were all back there by evening. Well, most of them were back at Glenview. Anybody can make a mistake and some of those mistakes left the bottom of Lake Michigan dotted with early- and mid-war Navy aircraft which had been relegated to training in the '43-'45 era. Not quite ten years ago, the Navy brought up, from 130', a Vought SB2U-2. The lake is deep, cold, and freshwater, so the Vought was not in too bad a condition. It has recently been put on display at Pensacola after its restoration and I had the pleasure of seeing it there on my recent trip to Florida. One of the first visitors was the guy who put it into the lake in the first place - after an engine failure. The SB2U was the Navy's first modern divebomber, a low-wing monoplane with retracting landing gear and an all-metal structure (albeit with a lot of fabric covering), but it had only 850 h.p. and had been almost totally replaced by the 1200 h.p. SBD by the time the war started. One Marine squadron of SB2U-3s, flying from Midway, were the only ones that got into the shooting war. On our side. Three squadrons of l'Aeronavale, the French Navy's air arm, used the export version, the Vought V157F, in the Battle of France, attacking German armored columns with little or no fighter cover. It is surprising how many of them survived until the Armistice. Note: If you are thinking of hustling out to Lake Michigan and retrieving an F4F, SBD, or similar for your very own, restrain yourself. The U.S. Navy takes a very proprietary stance on the subject of those planes. Around 15 years ago, an enterprising fellow dredged up an SBD and took it home to Indiana to work on. He didn't get far; the FBI was knocking on his door two or three days later - Theft of Government Property. The Navy takes the same attitude toward their planes at the bottom of the ocean. They were taken to court by a guy who wants to raise a TBD from the Atlantic off Florida. The restoration people rubbed their hands in anticipation of the Navy getting what was coming to it. The judge sided with the Navy.

Is it just me or have any of the rest of you noticed how we modelers seem to be at the very bottom of the scale of importance in The World's Perception of Things? Just think of all the

flying fields that have been lost to golf players, for Heaven's sake! "Kick out those fliers; we have to build another golf field to go with the other six in a one-mile radius". And last Fall, we Rubber fliers lost the stuff we've been using for motors because the golf-ball industry no longer requires that kind of rubber. Indeed, the chemical company that made the necessary additive has stopped doing so now that golf balls don't need it. A week ago there was news of another blow. There is a German fellow named Michael Selig, who made very high-quality clockwork timers for the guys who fly the 'very high-tech F.A.I. events like Nordic Glider, Wakefield Rubber, and F.A.I. Power. He has ceased production because the music-box industry no longer uses the gears he needs and nobody is interested in making them for him. It is had enough being brushed off by the golf players, but to suffer further indignities at the hands of the music-box industry -well, I ask you Isn't there something that we can stop using with catastrophic consequences elsewhere? Bringing the NFL to its knees? The NHL? Big-Time Tiddlywinks? No, I don't suppose there is. There is one ray of sunshine: No place to go but up.

C. O'D.

April

WITH THE WEEKDAY WARRIORS

RUTH LAW, UNCLE ROBBY, and the BASEBALL

Wilbert Robinson was a Major League catcher for 19 years, all but two of them in the 19th Century, and in 1914 was the manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, a post he would hold until 1931. The players called him "Uncle Robby" and genuinely liked the old New Englander even though he was not slow to proclaim his view that "they didn't make 'em anymore" the way they did when he played - not balls, bats, gloves, fields, and certainly not players.

Then, as now, Baseball had Spring Training in Florida and on one off-day, while the team was enjoying some time at the beach, Ruth Law flew over in her Curtiss Pusher, dropping golf balls as part of a promotion by Dunlop, the manufacturer. Most of the players were impressed by how far the balls dug themselves into the sand. Not so Wilbert Robinson; he was not impressed at all. The Dodgers saw an opportunity for a little mischief and it took hardly any teasing to goad Uncle Robby into declaring that he would certainly be able to catch a baseball dropped from an airplane.

It was all arranged and one morning the veteran catcher stood out on the sand, scanning the sky and punching his fist into the pocket of his old mitt. At the appointed time, the Curtiss came into view and presently a dark object fell from it and hurtled toward the figure on the beach. Now, Robinson had been a major leaguer for 19 years and he showed that his skills had not eroded by positioning himself directly in line with the falling missile, but something went terribly wrong. Instead of settling into the deep pocket of the mitt, the sphere skittered off into his chest, knocking the wind out of him and laying him flat on the ground. With his eyes tight shut, the fallen man reached a hand up to his chest and encountered a sticky, pulpy, mass. "Oh, my God", he groaned, "It's busted my chest open. It's kilt me." He paused to draw a breath and became aware that the sounds he heard around him were not cries of horror or even murmurs of concern, but chuckles, giggles, and, yes, laughter. Opening his eyes he beheld the mangled remains of the large grapefruit the players had induced the aviatrix to drop instead of a baseball. Scrambling to his feet and brushing the mess off his shirt, Uncle Robby growled, "Wiseguys. Okay, wiseguys", and stalked off the beach. One wonders what the team workouts were like for

the next day or two, but Wilbert Robinson was far too good-natured to hold a grudge and the Dodgers had to admit that, if it had been a baseball, he'd have had it right in the pocket of that old mitt.

C. O'D.

? Month

WITH THE WEEKDAY WARRIORS

There has been, at least, some action on the weekdays of late. You'll still find some full-size stuff at the foot of the column. If, after the piece about Chuck Jenkins, you turn to another section of this newsletter - Rotogravure, Letters to the Editor, Stocks & Bonds - you'll miss it.

Jim Smith has gotten rid of a lot of his big (.25-powered) planes and is converting a lot of his .020 and .049 stuff to electric. Removing the clapped-out, reed-valve, Cox .049 from his Pitts and replacing it with a "280" electric motor brought two undoubted improvements: the 8-oz. model now weighs 14 oz. and the power is down noticeably. It has also become a bit (quite!) squirrely on takeoff, possibly because it is not accelerating as well and getting the air flowing over the rudder early in the run. Jim expresses himself as well pleased with the results and plans further conversions.

Ken Springate is back from Arizona and was tuning up a new Citabria Pro, the parasol-winged bird Champion built for a while back in the 60s. This model was built locally from a Balsa USA kit and is a bit heavy as I am told their kits tend to be. Power is an O.S. .91 4-stroke with which Ken finds the Pro underpowered. On the only day I have wit-nessed it in flight, the engine was not a paragon of reliability and quit a couple of times, once on the runway and the other time at an awkward point in the air. Ken pulled off a workmanlike deadstick landing with no damage ensuing.

Doug McWha is still working on his Beech T-34B from the Topflite kit. He did, however, have a new Sig 4-Star 60 at the strip (and in the air) on Monday (3/16). It is correct-ly (for the ERCA) overpowered with a Magnum .90. That's not really so bad. There are certain people in this club - and I will forbear to mention Steve Harris by name - who would have a 2.10 in it. The 4-Star is red all over with only a couple of white, stylized, stars on the wings and stabilizer. Doug found it hard to stay oriented on the dull, over-cast, day - "I couldn't tell if it was going this way or that way", seems to be a statement I remember hearing. There were certainly no problems evident in-close upon landing.

Charging batteries brings out the Now, Now, Now in people. Even Job would have exhibited extreme impatience if he'd been waiting for his battery to charge. Everybody wants his pack fully charged ten minutes ago, so the poor things are subjected to charge rates that would make your eyes water. Now when you charge even an 1800 mah battery at a rate that might be mistaken for the price of an F-is, it comes out rather hot and probably wondering what hit it. So dedicated Electric fliers like Jim Smith build elaborate boxes that contain the charger, the pack, and an air-condi-tioning system. Well, okay, a fan. Chuck Jenkins has a simpler approach involving an empty pickle jar, water, and a balloon. Note the low-cost aspect of it all. You can get an empty jar from any pickle lover. Water? This is Oregon; it's hard not to get water! The balloon can be snatched from any little kid who isn't paying close attention. Chuck brings into

the house the jar which has filled with water during its stay outdoors a few days, puts the battery pack into the balloon and seals the neck, drops it into the jar, and cranks up the charger 'til Hell won't have it. At the end of its ordeal, the pack comes out of the jar cool.

I recently finished reading a book about Latécoere, a French aeroplane manufacturer. As the book ran down to the dull, uninteresting, stuff - you know, jets and missiles - I came across a section headed "Les Engins Postaux". This means, literally, "The Postal Missiles", leading one to believe that La Poste, the French Postal Service, had a scheme to deliver the mail by guided missile. I read on to see just what sort of missile would get such a name. La Poste had a scheme back in the 60s to deliver the mail by guided missile. The routes were Paris-Marseille-Bordeaux-Paris and they figured it would be an economical proposition with at least a 60% capacity. It wasn't quite as loony as it sounds. Laté had been building missiles for the French Navy and they had been getting surprising accuracy and reliability with them. Furthermore, the ones they built for training had a recovery system of chutes and airbags which had been working marvelously. The idea had the backing of a lot of bigwigs ("But not all!", said the author in a footnote.) but the project foundered on the subject of money. It wasn't too expensive - it was just that everything was too expensive right at that time and lots of more pedestrian projects fell by the wayside as well.

Just the other day, I finished a book about the B-32. It takes a diehard WWII fan to remember the poor B-32. Meant to be second Very Long flange bomber alongside the B-29, it was plagued by so many mechanical troubles that it was only just being delivered to the Army for testing when the 29 had been in action for six months. The absolute first one to be delivered for testing suffered a nosewheel collapse upon arrival which distorted the fuselage so badly that the plane was scrapped right there. Aerodynamically, it was a gem with excellent low-speed handling and it was a very steady bombing platform. Only three ever dropped bombs on the enemy, flying a dozen missions from the Philippines. They moved on to Okinawa and were joined by six more, but the war ended before they flew any further combat. Only 118 were built, including a group of forty TB-32s which were pure trainers. The last eighteen off the assembly line flew straight to storage fields to await scrapping. And thus did the B-32 sink into obscurity.

C. O'D.