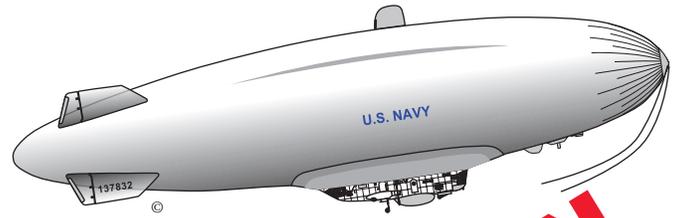


THE

NOON



BALLOON



The Official Publication of THE NAVAL AIRSHIP ASSOCIATION, INC.

No. 109

Spring 2016



BEHOLD - THE BLIMP!



China's economy is reported to be having an effect on the West's stock market these days. We can only hope widening Chinese interest in all things LTA will provide some inspiration on this side of the Pacific as well. As seen in these images lifted from the internet, Chinese have built and flown aerostats that appear to be clones of those of TCOM and have developed a boat-like car for a hot-air airship. At least two distinct models of more conventional non-rigid airships are also seen, with what appear to be different payload module configurations. Making headlines in the aerospace West was their high-altitude airship achievement (See "China Rising" inside). At least one press release was illustrated with a retouched old Lockheed-Martin graphic, while display models and computer-generated graphics (below) show some design cues from both L-M California's ISIS (topside solar cells) and L-M Akron's HAA prototype, with a nod to the 1902 French PAX of centerline thrust fame. While Americans have stumbled and canceled various high-altitude airship programs, the Chinese claim to be making progress in this challenging application. About the only thing the Chinese have not visibly pursued - at least as of this writing - is the hybrid airship.

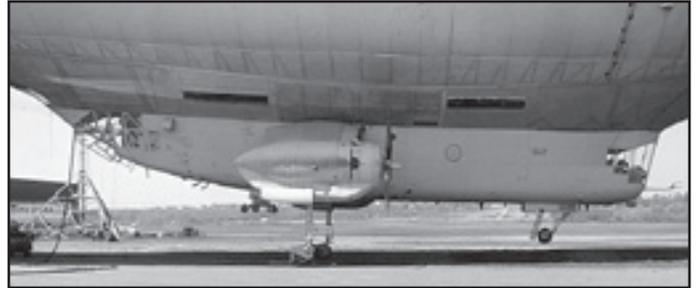


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Accept that some days you're the pigeon, and some days you're the statue. ☺

On the Cover: The ZPG-2 as seen from the fleet oiler she's about to drop a fuel hose pull line down. Given to Ed. at a NAA reunion by the tanker's crewman, neither he nor others have any specifics about the image... do you?



THE NOON BALLOON
Newsletter of the NAA
Volunteer Staff

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All material contained in this newsletter represents the views of its authors and does not necessarily represent the official position of the Naval Airship Association, Inc., nor its officers or members.

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EDITORIAL

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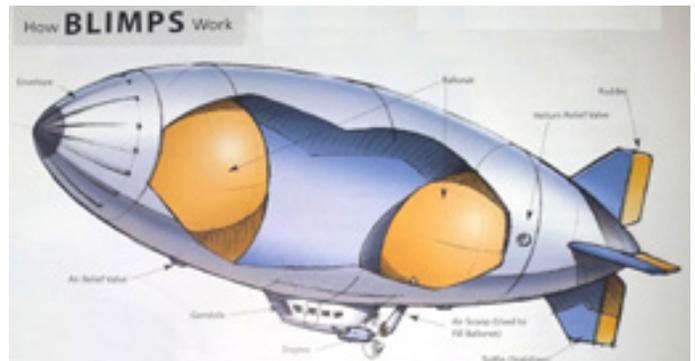
If you've hesitated at renewal time, pondering the question if we are actually accomplishing anything by being dues-paying, supporting members, you are not alone. Our membership is comprised of individuals with wide-ranging and passionate interests, not at all in lock-step. Collectors after that rare Zeppelin saucer and teacup can at best tolerate advocates of modern LTA technology. Men reminiscing about their younger, happier days skip over the technical presentation explaining some theoretical concept to get to the nostalgic sections. Others trying to maintain historical artifacts in educational displays have little use for reports on hybrids' progress toward profitability.

Understandably there have been instances of renewal refusals based on the magazine not containing this or that. Likewise, some find an excuse to quit when the magazine seems to promote something unworthy just because it's news; or, the publishing of a politically incorrect but fact-based revision of a long-held belief.

The Editor's job involves walking a bit of a line to try and balance these diverse passions - searching for the 50-50 mix of news and nostalgia, of theory and experience. Many members appreciate the challenge; some try to help with timely submissions. (I can usually quell grouching by welcoming their writing and submission of the missing or alternate viewpoint material. Like me, they would much rather just *read* the magazine than have to *build* it, especially day by day to avoid the quarterly deadline panic.) Does someone have to be the editor? I suppose we'll know the answer to that question if I have to ask for relief.

First enamored with the flying carrier rigids, I also came to appreciate the larger contributions of all Naval and other airships. This led to my learning video editing to produce an airship history series, and building a publishing system to bring LTA titles to those who would read them. Also editing these pages since issue #70, I feel I have done about as much as anyone to promote LTA. But, was/is that enough?

As I have told those who read this page, we are struggling to build a role-playing "hook-on" airplane as a step towards making a big-screen movie. "ZRS" will be a science-fiction-like work that would use modern computer graphics to show what might have been in WWII, to get people thinking and asking questions. Meanwhile, a book entitled "How Stuff Works" recently came to hand and, striking a chord with me, got me to re-think our textbook project:



The text with this graphic reads in part: "Inside the envelope are one or two smaller balloons, filled with air rather than helium. Because air is heavier than helium, the ballonets are deflated or inflated with air to make the blimp lighter or heavier." Sounding logical, the unsuspecting person could not know how wrong it is. (Why don't we just pump in more air for more weight, or better yet, compress the helium?)

Where does one go to find out how the airship really works? If the NAA survives long enough, we will have told all the great stories, exposed all the formerly classified records, and perhaps even have museum preservation of a decent spread of representative LTA artifacts. Yet I honestly believe the most important thing is yet to be finished. We should continue to work toward building the definitive LTA textbook, completing the translation of the German first printing, and adding new theory and experience for a new English printing. Two members have already submitted chapters. If you think this is a good idea and want to help, please let me know.

– Richard G. Van Treuren

View From The Top: PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We have weathered some NAA business issues and my heart valve replacement procedure was a success since my last message. Planning for the 2016 Pensacola Reunion/Conference is proceeding and it looks to be an interesting event. Registration info and menu selection choices for the banquet will be sent under separate cover to every member so as not to confuse inserts in the Noon Balloon. We sincerely hope that we have a good turnout for this event as much effort has been put into making this a successful and worthwhile event.

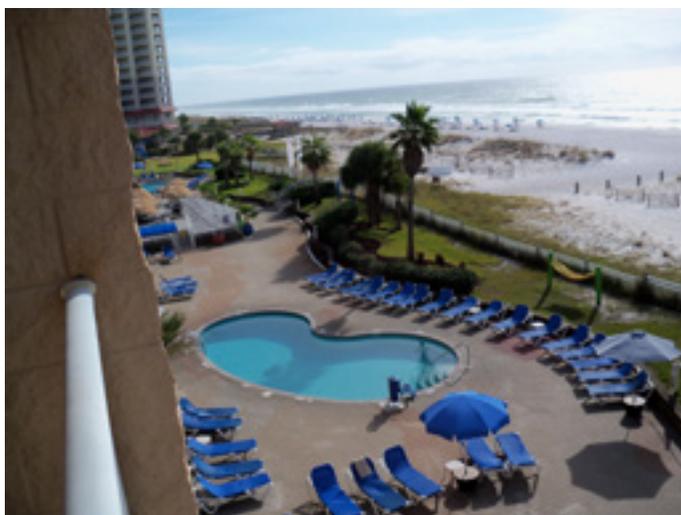
As I am writing this we are in the midst of receiving membership renewals. As I have written before, I am very encouraged with the amount of renewals that include an extra donation or multiple year renewal. As a non-profit association we depend upon renewals and Small Stores sales for our income. Our biggest expenses are The Noon Balloon and the Reunion/Conference. Donations, large and small, help us maintain our low membership fee, publish the finest airship magazine in the world and supplement our Reunion/Conference expenses. We are most grateful for all of you who donate. Yet, we still need to come up with some new ideas to attract new members. We have a lot to offer and the next few years look to be very exciting for the NAA as we have a number of activities planned and have been in contact with other similar mission veteran groups about some joint activities. More on this as things develop. Ross Wood is busy working with the nominating committee to present a slate of candidates for election at the Reunion/Conference. It is not an easy task and much credit goes to Ross and his committee for all their work.

We began the process of expanding our web page on past presidents and Bo Watwood has done a fine job in posting some bios and photos of our past presidents. We still need info and a good photo, in uniform or casual, for some past presidents. Specifically, past presidents L. Prost, W. Moore, F. Kleinberg, H. Biedebach, and M. Eppes. Anyone with any info to offer on these gentlemen, please contact me. We have Herm Spahr's and Bob Ashford's info and photos to be posted.

I have also started the process to have an LTA Hall of Fame on the website. As the name indicates, we want to recognize those individuals that played a major role in establishing LTA.



We are fortunate to have had some important people in this country that made significant contributions to Navy LTA and LTA worldwide. Some were, or still are, NAA members. I have contacted a couple of volunteers to serve on a screening committee and will be posting info on this in upcoming Noon Balloons. We will be sending out an info packet to every member with relevant info and application and will be posting a nominating form on the website for anyone wanting to nominate someone to our Hall of Fame. As I stated earlier, the initial goal is to induct four to six people at the 2016 Reunion/Conference and two to four every Reunion/Conference after that.



Thank you for your continued support. Let's see everyone in Pensacola!

– Fred Morin, President

TREASURER'S STRONGBOX



This past year has been good for the NAA. While we picked up a few new members, a number of our members have also Completed Their Careers. Our Treasury has grown a little with the generous donations, you, our Members, have given, 47 donations totaling \$1,320. Thank you one and all for your continued and extra support.

Last year we instituted the multi-year membership structure. Many of you took advantage of the premium offer of a DVD of choice as a Thank You bonus.

Thank you also for patronizing our Small Stores catalog. Small Stores sales have been good and 2015 sales were \$1195. Dave Smith took over this job from Donna Forand as of May 1st, 2015. Dave has added some new products, so be sure to check out the mailer that was sent with your renewal request!

So far, as of February 10, 2016, we have had 285 renewals plus the two-year renewals from last year. Timely renewals allow us to set budgets for the year and plan. We did not have to transfer any funds from savings into checking this past year to cover the expenses of the Noon Balloon, postage, or other expenses. Thank you to all who renewed on time!

As of today, February 10th, 2016, we have \$9,928.80 in checking and \$20,313.04 in savings plus \$100 in our Reunion Event account.

If you have a question about Membership or if I didn't get something right, please email me at deborah_v@cfl.rr.com or call me and I will do my best to square it away!

Up Ship!

– **Debbie Van Treuren, NAA Treasurer**

PIGEON COTE



Member Leandro Miranda reported, "I have attached a picture of me on Cabo Frio Island trying to find the wreckage of the K-36. Note, with the forest closed. On 10/14/15 I made my first attempt to get to the crash site, complex due to very closed and no more precise references the crash site found nothing. Just arrived at my house, The Noon Balloon No. 107. Pretty cool the material on the K-36; let's wait for someone to answer. In my research I came to the names of K-36's crew. I wonder if you would like to identify the full names and their functions?"

Batholf, Joseph, Lt (jg)
Ens. R. W. Widdicombe
Ens. E. H. Jones
Barnes, R.J. BM1c
Carino, J. E. AMM2c, USNR
Peters, J. A. ARM2c, USNR
Ivin, H. C. AMM3c, USN
Bacho, F. ARM3c, USNR
Ford, G. B. AMM3c, USNR

History Chair Mark Lutz did some more research and forwarded it to Leandro, but members who have any knowledge of the subject are encouraged to chime in. Ed. contacted member James Plumber, who explained Bos'n Mates fulfilled many duties, answering the question of how common this seemingly blackshoe rate would have been doing as a K-ship crewman. Ω

Alastair Reid forwarded this link showing original film of the German Navy Zeppelin L35 in its 1919 world: <http://www.filmportal.de/video/mit-l35-ueber-berlin-und-Potsdam> Ω

Joyce Tuggle, daughter of the late William Damon Tuggle (See Black Blimp) sent along his holy card, which shows the devotion to the memory of his USN LTA service, and his service record card. Ω



Some members discussed a memory of a certain LTA training film; Ed. chimed in, “our team had long ago raised the money and paid for transfers of all the training films we were able to find in NARA, Rosendahl collections, etc. These offered in our two DVDs: “Navy Blimp Training,” which has sound, and “Airship Handling” which has some sound, but the Nan-ship portion is hard to hear and the rest was silent anyway.” Don Morris e-mailed, “I well remember our training films at NAS Glynco at Brunswick, GA. One of them showed some sailors who hung onto the airship ropes and were swept up into the air. (As I remember three of them then dropped to their death).” Don included a link to a film he’d put together, which included his home movies of a ZPG at-mast deflation.

Ed. responded, “In my book, “Airships vs. Submarines,” I devote a sub-chapter to how memory can be a tricky thing, and give some examples of people quoting LTA memories that aren’t actually possible. So let’s be sure before we launch a search: If there was a training film that discussed what to do if you found yourself being hauled aloft (besides letting go when you feet leave the ground) we would surely like to hear more details, with the possible hope we could somehow find a copy somewhere. I think it more likely you saw the often-replayed famous newsreel of the USS *Akron*’s botched mooring attempt in California in 1932. I have the full story and reels in our DVD “The Flying Carriers” including the how / why, and how Bud Cowart survived.”

Don insisted, “The training film about the men holding onto the airship lines was shown as we went through Airship Pilot Training at Glynco, Georgia... Another three-part video may be the talk I gave at a Military Order of the World Wars Meeting, about my

time in airships at Lakehurst from 1954 to 1957:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQlOt9aPriE>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pRCZ2Vij-Do>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeUg4vKXpcY>

Ed replied, “Thanks Don, Those links show us something about today’s twittersphere, rather cheeky of the outfit to watermark film that came from the public domain. Of course I object to these snippets of shock without explanation of the missteps that lead to the tragedy, but that’s the internet’s nature, catering to human nature. When the LZ-126 did its “nose stand” the CO, Rosendahl, ran around and collected all the cameras and confiscated the film snapshotting the “event.” (Either he missed some or they were eventually leaked, as they are public domain today.)

Likewise the newsreel cameramen that were on hand to record the *Akron*’s arrival in California were not immune to the Navy’s desire for damage control, hence Bud Cowart’s supervised, coached (if not scripted) response to later questions. So whether or not the Navy obtained copies of the film(s) then by agreement, or later, a rough cut of at least one of the resulting reels wound up with the Navy Photographic Center. Since the NPC footage was donated to the National Archives, it is difficult for lawsuits to succeed in claiming copyright, hence it being considered public domain. So this leads me to believe that since the Navy had the film in its system, it could very well have been shown as a warning to sailors long after there were no longer “spider” lines with their toggles to hang on to (or to support your weight, as clever and properly positioned Bud Cowart did).

However, I have not seen that this material was re-cut and inserted in a titled, sound-added training film per say. The half-dozen or so training films we have located and put on DVD contain no newsreel footage. (In contrast, Rosendahl’s “History of the Rigid Airship” contains both newsreels and movie clips, i.e. “Victory at Sea,” and believe it or not I have seen TV producers go back and pay MGM handsomely for using snippets from “Hell Divers” even though the clips are arguably public domain used in a Navy “training” film.) Best wishes.”

If anyone has specific knowledge of such, or any other Navy LTA training film other than the ones we’ve located, please let us know. Ω

Gary Coleman e-mailed, "I've been a member of NAA for quite some time. My Dad was a Naval Aviator, and flew airships out of Akron and Lakehurst, which got me interested with airships as a kid. Dad passed on a few years back, but my interest continues. The Udvar Hazy Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum aircraft restoration group has an airship gondola that they want to restore. It started life as a Goodyear promotional airship, and was reassigned to the Navy as L-5, and later returned to Goodyear where it became the *Columbia*."



I've been able to find a little bit of information about its life in some of Shook's books and some Goodyear books I have in my collection, but not the sort of thing that can help much with the restoration. Photos of the insides of the gondola, flight manuals, maintenance manuals, or even articles from the Noon Balloon that might help them out? I don't think they have decided whether they want to restore it to any particular stage of its life, and I suspect that the kind of information we can find will help determine what they can do. I'll be glad to write up something for the Noon Balloon if you think it might be interesting to the other members. (Mark Lutz, Mort Eckhouse, George Diemer and Ed. all responded, but other members are encouraged to contact Gary with any L-5/*Columbia* information. We're looking forward to the results from Gary.) Ω

Continuing the discussion of the now-popular pursuit of helium pressurization, "Red" Layton e-mailed, "I have my misgivings about airborne helium pressurization, but I am 'not so sure about being not so sure'. When I started at the Naval Postgraduate School, it was located in Annapolis, MD, and I had to go to Lakehurst to get my required monthly flight time. On one trip I was assigned as the Co-Pilot on a Project flight-testing a

proposed system called "Sniffer." The flight late in 1951 was on a K-ship which had a 'strongback' attached to the landing gear so that it would neither retract or have any movement of the Oleo strut on landing. In front of the landing gear was installed a metal scoop about four feet wide, two feet high and two feet fore and aft. The scoop was pointed forward so that it had an intake of the surrounding air as the airship flew. Inside was a large metal box that completely filled the car from just behind the pilots to the rear of the car with just enough room behind the box for the operator. All of the metal looked like galvanized steel. The theory was that the airship flew along at about 500 feet, continuously sampling the air. Inside the box was a water system that precipitated the carbon particles from any diesel exhaust and gave an indication on a gage as to how much carbon was detected. If a diesel plume was discovered the airship set up a slow descent pattern in an effort to stay into the plume down to the sub's snorkel.

Fast-forward eight years to 1959. I am now the Maintenance Officer in a seaplane squadron in Norfolk, VA, when I receive a call from the Fleet Air Wing Maintenance Officer informing me that a team would arrive the following week to install a new piece of ASW gear. He referred to it by its Navy designation – AN-... - but at the end of his call he told me that the popular name for this gear was Sniffer! I asked where they were going to mount the pickup and he replied that it would be on the starboard side just below the Co-Pilot's window. The processing box would go in the forward compartment just behind the radar and the meter would be mounted about the radar screen so that the Radar Operator could monitor it. When I asked if this gear had been tested on a P5M, he said that he was not aware of any such test. The team arrived and outfitted all of our P5Ms with the equipment. The pickup, which was mounted on the side of the airplane was a perforated stainless steel tube about the size of a king size cigarette! And the processing equipment was in a box about 6 inches by 10 inches by 16 inches! Talk about miniaturization!!!

More over, the equipment did not work. Imagine trying to locate what started out as a six-inch diameter plume and then spread out as it drifted down wing. Even if one located the plume, it was nearly impossible to keep it long enough to find the sub. And, if you lost contact and tried to start over, you were in a section of the atmosphere that had just had two reciprocating engines spewing carbon particles. That said, Just after I left VP-56 they were involved in the Cuban Missile affair and one of the Squadron's P2s found a Russian sub using Sniffer. Ω

Lee Corbin e-mailed History Chair Mark Lutz, "Do you happen to have any information on the Navy's portable, mobile, mooring mast system that they were using back in the 1920s and 30s? It's the system the *Shenandoah* used in 1924 during its trip across the US." Mark responded, "James Shock wrote about the *Shenandoah* expeditionary masts on page 60 in his book "American Airship Bases and Facilities" (2002). For the cross-country flight of the USS *Shenandoah* in 1924, temporary (single pole aka stick) high mooring masts were used. These masts were 160 feet high and braced by cables anchored to buried concrete blocks or deep anchors in the ground in a (circle) around the mast (The blocks were also called deadmen). These masts were erected three places: 1) Fort Worth, Texas (near the Helium plant), 2) San Diego California (North Island), 3) Camp (Fort) Lewis, Washington State. The *Shenandoah* used the Fort Worth mast twice (to and from California); the San Diego mast twice (to and from Washington state); and the Camp Lewis Washington State mast once. Later, in 1928, the *Los Angeles* moored at the Fort Worth, Texas Mast once. A high stick mast was also erected at Ewa, Hawaii, for the *Shenandoah*, but never used. (These) masts were designated as semi-portable, as they could be dismantled, transported, and easily erected. (Some) masts consisted of a 16-inch spar of steel tubing, (others) of a lattice system bolted in the field. (They were) supported in a concrete base, (and had) guy wire braces.... At the top of the masts were operating platforms for (men) to operate the mooring mechanism. A circle of 24 snatch-block anchors, at a radius of 500 feet were spaced at 15-degree intervals. (A snatch block is a heavy U-bolt set in concrete.) Floodlights illuminated each anchorage point. Extending to the top platform were: a climbing trunk, a lifting gas main, a water line, and a fuel line, and perhaps an electrical line. A machinery house at the (mast) base contained three winches, lighting panels, pumps, fuel tanks, and water tanks..." (These stick masts were based on the Lakehurst high mast built in 1922. The main difference was the Lakehurst high mast was self-supporting - no guy wires -and had an elevator in the center.) Based on the similarity to the Lakehurst high mast, these stick masts probably had flexible pipes with quick disconnects at the top, and the lifting gas main was probably 12 inch diameter. The water pipe may have been 2.5 inches in diameter, delivering 50 gallons per minute. Fuel may have been delivered by a pipe two inches in diameter, at 35 gallons per minute. Fuel and water pipe size and delivery rate are based on the Henry Ford airport airship high tower design.) Access to the (airship) was by a

gangway from the mast platform to a hatch in the bow. There was a line coming from the top of the mast which was coupled to a line from the bow; a winch at the mast base then pulled the airship tight to a mooring cup on top of the mast. You can see that these masts were only sort of portable and moveable - not something on wheels that can be towed around by a large tractor. The U.S. Navy later switched to lower masts for the *Akron* and *Macon* rigid airships. It was easier to control the ships with very heavy ground-based equipment attached to both the bow and tail. The *Shenandoah* breaking away from its high mast in a 70+ knot wind gust, and the *Los Angeles* doing a nose stand seem to have been the key drivers for the U.S. Navy low mast. Ω

Australian Phil Guilfoyle philguilfoyle@yahoo.com.au asked, "I have an interest in the Sunbeam-Coatalen "Dyak" aero engine. I am looking for information on the British Sunbeam-Coatalen Dyak engines (built around 1917 to 1923). Just in case you are unfamiliar with them - the Sunbeam Dyak was a 100HP, 8.8L, in-line, overhead cam, six cylinder, aluminum block/head and crankcase aero-engine built by Sunbeam Motor Car Co in the UK. Alec Brew, in his book "Sunbeam Aero-engines," seems to believe that up to 32 Dyaks were made but I can only confirm 16. These aero-engines were fitted to Avro 504K trainers, most of which ended up in Australia. They were also fitted in pairs to two Imperial Japanese Navy airships and an unknown number of Vickers Submarine Scout Twin (SST) airships. It appears that at least three of the SST were sent to the USA. It is unclear whether the US airships were Dyak or R-R Hawk equipped. My interest is to find out: How many SST airships were sent to the USA? Were they Sunbeam powered? What became of the airships and/or their engines? Is there a resource I could contact regarding US airships? Is it known whether Japanese engines were destroyed in the post-war demilitarization of Japan? Is there a resource I could contact regarding Japanese airships? (I have a Japanese friend to assist communications.) Do you know of any Sunbeam aero-engine parts remaining outside complete units in aircraft collections? (Known fitted to Avro 504Ks: two in Australia, one in Norway). Please see the attached link to the Airship Heritage Trust site: <http://www.airshipsonline.com/airships/Technical%20Spec/SST%20Airships.htm>

Ed. responded but had no additional info; can anyone help our friend down under? Ω

Joann McOmber sent this recent photo of her late husband Jerry (see Black Blimp). Joann and Gerald McOmber celebrated 58 years of marriage last June. Following his service in USN LTA and HTA, the McOmbers ran their own company, United Window Grilles, until retiring in 1994. Joann renewed her membership with NAA. Ω



Member Don James e-mailed, “While looking at ocean liner stills and video, I chanced to see a video posted on “YouTube” entitled RMS *Queen Mary* “Return from Europe” 1952. It is a color home movie (set to some period music by the clever poster) shot on board the QM by someone in 1952. It is 11 minutes long, and near the end of the trip it contains some great footage of a US Navy K-type (or slightly later model) blimp making a low pass over the ship. The blimp appears in a few frames at first, then the camera focuses on some surface ships nearby, and then it returns to the blimp as it apparently changes course to circle overhead of the *QM*. You have to watch past the first appearance of the airship to see the whole encounter. I thought it was a really good flyover our boys gave the folks on the *QM*, and I’m glad someone recorded it.” Ω

“Red” Layton e-mailed, “The Chapel at Naval Air Station, Lakehurst – commonly called The Cathedral of the Air” - was originally called the “Shenandoah Memorial Chapel” according to a plaque in one of its side rooms. This room is not usually seen by visitors unless you happen to be the groom waiting for the wedding to begin on the 23rd anniversary of the crash of the *Shenandoah* – 3 September 1948. Incidentally, the Chapel would make a good story for TNB. As I recall, the structure, which was supposedly modeled after a French church, was donated by the American Legion and sits on land that is not a part of the Naval Air Station. There are some fabulous stained glass windows that have to do with the history of LTA. Someone from the Lakehurst Historical Society should be able to put such an article together. Ω

George Diemer e-mailed, “At NEAM we play “The Blimp Goes to War - Again” on a DVD loop, so we in the K-28 restoration team have heard the sound track hundreds of times. About 49 minutes into the movie there is a still photo of what appears to be a blimp crew, in the segment about ZP-51 setting up operations in Trinidad. The officer third from the left in the top row appears to be labeled “Diemer” which caught my attention. Do you have any further information about the source of that photo? We don’t run into very many Diemers.”



History Chair Mark Lutz responded, “I have a spreadsheet Al Robins made. It lists 2,411 WW2 US Navy LTA officers, and 174 LTA pre-WW2 officers. Robert P. Diemer is on the list, as a Lt(jg), rank granted April, 1944. It shows Diemer assigned to BlimpHedRon 2 (NAS Richmond, Miami, I believe) 1944 and 1945. Perhaps he was an administrative officer. I would not be surprised if Diemer, as a NAS Richmond officer, visited ZP-51, or was assigned to work there temporarily during WW2. He could also have been on a crew which ferried in an airship. Diemer’s “file number” is 33406 - which may be Diemer’s Navy Officer Service Number. If so, that number should have been issued sometime 1922-1925. Not sure what to make of that. If older, he might have also served in WW1, at NAS Rockaway Beach in 1917 (which had a Blimp Hangar) - and was transferred to NAS Halifax (Canada) on 9 July 1917, perhaps to help set up that base (it was a Curtis HS-2L flying boat base) NAS Halifax was transferred to Canada right after WW1, and still operates today as CFB Shearwater. This older Diemer was born in 1893, middle name Percifor. Ω

Al Robbins wrote, "I spent two short tours in LTA before VADM Pirie managed to kill the Navy's airship program in 1961-1962. Despite frequent direction from Congress, the heavier-than-air community has successfully kept the airship community in the ash pile for the past half century.

The winter uniform for Enlisted Men still included the Flat Hat in 1953. I'd just graduated from Boot Camp, with orders to AN(P) School -Airman Preparation School at Norman, Oklahoma. It was an eight-week course that was supposed to teach new "Airdales" everything about naval aviation ratings, and the ships and aircraft (land-planes, sea-planes, amphibious aircraft and helicopters) to which we might be assigned. The course didn't even mention that the Navy operated blimps.

Fifty years later, in 2003, I presented a paper on Carolina Airships - one of the half dozen companies producing unmanned outdoor blimps - at the first AIRSHIPS TO THE ARCTIC Symposium. These early machines relied on model aircraft electronics, engines, and off-the-shelf frame and video cameras. By design, most were limited: operations less than 1,000 feet above ground level, within the controller's visual line-of-sight, gross payload less than 10 pounds, endurance less than a few hours, and maximum speed less than 40 knots.

These small companies were driven out of business when the FAA elected to prohibit any commercial use (advertising and camera work were the only source of income for the various companies that had bought one or more) of these blimps.

Carolina Airships had produced a dozen 30- to 33- foot airships before the regulatory ax fell. This was an effective death-blow for Carolina Airships because nearly all of its customers were ATPs (Airline Transport Pilots), experienced airline pilots who couldn't afford to antagonize the FAA. The FAA has finally started authorizing operation of unmanned aircraft - by exception only. Unfortunately, too late for the former blimp companies, none of the first 500 exceptions (See attachments.) apply to unmanned airships. Most of the authorized fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft are too small to be detected by manned pilots, have a few minutes endurance and an all-up-weight of a few pounds. The FAA has since issued several hundred more exceptions, to a now-thriving industry, and still plans to issue guidance, at an unspecified future

date. Perhaps even as "flying wind tunnels" capable of evaluating potential manned airships.

I use Stout's First Law, SIMPLICATE, as my e-mail address. His Second Law - ADD MORE LIGHTNESS - was too long, but equally important. The U.S. Navy had roughly three years experience with squadron-level airship operations, primarily individual airships assigned to perform one of several tasks: Ship repositioning; pilot and crew training; surface search and rescue: ship and convoy escort, and anti-submarine warfare.

An unmanned airship, wouldn't need large windows, huge "glass cockpits," crew compartments, survival equipment, and enormous - strong structure to support facilities for the 90 percentile man. Particularly important if the ship is supposed to fly at any appreciable altitude. The Navy has accepted semi-automation as state-of-the-art for large airplanes (eliminated navigators, radiomen, flight engineers, etc.) LTA not only didn't automate, we commissioned the enlisted pilots.

Unfortunately, after WW II, our Navy's senior LTA officers believed their careers had been blocked because they weren't considered "real pilots" - fixed wing pilots. No other aircraft in the Navy required 5 to 10 "pilots" per flight crew. Thus there were way too many junior officers, with no chance to develop or demonstrate leadership, except by being first to qualify as Pilot-in-Command. Ω

Francisco Redondo reports, "I have just finished the edition of the book Science and Technology between Peace and War. 1714, 1814, 1914 Ciencia y Técnica entre la Paz y la Guerra. 1714, 1814, 1914 (PDF, ePub, 1326 pp. 2 Vols.) that can be downloaded free from the section "Publicaciones de la SEHCYT" of our website (www.sehcyt.es). On the cover of both volumes you can see the drawings of "Astra-Torres XIV" airship.

Link to Vol. 1: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B78MGHYEEe2TenNTeXB0MVB0RU0/view>

Link Vol. 2: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B78MGHYEEe2TdmlKY0pHZGVaYWc/view>

There is a whole chapter on the History of Aeronautics in Spain around WWI, and three papers on the History of Aeronautics written (in English) by Dr. Giles Camplin, Dr. Edwin Mowforth, Peter Davison and Christine Camplin. The printed version (2 Vols.) will be ready soon. Ω

SHORE ESTABLISHMENTS

MANITOBA

We have our airship inflated all winter and we are monitoring it to see the impact of temperature and humidity changes on the envelope. We are keeping the pressure at atmospheric and watching the impact on the shape. I would suggest that inflatables will have serious challenges in the North. Attached is a screenshot of our airship that is set up and instrumented to observe the impact of temperature and humidity changes on the pressure and shape of the airship.



Our observations suggest that helium, which is what it is filled with now, is quite sensitive to cold temperatures. Dale and I are now completely committed to breaking the 93-year old ban on the use of H₂ in airships. We are making good progress in our studies. The problem with any lab is that the conditions never really simulate the reality that could be partial ice, snow and stones, plus, the cold air rushing through all those vents and fans. We are willing to offer to have Lockheed bring their hybrid to Winnipeg in January (any January) and do some field-testing.

– **Barry Prentice**

Dr. Prentice also sent the link in which he was interviewed on the use of transport airships for the North. The interview starts at 16:15 in the third segment of the program.

<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/popup/audio/player.html?autoplay=true&clipIds=2676153055,2676153059,2676152886>

NEW ENGLAND AIR MUSEUM



We recently got the cowlings attached around the two new P&W R-1340 AN-2 engines that were donated last year. Yesterday we attached two carburetor scoops (not shown in this photo) under the engines, and there isn't a lot of pressing restoration left. We need to make a visitor viewing platform for the starboard side of the car, so they can look in through the many windows at the restored interior. We need to clean up the work area and do some proper informational displays, as opposed to the somewhat ad hoc materials we have now. The little TV in the bottom left plays "The Blimp Goes to War - Again."

If Goodyear hadn't made the decision to try out the heavy Trans-Lux system, they may never have inflated the K-28/*Puritan*, and it might have disappeared with the other five they bought from the Navy. To some extent the K-28 restoration depended on a failed advertising experiment in 1947. [In the sign's restoration] I had been using a nice article by Mark J. Price, of the Akron Beacon Journal, as a reference about the advertising blimps. It was posted on March 10, 2014, by the LTA Society on their website: blimpinfo.com/airships/local-akron-history-blimp-innovation-was-a-flash-of-brilliance

There is a lot of good info, but there was a puzzling statement that we were having a hard time resolving. Price said, "Ten panels — each holding 182 incandescent lamps — were installed on both sides of the *Puritan*. The 18-foot letters traveled from right to left through banks of lights on a 190-foot surface. The 10 panels of 182 lights did not match any photo we had, or any configuration of the fuses in our *Puritan* panel.

They were apparently experimenting with three different types of signage — two different sizes of fixed neon, and arrays of moving incandescents. We had another photo that showed 10 letters of text across the

envelope, confirming that there was an array of 7 rows of 60 bulbs on each side of the *Puritan's* envelope, or 840 bulbs in all on both sides. That matches the count of the fuse holders in the panel that Russ has restored at the Museum. There are 120 fuse blocks, each holding 7 fuses, or 840 altogether. There were some broken and missing fuses in the *Puritan* panel, so we cut replica fuses out of 1/4 inch acrylic rod, and painted the ends silver to fill out the collection. I'd gotten a side view photo of that Trans-Lux piece of equipment from eBay.



The original fuse panel is visible in the photo, as well as the big rotor and keyboard. It was a massive item. No wonder the smaller L-class Goodyear blimps couldn't lift the system.

We came across an article from the "Wingfoot Clan," June 2, 1966, which seemed to resolve the conflicting information in the Beacon Journal article. "Saga of the Blimp Billboard Started Long Ago" also described the history of Goodyear illuminated blimps. It was not the *Puritan*, but the blimps *Mayflower* and *Columbia* that carried 10 panels of 182 lamps, in the same pattern as the previous "Neon-O-Gram" signs, but using incandescents. The *Puritan* was resurrected to carry the Trans-Lux moving message system, which was too heavy

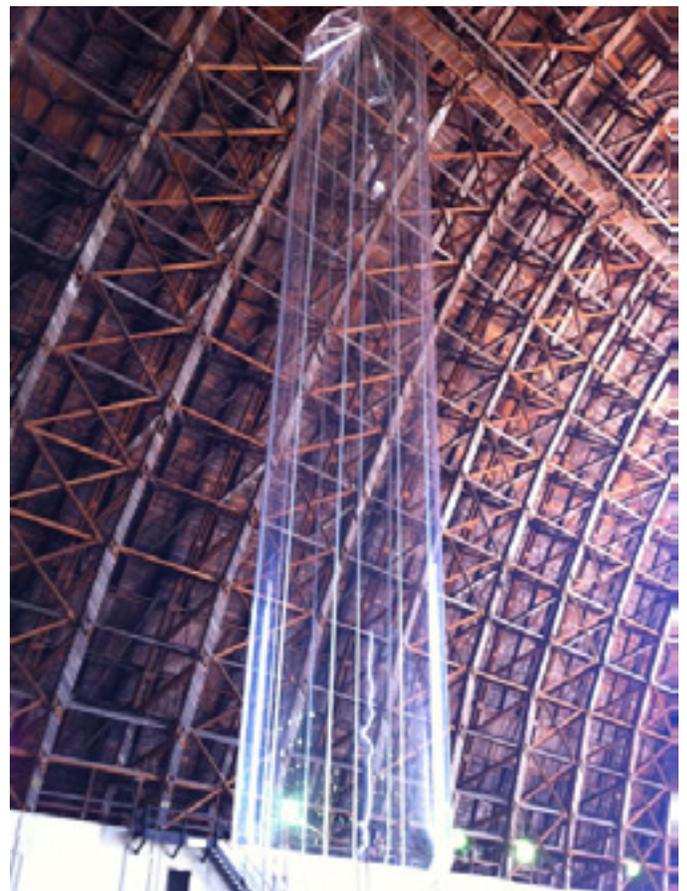


for the smaller blimps. The experiment only lasted one year, due to the cost of operating the big K-class airship.

Russ Magnuson (seated in the photo bottom left) is cleaning up the Trans-Lux fuse panel that Goodyear left in the K-28 car when they donated it to the Museum. That panel and some other Goodyear stuff were part of a system to spell out messages in incandescent lights across the envelope of the K-28 (named *Puritan* by Goodyear when they bought it back from the Navy). Russ had to take all that stuff out in order to restore the interior to Navy configuration. Now he'll put the fuse panel out as a separate display showing the brief post-war career of the K-28/*Puritan* as an advertising blimp.

– George Diemer

MOFFETT FIELD



Google's "Project Loon" (test inflation above, in one of Moffett's timber hangars) continues development and onsite testing of its balloon-based internet distribution technology. There is of course discussion of adopting hydrogen. Recently a picture surfaced of the photovoltaic panel platform that powers the equipment. Ω



AKRON



Above: John Mellberg during his presentation about the Last of the Super Zeppelins.

October 24 of last year The Lighter-Than-Air Society held its 63rd Annual Banquet and Fundraiser. This year's speaker was John M. Mellberg, an airship historian and Automotive/Vehicle Design Specialist. John's presentation *Hindenburg and Graf Zeppelin II – The Last of the Super Zeppelins* was well received and prompted a great number of questions and comments from the attendees. In his presentation he briefly touched on the LZ-128, the Zeppelin that never was (below). The LZ-128 was designed to be similar to the first *Graf Zeppelin* (LZ-127), increasing its passenger capacity from 20 to 24. Its design and production were abandoned in favor of the LZ-129 *Hindenburg* which could carry 50 passengers, initially and 72 later on. The *Graf Zeppelin II* (LZ-130) was designed to carry 40 passengers.

John's presentation included outstanding digital CAD drawings created by David Fowler of the LZ-128, LZ-129 and LZ-130. Below: Reproduction of an original LZ-128 "factory drawing" and his digital recreation of the airship's proposed design.

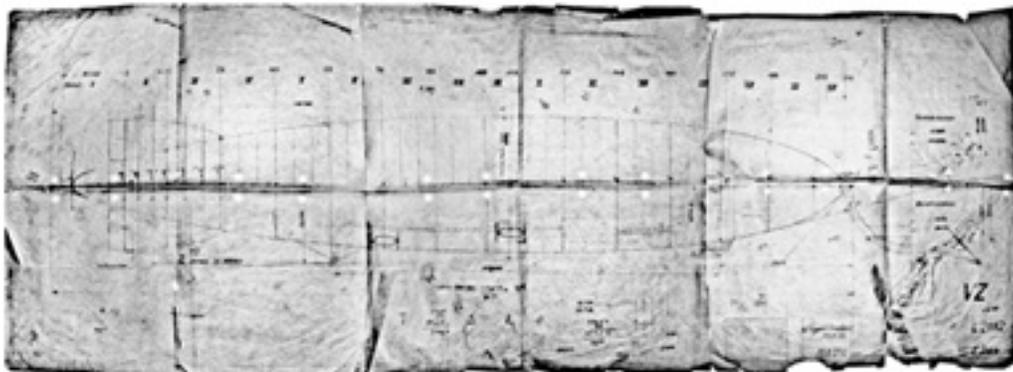
As has become customary, several LTAS members brought items from their personal collections for display at the banquet. The silent auction highlighted a tour for four people of the Akron Airdock (courtesy of Lockheed Martin), a round of golf for four at the Firestone Golf Club's South Course (courtesy of ChemStress) and pieces of girders from the USS *Akron/Macon* era mounted for display. Other items included several promotional items featuring Goodyear's new NT blimp and six-packs of Zeppelin beer.



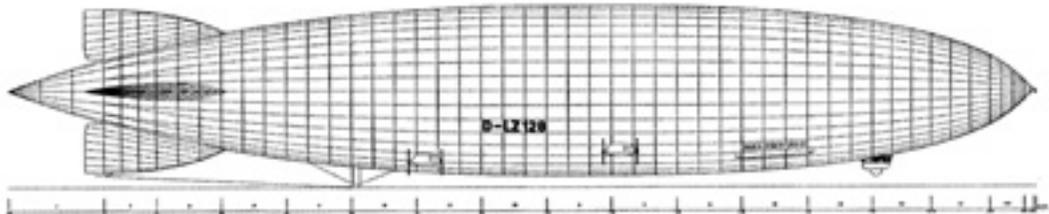
This year NAA and LTAS' David Smith was the recipient of the P. Rendall Brown Lifetime Achievement Award, in recognition of his numerous contributions to the preservation of the history and the promotion of new developments in L-T-A. (Above) Dave's award was presented by Ren Brown's daughter Carol Ault.

– Alvaro Bellon

Original 'Factory Drawing' of proposed D-LZ 128 design



Digital, recreated drawing' of proposed D-LZ 128 design





JLENS Breakaway (Compiled from news reports)

One of the two Joint Land-Attack Cruise Missile Elevated Netted Sensor System (JLENS) aerostats became untethered on October 28, 2015, while at an altitude of 6,600 feet “and floated aimlessly over Pennsylvania, downing power lines and cutting off electricity for tens of thousands of residents.” According to NORAD, “two F-16 fighter jets were scrambled to ensure it didn’t collide with other aircraft.” By early afternoon, it had climbed to 16,000 feet as it traveled into Pennsylvania.

After “drifting more than 100 miles,” the blimp came down in a rural, wooded area in Exchange, a community outside Bloomsburg, about 150 miles (240 km) north of the Aberdeen Proving Ground, close to Moreland Township, leaving “a trail of damage in its wake.” “The tether attached to the aircraft caused widespread power outages across Pennsylvania,” said a statement from Governor Tom Wolf’s office. The Los Angeles Times reports that officials were concerned that “the blimp could drag its tether over a city or a power plant, or collide with an aircraft,” but noted that it “steadily deflated as it rode the winds and was not shot down by the F-16s.” DHS said that the state police in Pennsylvania had “cordoned off the crash site to make sure none of the blimp’s secret high-tech radar and electronics were stolen.” Pennsylvania police and military officials guarded a wide safety perimeter around the blimp, which settled amid farmland in the remote area. Residents, including members of an Amish community, watched them work under steady rainfall. An FAA spokeswoman said that the agency worked to keep other air traffic away from the untethered blimp. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter said, “My understanding is, from having seen these break loose in Afghanistan on a number of occasions, we could get it to descend and then we’ll recover it and put it back up.”

Politico said yesterday’s “mishap was nearly two decades in the making,” adding that the project “is now a national laughingstock as Twitter users and cable-news outlets marvel over how one became untethered.” The incident “could be the death knell for the Raytheon-built Army spy blimps,” which were “already on life support after years of problems.” A previous blimp was destroyed by bad weather. An investigation has found that the Army’s JLENS program has failed to meet expectations after 17 years and nearly \$3 billion.



Due to years of unforeseen problems and “documented shortcomings” by the Pentagon Testing Office and the Government Accountability Office, the LA Times calls the program “a stark example of...a ‘zombie’ program: costly, ineffectual and seemingly impossible to kill.” As an example of JLENS’ inefficiencies, the article notes that had JLENS been working as intended, it would have detected Douglas Hughes and his gyrocopter before he landed “on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol.” He got through because software issues kept a second JLENS aircraft on the ground, and data from the aircraft has “not been integrated into the NORAD air defense network,” according to Maj. Beth R. Smith. The Army tried to end the program in 2010, but prime contractor Raytheon and other supporters managed to salvage funding for the technology. Marine Corps Gen. James E. “Hoss” Cartwright, who was at the time the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, defended the system. Cartwright later joined the Raytheon board, and the paper reports that according to the SEC, he was paid more than \$282,000 in cash and stock. The US Army received requests for more than \$300,000 in claims from a dozen people who say their property was damaged. Ω

China Rising (Compiled from news reports)



On 13 October 15 China tested a high-altitude airship (HAA) christened “Yuanmeng” (Dream) to an altitude of 20 km, demonstrating that it is making progress towards longstanding ambitions to exploit ‘near space’ - the region between 20 km and 100 km above the Earth. The Dream, a 75x22 m airship with a volume of 18,000 m³, was tested to an altitude of 20 km at a test area near Xilinhot, Inner Mongolia. With solar cells powering three propeller engines, Dream’s test was to last 48 hours. Reports noted it carried “broadband communications, data relay, high-definition observation, space situational awareness, and airborne imaging systems.”

A Chinese report from 14 October notes that “from a national security perspective near-space steerable airships can rely on their height advantage for early warning, wartime communications support, or aiding attack platforms.” Increased sensor coverage means increased warning time against stealthy threats such as cruise missiles, giving Chinese forces a greater opportunity to detect and shoot down such threats. It would also be harder for fighters and surface-to-air missiles to attack near space objects.

The People’s Daily spoke to Yu Quan of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, who told them that “The biggest challenge for the near-space airship is the big temperature difference in the day and night.” Because the airship is so close to space, it experiences space-like extremes of weather as it is baked by the sun and then frozen by the night. Dream is reportedly a product of the Beijing Aerospace Technology Company and the Beijing University of Astronautics and Aeronautics (BUAA). At a civil-military technology exhibition in Beijing in early July, both companies displayed

their ambition to produce large HAAs for persistent near-space operations similar to US concepts from the early 2000s.

Another centre for China’s airship development is Base 068 of the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation (CASIC), which has developed a series of smaller unmanned airships for civil-military missions, even conducting coordinated multiple unmanned airship exercises.



China is also developing a 60-ton airship as part of its “Jin Diao” (Golden Eagle) series, reports the People’s Daily. The latest model of the airship is on display at the Aviclub convention from Oct. 4 to 6 at Jingmen Zhanghe General Aviation Airport in central China’s Hubei province. It can be flexibly equipped with high definition cameras and equipment for infrared imaging, gas detection, exploration and surveillance. The new model is said to have improved steering technology and upgraded advanced flight control systems that can monitor flight parameters and status of the airship and contains a variety of fail-safe functions. Last July, Premier Li Keqiang and French Prime Minister Manuel Valls were present at the signing of a strategic cooperation agreement between state-owned China Aviation Industry General Aircraft Co and French Flying Whales Holdings Company. The agreement sets up a joint venture to develop a heavy-load airship, with a focus on the global transportation market through research and development, production, marketing and services.

People’s Daily said airships will be a focus of China’s 13th five-year plan for 2016-2020. The plan to build a domestic airship industry comprises three goals, the report said, the first of which is to develop a 60-ton-level airship through international cooperation to be marketed on the global market. Ω

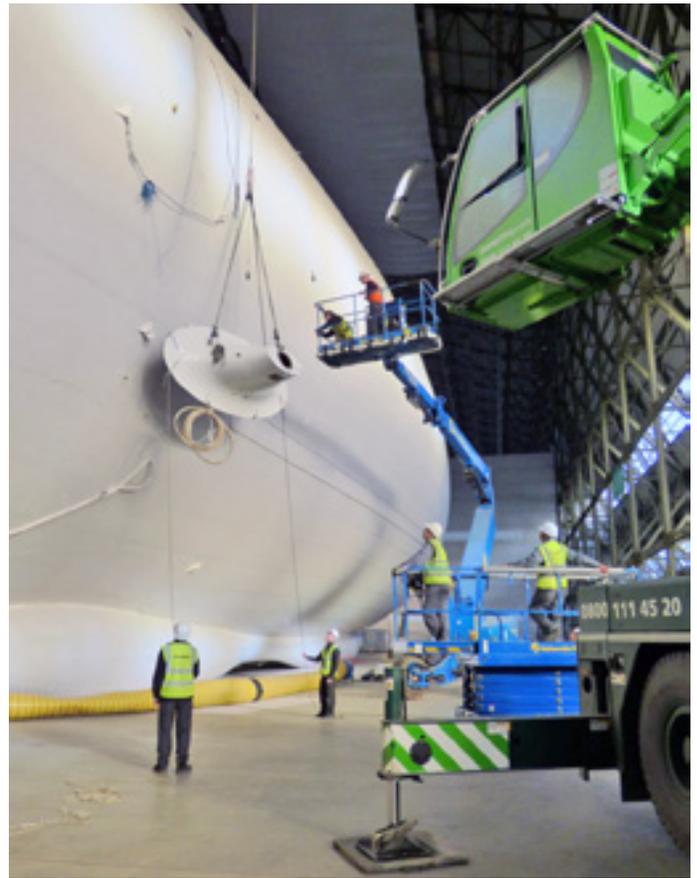
Hybrids Roundup

Below, BOC's tube trailers arrive, ready for the helium fill to start last October. Owing to various factors that have created a sort of glut in the helium market, its price and availability is stable in the U.K. and U.S.



On Saturday, 31 OCT 15 at 10pm, Airlander was floating for the first time in its hangar in Cardington. The 92 meter-long Airlander was floated and “walked” the entire length of the 248 meter shed to get to the front doors. This involved four forklift trucks; one at each corner of the Airlander, each carrying a two-tonne block of cement with a restraining rope attached moving in unison. **Hybrid Air Vehicles (HAV) has said engines; fins and mission module will be attached by spring.** The 92m airship, housed in Shed 1 at Cardington [see back cover] has recently had its aft carbon composite battens added, which will provide structural support to the rear engines. Other components attached in the final weeks of 2015 include the port tailcone, as well as the first engine pylon.

HAV received multiple financial awards over the course of 2015, beginning with a £3.4 million UK Regional Growth Fund award followed by a €2.5 million EU Grant being awarded by Horizon 2020, in recognition of Airlander's 33% reduction in fuel burn, compared with conventional aircraft, and less reliance on existing infrastructure. In March, a staggering £2.4 million was raised in a two-month crowdfunding campaign. Funding will be directed towards helping create a regulatory framework to allow the Airlander to be used in Europe and so contribute to a Smart, Green and Integrated Transport™ system as well as ensuring continued economic growth and lasting employment in the UK.



Above: Adding the first engine pylon in January. The pylon is both a systems bay and the structural support for the front engine. Testing of Airlander's four 325hp, 4L V8 direct injection, turbocharged diesel engines continues, putting them through their full range of speeds, reading them for the Flight Test program.



The fuel module was at rest under the mammoth hull to be attached in January whilst the finishing touches are made to the cockpit. Look out for the Airlander in the skies of Bedfordshire above the Cardington hangars in early 2016



Above: Cockpit re-attachment. With a length of 302 ft, a width of 143 ft and a height of 85 ft, it is officially the world's largest aircraft - the biggest passenger plane, the Airbus A380, is only 240 ft long.

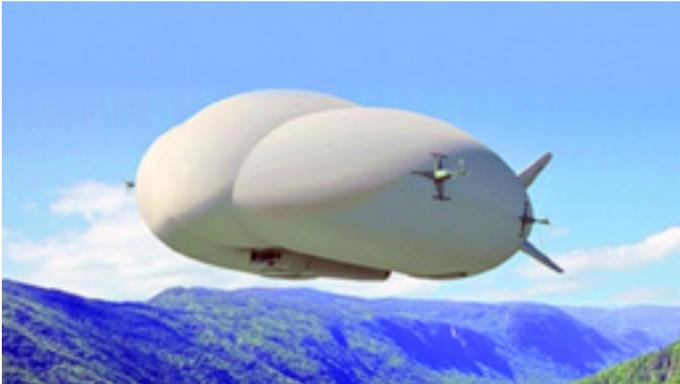


Above: Bruce Dickinson from "Iron Maiden" is one of HAV's major investors. (Daily Mail photo) Ω



Lockheed Martin Hybrid Airship Certification Plan for Commercial Transport Approved by the FAA

The Federal Aviation Administration (Seattle Aircraft Certification Office) recently approved Lockheed Martin's (NYSE: LMT) project specific certification plan for its Hybrid Airship. Given that Hybrid Airships did not fit within existing FAA regulations, the team worked to create a new set of criteria allowing non-rigid hybrid airships to safely operate in a commercial capacity. Transport Canada was also involved in the development of this criteria to ensure it included safety concerns unique to Canada.



"The approval of the certification plan represents an important risk reduction milestone for our customers," said program manager Dr. Robert Boyd. "Completing this step took dedication from both the Lockheed Martin system experts and the FAA, who worked meticulously through thousands of detailed items to achieve consistent and accurate verification statements covering the entire aircraft." Earlier this year Lockheed Martin along with Hybrid Enterprises LLC kicked off sales for the 20-ton variety of the Hybrid Airship. They are on track to deliver operational airships as early as 2018. Ω

NAA Member Dr. Boyd also offered this great new video link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=JO76dkzV28k

My (all so brief) LTA Experience

By W. J. "Jack" Overman, Jr.

Upon receipt of the last "Noon Balloon" I was delighted to read LCDR Garrison's article on his ZP-1 experiences. I also had a very brief tour of duty in the Air Ship community. I too, was in ZP-1, joining the squadron in August 1957. Then LT Joe Garrison was the first member of the squadron that I saw upon my arrival at the hangar. He was departing and I was arriving. He was a Lieutenant and I an Ensign. Being new and conscious of rank (however senior/junior) I rendered him my best salute and he, very startled (read) surprised, returned it.



Ed's caption: This 3K recovery at NASL shows the late use of "mules." Most K's were masted with manpower.

I was assigned to CO CDR W.A. Clark's crew on *One Peacemaker* with PAC LT Charlie Tall. I couldn't have asked for a better crew but, as Joe Garrison stated, the squadron decommissioned in July and I was off to NAS Norfolk and VP44 flying the P5M2 later redesignated SP5Bs. *One Peacemaker* was a 3K airship thus just like those I trained in at NAS Glynco. I was happy about this because I never did like the 4K Beta prop system.

Joe Garrison spoke about his experience flying from Gitmo to Weeksville via direct/over water routes. He states that he participated in the Gitmo deployment in 1957, as did I. On our return we too flew direct/Weeksville. (There must have been more than one detachment from ZP1 to Gitmo in 1957 because on our return the other airship was commanded by Lt Ed Stephaney). It was a very eventful flight. First we had to depart Gitmo loaded to the gills with cases of booze. They could be seen from the car, as the outline of each case was clearly etched in the fabric of the bag where

they were stored in the forward ballonet. When we took off, the airship settled almost to the water. We had to fly around the east tip of Cuba before we could take up our course for Weeksville, because we couldn't gain enough altitude to go over it. We flew for several hours before we burned enough fuel to climb to 500 ft.

Somewhere abeam Atlanta we started having equipment problems. Ed had lost his radar and low frequency radios. We had our radar and low frequency radio but had lost our loran so we would vector Ed around the bad weather, he would take loran readings and radio them via VHF to us, and we would then send the position reports out on low frequency radio. By the way, since we didn't have loran, we would follow Ed wherever he went. This arrangement worked fine for several hours (until after nightfall) when we got a blast from Ed saying "look out we just hit a doozy" meaning bad weather. At just about that time we struck it too and the airship was hit so hard that it was turned 180 degrees and nose down. We recovered with the short lines dragging in the water. It was frightening to say the least.



Ed. caption: This is a clipping from the Goodyear employee's paper, "The Wingfoot Clan."

Everything turned out OK and we made it back in one piece. Believe it or not, I still have a couple of bottles of booze that I bought and brought back to Weeksville.

Before I close this narrative let me mention one more flight that caused us extreme grief. We were out off the coast of North Carolina on a submarine exercise that had concluded, We had turned for home and

encountered very strong winds. We calculated that we were not making any headway west and were, in fact, proceeding backward at about 5 knots with an indicated airspeed of 55 knots forward. We actually made a position report five miles behind the previous hour's location. The winds finally lessened enough that we could make it to the beach and arrangements were made to hoist fuel from the beach to the airship while it hovered overhead. Fortunately the winds lessened further and we were able to make it to the base. As previously mentioned the squadron de-commissioned on July 1 and I was detached on the 3rd from the Wing. I reported to VP44 where I continued my career eventually reaching the rank of Commander and receiving a command assignment to a base in the Bahamas, assignment to the University of Pittsburgh as a member of an executive management course of instructions, and eventual retirement.

My thanks to Joe Garrison for writing his article and allowing me to, vicariously, renew my acquaintance with him. Ω

SHORT LINES



Aeroscraft ML866 Airship Reaches System Level "Design Freeze" Phase. The Aeroscraft Corporation (Aeros) revealed another milestone completed in the development of the world's first Vertical Takeoff and Landing (VTOL) capable heavy-lift cargo airship, the Aeroscraft, featuring independence from external ballast. Following the engineering scale down prototype "Dragon Dream" phase of the program, the team at Aeros is now entering the design freeze phase for the ML866 (66-ton) Aeroscraft cargo airship. Aeros is currently developing main component and test articles for the patented buoyancy management system known as COSH, or control-of-static-heaviness, as well as structural components for the operational Aeroscraft with 66-ton payload. Ω

AIAA-Illinois Institute Of Technology Team Launched Scarlet Hawk III Balloon In September. Illinois Institute of Technology Today (10/8) reports, "The American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA)-IIT team was recently at the Columbia Scientific Balloon Facility (CSBF) base in Fort Sumner, N.M., as part of High Altitude Student Platform," a balloon flight program supported by the NASA Balloon Program Office and the Louisiana Space Consortium. The team's Scarlet Hawk III was launched into the stratosphere on September 7 for a 23-hour flight. Ω

Capsule Dropped From High-Altitude Balloon To Test Its Performance. Tech Times (8/5, Depra) reports that under NASA's Flight Opportunities Program, a high-altitude balloon developed by the Near Space Corporation (NSC) dropped a capsule developed by Terminal Velocity Aerospace (TVA) from an altitude of 20 miles to see how the capsule would perform when returning from space. Paul De Leon, a program campaign manager from the Ames Research Center, said, "This launch is critical to ensuring that we have fast, safe, reliable and affordable ways to return important science back to Earth" from places like the ISS. The article notes that the test also allowed the FAA to obtain "its first validation for the Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast tracking technology." Ω

Applied Graphene CEO Looks To Introduce The "Strongest Material Known To Mankind" To UAV Market. Bloomberg News (1/25, Noel) reports that Applied Graphene Materials CEO Jon Mabbitt said in an interview that using graphene in UAVs may be among the quickest way for his company to "introduce the strongest material known to mankind into the lucrative aviation industry." The substance, known as a "wonder material," and its discoverers won the Nobel Prize in 2010. The material is 200 times stronger than steel and 70 times more conductive than silicon. Mabbitt said that "he's seeking graphene orders in specialized areas such as corrosion-resistant paint and aircraft parts." It can take years to gain approval to use new material in commercial planes, but Mabbitt said that the time needed to approve new materials in "the types of remote-controlled aircraft" being developed by Lockheed Martin and Boeing can be as little as two years. Ω

("Short Lines" continued on page 32)

READY ROOM

COME TO THE NAA REUNION – MAY 2016



Naval Airship Association Reunion
2-5 May 2016 Pensacola Beach, Florida

Tentative Schedule (subject to revision):



Monday: Arrive Hampton Inn & Suites, 2 Via DeLuna, Pensacola Beach (above); Registration & Check In; Meet & Greet Reception



Tuesday: (above) Blue Angels practice session (weather permitting); National Naval Aviation Museum guided tour.



Wednesday: (above) Alternate (weather) Date for Blue Angels Flight demonstration; National Flight Academy guided tour.

Thursday: Conference; General Membership Meeting; Banquet.

Reunion Ready Room – Hours for the Ready Room will be very flexible and coffee, water, and snacks will be available. Anyone bringing artifacts, photos, etc. will be provided space and tables. Small Stores will have tables set up for sales of NAA merchandise. It would be very nice to see NAA caps and shirts being worn at NNAM and all over Pensacola.



For now, reserve the dates **2-5 May 2016** on your appointment calendar, fill out the registration form enclosed with this issue, and we'll see you at the beach! Ω



BEHOLD - THE BLIMP !

By Harry E. Lindstrom, LCDR, USN (Ret)
with H. E. "Dink" Lindstrom, Jr., PNC(AW), USN
(In memory of H. "Eddie" Lindstrom II [1972 -1991]
who wanted to fly, but now wears wings of an angel.)

During World War II, the Navy blimp served valiantly from many stateside fields and overseas as well. They were stationed in Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana and California. Overseas they flew out of South America and Africa, to name a few places. They performed a great service protecting convoys from submarines; no ship was ever sunk in a convoy guarded by blimps. While a blimp's cruising speed was only 60 to 70 knots, they could stay airborne for many hours. In K-bags, eight-hour flights were routine but flights of 20 to 30 hours were possible without refueling.

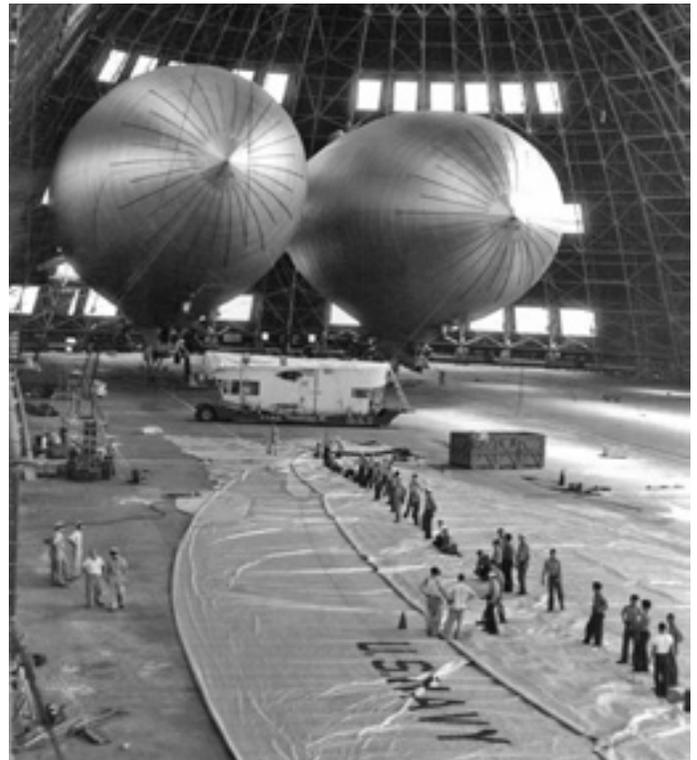
Blimps have a certain aura about them that fascinates anyone who had the pleasure of working with them. True, there were many hours of hard work both in the air and on the ground, but there was a lighter side, too. This story is written to present the lighter side in the lives and times of LTA men and officers in the '50s.

In order to appreciate some of the events, you'll need a little basic "Lighter-Than-Air" (LTA) knowledge. First of all, the word "blimp" originated with the English people in World War I. They had several lighter-than-air craft, one of which was type "B," LIMP - which slowly became simply blimp. (1)

Another matter to clear up - powered airborne vehicles are generally divided into three categories, namely: fixed wing, rotary-wing (more commonly known as helicopters) and lighter-than-air (LTA), The name of the latter should be self-explanatory. While the first two types derive their "lift," or ability to fly, from airfoils, the latter gets its lift primarily from the gas in the bag, which in the United States has been helium. LTA craft

are further divided into two major groups: Dirigibles, such as the USS *Akron*, USS *Shenandoah*, *Hindenburg*, etc., and blimps. Dirigibles all had a metal framework covered with fabric and the gas for lift was contained in bags within the framework. (2) In a blimp, there is no framework, and the shape of the bag is maintained by regulating the air in the "ballonets." Ballonet is a French word meaning "an airtight bag set in the interior of a spherical or non-rigid dirigible balloon to maintain pressure on the outer envelope." This pressure is registered on a manometer and the pressure is kept between 3/4 of an inch and two inches of water pressure, i.e., the amount of pressure required to push a column of water 3/4" to two." Not much pressure, but very critical to the operation of the blimp.

Goodyear manufactured nearly all of the blimps for the U. S. Navy and, until 1951, they were simply referred to by a letter for the model, i.e., K, M, N, etc. In the



sailor's vernacular, they were "K-bags," "Mike-bags" and "Nan-bags." K-bags were the most prominent in World War II. Anti-Submarine Warfare was their primary mission, although they occasionally performed search and rescue missions.

With blimps, many seagoing terms are used. They are "moored" to a mast, "berthed" in a hangar, etc. While in the hangar, several "mooring" lines hold them in place. All blimps prior to the Mike and Nan-bags had just one landing wheel - a unique sight indeed. It takes a while to figure out how the forces of physics work, but, you see, the helium is lighter-than-air, and because the lift vector

is straight up, they can rest on one wheel. The car, or gondola, is suspended on steel cables that are suspended from catenary curtains. These curtains are near the top of the bag, run fore and aft about 3/4 the length of the bag. A K-bag had two catenary curtains and the Mike and Nan had four. If the pressure got too low, the bag would wrinkle, the catenary curtains rip and catastrophe would ensue. One drawback to LTA was the necessity to maintain a pressure watch on them 24 hours a day when they were on the ground. A sudden cooling of the ambient temperature could cause a bag to wrinkle in less than five minutes, so a careful watch had to be maintained.

A K-bag is about 250 feet long and contains 425,000 cubic feet of helium and air. The Mike-bags are about 300 feet long and contain about 750,000 cubic feet. The Nan-bag is 423 feet long and contains about 1,000,000 cubic feet [see front cover]. The gondola on the K-bag is 30 feet long; on the Mike and Nan about 90 feet long. The K-bag uses a crew of 10, the Mike and Nan, from 15 to 20.

A daily ritual with blimps was “weighing off.” This was a procedure used to determine if any helium had leaked out (or been released). It was accomplished through a series of calculations and one physical aspect. Normally in a hangar the blimp had sandbags on the handrail to keep it on the deck because during training cycles the blimps were not fully loaded with fuel or ammo, hence they were relatively “light.” Blimps were said to be “xxx pounds heavy,” “xxx pounds light” or “at equilibrium.” In the process of weighing off, these sandbags would be taken off one at a time until the blimp actually floated (maybe two or three inches off the deck). The number of bags remaining were then counted to determine how “light” the blimp was. If all bags were removed and the blimp still didn’t float, then the number of sailors necessary to get it off the deck would lift up on the handrail. One hundred pounds was allowed for each man lifting and the sum required to lift was counted to determine how “heavy” the blimp was. In considering

the static conditions of the blimp, the temperature, atmospheric pressure and humidity had to be taken into consideration. For an average training flight, ideally the K-bag would take off no more than 2,000 pounds heavy and land about 500 pounds heavy.

Author’s note: The incidents you are about to read are essentially true, albeit poetic license may be used on occasion to provide a bit more color. It’s amusing, but true, that a sailor always begins a sea story by stating, “no kidding, this really happened” (...or words to that effect!). So, “no kidding, these events really happened!!!”

As you enter Naval Air Station Lakehurst, New Jersey, (NASL) the large hangars are first thing that catches your eye. Hangars 1, 2 and 3 are on the left as you come in on the main road and Hangar 4 is on the right. Hangar 1 was erected in 1919, and is about 700 to 800 feet long, 150 feet wide and 150 feet or so high. In the 1950s, it contained the only overhaul and repair (O & R) activity for U.S. Navy LTA. These hangars and all the NAS administrative buildings are in that section of the base known as “The Hill.” In 1950, Airship Squadron THREE (ZP-3) was in “The Hollow” in Hangar 5, almost a mile by road from Hangar 1. Hangar 6 was right next door. Hangars 5 and 6 were 1,000 feet long, 200 feet wide and 150 feet high. Each one could hold six K-bags, affectionately known as “Silver Guardians of the Sea Lanes.” In 1950, ZP-2 was housed in Hangar 5 also and was the sponsor squadron to assist the officers and men of ZP-3 in organizing and training to become a fully operational squadron. In fact ZP-3 did not get their first airship until November and used ZP-2 blimps for training flights until that time.



Anyone entering Hangar 3 was met by the self-appointed official greeter for ZP-2, “Blackdog,” a nondescript mutt who jealously guarded the hangar and would quickly disperse any visitor who wasn’t a member of the squadron or in the company of a ZP-2

man. Blackdog had many flight hours behind him and was present at every landing or launching of squadron ships, no matter what the weather or hour. He had a sixth sense about the arrival and departure times. In between evolutions, he could be found at any of a number of places on the base.

Anyone seeing a blimp for the first time was absolutely mesmerized by the giant silver bag nesting on a single wheel and held in place by the mooring lines. The pressure watch could be seen faithfully checking each ship periodically to insure that the proper pressure was maintained.

When a new man checked in at the Duty Desk, the quietude of the hangar was often shattered by the booming voice of one of the “characters” of ZP-3, singing in his best bathroom baritone. His aria, which was to become the de facto squadron theme song, was known as “I SAIL MY BAG ALONE,” sung to the tune of “I SAIL MY SHIP ALONE.” This sailor was sort of a fixture in ZP-2 before being transferred to the nucleus crew of ZP-3. A Navy veteran of some 10 to 12 years, he vowed to never make second class petty officer because he would “lose his seniority as third class.” He was proud of being a senior third class Aviation Machinist’s Mate in LTA (perhaps in the Navy). He was to become a cornerstone of the Mech Shop in ZP-3. He was indeed a good mechanic and willing worker, in spite of his junior rating and peculiar philosophy concerning advancement in rate.

Another character in ZP-3 was the senior parachute rigger. If he was refused a favor of some sort, he’d respond with “Oh, that’s O.K. - - but don’t be surprised when you pull that rip-cord and nothing but dirty skivvies come out!”

Still another character was a young sailor who took great delight in aggravating the leading chief. He would do it in such a way that the chief couldn’t punish him. For instance, the chief really chewed him out one day because his foul weather jacket was not properly stenciled. The man worked in the Metalworker’s Shop and so he had access to large stencils. The next day when the young sailor came to quarters, the chief checked his jacket and it was stenciled. The man’s name was Guggenheimer and it was stenciled from the left elbow, across the back and down to the right elbow in LARGE letters. (Normally the stenciled name was about three-fourths the way across the back.) This same man was chastised for not keeping account of the key to the Metalsmith’s Shop. To correct the problem, he attached the new key to a piece of aluminum two feet in diameter. Needless to say the key was never lost after that!

ZP-3 had its quota of young hot-shot pilots, too. Two of them, for all their youth, were fine pilots though lacking in judgement at times. NAS Lakehurst had two F6Fs due for overhaul and wanted them ferried to the overhaul activity. These two aspiring pilots loved flying the old fighter planes, so they volunteered to fly them. Through a mix up in instructions, they thought their destination was supposed to be Norfolk, Virginia. Upon arrival at Norfolk, they were advised that the F6F overhaul activity was MCAS Cherry Point, North Carolina. The two hot-shots had their crafts fueled and discussed plans to go to Cherry Point. Only one of them had a chart of the area from Norfolk to Cherry Point but they decided that was all they needed because the flight would be made in daylight hours and, if necessary, they could just follow the coastline. On the take-off roll, the one chart between them flew out of the cockpit. After becoming airborne they discussed the loss of the chart but decided they could find their way to Cherry Point without it. About 30 minutes south of Norfolk, they ran into a thunderstorm and had to separate while going through the clouds. Once through the clouds they never saw one another again.



One F6F proceeded to Cherry Point, but the pilot of the other F6F became disoriented. After a few minutes of trying to ascertain his position, he tried to call for help. To his chagrin he was unable to raise anyone. What he didn’t know was that his receiver was inoperative. Now he began to be concerned. Darkness was approaching, fuel was getting low, he was not sure of his location and there was no field in sight - - until suddenly he spotted an old World War II landing strip. He made one low pass over the field to check for obstructions; it looked clean. He climbed to about 2,000 feet and broadcast in the blind (not expecting a reply) telling anyone who could hear what he was about to do, and where he thought he was. The touchdown and initial roll-out were uneventful. In fact he was almost stopped when - thump - he struck

a huge water line which ran across the runway but was covered by grass. The F6F stopped abruptly, rolled up on its nose and continued up until it was almost vertical. For a brief moment (it seemed like an eternity) it hung motionless; then it dropped back down on its main gear and came to rest on the main gear with the nose on the ground. Fortunately, the pilot did not get so much as a scratch and his final transmission had been received by a USMC station nearby so fire engines were on the scene in minutes. The pilot became known as "Crash" Morgan.

Life in ZP-3 was interesting, though the early days were hectic as few of the men knew each other and no routine was firmly established. New men very quickly learned who the leading chief (an Aviation Machinist's Mate) was and, as time passed, this chief proved to be the most obnoxious man in the Navy. His first answer to any request was "NO." He was so ornery, he purportedly hated his own mother. It is for sure even Blackdog came to hate him. One time at a personnel inspection, all 300 men in the squadron were lined up like 3 rows of corn while the Commanding Officer inspected them. As in all inspections, not a word was spoken except by the Captain; thus, the silence was deafening. About midway through the inspection, there was a sudden commotion in the Chief Petty Officer's ranks and though the verbiage was somewhat garbled, you could detect a few invectives and a resounding thud as the leather of a shoe made contact with an animate object. After the inspection the crew found out that Blackdog's disdain for the chief was displayed by urinating on the leading chief's leg.

Learning the fine art of ground handling (recovering and launching a blimp) proved to be interesting, if

hectic. Fortunately for the newcomers, the old timers were meticulous in their instructing and you soon learned the rules. Two categories of lines were used to hold the blimp in position anytime it was not on the mast. The "short lines" were attached to the bag a little aft of the nose, swung free all the time and were about one half the length of the "long lines." The long lines were attached to the nose cone and normally stored in compartments on the underside of the gondola to be released when needed. When handling the lines out on the mat (landing area), you never let your feet leave the ground. Often the blimp would rise and all the men available could not hold it down. Most of the time it would rise 50 to 100 feet and then descend. Sometimes the pilot would even go around for another approach when it rose, so you can see the reason for keeping your feet on the ground. Another inviolate rule was that you never got in front of the line, lest you get knocked over and trampled if the blimp surged ahead, which it often did. It was imperative that you keep your eyes on the Ground Handling Officer at all times. He was the quarterback who directed the whole evolution in cooperation with the pilot of the blimp. A blimp not on a mobile mast and being held by ground handlers is like a playful pachyderm. Even in a light wind, because of the gigantic sail area of the bag, any change in the direction of the wind would send the blimp sailing across the mat.

Also, just like a weathervane, a blimp always swings directly into the wind when on the ground and no amount of force can stop it. There have been times when the after mooring lines pulled right out of the bag when trucks were being used in an attempt to hold the blimp straight.



The wise men in this new squadron watched the ground handling operation very closely, not only to learn the rudiments, but also to find out which of the many specialized, tasks were the best or easiest. You see, the majority of ground handlers were “MATRATS” who did nothing but work with the lines. The select few were privileged to drive the tractor to tow the portable mast, drive the sand truck (which held several 20-pound sandbags and 50-pound iron weights for attaching to the rail of the car after the blimp landed) or drive the “cattle” car, a semi-trailer converted to haul personnel. There were two other positions that were sought by some, but were not considered choice because of the element of danger. One was the man on top of the mast, who had to lock the mooring swivel on the nose of the bag into the receiver on the mast. The other, non-MATRAT position was winchman on the portable. Actually any of these were better than being a common MATRAT, as it required a great deal less physical exertion and was less dangerous, even the mast-top position. As an example, one bitter cold night in Weeksville, North Carolina, the MATRATS walked, ran, stumbled, (or were dragged) the length of a three-quarter mile mat three times before the blimp was finally put on the mast. On this occasion, the blimp was quite statically heavy, the pilot did not have much experience and weather conditions were poor, ergo, ground handling was extremely difficult.

There was a nucleus of experienced pilots from ZP-2 in ZP-3, and these erstwhile gentlemen quickly showed all the ZP-3 pilots the better spots for sightseeing. As a rule, blimps cruise at a rather low altitude, and with a pair of Navy issue 7x50 binoculars, it's possible to see all sorts of interesting sights. One of the spots was the nudist colony in southern New Jersey. By sheer coincidence, this colony was right on the radio range approach to the airport and close enough that you could justifiably be quite low when passing over the nudist colony. Yes, the summers were fun and a time when many radio range approaches had to be made!



In November 1950, ZP-3 received its first blimp, K-77. It was a proud day for all squadron personnel to be able to handle their own blimp. The tempo of training increased rapidly at this time. Another favorite sport was landing on the beach along the Jersey coast just to look around. Of course, it could be nothing more than a touch-and-go landing, because there were no line handlers, but it was great sport nonetheless. The frequency of such landings increased to the point that the Commanding Officer issued a written order forbidding such landings. One crew commander was smart enough to do it and get away with it. You see, the prescribed method of checking on such practices was to inspect the landing wheel as soon as the blimp arrived back at Lakehurst.

If beach sand was on it, the pilot was guilty. In CAC (Combat Air Crew) 307, after the beach landings were made, the flight mechanic retracted the landing gear and then very carefully dusted all the sand off of it. Exhibit A was destroyed! It proved very effective because in three years CAC 307 never got caught, but many beach landings were made. Because most daily flights were of five to eight hours duration, “Flight Rations” were issued and the meals prepared aloft on the small stove. Of course, there was always plenty of celery, lettuce, cucumbers, etc. One day, shortly after CAC 301 was airborne, the crew commander came back to inquire as to the availability of celery. The crew member preparing the food handed him a stalk with a rubber band affixed. Before long the blimp was over a residential area in southern New Jersey and made a low pass at a house. The crew commander tossed the celery, with a note attached, out the stern of the gondola for a perfect hit on the front lawn of his girlfriend's house. The blimp made another pass to be sure the message was retrieved by his girlfriend. It had been. About an hour later, a message came in over the radio, requesting all ZP-3 ships to give their position as of 0845. The crew commander, sensing trouble, told the radio operator to copy the positions of the other two squadron ships as they sent them in and then he would send in his position. This seemed a little strange to the radio operator but the reason became clear when CAC 301 sent its position in. The crew commander had plotted the position of the other two blimps on the chart and then picked a spot in between them to send in as the reported position of CAC 301 at 0845. In fact, CAC 301 was some 25-30 miles from that position at 0845. The reason for the inquiry by the squadron commander was not apparent until the blimp landed that evening. All returning blimps were met by

a reception committee composed of the Commanding, Executive and Operations Officers and an informal investigation was conducted that evening. It seems that some irate citizen had filed a protest with the FAA because a blimp had flown so low over his house that his prize chickens had become extremely nervous and injured themselves against the side of their cages when alarmed by a loud noise overhead! The results of the investigation were never published, but it can be assumed that the crew commander's subterfuge worked, as he was not grounded - that time. In later years he was grounded more than once for his playful antics.

In the early 1950s, ZP-3 blimps operated out of Weeksville, North Carolina, quite a bit, as Weeksville was very close to the Virginia Capes (VACAPES) operating area (Navy). Weeksville is right on Albemarle Sound just a few miles from Elizabeth City, North Carolina. In a matter of two to three hours the blimp could fly out over the Atlantic to operate with a sub or surface ship.

One cold, winter night the crash alarm sounded right around midnight. The assigned crash crew went careening down to the water's edge with the entire duty section coming close on their heels. A ZP-1 blimp had flown into the water. The visibility was down to about 100 yards, so looking for survivors of the blimp was impaired. After a few minutes of fruitless searching, from ashore the Officer of the Day (OOD) ordered the base "Duck" (an amphibious vehicle) to enter the water and head in the general direction of the cries of distress - you see, it was a very still night, so sound carried a long way over the water. Some young Ensign was ex-officio Commander of the "Duck." As it entered the water, the Ensign could be heard inquiring of the driver, "are you checked out in this vehicle?" The cherub-cheeked driver, a young seaman (who must have been all of 18) replied, "no sir, but I'm learning fast!" The "Duck" proceeded to a point about 50 yards off shore and promptly sank. The inexperienced crew had not closed the seacocks! As the water rose higher in the vehicle, the valiant Ensign ordered all men to start bailing. After 10 minutes or so of bailing, the Ensign proudly announced, "Very good, men, I think we're getting ahead of the flooding." A much wiser petty officer replied, "We ought to be. We're sitting on the bottom! It was nearly daybreak before they recovered the Duck. Fortunately all the crew members of the crashed blimp made it ashore in their own life rafts. No lives were lost, albeit some sailors had to be treated for exposure.

Perhaps the most humorous event in the history of ZP-3 was one that occurred with CAC 305. In the

winter of 1952, CAC 305 was scheduled for an ORI (Operational Readiness Inspection). The ORI consisted of exercising the crew in conditions tantamount to combat for a period of 8 to 10 hours. The site selected for the ORI was the VACAPES OPAREA. Two submarines, as well as some surface ships, would participate in the operation. The blimp departed Weeksville at 0300 and, after three hours, was ready to make surface contact with the submarine before commencement of the exercise. This was a requirement prescribed to enable a good check-out of all electronics gear before the sub dove. As CAC 305 approached the appointed rendezvous point, they made radio contact with the sub. The sea returned a false indication on the radar scope was of sufficient severity that only probable radar contact was made. After half an hour of cruising around the rendezvous point, the crew commander decided to use a prescribed plan to home in on the sub. He asked the sub to send a signal on a given frequency to enable the blimp crew to pick up these signal on their Automatic Direction Finder (ADF) in order to proceed directly to the sub. The sub complied and in a few minutes the blimp was "locked on" to the signal and heading for the sub. The



ADF had a selection knob by which you could select various modes of utilizing the radio signal. Included were "Monitor," for listening to the signal while maintaining your heading with the radio compass, and "Radio Compass" for utilizing the Radio Compass only. Well, as was often the case, after 15-20 minutes of listening to the steady dah-dah, dah-dah-dah (MO) the pilot grew tired of it and shifted the selector to Radio Compass. For the uninformed, when using the radio compass to "home in" on the signal, you simply maneuver the raft so the needle of the compass stays on 000 all the time, as the Radio Compass is so designed that all readings on it

are relative to the longitudinal axis of the blimp. After an hour of flying with the Radio Compass “zeroed in,” the plane commander alerted all crew members to keep a sharp eye out for the sub. An hour after that, the sub still was not in sight, nor was there any positive radar contact. The crew commander began to lose his cool at this point. He was pacing like a caged lion when suddenly he had an idea! Maybe he should check the signal that the blimp was homing on. To his chagrin he discovered that the signal now coming in was dah-dit, dit, dit-dah-dit-dit (NEL) - - which were the call letters of NAS Lakehurst, New Jersey. At this point the crew commander came completely unglued. The ORI observer had been snoozing, waiting for the action to commence but now was wide awake and breathing down the crew commander’s neck demanding to know what was going on and what was the present position of the blimp. The team commander was surreptitiously trying to determine his position while placating the observer, but wasn’t doing a good job of either one. The crews’ radar operator was a very competent individual with many hours experience and he tried to convince the crew commander that the present position was off the Delaware coast, but the crew commander wouldn’t believe him. The navigator was frantically trying to get a radio fix, but the crew commander had him so rattled he couldn’t do a thing right. He finally gave the Commander a position that was very close to the one the Radar Operator gave, but the Commander wouldn’t believe him either. About this time, the USS *PITTSBURGH* (a cruiser) was sighted. After several futile attempts to raise the *PITTSBURGH* on the radio, the radio operator was directed to use the Aldis lamp, a signaling device, to signal the *PITTSBURGH* and ask her present position. In a blimp, light signals were normally sent from the bombardier’s position, which was all the way forward in the car with Plexiglas on three sides. This was the best position for sending and receiving flashing light signals, though the speed of the blimp, coupled with the short range of the Aldis Lamp, limited the amount of time one could send to a given receiver. Because of this, it took two or three passes over the *PITTSBURGH* to get the message to them. They tried to reply by flashing light also, but receipt of the *PITTSBURGH* message never was completed. So in desperation, the radio operator asked the *PITTSBURGH* to signal the blimp by flag hoist. By this time, nearly every *PITTSBURGH* crew member was on deck and the laughter was almost audible.

The *PITTSBURGH*’s Captain, sensing the plight of the blimp (and probably wanting to rub a little salt in the wound), finally came dead in the water and ran up signals on both Port and Starboard halyards (normal procedure is to run up the signal on one hoist only). The blimp was indeed off the Delaware coast,



right where the navigator and radar operator indicated. A very embarrassed crew commander thanked the *PITTSBURGH* for the assistance and departed in a southerly direction to again try to effect a rendezvous with the sub. After two hours, CAC 305 was back over the assigned operating area and was fortunate enough to find the sub on the surface in just a short while. From this point on, the ORI went beautifully, as this CAC was a well trained crew. At the critique, back in Weeksville, the senior observer gave a grade of 91.6, but commented that “certain delays” in commencing the exercise cost the crew two Doughnuts on the grade!

All CAC’s had a definite series of exercises to perform to complete a training cycle. One of these exercises was ASW (Anti-Submarine Warfare) training with. a sub in the waters off Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Guantanamo Bay, hereafter referred to as GITMO, is the sight of the finest training base in the United States Navy. Weather is good for unrestricted flying or ship operation about 98% of the time and facilities for any kind of training are available. The Fleet Training Group, GITMO, is a Naval unit whose sole reason or existence is to assist ships and/or plane crews in training. So it was that the blimps from ZP-3 would periodically go to GITMO for two to three weeks of training.



In the early '50s, crews could still go on liberty on the mainland of Cuba. Liberty was an experience never to be forgotten... in many ways. First, those desiring to go ashore had to sign up a day in advance so that train reservations could be made for the journey from Camanera to Guantanamo City. On the appointed day, the liberty party mustered at 1400 on Fleet Landing. Here they boarded a 50-foot motor launch for the first leg of the journey. It was about a 30-minute boat ride to Camanera, the eastern terminal of the railroad. Once off the boat, the Red Barn (a bar) lay in a straight line between the boat dock and the train depot. Unusually enough, no matter whether the boat arrived at 1430, 1445 or even 1500, the train was never there...so naturally the sailors always had a drink at the Red Barn. There was one barmaid there who had more "sea stories" than the saltiest sailor, and referred to all Admirals by their first name, often alluding to be a personal friend. The

train ride into Guantanamo City was a never-to-be-forgotten experience. The cars were all rejects from the U. S. railroads, circa 1890, and there wasn't any glass in a window in any of them. The railroad track left a lot to be desired and the wood burning engine fairly belched smoke all the time, creating quite a breathing hazard. The piece ala resistance, at the end of the line, was Guantanamo City. This was a town of perhaps 10,000 which had a small section that gave you a taste of old Spain in the Western Hemisphere. The people in this part of town were all the good things you've ever read about Spaniards.... then there was the rest of the town. Every other door on the street opened into a bar. 95% of these contained "massage parlors." Liberty always expired at 2200 at the Train Depot in Guantanamo City. If you missed this train you were automatically AWOL. The returning liberty party was a sight to behold. Young and not so young, officer and enlisted... all were infected with the gaiety of the moment. Some had to be carried back by their buddies because of over-indulgence.

There was one occasion when a very happy sailor rode up to the train on a horse. The Shore Patrol (SP) stopped him as he headed the horse for the steps of the train car and inquired as to his intentions. "I'm going to take this horse back to the ship with me," he stated. The SP made it clear that this was not to be the case. The sailor then said, "But I bought him, I've got to take him with me!" The SP reaffirmed the denial of any such venture. It was only after several more exchanges that the sailor reluctantly got off the horse and boarded the train. It was later determined that some unscrupulous native had indeed sold the horse to the sailor for \$25.00, knowing the sailor couldn't take it any further than the train station.

In 1950, young sailors didn't make too much money, so they whetted their appetite with beer. Cuba had a national beer that was quite a drink. It was called Hatuey, or in the vernacular, "one-eyed Indian" (the label had the profile of an Indian on it). The alcohol content varied between 10 and 30 percent, mostly on the higher end of the scale. A favorite pastime of sailors was to taunt a newcomer to Cuba into a bet on his drinking prowess. After carefully preparing the victim for the bet, he was then offered a bet that he couldn't drink a case of "one-eyed Indian" in one day. The victim, who took pride in "holding his drink" would jump at this bet. There were two pitfalls for the victim. One was the alcohol content and the other was

the size of the case- 160 bottles. Many a good man lost a bet on this one.

In the normal course of events all blimps in GITMO would take off just after sunrise and land just before sunset, to avoid the gusty wind conditions found during the rest of the day. Normally, there was only one sub available to operate with the blimps, so the sub time had to be shared. One morning when CAC 301 was airborne, the other blimp was operating with the sub. With "Crash" Morgan as crew commander, CAC 301 was practicing landings at Leeward Point Air Field, which was across the bay from McCalla Field, the main field at that time. The blimp they were flying was relatively "light" and there was about a 25 knot wind blowing. After securing permission to land, "Crash" went in for the first landing, a touch-and-go. The blimp rolled along the runway about 50 feet before "Crash" pulled it back into the air. At about 500 feet of altitude, he throttled back to an idle and the static condition of the blimp plus the brisk breeze permitted the blimp to go backward without losing altitude. When the blimp had travelled backwards to a point past the approach end of the runway, "Crash" nosed it down and proceeded to make another landing. After three such evolutions, without changing heading, the tower called to ask if there were any problems with the blimp. "Crash" calmly replied that all was well, he was just shooting landings as he had requested!

Many times when the squadron sent blimps to GITMO they sent their squadron Beechcraft (SNB) down with extra crew members and/or administrative personnel. The SNB was maintained by squadron members in GITMO, but normally refueling was accomplished by NAB GITMO personnel. On one occasion of refueling, the young airman handling the hose was loudly bemoaning the fact that he had to refuel the "darned old Lakehurst plane." A ZP-3 member happened on the scene at the climax of his oratory. This squadron member, being a practical joker of the first order, decided to have some fun with the airman. "You know, buddy, we couldn't refuel this plane if we had to." Somewhat surprised that he was overheard, the airman queried, "Why?" The squadron member explained, "Well, first of all, we didn't bring our gas truck down," "But, but," sputtered the airman, "you could use our truck." The prankster, being ready for this retort, parried, "Oh no. You see, Base Instruction 8613.72 (an improvisation, as he didn't know any base instructions) specifically forbids operation of the

GITMO gas truck by anyone except Base personnel." This completely befuddled the poor airman and he continued the chore, mumbling to himself about "... dumb base instructions..."

Departures for the states were always a festive affair. The squadron had worked hard and, now that the toil was over, everyone was looking forward to rejoining loved ones. Just prior to one departure, a group of pilots was standing around waiting for the final preparations to be made for take-off. One of the pilots had studied voice for years and was the ex-officio squadron "singer." The Executive Officer (XO) was kidding him a bit and as the group broke up to board the blimps, the XO said "John, be sure and sing "ALOHA" as you become airborne." As John's blimp started its takeoff roll to the South, perilous things began to happen. First of all, a strong gust of wind caught the nose of the blimp and changed the blimp's heading about 45 degrees to the left which was toward a line of parked aircraft. With much skillful maneuvering the command pilot was able to clear the line of planes, but at this time he had very little runway left. The southern end of the N-S runway at McCalla ends abruptly in a 60-70 foot drop into the Caribbean.



Sensing the seriousness of his plight, the pilot pulled the nose of his ship high in an attempt to get more lift. Unfortunately he pulled it a little too high and the lower rudder began scraping the runway. Sparks flew for a good 100 feet of runway travel before he nosed it over enough to bring the rudder clear. Squadron members still on the ground stood awe-struck, believing that the blimp would never make it. The blimp still was not airborne when it cleared the end of the runway and as it shot into the void, it dipped and almost disappeared from sight. Miraculously the command pilot was able to keep it out of the water and little by little it began to gain altitude. The second blimp took off without incident.

The trip to NAS Glynco (Brunswick, Georgia) was without incident, but took 14 hours. After both blimps landed in Glynco, the crews got together to exchange greetings and the XO asked, "John, why didn't you come on the air with "ALOHA" after takeoff last night?" One of John's fellow crewmen replied, "Commander, he was too busy singing "Nearer, My God to Thee!"

During the early '50s, the United States and Canadian Navy conducted joint Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) exercises in the Northern Atlantic. Blimps were involved in quite a few of these. On one occasion two blimps from ZP-3 deployed to HMCS Shearwater, the Canadian air station across the bay from Halifax, Nova Scotia. The air station was on the outskirts of Dartmouth, a quaint little Canadian town. Support personnel for the operation were ferried from Lakehurst to Nova Scotia in an R4D (C-47) the day before the blimps arrived. Even though the newspapers publicized the coming of the blimps, their arrival provoked quite a bit of excitement. It was about 0300 when they arrived over Halifax and they were not scheduled to land until after 0800, so they just flew around the harbor, awaiting landing time. The lights of the city reflected brightly off the silver skin of the blimps and soon the police and newspaper switchboards were swamped with inquiries on "those strange objects in the sky" - "Are they Flying Saucers?" - "Are we being invaded?" Such were the thousands of calls.

There was a snack bar in the vicinity of the hangars that was run by the General Mess. They served soup, tea and the like at various times during the night. The snack bar area was about 15 by 20 feet with a serving counter along one side and windows on the remaining three sides. There was only one door which was opposite the serving counter.

As in Gitmo, both blimps generally took off early in the morning and landed late in the afternoon. During the day they would alternate operating with ships and subs. When not actually engaged in exercises, they were free to fly in any unrestricted area. One of the wildest practical jokes ever heard of was executed by a ZP-3 airman in HMCS Shearwater. During one such "free period," "Crash" took CAC 302 over the Canadian countryside for a little sightseeing. When they were well back in a wooded area, "Crash" dropped down to about 100 feet to get a better look at the scenery. Being relatively "light" he was able to throttle back and proceed very slowly without losing altitude. After a few minutes at this low altitude, the crew spotted a huge bear and decided to follow it. As the blimp approached, the bear looked up and spun around to beat a hasty retreat. "Crash" stayed right behind him. Occasionally the bear would look back over his shoulder to see if the "monster" was still there and on each occasion would run a little faster to try to escape. After about 20 minutes of this escape attempt, the bear seemed to realize the futility of it all and laid down and rolled over on his back, as if to say "OK, you win, come get me."



"Crash" a second class Aviation Machinist's Mate (mech) who had been in blimps in World War II and served in Africa with them got his claim to fame (if that's what you want to call it) with the execution of a very serious and stupid blunder. The early K-bags had a fuel manifold system that was all manually controlled. It was a cardinal rule that you always opened the fuel stop

at the tank before switching to that tank with a selector valve. One day while flying out of Africa, the blimp was just airborne when the flight mech decided to shift fuel tanks. He changed the position of the selector valve and then commenced opening the stops at the tank. Before he could get them open, both engines quit from fuel starvation. The only humorous part of the whole evolution was the pilot's description of the mech as the pilot looked aft, "There he was with one hand on each fuel stop rapidly opening them with a look of stark terror on his face." Suffice to say, the blimp crashed before they could get the engines restarted. The crew member was lucky that the command pilot convinced the Board of Investigation that it was a vapor lock the caused the whole thing, or the crewmember would have been court-martialed.

Flying out of Africa got boring at times, so various stunts were pulled to break the monotony. On one occasion, a blimp returned from patrol and landed with a chimpanzee operating the rudder control as co-pilot. Imagine the surprise of the MATRATS when they saw the chimp. (Note: one of the pilots was actually controlling the rudder from a remote auto-pilot station).

The Navy has always had its share of pilots who didn't trust their crewmen. On one occasion, during a night flight, a pilot casually strolled aft to the vicinity of the mech panel which was midships in the car. He studied the mech on watch for a moment and thought he had caught him asleep. In an effort to shock him into reality, the pilot reached up and secured the fuel to one engine, thinking that when it quit, it would really excite the mech. (The engines normally would run for one and a half to two minutes after the cut-off valve was secured.) As soon as the pilot stepped back, the mech very calmly reached up and secured the fuel to the other engine. The pilot screamed, "Why did you do that?" The mech answered, "Well, sir, I figure if you can secure one engine, I can secure the other!" You can rest assured that pilot never again doubted the efficiency of that mech.

On another occasion during a night flight, a pilot secured the fuel to one engine and stood back to wait for the fun. Nothing happened. He checked the cut-off valve and found it to be in the "off" position. He waited a while longer and still nothing happened. All the while the mech remained motionless and apparently unconcerned. Finally the pilot could wait no longer. He shook the mech as if to awaken him only to find out

he was very much awake. The pilot said, "Why won't that engine quit? I secured the fuel." The mech replied, "Well, you see, I opened the cross-connect valve with my foot as soon as I saw you secure the fuel to that engine." Another lesson learned for the pilot.

When returning from a deployment, it was common practice to stow excess baggage in the bomb bay. When this was necessary, it was smart to tell the crew chief about it, so the bomb bay doors would not be inadvertently opened, either in the air or on the ground. One command pilot stowed a case of whiskey in the bomb bay but did not tell anyone. The crew chief discovered it and about an hour after take-off from overseas, decided to make a routine check the operability of the bomb bay doors. You see, the command pilot made the mistake of being unusually nasty to the crew chief - which cost him a case of whiskey and he had no recourse because he stowed it illegally.

Unfortunately, in the late '50s and early '60s, some of the personnel assigned to LTA had their hearts set on serving in jets. Because of their apathy, they failed to use the blimp to its full capacity, thus pressure was applied to decommission all LTA squadrons. They met an untimely demise. (3)

At this writing, Westinghouse is developing a new generation of blimps (4) and hopefully these "playful pachyderms" will once again contribute a significant capability to our Armed Forces. Ω

Editor's notes: This story was submitted for TNB many years ago and may have been misfiled when CAPT Eppes passed away. We are pleased it was kept and not lost. (1) In some circles the more popular story of the word's origin is the onomopoeic, created by thumping the side of a British SS ship. (2) Of course "dirigible" is derived from the French word "diriger" of which one meaning is "to steer," so any LTA craft capable of directed movement, typically in conflict with wind, is a dirigible. (3) Flag leadership moving toward a carrier-based Naval Air Force succeed in deleting blimps and flying boats, but failed to eliminate land-based airplanes before that leadership rotated. (4) This is one of the only known images of the Sentinel 1000 with its short-lived Westinghouse insignia. The airship was lost in an unrelated Weeksville hangar fire.



The Historians' Letters (Part VIII)

By Roy D. Schickedanz



Additional letter from Alfred Weber of Karlsruhe, dated July 31, 1967: Dear Mr. Schickedanz:

Enclosed I send you the autographed photo which I received last weekend from Mr. Hans von Schiller. He sent a second photo of Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin, too, for you. The two photos are out of von Schiller's last book. You can write to Mr. von Schiller at Osterholzweg Haus Anna 1 7768 Stockach (Baden) West Germany.

I think I have given you the address in one of my last letters. If you write to me please write to Post Office Box 1845. I have lost some letters to my private address in the past. I hope you are well and with pleasure I hear again from you. With best wishes...

Dr. Douglas H. Robinson letter of Dec. 26, 1968, reads: You sounded a little homesick, I thought. Not sure whether you are still at Blackburn College or just visiting, but will send it on there and see what happens. Don't be too discouraged about Admiral Rosendahl beating you into print with the history USN blimps in WWII. I spent much of the day with him on Oct. 19, and he is still working on it. I can remember when the thing was announced for publication in the trade journals in 1957, and then withdrawn for revision. He actually intended the history to be in two parts, one being straight history and the other being comments by C.E.R which is likely to be polemical, if not controversial. The occasion was the Northeast Aero Historians meeting in Lakewood, and featured a bus tour of NAS Lakehurst. When the blimps were decommissioned in 1961 I resolved not to go back, and had some regrets that I broke the vow. The big Hangar #1 is half filled with a simulated carrier flight deck used to train aviation boatswains' mates in operating under the deck power equipment, and all that is to be seen of the LTA days are two very dilapidated gondolas

in one of the wooden hangars, one from a ZPG-2 and the second from a ZPG-3W, the latter all kept on because of the interminable legal proceedings arising from the fatal crash off Barnegat in 1960, I think. Not much doing with my history of aviation medicine. I finally got an answer recently to a query sent over a month earlier to my editor at the University of Washington Press, explaining why he couldn't publish it this year after all. I'm not ready to take it back as it is a specialty item and I had a hard time finding this outfit to take it. I'm not doing much of anything with LTA except helping out a bit with a children's Zeppelin history (two are already in print and two more coming along, to my certain knowledge). I did go to Germany this summer for a week, with the main purpose of attending a ceremony at the Nordholz N.A.S. of the Bundesmarine commemorating the 50th anniversary of Strasser's death in action. We had glorious weather and lots of old friends were there for a pleasant occasion. Probably the last time my great friend Martin Dietrich, who is at least 86.

I had another letter from Alfred Weber dated February 7th, '68: Dear Mr. Schickedanz:

Excuse please that you must wait so long for answer again. But about X-mas and New Year I had much trouble in my officer and the last two weeks I was ill with a hard influenza. I was glad to hear from you. To your asks: On Rhine-Main-Airport at Frankfurt was two great airship hangars. Hangar I was finished in 1936 for LZ 129 HINDENBURG. Hangar II was built later and finished in 1938 for the airship LZ 130 "Graf Zeppelin II." After the HINDEBURG-disaster came the LZ 127 GRAF ZEPPELIN (I) for sightseeing in hangar I. In October 1938 it was transported to hangar II and from November 1st the LZ130 housed in Hangar I. In March/April 1940 the two airships were destroyed and on May 6th, 1940, hangar I and II blown up by the German Wehrmacht (Army). I enclose a letter from Mr. Rutzen, chief of the fellowship of German Navy Airshipmen. He wrote me the addresses of the chiefs from the fellowships "Graf Spee" and "Admiral Scheer." They are:

Fellowship: Graf Spee": Mr. Wilhem Hellmeier
Sanmannreihe 21, 205 Hamburg- 80-Bergedorf West
Germany

Fellowship "Admiral Scheer.": Mr. Heinrich Bredemeier
Boemestrasse 12 Hamburg 70-Wandsbeck West
Germany

I hope you become contact with the two men and you can write that you have the addresses by Mr. Rutzen. I would be glad to hear from you again. For today I'm with my best wishes.... Ω

SHORT LINES (Continued from page 18)

Spaceport Tucson Approved, Set To Host Space Balloon Company. SPACE (1/20) reports that on Tuesday, the Board of Supervisors in Pima County, Arizona, approved the development of Spaceport Tucson, with World View Enterprises, a space balloon company, set to be its anchor tenant. According to the article, World View is currently creating “a balloon-based system that will take passengers up to an altitude of 100,000 feet (30,000 meters) or so in a pressurized capsule, allowing them to see the curvature of the Earth and the blackness of space.” The article adds that the balloon ride will be smooth and last between five to six hours “from liftoff to touchdown,” with tickets “currently selling for \$75,000” each, and with the first commercial crewed flights scheduled for 2017. Meanwhile, on its website, KVOA-TV Tucson, AZ (1/20) adds that the spaceport will be constructed near the Tucson International Airport. GeekWire (1/19, Boyle) reported that World View CEO Jane Poynter said that the approval of the spaceport demonstrates that Arizona has joined states such as Florida, California, New Mexico, and Texas at the frontier of the commercial space industry. Poynter remarked, “We’re really seeing an inflection point in this whole space tech area.” She also “emphasized that the balloon-borne flight system could be used for uncrewed high-altitude flights as well as the tourist trips,” and “argued that the World View experience will fill a niche that’s different from rocket-powered space tours.” According to Poynter, World View’s balloon-based system “allows us to be at altitude for an extended period of time – which, it turns out, is what people want to do when they go to space.” The article noted that other potential applications for the balloons include weather monitoring, surveillance, and scientific experiments. Ω

EasyJet To Test Plane With Hydrogen Fuel Cells. Reuters (2/1, Young) reports that British budget carrier EasyJet will test a new hydrogen fuel cell system that will allow an aircraft to taxi to runways without using its engines. While the airline is already benefiting from historically low oil prices, the new fuel cells could allow the company to benefit even further. According to Reuters, the system will be installed on an Airbus jet and, if successful, could save the airline between \$25 million and \$35 million each year on fuel costs. The Guardian (UK) (2/1, Topham) adds that the plan could save EasyJet “up to 50,000 tons of fuel a year and cut its carbon emissions.” Ω

Boeing Agrees To Pay \$12 Million For Failing To Meet Safety Deadline. The AP (12/22) reports that according to the FAA, Boeing will pay \$12 million for “failing to meet a deadline to submit service instructions that would enable airlines to reduce the risk of fuel tank explosions, among other violations.” The article notes that this settlement is “the second largest for regulatory violations in the history of the FAA.” The article adds that fuel instructions played a role in a fuel tank explosion on a Boeing 747 TWA flight off of Long Island in 1996. The Wall Street Journal (12/22, Pasztor, Wall) reports that Boeing has also agreed to as much as \$24 million in additional penalties if it fails to complete improvements within the next five years. However, according to the article, the FAA did not maintain that Boeing’s actions violated safety rules. Department of Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx explained that the agreement is “an important step toward ensuring that Boeing fully meets all applicable compliance standards going forward.” Ω

Researchers Develop Substance That Reduces Risk Of Jet Explosions In Crashes. The Christian Science Monitor (10/2, Spotts) reports that scientists have developed a new substance that can be added to diesel and jet fuel, which “reduces the fuels’ tendency to explode when a collision turns them into a mist.” The article points out that approval for use of the new additive in aircraft “could take up to seven years to ensure it meets FAA requirements.” Ω

MEDIA WATCH

“New Scientist” interviewed Marcel Felippes of Airship do Brazil about their plans to use airships to transport cargo in the Amazon. Recently NOON BALLOON learned they are working with Per Lindstrand to get an airship erected (below) quickly to train pilots. Ω



A Navy Airship Pilot in WWII and The Crash of the K-34

By Donald P. Venton,
CDR, USN (Ret)

Review by C.P. Hall II

This is a book that is autobiographical in nature with the main emphasis being the author's time as a naval aviator during the Second World War. Had this book been published in 1945 instead of 2015, the movie rights would not have been snapped up to make it into a serial titled, "Don Winslow commands Blimpron 42." The reader anticipating bombing the Japanese I-boats, depth charging the German U-boats, or frustrating Italian underwater chariots, will be sorely disappointed.

That said, Donald P. Venton joined the Navy as an aviation cadet late in 1942. One year later he completed training at Lakehurst and ended up a USN Ensign in Brazil, early in 1944. Most of 1944 was spent flying K-ships in Brazilian waters. Late in 1944 he was transferred to Blimp Squadron 11 stationed at South Weymouth, Massachusetts. He was onboard K-34 when it was lost at sea off Boston. Post war he remained in the Navy until retiring with the rank of Commander in 1970.

As you may have intuited from the opening paragraph, this is not a tale of intense combat experiences. Don Venton came of age in the 1930s in California, an enthusiastic observer of the development of aviation. He flew solo at his own expense before America entered the war and volunteered for Naval Aviation in 1942.

The standard historical cliché is that Japan began the war with superbly trained and combat-experienced naval aviators while ours were competent, peacetime fliers. We were initially shocked, and then learned to cope. The Japanese were unable to train equally capable replacements for losses, while we not only replaced losses

but manned multiple new CVs and CVLs as well. One may read Donald Venton's remembrances of Navy pre-flight school and wonder how that was accomplished? One interesting aside: "The 18th Battalion was made up not only of civilians but also 80% of Navy and Marine personnel who had been at Pearl Harbor and Guadalcanal. With the arrival of the ex-sailors and marines, the coaches/officers learned that they could not manhandle the Cadets. The pay line became, "let go of me or I'll have you court-martialed!" Also there is little evidence of speed in this training process.

That said, 1944 finds Ensign Venton in Brazil flying anti-submarine patrols in K-ships. While there may not have been any actual hostile encounters, the fascinating

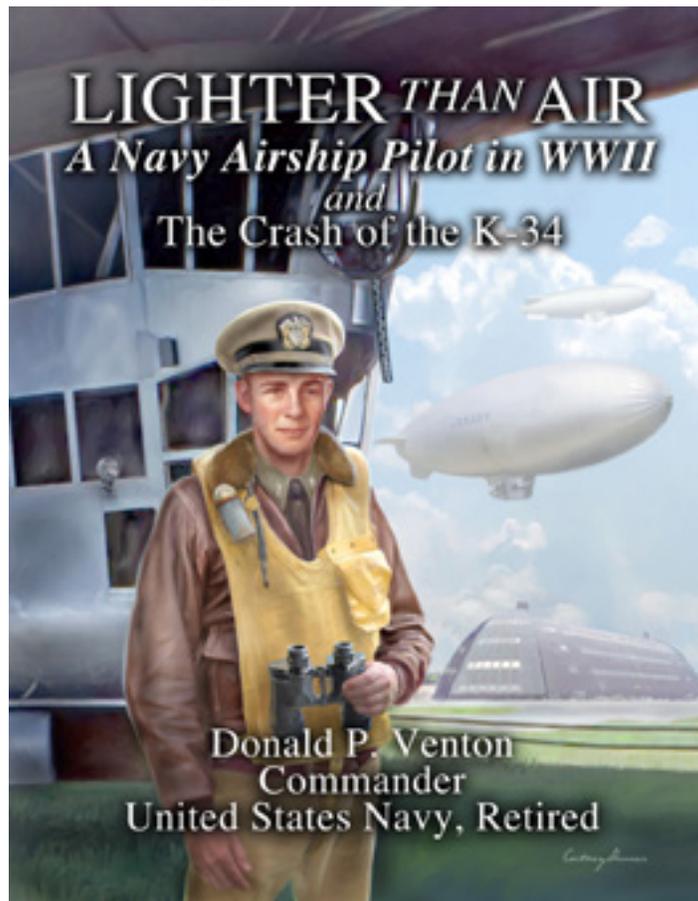
details of blimp piloting are revealed in striking detail. If you are an author of Naval Aviation history, would be an author of WW II vintage Naval Aviation fiction, or just are curious about the nitty-gritty of LTA flying; this may well be the book for you.

There is one, first-hand account of aviation disaster as Ensign Venton was onboard when K-34 was lost in foul weather off the coast of Massachusetts, near Boston, in November of 1944. The lesson, which seems apparent to me, is that an airship is so large, and access in flight is so minimal, that damage can grow from minor to fatal before anyone onboard can

grasp what is happening. The actual course of events can only be sorted out through supposition after the fact.

This book is softcover, 8½ x 11, just over 200 pages with many photos of the B & W snapshot variety which do not reproduce as well as half-tones. There are numerous drawings and diagrams illustrating the text. It is an LTA "how to" from the perspective of a naval officer. There is impressive detail regarding such issues as airship navigation and equipment utilization but it is the perspective of an officer, not an enlisted man! **Ω**

See "Small Stores Insert" for ordering information.

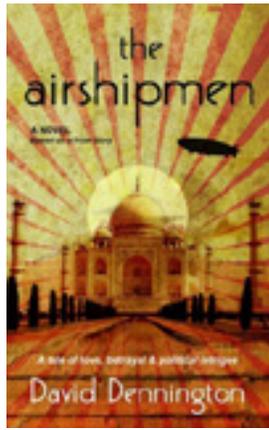


The Airshipmen

A Novel – Based on a True Story

By David Dennington

Reviewed by C. P. Hall II



The German airship *Hindenburg* burned at Lakehurst, New Jersey in 1937. The three remaining Zeppelins were scrapped in 1940. Since that time, the rigid airship has been the subject of history and legends; the subject of motion pictures, books, novels and newsletters. Perhaps the best known is the motion picture “The Hindenburg” starring George C. Scott and Anne Bancroft, which won an Academy Award. This film was very loosely based upon a book, “The Hindenburg” by journalist Michael M. Mooney who was accused of plagiarizing “Who Destroyed the Hindenburg?” by career author A. A. Hoehling; the plagiarism suit was unsuccessful.

the airshipmen is centered on the British airship program undertaken during the 1920s and intended to compete with German airship development. Fifteen years before the demise of Hindenburg,

Inventor and retired naval officer C. D. Burney initially proposed building five rigid airships to operate a bi-weekly passenger service to India, later to expand to the far reaches of the British Empire. Two years passed and this idea morphed into a project to build two advanced commercial airships: one at the Government’s Royal Airship Works (RAW), the other by Burney at a Vickers subsidiary. Six more years pass, the RAW craft crashed, and the Burney airship would be scrapped one year later.

Accurate 1924 airship program history is a challenge. There was immediate publicity in the year of conception followed by an era of de facto secrecy and little comment between 1924 and 1928. Program defense required controlled presentations be made in 1928-29 though performance predictions would often later prove inaccurate. Following the crash of R101, the inquiry was oddly structured; the transcript of testimony was at first, closely held, and later classified “Secret”. The published “Report of the R101 Inquiry” left many unsatisfied. An unspecified quantity of RAW records are said to have disappeared and in 1932, a great deal of remaining records regarding the 1924 Program were classified “Secret”, sealed, and unavailable to scholars until declassified under the terms of “The Official Secrets Act” in 1982.

David Dennington has written a novel based primarily upon what history has been written. He has created a number of fictional characters, which allows him to fill in gaps in the known history from fictional, therefore unchallengeable perspectives. David describes it as “a tale of love, betrayal & political intrigue”. The reader unfamiliar with the history will find this a fascinating story of interactions between political leaders, their subordinates and families, in the pressure cooker of international depression, affecting a government project, enmeshed in difficult circumstance, unlikely to result in success. The reader familiar with the history will find he is alternately agreeing with, and conflicted by, David’s fictional narrative.

the airshipmen is soft cover, 637 numbered pages in length with a few photos and maps. It is offered through “Amazon” for \$24.99. By the time that you read this, a Kindle edition should be available for about \$9.00.

In a recent WSJ book review, Edward Kosner offered a description of Alex Haley’s *ROOTS*, “- a historical novel valid in its essential narrative but informed by the imagination.” His words seem applicable to *the airshipmen*. It describes the essence of that which I commend to you as both interesting and entertaining. Ω

The March issue of *AIR & SPACE* has an unusually high LTA content. Dr. Tom Crouch reviewed the book *DIRIGIBLE DREAMS* (see previous TNB) and almost a page and a half are devoted to “The Underwater Airship.” This covers the Ocean Exploration’s Trust’s vessel *Nautilus*’s visit to the remains of USS *Macon*. (We reported on that surprise visit last issue but did not have the same mosaic shared with the national magazine. Hopefully we’ll be able to run the NOAA images in the next issue.) Ω

An article in the Assn of Naval Aviation’s *WINGS OF GOLD*, Spring 2015, p 44, *ANA SQUADRON NEWS, PATRIOTS*, Boston, MA, area: “...and to commemorate the flight of the Naval Air Development Unit’s blimp, *SNOW GOOSE*, which departed from South Weymouth on a flight into the Arctic region during late July and early August 1958. A book of interest about the flight in *ARCTIC MISSION* and *NADU: The forgotten Naval Air Development Unit of NAS SOUTH WEYMOUTH*, presented on the “Gedunk” page of the squadron’s website: <http://www.anapatriotsquadron.org/> Ω

BLACK BLIMP

William D. Tuggle, 94, passed 12 FEB 15. He served as a radioman on airships during WWII, entering the Navy two months after Pearl Harbor. He is survived by a daughter, son, and grandson. Ω



Clifford H. Barnes, 94, passed 19 OCT 15. Cliff served in WWII LTA, and then joined Eastern Airlines in charge of one of their shop repair programs. He joined Rolls-Royce in April of 1978, and was then based at Kansas City on the

repair side with TWA. He then retired in 1986 and moved to Florida. Cliff is survived by his wife, Polly. Ω

Jay V. Burnham, 92, passed 10 NOV 15. Jay was a young LTA pilot in WWII. He is survived by a son. Ω

Gerald E. McOmber, 81, passed 7 JUL 15. Born in Ohio and a graduate of Miami University, McOmber was commissioned in 1957. He served in ZP-3 and ZW-1 at Lakehurst 1958-61, later serving in HTA and retiring as CDR in the Naval Reserves. McOmber is survived by his wife Joann, children, grand and great-grand children. Ω



Richard D. Crosby, Jr. passed 29 DEC 15. Dick loved flying and always enjoyed seeing everyone at the reunions. Dick is survived by his wife of 66 years, Ann. Ω

John “Buck” Newsom, 96, passed 26 NOV 15. Born in North Carolina, John graduated from USNA in 1941. Aboard USS *Hopkins* as Gunnery Officer, the ship was credited with a Japanese sub sinking on 9 DEC 41. Completing LTA training at Moffett and Lakehurst, John returned to sea and also became HTA-qualified. Returning to LTA to skipper ZP-2 in Glynco, John also flew carrier-based S2Fs and seaplanes. He retired in 1964 to work for Centron Productions and become active in many museums, historical societies and volunteer organizations. He is survived by his wife of 69 years, Faye, two daughters, a son and grandchildren. Ω



Paul R. “Ren” Brown, 90, passed 5 FEB 16. Paul Rendall Brown was born in Akron and at age 12 joined Goodyear Troop #42 of the Boy Scouts, where he met many Goodyear employees, including P. W. Litchfield, who in June of 1942 formed the First Air Scout Squadron of the Boy Scouts of America.



Ren, a plankowner, then visited Goodyear's Wingfoot Lake Base and got his first blimp ride. Graduating from Akron's East High School, Ren was hired by Goodyear as an apprentice mechanic, working on final assembly of G, K, L and M blimps before enlisting in the Navy. In early 1947 he went back to work for Goodyear Aircraft Corp., later Goodyear Aerospace, on a variety of assignments in many facets of LTA: design, engineering, operations and administration. He earned his Commercial LTA Pilot License in 1955. Ren was also an instructor for gas-filled balloon pilots. He retired from Goodyear Industrial Products in 1987. Ren was a Charter and Lifetime Member of The L-T-A Society, holding the posts of Treasurer, Secretary and Chairman throughout the years. Ren was also a Lifetime Member of the NAA and an Honorary Lifetime Member of the Navy Lakehurst Historical Society. Ω

Summer issue's mystery photo question received one response. Tom Cuthbert is pretty sure the man is **Howard Brewster**, who had been Tom's instructor in September 1950. At a Reunion, Brewster had told Ed. he was part of Operations Plumbob and Clinker, and had photos to prove it. Since the "G-1" photo could be as new as April 1942, the dates do work out. Unless someone objects, we'll go with Brewster as the man in the photo. Ω



Information requested on Navy Career of Navy blimp pilot Thomas Francis Horan.

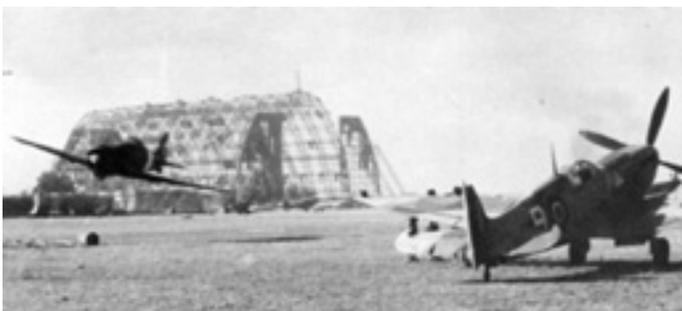
- He was first logged fit May 11, 1942.
- Qualified as a pilot Oct. 2
- He became a senior pilot on May 1, 1943 and a Command Pilot on Mar. 1, 1944.
- He flew ZN's through Oct, 1942, then K-ships/ZN's.
- Completed Blimp ASTraLant later in 1944.
- It looks like he worked out of Key West a lot of the war.

Requested by Lorne Bohn who is doing research on this Naval airship pilot.

Please contact him at: lbohn@shaw.ca

LIGHTER SIDE

The economy is so bad now that a picture is worth only 750 words. ☺



(Taranto was one of several Italian airships bases in WWI. Their hangar's remains are visible in the background.) Caption from the internet photo above: "An Allied pilot flying a Macchi 200 buzzing Taranto, Italy. It sadly proved that these kind of stunts aren't without danger as the pilot hit a member of the ground crew and more or less decapitated him. The pilot hadn't noticed a thing and after landing was confronted with a dent in his wing's leading edge, containing skull fragments." ;)

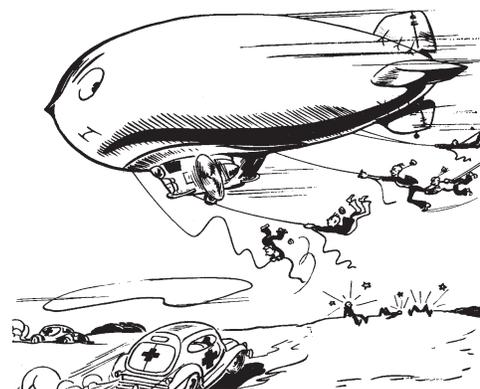


It's not that I believe there are too many idiots in this world, just that lightning isn't distributed right. - Mark Twain ☺

Law of Close Encounters - The probability of meeting someone you know INCREASES dramatically when you are with someone you don't want to be seen with. ☺

A member of Parliament to Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli: "Sir, you will either die on the gallows, or of some unspeakable disease." "That depends, Sir," said Disraeli, "whether I embrace your policies or your mistress." ☺

SPEED RUNS
DEFINITELY NOT RECOMMENDED
for LANDINGS





Airlander, the world's largest aircraft.



The Cardington Hangars started as a private venture when Short Brothers bought land there to build airships. It constructed the 210m long Hangar 1 in 1915 to enable it to build two rigid airships, the R-31 and the R-32. The site was nationalized in April 1919, becoming known as the Royal Airship Works. In preparation for the R101 project Hangar 1 was extended between 1924 and 1926; its roof was raised by 10m and its length increased to 247m. Hangar 2, originally located at RNAS Pulham in Norfolk, was dismantled in 1928 and re-erected at Cardington. Hangar 1 is an English Heritage Grade 2 building. Below: The grand opening of Cardington hangar by Mayor Dave Hodges in front of assembled delegates and press.

