



First Flight Airport, Kill Devil Hill, Kitty Hawk, N.C. The 3,000-foot strip was dedicated Dec. 17, on 60th anniversary of Wrights' first flight. On right is Wright Memorial Shaft; in center is Wright museum and visitors' center

# Planes Fly Again At

*First Flight Airport dedicated during 60th anniversary of powered flight events at Kill Devil Hill, N. C.*

by VOLA LAWSON

**S**ix decades after men's first powered flight, lightplanes can now land and take off within a few yards of the spot where the Wright brothers, on Dec. 17, 1903, flew for the first time in history.

Highlight of three-day ceremonies at Kitty Hawk, N. C., marking the 60th anniversary of the first flight, was the dedication on Dec. 17 of a 3,000-foot strip at Kill Devil Hill, N. C., called, appropriately, First Flight Airport.

The new airstrip, at its northernmost boundary, lies due west of the Wright museum and visitors center, and at its southern tip is in the westerly shadow of the 60-foot granite Wright memorial shaft. Its 3,000-foot paved runway—almost 30 times the length of the initial Wright flight in 1903—closely parallels the path of the Wrights' first flight.

Aviation and Government officials who gathered on the flat, wind-swept sand dunes for the ribbon-cutting ceremonies (performed by an FAA *Queen Air*) included Secretary of Commerce

Luther H. Hodges, North Carolina Governor Terry Sanford, AOPA President J. B. Hartranft, Jr., Phil Harr, Aerospace Industries Association president; Ralph Whitener, executive director of the National Aeronautic Association, and Lt. Gen. Harold W. Grant, deputy administrator of the Federal Aviation Agency.

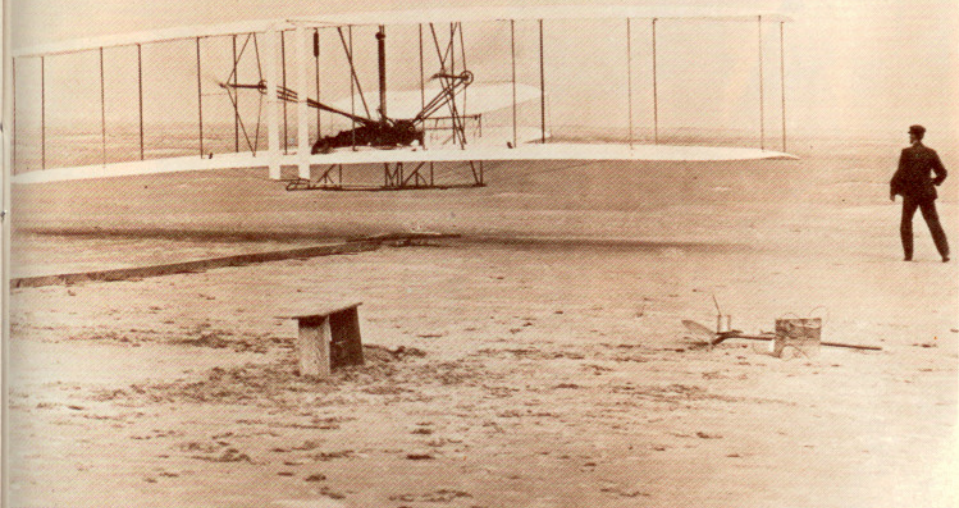
Sixtieth anniversary events were kicked off Sunday night Dec. 15 at the "Man Will Never Fly" dinner, an annual spoof of the local disbelievers who said the Wright flight was a myth. This dinner was given by the Man Will Never Fly Memorial Society, which meets on each anniversary of "the Wright brothers alleged first flight."

Among those in the audience who heard that "flight is for the birds; birds fly, men drink," were Astronaut John Glenn Jr.; Air Force Major Robert Rushworth, pilot of the 6,000 m.p.h. X-15; and Aviatrix Jacqueline Cochran.

Glenn, Rushworth and Miss Cochran were in Kitty Hawk to participate as

panelists in a flight seminar for youth which was held on Monday morning Dec. 16. Other panel members were Max Conrad (AOPA 95611), the flying grandfather and globe-circling pilot from Lock Haven, Pa.; TWA Captain Emeritus Hal Blackburn, a 6,000,000-mile airline jet pilot of Dryville, Pa.; and James Nields (AOPA 58977), businessman-pilot and president of Ware Knitters, Ware, Mass.

Attending the flight seminar were approximately 125 high school students from 22 states. After each member of the panel talked to the youths about aviation's impact on their lives and careers, they answered questions from student participants on the different branches of aviation. Conrad, who told the group he has devoted a great deal of time to encouraging young people to get out to the airport and learn to fly, said that aviation has been guilty of neglecting to recruit and interest young people in flying. Young people should also be reminded, Conrad said,



The most famous picture in the history of aviation—Wilbur Wright runs along beside the Wright Flyer as Orville, stretched out on the panel of the lower wing and no doubt trembling with cold as he did not want to risk adding the weight of an overcoat, begins the world's first powered flight on Dec. 17, 1903. Flight lasted 12 seconds, covered a distance of 120 feet

# Kitty Hawk

that "learning to fly is relatively cheap—it is cheaper than learning to dance."

Nields told the assembled young people that they should not think of aviation as "just the airlines, which are limited to serving only 600 communities in this entire country. General aviation patrols the lines that bring your gas, its planes put out forest fires, bring vital parts to remote building or business sites, and land money-and-time-saving trouble-shooters on the spot immediately.

"We fly our business plane 600 hours, 100,000 miles a year. Without it, we'd be dead." Nields spelled out for the students what communities should ask themselves if they want to figure in today's aviation picture:

1. Does your community have an adequate business airport?
2. Does it have supporting satellite airports?
3. Has it alerted industry and business to the opportunities of having airports and to the fact that an airport

raises real estate values?

4. Does your community airport have safe, high-speed highways leading to it?

5. What is your community doing to educate the public? (Here Nields pointed out that only 14% of the entire population of this country has ever flown).

6. Urge congressional and government officials to have all first class mail sent by air, as is done in France.

"We can no longer afford to have human resources—our most valuable asset—tied up in travel time," said Nields.

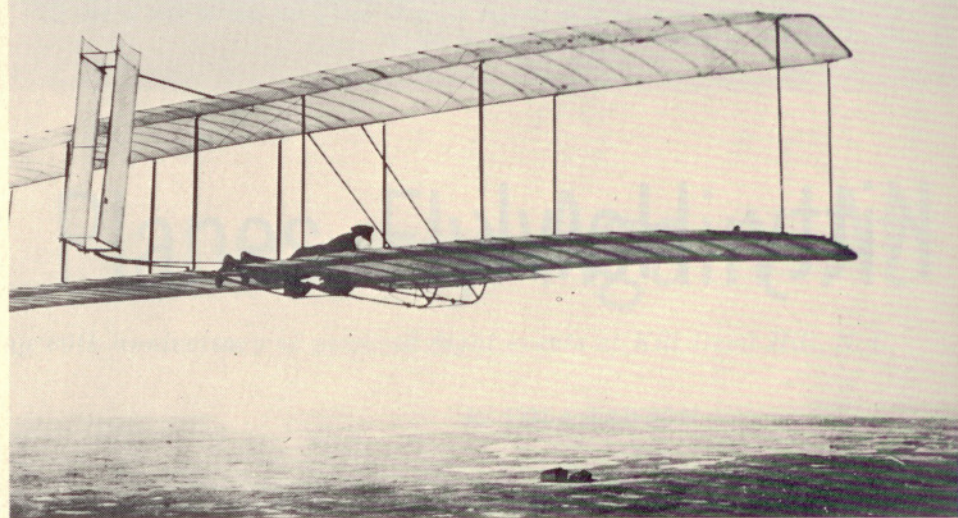
Youth Seminar Chairman Lou Davis, of the National Aeronautic Association, said that the seminar was designed to give today's aviation leaders a way of communicating with youth on tomorrow's problems and challenges of flying. "It is hoped," Davis said, "that this type of meeting can be made into an annual congress."

At a luncheon following the flight seminar, two of the students—Wanda



Participating in fly-overs during dedication of First Flight Airport were Igor Bensen (left) who demonstrated his "Spirit of Kitty Hawk" gyrocopter, and Robert Nance who did precision aerobatics in his 1929 Great Lakes (rear portion of which is visible in left background). Also participating in the airport dedication fly-overs were latest military jets; the USAF's Thunderbirds, jet precision pilots who perform their aerobatics in F-100's; and a solitary, unscheduled sea gull who tried a few aerobatics of his own during the Thunderbirds' demonstration

A 1902 glider-kite flight by the Wright brothers near what is now the First Flight Airport. Two buildings seen on the flat beach beneath bottom wing of the glider were Wrights' hangar and workshop



Hannah of Maryville, Tenn., and Tom Craig, Jr., from Elkins, West Va., who had been selected to represent the other delegates—spoke on "Flight, As I See It." The girl delegate told the group that her flight to Kitty Hawk for the 60th anniversary ceremonies was the first time in her 17 years she had ever been in an airplane. From her remarks, it appeared obvious she was looking forward to the flight home.

Monday afternoon, in near freezing weather, officials gathered at the new National Park Service's Wright Brothers museum and visitors center at Kill Devil Hill to dedicate a replica of the plane the Wrights used for their first flight. The replica, which was sponsored by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA), is the result of 11 months work by 50 volunteers—scientists, engineers, pilots, mechanics, housewives and industrial organizations. The original Wright *Flyer* is on permanent exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution's National Air

Museum in Washington, D. C.

Trying to duplicate the Wrights' techniques and materials was not an easy job, according to Maj. Gen. Marvin C. Demler (USAF), AIAA representative. "Believe it or not," said Gen. Demler, "it's harder to build the Wright plane today than it was in 1903. The project demanded every talent of our space and jet age experts. All of the materials and techniques available to the Wrights, crude as they may seem today, have long since been replaced by more modern techniques and methods. Consequently, stepping back 60 years to build the plane exactly as it was constructed then, with the same materials, was a real challenging venture."

Although the replica is complete and identical in every detail to the Wrights first plane, it will never be flown—the pistons have been omitted.

The replica was accepted by National Park Director Conrad Wirth. The Wright *Flyer* reproduction has a



Astronaut John Glenn tries his hand at the controls of the replica of the Wright Brothers Flyer. The replica, sponsored by the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics and built entirely by volunteers, is housed in the Wright museum and visitors' center at Kill Devil Hill, N.C. Astronaut Glenn was a vivid reminder of how far flight has advanced since its birth 60 years ago

Although First Flight Airport was dedicated on Dec. 17, it was opened to general aviation craft two days earlier. Ronald W. Houghtelling, right, and Bill Crawford, both of Raleigh, N.C., were first to land at new strip in a privately owned plane. They are shown here with the Cessna 140 which Houghtelling flew to Kitty Hawk area on Dec. 15



wing span of 40 feet. Its height is approximately 9 feet and length from elevator to rudder is approximately 21 feet. The powerplant model represents the original 12 h.p. Wright-built engine which weighed 170 pounds. The total machine weighed 750 pounds.

Glenn, Rushworth, Conrad, Miss Cochran, Governor Sanford, Secretary Hodges and General Earl Wheeler, chief of staff of the U. S. Army, were among the list of dignitaries attending the replica presentation.

After the ceremonies were over, there was a demonstration of various types of flight from jets to gliders. While this was going, Astronaut Glenn delighted the crowds inside the museum by climbing into the replica, stretching out on his stomach and working the ship's controls. Glenn, just as the Wrights 60 years earlier had done, had to shift his hips sideways to pull the wires attached to the saddle of the plane by which the wing tips were warped and the rudder turned, thus controlling

balance and directional steering of the craft.

As Glenn wiggled out of the replica he quipped that "the Wright brothers must have also been the first twisters in history."

Two Wright Brothers banquets were held that night to accommodate the more than 600 persons that had gathered in Kitty Hawk and nearby Nag's Head for the occasion. The honored guests shifted appearances between the two hotel banquets.

The main speaker of the evening was Secretary Hodges, who said he thought it especially fitting "that we gather at this historic site to reflect on the far reaching consequences of what took place here.

"When we consider the accomplishments of the pioneering Orville and Wilbur Wright, we are impressed first with the tremendous economic consequences of their inventive genius. The wealth added by the airplane to the world's treasury and the time saved in



First copy of the new North Carolina Airport Directory was presented to that state's Governor Terry Sanford (second from right) at dedication of First Flight Airport Dec. 17. Directory was published by the state's Department of Conservation and Development in cooperation with Governor's Advisory Committee on Aviation. Committee members who presented the directory to the governor are, from left, R.S. Northington of Winston-Salem; K. V. Brugh, Jr., chairman of the aviation committee; and, to the right of Governor Sanford, John Cunningham of Charlotte. In background is Wright Memorial Shaft

Over 125 high school delegates from 22 states attending "Flight Seminar For Youth" on Dec. 16 at Kitty Hawk to hear six famous pilot panelists talk on importance of various types of aviation. Panel members are, from left to right: Jacqueline Cochran, record-breaking woman pilot from Indio, Calif.; Maj. Robert Rushworth, USAF X-15 pilot; James Niels, businessman-pilot and president of Ware Knitters, Ware, Mass.; Astronaut John Glenn, Jr.; TWA Captain Emeritus Hal Blackburn; and Max Conrad, general aviation's flying grandfather from Lock Haven, Pa. At the speakers lectern is James Vercellino, director of aeronautics for Arizona and president of the National Association of State Aviation Officials, who introduced the panelists. Standing at right is Bob Farrington (AOPA 152251), who was on hand to tape the proceedings for his Raleigh radio program (see "North Carolina's 50,000-Watt Flyer," Nov. 1963 PILOT)



the transport of men and material are incalculable. It was the Wrights who ushered in the Twentieth Century's scientific and technological revolution. The modern world simply would not be 'modern' without the airplane.

"From the Wright *Flyer*, weighing 605 pounds, carrying a 12-horsepower motor, a fuel load of one quart, and a pilot and no passengers; costing under \$1,000 and making an initial flight of 120 feet in 12 seconds, there has been developed the modern jet liner weighing 295,000 pounds, with four turbojet engines developing 18,000 pounds of thrust each, carrying 130 passengers traveling at 590 m.p.h. and costing \$5,500,000.

"The several industries in aviation make up a sizeable portion of our economic activity. The airlines alone employ 175,000 persons, operate nearly 2,000 aircraft, and have a total investment of \$3 billion. In the past 10 years

the number of passengers has increased from 25 million to 62 million last year. And air cargo has passed the billion ton-mile mark.

"The general aviation industry, covering private planes used for business and personal flying, includes a total of 85,000 aircraft, which fly nearly twice as many miles as all the airlines combined. . . .

"But the Wrights not only made possible one of the world's great industries," said Hodges. "Even more important, even more significant for the destiny of mankind, they also transformed the world into a neighborhood. They turned oceans into ponds, continents into islets and placed every man within earshot of the bell that tolls for every other man. And as they gave wings to man, they also gave wings to his ideas—especially the ideas of freedom, justice and equality on which this nation was founded." ●