

# AOPA Milestones

■ Some of general aviation's problem areas of 30 or 35 years ago are still problem areas today—they have changed only in complexity and dimension.

An interesting example is that of the airports used by general aviation pilots. The airport problem was one of the things that brought about the formation of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association back in 1938-39. Landing places then available to private pilots were too few, and of those in operation, many were poorly run, offered inadequate services and facilities, and were sometimes known to take advantage of their customers. One of the early objectives of AOPA after its incorporation at Trenton, N.J., on May 15, 1939, was to improve this situation. An active campaign was launched to get more airports built and to see that those already in existence were cleaned up and operated properly. Effective in getting improved operations was an airport-rating system, in which AOPA members filed individual reports to AOPA headquarters on landing places. Ratings were then made and publicized. It was not long before noticeable improvements were made by some of the worst offenders. The member-reporting system, somewhat modified over the years, is still used today.

Getting additional airports, especially for the smaller cities and communities, has been a long and hard pull. AOPA has urged the smaller places to build airports without frills and suited to their needs. One handicap was inherent in the airports standards set up by the Civil Aeronautics Administration (predecessor of the current Federal Aviation Administration), which in many instances would prevent CAA approval from being given to the smaller airport which a community could afford. AOPA and others succeeded in getting these standards changed for certain types of airfields. AOPA also developed a plan of its own for the building of small fields—even sod runways if that was all a small community could afford. It became known as the "Minimax Airport Plan."

Today's airport problem is of a different nature. It is huge and complex. General aviation's right to use some of the big airports is threatened. Both economic sanctions—such as the \$25 minimum landing fee for general aviation planes during peak hours at three Port of New York Authority airports—and Federal Aviation Administration "rationing" regulations, which would effectively remove most general aviation

from five major eastern airports (the three PNYA airports and Washington National at Washington, D.C., and O'Hare at Chicago) are components of the threatening situation. Since the rights of all general aviation flyers are involved, a large amount of AOPA's national headquarters staff time has been spent during the last two years at least in protecting general aviation's interests in this area. Two suits have been filed in Federal courts recently in connection with these two moves to discriminate against private and business flying. The Port of New York Authority is defendant in one action, in connection with its \$25 minimum landing fee, and the FAA in the other.

AOPA is devoting other resources to the cause of protecting the rights of pilots and aircraft owners and of informing the public as to the contributions of general aviation to the national economy and to that of thousands of cities, towns and other communities throughout the country. An AOPA milestone was reached last year when a Director of Public Relations, Charles Spence, was appointed in order to help stimulate wider public support of general aviation.

While the airport problem is one of the more dramatic of the 30-year projects, there are others. They include AOPA's part in improving navigation facilities [see Duane E. Best's article, "AOPA And The Common System," on page 68 of this issue]; better and lower-priced insurance for pilots and aircraft owners; increased membership services; better equipment; prevention of discriminatory taxation against general aviation pilots; elimination of electrical transmission lines as hazards at airports; and elimination of airport landing fees, to mention a few.

The story of the beginning and accomplishments of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association is one of U.S. civil aviation's more interesting success stories. Here it is retold briefly. In this

issue of *The PILOT* are several articles which look at the AOPA story from different angles. The article "AOPA And The Common System" tells the navigation story from the days of light beacons and four-course ranges to modern day Vortac. Another article relates development of increased membership services and the growth of a paid staff of one man—J. B. Hartranft, Jr., now AOPA president and a member of the Board of Trustees—to a paid staff of 150 men and women. It is titled "AOPA Staff Geared To Serve Members." Still another article traces the growth of AOPA's sister organization, the AOPA Air Safety Foundation. Individual statements by members of the Board of Trustees give their views on AOPA's birth and the expectations of the founders.

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association had a humble beginning, but with bright prospects for the future. In the pre-1939 days, aviation was considered almost the exclusive preserve of the military and the young but growing commercial airlines. Federal and state government agencies were inclined to give short shrift to "nonscheduled pilots"—a favorite designation for private pilots in those days.

"The public image of the individual pilot was largely that of a thrill-seeking playboy or an itinerant daredevil," Robert L. Parrish, former associate editor of *The PILOT* wrote, in an article titled "AOPA: 25 Years of Growth" appearing in the May 1964 issue of *The PILOT*. "In the 26 years between Kitty Hawk and 1939, progress in general aviation had been so impeded by these factors and others . . . that the latter year had a total of only 29,513 certificated pilots."

Parrish then told how Ed Noble, chairman of the newly created U.S. Civil Aeronautics Authority, gave this bit of advice to a group of Philadelphia pilots who were on a hunting trip in Georgia with him:

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*Association's objectives over past 30 years have remained very much the same: giving aircraft owners and pilots individual service and working to preserve their rights. Here are some of the highlights of efforts made to attain these goals*

"What you fellows should do is to get all of the private pilots together in an organization that will argue for things that are in the best interest of all."

"The Philadelphians took that idea home with them," Parrish continued.

"Five of them—L. P. Sharples, P. T. Sharples, C. Townsend Ludington, J. Story Smith, and Alfred L. Wolf—met in L. P. Sharples' home to give the idea substance. That substance evolved into a carefully drawn up plan, the conception of AOPA.

"The five all were avid sports flying enthusiasts, but saw also the potential utility of the lightplane. Ludington was the founder and operator of an airline and director of the aviation section of the Franklin Institute. [Mr. Ludington died in January 1968.] The Sharpleses, both pilots and plane owners, were among the country's earliest pilots and were officers of the Sharples Corporation. Smith, president of the Philadelphia Aviation Club, was also executive officer of the Jacobs Aircraft Engine Company. Wolf, a seaplane buff and former executive director of the Philadelphia Aviation Commission, was a noted attorney, specializing in aviation law.

"From the outset, AOPA was envisioned as an organization that would actively serve its members by making flying 'more useful, less expensive, safer and more pleasurable.' There were several struggling private flying organizations in existence at the time, as well as countless aviation clubs. They all had three faults in common. Each was the tool of an individual or group who expected personal gain or benefit from it. Each was run by part-time, amateur management. And all were inevitably doomed to fail. Their organization, the Philadelphia quintet agreed, would serve only the common interests of all pilots, and it would be run by professionals.

"Purposes laid out for the budding organization were:

"To promote, protect and represent the interests of the members.

"To further the art, science and industry of aeronautics and the pursuit of flying.

"To promote the economy, safety and

popularity of flight in aircraft and the use of aircraft, including the pilotage thereof.

"To enjoy and exercise such other purposes and powers as are specifically granted to it by the laws of the State of New Jersey, not for pecuniary profit."

Written into the articles of incorporation, the principles have been the basis of AOPA's growth to 150,000 members in the 30th anniversary year. They also have enabled the Association to help improve the lot of the private pilot in both safety practices and economics. The general aviation industry, in the United States and abroad, also has been the beneficiary of the broad objectives.

With incorporation procedures completed on May 15, 1969, AOPA officially set up offices in Chicago's Merchandise Mart, with J. B. Hartranft, Jr., first (and still) professional head of AOPA, in charge. Assisting in the preorganization phase, and later, was the late Gill Robb Wilson (AOPA 1). Wilson at the time was Director of Aeronautics for the State of New Jersey. Some years later, he became publisher and editor of Flying magazine.

Working closely with Hartranft in Chicago was Max Karant (AOPA 18), then managing editor (and later editor) of Popular Aviation, predecessor of Flying magazine. Karant, now AOPA senior vice president, joined the professional staff in 1948.

Prior to establishment of offices in Chicago, the Association's headquarters were located in Philadelphia—on the second floor of a walk-up office building at 1424 Walnut Street. One of Hartranft's first assignments was to determine why so many other general aviation organizations had failed. The five founders believed that most of the failures were due to the lack of employment of business principles. Hartranft, a graduate of the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce of the University of Pennsylvania, confirmed the founders' suspicions.

AOPA rapidly outgrew its Chicago quarters and in 1940 moved its headquarters to New York City. The Chicago office was continued as a membership

servicing operation. When Hartranft was called to duty with the Army Air Forces in Washington, D.C., in 1943, he carried the headquarters to Washington with him so that he could devote his spare time to AOPA business. Headquarters have remained in the Washington area since then. They are now located in Bethesda, Md., a Washington suburb.

Playing an important part in AOPA's beginning were William B. Ziff and B. G. Davis of Ziff-Davis Publishing Company, publishers of Popular Aviation, which later became Flying magazine. Davis took a leading role in handling arrangements which led to Popular Aviation's becoming the official magazine of the new association.

In the AOPA 20th Anniversary edition of The PILOT, President Hartranft acknowledged the beneficial arrangement with the Ziff-Davis publication.

This mutual benefit contract with Ziff-Davis remained in force for 18 years. The publishing firm did not control AOPA in any way.

"AOPA's primary interest was providing good communications with its members," Hartranft said. "This melded in with the desire of Ziff and Davis to have their publication designated as the official magazine for the advertising advantage which a select pilot readership, such as the AOPA membership, would provide. In a real sense, Ziff and Davis were pioneers in the early history of AOPA . . . Our warm feelings for this publishing firm were not at all dimmed by the fact that we started our own magazine in 1958."

Starting its own magazine in 1958, AOPA took another step toward carrying out one of its major objectives—that of setting up the best possible facilities for communicating with its members. AOPA had determined that it would be a "membership service" organization giving every possible service to the individual member. Services grew as the membership became larger.

During recent years, with the threat to general aviation becoming increasingly ominous, greater representation on the national front has become imperative. An idea of the extent of the rep-

AOPA's first working space—an unused uptairs office at 1424 Walnut Street, Philadelphia.



resentation may be gained from the fact that one division alone—Policy and Technical Planning Division—attended 432 meetings during the 12 months ending Feb. 28, 1969; 385 were in the Washington, D.C., area, and 47 others were out-of-town.

Details of membership servicing and how various elements of the AOPA staff operate are given elsewhere in this issue of *The PILOT*. But there are many sides to the AOPA story. How this huge servicing organization came about can be traced over the years. The following chronology gives some of the major milestones in this history and that of the AOPA Air Safety Foundation:

**★May 15, 1939**

AOPA articles of incorporation approved at Trenton, N.J. Association's first official home established in Chicago.

**February 1940**

First AOPA mass fly-in held at Lake LaBelle, Oconomowoc, Wis.

**June 1940**

AOPA launches campaign for luminous marking of airfields for night landings; community air marking program; AOPA Air Haven plan for stimulating new, improved community airports.

**July 1940**

Move of AOPA headquarters to New York City completed; AOPA simulated disaster flight to Greenport, N.Y., to prove the utility of light aircraft in emergencies.

**January 1941**

AOPA-Hertz discount program introduced to members; first AOPA survey of all U.S. airports.

**June 1941**

AOPA stages air drop of leaflets, "Your Town Is Not Airmarked," on communities throughout the country.

**September 1941**

AOPA wins CAA agreement in plan for numbered runways.

**December 1941**

AOPA "goes to war" in program to assist CAA in utilizing pilots and lightplane fleet in defense effort.

**March 1942**

AOPA service office opened in Washington, D. C.

**June 1942**

AOPA starts campaign for issuance of permanent pilot licenses; campaign against "clearance" and landing fees begun; survey conducted of members to find out names and locations of airports charging these fees.

**December 1942**

Publication of AOPA Washington Newsletter begins.

**January 1946**

AOPA starts campaign to secure nationwide installation of ground control approach (GCA) units.

**July 1946**

AOPA completes arrangements with Lloyd's of London to provide members with discounted personal accident, hull and liability insurance; offers first "flying only" policies as membership benefit.

**September 1946**

AOPA mounts full scale flying safety program; renews emphasis on campaign against service, equipment and repair

"gougers" of lightplane owners.

**February 1947**

AOPA monthly safety posters produced for distribution to all airports; Private Flyers Association votes to merge with AOPA; establishment of Provisional International Civil Aviation Organization hit for failure to include general aviation representation.

**May 1947**

Reciprocal rights agreement signed with the Royal Aero Club of Great Britain; AOPA questionnaire on overcharge for service, equipment and repair distributed to all members.

**July 1947**

AOPA introduces aircraft title search service for members; publishes first International Flight Guide; launches attack on airport service monopolies; inaugurates AOPA Certificate of Merit program for above average airports; initiates drive to have stall-warning indicators installed in all aircraft by manufacturers.

**November 1947**

AOPA wins out in three-year battle for standard altimeter settings; mounts campaign to report reckless flyers to CAA.

**January 1948**

Reciprocal rights agreement made with Brazilian Union of Civil Aviators.

**April 1948**

Seaplane Flying Association merges with AOPA; AOPA Flight Planning Department organized to provide information and materials on domestic and international flight routing, where to go, how to arrange group flight activities, packaged flying vacations, and other services.

**June 1949**

AOPA publishes first manual on navigation by omni.

**September 1949**

AOPA map service established.

**February 1950**

AOPA and CAA start joint program to track down failures and defects in private planes; AOPA Special Pilot Service Bulletins inaugurated.

**August 1950**

Australia organizes owners and pilots association modeled after AOPA.

**September 1950**

AOPA flight planning and aeronautical chart service set up for members.

**November 1950**

AOPA develops civil air defense plan for private aircraft; introduces merit rating plan to members for lower insurance rates; AOPA Foundation, Inc., incorporated as independent, nonprofit organization to promote flying safety and education; AOPA coins the term "Unicom" for FCC's proposed aeronautical advisory service.

**May 1951**

AOPA Life Insurance Plan inaugurated to allow full insurance to members without restrictions or added premium. (This is still the lowest-priced insurance for the coverage available, and the only insurance premium that provides a wife's rider at half cost.)

**October 1951**

First claim paid on AOPA Group Life Policy.

**June 1953**

COPA of Canada established, modeled after and affiliated with AOPA.

**August 1954**

AOPA launches campaign to promote better cockpit visibility.

**October 1954**

AOPA 180° Rating Course developed under the auspices of the AOPA Foundation.

**April 1955**

Battle begun to deter plans to substitute military Tacan (tactical air navigation) system for VOR-DME.

**December 1955**

AOPA offers plan for multiple-use antennas and "antenna farms" to combat growing number of tall tower hazards.

**February 1956**

AOPA supports move to remove CAA from the U.S. Department of Commerce. AOPA endorses CAA policy statement that all civil aircraft are entitled to use all publicly owned airports where Federal funds are involved.

**March 1956**

AOPA formally petitions CAB to set up minimum cockpit visibility standards.

**June 1956**

AOPA calls for study of capability of plane electric supply systems to handle extensive electronic instrumentation.

**September 1956**

Technical experts in airport, air traffic control, and airplane and airspace problems added to full-time staff; introduction of AOPA Airport Letter.

**October 1956**

First AOPA Plantation Party held at Biloxi, Miss.

**February 1957**

AOPA assists in arrangements for hangar construction loans.

**March 1957**

AOPA formally asks CAA to take stand against landing fees for private aircraft at public airports developed with Federal aid.

**March 1958**

AOPA begins publication of official magazine, *The AOPA PILOT*.

**February 1959**

AOPA presents its Minimax Airport Plan in *PILOT* article, "Your City Can Afford This Airport."

**October 1959**

AOPA fights against 60-year age limit for airline pilots, designated medical examiner system, over-regulation of general aviation.

**January 1960**

AOPA offers recommendations for revision of Federal Aviation Act of 1958.

**September 1960**

AOPA wins revision of FAA medical forms that would give blanket authorization for release of all past medical data.

**November 1961**

AOPA 360° Rating Course introduced by the AOPA Foundation; International Council of Aircraft Owner and Pilot Associations (IAOPA) formed.

**December 1961**

First edition of the AOPA Airport Directory published.

**March 1962**

AOPA pre-packaged "Airoute" service inaugurated.

June 1963

AOPA Extension Course for pilot skill upgrading becomes available.

August 1963

AOPA Instrument Nav/Com Course published in *The Pilot*; new AOPA offices opened in Oklahoma City.

October 1963

Pinch-Hitter Course offered at Plantation Party.

January 1964

AOPA signs up 100,000th active member. Since 1939, a total of about 260,000 have been on the rolls.

November 1965

AOPA President participates in White House Conference on International Cooperation, urging better international flight rules and better airports in all countries.

January 1966

AOPA petitions Federal Communications Commission to change FCC rules as recommended by Radio Technical Commission for Aeronautics.

July 1966

AOPA staff member authorized by Federal Aviation Administration to conduct evaluation of Category II weather minimums.

January 1967

AOPA headquarters staff is reorganized. Five vice presidents and a senior vice president are appointed.

August 1967

Name of AOPA Foundation, Inc., changed to AOPA Air Safety Foundation.

October 1967

AOPA Air Safety Foundation announces

its seven-point program for air safety.

December 1967

First edition of AOPA Handbook for Pilots published.

December 1967

AOPA protests PNYA's proposed \$25 fee for "prime time" landings at Metropolitan New York airports.

February 1968

AOPA holds first press conference in its history, introducing "The Truth About General Aviation" to the public via the news media, to correct erroneous impressions of general aviation.

July 1968

AOPA employs its first public relations director; advertising and publicity program developed. AOPA offers 14-point program designed to ease congestion at major airports. AOPA files suit against PNYA to halt discriminatory \$25 fee at high density traffic airports in Metropolitan New York area.

January 1969

AOPA announces increase in benefits to members under AOPA Life Plan, due to safety record of general aviation pilots.

January 28, 1969

AOPA active membership reaches 150,000 figure. (By a strange coincidence, five years previously, on January 28, 1964, the current AOPA membership had just reached the 100,000 mark.)

April 1969

AOPA files suit against FAA Administrator to prevent implementation of "high density traffic airports" regulations scheduled to go into effect at five public airports. □

## AOPA's Membership Reaches 150,000

The year 1969 seems to be one of significant events for AOPA. In addition to its 30th birthday, the Association has reached another milestone in its history. Its total current membership reached 150,000 when the membership department opened the application of Miss Nellie M. Tice (AOPA 379070) of Fort Myers, Fla.

"Nell," as she is known to friends, began flying a little less than one year ago because, she said, "I feel that flying will be as necessary in the future as driving an automobile is now."

During her free time from work as an accountant with an International Harvester farm equipment dealer in Immokalee, Fla., Nell flies with the Cub Club at Fort Myers Airways.

She joined AOPA when she was a student pilot, just a few days before obtaining her private license. Her reason for joining, she said, was that "I feel that you should belong to and support the organizations of your interests. Only in this way can you reap the full benefits."

Next month she and her instructor, Miss Robley Geddes (AOPA 308454), plan what will be Nell's first long cross-country flight, to California for two weeks in a Cessna 172. She is not only looking forward to the trip, but in addition

she is looking forward to logging many pleasurable hours of flying in the future. □



Nellie M. Tice of Fort Myers, Fla., recently boosted AOPA total membership to 150,000.