

In letters received from AOPA members, every now and then someone will write in and say: "I haven't seen so-and-so since we both joined AOPA before the war. Could you tell me what he's doing now?"

Memories have grown somewhat faint. To refresh them, and because it is AOPA's 20th anniversary, it seemed like the right time to survey the 200 earliest members—those who joined when AOPA was not yet on its feet—and find out just what has happened to them in 20 years.

Inevitably, there have been losses among the first 200. Old friends like Lewin B. Barringer (AOPA 10), former head of the Soaring Society of America, and Vincent Bendix (AOPA 11), founder and president of the Bendix Corporation, have died, leaving a void in AOPA ranks and in the aviation community. But despite attrition, war and recession during the last 20 years, 46 of the original 200 remain active in AOPA, representing among themselves a colorful swash of professions and achievement.

There are, for example, Gill Robb Wilson (AOPA 1), editor; Brian Aherne (AOPA 9), movie and stage star; Jerome Lederer (AOPA 21), flight safety expert; Russell Hay (AOPA 199), Beechcraft distributor, Kenneth Benson, (AOPA 74), real estate broker; Marion "Babe" Weyant Ruth (AOPA 109), housewife; and E. N. Angus (AOPA 55), engineer. All of the 46 actives, or practically all, are still flying or somehow participating in aviation.

Six out of the 46 could not be contacted, but seven others were easy to find—they're members of AOPA's Board of Trustees and staff. They are: J. B. Hartranft, Jr., (AOPA 2), AOPA president; C. Townsend Ludington (AOPA 3), first AOPA president and now honorary president and board member; Alfred L. Wolf (AOPA 5), AOPA secretary, general counsel and board member; Laurence P. Sharples (AOPA 6), AOPA chairman of the board; J. Story Smith (AOPA 7), vice president and board member; Max Karant (AOPA 18), vice president and editor of *The PILOT*, and Philip T. Sharples (AOPA 45), vice president and board member. Both Hartranft and Karant are full-time AOPA employees.

When it first started, AOPA was no overnight success. It took more than three months to get as many as 200 members. At the end of these three months, in September, 1939, AOPA was .003% as large as it is now. At that time, the Association was competing with some 20 organizations (most of them now defunct) for the private pilot's dollar. Hartranft, then executive secretary, traveled to airports all over the country enlisting "whoever happened to be hanging around the airport."

Mainly, though, mailings were the most important source for gaining membership. One member, who refreshed his waning memory and answered our inquiry, Ellis A. Carson, recalled

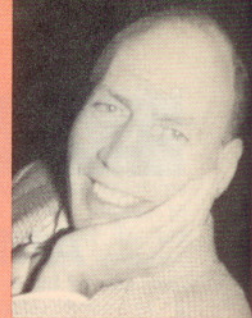


L. P. Sharples
(AOPA 6)

chairman of AOPA's Board of Trustees as he appeared 20 years ago. He holds one of 47 flying trophies he has won over the years



Robert C. Quinlan
(AOPA 122)

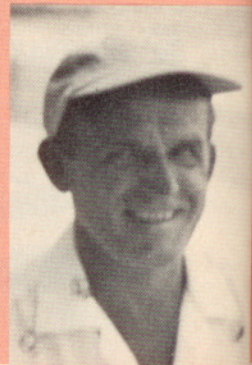


Lawrence Schmidlapp
(AOPA 110)

Arch Maddock
(AOPA 181)



Thadius Koch
(AOPA 156)



AOPA's First Two Hundred

Forty-six of the '39'ers, who are still AOPA members, maintain an active interest in flying

by B. M. RICHNAK

that it took three mailings before he joined AOPA, but when he received his membership number, he saw that it was No. 187—"and they said I was a charter member!"

Twenty years have passed and AOPA has grown up. The original membership has multiplied into 75,000 and, in the American tradition, AOPA might be called a success. And the active charter members? Let's let them speak for themselves.

"I joined AOPA the fateful weekend in September, 1939, when Hitler invaded the low countries," says Loren Cluster (AOPA 137). "I was in Cleveland attending the Cleveland Air Races when Doc Hartranft asked me to join." Cluster met Hartranft when they were both working for the New York Life Insurance Company in Philadelphia. "His (Hartranft's) heart was entirely in aviation, though, and he became the first general manager of AOPA after

about a year," Cluster continues. Today, Cluster is general manager of Cluster Theatres and a representative for a stock brokerage office in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. He flies a Model F Beech *Bonanza*.

Harry A. Bruno (AOPA 12), well-known New York public relations counsel and longtime aviation exponent, combines both activities successfully. He is one of the three living World War I pilots who, with three others now deceased, founded the Quiet Birdmen (QB), a secret aviation society, in 1921. He handled publicity for Adm. R. E. Byrd's North Pole flight in 1927, Lindbergh's New York to Paris flight in 1928, and the Lincoln Ellsworth antarctic expeditions from 1939-54. He is also author of a book, "Wings Over America," a history of American aviation. Bruno has received countless trophies and awards for his contributions to aviation.



Louis W. Rodehorst
(AOPA 177)



W. H. Ice
(AOPA 115)



L. R. Stringer
(AOPA 163)

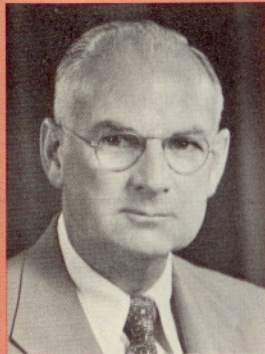


Lawrence Aicholtz
(AOPA 128)

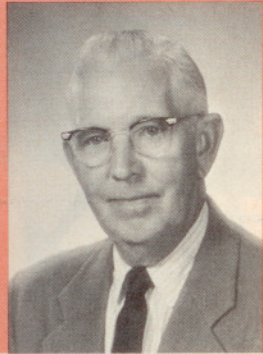


Edward R. Moore
(AOPA 145)

Russell Hay
(AOPA 199)



Roland Smith
(AOPA 195)



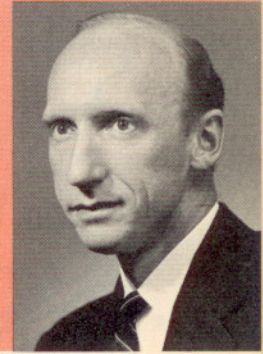
Wesley H. Dyer
(AOPA 127)



Col. Waldo B. Jones
(AOPA 198)



Thomas H. J. Davis
(AOPA 106)



Today, Bob Ewing (AOPA 151) follows the unusual pursuit of writing and lecturing on flying saucers, does psychic research and is editor and publisher of a periodical, *New Era*. When he joined AOPA in 1939, long before the "saucer" era, he was selling Taylorcrafts and operating the old Nine Mile Airport, outside Olean, N. Y. He's owned a Piper *Tri-Pacer* since 1952 and has flown it to the Virgin Islands, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Mexico and Canada. His home is at Edgewater, Fla.

As a rancher on Texas's wide open spaces, L. R. Stringer (AOPA 163) finds traveling in his Beech *Twin Bonanza* pretty comfortable. Since soloing in 1927 in an OX-5 *Eaglerock*, he has owned 12 different aircraft, logging a total of 6,000 hours.

The airlines provide occupations for three of the charter members. Thomas H. Davis (AOPA 106), president of Piedmont Airlines, Winston-Salem, N. C., was associated with Piedmont when it was still known as Camel City Flying Service, distributors for Piper and Stinson aircraft back in 1939. With Davis instrumental in its growth, it became an airline after the war with several local feeder airline routes in the southeast. Davis holds a commercial pilot's license with glider, single- and multi-engine ratings.

William H. Ice (AOPA 115) of Fullerton, Calif., and William R. Peters (AOPA 102) of Coral Gables, Fla., are both airline pilots. Ice is with the Flying Tiger Line, flying the San Francisco to Tokyo run in a *Super Constellation*, while Peters flies DC-6B's for Pan

American on its Latin American routes. Ice adds that he has one desire—to hear from all the 157 students he taught to fly from 1935 to 1942!

Member No. 177, Louis W. Rodehorst of Columbus, Neb., complains that he may have to "retire from my position in the postal service in order to pursue my hobby of pleasure flying." He also instructs students and flies emergency charter flights in his spare time. Rodehorst started flying in 1928 and participated in the commemorative air mail program in 1938. He owned an *Arrow Sport* and a *Challenger Robin* in the old days, but now finds flying his Cessna 120 a little faster.

Lawrence M. Schmidlapp (AOPA 110) of Cincinnati, O., has gathered 9,280 hours in the air since he first soloed an OX-5 Waco in 1928. At present, he is secretary-treasurer of the Sportsman Pilots Association and president of the Queen City Flying Service in Cincinnati.

Another sportsman pilot is John M. Wells (AOPA 34) of Southbridge, Mass., who served as the Sportsman Pilot Association's president in 1958. Chairman of the board of Harvey-Wells Electronics, Inc., Wells has found time to serve on both state and Federal aviation commissions, including the Radio Technical Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. During World War II, he carried such passengers as the then Sen. Harry S. Truman, Senators Brewster and Kilgore in his own plane for an inspection of military bases in Maine.

Four of the 46 are in the real estate business although they all started out

in different occupations. Kenneth Benson (AOPA 74) of Coral Gables, Fla., has his own brokerage office, but spends a lot of time in aviation activities. He is president of the Greater Miami Aviation Association and is actively working for a new jet airport "down in the keys south of Miami." In the past, he has served as state chairman of the Junior Chamber of Commerce aviation committees in both Ohio and Florida.

Roland M. Smith (AOPA 195) served in the Air Corps in two World Wars, and started his own real estate concern in 1946. His first plane was a Standard with an OX-5 engine, bought in 1920. In his over 40 years in aviation, Smith is proud of his record of no accidents in any of his planes.

George C. Selzer (AOPA 184) of Sioux City, Ia., is a long-time pilot as well as a long-time AOPA member. Aged 70, Selzer has his own real estate office, and has just recently completed a landing strip on his 34-acre farm. He has owned 15 airplanes since 1932, when he purchased a Lambert 90 *Monocoupe*.

Wynant C. Farr (AOPA 124) sells real estate in Newburgh, N. Y., and has flown airplanes since 1930. During the second World War, he was in charge of a coastal patrol unit for the Civil Air Patrol and made 25 attacks on enemy submarines off the coast of New Jersey. His enthusiasm for flying and the CAP resulted in the formation of the CAP Orange County group in New York State.

A retired airport manager and newspaper (aviation) columnist, Jean Adams Shaw (AOPA 116) is now a



Wynant Farr
(AOPA 124)



Leopold Boivin
(AOPA 162)



Marion "Babe" Weyant Ruth
(AOPA 109)

George Selzer
(AOPA 184)



Ellis Carson
(AOPA 187)



Jean Adams Shaw
(AOPA 116)



housewife at St. Croix, Virgin Islands, and "still attempting to write." During the 1930's, Mrs. Shaw did aerial photography and reporting for Boston newspapers, served as New England president of the 99's, and flew in the Miami Air Races. She took over as manager of Nantucket Airport, Mass., in 1946 and "retired" in 1955. Her book, "Heroines of the Sky," was published by Doubleday in 1941.

Marion "Babe" Weyant Ruth (AOPA 109) of Lansing, Mich., didn't learn how to drive a car until she'd been flying for 11 years. Today, she does both proficiently, as well as instructing pilots in flying and in the AOPA 180° Rating. One of her former students is Jack Adams (AOPA 138362) of Twinkle Town Airport fame. Mrs. Ruth met Doc Hartranft in September, 1939, in the restaurant at Lansing Airport and promptly signed up for AOPA. "I was a little doubtful at first," she says, "as no one on the field had ever heard of either Hartranft or AOPA, but he must have been quite convincing as 20 years later, I'm still a member."

AOPA 198 answers to the name of Col. Waldo B. Jones, and has spent most of the last 20 years in the U. S. Air Force. When he joined AOPA he was a civilian, though, managing the Marlboro, Mass., airport. He joined the Army Air Corps a year later, served in the European Theatre during the early part of World War II, and was deputy chief of staff in Korea during that war. He is presently stationed in England.

Probably one of the best-known of

AOPA members, Brian Aherne (AOPA 9), makes his home in Santa Monica, Calif., but you won't find him there these days. He is currently playing the lead in the touring company of "My Fair Lady." Mr. Aherne writes that he has had to give up flying, but that "the sound of a motor in the sky still makes me look up enviously and causes a nostalgic tug at my heart."

Business executives all, Wesley H. Dyer (AOPA 127), Thadius J. Koch (AOPA 156), Lawrence A. Aicholtz (AOPA 128) and Ellis A. Carson (AOPA 187) fly mainly for utility. Dyer, president of Metal Products Company of Nashville, Tenn., flies his Beech *Bonanza* on occasional trips to other company plants, while Koch, who is a distributor of X-ray equipment in Miami, Fla., must confine his flying to commercial airliners these days. He started flying in 1936 on a Kinner *Bird* 175 h.p. plane.

Running his own sound recording company in Hollywood, Calif., Mr. Aicholtz finds time in between business trips for some pleasure flying in his Beech *Bonanza* with his family. Carson is president of Sunbeam Plastics Corporation in Evansville, Ind., and says he looks forward to "standing beside an airplane with one more fan." He now flies a Cessna 195.

A branch manager for the Small Business Administration in Indianapolis, Ind., Earl Merry (AOPA 168) says most of his flying is all for pleasure now, although he was active in the CAP during World War II. "I've owned seven planes at various times, and will continue until the FAA or the man with



Loren L. Cluster
(AOPA 137)



William R. Peters
(AOPA 102)



Harry A. Bruno
(AOPA 12)



John M. Wells
(AOPA 34)



Robert Ewing
(AOPA 151)

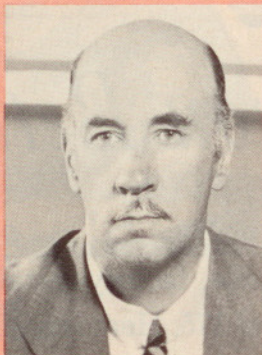
Jerome Lederer
(AOPA 21)

Igor Sikorsky
(AOPA 29)

Gill Robb Wilson
(AOPA 1)

Kenneth E. Benson
(AOPA 74)

Brian Aherne
(AOPA 9)



the scythe says no," he said.

Leopold Boivin (AOPA 162) moved to New Bedford, Mass., from New York City in 1942 and thinks it's the best thing he's ever done. "I'm a foreman for a brewery here, and like the Cape [Cod] for its fine flying country," Boivin said. He has just sold his share in a Cessna, but says he would like to buy a *Bonanza* "so I can get to more of the Plantation Parties like the one at St. Petersburg, Fla., last year."

E. N. Angus (AOPA 55), who heads an engineering firm in Oaklyn, N. J., writes that he is still an owner and pilot. "My interest has never lessened since 1918, and there has never been anyone that has been able to present an argument that would make me wish to filter one bit of the wings that it is quite certain have been in my blood from birth," he said.

It is significant that Gill Robb Wilson holds AOPA No. 1—for 40 years he has also been a "first man" in almost any new aviation development. An executive consultant for AOPA in the early days of its organization, Wilson was also a member of the committee that formed the Civil Pilot Training Program, a founder and organizer of the Civil Air Patrol, state director of aviation for New Jersey, four-time president of the National Aeronautic Association, and participated in many other aviation projects too numerous to mention. Pressure of duties as editor and publisher of *Flying* magazine have taken Wilson out of the cockpit, but he still keeps up with aviation developments.

Another "first man" in aviation progress is Igor I. Sikorsky, founder of

Sikorsky Aircraft and designer of the first successful helicopter in the western hemisphere. He holds AOPA No. 29. Since 1939, Sikorsky has designed and built helicopters for military and commercial use, and today, serves as consultant to the company that carries his name. He has received numerous awards and medals for his contributions to aviation.

Arch Maddock (AOPA 181) has flown for 32 years, first as an instructor, then as a private pilot examiner, and more recently working as pilot and photographer for the Atlantic Aviation Institute. Mr. Maddock lives in Pennington, N. J.

Edward R. Moore (AOPA 145) of Murphy, N. C., has had to substitute automobiles for planes during the last few years—he holds an automobile dealership in Murphy. He started flying in 1937.

Russell Hay (AOPA 199) of Pittsburgh, Pa., has been associated with airplanes for practically all of his adult life. Before the war, he had an aerial photography business, doing large-area mapping for the government, while flying his Cessna *Airmaster*. He was in Wichita, Kans., the fateful day of Dec. 8, 1941, when pilot licenses were voided. His license was among the first to be reinstated and "I flew from Wichita to Pittsburgh without seeing another plane in the air that day." After the war he became a Cessna dealer in Pittsburgh, and just recently took over the Beechcraft dealership.

Jerome Lederer (AOPA 21), as managing director of the Flight Safety Foundation, is responsible for many of

the safety facilities that have been incorporated in the lightplane in the past 10 years. For his work, he has received many awards, including the Arthur Williams Memorial Medal and the Monsanto Aviation Safety Award. Lederer is a member of the Committee on Operating Problems of the National Aeronautics and Space Agency and a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society. He was director of the safety bureau of the CAB and chief engineer for Aero Insurance Underwriters before joining Flight Safety Foundation.

For Robert C. Quinlan (AOPA 122) three significant events occurred in 1939—he moved to Dallas, Tex., entered the oil business as an independent operator, and joined AOPA. Today, he's president of the oil company, still lives in Dallas, and is still an AOPA member! During World War II he was in the Army Air Corps flying B-24's, was shot down by the Germans and spent 11 months in a prisoner of war camp. Since then, he's been active in the Air Force reserve and has sometimes used his company *Bonanza* for flying trips.

Harold "Trox" Troxel (AOPA 166) has been operating Port O'Maine Airport, at South Portland, Me. (an airport with which many vacationing pilots are familiar), for a number of years. The PILOT has received letters speaking of Troxel's fine facilities for transient pilots. He also has done much to promote general aviation among young fliers based at the airport.

That's AOPA's first 200. And as one AOPA'er mentioned, "Hope they're still here and flying on our golden anniversary." END