

Wing Tips

THE AEROSPACE EDUCATION NEWSLETTER OF NEW YORK WING

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THE ON-GOING SAGA OF THE WRIGHT BROTHERS

In December 1903, the Wright Brothers made the first successful flight in a man-carrying, heavier-than-air flying machine that was fully controllable, took off under its own power and landed at a point no lower than that from which it had taken off. Some of the best scientific minds of the day were struggling, unsuccessfully, to accomplish this with much greater financial resources and the ability to call on highly skilled craftsmen and machinists to convert their ideas into a tangible product. The Wright Brothers had themselves, their life savings and the help of their employee, a machinist named Charlie Taylor.

Two years later, the Wright Brothers had developed their invention to the point where it was bigger, stronger and more dependable. They also learned how to be skilled pilots. The next year, 1906, they stopped flying altogether and, unsuccessfully, tried to sell their invention first to the United States Government; then to other possible customers.

Things began to pick-up in 1907. The Wrights were developing a two-seat version of their aircraft and making contacts with important people in the US and in Europe. An important New Yorker, they had become friendly with, was the brother-in-law of a Congressman who used his connections to get the Army interested. They also were invited to go to Europe to meet with potential buyers. Wilbur made the trip while Orville completed the airplane they were building and got it crated for shipment to France. Later, both Orville and Charlie Taylor would join Wilbur, but it was a year of negotiations, frustration, and no flying. Meanwhile, Frenchmen, inspired by the Wrights, were busy building and flying aircraft of their own.

BRIG GEN TIBBETS DIES AT AGE 92

Brig Gen Paul W. Tibbets, Jr. died on November 1 2007. He joined the Army Air Forces in 1937 because he wanted to be a pilot, despite his father's wishes that he be become a doctor.

During World War II, Tibbets flew 25 combat missions in the B-17 before being assigned to test the new B-29. Within a year, he had gotten 400 hours in that aircraft. He was then assigned to work with the top secret Manhattan Project, which was developing the atomic bomb. Tibbets flew the B-29, *Enola Gay*,

named after his mother who supported his desire to become a pilot against his father's wishes. This mission dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

Tibbets was sorry that so many people had been killed, but understood that the event shortened the War thus saving many lives, both Japanese and American. He responded to critics by mentioning Japanese atrocities such as the Rape of Nanking, the Bataan Death March and other less well-known incidents.

AEROSPACE EDUCATION DISPLAY CONTEST TO BE HELD AT WING CONFERENCE

As usual, there will be an Aerospace Education Display Contest held at the Wing Conference. The Conference, this year, will be at Lake George, NY on the first weekend in May. The theme for this year is taken from Module 5 of *Aerospace Dimensions*, but not limited to the material contained in that textbook. The theme is: "Planets of Our Solar System."

If you are interested in participating in this contest, contact your Group Aerospace Education who will have more information and will co-ordinate the efforts of your Group.

REMEMBERING INOVATIVE DESIGNER, PAUL MACCREADY

Paul MacCready made headlines in 1977 for having designed the first successful human powered airplane. The aircraft was the *Gossamer Condor*, piloted and powered by bicyclist Bryan Allen, was the first successful controlled, sustained flight powered solely by a human being. The flight lasted 7 ½ minutes, flew a figure-of-eight course marked by pylons ½ mile apart and gained the Henry Kremer Prize of \$95,000 for MacCready. The aircraft, constructed of aluminum, wire and synthetics, and with a skin of thin Mylar, weighed only 70 pounds. It had the appearance of a giant-scale model glider covered with "Saran-Wrap." Inside, in a reclining position, was Allen peddling away and piloting the aircraft.

Two years later, the team of designer MacCready and pilot/powerplant Allen achieved another record. The *Gossamer Albatross*, also 70 pounds, made the first human powered flight across the English Channel.

McCready, an innovative thinker and extremely creative designer was a model builder since childhood. He died at age 81 in August 2007.