



News and Views

From the Editorial Hangar

In our last, we lamented the dearth of incoming material for the *AAHS Journal*. We received one email response directly. One or two others were sent as replies to the email that announced the online posting. Those were initially misdirected, but that IT glitch has been fixed.

CEO Jerri posted a similar message in the Winter 2025 Journal which, now that spring 2026 is upon us, should be in your mailbox by now. Jerri says she received two emails in acknowledgement, and a couple of *printed letters*. That 50% of the responses arrived via the USPS is evidence aplenty that AAHS must engage younger generations. In baseball terms, a significant segment of our membership is in the bottom of the seventh/top of the eighth. Your editor falls in that category, so we can't be accused of bashing old folks here. But the fact is our generation's kids and grandkids haven't developed the same interest in aviation and aviation history that we did eons ago. Or if they have, they're keeping it to themselves.

Back on February 1st, noted author and AAHS Life Member #100 Dan Hagedorn replied to our editorial musings in No. 26-01. We print Dan's thoughts here.

It is 10 degrees F here at Lake of the Woods, the snow from a storm a week ago is frozen solid and I finally had to hire front-end loader to clear my driveway. It has been a depressing week. And now comes the message in the Newsletter.

I truly appreciate the sincerity and candor, but as I am one of the dinosaurs that keep hanging on, I cling to the *Journal* and the Society as one of the constants in my life. There seem to be fewer and fewer of those. I well recall joining AAHS when I was 16, using money I earned from my paper route in very rural eastern Ohio in a town named New Concord - which just happened to be John Glenn's hometown as well. It was such an honor to me at the time, and I casually told anyone that would listen that I had been "accepted" as a member. It was an honor, and I believe that is central to our messaging and survival.

Some of you will remember the quarterly *SAFO - Small Air Forces Observer* produced single-handedly by Jim Sanders. Then there was the sadly missed *Skyways* quarterly edited by long-time friend Dave Ostrowski. Both had hardcore constituencies which, as best I understood, hovered around 2,000 to 3,000. Although spawned as an offshoot of Leo Opdycke's *WWI Aero*, the deep dark secret was that *Skyways* was doing better than *WWI Aero* and was, in fact, sustaining the other. Those two remarkable publications *did not fail*: they simply ceased when the prime movers were no longer able to carry the water, and *there was no thought whatsoever about succession*. But their membership survives, bewildered and scattered, worldwide. They are "some of us" but are lost.

In a nation of 333,000,000, a sizeable percentage of whom had some association with aviation, I fail to believe that AAHS and those other two worthies - to name just a few - can only attract and hold two to three thousand members. It is a statistical impossibility - yet here we are.

Having had the invaluable opportunity to view the work of sustaining aviation history from the vantage point of NASM and The Museum of Flight - *two of the most visited museums on earth* - there must be a message in that. And the lesson that I learned from those 29 years is that we are not doing a very good job.

One of the gems of The Museum of Flight, and right there on the campus, is the Reisbeck Aviation High School. Every time I felt poorly about the future of aviation history, I went over and listened to those 400 amazing young Americans, and they inspired me. Why not present every single graduating senior with a one-year Gift subscription on graduation day?

Our "fraternity," as I prefer to think of it, is fractured - a solitary experience for most. We lack cohesion - and a powerful voice - to inform the world what we are about and what we are striving to do. Our Madame CEO needs to hit the late-night talk shows and the national, morning news shows. She is personable, easy to look at, and has an excellent grasp of what we are about. We need to let people who I believe are our core constituency know we are here. And then ask them to play. We just need a very tall hill to shout from.

They will come.



AAHS 2026 Annual Meeting.

It's been awhile. Covid set everything back and some other things have intervened, but we're recouping and regrouping. Details are still in the thinking/talking stage, but pencil in October 2-4, 2026. Principal venue will be [Flabob Airport](#), home to AAHS and several other aviation-related organizations and businesses. But there are some interesting side-trips in the area to consider as well, [Planes of Fame](#) and the [March Air Museum](#) to name a couple. If there's something you'd like to see or have questions, let us know: FlightLine@aahs-online.org →

Joe Martin
AAHS *FlightLine* editor



Jordan High Remembers

Attending my High School reunion several years ago and talking with some of my classmates from 1964, I learned of a painted tile mural now displayed since 2003 on-campus honoring 74 Long Beach Jordan High School graduates (Our Fallen Heroes) who gave their lives during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam to present.

The 15 x 15 ft mural, made of 1,000 hand-painted tiles, includes a B-17F that was funded in 1942 by a student-led effort in the sale of WW II war bonds and stamps totaling some \$300,000. The Jordan High students raised enough money to "purchase" a B-17F for the US Army Air Force. It was built at the Douglas Aircraft plant in Long Beach, CA, not far from Jordan High School. It was a common occurrence for communities, including schools, to sponsor bombers by meeting fund raising goals. In recognition of reaching the funding requirement, the B-17F was officially named "Jordan High School" and painted on the aircraft nose. The mural, designed by students in 2003 included the B-17F, but did not display the tail number to trace back the fate of this aircraft, nor had any of my classmates seen a photograph of this particular B-17.

Researching the B-17F serial number recently, I came across the identity—B-17F 42-3453, from production block B-17F-65-DL, serial numbers 42-3449 to 42-3482. In June 1943 the aircraft was delivered to Cheyenne, Wyoming, then flown over to Europe and assigned to the 331st Bomb Squadron, 94th Bomb Group. It was loaned to the 96th Bomb Group for missions on August 17, 1943 and later. It went missing in action on October 10, 1943, over Schweinfurt. Due to enemy aircraft action, the B-17F crashed near Wurzburg, Germany. The entire 10-member crew survived and all were POWs until the end of the war.

The Long Beach Arts Council funded \$20,000 for the project to have the 1000 tile mural designed and painted for David Star Jordan High School.

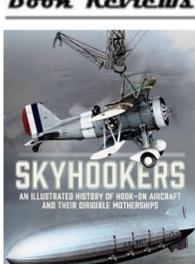


One a separate note, my High School best friend's name is one of the 74 individuals so honored on the mural. After graduating from Long Beach State College, Richard (Rick) L. Bakke and I both volunteered for the US Air Force in 1969. Rick was assigned to AC-130s, I was assigned to B-52s flying Arc Light missions in South East Asia. Rick was killed several years later during the Iran Hostage Rescue attempt in 1980 at "Desert One" landing zone in Iran and posthumously promoted to Major. I flew 66 combat missions in SEA in 1972-73, including Linebacker II sorties over Hanoi, North Vietnam. Completing 24-plus years of USAF service, I retired in 1993.

Lt. Colonel Howard Butcher - USAF (ret)



Book Reviews



Skyhookers: An Illustrated History of Hook-on Aircraft and Their Dirigible Motherships

By William Wolf.
199 pages, numerous black and white illustrations, with index and bibliography.

Hardback Edition: ISBN 978 1 03613 774 8
Also Available as a Kindle eBook

Casemate Publishers, 2025.
Available at <https://www.casematepublishers.com/> or through Amazon.com.

The latest from the prolific pen of William Wolf is a history of "so-called composite aircraft, consisting of the manned carrier 'mothership' aircraft and the manned carried aircraft dubbed the 'parasite.'" In general, the book is arranged in chronological fashion, divided into three sections of varying length. Section One, "Airship/Aircraft Composite Pioneers," takes only two pages to describe early (1905-1918) composite experiments, including John J. Montgomery's balloon/glider launches that ultimately proved fatal to Daniel Maloney. In early 1918, an Albatross D.III, released from Zeppelin L35, dived away and flew to a safe landing. But practicality and the need for such a program were questionable, and the Germans did not repeat this first "parasite fighter" experiment.

Section Two, "British Airship Composites First World War-1928," examines three British projects evolving from the need to intercept high-flying Zeppelins, the idea being to give slow-climbing fighters a leg up by stationing parasites at altitude until the raiders appeared. Once jettisoned, the parasite would descend to a normal landing. The first of these, employing a B.E.2c slung underneath an SS class blimp, failed when a sudden loss of pressure in the gasbag upset the airplane. The unsecured pilot was thrown from the cockpit while the hapless observer spun in, effectively ending the experiment. A similar program, blending the rigid airship R.23 with a Sopwith Camel, proved more successful but was not pursued.

On the other side of the coin, the need to protect an airship on an offensive mission over enemy territory or to extend the range of a reconnaissance aircraft necessitated the recovery of the parasite by the mother ship. Post-war, the rigid R.33, fitted with a trapeze apparatus, was coupled with the diminutive DeHavilland DH.53 Hummingbird as the parasite. This combination proved marginally workable but to be useful, or to even survive, a proper fighter aircraft would be required.



A DH.53 underneath the R.33

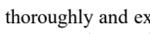
To that end, the R.33 was fitted to tote a pair of Gloster Glebes, placed fore and aft along the keel. As a demonstration, the jettisoned parasites flew around the mother ship before returning to base. In-flight retrieval of the Glebes was never attempted. Retirement (and eventual scrapping) of the R.33, coupled with fiscal austerity, ended British composite experiments once and for all.

Thanks to the lone surviving Curtiss XF9C Sparrowhawk displayed in the National Air and Space Museum, most Americans will be at least vaguely acquainted with Section Three, "American Airship Composites: Sky Hookers of the 1930s." In eight chapters comprising about three-fourths of the book, this section explores the underlying concept and subsequent development of the combination aircraft in the U.S. armed forces. Chapters 1-2 (each section starts over with chapter one) treat the earliest American efforts and the army's flirtation with the Sperry messenger as a parasite on various non-rigids, the most notable result of which was the first American in-flight hook-on of an airplane with its mother ship in late 1924.

The Navy was more persistent, thanks mostly to RADM William A. Moffet's advocacy of the rigid airship as a viable aerial scouting alternative for the fleet, culminating in the mammoth ZR/ZRS series (ZR indicating Zeppelin Rigid, C for Scout.) Naming of the airships followed the Navy's sea service custom of naming cruisers after U.S. cities. The development, construction—and endings—of *Los Angeles* (ZR-3), *Akron* (ZRS-4), and *Macon* (ZRS-5), are described in chapters 4-5. Chapter 6 describes and illustrates the original XF9C-1 through the "production" F9C-2 aircraft. Chapter 7 follows with extensive details on *Akron*, its crew, the Heavier-Than-Air (HTA) Unit personnel, and flight operations. Chapter 8 does the same for *Macon*, including her participation in fleet exercises, 1933-34 and her crash in February 1935 which, coupled with the advent of the aircraft carrier, doomed the Navy's rigid airship program.

In summary, author Wolf has covered the subject thoroughly and extensively, although the layout is somewhat peculiar. A separate two-page Section One seems hardly necessary, and an entire page is devoted to the specifications of the Sopwith 2F.1 Camel, along with a photograph of what appears to be a standard aircraft of that type. These line-by-line specifications of airships and their parasites, interrupting the narrative as they do, would have been better placed as appendices. With nary an introductory word, Section Three opens with a pair of stacked photos, the top one captioned as showing the first American composite attempt, a JN-4 coupled with the Navy's C-1 blimp. The caption for the bottom one, obviously meant to augment the one above, reads "Curtiss JN-4 Jenny, 'The airplane that taught America to fly.'" But the plane is a DH-4B.

Such minor annoyances aside, to anyone but a hardcore LTA enthusiast *Sky Hookers* will provide a wealth of obscure and largely unknown details concerning these hybrid machines and their niche in aviation history. →



Boeing 777-300ER (HZ-AK43) We snagged this one from <https://www.flightaware.com/photos/view/>