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WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF MOONEY MITES  
NEWSLETTER

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The WAMM Newsletter is established as a non-profit voice for the purpose of circulating information of interest or value as well as shared experiences to Western United States Mooney Mite owners and enthusiasts. In addition, it is formed in recognition that a newsletter is essential to maintain communication between Mite owners in attempting flying condition preservation of the remaining single place Mooneys. The newsletter is published every two or three months or as enough news and information gathers to be informative.

## THE DIARY OF A MITE

by Dick McComas

Mooney Mite, M18-C, S/N 210, N329M and I have shared many good flying experiences since March 19th 1970 when her diary (log books) and title came into my possession. I refer to 29M as "she" or "her" because of the love affair that has developed since we first flew together in 1966.

The first entry in 29M's diary is by Bill Taylor, Mooney test pilot, on June 14, 1950. She was flown by Bill for a little over one hour on her maiden flight. From this time until January 1st 1951 an additional 43 hours were recorded - pilot or pilots unknown.

The next entry was recorded by H. Loun, an A&E, who logged 40 hours between January 1st and October 31st 1951. The record is not clear if Mr. Loun was 29M's first owner or if he, as an employee of Mooney, flew and maintained her prior to her first ownership transfer.

S. J. Varby made the next entry in 29M's diary on December 1st 1951. From this time until August 31st 1952 Mr. Varby recorded 101 hours. There is no indication of the location of these flights.

29M's title was transferred to Mr. S. Balkurll on September 1st 1952 when she was moved to Akron, Ohio. From this time until July 31st 1954, Mr. Balkurll recorded 55 hours. The next entry in her diary was on March 11 1955 when she was licensed in Willoughby, Ohio. Presumably for this seven month period she was in storage.

On April 10th 1955 Mr. R. Holstein's name appears in 29M's diary. From April 10th to May 29th 1955, 17 hours were logged. Apparently this association was not satisfactory because after a short 3 1/2 month period, 29M received a new name in her diary, Mr. D. Harbaugh. This was recorded on July 22nd 1955. 29M had remained, as far as her diary shows, in Ohio. Up to this time 29M had been a one-man-at-a-time lady. But on August 15th 1955 D. Harbaugh decided to share. Walt Tomlin, Max Lovingood and Dave Mulvaney each obtained a 1/4 share interest. From July 22nd 1955 until June 20th 1959, 172 hours were entered in 29M's diary, all within the local area with an occasional flight to Chicago or Birmingham, Michigan.

On June 20th 1958 29M's log shows that she was placed in storage until April 23rd 1960 when she was ferried from Warsaw, Missouri to Fallon, Nevada. This flight took 16 hours. She was re-licensed in Fallon, Nevada on July 14th 1960 but no entries were made in her diary from this date until June 1st 1964 when she was again licensed in Santa Paula, Calif. This implies that 29M was again in storage for almost four years except for the flight from

Fallon, Nevada to Santa Paula, Calif.

J. R. Stevens appears in 29M's diary on September 29th 1964 when he flew her from Santa Paula to Torrance, Calif. From this initial entry by Stevens until May 20th 1966, 135 hours were recorded. Most of this time was in the Southern California area with an occasional flight to the Stockton-Sacramento vicinity. One entry shows a flight to Medford, Oregon and return.

The next recorded entry in 29M's diary was on June 5th 1966 by Ray Anderson. In August 1966 Ray flew with her to Ft. Smith, Ark. and return. A wonderful experience, according to Ray. It was during the time of 29M's and Ray's association that I was given the opportunity to fly her - and it was "love at first flight." In thirty some years of flying that has included thirty three different types of aircraft (from a Heath Parasol to a T-33 jet plus a couple of helicopters), none have performed as beautifully or has seemed as "one" with me as did 29M. It is thrilling when you just think about the direction or maneuver you want - and she follows. Just as if she is reading your thoughts. This is when our love affair began.

From June 5th 1966 until November 3rd 1968, Ray recorded 185 hours in 29M's diary. It was at this time, to my dismay, that she again changed owners.

The next entry in her diary is on November 3rd 1968 by Bill Thompson from Santa Monica, Calif. I prevailed upon Bill that if and when he decided to part with 29M, he must immediately contact me. Bill enjoyed flying 29M. He flew with her all over Southern and Northern California, Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Idaho. They also made a trip to Florida to visit Cape Kennedy. From November 3rd 1968 until March 18th 1970 Bill recorded almost 320 hours in 29M's diary.

About this time I received a call from Bill saying he was going to part company with 29M. You can imagine my joy in hearing this. At this time I owned a fun little "bug smasher", a 1938 Aeronca K, but I was not again going to let 29M slip away so on March 19th 1970 her diary records that we became companions. Since that time we have shared over 430 hours of beautiful flying over Southern and Northern California. To airshows and fly-ins from Watsonville to San Diego, or just spending a few days together.

We went on a trip to Spokane, Washington in early August this year - but that is another story, perhaps for a later issue of WAMM.

The Second Annual WAMM (Western Association of Mooney Mites) Fly-In was held August 25, 26 and 27, 1978 at Porterville, California. All those who attended had a very enjoyable time. Again, the Porterville airport management and townspeople were very cooperative. We were given, as was the case last year, the "Red Carpet" treatment. All of us wish to sincerely express our appreciation to John Konop, the airport manager, Ken Billingsley who generously provided transportation, and all the people who helped make the fly-in a success.

Eight Mooney Mite's arrived with their owners during the three days. These were Ben Faverholdt (Torrance), Dave Jappay (Hayward), Dick McComas (Torrance), Earl "Sandy" Sanderson (Placerville), the brothers Ken Shea and Rodger Shea (San Diego), Tony Terrigno (Corona) and Allan Weddle (Sacramento).

Five additional Mite owners arrived and reported on their restoration/repair progress during the past year. These people were Ernie Buenting (Cable), Jack Callahan (Bakersfield), Gary Gramman (San Diego), Doris Loftsgaard (Sacramento) and Ed Soncrant (Torrance). Ernie Buenting's Mite is flying, however he thoughtfully brought his three children in a Tripacer to enjoy the fun. In addition, four interested people arrived for a total of twenty Mite owners and guests.

As in the past, the early morning "Dawn Patrols" and the early evening fly-by's and formation flights were a delight. The Saturday afternoon formation flight including the low altitude airport fly-by was enhanced by the expert pre-flight briefing given by ex-Marine Corps. Colonel and pilot Ed Soncrant who flew F4-U Corsairs and other aircraft during WWII and Korea. Some of us have a little formation flying experience but there is no substitute for the guidance from a professional.

Three trophies were presented at this fly-in. One for the greatest distance flown shared by Ken and Roger Shea who came from San Diego. A trophy was given for the most original and unmodified Mite. This was presented to Dick McComas. The third trophy was, by unanimous vote, presented to Ken Billingsley from Porterville in sincere appreciation for his generous support in providing automobiles for transportation. Although Ken does not yet own a Mite (he is actively looking) this trophy was given for his beautifully restored J-3 Cub. Ken joined us early Sunday morning in the Cub for our Dawn Patrol. The Cub is now an honorary Mooney Mite. Ever try flying formation with a J-3 Cub 400 feet AGL at 70 MPH ?-----FUN!!!!!!

Pat Tomlinson, who operates the MEW Flying Service at Porterville gave us an exciting show Saturday afternoon flying his replica Sopwith Pup complete with an original Le Rhone rotary engine, hardware, instruments and machine gun (de-activated). Incidentally, if anyone knows the whereabouts of a Le Rhone engine, send the details to WAMM so the information can be passed on.

As all good things do, this second annual Mooney Mite Fly-In came to a close Sunday with everyone saying, not goodbye, but 'til we meet again. Those who were unable to attend missed a good time and a great experience. The re-newing of

# SAFETY — CORNER

WORMS IN THE WOODWORK/We knew the owner of an old wooden airplane in its declining years who used to go flying everywhere in it, through mountain turbulence, cold fronts, the lot. Did he never wonder, we asked him, just how long it would go on holding together? Said he, enigmatically, "Just so long as the termites go on holding hands, I've nothing to worry about!"

Well, every now and then the termites do let go, and this matter of the strength of old wooden airplanes is one that deserves thinking about. Listen to this example: This young man had saved up and bought himself an old Mooney Mite —and a very pretty ship, and a real gcer the Mite is. He was on a local pleasure flight one day, doing tight turns low down (which is foolishness enough). Then he levelled off and began to climb. At this point both wings just folded up above his head. Finis.

Examination of the wreckage revealed that the front or main spar of both wings had failed just outboard of the fuselage. The center section of the wooden front spar, inboard of the two main fractures, had separated laterally between the upper and lower spar caps. The rot was extensive: plywood stiffeners on both sides of the center section of the main spar showed many areas that were completely deglued from the spar. The spar itself you could push a probe into, and the stiffeners crumbled almost when you touched them. Nails in the area were completely rusted.

Water was the villain; water getting in the wheel wells during takeoff in rain and snow over the years, water rotting the wood, rusting the nails and weakening the glue.

There's an AD note for inspection for glue joint and wood deterioration out for Mooney Mites, and this airplane had in fact been inspected under this note five years before. Furthermore, there's a manufacturer's service letter recommending some extensive detective work for this kind of deterioration at every an-

nual inspection. But this particular airplane was five months overdue for its annual, and it seems likely that if it had been looked at when it should have been, the rot would have been noticed in time. The rot, let's face it, was very extensive; you would have to be dumb indeed to have missed it during such an inspection. But then again, it had been inspected properly 17 months before, when nothing was found. Can all that decay have taken place in 17 months? We don't know.

Some people would like to ground all old wooden airplanes permanently, and in Australia we understand they have in fact done just that. From this kind of thinking may the good Lord preserve us. (Almost every antique of quality has a lot of wood in its structure.) Bellanca in the U.S. and many companies in Europe are still building superb wooden airplanes, and very often these designs are stronger, strength for weight, than metal. A wooden airplane is inherently quieter than a metal one, and for our money a much better bet to have a crash in—often it just crumples up slowly, like a match box.

But the old ones you must inspect and keep on inspecting. You must get a man to do it who really knows what to look for, and where to look for it. You must be prepared to spend a bit of money on such inspections; chances are you paid little enough for the airplane anyway just because it was old and wooden. It's worth knowing that modern glues are much better than some older kinds. It's worth knowing that heat and humidity are the two things that do the damage. Keep rain and snow off of and out of the structure. Be warned that engine oil running back under the fuselage and soaking into the structure can be every bit as destructive as water. Make sure the airplane is never left in the open if it can be avoided. But above all inspect.

At least you don't have to worry about metal fatigue. □

friendships and making new friends with those who have a common interest is always exciting. We are all looking forward to seeing everyone again - soon.

Plans are being formulated for a Spring and Fall Fly-In. Information will be given in succeeding WAMM Newsletters as the plans solidify. Please send a card to Tony Terrigno and share your thoughts. This association was formed to serve all of us. We need your ideas.

Co-editor (Dick McComas)

## SALES CORNER

M18L---Approx. 700TT A&E, April Annual, Extra Tank, Make offer.  
713-455-6649

M18LA--1000 hours, new engine & prop...Daryl Strong...701-352-0271 Days  
701-352-1623 Kites

M18L---1949 65 Lyc. 140 SMOH, Escort 110, strobe, Landing light, extras  
509-525-6068

M18L---65 Lyc, low time, Radair 105 NavCom, spotless, \$7150. Plane-a-Broker,  
P.O. Box 2685, San Francisco, Ca. 415-589-4983

## WANTED CORNER

- 1) Lyc 65 engine, O-145-B2 or B3 with or without carburator.
- 2) Marvel Schebel MA-2 carburator.
- 3) Contact Editor.

It is absolutely amazing how a commonality in interests can bring out the best of human nature in people.

I make reference to my recent trip to Miami the past labor day week and my casual contact of a fellow Mooney Mite owner/pilot, Dave Russell. After a phone call, Dave Russell, of Fort Lauderdale made me welcome as well as made time of his busy schedule to the showing of his very handsome Mite N4057; in addition, to share his experiences with N4057 since his eight years of companionship. Dave invited me to fly the Mighty 'Mite' powered with a 75-12 Continental. My flight of 30 minutes over the flat lands of Florida and the attractive blue Atlantic shore line was most enjoyable.

In order that I could enjoy the bee-hive of activity involving all kinds of experimental and restoration of aircraft, Dave took me to the site, Pompano executive airport. South Florida does have good sound activity in general aviation. I hope it continues.

A slight man of about 140 lbs., Dave Russell is ideally suited for the proud Mite he flies. He is, as are many of the Mite owners I've met, friendly, interesting, and a nice guy to know.

If you are in the Miami area, give Dave a call to say hello - he'll welcome your call as he did mine. Tell him Tony sent you! You'll be happy you took the time to make the acquaintance!

Send in notes, information and photos and news about your Mite.

I'd like to provide a section in the newsletter to list briefly the many needs of members, so if you know of a way to help or have a suggestion or need assistance - please write or send a copy of your suggestion or need!

Next Issue - How to rid your mite of scalloped trailing edges without recovering!

