

The Lighter~Than~Air Society Newsletter

Issue # 2 January 2009

Welcome to the second edition of our new communication tool for our membership. In this issue we will cover the topics of our annual banquet, our display at Lock 3, a summary of board actions you might find interesting, and one of Tom Riley's "Caricatures" that have been so interesting in the past.

Let's start by including a copy of our President Dave Osterland's "State of the Society" address that he gave at the Annual Banquet on November 15, 2008 at the Quaker Square Inn, The University of Akron.



Dave Osterland—President

Mr. Osterland's remarks:

Welcome to the 56th annual banquet of The L-T-A Society. We appreciate your spending the evening with us.

At this time, I'd like to recognize members of the audience who are past presidents of the Society, its current officers and directors, and guests from afar. Please hold your applause until all of the names have been mentioned.

Past officers of the LTAS present include:

Ben Eubank, President 1987-91

Bill Howells, President 1992-96

Familiar faces among the current officers and trustees of the LTAS here tonight include:

Ren Brown

Eric Brothers

John Miller

Dave Wertz

Sandy Bee Lynn

Wayne Buchanan.

Tom Riley

I am pleased to note that Wayne Buchanan has accepted our invitation to join the board this past year.

We would also like to welcome several members and friends joining us from outside of northeast Ohio this evening .

Our program tonight will note the 75th anniversary of some significant LTA events that happened right here in Akron, as well as a take look back at passenger airship travel in the 20th Century.



Part of the Society's Collection

It also includes a look at passenger airship travel in the US now, on a Zeppelin airship, the first time that combination has been available here in more than seven decades.

The conclusion of the program will provide an opportunity to purchase books and other merchandise from the LTA Society. Sandy Bee Lynn and Mark Essex have volunteered to sell these items at the table located on my left.

Thanks to many of you for bringing in portions of your collections and for setting up these display items.

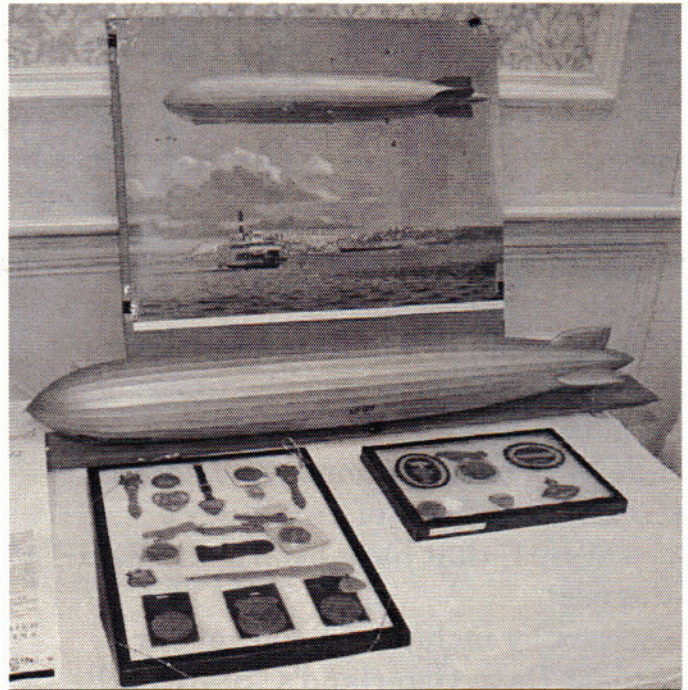
A big thank you to Marty Hardesty and his wife for handling the registration for this event and for being at the welcoming table along with Joan Reisig. Thanks to Sandy Bee Lynn for the table center pieces.

[The Society's Year in Review]

In the past twelve months, The Lighter-Than-Air Society has continued to pursue opportunities to enhance awareness of our organization.

During last winter's German Christmas Market, more than 100,000 visitors were counted at the Lock 3 Akron History Exhibit.

The Society's display of airship artifacts there continues to give us a prominent position among exhibits by the region's



Joan Reisig brought in part of her collection.

foremost historical organizations.

Our new and improved exhibit in Lock 3 opened last year, and we've been building on it since then. It is to reopen again later this month.

We look forward to participating in the expanded German Kris Kindl Market at Lock 3 beginning this November, especially the Christmas parade, which, for the second time, will feature large, helium-filled character balloons similar to the ones that have been part of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City since the 1920s.

There is still time to sign up as balloon handlers, should you so desire. The parade is scheduled for the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

As part of our celebration last year of 80 years of Akron's involvement with Macy's character balloons, The LTA Society participated in the Akron Christmas Parade, as sponsor, facilitator and source of labor to help bring the joy of those balloons to our town.





Eric Brothers—Featured speaker of the night.

We would like to share with you this short video featuring the parade balloons, courtesy of Deputy Mayor Dave Lieberth and the City of Akron.

(The video was shown)

The Society continues to build partnerships within the community – and beyond – that will enhance our reputation and capabilities as a center for knowledge on lighter-than-air.

This past year, some of our members participated in an Akron Public Schools event educating local high-school teachers on the rich LTA history we have to offer in their curriculum.

We continue to provide historical information on lighter-than-air around the world, and in the process, we promote our Society's activities and mission.

We have been blessed to receive significant donations of LTA artifacts from our members and interested parties.

From books, to photos to three-dimensional artifacts, these items greatly add to the knowledge base the Society will be able to offer to researchers.

We appreciate the time, effort and money that have been donated – and we hope will continue to be donated – by all of you who believe in the goals of The Lighter-Than-Air Society,

With your support, the Society hopes to continue to grow in its ability to share with everyone the stories of the people who have contributed to the past, present and future of lighter-than-air flight.

(Special Recognitions):

The Society's technical committee determined that no singular, complete accomplishment in the world of lighter-than-air merited The L-T-A Society's Achievement Award at this time, so none is being presented tonight. Likewise, there were no names nominated for Honorary Life membership in the Society. We seek your input as to the names of candidates worthy of that honor for next year. At this time, however, we would like to note some important events that took place 75 years ago this year. To help us in this task, Eric Brothers has put together a brief tribute to those events. Following that, he will launch into the main program, "Passenger Travel on Airships, Past - Present - Future"

Toby Halicki—King of car crash movies and friend of the blimp.

A caricature by Tom Riley



He was the king of car crash movies but he requested the Carson, California-based-blimp Columbia for every movie he made. A maverick, outlaw director in the movie industry he did it the hard way with his own funding, casting, directing, producing and acting.

His stern and steady gaze forced you into an answer. If you answered "no" the gaze shifted balance into warmth and coaxing mode until the answer slid toward "maybe" then ultimately agreement. That's how he got things done. Just beneath was a volcano emotion at the ready.

From the shores of Lake Erie, in Dunkirk, NY, the Halicki's towed and repaired autos. His love affair with cars grew out of that upbringing. He headed to California the land of hot rods, custom cars and movie stars. He combined the best of each in his film efforts.

Gone in 60 Seconds is a classic! So much so that a modern-day version, starring Nick Cage, hit the big screens a few years ago. Toby's original didn't play big in the U.S. but was a smash overseas and returned here to improved reviews. He was a promoter for sure — taking the star of the show, a Mustang named Eleanor from town to town, drive in to drive in until the film was ignored no longer. Toby in the lead role and his many staffers; secretaries, mechanics, accountant and so on acted in his epics. His studio was the streets of South Los Angeles where he also maintained his office and base of operations for Halicki's junk yard.

A couple blocks down the road was the blimp base spot on in the middle of Toby's South Bay Area street scenes and crashes. He was ahead of his time and

the Hollywood elite wasn't ready for his innovation and cinema technique.

This small epic is a flashback, obituary and tribute all in one. You see, the beloved Toby died when he was crushed by a falling water tower during a scene he was shooting doing what he loved best making a movie.

He returned to his hometown, Dunkirk, in triumph, successful, polished, poised and a star. Up the road a bit, in Tonawanda, NY, he arranged to rent an old factory, that held the water tower he wanted in the finale crash scene, after much cajoling, threatening and coercing a local city council to permit his use of same costing him loads of cash to cover the event with insurance.

New wife Denise co-starred in his last and final effort, The Sheer, a custom, triangular getaway vehicle that skimmed the curbs, overturning parked cars into the path of pursuing police vehicles. I had honor and privilege of meeting and working with him in LA just before I transferred to Akron, Ohio. Toby's good friends, PR Manager, Bob Urhausen and Chief Pilot Nick Nicolary not only undertook the Halicki's projects after I left but starred in The Junkman, another crash celebration on the big screen. Sarah and I met he and Denise in Tonawanda for a day's shooting. We'd stopped to say "hi" en route Niagara Falls, just up the road, then returned the next day early to join in the celebration of the final scenes. We couldn't have guessed it would be Toby's final scenes ever.

Denise was not in the scenes for that day so she spent a good deal of time with Sarah but I the starstruck kid followed Toby like a shadow. He shot and re-shot crash after crash until he got just the



right crush of the roof or roll on the bad guy car or pursuing police vehicle. His stunt guys responded with some hair-raising leaps airborne, twisting and turning thousands of pounds of steel into crumpled heaps on the ground.

The cornerstone event was an 18 wheeler leaping into the sky, striking the 100 ft. water tower which creaked and groaned to the ground in flames, crushing the traffic beneath.

Welders cut and cut the legs of the tower to ensure its' dropping on cue. They cut and re-cut at Toby's direction from below, no room for a retake on this one. I continued to follow him around the scene until he told me to put on a hard hat and take a position behind one of the dozen cameras in the ready but one that was a safe distance back.

I heard the creak but didn't hear a "roll cameras" as the tower toppled downward of its own volition Too many cuts I thought and regretted missing the scene Toby wanted. I heard screams, ran over and saw that the tank dropped directly on Toby. I felt flushed, angry, sad and lost among the confusion. I walked over to Sarah and said he needed to leave. We drove away and were a long way toward home before I could talk through my tears to relate what I'd scene. She already knew

the worst and I'm sure tried to comfort Denise. A few days later we drove back to Dunkirk for the calling hours.

The big man went out doing what he loved doing and in style with stretch limos and tux-wearing pall bearers. I recalled the good times and special effort he always offered his benefactors and those participating in the film process. I once picked him up at Canton Akron airport toting cans and cans of film he personally brought here to show our PR department as a reward for Goodyear assisting him in the effort. From the home office at Goodyear we worked through the finest marketing guy I'd ever known, Bob Toth, shipping tire upon tire in a multitude of sizes, everything from '48 Mercury to Bentley to police special rubber for the dozens of vehicles set for the movie. You could always count on a screech and close up of the Goodyear logo in key locations throughout the film.

He borrowed a mock airship car (rented most likely) from Paramount to film the close-ups of the blimp delivering him to scene locations around the "chase" locations. You always recognized the key areas; HMS Queen Mary in Long Beach, LAX, downtown LA in the distance and tons of local businesses including the showroom of Ronald Moran Cadillac, in Torrance, through which he smashed his way, one end to the other, evading black and whites in hot pursuit.

The L-T-A Society Directors:

David Osterland (Chairman), David Wertz (Vice-Chairman), Sandy Bee Lynn (Secretary Treasurer), James Boyazis, Eric Brothers, P. Rendall Brown, Tom Riley, John S. Cunningham, Brian Steinkershner, Robert Handelman, John Miller, Ron Syroid, Steven Paschen, , Timothy Toppen. Honorary members Howard Flood, Loren Seely, Charles Huettner and James Shock.

The LTA Society, 526 S. Main St. Ste 406,
Akron, OH 44311



We can only speculate on how successful he would have become, how affluent, how much adulation he would have garnered as his life ended as they say "only the good die young." He and Denise were in the process of mansion-planning, in the Palos Verdes area (his beloved south bay) which would have featured his world-class metal toy collection and classic, custom autos he surrounded himself by over the years. I recall one not-so-humorous situation via Toby and his film crew at the Carson Base. Bunches of his actors, in costume and make up, arrived to shoot a blimp scene. Out of the truck came a lion which was a part of the action and written in to board the blimp for the shot. It may have been the one occasion where his persuasion but rather reason prevailed. I asked him what we do if the lion gets nervous and eats our pilot. The airship and all aboard come crashing to earth or maybe even into the Pacific. His life was a series of risks but he wouldn't risk the lives or well being of others. It made him the human being he surely was.

There's a DVD out there, a compilation of all his film triumphs, narrated by lovely Denise, in loving memory of our fallen hero. It's worth the purchase. She was kind enough to provide an extra

copy for us in the package sent to our California blimp folks.

Programs and Meetings

Planning is underway for the Society to hold a series of programs and meetings during 2009, starting in the spring (if winter ever leaves). Our intent is to have a diverse group of activities that will be of interest to a broad range of lighter-than-air aficionados. Tentative plans include several oral presentations, video programs, and one or more field trips to significant l-t-a sites in the Akron area. So please stay tuned for details.

We welcome your comments about possible l-t-a programs, whether they might be suggestions for general topics or relate to specific programs or other activities. We would greatly appreciate your thoughts. If you have any comments, please contact John Miller: jmiller@uakron.edu; 330-869-8193; or 700 Hampton Ridge Drive, Akron, Ohio 44313-5094.

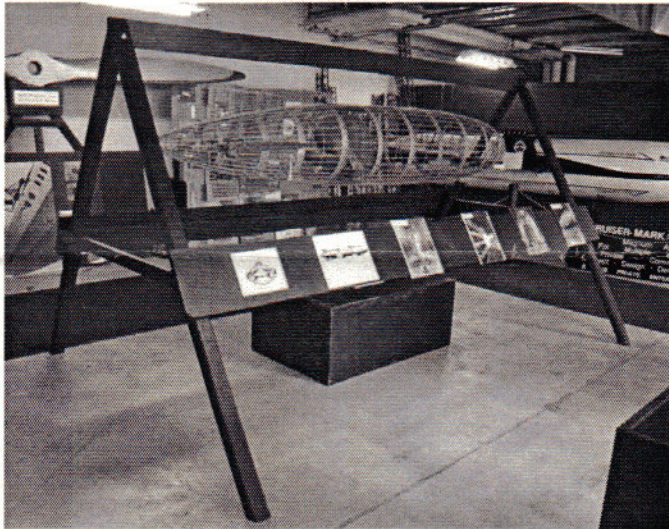
Recent Board Items.

- ☐ A storage area supplied by Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company was lost due to the development of a new World Headquarters complex that is being built. The Society kept many large objects from our collection at its location in the old Plant 1 area. Acme Grocery Company (Albrecht) was able to provide and alternate location for us at a very low rate. Goodyear provided transportation and personnel to move our artifacts to the new location. Many thanks to both Goodyear and Acme.
- ☐ Lockheed Martin made a substantial donation to the Society.

- ☐ Work continues to submit a grant application for funds to computerize the inventory of the collection of the Society.
- ☐ Wayne Buchanan became a new board member in September.
- ☐ The Society worked with the City of Akron again this year on the Christmas Parade and the inclusion of Macy's style helium balloons. The City took the primary financial and planning lead this year.

Lock 3 Display News

The Lock 3 Historical Display in Akron



Ring Laying model of the U.S.S. Akron

was overhauled and remodeled this year after fire extinguisher water pipes burst and caused quite a mess. The Society was fortunate to sustain almost no damage. Most of our displays are of duplicates of our photographs, and other items are safely displayed in cases. Through a lot of work by Tom Riley (manager of the facility at the time) and many other members, the display is better than ever. Special thanks to Martin Hardesty who did repair to several of the models on display, especially to a six foot model of the

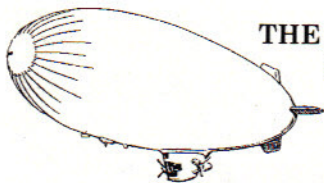


Wayne Buchanan works on Craig Herbert's uniform

U.S.S. Akron that need a lot of difficult detailed repair. Thanks also to Wayne Buchanan and Dave Wertz who rebuilt two of our display frames. One was for the 10 foot long "ring laying model" of the U.S.S. Akron. And one was built for a new display of our World War One observation balloon basket. That display also includes part of our collection of Craig Herbert, a WWI balloon crew veteran. Wayne took extra effort to put Craig Herbert's uniform on a mannequin inside the basket.



Craig Herbert's uniform inside balloon basket



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PURPOSE: *To further knowledge pertaining to the history, science and techniques of buoyant flight; to encourage the use of lighter-than-air transportation; and to establish and maintain a library and museum on lighter than air.*

Everyone is welcome to join

The LTA Society Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Email address _____

Types of membership available:

- ☐ Active Membership, U.S. & Canada: \$25 per year
- ☐ Active Membership, **all other countries:** \$35 per year
- ☐ Benefactor Membership: \$100 per year

☐ Life Active Membership:
(NEW! Senior rates!)

- ☐ \$425 - Up to Age 55
- ☐ \$325 - Age 55 to 70
- ☐ \$225 - Age 70+

- ☐ New Membership Please mark your envelope ATTN NEW MEMBERSHIP or
- ☐ Renewal ATTN RENEWAL to speed processing.
- ☐ **Please note:** My address has changed to the one written above

Make checks or money-orders in U.S. funds payable to **The Lighter-Than-Air Society** and mail to:
THE LIGHTER-THAN-AIR SOCIETY, 526 S. MAIN ST., STE. 406, AKRON, OH 44311 U.S.A.

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