Vought Donates $100,000 for HAC Archivist

By Paul Oelkrug, CA

The History of Aviation Collection (HAC) at McDermott Library has reached an agreement for a $100,000 donation from the Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation to fund an archivist for a project estimated to last two years.

Paul A. Oelkrug, CA, head McDermott Library Special Collections, and members of UT-Dallas’ Office of Development and Alumni Relations were presented the first of two $50,000 checks by Dick Atkins at the Chance Vought Aircraft facility in Dallas, Tex. on Sept. 4, 2012. The facility is next to the old Dallas Naval Air Station and the former Hensley Field.

The Heritage Foundation donation was publicly recognized Oct. 18, 2012 at a University of Texas at Dallas capital campaign event honoring donors. It was at this event, titled “Under the Trellis,” that the Vought donation was officially announced. A half-scale model of the F-4U Corsair was on display as a part of the festivities.

For the past several years the HAC has worked with the Heritage Foundation to slowly acquire and process their business archives. Now with funding for a two-year project, Special Collections will be . . . See Vought on Page 3
By Randy Hinshaw, HAC Volunteer

There are few among us who, when we hear an airplane flying overhead, don’t instinctively look up to identify the plane. One of the more easily identified airplane profiles is that of a Mooney, with its forward-sloped trailing edge of the vertical stabilizer. Not only did Al Mooney design the airplane that bears his name, he was responsible for 23 successful aircraft designs, most of which went into production or led to a production model. What most of us don’t realize is that Mooney never received significant personal financial benefit from his designs. That story is best told in *The Al Mooney Story* by Gordon Baxter.

HAC is fortunate to have been selected as the repository of Mooney’s papers by his son, John. A finding aid for this collection, “The Guide to The Al Mooney Papers,” is available. Studying this collection, one realizes that Mooney personifies and in many ways pioneered the evolution of civil aircraft (and some military applications) from paper and pencil and trial and error designs to computerized designs with tested components. Pilot safety and optimal performance were always dominant in Mooney’s designs.

Born July 10, 1904, Mooney and his brother Art were the sons of a railroad engineer from whom they learned drafting skills later used in creating aircraft designs. The brothers developed an early interest in aviation and pursued careers in the field throughout their lives, careers characterized by engineering brilliance and financial misfortune.

Al Mooney entered aviation almost by accident. In 1924 a chance suggestion to J. Don Alexander about the rigging of Alexander’s airplane that Mooney had seen flying over the retirement home of Mooney’s father led to a job offer at Alexander Aircraft. There Mooney constructed his M-1, the Eaglerock Long Wing (shown above), his first successful design.

In realizing a lifelong dream, Al and Art formed Mooney Aircraft Corp. in Wichita, Kans. in 1929. The company closed only two years later because of the Great Depression. Employment at Bellanca and Monocoupe Airplane Corp. followed. In 1937 Mooney and Monocoupe dealer Knight Culver purchased the Monocoupe design rights and formed Dart Aircraft Co. which was renamed Culver Aircraft Co. in 1939. The Monocoupe evolved into the Culver Dart which, in turn, became the Culver Cadet (M-12.)

After WWII, Culver’s sales evaporated, as did those of most civil aircraft manufacturers. In 1946, Al and Art returned to Wichita and reopened Mooney Aircraft Corp. where they remained until certification of the M-20 in 1955. It was their first aircraft, the Mooney Series 18 produced in 1946, which was dubbed the “Mooney Mite” and exhibited the reverse tail by which Mooney aircraft are so familiar. Economic pressures prompted Mooney Aircraft to move to Kerrville, Tex. in 1953 where the M-18 continued to be produced as the M-20 made its first flight. The M-20 was certified in 1955. Al and Art left the firm and joined Lockheed-Georgia.

At Lockheed, three of Al’s designs were developed. One became the Lockheed Jetstar and a second, a utility plane (LASA 60) was built for use in Mexico and South America. During development of his third design Al’s wife Opie died in 1966. The next year Art retired and only a year later in 1968 Al himself retired. Art died in 1980. About a year after completing his autobiography with Gordon Baxter, Al Mooney died on May 7, 1986 in Dallas, Tex., survived by son John and daughter Bobbie Sanders.
New Collection Recounts U.S. Army’s Milestone Flight

By Thomas Allen, PhD

The HAC has finished processing a collection of material about the Pan American Goodwill Flight of 1926-1927 that provide an inside look at a remarkable aviation exploit.

Conceived by the Army Air Forces (AAF) to satisfy the Coolidge Administrations request for ways to improve relationships with the countries of Central and South America, the Pan American Goodwill Flight lasted from Dec. 21, 1926 to May 2, 1927. It covered the capitals of all the Central and South American countries, save Lima, Peru which was too high for the aircraft to reach. Ten AAF pilots flew five Loening OA-1 Amphibian bi-planes named after American cities (San Francisco, Detroit, San Antonio, New York, and, St. Louis).

The Goodwill flight was considered a success, but was not without tragedy. During the Argentine leg of flight, The Detroit and the New York collided in mid-air. The crew of the New York was able to bail out and landed safely, but the crew of the Detroit (Lt. J.W. Benton and Capt. Clinton Woolsey) died when the aircraft crashed. The program was completed and surviving pilots were given the Distinguished Flying Cross. They were also presented the 1927 Mackay Trophy for the most meritorious feat of aviation.

The collection consists of photocopies of diaries, reports, trip forms, and other information collected by Goodwill Flight pilots as part of the flight. Included is a copy of the War Department’s official report on the flight and an article written by flight commander Maj. Henry A. Dargue for National Geographic.

Shrader Papers Provide Details on Events in Aviation History

By Thomas Allen, PhD

The HAC recently completed processing the papers of Welman A. Shrader, an aviation writer and photographer. Shrader was the author of the book Fifty Years of Flight: A Chronicle of the Aviation Industry in America, 1903-1953.

For the book Shrader complied hundreds of index cards containing important dates and events form aviation history. This chronology is present in the collection, and comprehensively describes aviation history from 1903-1981 (Shrader hoped to update his book by publishing a 75 year history of aviation sometime in 1978 to 1981).

A major part of the collection contains negative images of various aircraft. There are a number of rare aircraft represented. In addition to aircraft images there are pictures of famous aviators, regions of the United States, and Florida taken by Shrader and used in Florida via Camera, a 1939 book commissioned by Eastern Airlines as a means of attracting tourists.

The images provide a look at forgotten moments in aviation history. The Welman A. Shrader Papers are an excellent resource for researchers looking for facts and dates from aviation history or images of aircraft.

Chance Vought Foundation Delivers Major HAC Gift

able to complete the records transfer and process these valuable aviation resources for use by researchers.

Chance Vought Aircraft is the second oldest American aircraft manufacturing company. It is currently a subsidiary of the Triumph Group, an aerospace component manufacturer. Over the years it has produced many famous aircraft, but is best known for its F-4U Corsair that debuted in World War II.

Primarily a carrier-based aircraft, the U.S. Marine Corps fighter is easily recognized by its beautiful lines and gull-wing design. Its speed and maneuverability helped establish its superiority over the formidable Japanese Zero fighter plane. It also doubled as a very capable ground attack aircraft, seeing action in WWII and Korea.

Other famous aircraft Vought produced are the F-8 Crusader and the A-7 Corsair II. The Crusader is commonly known as the “last gunfighter” because of its aerial dogfighting capabilities, and the Corsair II is known for its excellence in ground attack capabilities. Both planes were used widely in Vietnam.

The Heritage Foundation is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation composed of retired Vought employees who volunteer their time to secure donations and to restore Chance Vought aircraft.

See the website www.voughtaircraft.com/heritage/