



## Moontown Airport News

December 2009

*By George Myers*

### **Jay Hargrove**

Jay Hargrove has, in aviation terms, "Gone West". The following, including the photograph of Jay and Cassidy is from the Huntsville times:

"James C. Hargrove Jr., 78, of Huntsville "slipped the surly bonds" of Earth Sunday (November 8, 2009). Mr. Hargrove retired from MICOM after 20 years of service. After retirement he spent a lot of time at Moontown Airport as a licensed pilot. Following his tour of duty in the Korean War with the Air Force, he became a popular DJ at WBHP, Huntsville's best station. J.C. was preceded in death by his wife, Patsy Hargrove; his parents, James C. Hargrove Sr. and Cordie; and his brother, William David Hargrove."

"Survivors include son, James C. Hargrove III of Huntsville; sisters, Ellen Batt and husband C.B., and Susan Eloise Tanner, all of Huntsville, Sarah Lancaster and husband Richard of Meridianville, and Sylvia Patterson and husband Pat of Madison; loyal friend, Tilly Moon; and several nieces and nephews".

"In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Community Free Clinic, 410 Sivley Road, Huntsville, AL 35801."

I first met Jay after the previous Moontown Airport owner, Buzz Barton, became ill prior to his passing in the autumn of 1989. Jay helped Buzz's wife Janie operate the airport. He continued that role for Shirley and me after we purchased the business from Janie. That was almost 21 years ago. About eight years ago Jay said it was time to hang up his wings and move on to other things. I still get inquiries about the man and his dog that operated Moontown Airport.



James C. "Jay" Hargrove minds the office at Moontown Airport. His dog Cassidy has logged several hundred hours of flight time.

**Huntsville Times Photo of Jay and Cassidy**

Buzz and Janie had a cocker spaniel dog named Cassidy, the airport guard dog that Jay adopted after Janie moved back to Georgia. Cassidy was a constant companion, always coming to the airport with Jay. Cassidy loved to fly.

I believe that Jay was the leader of Moontown's seniors and he encouraged many retirees to learn to fly. He instituted many safety rules and was always standing by to answer the UNICOM, pump fuel, mow grass and greet guest. I tried to pay him for his services but he refused saying it would be too much like a job if he accepted pay. His services allowed lower storage rates for those who were based at Moontown and provided an extra layer of safety.



**Kermit Week's Martin B-26 Bomber**

He appeared stately and content. Jay contributed much to aviation. He is in my personal aviation hall of fame.

### ***Early Heavy Rains***

Sunday night, December 9, 2009 must have set some kind of rain record for December, at least as far as our runway is concerned. There was 5.01 inches of rain in Ryland just a mile north of the airport. Big Cove, a few miles south of Moontown, had 6.07 inches. There was enough rain to overflow the Hambrik Branch of the Flint River banks passing the airport, flooding Moontown Road and the east end of runway 27. We filed a NOTAM to close the runways for two days. The runways are a little damp but

Jay's favorite WWII airplane was the Martin B-26 Marauder. One year at the Sun n Fun fly in, Kermit Weeks made two fly by's in his newly acquired B-26. I have never seen Jay happier than he was when that plane flew over Lakeland Airport.

I last saw Jay at his wife's visitation about one month

prior to his death. He had lost some weight, grown a mustache, and was in a

firm enough to use safely without damaging the surface. If the weather continues this way for the winter, we may have a repeat of our first year when rains drastically impacted operations for January and February. I'm hoping for a lot of sun and some of this global warming I keep hearing about.

### ***Activities***

The November breakfast was a huge success. It was the first good weather on breakfast Saturday that we have had since August. There were 65 aircraft in attendance, give or take a few. One of

the airplanes at the breakfast had been to the Antarctic and the pilot plans to take

it to the Arctic.



**Antarctic Pilot Interview at Moontown**



**Breakfast Pilots Admiring this Beautiful Aerobatic MX2**

Other activities during the November breakfast included PT-17 rides for hire and a professional photographer taking photos, mostly of children, with airplanes in the background. The long term forecast looks promising for the December breakfast.

Our Christmas party was attended by approximately 40 of our Moontown friends. It was an enjoyable evening of food and conversation.

### **Old Trade-A-Planes**

I picked up some old Trade-A-Plane (TAP) publications while on vacation in Kingwood, WV. They were dated 1948, 1949, and 1957 and they provided some very interesting information. For example, in the second November 1948 issue an Aircraft Components, Inc. advertisement offered BG aircraft spark plugs for between \$0.50 and \$1.00. The price for 100 AN3-4 bolts was \$0.75. The Fresno Airparts advertisement looked much like it does today. They had new Schenuit 600 x 6-6 ply tires for \$21.28 and the tube was \$5.46. There were parts for the P & W R-985, Continental A-65, C-75-85 and 90 engines.

The main difference in TAP from today was, of course, price and selection. A windshield for a 7AC Champ was \$45.75. A new Ranger 200 HP engine could be purchased for \$550 for those owners of PT-19s, and Fairchild-24Rs. Kollsman Sensitive Altimeter "Beauties" cost \$8.95.

The airplane selection was very interesting. The November 1948 issue offered two unlicensed PBY5-A Catalina flying

boats for \$11,000 each F.B.O. Cleveland, Ohio. A "luxurious" twin-engine Beechcraft was offered for \$26,000. Licensed Vultee BT-13's and BT-15's could be purchased for \$400 to \$850. There were over 20 Swifts offered for an average of \$2500, and Ercoupes cost an average of \$1500.

Most of the airplanes of that era were built with surplus WWII parts and labor and many of the parts offered for sale were new surplus. These seemingly low prices for airplanes and parts were out of reach of most returning vets. The surplus WWII aircraft and parts contributed to the growth of general aviation during the time period from 1946-1950 and probably beyond. Many of the airplanes based at Moontown were built between 1946 and 1956. They are still affordable and safe. I doubt that the new plastic planes will fair as well.

*The Moontown Airport  
Staff, Shirley and I wish  
you all a very Merry  
Christmas and a happy  
and prosperous New Year.*

*Keep 'em flying*