

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR: CHUCK STONE (IN HIS OWN WORDS)

Note: As part of her Creative Writing course here at Treemont, resident Donna Cook has compiled recollections from several neighbors in a booklet called "Treemont Treasures," now for sale in the TreeMart shop. Since your usual reporter must be out of town when the Tattler is published this month, Donna (and Chuck) generously gave us permission to present this anecdote from his youth for your reading pleasure:

"In June of 1939, soon after graduating from Brown University in Providence,



R.I., with an Engineering degree, I headed west to start my education. I had been hired by a campus recruiter for Wright Aeronautical Corp., one of two major manufacturers of

large aircraft engines. Since they were located in Patterson, N.J., I crossed the Hudson River for the first time and entered a whole new world.

I started my new job as an apprentice engineer at 50 cents an hour (I had been making \$25 a week as a yacht captain) in a department called Experimental Testing. In this area we installed and ran engines equipped with newly-designed parts, often until something broke. The new or broken part was studied and redesigned if necessary or, if successful, incorporated as an improvement in

production engines. Much of this work was done by new graduates, since this was pre-WWII and engines were being sold to England and France in addition to the increasing requirements for the U.S. military.

After about a year we moved up to Experimental Engineering where we were involved in design and planning. Part of the training in my specialty of Field Engineering was a stint in flight testing, which led to my first flight in an airplane—an open cockpit biplane. We went to 25,000 feet to test a new turbo-supercharger designed to give improved high-altitude performance—but that's a whole other story.

Finally my day came. I was told that Canadian Pacific RR, who had the contract to deliver Lockheed Hudson aircraft to England, had been losing many aircraft and crews in the flight over the Atlantic. Since it was thought to be an engine problem, I was given the job of finding the cause and a fix.

I packed up and went to Montreal, where I met Commander D.C.T. Bennet (the man in charge, whom I will never forget) and several concerned contract pilots, most of whom were from Texas.

I quickly learned that the problem was occurring when the pilot was forced to fly higher than normal to avoid bad weather. The first warning was an increase in oil temperature soon followed by a gush of oil blowing out the

engine breather. If left unchecked all the oil would be blown overboard and the engine would be destroyed.

While I had a feeling for the problem, I needed proof. The only way to get that was to create the problem. Comdr. Bennet reluctantly provided an aircraft, a pilot (I didn't fly at that time), and a radio operator, and after a quick briefing we took off and climbed. At a point somewhere above 15,000 feet the oil temp took a sharp rise. The pilot looked at me and I told him to follow normal procedures. As I expected, he opened the oil cooler shutters, allowing 50 to 60-degree-below-zero air to flow through the cooler, congealing the oil in the cooler and preventing its return to the tank! YAHOO--my theory was proven correct. "Let's go home!" We shut down the engine, feathered the prop and started our descent. Whoops! I was reminded that we had another engine subject to the same problem! When it gave out with a gush of oil the pilot asked, "Now what?" Good question.

The radio operator meanwhile had decided it was time to leave and notified the ground that we were abandoning ship. I convinced him that we were in no immediate danger, though at that point I wasn't too sure. The pilot shut down the #2 engine and we were now making like a glider—not a Lockheed Hudson's best flight style. Though we had great speed as the ground approached, we thought it best to have some power and managed to restart the first engine. We

alternated engines the rest of the way down and made a grand (and safe) landing on a runway crowded with fire and emergency equipment—and Cmdr. D.C.T. Bennet. We expected relief and "Welcome back—glad you made it back safely," but not so. What we heard from the Commander was, "You endangered my aircraft!" Nothing about the crew or me—I guess England needed aircraft more than they needed us.

Changes were made that solved the problem. We very quickly obtained oil coolers with a by-pass feature and a warm-up jacket that made it possible to fly to higher altitudes without cooler freeze-ups. And most important to me, I survived to cope with other problems. Just call me Lucky!"



P.S. from the Tattler: "I think this was more than luck, Chuck."

Guide to Pictures:

Cool-Hand Chuck in his youth.

ExecutiveChuck

Treemont Chuck



