



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
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The saga of the Fillmore Municipal Airport continues . . .

After the last column, more interesting information has come to light about building the airport facilities in the 1940's. Loreta Whicker shared with me the account of her father Henry Whicker and Ed Finlinson building the hangar which burned in 2006.

In Loreta's words:

"It greatly saddened me when the hangar burned down because it was part of my family history. Here's the rest of the story about how it came to be. They (the city) put it up for bids (to build the hangar) and my father Henry Whicker and his friend Edward Finlinson were encouraged to put a bid on it by a city councilman. They were both carpenters so (they) got the specs, figured out what it would cost to them to build (materials and salary) and submitted their bid. They came in \$150 lower than anyone else so they were awarded the bid. Needless to say, the other local contractors weren't happy and did their utmost to discourage them because they had no heavy-duty equipment to work with. But with a lot of ingenuity, hard work, ropes and pulleys, bolts, hand saws and drills and other hand tools and a helper they built the Fillmore Airport Hangar. They made \$100 a month each during the building and upon its completion, went back to making \$3 a day (helping to build the Topaz site)."

Not only are the facilities at the airport and those who built them interesting, but the aviators from Fillmore make fascinating reading as well.

One of the pilots not only used the Fillmore Airport in its early days but also lived in the apartment there with his wife for a time. That is Carold Robison, son of Alfred Milton and Pauline Swallow Robison. Carold's wife didn't share his interest in living in an airport hangar so Carold built the home he now lives in on First North and the couple moved in as soon as it was completed.



Pilot Carold Robison

Carold was the pilot of a B17 bomber in Europe during World War II. He first entered the military as a member of the Army medical corps, but when it was learned he was a pilot with many hours of experience, he was transferred to the Air Force. He and his crew of ten dropped literally thousands of bombs during the years he spent there. At one time, when the numbers of British pilots were running low, he flew with them on training missions.

He tells one of the things he remembers most was how cold it was in the plane. He had a special suit he wore to try to keep warm in the frigid temperatures.



Carold Robison (right front with sunglasses) and his B-17 crew

Carold owned a 1952 Cessna 120, which he flew to Fillmore from Dugway to visit. At the time, there were no lights on the airfield, so he would buzz his parent's home in Fillmore and his dad would drive to the airport to shine his headlights down the runway. Many night landings were made this way.

Carold told of flying home for Christmas in a terrible storm and having problems finding landmarks to let them know when they were near town. The cemetery was finally spotted and he was able to get his bearings from that.



Easton Robison standing behind his mini-plane



Easton Robison and his mini-plane

Another Fillmore native, also named Robison, who had an interest in flying from a very early age was Paul Easton Robison. He was known to his friends as Easton since his parents were Paul and Ann Robison.

At the young age of 15, Easton and his friend Kirk Lee drew up plans, bought materials and began construction on their own airplane. It was made of wood and got as far as being ready for the skin to be put on when Lee moved. The skeleton of the plane remained in Easton's backyard until it became a victim of the weather.

During World War II, Easton was a plane handler aboard the U.S.S. Bennington. Even though he had a vast knowledge of flying, he didn't yet have his pilot's license.

In 1958, Easton began again to build a plane. Not long after that, his wife Dorothy's brother Gary Bennett was killed in an airplane crash and the plane construction came to an end.

In 1971, Easton was reading a Popular Mechanics magazine which advertised plans to buy for a mini-plane. He sent for the plans and on July 3 began construction of this plane at his East Mill Creek home. He did some redesigning to make it fit his personal needs. He said he had, "Put everything I could get into the plane to make it safe." More than was required. This mini-plane flew at a top speed of 110 miles per hour with its 60 horse power electronic fuel injected engine, flying to a maximum altitude of 15,000 feet. He also designed and built a trailer for transporting the plane.

In 1972 Easton went to flight school to get his pilot's license. It was no use building your own plane if you couldn't fly it because you didn't have a license.

Three and half years after its beginnings, the mini-plane was sitting on the runway of Salt Lake Airport #2, ready for its maiden flight.

When asked what, he planned to build next, he jokingly answered, "A submarine!" There was a definite "no" from his wife.