



Consolidated PBY-5 Catalina patrolling the Pacific during WWII

Long Island Early Fliers Club, Inc.

March, April 2018 Newsletter

Editor: Fred Coste

Volume 3, Issue 2

Editor's Note:

In the fall of 1990 my wife and I visited the grave of her uncle, Jack Parrish who is interred at The National Memorial of the Pacific on Honolulu, Hawaii. For many of the families of the Greatest Generation, this hallowed ground is better known as the Punchbowl.

Jack had the nickname "Bushy," which was pronounced "Boo-she," by the family back home in Nashville. The family was quite large and feeding a large family in the late 1930's was a difficult financial proposition. It was one of the factors that drove Uncle Jack to enlist in the Navy at the age of 18; regular meals, he could send money home and there would be one less mouth to feed each day. Jack became a radio operator aboard a PBY Catalina in 1941. His duty assignment was Hawaii. He arrived in the spring and found this paradise island very inviting.

Little was known about Jack's death in April of 1942. All that his parents received was his charred wallet and some blackened coins that had been in his pocket. His sister Emily cherishes those items today.

A few years after visiting the Punchbowl, I was at a meeting of the Long Island Hangar of Quiet Birdman (QB). LIEF member and QB Mario Sireci was talking about his time flying the Catalina from Hawaii and the bombing of Pearl Harbor. I approached Mario to see if he might have known Jack Parrish. Although he didn't recall the name, we continued to talk and he asked several more questions.



*Jack Parrish before shipping out to Hawaii
in 1941*

As I related what I remembered, Mario's face paled and his eyes began to well up.

Mario said: "the pilot of that plane was my best friend; I know what happened to them." Mario went on to tell me that they had been flying grids looking for enemy carriers. April 5, 1942 was a day with miserable weather. These guys were late in getting back, which made things worse because the entire island was under blackout - we were only 4 months into the war. Mario said he and a few other pilots went to the base Commander and asked him to turn on the runway lights briefly "...you know that's the sound of one of our planes...just a few minutes so they can

find the runway..." but the request was denied. The plane crashed at Makapu'u point about 20-25 minutes later.

It was about 1998 when the Hawaii Aviation Preservation Society started investigating the aircraft wreckage that was still at Makapu'u Point. Here is their account of what had taken place.

They Stood the Watch...
The Story of Patrol Squadron Eleven
at NAS Kaneohe Bay

By Dave Trojan, Staff Historian,

**HAWAII AVIATION
PRESERVATION SOCIETY**



*A VP-11 crewman on watch in a PBV Blister
on patrol*

(Photo courtesy of Robert O'Connor Collection)

On 5 April 1942 tragedy struck again! A VP-11 crew flying a PBY-5A Catalina, loaned from VP-91, serial number 2487, crashed on Oahu near Makapu'u Point while returning to base in zero-zero visibility, killing the entire crew. The weather was so bad that the gray clouds merged with the indefinite darkening horizon. Maneuvers with a horizon obscured by darkness were an invitation to disaster. The PBY-5A Catalina crew slammed into a hillside while attempting to determine their position. The pilot unwittingly descended into the darkness and shadow searching for home. Extremely bad weather, darkness and low visibility were major contributors to the accident. The crash completely demolished the plane and killed the entire crew instantaneously. It was believed that they might have mistaken Makapu'u Lighthouse for Barbers Point Lighthouse due to the bad night weather conditions. Pilot fatigue was also undoubtedly a contributory cause of the crash. The Pilot and crew had been in the air a total of 12.3 hours at the time of the mishap.

The crewmembers were:

William H. Howe, Ensign,
Patrol Plane Commander

George L. Doll, Ensign, First Pilot
Orren A. Roberts, AMM1c (NAP)

Joseph H. Hayman, AMM3c

Jack Parrish, ARM2c

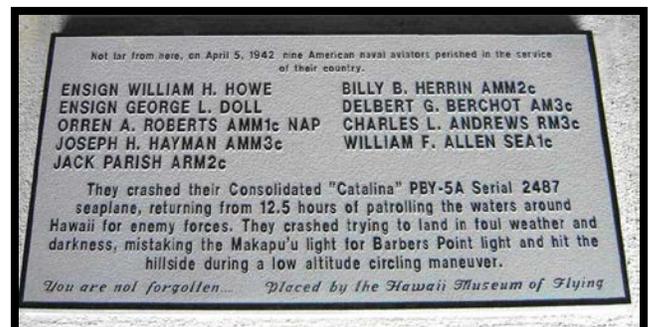
Billy B. Herrin, AMM2c

Delbert G. Berchot, AM3c

Charles L. Andrews, RM3c

William F. Allen, Sea1c

Debris from the PBY Catalina still lies above a lonely windswept cliff near Makapu'u Lighthouse. A few bits of twisted and corroded metal are all that remain. Most of the wreckage burned or was cleaned up long ago. Dirt, rocks and grass have slowly enveloped the rest. Bent and distorted parts testify to the force of the collision. The blue-grey paint color remains on a few parts. The largest piece of aircraft is the mangled aluminum and iron front landing gear mount. A glint of shine can still be seen on the mount. The wreckage is all that remains to bear witness to the brave crew. The Hawaii Aviation Preservation Society commissioned a granite memorial marker commemorating the crew's ultimate sacrifice. The marker was placed in December 2005 at the Makapu'u State Shore Side Park near the overlook at the summit and they plan on placing an additional plaque onboard MCBH Kaneohe.



*Commemorative plaque donated by the
Hawaiian Aviation Preservation Society.*

Editor's note: I was able to arrange a phone call between Mario Sireci and Jack Parrish's sister, Emily Crowe, within a few days of learning his connection to the family. Mario and Emily talked for more than two and a half hours about her brother's last few weeks in Hawaii bringing understanding, and new meaning to the personal effects she has treasured for all of these years.

Some additional history of Patrol Squadron Eleven (VP-11), a Navy PBY Catalina Patrol Squadron of WWII stationed at Naval Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii.

This account tells the details of the mostly-untold description of this PBY Catalina squadron just prior to and at the beginning of WWII along with the horror and panic that greeted Patrol Squadron Eleven on that sleepy Sunday in December 1941. The story is pieced together from a variety of sources including war diaries, action reports, message traffic, official and personal correspondence, and other documents to capture the courage and self-sacrifice of those who kept the faith when hope was lost and their will to turn tragedy into triumph; defeat into victory.



***PBYs over NAS Kaneohe during base commissioning ceremony
(Cliff Dohrmann Collection)***

NAS Kaneohe Bay was formally established on 15 February 1941 as a seaplane base for Navy patrol squadrons. In July 1941, Naval Air Station Kaneohe Bay became the headquarters of Patrol Wing One and VP-23 was the first to transfer to this newly commissioned Naval Air Station.

Accordingly, it was renumbered as VP-11, the identity it carried and made famous during WW-II. At that time the first digit of the Patrol Squadron matched its parent Patrol Wing's number and the last digit indicated the squadron's sequence within the wing. NAS Kaneohe Bay was the home of three squadrons VP-11, VP-12, and VP-14. Each of the three squadrons operated 12 Consolidated PBY Catalina seaplanes. The Patrol Squadrons began flying search and reconnaissance missions in the Central Pacific and from tender supported locations near Johnson Island.



***PBY on the ramp at NAS Kaneohe Bay
(Cliff Dohrmann Collection)***

In early October 1941, VP-11 mass-flw 13 PBY-1s back to North Island California, then to Corpus Christi, Texas and onto Jacksonville Florida. The squadron received twelve new PBY-5s in late October 1941. They then flew the

planes back to NAS Kaneohe Bay and arrived on 28 October 1941, thus becoming the first squadron to formation fly its entire fleet both ways across the Pacific. There were a total of 81 PBV Catalina's available in Hawaii in early December 1941. Fifty-four were the new type PBV-5's recently ferried to Hawaii and 27 were PBV-3's having over three years of service and worn from hard training use.



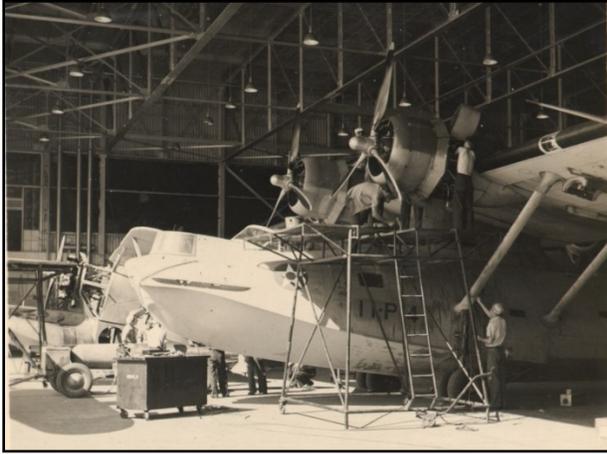
Catalina Engine Change at NAS Kaneohe Bay (Cliff Dohrmann Collection)

Upon receiving their new aircraft, the PBV-5's were experiencing shakedown difficulties and were hampered in maintenance by an almost complete absence of spare parts. Furthermore, an aircraft modification program for installation of leak proof fuel tanks, armor, and modified nose sections was in progress. The aircraft were not fully ready for war until these installations were completed. As the year progressed the squadron was put on an expanded work schedule and by the fall, all of the aircraft

were fully armed with machine guns on all flights.

Maintenance crews struggled to maintain aircraft with no spare parts and insufficient manpower. The squadron was stretched thin and operating on a shoestring. Although their operating allowance was 301 sailors, VP-11 was manned with about 190 enlisted sailors. The material situation of the patrol squadrons in early December 1941 made the upholding of continuous extensive daily searches impracticable. The squadrons maintained intensive training operations on the new aircraft while preserving the maximum availability of aircraft for an emergency. Continuous and extensive patrol plane operations, by the PBV-5's, were difficult because every time the planes flew they used up vital spare parts for which there were no replacements. The main effort was expansion training; expansion meaning the qualifying of personnel to form additional patrol plane crews, and to qualify the aircrews in their main jobs. To complicate matters even more, shortly before December 1941, a number of patrol planes were assigned for operational control to various task forces of the Pacific Fleet for training operations. Insufficient parts and the lack of essential equipment along with the squadron's training schedule and accompanying maintenance load continued to preclude regular and sustained long-distance patrols needed to provide adequate warning of an imminent attack. There was a general perception of

safety and security in Hawaii and it was believed that if war were to come, it would not start here.



VP-11 PBY-5 aircraft 11-P-4 during maintenance (Dohrmann Collection)

There were insufficient patrol planes and crews in the Hawaiian Area to effectively do the job required. A flight crew routinely conducted one patrol every third day. Although they could do more than that for short periods, physical fatigue became a problem when conducting continuous search operations. For the Commander of a search group to be able to state with some assurance that no hostile aircraft carrier could reach a spot 250 miles away and launch an attack without prior detection would require an effective daily search. It was estimated that to conduct a search through 360 degrees, to a distance of at least 800 miles, assuming a 15-mile radius of visibility, would require a daily 16-hour flight of 84 planes. Therefore, to conduct a continuous search of this type would require an overall force of approximately 200 aircraft, 252 aircrews to allow for crew rest, adequate spare parts and ample well-trained maintenance personnel for such

operations. Furthermore, each of the big Pratt & Whitney R-1830 radial engines required about 42 gallons of gasoline per hour. It was estimated that an average of more than 82 engine changes and a fuel consumption of over 1,980,000 gallons of gasoline would be required per month to carry out such an operation.

The PBV Catalina was the only type of plane the Navy had to conduct this type of search. The maximum distance a PBV could fly out to and return was considered to be about 800 miles. Even with such an effort, the search effectiveness was estimated to be only fifty percent. The fifty percent effectiveness was based on twenty-five mile visibility and the various weather conditions of visibility in the Pacific.

No PBV in the Pacific was equipped with radar at that time. If radar had been available, it would have increased the effectiveness of the patrols. Facilities were gradually being built up and obsolete planes were being replaced, however the Atlantic Fleet was receiving the priority. Only 81 patrol planes were available to do a job that required more than twice as many and personnel were just learning the new aircraft equipment.

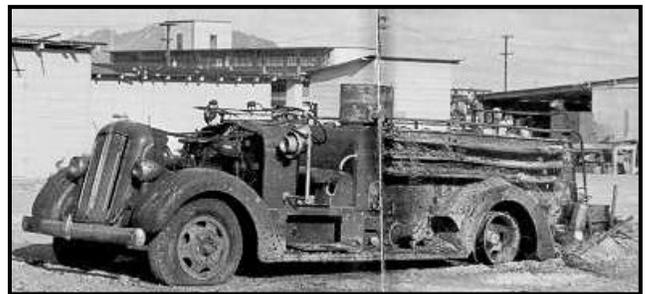
On the morning of 7 December 1941, there were 36 patrol planes at Kaneohe Air Station, 33 patrol planes at Pearl Harbor, and 12 patrol planes at Midway. Twelve of the planes at Pearl Harbor had just returned on 5 December after completing an extensive tour of duty at Midway and Wake Islands and required much needed maintenance. Patrol Squadron Eleven had

a total of twelve aircraft assigned to them; all their aircraft were parked at NAS Kaneohe Bay on the morning of December 7, 1941. Despite the maintenance problems, all twelve PBY's were on standby so they could be made ready for operations on a four hour notice.

NAS Kaneohe Bay was the first military installation on the island of Oahu to be attacked by aircraft of the Japanese Imperial Fleet on the morning of 7 December 1941. At 7:52 am, the first wave of nine enemy fighters circled at low altitude over NAS Kaneohe Bay, took aim at the control tower and four PBYs moored in the bay. They circled and started another low-level strafing run concentrating their efforts on the aircraft on the parking apron. This attack lasted for some fifteen minutes. One of the very first targets was the Wing Commander's OS2U-1 Kingfisher on the flight line. At the time a chief petty officer was turning over the propeller by hand and it was apparently thought to be a fighter preparing to take off. The OS2U-1 Kingfisher was thoroughly riddled with bullet holes. Most of the attacks were directed at the planes on the ground and in the water but there were some strafing of cars and quarters in addition to the main attack.

The Japanese had caught the Americans completely by surprise. The first attack set ablaze all the planes that were on the water and some of those on the ramp. The

second attack hit additional planes, setting more aircraft on fire. Squadron personnel took immediate steps to get machine guns into action and to save the planes not yet on fire or those not too far-gone. During the chaos, squadron personnel were also severely strafed on the roads in automobiles attempting to get to the hangar area. After the first two strafing attacks, all efforts were directed at moving salvageable aircraft away from those that were engulfed in flame. The strafing Japanese fighters destroyed NAS Kaneohe Bay's only fire truck.



Ruined Fire Truck (National Archives)



*PBY-5s burn out of control on the tarmac at NAS Kaneohe Bay
(National Park Service photo)*

After a brief lull in the attack, at about 09:30 a formation of nine bombers came in from over Kaneohe Bay. After following the coastline from Kahuku Point, at an altitude of about 1000 feet, they dropped bombs on the hangar occupied by Patrol Squadrons VP-11 and VP-12. This attack caused the greatest loss of life because a considerable number of men were in the hangar getting replenishment ammunition. Two bombs directly hit the hangar and two more close alongside. Immediately behind this wave of bombers were nine additional bombers that also dropped more bombs on the base. After the bombing attack there was a final strafing attack at about 10 o'clock.

It didn't take long before squadron crewmen and ground personnel shook off their astonishment and managed to get machine guns into action against the enemy. Offensive actions taken by VP-11 squadron members included firing back from machine guns that were mounted in a plane being removed from the hangar shortly after the raid started. Due to the continuous attacks by the enemy, the machine gun positions in the plane were soon abandoned and hastily set up near the south end of the squadron hangar with as much ammunition as the men could carry. One machine gun nest eventually contained four machine guns, 1 Browning automatic rifle, and one Lewis Gun. The other machine gun nest contained two machine guns in a semi-protected spot. Harm inflicted upon the enemy by ground fire from the base included damage to between four to six planes that were seen to be either smoking or spraying gasoline. One enemy plane crashed into the base of Pu'u Hawai'i Loa, northwest of what is

now known as "Kansas Tower" and two other Japanese aircraft crashed into Kailua Bay.



*Sailors Moving a PB4Y near Hangar One
(National Archives)*



Trying to save a burning PB4Y in the water at K-Bay (NHC photo)

The following is an account by Dallas H. Jones, a VP-11 squadron member when the Japanese attacked Kaneohe Naval Air Station.

"I was asleep in the barracks when someone yelled the hangar was on fire! The Japanese fighters were strafing the hangars and barracks. I knew then that we were at war; I jumped up and ran down to the hangar, oblivious to the 20mm and 7.7mm shells that were striking the ground all around me. I jumped in one of the burning planes near the hangar and took one of the .50-caliber machine guns and a box of ammunition and handed it to another Ordnance man, Red Scarbrough. We carried it to the edge of the tarmac where a truck from Public Works was parked, loaded it on the truck, and went to the

Public Works maintenance building. We obtained a 6-foot piece of pump pipe and a sledgehammer. We drove the pipe in the ground in an open area about 50 yards from the hangar, near the bombsight shop. We were in a position [where] we could see the Japanese bombers as they approached. We loaded the ammunition in the gun. I held the gun on the pump pipe while Red Scarbrough did the firing. The hot shells were hitting my neck as he fired. I could not move because I was holding the gun down. I saw the bombs fall from the Japanese bombers; I could see only a round ball, so I knew they were going to hit close by. When the bombs hit the hangar, it appeared to bulge out on all sides and then settled back. I saw a 1935 Ford go in the air as high as the hangar. I could hear ammunition in the planes exploding as the planes burned. We continued to fire until the Japanese bombers were out of sight."



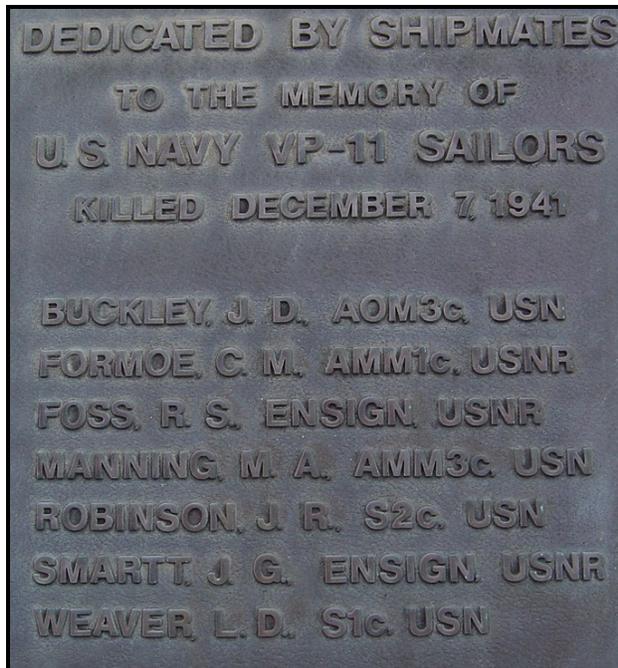
Retrieving Guns from a burning PBY
(NHC Photo)



Five sailors man guns in a crater
(National Archives)

An after action survey revealed that all planes actually at the base at the time of the attack were put out of commission (33 patrol planes, 1 OS2U-1 and a J2F-1 belonging to the Air Station). The only three patrol planes not destroyed were the ones on the dawn patrol. One of these was attacked by a number of enemy fighters in the air, receiving considerable bullet holes, but was not stopped and remained in service. The hangar occupied by squadrons VP-11 and VP-12 was completely destroyed. Casualties at NAS Kaneohe Bay totaled 19 dead and 69 wounded.

The squadron had received the first shots of WWII from the Japanese and may have suffered the first U.S. casualties of the Pacific theatre.



Bronze commemorative plaque on wall of Hangar 101 (Dave Trojan photo)

The squadron suffered greatly on 7 December 1941. Of the squadrons twelve aircraft, seven were completely burned, one plane was wrecked by guns and bombs beyond repair, and four planes were badly damaged but left in a repairable state. The Catalinas beyond repair were cannibalized for parts and relegated to the scrap heap. Practically all hangars, office equipment and provisions were destroyed. The Navy's patrol planes in Hawaii had been reduced from 81 to four flyable and a few repairable in just two hours. Items that were saved included: all squadron personnel service records except one, all personnel flight logs, propeller logs, engine logs, plane logs and the master flight logs; however, the aircraft logs were not much use without the aircraft they were assigned to.

Salvageable aircraft were painstakingly pieced together and put back into service. The best the squadron could do for the next few months was to repair the few remaining aircraft to be able to conduct patrol missions. The squadron was dealt a bad hand and they had no choice but to play it. Everyone knew the game would be rough but no one foresaw the grim reality of what lay ahead. While awaiting replacement airplanes, personnel, and equipment, flight crews were assigned to fly as relief crews on airplanes from other squadrons. These were the dark days of World War II; the news reported only losses and retreats around the world for the allies. Making matters worse, the squadron lost two more aircraft to accidents within the next six weeks. On 16 December 1941 a VP-11 PBY crashed at sea near Pearl Harbor and on 12 January 1942 another squadron PBY aircraft crashed during a faulty night landing in Kaneohe Bay.



*Salvage starting on a PBY on 8 Dec 41
(National Archives)*

The aircraft losses were finally replaced on the first of April 1942. Patrol Squadron Eleven received new PBY-5A seaplanes from the U.S., equipped with airborne search radar (ASE) for spotting ships on the ocean surface. The Consolidated Catalina

flying-boat patrol aircraft were the first type of U.S. aircraft to carry radar in operational service. Sector searches around Oahu were begun as soon as crews could be checked out on the new equipment. Between two and four planes took off daily between 6:00-7:30AM and did not return until 6:00-8:00 PM. Twelve to fourteen hour monotonous missions in the immense Pacific were typical. They would fly out to a distance of about 800 miles and return. There was little to do except monitor systems and stare at the repetitious seascape. At times their patrol altitude was at only 750 feet above sea level. Daily missions were flown in all types of weather conditions in search of the Japanese invasion fleet that never arrived.

L.I.E.F.C. News:

A big thank you to all of you who have sent in your dues for 2018. We also thank the following members who have provided additional donations:

Frank Martucci	\$ 35.00
Mike Scott	\$ 15.00
Pat Gallagher	\$100.00
Mario Barra	\$ 35.00
Frank Licari	\$ 35.00

A special thank you to all the Life Members who continue to pay dues to support the Club. Your financial support is important to

the completion of the work we have planned.

We also acknowledge and deeply appreciate the donation of a golf cart from Islip Avionics, Inc. Additionally, Islip Avionics is the driving force behind getting the Widgeon airworthy for the flight to Bayport this spring. A special thank you goes out to Fred Kattermann, Tres Whitt, and Dave Vives for the time and talent they are providing us in getting the Widgeon ready. Thank you also to the rest of the staff that keeps Islip Avionics open while the work is being done on the Widgeon offsite.

If you are shopping for radio equipment or are getting ready for the investment to make your airplane ADS-B ready for 2020, we hope you will call on the talented folks at Islip Avionics to do the work for you.

If you haven't sent in your dues, we hope you will remember to do so soon. Your dues and donations are vital to our continued progress at the hangar. Upcoming projects include:

- 1). The arrival of our storage container to be installed behind the hangar. We will use this space to declutter (hide) the support equipment used by the Wednesday crews for landscaping, golf carts, barbeque stoves and our lawn tractor....and maybe

some junk that we can't bring ourselves to part with...yet!

2). Bringing back our Bleriot from the display in the terminal at L.I. MacArthur Airport. We plan to hang the Bleriot from the hangar ceiling for our own display.

3). Refurbishing and clean-up of models that we plan to display when we officially open to the public.

4). Construction of the Widgeon display. We are hoping for an arrival date in May and it would be great to have the surrounding display area complete.

5). Refurbishing our latest donation of a golf cart donated by Islip Avionics, Inc.

Do you have the time and talent to share with our Wednesday work crew? We are at the hangar from about 8:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. each Wednesday. Stop by and have a cup of coffee with us on a Wednesday morning and see if there is a project that inspires you!

L.I.E.F.C. Dues for 2018 are due!

Please don't forget us! Financial donations are needed to keep our projects moving ahead.

L.I.E.F.C. Does Washington

April 12, 13 & 14th

We are no longer taking reservations for our Washington Bus Trip. We had to close

out the remaining space when the final head count was provided to the White House for our tour.

We'll provide a full report of our Washington activities in our May – June Newsletter.

Welcome New Members:

Roy & Alice Zimmerman

Time to smile.....

The following link was provided by LIEFC Member Izzy Epstien for your enjoyment. Click the link and give it a chance to load!:

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/ft5aY1I22j4>



Living on earth is expensive, but it does include a free trip around the sun every year.

The length of a minute depends upon which side of the bathroom door you are on.

Happiness comes through doors you didn't even know you left open.

Have you ever noticed that people who are late to arrive are jollier than those who have been waiting for them?

Most people go to their grave with their music still inside them.

If Walmart is lowering prices every day, how come nothing is free yet?

Some mistakes are too much fun to only make once.



A few more links to enjoy:

1). If cops talked like pilots.....

<https://youtu.be/NofR8XZab4>

2). Air New Zealand Aircraft Safety Video.....

https://www.youtube.com/embed/qOw44VFNk8Y?feature=player_embedded%22frameborder=%220%22allowfullscreen%3e%3c/iframe

Don't cry because it's over, smile because it happened

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The LONG ISLAND
Early Fliers Club

Long Island Early Fliers Club, Inc. is a non-profit organization founded in 1956 and Chartered by the New York State Education Department. We are dedicated to aviation education and preserving Long Island's aviation heritage. Volunteers who want to help educate and preserve our history are always welcome. Annual Membership in our organization is \$35.00 for individuals; \$50.00 for families.

Donations of aviation memorabilia, aircraft and aircraft parts, aviation clothing, display quality models and items of historic significance are always welcome and greatly appreciated. Cash donations, as well as artifact donations are tax deductible. You may visit our facility at Bayport Aerodrome, Vitamin Drive, Bayport New York most Wednesdays between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Appointments are necessary as airports are secure locations and can also be arranged at other times for your convenience. Contact us at: L.I.E.F.C., P.O. Box 43, Holbrook, NY, 11741 or call (631)-523-5407 (Fred Coste) or fax: 631-588-2147

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