Paton Field Centennial Moment—November

Happenings at Paton Field

As a public-use airport, Paton Field has been the site of many events—some known, others not.

Glider Launch, 1929

In April 1929 members of the Akron Gliding Club brought their training glider for testing to Stow Field. Purchased from Heraclio Alfaro, a Cleveland aeronautical engineer, the glider was piloted by Dr. Wolfgang Klemperer, a famed glider pilot and design engineer for Goodyear-Zeppelin. A ground crew of a dozen men launched the glider with its twenty-foot wing span from the knoll at Stow Field using a rubberized rope. The glider's longest flight lasted seventeen seconds.

Akron Beacon Journal, April 1, 1929

Fourth of July, 1959-1972

Stow's fourth of July day parade began in 1959. Starting at the airport, it would become one of the largest and most popular in the area. Ray Van Devere would push a Piper Cub to the street and put the nose down so it looked like a plane had crashed to attract attention and draw people in for plane rides. There would be banner towing with three horns on the plane to attract attention. Some years there was parachute jumping. The day was capped with a big firework display at the airport, a tradition that continued through 1972.

Unloading fireworks for the Fourth of July display at Kent State Airport, 1968 (Courtesy of Stow-Munroe Falls Public Library, Stow July 4th Parade Committee Collection)

Bob Hope, 1968

Bob Hope was the main event for KSU Homecoming in 1968, performing two shows on the evening of October 26. Earlier that day, he was flown from Columbus to Paton Field by Leonard Mack in the university's Aztec. A second airplane, a Cessna 172, flown by Dick Schwabe and flight student Roger Hyatt carried Hope's luggage. Hyatt recalls it was a large foot locker with stickers from all over the world.

Munitions Shipments, 1970

The airport in April 1970 received notice from the Stow Fire Department of prohibited flight activity. For more than a year, the Ravenna Arsenal had been flying primers, grenades, and larger shells out of the Kent State Airport to the Aberdeen Testing Range in Maryland. With the war in Vietnam raging, the munitions plant was working overtime, and samples needed to be shipped out for testing. The airport manager responded that the airport was not monitored at night, and there was no way to know of incoming and outgoing shipments. He immediately notified the Ravenna Arsenal to cease its operations.

Joe Walsh, 1975
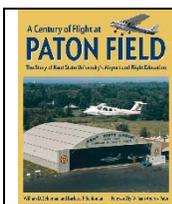
Joe Walsh and his rock group performed in the KSU Memorial Gym on Thursday, March 13, 1975 (general admission tickets were $5). Flying from Paton Field the next night, the twin-engine airplane with six band members went off the runway and into a snow bank, causing extensive damage to the nose. The pilot, identifying trouble with the controls, had aborted the takeoff. The National Safety Transportation Board later reported that a whiskey bottle had become lodged in the rudder pedals.

Stolen Airplane, 1993

Airport staff found a KSU Cessna 172 missing on the morning of August 10, 1993, and notified university police and the FAA. The 1984 aircraft, with tail number N97951, was valued at over $48,000 and had fuel for one to two hours of flying when stolen. Speculation was that it might have been stolen for parts or somehow ended up in the drug trade. The case was never solved.

DID YOU KNOW?

Ohio's worst snow storm in thirty-seven years hit in November 1950. The three-day blizzard blanketed the Akron area with 17½ inches of snow. Drifting paralyzed normal activity. A Peninsula farmer, concerned for his marooned beef cattle, contacted Ray Van Devere at the Kent State Airport. Van Devere flew his Piper Cub, equipped with skis, to deliver food to the stranded animals. He later reported that all of the airport's planes were equipped with skis and would be kept flying all winter.