



Southern Navion Air Group

Newsletter

MAY 2020

THE FATE OF GENERAL MACARTHUR'S NAVION

By Joe Cavett

When we found our airplane, N8747H, 7 years ago, I had never seen a Navion in person. What led me to the type was a lot of online research over a few years time. The research I did told me a lot of things about the airplane, and answered a lot of questions about it. One of the things I learned was that the Navion had actually been used in the military as the L-17. Not only that, but I found it particularly interesting that General Douglas MacArthur had been assigned a Navion for his personal use during the U.S. occupation of Japan after World War II and during the Korean War. General MacArthur used his Navion when he needed to get somewhere that was too far to drive and not accessible by a C-47.

I filed away that little bit of knowledge and didn't think much about it for a few years, but after finally purchasing our airplane in 2013 I realized that all of the research I had done still left one question unanswered: where was General MacArthur's Navion? A quick online search didn't reveal any answers, so I knew I would have to dig deeper. I eventually found a photo of the airplane with the bureau number, 47-1316, clearly visible on the tail. A little more research led me to Joe Baugher's website. Mr. Baugher has compiled an amazing collection of information about military aircraft bureau numbers, serial numbers, and aircraft disposition. Now I was getting somewhere. From Mr. Baugher's records I was able to find that General MacArthur's Navion had been serial number NAV-4-949 and had eventually been assigned a civilian registration number of N10302. Finally knowing a serial number and tail number, I was able to search FAA records and see where they led and I was hopeful that I was nearing the end of my search. Unfortunately, that was not the case and things were just getting started. What I was able to learn using the information I had was that 47-1316 had been converted to an L-17C in 1957 and remained in service with the Air Force until 1960. At that point it was demilitarized and transferred to the aero club at Loring Air Force Base in Maine before being deregistered in 1965. After that, the trail stopped cold.

I continued digging, but found nothing. I knew at this point that there were only two realistic options for the fate of the plane, and neither of them was good. First was that it had been retired and become a gate guard at a base. Ordinarily I wouldn't find that too disturbing, but the logical location for that to happen was Loring AFB, where it had last been assigned, and Loring had closed in 1994. The chances of a gate guard being saved after a base closure seemed remote and the only hope the plane had of survival was if its history had been discovered, but if that had been the case it likely would never have been sent to an aero club. The second option was that it had been destroyed in a crash. A search of the NTSB database turned up nothing. There were no records of any accidents involving the aircraft and the trail was still cold.

As what I thought would be a last ditch effort, I turned to some online aviation forums hoping that someone might have a lead. The only thing that turned up was a link sent to me about a man named Cliff Robertson that lived in California and claimed to have owned General MacArthur's plane, but none of the serial numbers were available. I would later learn that Mr. Robertson had brought his plane to an ANS convention claiming it was MacArthur's. I didn't have any of the identifying numbers on the plane, but I had a name and went back to the accident records. Luckily, for the purposes of my search anyway, Mr. Robertson seemed to have difficulty keeping his Navion in the middle of the sky and was involved in a few accidents in it. From the reports on those accidents I was able to find that his plane was serial number NAV-4-1151 and was still registered with the original tail

number of N41151. At this point I knew it had not been MacArthur's plane, but there was at least a possibility that he had flown in it as a substitute while his was down for maintenance or some other reason. I returned to Mr. Baugher's website to look up the serial number and found that this plane was not an L-17 and had never been in military service. My question still wasn't answered, but I was able to cross a wrong answer off the list.

With a trail that had once again gone cold, I was running out of options. I did the only thing I could do: I Googled the tail number. 99% of what I found was information I already had, but probably 30 pages deep in the search results I found a reference to the tail number on a Transport Canada website. Suddenly a lot of things made sense about why the plane had simply vanished. I had been looking up records in the wrong country. I clicked the link and it took me to a list of Canadian accident reports, but the list was the only thing available and the only information it provided was that the plane had crashed near Mingan, Quebec, Canada in 1962. Trans Canada had not uploaded any of the accident reports from that era to their website, so I contacted them to obtain the accident report and was told that they would send me a copy of the report for 40 cents per page. Not a problem, but their information was archived in blocks that contained several years worth of information and it was going to cost several hundred dollars to obtain a stack of papers that may not have answered my question. I didn't want to know that badly, but I had a few more things I could look into.

The first of those things was Canadian registration records. A search of their registration database didn't turn up any information on the plane. My last hope was import and export records. Canada had no records of the plane ever leaving the country and the United States had no record of it ever returning. At this point, I was out of ideas. I tucked my tail between my legs, hung my head in disappointment, and admitted defeat. Based on the information I had, my conclusion was that 47-1316 had been lost in the St. Lawrence River. I couldn't prove it, but the fact that the plane just disappeared with no further information in 1962 implied that the crash made the plane unrecoverable. Since the Mingan Airport is within a mile of the water, lost in the river seemed to be the most logical conclusion.

I didn't think much about the plane for a few years after that. Then about 6 months ago a Canadian Navioner posted a scan of a Canadian accident report to an online forum. The tail number jumped out at me. It was N10302. He had stumbled upon it while looking for something else in the Canadian records. I checked the number, then rechecked it to make sure it was really what I had been looking for. It was. The document listed the name of the Air Force sergeant who had been flying and that the aircraft was owned by the Loring Flying Club. In hand written notes it states that the aircraft "which is apparently owned by USAF" was located "In water about 2 ½ miles from Mingan Airport." The accident summary on page 2 of the report states "Circumstances unknown. Aircraft departed Mingan Airport encountered IFR conditions, struck water attempting to regain ground contact." The report goes on to list a passenger manifest of 5 people, 4 of which were killed in the accident. The sole survivor was the supposed source of the information in the report.

The mystery was finally solved. Although the ending was tragic, the book was finally closed. This was not the ending I had hoped for, but it is the ending we have for a historic aircraft along with her crew and passengers on June 8, 1962.

FUTURE FLY-INS

We are looking for a host to coordinate events on the ground so if you are willing, give Ron Hanselman a call or shoot him an email: ratf16@gmail.com.



TYPE OF ACCIDENT		TYPE OF AIRCRAFT		OPERATIONAL PHASE	
AUG 7 1962					
NAME OF PILOT (Sgt.) Adrien Joseph LAPOINTE		DATE OF ACCIDENT 6-8-62			
NAME OF OPERATOR Loring Flying Club FILES-- 5001-1-271		which is apparently owned by USAF.			
AIRCRAFT MODEL Navion		AIRCRAFT REG'N N 10302			
LOCATION OF ACCIDENT In water about 2 1/2 miles from		Mingan Airport, P.Q.			
		Entered on flexoline.		FORM 2472	

SUMMARY

Circumstances unknown aircraft departed Mingan Airport encountered IFR conditions, struck water attempting to regain ground contact.

DAMAGE

Destroyed.

INJURIES

Pilot (Sgt.) Adrien Joseph Lapointe - killed
 Passenger Claude Alain - killed
 Passenger Mrs. Johan Tardif - killed
 Passenger Daniel Tardif (Age 6) - killed
 Passenger (Mrs) Marguerite Giroux - seriously injured.

SNAG JACKET ORDER INFO

Looking to get the newest style SNAG jacket? The frost may have departed for now, but you'll want to get your stylish and warm jacket before the weather turns cold again. These are light and compressible- I keep one wadded up behind my back seat for "just in case" cool-fronts. Dick McSpadden is compiling a group order.

Please contact him directly to get added to the list. In your e-mail, please provide: Quantity, size, name (as you want it to appear embroidered on the jacket) and aircraft N-number, if applicable. Dick's e-mail is: rgmcspadden@bellsouth.net. The cost is \$85.00 including shipping.

STEC-55X GROUP BUY

The STEC-55x group buy was a real success. We had over 20 system bought at less than half the retail price. Marty Eveland and I worked with both STEC and our Navion Community to make this happen. So far, about half a dozen are in the air. All the owners who had installed the system are pleased with the results. They report that the system is rock solid. I cannot wait to get mine in the air as well!

SMOKE SYSTEM GROUP BUY

I have currently worked a deal for free shipping with Smoke System Helper. You can get any of their systems for the Navion for the listed price plus free shipping.

Just call Marvin at 419-360-7414 and tell them you have a Navion and Ron Hanselman sent you.

You can also contact Marvin at marvin@buckeye-access.com His website is: <https://www.smoke-system-helper.com/>

- Ron Hanselman



FLY-IN CALENDAR 2020

- Oct/Nov 2020 – open

THINKING OF HOSTING A FLY-IN...

On the Facebook page under "files" is a neat checklist from Ann McSpadden with all the instructions anyone needs to host a fly in! What a great way to show off your local airport and part of the US. If you are willing to possibly host a fly-in for the 2020 season, please contact Ron Hanselman at rat16@gmail.com or 702-308-0475.

SNAG NEWSLETTER/MAY 2020
 Susan Holmes
 4109 Lucas Lane
 Lake Charles, LA 70605