Remembrances of Bettis Field:
an interview with Kenneth W. Scholter
by William F. Trimble

The following excerpts from an interview by the author with Kenneth W. Scholter give a firsthand impression of some of the people and events at Bettis Field. Now 83 years old, Mr. Scholter was employed at the field when it was known (first) as Pittsburgh-McKeesport Airport. He knew Clifford Ball and D. Barr Peat, as well as many others associated with the airmail operations and other early aviation exploits at the field. He worked for a while at an airport in Hudson, Ohio, before going to Butler in 1934 with D. Barr Peat. The interview was conducted on June 21, 1993, and has been edited for publication. A transcript of the interview is in the Archives of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

**WFT:** What are your memories of the way the field was laid out and the people there?

**KWS:** The road that went by the south side of the Pittsburgh-McKeesport Airport was the Dravosburg-Homestead Road, and on the south side of that road there was a meadow up on a hill. It sloped up from the other side of the road. In the early days there was a surplus of World War I airplanes, and barnstorming pilots would rather purchase these airplanes for a little money than buy a brand-new airplane and they would keep up their activities in these surplus airplanes by barnstorming them and going into pastures and flying passengers anywhere there was any population.

Well, it just so happened that on top of this hill...
was a nice long strip of pasture to land an airplane. One day, a barnstorming airplane made a couple of circles around this pasture on top of the hill and decided he was going to land in there. When he landed, the grass was so high that he hit a stump that was covered with high grass. He couldn’t see the thing and he crashed the airplane on landing. D. Barr Peat, David Barr Peat, who was an engineer who worked on the Liberty Tunnels as a foreman, happened to live within walking distance of this strip on top of the hill. He, of course, rushed over there, and tried to help and straighten out the barnstormer’s problems. When they finally got the airplane straightened up and repaired again and he got out of there, this was like planting a seed in D. Barr Peat’s mind. He figured that there ought to be an airport around there somewhere.

**WFT:** Did D. Barr Peat actually help repair the airplane?

**KWS:** Well, in his way, yes. He made himself available. You hand me this and you hand me that. You lift here and what-not. D. Barr Peat figured that his strip up there lacked any possibility of becoming an airport, so he investigated around that field. Nearby was property owned by a Dr. Nason from McKeesport. He was very influential, but he was
not interested in airplanes at all. So Barr never had any help from Dr. Nason. He didn't object, nor did he help. He had a mansion right there on the edge of the road near the pasture where the barnstormer landed. But when you're on top of that hill you look down over Dr. Nason's house on the road, and there's a beautiful nice big pasture there. And this was owned by a farmer and well-to-do McKeesport man named Harry Neal, H. C. Neal. Harry Neal was quite a guy in his own right. Barr Peat, looking down there and picturing a future airport, contacted Mr. Neal, who was a personal friend of D. Barr Peat's, and they got together and they decided to clear off this pasture and open it.

Clifford Ball was interested in aviation in his way. He wasn't a rich man, but he wasn't poor either. He had this automobile business down in McKeesport, a Hudson-Essex dealership, and he also was looking to the future for something he could latch onto and make money.

**WFT:** Was Clifford Ball already interested in aviation by the time Peat and Neal came along?

**KWS:** No way, no way at all. He had a brother named Albert Ball, who had a builders' supply business in McKeesport, and Albert Ball and Clifford Ball between them had enough money that they could put some money into Pittsburgh-McKeesport Airport with Harry Neal. They bought some equipment and hired some pilots. Ball had two other brothers, but they weren't significant in aviation.

**WFT:** Did you know Cliff Ball before this other than just by the car dealership?

**KWS:** No. He grew with me. It was a case where everybody who was at that airport or had anything to do with it, just was in their tracks, was on their tail. Pretty soon they began to like me. They took me under their wing, and everybody went along with it.

Cliff Ball had more political connections than the average guy in that he had this garage in downtown McKeesport and it was next to the city lockup, the municipal building at the time. Cliff Ball was prominent politically down there because he had to be. At that time the bootleg business was prominent and when the state police would raid or take in some of these bootlegger cars, they would bring them down to the police station and they would immediately house their cars in Cliff Ball’s garage.

About that time, when I was at the airport, I was doing all kinds of things, and one of those things was being a “gofer.” They called me “Monk.” That was short for grease monkey, or airplane mechanic. I cleaned the bellies of airplanes, washed what I could reach. When there was an empty seat on one of the airplanes, one of the airmail airplanes, or one of the civilian airplanes, when there was an empty cockpit in one of them, I was in it. They all thought of me as the kid, “Monk.” When Cliff Ball was in the midst of getting the airmail organized with D. Barr Peat, he had a brand-new Model T Ford roadster down there that was confiscated and was sitting in his garage. Cliff said, “Monk, I want you to go into town with me, down to the garage, and I want you to bring back a car.” I did everything. As a kid, I was capable of doing things on my own. Heck, I'd been driving cars and many other things for a long time. I'd do all kinds of things. For instance, Dewey Noyes [one of the original airmail pilots] had a girlfriend who was an actress in the theater in Pittsburgh.

**WFT:** That was Blanche Wilcox?

**KWS:** Yes. She was in the theater in downtown Pittsburgh and Dewey said, “Hey Monk, how about getting the car and going down and getting Blanche when I come in. I've got to fly to Cleveland, and I want Blanche here when I come back so we can go out.” That's what I would do. Anyhow, that justified the use of the car. I'd go get parts, and I'd deliver people and get people, and do all kinds of things. I was always sort of in demand as somebody who could be depended on as a gofer. There I had a brand-new Model T Ford at my disposal. Now it wasn't legal, but Cliff Ball didn't have any trouble with that, because he was in with the police department, and all he did was put a dealer plate on the car, and so I was free to use it as I wished. Of course, I didn't have use for the car other than official business; there was no...
reason for me to do anything else. Most kids would have been in trouble with something like that, but not me.

**WFT:** When do you think you took your first airplane flight, and can you remember what kind of airplane it was?

**KWS:** I can remember that like it happened yesterday. It was so impressive to me, so important, that there’s no way I would ever forget it. But it wasn’t anything unusual. It was in a Curtiss JN4D Jenny, and it was flown by one of the original airmail pilots, Curly Lovejoy. Curly Lovejoy is a story in itself.

**WFT:** What do you recall of that first flight, then?

**KWS:** Well, it wasn’t anything important, like I said. It was a case of where Curly Lovejoy flew these airplanes for Cliff Ball, and I did these little chores for the pilots. Curly, for instance, would borrow my Model T every once in a while. Curly was quite a guy. Curly liked to nip it up, and he was quite a guy when it came to having a good time. In those days, pilots were more or less known for that sort of thing. Well, Curly borrowed my Model T one time. His home was in Pittsburgh. He would go home every once in a while, maybe three or four o’clock in the morning and he’d shake me in the hangar and say, “Kenny, I’m going to take the Model T. I’ll bring it back in the morning.” I’d be half asleep and shrug it off, and Curly would barge off in my Model T.

The next morning Curly showed up, but not my Model T. I said, “Curly, what happened to my car? I’ve got a couple of chores I’ve got to do here.” Curly said, “Oh, I had a little trouble last night coming down the hill in Homestead.” The darn hills are steep, you know. He came off the top of that street and ran into the main street between Homestead and Kennywood Park. There was a tractor-trailer there with an empty flatbed trailer that they hauled steam shovels on. You’ve seen them. Just as he came down over this hill (and he was probably pretty well lit) and just as that trailer got there, Curly came down the hill and couldn’t get stopped and he ran my Ford right into the side of that empty flatbed trailer. He left the wheels on the road, but the rest of the Model T went up on the bed of the trailer and that was the end of my Model T. So Curly did himself out of a bit of transportation, and Cliff had to figure out a way of getting another car.

Of course, he didn’t have any trouble getting cars, because they were confiscating those cars right and left. So I always had one.

Lovejoy was a prominent name in Pittsburgh. Most of these early fliers came from prominent families. Curly Lovejoy’s father was No. 2 under Andrew Carnegie, and he owned a mansion in Pittsburgh. Later on, they had a big write-up about Lovejoy. I’ve still got that write-up somewhere. They called it “Lovejoy’s Folly.” The mansion was very well-constructed; everything in that building was brought from overseas. Even the bricks were dovetailed together. When they tore the mansion down, they had to ruin the whole thing. They could salvage none of the bricks or anything like that. They tore it down, blew it up, dynamited it.

The whole thing was on Fifth Avenue, and stood empty for many years. For a time they stored Mack trucks in the living room. Mr. Lovejoy invested his money in gold mines out West, and he lost his money because the gold was in the mountains there, but there was no way to get it out. So in order to get the gold out of these hills in the mountains, they had to build a railroad to get the equipment in for the mines and whatnot. It just broke the old man. I don’t know what happened after that. Anyhow, Curly used to go to dinner in full dress and tux. He was a spoiled individual but a heck of a nice guy.

**WFT:** Had he served in the Air Service during World War I?

**KWS:** Yes. He was a captain in the United States Army Air Service. There were four pilots, really. There was Curly Lovejoy, Merle Moltrup, Dewey Noyes, and Jack Morris. They were the four original airmail pilots. Merle Moltrup and Curly were almost identical in their backgrounds. Merle Moltrup’s father was the owner of Moltrup Steel Company in Beaver Falls. And he didn’t want anything to do with the
things Mr. Moltrup had in mind for him as far as the business was concerned.

**WFT:** Was he also a World War I pilot?

**KWS:** Yes, he was also a World War I pilot.

**WFT:** And Dewey Noyes?

**KWS:** I don’t know much about his family background, but Dewey Noyes was the pilot for John D. Rockefeller. Standard Oil Company was Rockefeller’s thing. The old man, if you remember, used to be quite a character. Anywhere he went he always had a pocketful of new dimes. He would pass out the new dimes. Dewey was in charge of Standard Oil’s aviation department, and he tried to get the old man in the airplane, so he’d have a little more prestige and so forth in connection with him. They finally got around to the point where they got the old man in the airplane.

**WFT:** Was this in Cleveland? Is that where Noyes was from?

**KWS:** I can’t tell you where it was, but that’s where Standard Oil Company was located. It was Esso. The powers that be decided that the old man ought to have some idea of aviation and that it would be a pleasure to him and a new experience to get him in the airplane. So they got Dewey off to the side and said, “Look, we’re going to put the old man in the airplane, but you’re not to take off with that airplane. Just give him a ride around the airport in the airplane.” So that’s what he did. The only time he was ever in an airplane it was just to ride around the airport. When he got out, Dewey helped him out of the airplane, and the first thing the old man did was reach in his pocket and give Dewey a new dime. So I remember that real well. I didn’t see that happen, but I knew all about it. Of course, Dewey bragged about taking the old man for his first airplane ride — on the ground.

**WFT:** Now, the other pilot, Jack Morris, I don’t know that much about him.

**KWS:** Jack was quite a prominent guy, but he didn’t have the wealthy background of the other early pilots. He was one of the first commercial operators at Rodgers Field [in Aspinwall], the only operator besides the army reserve. He had a little flying school there.

**WFT:** It was like a fixed base operation?

**KWS:** Yes, only it didn’t amount to anything big. He had a little shanty there that he worked out of and he had one or two airplanes. He’d sell an airplane on occasion, and that sort of thing.

**WFT:** What kind of operation did Cliff Ball run at Pittsburgh-McKeesport?

**KWS:** Well, Cliff Ball was very anxious and very willing to progress. He wanted to very much, and he knew the business was there and it was up to him to buy the equipment to take care of the amount of mail that was available. So Cliff Ball was continuously looking for new equipment. Cliff had his ups and downs and a lot of them were downs. I’m jumping a little bit further ahead here. In the old days, in order to get his first three Waco 9s [brand of airplane], a lot of other things had to be taken care of, too. When Cliff bought those airplanes, he bought bare airplanes, and a lot of other things had to be purchased. For instance, one of the contract requirements was that the pilots must be furnished with a revolver. Anybody handling the United States mail had to carry one of those big 45-caliber revolvers, but at this time, Cliff bought little pistols. Of course, they all cost money, and sometimes there was a problem getting...
that money, because Cliff had already dried out all his sources. And the other thing was that those pilots were required to wear parachutes. Well, nobody who had anything to do with those early airplanes — the barnstormers, for instance — ever had parachutes. Parachutes were a luxury.

WFT: Under the terms of the contract, you had to have parachutes. How did Cliff get around that?

KWS: He didn’t really get around it. He ordered parachutes. There had to be at least four parachutes that they would use. Then there would be other spare parachutes. A parachute has to be repacked every so often and it had to be aired out. Cliff ordered these parachutes and they were being shipped in. In those days everything was shipped railway express. Well, the parachutes came in one at a time, just before the ceremonies opening the airmail service, and the parachutes were down at the express office C.O.D. It pretty near delayed the opening of the airmail because Cliff didn’t have the money to buy the parachutes.

Cliff was a pretty shrewd operator when it came to handling money, being an automobile dealer. But he had dried up most of his good sources and his reputation was good. He always paid his bills, but it sometimes took a long time. Cliff had a little trick. To the people that he knew and that he owed any money to, he would write a check. He would open a bank account, say, in some remote town over in the mountains that you couldn’t get to. He would put a few bucks in that bank and write a check on it and by the time the check got over there and back again, he’d have enough money to make it good. When Cliff Ball needed the airplane and he had the money, he wanted the airplane. The idea was to find somebody who was in production at the time. They built airplanes almost from a prototype standpoint.

WFT: Pretty much built to order.

KWS: Well, sure. The next airplane Cliff bought was a Travel Air…. Let’s get to the demise of the Pitcairn [one of Ball’s early airmail planes] first. Dewey Noyes got in the airplane one time and took off with a load of mail and landed in Youngstown, or tried to land in Youngstown. The airport was called Lansdowne Field, before the big airport we know today — the airport was being built for Cliff Ball and the airmail. Cliff Ball had promoted the airmail service with the politicians in Youngstown, and the only way they could have it was to build an airport. Dewey got in the airplane, and it was a pretty new airplane at the time, four or five months old, and… it was a blustery, windy day, and he was cross-wind on that runway. He tried to land a couple of times, but he couldn’t get the airplane down on the runway without it getting away from him. It was in the midst of construction and they had these outhouses or port-a-potties alongside the runway. The airplane got away from Dewey and he hit a port-a-potty and turned the airplane into a ball and that was the end of the Pitcairn. Dewey walked away from it without being hurt.

WFT: I wonder how Cliff Ball reacted to that.

KWS: Well, Cliff was pretty tough about that time. He had all these different episodes that could have been disasters. The Travel Air was the next airplane. That airplane was used for about six months. There was a pilot by the name of Eugene Cecil. There was no night flying, but every once in a while a pilot would be coming in from Cleveland and it would get dark on him. Gene took off and he was scheduled in at dusk. He got to Pittsburgh and got lost. The pilots in those days would come into the airport at McKeesport using the steel mill converter that continuously lighted the sky. They navigated with that.

WFT: The mills provided impromptu beacons for pilots in the Pittsburgh area.

KWS: That’s right. But this particular night the converter was down, or something, and he missed the airport. [T]he next morning we began to be suspicious that something had happened. And sure enough it had. We began to get telephone calls from the state police that there had been an airplane flying around down near
Uniontown. The Monk and a couple of helpers got in the Model T and started to look for the airplane. In those days it wasn’t a problem to follow an airplane because anybody would hear an airplane that sounded funny, or it was making a turn, or something like that. Everybody knew there was something wrong and knew where it was. We kept asking people. They said, “Oh yeah, the last we saw it, it was going that way.” We just pot-lucked the roads, and we found the airplane.

The Travel Air with Gene Cecil in it finally came to Chestnut Ridge. We asked, and someone said the last they heard it was on top of the mountain. We followed what information we could get from different people and we finally came to a farmhouse and went in and asked the farmer about the airplane. He said that he had heard it. He said if you go right over there to that field, that’s where we saw it hit. Sure enough, we went over there and the Travel Air was upside down. It was in the wintertime, and the ground was frozen and he hit a fence just as he made his approach and it went over on its back and poor old Gene’s head was down in the frozen ground about 6 inches. After we found that there was nothing we could do for him, we went through the general practice of getting the corpse out of the airplane and taking the airplane apart. We went back to the farmer and asked him why he hadn’t gone out to see if he could help the man; he might have saved his life. He looked at me after a little while and said, “Well, I saw and heard this explosion, but I think she was a steamboat.” I couldn’t figure out what that meant. That was the kind of guy he was. There wasn’t a river nearby. How could he get the idea it was a steamboat?

WFT: Was that the first fatality that you had on the airmail route?
KWS: Yes, I guess that was. Come to think of it, it was.
WFT: There really weren’t very many accidents or fatalities.
KWS: No, there wasn’t, because the airplanes were slow. The guys more or less knew what they were doing. Today, if you go in with a bigger airplane, it’s inevitable that it’s going to kill a lot of people.
WFT: Tell us about Al Litzenberger.
KWS: Al Litzenberger was from the state of Washington. He and his brother Carl were barnstorming pilots who came to Butler. I don’t know just how it all came about. He came through a man named J. Warren Smith, who worked for C. P. Mayer at his field in Bridgeville. J. Warren Smith was an early barnstorming pilot who worked for C. P. Mayer and he needed a couple of pilots, so he got in touch with Al and he barnstormed with Al in the early days somewhere out in Ohio. So he said, “Come on, Al, come on down here to Pittsburgh. You can do some flying down here. There are some jobs available and you can get in on the ground floor.” So Al did. He came here. He had a Waco-9 of his own and he promoted a guy by the name of Robert Headland who sold dynamite for Du Pont. He bought this Waco-9 and Al barnstormed that around here locally.

WFT: Did Litzenberger fly for Cliff Ball?
KWS: No, he flew for TWA for a while. But then Litzenberger was the instigator and he got a job with
Mesta Machine Co. in Homestead. The Iversons were in charge of, or owned, Mesta Machine, and somehow or another Al promoted them to buy an airplane. Their original airplane, I think, was a Lockheed 12. That was the first corporate airplane in the Pittsburgh district. They based it at Allegheny County Airport, and Al was the chief pilot. From then on all the corporations, like the oil companies, Gulf Oil, Consolidated Coal, and other corporations would look over at their boss and say that guy at so and so got an airplane and we’ve got to keep up with the Joneses, so we’ve got to buy an airplane, too. They didn’t know anything about aviation. And who did they have to go to? Al Litzenberger. He knew all about it. So all these other companies came to Al to find out what kind of an airplane to get and what kind of a
One of the major events in Pittsburgh in the summer of 1927 was the visit of Charles A. Lindbergh. An international hero following his epic solo transatlantic flight in May of that year, Lindbergh could not go anywhere without arousing intense public interest. That summer, there were plans for Lindbergh to take his Spirit of St. Louis on a national tour. In preparation for that journey, the Army Air Service agreed to send out several of its airplanes to survey the route and make preliminary local arrangements. An official from the Department of Commerce, Donald E. Keyhoe, was in charge of the tour.

In the meantime, Lindbergh decided to fly to St. Louis to visit Major William B. Robertson, his former boss and operator of the contract airmail route from St. Louis to Chicago. With as little fanfare as possible, Lindbergh and Army Major Thomas G. Lanphier left Mitchel Field on Long Island on the morning of June 29, flying a pair of Curtiss pursuit planes. It was a hot day and there were headwinds over the mountains that slowed their progress and consumed more fuel than they had planned. As a result, Lindbergh and Lanphier decided to land at Bettis Field, where they could gas up and get something to eat before continuing to Dayton, their next planned stop on the route to St. Louis.

KWS: D. Barr Peat was close with Major Thomas Lanphier, who was the commanding officer at Selfridge Field. Major Lanphier would commute back and forth from Selfridge Field to Washington, on business. He had to go down there maybe twice a month or so. He would fly in. He came from Detroit to Pittsburgh and he’d land at Pittsburgh-McKeesport Airport. So he got to be a regular, and Barr became familiar with him. One time, Barr got the idea that they could utilize a little promotion with Major Lanphier, and said, “Major Lanphier, what if we named the airport after one of your heroes, Cy Bettis?” Lanphier responded, “My God, that’s just what we need. We’ll name the airport Bettis Field.”

That’s how it got its name. Major Lanphier would come in and out, and he’d land there and sometimes spend the night at the Penn-McKee Hotel. Major Lanphier became pretty familiar at the airport and he was a pretty important muckety-muck and I imagine he had a couple of gals down there. Then he came more often and stayed overnight.

About that time, Lindbergh had made his flight, and he was a very sought-after individual to the point where he was almost a phenomenon. He couldn’t take a walk down the street or anything without people tearing his clothes off or trying to touch him. He was the number one man in the world. They had
confetti parades and everything else....

When Lindbergh and Lanphier came in to Bettis Field of course the first guy who saw it was Lindbergh made a hell of a fuss, saying "Lindbergh, Lindbergh." Lindbergh said that they wanted to gas the airplanes. Major Lanphier, of course, knew what the situation was there and he said he would like to get a sandwich up at the barbecue. He knew the barbecue was there. There was another fellow on the airport, who I haven't mentioned up till now, a guy by the name of William Burns Phelan. Bo Phelan. Bo was a ladies' man and a young fellow who had inherited some money, who Cliff Ball had sold some stock to. Bo became part of the airport. He had a Stutz Blackhawk automobile. When the guys mentioned that they would like to have a sandwich, the obvious place was the barbecue at the far end of the field. Bo brought the Stutz Blackhawk around and everyone piled on — Barr Peat, Lindbergh, Lanphier, and others got in the Stutz Blackhawk and went over to the barbecue to get a sandwich. They came back and gassed the airplane and took off again.

In the meantime, I'm the only one besides Bo and some of the other people around the field, including the gals who worked in the office. Lindbergh came in there and signed the register and I had a little box camera. I was no photographer, but my interest in aviation required me to have a camera. I must have paid $3 or $4 for this little Brownie camera. I had it hidden in the hangar. I ran in there and got that camera and snapped some pictures every time that I thought I could get a decent picture. I didn't know what I was doing. But I did get some pictures. After they took off, things settled down. The next morning all hell broke loose. There must have been reporters from every newspaper in the whole Tri-State area. There must have been 25 of them who came in there. They gathered up anybody who had anything to do with the Lindbergh visit. They crowded around these individuals. There hadn't been anybody there but the local people, a mechanic, a couple of pilots, the office gals, and Bo Phelan and myself and some other people. Some regular visitors. So they talked to us, and asked: "Where did he go? What did he do? What did he touch? Where are his footprints?" And all this crazy stuff. Finally one of the guys asked, "Did anybody get any pictures?" There was a long silence for a while. They squabbled about different things. "Did anybody get any pictures?" Finally one of the guys, somebody there who knew me and knew that I had a camera, said that there wasn't anybody here who got any pictures. There weren't any reporters. It was a complete surprise. But he said he saw Monk with a little Brownie camera and mentioned that he thought I took a couple of pictures. He didn't think I got anything. I wasn't a photographer, it was just a hobby. "Where's the Monk, who's he?" Cripes, everybody wanted to know where I was. Someone said that I was over in the hangar. Geez, everybody came rushing over to me. I thought they were going to tear my clothes off.

**WFT:** You were an instant celebrity.
**KWS:** Yes. One of them said, "They tell me you had a camera and that you'd taken some pictures of Lindbergh. Did you get any pictures of him?" I said, "No, I don't know whether I got any pictures or not. I got my camera. I paid $5 for this camera. Nobody's going to get my camera." That was like gold to me back then, that camera. So the guy looked at me and all these other guys were trying to get an idea about my camera. One of them came up to me and said, "You see this watch? This watch is worth $500. If you'll let me take that camera, I'll give you this watch for security. You'd have to take the camera downtown and get the film developed, anyway. Is there film in there?" I said, "Yes there's film in there. There are two more pictures on there, and I can't afford to waste the film." He said, "Never mind about that. You let me take the camera, and I'll guarantee that
you get the camera back, and I'll make any pictures you want. I'll get it developed and anything you want printed. If they're any good, you'll have first choice of anything you want.” So sure enough, the next morning, on the front page of both papers, including the Pittsburgh Press, there were my pictures. They were the best pictures. They couldn't have been any better had a professional photographer taken them.

**WFT:** You said you scooped the whole media.

**KWS:** I scooped the whole media and I even got a picture where he signed the register, Charles A. Lindbergh. Holy cow, anybody would have given their right arm to have had that signature. I was real glad, I thought, “Holy mackerel, it would have cost me $10 or $15 to get these prints, and he put new film in the camera, and gave me my camera back.” I got to thinking about it afterwards, and if I'd been smart and had somebody who really knew what they were doing, I could have got $5,000 for those pictures. I didn't get a nickel for them other than the fact that I was real appreciative of getting the pictures developed and printed. It would have cost me $10 or $15.

**WFT:** What do you remember about Lindbergh himself? Did you talk to him at all during that visit?

**KWS:** Lindbergh was very discouraged. No matter where he went, he was like a dog with its tail between its legs. You couldn't have any kind of conversation with him, because no matter what you'd say or what you'd try to talk to him about, it was something that he wasn't interested in. It'd be something silly.

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**On August 3, Lindbergh arrived at Bettis Field with the Spirit of St. Louis as part of his 22,000-mile, 82-city official tour. Some 10,000 people greeted him when he landed, and more than a quarter-million lined the streets on his route from the airport to downtown and out Bigelow Boulevard to Pitt Stadium in Oakland.**

**KWS:** One of the requirements when he brought the airplane in was that the airplane had to be hangared. Well, we only had that one hangar that we put the three Waco-9s in. We pushed the Waco-9s out of there and said we would try to get it in. Lindbergh's airplane had a large wingspan — it must have been 50 feet, I don't remember what the actual span was — but it wouldn't go into the hangar, and we wondered what we were going to do. He was standing right there and if we didn't get in the hangar, he was going to take off again.

Here's what we did. Right away, Barr Peat, who knew everybody in Pittsburgh and being in the steel business, all he had to do was run down to McKeesport to get anything he needed. We had the answer to the problem. This is a steel town, and if you go along the streets today, you'll see construction and these big steel plates that cover a manhole or something — great big things. We decided we'll get a couple of those downtown, bring them up and put them in a strip and grease them. We pushed the Spirit of St. Louis in that hangar sideways. We skidded it sideways. He wouldn't leave until we got that airplane in the hangar.... When he left the airport and left the airplane there, he went downtown to the William Penn Hotel for a big party, a banquet and so forth. Don Keyhoe and Mayor Charles Kline and Lindbergh were in this open car that paraded between the airport and the William Penn Hotel, where they had a big banquet.

**WFT:** Lindbergh flew out the next day?

**KWS:** Yes. There wasn't any big deal there. It was just a matter of getting him in there and getting the airplane out of the hangar. His next stop was Wheeling.

When I was at the airport, clothes didn't mean a thing to me. What I wore those days was coveralls, one-piece coveralls. When Lindbergh came in, or was going to come in, Barr Peat wanted to promote the event as much as possible. His sources of money were guys like Sam Brendel, who was a well-to-do oil man in McKeesport who lived in the Penn-McKee Hotel, and Harry Neal and Cliff and others, and Barr had run all his sources pretty dry. Brendel was one of the people who had a buck or two left, or was willing to let Barr have it. He went downtown to see Sam one day, and he said, “Sam, the Monk's up there and he's supposed to greet Lindbergh when he comes in, and the mayor is going to be there, too. And Monk doesn't have any clothes.” Sam said, “Don't worry...
about it. You just go down to the haberdashery in McKeesport and have him phone me and I’ll tell him to fit Scholter out. Whatever he needs, give it to him.” Sam bought the whole outfit. He started with the underclothes and bought everything I needed, shoes, socks, shirts, tie, the whole works. The white duck pants, and the blue jacket. Boy, I looked like I owned the place.

**WFT:** Mr. Scholter, can you tell us about your earliest reminiscences of flying? What got you interested in flying in the first place?

**KWS:** Well, I’m going to pick out a time that comes to mind. The first thing that I remember I was a kid about 15 years old. One day on a weekend I saw an airplane circling Duquesne, and it so impressed me that I vowed to find out where that airplane came from and where it was going to land. After he circled my hometown for a minute or two, I started off in the direction toward the airport. I just hightailed along toward where I thought the airplane was destined. I followed it, and finally came to the airport, which as I said was about a mile or two up the hill from the town of Duquesne. From that time on, I never left that airport. I found a place to hide and sleep. There was one old wooden improvised T-hangar building there that I could get in out of the weather and I managed to find an old obsolete parachute that I threw on the ground there, and that’s where I slept.

**WFT:** What did your parents think of your running away?

**KWS:** My dad worked in the steel mills at Duquesne and he was an electrician. He did house wiring and things like that. There were nine children in our family and when it came to me personally, one missing wasn’t missed. Not that they didn’t appreciate me or anything like that, but Mom didn’t have time to be too concerned about it, because we were very capable in our own ways.

**WFT:** Were you in the middle of the family or older or younger than the other siblings?

**KWS:** I was probably the latter part, I would say. When they finally did find out I was missing, they came out to the field and were satisfied that I wasn’t getting into any trouble and was being taken care of....

**WFT:** So you didn’t finish high school?

**KWS:** Oh no, I never had time. I was lucky to get through grade school. To this day — I think of it every once in a while — I wonder what I would have done had I gone to school and got an education. Maybe what I did would have been an asset to my career, but I couldn’t have done both.
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