



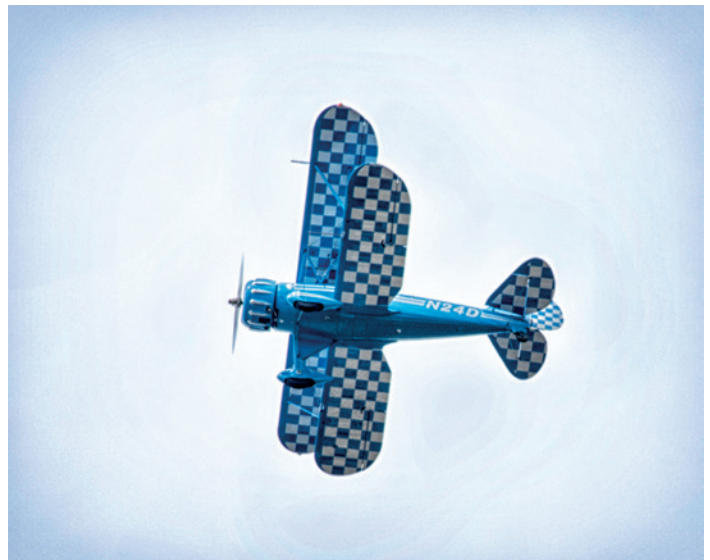
A vintage 1945 Piper J-3 Cub, piloted from the rear seat by Mr. David Nelson, passes over the Main Line Airport commemorative marker. Photographer Bud Laird occupies the front seat of the low-flying Cub. *Courtesy of Roger D. Thorne.*



Looking southeast from the Great Valley towards Paoli, four of the five vintage aircraft comprising the event's fly-over can be seen approaching the former Main Line Airport. *Courtesy of Roger D. Thorne.*



At the conclusion of the dedication ceremony, Mr. Daniel Kurkjian, son of famous rotary-wing designer Haig Kurkjian, scans the sky for first sight of the vintage aircraft which would comprise the event's fly-over. Dan, himself a well-known flight instructor, was the last pilot to fly out of the old Main Line Airport in 1976. *Courtesy of Roger D. Thorne.*



The blue and white checkered 1940 Waco YMF-5D biplane, piloted by its owner Steve Durham, passes directly over the Main Line Airport commemorative marker. *Courtesy of Roger D. Thorne.*

During a decade and a half researching the Main Line Airport, I've become acquainted with the deeds and contributions of so many individuals who helped put this field "on the map." With surnames like Ashby, Berry, Caldwell, Conrad, Devaney, Guequierre, Jacob, Jenkins, Kurkjian, Morris, Ray, Schacterle, Stanger, Wilford, Young ... and many others ... they were drawn together by their love of flying, a love of their country, and their seemingly limitless technical abilities.

So, for me, one of the especially rewarding parts of this commemoration was to see so many family members and friends of former Main Line Airport aviators gathered together as we honored this legendary field. At the risk of overlooking others whose presence was valued, I would like to extend my thanks to some of the "notables" with a personal stake who attended, and made special contributions to, this commemoration:

- To the many family members of Joe and Mary Berry of Malvern. I had extensively interviewed Joe Berry in 2006 about his father, veteran Chester County pilot Harvey "Buck" Berry, the MLA's Assistant Manager during the 1930s and the commanding office of CAP Squadron 13 during WWII. Harvey had passed on in 1951, and Joe shared so many details about his dad and the MLA. Joe passed a few years after that interview, and my interaction with the Berry family was suspended. Then weeks before the MLA event, I called Mary and invited her to attend. She eagerly accepted, and with many members of her family, participated in honoring a place so long in the family's lore.
- To local business executive Eric Lorgus, with whom I had begun to correspond, and from whom I had learned about the "second life" of another pioneer Chester County aviator, John Jacob. In my original article on the MLA², I had written that, in 1935, John Jacob terminated his position as General Manager of the MLA, but I never knew why. Eric had read my article on the TEHS website, and then contacted me with the answer. He informed me that John had left aviation to become a prominent builder and real estate developer, responsible for the creation of the North Hills subdivision in West Chester, Pa. In addition to his knowledge of John Jacob, and his material support of the event, Eric helped me connect with and interview John's daughter-in-law Bobbi, and her children Jake and Joanne.
- To Mrs. Barbara Conrad Cauffman of West Chester, older sister of future astronaut Charles "Pete" Conrad, who attended the event with several of her children and grandchildren. While so much of Pete's adult life was conducted in the public eye, his early life in St. David's, including his learning to fly at the Main Line Airport under legendary instructor Nick Morris, has unfortunately been obscured by wishful mythology. Barbara was anxious to clear that fog and set the record straight, and it was such a pleasure to meet her and her family.
- To my friend John Stanger, who in 2003 first introduced me to his dad Fred Stanger. I quickly learned that Fred learned to fly at the MLA in 1940, and was working toward his commercial license when America was attacked and entered WWII. Fred immediately joined, and flew, with the Civil Air Patrol, and then later served as a flight instructor and ferry pilot during the war. Over the four years during which I met and corresponded with Fred until his death in 2007, his attention to small details in his copious memories of the MLA have helped me immeasurably in telling the story. It was so good to have John in attendance as we honored so many men and women like his dad.
- To Robert Wilford from Berwyn, youngest son of noted inventor E. Burke Wilford, who was able to attend the commemoration, and was assuredly gratified to hear presented the many achievements of his father.
- To the Devaney family. Anyone familiar with the Main Line Airport, the name Devaney is elemental. The land upon which the airport would be built had been a farm owned by Wm. Devaney. William's son Charles became the first in Chester County to fly and own an aircraft, and was the president of the organization that owned the field from 1940–52. Decades later, in 2002, when I began my MLA research, Charles' sons William, Bob, and Dick were fundamentally helpful to me, and later as was Charles' daughter Virginia. In preparation for the MLA event, eldest son Bill, who would be unable to attend because of age and distance, corresponded with me regularly. At the event, my friend Bob Devaney, who had passed in 2015, was represented and supported by his wife Dorothy and members of their family. Dick was unable to attend, but Ginny was selected to "officially" read the words upon the marker during the unveiling. She later wrote to me: "My father would have been so pleased ... but also humbled. He never liked the limelight."

2 "A History of the Main Line Airport, Paoli, Pennsylvania" *Tredyffrin Easttown History Club Quarterly* Vol. 40, No. 2 (April 2003).

At the conclusion of the ceremony and fly-over, there were many in the audience anxious to speak with 88-year-old Mr. Jacques Guequierre, one of the few remaining fixed wing pilots from the old Main Line Airport. Mr. Guequierre (R) poses with long-time family friend Michael Morrison, former TEHS president and current board member. Mr. Guequierre learned to fly under veteran instructor “Nick” Morris soon after World War II, and hangared two aircraft at the field over the next two decades. *Courtesy of Michael Morrison.*

- To Tony Morris, distinguished West Chester attorney and younger son of aviator Nicholas Waln Morris. Early in my research I was introduced to Tony, who provided much material on his dad, who had passed in 1991, and was so supportive of our efforts to tangibly commemorate the MLA. I gratefully asked Tony to be one of two to unveil the marker.
- To my friend Dan Kurkjian, one of the sons of helicopter designer Haig Kurkjian, the other “unveiler” and assuredly the only person in attendance to have actually lived at the airport with his family during the 1950s. Over a decade and a half, my friend Dan, a former flight instructor and test pilot who was the last to fly into the old field in 1976, has contributed so much detail and expertise to keep the multi-faceted story of the MLA accurate and on-target.
- To Jacques Guequierre, at age 88 probably the oldest attendee at the MLA event, and the only aviator to have actually flown both fixed and rotary-wing aircraft from the Main Line Airport. Jacques was a contemporary of “Pete” Conrad, also learned to fly under Nick Morris soon after WWII, and purchased a Vultee BT-13 military surplus trainer which he hangared at the field. Two decades later, between 1967–69, Jacques returned to hangar his Bell 47 G2-A1 helicopter there. It was wonderful having Jacques in attendance, and honored, at the event.
- Finally, I wish to thank pilot Dave Nelson, who while not being personally involved in the MLA, immeasurably helped us in celebrating that place. Dave and I have flown together in his vintage 1945 Piper J3 Cub for almost a decade doing aerial photo retrospectives of the Upper Main Line. So when we began considering a vintage aircraft fly-over for this event, I asked him if he would coordinate this effort. He got the word out to other pilots, inviting them to participate, and was the lead pilot for our fly-over that included five planes. We are all very grateful to Dave for arranging this fitting conclusion to the ceremony.

Pilot Dave Nelson (L) takes the rear controls, with photographer Roger Thorne (R) occupying the front seat, as they prepare to take off in the 1945 Piper J3 Cub from Brandywine Airport in West Chester, Pa. for another of their aerial photography flights, October 2015. *Courtesy of John O. Senior.*





Three weeks after the commemoration ceremony for the Main Line Airport of October 5, 2017, pilot David Nelson and Roger Thorne flew directly over the marker, located on the Ricoh property at 70 Valley Stream Parkway, within the Great Valley Corporate Center in Malvern. The marker is visible adjacent to the Parkway, approximately 150' north of Swedesford Road (the red arrows point to the location). *Courtesy of Roger D. Thorne.*

“... perhaps, looking down upon us from a higher plane, those former aviators who called the Main Line Airport home are smiling on these proceedings.”

The conclusion of Roger Thorne’s remarks, Main Line Airport Marker Dedication, October 5, 2017

Some six months after the 2017 Main Line Airport commemoration, and during the first spring Nor’easter of 2018, the MLA memorial marker stands like a silent sentinel. Its consort, the old Linden tree which rises as the only survivor from the aviation days, is shown behind. *Courtesy of Roger D. Thorne.*

