

The Lahaina PBY...Why?

Consolidated PBY/5A

Catalina

c/n 21896

C-FSAT



*Plane plops down
safely in water
off Maui park*

LAHAINA — A twin-engine Beechcraft made an emergency landing in the ocean off Launiupoko State Park yesterday, Maui police said.

The airplane, piloted by William Bernard, 54, was doing practice landings at the Kahului Airport when it lost a wheel, police said. The aircraft is a type that can land on water and the pilot chose the relatively calm waters of Launiupoko to make a landing at about 3 p.m.

Bernard and two passengers were not injured. Bernard was at the plane yesterday evening with a boat to either tow it in or try to make repairs, police said.

The iconic flying boat had flown in Canada for over 40 years before it found its way to Truk Island in Micronesia in the Pacific. It flew on a contract in Truk for a few months, (in late 1984 into 1985) before making a stop in Maui, and its return to Canada. The stop in Maui was its last stop as a flying boat. It arrived with a mechanical problem that would be remedied in do time. It sat on the East Ramp at Kahului Airport (OGG) for a year before anyone returned to make repairs and ferry it home.

I joined Hemmeter Aviation the beginning of 1986 and relocated from Honolulu to Maui to oversee the new acquisition of the Maui Flight Center. I was aware of the PBY being on the ramp but now it was only 100 feet from my new office. With my previous years in seaplanes (U.S.C.G. HU16 AND Antilles Air Boats) I had an interest in this old beast that had been neglected for many months. A few more months went by when one day a couple of guys showed up and started to pay some attention to the PBY. There was no real facility on the field that could support this aircraft. Hemmeter Aviation was the closest and the two individuals that were tasked with getting the bird out of town came to borrow whatever they could from work stands to tools as well as some of my expertise.

There was a young man that worked at Hemmeter Aviation as a mechanic helper in the restoration of older fuel trucks for our operations. He showed an interest in the PBY and on his free time assisted the two individuals in their work on the aircraft. After nearly a week we had a request to fuel the aircraft in preparation for an engine run-up. The next day the PBY was to take it first flight in over a year.

The young employee at Hemmeter Aviation that assisted for the past few days requested time off to go on the test flight. I told him the time off would not be a problem but strongly suggested that he should not go. I felt that this aircraft had not received its proper review to ensure airworthiness as well as a test flight should be limited to required crew only. He was adamant about taking this opportunity to fly on a PBY. He thanked me for my advise and the time off and ran out to the aircraft and jumped on board.

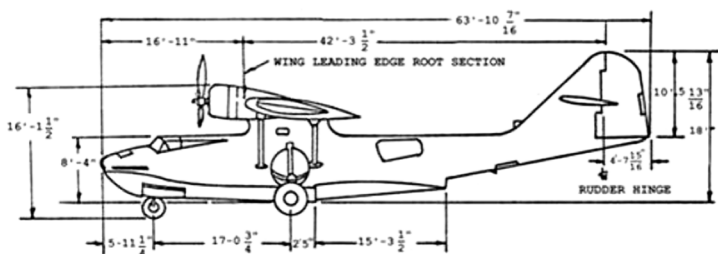
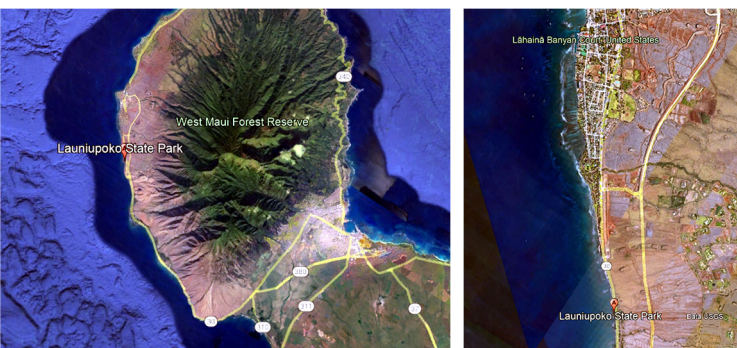
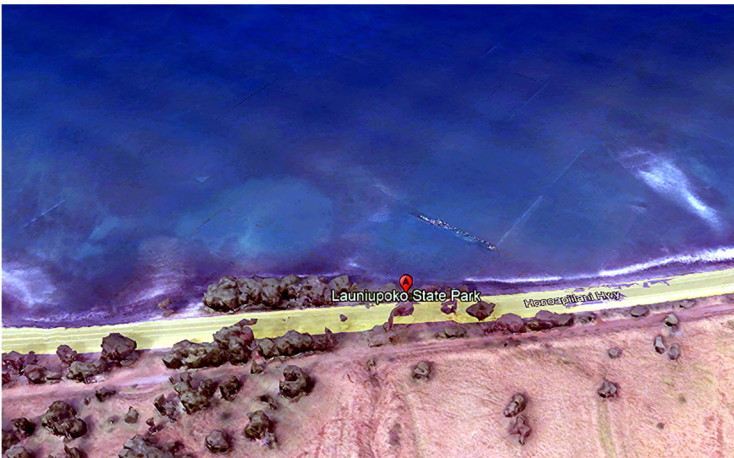
Shortly after, the PBY rolled down runway 2 and was airborne. It was only several minutes before it requested to return to the airport. The test must have received a less than a passing grade.

Shortly after flying over the number 2 at the beginning of the runway, the right main wheel left the aircraft. The tire was nearly four feet in diameter and weighed close to 200 pounds and now a projectile bouncing down the east ramp. On one bounce it went right over a single engine Cessna parked along the perimeter fence. It was then stopped by the Hemmeter Aviation's newly refurbished aircraft boarding stair truck. The main wheel/tire hit it with such force that the whole right side was bent beyond repair.



The PBY of course applied power and kept airborne while deciding what would be next. Well you don't need a wheel to land in the water, so the crew of this amphibian looked for the best landing site. The island of Maui is quite large and choice of landing locations were readily available. This crew was not well versed in island waters but did recognize that the south shores were leeward and provided calmer water. They picked their landing site perpendicular to the shore line just south of Lahaina. The official report was

*The Catalina hit a partially submerged reef after landing at sea near Maui, Hawaii.
The airplane operated on a test flight after having been stored at Maui for over a year.*



Immediately after touching down, water rushed in and poured towards the nose and the airplane quickly sank. The crew left the aircraft and stood on the wing of the aircraft which was about 1 foot under water. The aircraft was sitting on the bottom which put the depth about 13 feet. It wasn't to long before people arrived to assist, A boat came out and picked them up and brought them to shore. Other than being wet, they all were in good condition, except for the embarrassment of loosing an airplane.

Once they arrived on shore, the Maui police brought them to the Lahaina Police Station, were they tried to figure if they broke any laws.

I am back at my office wondering what had happen to the PBY and crew after dropping the wheel and recking my truck. I then got a call from the mechanic helper. He asked if someone could pick him up in Lahaina so he could get back to work. We sent the company van out to fetch him but before he returned to work I wanted to hear his story. That morning he wanted the opportunity to participate

in an exciting adventure with this PBY... I needed to hear more about the day he will never forget.

He shared more about water rushing in the entry hatch upon landing. He stated the guys said they were going for a very quick test flight and return to the airport and didn't close everything up as they normally would and forgot before touching down off Lahaina.

No doubt there is reef just off shore but it should have been easily recognized with the clarity of the water and mid morning sun being off to their left. If they actually landed on

the reef, they would most likely not have faired as well. If they landed on the reef they most likely would not be standing on the wing, 1 foot below the surface. The mechanic helper did not hear any sound of impact with the reef nor did he feel any abrupt contact. Just water rushing in. I question the reef story, but what do I know, I wasn't there.

During the salvage efforts, the aircraft was being lifted out of the water by a crane without a brain. The aircraft broke in two. PBY parts were now available.

I never saw this dynamic duo again or the Pratt & Whitney engine tools I lent them and the mechanic helper had a little more respect for my advise but was happy he had his story.

Tom Anusewicz

The Honolulu Advertiser April 15, 1986 article states "A twin-engine Beechcraft" made an emergency landing. Otherthan twin-engine no Beechcraft was involved.

OPERATING PROCEDURES	
c. BEFORE START	WATER
<u>CAPTAIN</u>	<u>F/O</u>
PASSENGER BRIEFING	COMPLETED
SEATS, BELTS, PEDALS	ADJUSTED
DOORS, HATCHES & EXITS	CLOSED
MAPS & LOG BOOK	CHECKED
EXTERNAL CHECKS	COMPLETED
LOCKS, CHOCKS, LADDER & PINS	STOWED
BLISTER, SIDE & TOP EXITS	CLOSED
FUEL, OIL, HYD LEVELS	CHECKED
FUEL SELECTORS	RT ON RT - LT ON LT
COWL FLAPS	SET
THROTTLES	SET
PROPS	FULL FINE
MIXTURE	ICO
CARBURETOR HEAT	COLD
BATTERY MASTER	ON
BEACON	ON
RUDDER	UNLOCKED
GEAR	UP
APU	ON & START
IGNITION MASTER	ON

Status: - (No safety board investigation)
Date: Monday 14 April 1986



Type: [Boeing-Canada PB2B-1 Canso A \(PBY-5A\)](#)
Operator: [Can-Air Services](#)
Registration: C-FSAT
MSN: 21986
First flight: 1943
Crew: Fatalities: 0 / Occupants:
Passengers: Fatalities: 0 / Occupants:
Total: Fatalities: 0 / Occupants:
Aircraft damage: Damaged beyond repair
Location: Maui, HI  [United States of America](#)
Phase: Landing (LDG)
Nature: Test
Departure airport: ?
Destination airport: ?
Narrative:

The Catalina hit a partially submerged reef after landing at sea near Maui, Hawaii.
The airplane operated on a test flight after having been stored at Maui for over a year.

21986	PBY-5A	9757		RCAF BOC 21.1.43: SOC	18.11.46
	Canso A		CF-SAT	Saskatchewan Government Airways SASK	3.48/54
				Central Northern Airlines	.54/55
				Transair Ltd, Winnipeg MAN	56/66
				Northland Airlines, Winnipeg MAN	.67/68
				William P. Bernard, Edmonton ALTA	69/73
			C-FSAT	Ray Bernard/ Can-Air Services, Edmonton ALTA	76/86
				forced landing wheels-up on snow covered ground,	
				ALTA: flown out with wheels still retracted	c77
				(contract flying at Truk, Micronesia, Pacific 12.84/85,	
				went u/s at Maui HI .85 during return to Canada)	
				badly damaged, struck a reef during water landing,	
				during test flights at Maui HI	14.4.86

A related PBY sinking / recovery <https://youtu.be/WOnYiEzK1qs>