Motorless flights

Some 70 years ago, Brazil discovered the pleasure of piloting gliders and planted the seeds at the base of the Brazilian aeronautics industry

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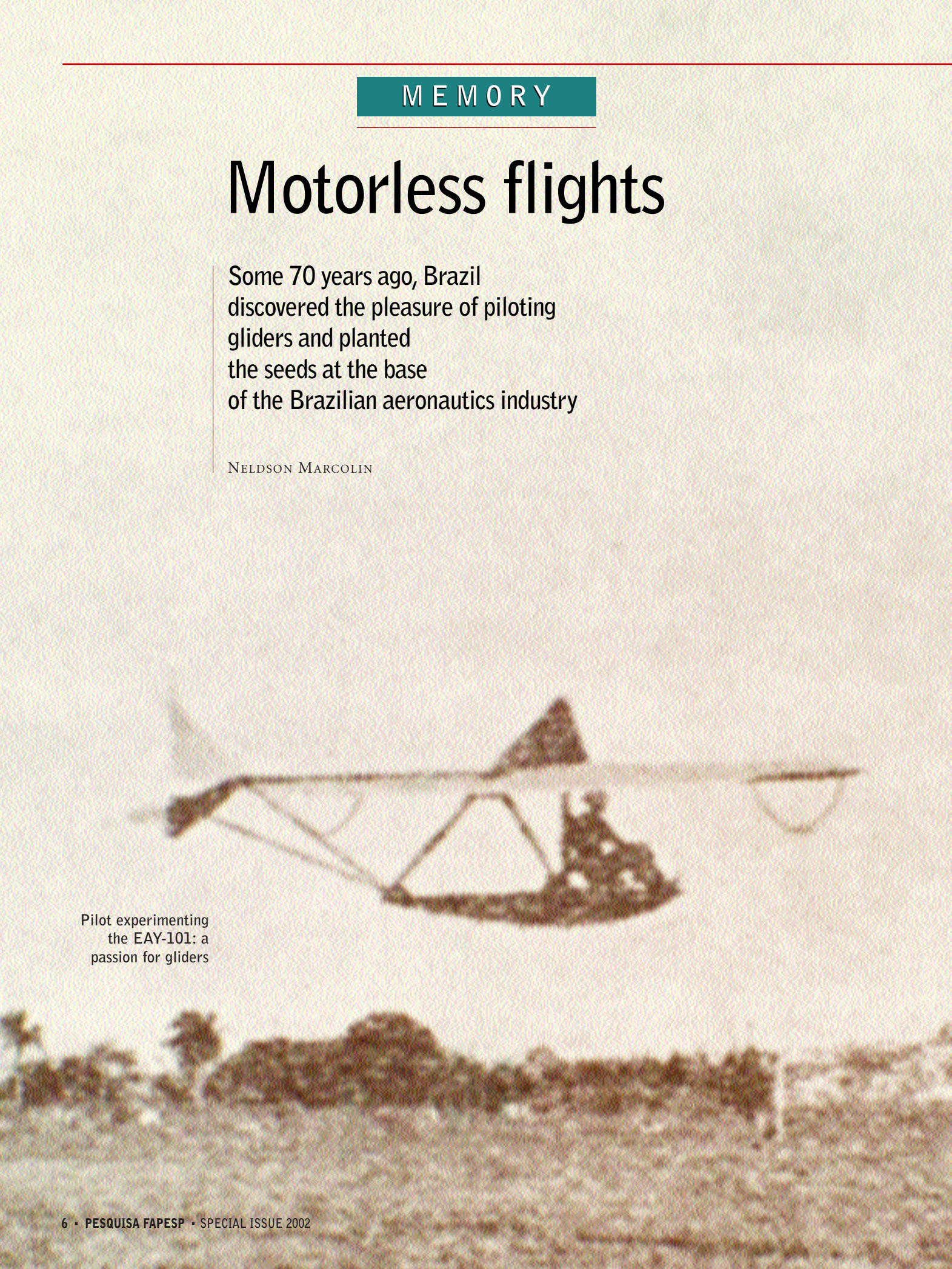
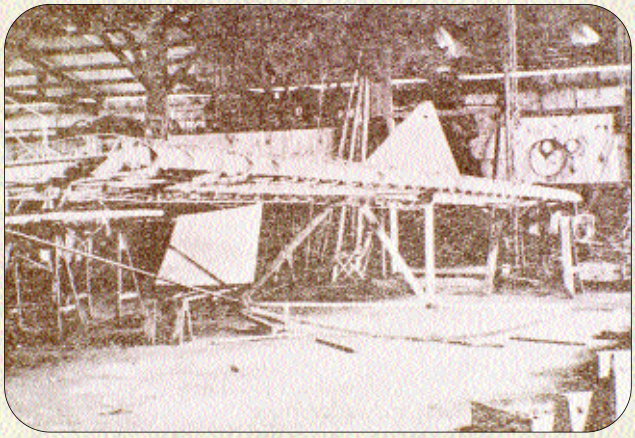
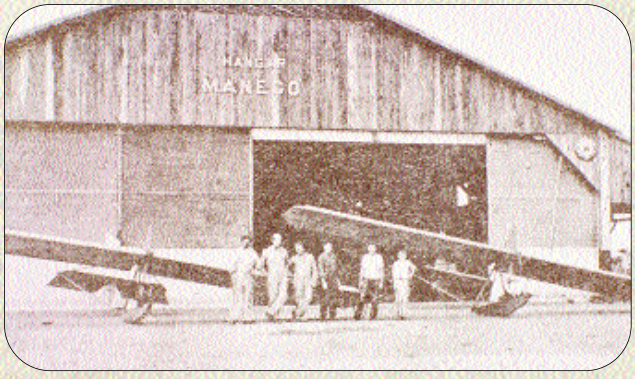


Pilot experimenting the EAY-101: a passion for gliders



IMAGENS CENTRO HISTÓRICO MACKENZIE



Pilot ready to fly (*above on the left*), workshop of the first glider (*above, on the right*) and the models EAY-101 and 102

Early in the 30s of the last century, the technology of flight was in full development, and new findings continually improved aircraft construction. In Brazil, however, notwithstanding the heritage established by Alberto Santos-Dumont, who had invented the airplane in 1906, no university course deal with aeronauties. The course ended up breaking up and not a single group graduated. There was a lack of rules to give it a backbone, which wound up making the course out of the norms of the time. Behind this attempt to attend to the needs of aviation in the country was a group of engineers and students, founders of the Mackenzie Gliding Club of 1931. Presided over by the Frenchman George Corbisier, a graduate from the São Paulo academia, and with Henrique Santos-Dumont, the brother of Alberto, on the Board of Directors, this group of friends built one of the first Brazilian gliders, according to the registry of the *Revista de Engenharia Mackenzie* (*Mackenzie Engineering Magazine*, June of 1934). Although it was completed, there is no photographic record of flight. Only its construction in a large shed is recorded. In 1932, along with attempt to set up the aeronautics course, the group arranged the first "gliders celebration" in São Paulo, at the airfield Campo de Marte – the airplane was the EAY-101. This short fever for sailplanes, as motorless flight is called, led the Technology Research Institute (IPT) to receive, during 1934, orders from the Polytechnic Gliders Club, created by final year students of civil engineering at the Polytechnic school. The Wood Departament was commissioned to reform and manufacture the wooden parts of the German gliders in use in Brazil. In time, the students went on to build their gliders at the IPT.

The Wood Departament evolved into research of new materials that could substitute the original wood and shortly afterwards created the Aeronautical Section, which began to work on the prototype of the first motorized airplane. In 1938, the IPT-0, also called the Bichinho (Little Pet), flew for the first time, equipped with an American motor. It was the first of a series of airplanes projected and constructed at the Institute. The initiatives of Mackenzie and of the IPT were important driving forces for one of the greatest technological conquests that has been achieved in Brazil: the creation and posterior consolidation of the national aeronautics industry.