



Fall  
2013

# NSM NEWS

*The National Soaring Museum preserves and presents the heritage of motorless flight, and promotes through education, a greater knowledge of soaring, aeronautics, and related physical sciences for everyone.*

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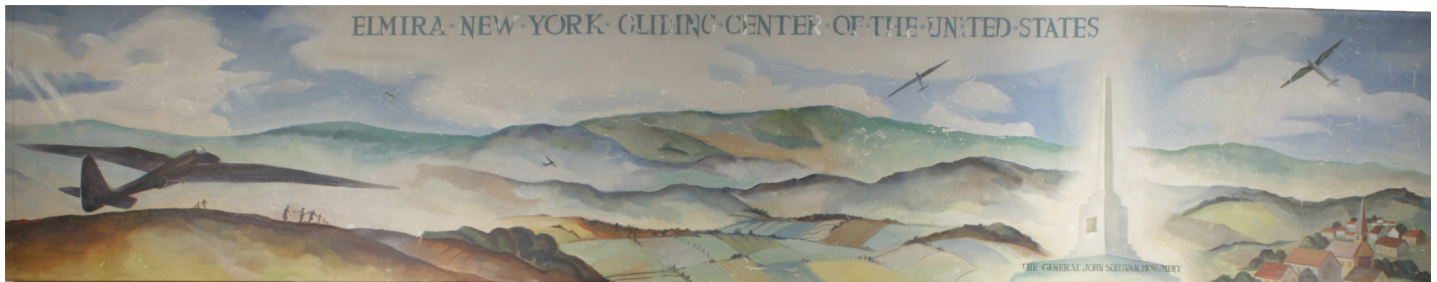
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*Floyd Sweet standing next to "Elmira", a Rhonbussard c. 1938.*

**"Always interesting! I'll be back!" - Herman  
from Clarks Summit, PA**

# Effort to Restore “Mystery Mural” Advances



The National Soaring Museum has been granted nearly \$4,600 to advance its effort to restore an 80-square-foot oil painting that has hung for decades in the museum’s community room.

The Greater Hudson Heritage Network granted the funds to the museum after NSM, cooperating with local art conservator Klara Zold, applied for support last spring. NSM is seeking additional funds to pay for conserving and restoring the painting during the next 12 months. We intend ultimately to reframe the artwork and hang it in the main balcony overlooking the Johnson Gallery.

Evidence suggests the mural (the term is loosely correct because of its size) was created in the mid-1930s. It depicts a 1930s-era glider, most likely a Mini-moa, being bungee launched from a hill while other sailplanes soar above. Experts in art history compare it to the kind of work done by artists employed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the decade before the Second World War. At the top of the painting are the words “Elmira N.Y. Gliding Center of the United States” in stylized, five-inch tall lettering. In the right center of the picture is a rendering of “Sullivan’s Monument,” a tall stone obelisk erected in memory of John Sullivan, an American general who led Patriot troops in successful battles against the Native Americans during the Revolution. There is some evidence that this part of the picture was repainted at a later date because the monument as shown replaced an earlier, smaller monument. At far right a small town is depicted. In the lower right corner are the names “Welty” and “DiZinno” in the place where one would expect the artist or artists to have signed the work. No one has any idea who either of these people were or whether there were indeed two people or perhaps just one whose name was “Welty DiZinno.” Our inability to identify the painter is just one of the mysteries surrounding the “mural”. Equally clouded is the history of

why it was done, where it hung, and how it came to be in the museum. One tantalizing and regrettable item of fact is that the mural was one of two, the second of which is presumed lost. The second mural, in fact, clearly depicts gliding at Harris Hill, whereas the first cannot be so surely identified. It might show gliding in the early 1930s at other sites surrounding Elmira. One could argue that it more likely shows gliding at South Mountain, which overlooked Elmira from the south and which is about half way between Harris Hill and Sullivan’s Monument. In any event, there is a question about who commissioned the paintings. Throughout the 1930s, the Elmira Association of Commerce strongly encouraged and participated in the National soaring contests here, going so far as to offer cash prizes and even to buy a Rhonbussard of its own to fly (appropriately named, “Elmira”). A booklet entitled “Public Art in Elmira, NY” and probably published in either 1941 or 1942 shows the “mystery mural” as being on display in the Association of Commerce offices in downtown Elmira. (...story continued on page 4)



Detail from the “Mystery Mural”

# Fall Education Wrap-Up

Fall may be at an end, but the National Soaring Museum's education programs are in full swing, with new Education Services Coordinator Kaye Norton at the helm.

The Overnight Soaring Encampments remain a popular draw to the museum, especially for scouting groups. This November, every available weekend was booked, and dates for winter and spring 2014 are already being reserved. Scout groups make up the majority of the campers, and Boy Scouts can use the overnight encampment as a chance to earn their aviation, meteorology, or astronomy merit badges, as well as belt loops for Cub Scouts.

This November, the NSM hosted its first Merit Badge Afternoon. In three hours, nine Boy Scouts earned their aviation merit badges through hands-on activities, flying in our flight simulators, and taking a tour of the museum.

Even though the snow is just starting to fall, we're already looking ahead to both new and returning educational programs. On May 3, the National Soaring Museum will host the Girls Soar with Science Fair. During the evening, Girl Scouts from a number of local schools will showcase their science fair projects, and community organizations will have hands-on STEM demonstrations for the girls to try, and the night will be capped off by a sleepover at the museum.

The Eileen Collins Aerospace Camp is slated to begin July 7 - July 11 for boys and July 14- July 18 for girls. ■



*A group of Cub Scouts brave the cold on a tour of the Harris Hill Soaring Corporation's glider hangar.*

*(Mystery Mural, continued from page 2)*

But where did it go from there? Some local people, including well-known pilot John “Corky” Gill remembers it hanging in the Mark Twain hotel. For years, this six-story red brick downtown hotel functioned as the social center for soaring events, so it might seem logical that the mural would be displayed there. However, it was sold in the 1980s to become apartments. At about that time, the mural somehow migrated to the early National Soaring Museum. No one can quite recall how. It is just one reason to regret the passing of Paul Schweizer, who probably could easily have told the story.

There is one other tantalizing item related to the mural and its creator. Eudora Welty, the Mississippi-born author who won both the Pulitzer Prize and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, was an artist and photographer before she became an author. She is known to have painted at least one mural (an actual mural in that the colors were applied to a solid wall, not canvas.) She was employed by the WPA in the mid 1930s, living in New York City. There appears to be some evidence that she traveled in this vicinity about that time.

To reiterate an earlier point, the work to restore this painting will take months, and NSM could certainly use additional financial support. It is our goal to document the restoration activity both digitally and, eventually, in the form of a booklet describing how it was done. It is a perfect opportunity for those who are interested in the art of soaring to contribute to the effort and to be immortalized along with the painting for as long as the history of soaring continues to be celebrated. ■



## Year-End Fund Raising Appeal Succeeding

As we go to press, the National Soaring Museum’s annual fundraising appeal has raised over \$7,500 from nearly 60 donors, with more coming in regularly. The number of donors has reached nine percent of the mailing--a strong response. It is one of the most successful of our recent fundraisers in terms of the amount donated. It comes at a time when the Museum is completing its budget year and when support is most valuable.

Donors gave a variety of amounts, with several giving more than \$100 and two local donors giving \$1000 each. The number of donors outside the Elmira area outpaced the number of local donors by two-to-one. Several Californians sent gifts, and donors from the Midwest were well represented. A notable number of this year’s donors had not donated in recent years.

In our mailing, we encouraged readers to choose what they thought the Museum’s areas of emphasis should be in 2014. Among the 14 choices offered in the letter, “increase visitation to the Museum by partnering with other museums” and “organize more soaring related activities” gained the most votes. Suggestions to improve the Museum’s collection of sailplanes and memorabilia and to allow online sales of items from our gift shop both attracted strong support. Voters favored moving the quarterly newsletter to a digital format as well as increasing the Museum’s visibility at soaring events.

Earlier this year the Museum’s development office re-initiated the “Cayley Society” to solicit unrestricted financial gifts of \$50,000 and up and to recognize donors in special ways. As this newsletter was being prepared we received the first response to the new Society and began discussions with the donating family. ■

<<< Detail from the “Mystery Mural

# From the Archives: A Tornado and Papers

A box of national aviation treasures was lovingly shipped from Rochester, NY to the National Soaring Museum by Jean Whitney in memory of her late husband, Hugh. He was Paul Schweizer's crew chief at the 1952 World Championships in Spain, plus the US Championships in England; and the US team manager for the 1963 World Championships in Argentina.

Hugh's collection of aviation books and papers were from an earlier era that used government acronyms like the CAA--the Civil Aeronautics Administration. (The Federal Aviation Administration [FAA] would emerge later, in 1959.)

When Whitney's box was opened this fall, the original "SSA-Glider Census and Data Form Calender Year 1957" documents found a new home. The papers were essentially arranged by the CAA registration number ('N' number) and included some international registrations (e.g., England). The single-sided survey asked for details about owners, condition, and status of the ship, number of airplane tows in 1957, flights from auto/winch tows in 1957, number of different pilots who flew the glider in 1957, and more.

Some survey respondents reported extra tidbits, like this owner of a Schweizer 1-26 in Coral Gables, FL: he handwrote "destroyed by tornado in April 1956". The owner had put a question mark next to the line for "Not repairable, scrapped, or sell for parts"!

An Elmira, NY owner of a Schweizer 1-26A handwrote, "First kit to be built out of Schweizer's plant".

The Illinois owner of a Laister-Kauffmann LK-10A-Modified typed, "No record of previous owners after glider's release from the Army".

For decades, NSM and the soaring community have gratefully acknowledged Hugh's contributions to aviation. NSM has awarded the Hugh Whitney Memorial Scholarship Award since 1978. It was established by Hugh's childhood friend, Doug Bruce.

In other NSM Archive/Collection news, we are obtaining copies of official documents related to our various government filings.

With the listing of the Warren E. Eaton Motor-

Places the National Park Services (NPS) recently added a new one-page summary on the web:  
[www.cr.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/13000778.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/13000778.htm)

This website has a link to the 51-page Eaton registration at: [www.nps.gov/history/nr/feature/places/pdfs/13000778.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/feature/places/pdfs/13000778.pdf)

The initial Eaton Historic Structure Report that was submitted to the NY State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is even more detailed and includes many historic photos. It is about 250 pages long.

For each museum, with the acceptance of one-of-a-kind donations, like the 1957 US Glider Census, and the excitement that a successful National Register nomination generates, comes an array of responsibilities. (...continued on page 6)

## New Staff at the NSM



Last August, the National Soaring Museum welcomed Kaye Norton as its new Education Services Coordinator. Kaye graduated from Alfred University in 2011 with her B.A. in Psychology, with a focus on child development. She is working on expanding the NSM's current educational programs, as well as creating new ones, and is thrilled to be a part of the National Soaring Museum! ■

(From the Archives, continued from page 5)

In New York State, museum charters are managed by the NYS Board of Regents. A Collection Management Policy is required of every NY educational corporation that meets certain criteria (e.g., NSM). In addition, when a NY museum changes its Collection Policies or there are other key changes, like increasing the number of board members, the museum must notify the State and send copies to Albany, NY. For details, see:

[www.nysm.nysed.gov/services/charter/museum.html](http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/services/charter/museum.html)

The NSM board has received a request to update our documents that have an impact on NSM's Archives/Collections. ■

## Blade's Good Grades

The National Soaring Museum has entered an exciting new partnership with the Elmira Jackals with the Blade's Good Grades Program. Fifth grade students from Beecher, Coburn, Diven and Riverside Elementary will be acknowledged for their hard work in the classroom at a Jackals games in January.

The NSM will be rewarding these students with free admission to the museum, and a discount in the Windrider Gift Shop. ■



## Looking for unique holiday gifts this year?

Whether you're looking for a souvenir of your visit or the perfect gift for a soaring enthusiast, the Windrider Gift Shop is a great place to start your holiday shopping!

<<< National Soaring Museum etched glass ornament, \$14.99

## Can't make it up to see us?

No problem! Shipping and handling is only \$6 on all domestic orders, or consider giving a museum membership as a gift!

Pewter sailplane in the cloud ornament, \$9.99 >>>



# Save the Date!

## Upcoming Events at the National Soaring Museum

Cookie Time with Mrs. Claus	December 8
A Soaring Taste of Wine and Chocolate	February 22
Aperture Ace-ettes Photography Show	March 1 - 29
Spring Concert	March 29
Girls Soar with Science - Science Fair	May 3
Annual Soaring History Symposium	May 9 - 10
Schweizer Homecoming	June 26 - 28
Eileen Collins Aerospace Camp	July 7 - 11
	July 14 - 18

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Catch up with the National Soaring Museum on Facebook or Twitter! We'll keep you up on all the latest news and events that are happening right here at the Museum. You'll love all the great photos, posts, and comments from soaring enthusiasts around the world! Don't have a Twitter or Facebook account yet? What are you waiting for? Stay connected and join the conversation! Signing up is quick, easy, and best of all, FREE!

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\_\_\_\_ Diamond (\$1,000-\$2,499) \_\_\_\_ Major Contributor (\$2,500 and up)

*\*All contributions over and above basic level memberships are tax deductible and will be acknowledged\**

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**Thank You For Your Support!**

