

NSM NEWS

SPRING-SUMMER
2020

Official Newsletter of the National Soaring Museum

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From the Director - Traff Doherty

It doesn't seem that long ago, but so much has happened since we went out to Little Rock for the SSA Convention in the latter part of February. I wanted to take a sizable table top display to the convention that would not have lent itself to airline travel, so we drove. It's not a bad car trip; 1400 miles – a pleasant two-day drive – in good weather. And I am very pleased to say that we had exactly that going out, during the event, and on the trip home. We were *very* fortunate! It was a great convention and we met a number of very nice people who visited us at our booth. At first I thought it was because of my personal magnetic charm – until I realized that they were really showing up to have some of Steve Leonard's excellent fudge that he left with us to share. And share it, we did! I also saw a number of lovely sailplanes – most of them having engines. My personal favorite (and one that I can actually relate to) was a beautiful *K&L Soaring*-restored 1-26D that sat right in front of our booth (Three cheers for the 1-26 Association, by the way!).



Then we came home to COVID-19 and things began screeching to a halt. We all watched with horror the goings on in NYC and were reminded (again) of how fortunate we – all of us – are to have not been trapped in similar circumstances. Our Governor, Andrew Cuomo, took a hard line and effectively shut the whole state down in March (we closed to the public on the 23rd) and thereby managed to minimize the effect of the virus in the upstate areas. By June 26th, when we were allowed to reopen, it was plain to see that much of New York State, including Chemung County, had essentially been spared. Our attendance and gift shop revenues for July and August were actually better than expected. People, who had been cooped up for so long were anxious to get out of their houses and do (new) things - and that worked in our favor. We have, of course, been observing the required COVID safety protocols and the visiting public has been very cooperative. Two additional factors have helped us through this period; we applied for and received a PPP loan, which covered our payroll and, thanks to additional generous support from our members, we are in reasonably good financial shape, overall. Where we all go from here, time will tell.

After cancelling the original May 1st U. S. Soaring Hall of Fame installation for Roy McMaster, we then planned to host the banquet on October 10th. But a local COVID-19 flare-up resulted in us having to cancel Roy's banquet again, shortly after sending out the invitations. It seems that a local group of individuals held their own little *spreader event* – and it worked! Dozens became sick with COVID-19, and three have already died! Yes, Chemung County, which had such an excellent record, took a hit! Roy *will* receive his Hall of Fame plaque – in a private ceremony. We hope to have some photos for our next newsletter and to send along to the SSA.

Folks, ALL OF YOU, please take this pandemic seriously! Wear your masks when out and about. I've already lost one old friend to this thing – I don't want to lose any more.



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New Book on Warren Eaton by Edward Erickson & Elise Eaton

Edward (Ed) Erickson, author and military historian, and Elise Eaton, granddaughter of Warren Eaton, are coauthors and neighbors in Norwich, NY (Warren Eaton's hometown).

The proposed title is *Warren E. Eaton and the Emergence of Soaring in America*. The book will be composed of about 300 pages, 30 photographs, 3-4 maps, and have a full bibliography.

The SUNY Press in Albany, NY is interested in publishing the book. Ed and Elise expect to submit a completed manuscript in mid-to-late 2021 and secure a contract. They hope to see it published about a year after submission.

They have visited the NSM a number of times during the summer conducting research in the museum's archives.

The book will highlight Warren Eaton's service in World War I as a fighter pilot and recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross, his successful effort to open the Norwich Airport, setting soaring records in the early 1930s, leading the SSA, and working to develop Harris Hill. Using newly-opened Eaton family papers in Norwich, Elise and Ed will also cover Warren and his wife, Genevieve's trip to Glendale, CA to acquire the Senior Albatross named the *Falcon* from Hawley Bowlus, their trip to the Wasserkuppe, an in-depth look at Warren's trip to Miami, and his fatal last flight. Of note, the book will conclude with a chapter on Genevieve's efforts to support the SSA and encourage soaring in America.

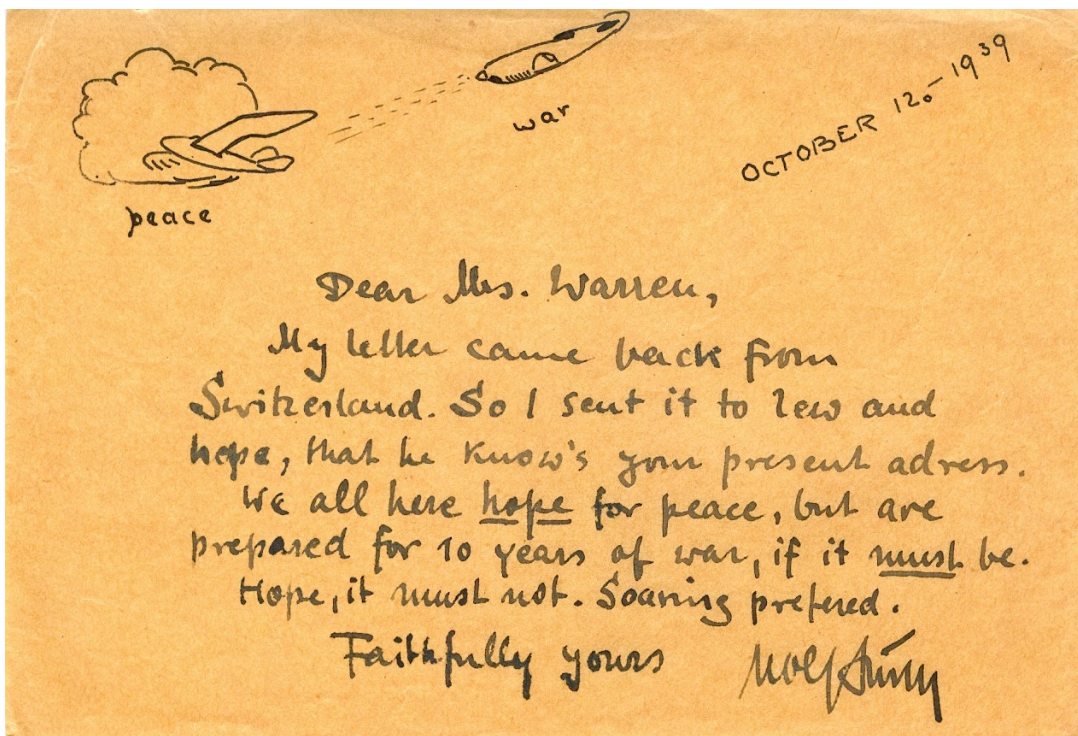
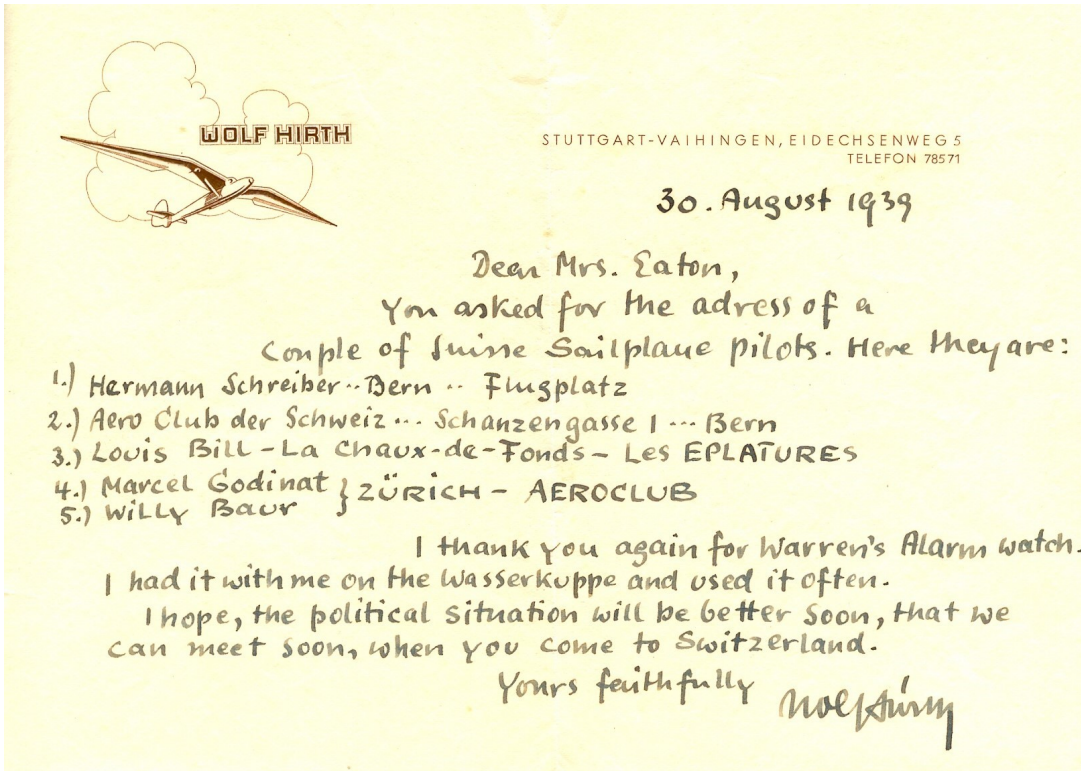
Lots of good reading to look forward to! Ed and Elise invite anyone with memories or stories about Warren to share them for possible inclusion in the book.



Eaton receiving mail for the first glider mail delivery during a glider contest. His friend, Jack O'Meara (U.S. HoF, 1956) at right. *Loomis photo 1933 #1 NSM*

Notes from Wolf Hirth - Jean Doherty

As I helped Ed Erickson and Elise Eaton gather material from Warren Eaton's boxes of archival material, the notes below from Wolf Hirth to Mrs. Eaton after Warren's death were particularly interesting to me. In the first note, he hopes the political situation "will be better soon". In the second note, he is bracing himself for many years of unwelcome conflict, closing with the words: "Soaring preferred".



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We welcome new Trustee,
Richard Welles,
and returning Trustee,
Jan van den Blink



What Role Soaring Played in my Life

by Frauke Elber



Frauke in a Delphin in 1962. She never actually flew this sailplane, but was modeling it for a photo shoot. Only two of this model were ever built.

Looking back on over 50 years in soaring, flying actively for 46 years, I am often asked if this was just an unusual hobby. Doing a lot of soul searching, I must say "NO". First of all, I did not get into soaring out of enthusiasm or the urge to do something unusual, something to prove a point.

It all began in the mid 50s when Hanna Reitsch's book "Fliegen mein Leben" (Flying my Life) was first published. I was fascinated by that book, but at the time, the chance to even get close to a glider or an airplane was zero. There were more important things in post-war Germany that I needed to take care of.

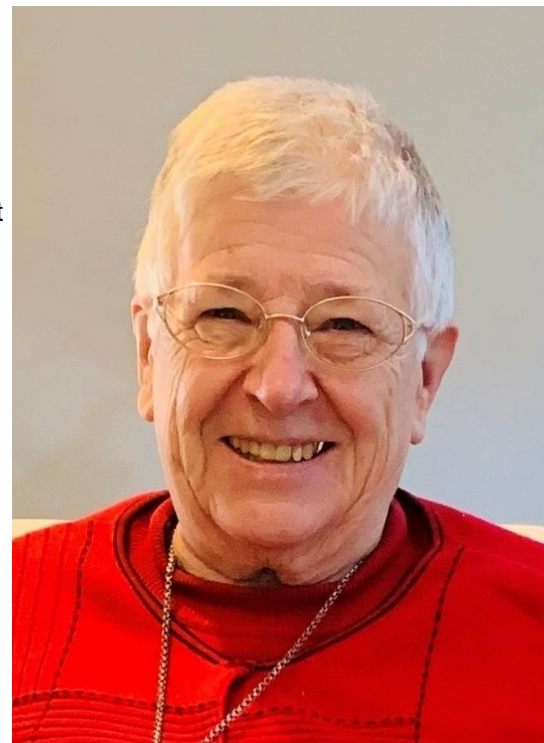
Then in 1961 a life-changing event happened. Freshly out of college, I got a job with the German equivalent of NASA. I was in the Material Division, still far removed from getting close to an airplane. Then I learned that our Flight Research Division had a double seated glider as a research vehicle, which on weekends was available for fun flying. It took all my courage to ask the engineer in charge if I could come out one day and watch the glider fly. The answer was, "Yes, but you are not going to sit on the ground. You are going to fly". I had no idea that this would influence the rest of my life enormously.

When I started that first job, I was an insecure, timid 21-year-old. All my bosses were demi-gods in my view. I had no idea what I could do or where my life would lead me.

That first flight in a glider was a "white-knuckle" affair. I was scared to death. It didn't help that my first instructor, one of our test pilots, had a reputation for "flying any way but straight". My training progressed slowly during the summer of 1962. I took part in a three-week intensive training soaring camp. At the end of the camp my now 2nd instructor deemed me ready for solo. I didn't feel ready but he coaxed me into soloing. Once the glider started moving and I realized the instructor was not in the back seat, I pretended he was and voiced all the commands I usually got from the back seat so loudly, that when I came in for landing they could hear me shouting on the ground.

This day turned into a groundbreaking, liberating day. I suddenly realized I could do things I had never dreamed of doing. I could overcome my fears, I could stand my ground. This sudden boost in self-confidence reflected at my work. I wasn't scared of all the new things that came my way or the people who threw the ball at me. I made my voice heard and stood firm on the ground.

By the time I moved to the US in 1970, I was married and had a baby. I left the work force, never to be gainfully employed again. My husband became a glider pilot and years later, my son, too. I never achieved great things in soaring, but I got deeply involved with women soaring. I was first in line when the Women Soaring Pilot Association was formed - first as a loosely-knit band of equal-minded women, then later as an official organization. With my European roots and connections, I was able to turn this national organization into an international one. I promoted the sport wherever I found the opportunity. And although I was just a weekend flyer, never venturing far from my home gliderport, soaring remained an important part of my life. So much so that after a kidney cancer operation, my first question to the surgeon was: "Can I continue to fly?" I flew actively for 46 years. It wasn't the cancer that finally grounded me. It was arthritis. I couldn't get out of the cockpit anymore! I am still very actively involved in soaring but concentrate mainly on promoting it, especially amongst women.



In Memoriam

Virginia "Ginny" Mayer Schweizer 1922-2020 U. S. Soaring Hall of Fame 1971

Ginny Schweizer passed away peacefully on June 4, 2020 at the Chemung County Nursing Facility, where she had resided during the past 8 months. For the previous 14 years, she lived at Appleridge Senior Living in Horseheads, NY, and prior to that was a resident of Big Flats, NY. At the time of her death, Ginny was 11 days shy of her 98th birthday. Born in Hicksville, Long Island, NY, she was the daughter of Peter and Mary Mayer. In December 1967, Ginny married Paul A. Schweizer, who was the love of her life for over 36 years until his death in 2004.



As a teenager growing up on Long Island, Ginny became passionately interested in aviation, including motorless flight. She pursued this passion throughout the rest of her life, and in the process, became a pioneering sailplane pilot and promoter of soaring and women in aviation. Following WWII, during which she worked for military aircraft manufacturers on Long Island, she became deeply involved in the sport of soaring. She became an FAA licensed sailplane flight instructor and until the mid-1960s, managed commercial sailplane flight training schools in New York, Texas, Florida and Minnesota. After her marriage to Paul A. Schweizer, they became an inseparable team, traveling the nation and the world, promoting the sport of soaring.

Her accomplishments as a sailplane pilot are numerous and significant. They include: competing in three U. S. National championships, winning the Women's National championship in 1947, being the first American woman to win the "Silver C" soaring award and setting U. S. Women's Soaring records for altitude gained, absolute altitude achieved, and two records for distance flown. In recognition of her many accomplishments, Ginny was inducted into the United States Soaring Hall of Fame in 1971, and is the namesake for the U. S. Women's Pilots Association "Virginia M. Schweizer Competition Trophy".

She was the 1996 recipient of the National Aeronautic Association's Katherine Wright Memorial Award.

Ginny also proudly supported and participated in numerous organizations, including the First Presbyterian Church of Big Flats, NY, the Soaring Society of America, the Harris Hill Soaring Corporation and the National Soaring Museum.

Ginny will long be remembered for her enthusiasm, optimism and ever-present smile.

Individuals who wish to remember Ginny with a memorial gift are asked to consider a donation to either the First Presbyterian Church of Big Flats, or the National Soaring Museum.

A memorial service to honor Ginny's long and productive life will be scheduled in the future at a date and time to be announced.

In addition to her parents and husband, she was predeceased by her sister, Mary Mayer Keena, brothers Peter, Harold, and William Mayer, nieces, Maureen Keena Nicholson, Susan Schweizer Evans and Sally Schweizer Lese. Among her survivors are numerous nieces and nephews, including Karen Keena Cuozzo, Kerry Pataki, Elizabeth Pataki Hubbard, Holly Pataki Bettin, Margit Pataki Raman, Les Schweizer, Julie Schweizer Shepherd, Deirdre Martinez O'Mahony, Paul Martinez, Barbara Martinez Henning, Stuart Schweizer, Paul H. Schweizer, John Schweizer and Gayle Schweizer.

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In Memoriam

Bill Holbrook 1921-2020 U.S. Soaring Hall of Fame 1973

William Covington Holbrook, Jr. was born in Akron, Ohio on August 23, 1921. He died on June 8, 2020 in the North Carolina Veterans Home in Fayetteville, North Carolina at the age of 98.

As a member of the U.S. Army Air Corps, Bill flew air sea rescue missions in the South Pacific during World War II. After the war, he worked as a corporate pilot for Goodyear and its subsidiary Kelly Springfield. Bill was passionate about flying, especially flying sailplanes. He set a world record for soaring in 1972 with a non-stop round trip flight from State College, PA to southwestern Virginia, a distance of over 783 miles. In 1974, he won a cross-country sailplane race competing with six other pilots flying from Los Angeles, CA to Washington, DC. Bill was a Presbyterian and served as a church elder in Cumberland, MD and Tucson, AZ. This year marked Bill's 75th anniversary as a Master Mason.

Bill loved his family as much as he loved flying. He married Sophie Relich, high school sweetheart in 1942. She passed away in 2014, a couple of months after their 72nd wedding anniversary. Together, they raised four daughters, Karen Holbrook (Richard Trask), Billie Holbrook, Deborah McCullough (Ed), and Lisa Lofthouse (Dean). Bill loved children, especially little ones and was an important figure in the lives of his six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. He was the patriarch of a large extended family. Many family members recall their first airplane or glider ride at the Cumberland Airport.



Bill loved soaring competition so much that he wanted to share it with others. In 1969 he joined with Ed Byars to develop and present the very popular and successful series on Competition Soaring and CrossCountry Soaring. These seminars were presented at SSA Conventions and elsewhere. They were published in book form and also as audio tapes. To quote Bill – “We fly a flag when we do certain things, and it says, 'Dedicated to making good pilots better.'” He flew in and won the Smirnoff Derby in 1974 – a coast to coast competition from west to east consisting of a series of goal flights and sponsored by Heublein. He also flew all three major classes of national competition – with his best placing in Standard class at Chester, SC in 1973 where he was tenth in a field of 56.



Bill in his Schweizer 1-35 over south Cumberland, flying toward the Kelly Springfield plant

He volunteered for the military in the early days of WW II, applied for and was accepted into the Aviation Cadet Program. Perhaps a sign of the future, his basic training was at the Army Airfield in Marfa, TX. He qualified in Air Sea Rescue Training flying a PB5Y-5A and served in an Emergency Rescue Squadron in the Pacific Theater until the end of the war. His squadron rescued over seven hundred men during their first year overseas. When he returned from the war, Bill became a corporate pilot first for Goodyear in Akron and then to his long time home in Cumberland, MD as chief pilot for Kelly Springfield Tire Company. It was there that he took up flying sailplanes in the late 1950s. In May of 1972 he set a world goal and return record of 1,260.44 km (783.2 mi.) flying his Glasflügel H-301 from Lock Haven, PA to Hansonville, VA and return.

Bill Holbrook's badges are Silver #345 earned in 1959, Gold #197 earned in 1964 and Diamond # 251 (Intl #1235) completed in 1973. He made his 1000K Diploma #7 (Intl #10) in 1973. His Smirnoff Derby win was against strong competition including three national champions and five world record achievers – Danny Pierson, Hannes Linke, Ken and Ross Briegleb, Karl Striedieck and Dick Schreder. Bill Holbrook was awarded the SSA Exceptional Achievement Award in 1973 for his world record flight. He published several articles in Soaring magazine mostly about his goal of interesting fellow pilots in safe and fun competition and cross-country soaring through the Symposia he developed and presented with Ed Byars. In addition to the Proceedings of the Symposia, they published the book Soaring Cross Country. The book and especially the Symposia were credited with not only improving both the techniques of competition and cross country soaring, but also with the improved safety protocols. Bill and Ed each received an SSA Exceptional Service award in 1974.

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Sponsor A Glider 2020

By sponsoring a glider for the annual donation of \$500, the National Soaring Museum will designate the glider of your choice as being sponsored by you for 2020 and will display near the glider a photo (if desired) of the sponsor and a brief biography. At the sponsor's option, the biography may include a reference to the particular glider and its importance to the sponsor.

A list of gliders currently in our collection can be found on our website. The Zanonina, Baby Albatross, Schweizer 1-26, Schweizer 1-35, Orlik, Schweizer 1-7, Pratt Read LNE-1 and the Gross Sky Ghost were all under sponsorship for 2019. Please call the museum 607-734-3128 with any questions

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