

GRENVILLE L. SEIBELS II (1998) (~1911-1998)



Gren Seibels (also known as Tango-Tango) was an icon of soaring. He was a man who hated the ordinary, dreaded the humdrum and was repelled by boredom. His life was spent dodging the snares and traps of conformity. Gren once said –

*“In a world that offers so many fascinating things to learn and do, a single lifespan seems unfairly brief; no matter how hard we try, or how fast we move, our time runs out before we explored even the **hors d' oeuvres** at this incredible banquet.”*

Gren had a great start in life graduating from the University of the South in Swananee, TN. The year was 1943 and he graduated *summa cum laude*. He joined the Navy and became a pilot of torpedo planes and dive-bombers. He never flew combat but was one of those guys that was so good at teaching that he never had the chance to fight. It was during this time that Gren began his love affair with aviation.

When Gren left the Navy, he moved to Columbia, South Carolina where he took a job as a staff reporter on *The State* newspaper. Soon bored with that, he moved to news director of a local radio station. This led to the “new medium” television. From 1953 to 1958 Gren was the news director for WIS-TV. Gren got bored again and formed his own company, Columbia Films, Inc. This company made commercial and documentary films.

Gren began to soar with great regularity in the mid 1960s and was a early member of the soaring organization at Chester, SC. In 1968 he organized the first soaring contest held at Chester, a race which soon became regional – a place where pilots could come to shake off the rust and cold of winter. He was a great organizer and his leadership made the races the best organized of their time. Fellow members of the Hall of Fame were attracted to the site – Butler, Byrd, Moffat, Schreder, Schuemann – all under his watchful eyes.

Perhaps Gren's biggest contribution to soaring was encouraging Charlie Spratt with his involvement in sailplane racing competition. Many years later people would ask Gren “if he knew Charlie Spratt?” Gren would reply, “KNOW HIM, HELL, I INVENTED HIM!”

Gren had a wonderful gift. He could put into words the things all of us who are in soaring feel. He wrote four books about our sport and each one is a gem. He could make you feel as though you were in the cockpit with him and he could bring a smile to your face with the description of the people in this game. He knew everyone and had an opinion on everything. He was a straight shooter and a straight up guy.

When Gren made the tortured decision to quit soaring, Chester was never the same. Something was missing when old “Tango, Tango” wasn't heard to call, “One Mile Out.” The meets at Chester continued but the Golden Age was over.

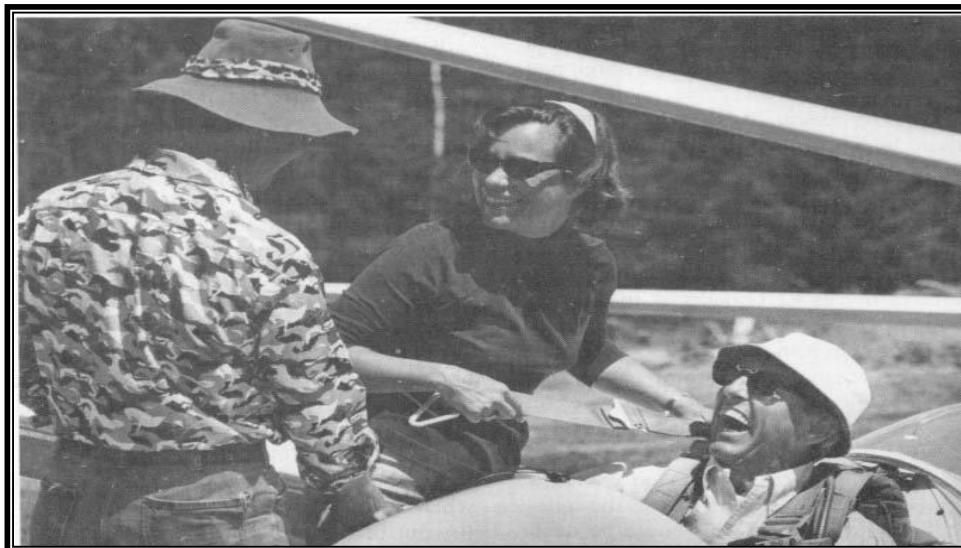
Books by Gren Seibels include the following:

Pilots Choice – a Soaring Odyssey 1970
After All 1983 (Lincoln Award in 1984)
Turnpoints 1985
A Gaggle of One (Lincoln Award in 1976)

Gren Seibels earned Silver #1216 in 1967, Gold #385 in 1967 and Diamond #122 (Int #797) in 1969.

Above adapted from *Final Glide* on the SSA web page (ssa.org) presumably written by Charlie Spratt.

From *Soaring*, August 1977 page 23; Photographer Harald Krauth



Unseemly hilarity on the Sugarbush launch grid. While Trudy Seibels helps stuff husband Gren into his Libelle sailplane, Art Hurst's double-edged *Bon Voyage* provokes a guffaw.