

STERLING V. STARR (1979) (1930-)

If anyone ever had a name that described them perfectly, it is Sterling Starr. He started soaring in the early 1950s and very soon earned all his badges – except the 1000 K Diploma which took a few years longer.

Just one year after starting to fly sailplanes, he teamed with Duke Mancuso to win the National Club Championship at Elsinore for AGCSC. He then served two years as AGCSC President. He and Duke jointly owned an L-K in which both earned their Gold badges.



He has flown MANY Nationals since placing seventh flying the AGCSC 1-26 (which he helped to build) in the 1958 Competition in Bishop, CA. He has earned almost every award the SSA offers. After moving to Montana, he cleaned up on just about all the Montana state records in Open Class (both single- and multi-place), 15-Meter and Sports Class – speed and distance. He served as Bill Ivans' crew for the World Soaring Championships in St. Yan, France, in 1956. He was SSA President, Vice President, Trustee, Honorary Vice Chair and served on several Boards including Rules, Development and Future Restructuring.

Sterling was born in 1930 and soloed on his 16th birthday. His interest in aviation, both professionally and avocationally, started early and he graduated from Ohio State University in 1953 with both Bachelor and Master degrees in Aeronautical Engineering. He initially worked for Ryan Aeronautical Company for a year and then joined the San Diego Division of Convair as a Design Specialist in the Aerodynamics Group. He eventually headed the Pomona Division. Later he was Vice President of Corporate Planning based in St. Louis with what had become General Dynamics. After retirement, he moved to Billings, MT in 2004 where he had been active in local politics and airport administration. Mainly he had devoted himself to sailplane flying and service to the Soaring Society of America.

In 1959 he was elected as an SSA Director for Region 12 -- thus starting his long time service to the management of SSA – eventually becoming one of two Honorary Vice Chairs.

Sterling was active in the Southern California Competition Club which, in the 1960s,

stroved to improve competition verification techniques such as the start gate and turn point identification techniques. He learned the needs and tested the solutions by competing in at least 14 National competitions (open, standard and 15-Meter) from Bishop to Tonopah and Elmira to Chester with Hobbs and Adrian in between.

In July 1961 he set a national goal and return record of 348.24 miles flying from Inyokern to Lee Vining and return.

He purchased a Schweizer 1-23D in 1960 and flew it at the Odessa Nationals in 1960. In 1961, using his aerodynamic background, he presented estimates for possible improvements to this sailplane at a September 1961 Technical Symposium. He flew the Nationals again at Elmira in 1963 and, this time, decided to implement his ideas. After approximately 1,500 hours design and construction (including 400 hours by friends Andy Kesckes, Elton and Steve Ballas), the modified sailplane flew in 1965 -



Sterling in his 1-23D Photo by Joan Starr

- the 1-23HM. The result was a sailplane with excellent handling qualities, good stall characteristics, almost neutral longitudinal stability and light roll control with very little adverse yaw. This sailplane made the cover of *Soaring* magazine (July 1967).



Sterling earned the Barringer Trophy in 1957 for a combination wave-thermal flight from Bishop, CA to Utah.

He was awarded the Eaton Trophy in 1974, the Schweizer Award in 2002, the Exceptional Service Award in 1970 and 1987 and the Certificate of Appreciation in 2004 and 2008.

He earned Silver #205 in 1954, Gold #65 in 1956, Diamond #11 (Intl #85) in 1957, the Symons Two Lennie #125 and the 1000 K Diploma #49 (Intl #199) in 1993.