

HANNES M. LINKE (1998) (~1939 - 2017)

Hannes Linke loves soaring – especially competition. But he also enjoys setting a world record. The photo to the right was taken the day (July 30, 1967) Hannes set the World Speed record around a 100 km triangle. His speed was 136.66 kph (84.59 mph) and he was flying a Glasflugel H-301 Libelle out of the famed soaring site – El Mirage, CA.



Photo by George Uveges

He actually made this flight twice that day. The first time around he was not sure which of two locations was the declared second turn point. He chose one, took the identifying photo, returned to El Mirage with minimum altitude, climbed up again, re-started and this time selected the second choice for the declared turn point. The second flight photo had the right turn point so Hannes had the World Record and the German National record (he was not yet an American citizen).

Hannes flew his Libelle at the Nationals in Reno in 1966. The fifth day was declared Free Distance. Hannes spotted a dust devil reaching to cloud base. He thought maybe he could go to Idaho. He found a small wave and was soon at 18,000 feet. Then he heard Graham Thomson on the radio asking for help – Graham could not determine his position and was needing to land. Hannes looked down and saw Graham far beneath him. He tried to answer his question which was – where is the nearest ranch – but could not understand Graham's British pronunciation of 'ranch' and kept asking, “Say again.” At last Ross Briegeb's voice on the radio said, “Hey, Linke – he means ranch!” Hannes directed Graham to the northwest and stayed in the area until he located the ranch.

His soaring interest, training and experience had started in Germany in about 1952 when, as a child, he paid 50 cents to sit in a Minimoa sailplane. About a year later he rode his bike to the location of the local glider club to see what was going on. He then persuaded his Dad to pay for a ride and joined the club in the spring of 1954. When he reached the required age of 17 in 1956, he obtained his official license, qualifying in Class I to solo and in Class II to take passengers. He went on his first cross-country in 1958 and earned the Silver badge. All his flights up to this time had been with winch tow but he eventually qualified for aero tow also.

In 1959 he was offered and took a job as flight instructor on Juist Island in the North Sea off the north coast of Germany. He made very good contacts in soaring there and

often had very long hours giving instruction. He accumulated more than 4,000 winch tows giving instruction. He considers this a valuable time in his life – he developed confidence and made many close friends.

In 1962 one of his close friends had gone to America and so he decided to join him. On December 11, 1963, he arrived in Los Angeles with \$75 in his pocket. Based on his training and experience in Germany, he found a job and started working at a company in Santa Monica. In 1982 he bought the company and ran it for 23 more years.

He maintained contact with his soaring friends in Germany and in 1970 made arrangements to assist the German World Team at the World contest in Marfa Including crewing for the winner in standard class – Helmut Reichmann. He soon developed a close and continuing friendship with Helmut Reichmann.

In 1981 Reichmann joined with Barron Hilton to establish the Barron Hilton Cup which celebrates successful worldwide soaring pilots and other celebrity pilots at the Hilton Ranch in Nevada. Hannes joined in this endeavor as an advisor and, in 1991, became Competition Director for the event.

Hannes Linke enjoys helping other people to fly in competition – especially World competition and has participated in the management of many National and World contests. He helped organize and was the Competition Director at the 1991 World Soaring Championships in Uvalde, TX. He was a Steward at the 1993, 1995 and 1997 World Championships and Chief Steward for the 1999 World Competition in Bayreuth, Germany.

In addition to all the above, he has been Vice President of SSA, Contest Board Chair, organized the Smirnoff Derby and competed in it once. He also organized the Hitachi Masters of Soaring series. He has written many articles for *Soaring* magazine about contests and the sailplanes that win.



All his badges are credited to Germany – Silver #3194 in 1958, Gold #234 in 1962 and Diamond #62 (Intl #419) in 1965. However, the last requirement, the 300 km distance leg of the Diamond, was made in Texas. In 1965 Hannes and his fellow Lilienthal Soaring Club members made the trek to the annual soaring camp at Marfa and proceeded to burn up the skies. Flying the club Zugvogel IIIA, Hannes made a 318 km triangle to complete the task late in the day.

Hannes Linke was presented with the SSA Exceptional Service Award in 1985 and the Exceptional Achievement Award in 1991.