

NSM



A Quarterly Journal
of the National Soaring Museum
Spring, 1982 Vol. 4, Number 4

From the Editor

1982 is a significant year in the history of soaring, in that, The Soaring Society of America is celebrating its Golden Anniversary. The local community, continuing its active support of soaring has reactivated the former 50th Anniversary Committee which helped us to celebrate the anniversary of the first national soaring contest which was held here in Elmira in 1930 through community instigation and assistance. The group's new title is the Community Soaring Committee and it is hoped that it will be an on-going activity which will continue to develop the sense of community pride in their involvement in the history of soaring.

Again, as in 1980, a full year of commemorative activities are planned. Members on the CSC are again, from the National Soaring Museum, the Harris Hill Soaring Corporation, and community leaders. You will note in the schedule that the HHSC is hosting several of the events which is only natural with their flight activity. Just as members of the museum's Board of Trustees are from The Soaring Society of America, our By-Laws call for appointments also from HHSC and Chemung County, as well as elected members-at-large. The histories of each organization are inextricably meshed in the history of soaring. This combined active support and the museum membership have helped the National Soaring

Museum to develop into an outstanding facility of which you can be proud.

Our credibility is growing on a national level which is apparent with our latest acquisitions, some of which are noted in the ensuing NSM articles. The library donations from John Ryan, Phoenix, AZ and E.J. Reeves, Dallas, TX are an outstanding addition to our research capabilities. And the papers, films, and/or photos from the files of Robert Blaine — Woodland Hills, CA, Taylor Boyer — Mercer Island, WA, Howard Burr — Glendale, CA, Peter Riedel — Ardmore, OK, Mike Shoen — Phoenix, AZ and Floyd Sweet — McLean, VA fill in many of the details on the history of The SSA and soaring in the United States. Then, there is the gentleman who had read about the full year of commemorative activities surrounding The SSA's anniversary and thought perhaps it was time to dig out a box from his attic. He had been named Executor in a will years ago and, "wasn't sure how important the material would be, but that the museum could have it". The box contained autobiographies and personal notes from each of the following: Ralph Barnaby, Lewin Barringer, Charles Gale, Wolfgang Klemperer, Helen Montgomery, Robert Stanley and Sherman Voorhees; and biographies from families or secretaries of Richard C. du Pont, Edward S. Evans, Mathias Arnot, and Warren E. Eaton.

This is indeed a significant year in the history of soaring and The Soaring Society of America.

CALENDAR

Date	Event	Location
April 3, 1982	NSM Board of Trustees' Annual Meeting	NSM
May 11	Dedication of Memorial Wing Pylon Commemorating Glider Mail Flight (SSA's Golden Anniversary of Incorporation)	Harris Hill
May 28	Reception for SSA East Coast Safari Fly-in Evening Open House — Exhibit Opening	NSM
May 29	U.S. Soaring Hall of Fame Banquet	NSM
May 29-30	History/Competition Seminars Vintage Sailplane Regatta	NSM/Youth Camp Harris Hill
May 30	Vintage Spectacular — Static Display Air Show — "Volksmarsch" — Models	Harris Hill
June 6-12	National Soaring Week	United States
June 29-July 8	15m National Soaring Championships	Harris Hill/NSM (Sponsored by HHSC)
July 3	Lawn Party/Ox Roast	Youth Camp
July 9	Championship Awards Breakfast Dedication of Sculpture & Founders' Gallery Community Banquet Honoring SSA and the Founders SSA Directors' Meeting	NSM NSM Elmira College NSM
July 10	Dedication of National Landmark Plaque Glider Mail Flight (#2 in series)	Harris Hill NSM
Sept. 3-6	SSA's Sailplane Homebuilding Conference	NSM/Youth Camp
Oct. 9	Ralph S. Barnaby Annual Lecture and NSM Board of Trustees' Fall Meeting	Boulder, CO
Oct. 9-10	14th Annual Fall Foliage Festival	Harris Hill
Nov. 26-28	43rd Annual Snowbird Contest	NSM/Harris Hill

UNITED STATES SOARING HALL OF FAME WEEKEND

AND EXHIBIT OPENING



Left: SSA Awards Chairman Floyd J. Sweet presenting the U.S. Soaring Hall of Fame certificate to William Frank Kelsey.

I'm not sure if words can generate the excitement which occurred here at the National Soaring Museum this spring. Of course, there was the usual fascination of reviewing the museum's photo collections and archives to select materials for the exhibit theme. But — to try and cover a 50 year span of the history of The Soaring Society of America; how can you do it justice? The museum's Exhibits Committee recommended a life-size diorama with a bungee cord launch scene of the 1930's, that all suspended sailplanes be of the 30's and the photo exhibit focus cover 50 years of soaring **Personalities, Events, Innovations, Sailplanes**, and on the back of **The SSA Presidents'** wall, an enlargement of the Golden Anniversary logo.

Pretty imposing, wouldn't you say? But, of course — this was just the surface!

The Pomeroy Gallery of **Personalities** was to be changed to the **Founding Fathers' Hall**, with Gerald Pomeroy again gracious in agreeing to do the illustrations of each of the founding fathers of The Soaring Society of America. And, with Lee Robbins and friends completing the restoration of our forward cockpit section of the CG-4A, donated by Harold Hudson, Pine City, NY, and the availability of one of the life-size Condor sculptures by Erwin Hauer, Yale University, we were able to add previews of the museum's coming attraction exhibits.

Still, this was just the surface!

To complete the proposed life-size diorama scene, we were able to secure the loan of a 1931 Ford Touring car from Stanley Wilcox, Horseheads, NY, (The Eatons and the du Ponts arrived on the scene in Ford Touring cars.), and just for fun, a 1915 Harley-Davidson motorcycle from Ray Robbins, Troy, PA.

Still, this was just the surface!

Who would have believed that Bill Rodenberg's Baker-McMillen Cadet II would arrive on the Hill from Brownsville, CA with help from Dr. Frank Gross, Akron, OH and Arne Hallin and Bob Dart, Mayville, NY, to be placed in the life-size diorama along with Warren E. Eaton's Franklin Utility glider?

And on top of that; Dr. Frank Gross, designer of the Cadet II, the Akron Condor, the earliest 2-place glider and the innovative 4-place glider, would agree to be one of the panelists at the history gathering seminar planned for the U.S. Soaring Hall of Fame weekend.

Still, this was just the surface!

We knew that Vic Saudek, museum Historian, from Los Angeles, CA and Alcide Santilli, fellow Hall of Fame'r from Albuquerque, NM were meeting en route and then trailering-in valuables to add to the National Soaring Museum's collections. But . . . are you ready for this? They brought in the **Super Albatross**, donated by Herman Stiglmeier, Koloa, HI and scrapbooks, papers, historic tapes, slides, and/or photos from Rose Marie Licher, Eleanor Velarde Klemperer, Betty Ross, (Harland's widow), Gus Briegleb, Howard Burr, and then Vic and Al added memorabilia of their own. The new acquisitions are still being reviewed, but such a wealth of history . . . I look forward to each opportunity I have the time to spend registering the items.

I'd now like to set the scene for the following account. William Frank Kelsey, Salt Lake City, UT, one of the new Hall of Fame inductees had arrived several days before the exhibit and seasonal opening and was immediately put to work painting and hammering — which is not unusual if you arrive here on the scene early. Shortly, thereafter, Vic and Al arrived with their precious cargo. It was natural that they began to reminisce about their earlier days on the Hill. Well, when Al was formally inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1980, one of the stories he told was of the efforts of trying to clear the Hill of rocks and stumps during one of the early nationals; and how he finally resorted to a brush and a bucket of white-wash to identify these hazards for the landing pilots.

O.K.?? Scene set??

Vic and Frank walked up to me the day before the exhibit opening, with smiles on their faces, and said, "Your life-size diorama of the bungee launch scene is missing something". "Really?", said I. "Remember, Al's white rock story?", said they. I pointed to the brushes and the can of white paint; and since they had **already** selected the **perfect** rock, in a matter of minutes (minus the ceremonial paint job seen below), they had truly completed the scene.



The opening and reception Friday night, May 28th was exciting, in that, we had completed the exhibit changes on time, and the guests and the vintage sailplanes were beginning to arrive. The weekend was a significant time for many who were looking forward to this golden anniversary celebration of The SSA.



National Soaring Museum President Lee L. Robbins welcoming the attendees to the banquet.

Saturday, May 29th, Roy McMaster of Bluff Point, NY chaired a Competition Seminar at the Harris Hill Youth Camp for the East Coast Safari Fly-In participants and competition minded enthusiasts, while Vic Saudek chaired a History Seminar in the museum's community room. History panelists were Ralph S. Barnaby, Dr. Frank Gross, Wm. Frank Kelsey and Vic Saudek. Participants adding to this oral taping session and the informal session on Sunday were Bruce Helvie, Al Santilli, Paul Schweizer, Gus Scheurer, Walter Setz, Harvey Stephens, and Elmer Zimmerman. There were **many** guests significant to the history of soaring and their support of the National Soaring Museum, however, I list only those we taped in the history sessions.

Many of the attendees were on the Harris Hill field reviewing the vintage sailplanes lined up for the VSA's Regatta. Proudly assembled were Jan Scott's Wolf and Pratt Read, Gil Fitzhugh's and Greg Reynold's LK-TG-4A's, Bob Abbott's and Bob Storck's Flat Topped LK, Bob Storck's RJ-6, Norm McElroy's Kirby Kite, Len McClain's Cherokee, Bill Parr's and Bruce Barritt's 1-23D, Allan MacNichol's Prototype 1-21, the Rochester Soaring Club's 1-23B, the Mohawk Soaring Club's 1-23D, the Long Island Soaring Club's 2-22, the Aero Club Albatross' KA-6, Martin Drake's 1-26, and I believe there were two more 1-26's. The Vintage Sailplane Association really put on a good show! There will be more particulars about their activity in the next VSA's publication, **Bungee Cord**.

Floyd J. Sweet was the featured speaker at the Hall of Fame banquet held at the museum. He flew in the first national competition sponsored by The SSA in 1932 and has been an active and leading force in the soaring movement during the past 50 years and we asked him to reminisce, a bit. As the Awards Chairman for The SSA Board of Directors, Floyd presented William Frank Kelsey a certificate and formally inducted Frank into the U.S. Soaring Hall of Fame. Floyd

hopes to present the SSA Hall of Fame Certificate to Dr. Joachim P. Kuettner at the Fall NSM Trustees' Meeting in Boulder, CO. Frank responded with such a warm acknowledgement and interesting speech, that, with his permission, it has been published in this issue, see page 7.

Sunday morning the vintage sailplanes lined up for a static exhibit on the field and then took to the air, with help from the Harris Hill Soaring Corporation, to continue their competition. While in the museum conference room we were video taping interviews with Ralph Barnaby, Frank Kelsey, Vic Saudek, Walter Setz and Floyd Sweet. You see, Lew Hull from the Philadelphia Glider Council had appeared with full video taping equipment, gave our staff a quick orientation, and we immediately took full advantage of the occasion and his generosity.



The VSA line-up.

That evening the VSA held their annual meeting. It was at this time that I really became concerned about Ralph Barnaby, who was still recuperating from major surgery just weeks before. You see, he was one of the last to leave the museum Friday evening and on Saturday he arrived early to participate in the seminar. And when he disappeared later in the afternoon, we thought, "Good, . . . he's gone back to the motel to rest". However, we later discovered that he had gone to visit Edward A. Mooers, for whom the museum's community room is named, and who is Trustee Emeritus of the National Soaring Museum. Again, on Sunday, Ralph arrived early to do the video taping for us and then again, he disappeared. And this time we thought, "For sure, he's gone back to the motel to rest". Wrong! . . . He'd gone to visit Tony and Jackie Doherty. Tony being a museum Advisor and former sales manager for Schweizer Aircraft. And so, on Sunday evening at the VSA meeting, when Ralph looked at me and said, "Shirley, I'd like to go upstairs", I worriedly accompanied this 89 year old gentleman upstairs to the office, whereupon, as he was pulling a bottle of after-shave lotion from his pocket, he stated that, "the squeak in the office door was pretty bad". He squeezed a few drops on the pins and noting my quizzical expression said, "Well, it has lubricants in it, doesn't it?" We then proceeded to take care of several other squeaky doors in the lobby. I can't even guess when he had time to think of returning to the motel to pick up the lotion for this maintenance job. In any case, we then returned to the VSA meeting and pizza party. I'm not going to admit to who slowed down first.

And still, this was really just the surface. It's often been said that soaring people are a special breed of people. I know that museum members are also a special breed. And in our case with **members** of the National Soaring Museum, we are twice privileged.

Shirley Sliwa

SPRING 1982 OVERVIEW



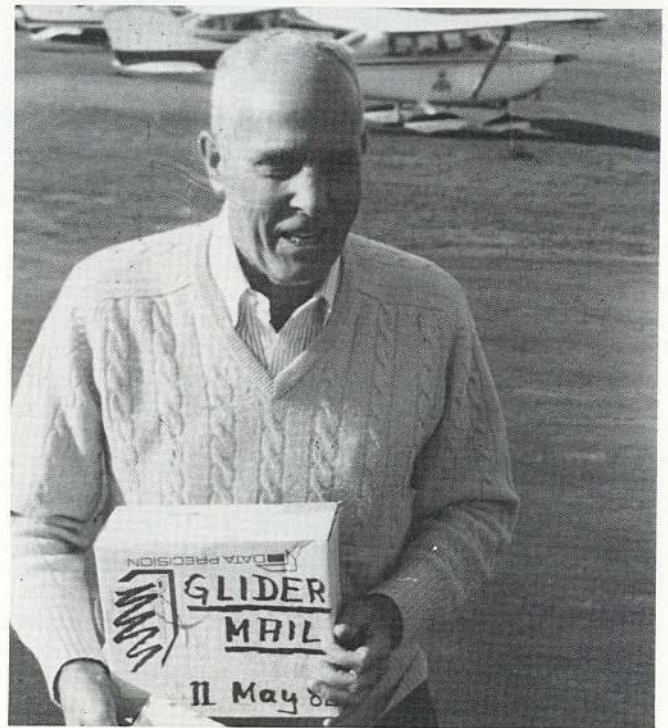
The art work by Robert E. Cunningham, Houston, TX on the International Post Card introduced on March 5, 1982 by the U.S. Postal Service at The SSA Convention. It marks The SSA's Golden Anniversary.



The Baker-McMillen Cadet II glider arriving at the National Soaring Museum.



Hall of Fame members at the induction ceremony. Left to Right: Standing: Paul A. Schweizer, Gustav Scheurer, Barney L. Wiggin, William H. Coverdale, Jr., Victor M. Saudek and Alcide Santilli. Seated: Floyd J. Sweet, Ralph S. Barnaby, Inductee-William Frank Kelsey, and Virginia M. Schweizer.



Warren E. Eaton, Jr., Norwich, NY son of the first President of The SSA receiving the commemorative glider mail on May 11, 1982, marking the 50th Anniversary date of the incorporation of The SSA. HHSC refurbished and moved the museum's wing pylon to the brow of Harris Hill and as part of the ceremony on this date, the pylon was dedicated as a Memorial to all pilots who have flown from Harris Hill.



Left: Museum Historian Victor M. Saudek and Dr. Frank Gross preparing for the History Seminar.



WILLIAM FRANK KELSEY



AT THE HALL OF FAME CEREMONY SAID

It is a pleasure to be in Elmira again and to see so many soaring friends. The last time that I was in Elmira at a soaring banquet was 26 years ago during the 1956 National Contest. Ralph Barnaby was kind enough to meet my wife and me and my son and daughter at the airport; and, I am pleased to present my wife Mae and my son Jim tonight. My daughter sends her regards and her Aunt Ruth Bennion in her place.

One of the Utah Soaring Club members referred to me as "an Old Timer" at my 70th birthday party. There was something about it that rang of "has been" and I did not like that. 'Course it really isn't easy being an "old timer". I try to get by, by taking shorter breaths and quicker steps . . . or is it the other way around??? It's tough reaching your September years and realize that you blew July and August. I recently wondered why I was feeling so good until I caught my wife spiking my Geritol with wheat germ. My real secret is a young thinking mind . . . 'Course my 19 year old mind keeps many commitments that my old body just can't keep. However, being in your 70's means having lived long enough to have had a long and wonderful love affair with **Soaring**.

My first sailplane was my version of the M.I.T. which Eddie Allen flew in the first Internationals in France in 1922. With only a small 3-view for reference I built the sailplane in 1928 as only a 15 year old would; more enthusiasm than skill.

It was during my last year in high school as a shop project; my shop teacher gave me permission to build a glider, thinking that I meant a porch swing which at that time were called gliders. My project caused considerable consternation when I started to assemble the 36' wing which stretched pretty well across the complete shop. This called for a quick trip to the principal's office and fortunately for the project, he had been greatly impressed by Charles Lindbergh's recent visit to Salt Lake City after his Paris flight. He was not about to be responsible for hindering the career of a budding "aviator". I like to think that my 15 year old's logic and persuasion prevailed but, whatever, construction continued.

The second crisis occurred when upon assembly of the wing to the fuselage, the tips drooped half way to the floor. No problem though, I merely cut the one piece cantilever wing in half and installed wire braces. After completion, the first three launches were made semi-successfully from the top of a hill while, as the terrified test pilot I sat petrified and fortunately did not move anything. I don't think I landed, more like a ricochet. The ship's career ended abruptly while being flown on the second of two flights by an experienced "power pilot".

A series of "Primaries and Secondaries" followed the 1929 National Geographics article on the Wasserkuppe in Germany.

A 45' Bowlus "paper" sailplane was built and flown followed by a 60' model which really was a little too much for the experience level of our small group. A modified Mead Challenger proved more practical and considerable ridge soaring experience was gained in it; plus some modest cross-country flights.

The first two-seater that was built was Jack Laister's Universal with a modified longer tapered wing and shallow gull. This flew quite well compared to preceding sailplanes. About this time I made my first visit to see Hawley Bowlus in 1933 by motorcycle. I started to work for National Parks Airline which merged with Western Air Express, now Western Air Lines which provided a source of flight passes. I visited Bowlus quite regularly and the first production Baby Albatross kit was purchased from Bowlus Sailplanes and completed during 1938. In 1939 I went to work for Hawley Bowlus in San Fernando, CA and, building and flying sailplanes 7 days a week was a sailplaner's "Heaven".

I inherited the test pilot job flying the C.A.A. certification tests on the Baby Albatross after Jack O'Meara's untimely death while flight testing a Navy Airplane. Jack was in the middle of the aft C.G. spin tests on the Baby Albatross and this proved quite character building. I suspect that I did this with more enthusiasm than skill but, in due time the Albatross was given a Type Certificate.

About this time I built the Super Albatross by working nights at the Bowlus plant. I am thrilled that this sailplane is just now being accepted into the National Soaring Museum through the generosity of its present owner, Herman Stiglmeier.

Pearl Harbor brought chaos to the civilian manufacture of sailplanes as it did to most everything else. Bowlus Sailplanes was soon doing only defense work with the development of a two-place trainer design for the Air Force and collaborating with Douglas Aircraft Co. on some large wooden invasion gliders. These did not go into production, but fly they did! Hawley Bowlus and Dr. Klemperer actually thermalled one of these monsters at 29 Palms much to the delight of the entire staff at the 29 Palms Academy. Hawley Bowlus left Bowlus Sailplanes, Inc. in 1942 and spent his time developing a boom-tailed Invasion Glider which tragically Dick duPont and three others lost their lives during a flight at March AFB.

Bowlus Sailplanes, Inc. closed its doors in 1943 and my defense work continued in Fresno, CA in charge of a Navy Overhaul and repair of Battle damaged Carrier Aircraft for the Naval Air Station in Alameda. Being in the middle of the defense zone and not enough rationed gas coupons to get out, stopped all fun sailplaning except for the Bishop Scientific Thermal Sniffer project in 1944.

After V.E. day civilian flying was again permitted and several cross-country flights were made in the Super Albatross in the San Jacquin Valley of Central California.

A move back to Salt Lake at the close of the War and then, I sold my beloved Super for reasons that later made no sense at all. In due time it became the property of Herman Stiglmeier. Herman did let me fly it on many occasions, however, which I appreciated.

(Continued on Page 8)

WILLIAM FRANK KELSEY

(Continued from Page 7)

Going into the Fixed Base Flying Service business soon found me flying charters day and night for 6 days then on the 7th relaxing by flying sailplanes.

I entered two National Contests with borrowed sailplanes and soon found that I was a better participant than Competitor.

Flying Big Ed Butts (also big Prue Two) at McCook Nationals; George Coder filed an official complaint against me. He said that every time that he got a thermal, "there was old Kelsey in the Prue up above him shutting off the sun". He called it, "the aluminum overcast".

Various store bought sailplanes were owned; the last being my Schweizer 2-32 bought in 1967. I have almost made Denver several times in it and if old rocking chair don't get me first I will make it yet. Sailplanes, notwithstanding, the best things I cherish in some 55 years of most enjoyable flying is the wonderful people that I have met in the soaring world. I do say that sincerely!

And what does a bent, but not bowed, Airport Man do when he retires? This one builds and flies like always but at a more leisurely pace. My present project is the restoration of a 42 year old 2-place Bowlus Baby Albatross owned by Airline Captain Ron Nelson, of Minneapolis. If you are here, stand up Ron! (He was, to see his friend honored by The SSA.) Incidentally, it is the only one left of the three that were built at Bowlus and was originally owned by Ted Nelsen, no relation, of San Leandro, CA.

I still go to National Contests but only as a tow pilot. I have towed in 8 Nationals and the World's Championships at Marfa, Texas in 1970. Tow pilots have the best seat in the house at a Contest.

I still have my 15 year old 2-32 which I manage to fly 2-3 times a week at the Heber City Glider Port. I also have a 17 m. wood sailplane which I have puttered on, way too long. Yes — I said wood! Us buggy whip-makers and wood choppers are making a comeback . . . I think!

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to thank those responsible for my receiving the "Hall of Fame" Award. I still don't know why anyone should receive an award for doing what they really love so much. But, thank you anyway. I have certainly joined some illustrious company indeed. It is perhaps fitting that Hawley Bowlus is the first name on the Hall of Fame for Soaring Awards recipients. What an honor to be included on this list also

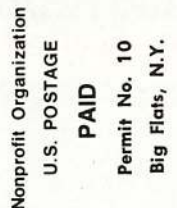
Thank you

(Ed. I just read an article in the 1931 Edition of **FLYING AND GLIDER MANUAL**, entitled "Adventures of a Glider Builder" by — guess who? Frank Kelsey!)

NSM is a publication of the National Soaring Museum, Harris Hill, RD3, Elmira, New York 14903. Anyone is invited to contribute material and pictures with identification about historical soaring activities, renovation of old sailplanes, soaring pioneers, unusual uses of sailplanes, etc. Manuscripts are subject to whatever revisions, additions or deletions are necessary to make the material conform to the space limitations and standards of NSM. Material that is to be returned must be accompanied by a stamped, self addressed envelope. No compensation other than credit will be made.

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