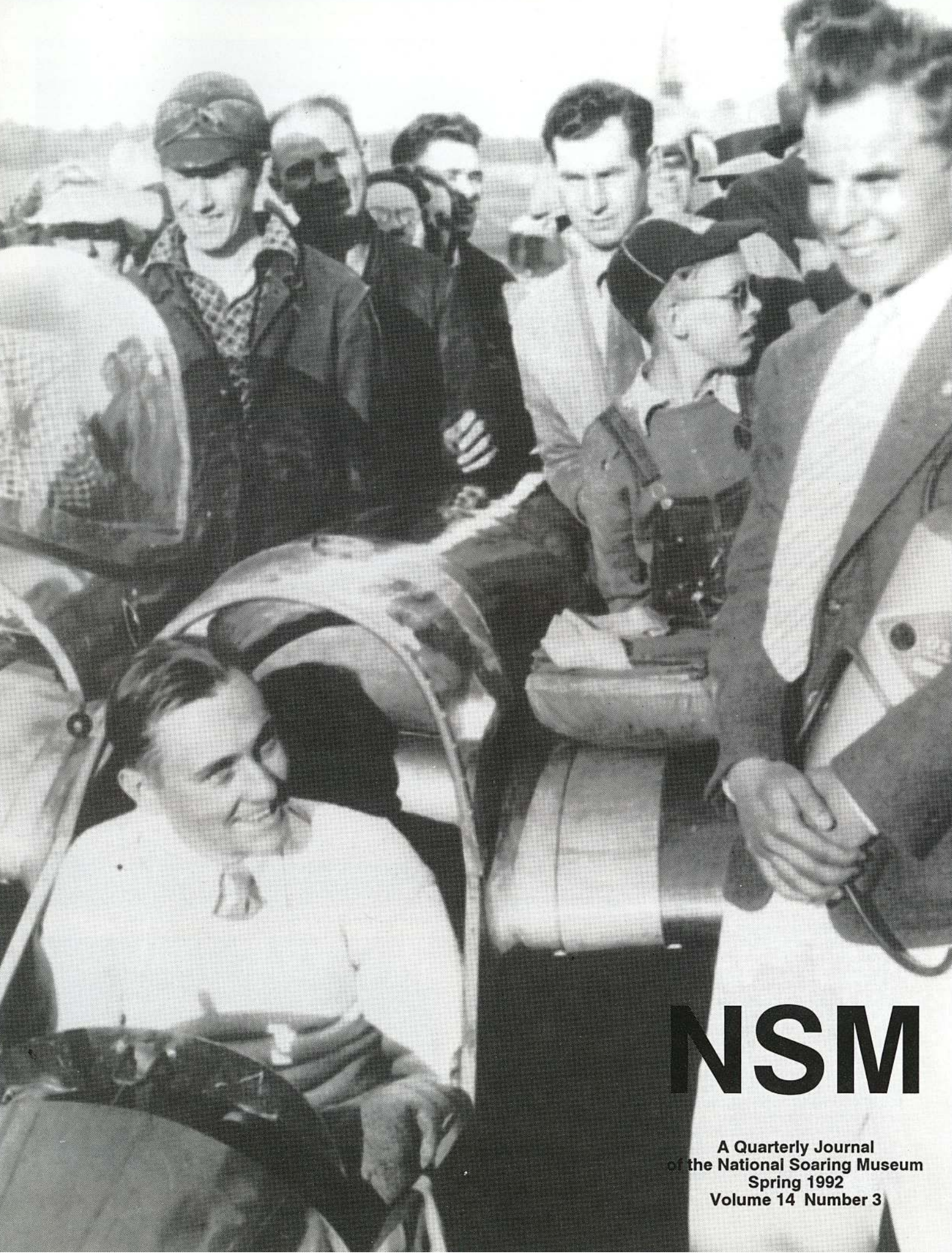




NSM

A Quarterly Journal
of the National Soaring Museum
Spring 1992
Volume 14 Number 3



Glider activity at Elberta Beach, MI, in 1939 (Frankfort photos courtesy of Midwest Soaring Museum and Pete Sandman).

Frankfort, Michigan Honored With National Soaring Landmark

On Sunday May 10, amid winking cameras, humming camcorders and TV, the people of Frankfort, MI, were honored with a National Soaring Landmark by the National Soaring Museum. The monument recognizes the pioneering soaring flights over Lake Michigan's shores and Frankfort's support for the development of the art and science of motorless flight in the 1930's.

The National Landmark program was developed in 1981 by the NSM Trustees to identify and memorialize individuals and historic events related to America's soaring past.

Frankfort Landmark weekend began Saturday with a sailplane meet during which NSM Landmark Program Chairman and vintage sailplaner Jan Scott flew his newly refurbished Minimoa (one of only three airworthy Minimoas in the world).

Scott carried a pouch of especially postmarked glider mail in the "Minny." He was joined in the air by an ASK-13 piloted by John House with oldtime trailblazer Ted Bellak strapped in the rear seat carrying a second mail bag on his lap. The glidermail arrangements were made with the U.S. Postal Service by NSM Aerophilatelic Coordinator Simine Short.

Northwest Soaring Club president Chuck Mange flew Frankfort Postmaster Janet Arnold, and club members flew attending VIP's and other sailplane passengers throughout the day.

Saturday's Dedication Banquet at the Frankfort Hotel opened with a welcoming address by soaring historian Pete Sandman. He said that throughout Frankfort's history, "Nothing dominated a period of its time in the late 30's more than the sport of soaring. The entire town (about 150 miles north of Chicago on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan) was involved."

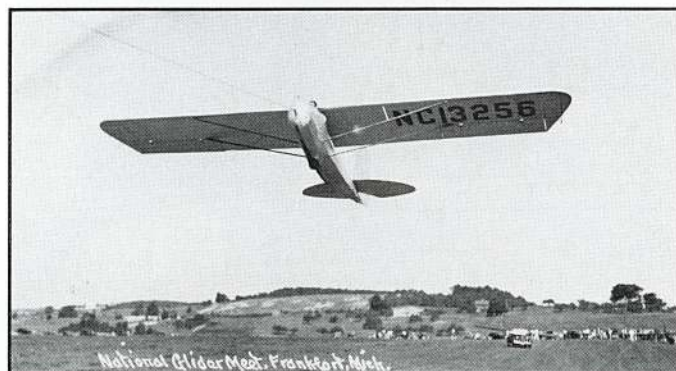
The gliding school was the first such community-backed facility in the nation and the sailplane factory was one of the three largest in the U.S. The winds off the lake gave the town more soaring days per year than any other site.

NSM Director of Institutional Advancement, Mike Ziomko, spoke of upcoming exhibits, projects, building expansion and the need for a broadened base of support to pass on to succeeding generations the hard won motorless flight heritage exemplified by the Frankfort pioneers.

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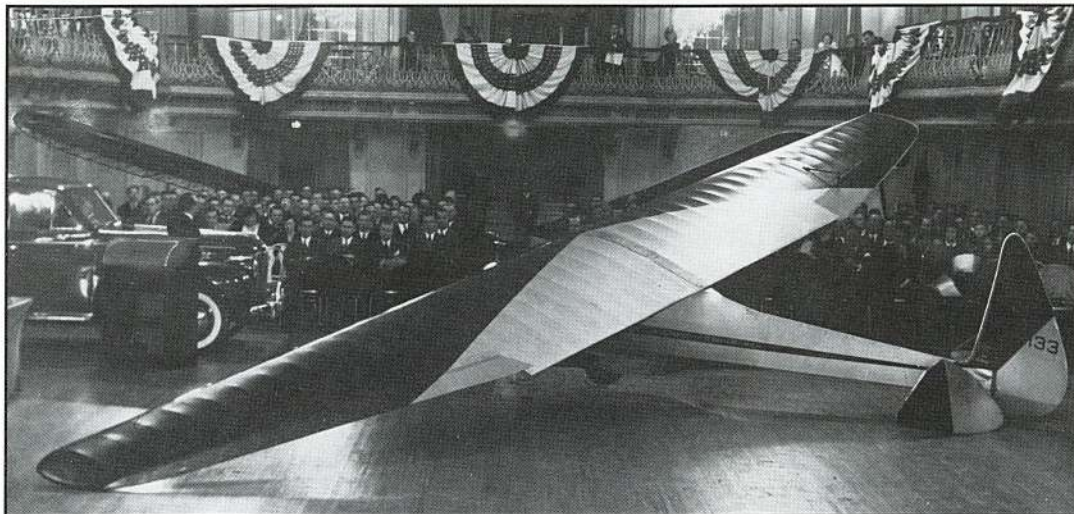
The new National Soaring Landmark at Frankfort, MI. Left, Ted Bellak; behind him, the NSM's Mike Ziomko, Stanley Johnson, 1930's glider pilot; local soaring enthusiast, Elaine Larson; NSM Trustee, Jan Scott is rear right.



Glider launch at the Frankfort National Glider Meet.



Walking a Universal 2-place glider from Empire beaches around 1936. (Note balloon tires on roadster).



The Stan Corcoran Cinema at the 1939 Chicagoland Glider Council exhibit held in the Hotel Sherman.

Above and below Ted Bellak and the Goeppingen Minimoa, "Dove of Peace."

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Ted Bellak's "60 Years of Soaring Involvement," recalled the 1934-1937 years when he and Lewin Barringer began cross country trips looking for ideal gliding sites.

The Sleeping Bear Dunes north of Frankfort had been developed as a soaring site in 1935 by the Detroit Glider Council under the direction of Arthur B. Schultz, who said that the area had "unusual possibilities for ridge soaring and flying the storm fronts that move in off Lake Michigan." He persuaded the Midwest Gliding Council to hold their first meet there in Sept., 1936.

At the '37 meet, 13 gliders participated with ten in the air at one time. That year Detroit's Elmer Zook broke the state endurance record by staying aloft for eleven hours.

The Soaring Society of America's Karl O. Lange announced that in addition to the Nationals at Elmira in 1938, another to be called "The American Open Soaring Meet" would be scheduled at Frankfort MI.

Jack O'Meara, Chet Decker, Richard DuPont, Warren Merboth, Lewin Barringer, Stan Corcoran and Ted Bellak participated in the August event. Victor M. Saudek was the meet's official meteorologist. He hitchhiked in from Pittsburgh's Carnegie Tech, stopping off at Dayton, OH, to interview Orville Wright. Peter Riedel, a 1920's veteran of the German Wasserkuppe and one of the world's outstanding pilots, put on a display of gliderbatics with successive loops and barrel rolls.

Pete Sandman in his "Silent Wings of Glory," reported that 27 gliders were airborne a record 336 hours, and Helen Montgomery of Detroit stayed aloft for seven hours and 22 minutes for a national women's record.

A Dunker's Club was formed for the glider pilots who didn't make it back and landed in the lake. A vial of Lake Michigan water was awarded to each of the ten "indunkted" members.

A number of businessmen persuaded Corcoran to remain in Frankfort where after working at the local Ford garage and instructing for the Frankfort Soaring Association, he was further induced to start building his famous Cinema sailplanes.

With \$600 raised by the following January, the Frankfort Sailplane Manufacturing Company began operations in the Olsen Building at the corner of Main and Fourth Streets. Corcoran, who had been elected to the SSA Board of Directors, sent for Bellak, then in Newark, NJ, to assist him.

1939 saw the company awarded a government contract for glider instruction and Ted Bellak's record-breaking, 54 mile over-water flight from Sturgeon Bay, WI, across Lake Michigan to Frankfort. He was towed in the "Dove of Peace", a Minimoa behind a Waco UPF-7 piloted by Cass Szmagaj to 12,500 feet over the Wisconsin shore and released, arriving on the opposite side with 4,000 feet to spare. The flight was planned with Vic Saudek to determine the meteorological effects of bodies of water on thermals. Immediately following Bellak's flight, the successful '39 meet began with extensive newsreel and press coverage.

Frankfort historian Sandman related this story about J.J. (Jim) Smiley, an associate of Corcoran's and an I.N.S. correspondent who described the reason why the Corcoran organization left Frankfort for Joliet, IL.



The Frankfort Gliding School, 1939. Left to right: Stan Corcoran, James Smiley, George Bennett, John House, Bill Upton, Madelyn Frary and Bill Brown.



Peter Reidel's German Kranich in which he performed aerobatics at the Frankfort American Open Soaring Meet.

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"We needed money for the sailplane company and this friend of mine (Smiley's) in Chicago introduced me to Phil Wrigley, George Getz (who promoted the Dempsey-Tunney fight) and Colonel McCormick (Chicago Tribune) and we came up with a quarter of a million dollars...but, we had to keep the factory down there...We built out of the airport in Joliet."

There, they made the military versions of the Cinema II, designated TG-1A thru D for glider pilot training.

Although minor national meets were held there in the early 40's, at the war's end the Frankfort never regained its former prominence.

Again, Pete Sandman, "But when the sport of gliding is brought to mind amongst the flying experts, the resort town of Frankfort, MI holds fond memories...Crystal Downs, north of Frankfort, probably has the best and safest site yet found in America."

The NSM's Jan Scott in reviewing the Soaring Landmark Program said that Frankfort was only the fourth location in the country so honored.

The first was in 1981 commemorating Capt. Ralph Barnaby's 1929, 15-minute 6-second flight at Corn Hill, Truro, MA. This was the first American flight to break Orville Wright's 1911, 9-minutes and 45-second gliding record.

In 1982 the second National Landmark was dedicated at the brow of Harris Hill, Elmira, NY, to mark a half century of community support and to honor the late J. Thomas Rhodes and his family for their hospitality and help in establishing soaring on Harris Hill.

The third National Landmark was presented to the citizens of Akron, OH, for their zeal in supporting motorless flight from 1929 to 1936 and to mark the 50th anniversary of the first towed glider flight from there to Columbus carrying U.S. Mail in a Gross 4-place glider.

Preceding the Sunday National Soaring Landmark dedication there was a well-attended roundtable discussion, "Soaring Before WWII" at the Frankfort Information Center. Oldtimers told of how lucky they were to stay aloft for a few minutes in a glider to a generation who thinks nothing of flying to a different continent in a few hours.

After, the streets were cleared and the Frankfort School Band played the National Anthem as the plaque was unveiled.

An informal reception at the Main Sail Restaurant closed the Landmark Dedication festivities.

Frankfort citizens now have a silent reminder to tourists and passers-by of its colorful soaring past.

Military TG-1A's at the Frankfort-Lewis School of Soaring, Lockport-Joliet Airport. (Additional Frankfort photos - page 8).



Don Stevens, left and Stan Corcoran at the 1938 Harris Hill, NY Nationals. Both were from Hollywood, CA, resulting in the movieland name Cinema for Corcoran's ship. (Fred T. Loomis photo, NSM multi-media collection).



A Cinema powered glider, 1944, with dual 2 cycle 6 h.p. engines and contra-rotating props.

The Frankfort Cinema

The following is condensed from the Peter M. Bowers, "Interesting Gliders" feature that appeared in the July, 1960 issue of SOARING.

The original Cinema I was designed by Stanley R. Corcoran as a single seater along conventional lines. Wings and tail surfaces of the 1938 sporting machine were built up of birch plywood and spruce. The fuselage was welded steel tubing. The horizontal tail consisted of "pendulum" elevators with no horizontal stabilizer, a fairly common arrangement at that time.

While a few single seaters were built, the design was developed into the Cinema II, a two-place version built by the Frankfort Sailplane Company of Joliet, IL.

Shortly before the American entry into WWII, the Army invited industry to submit designs for military training gliders.

Frankfort made slight modifications to the Cinema II bringing it



up to military standards for use as a training glider. The company received two orders, first for three XTG-1 experimental test models and then for 42 production TG-1A's (TG-Training Glider).

At the time these were in production the Army was buying up privately-owned sailplanes for training purposes. Four single-seat Cinema I's were given designated TG-1B and three Cinema II's, also known as "Model B," became TG-1C. A Cinema PS-2 became the single military TG-1D.

The Army became aware that these ships were not ideal for teaching military pilots to fly. Prewar soaring pilots who had become instructors, as well as some of their students soared off on cross-country expeditions in these handy Cinemas.

The Cinemas were declared surplus in 1943 and 1944. They survived the war to form the backbone of soaring through the first postwar decade. There were 53 military TG-1's built.

Cinema II (TG-1A) Specifications

Span	46' 3 1/4"
Length	23' 2 1/4"
Height	5'1"
Wing Area	194.3 Sq. Ft.
Aspect Ratio	10.7
Empty Weight	500 lbs.
Gross Weight	920 lbs.
Top Speed	80 MPH
Sink Speed	3.2 Ft./Sec.
L/D	20 to 1



Members of United States Soaring Hall of Fame welcome the 1991 inductees, Eugart Yerian, *seated left*, and Vice Adm. Donald D. Engen, USN, ret., *next to Yerian*, accepting on behalf of Barron Hilton who was unable to attend.

Seated at right, Virginia M. Schweizer, 1971.

Standing from left to right, William Gus Briegleb, 1958; Paul A. Schweizer, 1955; Alcide Santilli, 1979; Bernald S. Smith, 1984; Floyd Sweet, 1963; William Schweizer, 1984; and Hal M. Lattimore, 1989.

National Soaring Museum Hosts U.S. Soaring Hall Of Fame

**Barron Hilton and Eugart W. Yerian Inducted
During 38th Annual U.S. Soaring Hall of Fame
Ceremonies**

**Ground Broken For New Sailplane Storage
Building**

**First Annual Gross Sky Ghost Youth Achievement
Award**

Barron Hilton, of the Flying M Ranch, NV/CA, and Eugart W. Yerian of Memphis, TN, were named to the U.S. Soaring Hall of Fame by The Soaring Society of America's Board of Directors. The 38th annual Hall of Fame ceremonies honoring the 1991 inductees were held Saturday, May 16th, following a reception and banquet in the NSM's Edward A. Mooers Community Room.

NSM Executive Director and Master of Ceremonies Dr. Charles D. Smith introduced George H. Edwards, NSM Trustee President, who in welcoming remarks outlined several new Museum projects. These include the new 3,200-square-foot Sailplane Storage Building for which ground was broken that afternoon; the "Evolution of Gliders and Sailplanes Exhibit," a panoramic scale model display to be completed soon; The Dr. Frank Gross Sky Ghost Youth Achievement Program; and the summertime dedication of a kiosk exhibiting a panel of fabric used in the original Wright Brothers 1903 Kitty Hawk Flyer.



At the Hall of Fame Reception. From left SSA Executive Vice President Larry Sanderson, NSM Executive Director Charles D. Smith, NSM Trustee President George H. Edwards, SSA President E. Gene Hammond, Vice Admiral Donald D. Engen, USN (ret.).



Recalling their early glider experiences left Dr. Frank R. Gross and 1991 Hall of Fame inductee Eugart Yerian.

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1991 Hall of Fame inductee Eugart W. Yerian recalls the early days of the Memphis Soaring Society.



Vice Admiral Donald D. Engen USN (ret.) accepts the 1991 Hall of Fame Award for Barron Hilton.



1991 Hall of Fame inductee Barron Hilton, who was unable to attend due to corporate commitments.

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Edwards thanked Paul A. Schweizer for his work in marshaling model builders from all over the world to craft these incredible models for the Museum's E.O.G.A.S.E. Edwards commented on the Bowlus Albatross and Baby Albatross models that Jeff Byard brought with him from San Luis Obispo, CA. "They're like Faberge eggs," he said, "jewels of modeling; made of mahogany pieces from the original Bowlus factory; not just models, but part of soaring history."

Dr. Frank R. Gross of Akron, OH, in describing the First Annual Gross Sky Ghost Youth Achievement Award said, "It is slanted toward youth...I felt that the most support was needed in interesting the youngsters to take part as early as possible in soaring. They should be recognized and should help the soaring movement."

First Award winner was David Graham of Horseheads, NY, an officer of the Junior Organization of the Harris Hill Soaring Corporation who soloed at 14. He's had several five-hour flights, earned his private license one week after his 16th birthday, organized several club projects and worked on club ships.

In addition to a certificate and inscription on the permanent Sky Ghost plaque, Graham received a \$500 Gross scholarship to be administered through H.H.S.C. for the advancement of his soaring activities.

A similar Gross Sky Ghost recognition will be awarded to an SSA student member during the 19th Annual Ralph Stanton Barnaby Lecture Program to be held October 24th, this year, in Washington D.C.

SSA Executive Vice President Larry Sanderson, commenting on the 60th anniversary of the Soaring Society of America, said that seven people had been members since its 1932 founding and that two of those, Alcide Santilli (H of F, 1979) and Floyd Sweet (H of F, 1963) were present at the banquet.

Sanderson explained the process for membership in the U.S. Soaring Hall of Fame. "A candidate must have had a lifetime commitment to the sport and be so involved with others that it is recognized...Names along with documentation are circulated to the SSA's 27 directors who vote. The top two are selected."

Sanderson introduced Vice Admiral Donald D. Engen, USN (Ret.), President of the AOPA Air Safety Foundation, former head of the Federal Aviation Administration and member of the SSA Board of Directors. Adm. Engen accepted the Hall of Fame Award for Barron Hilton who, because of corporate commitments, was unable to attend. Sanderson said that in 1986, for the first Hitachi Masters of Soaring event, Adm. Engen was contacted as head of FAA, "to see if he would like to come out to Minden, NV, and soar with the best sailplane pilots in the world."

The answer came back not only as yes, but "hell yes!" Sanderson laughed, "and together with 17 of the world's best pilots flying the world's fastest ships, Don came out and crawled into a Janus with Bill Ivans (H of F, 1962). These two old guys flying a somewhat cumbersome ship proceeded to blow the doors off five of the other guys as they flew the course!"

Adm. Engen said that Barron Hilton is a patron saint of soaring. He's a soaring pilot who soars with the very best and never asks any quarter or handicap, a great family man with wife Marilyn and eight children. "At 64 he soars, he balloons, he flies a Stearman and a staggering Beech. He's got a Mach one-eleven that he flies; he gets around and is really zestful of life."

The son of the legendary hotelier Conrad Hilton, Barron opted to make his own fortune without his father's assistance. One of his business ventures was forming Air Finance Corp., which leases planes to companies.

"He's best known for his Barron Hilton Cup competition," Engen said, "one of the greatest things that a soaring pilot can vie for. He's kind of like a maestro; he orchestrates, elicits enthusiasm, and rewards performance."

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At the Hall of Fame Reception from left Walter Setz, Paul A. Schweizer, Donald Engen, Jeff Byard, and Felix Chardon.

Right: SSA Executive Vice President Larry Sanderson commenting on the 60th anniversary of the Soaring Society of America.

Below: NSM Exhibit Committee Chairman Paul A. Schweizer, left, and NSM Executive Director Charles D. Smith holding Bowlus Albatross sailplane models.





Dr. Frank R. Gross, right, describes the NSM's restored Gross Sky Ghost cockpit arrangement to David Graham, first winner of the Annual Gross Sky Ghost Youth Achievement Award and Scholarship.

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In 1976, Hilton met with the renowned German aviatrix Hanna Reitsch, who regaled him with tales of soaring that he had never heard before. From then on, the 1991 inductee gave soaring his total attention and provided encouragement to others. His Hilton Cup competition provides that incentive to world-class pilots.

Hilton invites the winners to the U.S., "...foots all the bills and brings them for a week at his 'small' ranch - 450,000 acres, part in Nevada and part in California." Engen said.

He added, "Hilton's Flying M Ranch, with a 5,000 foot macadam strip, is in the seat of the best soaring and cross-country conditions that you could hope to have."

Pilots are briefed by an aerographer that Hilton brings in from Minden, NV. Everyone is on the field by 10:30 or 11 and as soon as the cumulus clouds start popping they are in the air and stay there until the last afternoon puff of lift.

The Cup has nurtured a camaraderie among sailplane pilots of the world and introduced them to the high desert soaring of the United States.

"That's a measure of the man's dedication and heart that he puts into our great sport," the Admiral said, adding, "Barron expressed his great sadness at the death of Helmut Reichmann earlier this year. Helmut and Hannes Linke structured the Hilton Cup competition and made it go." (The world championship German sailplane pilot and author was killed in an air accident in France. - Ed.)

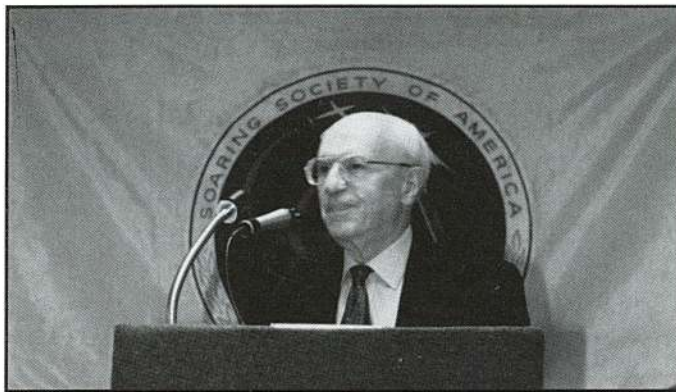
Accepting the award in Hilton's name, Admiral Engen thanked the Directors and membership of the SSA for having honored Barron Hilton by naming him to the U.S. Soaring Hall of Fame.

Before introducing 1991 Hall of Famer Eugart Yerian, William G. (Gus) Briegleb, Adelanto, CA (H of F-1958) recalled that Eugart learned to fly in high school in 1922 when a friend bought a military surplus Curtiss Jenny, but Yerian hadn't taken up soaring until 1939 when they met.

During the wartime years Yerian became Briegleb's plant manager, building and testing gliders.

Following WWII, Yerian purchased 20 surplus Schweizer TG-3A's. He sold them as trainers to clubs and individuals, thus forming new centers of soaring, principally in the states near his hometown of Memphis, TN.

While teaching speech and drama at Memphis State University during the 40's and 50's, he fascinated students with his stories of the freedom and exhilaration of motorless flight.



Dr. Frank R. Gross explains background and aim of the Gross Sky Ghost Youth Achievement Award and Scholarship at the Hall of Fame banquet.

In 1947 Yerian, along with his students formed the Memphis Soaring Society, the first gliding club in the Southeast and the longest continually running club in the country.

Briegleb said that Yerian had done many interesting things through the years in addition to starting the MSS; acting, directing, staging the first tv show in Memphis. He made training films for the Holiday Inn, of which organization he is a vice president. He also served on the SSA Board.

"But the best thing he did, amid all his other activities," Briegleb continued, "was to take on the editorship of SOARING magazine for five years."

"Eugart celebrated his 85th birthday by soaring his Concept 70 for the press," Briegleb said, "and today at 87 he's still flying. His greatest contribution is in the promotion of the sport of soaring."

The dapper octogenarian regaled his audience with stories of building soaring enthusiasm. "I've spent my whole lifetime working and keeping the Soaring Society going," he said.

"We did a lot of things in what we call the mid-South to keep soaring going. Every little town in the mid-South has an air show and they always invited the Memphis Soaring Society to come and sell rides and give demonstration flights. One time I asked this friend of mine to fly the towplane to this little town for us. When the thing was all over and everyone was putting away the ships and leaving, the towplane was still sitting there. The fellow who flew it out there and towed all day was packing up to ride home with someone else. I said, 'What's going to happen to the towplane?' He turned and said, 'Don't ask me; I'm never going to get in that damn thing again!'"

Yerian's 16-year-old son de-rigged the glider, put it on the trailer and returned home to Memphis while Yerian flew the towplane back.

Yerian said there were hundreds of similar stories, "The main thing is we worked hard to keep it going."

"I have found through the years that it has all been worth it," the new inductee said, "because I have made hundreds and hundreds of friends. The reason I'm here is because a lot of my members have been looking at this list of people in the Hall of Fame and saying, 'Eugart, why aren't you on that list?'"

"I said, 'Because you guys haven't put me there.'"

"Well, enough of our guys wrote letters to the SSA officers and directors, and I got nominated, and I got here!"

"It's been great fun. I've enjoyed it and I'm glad to see all of you," Yerian waved. The audience applause reciprocated the feeling.

Dr. Smith closed by asking all eight attending Hall of Famers, in addition to the newly inducted, to stand and be recognized.

ON THE COVER

Ted Bellak in the Minimoa "Dove of Peace" after his record-breaking 54-mile over-water flight from Sturgeon Bay, WI across Lake Michigan to Frankfort, MI. The 1939 flight was planned with Victor M. Saudek. (shown at right holding oxygen tank) It was to determine the meteorological effect of bodies of water on thermals. Lewin Barringer, first General Manager of the SSA, flew this Mini in 1938 to a U.S. Goal/Distance record of 212 miles, from Wichita Falls, TX to Tulsa, OK from a winch launch.

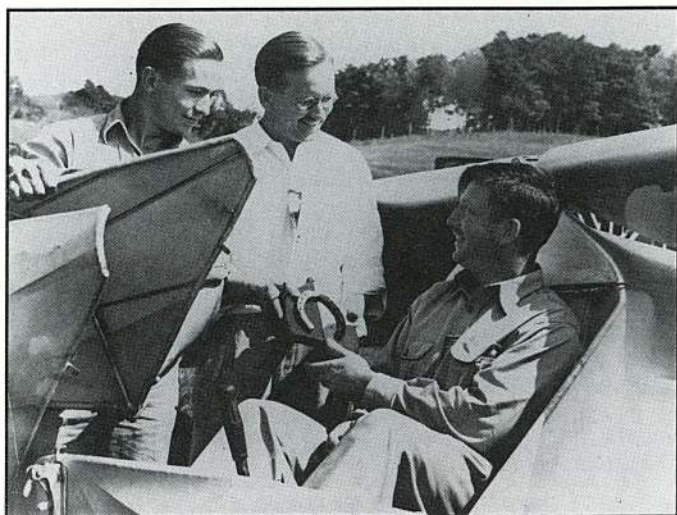
The ship is now on display in the National Soaring Museum's main exhibit hall.

You can help in preserving America's soaring heritage.

If you have historic memorabilia and excess or duplicate publications, please contact the National Soaring Museum to discuss contribution to the Museum's collections and archives.

Share your collection of Soaring artifacts and reminiscences with interested succeeding generations.

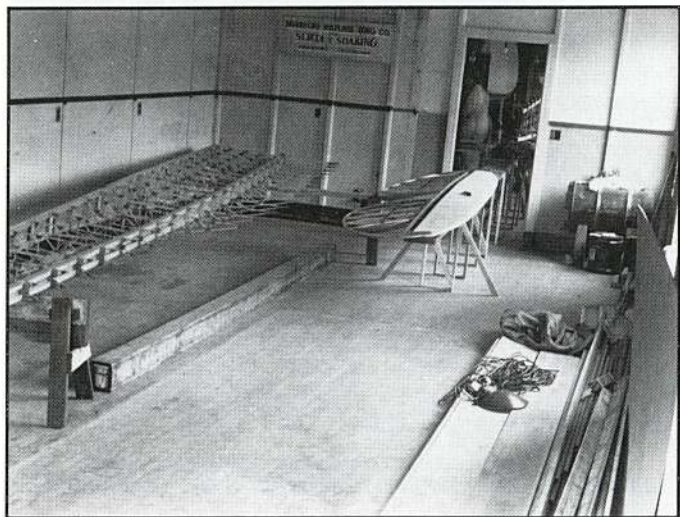
Address: Charles D. Smith, Ph. D., Executive Director
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Frankfort - continued from page 4

Above: left to right Elmer Zook, Art Schulte and John Nowak at the 1939 Frankfort American Open Soaring Meet.

Below: Interior of Frankfort Sailplane Company plant, 1939.



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Editor — Bill Gallagher

The National Soaring Museum is an affiliate of The Soaring Society of America and, as such, is the official repository for all its artifacts and memorabilia.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
Mid August	Dedication of 1903 Wright Flyer sample	NSM
Sept. 12-13	Chemung Valley Air Show	Elmira/Corning Regional Airport
Sept. 26	Fall KITE-CITEMENT	NSM
Oct. 24	19th Annual Ralph S. Barnaby Lecture	Washington, D.C. Area
Dec. 4	Annual Community Soaring Luncheon	NSM Community Room

For further information, contact Paul Prunier, Curator of Education

Letters to the Editor:

"It's Still Working!" Remember "The P-38 Drop Fuel Tank That Grew into The Prue 160 Sailplane," article that appeared in the Winter '91-'92 NSM? James F. Jenista, Jr. of Boulder City, NV, tells us that the doughty little "160" is still flying...



Dear Sirs;

A friend of mine just showed me a recent (current?) copy of your Newsletter, featuring an article on Irv Prue's Prue 160. It included some interesting historical data on the bird, but stated that Prue hasn't heard of its whereabouts lately. But you know! I have in my hand a letter from the NSM, dated 13 Dec., 1988, certifying that the NSM has the HP-8, N34Y, signed by Jennifer Trimber. It was written to help me straighten out the registration on N90614, which the FAA said was the HP-8! With your help, I got the record straight, and I own - and fly - the Prue 160 fairly regularly!

...I just thought you'd like an update. I'm enclosing a picture I took, at Jean, NV, where the Las Vegas Valley Soaring Association operates. I first flew successfully that month, and now have about 30 hours in it. I'm a CFIG, now retired, and fly for fun now.

When we first acquired the Prue, it had no canopy, and was missing a wing rib and some fittings. We built the canopy shown, got all the pieces together, and the FAA re-issued the Airworthiness Certificate. I hope to improve the performance of the bird with a new canopy (more closely approximating the original), and replacing the 1947 paint during this year's annual inspection. I fly it conservatively, and expect to enjoy it for a few years more. However, I don't think it should be disposed of back in the ocean - regardless of Prue's views on the subject! The NSM, or one here in the West, would be a more appropriate resting place.

As I said, I thought you'd like a brief update. For my part, I'd be very interested in getting a copy of the newsletter with the article for my own historical record. It's a unique bird, and worth keeping track of!

Keep 'em Soaring!

James F. Jenista, Jr.