



Southwest Soaring

Quarterly Newsletter of the U.S. Southwest Soaring Museum

A 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt organization

An affiliate of the Soaring Society of America, Inc.

Fall 2007



The Venerable Schweitzer SGU 2-22

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT! SEE PAGE 5

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Our Web site: www.swsoaringmuseum.org

Cover: This 2-22 is purported to be the one used in the Walt Disney made for television film “The Boy Who Flew With The Condors”

NOTE:

Deadline for copy for the Winter Newsletter is 1 November

Editorial

By

Bob Alkov

Our cover depicts the Schweitzer 2-22 that was featured in the Disneyland Television series Walt Disney’s World that aired on the 19th of February, 1967. The episode dubbed “The Boy Who Flew With Condors” marked a turning point in motorless aviation. The Soaring Society of America more than doubled its membership after millions had viewed the show. Commercial soaring operations also got a tremendous boost from it.

Letter to the editor:

I came across your site whilst surfing regarding RAF Fairwood Common, I was amased to see WB941, my aircraft. (The Slingsby T-21 that was featured on our June 2007 cover, Ed.) I was one of the cadets who was trained to solo in the lovely lady, my first solo was on 08 March 1969, 5 days after my 17th birthday. I would dearly love to get a picture of the old girl, and would willingly supply a copy of my flying log giving the detail of my training in her. I do hope I will hear from you.

Regards,

Jack Thomas
J.E.Thomas Flt.Lt.
Officer Commanding
334 (Neath) Squadron

(We would like to solicit letters from our readers as to their opinions on our newsletter contents, what you would like to see covered, what to leave out, etc.)

MUSEUM MUSINGS:

Recollections of Alcide Santilli

By

George Applebay

Captain Alcide Santilli reported for duty at Sandia Base in Albuquerque in the summer of 1947. Following along in a trailer behind his car was an LK-10 war surplus sailplane. This fine old ship had been purchased by Al from Tom Page, another long time soaring pilot from Illinois. Al and Tom had been competitors to the

National Soaring competitions in Wichita Falls that summer and a deal was struck that allowed AL to become the new owner of this LK, which, during the war years, was known as a TG-4 training glider.

In looking around Albuquerque for a place to operate his new ship from, Al found that Albuquerque had many airports in those days. Kirtland, by this time, was quite busy with military, airlines and commercial activity. West Mesa Airport was being used commercially by Cutter/Carr as their primary base of operations for their post-war GI training contracts. Captain Al could have used West Mesa, however, he still had the choice of three more flying fields on the nearer East Mesa.

It seems that Cutter/Carr needed a second airport to support their operations and had opened a flying field in that area of land just north of where American Furniture is located on the corner of Menaul and Carlisle. Just a mile east of Cutter/Carr #2 airport, between Menaul and Montgomery and San Pedro and Louisiana, lay the Bell/Graham Airport. Jack Bell was the principal operator of this field until hard times forced him to take a drivers' job with Greyhound. Jack drove between Albuquerque and Amarillo mainly and continued his flying in both places. While working on his own hanger at Amarillo, he suffered a heart attack while on the roof, and was found there on the roof by friends after succumbing. A man by the name of Dorland continued to operate the Bell/Graham field for some time until it's closing in the early 1950s. Dorland later became a successful building contractor in the Albuquerque area and constructed several schools.

A third airport was located just another mile and a half east, called the Sky Court, and was owned and operated by Harold Snell until the mid 1950s when it, too, was closed. The location was, again, between Menaul and Montgomery and Wyoming and Eubank. One wonders how so many fields could operate successfully. Each must have had their own specialty. The University Flying Club, of which Santilli had become a member, flew their PA-12 Super Cruiser from Sky Court, so Al chose this field from which to operate his sailplane.

Al found that he was not alone in his motorless flying at this most eastern airport on the East Mesa. The Civil Air Patrol had owned and was flying a surplus

Schweizer TG-3 training glider, under the leadership of Albert E. Hastings. Al Hastings was one of the very early soaring pilots and had the distinction of having won the first two national gliding championships held at Elmira in 1930 and 31, flying a Franklin glider. Mr. Hastings had come to Albuquerque as an aviation incident adjuster for the Zener Insurance Agency in Albuquerque. Al Hastings later took to the road as an applicant interviewer for the "Famous Artists", a school for budding illustrators run by Normal Rockwell and Steven Dohanos. At this time, in the summer of 1947, Major Charles Lynch Phillips was the Air Force Liaison Officer for the Civil Air Patrol, and was also responsible for some of the CAP cadet glider training in the TG-3. Robert "Bob" Allen was also one of the very active CAP members and pilots of the TG-3.

A third glider had spent some time on Kirtland during the later part of the war years. It was designed and built by the Aero Industries Technical Institute and was called the "G-2", registration N-19965. The ship was very unique in that it had an aluminum fuselage and a 48-foot, plywood and fabric-covered wing. This ship had been flown in the second Southwestern Soaring Regatta at Wichita Falls, Texas, in 1940. It also won the first place award in the 1940 design contest at the National Soaring Meet that year in Elmira. It was sold during 1948 and was observed being trailered away from Kirtland at that time. Many pre-war gliders were conscripted into the service during WW-II and were sold surplus after the war was over. It is thought that this ship was one of those that were bought up by the military and possibly sold from Kirtland as surplus, as many aircraft were disposed of from this base.

A heavy storm in late 1947 dumped hail and rain on both the TG-3 and Al Santilli's TG-4 damaging both severely. The CAP TG-3 was thought unrepairable. Santilli commissioned Al Fiedler at Dorland's Flight and Repair Service to restore his TG-4. The repairs began to drag on for too much time to suit Al.

In looking for a way to get back into a glider, he found what seemed like another good LK-10 named "Yankee Doodle II", located at the Smokey Hill AAF Base in Kansas. The two sergeant owners at Smokey Hill were happy to sell it to Al and even offered to pull the LK with its' trailer to Albuquerque. The fast drive to

Albuquerque probably damaged the horizontal tail or its operating mechanism much to Al's chagrin. The first flight that Sunday morning came off well. The air was smooth with a short and uneventful flight. The AT-6 used on the next tow was anything but uneventful with its fast tow speed. Al encountered a lively thermal while still on tow. Bang went something in the tail and the next thing Al knew, his new ship was uncontrollable and doing things Al definitely did not like. He released from tow but things did not improve. Within the next few seconds Al joined the Caterpillar Club, an exclusive organization formed by the Switlik Parachute Company, with honorary membership for those airmen, whose lives were saved by the use of one. As Al floated to earth, he saw his new LK do an outside loop on its way to a splintering crash below him on the Far East Mesa. While Al's original LK was still being repaired, he drove to Kansas and purchased another LK for \$350 in the spring of 1948. A careful drive this time brought it safely back to Albuquerque. Al flew it in the Nationals that summer in Grand Prairie, Texas. He later, in '48, took it to the West Coast Regionals in El Mirage, enjoying many good flights. Since his first ship was being completed, Al decided to leave his number 3 ship at El Mirage and continue to fly it there when his travels took him to California. Eventually the ship was sold to Ed Butts in 1952. Al continued to fly his number one ship in Albuquerque after repairs were completed. Tows were sometimes very difficult to come by. On one occasion, a BT-13 owner was asked to tow. "Sure!" said the aircraft owner, "if you will fill my tank!" Little did Al know that the 13s' tanks were real leakers. After putting in 40 gallons, they took off from the Graham and Bell Airport. Al said the gas was streaming out of that 13 like rain coming down. Most expensive tow he had ever purchased. He released from the flying fire hazard as soon as he found a good thermal at 800 feet.

On another occasion in 1948, Al did a car tow off the escarpment on the West Mesa to check out conditions there. Since landing areas around the escarpment were not safe, it was ruled out as not a good idea to use that place for glider operations.

Santilli continued to fly his ship as tows were available, and give demonstration rides and some instructions. About this time a group of pilots in Lordsburg purchased a TG-3 and put it up in good shape. Contact was made

with Al to come down and check one of the owners out in it. Dr. Carl Fife had the most recent flying experience, as he owned and flew a Bellanca Cruisair. The other owners were former military pilots that wanted to renew their flying abilities. The TG was taken out to a dry lake bed about 10 miles west of Lordsburg, where, auto tows were conducted. All went well and thermals were found, allowing for a return flight back, at an altitude of 14,000 feet, to the Lordsburg Municipal Airport. Dr. Fife had shown good aptitude for handling the glider and therefore, was checked out. Some days later, Dr. Fife elected to do a solo car tow. Insufficient altitude was gained for a proper pattern; a stall spin resulted, causing the death of Dr. Carl Fife. New Mexico soaring had been hit with a hard blow.

In 1949 Al was installed as the first SSA State Governor and, with that title, he helped promote gliding in the state. Ed Butts had transferred to the Roswell AAF Base and started soaring in the area. Benjamin Sapeyta, a Roswell resident, became a staunch supporter of soaring and eventually proposed and conducted a Regional contest there in 1968. Harland Ross was the competition director and for the first time in soaring competition, cameras were used for turn point documentation. This was the first formal soaring meet to be held in New Mexico but certainly not the last. Dave Johnson, flying his new Libelle, won the contest.

Al Santilli left Albuquerque in 1950, moving back to the east. There, he continued his soaring from the Martinsburg, Virginia Airport. Al's hanger there was smaller than his LK's wingspan. Landing late one evening, he found that everyone had left the airport. Al had to learn the hard way that evening how to remove one wing from his ship by himself so he could get the ship into the small hanger, no small feat in itself one would imagine. After moving back to Albuquerque, Al still often found himself to be the last to land most soaring days. His friends took better care of him and waited around to help him put his bird in the hanger. Al had long ago paid his dues to the soaring community.

Al returned to Albuquerque in 1957, leaving again in 1960 for a tour of duty in Germany. He returned again in 1965 to retire from the military as a Colonel never to live any other place. He died on June 23rd, 2007, at the age of 93. His presence impacted heavily on the New Mexico Soaring scene.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

By Allene Lindstrom

Like most organizations when people work together with a common goal, everyone comes away from a task with a positive feeling. It is fun working cooperatively completing an objective that adds to the overall plan. To do this we often need new volunteers to supplement the current people. New volunteers create new ideas and energy. More hands make short work of any job.

The US Southwest Soaring Museum and the Southwest Soaring Museum Foundation are actively seeking volunteers with varied talents. Your talents and abilities are a valuable asset that will continue to provide education, preservation of history and a source of pride to Moriarty and New Mexico. If you can spare some time, please volunteer by calling the Museum (505) 832-9222, or P.O. Box 3626, Moriarty, NM 87035 and also at the Museum, 918 East old Highway 66, in Moriarty.

The US Southwest Soaring Museum Foundation is still in its infancy. Our goal is to build an endowment fund by raising money that will provide additional support for the USSSM. **WE NEED YOU!**

May I express my thanks to all the volunteers who have contributed their time, energy, support and money to the USSSM effort. Fall seems to present itself as a time for celebration of the season's bounty. Toward this end, a dinner event is planned jointly with the New Mexico EAA chapters' annual September 8 fly-in and the Southwest Soaring Museum Foundation as a benefit fund raiser for the Museum.

Chapter 179 of the EAA and the US Southwest Soaring Museum Foundation cordially invite you to join us for

AN OCTOBER FEST BENEFIT AND DINNER:

Saturday, September 8, 2007, 7:00P.M.

At the US Southwest Soaring Museum, 918 Old Highway 66, Moriarty, NM

\$45.00 per person

The dinner menu will be catered by El Comedor.

There will be October Fest Beer and desserts and yes, there will be salads and side dishes.

The agenda for the dinner features:

The EAA award presentations and Silent Auction. Ted Spitzmiller, local author, speaker and aviator will speak on the "Impact of Sputnik". Ted's autographed books will also be available.

Events during the day at the Moriarty Airport include: Breakfast by the EAA, Hamburger Lunch by The EAA, and Afternoon Ice Cream by the Commemorative Air Force, Flea Market sponsored by the SSM Foundation.

AIRPLANES OF ALL MAKES AND MODELS!

With these aspirations, Volunteers are needed. These are easy jobs and take a very few hours of your time to make a large difference in the outcome of this effort.

Donations are requested for the Flea Market and Silent Auction. The items for the Flea Market are usually aviation related like odd parts, memorabilia, and instruments. Items for the Silent Auction are usually new, have more value and not necessarily aviation related. All items accepted can receive a tax-deductible receipt.

For those who wish to volunteer to help with the dinner or make donations please contact Allene Lindstrom at ba1337853v@losalamos.com or 505-662-7510. Please leave a message on the answering machine if no answer.

Finally I want to THANK all of the volunteers who helped and the many people and businesses who helped to promote this event to make it a success. As a one-person operation, I am immensely grateful for the help I have received from the New Mexico EAA Chapters and the Commemorative Air Force.

ITEMS FOR SALE:

The Museum Board has declared several glider trailers in various conditions surplus to the needs of the Museum and has made them available for sale. Consult the Museum web site for a list.

The Foundation is offering glider ride gift certificates. Prices range from \$75.00 to \$150.00 depending on the length and type of ride desired. Contact Allene Lindstrom at: ba1337853v@losalamos.COM.

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USSSM Membership Application

Benefits of memberships include:

1. Free admission to museum facilities.
2. 10% discount on gift shop purchases.
3. Receive all USSSM mailings.
4. The satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to build a first-class museum.

Life members and major contributors and their minor children receive these benefits for life. Other members receive them for one year. Family, Supporting and Sustaining include minor children. Supporting and Sustaining accrue toward a Life membership.

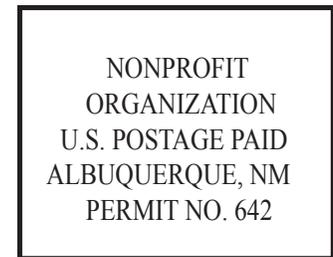
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