



# *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.

**Spring 2008**



**Open House during the 2008 SSA Convention, February 14th**

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505 832-0755 (business)

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[kathytaylor1000@msn.com](mailto:kathytaylor1000@msn.com)

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505 281-9505

### J. D. Huss

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505 899-9169 (home)

[jd.huss@faa.gov](mailto:jd.huss@faa.gov)

[abqtubbycat@earthlink.net](mailto:abqtubbycat@earthlink.net)

### Jim Bobo

[jimbobo@mindspring.com](mailto:jimbobo@mindspring.com)

### Bob Alkov, Newsletter

505 281-7264 (home)

[prahna@aol.com](mailto:prahna@aol.com)

### Deor Jensen

480-258-3548 (cell)

[kdjensen@hotmail.com](mailto:kdjensen@hotmail.com)

[www.swoaringmuseum.org](http://www.swoaringmuseum.org)

### For Museum Hours

Phone (505) 832-9222

### USSSM Foundation

Allene Lindstrom, President

505 662-7510

**Cover: During our open house on the evening of February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2008 we hosted about 150 attendees of the SSA convention in Albuquerque. (Photo by Deor Jensen)**

## Editorial

By

Bob Alkov

The SSA convention held in Albuquerque 14-16 February afforded us a chance to advertise the Museum at our booth. On the night of February 14<sup>th</sup> SSA arranged to have three busloads of attendees driven to Moriarty to view the USSSM. We had a most successful evening. Over 120 people bought bus tickets and many more drove out in their own cars. (See cover.)

George Applebay taped Aviation Pioneer Peter Riedel telling the story of his flight from California to Texas in stages in 1939. The story is too long to be printed in these pages in entirety, but we have a few excerpts for you of this most interesting event.

Peter was born in Dehlitz Germany, near Halle on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1905. At the age of 14 Peter designed and built his own glider. He graduated from the Technical University at Darmstadt with a degree in aeronautical engineering. In 1920 Peter started flying gliders at the Wasserkuppe. He went on to win many soaring honors including the Rhoen Soaring Contest in 1933, the Hindenberg Cup in 1934, the 8<sup>th</sup> International Soaring Contest at Elmira and the Dupont trophy in 1938. He flew as a pilot for Lufthansa, and then was commissioned as a Captain in the Luftwaffe. He subsequently was assigned as Air Attaché to the German Embassy in Washington, DC. While in the US he married Helen Klug, a US citizen from Indiana. While he was in Washington he took leave and flew to California to attempt to fly across the US in the embassy's Kranich glider.

After World War II started Peter was interned by the US, and subsequently exchanged for US diplomatic personnel serving in Berlin. While serving as Air Attaché to the German embassy in Stockholm he was asked by his superior to liaison with the American OSS (now the CIA). Unknown to him his boss was implicated in the attempt on Hitler's life in 1944. He resigned his commission and defected, fearing he would be sent back to Germany to be executed. He escaped to Casablanca and eventually made his way to South America. There his wife joined him from Switzerland where she was spending the war. Finally he was able to return to the US in 1953 with his wife and in 1959 became a US citizen.

In the US he worked for TWA and PANAM. After retiring he traveled with his wife to East Africa, where he worked as a volunteer pilot ferrying medical doctors to remote areas of Kenya and Tanzania. He eventually settled in Ardmore, Oklahoma. He taught soaring, authored a trilogy on the History of Soaring, lectured and presented various papers at technical seminars in the US and in Europe and worked on his memoirs. He passed away on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1998 at the age of 93.

## Peter Reidel's 1939 Attempt to Soar Across the US

While stationed in Washington, D.C., Peter Riedel asked his boss for the three and a half weeks leave he had accumulated during 1938-39. He proposed that they let him fly a Kranich two-seat sailplane that the Embassy had shipped over from Germany to attempt a cross-country flight from California to the East Coast in stages. He enlisted two volunteers from the German Embassy to drive his car and trailer the glider to San Francisco. He joined them later, flying out on an airliner. After realizing that he couldn't soar in San Francisco due to the meteorological conditions in the Bay area, Peter and his crew drove to Los Angeles. After several flights in the LA area, from Burbank and from Muroc Dry Lake in the Mohave Desert (now Edwards Air Force Base) Peter took off from San Bernardino. His crew gave him an auto tow to 500 feet using a 1200-foot hemp rope. (Ed.)



**Peter Reidel with the Kranich 1939 in Magdalena**

The following synopsis is excerpted from the transcription made by George Applebay of the tape of Peter's narrative: "I caught an upcurrent and hoped that I would now begin the great trip across the continent. The mountainous area helped; I remember soaring above the ridges. The weather was poor for soaring and I didn't go up very high. There was not a very well defined cloud base. I just went slope soaring from one upcurrent to another, always keeping (an anxious lookout) for landing places because I didn't have much altitude." ... (I saw a gap between the mountains and sped up to avoid the downcurrents through the gap.) "I landed at the Morongo Indian Reservation, north of Banning after a flight of 35 or 40 minutes . . . not a very encouraging beginning. Soon my helpers caught up with me after some telephone difficulty."

"After disassembling and loading the Kranich on the trailer, we decided to go to Palm Springs on the Western Edge of the Imperial Valley where we spent the night. The airport had the beginning of a runway but it was much too short. I only made it to 200 feet on the auto tow. I was turning back for a landing when I hit a good thermal and fulfilled my second condition, an altitude climb of 3,000 meters for the Golden "C" award by making it high above Mt. San Jacinto (12,000 ft ASL). The thermals were good and the mountain provided lift, so I had a lovely flight."

After spending a couple of exhilarating days soaring from the Palm Springs airport, Peter realized that he was running out of time and would never make it by soaring back all the way to Washington, DC. As a European he had grossly underestimated the distances in the US. They trailered the Kranich to Prescott, Arizona where they found the airport to be too small to take off on an auto tow. Their 1200-foot rope took up most of the runway. So they drove on to Winslow, Arizona. He considered trailering the glider back, but the trailer needed some welding. At the airport they found a mechanic at the Transcontinental and Western Airlines hanger (which later changed its name to Trans-World Airlines). The mechanic saw the problem right away and made the weld, refusing to accept any pay for it. Peter said of this incident: "This wonderful American readiness to help your fellow man was something I just loved, and was one of the reasons I decided to become an American citizen after the war." He decided to repay them by showing them a takeoff in a soaring plane. He had a canvas bag with a gallon of water in the rear seat and had eaten breakfast, but had nothing to eat aboard the sailplane. After the auto tow he released, intending to come back around and land when he encountered a weak thermal going up at 2 meters per second. He was only wearing short sleeves, but in no time was 4,000 ft above Winslow.

He went on "I said to myself, I will give it a try. I will dash towards those mountains to the south. If they are disappointing, I can land close to that little road I saw stretching towards the mountains... I slowly gained more and more altitude. These mountains grew close and I knew from experience that when up currents are strong there will be a ring or stretch of down currents before you reach the mountains. ... I figured we can always land close to the road; there were still open spots. ... I soon came into an area of descent that was very alarming." He then spied a sawmill with some houses around it and open fields where he could land.

At this point he said “Hardly had I finished the thought when suddenly there it was, an upcurrent, and it came with a bang as if someone had hit the Kranich with a big fist from underneath. The rate of climb jumped right away to 3 meters per second, and then 4 meters and then 5 meters. ... I just took the first circle around and up we went, finally reaching 7 meters per second. ... It was hardly more than 8 or 9 minutes and I was at 15 to 16,000 feet altitude when I hit cloud base.” Afraid of being sucked into the cloud where he would encounter IFR and icing conditions he pushed the nose over. He felt terribly cold in his short sleeves.

Peter continued, “The plane raced east and I started taking my first good look at the countryside. When I looked down I became a little uncomfortable. I often did not see any roads at all, especially when I was over the mountains, they were just not visible and when you are outside of the mountains, over desert country, there were not any roads either. There were only canyons, and they were just crossing my course. If I would have had to land there and if I would have had to climb through one of those canyons, that would have been enough to scare me to death because... I get very dizzy at heights... I can assure you though, your mind suffers from lack of oxygen and gets less and less reliable; you become overly optimistic.”

“The day was getting far advanced and after quite a long time, about 6 o’clock in the evening, I saw far ahead a plain. On that plain, coming from the right, was a straight line going at an angle and then reforming and going in my direction. I thought to myself, that must be a highway, something made by human hands. To the left, everything was wild desert landscape, uninviting for spending the night or even finding a flat place for a landing. I held my course a little bit more to the south and arrived above a beautiful looking ranch with a road that joined the other highway on the plain.

Now ahead of me were mountains again. I knew from my road maps which had no altitude indicators at all and no airports marked except the biggest ones, about where I was. At that time, in 1939, you did not find landing strips, as nowadays. I decided not to try to continue across those mountains ahead, because by now it was 7 o’clock in the evening. I knew the Rio Grande would be behind those mountains but how far? With a heavy heart and about 2500 feet altitude I did something I had never done before on a distance flight;

I opened the spoilers and settled down to about 1,000 feet above the ranch house and still hit upcurrents. The

thermals were still powerful and the clouds were still very good.”

After landing “I greeted Mr. A.L. Myrland, a Norwegian-American from Chicago and his wife, their cowboys and other helpers, who received me very graciously. They said I was at Rancho Montoso, near Magdalena, New Mexico, 215 miles of a triangular flight from Winslow. I had spent seven and a half hours in the air. ...Mr. Myrland invited me to stay as their house guest. After calling my friends at their motel in Winslow, I had a wonderful two nights and a full day at the ranch, until my friends got to my location. They told how awful the roads had been. They both looked as if they had been cleaning chimneys after that dusty trip. We made it to Albuquerque after an auto ride from the ranch. There we went to the West Mesa Airport and left the glider.”

The next day after three takeoff tries with the worn rope which kept breaking, Peter was at last able to get to 200 feet and upon turning back to land, just like at Palm Springs, he encountered a thermal. After about 15 minutes, he says “I found myself above that beautiful west slope of the Sandia Mountains just east of the City of Albuquerque, where that plateau, west of Moriarty, falls down into the Rio Grande Valley. From then on upcurrents just like the day before, 4,5, or 6 meters per second transported the 18 meter Kranich quickly up to cloud base again.”... “Following Highway 66 we passed Santa Rosa. I remember at about Tucumcari I reached an altitude of 17,600 ft. above sea level...I still looked up and estimated 2,000 feet to the cloud base. That means cloud base can reach 20,000 feet when the weather is right and the upcurrents are still powerful. At the time I consciously gave up at 17,600 as it would have been suicidal to soar on up to the bases without oxygen equipment.”

He continued to follow the road out of Tucumcari southeast across the Revuelto Creek and then on to San Jon. Later he realized that he had made a great error. His goal was Amarillo, but by following the southeasterly direction he flew 25 degrees further south than planned and wound up in Hereford, Texas. He was now encountering moist Gulf air and had to land. His vacation time coming to an end, he and his companions trailed the Kranich back to Washington, DC. He attributed his mistake to fatigue and stress from long flights made at high altitudes without oxygen and proper clothing for cold weather.

## Glenn Holforty—A Brief Bio

By Lynn Buckingham



### Glenn Holforty with Rick Kohler in the Grob 103

A first impression one gets upon meeting Glenn is that this is probably a man in his 80s. It would be difficult to guess his true age. Then Glenn may tell you about some of the adventures he has recently had and you would realize you are talking to a man who has a great zest for life. For example, in the above picture Glenn is shown collecting on the promise of a free glider ride when he reached the age of 100. The ride took place on December 26, 2007. He turned 101 on February 6, 2008.

Glenn Wilbert Holforty was born on a farm outside of the very small town of DeLand, Illinois on February 6, 1907, the youngest of three brothers. After High school graduation in 1924, Glenn farmed with his dad for a year and then worked on the local newspaper.

Glenn spent a summer in Michigan driving a tractor for a housing contractor and got hooked on motorcycles, purchasing an Indian. Upon arriving back home in Illinois, his dad put a stop to that dangerous nonsense and made him return it, telling the dealer that Glenn was still a minor. Glenn also received his first airplane ride during that summer and acquired the flying bug.

An early adventure after high school was a trip to California and back with a friend in 1926 in a Model T Ford Coupe—hand crank, foot pedals, electricity supplied by a magneto, etc. They often slept on the ground either on or under a tarp.

The flying bug would not go away so Glenn went to flight school in 1929 in St. Elmo, IL and soloed in 1930. Glenn also met and wed his wife in St. Elmo.

They spent the depression running his family farm. Two children were born of this marriage; Betty Miller, who lives in Cedar Crest, NM and a younger brother. Glenn and Myrna were happily married for 72 years until Myrna passed away in 2001. Descendants of this marriage include two grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren and six great-great-grandchildren, none of whom inherited the flying bug.

A career with Allis Chalmers resulted in several moves for the family and a lot of business flying to many different cities for Glenn. He wasn't the pilot but it must have fit right in with his liking "anything to do with being in the sky", according to daughter Betty. Flying was a hobby although Glenn never actually owned an airplane.

Glenn retired at about age 57, leaving many years for travel and adventure. Although Glenn and Myrna did some traveling after he retired, she didn't share his passion for flying. Some of Glenn's most remarkable activities have happened in more recent years, when he was in his 90s.

In 2002 Glenn and Betty went on a cruise to Alaska where they took a helicopter trip that gave them a chance to walk on some glaciers and visit Eskimo villages. In 2003 they took a long car trip back to Illinois. In 2004 Glenn was able to take several glider flights in Arizona and New Mexico. He was also delighted to fly with a family friend in his homebuilt airplane. In 2005, at age 98, Glenn did a parachute jump out of an airplane.

In 2006 he went on a motorcycle ride with his grandson. The highlight of 2007 was Glenn's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party. This event was held in February 2007 near his home in Arizona and turned into a wonderful celebration with many friends and family. A gift was a balloon ride scheduled for March 2007. Later that year he and Betty took a cruise to Tahiti and Hawaii, which included a chance to go down into a submarine. Now Glenn is trying to persuade Betty to go on a cruise with him to Australia and New Zealand!

Presently, Glenn lives alone in an apartment in Peoria, AZ. He has no heart trouble and walks with the help of a walker. He cooks his own breakfast and has other meals with friends in a communal dining room. He loves to play cards, especially pinochle. He attributes his longevity to "aftershave lotion and my cardiologist". Glenn is a "Life" member of the Southwest Soaring Museum.

## SOUTHWEST SOARING MUSEUM FOUNDATION NEWS

By Allene Lindstrom

There have been some positive changes made with the Southwest Soaring Museum Foundation.

We have a new post office box. It is now P.O. Box 1225, Los Alamos, NM 87544. You can reach the Foundation at (505)662-7510 and leave a message on the answering machine. Our e-mail is [soaringfoundation@mac.com](mailto:soaringfoundation@mac.com). In the near future we will develop a web site.

We lost our founding treasurer, Steve Hill who resigned and were fortunate to locate a gentlemen, Dexter Sutherland, to be our new treasurer. Steve was an outstanding member and contributor to the Foundation and his expertise is missed. Thank you Steve!

Three new individuals have agreed to serve on the Foundation Board since our last meeting in November. They are Dexter Sutherland, Bob Talarczyk, and Nancy Talarczyk. Our recent board meeting this February netted a very productive discussion toward the formulation of a "Mission" statement for the Foundation. Discussion also involved ideas of how to sell the Foundation and support the U.S. Southwest Soaring Museum.

In the last three months we have had to move our banking to a more convenient bank for the treasurer and board. Our last bank was the 1st Community bank with a branch in Moriarty. The 1st Community Bank was very responsive to the needs of the Foundation and Museum. Our sincere thanks for their service and our regrets about having to leave. If you need a banking service, 1st Community carries our recommendation.

Donations come in various forms. As a result of an article in the last quarter Soaring Museum newsletter, through the Foundation came an offer of \$10,000. This offer has several caveats attached to it. The major one is the Museum Board needs to create a non board committee to start a youth education program. The funds earned by carrying out this program would do some needed repairs to the Museum building. The donor's vision of this program would be to create a basic, but simple, education program to introduce youth to soaring. This is a seed education program for the Museum which

allows improved chances to obtain education grants. Youth education is one of George Applebay's cherished goals.

A reminder: The Museum still has some excess glider trailers for sale. They were posted on the Museum web site. The Foundation still offers glider rides at Sundance Aviation, sale of which gives the Foundation a bit of operating money. Left over from the Fall dinner door-prizes we still have 15 gallon of Av-fuel donated by Los Alamos Avgas, Inc, a \$50 U.S. savings bond donated by First National Bank of Santa Fe, and a pizza platter donated by Cook'n Stuff. Minimum bids is \$35.00. E-mail us at [soaringfoundation@mac.com](mailto:soaringfoundation@mac.com). Local volunteers who would like to help get the education program started would be appreciated.



**Lynn Buckingham and George Applebay in our booth at the SSA Convention**



**Clockwise from the right front: Kathy and George Taylor, Lisa Ruppert, George Applebay, Alice and Dick Johnson and Bob Whelan at the SSA Awards Banquet during the 2008 Convention**

Membership numbers and expiration dates are on your mailing labels.

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**NOTE**

**DEADLINE FOR COPY FOR THE SUMMER ISSUE IS MAY 15TH.**

**DIRECTIONS TO THE MUSEUM**

We are located at 918 East Old Route 66 in Moriarty, New Mexico. Traveling East from Albuquerque on Interstate 40 take exit 197 (about 35 miles from the city). Exit right onto Highway 66 facing West. We are the big building on the left.

Traveling West on Interstate 40 exit right at exit 197 and continue heading West on Route 66. We are the big building on the left as you enter 66.

# 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.

Send check to: U.S. Southwest Soaring Museum  
P.O. Box 3626  
Moriarty, NM 87035

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