



# *Southwest Soaring*

Quarterly Newsletter of the U.S. Southwest Soaring Museum

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

Fall 2009



IAR Brasov IS-29D2 Lark

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**Cover:** Gene Rinke surprised us back in March with his beautiful Romanian IAR Brasov IS-29D2 Lark that he trailered down from Michigan, calling us while still an hour away to announce his gift for the first time.

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## Editorial

by Bob Alkov

In this issue we are presenting a brief history of the Albuquerque Soaring Club (ASC). We would like to include histories from other Soaring Clubs. If you would like to see your clubs' history included please send us your manuscript. The deadline for our next issue will be November the 16<sup>th</sup>.

The history of the ASC was prepared as part of a power point presentation on the history of soaring in New Mexico which was given to the Albuquerque Aviation Historical Association on the third of September. The information for the ASC history was provided by George Applebay, "Buzz" Averill, Ken Harper, Ted Nagy and Hermann Wentz. The piece on Helmut Roemer's flight was gleaned from the September 1962 issue of New Mexico magazine and from the article he wrote printed in the July 1961 issue of Soaring.

On another note, Bob Talarczyk, owner of Darkhorse Design in Santa Fe, donated these beautiful posters to the competition pilots during the 1-26 and PW-5 Nationals at the Moriarty Airport during June and July of this year. They are available in color in the museum's gift shop for \$ 15.00 each.



## The History of the Albuquerque Soaring Club

On March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1930 twenty leading citizens of Albuquerque met at the Albuquerque Airport on the East Mesa to form The New Mexico Glider Club. Albuquerque Mayor, Clyde Tingley, was named President, the airport manager, Frank Speakman, was made Vice President and H.T. Byler was made Secretary-Treasurer. They elected a five-man Board of Directors and made plans for acquiring a glider. Members started studying meteorology and other aviation related subjects.

The glider arrived on April 12<sup>th</sup>. It was an Eaglenook primary glider with a wingspan of 36 feet. The pilots' seat was mounted below and in front of the wing. Catapulted by a bungee cord stretched by two teams of club members with another team holding back on the tail until the pilot was ready to launch, the glider averaged flights of one minute. Eventually they started using automobile tows.



**Bungee Launch of a Primary Glider**

In 1957, Robert Davis attended the Schweizer Soaring School at Elmira, New York, and took their flight training course. He purchased and brought back to the area a Schweizer 2-22 training glider. Shortly thereafter he acquired a Super Cub tow plane and a Schweizer 1-26. He tried to set up an operation south of Kirtland Air Base on land that looked desirable. After a few flights, the governor from Isleta Pueblo came upon the scene and demanded immediate removal of the flying equipment. It is thought that Davis brought together a group of interested followers at this time, initiating the original Albuquerque Soaring Club. Club operations were commenced at the new Coronado Airport.



**Bob Davis in his 1-26**

The new club purchased Bob's 2-22 trainer and later a Schweizer 1-26 glider kit and started building it as a club project. New club member, and long time model builder, Clyde V. "Buzz" Averill was a principal builder in this project with the assistance of Louis Bothell, a UNM Professor of Aerodynamics. Buzz claimed he learned to buck rivets at this time as he performed that task on nearly every rivet in the ship. It was in 1959 that Buzz learned to fly, soloing the 2-22 under the instruction of USAF LT Bob Maiden.

In the spring of 1960 a group of soaring enthusiasts flying out of the West Mesa Airport formed the Albuquerque Soaring Club. West Mesa, located West of Coors Blvd. and North of Central, was the site of the original Albuquerque Municipal Airport named Oxnard Field, the base of operations for TWA.

Richard G. Illing, a retired Air Force Colonel and soaring enthusiast, helped organize the club by drawing up the by-laws and submitting the articles of incorporation to the State, although he never joined the club. He wrote an article on soaring in New Mexico that was published in the September 1962 issue of New Mexico Magazine.

The club was headed up by a group of Air Force officers assigned to Kirtland AFB. President was Lt. Bob Maiden, vice president was Maj. Marvin Sullivan, head of operations was Lt. Bob Mercer, and the treasurer was Captain Herman Moore. The secretary was a civilian, Hermann Wente, a Sandia Corporation engineer and another Sandia engineer, Hank Tendal filled the position of maintenance officer. The initial group of members



included George Ashley C.S. (Buzz) Averill, Dr. Lou Bothell, Bob Davis, Sgt. Don Jackson, Major Clay Keen, Gerhard Schirmer, Ken Cordes and Jim Stark, another Sandia engineer. They flew the 2-22 and the 1-26, which they had built from a kit. For launches they used a Chrysler powered winch built by “Buzz” Averill and a privately owned 150 horsepower Piper Super Cub. Later they started operating from 7 Bar Airport on the Black Ranch (now the site of Cottonwood Mall).

In the 60s winter wave flights were made from Mountainair, Pendaries and Angel Fire. In 1966 Al Santilli along with his partner, Ted Nagy took delivery of a UTU from Finland. The Finns had used urethane foam construction with fiberglass overlaid covered by gel coat. Ted, flying the UTU in a wave out of Moriarty above 20,000 feet, heard a popping sound and looking at his wings was horrified to see that air trapped in the urethane foam had caused bubbles to form under the fiberglass and gel coat. The canopy had frosted over and his spoilers had frozen. Reaching lower altitude, he was able to melt a hole in the frost on his canopy and was able to land without spoilers. Al tried to repair the damage but gave up and purchased a Glasflugel Libelle, which he flew until his death in 2007.



**Al Santilli with the ASC's 2-33 named for him**

During an Easter wave camp at Angel Fire in the 60s the club used an inexperienced towpilot. An ASC member, Dorothy Carter, volunteered to jump in the back seat to help with familiarizing him with sailplanes while he towed Tom Brandis. Flying into a box canyon the towpilot pulled the nose up steeply, stalled out and struck the mountain, killing himself and Dorothy. Tom Brandis was able to release and land with some damage, but no injuries. Later Tom was killed when he exceeded redline speed, overstressed another glider, pulling a wing off.

## **Lieutenant Helmut Roemer's Flight**

In March 17, 1961, West German Air Force pilot Helmut Roemer reported for temporary duty at Kirtland AF Base. Helmut, an experienced glider pilot, having started with gliders in Germany in 1951, was interested in trying New Mexico conditions. Coronado Airport was now in operation and Bob Davis had his newly acquired Schweizer 1-26 located there along with the Albuquerque Soaring Clubs' equipment.

Sunday, April 9, Helmut borrowed Bob's 1-26 and got an altitude gain over the Sandia Mountains in wave of 13,000 feet to earn his Gold Altitude Badge. His low point was 10,000 feet and he reached 23,000 feet without oxygen before descending from the minus 25 degree Fahrenheit temperature. Not dressed for the cold weather, he said "I felt mighty cold". When asked how he could get by at that altitude without oxygen, he replied "They taught us in the German Army to breath deeply". He was disappointed in not attaining his Diamond altitude gain badge because his barograph would not record altitudes that high. April 10, using Bob's ship again, Helmut tried for his Diamond Distance with a declared goal of Shamrock, Texas. Winds favored a slightly more northerly track and with weakening thermals, Helmut set up a final glide, landing on the Francis Farm, 17 miles north of Spearman, Texas. This flight was a disappointment as he flew only 308 miles, four miles short of the needed 312 to earn the Diamond.

Trying again, on May 5<sup>th</sup>, in the newly completed Albuquerque Soaring Club 1-26, Helmut got an earlier start. After experiencing a low point of 200 feet over the Conchas Lake he was able to use a small ridge to sustain himself for 10 minutes until a weak thermal lifted the 1-26 back up to 1200 and a downwind drift brought another that carried him back up to cloud base of 14,000 feet. After 7 hours and 30 minutes of flying, a landing was made at Garden City, Kansas. Helmut had covered 373 miles, crossing parts of five states, creating a new distance record for Schweizer aircraft and earning the 312 mile Distance Diamond to add to his Gold Altitude earned on his first flight from Coronado. During the flight LT Roemer attained an altitude of over 20,000 feet above sea level. Needless to say, Helmut returned to Germany a very happy pilot and left a challenge for other pilots in this area to try for greater accomplishments.



### **LT Helmut Roemer**

Inspired by Lt Roemers' flight "Buzz" Averill flew the 1-26 to Mosca peak in the Manzanos and landed at Tajique after 5 hours. On another flight he flew from Coronado to Mountainair in two and a half hours. Later he flew a 7-hour flight to Clayton and became the first glider pilot in New Mexico to earn a silver C badge. In 1961 the club moved from Coronado Airport to a former CAA airport called Otto, 4 miles North of Moriarty on State Highway 41. Later the club made another move, this time to Evans International Airport Northwest of the present I-40 West interchange. During 1967-68 Moriarty purchased land and constructed a new airport 2 miles Southeast of the city.

In 1963 the club was forced to sell the 1-26 to reimburse the Air Force officers who had contributed funds to help buy the clubs' equipment and were now being reassigned to other bases by the Air Force. Shortly afterward a windstorm destroyed the 2-22. Although insured, an unscrupulous mechanic made such poor repairs that the glider was unflyable, yet he duped the insurance company into paying him and then skipped town. Hermann Wente and Paul Scates eventually repaired the 2-22 in their spare time, but meanwhile the club fell apart. Later they started flying out of Cutter Airport on the West Mesa. "Buzz" dropped out but rejoined in 1964.

The club grew in membership between 1964 and 1970 adding eighteen new members including Al Santilli, George Applebay, Ken Harper, Ed Burnett, Hugh Bivins, Gault Bowen, Paul Scates, John Davis, Ted Nagy, Leo Doyal, Bob Woods and John Wheatley. They flew a Schweizer 1-26 and a 2-33, using a 180 HP Piper Super Cub for tows. Negotiations with the City of Moriarty started in March of 1970 for a hanger at

the airport there. In the summer of 1970 John Wheatley spearheaded the move to Moriarty. Ken Harper designed and started construction on a club hanger.

In 1973-74 the club had acquired a Swallow T-45, a new 1-26 and a Schweizer 1-34. The club was able to participate in the Santa Fe regional contest in 1978 and a regional contest in Las Vegas, New Mexico in 1981. In the 1980s the club was trailering their gliders to Durango, Colorado and Taos, NM and Silver City in the summer for some flights away from home. In the 1990s they expanded their summer camps to Springerville, AZ and Alamogordo, NM.



### **Harland Ross with his RH-3**

In 1973 Harland Ross moved to New Mexico and joined the Albuquerque Soaring club. Harland, a highly regarded sailplane designer had designed and built the Zanonias, the RH-3, the RJK-5 and the R-6. By 1975 he had started towing for the club in the club's PA-18. He continued to fly the latest fiberglass ships.

In 1985 the Moriarty Airport received its first paving project. Meanwhile the Club had to fly out of Diamond High until the paving was completed. In 1992-93 a major paving project was undertaken at Moriarty. The

club bought a Lark and a single place Astir for those pilots ready to step up to higher performance sailplanes. In 1986 the Soaring Society of America moved their headquarters to Hobbs, New Mexico. In 1991, in 2000 and again in 2008 the SSA held their annual convention in Albuquerque with the Albuquerque Soaring Club acting as hosts. By 1993 Moriarty was hosting regional contests. National contests soon followed. In 1996 the Standard Class Nationals were held there and the 1-26 Association held their Nationals there in 1995, 2005 and 2009. The Moriarty Airport supported the U.S.

Team Advanced Soaring Camp for juniors during July of 2004 and again in June 2005. Moriarty also hosted the PW-5 Nationals in June of 2009.

In 1989 the Club acquired a Glasflugel Libelle and bought a second Schweizer 2-33 trainer in 1991. They also bought a Pawnee towplane (converted from agricultural use) in 1992 and a second Pawnee in 1996. A 2 place Grob was purchased to enable instruction in a high performance sailplane and a PW-5 single place for an intermediate step between the benign 1-26 and the higher performance Grob Astir single place.

Starting in the 1980s the club began trailering gliders down to Alamogordo at Thanksgiving for wave flying in what came to be known as “Turkey Fest”. At one point in 1987 there were 17 sailplanes in formation over the mountain in the wave.



**Half the Formation in Wave During Turkey Fest 1987**

The members of the Albuquerque Soaring Club have distinguished themselves participating in National Contests, earning many Diamond badges and setting

records. Three of the Diamond badges were won flying the low performance 1-26 out of Moriarty. On the May 9th, 2004 Chip Garner flew a 1000-kilometer free distance flight from Moriarty in his Discus sailplane. Later in July 2004 and again in July of 2005, Chip repeated his performance flying over 1000 km from Moriarty. Garrett Willat was also credited with a 1009 km flight from Moriarty in Chip’s Discus.

### **Southwest Soaring Museum Foundation Appeal from Steve and Mary Moskal**

The USSSM Foundation would like to compile a list of all the Soaring Clubs and Associations that involve our members. We want to promote our mission and goals with an informational packet about the Museum and its plans for the future. Please send an email to Mary Moskal at [wonderwoman45@g.net](mailto:wonderwoman45@g.net) with the name and address of your organizations. Your personal contact information will not be used.

Please remember the Southwest Soaring Museum Foundation. Including a gift to the Foundation in your will or revocable living trust lets you feel good about your contribution now and will enroll you in our Premier Donors Memorial Program. Your gifts are needed now more than ever to sustain the essential services that the Museum depends on. Every gift matters. Your gift does make a difference. Thank you.

### **Directions to the Museum**

We are located at 918 East Old Highway 66 in Moriarty. Traveling East on Interstate 40 from Albuquerque, exit at mile marker 197, 35 miles from the city. Traveling West on I-40 exit right at Exit 197. We are on the left as you enter route 66.





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