

TOLEDO CLUB COMES OF AGE

by
BOB BAUER

It was a typical October autumn day back in 1931, when Joe and Howard Funk, with a small crew, set up operations at the Toledo Municipal Airport with a Funk two-place glider. Their purpose was to demonstrate to Toledoans, the art of gliding as it was being done in those days. From that demonstration and a few free rides came the currently active and growing Toledo Glider Club with twenty-one members; five sailplanes including two Schweizer 1-19s, a Schweizer 2-22, a Cinema and a Bowlus, as well as a Stearman tow plane and an automatic power winch.

The original group of thirty members each paid an initiation fee of \$5.00. This nest egg was spent for the plans and the raw material for the construction of another Funk glider. The fuselage was constructed at the airport under the direction of Ed Knight. The wing work was accomplished at Macomber High School under the direction of Lawrence Smart, aeronautics instructor.

In September, 1933, the complete ship was launched. At the controls was a young pioneer, and current president, Ed Knight. The launching was by auto-tow. An altitude of thirty feet was attained on the first flight. The glider was hauled back, the performance repeated several times with gradual turns to the right and left until finally it rose to 800 feet, flew through a complete 360 degree turn, and landed without incident. Thereupon, this veteran glider pilot became the official club instructor. He had completed a total of at least six flights.

The Club survived for several years on dues of 50 cents per month and a flight fee of 10 cents per auto-tow. Additional revenue to defray expenses was obtained by the promotion of sideline income projects. Much help and encouragement came from the ABC Group from Detroit. They pooled their finances and crowded eight into a car to come to Toledo to support our various ventures. During the "lean thirties" this was a big help.

Early in 1935 the intrepid instruc-

tor, tiring of 360 degrees from maximum altitudes of 800 feet, purchased the well known Valkyrie, a sailplane designed by Martin Schempp. Many outstanding flights were made in this ship. In June, 1935, the Toledo Club, together with other soaring clubs, trekked to Empire, Michigan, to test ridge soaring along the sand dunes of Sleeping Bear on the shores of Lake Michigan. Members of the Toledo Club still return to that site and participate in soaring contests held there in the fall of each year.

The years 1941 to 1945 were lean ones. Because of the war, gliding went military and sport soaring was temporarily shelved.

In 1946 the activity was revived



Photo: J. Nowak

Ed Knight, now president of Toledo Gliding Club, airborne in an early Funk Glider.

in Toledo. Knight, by now a Lieutenant Commander in the U. S. Navy, became the proud possessor of a Schweizer 1-23 and a Stearman towship. The Club acquired the Schweizer 2-22. Despite the availability of this excellent equipment the enthusiasm for soaring was not too great. Only a few of the old standbys returned with a strong urge to soar again.

By 1948 the area-wide interest began to gather momentum. Ed Knight with John Nowak promoted what is now known as the annual Midwest Soaring Contest. Early participants included such soaring notables and experts as Dal Wise, Chuck Kohls, R. E. Franklin, Dick Johnson, Floyd Sweet, L. Ely, Joe Trefry, Art Schultz and J. Nowak.

The Midwest Contest, held over the four-day Fourth of July weekend of that year provided good soaring.

Flights up to 10,000 feet, six hours duration and 192 miles were recorded. The social highlight of the meet was the dinner held at the Carranor Hunt and Polo Club for all participants and their families. Movies of previous meets and contests were shown.

The year 1953 marked full recovery. Interest was greatly accelerated, and new members were added and new equipment was purchased. Each weekend witnessed much flying activity.

The highlight of 1953 was of course the fifth annual Midwest Soaring Contest. It was won by Larry Gehrlein of the "Flying Gehrleins" who hails from Erie, Pennsylvania.

The Club finds itself still riding high in 1954. This year more flying time has been logged than in all previous years combined. Club members have participated in contests in three states. On May 30th the Club participated in the Wright Memorial Contest at Dayton, Ohio.

During the weekend of July 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th, the Toledo Glider Club was host to some 25 participants with 13 ships at its sixth annual Midwest Contest. The best performance of the entire series of contests was attained despite one rainy day. The contest was won by Lt. Dave McNey, who made two excellent cross country flights; one to Akron, Ohio, and the other to Wheeling, West Virginia, a distance of 175 miles. The longest flight of this contest was recorded by Marvin Frost, of Dayton, Ohio, who flew to the Greater Cincinnati Airport in Kentucky, for a distance of some 200 miles. This was Frost's "Gold C" distance.

It is great to be twenty-one.

EARLY GLIDING

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Canadian Air Force before this country's entry into the conflict. After two years with the Royal Air Force and upon our entry into the war, Col. Ormand transferred to his own country's Air Force. Altogether he spent twelve years in military flying, rose to the rank of Lt. Col., and gained the rating of Senior Pilot along with many other ratings and honors.

We think the self generated enthusiasm of a West Texas lad, born and raised on a ranch in the remote section of the high plains, is an example of the finest tradition of American airmen.