

SSA INSTALLS PLAQUE AT KITTY HAWK

The gliding and soaring flights of the Wright Brothers are now memorialized at Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina. On the occasion of the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Wright Brothers' first powered flight, the Soaring Society of America presented a bronze plaque to the U. S. National Park Service for permanent display at the Wright Brothers National Memorial. The plaque consists of the likenesses of Wilber and Orville Wright in bas-relief and the caption "They Taught Us To Fly." Accurately depicted on the background of the plaque are the gliders which the Wrights flew on the Kitty Hawk dunes in 1901, 1902 and 1911.

It is quite significant that the sculptor of the plaque is a person long associated with the soaring movement in this country, Capt. Ralph S. Barnaby, USN (Ret.) He was a founder-director when The Soaring Society of America, Inc., was formed in 1932, has served four terms as its president and in 1960 was presented the Society's highest award, the Warren E. Eaton Memorial Trophy.

Ralph Barnaby has many sculptured works to his credit. Among these are busts of Admiral W. S. Sims and Admiral W. A. Moffett displayed in Memorial Hall at the U.S. Naval Academy, also busts of the first Secretary of Defense, James Forrestal, Admiral David W.

Taylor and Admiral Sims at the Mariner's Museum, Newport News, Virginia.

The beauty and significance of the plaque was aptly noted by Conrad L. Wirth, Director of the National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior. In his letter thanking the Society he said, "We can see that the sculptoring of the brothers' remarkable likenesses was a work of love by Captain Barnaby."

The plaque was presented in the name of the Society by past president Lt. Col. Floyd J. Sweet, USAF (Ret.). It was accepted by James B. Myers, Superintendent, Cape Hatteras National Seashore Recreational Area. Capt. Barnaby revealed in his remarks at the unveiling of the plaque that his early schooling was directed toward a career in art; that is, until he saw his first airplane and built his first glider in 1909.

At the time of his retirement from the Navy in 1947, Capt. Barnaby was Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Development Station, Johnsville Pennsylvania. Since then he has been on the staff of The Franklin Institute, first as head of the Aeronautics Section of its Laboratories for Research and Development and later as Manager of Project Development. Currently he is Exhibits Consultant to the Institute's Science Museum. (For

more on Capt. Barnaby see *Soaring*, August, 1959.)

It was bright, cold and windy on the 16th and 17th of December on the Outer Banks of north Carolina. The most oft heard remark was, "Why couldn't the Wright Brothers have made their historic flight in summertime!"

Members of the Society participated in aerial demonstrations during the presentations and wreath-laying ceremonies at the Visitors Center and during the dedication of the First Flight Airport near the Kill Devil Hills monument. From the Mid-Atlantic Soaring Association were Joe Caicuts flying his BG-12A and Gene Wilburn, pilot of the M-ASA Piper PA-12 towplane. Art Lowe of Lynchburg, Virginia, flew his Schweizer 1-26 towed by Major Linford Bachtell of Washington flying his Cessna 180. These pilots put on a most impressive show. Assisting in the ground operations were SSA'ers Ben Greene of Elizabeth City, N.C., Nathan Frank of M-ASA and Paul Kurbjun, Hampton, Virginia.

Also presented for installation and display in the Visitors Center was a full-scale reproduction of the original Wright Flyer, a gift of the Washington Chapter of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. SSA members who worked on this project were Nathan Frank and Floyd Sweet.

History records that the Wright Brothers first conducted experiments at Kill Devil Hills in 1900 with a machine which they flew as a kite. In 1901 and 1902, they returned to the North Carolina site with man-carrying gliders and conducted numerous gliding flights



Capt. Barnaby, the plaque he created, and Floyd Sweet, Chairman of the SSA Awards Committee.



Joe Caicuts soaring his Briegleb BG-12A sailplane over the Wright Brothers Monument.