

Know Your Soaring Centers

"The fulfillment of a life-long dream" is the way Fred Harris expresses his thought of Holiday Soaring School which he owns and operates at Tehachapi, Calif. As a boy in Chemung County, New York, Fred was thrilled to see his first sailplane launch from the ridge which now is Harris Hill, at Elmira. The graceful, effortless movement of that huge, black bird, piloted by the late Wolf Hirth sparked a tremendous desire to accomplish the same thing. Some 20 years and 14,000 hours of power flight time later, Fred saw his boyhood dream come true.



Holiday Soaring School staff, left to right: Bob Clayburn, chief tow pilot; Goldie (Mrs. Fred) Harris, business manager; Fred Harris, manager and FAA Examiner; Richard Sayre, Chief Instructor; Herb Ashley, chief line boy.

In a sleepy mountain community, nestled in a bow-shaped valley, high in the Sierra mountains, Tehachapi is one of the few passes from the East into the San Joaquin valley to the West. It is located on the main line of the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe railroads, and on Highway 58, about midway between Los Angeles and Bakersfield. Operating from Tehachapi Airport, located within the city, Holiday Soaring is only a stone's throw from the center of town with its fine motels, restaurants, and recreational facilities.

Starting in a small way about six years ago, Holiday Soaring has had its ups and downs—literally (approximately 35,000 sailplane flights)—and financially. From a little, part-time operation it has grown to a full-time, seven-days-a-week year-round service to the soaring public. Five full-time employees are augmented on weekends by six additional helpers.

Soaring comes first at Holiday, where sailplane rentals, launching tows, introductory rides, as well as pilot instruction are available. One will always find work being done on a customer's ship, or on one of the many sailplanes owned by Holiday. A spare-time activity is building sailplanes from Schweizer kits.

Holiday has been tops in sales four of the six years it has had a Schweizer dealership.

Five distinctly different types of lift are available at Tehachapi. The favorite and most dependable of these is a geographical wind convergence, or shear. This lift comes from the prevailing north-westerly wind or air mass being deflected by the topography surrounding the valley. This causes a NW and SW wind to converge right down the center of the valley.

Of course everyone in soaring has heard of the famous Tehachapi wave, which offers unlimited Diamonds to those who seek them. One of the outstanding features of the wave is the fact that one does not have to go thru the rotor to get into it. Being located upwind of the face of the wave, the tows always are thru quite stable air. Wave flights, once temporarily banned, now have been legalized again by Air Traffic Control. Holiday expects to help an increasing number of pilots get their Diamond altitude this spring.

Besides shear and wave lift, Holiday offers thermals, ridge, and meteorological shear-type lift. From Tehachapi, soaring flights have been made to Cedar City, Utah; Tonopah, Nev.; Bishop, Leevining, and Needles, Calif.; as well as to Parker, Arizona.

With most of Holiday's effort being put into training the operation has shown a steady growth. Both beginners and experienced power pilots benefit from the modern teaching methods employed there, and the management takes just pride in its safety record. Credit for this is given to the "Positive Flight" courses, in which the "guess" element is eliminated. Harris declares that, by adhering to Holiday's method of evaluating altitude and distance, a pilot always will reach his landing objective, with a good, safe, reserve of altitude.

By precept and example, Holiday instructors encourage, and insist on safety and courtesy. In Fred's opinion, stressing these virtues will contribute positively to the future of soaring in the U.S.—and elsewhere. Fred and Goldie have great plans for the future, and their aim is to keep Holiday among the top soaring centers.

The welcome mat always is out at Holiday, where Goldie Harris is the firm's business manager. Dick Sayre is chief instructor and Bob Clayburn is chief tow pilot and mechanic. Fred Harris supervises and coordinates all activity.

HOLIDAY SOARING SCHOOL

Location: At the Tehachapi Airport, Tehachapi, California. On Highway 58 between Los Angeles and Bakersfield.

Services: Sailplane sales, rentals and repairs. Schweizer dealer. Open seven days a week all year 'round.

Contact: Fred or Goldie Harris, P.O. Box 6, Tehachapi, Calif. Phone TA 2-3726.