

# Old LK's Never Die....

*...they just get modified and modified and modified.*

I have been attempting to more or less catalog animate LK objects. The following points stand out: It is apparent that the Lawrence Tech group made a true contribution to the soaring movement—in all phases. It is surprising how many of them are still around, still active and still contributing. Sparling, Novak, Bierens, Trager, Christiansen, Zook, to mention a few.

There seems to be a fierce determination of the LK owners to hang on to these ships. Why? Simple! For a relatively small investment (\$250 war surplus, with trailer, \$2000 for a decent one today) one gets a good soaring machine capable of a glide ratio of 25 or 26 to one (with minor modifications), a small glider (even the 2-22 has more wing area), and a relatively lightly loaded machine that will compete with anything up through a long-winged 1-23 at low speeds. And you can carry a passenger. All ATC'd, proven, well known and, again, inexpensive. Nothing is for nothing, so you do pay in maintenance, some marginal stall characteristics, an old wooden wing and poor high-speed performance. My LK is 23 years old. It will be interesting to see the K-7's in 1985.

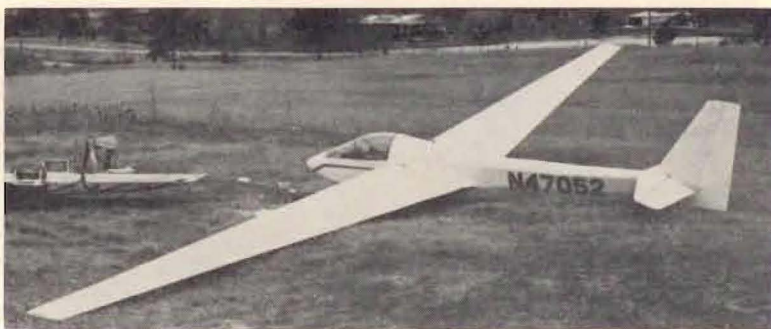
In locating 100-odd old LK's I feel I now know better why they've lasted. First, Uncle Sam made 156 of them, thus only the 1-26 and the 2-22 surpass them numerically in the U. S. The flight characteristics and integrity of the airframe still stand out. This integrity is important. The late Dr. Raspet conducted numerous flight-test programs on modifications made to increase performance, and did so with little or no sacrifice in structural integrity. Tom Page went through the STC on the flat-top "because it seemed like a good idea."

Bob Sparling told me that in his experience at Wright Field no airframe had survived the static-load acceptance tests like the TG-4A. I think it was Bob who told me that every LK was flown at 240 m.p.h. as standard procedure in the flight-acceptance test. This was 100 m.p.h. over the never-exceed speed of 140 m.p.h. All this perpetuates one's confidence in the design.

The multiplace goal-and-return record is still held by an LK. As late as 1955 Kempes Trager won the Nationals in the home-built Alibi, a ship which utilized virtually unmodified LK wings. Fritz Compton had the longest flight at the 1957 Elmira Nationals—320 miles to the Atlantic where he had to stop with time, and 6000 feet left. I think this still remains the third-longest flight east of the Mississippi.

I have identified 49 LK's as currently airworthy and flying and 25 that are not licensed, but undamaged. I know the whereabouts or fate of some 37 more. This does not include about 10 that I have identified but cannot get first-hand information about.

—Allen MacNicol



All photos (except top) by Pete Bowers.

Four examples of modified LK's are seen in the photos above. The most recent addition to the group (formerly the Chartreuse Goose) got the treatment from John Karlovich of Atlanta, Ga. John added five feet to the span, two feet to the length of the fuselage, and such niceties as a retractable tow hitch, thus pushing Larry Bell's version (second photo) for changes. Pop Krone's Comet (third down) was one of the earliest single-place flat tops, featured a retractable wheel and plywood covering on the top surface of the wing. The double-bubble version was an endeavor to retain both seats, yet keep up with the bubble craze.