

A HISTORY OF SOARING IN UTAH 1927-1950

UTAH SOARING ASSOCIATION 1964 - 2006

*A TRIBUTE TO A PIONEER OF SOARING
FRANK KELSEY*



by Lee Steorts 9/7/06



"I'd rather be soaring . . ."

In the Beginning - Frank Kelsey

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UTAH SOARING ASSOCIATION HISTORY 1964-2006
A TRIBUTE TO A PIONEER OF SOARING - FRANK KELSEY**

I have been asked by several soaring pilots to write a history of soaring in Utah.

Obviously I was not present when soaring in Utah began. Most of the information during the early years was furnished by Bob Meakin and Frank Kelsey. I consider Frank the pioneer of soaring in Utah.

I spent many hours with Frank in his shop while he was repairing or rebuilding damaged gliders. We used to crew for each other on many cross country flights and flew in several soaring safaris together. This gave me a chance to hear many stories about the early days of soaring in Utah.

One of the early glider pilots, Bob Meakin, has written a great article about the early history in Utah. His article was divided into three parts. The first appeared in the Winter 2001 publication of "Journal, American Aviation Historical Society". The second appeared in the Spring 2002 edition, and the third in the Summer 2002 edition. Many of the early facts are quoted from these articles.

I had the good fortune to know and fly with some of the early pilots - Glenn Robinson, Bill Parks, Frank Kelsey, Jack Milligan and Mike O'Neil mentioned in Bob Meakins' article.

The Catalyst for flying began with Charles Lindberg's solo flight across the Atlantic in 1927. A group of 18 University of Utah students founded the "U-Glider Club" in 1927. The name was changed to 'Utah Motorless Aviation Club' and was granted a charter by the school in 1928. The school accepted no responsibility. The membership quickly grew to 30 members.

In 1928, while a student at West High School at age 15, Frank Kelsey, having seen the story in National Geographic about flying at the Wasserkuppe in Germany and some pictures and drawings of a primitive glider, asked his wood shop teacher if he could build a glider.

The teacher thought he meant a porch swing and gave him permission. Frank told me that when he began laminating a 33 foot spar for the wing the teacher stopped him and said they had better go to the principal's office and discuss the project. The principal thought it sounded like a great project and gave his OK to proceed. When the rest of the students learned what Frank was building many of them abandoned their own projects and started helping by cutting out wing ribs and other parts. He worked from a small 3 view photo of a Massachusetts Institute of Technology soaring glider of 1921-1922. The project was moved to an abandoned chicken coop located behind Franks house on Lake Street.

1929 - The University of Utah club now called "University of Utah Glider Club" built their first glider called "U-1. It was a German design known as "Hangwind". The glider weighed only 130 pounds and was first flown at the "Point of the Mountain". This is where most of the gliding occurred during the early days.

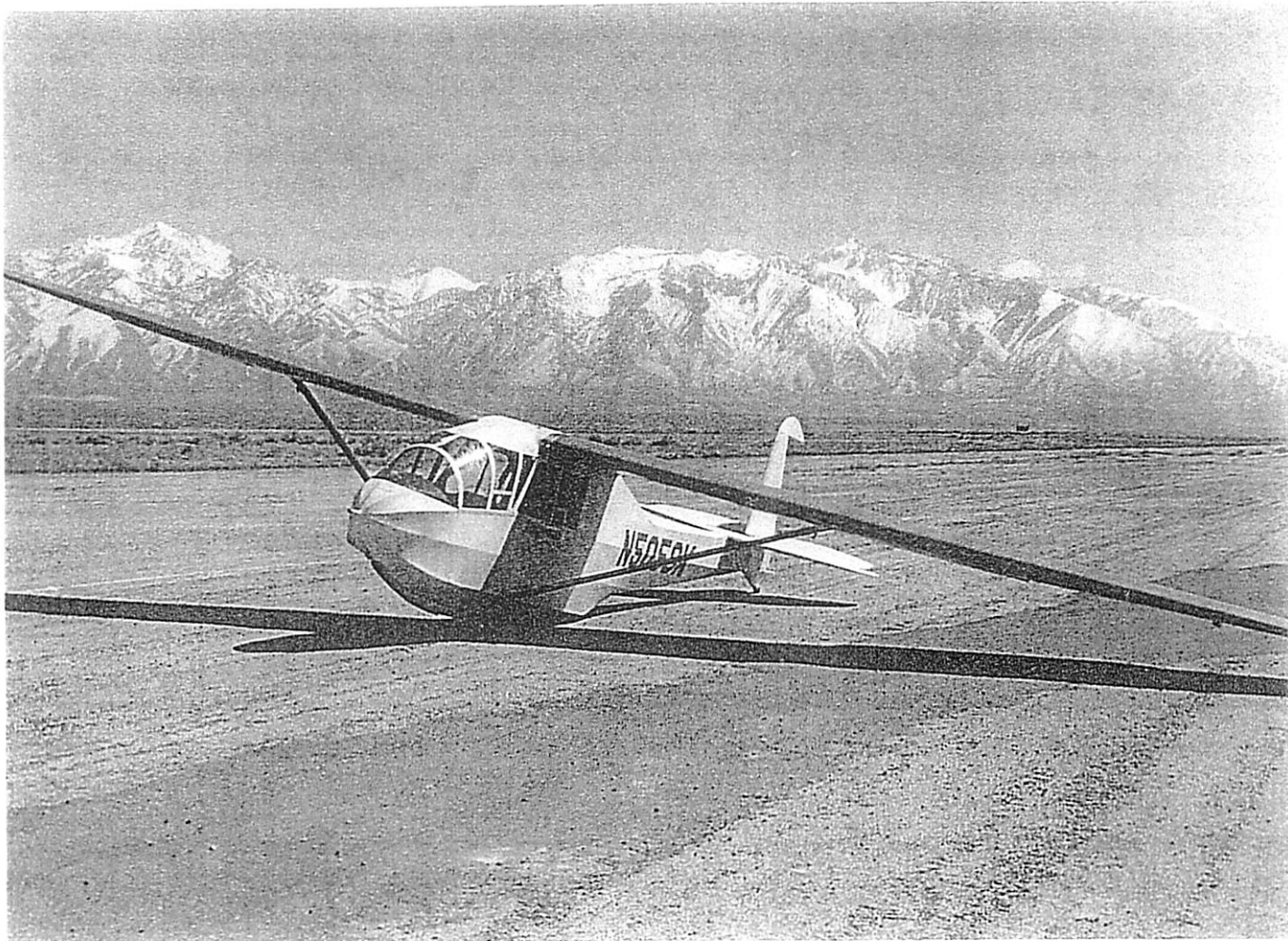
Just a brief explanation about the early soaring site.

The "Point of the Mountain" was a ridge caused by a huge sand bar that extended between Utah valley and The Salt Lake valley thousands of years ago. The North facing side of the ridge has two distinct levels which make it ideal for ridge soaring. The flat portion is the old lake Bonneville level called the Stansbury level. The upper flat portion, about five or six hundred feet higher, is the Provo level.

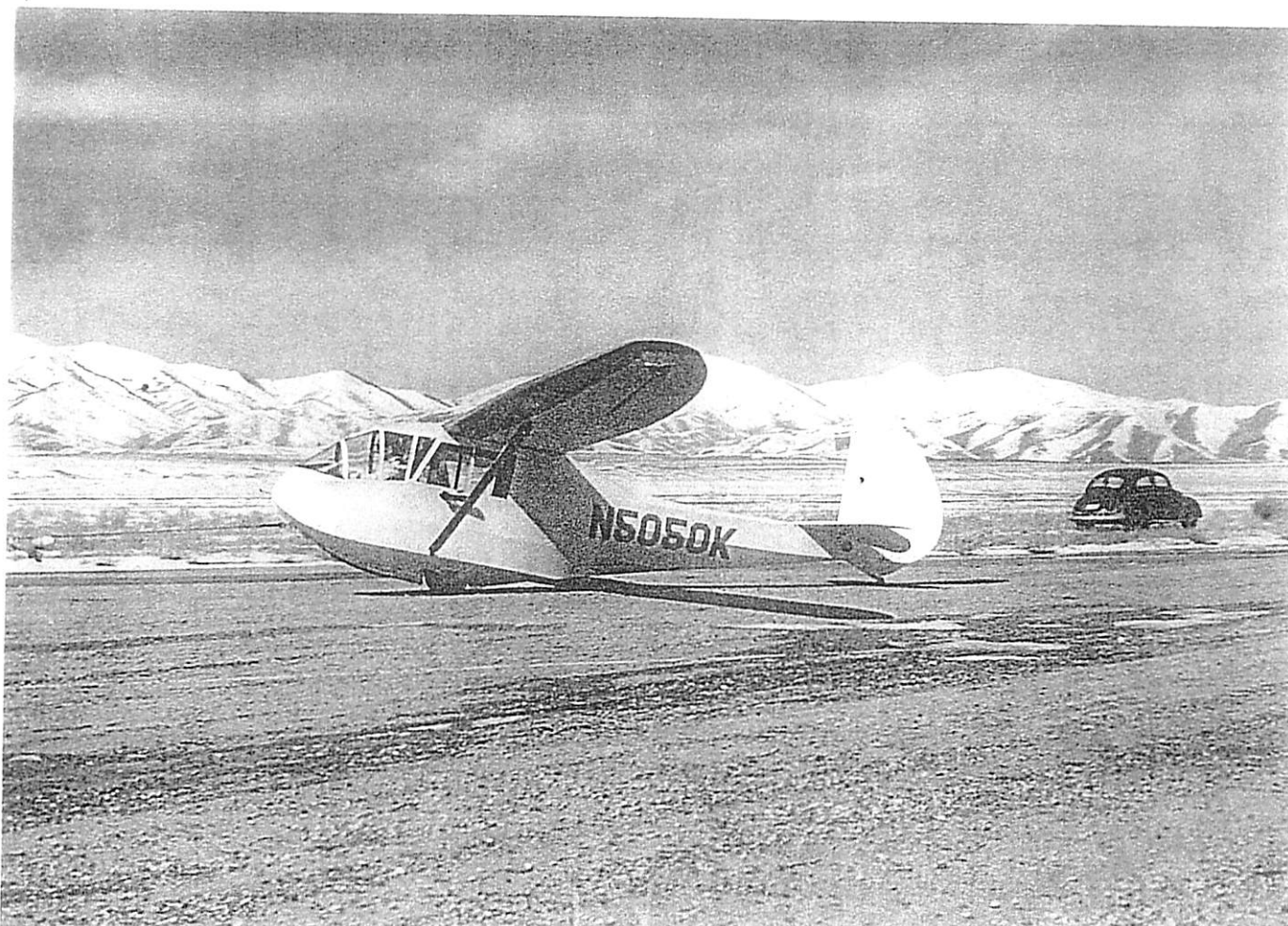
The "Point" as it was called was unusual because it could be used for soaring when the wind is from the North or South. As a rule the prevailing wind during the morning hours is from the South and then switches to the North during the latter part of the day allowing soaring flights from either side of the ridge.

The lower level was ideal for winch or auto launch. After takeoff the glider moves over against the first level and after gaining two or three hundred feet above this level it could then move over against the main portion of the mountain, which by the way, is called Traverse Mountain. Once against the mountain you could then climb to about 1000 feet above the point of takeoff and could slope soar all day as long as the wind continued.

The first flights were made from the south side of the ridge due to the fact that the slope was smooth and there were landable fields below the hill.



5050K - Klippety-Klop - The Original Club Glider





Sun Valley, Idaho to Butte
Montana...200 mile goal...



Sun Valley to St. Anthony
during S.V Regatta....



Frank made two great flights
Sun Valley to Butte MT & to St Anthony, ID



Scott & Lee Steorts - Frank's crew

The first flight of the U-1 was at the Point of the Mountain. The glider was positioned on the crest of the hill facing into a 20 mile per hour wind. the ship was steadied by several club members and tethered so that it couldn't get away. They were able to hover at the edge of the hill and get to know how the controls worked.

Later they used a 200 foot elastic shock cord laid out in a "V". 4 men in a line on each side. The tail was tied down but could be quickly released. The men first began to walk stretching the shock cord, then, on command, would begin to run. The glider was released and was sling-shot into the air. This first rather primitive glider had a glide ratio of about twelve to one. Today's modern gliders are around 50 to one .

In August of 1929 Frank Kelsey completed his MIT glider. On Labor Day he, with some of his friends, took the glider to the "Point". None of them knew how to fly but took turns trying. They would haul the glider about half way up the hill. One of them would get in, fasten the seat belt (an old leather belt) with a bolt and wing nut and the others would run downhill supporting the wings until flying speed was reached and the glider would fly down the slope landing at the bottom. After several tries a powered airplane pilot approached and offered to show them how to fly a glider. He crashed, tore off the landing gear and smashed the tail assembly. Frank took the damaged glider back to his shop and decided to repair it and to make some modifications. The fuselage was fully covered, control system improved and landing skid strengthened. Aware of the success of the U of U Hangwind and realizing that the MIT secondary was an antiquated 1922 design made a decision to scrap the MIT and build a less fragile Northrop Primary.

The Northrop Primary was completed during the winter of 1929-1930.

In 1930 the U of U club built a higher performance glider called the "Darmstadt". They made some simplification changes and designated as 'U-2". This new glider had almost double the glide ratio as the U-1. With the new glider they were able to get altitudes of 200 feet above the ground and flights of 5 minutes' duration.

Kelsey didn't have the manpower that the U of U club had and had to haul his ship back up the hill. He built a dolly to make it easier. He couldn't afford a bungee cord so they still skidded the ship down the hill using a long rope and a couple of men on the end of the rope. They

found it satisfying that a 170 pound glider could fly with a pilot of the same weight.

Kelsey's aunt christened the new glider "Cyanide". She said "One drop and your dead". This was painted on both sides of the triangular brace on top of the wing.

Several other groups were building gliders. Some mechanics at the Salt Lake airport built and flew an "Eaglerock" using an automobile launch for the first time in Utah. Other clubs were being formed in Roosevelt, Vernal, Price, Richfield, and Ogden.

Also in 1930 a "Meade Rhon Ranger" was built by Glenn Mitchell, Lawrence Mitchell and Frank Backman.

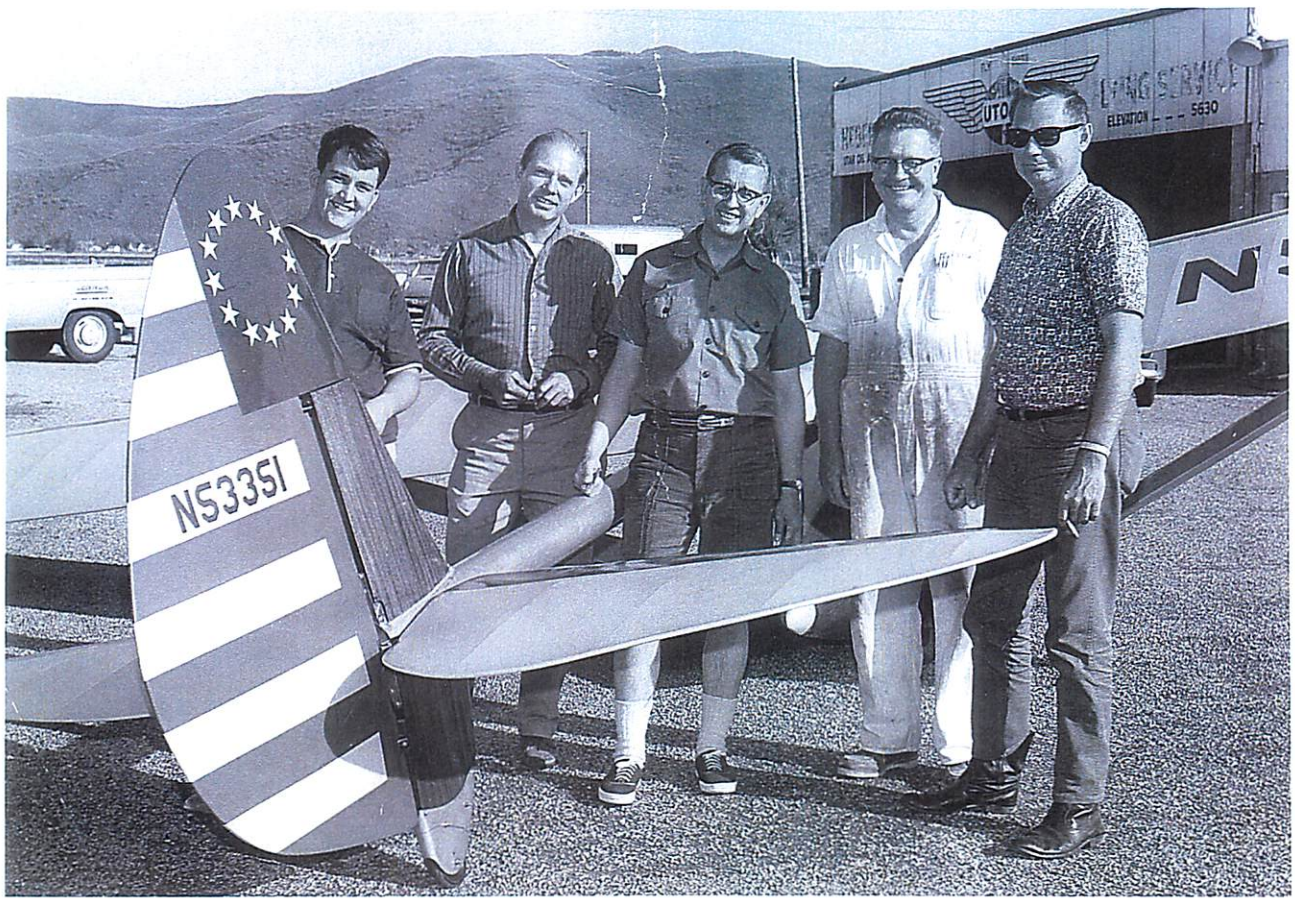
In 1931 the U of U club suffered a fatal accident with their U-2 glider. Their club president and the most qualified pilot appeared to have suffered a fainting spell. He slumped over the control stick and dove the glider straight into the ground.

After this accident the University of Utah abolished the club.

In 1931 Frank Kelsey organized the "Salt Lake Glider Club". About a dozen people joined and Frank did the instructing. Frank converted the Northrup by increasing the wing area and adding streamlined cockpit nacelles which allowed the pilot to sit inside rather than out in the wind, and reduced the wing loading which allowed the glider to actually soar.

1932 - Over a two year period the Orgill brothers had been building a "Rhon Ranger" and with a magazine article entitled "Teach Yourself to Fly" they proceeded to try to bungee launch it from the local high school football field. This was unsuccessful and they moved their operation to the hills near Bachus where they were finally able to fly their glider. The Magna Glider Club was formed. One day after several fair flights by club regulars a new member, after a few level downhill skims, decided he could handle it. He was launched from higher slope. He climbed the Ranger to about 50 feet-suddenly decided he did not like it and jumped out. During his bouncing down slope tumble he suffered a broken arm and a few bruises. The feather weight glider suffered only minor damage.

Later the ship was badly damaged in an accident. It was stripped of salvageable parts and burned.



The Baby Albatross - Scott Steorts, Doug Mitchell, Lee Steorts, Frank Kelsey, Walt Tiernert.



Scott Steorts on Klaus and Brunos' winch

1933-The Orgill family moved to Wendover, Nevada where the Orgill boys continued their flying using the salt flats as an airport using auto tows.

They organized the "Wendover Glider Club". At a later date, built and flew a Bowlus Baby Albatross.

1932- The Salt Lake Glider Club wanted a ship more capable of soaring and decided to build a Bowlus Albatross. Frank and Roland Logie built the first true American sailplane in Utah. It was modified Bowlus Albatross with 45 foot wing span reduced from 60 feet. The reduced wing area could not provide satisfactory lift and only produced a glide ratio of 14 to 1. It was flown by experienced pilots during that year.

The decision was made to install the 60 foot wing on the Albatross fuselage. After the new wing was installed and flown by a couple of the more experienced pilots it was decided it was too much for the experience level of the group. The ship was probably sold.

The decision was made to acquire a ridge soaring Secondary capable of automobile launches. The south side of the Point was not good for auto launching so Kelsey and Mitchell decided that the north side would be ideal when the northwest wind was blowing. the 1st ridge about 600 feet above the valley floor and the "Big Hill" 1500 feet above the valley floor. Kelsey and Mitchell found that for \$44 they could buy a kit to convert their Mead "Rhon Ranger" into a streamlined Mead "Challenger". In addition to the streamlining they replaced the existing wire wing bracing system with streamlined steel struts, reshaped the rudder, and added a small pair of 5 inch pneumatic wheels to make the landings and takeoffs smoother.

The Challenger was a huge success. Many ridge and soaring flights were made at altitudes exceeding 2000 feet and over one hour duration.

Flying at the point of the mountain had finally come of age.

After seven successful years of solo flying the first 2 place glider was finally possible. Frank Kelsey obtained plans and built a Jack Laister "Universal" sailplane. This gull-winged ship flew well except for an uncomfortable tendency to unexpectedly approach a stall in steeply banked turns unless very proper coordination and airspeed control was maintained. Less experienced pilots in the club still flew the

“Challenger”.

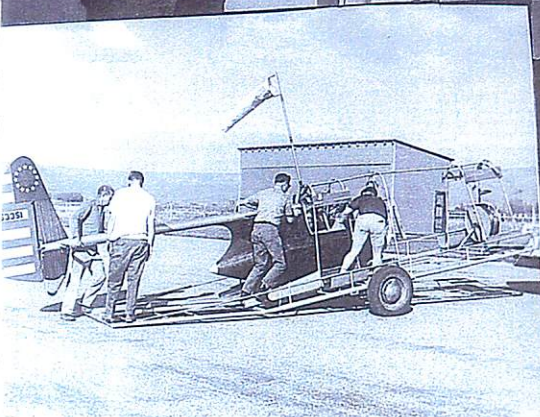
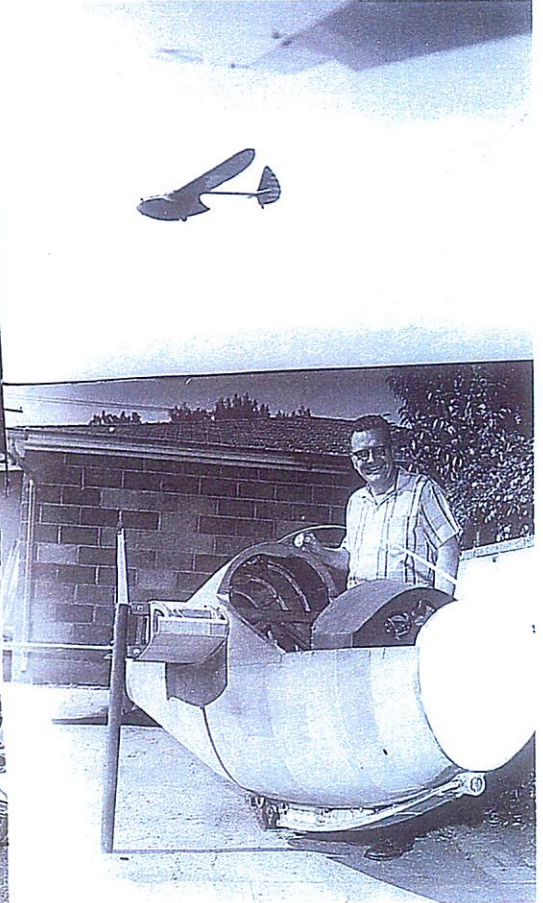
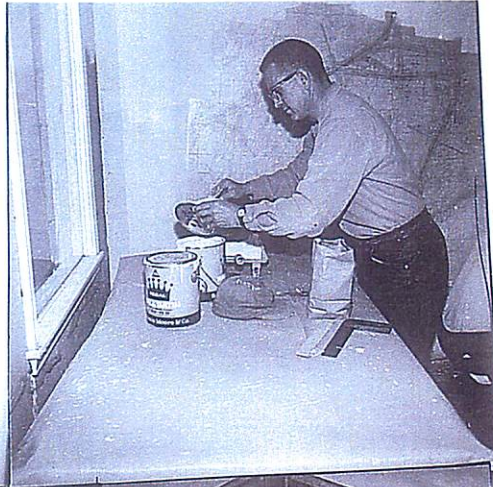
During the 1936-1937 season over 60 flights were logged. In September of 1938 pilot Glenn Mitchell with a passenger in the rear seat while making a steep approach rolled into a steep turn, stalled, and spiraled down almost vertically into the ground from about 200 feet. The passenger, badly hurt, survived. Mitchell, unfortunately died at the hospital after being removed from the wreckage.

Since construction of the “Challenger” in 1934 it had been flown 200 hours by at least 25 club members. In 1937 control was lost during a cross wind takeoff. The “Challenger” wound up in a severe ground loop and finally nosed up and over onto it’s back. It was badly broken up. The author of the article that I am quoting managed to scrape together \$65 to buy the wreckage. Together with his best friend, Dale Jamison, and with advice from Kelsey were able to rebuild the “Challenger”. When the “Challenger” was finished a new club was organized by Bob Meakin and Dale Jamison called “Rocky Mountain Glider Club. Instructions were given to the club members by Frank Kelsey and Glenn Robinson. The usual procedure was “Windjamming” (headed directly into the wind keeping the nose straight, the wing level and moving the nose up and down with the elevator).

With the Universal and the Challenger both basket cases and the original Northrup Primary committed to the scrap heap the Salt lake Group found itself without an aircraft. At this point Hawley Bowles and U.S. Soaring Champion, Jack O’Meara came to town towing the very newest Bowlus Sailplane, the Single place Baby Albatross. The price of the kit was \$500 and included everything to complete the ship. The ship was demonstrated by O’ Meara at Carter Field on 21st South. A down payment was made and the kit was promised in 30 days. Upon arrival of the kit, Frank Kelsey, Mark Kemp, Glenn Robinson and a couple of other club members went to work in Kelsey’s Chicken Coop shop.

The Baby Albatross was finished and ready to fly in March of 1939. Ridge Soaring and real thermal soaring were now possible.

Meanwhile the Orgille group, after loosing Orgill #2 ordered a complete Rhon Ranger construction kit. The price had gone from \$90 to \$300.



*Rebuilding the old terminal building at Heber Ttiernert painting,
Lee mixing, the Baby, Assembling the Baby, Al Burgener opening
a drum, Frank with his K-17 fuselage*

They modified the fully exposed fuselage by installing a cockpit enclosure and streamlined fuselage fairing behind the pilot. The ship was later destroyed in a landing accident.

After seeing the Bowles Baby Albatross a kit was ordered and the ship built at Wendover. On of the first flights Willis Orgill caught a thermal and soared to 3500 feet above ground level and remained aloft for over an hour.

In 1939 Hawley Bowles recognized Frank Kelsey's impressive glider construction and piloting ability and hired Frank to become his shop manager and test pilot at the San Fernando factory.

Once settled in his new job Frank began (on his own time) building a Super Alabtross with several modifications to increase it's strength, roominess, and flying characteristics. Frank told me that this was his favorite sailplane.

In 1940 a new club was formed called S.O.S. (Soarers of Salt Lake) Members included Jack Milligan, Don Smith, Keith Martenson and Glenn Robinson. They ordered a Baby Albatross Kit and built it in Kelsey's chicken-coop shop.

The glider group in Utah began a drastic change as it appeared that the United States might become involved in the war in Europe. Several pilots enrolled in aircraft sheet metal schools in Los Angeles. Bowles engaged in construction of 2 place military training gliders and hired 3 Salt Lake glider builders, Dewey Kemp, Martin Bray, Bob Meakin with Kelsley as the shop foreman.

After Germany's successful use of troop carrying gliders in the invasion of Crete, Belgium, Norway, Africa and Libya the U.S. military services contracted for the construction of such aircraft. Thousands of pilots would be trained to fly the newly designed 15 place Waco CG 4-A troop carriers.

The Salt Lake boys, working at Bowlus, managed to continue flying at Baker California located at the south end of Death Valley.

1945-46 when the war ended there were no gliders to fly. The Mead Challenger which was stored in a chicken coop suffered from old age and



*Ron Nelson standing beside the 2 place Baby
that Frank restored*

extensive water damage. The two baby Albatrosses had been sold in California. The Baby Albatross that was being built by Mike O'Neil and Jack Milligan before the war started was finished and a new club the "52-20 club" (\$20 for 52 weeks) was formed.

Glenn Robinson purchased a surplus Navy 2 place ship - a "Pratt Reed". This was a side by side two place Navy training glider.

In 1947 Frank Kelsey returned to Salt Lake and together with Mark Kemp operated a small fixed base flying service in Midvale Utah. This was the beginning of Kemp & Kelsey Air Service. This operation was later moved to the Salt Lake International Airport. Mark retired in 1963 and sold his interest to Hague Ellis. The flying service was then called Kelsey-Ellis Air Service.

Bill Parks bought a surplus Schweizer TG-3 and took it to the Midvale airport and asked Frank to teach him to fly it. Frank was only too happy to do so.

1948 the Utah Soaring Association was established by Bob Meakin. He felt the need to reintroduce motorless flight throughout the state especially in the smaller towns which had organized glider clubs prior to World War II. Clubs which had been active were in Spanish Fork, Vernal, Price, Richfield, Wendover, Logan and Ogden. Bob Meakin gave illustrated lectures at schools, chamber of commerce luncheons etc. From this activity the seeds were sown for the continued growth of soaring in Utah.

Frank Kelsey had sold his Super Albatross and had nothing to fly when he returned to Salt Lake. He had, however, obtained a pair of Nelson Hummingbird wings which he brought with him (but more about that later). He bought a surplus Schweizer TG-3.

The Utah Soaring Association consisted of a Baby Albatross, a Pratt Reed, 2 Schweizer TG-3s and in 1949 they purchased 2 surplus Stearman towplanes. None of this equipment was owned jointly but by individual members of the group.

After Frank returned to Salt Lake he needed a glider to fly. He designed and started to build his 17th glider - the K-17. This was to be a high performance wood glider with the latest technology. The project began



Lee Steorts and his Cherokee II RM



in 1959 but wasn't completed till after his death in August, of 1991. He wasn't a slow builder but was swamped with work for other glider pilots doing repair and restoration jobs on gliders.

In the meantime, in order to have something to fly he took an old Aeronca fuselage, stripped it down, extended the nose, changed the entire tail section, and added the "Nelson Hummingbird Wings" that he had acquired while working at Bowlus. The N number on the ship was 5050K. Somewhere along the line someone started calling it "Klippety Klop" and the name stuck. It wasn't a very pretty ship but it flew quite well.

My personal soaring experience began when I was learning to fly at the Salt Lake airport. I was introduced to Frank who was always looking for someone to fly with and to help in handling the big two place ship. At the end of each flying day it was a big job to hoist the ship up to the top of the hangar with a hand operated winch. The airport, at that time, would allow the glider to be air towed from the grass in between the runways.

In 1964 Frank Kelsey called a meeting of all the power pilots flying at the Salt Lake airport. He had an offer from Tom Davis, from Seattle Washington to lease a schweizer 2-22E to Frank for a period of 3 months. At the meeting there was enough interest to proceed. Everyone paid \$30 which entitled each to 3 or 4 hours of flight time. There were two former military glider flight instructors who agreed to teach.

We towed from airport #2 with a Cessna 180 and had access to a winch furnished by Bruno Haufe and Klaus Hill - two German pilots who were building a small glider at their home in Hoytsville, Utah. We also did auto and winch tows from the north side of the point of the mountain. During those three months there were several who learned and were able to pass their test for a gliding certificate. Most received their air tow, and ground launch endorsements.

In April of 1965 we learned that Frank was going to sell his "Klippety Klop". He was asking \$1,800 for the ship. Five of us put up \$300 each and asked Frank to remain a partial owner. We then organized a new club called "Wasatch Mountain Soaring". The members were Frank Kelsey, Dewey Gerard, Lee Steorts, Doug Mitchell, Al Bergener, and Bill

Browning.

That same year Frank was at a soaring site just out of Colorado Springs called Black Forest. There he became acquainted with a German professor at Kearny State College at Kearney, Nebraska named Hannes Hagspiel. He had 5 sailplanes, a Citabria tow plane and a winch mounted on a truck. He was looking for some place to use the equipment and to teach. Frank convinced him that he should come to Heber. The airport, at that time had 3 dilapidated hangars and a vandalized office, which a group of us rebuilt. During the summer several pilots completed their transition training and received their glider rating. The airport was leased from Heber City and Summit County.

When Hagspiel returned to college that fall, the club leased the Citabria and a Kal-8 glider. Before he left there was some friction between Hagspiel and the mayor when he was asked to repair some holes in the airport fence to keep the cows out. Hagspiel did not make the repairs but posted a sign saying "All cows are to keep out - by order of the Lord Mayor". This caused bad feelings between the airport and the mayor.

A fatality occurred the following fall when a glider, in which the student was not familiar, ballooned on takeoff and dove the Citabria into the runway, killing Hagspiel who was flying the tow plane.

In March of 1967 K&E (Kelsey - Ellis) Skysailing started a soaring school at Heber airport with a new Schweizer 1-26, 2-33, and a 2-32 glider, two super cub tow planes and a Stinson L-5.

April of 1967 the club purchased a Schleicher Ka-8 from Lou Stur of Sun Valley, Idaho. The club now owned two ships, the two place Klippety-Klopp and a single place Schleicher Ka-8.

June of 1968 the Ka-8 was damaged in a winch launch, was laid up for 2 1/2 years and was rebuilt by club members. That same year the University of Utah formed a club around a world war II TG-3 glider which they called "Fat Albert", and a Schweizer 2-22. -

In 1969 K&E Skysailing lost the lease on the Heber Airport and moved their operation to Nephi, Utah. We were flying "Klippety Klop" and the



Doug Mitchells' Baby Albatross



Scott and Hannes's Kal-8

Ka-8 using Frank Kelsey's L-5 for tows.

At Nephi we discovered the thrill of fairly long cross country flights. Many flights were made from Nephi to Milford, Mt Pleasant, Beaver, Junction, Minersville, etc. We found it easier to get away from the airport earlier in the day and easier to make a long final glide coming back home.

During this time many of the club members had purchased their own gliders and several overnight trips were made to Wendover, Malad, Idaho and Sun Valley.

When K&E lost the lease on the airport the City gave the lease to Larry Winterton who continued a glider operation.

In 1970 the University club purchased a home-built "Cherokee" glider built by Lee Steorts.

June of 1971 a Schweizer 2-22 was purchased from Sailplanes unlimited of Seattle, Washington and the club again moved back to the Heber Airport. The 2-22 was lost in a fatal accident on the Wallsburg ridge. This same year "Klippety-Klop" was sold to a new owner in Soap Lake, Washington.

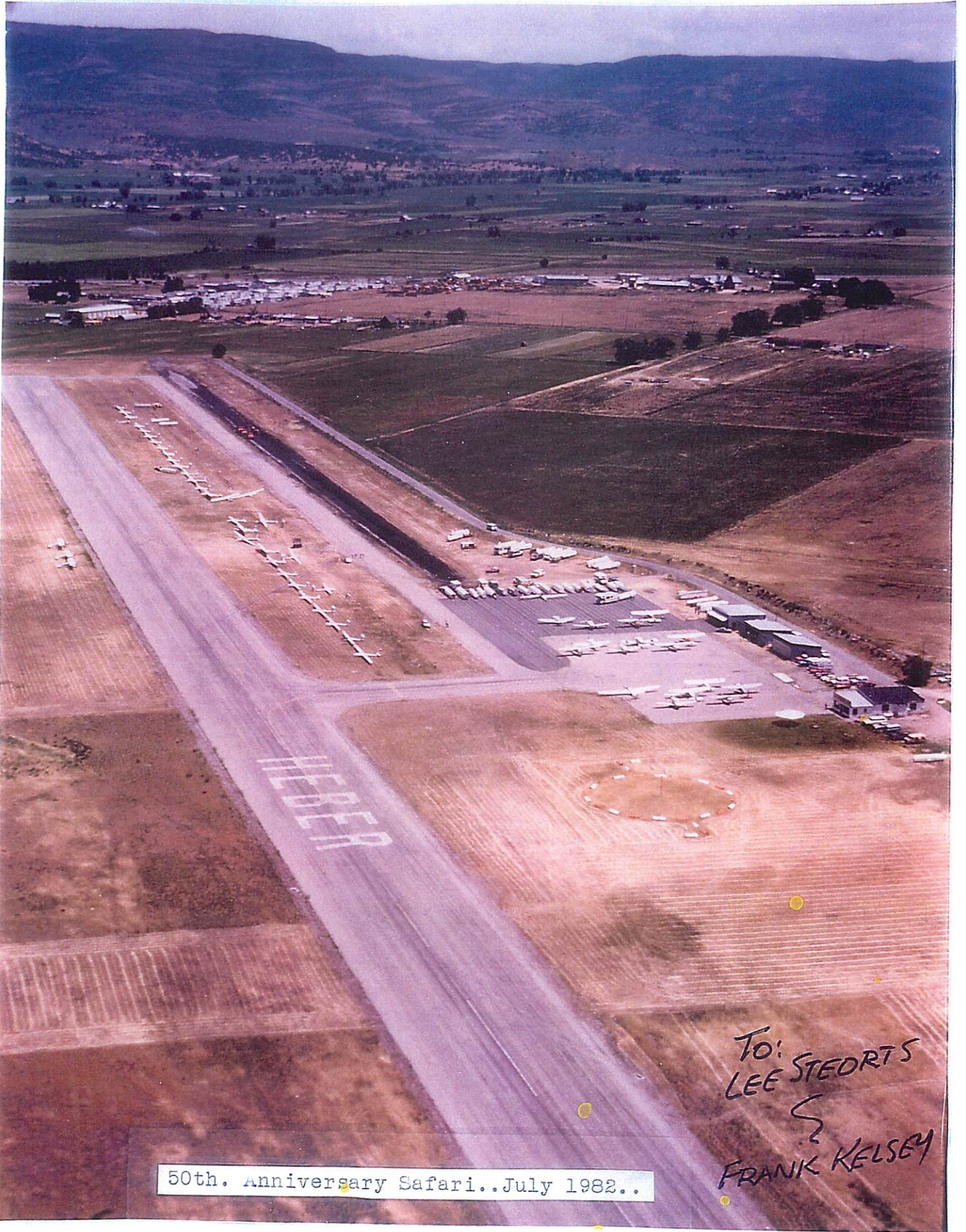
In 1973 the club merged with the University of Utah Soaring Club.

During the next several years there were various Records Camps, Safari's, Wave Camps, and many weekend trips to Malad, Sun Valley, and Driggs, Idaho, Wendover, Cedar City and Parowan, Utah. Many of the club trips were for a week at a time participating in the Sun Valley annual regatta. We flew with many of the Idaho and Washington Pilots. We flew from Hailey to Salmon, Stanley, Smiley Creek, and many other points in the Sawtooth and White Cloud mountains of Idaho.

The club has maintained it's base of operations at Heber except for a short period from 1965 until present.

In 1975 the club purchased a Schweizer 1-26 from Herb Anderson who managed the Pitts factory at Afton, Wyoming.

Due to the fact that the Cherokee was a wood and fabric covered ship



50th. Anniversary Safari..July 1982..

TO:
LEE STEORTS
~
FRANK KELSEY

Heber Airport during 50th Soaring Society anniversary Safari

and not practical to leave out, a decision was made to sell the Cherokee and purchase a second all metal 1-26.

In 1976 the club lost a 2-22 in a crash and replaced it with a Schweizer 1-34 also purchased from Herb Anderson.

Unfortunately at this point in the club history the records become quite scarce and hard to follow. There were very few meetings and seldom were notices or news letters issued. My memory does not fill in many blank spots. Right from the time that I completed building my Cherokee II RM I always had my own ship and did not depend on club equipment for my flying so couldn't follow the history too closely. From 1977 through 1988 the few records we have show that we sold a 2-33 and purchased a Romanian IS 28-B2 Lark. This was an all metal two place medium performance glider. It had all the bells and whistles to help train those who would be going on to more sophisticated aircraft. It had interconnected flaps and ailerons, flaps both positive and negative, and a semi retractable landing gear.

A definite highlight for the club was the hosting of the 50th anniversary safari of the Soaring Society of America. The SSA was formed in 1932 and one of the anniversary celebrations was staged at the Heber City airport in July of 1982. There were over 40 gliders that came from various parts the country. The club hosted several contests, parties, cook-outs and other activities for the pilots, wives, and children. Everyone agreed that it was a great success.

The next report I have is a call for a meeting in December of 1988 indicating that the club was virtually defunct. The Heber airport was under construction during the soaring season of 1987 and never did recover during 1988. the 1-34 was hardly flown at all and the Lark was used predominantly by the Associate members (those who owned their own ships). There were only 6 dues paying members which didn't bring in enough revenue to make the annual insurance payments let alone annual inspections and maintenance. At this meeting a suggestion was made to sell the Lark and the 1-34 and split the revenue 18 ways. There were 6 dues paying members, 10 Associates and 2 life members.

After consulting with an attorney we found that under the terms of our



Dewey Gerrard sitting in Franks' K-17



*Commemorative Post Card issued by Postal Service
for 50th SSA anniversary*

articles of incorporation we could not sell our assets and make distribution. Any proceeds must go back to a "worthy organization of similar nature".

In April of 1989 Larry Patterson offered to buy our club equipment and allow our members to join his club at Cedar Valley. We had the Lark a 2-33, and a 1-34. Larry had 2 gliders and 17 club members. After much negotiation it was agreed that our members would join his club, and would pay the same dues as before. Larry would purchase two of our ships for \$20,000 with the stipulation that after one year of operation, if we were not satisfied we could buy back the 1-34 and Lark at the original price.

Our membership list for 1991 shows 31 Active members, 19 Associate members, and 2 Life members. As you can see the merger of the two clubs brought the total to 52 members, the largest it has ever been.

Evidently 1-34 went back to Heber. A 1991 June notice indicated that the Lark a 1-26, and a 2-33 were available at Cedar Valley. The same notice indicated that not only was the 1-34 at Heber but a 2-33 was also there. Members of each original club were flying at both locations.

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of the pioneer of soaring in Utah. Frank Kelsey passed away in his sleep in August of 1991. Frank was one of the best known aircraft builder, repairman and restoration expert in the country. Frank was recognized for his accomplishments and was inducted into the United States Soaring Society Hall of Fame in Elmira, New York. A well deserved honor.

Larry Patterson who owned the Cedar Valley Airport not only allowed power pilots as well as glider pilots to use his facility but also allowed a sky diving operation. At some point a sky diver was either badly injured or killed (I'm not sure which) and the Cedar Valley Airport was sued. Larry eventually won the suit but it cost him a great deal of money to defend himself. After this happened Larry had a release drawn up to protect him from any further lawsuits. jThereafter he required anyone using his airport to sign the release. Most of the club members signed but a few refused to do so.

When the insurance company who insured our gliders, learned of the



Romanian IS 28-B2 two place Lark



Lark trailer - a "big" one

release from a question came up as to whether we would be covered by their policy or not. After meeting with attorneys it was still unclear. There were several of our club members who had somehow angered Larry who refused to let them fly from his airport. This presented another problem. Some of the members were welcome at Cedar Valley and some were unwelcome and deprived of the use of the club gliders stationed there.

After many meetings and discussions it was decided to re-purchase the Lark and 1-34 and move back to Heber. The members of the Cedar Valley group would then be able to fly their ships at Cedar Valley or the gliders at Heber.

Dave Robinson had come back to Heber and was now operating the soaring operation there.

A decision was made in 1994 to upgrade the equipment and to try to decide where to place the gliders - Heber, Morgan, or both. It was decided to sell the Lark and look for a better performing fiberglass ship. Either an ASK-21 or a Grob 103.

A Grob 103 Twin II was located in Omaha Nebraska. In May of 1995 John Mildon and Lee Steorts went back to Omaha to inspect the ship and make an offer if it looked OK. It was in very good condition and they brought it back to Utah. The Lark was then put up for sale. Dave Robinson of Soar Utah obtained a new Pawnee tow plane and announced that he would be building a new hanger of his own.

The club 1-34 was destroyed in a landing accident at Heber. One of the members froze at the stick and flew it down the runway and right through a fence. We started a search for another 1-34 and located one at Turf Soaring near Phoenix. The ship was purchased and brought back to Heber. It was painted bright yellow with blue trim and had the name "Buzzard Wings" painted on the nose.

1998-1999 The club 2-33 was stripped down, the fuselage sandblasted, and repainted, re-covered. The interior was completely re-done and the entire ship re-painted. Most of the work was done by club members.

The next few years saw a movement of gliders between Heber and Morgan, Utah. The Heber operation didn't begin till sometime in May

and the Morgan season started as soon as the weather permitted. Several members lived in the northern part of the state so we tried to have at least one ship available at Morgan.

A decision was made in 1992 to replace our old 2-33 trainer and replace it with a fiberglass Grob 103 if possible. A Grob 103 Acro was located in Portland, Oregon. Two club members inspected it, bought it for the club, and brought it back to Heber. The club fleet now consisted of a Schweizer 1-34 and two Grob 103's.

Since buying the Grob's we found that the membership in the club has continued to grow and the use of the ships has increased quite a bit.

MY PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

My personal observations of the Soaring in Utah from my beginning participation in 1964.

Without the encouragement and professional assistance from Frank Kelsey it is doubtful, in my mind, that soaring would be where it is today. During the early days Frank, John Mildon and I did a great deal of the repairs and maintenance on the club gliders and trailers. The club saved thousands of dollars over a period of 40 years. The club was appreciative and made Frank, John and me Honored Members. In the early days of the club it was truly a club. There were regular meetings, lots of social activities, parties, weekend safaris, contests, monthly news letters, and in general great comraderie.

As time went by and as members progressed, prospered and found the advantage of owning their own gliders the need for collective ownership decreased. One advantage a glider owner received from belonging to a club was the use of a 2 place glider to give rides to their friends and relatives. There are also times when an owner wants to take a quick flight and doesn't want the hassle of assembling and disassembling their own glider.

It appears to me that the club has become, as the name indicates an "Association". We have become a group of pilots who have banded together in joint ownership of several gliders. The club presently has 2 fiberglass 2 place Grob's and are contemplating the sale of the venerable

1-34 and replacing it with a higher performance fiberglass single seat glider.

It was discouraging to see the slow metamorphosis from an active "Club" to an "Association" of glider owners.

Whether this is good or bad is hard to say. The group is getting larger and more people are being exposed to the wonderful sport of soaring so it couldn't be too bad. Participation is increasing but the feeling of comraderie is missing.

Another observation I would like to make concerns the lack of motivation most of the present group of pilots show.

Almost all of my 3 diamonds and 30,000 cross country miles that I flew were flown in a home made medium performance glider with, by today's standards, rather primitive instrumentation.

With today's high performance gliders equipped with the latest electronic instruments that make soaring so much easier and safer it appears to me that my fellow glider pilots are not taking advantage of the modern equipment. Very few are experiencing the thrill of cross country or competitive flying or trying to earn their 3 Soaring Society Diamond awards. I would hope that this will change.

Happy Soaring

Lee Steorts