

Walter Cronkite's Rebuke of Gliders

Walter Cronkite, veteran news correspondent of WW II, who flew into Holland in a CG-4A glider later said "If you have to go to war, don't go in a glider!"

In spite of Cronkite's rebuke of gliders, Bob bought several Pratt-Reed and TG-3 (Training Glider), war-surplus gliders! They were brand new and cost \$300 each, in Americas, Georgia. He built a trailer that would hold two of them and drove them two at a time to Phoenix, AZ. Bob was about 26 years old at this time.

Bob believed the sale of these military surplus gliders helped to spread the popularity of soaring in the USA after the war. He said many pilots learned soaring in these surplus gliders.

After returning from the war, Bob was only able to dabble in gliding. He flew his surplus gliders for several years in Phoenix, flying with Archie Furgenson, a marine pilot.

He tried to sell excess surplus gliders for a profit, but was hard pressed to sell them. He said gliding was not too popular in those days. Other than that, up until the 1960's, Bob didn't fly much. He had to focus on finishing school and starting his career as an architect. His work was superb. One of his homes was featured in Sunset Magazine.

He went back to UC Berkeley from 1949-50. He recalled being an apprentice for \$5 per hour while he was attending college on the GI Bill. That wasn't enough to live on, so he had to depend on Dorothy to support him. She was working as a bookkeeper for a Cadillac dealer in Walnut Creek, CA.



Bob's son Ron (left) built this hang glider. He and dad (right) is carrying it to Mt. Diablo for it's maiden voyage. It took Ron 2 months to build it during a college break. Circa 1960's.



Ron Klemmedson flies off of Mt. Diablo on his maiden voyage. "It flew over 300 feet, longer than the Wright Bros. flight" according to his father. Circa 1960's

In the 1950's, he continued to apprentice in other architect offices and would moonlight for construction contractors on weekends. Back in those days, getting caught "moonlighting" could get you fired.

Finally in 1955, Bob received his California Architect License. This allowed him to start his own business, putting in twelve hour days, six days a week. It wasn't until the 1960's that he had time to focus on soaring.

To round out this profile on Bob Klemmedson, we elicited the help of daughter Kim, close friend Barry Danieli and fellow glider pilot Mike Green:

Article by Daughter Kim

We were fortunate enough to receive three short stories from crew member and daughter Kim. Her recollections of Bob's flying will leave you in stitches.

Article by Barry Danieli

In early 1970's, Barry Danieli began crewing for Bob Klemmedson. Read this exciting article that talks about his experiences with Bob during this era.

Article by Mike Green

To complete this tribute, Mike Green will write about the year 2002 when he and Bob Klemmedson were "team flying." This pair of "senior citizens" of soaring outpaced their young contenders and sauntered away with a first place trophy at Air Sailing!

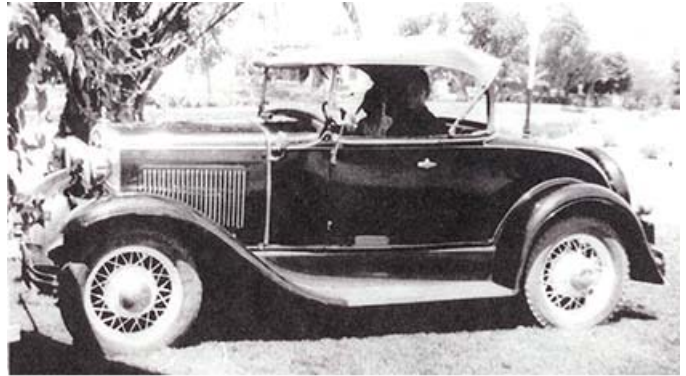
Special Thanks

Special thanks to JJ Sinclair for his technical advice on aerial dogfights.

BOB & DOROTHY SCRAPBOOK



This home designed by Bob Klemmedson in the 1970's is located in the Berkeley Hills.



1931 Ford Roadster Model A. Bob Klemmedson's first car with brother Don (age 4) in the left. Circa 1937



Bob in cockpit of his P-38L Lightning. Circa 1945



1961 Sky Sailing Regatta held in Redding, CA. Bob Klemmedson displays his 2nd Place Trophy. He rented this 1-26 Schweitzer from Les Arnold in Fremont, CA for \$75 for the weekend.



This home in Orinda design by Bob was published in Sunset Magazine. Bob received calls from all over the world after its publication. The swimming pool enters into the living room! Circa 1980

BOB & DOROTHY SCRAPBOOK



The 9th World Soaring Championships in 1963 held in Junin, Argentina. Alice (center) and Dick Johnson (right) in front of a Sisue glider. Bob Klemmedson was the Crew Chief.



Bob flying over Livermore, CA in a glider built in Austria. Only two were shipped to the USA. Circa 1965



Bob Klemmedson (left) in a RJH7 side-by-side seating, designed by Dick Schreder and built by Henry Prieze in Canada. Circa 1982.



Bob Klemmedson Flying over Livermore, CA in a side-by-side 2 seater, designed by Dick Schreder & built by Henry Prieze in Canada. Circa 1969.



Jerry Robinson in El Mirage with his home made sailplane built with the infamous William Hawley Bowlus. Dick Johnson is on the wing tip. Circa 1956



Bob Klemmedson in the cockpit of a glider with brother Don (left). This glider was built by William Hawley Bowlus, a famous designer and builder of gliders. Circa 1939.



Mother and Daughter

Dorothy (left) in a 1947 photo taken on the beach of the Salton Sea near Palm Springs.

Kim in a famous 1973 photo later published in WestWind Magazine. She is taking a shower outdoors at an Air Sailing event.

In a way, my father's style is very similar to Gary Kemp's. **They are completely nuts, very competitive, and most importantly eccentric.**

I too have many stories centered around "7A." I have always referred to my father as 7A. **I cried for two days, when he sold 7A** (the 33rd Standard Cirrus ever made) right out from under my nose. I was really pissed at him, because **he basically sold my childhood and didn't even consult me.** No, I do not fly, but I sure would have, if he had given me that bird.

I can thank soaring for teaching me how to drive, swim, survive in a desert, go LONG periods without showers **and basically be the low maintenance female I am today.** I know most of the brothels in Nevada, can name all 13 counties of Nevada and have conspired to play a few dirty tricks on crew members or pilots whom we thought were a little too pompous.

Where to begin? My earliest memory is of a glider field in Livermore, CA (doesn't exist anymore). It was in the early 60's and I think 7A was flying a Pratt-Reid at the time or maybe a Skylark (when your 5 or 6, you do not care about what type of glider it is).

The glider field was great, because they had this huge pool to play in while 7A was chasing thermals. We would go there on a Saturday morning. Dad would fly and I would get wet all day.

I remember having to help him put 7A back in the hanger and wash the wings (wasn't allowed to wash

the canopy). **I also remember buying an Orange Crush for a nickel** and it tasted like heaven. On the way home, we would stop at the A&W (the ONLY fast food my dad and mom would let us eat until I was at least 15 years old) and have a root beer float.

I have 3 stories that remind me why I loved being dragged around the country with 7A:

Story I – A Typical Day for a Glider Crew

1972, Marfa Texas. O.K., but in 1972, no one in their right mind knew where Marfa was. Now Mick Jagger has made it popular, go figure!

Well, back then there was this really cool WWII hanger where the contest was held on the tarmac of this abandoned airport. My dad took my mom, myself and Barry Danieli down for this contest.

Well, first and foremost, I hated Barry back in those days, because the only reason he was along was because I couldn't drive, so we needed another 16 year old to drive the pick up and trailer to relieve my mom from driving.

Well we were not there but one day, when **I got to see my first rattlesnake, first tarantula, and first vinegaroon** - now for a kid from Orinda, CA, that was way cool and really scary, but that is what made it fun. If you have ever heard my dad laugh, it was a treat. He was rolling when he showed us these critters. He even volunteered to kill the rattler and cook it up for dinner - that was nixed by Dorothy.

Well, in these days, prior to any gas restrictions, the contest director would liven things up and give you an "open day". Basically, you had to figure out in what direction you could fly the greatest distance, land off field and win the day.

Well, my dad took off that morning. All I remember was we had these great codes for where he might be headed. So we got the word from 7A that he was headed Northwest, sort of towards Hobbs. So off we go, driving like a mad banshee.

Dorothy was driving. **My dad could fly fast, but he drives really slow, while my mom goes like hell when she was chasing my dad.** So we are headed up 1-25, because by now he had long since past Hobbs and was headed for Truth or Consequences.

About this time, we lost radio contact and all we could do was keep driving north and checking in with headquarters to see where he possibly landed. This went on for a very long time, until about 9 or 10 at night. We had learned he landed in Espanola, NM (north of Santa Fe).

I think we were still south of Albuquerque at the time, so we had a long way to go. When, we all met up with Dad, all we could say was "Tomorrow better be a rest day, cuz we ain't getting you back in time, and you better have won the day for all the driving we did."

Well, Dad did not win that day, but he did win the next day. However, I think the best part of the story was he got to recant his version of the flight on his 25th wedding anniversary. **My mother was a Saint for going to Marfa, Texas for their silver anniversary.**

Addendum to Story I - The Vinegaroon

by Bob Klemmedson -

The contest manager was a judge Lattimore, a very famous guy. He was really tough. Someone caught one of these vinegaroons. **They were at least 2 inches long and very ugly.**

The judge smoked cigars and he had an ash tray in front of him while he was conducting a meeting for the contest. One of pilots or crew members flipped his ash tray over and stuck the vinegaroon under it. When he turned it over, the vinegaroon had crawled over the table, everyone scattered. Some pilots from Williams were at this event like Ray Gimney and may remember this little incident.

Angie Schreder, who is the wife of Dick Schreder, designer of the HP series of gliders, baked a cake and presented it to Dorothy and Bob the next morning which read, "Happy 25th Anniversary."

I know it was Minden - Std Class Nationals and want to say it was 1974, but not sure:

Story II – Don't Tell Mother How I got There

The Course: A triangle on not such a nice day. 7A is about 3rd place. More importantly **Tommy Beltz is ahead** of him in the standings. Everyone is struggling



VINEGAROON - Uropygid is commonly known as a whip scorpion. It is also known as the vinegaroon because when agitated they can spray a secretion of acetic acid.

back to home base, knowing no one will make it, so it is just get as close to Minden as possible.

Well, according to 7A, he and Tommy were on the north shore of Washoe Lake, trying to egg each other on. Beltz figured he'd hang with the locals, but when he got too close to the ground, he put it down in an alfalfa field. **"Now, I have you Beltz,"** 7A was thinking and he started out across the sage brush toward the lake. . .

When, we finally got to meet dad later that evening. My first question was "Dad, how did you land here?" Dad said, "I will tell you, but you have to promise not to tell your mother. **"Now, go out in the sagebrush and try to find my tail skid."**

Story III - The Rest of Story II

Dad, once he left Tommy behind, he figured he could get to the shore of the lake and land it on the shore, so off he goes. Problem was, he was losing altitude much faster than he thought he would.

Oh well, time to drive it to the deck, hope for ground affect to carry me to the shore. **Oh crap, there is a fence up ahead (barbed wire)** and utility lines about 40 ft. above the fence.

No problem, 7A bounces over the fence, but under the wires (my dad is a very lucky person). **Now he knew he was in deep doo-doo**, so he has to put it down in the sagebrush. Only problem is, he's going pretty fast. Sooo, ole 7A proceeds to ground loop and he stops in a cloud of dirt and dust.

Now, comes the next problem, he ground looped so hard that he jammed the canopy shut and he can't get out. As luck is always with my Dad, he landed between some houses and the lake. Some of the neighbors heard the crash, so they came running over to see if my Dad was okay.

Here he sits in the cockpit and can't get out, but he still asks the bystanders **"Do I still have my tail?"** (Standard Cirrus's have a T tail which is infamous for snapping off in a landing such as described above).

They looked at him with a huge “?” on their faces, so my dad said "Is there a thing in a shape of a T at the end of the glider? "Oooh, Yep, sure is."

After that, they help get my dad out of 7A and to this day, he still does not know how the tail didn't snap off. I think it was because he is so damn lucky and that plane really liked us.

As I proceeded to scour the "landing site" for my dad's tail skid, I was amazed at the fact he was not killed, but then I also knew he had a little bit of pirate/flying ace in him. I knew then that once again, his lack of fear, great skills, and sneakiness had got him through. I just plain laughed out-loud. [Here's another great story to tell my kids about their crazy grandfather](#)



This was the sailplane that broke Kim's heart when her dad sold it. The infamous 7A was the 33rd Standard Cirrus ever made. Bob owned this for twenty years.

TIME FLYS WHEN YOUR HAVING FUN WITH BOB KLEMMEDSON

By Barry Danieli



2006 Oktoberfest at Williams Soaring, CA. Walt Cannon (front) is landing the Duo Discus with author Barry Danieli (rear).

My receptionist told me there was a Dr. Michael Green on the phone for me. That's one way to get through but she knows that anyone who mentions a key word like "soaring", or "sailing" won't have any problems. Mike stated that Tom Jue was writing an article on Bob Klemmedson and thought I might have some insight. After a couple of e-mail's he asked if I could write something on Bob. Well, after crewing for him as a kid, racing against him, and flying with him there might be a few stories to share over the years.

I think I was born with goggles, leather helmet, and a silk scarf around my neck. My grandfather had a Piper Super Cruiser and my father sold Ercoupes. My mom was flying with them while pregnant with me. We had our own private dirt strip in Sonoma with a T hanger for the plane. My father started me out with hand launched gliders and at the ripe old age of seven, I became the AMA West Coast Junior Hand Launched Glider Champ. Soaring and competing was in my blood.

Most kids think that if they solo an airplane at sixteen they have a jump on any aviation career. I learned that you could fly a glider when you are fourteen so my parents drove me to Calistoga at age thirteen so I could solo on my birthday. Jim Indrebo took me under his wing and made an enthusiastic glider pilot out of me. To build time, my father bought a 1-34 which he leased back to Jim. When I was fifteen I had a learners permit and would ride my 90cc Yamaha to Calistoga, sit on the ridge all afternoon and build time. A summer vacation to Marfa Texas to see the World Soaring Championships in 1970, and I came back with a whole different perspective on our sport.

I wanted to learn more about soaring contests so in 1972 I ran an "Available to Crew" ad in West Wind. **I said something about knowing where the laundromat was in Marfa and that I knew how to clean a canopy without scratching it.** I now had my driver's license and a strong desire to learn more about racing sailplanes. Call it luck, fate, or an act of God but I had the good fortune to have Bob answer my ad. A little tune up at the Region 11 contest that spring and we were off to the Standard Class Nationals in Marfa Texas. Bob made sure I could back up the trailer before we left.

Now it must have taken some courage for Bob and Dorothy to allow a sixteen-year-old kid to drive the truck with a big camper and new Std. Cirrus in tow, especially at the speeds we drove in those days. Dorothy would ask how fast I was going and I would have to back it down to only 70MPH. These were backcountry roads we're talking about here, not freeways. Bob didn't seem to care how fast I drove, guess I had it under control. Oh that's right, **Bob had crewed for the legendary AJ Smith at the worlds in Poland.** Rumor has it that after riding with AJ, anything I did was probably pretty tame. Maybe it was the nerves of steel he had from flying P-38's in the Pacific during WWII. One thing for sure, Bob didn't scare easily and I enjoyed zipping along.

Crews had a more active part in the contest back then. Radios weren't as good and you would try to stay in contact with the pilot by following him. If he had to land out, you could help assess a field, or stop traffic to get him down on a road.



The Barbara, a 1932 Alden schooner, rebuilt in the 1980's by Bob Klemmedson and friends, including Barry Danieli. This schooner placed 1st, 2nd and 3rd in a number of Master Mariners races in the San Francisco Bay. In this photo, Barry Danieli is at the helm (standing up with blue shirt and red vest). Bob is sitting to the left (white hat).

More than one crew was known to flatten out road markers to protect those wings on landing. You could then quickly de-rig the plane, rush back to the airport, re-assemble it and send the pilot off on another try.

Bob's camper had a vapor lock problem. Dorothy, Kim and I would stop frequently in the hot Texas desert to wrap cool towels around the fuel lines to continue our chase and try keep up with Bob. Hopefully he would send us home early enough to watch him finish and catch the wingtip.

One day I came to a stop sign while following Bob and we felt a sharp jolt. Kim came flying out of the cab over bed and landed on the floor. Some girl had rear-ended us and punched a hole in Bob's clever homebuilt trailer. After dealing with the police, we really had to go. Fortunately Bob made it back that day and was able to make temporary repairs to get us through the contest. At the end of the contest I had to go to the police station and answer some questions about the accident. Never having to deal with the law before I was intimidated but Bob was there and helped guide me through the whole process.

The trailer Bob had built for the Cirrus was a piece of ingenious engineering. You could raise the top off, remove a couple of perfectly cut side panels, and slide the glider in with the tail off. With wing covers it was a clever way to store the glider assembled at the airport.

Bob and Dorothy celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary at that contest in Marfa. Fortunately, it was a booming day and Bob must have been in a hurry to get back to Dorothy because he burned up the 262mi track at nearly 77mph. I don't think anyone had ever flown a task that fast before.

Back in 1972, they still had a task called "Free Distance". The idea was you had to fly as far as you could from the starting point. Gasoline was cheap back then but it was hard on both crews and pilots. **Bob got on a storm front and rode it over 400 miles all the way to Espanola New Mexico.** He was second for the day to Ray Gimmey. Fortunately the next day was a rest day so we could drive back to Marfa. When Ray had to give his speech on his flight, he handed the gas receipts to the competition director and stated why he hated "Free Distance". That task was abolished by the rules and never flown again.

Dorothy and Kim decided to visit relatives after Marfa so that left me to drive the camper back while Bob flew. We stopped in Las Vegas which I had never seen before. **Bob had a system for playing craps and to this day I've yet to see him loose.** I guess he was defraying his soaring expenses because when he got home, he decided to fly the Open Class Nationals at Minden. We all know that is the contest that Ray Gimmey won with his Std. Libelle but Bob was up the with the rest of the small ships that beat the big birds that year. I'm now at the age Bob was when he flew

those two nationals back to back and I can really appreciate the energy it took to fly a second contest.

In 1973 I was asked to crew again in Liberal Kansas. **I'm sure it is the one contest that Bob would rather forget.** After a practice day, Dorothy's relatives had come to visit us from Oklahoma. We put the wing stands under the wings, I bolted in the tiedown rings, and went to town for a bite to eat. We were only going to be gone for a short while and everything was calm. While we were in town, a huge squall hit and it dawned on us the glider wasn't tied down. Bob jumped in the camper, raced through the streets of Liberal, and was doing a 60mph powerslide as he raced back to the airport. An HP-14 was flipped as well as three Kestrel trailers. Fortunately, the Newgard's noticed the Cirrus wasn't tied down. They took the tail off, hung on the glider, got it tied down, and saved 7A. It was an important lesson I learned that day that I have carried with me ever since. First, I developed a healthy respect for weather and second, **NEVER leave the airport with your ship or trailer unsecured!**

Eventually a Kestrel 19 came into our family. I now had a glider that made up for my lack of airmanship that would allow me to keep up with Bob in his Cirrus. He was gracious enough to fly along with me and help build my cross-country skills. Back in the day, I flew with him in his RHJ-7 and what impressed me most was how calm & cool he was even when things got a little hairy. In fact, the hairier they got, the more he seemed to enjoy himself. **What I perceived as a risk with my experience was still quite comfortable for Bob with his experience level.** He never held anything back and was always willing to share his vast knowledge. When we finally got the chance to compete against each other at the Open Nationals in 1979, we were right next to each other on the score sheet, only a few points apart. The same thing happened a few years later at the Sports Class Nationals. I'd like to think that I was making the same decisions Bob would make if he was flying my plane.

Bob was there for me during one of my more difficult times in a soaring contest. In 1984 I was flying a Nimbus 3 during the Open Class Nationals in Minden, competing against Bob and my father. **Gary Kemp called a 500mi task that was the longest task ever, called in a contest at that time.** I was one of the fortunate ones to finish the task and soon after I landed word came in that my father had crashed out near Silver Springs. After flying for over eight hours I went out to go retrieve him and the 604 he was flying. Fortunately he wasn't hurt but the 604 was another story.

I should mention that the 604 had a three-piece wing with a center section that weighed over 350 lbs. Two big jacks would raise and lower the wing on the fuselage and all the pieces fit on dollies that would be rolled into the trailer. Normally it wasn't a problem but if you couldn't get the trailer to the glider or if the

fuselage was busted, you had a lot of heavy pieces that you had to somehow pack in this box.

Bob had landed at Fallon and was on his way back to Minden when he saw us struggling with the busted 604 in the sagebrush off the side of the road. It was dark, cold and late. A thunderstorm had just dumped on the area. **Several crews went by but Bob was one to stop and help us pick up the pieces.** You had to be there to appreciate how big and heavy a 604 center section could be to fit on top of all the busted pieces of a pre-carbon open class glider. Bob was right there with us, muscling and wrestling the wounded beast back into its box. Thanks for the help Bob, I'll never forget it.

No matter what Bob was doing, he was always enjoying himself. He bought a 60' schooner in the early 80's. This boat was half-underwater and was missing the rudder. Paul Sasse dove down to the bottom of the berth and found the rudder in the mud. Bob had the boat hauled out to the boat yard and spent a couple of years lovingly restoring her. He then started to enter the Master Mariner regattas. I had spent some time sanding on "Barbara" and done some sailing so I was part of the crew. **Over the years we won the Master Mariners regatta a couple of times and placed in the top three many times.** We even won the fastest elapsed time for a Marconi Schooner. This is comparable to the trophies they award in our National Soaring Contest for the fastest task flown.

Bob really enjoys sharing his boat with his friends. I'm sure you don't have to look too far to find someone at the gliderport who has sailed with Bob on the "Barbara". He is happy to let anyone try their skills out on the helm and always has a bright smile when out on the water. One of our favorite events is to go out during fleet week and watch the Blue Angels from the water. One year we were invited to escort the fleet in as they passed under the Golden Gate Bridge. This was a special moment and definitely had to be a high point in the long history of the "Barbara". Whenever you are out on the "Barbara", you feel like a celebrity because people are always coming up along side of you and taking your picture. This is a real testament to Bob's wood working skills.

Anyone, who knows Bob, knows his affinity for wood. I've lost count of the number of glider trailers he has built. He still has a runabout he designed and built sitting in his back yard as well as an all wood Loehle Sport Parasol ultralite. He recently restored a MG-23SL, which was the sistership to the one he originally owned. He gets that gleam in his eye every time he talks about how nice that ship flew.

Bob has built several remote controlled models of the "Barbara" as well as a Star racing class sailboat. He still actively enjoys and races the boats.

He was also quite the golfer. **Bob lives on a golf course and plays with the same passion he had for soaring.** I was fortunate to team up with him for a fun

tournament during one of Jim Indrebo's New Years wave parties at Calistoga. We won the champagne but I wasn't old enough to drink it at the time.

Bob and I both enjoy flying two seat gliders. He bought the Duo Discus with Mike Green and I had bought a share in a Nimbus 3D. I flew with Bob in some contest and he flew with me in my Nimbus. One of my most memorable flights with Bob was during the regionals a couple of years ago. We were able to climb up the face of a cloud and get above them. Looking down at the halo around the shadow of our glider against the clouds was a very special moment for me with Bob.

Anyone who has been fortunate enough to fly with Bob soon realizes he is a wealth of soaring knowledge. I tried to be a sponge, absorbing what I could but he has probably already forgotten more than I've learned over all these years. One thing is for certain, I know I'm a better pilot having the good fortune to have flown with him all those years.

Knowing Bob has enriched my life more than words can convey. I'm grateful for the hours spent flying with him in the RHJ-7, Duo Discus, Nimbus, and even my Cessna. We have shared many hours on the water sailing the "Barbara", going to 49er games, and chasing the golfball around the course. He has even returned the favor and crewed for me in a national contest. Time really has flown knowing Bob and Dorothy for the past thirty-five years. They have had such a positive impact on my life but the soaring experiences with Bob have been the icing on the cake.

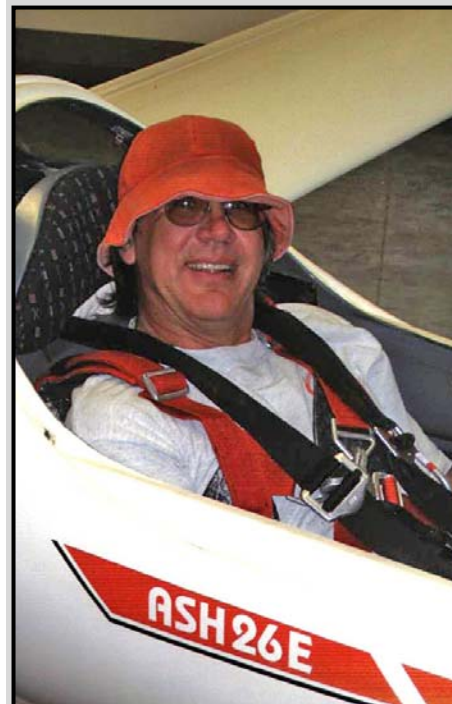
I have nothing but fond memories of Bob and Dorothy. They just celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary together and even with soaring as his mistress, **Dorothy is still lovingly by his side as copilot.** A true inspiration to the rest of us!

About the author

Barry Danieli is a graduate of the University of the Pacific and Palmer College of Chiropractic. He describes himself as a Chiropractor/Gentleman farmer growing award winning Cabernet Sauvignon grapes for Sebastiani winery. He earned his Diamond badge as a teenager and has flown a bunch of Regionals and Nationals over the years in all classes. He was the Region 11 Open Class champion in 1983 and has placed in the top ten of two Nationals.

When Calistoga, Lagoon Valley, and Sonoma closed their soaring operations he found it more convenient to go sailing. He won the 1989 and 1990 season in his class (Olson 30) on San Francisco Bay then branched out racing offshore to such destinations as Cabo San Lucas and Hawaii. He placed 2nd or 3rd in three St. Francis Yacht Club Big Boat Series' in his J/35 and he has twice won the Farallon's race. Eventually he was racing in regattas throughout the world in Key West, Ft. Lauderdale, Hawaii, Mexico, and Thailand to name a few, racing on everything from Melges 24's to 80' maxi's.

Barry was the season Karting Champ at Infineon raceway in 2002, but decided that he would really rather be soaring. "Karting is everything soaring and sailing isn't. It's noisy, greasy, and really, really fast". He sold the kart, cut back on the sailing schedule, and recently added an ASH-26E to his stable of aircraft. "Now I can soar when and where I want to without having to depend on the availability of a towplane." His understanding wife, Diane, can usually be found on the boat or at the airport with him in the back seat of his Nimbus.



The Old Guys Win The Race

An Interview with Mike Green

By Tom Jue



Mike Green (rear) is in the Duo Discus. He and Bob Klemmedson won first place at Air Sailing in 2002. In this file photo, in the 2007 Oktoberfest, John Apps (the third partner) is in the front seat. Photo by Tom Jue



Mike Green took me along in the Duo Discus in May 2005. He was flying this sailplane, dancing in the skies like he was wearing high cap sneakers. Photo by Tom Jue



Bob Klemmedson (front) and Mike Green (rear) in the Duo Discus. Both are wearing oxygen annuals.

I recently spoke to Mike Green about the vintage year he had with Bob Klemmedson in 2002.

As the Ol' Blue Eyes Frank Sinatra sang, "it was a very good year" for Mike Green, Bob Klemmedson and Earl Smith.

Sure, Bob and Mike won first place at Air Sailing. Yes, the trio of Bob, Mike and Earl did place 15th at the Lubbock Sports Class Nationals. However, what made it especially memorable was **that these were the "old guys!"** The three of them proudly totaled 235 years of age.

At the time, Bob was 81. Earl Smith at age 82 was crew. Mike at age 72 was the youngster in this crowd.

2002 Air Sailing Annual Sports Class

Bob and Mike first took their Duo Discus to Air Sailing, located in Palomino Valley, just 25 miles northeast of Reno, Nevada. At the time, the Duo Discus was owned by Bob Klemmedson, Mike Green and John Apps. Bob and Mike were "team flying" this contest.

Bob and Mike felt good about this race. They were very experienced flying in the Sierras. They have been flying consistently here at Air Sailing and they knew they were the most experienced pilots by far. On the next to the last day of the contest, they were a comfortable 300 points ahead of second place. However, these thoughts became ironic as they were barely able to squeak past the youngster Tim Kurreck, who probably competed in only one other contest previous to this. Mike recalled that Tim did tremendously well.

Chad Moore was serving his first time as Contest Director at Air Sailing, wrote the following in the August 2002 issue of Air Sailing News:

Tim Kurreck absolutely smoked the field with a long flight south for the 2.5 PST task for the last day; the next fastest pilot was 15 mph slower. The fickle thermals gave the rest of the field grief. Even Rolf "Keep It Flying" Peterson landed away. **But the team of Mike and Bob in the Duo Discus flew solidly every day and won the contest.**



Bob Klemmedson at Air Sailing with Norma Burnette in 2002. Norma is an icon in the soaring community in Region 11.

She was responsible for designating the “MG” Call letters for the Duo Discus as “Mighty Gorilla.” Mike Green told me that had no choice but to acquiesce, but that’s another story for another newsletter!

2002 Lubbock Sports Class Nationals

With this great win under their belt, Bob and Mike headed for Lubbock, TX, where they were joined by Earl Smith, who was the “honorable ballast” and crewed for them during this race. Earl was an old buddy of Bob Klemmedson.

From a casual look, you wouldn’t think a bunch of old farts stood a chance. Although Mike is a competitor, he said, his reasons for flying contests were not solely due to his competitive urge. Rather, the way he saw it, flying contests was a good way to fly cross-country more safely. He told me “the support was huge. The weather was good. The geography selected was usually excellent. You had crews to help around during land-outs.”

Mike recalled that Bob Klemmedson was the more aggressive flyer of the pair. Bob had a lot more experience flying than Mike. Perhaps what was most significant was that **Bob was a serious competitor. He came to win.** Mike stated with tremendous passion in his voice, “Flying with Bob Klemmedson that year made me a better competition pilot today, period!”

Mike’s motor home broke down on this trip, but fortunately, the transmission held until they reached Lubbock. It took three days over a weekend for a General Motor’s dealer to fix the transmission.

Good sailplane pilots adapt and adapt they did. They stayed in the motor home in the dealer’s lot while it

was being fixed! During the contest, they stayed at a KOA camp ground. Neither camping nor RV’s were allowed at the Lubbock airport.

This little setback did not damper their enthusiasm. **They ran a great race and placed a very respectable 15th place out of 44 contestants.** This wasn’t too bad when you’re up against some of the best in the country.

The Spoils of Victory

Getting back to the Air Sailing contest, the tradition was if you won the race, you had to run the next year. So in 2003, Bob Klemmedson was the Competition Director and Mike Green was the Contest Manager!



This photo was taken at Air Sailing in 2002 when Bob Klemmedson was Competition Director.