

The following article was transcribed from the paper-only April 1999 issue of the LVVSA newsletter.

History According to Ralph

The following is based on my memory and may not be 100% accurate. However, it is a start on which others may build or correct.

My first glider flight was at Purdue University. It was a winch tow in a PGC-2 (Purdue Glider Club-2Place). The winch was powered by a model "A" Ford engine with a solid steel clothes line with many splices from lots of breaks. The flight lasted only three minutes. This was the club's only two place glider and it was wrecked shortly after my flight, ending my glider flying for forty years. I left Purdue after completing my freshman year to work at Franklin Air-cooled Motors in Liverpool, NY near Syracuse. There I took flying lessons at Amboy Airport and paid \$8/hr for instruction and aircraft wet. I soloed a Cub Cruiser in early 1941. I flew about twenty hours in light aircraft until December 7th. At that time the CAA grounded all pilots until interviews were completed and most pilots were allowed to fly again.

I went into the Army Air Corps in February 1943 and completed Primary Flight Training at Hemet Ryan Field in PT 17s (Stearman). Basic was completed at Gardner Field, Taft, CA in the BT 13 and advanced at Luke in AT 6s. Transition training took place in P-40s and finally P-47s at Shaw Field, Sumter, SC.

After completing a degree in Mechanical Engineering at Syracuse University I worked for the Navy and for the Army Material Command in the Washington, DC area. Retiring in 1975 we moved to Las Vegas in 1980.

In 1981 I saw an advertisement in the Las Vegas Journal which directed me to the Jean Airport where I met Tom Sullivan, Phil [Mort] Mortensen, Bob Holmes and others. In 1982 Russ Buchanan came over from Desert Soaring, Boulder City, to give me my first check ride in the 2-33. I was encouraged by Mort to do the CFG and accomplished it in January 1986.

Phil Mortensen operated Terra Training, a flight school located at McCarran airport. They went out of business in 1980 due to lack of support from the GI Bill. With financial backing by Dr. Kemp, K&M Aviation was established at Sky Harbor Airport, now Henderson Executive. Bill Walker was chief instructor and Mort headed up the glider operation at Jean. Dr. Kemp sold the operation to Bill Walker in 1984. Tom Sullivan, Bob Holmes and Ralph provided the glider instruction. Zink [Ray Zinkowski] and Mort did most of the towing.

Bill Walker decided to get out of the business in 1987 and Mort and nine others conducted the first meeting of the LVVSA in 1988. The club purchased the Scout from Walker and Russ sold us the 2-33. In 1989 the club leased Shad's Blanik (2NV) and Ann Irving sold her 1-26 N7799S [SN 446] to Russ who eventually sold it to the club.

In mid-1990 Shad sold 2NV and the club bought Steve Jackson's Blanik N65379. Soon after this the Blanik was refurbished by Mike Arkovitch. It was badly damaged in 1996 and the insurance settlement allowed the purchase of [another Blanik] N51MC from Warren Pietsch.

In September of 1996 the club voted to discontinue the Pawnee rebuild project and purchased N7211Z in December. The Scout was sold in July of 1998.

I believe that the current club members are the best personnel the club has ever had. These members should have the use of nice and safe equipment. This will require the cooperation and commitment from all members.

Good Soaring

Ralph