

Gliders and Power Mix for the First Time at the U.S. Nationals

by John Lumley



Holy cow, it's a long drive from south Florida to Sherman, Texas, especially dragging a glider trailer. The front end of my SUV shimmied above 55 mph, so even kids on scooters were passing me.

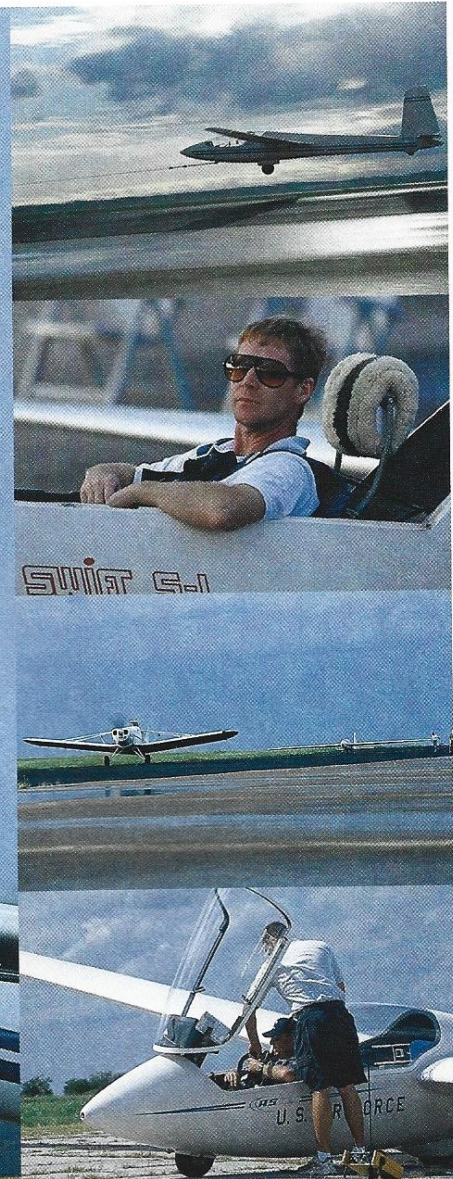
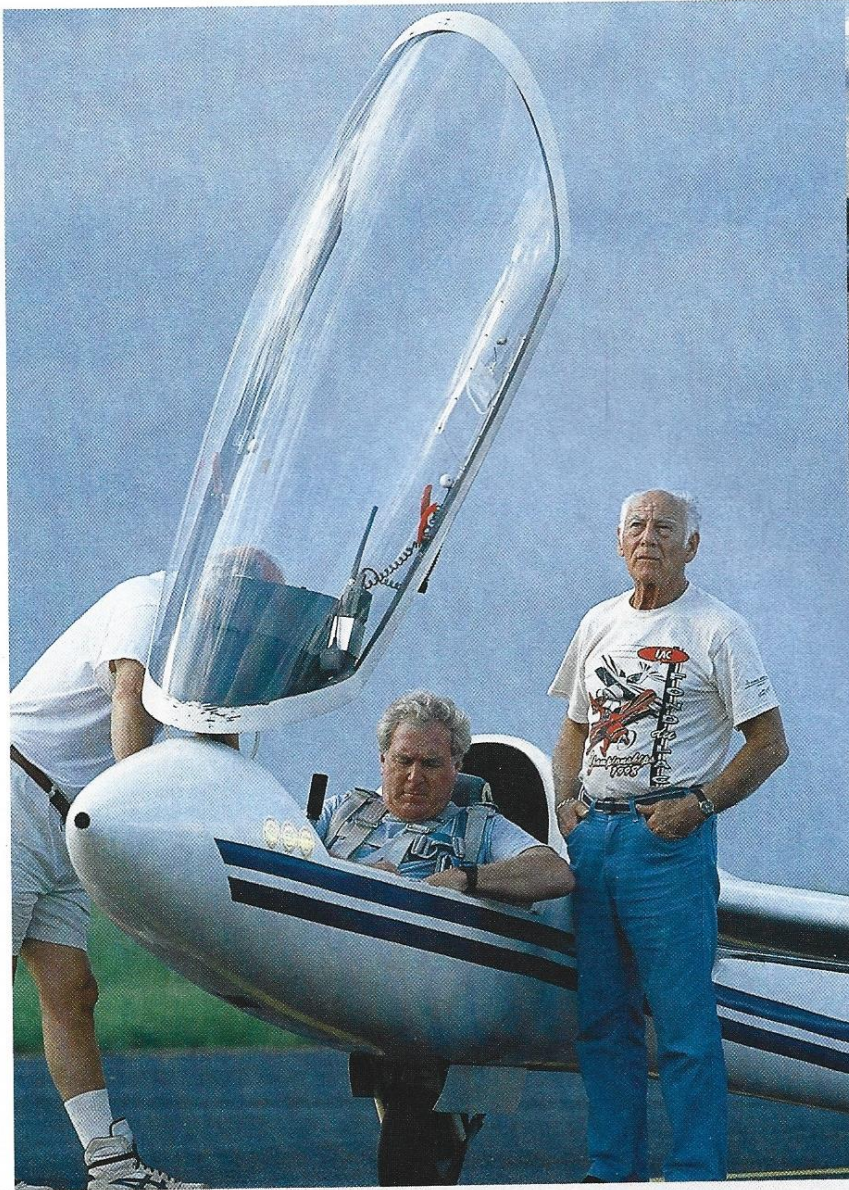
Grayson County Airport, Sherman/Denison, Texas, was the site of the 2001 U.S. National Aerobatic Championships, which was held September 1-7. Glider and power flights were intermingled during the competition, and the first glider flights flown on Monday, September 3, were the Intermediate Knowns. At the

contest briefing, areas were set up for glider and power holding so no time would be lost bringing aircraft into the aerobatic box. (This was done every morning.) The judges had a clipboard for glider and power competitors and switched back and forth as required. Unfortunately, the weather created many delays throughout the day. When flying was finally completed on Monday, medals were awarded for categories completed that day. Results in Glider Intermediate were Tom Hankinson in first with 1219.7, Jerald Kurtz in second with 1006.7, and

Shaun Germain in third with 918.8.

The weather on Tuesday, September 4, was about as horrible as you could ask for. We did manage to complete the Intermediate category, and then flying was canceled for the day. The bright spot was the 2nd annual Clifford Hurley World Famous Starter Party, which was held in front of the main hangars and in between the rain-drops.

On the morning of Wednesday, September 5, the weather was not cooperating, as low clouds and drizzle lasted most of the morning. The

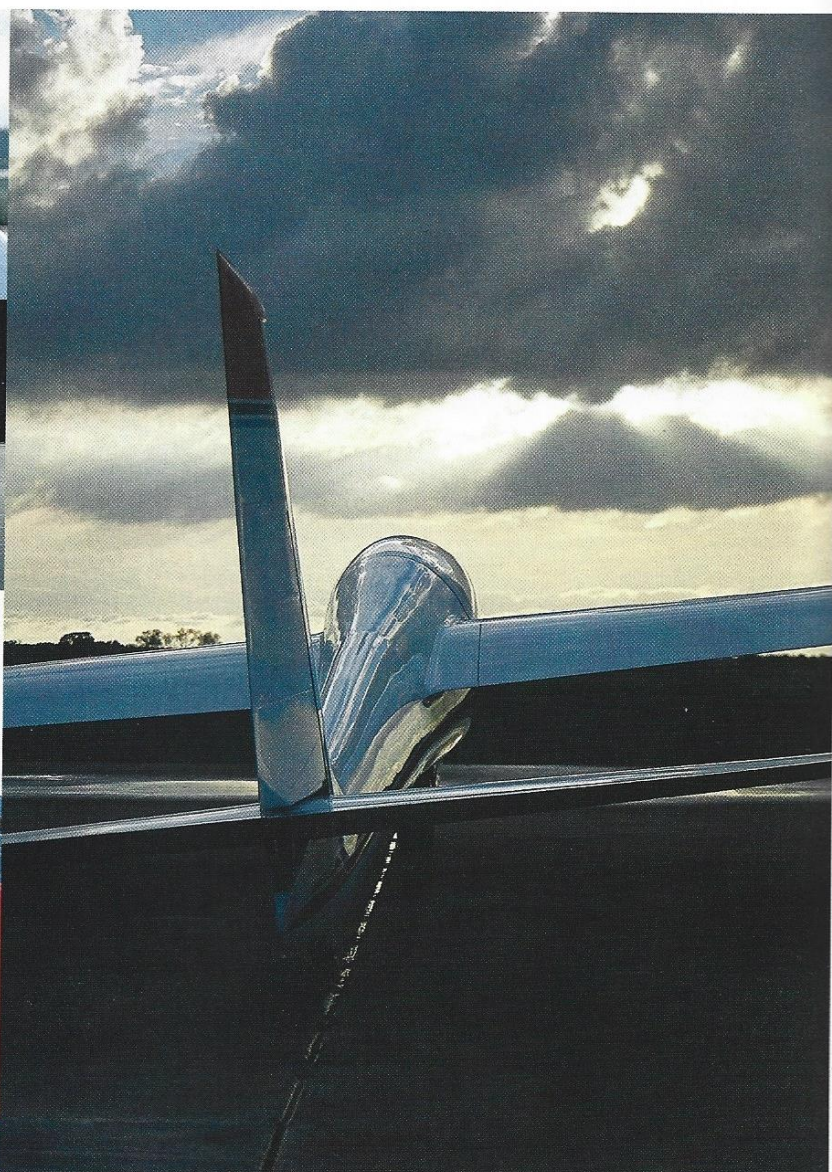


Unlimited gliders were finally rolled out for a few hours but were returned to the hangar when thunderstorms moved in. Heavy rain, frequent wild lightning, and blowing livestock continued until 6:30 p.m. Suddenly openings in the cloud cover appeared, and the Unlimited gliders once again rolled out in anticipation of flying the Known. John Lumley was the first Unlimited glider competitor to fly followed by Kim Reniska. The starter and judges could insert about three power aircraft in between each glider competitor, which worked out quite well.

Winds were quite strong from the southeast, and occasional low clouds regularly blew through the box. Tom Rhodes, the third Unlimited glider competitor, was towed to altitude and held in orbit for quite a while waiting for an opening to appear. It was a race between sunset and a flyable sky. Finally as he was being cleared into the box, his radio failed, so he was obligated to land without competing. Sunset had come and gone by this time, so flying was terminated for the day. Wednesday evening's meal and entertainment was well organized by

Contest Director Allyson Parker-Lauck, and we all headed out to Buzzard's Bar and Grill to kick back with a casual dinner and to sing karaoke. (Rumor has it that Jan, Lisa, and Allyson have signed on with a recording company since that evening!)

Thursday, September 6, began with low ceilings and fog. The briefing was moved to 7 a.m. to try to recover some of the missed flying time. Gliders were pulled out into position at 8 a.m., and the wait began for flyable weather. Finally, ceilings lifted at 10:45 a.m., and the judges and other officials



scrambled to man their positions. Unlimited glider and power started off first to complete the balance of their first Known program. Tom Rhodes was the first Unlimited glider competitor to fly followed by George Watson and Walter Parrasch. Tom and George both completed their flights prior to the lunch break. Staying in the box was quite a challenge because of the strong winds from the southwest. Flying was put on hold until 2:30 p.m. because of low clouds. When competition resumed, Walter Parrasch flew the remaining Unlimited glider Known se-

quence in some pretty hefty winds. A 30-minute break was taken to change judges, and glider and power Sportsman began.

Temperatures began soaring when the sun came out, and it was hard to tell whether we were getting sun-burned or wind-burned. The Sportsman glider category continued intermingled with power and finished at 6 p.m. Judge positions were again changed, and the second round of power flights (the Unknowns) began. Medals were awarded when the flying was ended for the day, and the

Sportsman results were first—Mike Criste, second—Luka Tomljenobic, third—Rob Morgan, fourth—Brad Hubinger, fifth—Chris Hubbard, sixth—Clem Copuntess, seventh—Rob Stimpson, and eighth—Mike Smith. Mike Criste flew an MDM-1 FOX while the other competitors flew the ASK-21.

Friday, September 7, started with a 7 a.m. briefing, and flying began promptly at 8 a.m. It was a windy day. Just how windy was it? You had to be there. It was so windy that we sent the tow planes home, as we did not need them to launch! Unlimited power flew



their sequences with surface winds of 25 knots and upper winds at 2,000 feet of 35 to 45 knots. The glider competitors were unable to fly because of the extremely strong winds. The pilots agonized over the decision, but the performance of a glider with reference to staying in the aerobatic box in such high winds was not feasible. The awards banquet was held Friday night at the Sherman Holiday Inn, and the preparations and food were excellent. I have to say, everyone "cleaned up purty good" for the fixins at the shindig.

Beautiful awards were presented to

many of the organizers, judges, and volunteers who make these contests possible. The final glider results for Sportsman and Intermediate were unchanged from the original medal ceremony listed above. The glider results were finalized for the Unlimited gliders without a second flight. First place and new Glider National Champion is John Lumley; second, George Watson; third, Walter Parrasch; fourth, Kim Reniska; and fifth, Tom Rhodes.

It was a pleasure to be a part of the U.S. National Aerobatic Champion-

ships. The IAC glider competitors are appreciative of the efforts of past IAC President Doug McConnell and current President Rob Dorsey to include the gliders in a well-run and well-judged competition. The integration of gliders and powered aircraft went smoothly, and many new friends were made along the way. Once again, our heartfelt thanks to Contest Director Allyson Parker-Lauck and the many volunteers, judges, assistant judges, runners, starters, scorekeepers, and the list goes on. Without you it could not happen.