

Looking Backward

Details of gliding activities in Alberta in the nineteen thirties came to light at the recent Westaskiwin Meet when a member of several early gliding clubs visited to check on modern techniques. Dan Key, a recording engineer at Radio Station CKVA, told of clubs with 150 members, construction of several Rhon Ranger primary gliders, weekend flying over a period of six years, a tragic accident at Drumheller and journeys to Elmira.

Three brothers, Hiram, Oscar and Albert Lindgren were the driving force behind the Amisk Gliding Club. Dan Key recalls that this club had a membership between 100 and 150. Amisk is a small town south of Wainwright, near the Saskatchewan border. The Club had two Rangers; the C-2 was wire braced; the other was strut braced. (It seems everyone who flew a primary took a wing-camera picture in flight, and Mr. Key's showed himself as a teenager at several hundred feet altitude.) The Lindgrens had started a flying club in California but when a student damaged their aircraft, they returned to the farm and introduced the gliding era to the area, starting the club in 1932. A car was used at first for launching, later a winch.

Who was the Estevan man who, according to Key, "built several gliders"? One of these was for the town of Edgerton.

Dan Key himself had 130 flights including the low hops used for initial training. He instructed during the latter years of the activities.

The Camrose episode must be included for completeness. The ten-member club, Dan Key as instructor, lasted a week. Key stalled the glider on an auto-pulley launch.

A club at the town of Veteran had a Rhon Ranger and a Pietenpol and 15 or 20 members. Drumheller had a short lived club. A pilot spun the glider and was fatally injured when the glider struck the ice.

Hiram Lindgren travelled to Elmira for U. S. championship meets. Here he learned how to make a primary instrument for a primary glider. The altimeter consisted of a thermos bottle and a U-tube. To tell the altitude, if the bottle and tube were proportioned correctly, you counted the bubbles on the way up - one bubble for ten feet. Well - that's what the man said.

Key mentioned a "wing" built by a "German" in Saskatchewan. Could this have been the Brandlmayr Sailplane of 1939?

The last Rhon Ranger from Amisk was taken to Hughenden in 1937 when the Amisk Club petered out.

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