

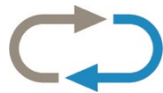


Newsletter of the Skyline Soaring Club for March, 2024

WEBSITE!!

Wow! Skylines digital genius (Piet Barber) has done it again with a huge remake of our club website. Well done!! See

<https://www.skylinesoaring.org>



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Stephanie Zilora

- March 9, 2024, 0900-1300: Skyline Soaring Club's Annual/Safety Meeting at the firehouse across the street from KFRR
- April 22-27, 2024: 2024 SSA Region 5 North Contest, Perry, SC
- May 13-19, 2024: 2024 Region 2 Contest, Reedsville, PA
- June 2-8, 2024: 2024 SSA Region 5 South Contest, Cordele, GA

- June 23-28, 2024: SSC Week of Training, Petersburg, WV
- July 22-26, 2024: 46th Women Soaring Pilots Association (WSPA) Seminar, Sunflower Aerodrome, Hutchinson, KS
- August 4-10, 2024: 2024 SSA Region 3 Contest, Elmira, NY
- September 16-21, 2024: 2024 Region 4 South, New Castle, VA
- October 24-26, 2024: SSA Convention, Knoxville, TN



REMINISCING

Jim Kellett

A recent cartoon had a small kid teasing his dad because dad couldn't figure out how to use his smartphone. But he reminded the kid "don't be a smart alec - remember I taught you how to use a

fork” . . . Unlike the magic performed by today’s digital masters, what follows is a reminiscence about what the state of the art was back in the (good?) old days.

Ever hear of a barograph? It’s a machine we used to record flights for badge claims. It’s a simple recording barometer, about half the size of a shoebox. After our official observer sealed the unit it was secured in the glider where the pilot could not reach it. During the flight it made a simple trace of altitude vs. time. After the flight, the official observer broke the seal and processed the trace.

There were three kinds in common use back in the day – the Replogle, that made a trace with a sharp metal stylus on a strip of coacervate paper.



The Winter made a trace with a stylus on a strip of smoked foil. You coated the foil by rotating it in the sooty smoke of burning camphor, and of course anything that touched the foil other than the stylus ruined the recording. Like the one in this picture! Processing the traces was a pain in the ass. After the flight, the trace was fixed by spraying it with a fixative such as Krylon.



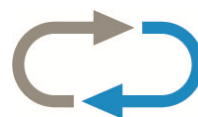
The Peravia was easiest of all in that one didn’t have to affix a strip to a drum; the recording wax paper came from a continuous roll, so one didn’t have to worry about a trace going bad by getting tripped up going over the edge of the recording strip.



Now, for goal flights, hold your hat. First, write a declaration sheet; then photograph it with an Instamatic 126 camera



mounted on the left side of the canopy so that the field of view included the wingtip. When you reached the turnpoint(s), you circled it with the wingtip and turnpoint clearly visible in the camera’s viewfinder, and tripped the camera.



BARBENHEIMER
Dan Ernst

Unless you have been living a blissful life under a rock someplace, you have undoubtedly heard of the blockbuster movies "Oppenheimer" and "Barbie." I can't think of two more disparate motion pictures than those two; and yet, some people with time on their hands (and over-sized bladders) thought watching these two movies back-to-back would be a...well, I am at a loss for words as what to call it, but people, a lot of people, did it. There is actually a Wikipedia entry for it as a cultural phenomenon.

Well, Skyline Soaring Club has its own Barbenheimer story!

Back in the day, four amigos flew their 1-26s almost every weekend in Northern Virginia. They were Bill Vickland, Bob Collier, Dudley Matson and Al Dresner. Al had been a Navy patrol pilot in World War II and later flew power planes as well as owning a couple of gliders. In post war Washington, D.C. Al met and married Barbara. They led a fairly quiet life except for all of the 1-26 flying. Al became a nationally recognized authority on kitchen design and remodeling and Barb worked in retail in various department stores around Washington area that old timers will remember, sometimes meeting First Ladies and

other famous people. Oh, and they raised four sons.

When Joan Vickland passed away in 2015, Barb came to a celebration of Joan's life at the Vickland home. After the remembrances, Barb, still sharp in her later years, was talking with a small group and dropped the fact that she had been a secretary on the Manhattan Project. Furthermore, immediately after the Trinity test, she had taken lengthy dictation from Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer on the project. And she said, she still had many steno pads of her shorthand notes in her attic! Say what? Those must have been some of the deepest secrets of the United States at the time! Barb was very matter of fact about it. The transcript is on the Internet, she said in an oral history for Historic Chevy Chase. Here is a link:

<https://www.historicchevychasedc.org/oral-histories/barbara-dresner/> The interview took place on September 17, 2012.

Here is an excerpt:

Then, after that, and this is not documented in the biography, for two straight weeks – 6 days a week – he dictated to me in an empty building across from where Foundry Methodist Church is. It is across from the Carnegie Institution. It was like an old house – empty. It was on 16th Street across from Foundry. It was just the two of us. He was dictating.

Q – What was he dictating?

A – The nitty gritty of it I don't remember.

Q – You would type it, and would he edit it?

A – No. I never saw it again. There was a small elevator in the building holding not more than two people. We would always leave together. He would want to take me home in a cab.

Q – So is that is what happened?

A – No. I took the bus.

Q – He would say, "Let me get you a cab."

A – I would say, "No. I'll take the bus."

Q – Why did you do that?

A – Well, I was used to taking the bus. I don't know. Thinking back on it now, I think I thought, "Why bother him. I don't need a cab. I'll just take the bus."

Q – You did this for two weeks?

A – It was 10 days. We were leaving this one day, and he had the medal that Truman had given him. And I can see him now. He was like a little kid. He was so thrilled with this medal.

I am assuming that by the biography, Barb means "Oppenheimer, American Prometheus" published in 2005, which is the basis for "Oppenheimer" the movie. I have read "Oppenheimer, American Prometheus" and highly recommend it. I wouldn't propose to do a book review here, but for me the book was richly detailed and left me with a sense of wonder that America could find a man that both deeply understood the most advanced physics of the day and also had the organizational ability to manage the program to engineer that knowledge into an actual weapon. And the book title suggests the poor way he was treated after the war. I haven't seen the movie and may not. I am generally disappointed with historical movies because they often play loose with the facts for drama sake. Not to mention the run time which for me is at least two bathroom breaks--and that's on a good day!

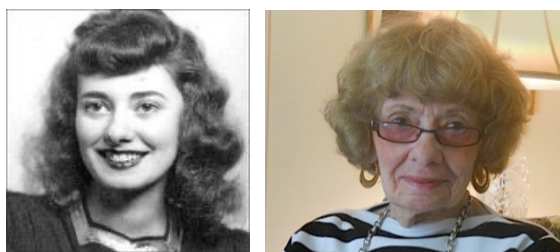
I recommend Barb's oral history. It is history in the raw. She provides an interesting and informative peek into the day-to-day life surrounding the management of scientific efforts in what is sometimes called "The Wizard War." Barb came to Washington to do her part to win the war like the Rosie the Riveters did. That she ended up in the front office of the epicenter of the American scientific war effort was unscripted. She met many of the brightest scientific minds and senior military leaders of the day, including General of the Army Dwight Eisenhower. (Read what she has to say about that!)

Many young women supported the war effort from mundane administrative positions all the way to the more exciting and dangerous contributions of the WASP pilots. To get a good

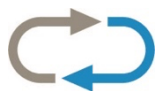
feel for this and get a look at another side of the Manhattan Project, look for "Girls of the Atomic City." It details the accomplishments and trials of many women that were brought to Oak Ridge, Tennessee to work at the enrichment of uranium for the bomb. Post-depression era, many people were eager for the paying jobs the war effort brought. Let's say that standing up a huge industrial effort in the woods of Tennessee had moments that ranged from heroic to comical.

If you invest the time to read beyond Barb's wartime experiences, you will find a story that reflects the hundreds of thousands of men and women returning to continue their lives. I suspect relatively few just picked up where they left off. Their fortunes and they themselves were changed. Barb met Al and didn't return to Williamsport, PA where she grew up, for example. But after fighting in combat and witnessing the dawn of the nuclear age, they went on to lead normal lives. They built businesses and raised families. She only mentions Al's glider flying in passing, but I still think it is worth a read.

Barb passed away in 2020 at age 95.

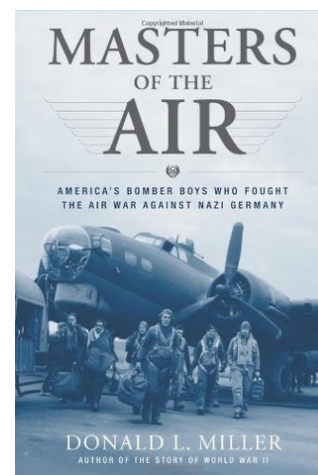


So there you have it. Barb Dresner and Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer- Barbenheimer. It is a bit of a stretch, I know, but I hope you enjoyed it and that you will read Barb's history.



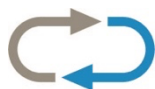
BOOK REVIEW
Masters of the Air
Jim Perlmutter

With the onset of the nine-part mini-series, *Masters of the Air*, I'd highly recommend the book by the same name from where the story originates. The TV mini series is produced by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks, and is a



companion to the previous successful productions of the *Band of Brothers*, *The Pacific*, and the movie, *Saving Private Ryan*. By the time you read this review, several episodes will have been aired and completed by mid-March. The book's author is Lafayette College History professor and well-published WWII expert, Dr. Donald L Miller. Spoiler alert, the word glider is never mentioned in this well-researched and documented 475-page work. Spoiler # 2, since I do not possess Apple TV, I have not seen the much-touted program but I can comment on the book. I have, however, seen numerous trailers regarding the series. The Apple production will follow a cast of a few significant characters mentioned in the book, follow a storyline, and will have voice-over narrations, similar to the aforementioned productions. The book in addition, has chapters dedicated to other significant individuals, the evolution of the B-17, crew training and positions, bombing tactics, famous movie celebrities, notable war correspondents, advances in aviation medicine, living conditions, combat exhaustion (now PTSD), the fate of those shot down and POW's. A poignant statistic was that there were more casualties of airmen in the 10th Air Force than the entirety of United States Marine Corps in WWII. Significant details regarding the leadership of Generals, Arnold, Spaatz, Eaker, Doolittle and LeMay are discussed to include the Royal Air Force and associated political goals and differences. The book can be obtained in the usual formats, hardback and soft back, Kindle, audio, and my favorite and cheapest, the public library. As a side note, I couldn't help but recalling the 1990 movie, *The Memphis Bell* and the TV series, *12*

O’Clock High (1964-67) which was based on the 1949 movie by the same name. You will find many similarities from these previous productions in Masters of the Air.



THE DAY GRAVITY FAILED

George Hazelrigg

In October of 1968, with a freshly minted PhD, a new wife and 100.1 hours in my log book, I left New Jersey to accept a job with General Dynamics Astro in San Diego, California. The next month I joined the San Diego Flying Club and began checking out in their aircraft. The Club required a mountain check ride before I could make a flight out of the local area, so I scheduled that for December 23. The plan was to fly out to Yuma and return crossing the Laguna mountains, which peak out at over 6,000 feet. I reserved the Club’s older straight-back Cessna 172, N5566T.

I initially planned for an eastbound flight at 7,500 MSL. However, being an anal-retentive engineer, I thought about the worst thing that could happen—an engine failure right at the crest of the mountain. What would I do? An 1,100 foot clearance over the terrain wouldn’t serve me well, so I chose the next option, 9,500 MSL, for the crossing. Then, just to be sure, I looked for what I could do if indeed I had the unlikely experience. El Centro Naval Air looked good, and it calculated out within glide range of the Cessna. That done, I finished working on my flight plan and, just to be sure, I wrote down the heading to and frequencies for El Centro at the bottom of my flight plan.

The 23rd dawned typical San Diego, a beautiful warm and sunny day with a mild Santa Anna breeze that provided almost infinite visibility in rather dry air. I met my instructor, Red, at the field around 9 AM and carefully preflighted 66T. We strapped in and headed off with not a care in the world. A while later, I was leveled off at 9,500 MSL and cruising in totally smooth air.

All was well with the world as we crossed Pine intersection very near the crest of the mountain. At that point, to demonstrate my piloting acumen, I called Flight Service and gave a position report, “5566 tango, niner thousand five hundred, Pine intersection.” As I released the mic button, it suddenly got very quiet in the cabin. We had a total loss of power, exactly at the point I had prepared for.

Now, I have to give a bit of background here. As a teenager, I was totally into engines, running them, modifying them, and even blowing the piston out of the bottom of one trying to get twice as much RPM as it was designed for. On top of that, my first job out of engineering school was designing test equipment for large engine tests at Curtiss-Wright. And I had experience with the Wright TC-3350 and J-65 engines. So, my ears were well tuned to engine sounds, and I prided myself with my ability to diagnose problems with nothing more than the sound the engine made.

But the engine of 66T made no sound. It just quietly died. Red was obviously nervous. My very first thought was fuel starvation. But we had topped-off tanks just 25 minutes earlier, the gauges read nearly full, and gravity delivered the fuel from tanks to engine. Carb ice maybe. But we had a carb temp gauge and it was well into the green. The prop was windmilling with no sign of trouble there, and there had been no loud metallic sounds that would have told a story of big parts getting smaller. What to do? With my best guess still being fuel starvation, I grabbed the primer, pulled it out and gave a push. The engine immediately began making happy engine sounds again. So, I thought, if I have to keep pumping this thing that’s what I’ll do. About that fast the engine sounds subsided back into silence. The second pump of the primer yielded nothing, not even the resistance generated by pumping gas.

By now, about 30 seconds after my last transmission, I had turned to a heading toward El Centro and I called Flight Service back, “be informed 66 tango has had an engine failure.” The friendly response came back, “What are your intentions?” “66 tango is headed to El Centro

Naval Air.” “66 tango, standby one.” A pause, then “66 tango, contact El Centro tower on....” Of course, I already had the frequency. “El Centro tower, Cessna 5566 tango.” The immediate response was, “66 tango cleared to land runway 26.” “66 tango, roger, I’m not sure we can make 26, how about a straight in for 8?” “66 tango, cleared straight in runway 8.” And immediately after that, “All aircraft in or about the vicinity of El Centro Naval Air, stay clear of the area, emergency in progress.”

It turned out that my plan worked pretty well. We arrived at El Centro with almost 2,000 feet to spare and flew a pattern for 26 after all. As I turned final, Red, recovering well from the experience and not fully trusting my skills, opted to take the controls for the landing. We had a royal arrival, with fire trucks escorting us down the runway and my greatest fear was that the engine would backfire and we both would be drowned. Then, as we rolled to a stop on the runway we heard a most amazing sound. The engine was running, smooth as ever and without any sign of a problem. Now *my* biggest problem was sheer embarrassment.

We taxied over to the ramp and shut down worried about what would be in store for us next. I obviously wasn’t ready to jump back in and fly 66T back to Montgomery field. But to my surprise, everyone was very friendly and accommodating, and we were not held hostage or asked to fill out a pile of forms. We were able to get a mechanic to come to the field to check our engine. Naturally, he found nothing wrong and chastised us for not using carb heat. But we knew that wasn’t the problem. So, with nothing else to

do, we departed with a clearance to climb over the field until we were above 8,000 MSL, and we returned safely to MYF.

Not long after this, 66T did the same thing again. In fact, the problem occurred again five more times, with two of the five also ending in dead stick landings at an airport and the other three restarting in the air, before we diagnosed the problem. Gravity had failed! The Cessna 172 has a gravity fuel feed system with the fuel line going from the tank down behind the doors, under the floor to the fuel valve and then up to the carburetor. But, at the turn in the line where it bent to go down behind the door, the fuel was vaporizing and filling the vertical line only with vapor. This vapor did not produce the head necessary to propel the fuel back up to the carburetor. Hence fuel starvation with nearly full tanks.

From here, the story gets quite a bit messier. Perhaps I shouldn’t tell it in public. The fuel recently had been winterized with volatile additives, making it more prone to cavitating. Suffice to say that Cessna soon came out with a redesigned fuel line and after installation the problem went away. But not before there was at least one related fatal accident blamed on vapor lock. Cessna added electric fuel pumps to their line of high-wing airplanes about that time. Perhaps they too didn’t trust gravity any more.



Skyline Soaring Club, Inc.

is a private,
501(c7)
non-profit

organization, dedicated to the enjoyment and promotion of the sport of soaring. SSC is based at the Front Royal-Warren County, Va. Airport and is an affiliate club of the Soaring Society of America. For information about the club go to

www.skylinesoaring.org

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