

# Sailplanes in Canada

by Bill Woodward

**While the first R/C Glider actually flew in 1938 in North America according to Model Airplane News when Clinton DeSoto flew an eighteen-foot gull-winged glider. It wasn't until the 50's that freeflight gliders were being modified with escapement radio control of rudder and elevator.**

These models were used for slope soaring in Southern California during that period. No doubt this development was noticed in Canada too but the powered R/C model development would predominate. Increased interest in R/C gliders prompted Air Trails Magazine in the States to publish the first R/C Glider design, "The Thermic 100" in 1954. By 1956 Bob Chase, USA, set a world endurance record of eight and half hours duration for a slope flight. By 1961 The Forest City Flyers, London, Ontario were holding their eighth annual International R/C Meet for powered R/C. No doubt a number of modelers were flying powered assisted gliders at this time. In 1961 the Citizen's Band was legalized with four designated R/C frequencies. By the late 60's American and European kit manufacturers were producing a number of pure R/C Sailplane designs to encourage competition. Also the FAI was involved in preparing provisional rules for R/C Glider attempting Speed Records and Competition.

## The R/C Sailplane Arrives on the Scene

By the early 1970's a major kit manufacturer Graupner was marketing the Cirrus and Cumulus models that promoted F3B type competitions in Europe and abroad. In April 1970 issue of Canadian Model Aircraft (the official MAAC magazine) the first R/C glider by Oldrich Pergl of Hamilton, a "Fakir 5" was featured. In 1970 the Nordsoar contests began in British Columbia with Julius Topf, of Vernon, organizing the event. In the 1973 issue of Competition Canada, Nino Campana mentioned the price of the Graupner Cumulus 2800 R/C Glider selling for \$137.00. In March 73' an advertisement for Carl's R/C Hobby shows the Cumulus Glider going for \$99.95, the Cirrus for \$51.95 and the ASK 14 for \$89.95. With reliable radios and these types of models, thermal duration flying with R/C gliders was now a practical reality and it was promoting competition throughout the country. In 1973 at the Yorkton, Sask. Canadian Nationals the category for Thermal Soaring was held for three days! The October issue of Competition Canada shows a picture of the first R/C Sailplane Contest with 19 pilots at the Canadian Nationals. The Standard Class winners were: 1st Sheldon Swan, Winnipeg, Man.; 2nd Father Dignan, Scranton, North Dakota; 3rd Bill Driver, Regina, Sask.; 4th Mike Broadbent, Transcona, Man.; 5th Duncan McRae, Winnipeg, Man. In the Open class Sailplane: 1st Jack Humphreys, Weston, Ontario; 2nd Charles Matusik, Winnipeg, Man.; 3rd Bert Sanders, Delta, BC; 4th George Fawcett, Southport, Man.; 5th Dave Scott, St. Albert, Ab. What a cross section of the country and the USA was represented at this first National R/C Glider event!

## The Beginning of R/C Glider Clubs

In 1973 CIAM (of the FAI) formed a Radio Control Glider Category and appointed a Chairman to administer the Class F3B Thermal Soaring and Slope Soaring Rules that were also approved that year. Furthermore new frequencies were certified for model use in the 72 MHz "aircraft only" band. In 1973 The Ottawa R/C Club held their first Annual R/C Sailplane contest with Ken Shepherd the overall Champion. The year 1974 saw dramatic growth and interest in R/C Sailplane activity. In the May issue of Canadian Model Aircraft, Ray Munro published an article on R/C Glider flying. The Canadian Nationals held at Centralia, Ontario saw a record number of entries in R/C Sailplane. Following the Sailplane events, Dave Henshaw, the President of MAAC at the time helped organize with Jack Humphreys, CD of the events, "The Central Ontario Glider Group". This was the first formal R/C glider club in Ontario and did much to organize competitions in a number of different sites throughout Ontario. It published a newsletter called The Gull that became an important link for R/C Sailplane enthusiasts. In the August 74 issue of Canadian Model Aircraft C.O.G.G. was mentioned with Dave Henshaw as the contact person. It showed five events at different cities for the coming year. Reports in the Canadian Model Aircraft that year showed slope soaring activity in the Qu Appelle Valley, Sask. and a glider meet in Victoria BC. Even a Canadian designed R/C sailplane was offered for sale, "The Chinook", a complete kit for \$69.95!

## R/C Sailplane F3B Class First World Championships in South Africa

In January 75' issue of C.M.A., a notice showed that the first glider contest was

going to be held at St. Clet's, Quebec sponsored by the Montreal Area Thermal Soarers with Richard Reuland as CD. In the May/June issue an article on "The Competitive Silence" by Oliver Komamycky of Winnipeg, Man. managed to stir up the soaring community! Team trials were organized for F3B R/C Sailplane under Julius Topf as Committee Chairman for 1976 as the first F3B World Championships were going to be held in South Africa in April 1977. Team Trials were organized both in the West and East. The first F3B team consisted of Julius Topf, BC; Richard Reuland, Montreal, PQ; and Jack Humphreys, Toronto, Ont. with Team Manager, Stan Shaw, Islington, Ontario. While the team didn't place, it did demonstrate that Canadians were equally competitive and striving to match the leading European and North American flyers. By the way Skip Miller, USA, won the first W/C flying a modified "Aquila" standard class model. By the second W/C model design had progressed quickly to full house composite models like "The Dassel" and "Optima". Canadian Teams continued attending W/C making the biggest impression at the 1981 W/C when Dave Wright, with his own design, set a new two lap speed record of 8.45 seconds over a 150 meter course. The use of a 36 volt powered winch was named the "Cannon-Ball" helped accomplish the task. At the next CIAM meeting rules were introduced to ban the use of a 36 volt winch. We Canadians know how to make an impression! Another first occurred in at the 85' Australia W/C where Joe Bedford used his own designed computer-controlled transmitter during the event.

## The Growth of R/C Sailplane Activity

In the 1975 August issue of MAAC Magazine Dave Henshaw announced that the League of Silent Flight (L.S.F.) would allow Canadians to have their own coordinator and Chapter. An article and application form were included to promote a soaring accomplishments program. The fourth Annual Nordsoar contest was held in BC. The 2nd Annual Friendship Slope Soaring Gathering was reported by Brent Reusch, of Yorkton, Sask. In the Dec. issue of C.M.A. an article "Soaring West" by Tony Bryant, the following comments give some idea of the interest level. Tony said: "This year marked the 3rd consecutive season of Sailplane activity at the National Level. What started out with a handful of glider enthusiasts from Winnipeg, Regina and Saskatoon at the first National Competition at Yorkton, Sask. in 73' has become a highly competitive soaring Nationals. Next year the Nationals at Calgary (76) promises to be even bigger." The 1977 Canadian Nationals attendance figures peaked at 397 entrants with three days for R/C Sailplane events.

## Canadian League of Silent Flight Coordinator

During the 70's Dave Henshaw became the first Canadian League of Silent Flight Coordinator. The L.S.F. was formed in California, USA to promote Soaring accomplishments that consisted of five performance tests or Levels for flying R/C Sailplanes which met current FAI specifications. For example Level One required the performance of the following tasks: a Five Minute Thermal Duration Flight; a Fifteen Minute slope duration flight; five precision spot landings within three meters or less. The highest Level Five required the following tasks: a Two Hour Thermal Duration flight; an Eight hour Slope Duration flight; a Ten Kilometer Goal and Return flight; six competitions (with twenty or more competitors) entered with 12000 points and including Three Wins.

Dave Henshaw made Level One by April 6th/76, and had completed his Level Three on July 19, 1981. Dave organized Postal Contests for LSF members from 1976 to 1981 inclusive. According to his records as of 1975 there were 57 Level Ones; 28 Level Twos; 8 Level Threes; and one Level Four in Canada. There were thirty-six in BC, thirty-three in Ontario; with Alberta and Sask. each with eight; five in Quebec and one in the Yukon. for a total of 94. World Wide there were over seventeen hundred LSF registrants at that time. By September 79' the total grew to 242 registrants with 83 Level One; 39 Level Two; 24 Level Three 9 Level Four.

John McMillan (MAAC 27) was the first Canadian to achieve Level Five on May 11, 1986. Joe Bedford of Kanata, Ontario did his on June 21, 1986! Neil Tinker (Toronto, Ont.) completed his Level Five on July 3, 1988 and Gerry Bower (Kanata, Ont.) on September 3, 1988. Stan Shaw did his on Aug. 12, 1990 and Bill Pettigrew (Montreal, PQ) now in Perth, Australia was the sixth Level Five on Aug. 8, 1993. At that time there were 96 Level V in the world! Bill's wife Margaret Pettigrew is now a LSF Level Three, the only Canadian woman to hold that LSF level.

## The Canadian Soaring Society

During the 80's Jack Nunn was instrumental in forming The Canadian Soaring Society. The aims of the new group were as follows: to bring together all R/C sailplane pilots in a common goal to promote our hobby at all levels; to help

