

JOSEPH P. STEINHAUSER (1994)
(1905-1995)

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Presentation by Simine Short at the posthumous Induction of Joseph Steinhauser
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Joe Steinhauser's philosophy for getting people involved with soaring was to teach them how to fly. From 1928 and Steinhauser's first successful flight in his homebuilt S-2 primary until a debilitating 1955 auto accident ended his soaring career, Steinhauser had been a motivating force in the Midwest soaring movement. In 1953, 15 of the 31 sailplanes registered in the State of Illinois were operated by Joe Steinhauser.



Joe started life in Germany where he designed his first glider at the age of eight. It didn't fly but started him on an exciting aviation career. Fifteen years later, after coming to Chicago as a teenager, he built his successful S-2 40-foot primary glider. He knew he needed launching help so formed the German-American Glider Club, one of the first glider clubs in the Chicago area.

Always mindful of sailplane safety and the public's sometimes negative perception of the sport of soaring, Steinhauser went to Germany in the mid-thirties to purchase a safe, dependable, high-performance glider. After meeting with Martin Schempp, Oskar Ursinus and many other German motorless flight pioneers, he decided on a *Wolf* sailplane. It was then considered one of the world's most advanced as well as being safe and practical. German registration was by letters not numbers. Ever the hometown promoter, Joe had the *Wolf* registered "*D-Chicago*" and made his Silver "C" duration flight over the dunes of Lake Michigan near Benton Harbor. He started the Motorless Flight School in Chicago and trained nearly 70 members during the first two years.

Joe was instrumental in bringing seven area glider clubs together in 1937 to form the Chicagoland Glider Council – the oldest council in the sport of soaring.

In 1940 he bought Emil Lehecka's Rhönsperber and using thermal energy alone, is believed to have made the first Silver "C" distance and altitude flight over the city of Chicago.

Steinhauser, along with John Robinson and Stanley Smith, flying three Schweizer two-place SGS 2-8 sailplanes, with passengers, performed a triple tow behind a J-5 Standard biplane in April of 1941. The demonstration, sponsored by SSA, the Elmira Area Soaring Corporation and the Schweizer Aircraft Corporation, was conducted for a visiting U.S. Congressional committee at the Big Flats (NY) Airport. Thus, the observers were able to see the feasibility of an American military glider program.

The same type triple tow was again demonstrated from Joe's Motorless Flight Institute & Research Center in Chicago later that same year. This time three Marine Corp pilots flew the school's Schweizer SGS 2-8's (Later military version designated TG-2).

Steinhauser once estimated that his renamed Motorless Flight Institute trained more than 600 students. He only stopped when spinal injuries confined him to a wheelchair and he could no longer teach.



Joe Steinhauser and the D-Chicago glider which he used to soar 40 minutes over downtown Chicago using the city heat rather than the mountain topography

Steinhauser's pioneering efforts showed others what Midwestern soaring was about and made soaring flight available to thousands who might otherwise never have had the opportunity.

Joe Steinhauser holds Silver #22 earned in 1940.