

FRANCIS P. BUNDY (2001)
(1910-2008)



Dr. Francis P. Bundy, a multifaceted person, was a physicist, gardener, outdoors man and soaring enthusiast who was admired for his scientific prowess and his love of soaring. He introduced hundreds to the sport over a 45 year soaring life. Whether going cross-country, instructing, giving rides or just flying around the patch, he was happiest when soaring.

Born in Columbus, Ohio in 1910, he was seventeen when Lindbergh flew the Atlantic and, like so many Americans of that day, fell in love with the dream of flying. He liked to put his dreams to work and a year after Lindbergh's flight was busy building a primary glider with some college friends.

The pressures of the Great Depression put an end to the project before flight was possible. His dreams were put on hold while he graduated from Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio in 1931, earned a PhD in physics at Ohio State in 1937, married and did war work at the Harvard Underwater Sound Lab where he worked on sonar devices. Before joining the Harvard Lab, he taught at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio. After the war effort, he joined the General Electric Research Laboratory in Schenectady, NY specializing in various fields of physics, mechanics, optics, radiation, heat transfer and, most notably to the world at large, super-pressure physics, where he was a member of the GE team which perfected the process for “man-made” diamonds.

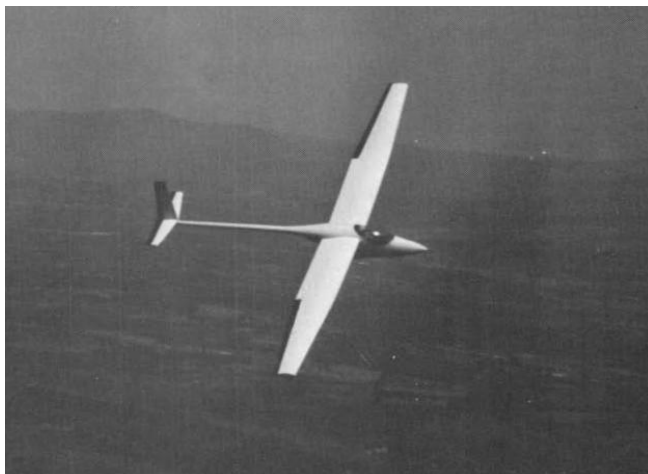
It was while he was at GE that he joined the newly formed Mohawk Soaring Club started by three GE engineers in 1952. By 1953 he had his license, gained in the club's winch-launched 2-22. His first cross-country flight was in the same ship, flying with Richard Ball, later of Ball Variometer fame, as the Mohawk entry in the 20th National Competition at Elmira, NY. Paul MacCready won the meet in a Schweizer SGS 1-23D, which Dr. Bundy promptly bought in partnership with Hal Bovenkerk, a fellow GE scientist and member of the Mohawk Club.

In 1954 the Mohawk Club bought a 1-26 kit from Schweizer and put it together in the Bundy barn with plenty of help from all the Bundy family. The 1-26 flew in November of 1955 with Francis and his wife Hazel Bundy the second and third pilots to fly it.

He became very active in competition in the northeast – flying the Snowbird Meet at Harris Hill several times, the Northeastern States Soaring Championship at Elmira in 1956, placed second in the open class in his 1-23D (Tinny Hawk) in the 1957 Labor Day Regatta. His competition experience was not limited to flying as he participated in several as a contest official. His success with wave soaring in the northeast encouraged others to fly and enjoy waves. He gave unstintingly of his time, abilities and remarkable energy to the Mohawk Soaring Club, holding all club offices over the years, and finally racking up over 7,000 flights, mostly on winch launches, mostly instructing.



Bundy family: Hazel, Francis, Susanne with Howie Burr plan a flight, Snowbird, 1954



In the 1970s he became involved with the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's Composite Materials Program which has produced three glider designs, the RP-1, RP-2 and RP-3. The President of RPI appointed Dr. Bundy an Adjunct Professor to help with the program. He not only verified all the calculations and directed many modifications but also served as test pilot for all three designs.

RP-2 to the left

Dr. Bundy was a fellow of the American Physical Society, Sigma Xi and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He published over one hundred scientific papers and was recognized in 1987 with the Bridgman Gold Medal of the International Association for the Advancement of High Pressure Science and Technology.

Dr. Bundy earned Silver #199 in 1954, Gold #371 in 1967 and Diamond #170 (Intl #929) in 1970 – all east of the Mississippi River. In recognition of his dedication in introducing people to the art, sport and science of motorless flight, the words of his nomination to the Hall of Fame say, “His many contributions are exemplary of the SSA stated purpose 'to help people enjoy the sport of soaring'.”

Above adapted from George Moffat's article *Francis Bundy – A Soaring Life* in *Soaring* magazine, May 2008, page 37 and other sources.