

WILLIAM H. COVERDALE, JR. (1978)
(~1913-1985)

Floyd Sweet talks about Bill Coverdale: *Soaring*, April 1986, page 9

At the end of World War II, Bill was a young Navy Lieutenant assigned to Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio. His previous interest in flying led to his becoming a member of the newly formed Soaring Society of Dayton. In 1948 he was elected a Director of the Soaring Society of America, a position he held for 24 years. That same year he flew his first National Competition which was at Harris Hill in Elmira, NY. He placed fifth flying his LK-10A. Bill continued to be a serious competitor for the next two decades, finishing consistently in the top bracket, second in 1951 and third in 1952. Following the L-K-10A he owned a Minimoa, Ka-7, K-8, 1-23, 1-26, built an HP-11, owned a Cirrus, a Libelle and a Janus II. He established a World Goal and Return Record in 1952, flying his 1-23 from Grand Prairie to Brownwood, TX and return, a distance of 260.4 miles (418.98 km). The record was not exceeded until 1955.



Bill held FAA ratings of Private ASEL and Commercial Glider, and FAI Gold Badge No. 35 with two Diamonds. He was a member of two U.S. World Championship teams, first as crew for Paul Bikle in 1960 in Germany and then as crew for Dick Schreder in Argentina in 1963.

During his 24 years on the SSA Board, Bill had a nearly perfect attendance record and contributed much to the development of the Society. His firm, no-nonsense statements were well respected by his colleagues. In 1951 he became chairman of the Contest Committee and wrote several articles in *Soaring* on FAI awards and contest flying. He was appointed chairman of the new Long Range planning Committee in 1962 and developed the Society's first look at its long-term goals.

Bill maintained homes in Waynesville, Ohio and Naples, Florida where he actively engaged in promoting soaring. When the Soaring Society of Dayton sought its own site, he was instrumental in securing the Caesar Creek glider field.

After his graduation from Yale University in 1933, Bill was employed by Republic Steel, except for the war years, and retired in 1959. Besides his great interest in soaring, his hobbies were fishing, restoring antique cars and electric player pianos. Bill was a Life Member of the SSA and a Patron of the National Soaring Museum.



Bill Coverdale lands his Skylark at the Warren E. Eaton Airport, Norwich, NY during the 22nd National Championships at Harris Hill, Elmira, NY.

Staff Photo

He placed 8th in the 1955 Nationals at Harris Hill and flew a total of 875 miles. He was awarded the Bendix Aviation Corporation Silver Distance Trophy for a 202 mile flight to Ridgeway, West Virginia.

Bill Coverdale loved soaring – especially competing. He flew the 24th Annual Soaring Championship at Elmira in 1957 in a 1-26. He placed 11th beaten only by such sailplanes as a 1-23 E, the RJ-5, Prue 215A and HP-7 with Stan Smith the winner flying his 1-21.

Contest Cameo: *Bill Coverdale did a remarkable job in bending his new 1-26 to his will. One wonders how much higher he might have placed if he would have had a little more penetration at his disposal. Nevertheless, he said he had more fun in the 1-26 than he ever got out of other ships.*

He always made a point of encouraging fledgling pilots and would lend them his 1-26 to get their Silver Badge. He also was generous in helping pilots he was competing against when they had equipment problems during contests.

On the 25th anniversary of the Society, he gave a report on SSA's future (April 1962, page 9) – predicting the next 25 years would be harder than first 25. Interest in the sport was increasing and the SSA membership had grown to 3,000. He urged the purchase of life membership, extra contribution when renewing, estate planning: *“Meanwhile, your thoughts, suggestions and voluntary contributions will be of tremendous value in the preservation of our magazine, our Society of flying sportsmen, and, you might say, our way of life.”*



He built and competed with an HP-11 shown here working on a wing.

In addition to his Gold Badge #35 earned in 1952, he also Silver #78 (1947).

(Ed Note – Thank you, Bill, for approving my “C” Badge, #1128, October 12, 1953, Wurtsboro, NY,

witnessed by Virginia Bennis (now Schweizer))