

EINAR K. ENEVOLDSON (2010)
(1932-)

Engineer, Pilot, Explorer – Einar Enevoldson, like so many others of his age group during that time, built models as a young boy. He soon learned that, to be successful, it was necessary to do careful planning with a depth of understanding of the situation. Soon while in high school, through friends in the model club, he discovered something else to test his curiosity and quest for understanding – sailplanes. He spent some time at the well-known gliderport of El Mirage – which he called the University of El Mirage – both because of the people and the sailplanes but also the sport which challenged him.



He joined the Air Force in 1954 where he stayed until 1967 and had several interesting experiences including flying the F-104 to several time-to-climb records, instructing Chinese pilots in Taiwan and, perhaps best of all, being selected for the prestigious Empire Test Pilot School in England. He joined NASA at Edwards AFB in 1968 and stayed there until 1986 when he started working for Grob until 1995. While at Grob, he set more time-to-climb records – this time in the Grob Egrett.

Einar loves competition as he believes it is the best way to become a better soaring pilot. Setting of tasks by the Competition Director challenges the pilot to try tasks he might not otherwise have considered – thus stretching the boundaries of his skills. He flew his first contest while stationed in England. When he returned to the States, he flew a regional at California City and then Nationals, first at Marfa, Texas, in 1969, then U.S. Open at El Mirage in 1970, the U.S. Standard Class at Ephrata, WA 1971 and the U.S. Standard Class at Hobbs, NM in 1974. In 1972 he was selected to fly the Smirnoff Sailplane Derby, a cross-country race with a series of goal flights from the west coast to the east coast. Einar enjoyed this type of competition because, even though the goal was selected for him, he had to determine his own course in a geographical location that changed every day.

With all the various kinds of flying experiences described above, you might guess that Einar has flown many different aircraft and you would be correct. As a minimum, he has flown 80 types of NASA and military aircraft, 97 various gliders and 62 other types of aircraft (General Aviation).

Ever since Einar participated briefly in the Sierra Wave project in the early 1950s, he dreamed of exploring the stratosphere in a sailplane. In 1992 he saw a photo of a 75,000 foot high wave cloud over northern Scandinavia. His curiosity and imagination were sparked. What caused these stratospheric wave clouds? Might that meteorological condition carry him far into the stratosphere in a sailplane? He consulted with atmospheric scientists and others and soon learned about the Polar Vortex, the Stratospheric Polar Night Jet and, most importantly, these conditions sometimes coincided with the traditional mountain wave. There were indications that this phenomenon reached 100,000 feet. Einar wanted to find out. Project Perlan was formed.



L to R: Dr. Paul MacCready, Dr. Joachim Kuettnner, Einar

Einar had a plan and went about implementing it. As is not surprising, the plan required money. Einar managed to interest millionaire adventurer Steve Fossett and together they went to Argentina and set a new world absolute altitude record of approximately 51,000 feet – more importantly, they had reached the stratosphere and proven it was possible to reach and utilize the high altitude wave.

Mission II of the Perlan Project is to soar to 90,000 feet. The project is now fully funded by Air Bus and Einar has the title of Founder and Chairman of the Board.

Einar earned Silver #193 in 1953, Gold #629 in 1971 and Diamond #207 (Intl #1009) in 1971. He gave the Barnaby Lecture in 2007.

Einar in his own words has spent a lifetime learning to fly. More than that, he has lived his dreams.



Artist rendition of Perlan 2 sailplane

Reference: *Soaring Beyond the Clouds – Einar Enevoldson Reaches for 100,000 Feet* by Bertha M. Ryan, 2010, published by SSA.