



The AMA History Project Presents: History of the WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL GLIDER SOARING (WINGS)



Began in 1974

Written by BR (2014); Transcribed by JS (02/2015)

The following was written by Barbara Robinson in 2015 and added to the History Project in February of that year.

WINGS Women's International Glider Soaring

WINGS was founded at the 1974 SOAR Nationals for the purpose of promoting the sport of glider flying by women throughout the country. The original founders were Barbara Henon, Barbara Robinson, and Margaret Gill. One of the original names proposed for the group was the "6 G's" for Glamour Girls Guiding Gorgeous Gliders Group. Not wanting to place a "sexist" commutation on the group the name adopted was Women in National Glider Soaring with the acronym WINGS. The club grew from three founders to over 456 members, including Canadian, Saudi Arabian, and Australian members, and the name was changed to Women's International Glider Soaring, thereby retaining the acronym WINGS. The club had team entries at both the 1975 (see picture) and the 1976 SOAR Nationals. Officers during 1975/76 were Margaret Gill, President; Lila Stamm, Vice President, and Helen Olson, Secretary/Treasurer. Officers during 1976/77 were Barbara Robinson, President; Lila Stamm, Vice President, and Karen Toebe, Secretary/Treasurer.

WINGS also sponsored a high-point flyer award from contests flown by members in their local regions. Glider competition was recognized by the AMA in 1976 and both a SOAR Nationals and the AMA Nationals were held that year. SOAR then discontinued sponsoring the SOAR Nationals and from then on Glider Competition as held in conjunction with the AMA Nationals. Interest in continuing a separate glider club waned in part due to the large context of the AMA Nationals and the cessation at the early AMA Nationals of a team competition. When the WINGS decided to disband, the monies in our treasury were donated to the AMA with a request that WINGS be permanently remembered as a unique history of women glider pilots.

Sailplane Magazine, Nov.-Dec. 1975 issue featured Barb Robinson the cover flying while on crutches in August 1975. The inside article shows her accepting the 1st Place Trophy for Standard Class Win at the SACS Greater Chicago Land Glider Meet. This was followed with the January-February 1976 issue of Sailplane Magazine featuring Margaret Gill, Pat Sark, and Ruth Brocius who were all members of WINGS.

The WINGS held a joint contest with the Michigan Radio Control Society in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in September 1976. One day was the MRCS Michigan State Championship and the second day was the WINGS contest with Barb Robinson as contest director for the event. (see Article and Pictures) Barb Robinson went on to being a part of the team of Bob and Barb Robinson, Pat and Mary Flynn, Dale Martell, Noal Rossow, and Erich Kugler who won the Great Race IV in Chicago on July 21, 1979, which is immortalized on a plaque at the AMA Headquarters in Muncie. After achieving Level III and all but the goal and return for Level IV in

the League of Silent Flight, Barb took a hiatus from flying for a number of years. She has returned to some competition and has volunteered for the past eight years at the Soaring Nationals and the World Soaring Masters in Muncie. In 2013, 2014, and 2015, Barb Robinson was Unlimited Contest Director at the Nationals.

The WINGS club is a unique piece of history in the soaring community and the contributions the club and its members have brought to the soaring history deserves permanent recognition.

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