



WEST by TAIFUN

*Re-entering the Soaring Game
In a Big Way. First Step,
Picking Up Your New Toy!*

by BARRANT V. MERRILL

I thought that I had completed my soaring days when I sold my PIK-20E in October, 1984 and decided to become better versed in all of the other activities one can enjoy as a resident of Sun Valley, Idaho. Having learned to fly power in 1946 and having taken up soaring at Erwinna, Pennsylvania in 1974, I became a typical weekend soaring nut. During those years, I owned a standard Cirrus as well as a PIK-20D-76 and the aforementioned PIK-20E. When we moved to Sun Valley in 1982, without the three hour round trip daily commute to Wall Street, I mistakenly thought that I would have nothing but time for soaring. Wrong! Not only did I become involved in a number of other businesses, but found that there are so many great things to do in Sun Valley that I didn't do any of them well. My soaring also suffered. So when I had an opportunity to sell my PIK and bid farewell to the sport, I said "sold."

I must admit, however, that I never failed to look skyward when planes or gliders would go overhead and it was only curiosity that caused me to revisit the Hailey, Idaho airport last July to see who and what might have arrived for the annual motorglider "fly in." I was fascinated to see several Grob G-109A's, PIK-20E's and DG-400's as well as to reacquaint myself with John Chalmers who, with his friend, Danny Royce, had flown their Grob 109's up from Rancho Santa Fe, California. John was kind

enough to offer me a flight in his ship and as we flew north toward Sun Valley in moderate conditions, made the comment that he really liked the "variable glide ratio" of the Grob. Not wanting to appear too dense, I pondered the statement a moment and then queried, "What's the variable glide ratio?" "The throttle," John replied. Indeed as we cruised north over the Wood River Valley testing the growing lift, it was a real delight to bob and weave among the cu's in search of strong updrafts and all the time knowing that you had the luxury of the "variable glide ratio." We did find excellent lift over Warm Springs Road, feathered the propeller and climbed to over 12,000 feet. When the lift finally dissipated, on came the engine and back to Hailey we flew. After that experience, as I am want to do, I gathered as much information as was available on the Grob as well as the new Valentin *Taifun* 17E. The latter ship with its sleek design, retractable tricycle landing gear and positive/negative flaps, as well as spoilers, quickly caught my attention. I spent several hours talking to the few *Taifun* owners that I could reach by telephone and was delighted to learn that a partnership of Hal Ross and Mort Tyler who live outside San Francisco would be able to give me a demonstration flight at their gliderport near Livermore, California.

In early September 1985, Hal flew my wife Patty as well as me in his 80 horsepower model on a delightfully warm

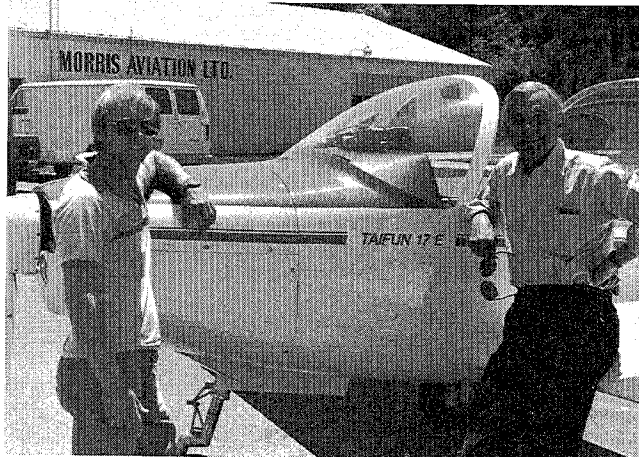
Opposite page: the view from the cockpit approaching Pocatello, Idaho, with the Snake River winding to the horizon. Right: that's the author with his elbow in the cockpit, Art Lazzarini holds engine cowling on with his.

sunny day which, unfortunately, provided very little lift, but a day that showed the power capabilities of the *Taifun*. I remember how impressed I was with the cockpit comfort, well laid out panel, position of the throttle, dive breaks, and flaps and the extremely comfortable seats, not to mention the almost flawless contour of the wings. Upon returning to the ground, I made up my mind that I would reenter the flying/soaring world, but this time with a *Taifun* 17E motorglider. Since this was Sunday, I had to wait a day to place my order with Phil Morris of Morris Aviation, Ltd., Statesboro, Georgia.

I decided to order the 90 horsepower Limbach engine which also features an electric variable speed propeller due to the fact that Sun Valley's elevation is 5,3000 feet, not to mention the fact that the 90 horsepower engine should be able to provide better overall power performance. Phil told me to expect a four month wait which was fine with me since the ship's arrival in Georgia would better coincide with the spring flying conditions. Since I planned to fly the *Taifun* from Statesboro to Sun Valley, it seemed better to delay the westward trip as long as possible. Imagine my surprise when Phil called to say that the ship would arrive in Statesboro in late November, 1985. Naturally, I was delighted but told Phil to take his time outfitting it with Loran C, VOR, King radios, strobes, ect. because I did not see how I could begin my cross-country odyssey until at least April, 1986.

I had not flown power cross-country since 1954 so I was able to persuade a professional pilot friend, Art Lazzarini of Hailey, Idaho, to make the trip with me. Art has flown over 6,000 hours with about every rating to go with that amount of time. He also owns a glider and, with his wife, Bonnie, has just completed building a Long Eze. We decided on mid-April to make the voyage and Art and I decided to meet in Statesboro for a check out and then start for home.

Final plans were made and Art arrived in Statesboro on April 22 to begin the check out process with John Wallace, the local CFI. I arrived the evening of April 22; having

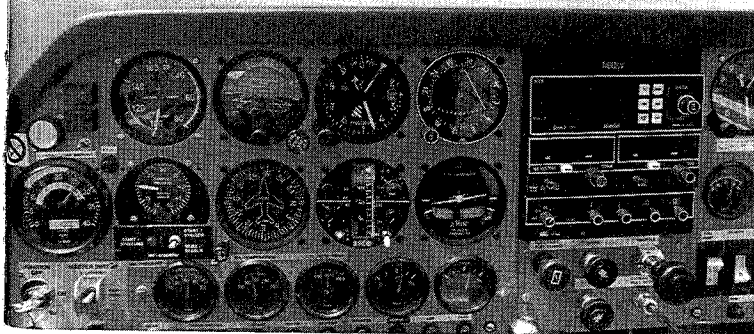


flown from Boston to Savannah where Art was good enough to pick me up at the airport and drive me to our motel in Statesboro. Art had checked out that afternoon with John in what he said were some of the gustiest conditions he had ever flown in. I was glad to learn that he felt very comfortable with the *Taifun* and we decided to drive out to Morris Aviation early the next morning for my initial check ride.

We awoke on the morning of the 23rd to a clear, crisp day which later turned out to have broken a record for cold in the southeast. Phil Morris met us at the airport and couldn't have been more helpful or obliging even to loaning us one of his cars for transportation. Art and I took off in a shifting cross wind and worked ourselves easily and quickly to about 7,000 feet. We practiced the usual check out maneuvers and at this point discovered that the engine seemed to miss periodically. When we returned to the ground, we reported the problem to Phil who was amazed that this had occurred inasmuch as Limbach had recently sent a factory representative to Morris Aviation because another 90 horsepower model was also reporting skipping of the engine at altitude. Phil Morris and the Limbach representative had completely gone over my engine as though it was a 100 hour inspection, changed spark plugs, etc, and flown the plane to 12,000 feet without incident. After lunch with Phil, Art and I shot a few more landings and then I flew with John Wallace to be checked out by him. Once again, we encountered the engine miss at about 6,500 feet.

The next day, April 24, we arrived at the airport early in the morning and embarked upon a systematic check of the carburetors, blew out the lines, and all but disassembled the carburetors, and decided to lean them again. Art and I then flew the ship straight to 12,000 feet without incident and then, to our chagrin, the engine again began to miss.

Nevertheless, we decided to embark on our trip west and after farewells and bill paying, departed Statesboro airport and 1:00 p.m. E.S.T. on April 24 with Memphis as our target for the night. We filed a flight plan and flying at 6,500 feet encountered a slight tail wind so that our flight time on the first segment of the trip to Gadsden, Alabama was about three hours. We stopped in Gadsden for a late lunch, refueled and headed for Memphis. I forgot to mention that until we were slightly short of Gadsden, we found no evidence of the engine missing and as we



The Taifun's instrument panel. Lots more goodies than your average pure sailplane. More to worry about, too.

approached Gadsden it began to miss again but only slightly.

Fueling up and lurching at Larry's Barbecue we headed for Memphis on a 295 degree heading. Unfortunately, all along this portion of the flight we encountered the same engine miss which had dogged us earlier. The trip from Statesboro to Memphis, via Gadsden, was uneventful, smooth and made even better by operating the II Morrow Loran C Apollo II, with the Flybrary option. The accuracy of this Morrow Loran as well as its user friendliness made our navigation tasks a real joy even though we were obviously fully prepared with charts and a VOR backup. We arrived in Memphis around 5:30 p.m. and tied down overnight at Memphis Aero.

We decided at dinner to rise at 5 a.m. and head for Boulder, Colorado which was about 700+ nautical miles. Since I have a son at the University of Colorado in Boulder, I alerted him of our intended destination and told him that I would call him enroute. We departed Memphis at 6:15 a.m. on April 24 on a beautiful, clear day. We elected to head west at 2,500 feet since there were stronger head winds aloft. Flying over the Mississippi River and the verdant farm country in Tennessee and Arkansas is a real treat. By about 8:30 a.m., we decided to select a breakfast stop as well as to refuel and headed for Shangrila, Oklahoma which has a very pretty north/south landing strip, the southern end of which ends in a large lake. Unfortunately, winds were out of the southwest at a fair clip but we managed to set her down anyway with some difficulty on my part and arrived as Shangrila at about 9:15 a.m. One word of caution with respect to motorgliders in Shangrila, and strips like it, as they require a bit more planning inasmuch as this runway was fairly narrow with sloping ground going upward on either side. With a 17 meter wingspan, you could get yourself into trouble if not careful. We were met by the Shangrila Lodge van and driven the two miles to a very hardy breakfast. Shangrila Lodge, cottage et al is a very impressive layout with a good-looking golf course as well as indoor tennis facilities and several first class restaurants. It is located about 90 miles southeast of Tulsa and would well be worth thinking about stopping there for a good rest and recuperation.

We departed Shangrila taking off over the lake and

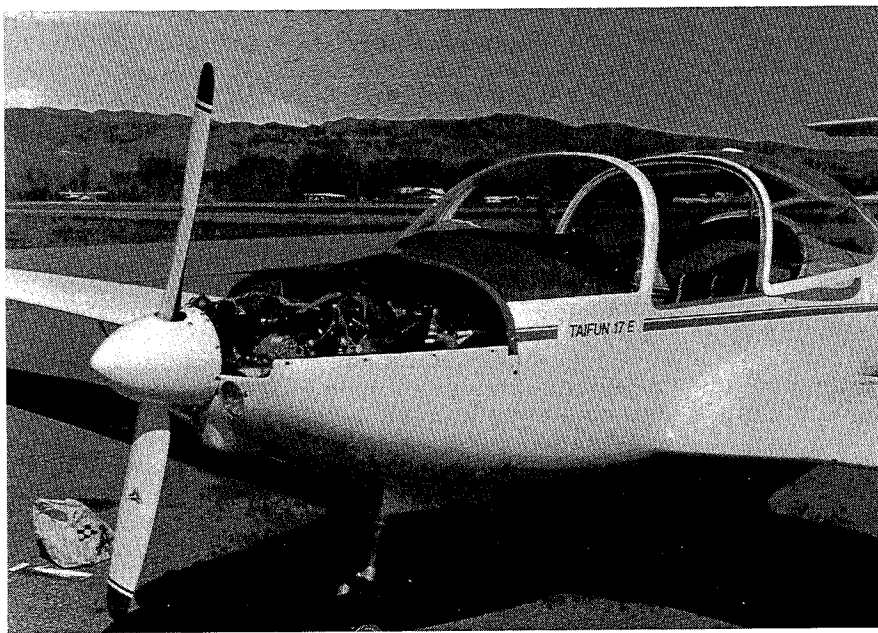
worked our way westward until we reached Great Bend, Kansas where we refueled and stretched out legs. We might well have gotten some very good soaring in between Shangrila and Great Bend because we ran into some terrific thermals along the way which I suspect would have been very good for our *Taifun's* soaring capabilities, however we were running against the clock. As we touched down in Great Bend, someone in another plane inquired of a friend over the radio, "Hey, what was that thing that just landed?" We gave the correct reply.

After refueling, our next stop was Goodland, Kansas, where we were well taken care of by Butterfly Aviation. We had considered landing at Kit Carson airport a few miles further west but would have had heavy crosswinds and at Goodland we had a second runway which cut the crosswind down to a manageable level. We found that we were averaging slightly in excess of 5 gallons an hour with fairly strong headwinds versus the previous day where we were running slightly more than 4 gallons per hour. We figured that we could easily have flown past Goodland and perhaps made Front Range airport east of Boulder, but since conditions were fairly rough with some light rain squalls, we felt that a conservative approach was the best. We touched down in Boulder at 5:30 p.m. and noticed that even at that hour there was quite a bit of glider activity.

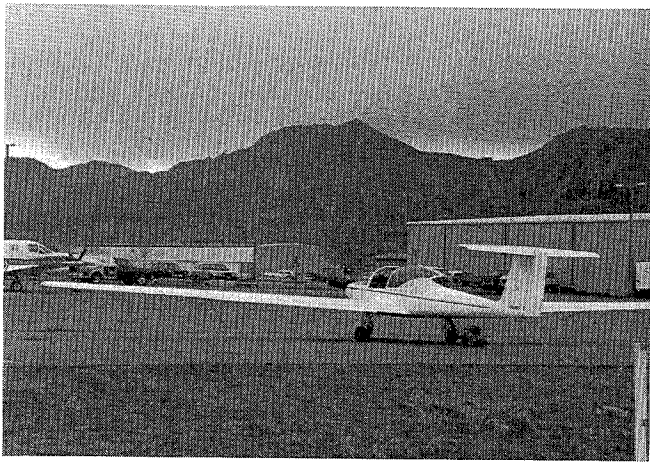
I awoke the next day at 4:30 a.m. turned on CNN and was distressed to learn of a large spring storm in the Rockies in all of the places we planned to fly. After checking with flight service, we decided to lay over in Boulder which gave Art a chance to visit his parents who live in Pueblo.

Laying over was a good idea for the weather became progressively worse—so much so that I made two trips to the airport to make certain that the tie downs were effective. Saturday night gave us the time change to daylight savings and we agreed to meet at the airport about 6:45 a.m. When we arrived, the wind was blowing from the east but we had a fair degree of ice on the wings due to the rain the night before and temperatures that had dropped below freezing. Fortunately, the sun came out to help us thaw the wings and we departed Boulder around 9:30 a.m.

As we became airborne, at about 300 feet, we encountered severe engine missing and turned back toward the



The author took advantage of a stop in Boulder to adjust the carburetors in hopes of curing some engine problems.



Taifun tied down in Boulder waiting for a front to pass.

field when we obtained sufficient altitude to do so. We circled Boulder airport while climbing to about 7,500 MSL, now that we had a runway made, troubleshooting the now familiar carburetor problems. The glide capabilities of the *Taifun* made this task somewhat more comforting than in a conventional airplane. Having decided that we needed to continue leaning the carburetor we landed again. We were able to get a ride to the local auto parts store and purchased proper tools to do the job. A full turn more toward lean, while checking other options convinced us that the leaning might do the trick. We departed Boulder again at 11:00 a.m. and climbed, without incident, to 13,000 MSL catching a wave as we flew northwest.

We jumped the front range a little south of Ft. Collins and although we encountered a lot of moderate turbulence, made Rock Springs, Wyoming without incident. Rock Springs has a 10,000 foot runway and an elevation of about 6,400 feet which was the highest that we had yet landed. We took off in a fair cross wind after refueling and the ship handled beautifully.

We had headwinds most of the way to Sun Valley but decided we had plenty of fuel to make it all the way home without having to stop at Pocatello. We landed in Sun Valley at 5:15 p.m. on Sunday, April 27, just ahead of a squall line. Our total flight time was 20 1/2 hours accomplished in 2 actual days of flying with headwinds at least 90 percent of the trip. We consumed about 90 gallons of gasoline, the average cost per gallon equalled \$1.91 and our average consumption was 4.4 gallons per hour. Not bad considering that we were operating most of the time in a headwind environment.

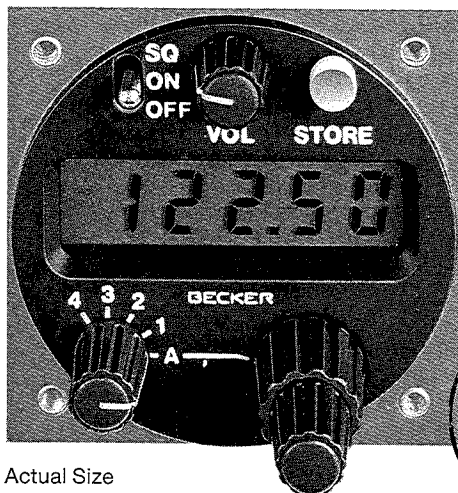
Since returning, we feel that we have isolated the engine missing problem by having leaned the carburetors, which were set way too rich by the factory. I also have spoken to Jerry Treger in Tulsa, who represents Limbach in this country, and he has agreed that the engine missing in the new 90 horsepower model is something which can be remedied.

I have got to say that making this trip westward with Art was one of the highlights of my lifetime. The ship handled superbly in all types of conditions and hardly seems bothered by excessive turbulence. It is the most comfortable plane I have ever flown and with my bad back I would have been crippled had I driven anywhere for 20 hours.

If you believe, as I do, that the motorglider may well be the wave of the future, try out the *Taifun* 17E—you'll love it!

Enjoy soaring - and forget radio problems!

BECKER AR 3201



Actual Size

BUSINESS MEMBER

- 2 1/4" instrument size
- 760 channels
- 5 non volatile channel memories
- optional display of battery voltage and OAT in °C and °F
- 5-7 Watts output power
- intercom, auxiliary audio input

- Transmit and low voltage warning
- Uses U.S. and German mikes
- full 2 years warranty
- Service available in the U.S.
- full range of accessories and portable cases available



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