

KLENAWICUS AIRFIELD



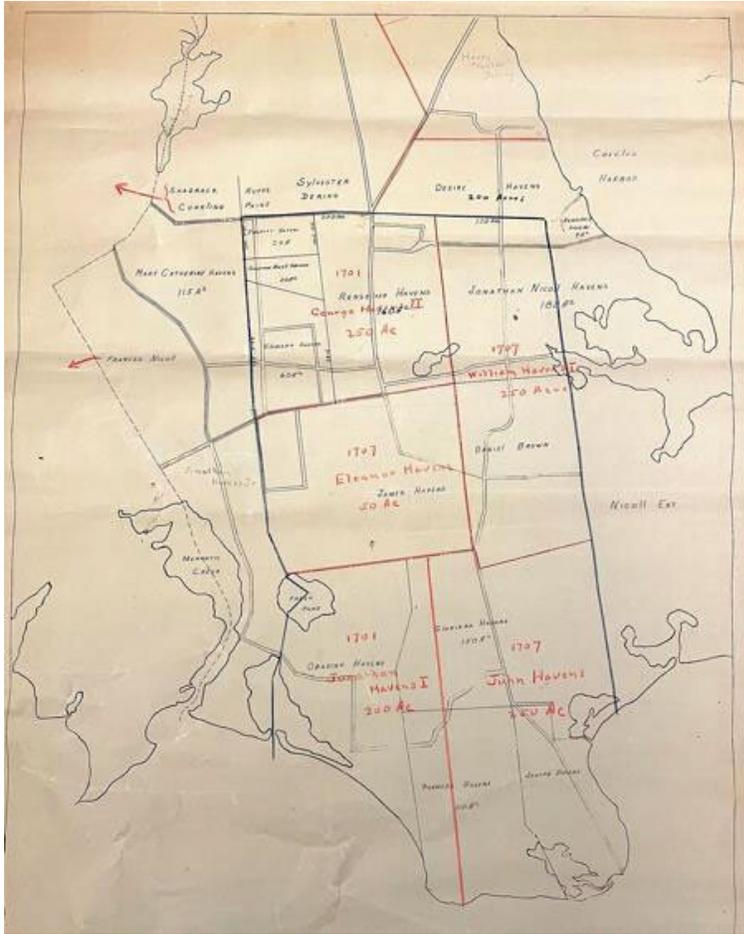
Property Description

The Town and County acquired the 34-acre property in 2011 to preserve the aquifer, preserve the Island's aviation history and continue air delivery, Medivac and other emergency services. The Town acquired the eastern 17-acre parcel with the landing strip, and the County acquired the remainder, principally on the western and southern sides. The primary public use of the Town's 17-acre parcel is as an airstrip and its support functions. The Town's parcel is bounded on the north by Burns Road, on the east by Cartwright Road, except for a private residence, and on the south and west by the County's parcel. In addition to the airstrip, the Town's parcel along Cartwright Road consists of a grassy field north of the private residence, and south of that residence a large, wooded depression and a grassy area containing the hanger and airstrip support area.⁵ The airstrip ends at Lily Pond, just north of Congdon Road. The Shelter Island Pilots Association manages the property under agreement with the Town.

Access

Although the Airfield is public property, it remains in use as an airstrip with active flight operations. Consistent with public safety, no pedestrian traffic is permitted on the runway or a buffer zone five yards on either side of the runway. The hanger is not open to the public. No walking trails are provided. Entrances into the area are a dirt road going south from Burns Road (at the historical highway marker) and a dirt road (unsigned) going west from just south of 19 North Cartwright Road.

⁵ Parcels 3 and 6, Final Plat, Klenawicus Subdivision, April 20, 2001, revised August 17, 2010 (Town Clerk's office).



Prior Owners & History

The property was part of the 1,000 acres that George Havens purchased from Nathaniel Sylvester II in 1700. It passed to his grandson Jonathan Havens, Jr., great grandson Nicoll Havens and great-great grandson Jonathan Nicoll Havens.

Jonathan Havens Jr., (1709-1774) built the “Great Central Mansion” northeast and overlooking Lily Pond (south end of the airstrip), said to have been “unusually large and handsome for one of those times.”⁶ His son Nicoll Havens (1733-1783) lived in the Mansion with ten children and fourteen enslaved people. His son Jonathan Nicoll Havens (1757-1799) inherited the property; he was Town supervisor, delegate to the NY State Convention that approved the U.S. Constitution (1788), member of the NY Assembly (1786-1795), and member of the U.S. House of Representatives (1795-1799). He died unmarried without children in his early forties.

After the Havens there were several owners, including Robert Mack, until Alexander Klenawicus (1883-1938) brought his family in 1927 to the 1866 farmhouse (presently 22 Burns Road) and 43-acre farm from Southold. The family subdivided the farm in 2010, reserved several residential lots and sold the remainder to the County and Town.



The Klenawicus family raised mostly potatoes as well as flowers, vegetables, and poultry. Beginning in the 1930s the Klenawicus brothers worked on airplanes recreationally. In 1936 Joseph Klenawicus, Sr. (1914-1997), made his first flight there and his brother Frank (1927-2005) made his first flight in 1950. They used a narrow path, about car-width, in between the rows. The brothers and others repaired their planes there and made local flights for family and friends. Many Islanders learned to fly during World War II and returned to fly out of the Airfield. In the 1960s Frank Klenawicus built a metal building on the east side with access to Cartwright Road to serve as a hanger for four planes and later added space for two more, parked nose to tail. Efforts were made to provide commuter air service to Flushing Airport but were unsuccessful. In 1967 Sid Stiber made the first international flight from the Airfield when he flew his two-engine plane to Labrador, Greenland, Ireland and Amsterdam and then returned by the same route – thus providing a new name, “Klenawicus International Airfield.” For several years Frank hosted an annual fly-in for small and antique planes with a pig roast.

⁶ Ralph Duvall, *History of Shelter Island 1652-1952* (supp. ed. 1952), p. 62.

Stories & Other

- The Great Central Mansion was damaged by fire and Timothy Congdon incorporated the surviving west portion into the house he built c. 1810, presently 29 Congdon Road (William Meringer, “Floyd Sherman House,” *Architectural Inventory of Shelter Island Houses*, Nov. 16, 1976).

- Lodowick Havens provided this description of the Great Central Mansion:

“His [Nicoll Havens] house stood to the north of the mill pond (Lily Pond), a large two-story house; it had a negro kitchen the whole length of it; two large orchards, and fruit trees of every kind, outhouses, barns, blacksmith shop, and windmill.” ⁷

- Katherine Horsford in a paper presented to the Historical Society provided this description of her visit to the Lily Pond area:

“We found Mr. Floyd Sherman’s house . . . [and he said] he would show us, what his father had told him was the site of the old mansion, about a quarter of a mile away. So off we went . . . coming at last to a beautiful sloping sunny pasture, looking down upon long narrow twin waters; and here, under a young sycamore tree, were the remains, very few and indefinite, of the foundations of the house, only indicated by an elevation above the surrounding grass. It was an ideal site for a house, and it pleased us to picture in our minds the spacious house, with many outbuildings, – for Nicoll Havens had two sons and eight daughters, and owned, history tells us, fourteen slaves.” ⁸

- Lodowick Havens named the people enslaved by Nicoll Havens in his diary (Notes on Lodowick Havens 1774-1854, p. 7 (transcription, SIHS 1986_78)):

“Affrica, Pomp (Pompey?), London, Titus, Tony, Caesar, Cuff, Lum, Violet, Dido, Differ, Hagar, Judit• A number of men learned to fly during World War II service and continued to fly after the war from the Airfield, including George Dickerson, Lee Johnson, Dan and Anton Schaible, Blake Laspia, Charley Avona, Hoot Sherman and Michael Coles.

- East Hampton Star, Nov. 20, 1984, reported a gathering of the Antique Aircraft Club on Shelter Island: “Antique Aircraft,” planes from as far away as Canada, including “antique Cessna, Waco, army surplus, and single-winged planes that had been rebuilt and restored by Club members were on view.”
- “Flying the Friendly Skies of Shelter Is.,” Suffolk Times, Oct. 1, 1987, with photo of Frank Klenawicus and his 1929 biplane. (Also Shelter Island Reporter, Oct. 1, 1987 (See below)
- “History of Aviation on Shelter Island,” Shelter Island Historical Society Newsletter, Fall 2000 (SIHS 2009_222). (See below)
- Borisova, Natasha, “History of Aviation on Shelter Island” (May 2000) (SIHS 2000_91A). (See below Shelter Island Reporter article 6/10/21)

⁷ Ralph Duvall, p. 64.

⁸ Ralph Duvall, pp. 63-64. h.”



1947 Photo of Joseph Klenawicus, Sr. at the age of 33 in his 1929 Kitty Hawk that he bought for \$25 in 1945. He worked on it for two years. Unfortunately, one winter he tried to melt the ice on its canvas cover with a blowtorch and it caught fire and burned.

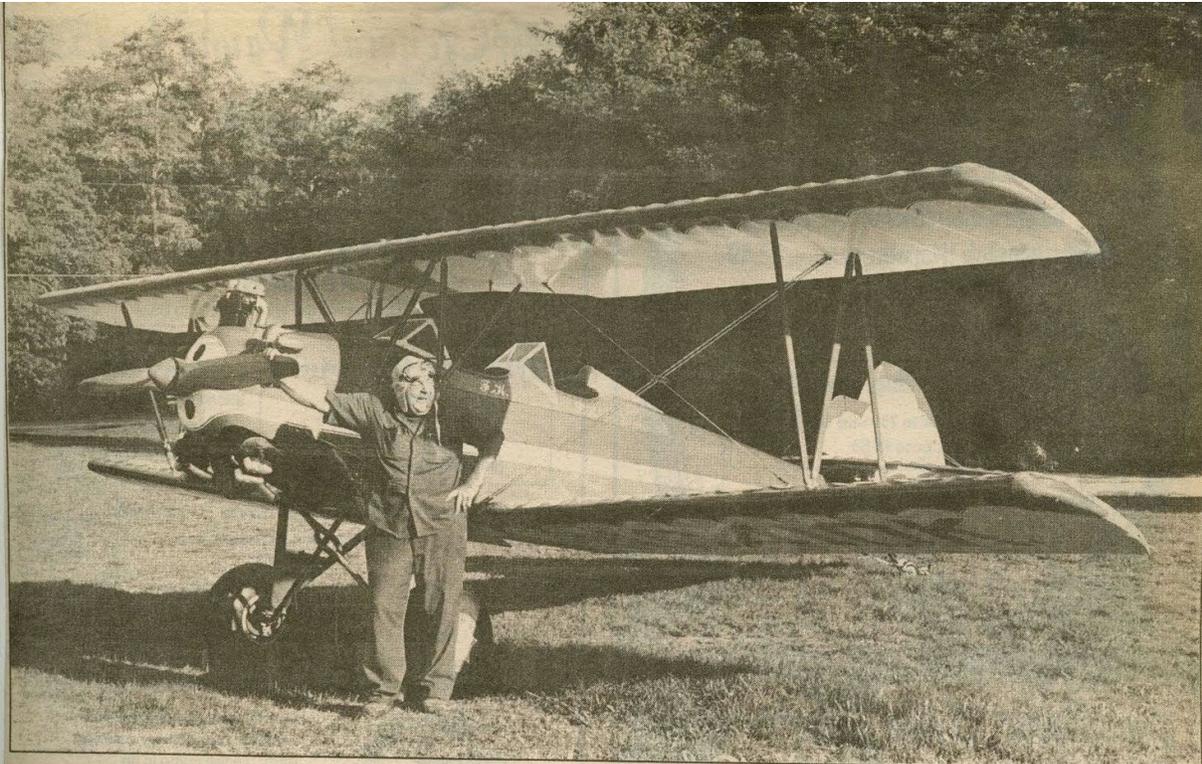


Photo by Judy Ahrens

RED BARON?--Shelter Island Highway Superintendent Frank Klenawicus has become a familiar (overhead) sight, flying the 1929

Fleet Model 2 biplane he recently restored, with some help from his friends.

Flying the Friendly Skies of Shelter Is.

Supp. TIMES 10/1/89

By JANET GARRELL

SHELTER ISLAND--When people say that Shelter Island's highway superintendent doesn't have his feet on the ground, it's not meant disparagingly. Superintendent Frank Klenawicus just happens to have a new hobby -- flying his 58-year-old biplane.

In recent weeks, Shelter Island residents have grown accustomed to seeing Mr. Klenawicus swoop around in his red and white 1929 Fleet Model 2 biplane. Actually, that aircraft is not a new phenomenon for the island. Residents with memories that extend back more than a couple of decades will recall Mr. Klenawicus's flights with the biplane

in the 1950s.

"I love flying, and I've always liked biplanes," said Mr. Klenawicus. "When I got out of the service, I had a pilot's license. I bought this airplane from a couple of young fellows in Mattituck in 1950. I think it was originally based in Riverhead. It was a pretty old airplane even then."

For 10 years, Mr. Klenawicus en-

joyed his acquisition. Then he married, built a house and started a family. As is the case with so many other people in the same situation, his youthful hobby languished. Mr. Klenawicus took the airplane apart and stored it in his cellar. "I never touched it for 25 years," he said.

Finally, circumstances changed. "Five years ago, the house was finally paid for," said Mr. Klenawicus. It was time to bring the biplane back into the daylight. However, the aircraft required some serious restoration. The original fabric had rotted and needed to be replaced. Mr. Klenawicus had to deal with extensive rust and corrosion, and the 100-horsepower, five-cylinder engine had to be completely rebuilt. "It took four years, working on weekends, but I did it mostly all myself," Mr. Klenawicus said. The work was done in the cellar, and the 22½-foot-long red and white biplane with the 28-foot wingspan was assembled outside.

Now it's at home on the runway that cuts through the middle of Mr. Klenawicus's farm. Its owner intends to keep it operational, not only for himself and for friends who enjoy being treated to flights, but also for his daughter, Susan. "She's interested in it," Mr. Klenawicus said. "She's had a few lessons and she wants to fly it, so I'm going to keep it for her." The main thing about the rebirth of the biplane, according to Mr. Klenawicus, is that "we're all having fun again."

Shelter Island

Patricia Devlin / 749-1352

Hello, friends and neighbors. Labor Day weekend has come and gone, the children are back in school and some semblance of a schedule comes back to many families on the island. The teachers are looking forward to their next school break which I believe is the Columbus Day weekend. Did I notice some of our island retired teachers waving to their working colleagues, hmmm? Then do you know what they do on that opening day of school? They take themselves out to lunch. I'm asked to pass on this information that the next East End Retired Teachers Association meeting will be on Nov. 4. Any retired teacher residing in Eastern Suffolk, regardless of where you taught, is most welcome to join the group.

Theresa Eileen was born to Phyllis and Phillip Power of Shelter Island

at 6:44 p.m., Aug. 31, in Southampton Hospital. She weighed eight pounds, seven ounces. Her grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Clark of Shelter Island and Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Power of California. The other proud family members are great-grandmothers Fannie Dickerson and Hazel Smith, and five-year-old sister Sharon, all of Shelter Island.

Shelter Island Senior Citizens, your first fall meeting will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 16 at 11:30 a.m. at St. Mary's Church. Please plan to attend.

The Women's Community Club of Shelter Island was treated to an interesting travelogue given by Jill Paterson. Jill told of her and her husband's experiences in Asia, Africa, Singapore and Australia. Everyone enjoyed this September program.

Mr. and Mrs. Harry D. Bowditch, on Tuesday evening, entertained the Center Moriches Group Home where daughter June resides.

A Celebration

The Shelter Island Chapter N.S.D.A.K. is celebrating the 200th birthday of the Constitution from Sept. 17 to 23. Mrs. Harry D. Bowditch, chairman of the Constitution Committee, tells us that the celebration officially starts with the signing of a proclamation by Supervisor Jeffrey Simes. There will also be bells tolling 200 times each all over Shelter Island at 4 p.m. on Sept. 17.

The Szorc, Grundman and Roeske families held their 10th annual family reunion at the Peconic Lodge. These folks hail from Woodhaven but come each year to the Peconic for rest, relaxation, parties and fishing and clamming.

Marion Gleason gave a going-away "Chicago or Bust" party to her daughter, Mary Fran Gleason. The former managing editor of the Reporter is going back to school to secure her master's degree.

SHELTER ISLAND REPORTER - JUNE 10, 2021 - FEATURED STORY

From a potato field to the skies: The birth and growing pains of Shelter Island aviation.

By Ambrose Clancy

After Island historian Edward Shillingburg was asked to take part in a presentation at the Shelter Island Historical Society in August, a document in the Society's archives surfaced on the history of the Klenawicus Airfield, and other early stories of Island aviation.

The Historical Society's event later this summer is to consist of several people giving short reports on the Island's preserved properties, and Mr. Shillingburg drew the Klenawicus straw. "The idea is to bring to the public's attention the Island's open space program," Mr. Shillingburg said. "To answer questions of, 'What are they?' 'Where are they?'"

The airfield, a beloved, 17-acre Island institution — known fondly as the Klenawicus International Airport (see below for the reason) — was purchased by the town in April 2011 for a total of \$4,148,500 from the Klenawicus family, using Community Preservation Funds to preserve it from development. Money for the CPF comes from a 2% tax that buyers pay when purchasing East End properties and is used in turn to purchase open space for preservation.



The Shelter Island Historical Society

Newsletter Autumn 2000

History of Aviation on Shelter Island

Excerpts from Natasha Borisova's Oral History Project

Aviation has been a significant part of Shelter Island history. For sixty-five years people have been flying over our beautiful island. There is not much information about this fascinating topic in the Shelter Island archives. The purpose for this project is to fill the historical gap, to present and preserve the history of aviation on Shelter Island.

"Flying had started to become a popular new sport in 1909 when Glen Curtis flight clubs and airports began to spring up all over Long Island. But flying required a special courage due to many accidents in the small and, as yet, flimsily built planes. Many were two-seaters, and most were open cockpit bi-planes." (Frances Kester, *Never-Never Land: The Saga of Westmoreland Farm*, p. 11)

Long Island was a major site of flying achievement for over twenty years at the beginning of the century. "The concentration of so much achievement in American aviation on Long Island in those pioneering days made it truly the 'cradle of aviation', as it has been called. Even to this day, research and manufacturing for the aerospace industry go on, demonstrating Long Island's continuing role in this field. Yet somehow the standard histories of aviation have missed noticing all this, even while they recount numerous events that did in fact take place on Long Island. It is no wonder that so few people are aware of Long Island's central place in aviation history." (Strand and Duke, *Picture History of Aviation on Long Island, 1908-1938*)

The Klenawicus family had a major influence on the history of aviation on Shelter Island. The family bought a lot for a farm in 1927. It was mostly used as a potato field. Who would have thought that this potato field would have such an influence on the history of Shelter Island? Joseph Klenawicus, Sr. was the first in the family to take an interest in airplanes. He and his good friend, Mike Sabal, built their first airplane together in 1935. They took an engine from a car and used it for their

Continued on pg. 3

Autumn 2000 3

plane. When they finished, their take off was the first flight from Shelter Island. The plane got up in the air, but then the engine failed and it crashed into a cornfield. That didn't stop them though, Joe and Mike kept working on different planes. Joe bought an airplane right after the war, around 1945. It was a 1929 Kitty-Hawk. He worked on it for about two years, fixing it up and then was ready to have it inspected so he could fly it. It was a cold winter day, and it had been raining for a few days. The canvas that was covering the plane was frozen to the ground. "Instead of getting a knife and cutting the canvas around to get it up, Joe came up with an idea to use a blow torch to apply heat to the edges of the canvas so the ice would melt. Back in those days things were a lot more flammable," as Frank Klenawicus explained. They used a substance called dope, which was highly flammable, to hold the plane together. The canvas cover caught on fire and the whole plane burned up in minutes. Joe was in his thirties. He was devastated because that was his first plane and he had spent so much time on it. Parts of it were saved and Frank Klenawicus, Joe's younger brother, is hoping to restore it and get it to fly someday.

"When Mike Sabal's plane was ready he tried to take off from Hitts Shores. There wasn't a runway long enough there. So he built floats that went into the water hoping that the plane would get up in the air before it hit the water. Unfortunately, it just wasn't long enough, and the plane crashed into the water. It flipped over and Mike had to climb up from under it." [Frank Klenawicus]

"During the thirties there was a lot of sea plane activity," as Frances Roe Kester stated. The reason for that is that there weren't any landing strips for the airplanes on the Island. Dudley Griffing was another early pilot. He worked with seaplanes, which he would fly from different creeks, North Ferry slip, or the most common place would be from a ramp at Louis' Beach. When he was in his late twenties, he started the first airline service from Shelter Island to New York City in 1938. Unfortunately, it didn't last too long, four or five years. "He didn't make any money off it," said Frank Klenawicus. Griffing not only worked with sea planes. "He had all sorts of planes," Hoot Sherman said. He was a "local legend" as the Islanders called him. He took many people for airplane rides around Shelter Island, Frank and Hoot were two...

Frank Klenawicus remembered a story, how in the early thirties, during the harsh, cold winter the waters around Shelter Island froze. The ferries couldn't get through the thick ice. Trucks with food couldn't make it over to bring supplies to the Island residents. During that time airplanes were used to deliver what was needed. "There was a place for them to land in the Heights," as Frank recalls.

The Klenawicus airfield was a potato farm until about the 1950's. The planes that used to land there had only a narrow path, the width of a car, in-between the potato rows. Other obstacles that made it difficult were the large trees at the end of the short runway. Planes had to go around them. Then, around 1955, when Jon Wright and Dick Edwards organized the Shelter Island flying service to Flushing Airport, NY, the runway was increased to its present length of approximately 1600 feet. Primarily, the airport was kept private. "Because of the threats of lawsuits, such as the day a young man was flown into Shelter Island on a charter airplane and he couldn't get out properly. He didn't know any better and fell off the wing. His mother was screaming at us, that we don't have any special steps to get out of the plane. And we told her, 'Lady, this is private property.'" [Frank Klenawicus]

James A. Roe, Sr. of Westmoreland Farm was another early pilot on Shelter Island. He was a World War I pilot. "At age twenty-one he joined the United States Air Corps. He became one of the chief flying instructors and was sent to major flying fields to train as many men as he could." (Kester, p.172) In 1946, Roe started the first airstrip at Westmoreland Farm. It lay out over what used to be a private golf course. Roe decided to put another airstrip on what used to be a potato and lima bean field around 1950. Then he had two airstrips to work with. "If the wind was against him he would fly from the airstrip that better suited take-off," as Frances Kester recalls. The Westmoreland Airfield was used mostly for friends and family. James A. Roe, Sr. used to have parties to which many dignitaries from New York and Washington, D.C. would be flown in by planes and helicopters.

During the Second World War, many Islanders learned to fly fighters and bombers. "George Dickerson, Leo Johnson, Dan and Anton Schable, Blaine Laspia and Charles Avona were all pilots," recalled Frank Klenawicus. "Some made it back, but Avona got killed while flying over Germany."

After the war some returned from the service with a yearning for planes and flying. Many went out and bought a used or a wrecked plane after the war. Sid Siber was a member of an aircrew. He came to Shelter Island in the 1950's. He didn't have his flying license yet, so he went to the Klenawicus airport and took lessons that were offered by instructors from Mattituck. After he got his license, he bought a wrecked plane in Mattituck. Frank Klenawicus helped him repair it. "I flew that for several years, and then every few years I kept improving my airplanes," said Siber. "They got bigger and faster."

Sid Siber made the first international flight from Shelter Island in 1967. "I flew the Atlantic Ocean to Europe in a two engine airplane and that's how the Shelter Island 'Klenawicus International Airport' got its name."

(The entire report is available at the Havens House archive)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sept. 8 LECTURE 2000 SERIES Frances Kester on Never-Never Land: The Saga of Westmoreland Farm

Oct. 6 ANNUAL DINNER MEETING Priscilla Dunhill Slide/lecture on Salt Box, Victorian and Modern architecture of Shelter Island and the North Fork

Oct. 8 FALL HARVEST FESTIVAL
2 - 6 pm Celebrate Autumn at the Havens House Barn (\$5 adults, \$3 children, under 2, no charge)

Oct. 13 LECTURE 2000 SERIES Toots Clark
First hand account of Life at Mashomack in the Early 20th Century

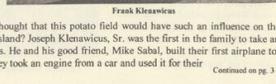
Nov. 10 LECTURE 2000 SERIES Matthew Palus
University of Maryland Historical archaeologist on Making the Past Matter

Dec. 8 LECTURE 2000 SERIES John Strong
Historian from Southampton College on The Algonquin Peoples of Long Island Today

Dec. 1 HOLIDAY PROGRAM
5:30 - 7:30 PM



Frank Klenawicus



Sid Siber and Natasha

258 Towns Road
2009-222

The Shelter Island Pilots Association was granted stewardship of the airfield.



There didn't seem to be any historical record of how the airfield was founded, until the Historical Society brought forth an oral history project by Shelter Island High School student Natasha Borisova, which was published in the historical Society's Autumn 2000 Newsletter.

Below (with slight editing) is Ms. Borisova's report:

By Natasha Borisova

Aviation has been a significant part of Shelter Island history. There's not much information about this fascinating topic in the Shelter Island archives. The purpose of this project is to fill the historical gap, to present and preserve the history of aviation on Shelter Island.

"Flying had started to become a popular new sport in 1909 when Glen Curtiss flight clubs and airports began to spring up all over Long Island," wrote Frances Kestler in "Never-Never Land: The Saga of Westmoreland Farm."

"But flying required a special courage due to many accidents in the small and, as yet, flimsily built planes. Many were two-seaters, and most were open cockpit biplanes," Ms. Kestler wrote.

Long Island was a major site of flying achievement from the creation of airplanes in the early 20th century with, as the volume "Picture History of Aviation on Long Island" says, "The concentration of so much achievement in American aviation on Long Island in those pioneering days made it truly the 'cradle of aviation,' as it has been called."

The Klenawicus family had a major influence on the history of aviation on Shelter Island. The family bought a lot for a farm in 1927 to grow potatoes. Joseph Klenawicus Sr. was the first in the family to take an interest in aviation. He and his good friend Mike Sabal built their first airplane together in 1935, when they took an engine from a car and used it for their plane. When they finished, their take off was the first flight from Shelter Island.

The plane got up in the air, but then the engine failed and it crashed into a cornfield. That didn't stop them, though. Joe and Mike kept working on different planes and Joe bought an airplane, a 1929 Kitty-Hawk, around 1945. He worked on it for about two years, fixing it up, and then was ready to have it inspected so he could fly.

It was a cold winter day, and had been raining for a few days. The canvas covering the plane was frozen to the ground.

“Instead of getting a knife and cutting the canvas around to get it up, Joe came up with an idea to use a blow torch to apply heat to the edges of the canvas so the ice would melt. Back in those days things were a lot more flammable,” said Frank Klenawicus, Joseph’s younger brother.

They used a substance called “dope,” which was highly flammable, to hold the plane together. The canvas cover caught fire and the whole plane burned up in minutes. Joseph, in his 30s at the time, was devastated. Parts of the Kitty Hawk were saved and Frank hoped to restore it and get it to fly someday.

“When Mike Sabal’s plane was ready, he tried to take off from Hilo Shores. There wasn’t a runway long enough there,” Frank said. “So he built floats that went into the water hoping that the plane would get up in the air before it hit the water. Unfortunately, it just wasn’t long enough, and the plane crashed into the water. It flipped over and Mike had to climb up from under it.”

“During the 30s there was a lot of sea plane activity,” said Frances Roe Kestler. The reason was there were no landing strips for the airplanes on the Island.

Dudley Griffing was another early pilot. He worked with seaplanes, which he would fly from different creeks, North Ferry’s slip, or, the most common place, a ramp at Louis’ Beach. In 1938, when he was in his late 20s, Dudley started the first airline service from Shelter Island to New York City. Unfortunately, it only lasted four or five years.

“He didn’t make any money off it,” said Frank Klenawicus.

Dudley didn’t just work with sea planes. “He had all sorts of planes,” Hoot Sherman said. He was a “local legend” as the Islanders called him. He took many people for airplane rides around Shelter Island, Frank and Hoot remembered.

Frank recalled a story from the early 1930s, during a harsh, cold winter when the waters around Shelter Island froze. The ferries couldn’t get through the thick ice. Trucks with food couldn’t make it over to bring supplies to the Island residents. During that time, airplanes were used to deliver what was needed.

“There was a place for them to land in the Heights,” Frank recalled.

The Klenawicus airfield was a potato farm until about the 1950’s. The planes that used to land there had only a narrow path, the width of a car, between the potato rows. Other obstacles were the large trees at the end of the short runway. Planes had to go around them. Then, around 1955, when Jon Wright and Dick Edwards organized the Shelter Island flying service to Flushing Airport, the runway was increased to its present length of approximately 1,600 feet.

The Island’s airstrip was private, Frank Klenawicus said, “Because of the threats of lawsuits, such as the day a young man was flown into Shelter Island on a charter airplane and he couldn’t get out properly. He didn’t know any better and fell off the wing. His mother was screaming at us, that we don’t have any special steps to get out of the plane. And we told her, ‘Lady, this is private property.’”

James A. Roe Sr., of Westmoreland Farm, was another early pilot on Shelter Island. At age 21 he joined the United States Army Air Corps. He became one of the chief flying instructors and was sent to major flying fields to train as many men as he could. In 1946, Mr. Roe started the first airstrip at Westmoreland Farm on what was once a private golf course. Mr. Roe decided to put another airstrip on a potato and lima

bean field around 1950. Then he had two airstrips to work with. “If the wind was against him, he would fly from the airstrip that better suited take-off,” Frances Kestler recalled.

The Westmoreland Airfield was used mostly for friends and family. Mr. Roe had parties where many dignitaries from New York and Washington, D.C. would be flown in by planes and helicopters.

During World War II, several Islanders learned to fly fighters and bombers. “George Dickerson, Leo Johnson, Dan and Anton Schaible, Blaise Laspia and Charley Avona were all pilots,” recalled Frank Klenawicus. “Avona got killed while flying over Germany.”

After the war some returned from the service with a yearning for planes and flying.

Many bought a used or a wrecked plane after the war. Sid Stiber, a member of an aircrew, came to Shelter Island in the 1950s. He didn’t have his flying license yet, so he went to the Klenawicus airport and took lessons offered by instructors from Mattituck. After he got his license, he bought a wrecked plane in Mattituck. Frank Klenawicus helped him repair it. “I flew that for several years, and then every few years I kept improving my airplanes,” Mr. Stiber said. “They got bigger and faster.”

Sid Stiber made the first international flight from Shelter Island in 1967. “I flew the Atlantic Ocean to Europe in a two engine airplane and that’s how the Shelter Island ‘Klenawicus International Airport’ got its name.”

From Shelter Island to international educator: Author of Island aviation history living in Berlin



By Ambrose Clancy

We contacted Natasha Sell (formerly Borisova), who wrote a history of aviation as a high school senior. The 2000 Shelter Island High School alumna is currently living in Berlin with her husband, Lorenz Sell.

“I’m so happy to hear this,” Ms. Sell wrote when told her school project would be appearing in the Reporter.

The schoolgirl scholar has stayed with her passion for research, writing, teaching and learning. After graduation from Shelter Island High School, Ms. Sell studied International Relations at Tufts University and then received a Masters from Harvard Graduate School of Education in School Leadership and Development. She has since led global education projects at Harvard, the Asia Society and the Ross Institute. Since 2012,

she has entered the entrepreneurial start-up world with Mr. Sell.

They’ve created an online learning platform “focused on group learning and meaningful engagement called Sutra.co.,” Ms. Sell wrote. “We teach a course called Transformational Teaching Online and have helped hundreds of educators, trainers, facilitators, etc., create online learning experiences that emphasize meaningful connection and conversation.”

She splits her time between East Hampton, Moscow and Berlin. Speaking about her research project on Island aviation, Ms. Sell wrote: “It was an incredible experience for me to put that together and I’m so happy it lives on.”