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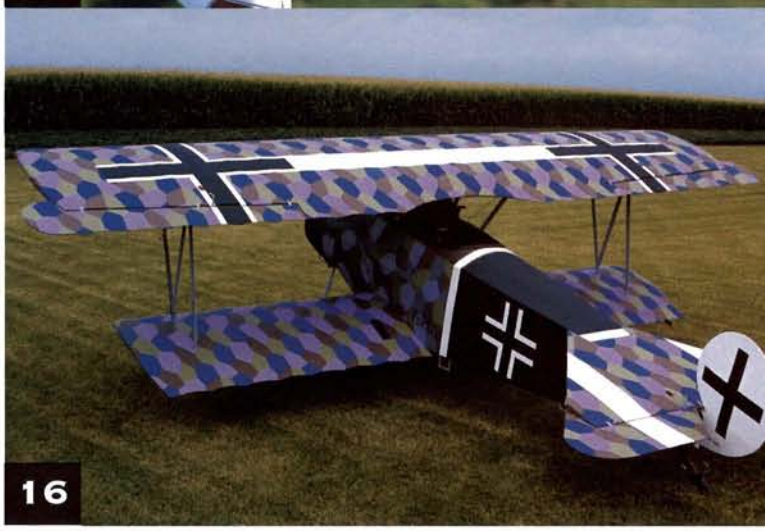

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SEE PAGE 32 FOR FURTHER VINTAGE AIRCRAFT ASSOCIATION INFORMATION

by Budd Davisson

remember

aerial photography by Mark Schaible, ground photos taken by Leslie Hilbert

You could almost judge a pilot's place in the aerobatic time-continuum by his reaction on walking past Marc Krier's clipped Cub at Oshkosh. To many it was just another well done example of the breed. Those with a little gray hair who recognized it, however, often stood and smiled. And remembered. And most would walk up to Marc and say something.

ng uncle hal

"YOU KNOW, I SAW YOUR UNCLE fly and he was the smoothest aerobatic act I ever saw. The smoothest. And he stood around after that show and talked to us for the longest time. He was such a nice man."

Marc Krier couldn't agree more. His uncle, Harold Krier, was all of that. Smooth to the point of being silky. Nice to the point that everyone felt like Marc does. He was everyone's Uncle Hal.

Harold Krier, to a generation who doesn't know, was THE aerobatic/airshow pilot of the 1960's and set the style for many fledgling aerobatic pilots at the time. This writer was one of them. Harold Krier was our hero and to this day, if the subject of aerobatic style comes up, I'm proud to say "I do Krier type of aerobatics. Big and smooth and on line. I'm not into the frantic, tumbling style." He was the man. And it's a shame more don't remember.

Plenty of masking paper and tape, along with gobs of time were spent in applying the outstanding checkerboard color scheme.

Coming out of Ashland, Kansas, Krier first performed at country airshows in a clipped Cub then went through a series of aerobatic airplanes including a Warner power Great Lakes, the specially designed Krier Kraft biplane, and his signature airplane, the Ranger powered Super Chipmunk. He was killed in July of 1971 when his chute didn't deploy while spin testing an aerobatic special.

To an entire generation of akro pilots, Krier was a hero, both in the way he flew and the way he conducted his public persona. He was a class act through and through. But Marc Krier simply saw him as Uncle Hal.

"Uncle Hal was a fun kind of Uncle. The kind you looked forward to seeing," Marc says. "For one thing, when he came out to the ranch, we always knew we'd be getting a present. Always. He never forgot."

"I remember one Thanksgiving, he came by with a new Studebaker convertible and gave us all rides," Marc remembers. "That was my first ride in a convertible and I was freezing to death, but I was loving it!"

Marc was 13 years old when his uncle was killed and even discussing it still brings an obvious lump to his throat. Uncle Hal had been something special to him, as he had been to the rest of us.

Marc is also from Ashland and after graduating from college with a degree in agricultural science went back to work on the family ranch. And we mean ranch, with a capital R; they are running cattle on over 10,000 acres of grass land! Ask what his job on the ranch is and he says, "I do what ever has to be done. Anything."

Marc Krier, Ashland, Kansas

Flying had always been a peripheral part of his life through uncle Hal, but it wasn't until 1988 that he started taking flying lessons himself beginning in a Taylorcraft. He soloed in a Wag-Aero clipped Cuby and it may have been that airplane that started him thinking.

"From the moment I started flying I had a goal," Marc says. "I wanted to either restore one of Uncle Hal's old clipped Cubs or build an exact replica of one."

Harold Krier actually had two clipped Cubs. He built up the first one to be used in his airshow act, but sold it when he moved into more exotic, higher performance airplanes. Then he built a second clipped Cub with a special goal in mind.

Marc says, "He built that second airplane to teach each of his niece and nephews to fly. He was going to solo each of us in it. Unfortunately, I was too young and never got a chance to do it."

Both of Krier's original clipped Cubs are still in existence and in good hands, according to Marc. But the owners wouldn't sell him one of them, so he did the next best thing and built a replica.

"I felt like people ought to remember, and I thought building a replica of his Cub would be one way to do it." What he doesn't mention is that the airplane is obviously a connection to a man he loved very much.

The current owner of the original brought Harold's Clipped Cub over for Marc to fly on the occasion of his 40th birthday. "Man, all that history! It really started to mist me up."

To start his replica Marc bought a stock Cub out of O'Neill Nebraska and took it to Rolland Hosteler in Wichita who was going to do the lion's share of the work. "It was 173 miles over there, but I'd be there every weekend helping. I really got tired of sanding during the finishing phase and I did a lot of the final masking."

They did all the work in a single car garage using a commercial storage bay to hold parts. "We got really good a cycling parts in and out of the storage unit."

With two clipped Cubs to replicate, Marc had to decide which one he'd do and decided to split the difference. "I wound up using the best features of both airplanes and painting it like the second one. The first one had great big letters down the side that said 'Harold Krier-Flying Blue Skies Air Show.' I wanted to make sure people understood what they were looking at so I used the later paint scheme that allowed me to paint the memorial message on it."

The Reed Clipped Cub conversion entails taking 40-1/2" out of the root of each wing and putting a vertical steel channel stiffer at the outer end of the strut fittings to make up for the different strut angle to the original fittings. That plus a notch in the edge of the door to clear the strut was about all that was included in the original

STC. Most clipped Cubs, including those done by both generations of Kriers, include much more.

"I doubled up the ribs like my uncle did and used a C-90 like his. Mine is a C-90-14 with Ex-Cell-O fuel injection and a flop tube in a header tank for inverted fuel. I don't have a wing tank. Uncle Hal modified the tail surfaces to be balanced like those on a Tri-Pacer so I just used Tri-Pacer surfaces which are identical. The nose bowls were PA-11 Piper and the original used aluminum Taylorcraft pants which are almost impossible to find, so I used PA-12's which are really close. I also used PA-11 bungees like he did which are a little cleaner than J-3's."

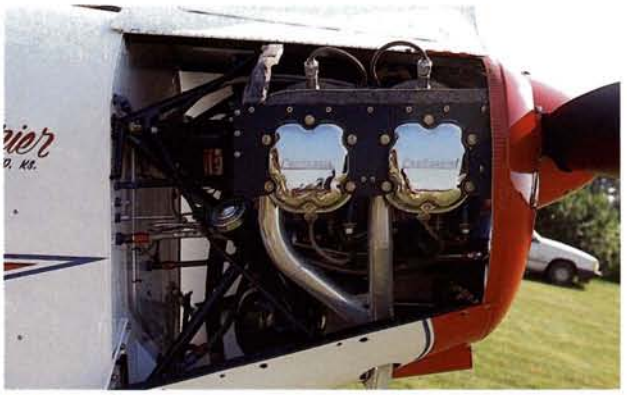
Some of the modifications are fairly subtle. "I used heavier struts with Univair forks and went to a flat dash panel. The canvas sling back seat was replaced with a stiffer aluminum sling which keeps your backside out of the bellcrank when coming out of loops. This is all stuff Uncle Hal did too."

Since the airplane was originally designed for aerobatics, Krier the elder had gap-sealed both the ailerons and the tail surfaces. This increased their effectiveness noticeably. Clipped Cubs, in general, vary from sedate, 65 hp fun runners to very serious big engine airplanes with lots of mods. The doubled ribs, heavy struts and gap sealed control surfaces are indications a clipped Cub is meant for serious business and all of the Krier airplanes, then and now, are meant for serious aerobatics.

Wanting to stay as close as possible to original, Marc decided to stay with the expander tube brakes and says, "By the time you add up all the parts, it costs close to $3,000 to rebuild those brakes, but it just seemed like the right thing to do."

The airplane uses the Stits process up to the color coat where they shot polyurethane enamel. This was apparently a good choice because what very few people at Oshkosh who saw the airplane realized was that Marc actually restored/re-built the airplane over ten years ago and '99 was just the first time he brought it to Oshkosh. The airplane has weathered the time well, as indicated by the fact that this year the judges selected the airplane as the Best Custom Class B (81-150 hp) Classic airplane of EAA AirVenture '99.

A flying tribute to one of the aviation greats, the late Hal Krier, super-smooth aerobatic pilot.



(Top) The simple nature of the Continental's engine installation lends itself to very neat and tidy workmanship. A full PA-11 style cowl was used. (Middle) The interior is uncovered to help keep the airplane as light as possible, and to allow easy inspection of the structure. (Bottom) Beautiful all metal wheel pants and expertly applied checkerboard trim adds to the sharp look of Marc's tribute to his uncle.

Marc had come up as part of a gaggle of Cubs and Cub-type aircraft from Kansas and everyone in the formation felt as if they'd won something when Marc came away with a trophy. Most felt it was both a tribute to his uncle and a pat on the back to Marc for producing a nicely done, downright cute, airplane.

Hopefully, with Airshow Legends being brought to the fore, more people will remember Harold Krier and others will learn of his contributions. He was an outstanding gentleman and it's nice to see his family loved him as much as the rest of us did.