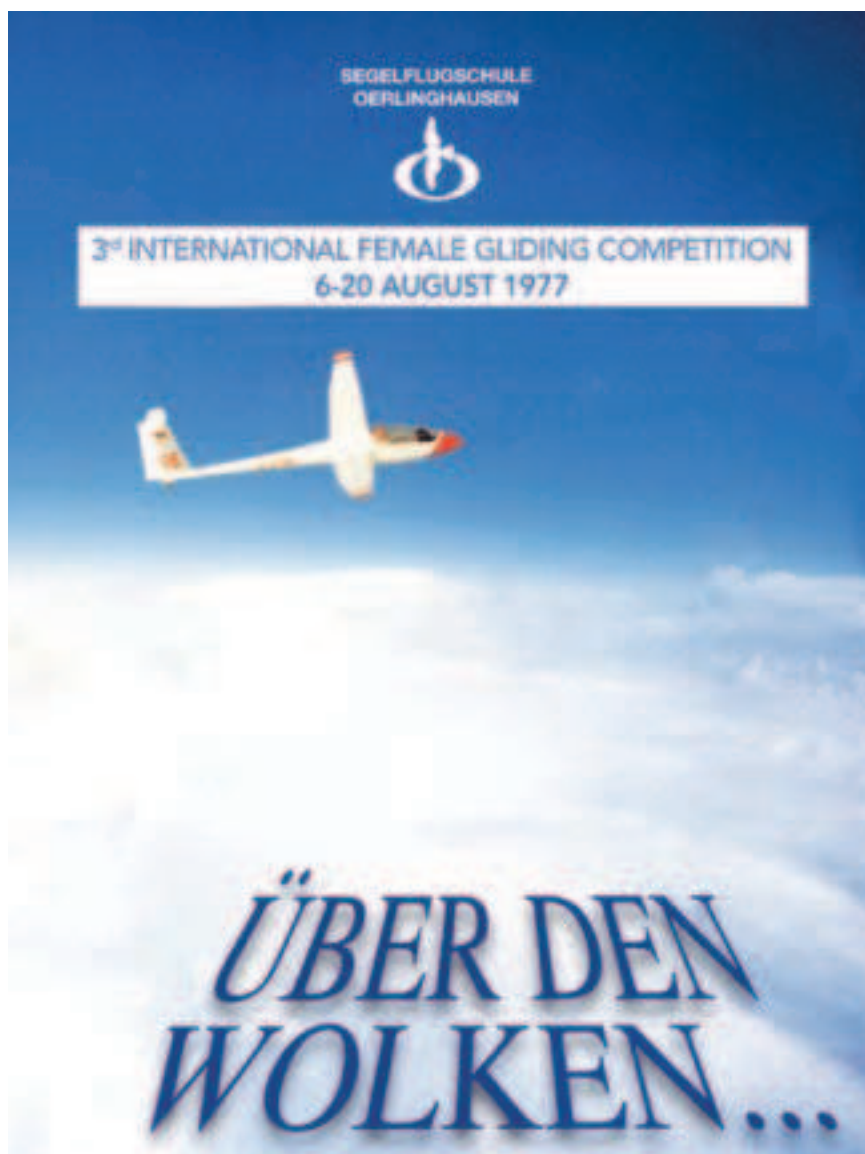


3rd International Gliding Competition for Women 1977 OERLINGHAUSEN – Germany



Now the West came in for its organizational turn.

Fred Weinholtz had become president of the DAC German Gliding Commission and to the frightening surprise of the male national team a programme for promotion of women glider pilots had been developed. Ingrid Blecher became representative of the women glider pilots in the German “Sportbund”. It seemed logical for Fred to be entrusted with the overall organization in Oerlinghausen – as approved by his fellow members of CIVV/FAI.

What inspired Fred to ask to be assisted by Rika Harwood and me, Gill Van den Broeck? We were of course flattered by his request. He would thus be flanked by two solid women. We did not for one single minute regret to have accepted.

I can still see how Rika – regretfully deceased since then – with her unmistakable Dutch accent announced “*Start line is now open*” and lying on her back scrutinized the sky with her field glass to identify gliders flying over. Unfortunately on some days you didn’t even need binoculars because cloud base was SO low and the weather was SO awful.

Compared to THIS even Leszno 1975 was a present!

Organization by a Western country, it also meant every pilot bringing her own glider. “Luxury days” of free of charge use of gliders were over.

The only FAI 15 m class glider “Mosquito” of French Francine Hannhart was sanctioned with 5% Handicap. And in the West of course, also towing was no longer free of charge.

For the first time Switzerland and France were represented but not DDR, USSR and Yugoslavia. And who came from farthest to join Oerlinghausen? You guessed right: Australian Sue Martin, her third trip to Europe...

As I said, the weather was really frightful. Outlandings, outlandings, outlandings again.

One day USA pilot Judy Silverman landed out on a field. Soon people arrived and Judy handed over to one of the bystanders the German written “charter letter” of the organizer, requesting the farmers or other witnesses of the landing, to help the non-German speaking lady when announcing her exact place of landing. Did Judy really look very much lost? Or tired? Or desperate? Whatever, one of the farmers took her cap and started his “begging” tour. No No Judy protested in vain, the Deutschmarks were rolling into her cap... and there was enough to stand a round of drinks in Oerlinghausen in the evening.

If occasions for flying were scarce, one could at least speak about it. Fred Weinholtz made the very best of the presence of these international gliding women from East and West for a very instructive exchange of ideas. The ladies were strongly encouraged to insist, their fellow countrymen in FAI/ CIVV committees should advocate the wish to finally grant official world champions titles to the women’s competitions.

Australian Sue Martin stressed it very clearly: “International contest” or “World Cup” is not enough, only “official world championships” could get some support from the relevant national bodies. She was sure persistent *FAI/CIVV refusal* would be the finishing strike in her case.

An important and unanimous wish of the pilots was to have these biennial gliding competitions organized alternatively by an East and a West country.

Exchange of ideas, the more the better, but then finally came a day “IT” was worth risking to set a task. Launching started with hardly 700 m cloud base. “So near the ground and not a mountain in sight” lamented Heidi Goetz, the very first representative of Switzerland. Comment of Hanna Reitsch who had come to encourage the pilots: “I think I would never have the courage to start so low, hand permanently on the wheel extracting lever”.

The poor meteoman hardly dared to show his face, maybe he even felt lucky not to be lynched by the disappointed crowd!



*Majewska – Goetz – Bolla – Pollermann – Toivonen – Litt – Muller – Brondel
Sterling – Hannhart – Gavaret – Weinreich – Deutschmann*

Bertels – Dankowska – Silvermann – Mayer zu Wickern



Front row extreme right: Hanna Reitsch.

8 times a task had been written on the board. Fred tried and tried again and again, but couldn't make it to more than 3 competition days.

In Oerlinghausen the representatives of Federal Germany clearly achieved connection with the flying women elite. Marianne Koch-Deutschmann could forget her 18 place of 1973, here she proudly stood on the rostrum next to Pela Majewska and Ada Dankovska.

And look at number 5, Gisela Weinreich later not less than 5 times final victory! But of course here in 1977 she didn't know that, neither did we. And let's not forget the "Nationals", solid reserve for the future. Of the 13 participating "youngsters" the medals went to Christl Schaumburg, Marlis Kall und Gudrun Emde!

Never ending complaints about the weather did not deprive Oerlinghausen of importance, Oerlinghausen was indeed a real championship of side-programmes – social events, if you prefer- with unlimited fantasy. Competitors split up in internationally composed groups for the various "contests" and Fred's assistants had chronometers ready:

- competing for the title of "egg throwing without breaking the eggs"
- reverse slalom driving between cleverly set up obstacles, empty trailer behind the car: unbeatable champion was French Marie-Françoise Gavaret
- running zigzag between rows of (empty!) beer-bottles

- initiation in “pétanque”, famous Provence game, by the 3 headed French team
- chief attraction was the original **fashion show**. Every participant received a piece of cloth (left over from a textile fair) to turn it into an original design. Sewing was forbidden, 3 safety-pins and no more, to be controlled by the jury and disqualification if more than 3 were used.

An upturned trailer was the **catwalk**. All these unbelievable scenes and admirable imagination did not only fascinate competitors and crews but also an unexpected guest: Sheikh Ibn Suliman from Qatar assisted by Hanna Reitsch. The Sheikh was looking for “new material” for his harem...

Best inspiration prize went to Pela Majewska and C° for their creation “the 4 seasons”.



Incomparable is the word for Ingrid Blecher’s presentation: like a light footed starlet in perfect Charleston style she floated on the catwalk with Abba’s “Yes sir, I can boogy”.

Hers was the “prix de l’élégance” – unanimously.

I had the faint impression the Sheikh was having too difficult a task choosing extra “material” for his harem, he finally abandoned. Only at the very last moment we discovered, how damn... much he looked like our Mr Weinholtz!

3rd positive test in Oerlinghausen. When Fred reported to CIVV he still met with resistance, especially from stubborn Swiss President “Pirat” Gehriger, a hard to beat opponent.

Pirat (not the glider from Leszno!) finally knuckled down, at least partly and not after having extorted member's promise: women's championships NEVER on world level, only continental.(the gender neutral European championships did not exist yet).

Later on fortunately this promise was not kept by their successors!

So, not yet “world championships” which continued requiring: patience, girls, patience!

But at last and at least: **European** championships – the first ones in Hungary 1979.



From left to right: Ada Dankowska (POL) 2nd, Pela Majewska (POL) 1st, Marianne Deutschmann (GER) 3rd
Red/white lady: Hanna Reitsch.



From left to right: Marlis Kall 2nd, Christl Schaumburg 1st, Gudrun Emde 3rd of German nationals.

3rd international women's gliding competition
FAI approved

OERLINGHAUSEN (Germany) 1 9 7 7

17 pilots from 8 countries

FINAL RESULTS after 3 tasks

1. Majewska Pela	POL	St.Jantar	FK	2205 pts	ALL 3 days victory
2. Dankowska Ada	POL	St.Jantar	AD	1967	
3. Koch-Deutschmann Mar.	GER	Hornet	WU	1892	(no points 1st day !)
4. Bertels Annemarie	BEL	St Libelle	AM	1631	
5. Weinreich Gisela	GER	Hornet	WX	1594	
5. Goetz Heidi	SWI	St.Libelle	65	1519	
7. Toivonen Teresa	SWE	St.Cirrus	SI	1438	
8. Meyer zu Wickern Ingr	GER	LS I F	MC	1373	
9. Bolla Maria	HUN	St.Jantar	OK	1364	
10. Litt Geogeo	BEL	St.Cirrus	LG	1339	
11. Hannhart Francine	FRA	Mosquito	PF	1273	(handicap 5 %)
12. Moeller Inge	GER	St.Cirrus	MM	1066	
13. Pollermann Judit	HUN	St.Jantar	OA	901	
14. Brondel Anne Marie	FRA	LS ID	17	493	
15. Silverman Judy	USA	LS ID	S3	333	
16. Gavaret Marie-Françoise	FRA	LS ID	21	238	
17. Sterling Alberta	USA	Astir	JE	93	147

After Oerlinghausen we never saw Pela Majewska again in competition – what a pity and what a loss!

PELAGIA MAJEWSKA, MEDAL



PELAGIA MAJEWSKA

Sie war die berühmteste polnische Segelfliegerin. Von 1950 bis 1989 nahm sie an mehreren polnischen und internationalen Wettbewerben teil. Sie hielt 20 polnische Frauenrekorde, davon 17 Weltrekorde. Sie wurde 1972 die erste Europameisterin in den 1. Intern. Meisterschaften der Frauen im Segelflug in Leszno/Polen. Bei den 2. Intern. Meisterschaften der Frauen in Leszno/Polen 1975 wurde sie 2. Als zweite Frau der Welt nach Marcell Choisnet-Gohard erhielt Pelagia Majewska 1975 die "Lilienthal-Medaille", die höchste Auszeichnung der FAI im Segelflugsport. 1988 verunglückte sie in Portugal tödlich. Ihr zu Ehren wird seit 1989 von der FAI jährlich eine "Pelagia Majewska-Medaille" an die beste Segelfliegerin verliehen.

She was the most famous Polish gliding pilot. From 1950 till 1979 she participated in numerous Polish and international gliding contests. She has written 20 Polish women records on her name, of which 17 were world records. In 1973 she won the 1st FAI approved women gliding contest in Leszno and became second in the 2nd in the second one in 1975. She was the second woman, after French Marcelle Choisnet-Gohard, to be rewarded the "Lilienthal Medal", the highest FAI distinction in gliding. In 1988 she had a fatal crash with a motor plane in Portugal.

To honour this exceptional Polish pilot FAI decided in 1989 the yearly granting, besides the Lilienthal-Medal, of the Pelagia Majewska Medal to women with special successes and merits in gliding. This medal reminds of the outstanding Polish pilot, who essentially hall-marked women gliding.

This polyvalent sportswoman, born in 1933, made her way in aviation via SG-38 and parachuting to discover gliding and since then her whole heart belonged to motorless flying. She soon ranked among the best pilots of the country and even of the world. In 1956 she set up her first world record, to be followed by 15 others and numerous champion titles.

Her successes in gliding performances illustrate only one side of her personality. All over the country she gave lectures in schools, youth associations and other institutions thus arousing and promoting enthusiasm for gliding. In 1960 she was granted the Lilienthal-Medal.



DLA KOGO MEDAL PELAGII MAJEWSKIEJ

Jak już informowaliśmy (SP nr 45 z 5.11.1969), 82. Konferencja Generalna FAI zatwierdziła Medal imienia Pelagii Majewskiej i określiła zasady jego przyznawania, które włączono do Regulaminów Medalii i Dyplomów FAI. Postanowienia dotyczące Medalu im. Pelagii Majewskiej brzmią następująco:

„Medal ten został ustanowiony przez FAI w 1969 na wniosek Aeroklubu PRL dla uczczenia pamięci Pani Pelagii Majewskiej, wybitnej polskiej pilotki szybowcowej, laureatki Medalu Lilienthala za rok 1966, zdobywczyni 17 szybowcowych rekordów świata, która poniosła śmierć w wypadku lotniczym w 1968.

Medal został ufundowany dla FAI przez Aeroklub Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej.

Medal Pelagii Majewskiej może być przyznany raz w roku, na wniosek Komisji Szybowcowej FAI pilotce szybowcowej za:

- wybitny wyczyn szybowcowy uzyskany w roku poprzednim lub
- wybitne zasługi dla szybownictwa w dłuższym okresie.

Co rok każdy członek FAI może przedłożyć na piśmie nazwisko jednej kandydatki, do rozpatrzenia i podjęcia decyzji przez Komisję Szybowcową FAI, a następnie przez Radę FAI”.



On the occasion of the “Witches ritual”, ceremony around the camp fire when women pilots participating for the first time in an international contest are granted admission in the circle of the flying witches or *Babajagas*, Chief witch Pela expressed the full extent of her temperament and inspiring acting talent.

Because of health problems entailing periodical interruptions of her gliding activities she never had the chance to conquer a European or World title.

When she could fly again , it was with agricultural planes for the Polish PZL. In the course of an overland flight to Africa in 1988 she crashed with fatal issue near Lissabon.

PELAGIA MAJEWSKA - MEDAILLE

Ann Welch [*Great Britain*]
Gisela Weinreich [*Germany*]
Geogeo Litt [*Belgium*]
Maria Kyzivatova [*Czechoslovakia*]
Adele Orsi [*Italy*]
Bertha Ryan [*USA*]
Hana Zeijdova [*Czechoslovakia*]
Dr Angelika Machinek [*Germany*]
Carol Clifford [*South Africa*]
Ghislaine Facon [*France*]
Maksymliana Czmiel Paszyc [*Poland*]

