

HAROLD KRIER

1922-1971

Bill Sweet summed up Harold Krier well in his book ***"They Call Me Mr. Airshow"***. *"Harold Krier was a ranch boy from the little town of Olpe, Kansas, but he went about as far as you could go in the world of airshows and aerobatics."*

Once out of high school, Harold enlisted in the Army Air Corps as World War II was raging. While in the service he served two tours of duty in North Africa and Europe as a flight engineer on the B-17 and B-24 in addition to getting some time in a B-26. Once the war was over, Harold joined his family in their new home, Ashland, Kansas, and learned to fly under the GI Bill.

Harold was as much interested in the design and mechanics of an airplane as he was in flying it. One skill complemented the other which served him well throughout his entire flying career. He became a master mechanic and during the mid-1950's started flying airshows in his 1946 Clipped Wing Cub, N70137. He quickly graduated to a highly modified Great Lakes Special which he and his brother Larry built while operating the Garden City, Kansas airport.

Harold's first real start in the air show business came about when his close friend Frank Price introduced him to Bill Sweet while at a Florida airshow. From there, as they say, the rest is history. He became the star attraction with Bill Sweet's National Airshow from the late 1950's until his death in 1971, performed coast to coast, was featured in numerous TV shows and magazines, and rose to the top of his field.

In the early days airshow pilots were viewed more as "stunt" pilots with a somewhat negative connotation. Harold worked tirelessly to legitimize airshow flying and aerobatics, constantly emphasizing the precision required to do this type of flying. In addition to flying airshows, he also started flying in aerobatic competitions. At the time there was little interest in competition flying, and through the hard work and efforts of Bob Taylor and his Antique Airplane Association, aerobatic competition became a reality. Harold won the AAA Aerobatic Championships in 1958, 1959 and 1960. In 1960 the trophy was retired in his name.

In the early 1960's Harold realized he needed a new airplane to be competitive. Because he could not find a Bucker Jungmeister, he decided to build his own airplane from the ground up. It would combine the best features of the Jungmeister and the Great Lakes, and once completed it was called the Krier Kraft. Harold competed in the 1964 World

Aerobatic Contest in Spain with this airplane but was still unsatisfied with its performance. He stayed in Spain for a period of time learning all he could about the new Aresti scoring system which, at the time, was pretty much unknown in the United States. Upon his return to the United States, he worked tirelessly to educate everyone about this new scoring system which contributed greatly to the United States' competitiveness in future World Aerobatic Competitions.

Once again from Bill Sweet's book, *"The world contest convinced Harold he needed a better competition aerobatic airplane. As much as he loved the Lakes and the Krier Kraft, he felt the day of the biplane was past, that there was too much inherent drag to compete with clean, trim monoplanes."* Harold was the first to see that the future of aerobatic competition was with the monoplane, something that everyone in today's world takes for granted. He was also the first to see the potential of the Canadian Chipmunk. After an airshow in Canada, Harold was able to fly a Chipmunk, and that was all it took. He bought a Chipmunk and began the task of converting it into a world-class aerobatic airplane. Harold's natural talent as a mechanic and engineer took over. He modified the Chipmunk by clipping and metalizing the wings, lengthening the ailerons, redesigning the tail, strengthening the structure where needed, and reengining the airplane with a 200 HP Ranger. Harold Krier produced the first aerobatic monoplane to represent the United States in world aerobatic competition. Virtually all of the monoplane designs since that time originated from his concept. He freely gave all the information he learned building his Super Chipmunk to others so they could duplicate his design. Art Scholl, Skip Volk and all of the other Super Chipmunk designs came from this first airplane designed and modified by Harold Krier.

Harold made the final design change to his Super Chipmunk in 1971 by replacing the 200 HP Ranger engine with a 295 HP Lycoming GO-480-G2D6 engine. The engine, prop and cowling were from a D50 Twin Bonanza. Using his mechanical skill, Harold adapted them to his beloved Super Chipmunk. His brother Larry told me that with this final modification, Harold was finally happy with his airplane. Unfortunately, he only flew about six airshows with this new engine configuration.

During his career, Harold represented the United States in the 1964, 1966 and 1968 World Aerobatic Championships. He helped form the Aerobatic Club of America and was also a past president of the ACA. In 1963 Harold was presented with the EAA Outstanding Achievement Award, was the recipient of the Rolly Cole Memorial Trophy, the Mike Murphy Trophy for Aerobatic Excellence in 1967; and was inducted into the International Aerobatic Club Aerobatic Hall of Fame in 1989, and the International Council of Airshows Hall of Fame in 2004.

Harold Krier died tragically on July 6, 1971 while spin testing an airplane for his friend Pappy Spinks. The airplane would not recover from a spin, and Harold's parachute failed to open. Harold rests on a quiet hillside in the Ashland, Kansas cemetery overlooking the Kansas plains.