

From Leo Brigliadori
A tutti i volovelisti.

This night, the great Swiss gliding Champion, (17 times Swiss champion and many times close to the Standard Class podium in World Championships) Hans Nietlispach, passed away from illness at 84. A great competitor in Rieti Championships where he won once and was always among the leaders.

His gliders were first the Libelle and then the Hornet. Several episodes are famous where he was the protagonist: the final contest day of his career was the last day of a CIM (Coppa Internazionale del Mediterraneo), I don't remember which year, but anyway he won the day. On landing (he had planned it all), he fell to his knees and had himself officially crowned "King of Ripa Sottile (the narrow lake just north of Rieti which is often a final report point) by Ettore Muzi, who, in the fashion of the old time Knights, touched him symbolically on the shoulder and head with a sword. He had, in fact, snatched the title years earlier without ever having received the official investiture which was finally his, at least on the last day of his competition career.

His licence bore a photo of an orangutang such was his disdain of bureaucracy. It was Hans who had Switzerland eliminate the need for a medical examination for glider pilots, asserting that a pilot who is unfit doesn't fly, and doesn't need the doctor to tell him that. Many Italian who later obtained Swiss licences must be grateful to him for this alleviation.

Ironically, the Swiss have just recently reaffirmed the obligation of medicals, even if this will only come into force in 2 years time.

He was fanatical about perfecting his gliders and closing gaps. I remember the Worlds in June, Argentina in 1963, on the first day, how he convinced his companions in the Open Class to copy him in sealing even the airbrakes with sticky tape because it was a goal flight to Mercedes, an airfield with two very long runways. Only nobody had told the organisers that, next to the runways, there was standing corn over two metres high all over the airfield. When the first 80 gliders arrived, the runways were already totally covered, a glider here, another there, none had given instructions on how to group them. The last 20 gliders had fine problems finding the last bit of space, but there certainly wasn't enough for anyone without airbrakes. So it was that Hans in a Skylark as well his partner Rizzi (with an Elfe) had to land in the wheat. Rizzi broke his glider as did Makula of Poland flying the Zefir which had no airbrakes but only a tail chute which, wouldn't you know it!, failed to deploy on this occasion.

I cannot forget Hans being my ally in the 1978 Chateauroux Worlds and it was thanks to his support that I was able to place second in the final task.

Hans was a member of the IGC Board for many years and also wrote a book (in German) about alpine flying which stands as an autobiography.

Emil and Urs, not many of the hierarchy of the Soaring Society of America who knew Hans are left, but I am and knew him well, and respected him and enjoyed him well. I will take it upon myself to, besides passing on to you two my personal condolences to the Swiss gliding community but most importantly to his family, also that of the Soaring Society of America. Fred Weinholz has said it well for all of us who knew Hans from those good old days; I echo Fred's commentary.

Bernald S. Smith
ex SSA CIVV/IGC delegate IGC GNSS Chairman