



Elliot Gordon Zachary Bellah

Gordon Bellah the youngest of 13 children, was born on April 11, 1906. He was a farm boy who graduated from Georgia Institute of Technology in 1925, with a degree in Electrical Engineering.

Bellah became interested in aviation in the 1920's. At that time, two instructors, Doug Davis and Beeler Blevins maintained aircraft hangars at Atlanta Candler Field and Pitcairn Aircraft occupied a third hangar, where Davis taught Bellah to fly. Bellah barnstormed in an American Eagle and Travelair airplane. He worked with Doug Davis, Fred Dorsett (who soloed Bevo Howard), Fred Stone, Furman Stone (who soloed Fred Dorsett), Fred Zheims, who was a German pilot, all barnstorming for many years. In 1929, Bellah purchased a Kinner K5 "Bird," which he kept through the years and needed recovering when he died.

During World War II, Gordon was a Flight Instructor at the 63rd Flight Training School at Douglas, Georgia, teaching aviation cadets to fly the Stearman PT-17 "Kaydet" primary trainer. He attended the reunions of the 63rd Flight Training Group until 1994.

By 1964, he had logged 10,000 hours in light planes and although he continued to fly for thirty more years, he stopped logging his flight time as he deplored "paper work." But his interest in aviation never waned. As "Dean" of aviation at the Bellah School of Aeronautics in Stockbridge, Georgia, Bellah was credited with turning out more fledglings than any other pilot in the southeast.

Early in his career, he built Bellah Airport at his home, about 18 miles southeast of Atlanta, on a 2,300 foot pasture. It was traditional for pilots from far and near and from other countries to gather at his airport on Sunday afternoons for "Hangar Flying," and to mingle with skydivers who used his airfield as a base. One of the first skydiving schools in the south was at Bellah Field.

It is believed that the modern parachute evolved based on what was learned there. The jumpers were protective of their silk parachutes. They packed and sewed and made repairs themselves until finally the "chutes" became more fragile and smaller. They discovered that some maneuvering was possible and they could land where they wanted to land. A traditional story is that at one point, Gordon's group challenged the Army to a contest to see who could land more accurately. The Army jumped first and they never hit their target, but everyone of Bellah's boys landed on their target.

Gordon Bellah continued to promote aviation until his death at age 90 in 1996. Many aviation careers were launched under his tutelage.

In recognition of his distinguished contributions to early aviation and sky diving, Elliot Gordon Zachary Bellah was enshrined into the Georgia Aviation Hall of Fame on April 26, 2014.

Elliot Gordon Zachary Bellah

Flight Instructor and Skydiving Pioneer

(1906 - 1996)