



01569

NASA

NORTHROP  
DRYDEN FLIGHT  
RESEARCH CENTER

NAVY

1  
00:00:02,280 --> 00:00:04,500  
On a cold and windy February afternoon

2  
00:00:04,500 --> 00:00:07,560  
50 years ago, the late Paul Bickle soared

3  
00:00:07,660 --> 00:00:09,760  
into the stratosphere with one goal in mind.

4  
00:00:10,260 --> 00:00:11,680  
To set a world altitude record for

5  
00:00:11,680 --> 00:00:13,440  
unpowered sailplanes.

6  
00:00:14,420 --> 00:00:16,880  
Bickle, then director of NASA's Flight Research Center

7  
00:00:16,940 --> 00:00:18,120  
at Edwards Air Force Base

8  
00:00:18,120 --> 00:00:20,840  
and president of the soaring Society of America,

9  
00:00:21,080 --> 00:00:23,480  
was an avid and accomplished sail plane pilot

10  
00:00:23,760 --> 00:00:25,500  
who devoted every weekend to soaring.

11  
00:00:26,500 --> 00:00:28,820  
former NASA research pilot Einar Enevoldson

12  
00:00:28,820 --> 00:00:31,340  
a record-setting sail plane pilot himself,

13  
00:00:31,820 --> 00:00:33,820

noted at a recent colloquium that Bickle

14

00:00:33,820 --> 00:00:35,100

knew what he wanted to do

15

00:00:35,360 --> 00:00:37,480

and didn't exceed what he knew he could do.

16

00:00:37,880 --> 00:00:41,480

prepared very thoroughly and it was a conservative,

17

00:00:42,040 --> 00:00:46,060

test pilot like engineering approach, to the problem.

18

00:00:46,600 --> 00:00:48,640

And Paul had excellent eyes and he certainly

19

00:00:48,640 --> 00:00:51,180

had the competitive instinct and the flying talents.

20

00:00:51,360 --> 00:00:53,560

Could have been a great fighter pilot.

21

00:00:54,280 --> 00:00:57,500

In just over two hours Bickle and his Schweitzer 123

22

00:00:57,500 --> 00:00:59,059

sail plane were back on the ground

23

00:00:59,059 --> 00:01:03,700

after reaching an altitude of 46,267 feet.

24

00:01:03,700 --> 00:01:06,600

A record that would stand for 25 years

25

00:01:07,360 --> 00:01:09,500

The Schweitzer has been preserved

by his family

26  
00:01:09,900 --> 00:01:11,960  
and was on display during the colloquium at

27  
00:01:11,980 --> 00:01:13,760  
NASA's Dryden Flight  
Research Center.

28  
00:01:14,500 --> 00:01:16,620  
Seeing the aircraft in which Bickle's record was

29  
00:01:16,620 --> 00:01:19,000  
achieved and comparing it to more current

30  
00:01:19,000 --> 00:01:20,720  
high-performance sail planes,

31  
00:01:21,240 --> 00:01:23,220  
his record is all the more remarkable.

32  
00:01:23,940 --> 00:01:26,700  
Bickle's eldest son Hugh, recalled that Bickle's tenure

33  
00:01:26,700 --> 00:01:28,880  
at the helm of the NASA Field Center

34  
00:01:29,040 --> 00:01:30,680  
was marked by amazing advances in

35  
00:01:30,680 --> 00:01:32,060  
aeronautical achievement.

36  
00:01:32,060 --> 00:01:34,980  
During his career Paul Bickle helped to move aviation

37  
00:01:35,420 --> 00:01:39,760  
from 450 miles an hour to 4,500 miles an hour.

38  
00:01:40,380 --> 00:01:44,300  
and from 60,000 feet to the edge of space.

39  
00:01:45,040 --> 00:01:48,220  
Not a bad life, both at home and at work.

40  
00:01:48,600 --> 00:01:51,320  
The outstanding safety record and a broad knowledge

41  
00:01:51,320 --> 00:01:53,520  
gained from the research done during Dad's

42  
00:01:53,520 --> 00:01:57,200  
12 years as director, can only be attributed,

43  
00:01:57,200 --> 00:01:59,000  
and he would be the first one to say this,

44  
00:01:59,500 --> 00:02:03,100  
to the NASA engineers, pilots and technicians