



Peter Sinclair

February 17, 1929 - January 21, 2015

Peter Charles Sinclair was born in Seattle, WA on February 17, 1929. His father, Peter McMillan Sinclair came to America from Scotland at age 19, and became a naturalized citizen in 1918 by serving in the U.S. Army and settled in the Seattle area. Pete's mother, Lenore Weiss, moved with her family from South Dakota to Seattle in 1905. Peter McMillan and Lenore were married in 1919. Pete's father died when he was only four years old. Pete had one older brother, Philip (1925-2006). Lenore raised the boys in the University District of Seattle.

Pete graduated from High School in 1947 and from the University of Washington in 1952 with a degree in Meteorology. During the summers of his college years he joined a fishing crew in Seldovia, Alaska, owned by the legendary "Squeaky" Anderson, a retired U.S. Admiral. Pete was commissioned in 1952 as a 2nd Lt. in the U.S. Air Force as a result of his ROTC training. His four year active duty assignment was with the Weather Detachment at McClellan AFB in Sacramento, CA. He received a Masters Degree in Meteorology from UCLA in 1958. Around this same time he sold his sports car, a Jaguar, to purchase his first plane, a sailplane (or glider). He met his wife, Mary, in Pasadena, CA in 1959 and they were married in Los Angeles in 1960. They moved shortly thereafter to Tucson, AZ and two daughters, Jacqueline and Teresa, were born there. Pete would earn his Ph.D. in Atmospheric Science from the University of Arizona in 1965. He used

his sailplane to fly through dust devils and conduct research for his Ph.D. His desert research on dust devils is still referenced today by those studying the topic and he was sometimes hired as an expert witness in cases of accidents involving dust devils. He was to become known as "Dr. Dust Devil" for his research and doctoral thesis done at this time period.

Pete accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Atmospheric Science at CSU, moving his family (and sailplane) to Fort Collins in 1965. The close proximity of an airfield and research lab to the foothills campus provided a unique opportunity for Pete as both a scientist and a pilot. He served as faculty advisor to the CSU flying club and was involved in both research and graduate student teaching. He was a maverick and an inventor, always believing in the impossible and asking, why not? He gave great energy to designing instruments that took cloud measurements from aircraft. He worked in the hail suppression program, the Rough Rider Project and NASA's cloud tracking program. Throughout the 70's and 80's several aircraft were used in his research programs including a North American T-6 and T-28, a Beech Queen Air, Cessna T-207 and NASA Lear jet. In a bold and unprecedented move, Pete managed to acquire a decommissioned military plane, the McDonnell F101B, donated by the Air Force to CSU. Flown out of Buckley Air Force Base in Denver and piloted by a test pilot from CA, Pete rode in the back seat and conducted high altitude severe thunderstorm penetrations. The plane was known at military bases around the country as "The Gray Ghost". The F101 is currently on display at the Forbes Air Museum in Topeka, KS. He developed new low-speed air sampling aircraft deployed to the Atomic Energy Commission, studied and flew into waterspouts in Key West, developed rockets for cloud seeding to lessen severity of hailstorms, and did work in the Grand Canyon. He traveled to Argentina, India and Saudi Arabia on either research endeavors or to present scientific papers to foreign colleagues. In his latter years, he often marveled and gave thanks to God for the protection and provision afforded to him during his dangerous flying years.

Four more children were added to the family in Ft. Collins, Michael, Douglas, Suzanne and Lisa. In addition to his work at CSU, Pete and his family raised alfalfa on a small farm north of Ft. Collins. His children remember summers of hard work irrigating, controlling weeds, cutting, baling and selling hay. Family memories of Pete include, watching reel to reel movies of tornados, bedtime stories involving tales of the “red and blue airplanes and the “light people”, sailing a Catamaran on Terry Lake, the purchase of a Dune Buggy that he drove to work in fair weather and a spray paint experiment on Toads to determine their travel pattern around the farm! After his retirement in 1992, Pete and Mary enjoyed several wonderful years traveling with their 5th Wheel.

Pete left a legacy of personal integrity, a strong work ethic and high standards that is carried on in his children.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation in Peter's name to:
Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) at donorservices@maf.org or
Samaritans Purse at samaritanspurse.org

Cemetery Details

Grandview Cemetery

1900 West Mountain Avenue
Fort Collins, CO 80521
<http://www.fcgov.com/parks/grandview.php>

Previous Events

Memorial Service

FEB 17. 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM (MT)

Drake Road Christian Church
608 E. Drake Road
Fort Collins, CO 80525
info@goesfuneralcare.com

Tribute Wall



“ *Peter Sinclair*

October 25, 2022 at 06:14 PM



“ *I worked for Peter when he was writing up his PhD thesis at the University of Arizona - very nice guy - I usually sat in a dark closet, transcribing data from his 16mm dust devil films & graphing them - great job for a freshman - Thanks, Doc !!*

John Edwards - June 18, 2022 at 02:47 PM

“ *HOMAGE TO PETER SINCLAIR (1929-2015)*
by Bill Gray

Peter Sinclair played an important role in the early development of the ATS Department from 1965 through the 1970s and 1980s when we were a much smaller and a much less well known department. A number of people during this period used to question whether our department would really grow and flourish to the very high level to which it is now regarded.

It was special to have an ATS faculty member who was an aircraft pilot, well experienced in aviation flight technique and well able to organize and carry out highly technical aircraft observational field programs. Very few university academic professors are so talented and experienced. Pete was indeed a unique faculty person in this regard. He was one of the few to make use of the Christman Field Airport adjacent to our department. For many years he housed his aircraft there. Pete was also a sailplane pilot and employed this plane for many upper-air measurements.

Peter was a bit of a daredevil by flying many hazardous weather missions such as through upper-level thunderstorms (with a special jet aircraft from Buckley Field) which he arranged. Besides his well-known extensive jeep driven measurements through many hundreds of dust devils he also flew through waterspouts in Florida, hail clouds east of the Rockies, low-level air quality sampling flights, special cloud seeding missions, etc. mostly in the US but also in a number of foreign countries (Argentina, India and Saudi Arabia). He was indeed lucky to come through all this flying and other activity without serious incident.

Pete and I spent many hours discussing the physics of atmospheric vortices from dust devils (50-50 clockwise, anti-clockwise) which do not respond to the earth's rotation, to waterspouts 85-90 percent influenced by the earth's rotation, up to larger scale tropical cyclones which all follow the Coriolis Principal. Pete showed me

how the centrifugal force is not really a true force but a derived artificial force, and many other things that his insights brought up. His curiosity on how the meso-scale processes of the atmosphere ticked was always there. He made many scientific contributions to a better understanding of sub-synoptic scale processes.

All this was done through a period of being a father to 6 children and working his small grassland farm just north of Fort Collins. Pete was unfortunate to have his father die when he was only 4 years old. But he was later blessed with a most wonderful wife of 54 plus years. Mary gave magnificent support to Peter in his recent declining years.

What a notable and successful life Pete lived up to nearly 86 years. He left his mark in the world.

William M. Gray - February 16, 2015 at 02:53 PM

JE

I worked for him just after I arrived at the University of Arizona in 1961, assisting with his PhD whirlwind data from his sailplane - really nice guy.

John Edwards - August 29, 2021 at 03:51 PM

MA

“ I will always remember the flights Pete and I made together and our many conversations with fondness. Mike Toy

Mary - February 12, 2015 at 12:14 AM

MA

“ We are sad. We will miss Pete even though we didn't see him much lately. He had enough faith in Charlie to give him a job. We will forever be thankful. Jane & Charlie Wilkins

Mary - February 12, 2015 at 12:11 AM

MA

“ *"Pete" One good man will be missed by many, including us. Dallas & Vivienne Talbott. Laramie, WY*

Mary - February 12, 2015 at 12:10 AM

MA

“ *I enjoyed working for Pete at CSU and have many great memories of our flying experiences together! Gil Summers*

Mary - February 12, 2015 at 12:08 AM

EH

“ I was saddened to learn of the recent death Peter C. Sinclair. What a wonderful guy!

Peter was one of my soaring heroes. In 1965 when I first showed up at CSU, the department head Herbert Riehl enthusiastically talked about this fantastic prof who was coming and he was a glider pilot! Peter and I only had a brief overlap, he arrived in 1966 and, after earning my M. Sc., I left in 1967. I witnessed him flying his instrumented LK-10A (USAAC TG-4A) glider from Christman Field in July 1966. Posted are the two photos I took of that event. The first photo is Peter landing; notice the Cessna 180 tow plane off to the left of the picture. The second photo is after the ship was pulled off the runway. Peter is resting on the port wing's leading edge. The tow pilot, Dave Younkin, is leaning up against the fuselage. Visible above the starboard wing is the new CSU Atmospheric Science building under construction.

The Christman Field event was the first time I had seen a glider flying up close. I still have notes I took from discussions with Peter in December 1980 on how to buy my glider which I still fly today!

Peter and I collaborated in the early 1980's upon my return to CSU as a Research Associate. For example, the third picture is of Peter and me in front of his Cessna T207 at the Van Nuys CA airport in October 1980. We were flying off-shore southern California measuring atmospheric properties at the time meteorological satellites passed overhead. We, with Phil Durkee as the satellite ground-station scientist at Scripps Institute in La Jolla CA, were attempting to understand the 'anomalous grey shades' the satellites were detecting. Phil would see a 'shade' and direct us to investigate the region. However, whenever possible, Peter was insistent in making our flight operations terminate in time for us to make 'happy hour' for the free Corona on the veranda of our motel....vestiges of his Air Force days?

Em. Prof. Edward (Ward) Hindman

MA

“ *The story of Pete's life was so nicely written with the telling of all his myriad accomplishments. It was very impressive and gave me a feeling of only knowing a very small portion of who "PETE" really was. I acknowledge you for being able to express Pete's story with so much feeling and clarity for all of us to understand who this wonderful guy really was. My condolences to you and all of your family on accepting this very sad day each in your own way. Love & best of thoughts as you continue on your way in life. Claire (Mary's sister)*

Mary - February 03, 2015 at 11:35 PM

MA

“ *Tribute to Colleague Dr. Peter Sinclair (CSU)- on Joe Golden's FACEBOOK page, posted 1/24. Pete passed away after long illness a few days ago, he was an early mentor who later became a close friend and colleague. I ordered his Ph.D. dissertation (U.AZ, 1966): "A Quantative Analysis of the Dust Devil". He chased numerous dust-devils with an instrumented jeep (prototype for what now are mobile mesonets!!) in conditions most storm chasers today would not endure: temps often between 100-110F, and dodging large cacti, rattlers, and scorpions and other nasty critters all over the desert SW of Tucson. He also obtained sailplane measurements directly through/over dust-devils! I read the dissertation cover to cover in 1968 while pondering whether or not a waterspout project in the Keys for my own Doctoral studies might produce anything substantive, and Pete was both encouraging and realistic. We later collaborated in the 1970s on obtaining the first direct aircraft-penetration measurements through waterspouts (a jolting experience, for sure!!). Pete was one of the inspirations in my life, and I will miss him greatly. Joe Golden*

Mary - February 03, 2015 at 05:31 PM

ML

“*Mary and I were high school classmates and have kept in touch over the years. Many years ago while we lived with our young family in Denver, Mary and Pete were making their journey (I believe) from AZ to Ft Collins and pulling Pete's glider along. They parked it in front of our house for a night and the whole neighborhood was in awe of such a contraption on wheels on our street.! Talk of the town. We always knew of the brilliant mind of Pete and the great love He and Mary had for each other.*

Marilyn & Jim Lyle

Marilyn Lyle - February 02, 2015 at 11:27 AM

TN

“ *My name is Tim Neuroth.*

Pete's wife Mary is my mother Lorraine's baby sister.

When I graduated in 1975 from high school, my Grandmother Lilly Hebert (Mary's mom) encouraged me to take a trip to fort Collins and Arvada and spend time with Pete and Mary and their family (my cousins), as well as my Aunt Jane Hebert (Houston).

I'm forever grateful for the time I spent there and the memories I'll have forever. Pete put me to work with fun outside chores like repairing and staining the fence, and putting down some paving stones. I'd like to think it was partial payment for my room and board (although I must say I was tempted to head back home the night Mary served rutabaga!)

Pete was so much fun to visit with and for such a scholarly person he had that rare gift of sharing his vast knowledge of meteorology without feeling like he was either talking down to your level or well over your head.

I still wish I'd taken him up on his offer to take scuba diving lessons and accompany him to FLorida to study waterspouts in the gulf. Knowing Pete, it wasn't just a whimsical empty promise.

May God continue to give you comfort and peace.

My wife Dianne and I look forward to bringing Leo and Lorraine out for the memorial service in a few weeks.

With love and gratitude;

Tim Neuroth and Family

Tim Neuroth - January 29, 2015 at 11:08 AM



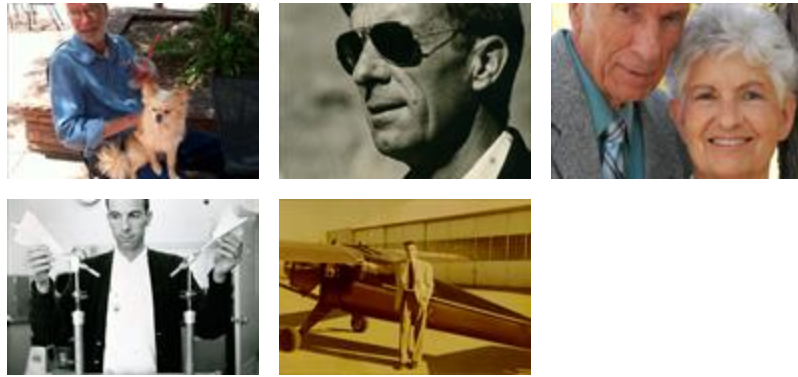
“ Chrissy McCollom lit a candle in memory of Peter Sinclair



Chrissy McCollom - January 26, 2015 at 01:01 PM



“ 6 files added to the album Memories Album



Goes Funeral Care & Crematory - January 24, 2015 at 03:47 PM