

# **POPS SpringFest**

## **26Feb – 1Mar 2020**

### **Florida Skydiving Center, Lake Wales, FL**

Sport Accuracy competition:

Third place went to Harry Moore

Second place to James “Jody” Brislawn

Top JOS Russ Manhold bringing home the Gold

FS Scrambles:

1<sup>st</sup> place went to Team “Quick Silver”:

Kathleen Snurkowski, Gary Barron, John Wallace, & Harry Moore, Camera: Steve Sears.

2<sup>nd</sup> place in FS Scrambles went to “Team Zorro”:

Ben Wong, Curtis Meyer, James Harrison, & Top POP – James “Guido” Davis subbing for Russ Manhold, Camera 2 - Danny Warren & Kaleb Cupp.

Hit N Rock:

Jeff Collins took 3<sup>rd</sup> place

2nd place Hit N Rock went to Czar Bucevschi

Top POP – James “Guido” Davis brought home the Gold in Hit N Rock

Classic Accuracy:

Reinhold Haibel - 3<sup>rd</sup> place Classic Acc

Nancy La Riviere – 2<sup>nd</sup> place Classic Acc

James Hayhurst – 1<sup>st</sup> place Classic Acc

Other POPS members registered:

Jim Patterson, Bill Rule, Lew Sanborn, Cheryl Stearns, Alicia Moorehead, Rick Kuhns, Joe Barron, Ron Brissey, Richard Duke Goodreau

## POPS 50<sup>th</sup> SpringFest and Betty Hill memorial

While most of the East Coast was being covered with snow and rain, down South in Florida, the worst was a little bit of wind. This didn't stop a group of Parachutists Over Phorty from enjoying some competition and camaraderie at the 50<sup>th</sup> SpringFest.

Friday morning, 28 February, all the stars aligned to start the competitions. AmeriCup Classic Accuracy was going on at the dropzone as well, so several of those members that were also POPS members used their jumps to count for both Classic Accuracy events.

While Classic Accuracy was going on, seven POPS competitors tested their flying skills in the Sport Accuracy competition. All three rounds were completed on Friday. Sport Accuracy differs from Classic Accuracy in that you LOSE points for falling down on landing, whereas most Classic jumpers land on their butts, using the heel of their foot to get scores in the millimeter ranges. Sport Accuracy also limits the size of the parachutes to nothing larger than a 1:1 wing loading.

This year February had 29 days, making it "Leap year", which made it appropriate to have skydivers leaping on Leap Day. This day was even more special as it was used to celebrate the life of a very special lady, the former owner and manager of the Florida Skydiving Center, Betty Hill. Prior to this POPS weekend, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, several hundred skydivers, family, and friends gathered for the first memorial event and celebration of life at the resort where Betty used to reside. She is succeeded by her husband Roger who was there to enjoy the love and watch as jumpers from various skydiving disciplines made CRW formations, ash

jumps, and landed with flags. Afterwards people shared their stories of love for her.

*Betty Ann Johnston Kabeller Hill only did one jump herself, but she made homes for others to partake in thousands of jumps for over 40 years.*

*At the age of 18, her and her first husband George Kabeller opened their first skydiving business in Downsville, MD.*

*In 1984, the two of them moved to Florida where they built Zephyrhills (Z-Hills) Parachute Center, and then in 1995 they bought Florida Skydiving Center in Lake Wales. She soon after divorced George and later married Roger Hill in 2002.*

*Skydiving was not her only love, she was also active in the community with the Kiwanis club, and became the second woman to serve as president for the Chamber of Commerce.*

*Betty and Roger loved their skydiving family and even built a mini movie theatre in the hanger where freefall videos could be viewed.*

*In 2004, three hurricanes destroyed the hanger along with one Twin Otter aircraft.*

*This didn't hold Betty and Roger back, they persevered and rebuilt.*

*Betty eventually lost to her disease on 16 Dec 2019.*

Back to 29 February, Saturday, POPS did one round of FS 4way Scrambles, then a group of both POPS members and friends of Betty did one practice jump for Betty's ash dive, then did the real jump. There was a base of three jumpers, with three diamonds attached to them. The jumpers closing the diamonds each had a ceremonial bag of ashes. The ashes were released one at a time in a clockwise manner. Twelve jumpers made up the formation, with three cameramen and two lurking jumpers, for a total of 17 on the load.

POPS did one more round of FS Scrambles and decided to hold off on any other jumps till Sunday. The evening banquet still went on as planned. The food was provided by James Harrison's relatives. James is a local Florida POPS member who made this special event happen. James also had a friend bring a food truck to the DZ during the day that worked via donations for military organizations. Awards were given out Saturday night for the Sport Accuracy competition. Third place went to Harry Moore, Second place to James "Jody" Brislawn, with Top JOS Russ Manhold bringing home the Gold. A few people gave speeches and celebrations of life for Betty Hill.

The first of March was a Sunday, which have now been designated as a weather day / record day, and this year it was necessary to use Sunday because of some high winds during the previous days. The last round of FS Scrambles was completed, followed by the traditional final POPS event, the Hit N Rock. Closing thanks were given, along with the awards for FS Scrambles and Hit N Rock.

FS Scrambles 1<sup>st</sup> place went to Team "Quick Silver":

Kathleen Snurkowski, Gary Barron, John Wallace, & Harry Moore, Camera: Steve Sears.

2<sup>nd</sup> place in FS Scrambles went to "Team Zorro":

Ben Wong, Curtis Meyer, James Harrison, & Top POP – James "Guido" Davis subbing for Russ Manhold, Camera 2 - Danny Warren & Kaleb Cupp.

Jeff Collins took 3<sup>rd</sup> place in Hit N Rock. 2nd place Hit N Rock went to Czar Bucevschi, who had just signed up that weekend, along with six other new members. Top POP – James "Guido" Davis brought home the Gold in Hit N Rock.

Classic Acc was completed and awards were given to the top three out at the accuracy pad.

Reinhold Haibel - 3<sup>rd</sup> place Classic Acc

Nancy La Riviere – 2<sup>nd</sup> place Classic Acc

James Hayhurst – 1<sup>st</sup> place Classic Acc

Thanks as always to the dropzone and the staff at Jump Florida Skydive. Tim Jones and Pascoal Rodrigues running the show, Jeff Holmstock for doing everything, and the manifest ladies: Maria, Angel, and Paula.

Outsourced help came in the form of photos and videos compiled by Gregory “Baglock” Palmer. Taylor Webb designed the Anniversary T-shirts and Kevin Postlewait made the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place plaques for Hit N Rock.

Remember to mark your calendar for 7-15 August, for the bi-annual POPS World Meet, which will be in Dunkeswell, England this year. For US members, please go to the POPS Store on the website and purchase a US POPS shirt, either Polo or Tshirt, so all our members match! There are fits for both men and women. More details for this event and all POPS, SOS, JOS, JOES, & JONS events can be found on the NEW website: [POPS-USA.com](http://POPS-USA.com)

(Betty’s jump:

Guido, Stefan Wiesner, Harry Moore, Tom Cavage, Joe Linko, Craig Sagalow, Paul Sessions, Mike Mathes, Frank Deazley, John Sugar, Robin Griesheime, Elischa Weber, Christoh Tohle, & David "Pip" Perry (organizer).

Camera: Steve Sears, Danny Warren, & Kai Erthel )

- Top POP - James "Guido" Davis

## Remembering Betty Ann Johnston Kabeller Hill

I first jumped in Lake Wales during March 2000 when Betty Hill hosted the annual **POPS SpringFest** event at **Florida Skydiving Center**.

I was impressed with her graciousness and attention to detail, seemingly covering every aspect of daily drop zone operations from manifest, to registration, to clogged toilets, and comforting visitors from around the world.

For me, living in South Florida, it was a relatively uncomplicated drive from my home near Fort Lauderdale to Polk County where skydivers could enjoy jumping from the CASA, Twin Otters, and a Caravan.

Folks may recall Betty and Roger built a mini movie theater in the hangar where freefall video could be viewed after every jump, and longer videos could be enjoyed during evening hours and weather holds.

Back then, Betty arranged for award banquets to be held in posh places like the Lekarica Golf and Country Club, located just south of Lake Wales.



In the summer of 2004, three unwanted guests visited [Florida Skydiving Center](#)...

**Charlie, Frances and Jeanne.** The three hurricanes destroyed Betty's hangar and most everything contained inside, including one Twin Otter. Betty and Roger were devastated by the loss... but they remained undaunted. Within a few weeks, Betty had shifted operations to a small shack on the north end of the airfield where regular operations resumed under her skilled guidance.

In 2005, I coordinated with Betty in organizing and hosting a world record event for Skydivers Over Sixty, the first such event east of the Mississippi. The SOS event was a roaring success, leading to a new 33-way SOS world record on the final load... of the last day.

Again in 2007, Betty and I organized another SOS big-way world record event at [Florida Skydiving Center](#), this time in a newly built hangar on the site where the original hangar had been destroyed in 2004.

Next week, [Florida Skydiving Center](#) hosts another annual [POPS SpringFest](#) event, this time the [50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary POPS SpringFest](#) competition. It will be the first time POPS folks, from around the world, will gather in Lake Wales without our beloved Betty Hill there to support us. The POPS event will culminate Saturday evening, February 29<sup>th</sup>, with an awards banquet and a POPS [Celebration of Life](#) ceremony... remembering our dearly departed friend... Betty Hill.

In closing, I want to thank Roger Hill, and many others, for planning and organizing today's [Celebration of Life](#) for our dear Betty.

Betty was an inspiration and role model for most of us... fighting the fight until the very end. If she could be here this evening, I'm confident she would be chatting with friends... old and new... inviting them to come again next year.. and all the years to follow.

God bless you Betty Hill. Our love for you will never die.

Betty Hill only jumped once herself, but she brought thousands of skydivers to Lake Wales in the more than two decades she operated the Florida Skydiving Center. Friends, family and aviation sports enthusiasts began mourning her death Dec. 16 after a valiant 19-year battle with cancer.

Hill was the brains behind the business and tirelessly promoted skydiving for more than 40 years. Instead of going to college, she and first husband George Kabeller opened their first skydiving business with a small Cessna and four parachutes in Downsville, MD, just a few miles from her hometown of Hagerstown. She was 18 years old.

The couple in 1984 moved to Florida where they built the Zephyrhills Parachute Center. Eleven years later they purchased the Florida Skydiving Center in Lake Wales, which Hill continued running on her own after their amicable divorce two years later. She also served as Lake Wales Airport manager and fixed base operator. The Florida Skydiving Center helped bring visitors to Lake Wales, not only to try skydiving, but for national competitions where skilled divers linked up into various multi-person canopy formations, dazzling the spectators on the ground.

In 2002, she married Roger Hill, who supported her business endeavors and community service. She was a life member of Kiwanis and could be found working away in the kitchen at the Lake Wales club's annual pancake festival.

"Betty was always a glass half full person. Whatever life threw at her, she persevered and did it with a smile," said attorney Cynthia Rignanese, a longtime Kiwanian. "She always had that smile and time for her family, business, friends and community."

Rignanese said Hill was involved in many Kiwanis projects, and "Kiwanis Pancake Breakfasts are not quite the same without her cheerfully and smoothly setting up the dining room to serve 5,000 pancakes."

Hill became just the second woman to serve as president/board chair for the Lake Wales Area Chamber of Commerce. Eight months into her term she encountered her greatest business challenge when three

hurricanes crossed over Lake Wales, destroying the 24,000-square-foot operations building and wreaking havoc on the airport as a whole. Four years later, with the municipal airport still a mess, Hill took the city of Lake Wales to court to force necessary repairs and obtain reimbursement for her sizable personal investment and debt. Nine years after the hurricane, Hill received a settlement from the city's insurance company, which covered only a portion of her investment loss and expenses. Hill did not receive city funds.

As word spread about Hill's death, hundreds posted condolences and fond memories on Facebook. Despite her battle with cancer that caused her to travel internationally to seek treatments, Hill retained a positive, upbeat spirit and a big smile. She will be missed by many.

The Florida Skydiving Center posted this message: "It's very sad that this morning we lost a such wonderful lady, smart, beautiful inside and out. Forever in our hearts Betty! Those we love don't go away, they walk beside us every day .. unseen, unheard, but always near, still loved, still missed and very dear! R.I.P. Betty Hill."