

Dipl.-Ing. Wim Oyens – Chairman and Stimulator of the OSTIV Sailplane Development Panel from 1963 to 1975



Wim Oyens was born at Hilversum, The Netherlands, on 22 December 1906. As a boy of twelve years old, he visited the first international aeronautical exhibition in the world – the ELTA – in Amsterdam whereby he was so impressed with the flights of Draper, Duke, Fokker and Turner, and by the «enormous» bombers as the four-engined Handley Page V/1500 that he immediately decided upon a career in aviation. It is characteristic of Wim's qualities of character that he stuck to what he resolved, and enjoyed – after having obtained in 1930 a degree in mechanical engineering at the Technical University of Zurich – more than 40 years aeronautics, both as profession and as sporting activity.

After having been one of the first participants in Prof. Ackeret's «Jahreskurs für Flugingenieure» at the Technical University of Zurich, he gained in 1930 his private pilot's licence, which is now the oldest valid licence in the Netherlands,

being No. 14 on the Dutch register! His introduction to gliding was a «hop» in a Zögling in 1932 over the beach near Noordwijk. Then he co-founded that year the Amsterdam Gliding Club which started its activities at the airport of Amsterdam, «Schiphol».

While continuing to build up his gliding experience, Wim Oyens and his friend, Jan Hoekstra, built the first Dutch two-seater, designed by the latter, and having made its first flight on 19 August 1934.

When in March 1936 was established the «Nederlandsch Instituut voor Zweefvliegen», a gliding school using aerotow as launching method, Wim Oyens was one the school's first instructors.

Meanwhile he wrote with a colleague-engineer a technical Handbook on aeronautics, titled «Van Vliegen en Vliegtuigen» («On Flying and Airplanes»), containing a complete strength-calculation of an airplane. Oyens joined the Netherlands East Indies Airforce as a technical officer in September 1937, but was taken prisoner in 1942 by the Japanese. During his 3½ years as a prisoner of war, he and Australian Paul Metzler wrote a Handbook for pilots. The original manuscript is probably unique in being the only such document in a War Museum (Australia) to be written on toilet paper – the sole paper available for them.

Even in his professional work, Wim Oyens tried always to promote gliding. So, being after the war – as a member of the Netherlands Military Mission in Indonesia – Director of the School for Technical Officers, Lieutenant-Colonel Oyens included the construction of a Grunau Baby in the syllabus of the course.

He scored another first by earning his Silver C in Indonesia.

Returned to the Netherlands, Oyens served in the Dutch Royal Airforce until his retirement as Major-General in 1967. Oyens work for OSTIV commenced in 1963 when he succeeded Beverly Shennstone as Chairman of the OSTIV Sailplane Development Panel, a post he held for more than 12 years.

Starting his task, he found «Airworthiness Requirements for Standard Class Sailplanes», realized under the guidance of his predecessor. Since these «Requirements» had met with a generally kind reception, under the chairmanship of Wim Oyens the Panel extended the «Requirements» to all categories of (pure) sailplane of which the first edition was published in 1964. The document was regularly re-issued as experience was gained, being extended to cover also powered sailplanes in 1971. The latter was a significant advance, and a careful line had to be steered to ensure that the requirements were adequate but at the same time not too aeroplane-oriented. It is mainly Oyens' merit that this target has been achieved.

It is interesting to see that several western European government agencies are now co-operating in a similar venture, and to know that Oyens' work underlies their working material to a large degree. In retirement Wim is still active, both as a pilot and as a technical writer, also as an artist – a painter – of no mean ability.

His recipe for a long flying life is two-fold:

«Stay healthy» and «Go through your check list carefully before each take-off».

L.A. de L./C.O.V.