



Left: The pyrotechnic dance of the Night Delight act.

Right: Manfred with his H101 Salto glider.
Photos by Eric Dumigan Photography

Below: Manfred Radius and young fan.
Photos graciously supplied by Manfred Radius

COMMUNITY

Member Profile: Manfred Radius

Ballet in the Sky: 40 Years of Precision Glider Aerobatics

By Valerie Boucher

Among the revving engines and energy of typical air shows, COPA member Manfred Radius brought something different: quiet precision. For nearly 40 years, he performed in an unpowered H101 Salto glider, turning flight into a dance, graceful and unforgettable.

In 1961, as a teenager riding his bike near Hamburg, Germany, Radius discovered a gliding club offering rides. “It was the first time I flew in any kind of aircraft,” he recalled. “The winch launch, going up at a steep angle, was a thrill. Everything looked so small... It was a fantastic experience, and I wanted more.” He joined the club that summer and continued to fly.

After immigrating to Canada in 1969, Radius met Polish aerobatic pilot Bogdan Wolski, who gave him his first aerobatics lesson in the two-seat L-13 Blanik glider. Radius became an instructor in 1972 and, two years later, reached 35,000 feet over the Rocky Mountains in a sailplane near Colorado Springs.

He competed internationally, earning ‘best foreign aerobatic pilot’ at the German Glider Aerobatic Championship and flying in the First World Championship in

Austria in 1985. Over his career, Radius performed 1,140 times across 441 shows in 4 countries: Canada, the United

For nearly 40 years, he performed in an unpowered H101 Salto glider, turning flight into a dance, graceful and unforgettable.

States, Australia, and Mexico — always flying the same German-made H101 Salto.

Radius joined the International Council of Air Shows (ICAS) in 1978, crediting it

with supporting both his career and the air show community. He encourages young performers to join early.

His signature manoeuvre, the inverted ribbon cut, debuted in 1988. Flying upside down just 26 feet off the ground, he aimed to slice a suspended ribbon with his glider’s tail fin, a test of precision and nerve. “I wasn’t the first to do it,” he said, recalling an older pilot from Eastern Europe. “But I am not aware of any other glider pilot doing it.”

He always put safety first. “If I was too high, I wouldn’t pull down late but would overfly the ribbon to try again later.” Over time, he called it an inverted ribbon-cut attempt. Even when missing, he delivered a solid show.

In 1992, at the Canadian International Air Show, Radius made history performing the first inverted ribbon cut over water, flying between two yachts on Lake Ontario.



Night flights were a signature part of Radius’ act. His *Night Delight* featured pyrotechnics on the wing tips, choreographed to classical music, and became a highlight across North America and Australia. Michael Small, recalling a 1997 Melbourne performance, called it “absolute aerobatic and visual magic.”

- Continued on page 25

→ Continued from page 4
(President's Corner)

emphasis on connecting with COPA Flights from coast to coast to coast. These local chapters are the heart of our network and are where stories are shared, where grassroots advocacy takes shape, and where mentorship begins. In the months ahead, we'll be working to better support and collaborate with our Flights to ensure that your efforts are supported and celebrated, and that your needs help shape our national agenda.

Above all, we want to be transparent and keep you informed every step of the way. We want you to follow our progress as we tackle key issues, celebrate milestones, and adjust when needed. These are not abstract ambitions. They are real actions designed to create value, strengthen our community, and ensure your voice shapes the future of General Aviation in Canada.

As I look ahead, I'm energized by the possibilities. COPA is a member-driven organization, and our strength lies in your stories, your advocacy, and your love of flight. Over the coming months, I look forward to meeting more of you, learning from your experiences, and continuing to build an organization that reflects where you are today and where you want to go.

Thank you for welcoming me into this incredible community. I'm honoured to lead COPA at such a pivotal time and remain committed to ensuring that our freedom to fly continues for generations to come.

Until next time, blue skies and safe flying. ■

→ Continued from page 6
(Member Profile: Manfred Radius)

His calm, precise routines reflected thousands of hours of practice and discipline.

Since his aerobatic debut at Hamilton Mount Hope Airport in 1985, Radius has performed at numerous shows from Lakeland, Florida, to Abbotsford, BC. He credits producers and volunteers alike. "Without countless volunteers donating their time and talents, my performances and most air shows wouldn't be possible."

His performances earned widespread praise. Spectators called them "awe-inspiring" and "mesmerizing." USAviator magazine wrote in 1995: "He is absolutely incredible; a truly phenomenal presence in the airshow biz." In *The Cannibal Queen*, New York Times bestselling Author Stephen Coonts recalled: "The most spectacular flying exhibition I have ever witnessed... the silent crowd watched, mesmerized... His mastery of craft was total."

His performances didn't just captivate crowds on the ground; they made their way onto screens too. Radius was featured on shows like *That's Life*, *Stuntmasters*, *Magic in the Air*, and *Science of Fun*, showing audiences, even those far from any runway, what was possible in a glider.

Outside the cockpit, he logged over 1,100 skydives in more than 30 years.

In 2023, he was inducted into the ICAS Foundation Hall of Fame, one of the highest honours in air shows. "There were others more deserving," he says modestly. "I was lucky the committee selected me, besides Matt Chapman."

At 80, Radius gave his final performance in October 2024 at the Culpeper Air Fest. "It was time to quit because I started making mistakes," he said. "I'm relieved I flew since 1985 with the same glider, still in good shape."

Though retired, Radius' performances remain a benchmark in glider aerobatics. "If someone remembers one of my shows," he simply says, "I hope they enjoyed watching it." ■

DISCOUNT AVIONICS
705-272-9179

Offered Services

- Bilingual services in French & English
- Sales, Service & Repair station for
 - 406 ELT, Artex, Kannad,
 - ACK ELT, Ameri-King
 - Pointer, SkyHunter ELT
- Factory Authorized Dealer for
 - Techni sonic Industries LTD
 - ACR/Artex Service Center
 - Kannad approved programming/Battery replacement center
- 2-4 days turnaround time on ELT certification

PLEASE SEE WEBSITE FOR SUBMISSION FORM OR GIVE US A CALL.

Scan the code with your phone camera!

Stay up to date on our promotions! Follow us on socials.

Contact us

- Office: 877-878-8363
- Cell: 705-272-9179
- Email: service@discountavionics.com
- Web: www.discountavionics.com

Locate us

Conv Box 3635
5 North Shore Road
Cochrane, Ontario
Canada
P0L 1C0