

Adele Orsi Mazzucchelli  
Margot Acquaderni

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's on behalf of the Centro Studi Volo a Vela Alpino that I'm very pleased to welcome you here in Calcinate, to this wonderful airfield that was born thanks to the generosity of Adele and Giorgio Orsi and whose Aero Club was titled to Adele Orsi in 1998, year in which she died after quite a long illness that forbade her to fly in the last few years of her life.

I'm really moved to speak about Adele : I have been given a very difficult task since she was really a very particular person.

I'd like to thank all the people that helped me find information, especially all the pilots that started flying with her, some of whom are here tonight. A particular thank you to Davide, her grandson who helped me very much in collecting pictures and news.

Adele was really special: besides being a perfect wife, a wonderful mother and excellent pilot, with no doubt she was a pioneer, a forerunner and a developer of this wonderful sport that is gliding, not only in this area but all over Italy. And to me she was very important not only for what she taught me in flight but also because she introduced me to the pilot who would become my husband.

Just let me say something about her, about the way she kept in touch with gliding.

It was in fact mainly by chance.

1959: Adele was at that time 31, she was married with Giorgio and they had 3 children: Silvia who was then 8, Gianni who was 6 and Marco who was 4. She was, and had always been, an extremely sportive woman and she used to play volleyball and tennis at her wonderful house in Varese, with her friends. Once one of them, Giorgio Conversano, did not go to play tennis because he went gliding and both Giorgio and Adele were very curious. They didn't really know what gliding was, apart from what they had heard about the flight from Campo dei Fiori that took place in 1926 with Ettore Cattaneo and the University students: they flew 11 km landing on the border of the lake of Varese or in 1934 with Plinio Rovesti. At that time 9 hydrogliders landed in lake Maggiore. Plinio was flying a glider called Roma, 20 mt. wing span. Plinio was part of a group supported by the Nac of that time that was called RUNA (Reale Unione Aeronautica) , and so they decided to go and have a look.

**It was a love at first sight** and thanks to Sergio Baldisseri, the pilot who took both Adele and Giorgio aloft, gliding became their lifelong passion.

After that day they played very little tennis and they spent all their week ends at Vergiate airfield, flying the " Spatz " and the "Canguro" together with many friends: Umberto Bertoli, Guglielmo Giusti, Aldo Trecchi. She gained her licence number 951 in July 5<sup>th</sup> 1960.

Adele was used to do things at her best and she realized that the gliders used then were not very modern so, together with Giorgio, she started travelling to see what they could buy. Immediately a two seater bocian and a single seater Mucha 100 arrived in Vergiate.

She also understood that the airport was not the right place to take off if you wanted to exploit the meteorology of the area and she soon convinced her father, who had already built the golf club which is still one of the best fields in Italy, to build an airfield on the border of the lake of Varese. And here it is today. It was hard to reclaim the area, since it was very marshy. It was 1961.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1962 the field was inaugurated: Adele and Giorgio bought some of the most updated gliders: the airfield could boast 2 double seater Bocian, a Mucha 100, a Mucha standard, and a Skylark 3 bought at the Italian championships in Perugia from Philip Wills. Plinio Rovesti was the director of the field for 4 years and thank to Adele and Giorgio he also became the editor in chief of the magazine "Volo a Vela" that was first born in 1946 for 6 months and returned to life in 1957 with Vergani, Galli and Soldini. A unique magazine that is still existing today.



Since then Calcinate has become one of the most important airfields, it in fact permitted to exploit the weather conditions and the orography: an open door towards the alpine chain and the opportunity to have an airfield only devoted to gliding .

Many pilots from the near airfield arrived here for two main reasons: the club could offer the best and most updated gliders and could also offer the teachings of the most well known pilots and instructors in Europe: Biagi and Bertoncelli from France, Vilgus, Popiel, Maculan (world champion) and Piacieski from Poland, besides many other foreign pilots that came here to train but who also compared their experience with the one of the Italian pilots. Anna Reitsch and Mr. Kutner a scientist of the NASA who projected the landing on the moon and who was very experienced on wave flight.



Adele and Giorgio became then the referring people for the Italian gliding: not only pilots from this area but from all over Italy came. They in fact organized conferences, meetings and stages involving people from all over the world: Two meetings of OSTIV (Organization scientific et technique du Vola a Voile) on standard gliders and two seaters, besides many meteorological conventions.

Adele was extremely curious, she created and was the "engine" of Alpine Gliding Studies Centre (Cento Studi Volo a Vela Alpino) a centre which promotes all scientific and meteorological research activities on mountain gliding to the study of the particular meteorology in the alpine area. In this Club that was then AVAL (Aero Club Alta Lombardia) all the new prototypes of the gliders of second generation could be found. Adele and Giorgio were really

important for the development of gliding all over Italy.

Many champions were born in Calcinate and Adele trained them: Roberto Manzoni, Roberto Monti, Walter Vergani, Marco Gavazzi, Attilio Pronzati, in this airfield that was the first in Europe to be a private property with a wonderful panorama and very rich equipment that could be offered.

Adele was special: she was extremely precise, she wanted to learn as much as she could from the others and every time she took off, she had already studied the map and knew mainly everything that could have happened in her flight. She liked competing very much: once she was interviewed and she said:

"Competitions are a part of soaring. You miss some of the sport if you do not compete. I always liked being in a competition. I felt it was complementary to record and distance flights."

She was always leading the scoring of the competitions she was flying. She was usually fighting against men but she thought that gliding is one of the sports where there are no differences between men and women.

She in fact started to compete immediately, first in Great Britain 1963 at Lasham, then in France at Lafertè, then in the United States and in Argentina. She went there together with Giorgio and some friends, Guglielmo Giusti. They were flying three pilots with one glider.

Only once, in 1973 she competed in Poland in a women competition. They were to fly the same glider: a Pirat she had never tried before. They flew 9 tasks of which two times 544 triangles. She was 15<sup>th</sup> over 21 competitors coming from 12 different countries. Her comment was:

"The foreign pilots gave me quite a beat..."

In 1974 she went to Walkerie in Australia to fly the World Championships together with Sandro Serra, Ferro Piludu and Mario Cattaneo.

Very soon she earned many Italian records as well as some world records.

Again in an interview she said:

" If you want to achieve a record, especially world records, you need to be tenacious. Try, try and try again, this is the most important thing. The day does not need to be exceptional. You do not need to be particularly inspired. Just try, try and try. Then be tranquil. One should not place too much emphasis on the record attempt. I always tried to be calm on take off, and, once aloft, to concentrate on my objective. "

She started beating records in 1973 :

17/08/73 speed over a 100 km triangle single seater 120.153 km/h

17/08/74 speed over a 100 km triangle two – seater 110,758 km/h with Franca Vergani

19/08/75 speed over a 300 km triangle two- seater 97,741 km/h with Mina Monti

27/04/76 Distance out and return two- seater 546 km

10/01/92 speed over a 100 km triangle two-seater 121 .01 km/h co pilot Katrin Keim

and she was co-pilot in other 4 world records always with Katrin Keim

Adele was awarded with several prizes :

FAI Paul Tissandier diploma

She has been registered in the Italian Board of aviation Pioneers

She was awarded with the Peklaga Majewska medal.

Adele had a lot of friends who liked very much to fly with her. They all say that nothing was left to chance and they remember that each time they were having dinner together, they finished the evening in front of a map, studying the task they had to fly the following day.

She was scrupulous and stubborn. She tried to prepare everything well in advance and not to forget any important thing. She was the first to take off and the last to land. If she couldn't reach what she had in mind she wanted to understand the reason why, to be able to face it the following time.

I had the great opportunity to fly with her and to learn a lot. Unluckily not so much as I would have liked, but it was enough to understand who Adele was. We tried to beat some records and I remember all the time spent with her scheduling the flight.

Unluckily the last period of her life was touched by a cancer that obliged her on a wheel chair the last years of her life.

Adele never lost hope. She was always very well organized even in her illness. I remember when I went to visit her before my first International competition in 1997.

She told me not to try to stay with the strongest but to "stay with the group". She gave me a lot of suggestions that I will always keep in mind.

Adele was very prudent and she also taught me some extremely important rules I will never forget.

I remember flying a competition with her, flying in the clouds, outlanding and you cannot believe ... everything that came out from her glider !!! In fact she was nicknamed Eta Beta.

When flying together she always explained to me all her choices. I felt a bit in awe of her, because she was not very talkative but she knew when to speak and what to say.

In the end I have to say that what Adele was in flight and for gliding was the mirror of what she was in everyday life:

She liked planning, everything had to be in order.

She cared about everything, trying to precede the needs of people

She was perseverant and persistent in all the things that she was doing.

She faced things with humility, reliability, strong humanity and refinement.

I really hope we will be able to take up the heritage she left us.

