

I can't tell you much about Gary but I did fly with him and he was a fine man. I remember him telling me that he was moving to Saratoga. I told him that I thought that it would be a difficult commute.

I do know that part of the draw to Saratoga was a close friendship with Gary Welton. Evidently, Gary Harsen instructed Gary Welton on the fine art of flying. Gary Welton was the one who located Gary's crash site. He had been flying Search and Rescue on a line of flight between Casper and Saratoga without any luck. He decided to expand his search to the East which took him over Elk Mountain. Strong crosswinds (I was told approximately 50 mph) out of the West had blown Gary off course (no directional aid in Saratoga so he was flying time and distance off of Casper or maybe Crazy Woman). He picked up Gary's ELT on Elk Mountain.

Sometime later, I talked to Rod Johnson, a local rancher and, I believe, at that time Deputy Sheriff who took part in the ground search. He told me that the approach to the site required a snow cat which was brought in from Laramie. It was extremely difficult due to the location near the top of the mountain and deep snow conditions. He said that when they reached the site; it was obvious that Gary had died on impact. He mentioned that Gary's wristwatch was found being held over his knuckles; which they believed indicated that he was closely timing his flight. He said that they removed Gary's body but due to the difficult winter conditions; they decided to leave the wreckage until spring. At the earliest opportunity, they returned to the site to investigate and recover what they could. He was amazed to discover that someone had beaten them back to the site and had tampered with the wreckage.

These recollections are based upon personal conversations with Gary Harsen, Gary Welton and Rod Johnson.

I would think that an obituary and photo could, probably, be found in the archives of the Saratoga Sun newspaper. I will do an online search and see what I can find.

-Larry Elliott  
(2/11/15)