

December 2007



e-WESTWIND



Heading for the High Ground – Rick Walters in the French Alps – Photo- Peter Deane

Joyous Solstice!!

Editorial- PASCOS and Regional Soaring PASCOS Achievements 2007
PASCOS Board Meeting Oct 2007 Region 11 2007 Safety Review Upgraded Web Site!!
NCSA Making Dreams Come True Byron flight to capture the Egg!
GliderPalooza at Panoche Labor Day TAGAR results 2007 PASCOS AWARDS
Mountain Ridge Soaring Landings – Some thoughts from an Old Timer

IMPORTANT! PASSWORD CONTROL HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM WESTWIND TO MAKE THE ELECTRONIC VERSION MORE ACCESSIBLE- CHECK OUT THE NEW WEBSITE at www.pacificsoaring.org

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this Corporation shall be to initiate, sponsor, promote, and carry out plans, policies, and activities that will further the growth and development of the soaring movement in Region 11 of the Soaring Society of America. Activities will be targeted at increasing the number of soaring pilots in the region in addition to the development of soaring pilots to promote safety of flight, training in the physiology of flight, cross country and high altitude soaring and the development of competition pilots and contest personnel at the local, regional, national and international level. The present board will remain in office until November 2007. Current dues are \$25 annually from the month after receipt of payment.

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Elmer Udd,

PASCO Board Meetings; Every 1st Wednesday of the month, 7pm,
 Contact Karol Hines (775-747-0569, karoll@sbcglobal.net) for location and directions.
Members welcome; please tell us you're coming.

REGION 11 GLIDER OPERATIONS

| | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------|
| Air Sailing, Inc. Airport | Palomino Valley, NV | 775-475-0255 |
| Central California Soaring Club | Avenal Gliderport, 600 LaNeva Blvd Avenal CA 93204, | 559-386-9552 |
| Ely Soaring | Dan Callaghan P.O.BOX 151296, Ely, NV 89315 http://www.elysoaring.com | 775-720-1020 |
| Las Vegas Soaring Center | Jean Airport, | 702 -874-1010 |
| Montague Tow operation | Richard Pfeiffer | 530 905 0062 |
| Mt. Diablo Soaring, Inc. | Rolf Peterson, Flt. Instructor rolfpete@aol.com | 925 447-5620 |
| Northern California Soaring Ass'n (NCSA) | Byron Airport, Byron, CA. | 925- 516-7503 |
| Owens Valley Soaring, | Westridge Rd., Rt 2, Bishop, CA 93514 | 619-387-2673 |
| Hollister Gliding Club, | Hollister Airport – Hollister California, info@soarhollister.com | 831-636-3799, 831-636-7705 |
| Soar Hawaii Sailplanes P.O. Box 30863, Honolulu, HI 96820., | Dillingham Field, Oahu, HI. soarhi@lava.net | 808 637-3147 |
| Soar Minden | Minden-Tahoe Airport, P.O. Box 1764, Minden, NV 89423, | 800-345-7627 775-782 7627 |
| Soar Truckee, Inc., | Truckee Airport, P.O. Box 2657 CA 96160, | 530-587-6702 |
| Williams Soaring Center | Williams GliderPort 2668 Husted Road, Williams, CA 95987 http://www.williamssoaring.com/ | 530-473-5600 |

REGION 11 CLUBS & ASSOCIATIONS

| | | | |
|---|--|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Air Sailing, Inc. Airport | Palomino Valley, NV | Ty White | 510-490-6765 |
| Bay Area Soaring Associates (BASA) - | Hollister Airport, Hollister, CA; | Miguel Flores, | 831-801 2363 |
| Central California Soaring Club | Avenal Gliderport, Avenal, CA. | Mario Crosina, | 559 251-7933. |
| Great Basin Soaring, Inc. | 2312 Prometheus Court Henderson, NV89074 | Terry Van Noy | (702) 433-9677 |
| Las Vegas Valley Soaring Association | Jean Airport, NV, PO Box 19902, Jean, NV 89019, | Jay McDaniel | 702-874-1420 btiz2@cox.net |
| Minden Soaring Club PO Box 361 Minden, NV 89423 www.mindensoaringclub.org | Minden Tahoe Airport | Leo Montejo | |
| Mount Shasta Soaring Center | Siskiyou County Airport, Montague, CA | Gary Kemp, | 530-934-2484 |
| Nevada Soaring Association (NSA) - | Air Sailing Gliderport, NV. | Vern Frye | 775 825-1125 |
| Northern California Soaring Association (NCSA) | Byron Airport, Byron, CA. | Mike Schneider | 925 426-1412 |
| Silverado Soaring Association | Bryan Forsyth forsyth.bryan@gmail.com | | 530-414-1902 |
| Valley Soaring Association (VSA) - | Williams Glider Port 2668 Husted Road, Williams, CA | Peter Kelly | 707 448-6422 |

WORLD WIDE WEB ADDRESSES - REGION 11

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Soaring Society of America | http://www.ssa.org |
| Pacific Soaring Council | http://www.pacificsoaring.org |
| Air Sailing Inc. | http://www.airsailing.org |
| Jim and Jackie Payne - FAI Badge Page | http://home.aol.com/JPAviation |
| Bay Area Soaring Associates | http://www.flybasa.org |
| Central California Soaring Club | http://www.soaravenal.com |
| Las Vegas Soaring Center | http://www.lasvegassoaring.com |
| Las Vegas Valley Soaring Association | http://www.lvvsaa.org |
| Minden Soaring Club | http://www.mindensoaringclub.org |
| Mount Shasta Soaring Center | http://www.craggyaero.com/mssc/ |
| Northern California Soaring Assoc. | http://www.norcalsoaring.org/ |
| Silverado Soaring, Inc. | http://www.silveradosoaring.org/ |
| Soar Hollister | http://www.soarhollister.com/ |
| Williams Soaring Center | http://www.williamssoaring.com/ |
| Valley Soaring Association | http://www.valleysoaring.net |

Editorial - What is PASCO and where should it go?

This is a potentially controversial editorial – in it I am hoping to surface and address some of the issues that have been both driving me and bothering me for several years – concerns about the expectations of PASCO, its role and its limitations, how our role needs to adapt with changing times, what actions we need to put in place, as well as volunteerism and what we should continue to do. I hope to raise issues that will strike a chord with you all and that will generate some interest and dialogue (please use the Region 11 yahoo group for comments and discussion!)

How has soaring changed over the last 10 years?

Over the past 6-7 years we've seen the dot-com bubble burst, glider FBO business plummet and gradually resurface, the dollar plummet against other currencies (particularly regrettable against the Euro). We've seen the closing of Crazy Creek, the ascendance of Williams, Hollister has changed hands, High Country Soaring closed down, Ely Soaring started up, a dramatic increase in jet traffic into Reno and our first jet-glider mid-air. We've seen our national organization raped and pillaged, with a rebuild in progress. We've also seen an increase in the scope of organized soaring at several sites (VSA race series, Hollister league, the Truckee glider races etc). However, with a few exceptions, our soaring businesses and infrastructure continue to limp along at a subsistence level. We have yet to reach critical mass at the bulk of our soaring sites – by critical mass I mean where the size and vitality of the club or FBO is not dependent on a handful of active pilots- and so the operation can scale to a point where costs per launch can be brought down or at least held at a level

that is accessible to more people. Reducing costs is a huge topic – one where a large site with winch launching – if we can figure out how to start, fund and run one, can help significantly.

While we have had significant changes to our local soaring scene, there have been some truly monumental forces affecting us over the longer term. **THE** critical change factor in the last 15 years is communications (the internet) and the explosion of all forms of entertainment but, in particular, home based entertainment. Additionally, because of the time and financial costs of soaring, the age profile of the soaring community is increasing. There seems to be two 'sweet spot' groups of new members: those before marriage, mortgage and children, and those after, and a very noticeable gap in between. This seems the current reality.

The ubiquity of computers and the web, almost non-existent 15 years ago, has changed all aspects of our soaring infrastructure and communications. ALL communications, from the National level (SSA) to the local level (FBO forums) happens instantly and with great ease. This has some pretty serious implications for an organization that was conceived prior to the Internet – both in terms of its position and role relative to the SSA and to the local club and FBO activity.

With these dramatic changes in communication and the Internet, it would seem that old ideas about the need for an interstitial 'regional' organization in between the SSA and the local clubs as a communications link fly out of the window. The SSA communications infrastructure raises the issue of 'headroom' for PASCO - how much is our national organization communication making PASCO's traditional activity redundant? However, the answer (from experience), is almost not at all, as the

SSA is itself an organization of (largely) volunteers which is barely equipped to deal with the same issues PASCO does, albeit at a national level. So what is PASCO's link to the SSA? We've made a point of having our region 11 directors as active members of our PASCO board meetings and we get early reports from the SSA meetings for inclusion in WestWind. The latest SSA web based communications courtesy of Doug Easton, is designed to get directly to members more easily – however our regional communications structure does provide a 'back-channel' to get concerns to our regional representatives, and the SSA website is still 'passive' in the sense that new information is only posted there, with rare global alerts for new information. Thus a forum for regional information such as WestWind and the Region 11 forum remain valuable. Fred LaSor's meeting notes from the most recent SSA board meeting are included in this issue.

More about the SSA - whatever the perception, the SSA is not a 'mother ship' upon which to shift all regional burdens- there are simply insufficient resources at the national level to make this a possibility. In the same way, not all local burdens can be shifted to PASCO to resolve. To expect this is, I think, to misunderstand the nature of PASCO -the volunteer part time nature of **all** our organizations means that there is no 'them' to shift any burden of responsibility of action onto. For truly urgent issues, PASCO provides an organizational umbrella **under which its members can rally**. This is the most important thing anyone needs to understand about PASCO – **it is a community of regional soaring pilots and not a paid-for service organization or a bureaucratic endeavor**.

PASCO History and member contributions

Historically speaking there has been a huge amount of pioneering work that was done by PASCO volunteers. Classically, this consisted of filling the (then) huge gaps in the soaring instruction infrastructure of the period, so that pilots would have an extended learning environment. Think **Wave Camp, Cross Country camp, Regional championships, PASCO League , safety & educational seminars, regional communications through a newsletter and a web site** etc.etc.

As several of these initiative succeeded, they were, in general, taken over by the clubs/sites themselves. The most recent and obvious example of this is the race series at Williams and the Hollister League, growing out the PASCO League - these local series were started as a result of the popularity of the initial PASCO League but for folks who didn't want to drive to other sites to fly occasionally. Also the FBO's saw it as a way to keep their clientele and business captured locally, so the local race series were started. The rest is history. The PASCO league was started 1994 (I ran it for 5 years and introduced MANY pilots to x-c and competitive flying) and lasted nearly 10 years before the local series and lack of new pilots of the 'have-glider-will-travel' variety

made it redundant. The Thermal and X-C camps still run every year at Air Sailing and provide several clubs with a way to introduce new pilots to high desert soaring an a safe way.

So while not obvious on a daily level to the average punter, PASCO's existence has been crucial in originating the activities we enjoy now at many sites and continues to be an invaluable resource for resolving regional issues.

What plan for the future?

I am interested in seeing PASCO evolve and stay viable. The reason for this is simple – PASCO has been improving the soaring infrastructure since its inception by addressing holes in the infrastructure – these will continue to occur and since we can't always address them in advance it makes sense to keep a regional organization in place. To me it would be completely foolhardy to abandon PASCO because the old problems it addressed have been (largely) resolved. Some of the community not aware of PASCO have little historical context and/or are perhaps only interested in their local environment. **PASCO exists for those who see a regional organization (of some kind) as important**. A major issue for PASCO is how should it evolve and adapt to changing conditions in the local and national soaring movement.

There are regional issues that directly affect our pilots and FBO's that local sites are not able, interested or equipped to handle. The most obvious one here is the recent airspace crisis following the mid-air in Reno. There is ABSOLUTELY NO WAY that any of the bickering mob on the newsgroups could have worked effectively to manage the fallout from the mid-air - and yet key PASCO members and leaders working under Karol Hines were able to do this. Without PASCO as an umbrella group around which to rally, this would have been a disaster for Sierra and Region 11 soaring.

So - the charter ITSELF must adapt and change to be viable. **PASCO's charter in the byelaws has recently been changed to include promotion of the sport**. This is a key activity that any FBO's and clubs can benefit from, and, characteristically, is a large hole in the regional soaring infrastructure. Strong FBO's with critical mass do not need promotion so much - but they are by and large the exception and of course one day they might actually need recruiting help once more, It would be foolhardy for any to dismiss the value of a regional organization doing this kind of work.

The newsletter continues to focus on key regional issues and as a source of education and information for its members, as well as recording the history of soaring in the region. As the gaps PASCO used to fill are filled at the local level, it means that PASCO's activities must change. Hence the addition of promotion as well as continuing the retention based activities. And by the way,

airspace issues come under protection of the sport - something people seem to have lost sight of. These will continue to be an issue for us in the future.

The web site is of the highest importance for helping drive public awareness of our sport and where to fly in the area, as a repository for a large number of informative articles and presentations from past seminars as well as West Wind archives - With the vast majority of communication and information flow now taking place over the internet, a really viable, attractive, search engine friendly web site is paramount. PASCO has been looking for a really good webmaster for some time and recently we found a real jewel in Larry Roberts (YE) who has done a fabulous job of renovating our 'good but not great' web site. In addition, we have some plans for pod casting and promotional videos to pull the punters in and make soaring visible and, dare I say it - cool.

In addition, several prominent PASCO members are heavily involved in youth programs and CAP in particular - folks like Bob Semans at Minden, Jim Goetsch, Drew Pearce and Russel Holtz in the past youth program at Hollister Gliding Club, and the NCSA at Byron, who recently have 3 new teenage members. Youth programs are a very strategic activity as many will leave the sport to build their lives and careers and return later - however here deep seeds are sown.

Volunteerism and Promotion

Working at the regional level, particularly towards promotional activities such as air show displays, requires an unusual kind of volunteer - while organizing events at your club returns a significant amount of local camaraderie, and direct personal feedback, working at the regional level with the general public and directing them to the closest or most appropriate club is a different activity, frequently done alone or with one or two others, and with no-one to give you a pat on the back at the end of the day. Its rewards are a little more conceptual and difficult to measure (how many folks actually went to the club you suggested? And how would you know?) However this kind of activity is tremendously important - creating a good perception with the general public means good word of mouth and a greater chance that your contact will trigger interest in others. These activities raise the general knowledge and interest level of all and can really be the positive factor that tips a 'maybe' candidate into a real soaring pilot. Promotion to 'motherlode' groups such as power flying clubs, hang-gliding clubs and model airplane clubs - all aviation oriented - is another way to promote the sport - PASCO is planning on putting together some presentations that members can show locally at these kind of organizations and this is a goal for 2008.

There is also a problem with a regional movement with insufficient active members (with its consequent lack of critical mass) and that there is too small a pool of

volunteer members. So until a healthier membership and activity level is reached, volunteerism, wherever possible, needs not to be a 'single stint' after which one does a quick imitation of Pontius Pilate and declare that ones required contribution is now over. If possible, the approach needed is a cyclic process where new and experienced volunteer members cycle in and out to avoid burnout without losing the benefit of past experience and 'corporate memory'. Please consider this.

Retention Activities

Keeping folks in the sport has been PASCO's traditional center - and these activities continue - seminars, achievement awards, sponsored camps and contests, the capture trophy, the newsletter (hopefully adding to a sense of community) coordinating regional calendars and helping prevent conflicts.

All our key activities can be summarized as follows;

Promote, Protect, Retain, Communicate.

There are levels of these activities which cannot be done without a regional infrastructure, even though the work is done by individual members. The higher goal here is to do what we can to help our regional soaring environment flourish. That is the big over-arching idea. How we add value will change over time as situations evolve.

We're building a community here, and making a difference one member at a time. Thanks for continuing to be a member of PASCO. If you're not already involved, please think of ways you can contribute.

PASCO ACHIEVEMENTS 2007

What have we achieved this year?

Reno Airspace and transponder procedures

This has already been reported in detail in previous WestWinds and represents a huge amount of work by the airspace team, led by Karol Hines. The procedures and successful Reno glider alert proposal area represent a massive forward step public and glider pilot safety and in the relationship we have as a regional soaring movement with the FAA and their representatives.

A big thank you to all the team members ; Karol Hines, Rolf Peterson, Mike Moore, Mike Hoke, Linda Mae Draper, Jim Hamilton, Gary Phillips, (jet pilot at Reno and soaring pilot) Bob Semans, Rick Walters, Peter Deane, Fred LaSor,

Populating the Committee seats

Dave Cunningham - Safety Officer
Larry Roberts - Webmaster
Rick Walters - Competition

Seminars and Banquet

These were a success again this year with a high-zoot presentation by Rick Walters on his experiences in Berlin, Peter Deane speaking about his experiences flying in the French Alps, and a very thought provoking panel on safety organized by Martin Hellman. For the first time in a while we had an accident review thanks to Richard Pearl (article included in this issue) Thanks go to Mike and Nancy Mayo, Bruce Roberts and his girlfriend Natalie, Karol Hines, Cindy Donovan, Hans van Weersch, for banquet organization, Dave Cunningham, Kempton Izuno, Peter Deane, Richard Pearl, Martin Hellman, Rick Walters, Don Brooks, Bob Semans for seminars.

Cross Country Seminars (Berkeley)

Another of Carl Herold's cross country seminar series was held at Berkeley in February – Carl will not be able to run this in 2008 and plans are afoot to create an alternative at the same venue and time frame.

Strategic Planning Meeting

This was held at Peter Deane's house with a quorum of PASCO board members and interested members. Results were reported earlier this year in WestWind. The results were reviews at the seminars and lively discussion resulted in recruiting our new webmaster and a pending improvement to our web site as a promotional tool for soaring.

WestWind

4 issues have been provided this year, with much appreciated assistance from Hans Van Weersch for printing, labeling and postage

Web Site upgrade

Larry Roberts has done a terrific job of completely re-writing all the code in our web site so that it is now modular, standardized and maintainable. In addition its new structure will support much easier updating when our second wave of improvements follow.

Region 11 Championships at Minden

Once again Karol Hines came to the rescue, with help from Rick Walters and others to put on a successful regional championships at Minden. Results were reported last issue.

Excellent financial condition

With the advent of our increased electronic WestWind distribution, our bank balance has increased steadily to the point where we now have some useful funds to apply to our 2008 activities. The board will be determining what these will be and what our spending

budget for our promotional and retention activities will be for the coming year.

PASCO Site Champions

We have been recruiting site champions to increase awareness of PASCO at the various clubs and FBO's

PASCO Board Meeting Minutes Oct 2007

Meeting called to order at 7:08

Board members attending:

Mike Mayo, Peter Deane, Marc Ramsey, Hans Van Weersch, Karol Hines

Guests attending:

Jay McDaniel, Cindy Donovan

Treasurers Report

Hans provided excel spreadsheet. Checking 17.5k, scholarship 8k, a few outstanding bills to be paid.

Banquet and Seminar

Dave Cunningham has Rick Walters, Kempton Izuno, Peter Dean, Richard Perl, and Kenny Price as speakers, along with a panel discussion led by Martin Hellman. Karol suggests having Don Brooks come to discuss experiences with new Reno procedures this summer. Williams and Hollister will also be having traffic problems in the next few years. Karol will attempt to get Don Brooks, if not available, will call Dave to see if someone from Sacramento Tracon can come down.

Mike reports lunch and dinner catering set up. No speaker arranged for banquet.

Peter will arrange for emailing itinerary/invitation to membership.

Awards

Cindy reports three regional contest awards, applications for longest distance and an out and return. No longest Silver yet. No service awards yet. Cindy is soliciting nominations, No Les Arnold award nominations. Peter suggests asking Peter Kelly to talk a bit about the PASCO egg. No Region 11 records this year. Ramy is handling the Sawyer award, needs to be contacted.

Communications

WestWind went out. Next issue will go out early December. Nothing has happened with website, Brian has not been responding to emails. Need to find someone else to help out.

Safety

Dave has sent out requests for site champions at Avenal, Hawaii, and (one other). He also reported Reno

procedures presented to Air Sailing, Truckee, Minden. Information printed in WestWind, presentation available on Yahoo R11 group. Dave asks for input on other means of publicizing, perhaps Soaring magazine? Still plans to add Safety tab to website, but it hasn't happened yet. Safety article will be solicited from BASA for next issue of WestWind.

Regional Directors

Jay has agreed to continue for another term. Reports SSA finances are looking pretty good, may avoid additional fines and penalties, but not confirmed.

Definition of Role of PASCO Directors

Nothing has been done since summer.

Strategic Plan

We don't have one, yet. We need a strategy we can articulate to the membership, and inspire some more volunteerism. Sept 22 meeting did not happen, was intended to distill ideas from previous planning session down to some practical proposals. Perhaps this can be discussed in a panel session at the seminar.

Next Meeting

Wed Nov 7 at 7pm
Meeting adjourned at 8:30

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| <i>Gliners Available</i> | <i>Hourly</i> | <i>*Daily</i> <small>Mar.-Sept.</small> | NEW FOR 2007: |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|--|---|
| Discus B | \$57 | \$250 | Soar Minden will offer XC training in Grob 103's this summer. Book early to guarantee a place. |
| LS-4 | \$48 | \$215 | |
| LS-3A | \$48 | \$215 | Newly graded, soon-to-be paved (we hope) tiedown on east side – with dry camping permitted. Glider east side tiedowns \$8/ day assembled, \$52/ month. Trailer tiedowns \$18/month. |
| Mini Nimbus B | \$40 | \$190 | |
| 4-Grob 103 Acros | \$60 | \$240 | |
| 2-Grob 102s | \$40 | \$190 | |

* Daily rate includes unlimited use of glider, O₂, Barograph, Parachute & 1st tow up to 3000 ft tow.

Soaring Society of America, Board of Directors mid-year meeting, Elmira, N.Y. September 29-30, 2007

The Soaring Society's Board of Directors met in Elmira N.Y. this past weekend. I attended as the Director from this region (11) and I wanted to report on that meeting while it is still fresh in my mind. You will be seeing more complete reporting in Soaring magazine and SSA's e-news.

First of all, this was my first visit to Elmira, home of Schweizer Company, Harris Hill Soaring Corporation and the National Soaring Museum, which was celebrating a major anniversary milestone by hosting the Barnaby Lecture. I attended the lecture to hear Einar Enevoldson talk about the Perlan high altitude project. You will recall that Einar and Steve Fossett set the

absolute altitude soaring record in Argentina earlier this year with a flight to 50,000+ feet, and Einar gave a fascinating illustrated presentation about that flight and the planning for it. Before the banquet began a senior gentleman I didn't recognize shuffled over and asked if he could join us at our table. When we welcomed him, he introduced himself – Bill Schweizer. Talk about history! I took a brief flight in a K-21, about 10 miles out and back on a day with cloud streets stretching for miles in every direction. Pretty country, but weak thermals compared to ours.

Lots of time was spent at this board meeting talking about the report of the Future Restructuring Task Force and the efforts to get the SSA back on a sound financial footing following the embezzlement that was discovered a little over a year ago. The good news is that a little over one year after the theft was discovered the SSA is

current on its debts and has money in the bank. The bad news is that the IRS is still asking us to pay penalties and interest on the taxes that were paid late, and that matter is still before a court where we are asking for relief as the delinquency was the result of a criminal employee who has been sacked and charged with embezzling. We had expected a judgement on this by now, but it is still pending.

Another reason not to celebrate the financial news is that we are solvent because SSA has not replaced its two most senior employees so there has been a substantial savings in the salary account, and donations to the society are running at an all-time high. We like plentiful donations, but they don't reflect business as usual so we cannot count on a continuation of this situation. In any case, it was decided NOT to raise dues at this time, something that had been recommended.

Much Board discussion addressed the question of replacing Executive Director Dennis Wright, who resigned last year following allegations of embezzling by Chief Financial Officer Alan Gleason. For a variety of reasons, the Board ultimately decided not to fill this position at this time. Instead, the Executive Committee was authorized to offer the position of Office Manager (I might have that title wrong) to Denise Layton, with an increased focus on office management and an increased salary. At the same time, the Executive Committee was authorized to recruit a managing editor for Soaring Magazine to relieve Denise of that responsibility.

The Board also elected the following to the Executive Committee: Chair: Dianne Black-Nixon

Vice-chairs: Phil Umphres, John Dezzutti, Al Tyler, Cindy Brickner, Treasurer: Phil Umphres, Secretary: Richard Kellerman

Those of you who remember the minutes from last September's BOD meeting will recall that the entire Executive Committee offered to step down as a gesture to having a new broom sweep clean. Several of the members listed above, notably Dianne Nixon-Black and Phil Umphres, are holdovers from the previous Executive Committee. This was a deliberate decision by the BOD to preserve some corporate memory.

The Board of Directors also considered recommendations of the Task Force to improve operations, increase transparency, build membership, and generally make the society better able to grow and represent soaring. One decision that dates from the BOD meeting a year ago and was reaffirmed this meeting was to go to an every-other-year convention schedule. The 2008 convention in Albuquerque will be followed by one in 2010, venue to be announced.

Complete notes will be published by the SSA in the coming month, and will be available on the web site. If you have specific questions, call me (775) 790-4314 or

send me an email and I'll try to answer them. If you will visit the SSA web site you will find links to other reports, the three most timely of which are the addresses for:

The budget and finance committee ==
<http://www.ssa.org/myhome.asp?mbr=6802004575>

The Future Restructuring Task Force home page ==
<http://www.ssa.org/myhome.asp?mbr=3192254900>

Fred also reminds us that thanks to Doug Easton, the financials are now posted on the SSA website. SSA members can now access the financial statements by logging on and either reading the news blog or by going directly to the Budget and Finance Committee homepage.

ACCIDENT REVIEW – 2007 - WESTERN REGION

(The basis for this article was a presentation by Richard Pearl at the November 2007 PASCO Safety Seminar).

There is a saying in the accident business that "There are no new causes of aircraft accidents, just new people making the same mistakes."

Historical data from all types of aircraft accidents and incidents indicates that only 5% of aircraft bending is caused by system errors or malfunctions, while 95% are related to human errors. That 95% can in turn be traced to "complacency, proficiency/currency, check list/distractions. The FAA estimates that (broadly speaking) for every accident there are 30 incidents, 300 hazardous conditions, and 1,000 unreported "events." Let's first review some definitions from the FAR's:

- ✚ *Accident* – "An occurrence...in which any person suffers death or serious injury, or in which the aircraft receives substantial damage." Substantial damage relates to damage which adversely affects structural strength, performance, or flight characteristics and would normally require major repairs or replacement of the affected component.
- ✚ *Incident* – "An occurrence other than an accident which affects or could affect the safety of operations."

Accidents and incidents are reported to the FAA.

To the above definitions, I'm going to add *Events*, which falls outside the above definitions, are not reported, but entail minor equipment bending or "but for the grace of God" situations that could have resulted in an accident or incident. Events are the folk lore of pilots, and there are more of them than we care to imagine.

The SSA accident reporting data has been depressingly consistent over the years, **The majority of the destruction has occurred in the landing phase of flight (60%)**, followed by in flight (15%) and ground situations (15%), then take off and tow situations (10%). Extracting NTSB country-wide glider accidents from 2006 and 2007 revealed 71 accidents and seven fatalities. The California/Nevada region had 24 accidents and one fatality. It would be nice to have the number of launch data to compare accidents to, but that is not available. I do recall, however, an article in West Wind several years ago that argued that – contrary to conventional wisdom and what we frequently tell people - the trip to the airport is NOT more dangerous than flight itself (hopefully my wife isn't reading this).

Use of Mode C Transponders

Reno, Nevada

The potential conflict between gliders and commercial air traffic near Reno has increased with the growth of commercial jet traffic into Reno-Tahoe Airport (RNO) during the past few years. PASCO emphasizes that glider pilots operating in the Reno area must be alert for all air traffic arriving and departing RNO.

Transponder signals are received by Traffic Collision Avoidance Systems (TCAS) on board commercial aircraft as well as by Air Traffic Control (ATC) Radar. By Air Traffic Control (ATC) Letter of Agreement, gliders in the Reno area can transmit the 0440 transponder code in the blind, without establishing radio contact with Reno Approach Control.

PASCO recommends that gliders operating cross country, within 50 NM of Reno-Tahoe Airport, install and use a Mode C altitude encoding transponder.

A new page has been added to the Minden Soaring Club Web site: <http://www.mindensoaringclub.org/>. Look under the WELCOME page for a new section for those soaring out of Truckee, Minden, or Air Sailing. Please study this material on safe soaring within the Reno ATC area.

I retrieved NTSB data for the last 12 months for the PASCO Safety Seminar, and obtained "Events" that occurred in at local FBO operations. I appreciate each operator's forthrightness. All accidents, incidents and events were tabulated and are presented later in this article. The goal was to put each situation into not only the phase of flight, but to see whether there were any correlations that could be made by "inferring" the probable cause, which were grouped into: complacency, proficiency/currency, and rushed checklist/distractions. It was understood that this approach is somewhat akin to "divining" since we were analyzing only cold NTSB reports or reports from the FBO's. I also recognize that there is usually not just one reason for an

accident/incident/event, and that is the reason the literature talks about an "accident chain of events, where breaking any one link could have prevented an event."

The intention during my PASCO presentation was to review each case and see whether we – as a group – could identify the probable cause. This proved harder to do than envisioned as some very thought-provoking discussion ensued and we never really had an opportunity to get far down the list. This article is intended for your personal evaluation. I have my own opinions on probable causes which I will share later in this article.

For the NTSB situations, I listed the location, type of aircraft, what happened, and the phase of flight. For the FBO-reported situations I listed only what happened and the phase of flight. I stratified landing situations into landing at an airport and an off field landing. You can access the NTSB reports from their web site for further information.

The spreadsheet contains 29 situations. I excluded the single fatality as the only known fact was the impact into Boundary Peak Mountain; weather was apparently not an issue. All other situations could be detailed by the pilot's report or knowledgeable ground observers. Of the 29 situations, 69% were in the landing phase with 52% pts. in situations at the airport and 17 % pts. off field. Take off situations accounted for 24% and ground situations accounted for 7%. This data isn't all that much different from the national data.

I've been flying for close to 30 years, been an instructor for 20 years, have personally seen way too many accidents/incidents/events, and personally known four pilots who were killed in gliders. My reading of the tea leaves - and you need to read the full NTSB reports to get the full flavor of each accident/incident - is that we may not be placing enough emphasis on Complacency. Complacency, in fact, could be our Achilles Heel (a fatal weakness in spite of overall strength). Complacency is based on past success. It encourages taking things for granted. Perhaps most telling, it seems to affect those with the greatest experience. In a NTSB landing accident report of an ASW 27 in which the tail boom broke off, the pilot "noted that this was an uneventful day, which could lull one into not paying full attention to all phases of flight..."

Complacency affects all levels of pilots. I once allowed a launch on a training flight (after a long day of instructing) without verifying that the spoilers were closed. On initial tow I only noticed that the rate of climb was somewhat substandard. The tow pilot gave a violent wave off when we turned for the downwind leg and I immediately released. I did notice the sink rate was much higher than normal for a L-13. On a VERY short final the student asked "shouldn't we put in the spoilers?" The tow pilot had a few concise words with me afterward.

Complacency can occur at any time: on the ground, during the take off and tow, in flight, and during the approach to and actual landing. It is easily coupled with rushed or non-use of checklists (how else to explain taking off with open spoilers, or canopies opening on tow). I think, in the main, we fall victim to a degree of overconfidence. It's the "been there, done that" syndrome.

Look at the following table. Try and place yourself into the cockpits and "read the tea leaves" for yourself. Perhaps assign a primary value for the most likely probable cause, and a lower value for the secondary cause. Add up the scores.

Now, we all understand that we cannot eliminate accidents/incidents/events, nor can we Fly Safe! We can, however, fly *safely*, which primarily means keeping current, maintaining high standards, and planning ahead. We can never afford to get complacent in ANY phase of flight. What the philosopher George Santayana said about history and politics is fully applicable to flying: "Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it." Let's not be among those "new people making the same mistakes."

(Richard is a CFI-G with Northern California Soaring Association. He is currently the President of Soar Truckee, Inc.)

| WHERE | A/C | WHAT | Phase of Flight |
|------------------------------------|-------------|---|---------------------|
| NTSB (Jan 06 thru Sept. 07) | | | |
| Truckee | G-102 | Wind gust; hard landing; broke gear | Landing - airport |
| Truckee | Ventus | X-C flight; minor injury; a/c totaled; heavy sink; impacted terrain @ airport | Landing - airport |
| Minden | G-102 | Heavy sink in pattern area; glider on runway; landed off field | Landing - airport |
| Llano | L-13 | L-13 impacted stationary DG 505 on adjacent runway after touchdown. | Landing - airport |
| Williams | ASW - 27 | Sink in pattern; landed short | Landing - airport |
| Tucson, AZ | G 103 | PIO; tail section separated | Landing - airport |
| Llano | G103 | Hard land; tail separated; student pilot | Landing - airport |
| Heber | Std. Cirrus | Stall/spin; spoilers open; on approach | Landing - airport |
| Hemet | L-13 | Sink in pattern; collided with fence; flaps deployed; first solo since L-13 checkout | Landing - airport |
| Minden | G 103 | landing too long...4th solo fit; encountered heavy sink - too slow and stalled short of | Landing - airport |
| Minden | Nimbus 3DM | Local flight; off field landing near airport; ran into ditch; minor injury | Landing - off field |
| Lake Ellsinore | SGS 1-26 | Heavy sink on R-T-B; off field landing | Landing - off field |
| Minden | G 103 | Ground loop during off field landing; approaching storm | Landing - off field |
| Williams | ASW 24 | Off field landing short of airport; heavy damage | landing - off field |
| Minden | G103 | Spoilers open on take off. Glider collided with telephone pole after an attempted RTB from approx. 100 ft AGL position. CFGI in command | Take- Off |

LOCALLY REPORTED EVENTS

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Sailplane hit runway marker during ground movement; high wind conditions | Ground ops |
| Ground crew knocked down by wing during launch | Ground ops |
| Low pattern approach (2) during Thermal Camp | Landing - airport |
| Down wind landing...not required; disoriented visiting pilot | Landing - airport |
| Gear up landing (2) | Landing - airport |
| Hit runway taxi light; CFGP-piloted commercial ride flight | Landing - airport |
| Wing hit runway marker on roll out | Landing - airport |
| Off field Landing; poor site selection | Landing - off field |
| Spoilers open on take off; tow pilot wave-off; no damage; CFGP error | Take Off |
| Canopy opened on take off; wild aero tow | Take Off |
| Motor glider on take off interfered w/ landing power traffic | Take Off |
| Canopy opened on take off | Take Off |
| Aborted take off due to opposite landing traffic | Take off |
| Un-Latched canopies caught by wing runner prior to launch | Take Off |



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NCSA Can Also Make Dreams Come True. by Sebastien Belanger

I have always been attracted to aviation. My dad was a recreational aviator so it is no surprise I have always associated airplanes with good times. Although I grew up around airplanes, I never had the ambition to start flying on my own. That was until I was introduced to sailplanes in 1995. Being an avid sailor and airplane enthusiast, I immediately fell in love with soaring, which represented in a way the ultimate fusion between flying and sailing. Gliders, with their sleek aerodynamic profiles, sporty cockpits, and clean instrument panels did not intimidate me as much as their noisy and complex propeller-driven cousins. I flew with the Montreal Soaring Council for a whole summer, and almost got ready for a check ride but winter beat me to the punch. The gliders were hangared, and I did not fly again for 10 years.



I missed soaring very much. In fact for almost a decade, I thought about getting back into soaring at least once a month, but never did. Let's face it; there are a lot of barriers to entry into this sport: costs, time consumption, scarcity, etc., etc. After ten years of procrastination, with a little more time at hand, I finally researched soaring clubs in the Bay Area. I quickly realized that even though the population density is high, the weather allows for year round flying, and that the topography is conducive to soaring, there are very few options available for prospective sailplane pilots. After a bit of research, I contacted an experienced Bay Area glider pilot who directed me toward NCSA. A few weeks later, I was training again and slowly getting ready to solo a sailplane again.

I want to share my "learning to fly gliders at NCSA" experience with WestWind readers for two reasons. First, because basic training, which is something NCSA takes very seriously, is the backbone of the sport. Unfortunately, clubs that provide basic training often do not get proper recognition for their ongoing contribution to the sport. Second, because I procrastinated for ten years before flying again, that cost me ten years of enjoyment (and experience) at the controls of a sailplane. Hopefully, this little timeline will inspire some to go ahead and get signed-up. It was a lot of work to get the rating, but it also proved to be fun and rewarding. If I have done it, everyone with a minimum of interest and dedication can do it too.

My first day at NCSA: The airport was on fire !

I first visited NCSA in late June 2005, the day a brush fire threaten to run over Byron airport. I did not fly on that day, but it gave me a chance to look closely at the club's fleet. NCSA operates two shiny (aluminum) Czech-built 2-seater trainer gliders called Blaniks. This immediately signals the club's focus on primary training, perfect! They also operate



a single seater aluminium trainer (Schweizer 1-26), and three composite gliders for intermediary training. The nice people, the equipment, the proximity to the city (45 minute drive from the Bay Bridge), the dry climate, and the number of active instructors were all factors that contributed to my decision to join NCSA.

My first few flights: Byron is a real airport !

As happy as I was to be flying again, one thing bothered me about flying at NCSA: Byron airport. It took me a while to appreciate its concrete runways and taxiways on which we need to tow the club gliders back and forth.

It was quite a change from the glider-only 500-foot wide grass runways of the Montreal Soaring Counsel where we did not use radios simply because we did not need them. I quickly realized that Byron was a real airport with real traffic; and lots of it. All of a sudden, I am sharing airspace with King Airs and Cessna Citations. As much as I did not appreciate Byron at first, I became thankful for having the chance to learn to fly in such environment. Flying in those circumstances helped me with ground handling, situation awareness, radio skills, aeronautical decision-making,

approach planning, and energy management. Byron also has two intersecting runways so there are often opportunities to practice crosswind landings and takeoffs. I eventually soloed the Blaniks and the Schweizer 1-26.

Getting ready for the check ride: Don't my instructors have day jobs ? After enjoying my solo privileges for a while, I started to feel like bringing friends along for a ride. Well, this is easier said than done. Because it became clear to me that NCSA instructors were determined to have me score the highest mark ever recorded for an FAA written and check ride. Well that did not happen, but let me tell you that I felt very ready once they finally allowed me to take the test. NCSA instructors do not ask for any compensation for ground school, but if they did, they'd all be rich. We met for hours at a time going over airspace rules, VFR minimums, FARs, navigation, etc. A couple of instructors even met with me after work on a weekday and grilled me for three hours non-stop in an East Bay restaurant to help me prepare. I have never been so ready to take a test in my whole life. No need to tell you that the check ride went very well. Another interesting anecdote is that the club operated on a weekday so that I could take the test in a calm environment, and many showed-up to help. This is quite remarkable. In February 2006, I officially became a glider pilot. But as I quickly realized, this was just the beginning.

Transition to composite airframes: What do you mean by low energy ? Most everyone gets into soaring with the dream of flying fancy fiberglass gliders. Well, the reality is that depending on what club/school you are flying with, this can take a while. At NCSA, students get to train in Grob 103s once they obtain their pilot certificate. Besides being a great incentive for me to get the pilot rating, it also allowed me to become very comfortable flying the Blanik, which definitely helped when I flew with the examiner. Personally, I found the transition to fiberglass to be challenging, as I had developed a fly-on-the-runway landing technique that worked very well in the Blanik but not so well in the pitch-sensitive Grob. NCSA is quite serious about continuous learning, so I earned my first level Wing badge before I had received my certificate by mail. On my first solo fiberglass sailplane flight, I also encountered my first wave. The wave, which was clearly marked by a rotor cloud, propelled me 10,000ft right above the airport. I can't describe the feeling I had. This was ecstasy! A mixture of joy, amazement, and feeling of accomplishment. It was April 8, 2006. Why did I wait ten years?



Mountain Flying: Are you sure the variometer is working properly ?

My instructors encouraged me to attend the 2006 Thermalling Camp at Air Sailing. NCSA was kind enough to allow me to take a Blanik to the mountains for a week. We decided to tow the glider there, so I ended-up flying a 2-hour tow from Byron to Air Sailing in tandem with an experienced instructor sitting in the front seat. This was my first landing and approach outside of Byron and first attempt from the back seat. That moment made me realize how effective my training had been. I navigated properly, released at the right location, made a nice approach and landed the glider safely. That same day, we also flew a Grob 103 from Minden to Byron. Flying at Air Sailing for a week was a great experience. I have to admit to being quite uncomfortable the first time our tow pilot flew along the Dogskin ridge. But I quickly got the hang of it. It took me a few days to get comfortable with the strength of the lift, sink, and turbulence found in the mountains. I was flying with another club member during the camp; we both came out of the experience as much improved pilots. I went back to Air Sailing a couple of times and enjoyed our Blanik with my wife and we had a blast. A few weeks later, I got a checkout at Truckee. I was able to enjoy soaring in the Truckee valley 3 or 4 times last summer. My wife came a couple of times and I also had a few friends hop in for a ride. By the end of the summer (in about a year of flying), I had about 80 hours under my belt.



the Truckee valley 3 or 4 times last summer. My wife came a couple of times and I also had a few friends hop in for a ride. By the end of the summer (in about a year of flying), I had about 80 hours under my belt.

Current Status and Next Steps: Now that I can land, let's learn how to fly...

I have since then checked-out on the club's single seat Grob 102. Sweet! I am all signed up and looking forward to attend Air Sailing's 2007 Cross-Country camp. The days get pretty short during Fall and Winter so I decided to start flying power as a complement (not a substitute) to soaring. Holding a glider rating made the transition to single engines a breeze, but I am learning a lot flying power, which will make me a much better pilot in general. I am now expecting to take the single engine check ride in early March, just in time for Spring and those nice post frontal days at Byron. Everywhere around the world, the grass is always greener on the neighbor's lawn, but at Byron the grass is always greener in Spring! See you out there.

Thanks to NCSA for getting me this far, Sebastien



The October Egg (by Roy Moeller) (The Egg is PASCO's inter-club Capture Trophy....Ed)

On Thursday Ramy Yanetz suggested that the following day might be exceptional and was trying to flush some birds into the air. Shannon Madsen, Mike Mayo and Bill Brown signed up right away but I wanted to check the forecast first. It looked good, but based on satellite images, a little drier than the media forecasters were touting. Distracted by last minute issues at work, I neglected to notify the group that I would also be coming out.

The next morning was overcast but calm in the east bay but with broken heavy clouds to the east. Cloud cover was rapidly changing by the time I arrived at the field. I don't remember why but it seemed to take forever to get ready to launch. Eventually, just before noon we were ready, Shannon taking off first and releasing at 2000. I followed, imprudently getting off at 1400 in what seemed a great thermal. That cost me about 20 minutes of milling around the pattern before I blundered into some real lift. I watched Ramy take off in the meantime. That was last time I saw him until he landed. I was hoping that the lift would be good to the east, enabling a flight down the east side of the valley but I soon abandoned that dream struggling to get above 4000 under unpredictable clouds near Stockton.

Ramy had apparently started off to the north and it sounded like Shannon was heading that direction, reporting 4500 near Brentwood. Returning to Discovery Bay, north now looked much better so I followed the leaders. Turning slightly west at Rio Vista and on to Nut Tree the lift was well marked and strong. My lowest point on this leg was 3000 at Nut Tree. Very heavy cloud cover extended over the length of the ridge east of L Berryessa so a track east of the ridge seemed

more comfortable. Enroute, there had been a lot of chatter about who was going for the Egg. Up to this point I just entertaining the thought but finally I concluded that since conditions were so good, it would be a shame to pass it up. Not having been this far north, I started to consult the sectional. This entailed considerable bouts of folding, re-folding, PIO's and blue words. As it turned out, only the heading and distance were useful at this point, since Williams was too far to make out any landmarks.

My track took me over a range of low hills to south of Williams, gradually losing altitude. Near the north end of this range, I was down to 2000 and still hadn't identified which town was the target. A fellow pilot informed me that the town near the orchards was Arbuckle, not Williams. The orchards were quite numerous, interspersed with what appeared to be cleared fields. These "fields" were of particular interest as I was getting quite low. These later turned out to be very unfriendly vineyards.

Eventually, finding some lift that would allow a final glide to the next town I pressed on. Increasingly more uncomfortable about the distance to my intended touchdown point, I re-consulted the now mangled sectional. Williams lies just south of the point where the railroad and interstate 5 turns due north and it was now apparent that I was heading for the next town up the road, Maxwell. Tuning back to Williams, I was now desperately searching for the field. Fortunately, a local pilot heard my queries and helped out. Even at 1200ft the strip was difficult to see.

After an uneventful landing, one of the tow pilots helped move the ship clear of the runway. After hurriedly exiting, I made haste to empty my personal ballast tank. It is most unwise to consume large quantities of coffee before a long flight. Relieved of several worries I was now inclined to relax, wander about and check out operation. Rex, however, strode out and handed me the

Egg. Explaining the forms and logbook, he helped me push out to the line where a waiting tow plane had magically appeared! It was around 3 o'clock and I should have been thinking of the return flight. The tow turned out to be quite interesting. Either the tow pilot managed to stay in lift during the straight out climb towards the ridge or they had filled the Pawnee with rocket fuel. The vario stayed pegged most of time. Density altitude may have played some part, but whatever the reason the tow to 4000 was exhilarating and short. The rapid ascent enabled me to find a good thermal just south of the field. Where was it earlier when I needed it?

The return track retraced the one taken north but with much better conditions. Cloud bases were over 8,000 with the vario frequently pegged. With a slight tailwind, progress was rapid. It still seemed better to go east of the main build up looming over the ridge. A slow thermal at 4000 between Dixon and Nut Tree got enough altitude to arrive at Rio Vista. It was here that I saw the only other glider enroute. Mike Mayo in E5 pulled in 2000ft below, but couldn't connect with the lift. Arriving a little earlier and higher, I was able to reach the booming street spanning the delta which Ramy just reported leaving. The final glide to Byron was over quickly.

Since it looked like only Ramy and myself were the only ones with Byron made, I landed at around 5pm and waited for Ramy, who was relaying messages. Shannon had landed at Tracy and Mike eventually at Rio Vista, so we decided to tie down the gliders instead of de-rigging, in order to speed up the retrieves. Shortly, light rain and the setting sun resulted in a rainbow which Ramy, with his cell phone camera, took several shots of it and the egg being held triumphantly aloft.

GLIDERPALOOZA at PANOCHE (Quest Richlife) –photos by Buzz Graves.

Just a quick note to thank everybody who came out to the Gliderpalooza this past weekend. You all helped make it a success. Although Sunday was a bit busier than Saturday, it's my hope that everybody who came out either day had a great time. Thanks go to Ziggy, who allowed us to use the airstrip again this year, and Drew Pearce for making all the phone calls and arrangements to get permission. Also, thanks to Drew for the use of his motorhome as a mobile base of operations.

Thanks to Joy Pierce for handling the billing materials and writing up the receipts, and for offering many shuttle rides to and from Panoche on Sunday and even Monday. Thanks to Larry and his wife at the Panoche Inn who went out of their way to cook us a great BBQ, and for all the other small things they do for us all the time. Thanks to Jim Stephens for the use of one of his

pickup trucks so we'd have a way to transport our fuel tank to and from Panoche.



Thanks to Harry Fox for all of his great work in organizing the use of all the BASA ships and BASA pilots, as well as his willingness to use his Citabria for shuttling people back and forth between Panoche and Hollister. Thanks to Haven Rich for helping me get the fuel tank mounted in the pickup truck, and for all of his help in dealing with multiple problems that arose on the ground at Panoche.



Thanks to Eric Rupp for giving the initial report on the condition of the runway there on Saturday after the heavy rains on Friday.

Thanks to Ramy Yanetz for taking on the responsibility of organizing the private owners, both on the ground and in the air, during both days. Thanks to Andrew Klofas, Ruth Cook, and Jeffrey Hazlegrove for being enthusiastic helpers during all the line operations, ground handling, and launches, so that everything went as smoothly as possible. Thanks also to everyone else who helped the line operations, as all of your help really made things run smoothly and efficiently. Thanks to the tow pilots, and everyone who took a tow(s) for making it

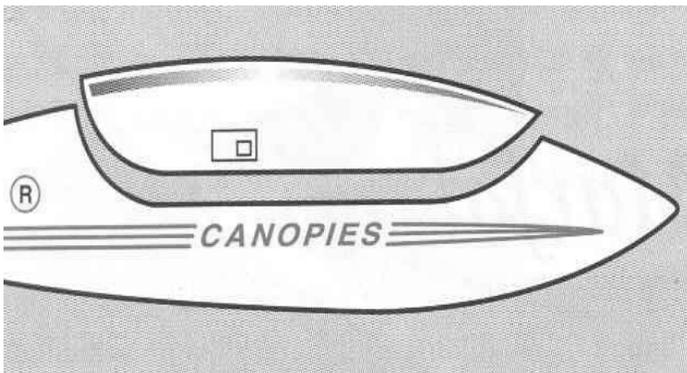
a safe and fun experience for all involved. If I've missed anyone, I'm sorry, but just consider yourself thanked for any and all contributions you made to Gliderpalooza, 2007

For those of you out there who didn't get a chance to come and fly at Panoche International, we hope to see you when we do it again next year.



Some of us who were at Panoche on Saturday went over and camped at Mercy Hot Springs, and this was an excellent place to stay for the night. The individual sized, outside hot tubs, which are on a wooden deck under a very starry night sky, are not to be missed. For those of you wishing to come out next year, I highly recommend staying at Mercy.

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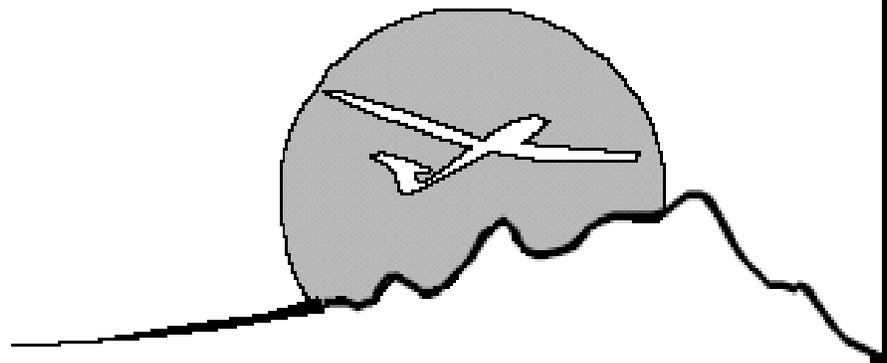
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| Final Standing | | | | Final Score | Legs Completed |
|----------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Position | Call Sign | Pilot | Glider type | | |
| 1 | 5S | Ed Salkeld | ASH-26 | 74 | |
| 2 | C2 | Sergio Colacevich | Discus | 46 | |
| 3 | 2T | Peter Deane | LS-8 | 34 | |
| 4 | TG | Ramy Yanetz | LS-4 | 33 | |
| 5 | F8 | Bill Gawthrop | ASH-26 | -3 | |
| 6 | U2 | Darren Braun | Jantar Std | | 10 |
| 7 | 5K | Jim Alton | Lak-17 | | 10 |
| 8 | L8 | Yuliy Gerchicov | DG-800 | | 7 |
| 9 | 14B | Bruce Roberts | ASW-20 | | 6 |
| 10 | 1A | Tony Gaetcher | LS-8 | | 6 |
| 11 | L6 | Jon Fitch | LS-6 | | 5 |
| 12 | 1CH | Matt Gillis | DG-1000 | | 4 |
| 13 | PK | Paul Kellas | Libelle Std | | 1 |

RIDGE SOARING

(Published with permission from the Great Western Soaring School at Crystallaire in the Mojave desert. www.greatwesternsoaring.com Check it out, it is packed with excellent information. This is an excellent article and one very important for safer flying in the mountains.. Ed.)

Ridge soaring is an interesting study in contrasts. Windward slopes offer lift that is easy to work, but can also be quite hazardous. The flow of air may be glassy smooth, or contain turbulence that is at times prohibitive. It might make cross-country flights possible for even the least experienced of pilots in low performance gliders, but usually requires operating

extensively in very close proximity to the earth - in some places only moments from landing if a situation is not handled properly. Also, experience in soaring on only one type of slope could engender a confidence that is unwarranted when facing a very different set of circumstances elsewhere. Therefore, even a seasoned pilot is wise to procure a local checkout before soaring on hills of an unfamiliar nature.

While at the basic level there seems little to it (simply fly parallel to the slope and be sure not to hit anything), ridge soaring at its best actually presents as many subtleties, and will reward finesse every bit as much as thermal soaring. The great advantage is that it's often possible for even a beginner to stay aloft indefinitely and advance more quickly through the learning

process, whereas one small mistake is usually all it takes to shoot down the same beginner in thermal conditions.

READING THE TERRAIN

A number of different tactics may be used in ridge soaring. The most appropriate one for a given circumstance is dictated by the specific type of hill (its shape and size), and the idiosyncrasies of the resulting airflow. Perhaps the simplest way to analyze sloping ground for its usefulness in ridge soaring is to distinguish between sections of terrain that act as COLLECTORS and/or DIVIDERS. Slopes and bowls that more or less directly face the wind collect it and concentrate any available lift. But slopes angled away from the wind, or protrusions into it, tend to deflect or divide the flow, either ruining lift or focusing it elsewhere. Which parts of a mountain function in which way depends upon the existing conditions (primarily wind strength and direction, but also including other interrelated factors). Such relationships constantly shift with changes in the weather and sun angle.

Even a concave feature that collects and concentrates wind from a broad area may not always produce good lift. Whether it's a shallow indentation or a spectacular canyon, change in wind or sun angle can transform it from a terrific lift source to a deadly sinkhole - or the reverse - in less than an hour. A convex feature can be even more unpredictable. It may tend to divide wind flow, but if wide enough and oriented properly, might itself act as an individual ridge or thermal trigger. Depending on the vagaries of other surrounding influences, a particular mountainside could even switch back and forth from one effect to the other every few minutes.

As a slope changes shape beneath the onrushing sailplane, adjustments must be made on a moment-by-moment basis. For instance, even a small protrusion lying upwind, lower than the one you are working, may interrupt the lift a mile or more downwind. If you come upon such a disturbance and have enough altitude or speed to sail across it, you can probably expect a return of soarable lift just beyond. But what if it doesn't work that way? Some hills offer lift at such low altitudes that a loss of three or four hundred feet means landing out, and if so, the critical decision whether to continue on or turn back must be made very quickly. Experience will help in anticipating how a given wind might flow over variations in the surface, but, whatever your level of expertise, it is important to constantly study the route ahead and use imagination to interpret whatever information is available before flying close to high terrain.

It is usually best to attack the nearest or highest point within reach first, and then explore progressively lower areas as you descend in search of lift. A high, steep

slope may sometimes provide good lift well below the crest, making it possible to arrive there low and gradually climb the hill, but it's not always that easy.

When you do find yourself working lift below the top of a hill, do not assume that you'll be able to maintain one altitude indefinitely. If instead you begin to lose altitude, the slope encroaching from below will quickly shrink your usable airspace. So remember this general rule: the closer you are to terrain that extends above you, the more important it is to either climb or get away.

Also, when ridge soaring in convective conditions expect strong, possibly violent sink at any time, usually tending to roll you toward the nearby mountain. If you're too close to steep terrain without sufficient speed or room to dive away, a thermal or rotor just upwind can kill you in seconds! Always carry extra speed whenever you're very near or moving toward the terrain, and keep ample room on the windward side for diving away.

Pilots unfamiliar with slope soaring may be tempted to fly directly over the crest of a hill, and this can quickly prove to be very hazardous. If the wind is flowing from only one direction, then the crest will be where that flow levels out and starts back down; unless you find a thermal, there may be no lift over the summit itself! Meanwhile, a sailplane aligned parallel to the slope (and more or less perpendicular to the wind) will drift steadily downwind across the top, and when the sink finally grabs its downwind wing there may be no choice but to turn the wrong way, downwind, into deepening sink. Even worse, many ridge tops are so broad and flat that gliding clear across them in this situation is impossible...

However, if a ridge has wind blowing up both sides, and especially if its sides are steep and it's sharp on top, following the actual watershed may be a most useful technique. The combination of slope lift and thermals coming from both sides may make the ridge top soarable even when there is insufficient lift of either kind on either side.

Yet this is inherently hazardous stuff for several reasons. First, the crest directly beneath you is impossible to see, and it (or the tree tops on it) may rise and fall abruptly as you fly along. Also, the localized airflow might be extremely inconsistent - especially if thermals are strong - and sudden sink is a serious possibility. When the bottom drops out, you could be forced to turn away from terrain in a direction that would leave the ridge standing high between you and a safe landing. If you are not already fairly familiar with mountain soaring, save this adventure for later, and don't try it at all until someone with more experience has demonstrated that it is workable and safe on any particular hill. Too many soaring pilots have already crashed on ridge tops; we don't need more!

Even very large and/or steep mountain slopes can be useless for ridge soaring if they are serrated by multiple drainage patterns. Airflow typically reflects the shape of the hill. So in ragged terrain the most windward points act principally as dividers, deflecting the best lift so far back into sharp ravines that working it becomes dangerous. Be very leery of flying too far back into long, narrowing canyons, especially when wind is striking the overall slope diagonally. The lift may seem fine at the outer end where the canyon is wider, but as you proceed toward the head of such a canyon the spur upwind will sneak closer until at some point it dumps turbulent sink directly onto your ridge. Then, suddenly, you're descending into rising terrain, needing to turn away in very limited airspace toward the increasing sink from that other ridge. As the sink deepens, you could find yourself diving for survival, straight downstream, horribly close to a high canyon floor - beneath the lift you were using moments before.

In addition to all these problems, as the hills rise around you they might require a circuitous and much longer route back out to the safety of open airspace - perhaps farther than you have sufficient altitude for. In seconds, this scenario can become a genuine dead end!

One real-life case in point involves all the above hazards in very big and complex terrain, made even more serious by our having never been there before. We were at least six thousand feet higher than the valley we had come from, and were climbing with ease, holding an even distance above the ascending spine of a steep ridge. Although our slope was itself quite large by ordinary standards, it was merely a secondary watershed extending almost perpendicular from the towering crags of the main summit far above. To complicate matters further, the actual wind aloft was from the far side of that enormous mountain, reaching our hill only after dumping over and curling around.

The lift was weak but steady, yet the spectacle of gorgeous stair-step lakes sliding into view as we rose was very distracting. Then we rounded a bend and suddenly realized that the canyon floor had been rising even steeper than the crest of our ridge. Just ahead the slope below us dwindled to nothing, our canyon narrowing to a small alpine meadow surrounded by granite walls further up. Since we were unfamiliar with this area, not only did we lack anticipation of what lay around every rocky corner, we also had no local knowledge or feel for how the ever-higher terrain might affect our fortunes... We immediately turned back out toward safety, but so little room was left beneath us that some heavy sink from the snowfields overhead, a bit of indecisiveness, or fear-inspired sloppy stick work could have made it a very close thing! The key to our finally soaring over the great summit lay in that timely retreat.

Other subtle hazards also lie in deep canyon terrain, waiting to trap the unsuspecting pilot. Imagine a wide stretch of high ridge with two spurs extending out from

it, not quite parallel to each other, but closer at the bottom than at the top. The mouth of the canyon, then, is narrower than the top, and wind that flows in will tend to spread out rather than converge and rise. A soaring pilot attempting to cross such a canyon from below the upper ridge could find mostly sink and be obligated to turn away for a downhill run into the wind just to escape the canyon alive! Also, the more complex any piece of terrain is, the more likely it is to produce sudden, radical - unpredictable - changes in air flow. Think of it this way: flying near a single slope is relatively more hazardous than in completely open air space, and flying near two slopes doubles that level of hazard. But when your long-winged aircraft is actually surrounded by rocks, your freedom of movement is so restricted that even a bit of thermal sink could be very bad news indeed!

Here we're talking about one of the most perilous situations in soaring, and, although it may offer tempting results, it is no time for cockiness. So again, if you don't honestly believe you're already a pretty good stick-and-rudder pilot who can fly unusual attitudes in extremely dynamic conditions without using the instruments, do us all a favor and just stay away from deep declivities in high terrain.

If you do decide to tackle such an environment, however, a careful but confident aggressiveness is vital. Even so, you must earn your confidence gradually, in various conditions, and expect many hair-raising surprises!

There are places where an entire range of mountains offers no good slope lift in the conventional sense near the surface, although we may find lift that feels more like wave a short distance upwind. (Or perhaps powerful slope lift near the surface leads directly up into this wavelike lift - plus more of the same further upwind of the mountain.) Some pundits would argue on technical principles that unless there is down-sloping terrain upwind, it cannot be an actual wave. Maybe so, but nevertheless, in terms of using it effectively, it may help to think of this sort of lift as a kind of wave. Air is piling up the way river water does on the upstream side of a bridge pier. It may be better to work such lift by facing the wind and hovering, more or less stationary relative to the hillside, rather than tacking along it. This soaring condition may remain steady all day, but can also flow through with the wind or suddenly break.

When it does, penetrate a short distance looking for another surge of lift forming upwind. If you find zero sink, circle in it (or figure-eight) while drifting back to where the lift was before. There, the rising of terrain beneath you might again strengthen zero-sink. If your mountain is large and steep enough and presents a wide enough obstruction to the wind, there can actually be more wave further upwind, well away from the hill (like a secondary wave, only reversed). (Such a condition implies relatively stable air at that altitude, and therefore indicates a possibility of more

conventional wave downwind of these same mountains...)

Most pilots seem to think of density altitude as a problem only during takeoff and landing, but in the high country it can be like having the Devil for a co-pilot. Remember that the atmosphere is about two percent thinner for every thousand feet above sea level. If you're maneuvering in the head of a canyon at ten thousand feet, you'll need another twenty percent more room to complete a turn - plus considerably more if it's a hot afternoon in July with even warmer air surging up from below.

At the other extreme, even very low and shallow slopes can produce perfect ridge lift - so long as they are smooth and uniform. Over terrain such as the Appalachian ridges it is often possible to push a sailplane all the way down to a wingspan or two from the surface, converting the stronger lift there into greater airspeed. Of course, the lower you run a ridge, the more speed you need - not only for maneuverability, but also to skip across short sections of sink. If it's a truly 'ridge-runnable' day, there will be plenty of lift to make high speeds near the surface a safe and practical possibility. If not, don't try it; it is not worth the risk!

There is, after all, so little air being collected by low or shallow slopes that, even in strong wind the likelihood of climbing from below the crest is quite slim. Besides, in such small terrain you might not be much above landing pattern height for long stretches of time and/or distance. Therefore, in regard to the lowest of ridges, your rule should be: don't even try to soar below the crest!

This last example, and our earlier story about nearly having to land in an alpine meadow, both suggest a very important point that may sound trite but is sometimes not really obvious when you're up there soaring. It's easy to be lured onto a hill where there is too little slope beneath you to provide sufficient lift. The bottom of a slope (especially the bottom of a canyon) is no place to be in an aircraft of any kind, particularly one with no thrust!

To this we must add some further subtleties about changes in the degree of slope. Whether the slope is convex or concave, either kind of inconsistency can cause airflow to separate from the surface (just as it does due to unsmoothness in the surface of a sailplane wing), and therefore seriously weaken orographic lift. If this does happen, you could find yourself suddenly descending onto terrain directly below you at close range - terrain which is by definition flatter/wider, and therefore harder to fly safely away from. There is a potential bright side to this phenomenon: the place where upslope winds separate from the surface is exactly where a thermal is most likely to do the same! So, whether you're climbing by a change in slope or

rushing by it horizontally, look -and FEEL - for a change in lift rate, and if it weakens, or if there is increased turbulence, look immediately upwind (away from the hill) for a possible thermal.

Always remember, too, that sloping terrain above you promises nothing; it's the terrain below you that counts! (The same is true of thermal hunting, of course; those black rocks may be hot enough to cook on, but if you're looking horizontally at them, the lift they're kicking off will all be above you and out of reach!)

Even in the absence of strong wind, the day's first lift normally will be found above some sort of sloping ground. If sun and wind are coming from approximately the same direction, lift should be easy to locate. However, if they oppose each other at an odd angle, it may be so broken or intermittent that simply staying up is a great challenge. But whether it amounts to weak thermals enhancing ridge lift or vice versa, either can usually be expected to strengthen as the sun rises in the sky.

Then, aside from any squalls or frontal-related activity, expect both thermals and wind to weaken as the sun lowers toward evening. Overconfidence from a long day of powerful ridge soaring can turn to dismay as you realize you've lost unrecoverable height, late in the day and many miles from home - with even smaller prospects for good thermals away from the hills.

VISUAL INFORMATION

Some kinds of vegetation can provide reliable indications of wind strength on the slope itself. On hardwood trees the leaves are often turned over by strong wind, and show a lighter color. In this way, streams of air that would be felt as gusts to someone standing on the hill are visible from above (and sometimes for many miles) as swaying, snakelike patterns in shades of green flowing over hillsides distant and near. Similarly, lift is also easy to 'see' on open slopes covered with tall grass, though not from as far away. Bare trees and conifers, however, do not serve as well in this sense, their movements being visible only from much closer range. In any case, when soaring in conditions so weak that the vegetation is moving very little, if you do see an isolated patch of motion, it's announcing a pulse of stronger wind, or possibly even a thermal.

Not only can such information reveal where the lift might be stronger, a lack of it may warn the wary pilot away from certain areas of weaker lift, or even sink (in the lee of an upwind hill, for example).

Similar information can be had from the ground, perhaps completely out of sight of the hill in question. If trees around your airfield are moving steadily and the wind is from the best direction, the chance of finding workable lift 2000 feet up on a steep mountain is good.

However, if your hill is extremely low or not very steep, then a mere breeze at the airfield may instead imply insufficient wind on top.

Birds, of course, serve as excellent markers. Indeed, they are often selective enough to cruise at only the optimum altitude and distance from a hill, and they will also stop and work individual 'sweet spots' where a concentration of flows creates stronger lift.

If there are isolated clouds, watch the movement of their shadows for an indication of wind direction and strength. Remember, though, that if their bases are far above the high terrain, they may indicate an entirely different wind direction (and probably higher wind velocity) than will be found down on the hill.

Shadows themselves can be significant factors in soaring close to a hill. Lift that is weak and barely soarable in the sun may become too weak and unsoarable when a large cloud shadow moves over. Conversely, weak, barely soarable lift over shaded slopes may quickly strengthen, and even offer thermals only moments after a patch of sunlight opens. In this way, very early or late in the day, you may find your fortunes affected by clouds that are many miles away, between you and the low sun. Such changes can be anticipated by watching the landscape ahead and the cloudscape up-sun (and upwind) for their advance.

A line of cumulus along a ridge certainly suggests good lift of one kind or another, but if thermal activity is strong, it can also generate serious thermal sink which could render straightforward slope lift more difficult or even unworkable.

Ideal slope lift may also be spoiled - or improved - by other rotor or wave superimposed on the terrain. These can have very great - or very minor - influence on ridge soaring conditions. Depending on their position relative to the hill, each can mean lift or sink, and if they are moving across the landscape their effects may swing from one extreme to the other in a matter of moments, or in only a short distance along the slope itself. Either way (and with or without clouds or shadows), if you're slope soaring in otherwise steady conditions and suddenly encounter unexpected sink, turning directly upwind can put you in thermal, rotor, or wave lift that may be moving onto the ridge. This might also be the best chance to escape the hill if that is what you wish to do.

When a summer shower blows through the wind will probably either increase or decrease, depending upon the stage of convection within the cell itself as it passes. Here again, wind strength is not the only thing to consider. Since the cloud is approaching from upwind, you are on its downwind side, and it could dump heavy sink on your hill - as well as water on your aircraft! Also, if the cell is still gathering strength, a sudden lowering of cloud base is possible. Moreover, if the in-draft of an approaching convective cell deflates

your existing wind, it may leave scant time and altitude with which to get safely away. Whatever the case, expect little or no wind immediately after a strong shower. Then, if the wind does freshen again, look for its direction to rotate clockwise (in the northern hemisphere). Whether this change has a positive or negative effect on the soarability of any particular hill depends upon the slope's orientation, and therefore that too can be anticipated.

Another example of superimposed atmospheric standing wave from upwind flowing over a hill. If the two are roughly parallel, the question is whether they are in or out of phase. Where the wave crest lies upwind of a slope, wave sink might be directed onto it, effectively canceling lift. If the wave crest lies directly above a slope, rotor could be a serious problem near the surface, yet the ridge as a whole may also serve to amplify the wave. But if the wave crest lies slightly downwind of a slope, the lift down low will almost certainly be enhanced, while the wave could be weakened (or even canceled out). With luck, though, either of these last two examples might present an opportunity to climb easily from low altitude right up into the wave! Now imagine a wave occurring about twenty degrees out of parallel with a long, straight ridge, and therefore crossing it. Each of the effects mentioned above may be present - at different points along the hill. It would then be even more important to anticipate conditions at any particular place on the hill before committing oneself there.

Approaching a ridge from downwind is a spooky thing to contemplate, in view of the potential for tremendous lee-side sink and turbulence, but it can be done safely and easily in some situations. If you have enough height (at least several hundred feet above the hilltop), it is sometimes possible to porpoise carefully across without much loss of altitude. Any large area of sink should be traversed by the shortest possible path in order to minimize time spent losing altitude. However, it's usually best to approach the ridge itself diagonally, allowing room for a diving turn away in strong sink if you arrive too low. (Also, of course, you need a feasible plan for the moments after that!) If these priorities are not compatible, postpone such an into-the-wind crossing until you have better position or more height.

When approaching a slope from upwind, it's not unusual to encounter sink before reaching soarable lift - perhaps even over the bottom of the hill. Sink at such a time and place may cause some doubt about the lift expected closer in, but there should still be time to look for visual signs. Even if they are absent, by the time you near the slope itself, sink should begin turning to zero sink - that is if the lift is really working. However, once the bottom of the slope is behind you, if you're still descending, you must quickly rethink whether you want to go any nearer. Don't forget that, starting with a tailwind, your turn away from the hill might consume

more airspace than you expect! And then, wherever you're going after that, you'll be bucking a headwind...

If you intend to glide away from slope lift and arrive somewhere else as high as possible, first climb as high as you can on the hill. If you are leaving to windward, depart from the highest point you can reach and porpoise directly into the wind until you begin losing altitude before turning toward your destination. In this way it is sometimes possible to advance miles into the wind without significant loss of altitude while creating a better glide angle to the next objective. If departing downwind, again, get as high as possible. There will inevitably be an area of strong sink in the lee of the ridge, so take the shortest route across it (not diagonal to the wind) to minimize your loss of altitude. These considerations are especially important early or late in the day, and whenever there is little or no thermal lift.

TECHNIQUE

It seems that most pilots who are unused to ridge soaring make the same few predictable mistakes. Some of these only impair performance, while others increase the level of hazard. When flying very near terrain, however, anything that lowers performance also raises the level of hazard.

First, anxiety about proximity to the surface tends to make those who are unfamiliar shy away from a hill by leaning in the cockpit with their upper bodies. A pilot doing this cannot see as much of the ground moving beneath the downwind wing, and in this environment that particular information is the most important. Holding such a position also becomes uncomfortable and fatiguing. Just as when people lean away from an ordinary turn, it is a sign of fear that should be dealt with beforehand, on the ground, not in critical flight situations.

Banking the aircraft itself away from a slope while in straight flight is another common mistake, which can occur for two different reasons. One is the same anxiety mentioned above. The other is more complicated, but, being mechanical, is perhaps easier to solve. When flying approximately perpendicular to the wind, your crab angle may be very pronounced, and the visual effect of ground moving by sideways at close range prompts an erroneous response: an unconscious continual bank to windward. Meanwhile, remaining in lift demands a flight path parallel with the slope, and since the windward wing is down, opposite rudder becomes necessary in order to remain near the slope. This is not only inefficient; it also requires the fuselage to be yawed toward the hill. (Such a problem might sound silly on paper, but experience has shown that almost everyone does it until they are truly comfortable soaring near mountainous terrain. It is also one of those errors that seem to return with other bad habits after an extended time away from soaring.) The solution lies in consciously setting up an

appropriate crab angle and then keeping the wings level and the yaw string straight. Once the ship is really straight and level, use small coordinated turns as needed to adjust the crab angle so your flight path remains a constant distance from the slope. Remember too that if the wind direction is diagonal to a slope, different crab angles will be necessary when running along the ridge in each direction.

Another mistake, common when the area of lift is limited, is going too far and flying out of lift before turning back. This can quickly waste all the altitude gained on one pass before beginning the next; if conditions are weak, it could even shoot you down. Instead, anticipate where the lift will end, turn back earlier than necessary the first couple of passes, and then gradually explore further each pass. This will almost surely result in your being able to ride the slope a little higher, since no precious energy is being wasted.

To maximize altitude in an otherwise static ridge soaring situation, restrict your flight path to the section with the strongest lift. If a hill is, say, a mile long, then the area of good lift will probably only be about half of that, with an even better, smaller 'sweet spot' inside of it. A quarter mile is plenty of room to maneuver and reverse directions. If such a sweet spot is found on two successive passes, anticipate it. Porpoise each time you pass through it, or perhaps turn momentarily a few degrees toward the wind. Where there is enough room, it might be appropriate to circle (being very careful to avoid both traffic and drifting too close to the hill). Such resourcefulness will result not only in staying higher, but could make it possible to reach other lift and get away.

One problem with working very weak ridge lift is that the zone of lift can be terribly narrow. When turning away, you may leave the rising air and lose more altitude before returning to the hill than was gained beforehand. In some instances a careful fluctuation of airspeed can help. Assuming you've carried some extra speed while passing close to the terrain, it's possible to trade a bit of that speed for altitude while changing directions. The idea is to achieve a smaller turn and lesser sink rate while pointing away from the hill, putting you back in lift sooner and higher. Of course that original speed must be regained at the end of your turn to make the maneuver safe, and an awkward recovery could result in diving on the hill - which would be counterproductive to say the least. This technique requires a delicate feel for the specific aircraft in slow, turning flight, as well as real confidence in soaring near high terrain. Moreover, it is only truly useful when the lift or terrain is marginal. Therefore, as we've said elsewhere, if you are new to this environment, leave such advanced methods for later, or perhaps ask someone who is more experienced to come along the first time you give it a try. If they demonstrate reluctance in any particular circumstance,

perhaps you should, too. Anytime it's unusually rough, allow some extra distance between you and the surface (rough air usually means strong wind or strong thermals, including thermal sink, and therefore ample lift further from the slope). In such conditions, be sure

to tighten your harness right down to the point of discomfort. Slamming your head against the canopy is decidedly more uncomfortable, especially if you break one of the two!

Stow able Wing Tip Wheel for Aero-Retrieves

This is a really good idea from JJ Sinclair – a storable wing tip wheel that allows an aero-retrieve from a remote site without a wing runner – not always available.... They fold up and fit behind your cockpit and are light and strong – They are available through Rex and Noelle Mayes at www.williamssoaring.com and run around \$125 – a lot cheaper than repairing a whole bunch of wing tip rash. I don't have one yet but there is one in my future – maybe even my Christmas stocking. (you still GET those, don't you?) Some pics.....



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Landings;
Some thoughts from an 'old-timer'
by Tom Jona

(I found this article written by Tom Jona , a wonderful old pilot who is sadly no longer with us, in an old Buzzard (NCSA newsletter) I put together more than 10 years ago- some of the wisdom here is timeless. Tom was a fascinating and talented man, WW2 fighter pilot and refugee, I hope you enjoy this and that those who knew Tom can remember him with joy...Ed)

What you are going to read is no great new arrangements of aerodynamic principles or bursts of brilliant theorizing, merely some observations coming from a slightly different angle. **Learning to fly in single seat "open air" primaries without any instruments and possible references to the horizon**, instructing during the 1940s utilizing the same degree of sophistication created some circumstances not very common today. Fairly crude technology and vague theoretical instruction brought about a lot of simple common sense rules and explanations. Undoubtedly, not all of them make "sense" any more. Let's tackle two issues.

The first is the much discussed "downwind turn": you loose speed, allegedly. Well, it might seem that way, especially close to the ground. But imagine that you are swimming in a smooth flowing river: it does not make any difference which way you turn, upstream or downstream. But yes, it makes a heck of a difference in the air if turning close to the ground you dip your lower wing into a slower moving layer, upwind or downwind!

The second is the "landing setup"

Rules, regulations, instruction manuals and a plethora of articles written by the best people we have deal with this subject. Special attention should be given to Derek Pigott's excellently reasoned redesign of the rigidly followed square pattern for gliders published in the December '95 issue of Soaring.

Many of us have made our approaches this way, albeit unsure of its legality. Tom Knauff's recent three-part article is also a potential life saver.

To present my points to novices, their instructors and to the not so novices I'll follow a landing glider with

some comments. My main purpose is to deal with the perceptions during the last phases of the pattern.

A rather new student (Joe) and Instructor are downwind, landing checklist completed. For the sake of simplicity, we are assuming they are flying a Grob 103, left pattern. At this point Joe is in a strange, rapidly changing environment, his depth perception is poor (yet), tries to remember what to do and look out for traffic, (flaps, if any, are lowered , the nose dips) and the end of the runway is coming up and the radio is full of chatter and instead of the horizon a huge hill looms ahead.....

Given a fairly normal day, now is the time to concentrate on the essentials: the airspeed indicator (yes, since there is no horizon and Joe is not yet capable to judge airspeed by sound and feel), and the arch-original heads-up display: the yaw string. If he has ~10 Kts over best L/D speed and the yaw string stays near the middle, he is reasonably safe.

At this point Joe might not know his altitude above the runway. He should guess: could I make a shallow dive to the runway in case of an emergency and judge the altitude by that. He feels the nose of the ship is way down, the terrain is right in front of you (especially with flaps down), the ground is passing by too fast, the controls feel stiffer, instinct tells him to pull back on the stick: **but trust the air-speed indicator instead.** (Flying **lower** creates an impression of increased speed and wind on the downwind leg truly adds to the ground speed). Now Joe is preparing his turn to base. Almost 90 degrees to the end of the runway. He would extend the downwind leg a little more. Still a little too high.

Let's stop our flight in mid-air here. This is the point where all those almost always fatal just before landing stall-spin accidents originate from.

Ideally, Joe should fly a somewhat wide pattern to leave more room for starting a gentle turn earlier and not loose the end of the runway from sight, keeping it in front of the wing. Then comes the 120-150 degree turn to final with a sharper angle of bank, carefully coordinated, or - if the altitude is still too high - a

slipping turn, since a slipping glider would not stall. (Note of caution: some planes like the Cessna 172 are prohibited to slip with full flaps because they disturb the airflow over the tail surfaces. T tail gliders are probably not affected, but this effect can be type-specific, aggravated even more perhaps by open spoilers. Any comments, anybody?) Optionally, final is where spoilers should be opened first. On paved runways wheel landings provide better directional control. New students should touch down some hundred feet beyond the numbers so they can concentrate on the feel of the landing procedure.

Now we go back to our flight with Joe. He has extended the downwind, lost sight of the runway, he faces way to the left when he starts to turn on base and Instructor reminds him to coordinate the controls.

Soon the feeling of a skid to the right develops, (the wind is pushing the plane to the right compared to the ground and the urge is strong to use left rudder to correct it - but the yaw-string says no!) and while the turn is more or less o.k., straightening out for base a lot of left rudder still remains. Joe now perceives that still too high he is already too late with the turn to final, opens the spoilers where the generated extra sound gives the impression of extra speed, adds a lot of left aileron and rudder, tightens the turn by pulling on the stick.....

Fortunately, of course, Instructor was not dosing in the back seat idly. But what about the pilot with the super-duper \$\$\$\$\$\$\$ glider flying high all day, hot, dehydrated, ran out of oxygen long time ago, has gethomitis and five other gliders/tow plane on his tail?

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*High resolution digital photos & RTF
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