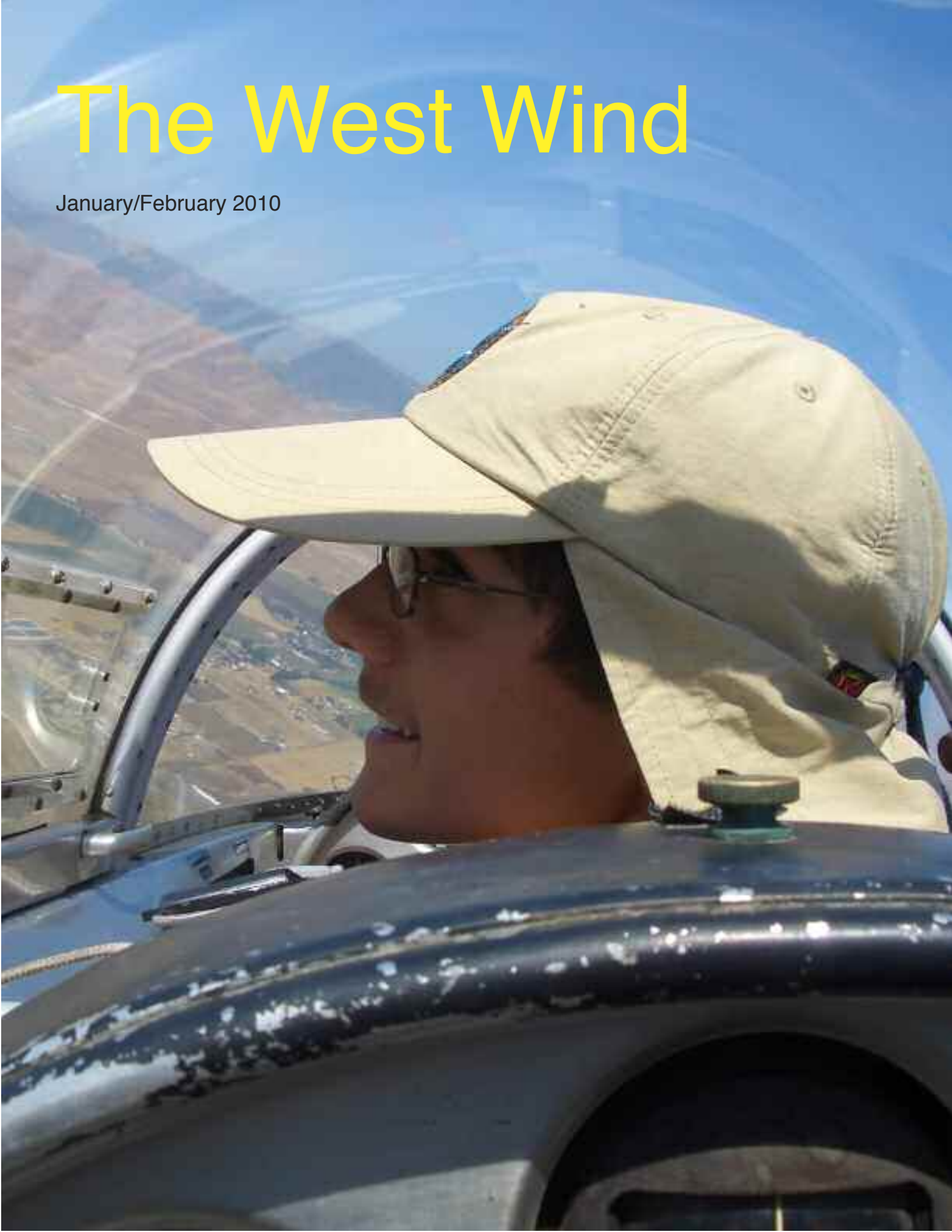
# The West Wind

January/February 2010



## Preflight

My bagpipe instructor once cautioned me against apologizing before playing a tune. However, since there have been a few changes to The West Wind magazine, I feel an explanation is in order: Last Fall I volunteered to help out on the PASCO board and agreed to take a shot at editing The West Wind. My initial motivation was purely selfish – I felt that the responsibility would remind me to go soaring!

Once I started working with the PASCO board members, however, I was quickly struck by their professionalism and dedication. Although entirely volunteer, the PASCO board and a number of supporting cast are diligently working to promote the sport of soaring in a variety of ways - which I hope to describe in this magazine. They – and you – are also simply a fantastic group of people. I am delighted to contribute in this small way.

Editing a magazine is a new experience for me – I have never played this tune! However I am determined to give it a try; to experiment, to illustrate, to describe. Even, occasionally, to fake it. But above all, I will be having fun. I hope you find it fun to read. Let's go soaring on The West Wind!

In this issue I report on some things that have come up at PASCO Board meetings over the past few months and the Fall PASCO Seminar (wow!) We get news from the Northern California Soaring Association and a delightful trip report from Morteza Ansari. Fred LaSor briefs us on PASCO's recent work with the FAA. - Jim Wallis, Editor

*Cover: John Pericich thermaling over Byron in NCSA's Blanik L-13*

## Heard Around the Airport

Licenses
OK. Take out your pilots license and look at it. Is it made of paper? If it is, you need to replace it with a plastic one by 31 March, 2010 or you won't be street legal. I know, I know. I don't like change either. But this new license is cool: On the front, it has a picture of a Wright Flyer racing what looks like a 737. On the back, a photo of the brothers themselves. Did they ever get a license? Doubt it. But you need one, so do this. Then go soaring.

Next SSA Convention
Wow! The next SSA convention is going to be in Reno in 2012. We haven't hosted one of these in a while. Stay tuned for additional information. I just got back from the SSA convention in Little Rock – what a blast (details in the next issue).

PASCO Hats and t-shirts
What is the well dressed soaring pilot or crew wearing? Glad you asked. Check out our Spring fashion line-up of PASCO hats and t-shirts. These are de rigueur wherever soaring pilots congregate, are available now and selling fast. Contact Joel Klein at **joel@klein-graphics.com.**

Previously owned transponder
Fred has a **Becker Mode-C transponder** with wiring harness, altitude encoder and antenna — ready to put into your glider so you can be seen by air carriers and others with TCAS. Great investment in safety. He only has one right now, but will sell the whole thing for $1,950. Give Fred a call at 775-790-4314.

## PASCO Safety Seminar and Banquet

I had never been to a PASCO Seminar before so I was looking forward to attending. It was doubly interesting because the seminar was held at the Hiller Aviation Museum located at the San Carlos airport. Arriving early so I could help set up chairs, I also grabbed a choice seat near the front.

The first speaker was **Richard Pearl** on glider safety. Richard opened by expressing some of the frustration we probably all feel: Why do the same accidents keep happening? Richard did a good job organizing the accident record into something digestible – 52 incidents in the past two years! One thing that seemed to jump out at several attendees was the seemingly large number of accidents involving motor gliders.

The underlying problem seems to be that the nature of soaring involves a lot of temptations for glider pilots to push the envelope. Richard pointed out that 65% of the accidents involved pilots with "high time" (> 200 hours) so it appears that experience may not necessarily inoculate us against trouble.

That was followed by an informative discussion about **oxygen use**. I didn't know that the time taken to get to altitude could play a big role in acclimatization: Hiking to 14,000 feet over a day or two can yield a completely different result than going to altitude in just an hour. The faster you go up, the more rapid the onset of altitude effects. Also, altitude effects are cumulative, and can be aggravated by alcohol use. (Hopefully THIS isn't an issue for pilots!)

Altitude effects start coming on by about 10,000 and there is about a 10% decrease in coordination by 12,000, and it is off 25% at 15,000. By 18,000 feet you typically have only about 30 minutes before you are unconscious! So, if there is any question, just go on oxygen at 10,000. When at altitude, oxygen delivery is a critical aircraft system so it is particularly important to make sure the system is working and that it is appropriate for both the pilot and for the flight being contemplated. Otherwise, maintain currency. Exercise caution and be sure to plan your flights. Always be careful of your assumptions and work hard to maintain situational awareness.

**Fred LaSor** was up next with a review of the **Minden Wave**. Since wave is a stable air phenomena, the best months for wave tend to be colder ones: January, March and April. But June seems to be a good month as well. Other important factors include wind within 45° of perpendicular to the ridge line and occurrence within about 25 miles of the ridge top. Wave is typically a pre-frontal phenomena so be sure to consider the potential complications of moisture and visibility. Where there is wave, there is a rotor underneath. Tighten your seatbelt and turn on that oxygen! The rotor can be your elevator up and down from the wave. Understand how it works, and the rotor can be your friend.

Fred then gave us an overview of the "wave window" – procedures that have been developed in collaboration with the FAA which permit VFR glider flights to FL 280. This requires collaboration with a **Wave Window Operations Manager** on the ground.

June to September is a good time for thermals at Minden. Thermals are unstable air caused by warm ground under cold air. Thermals can be broken up by wind or wave. Good places to look for thermals are at "discontinuity" in the ground topography such as ridges.

Many long distance flights can routinely be made from Minden including flights to the White Mountains or Susanville and returning. Kind of makes you want to head over there and do some flying!

Next **Pete Alexander** made us all green with envy when he described his experiences **soaring in New Zealand**. What can you say about taking a vacation where you wake up every day and go flying? Peter brought a ton of pictures and has a delightful speaking style. All we had to do was dream! Boy, the terrain in the photos was rugged. Apparently there are little airstrips scattered all over. The trick is knowing where they are if you start getting low…

*Seminar - page 6*

## Contributions

The West Wind Magazine is interested in articles and/or photographs that are of general interest and related to almost anything to do with soaring including but not limited to: soaring techniques, safety, "how to", "how not to", "yeah, I did that", "been there done that", harmless gossip, hangar flying, good jokes, funny stories, quips, tips, quotes, hints, instructions, announcements, etc. Please submit material to the editor via electronic mail to **Comm@PacificSoaring.org**.

# End of the Season Flights

*By Morteza Ansari*

The last soaring season was pretty slow for me. Between a new job, a couple of family vacations, and a few weekends with poor weather condition, I flew about half as much as usual. I was itching to get another couple of flights before the end of the season. Fortunately the weather god finally had mercy and the forecast for the end of the week was looking good, but with conditions weakening by Sunday. A quick chat with my boss and I had Friday off (I owe him one) and on Thursday night I headed to Minden.

As usual I got a late start (between a work conference call and everyone being busy launching) and didn't get launched until close to 1PM. It was pretty quick to get to Paterson, but the really nice looking cloud street wasn't working and I ended up low and looking for lift. After wasting a good chunk of time there, I was high again and the rest of the flight was very easy. I stayed between 15-18K the rest of the day.

By the time I got close to Bishop, it was time to head back north. Just north of Mono lake I climbed back to 17.5K and it was time to decide which way to go. Over the Sierras it was pretty dark with lots of virga. To the east, someone was reporting getting low near Hilton ranch, and the direct line back to Minden was through a line of OD and virga. Given I knew the lines to the West and East weren't working, I just headed directly for Minden. To my pleasant surprise, the air was friendly and I arrived at Minden at over 12K, even though I was flying in snow and occasional hail for a good 5 minutes. Not bad for a short September day with a late start...

The next day started with lots of moisture and by 10 am you could see virga to the west and south of airport. I launched around 12:30 and by the time I reached the Pine Nuts they were pretty much covered by OD with some lightning just to the south. From Mt. Siegel south all was in shadows and looking pretty bad, but the clouds over the Pine Nuts were working.

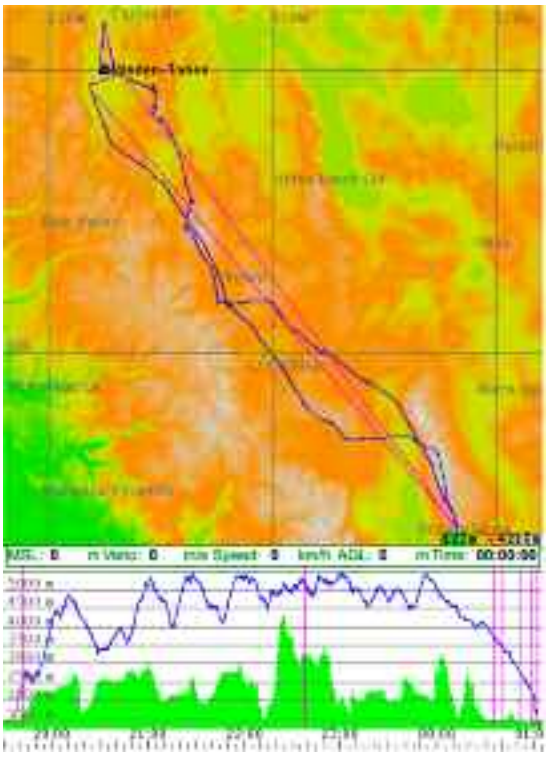
I got to about 17K and headed north to explore in that direction. Dayton Valley was in sunlight, but there wasn't anything workable there. By then the whole Minden valley was covered in OD. Blue sky with some high clouds to the east, and thunderstorms to the south. I headed back toward Minden just to hit very strong sink and severe turbulence. After talking to Minden ground, I decided I'd rather land out than go back and land at Minden! I headed east after

hearing Matt had a thermal that took him to 16K, but couldn't connect with it. In the mean time the squall line was moving east fast. I couldn't even see Dayton anymore and in a few minutes Rabbit dry lake was also completely covered. I decided now was my chance and dove for Silver Springs airport. By the time I was on base, the AWOS was going off with wind shear advisory. I put it down on the runway in about 20G30kts of wind pretty much right down the runway and about 30 seconds later the wind picked up to 35G40kts. I could not get out of glider and if I even let go of the brakes the slightest bit, I was being pushed backward. Fortunately the airport owner/manager came over and, along with the help of a third person, I managed to get out of cockpit. Even with the three of us working, it took us a good 40 minutes between when I landed and when we could pull the glider off of the runway.

The winds didn't die down and there was more lightning around Dayton so I decided that I had enough and called for the retrieve. Matt showed up with the trailer a couple of hours later and we put EP in the trailer and headed back watching a great sunset. Thanks Matt, I owe you a retrieve!

Overall a pretty good weekend to end the season. I was hoping for better conditions on Saturday, but still had a great time and learned some new things. After all, the excitement is what soaring is all about. If it was always easy, it wouldn't be soaring!

Now it is time to start dreaming about next season...



## PASCO Seminar

*From Page 3*

**Peter Deane** spoke to us about PASCO's work with the FAA to establish safe operating procedures in high traffic areas. I'll tell you, seeing a picture of a Hawker business jet with a glider spar sticking out its nose certainly gets your attention! PASCO is working with the FAA to develop and implement common sense voluntary procedures for traffic separation that will preempt any need for additional regulatory restrictions on glider operations.

The present emphasis is upon pilot education and compliance with existing procedures as well as promotion of transponder use in congested areas. Although current efforts are focused upon glider operations in the Reno area, the Byron and Hollister areas are also seeing increased traffic and PASCO is looking into the development of proactive initiatives to promote traffic safety in these areas as well.

I took four and a half pages of notes on a presentation by **Darryl Ramm** about **transponders and related technologies** and I honestly don't know where to start! Quite simply, there is an astonishing variety of technologies that are available now or will be in the very near future. Essentially, much more information is going to be available – not only as data transmitted from the aircraft to controllers, but also from controllers to aircraft and even from aircraft to aircraft. Like the personal computer, transponder technologies that were only available in 757's yesterday, are coming within reach of the private pilot.

**Marc Ramsey** reported on his efforts to develop a home built winch. This is a really interesting project. Winch use is getting more and more attention as a way to reduce the cost of soaring. While some winches are used in Southern California, there are not any active winches operating in the PASCO region.

The barriers to acquisition of a winch are significant: They are fairly expensive to purchase or rebuild (when parts are available) – which is Marc's motivation to home build – but the engineering and construction of a winch is quite technical. As illustration, Marc told us about a winch that had crushed its drum on its first launch attempt.

There are other issues as well. For example, winch launches have somewhat different space requirements than aero tows. However the reward is a fairly dramatic reduction in glider launch costs.

Finally, **Dave Greenhill** spoke with us about flying at Montague. He provided us all with a very clear discussion about the wide variety of soaring conditions that can be found in that area along with his suggestions on how to fly them.

Since I'm about out of space I'll simply add that the banquet was delicious and the talk by Mr. Alan Brown, retired Director of Engineering for Lockheed, on development of the F117-A Stealth Fighter was sublime. I also spent a couple of hours just wandering around in the museum discovering its many treasures. Can't wait until next year!

## An upbeat update on gliders and soaring in Hollister, Ca.

*by Quest Richlife, Owner*
*Hollister Gliding Club*

Hollister Gliding Club (HGC) is not really a Club at all, but is the name of the sole proprietor business providing glider tows and flight instruction at the Hollister Municipal airport. HGC is the glider FBO at Hollister, and provides all tows on the field for instructional flights; BASA (Bay Area Soaring Associates membership Club) gliders; private owners; and scenic rides. HGC operated for almost the last four years on the Hollister Airport out of shipping containers, then a modular mobile office followed by a warehouse. But we finally moved into our nice, new, permanent office at the airport in August of 2009. Come by and check us out some time!

HGC operates a Piper Pawnee, as well as two Piper Cherokee 235 aircraft for towing. We also utilize a Schweizer 2-32 as our primary training glider, and use this model for all the commercial scenic and aerobatic rides done from Hollister. This year, through March 21st, HGC is once again offering a "Winter Special" to those pilots in training who do not yet have a Glider Category Rating. Check out our website at www.soarhollister.com or call us at 831-632-6235 for more details.

Also, HGC will be offering a special $83.00 tow to 6,000 ft. AGL for cross-country glider flights. Some restrictions apply! Contact HGC for all the accurate info and current details.

ALL aspects of glider flying and soaring are alive and well -and competitively priced!- at Hollister, so come and check us out this coming 2010 season.

Happy Soaring,
Quest

## Club News - NCSA

### First Solo - John Pericich

John, the first recipient of the Dave Cunningham Memorial Youth Scholarship, made his first solo on November 15th, 2009 in a Blanik L-13 at the Northern California Soaring Association (NCSA), Byron, California. He also has some time in Cessna 172s. We will hear more about John's experiences in a future issue.

### Transition Solo - Russell Reed

Russell is transitioning from paragliding and also soloed on November 15th, 2009. Like John, Russell flew with help from the Dave Cunningham Memorial Youth Scholarship. He is a Marine Engineering Student at the California maritime Academy.

## PASCO meets with Reno FAA

As part of PASCO's continuing effort to enhance soaring and improve safety, representatives from PASCO met with FAA officials at the TRACON facility in Reno December 10. Included in the meeting were Reno Air Traffic Control management and controllers, FAA Flight Standards Safety officials from Reno, Fresno, and Las Vegas as well as representatives of three glider operators, Reno-Tahoe Airport management, and one air carrier.

This meeting was one of a long series of meetings between PASCO, Reno Air Traffic Control, and interested glider operators that is designed to keep communications channels open and discuss options that will make for safer operations in airspace that is used simultaneously by air carriers, general aviation aircraft of all sizes, and gliders. Under discussion were the use of altitude-encoding transponders, future use of ADS-B, and possible standard approach routes for commercial air carriers.

There was general agreement that the use of altitude-encoding transponders (Modes C and S) by gliders significantly improved the visibility of the gliders to both controllers and aircraft equipped with T-CAS. Increased two-way communication between glider pilots and Reno controllers was also discussed. Controllers at the meeting said such communication was welcomed on their part and helped them with separation of gliders from other airspace users. PASCO representatives explained that we continue to recommend transponder use and radio communication with Reno Approach Control, but cannot mandate it as we have no enforcement authority.

FAA representatives discussed the so-called "Next Gen" operations, including ADS-B and how that will impact glider operations (expensively unless, we think, you have a Mode-S that can be upgraded to ADS-B with a simple module addition). FAA Air Traffic Control representatives have also discussed proposed standard arrival routes (STARS) that they are planning to put into effect in February and July. PASCO has pointed out possible changes that could reduce air carrier - glider conflicts in areas around Air Sailing.

The bottom line for PASCO members is that we have a positive relationship with the FAA folks in the Reno area and we think this relationship enhances safety for glider pilots flying around Reno. We'll keep members apprised of developments as they take place.

Fred LaSor

**The West Wind**
**616 Barbera Place**
**Davis, California  95616**

The West Wind magazine is a publication of the Pacific Soaring Council, Inc. (PASCO)  a California non-profit §501(c)(3) corporation engaged in furthering the growth and development of the regional (Nevada, Northern California, Hawaii) soaring movement through educational activities and the fostering of amateur sports competition. 

Join PASCO Today!  Membership includes a one year subscription to The West Wind.  Send your name, mailing address, telephone and e-mail address along with a check (payable to PASCO) for $25 to:
Ty White, Membership Chairman
41600 Marigold Drive, Fremont, California  94539