

# The West Wind

March/April 2010



## Preflight

Wow. Here we are on our second edition - how time flies when you start out two months behind!

As promised, I report on my exciting trip to the SSA Convention in Little Rock. It turns out that something like 25% of the exhibitors at the Convention were from Region 11 so my focus in this issue is upon those participants. Some of the neatest soaring accessories are produced right here in our own region.

John Pericich (our cover guy from the Jan/Feb issue) makes the centerfold and tells us about his first solo experience. Fred LaSor gets us warmed up for the coming season with some sensible safety tips.

So pull up a comfortable chair and enjoy the magazine!

- Jim Wallis, Editor (comm@pacificsoaring.org)

*Cover: A couple of pilots caught cozying up to the comfortable JS1 "Revelation" at the SSA Convention*

## Heard Around the Airport

These items just in from Neita Montague, President of the Women Soaring Pilots Association:

The Women Soaring Pilots Association invite both women and men to their 34th Annual Women Soaring Seminar to be held at Air Sailing in Reno, NV July 19 to 23. We welcome you to arrive early to acclimatize to our high desert/high density altitude and to get ready for the formal program which starts Sunday night the 18th. For Saturday day and Sunday we plan tours to Virginia City, to Pyramid Lake for a swim and to the Paiute Native American Museum near the lake as well as Flight Checkouts in order of registration. Emphasis will be on cross country work and we will hold a dry lake landout day. For registration go to [www.womensoaring.org](http://www.womensoaring.org) or email [neitalibelle@aol.com](mailto:neitalibelle@aol.com)

The Women Soaring Pilots Association is offering a beautiful quilt for raffle at \$5.00 a ticket. Monies will go to scholarships (see those offered on our [www.womensoaring.org](http://www.womensoaring.org) website) for student pilots and training for advanced ratings. Email Frauke Elber at [fandw\\_elber@cox.net](mailto:fandw_elber@cox.net) for tickets. Drawing will be held at the Women Soaring Seminar in July.

Editor's note: The way I figure it, \$100 gets you twenty tickets for about the price of a tank of gas. That's a very easy way to help a worthy organization.

## SSA Convention

While planning a business trip to Atlanta in early January, I realized that the Soaring Society of America 2010 Convention was running at the same time. A couple of minor adjustments to my itinerary and I found myself touching down at the Little Rock National Airport (LIT) on January 27<sup>th</sup> at around 2330 hours intending to spend the entire next day hanging out at the trade show. Of course I overslept so it was a struggle to get through it all as I was trying to be the good reporter - I interviewed everyone from the SSA staff at the registration desk to Gerhard Waibel. Such fun!

Surprisingly, Region 11 soaring businesses comprised about a quarter of the companies participating in the trade show. Almost as soon as I walked into the door, I ran into **Richard Pfiffner** of Craggy Aero located at Montague, California.



Craggy Aero designed and manufactures the **Craggy Aero Ultimate Flight Computer**. Richard told me that this unit incorporates a proprietary display which delivers outstanding resolution and readability even in direct sunlight. It runs SeeYou Mobile as well as WinPilot software at speeds that are much faster than other units. Also, its clean design allows for easy installation. Look for more information at [www.craggyaero.com](http://www.craggyaero.com) or call 530-905-0062.

**Rex Mayes** from Williams Soaring Center/**Sage Variometers** brought me up to speed on the remarkable technology behind this device. Designed by Will Schumann in 1973, and still the only one of its kind, the Sage is a "taut wire variometer" characterized by its extremely fast response time. This is attributable to elimination of bearings and the extremely light mass of the moving parts. In fact, the only problem with this device is that, for some people, the variometer works a bit too well and needs to be attenuated! Rex and his group have not been resting on their laurels. The Sage has been updated and now includes audio output - which can be retrofitted to all Sage models. Other options include 20 knot ranges, a 12

knot averager and new color options. Check out their web site at [www.williamssoaring.com](http://www.williamssoaring.com) or give them a call at 530-473-5600.

**Al Silver** of Silver Parachute, Hayward, California, was working a booth along with Dan Tarasievich of Para-Phernalia, Arlington, Washington. These are the guys who make the Softie parachute. Al gave me his handout on bailout procedures and talked me through some of the considerations involved in purchasing and using an emergency parachute. Like the name implies, the emphasis of the Softie is on comfort. Makes sense. If you have to sit on something



while you are flying it might as well be comfortable. They customize the fit to you and your aircraft. Sounds good to me! I have to confess that I am not very keen about the idea of jumping out of an airplane, but talking with Al got me thinking about it a bit. He's promised to write an article for us later on. Meanwhile, you can find him at [www.silverparachutes.com](http://www.silverparachutes.com) or by calling 510-785-7070. These guys

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## Notes from the Safety Office

Soaring season is coming our way and now is a good time to think about some safety issues as we plan for the booming thermals that we'll soon be seeking. Here are some random thoughts about making this a healthy and happy soaring season.

### USE YOUR RADIO

A midair collision in our region between a glider and a towplane at the end of last year has caused the PASCO Board to discuss what policies might help prevent a similar accident in future. Based on discussions at our last board meeting we have decided to recommend all tow pilots initiate a radio check before the beginning of the tow. The suggestion has even been made that commercial operators and clubs should refuse to sell tows if the glider is not equipped with a working comm radio.

As with all policy recommendations this is not a panacea. We hope, though, that it will increase situational awareness and confirm to both pilots that their comm radio is turned on, tuned to the correct frequency, and set loud enough to hear. Whether operators supplying tows decide to refuse tows to non-complying gliders is up to each operator, so this is not yet a uniform policy in PASCO-land. We encourage all glider pilots to participate in this program, no matter what the tow pilot in front of you is doing. We think it might save lives, and that is a good goal.

### USE YOUR RADIO!

Another example of the value of a two-way comm radio is if you are flying in the vicinity of Reno International Airport. PASCO established a communications protocol two years ago for glider operations near

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# A Solo to Remember

*By John Pericich*



There are many memorable flight experiences in a glider pilot's career. Among other notable flying experiences are many rewarding "firsts." One's first thermal flight in weak lift may seem unsubstantial to a seasoned glider pilot, but a novice may be enamored by the excitement of climbing a mere two hundred feet solely using the natural physics of the atmosphere. Among numerous notable experiences and firsts, the first solo flight is indubitably one of the most memorable and rewarding experiences in a pilot's career. Thanks to the dedication of several instructors, I was ready to solo in a very short amount of time. Unfortunately, my age was still a factor, as I still had over three months until my fourteenth birthday. Eventually, my birthday arrived, and I was eagerly anticipating a solo flight. However, fate had other plans as the L-13 Blanik in which I was planning to solo had sustained major damage to its tail wheel structure.



I obtained the news of the Blanik's return-to-service in early November, and I re-scheduled my solo amidst my other activities for Sunday, November 15, 2009.

Thankfully, November 15, a stunningly beautiful fall day, arrived, and the Blanik had not incurred any more damage. I was fortunate to meet Kathleen Cunningham, the widow of the late Dave Cunningham, to whom [my flight] scholarship had been established in memoriam.

Upon fastening my seat belts, adjusting the rudder pedals, and setting my altimeter, I began to feel somewhat nervous. The feeling of the first solo flight is what I would call "nervous confidence". As any pilot can attest to, the first solo is a somewhat strange, occasionally nerve-wracking experience, yet the many hours of training which one has obtained in preparation for the solo

are able to sustain his or her "mental-gridlock" due to anxiety and the student pilot is able to successfully pilot the aircraft. At one point in my flight, I recalled a line from an article titled "Hummingbird Haven Recollections" by Kempton Izuno in which Kempton writes that "on [his] fourth solo flight [he] landed too long down the runway and crashed through the barb wire

fence at the east end of the runway". Recalling this line facilitated my nervousness, yet, fortunately, I landed safely (though not the best landing I have ever performed).

Unfortunately, low cloud ceilings coupled with poor visibility have prevented me from flying solo much since my first solo. Recently, I was fortunate enough to be in Byron when the clouds cleared slightly for a brief period of time, and I treated myself to a solo flight filled with spectacular views of the cloud tops and Mt. Diablo. After this flight, one of my fellow club members inquired whether or not I had enjoyed the spectacular views of the clouds. 'Well, to be honest with you, I do not think I have flown solo enough to enjoy the views.



### Take supportive parents...

On the contrary, I spend most of my time with my eyes glued to the altimeter, diligently making sure that I have enough altitude to return to the airport,' I replied.

Needless to say, I am overjoyed to have finally soloed, and I look forward to many rewarding solo flights in the future. Now, two new goals would be in order: attaining the SSA "B" badge and successfully passing the written exam.



### Yields a happy pilot!



### Add flight instructor...

## SSA Convention

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have been in the business for over 25 years and they know what they are talking about.

Then I ran into **Fred LaSor** and **Laurie Harden** Of **SoaringNV** located over in Minden, Nevada. I'm probably the last person to get this, but the name of their outfit is pronounced "soaring envy". They are running a Minden Wave Camp from March 30<sup>th</sup> through April 3<sup>rd</sup>. Sounds like they've got a pretty good program planned. Give them a call at 877-276-2768 or check out their web site at [www.soaringnv.com](http://www.soaringnv.com).



Next up was **Steve Lowry** and Doug Hornal of **Acroflight International** located at Dillingham on Oahu, Hawaii. Steve provides aerobatic training in an MDM-1 Fox and there are rentals and instruction available in gliders or motorgliders (they have a Samba and a Grob 109). I'm going to be in that neighborhood in the next couple of weeks so I'll try to prepare a more in-depth report. On the other hand, they say that the location is soarable approximately 340 days per year and a 1000 foot tow is pretty much all you need to get onto the ridge so you may not want to wait for me!  
[www.acroflightinternational.com](http://www.acroflightinternational.com) or 808-221-4480

Finally, I lurked around **Soar Minden's** booth a couple of times trying to chat with **Tony Sabino** but he always seemed to talking with someone. Little surprise with his great photos of Minden soaring. According to their web site they operate four Grob 103s and a variety of high performance single seat gliders. They also have five, seven and ten day package deals

### PASCO Hats and T-shirts

I'll tell you the truth: I wore my PASCO hat when I visited Hawaii soaring operations and they let me fly for only full price. How cool is that? Get yours now. Contact Joel Klein at [joel@klein-graphics.com](mailto:joel@klein-graphics.com).

that include hotel (including pick-up and drop-off), glider, a tow per day, and all the accoutrements. Doesn't get any easier than that!  
[www.soarminden.com](http://www.soarminden.com) or 775-782-7627.

Outside of the trade show there were well over 70 seminars, talks and meetings as well as parties every time I turned around. I thought I was going to miss all of that, but a weather cancellation sent me back from the airport the next day to sit in on a couple. Can't wait until the SSA Convention comes to Reno in 2012!

## 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](http://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

## Safety - From Page 3

Reno, copies of which are available on this web site. If you are not familiar with this procedure we encourage you to read it and follow it. Several PASCO members have met on a number of occasions with Reno controllers, and the controllers have been very cooperative when it comes to communicating with glider pilots.

We're not recommending you go get your Instrument Rating (of course if you have it, that's not a bad thing!) But we are recommending you keep Reno informed of your location, altitude and intentions. Especially if you are not equipped with an altitude-encoding transponder, this is a good practice as it will help the controllers recognize you and try to keep you and other aircraft in separate parts of the sky. Please look over these procedures and put them into effect.

A final note on this: if you really are not comfortable talking on the radio please talk to an instructor about this. Just a little practice will make it much easier. And if you're coming due for a Flight Review this spring your instructor will welcome the chance to include a review of communication procedures in the review.

### AND ABOUT THAT TRANSPONDER

PASCO has been recommending altitude-encoding transponders in gliders now for years. Just a year ago there was a near miss between a commercial airliner and a glider over Minden. We don't need to tell you that a collision would be a terrible event for a whole lot of people, and would probably end glider operations in this fantastic soaring mecca. So we'll take this opportunity to re-state this recommendation. Install and use an altitude-encoding transponder in your glider if you have not already done so!

The price of such equipment is actually coming down. Cumulus Soaring offers the Trig TT21 Mode S transponder, complete with altitude encoder, antenna and wiring harness, for less than just the Mode C transponder most gliders currently have installed. So if you're still looking for an excuse NOT to install a transponder, price is no longer as compelling an argument.

### PHYSICAL FITNESS

Every year several pilots show up at the glider port who are clearly not in good enough physical condition to undertake long cross country soaring flights. If you're thinking soaring is not strenuous you need to think again. Assembling your glider, pushing it out to the flight line, staying mentally sharp for four or five hours in a confined space, and then remaining

sharp when you come back to enter the pattern and land all require more physical fitness than sitting on your couch and watching the Super Bowl. On top of that, if you're coming from sea level to Truckee, Air Sailing or Minden, you'll be starting out with an oxygen deficit.

Many of us have come through the holiday season and winter with a few extra pounds and lowered fitness. A month of focused aerobic exercise and some free weight activity before getting back in the cockpit is a good investment. You'll feel better and fly sharper, so try to include this in your pre-season planning.

### GETTING THE RUST OFF

Several years ago the SSA pushed hard to get all pilots to make the first flight of the new season with an instructor. It's a good personal policy that will help you get the rust off and is good for our sport. Think about this as you plan to kick off the soaring season – two or three flights with an instructor will probably make you safer and possibly even identify some skill you might want to improve during the coming year. Do give it some thought!

And finally, here's wishing everyone a safe soaring season with towering Cus always within reach!

*Fred LaSor, SoaringNV, Minden, NV*

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

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. Please submit material to the editor via electronic mail at:  
**Comm@PacificSoaring.org.**

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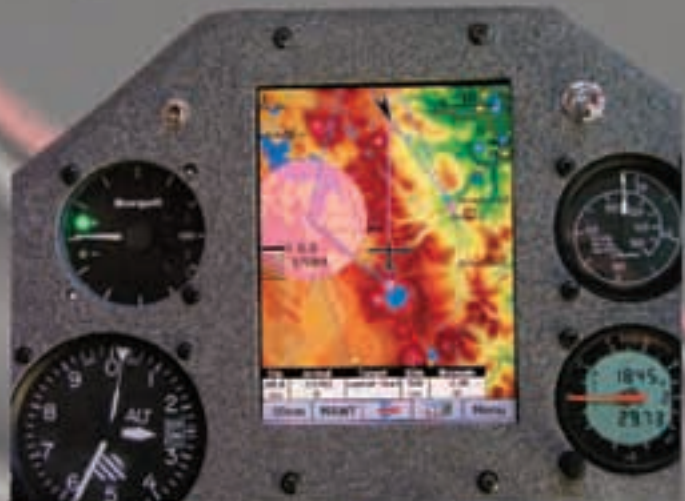
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