

SKY LINES



SKYLINE SOARING CLUB NEWSLETTER

March 2009

“FAA Wants Billions, But Won’t Act on Glider Danger” ***San Francisco Examiner Continues Rant Against Transponderless Gliders***

From a San Francisco Examiner Editorial, Feb. 17, 2009

It’s been almost a year since the National Transportation Safety Board recommended, for the second time, that gliders be required to use identification transponders during flight so that other pilots in the vicinity can “see” them in the air. Gliders are exempted from the requirement at present.

The NTSB first documented this glaring aviation safety hazard more than two decades ago, but the Federal Aviation Administration, in true bureaucratic fashion, has taken no action on an issue that literally involves life and death in commercial aviation.

To read the complete editorial go to: <http://www.sfexaminer.com/opinion/FAA-wants-billions-but-wont-act-on-glider-danger-39764817.html>.

The Feb. 17 San Francisco Examiner editorial, “FAA Wants Billions, but Won’t Act on Glider Danger,” is an excellent example of writers being blinded by their own brilliance. The editorial states: “In the 20 years since the NTSB first raised the issue of gliders flying in commercial [sic] airspace without identification transponders, nine people have died in glider/plane collisions, three have been injured and there have been more than 60 hair-raising close calls which could have been prevented had FAA officials heeded the advice of the NTSB experts ... it is only a matter

of time before a commercial airliner with hundreds of innocent men, women and children aboard has a tragic encounter with a transponderless glider.”

Like most demagogues, the writer has a tiny kernel of truth wrapped in prejudice and factual error. For example, compare the actual statistics to those the Examiner writer used.

- Between 1982 and 2003 there were 46,439 general aviation accidents in the U.S.
- Approximately 400 involved midair collisions (800 aircraft).
- Of those 400 midair collisions, 18 involved gliders.
- Ten were between two gliders, six were between a glider and an airplane; and two were between a glider and its own tow plane.
- There has been one midair collision between a glider and an airliner in history, in France about 10 years ago. No one died.

Having said all that, there is one small piece of useful information buried in the rhetoric, a catastrophic collision between a glider and an airliner, an accident that has never happened, will not only be bad for those involved but will mark the end of soaring in this country. And the risk of such an accident is increasing in some areas, including the one in which we fly. That’s why, in our area, there are increasing numbers of gliders, usually the more adventure-some single-seaters, but at least two club trainers, now flying with voluntari-

ly installed transponders. Expect this movement to grow as glider pilots realize that wise voluntary action obviates unwise involuntary regulation.

In fact, the Federal Aviation Administration is actually cooperating with these efforts. There is a single transponder code being used in the mid-Atlantic area that identifies the target as a glider, and there is now movement within the FAA to respond positively to a proposal made nearly 15 years ago by the Soaring Society of America to identify a single national code for gliders. Keep your fingers crossed.

—**Jim Kellett, Soaring Society of America Region IV director**



ADIZ Training Certificate Required for Pilots Flying Near Washington, D.C.

All pilots flying within 60 miles of the Washington, D.C. VOR are now required to complete the Federal Aviation Administration D.C. Special Flight Rules Area training course and pass a test. Pilots must be able to produce a certificate of achievement to this effect. Duty officers must check all pilots in command to ensure they have complied with this requirement. To take the course, go to: www.aopa.org/adizfaa.

—**George Hazelrigg**

Letter from the SSC President

With everyone's help 2009 should be another good year for soaring. We're well into scheduled operations for the year and have seen some good flying. So far the weather has not cooperated on the weekends but there's still been plenty of opportunities to get your annual instructor ride and refresh your landing currency during smooth and cloudy conditions. If you missed the annual safety meeting make sure you review the video tape or DVD of the meeting before flying and also remember to complete the online Washington D.C. ADIZ training since Front Royal Airport is within 60 miles of the DCA VOR.

The flight instructors and tow pilots have been working hard to schedule more weekday flying this year and they've started scheduling Fridays for the next couple months. Keep an eye on the schedule and make sure to let the scheduled instructor and tow pilot know you're coming out so they can better plan the day. Remember that weekday operations require everyone to pitch in and help since there may not be a scheduled duty officer and assistant duty officer.

Thanks to Craig Rodermal and his work on the county airport commission the electrical box on the grass landing area has been buried. This should add a bit more safety for student landings in the grass, and in particular for emergency landings when operating from runway 09.

I'm sure you've noticed in your e-mails that the club is trying to raise money from the members to purchase Dan Noonan's Cirrus since he's thinking of selling it. This is an opportunity to keep a higher performance single-seat glider in our inventory to help our members reach higher levels of soaring experience. We're looking for pledges for a no-interest loan to the club that will be paid back after we repay the Husky loan in two years. Currently we have \$8,500 in loan pledges for the \$16,000 needed. More members must pledge if they want to keep the Cirrus in the fleet and have more aircraft available to fly this summer.

The success of our club in 2009 is totally dependent on volunteers to step up and help out. Everyone needs to participate in supporting the duty crew on the field during flying days and taking a little time to help take care of the equipment and hangers. We're also looking for a volunteer to be the club safety officer. The main responsibility of the safety officer is organizing the annual safety meeting and periodically working with the board to resolve safety issues. If anyone is interested please let me know.

Spring is on the way, the weather is getting nicer and the one remaining ingredient to make this a great year is you. Please come out to the field, get involved and experience the joy of flying that we all crave.

—**Craig Bendorf, SSC president**

Copy That

A Letter from Susan Gogos

Dear Soaring Friends,

Even though I was just a "crew" I feel I am one of you. Bela and I always felt that we were members of a very special group. I cherish the memories of the many hours Bela and I spent in the circle of you out on the field or at The Mill after a great day of "work." You made us feel like we were with family. Flying and soaring were a big part of Bela's life through the years, starting at a very early age when he would sneak out to the field without his mother knowing he was "up there" flying instead of at school.

I don't need to tell you what a big empty hole he has left in my heart and life. I will always keep warm feelings and memories within me of you all. Please keep me on your list for newsletters. Your attendance at his service and your speeches made it very special—thank you for that. I am grateful for having been at his side when he closed his eyes forever.

I hope you will have a great season, soaring high and long above "Gogos Gap," enjoying it and keeping Bela's memory in your hearts. It is a great comfort to me to have Lilly and David staying with me now.

Fondly, Susan Gogos

Winch Launching E-mail List

A new e-mail list for pilots interested in winch launching is available on the SSC Web site. To subscribe to the list go to: <http://skylinesoaring.org/mailman/listinfo/winchers.html>. After you enter the requested information you'll be sent an e-mail confirmation. When you receive that confirmation use the Web link in the e-mail to verify your subscription to the list.

—**Vern Kline**

Skyline Soaring Club, Inc. is a private, 501(c7) non-profit organization, dedicated to the enjoyment and promotion of the sport of soaring. SSC is based at the Front Royal-Warren County, Va. Airport and is an affiliate club of the Soaring Society of America. For information about the club go to **www.skylinesoaring.org** or e-mail **welcome@skylinesoaring.org**.

President — Craig Bendorf

Secretary — Jim Kellett

Treasurer — Daniel Noonan

Membership — Steve Rockwood

Chief Tow Pilot — Curtis Wheeler

Chief Flight Instructor — Jim Kellett

Skylines Editor — Dennis Johnson

Directors — Shane Neitzey, Spencer Annear, Paul Seketa, Jim Parrish, Vern Kline





Photo by Dennis Johnson

Dan Noonan's Cirrus launches at Skyline Soaring Club last year.

Cirrus Purchase

Based on a club survey, input from club members, a review of club's finances and a review of multiple options, the board of directors has decided to pursue the purchase of Dan Noonan's Cirrus. This decision is contingent on the ability to obtain a no-interest loan from the membership which would not be repaid until the Husky loan is paid off. We need your help and commitment to make this happen and keep the Cirrus in our fleet. We're looking for financial pledges from the members. We will accept a pledge of any amount to get to the \$16,000 goal. To be fair to Dan and prevent this from dragging out the board has set a time limit of four weeks. So start making your pledges now to: directors@skyline soaring.org. Two weeks into the Cirrus loan campaign the club has pledged \$8,500 of the needed funds.

—Craig Bendorf, SSC president

Cross-country Course

Jim Garrison will present a cross-country course for SSA Region IV members Friday evening March 27 and Saturday March 28. This course is an expanded version of his class that has been popular with members of Shenandoah Valley Soaring and SSC in the past. This course will provide all the information needed to start flying cross-country and pursue badges efficiently and safely. The course will be held in Harrisonburg, Va. To attend contact Jim Garrison at: jcg8w@cms.mail.virginia.edu.

Safety Meeting Tape

The original VHS tape of the annual

safety meeting, which is required viewing for all club members who did not attend the meeting, is in the Front Royal FBO. Unfortunately, the FBO VHS player is FUBAR (a Navy term, which means it's broken). If anyone has a spare VHS player to donate to the FBO I'm sure they would appreciate it. I think there is one or two in the hanger; maybe we could donate one of those?

In the meantime the DVD copy is in the DVD drive of the FBO computer. Do not remove these copies. If you need one of your own, contact me at: otisra@mac.com. Thanks.

—Dick Otis



An electrical box that stood in the middle of the grass runways at Front Royal Airport is removed and placed underground Feb. 23.



Photo by Dick Otis

Kevin Fleet speaks to club members at Skyline's annual safety meeting Feb. 7.

SSA Regional Leadership Conference Held at Smithsonian Aviation Museum

Nearly two dozen representatives from nine mid-Atlantic soaring clubs, the Federal Aviation Administration and the Soaring Society of America's national and regional leadership met Feb. 21 for the annual Regional Leadership Conference. This year the meeting, held at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center at Dulles Airport, was hosted by Mike Higgins, president of Mid-Atlantic Soaring Association. Skyline was represented by Craig Bendorf and Spencer Annear.

The conferees took this opportunity to present a special SSA Exceptional Service Award to Fred Ninger, an air traffic control specialist with the Potomac Consolidated TRACON in Ashburn, Va. Mr. Ninger was recognized for his service to area soaring clubs over the last three years in establishing formal letters of agreement with the clubs (leading to controllers being trained in glider operations), establishing a voluntary transponder code for gliders and tow planes, and coordinating glider operations with other ATC facilities from Philadelphia, Pa. to Atlanta, Ga.

During his briefing to the group Mr. Ninger announced that the FAA, after considering SSA's request of some 14 years, was moving to establish a national glider-unique transponder code, 0000. This code would use the least amount of power possible [in the glider] and make it possible for ATC radars to tag targets squawking this code as gliders anywhere in the U.S.

This has been a long time coming and is a most welcome improvement that the SSA has sought since 1995.

Other topics prompting much discussion at the conference included various ways for clubs to provide a gliding experience to nonmembers (including the SSA's FAST package), reciprocity for pilots to enjoy services from other clubs in the region, insurance issues, and various organizational structures such as profit, non-profit or public charity.

As an aside, the Udvar-Hazy Center is a great venue for aviation-related meetings and we received much assistance from staff member Doug Baldwin. Doug is also the Smithsonian's representative to the National Coalition on Aerospace Education, and guess who represents the SSA to the same organization? Yep, Skyline's very own Gordon Roesler.

—**Jim Kellett, Soaring Society of America Region IV director**



Above: The Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center at Dulles Int. Airport is the companion facility to the Air and Space Museum on the National Mall.



Left: Jim Kellett (left) presents a special SSA Exceptional Service Award to Fred Ninger, an air traffic control specialist with the Potomac TRACON.

Below: Conference members in front of the Space Shuttle at the Udvar-Hazy Center.

