

*Newsletter of the Skyline Soaring Club for November, 2020*



**THREE WEEKS OF TRAINING:  
A Retrospective on How I Learned to Fly**

On December 16, 2017, Andrew Neilson took me up for what he likes to refer to as my “most expensive glider flight ever.” That seems like an odd moniker since it wasn’t a particularly long flight, and he paid for it, but afterwards, I decided I wanted to learn to fly gliders—a decision my bank account has complained about ever since. Once Andrew did that first stall, I was hooked! I went to the annual safety meeting and got myself on the waitlist for instruction.



As luck would have it, the Board elected to allow waitlisted student members to participate in Week of Training 2018, which is where I got my very first taste of being at the controls. To say that the WoT 2018 was like drinking from a fire hose is an understatement! You see, unlike many of Skyline’s members, I had no other aviation experience. Heck, I didn’t even have a previous interest in aviation! Up until then, my only interest in flight was whether I was getting upgraded to first class or not. So when Piet Barber handed me the controls on my first aerotow and told me to try to stay in position behind the tow plane for ten seconds, it was a completely new experience. Spoiler alert: I think I made it three seconds before he took back the controls. Having dutifully listened to Andrew talk (and talk, and talk) about flying for the previous two years, I thought I would have picked up a few things, but there was so much to learn! A few days later,

Chris Zaboji demonstrated boxing the wake and told me to make sure the thingamajig was lined up with the whatchamacallit, or at least that's what I heard, since I had no clue what any of those pieces and parts on the tow plane were called. Thankfully, experienced students, rated pilots, and instructors alike took me under their wing. Miriam and Syed Ali took time to walk me through how to pre-flight a glider properly, answering all my questions along the way. Jim Perlmutter taught me how to safely and efficiently hook up and launch a glider. When I was struggling with overcorrection, Bill Burner gave me one of the most useful pieces of aviation advice that I've ever heard (first, stop the problem from getting worse—then fix it!). And as someone who felt like a bit of an outsider at the club (let's face it, I'm a little outside the usual demographic), the camaraderie of WoT was invaluable. Whether it was the teamwork of getting everything set up in the morning and put away in the evening, lunch and the hot wash in the FBO, dinner together at the camp ground every evening, or having a few drinks in the gazebo back at the Fort Hill Motel, participating in those shared experiences made me feel much more at home in the club, and so much togetherness with the same group of people meant that I really got to know everyone!



After WoT 2018, I had to take a bit of a break, since I was still on the waitlist, but once approved, I resumed flying sporadically at Front Royal. Life and other obligations (and a dislike of cold weather) meant that I was really only flying about once a month (and not at all from November to March), so my progress as a student stalled (if not regressed). Luckily for me, WoT 2019 was just around the corner! Being back at Petersburg felt familiar in

many ways, but there were definitely differences. On one of the first days of WoT 2019, I was in the mentor position, showing some of SSC's newest, youngest members how to pre-flight a glider properly, and I was struck by the parallelism to the previous year. A few days later, Jim waved me off doing glider hookups so he could show the newbies how to do it.

Meanwhile, I did my best to be a good example of pitching in and helping out, even if that meant spending an entire afternoon waxing a glider's wings. Oh yes, all the while trying not to panic about my impending doom—er, first



solo. Piet signed me off for it on the Thursday of WoT 2019 after a few ghost solos, but afternoon rain pushed it to Friday morning. I have a habit of being inadvertently funny on the radio, and my first solo was no different. During WoT 2018, Chris Z. and I flew a very extended downwind to allow time for the ground crew to launch the glider that was currently on the runway, and my last radio call was that we were on "an exceptionally long final," which cracked up everyone on the ground. Well, on my first solo, the tow pilot (who happened to be my husband, Andrew) was getting into air that was a little too turbulent for my comfort, so I called him on the radio and asked him to turn away from the mountains. Apparently, everyone on the ground just about died laughing, and more than a few jokes were made about who wears the pants in our family! Andrew says his only regret is that he didn't think to respond "Yes, dear." Anyway, I jumped off tow as soon as I was at pattern altitude (even though I had been told to feel free to take a 3000' tow), and despite my trepidation, managed to perform a nice landing with both myself and the glider intact. It was a great way to end WoT 2019! I later learned that Piet was more nervous sending

me off to solo than his own son (who soloed on the flight after mine)!



I was able to fly a little more consistently at Front Royal during summer 2019, coming up two or three times a month until the weather turned colder, capping off the year by flying solo in the Grob on one day when it was being used for normal weekend operations. It was a nice memento since all my initial flight training had been in the Grob, and I always loved flying it, but by the time I soloed, the club had decided to sell it. My instructors seemed pleased with how my flying was progressing, and I was pleased (albeit dubious) about the number of 4s that started showing up on my SPR. I took George Hazelrigg's ground school over the winter to prepare for my written test. And then, as we all know, 2020 happened. My flight instruction was on hiatus until the club resumed instruction in July. Armed with my KN95 on face (doesn't do much good "in hand"), I hammered away on rope breaks and the other skills that I still needed work on. Flying doesn't feel like fun when you're only flying the skills that stress you out, but my blood pressure got a break when I had a very memorable hour-long instructional flight with John Noss where I got to fly in wave for the first time! After that, it was back to rope breaks and on to WoT 2020!

Like everything about 2020, WoT 2020 was very different from previous years. Besides wearing masks and adhering to COVID procedures, we were at Front Royal, and we were coping with a gaping Pete Maynard-sized hole in operations. Pete had been such an integral part of the previous WoTs that it was unfathomable not to have him around for this one. Thankfully, Carlos Troncoso stepped up to be our trusty DO for the week, and a whole host

of members helped out with the ADO responsibility. In many respects, WoT 2020 felt more like extended normal weekend operations: there was no one who was completely green, as all students had at least a few glider flights under their belts, and a couple of us were getting close to our check rides. And unlike at Petersburg, where the flights are entirely instructional, regular members got to fly, too! We had a bit of a rotating cast of characters, so there wasn't quite the camaraderie that had existed in previous years, but we made the best of it with a hot wash at the end of each day, and many of us still went out to dinner every night at PaveMint. I had taken my written test a few days before WoT 2020 kicked off, so my goal for the week was to get my certificate. As such, I spent most of my time on the ground studying—reading everything I could to prep for the oral portion—and very little time pushing gliders. I felt bad for not participating more, but I wanted to be as prepared as possible!

Monday started off as expected (More slips on final! More rope breaks!), but I was feeling pretty good about my flying. Tuesday reinforced that when I had a 2:43 flight in N321K. There was reliable lift everywhere I looked—not enough to get very high, but enough to stay up (clearly!). I thermalled by Signal Knob, I thermalled over the river, I thermalled by a lookout on Skyline Drive, I thermalled by Walmart...it was an incredible flight. I must have been a little more tired than I thought, though, because I capped off that flight with a significantly less amazing landing.

Wednesday, things were getting serious, so I flew a simulated check ride profile with Jim Kellett. When we landed, I felt good enough that I asked Piet to schedule my check ride for Thursday. Still flying high (metaphorically speaking), I made the mistake of listening to everyone who had been encouraging me to fly the Sprite ("It's easy!" "It's a great confidence booster!"). After bouncing it down the runway on takeoff, that aerotow was the first and only time I've ever been happy to be on tow—because at least I wasn't on the takeoff roll (bounces?) anymore! It wasn't so bad after release, but then the time came to land it. I had been warned about the airbrakes not being very effective, but I also had been warned that the Sprite doesn't

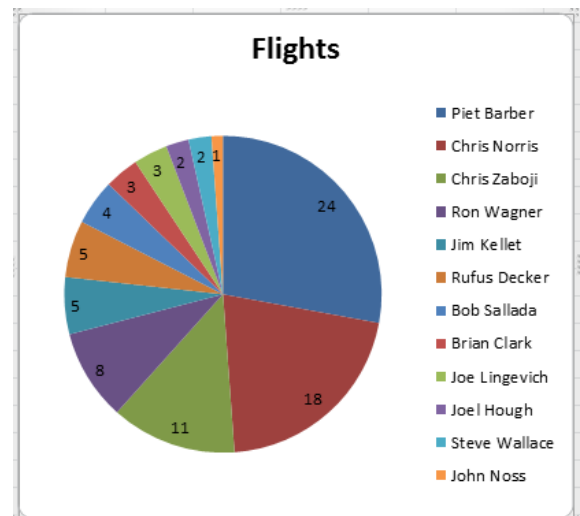
penetrate the wind very well, so having a bit of a headwind, I wasn't too sure how to balance those two factors. The way it worked out, I was high and floating and starting to run a very real risk of going long on the grass safety area (not a good thing to do when there's concrete waiting for you at the end), so I kicked it over into a hard slip and slipped it down until I was just barely above the grass. I straightened out as much as I could (pretty sure I was still crooked), touched down, and stopped as quickly as I could. I was shaking when I got out. Far from being a confidence boost, that flight terrified me because I was in way too far over my head. I was even close to canceling my check ride, but I decided to go through with it.

Thursday dawned with me anxiously arriving early at the airfield. My check ride was scheduled to start at 11:00, so I spent the morning feeling nauseous. Once the ground portion of the check ride started, I realized that I was well prepared, and I relaxed, even joking around with Piet a bit. I passed with flying colors, and we moved on to the practical portion of the test. I'll skip the details but suffice to say that it did not go quite as well as I had hoped, and there were a few skills that I would need to review and re-do another time. Thankfully, I went up with Chris Norris at the end of the day (in the rain!) to review those skills and got signed off to try again. There was still one more day left in WoT 2020, and I was scheduled to redo those skills on Friday afternoon. Unfortunately, Mother Nature had other ideas, and Friday dawned with the weather guessers forecasting rain all day. Since everyone was pretty tired from the week, the group made the executive decision to cancel ops for the day. As it turned out, it was a beautiful day all day, but such is life. For me personally, WoT 2020 ended on a very disappointing note. I badly wanted the parallelism of my first flight at WoT 2018, my first solo at WoT 2019, and my certificate at WoT 2020. It appealed to my sense of order, but it was not meant to be. Thankfully, I didn't have to wait too long to redeem myself. The next weekend, following Ben Bierstine's successful check ride (and following a rain squall that we waited out), I got my certificate! The weekend after that, I took Andrew up as my first official passenger.

Now, this is my anecdotal perspective of three WoTs, but sometimes numbers can tell a story as well as, if not better than, words. Out of curiosity, I did some calculations on my instructional flights. I had 86 instructional flights before I got my certificate. I have flown with twelve different SSC instructors. Piet is actually the instructor I flew with the most, for 24 (or 28%) of my instructional flights. He is closely followed by Chris N., who I flew with for 18 (or 21%) of my instructional flights. That's



almost half of my flights between the two of them! The top four are rounded out by Chris Z. and Ron Wagner. Now, since Piet and Chris Z. aren't actually on the schedule that much to instruct during normal operations, it made me wonder what portion of my flights happened at a WoT. After a few more calculations, it turns out that 43 out of my 86 instructional flights, or exactly 50%, happened during a WoT. That really drove home to me how important the WoT is for instruction. As it was, it took me just over two years after my first flight to get my certificate. Had I not been able to get that concentrated burst of training during three WoTs, it



would have taken me over four years, given the frequency with which I was able to fly during normal operations. The pace of operations and the ability to bond with other club members are unparalleled, and I'll always be a strong supporter of the WoT.

>Stephanie Zilora



### CONGRATULATIONS!

Another WoT success story! Nick Leonard completed his training and practical exam on October 8 for his private pilot glider rating! Well done (and to his recommending instructor, Chris Norris, as well).



Nick, shown here expressing his gratitude to Piet Barber, benevolent overlord of the FAA (and the DPE examiner.)



### SSEF NEWS UPDATE, October 2020

The Skyline Soaring Education Foundation (SSEF) ([www.ssefva.org](http://www.ssefva.org)) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 2010 with a mission "to promote aviation education for young adults, by providing an opportunity to participate in the sport of soaring." The foundation has been strongly supported by Skyline Soaring Club over the years in terms of SSEF board leadership, financial support,

and flight training activities. The SSEF board main responsibilities are to promote fundraising, and award/manage scholarships.

One of the earlier recipients (2017), Elise Wheelock, is now a Piper Product



Marketing Specialist and the youngest certified M600 pilot in the world!

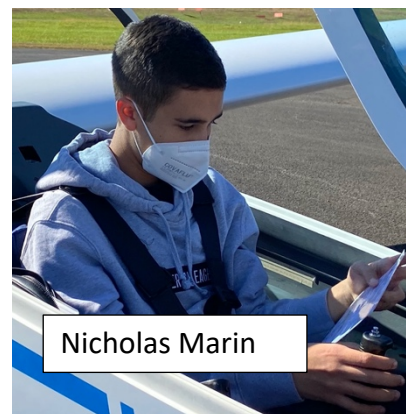
The two most recent scholarship awardees for 2020



are Nicholas Marin and Mia Anderson. Past scholarship alumni include Ryan Trexel, Julia McGee, Ava Dunphy, Andrew Melanson and Max McGowan. All of these scholarships have been supported by generous donations to the foundation - mostly

from SSC membership. Scholarships are awarded to applicants who are 13-1/2 to 25 years old and provide

membership to the SSA for one year, a copy of the Glider Pilot Handbook, and cover up to 35 instructional flights (or solo). All of the scholarship



flight training to date has been supported by Skyline Soaring Club. Scholarship applications are available on the SSEF website and are considered on a rolling basis as funds allow. The scholarship application can be found on the SSEF website.

This year, a SSEF Memorial Scholarship in the name of Ryan Trexel has been established by his grandfather, Mr. Ralph Sharpe. Club members have also recently donated \$800 to SSEF in Ryan's memory. The Trexel scholarship will enable the SSEF to support one scholarship award per year - more information about Ryan and his love for flying can be found on the SSEF website (<http://ssefva.org/ryan-trexel-memorial-soaring-scholarship/>).

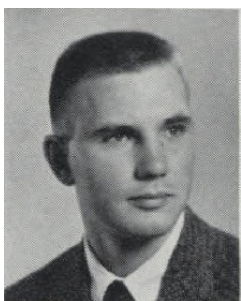
The SSEF board of directors thanks outgoing president Shane Neitzey for his service over the past three years and welcomes new board member Chris Zaboji. The current SSEF directors (all SSC members) are Craig Bendorf, president; Bryant Smith, treasurer; Joe Lingeitch, secretary; Ken Ring, website and Chris Zaboji.

Donations to the SSEF can be made to:

SSEF Donations  
 ATTN: Bryant Smith, Treasurer  
 11762 Gascony Place  
 Woodbridge, VA 22192



### THE GRAND MASTER RETIRES!



It's time ...to hang'em up. I ain't no spring chicken and this ain't stamp collecting! During my time with SSC, I've had the good luck of shepherding a lot of folks through the beginning phases of glider-flying. It's provided me with much fun, good memories

and, yes, some self-satisfaction. I wish the club and its members every success in the future as it eventually emerges from these tough times. Soaring is a great hobby and sport; progress within it and respect it.

>Bob Sallada



### FREE TO A GOOD HOME!

NG is getting an instrument panel upgrade, if anybody is interested in these retiring items let me know. The

PCAS (top box in the photo) sits on the glare shield with Velcro, runs on two AA batteries, warns if anybody with a transponder



gets within a few miles and reads out the altitude difference, it is often my first warning that there is somebody nearby. The Cambridge 302/303 takes a 12v power supply, pitot and static inputs, uses included GPS to figure winds and navigation data with final glide and speed to fly, also has a wiring harness to connect to an Oudie. Both work fine and have served well, let me know if you are interested in either.

>John Noss



### ON TO 10,000

2020 had not been good to me for flying with Skyline Soaring and I was beginning to contemplate hanging up my logbook. Fortunately, Piet Barber and his crew gave me the opportunity to dust off my doubts and skills with the Week of Training in October, deftly monikered "OctoWot" (among other things).

The plan was to get enough flights in with an instructor to regain the skills lost over almost a year of inactivity and the confidence to pilot a glider safely. Thanks to Chris Norris those goals were worked on. At the safety meeting on Wednesday, it was observed that conditions were prime for wave flights. I always thought that wave flying was for the super pilots in the hot private ships going to unimaginable altitudes through rotor and coming back with frostbite and tales of epic conditions. But for me, in a club ship, on a training flight - no way.

Hugh McElrath towed Chris and me to 4000 feet with the Husky, which was an adventure in itself. I remarked to Chris that it was going to take a long time to get to the

drop off altitude as it was really bumpy on the tow. I guess that should have given me a clue as to what was to come. Was this the rotor those intrepid wave pilots talked about? To me, it was just super bumpy, getting slack line in the rope, having the instructor yelling from the back “slack line, take care of it!”. My clumsy attempt at taking out the slack resulted in a resounding call from the back “Nope!”.

We dropped off at Signal Knob, another landmark those bold pilots in the private glass ships talk about after soaring for hours and hours. When the variometer first chirped, I turned the plane in hope of coring that thermal and impressing the instructor with my thermaling skills. The voice from the back said that it wasn't a thermal, it was WAVE. So, we turned around and pointed the nose of the plane into a westerly direction and, lo and behold, the variometer kept chirping. Now the questions started popping into my head. Is there an optimal direction to



point the plane? How do I know what that direction is? Is it better to the right, or left, or should I stay where I am?

Another new experience was viewing the ridge disappearing below but not in a lateral sense, just a vertical one. Five thousand, six thousand and when I looked down, we were roughly in the same spot over the ridge that we had been for the past ten or fifteen minutes. Seven thousand feet marked a new altitude height for me in gliders, last achieved in thermal conditions back when Skyline was located at the New Market airport. Wow! Eight thousand, nine thousand, I asked Chris if he noted our take off time. He said that Stephanie – the DO – would call us back if we overstayed our allotted use of the club ship.

Finally, as we neared the vaunted ten thousand MSL altitude the variometer was still chirping but not as enthusiastically as before. I feared that it was going to be close but no cigar for this one. Chris said “let me fly for a minute” and took over the controls. Ninety-nine

hundred, ninety-eight hundred, ninety-seven hundred, I could see my precious altitude slipping away. But then the variometer came back to life with a renewed vigor. Chris said “your plane, hold it here”. Back up we went and finally broke through the rarefied ten-thousand-foot barrier.

Chris then broke my reverie and announced that we have to head back to KFRR. “Pull the spoilers, practice your slips, do whatever it takes to lose altitude” were my instructions. The ride down was another experience, bumpy, the glider shaking and rattling, not at all in my comfort zone. Chris got us back on the ground after a flight of 1:11. One hour plus going up less than ten minutes coming back down. Whew!

So, what did I learn? Pay attention to the weather. Wave doesn't have to occur in the dead of winter in the mountains and thermals aren't limited to beautiful days full of fluffy cumulous clouds. When one finds oneself in conditions of lift, look around for better lift. I was content with my two and three hundred foot per minute gains, but there was probably something better to the left or right or farther ahead; I should have looked for it.

Has my love for soaring been renewed? You bet it has!

Thank you, Piet Barber, for spearheading the OctoWot. Thanks to all the folks that came out to make it a success – Chris Norris, Andrew Neilson, Hugh McElrath, Eric van Weezendonk, Stephanie Zilora, Chris Carswell, Allison Diaz, et al. The next time Skyline announces a Week of Training, I will be there.

>Ralph Vawter



#### BOARD NOTES

Keith Hilton, Secretary

Your Board met on 15 October via Zoom teleconference. It had been a while since the Board was treated to reports from all the Club Chiefs and Meisters, so I requested the reports for this meeting.

Steve Rockwood reported that the Club is still financially viable. The Board discussed payback of interest on the member loans for ASK-21 N321K. The Club was able to save some interest by paying down the member loans after the sale of the Grob.

Tim Moran noted the Club currently has 97 active members including two new SSEF students, four new Introductory members, and one new Probationary member. The Club lost three Full members, two Introductory members, and one Probationary that all decided to leave the Club.

The Board unanimously approved a motion to resume providing FAST flights following the same guidelines that we followed before the pandemic. FAST flight will be coordinated through Tim Moran and Jim Kellett and be limited to two per weekend.

There are currently 35 individuals on the wait list for instruction. Now that the Club is back to "normal" operations, the Board unanimously approved a motion to accept five students from the wait list.

Chirs Carswell asked the Board to consider several changes to the Club Operations manual. The Board voted to make the following changes to the Operations manual:

Chief DO Chris Carswell recommended the following changes to paragraph 1.7 *Appointed Officers which were approved:*

### **1.7 Appointed Officers**

*Certain operational positions are filled by appointment by the Board of Directors or its delegates. The Chief Tow Pilot, Chief Instructor, Chief Duty Officer, Membership Officer and Safety Officer must be Full members. All other roles may be filled by Full, Probationary, Family, Student or Service members meeting the other qualifications and approvals as described below.*

#### **1.7.8 Chief Duty Officer**

*The Chief Duty Officer (CDO) is appointed by the Board of Directors and shall oversee all Duty Officers; and maintain the Duty Officer training program. The CDO will coordinate with the Membership Officer to periodically assess when members should be considered for assignment as Duty Officers or Assistant Duty Officers.*

John Noss provided the latest operational statistics. As of the 15 October meeting, the Club had flown around 820 glider flights compared to over 1,300 for the same time last year. The two ASK-21s racked up 624 of those flights. It should be also be noted that Andrew Neilson has towed around 225 gliders and Chris Norris has provided training for around 125 student flights. Behind Andrew and Chris were Hugh McElrath towing 135 gliders and Piet Barber instructing for around 62 training flights.

John Noss, as Chief Flight Instructor, noted that slightly better than half of instructors are continuing to instruct at meaningful levels. Piet Barber and Chris Norris got a lot of instruction done at the recent week of flying.

John expressed that everybody needs to understand that Covid19 mitigation procedures remain important

The Board briefly discussed installation of an ADS-B transponder in the Sprite. The Club doesn't have the funding at this time, and the Discus should be the priority for an ADS-B transponder.

The Board determined to divest itself of the Honda four-wheeler. There was a concern that if a Club member got injured riding the ATV without a helmet the Club could be held responsible for not enforcing VA law.

Chris Norris noted that the handling characteristics of the Sprite are much different than the ASK-21 trainers. He and Piet Barber suggested that the Board consider adding a PW-5 to the fleet, using the hangar space now occupied by the Sprite and possibly moving the Sprite to a tie down (or selling it). As an aside, he mentioned one was for sale on W&W, for less than \$20K. The Board agreed to take up this topic at a future Board meeting.

Erik van Weezendonk, as Safety Officer, noted that Rock (the new airport manager) doesn't have a problem with us using the grass to land on. That being said, Virginia DoT probably would have a problem with that. So....we need to reiterate that it's an option, but not to be referred to as a runway.



Erik suggested that Members stop trying to land so close to the threshold and some suggestions to provide markings in the grass as better aim points was discussed.

I installed new K2 batteries in N341KS and John Noss updated the weight and balance charts. The forward cockpit electronic vario in N321K display has a burn spot in it. If our spare vario is repairable, I will replace it. I have to send the spare vario in for repairs.

Web master Piet Barber noted that the operating system that the club website is using has come to an end of life at the end of the month. He will need to migrate the club webserver to a new virtual machine at the same provider. The upgrade will take a day. The setup will take a day. The new monthly fee will be 20 dollars a month, compared to the current rate of 28 dollars a month. (Yes, that's less). He'll need to make the request to set up the new virtual machine in the next few days, or I won't have enough time to do the upgrade intelligently. The upgrade will not remove any old features, and won't have any new features right away. However, with the newer operating system, it makes it easier to do some new technologies to modernize our website.



**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](http://www.skylinesoaring.org)

Jim Kellett - *President*

*Directors*

Brian Clark  
Bill Burner  
Evan Dosik  
Jim Perlmutter  
Ken Ring  
Dick Garrity - *Ex officio*

Keith Hilton - *Secretary*  
Steve Rockwood - *Treasurer*

John Noss - *Chief CFI*  
Shane Neitzey - *Chief Tow Pilot*  
Chris Carswell - *Chief Duty Officer*

Erik van Weezendonk - *Safety Officer*

Tim Moran - *Membership Officer*  
Ken Ring - *Hangar Meister*  
Ertan Tete - *Field Computer Meister*

Mike Ash - *Duty Roster Chief*  
Piet Barber - *Webmaster*

Brian Clark - *Assistant Webmaster*  
Jim Kellett - *Newsletter Editor*  
David Collier - *Tow Vehicle Meister*  
Andrew Neilson - *Tow Plane Chief of Maintenance*  
Peter Melenson - *Club A&P*

Keith Hilton - *ASK-21 (N321K & N341KS) Meister*

Evan Dosik - *ASK-21 (N321K) & Grob Meister*  
Guido Kramp / Rob Jacobson - *Discus Meister*  
Peter Ross - *Sprite Meister*  
Matt Vosika - *Organizations Liaison Officer*