

*Newsletter of the Skyline Soaring Club for October, 2021*



**ADM WORKS FOR PARTIES, TOO!**

A humorous example of Aviation Decision Management (ADM) goes like this:

When two or more pilots are standing around on the ramp trying to decide if the winds are safe enough to fly . . . the decision has already been made.

Many of us were really looking forward to celebrating the Club's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in November – for sure yours truly was! But . . . when six or more Board members debate whether or not such a gathering would be safe, given the changing knowledge of the risk of COVID. . . then the decision has already been made!

So, safety first – no party in November. But stay tuned, because the Board's constantly reviewing the state of pandemic, and hoping to set it up later – possibly in the spring of 2022.



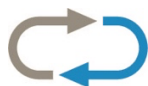
**DEE'S FIRST SOARING FLIGHT**

Joel Hough

September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Dee and her husband (Jim) showed up to inquire about power lessons at Front Royal Airport, while I was finishing up making tow ropes. She wanted to resume her flying lessons that she took when she was 35 while working at NASA. I asked her and her husband if they wanted to fly a

glider as the ASK-21 321K X-ray was parked with no customers. They debated about it a little while and Dee came back stating that she would like to fly in a glider. So the do you weigh more than 154 pounds question was asked, and 12 foot plates and a 15 pound back plate of ballast was installed. Next a seating orientation was given with how to latch and unlatch the seatbelts, and latch and unlatch the canopy.

A 4000 foot tow was requested. The release occurred at 3200 feet in a thermal over the ridge and the flight included soaring around for 51 minutes and a maximum height of 4800 feet. During the flight, she commented on the quietness of the flight and enjoyed turning and climbing in thermals. She agreed that it was a beautiful day. We started at the ridge thermal and returned to it once, then flew out to Front Royal and around the area North of the airport. She was too nervous that the stick was different than the yoke of a Cessna, and I decided not to push the issue as she was enjoying looking back and forth at the gliders on tow, gliders in the air, the tow plane returning to land, soaring birds, cumulus clouds and land marks such as the quarry. After landing, the ASK-21 was removed from the runway and the tail dolly attached. The brisk walk back to the tie down area included Dee saying how much she loved her flight. Dee and Jim had offered to pay, I said maybe they could donate \$50 or something to the Skyline Soaring Educational Foundation. Dee wrote a generous check for well over the recommended \$50. I think she will be back for soaring lessons.



### SEPTEMBER KUDOS

Ralph Vawter

We all have to give a great big shout out to the crew that made the Week of Training possible, especially Piet Barber for being the driving force behind this

great event. This event could not have happened without the assistance of Stephanie Zilora as the DO every day; Peter Ross and Justin Mensen performing the ADO work; Tom Ward, Andrew Neilson, Hugh McElrath and Richard Good towing when the winch was not in use. The real workhorses of the WOT were Piet and Chris Norris providing the instruction. Piet sat in the instructors' seat for over 60 flights and Chris instructed for more than 35 flights. Congratulations to all!!

Speaking of the WOT, the following pilots earned the winch endorsement to add to their Private Certificate: Mia Anderson, Peter Ross, Richard Good, Hugh McElrath, Tom Ward, Carlos Troncoso and Uwe Jettmar. Kudos to each of you!

And again, our young superstar – Caleb Smith – earns another star of recognition. Caleb has passed the written portion of the certification program and has purchased the Bob Wander book on taking the checkride. Caleb also garnered the FOD on 9/18 with a flight lasting 1:52, which also earned him a SSA "C" Badge. Congratulations, Caleb!



### I HAVE CONTROL . . . OR DO I?

Allison Diaz

Last August, the owner of an RV-6 airplane departed on a flight with another pilot to test a newly-installed multi-function display (MFD) unit. The owner, who had about 2,000 hours of flight experience, was seated in the right seat, and the other pilot, who had about 300 hours, was seated in the left seat. The left seat pilot conducted the takeoff, after which the owner took control and completed some turns at altitude while the left seat pilot calibrated the MFD. After this, both pilots thought that the other was flying. As they returned to the airport, the airplane descended below 500 ft

agl, nearly impacting the ground twice. On both occasions, the left seat pilot pulled up before the airplane crashed, but then let go of the controls, thinking that the owner was flying the airplane. As the airplane descended uncomfortably close to the ground a third time, the owner yelled, "Pull up!" but there was not enough time for either pilot to react before the airplane impacted a soybean field and nosed over. While climbing out of the wreckage, apparently still flummoxed by what had just occurred, the owner asked the other pilot, "Why in the world were you doing that?" The left seat pilot reported after the accident that he had attempted to share his concern about the airplane's low altitude in a "non-threatening way." He could not understand why the owner was flying so low, not saying anything, and wondered if he was "messing with him." (NTSB Accident #ERA20CA298)

The FAA lists the positive exchange of flight controls as a special emphasis item for every practical test, from private pilot all the way to ATP, stating, "There must never be any doubt as to who is flying the aircraft." The positive exchange of controls is introduced to student pilots starting on day one of flight training, as it is critical for safety in the instructional environment, but it is equally important (if not more so) when two fully qualified pilots are flying together. A simple, "your controls" or, "I've got the airplane" by either one of the pilots in this accident would likely have prevented the above accident.

This accident also highlights a serious communication problem between the two pilots on board. In statements provided after the accident, both pilots expressed that they were concerned by the other's decision making/flying, but chose not to say anything, or if they did say something, it was vague and non-specific. A breakdown of communication was a contributing factor in many major airline accidents, including [Tenerife](#), [Eastern Air Lines Flight 401](#), [United Airlines Flight 173](#), and [Air Florida Flight 90](#). Accidents like these ultimately

resulted in the integration of crew resource management (CRM) training to reduce accidents caused by human error-type accidents. One of the major tenets of CRM is open communication amongst the crew and fostering an environment where any crew member at any time can raise safety concerns without dismissal or repercussions.

The failure of both of the pilots onboard the RV-6 to speak directly to their concerns about the safety of the flight resulted in a very real accident that destroyed an airplane and could easily have been fatal; but the fact that they both allowed the airplane to almost crash two times without discussing what was going on reveals just how difficult it can be to assert oneself. It's easy to fall into the traps of trusting that the guy/gal with more experience or a higher rank knows what they're doing (this is called an "authority gradient" in the human factors world); of not wanting to look like a wuss by speaking up; or adopting an attitude of invulnerability – "this is probably fine...I'm sure they've done this before and nothing happened."

I mentioned this accident to Piet on my CFI-G checkride, and confessed that I would likely be hesitant to speak up in the hypothetical scenario that I was flying with him in QQ and became uncomfortable with something about the flight. After all, Piet has decades of experience, thousands of glider flights, and QQ is his glider. But Piet reacted like the safety-minded professional that he is and stated that he would hope and appreciate that I (or anyone who flew with him) would say something if they had questions or concerns. This is the right attitude!

Let's continue to foster an excellent safety culture here at Skyline. Although we may not be operating with the structure of a flight crew in a transport category aircraft, the principles of CRM remain applicable. It's the reason that we say that anyone can call for a "time out" at any time; whether that's an instructor, a student, an ADO, a DO, or if you're

just hanging out and telling your friends lies about your soaring exploits. In the words of Keith Hilton, if you see anything “dumb, different, or dangerous,” speak up! On a day out at the airport, we’re all crew members, and we all can monitor and contribute to the safety of operations.



## MEET THE MEMBER – HUGH MCELRATH

Interview by Marcelo Morichi

### When did you join SSC? How did you learn about the club?

A: I joined at the beginning of 2008. I was partners in the “ultralite trike” (powered hang-glider) that is based at FRR, but I saw these sleek white shapes going by and decided to investigate what was going on at the other end of the runway.

### How long have you been a glider pilot? Where did you learn to fly gliders?

A: I finally did my checkride on 21 July 2010. All of my training was done at SSC.

### What ratings do you have?

A: Private pilot  
airplane single  
engine land and  
glider; sport  
pilot  
weight shift  
control land;  
lapsed  
advanced  
hang-glider  
pilot and  
intermediate  
paraglider  
pilot; lapsed  
tandem instructor in hang-glifters.



Launching hang-glider at The Pulpit, McConnellsburg, Pennsylvania. Last one to get off as wing ramped up - blowing about 19. Flew 25 miles to near Camp David.

### When did you fly for the first time? What do you remember about that experience?

A: Well, I got to ride in a regularly scheduled Piedmont Airlines DC-3 to my grandparents’ funeral when I was 12... Then a man from the church took me up in a Cessna once - we lived right next to the secondary airport in Louisville, Kentucky. I would ride my bike over and mooch around in the hangars. (So I was already hooked.) In college, I took a couple of parachute jumps, but was really interested in what the pilot of the jump plane was doing...

### How long and what is your commute like to the airport (routes you take, time you leave home, any favorite places to stop along the way?)

A: It’s a solid hour and 45 minutes to FRR from my home in Hyattsville around the Beltway and out 66, so I have to leave by 6 to make an 8 o’clock show time. \*Always\* stop at the rest area near Cub Run. When I was breaking in as a tow pilot we rented an octagonal pedestal cabin in Linden, which cut the commute to 20 minutes. Now we have a retirement place in Thomas, West Virginia, which isn’t any closer than Hyattsville, but there’s less traffic and the views are spectacular. It’s also more convenient for week of training at Petersburg... Sometimes I fly my motor glider to/from FRR in 50 minutes. By the time you factor in the pre-flight, etc. you don’t really save time, but it’s beautiful. I try to avoid flying back in late day thunderstorms or approaching darkness...

### Who were/are your mentors are SSC?

A: Bob Sallada was my first glider instructor, but I started taking lessons with whomever was the duty instructor. This became a problem when I scheduled my check ride: no one instructor felt he knew me well enough to sign me off, but Piet Barber rescued me the day before the check ride. When we were out at the field at midnight working some administrative detail, we saw a black bear running across the airfield...

**What do you like the most about flying in the Front Royal area?**

A: It's just the most beautiful area with the Massanutten and Blue Ridges. I flew hang- and paragliders here too, so it feels like home.

**What is your more memorable glider flight? When did it happen? Why do you remember it?**

A: Top of mind is riding along with Piet at the Region 2 contest earlier this summer. Getting to see and understand the system of 7 named ridges around Mifflin Country, Pennsylvania - and the confidence that the pilot of a high-performance glider develops for actually going places in a glider - was a revelation.

**Any close calls? If so, please provide a brief description.**

A: Heh, heh - I think I've made every bone-head error in the book: launching without locking the spoilers in the Sprite, launching with canopy unlocked in the Sprite, launching with spoilers unlocked in a two-seater (with a front-seat passenger). Last year, I was giving a ride to an 8-year-old in my Pipistrel touring motor glider over Linden when I noticed I could not develop full RPM - the propeller pitch control had failed. There was at least some thrust because we made it the 9.5 miles to FRR - arriving too high, of course. Had to do S-turns with full spoilers to get down in the last third of the runway.

**When did you become a tow pilot and who taught you the ropes?**

A: I initially attempted to learn in the Husky ten years ago, before I had even finished training in gliders, but it was too much all at once. After a couple hundred hours' tail-dragger time in my motor glider, the Husky became easier to land. Shane Neitzey as Chief Tow Pilot was my towing instructor.

**What do you like about towing gliders?**

A: You get to fly all day! For free! It takes a lot of concentration (it's repetitive; the challenge is to stay alert). You get to fly two different interesting airplanes. Sometimes you can find a thermal and tow up in it...

**Please tell us about any challenging or memorable tow flight?**

A: Operating at Burner Field and at Petersburg are interesting because you are landing on the grass. The high tempo of operations at Petersburg resembles that of a contest.

**What do you do for a living (or did, if you are retired)?**

A: I was in naval intelligence for 30 years, then finished up with one of the Department of Energy national laboratories as a DC area manager.

**Where did you grow up?**

A: Louisville, Kentucky. My father was a professor and we had sabbatical years in Bologna, Italy and Oxford, England, which enriched my educational experience.

**What do you like the most about SSC?**

A: In addition to the camaraderie, I am pleased with SSC's focus on training, including the SSEF scholarship program. The safety culture of the club, including the excellent maintenance of the gliders and tow planes, is encouraging.

**What's on your gliding bucket list?**

A: I hope to break into the cross-country flying game - in a step-wise fashion. I would like to experience the big air out west - and at Omarama, New Zealand.

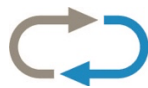
**What do other members might not know about you?**

A: In the Navy, I was stationed in Japan, where I got my power license, and Naples, Italy - where I met my wife. She's also from Louisville, Kentucky. Our first date was flying in a Supercub from the Navy

flying club over Vesuvius, down to Amalfi, over to Capri and back. In 2012, Sallie got a temporary Foreign Service assignment in Manila. I was a “Lucky Bugger” (unemployed ex-pat following wife’s professional career), flew light sport airplanes and paragliders a lot.

**What would you tell a student pilot who struggles to see the light at the end of the tunnel?**

A: If it was easy, anybody could do it - but nothing has ever given me more satisfaction than learning to fly.



**SUMMARY OF BOARD ACTIONS**

Keith Hilton, Secretary

Our Board of directors held ZOOM teleconference meetings 15 July, 2 September, and 23 September. Various Club members have made presentations and attended the meetings.

The Board continues to use caution in the protection of our Members from COVID-19. It is a personal decision to wear masks if individuals are fully vaccinated. The current position would remain in place until further guidance from the CDC or state.

The Club financial situation remains sound. We have over \$94,000 in the bank. Those funds are broken out into the following “funds:” \$36K engine, \$9K tow plane recovering, \$6.5K operating reserve, \$19K capital investment, \$10.5K avionics and we have \$12K in cash reserves.

There was an extensive discussion on setting up of QuickBooks and hiring a QuickBooks expert to help set up the financial program to better serve the Club needs.

Hiring the expert (less than \$1,000) to help our treasurer, Ralph Vawter, with the setup of a Club “Cloud” version QuickBooks program. Brian Clark took the action to research moving the Club’s QuickBooks to the “Cloud” and to present a proposal to the Board at the next meeting.

Our Membership Officer, Tim Moran, noted that we currently have 107 members plus 45 prospective members on the student wait list. Chief CFI John Noss and Membership Officer Tim Moran recently accepted an additional five students.

Seventeen students have flown this year and five new student members have not flown yet. Another 10 student members have not flown this year and are considered ‘inactive students’. A few more new student members are on the way; as their applications are processed, then we will reevaluate, with intent to see how far we can get on drawing down the wait list without breaking the student load.

The Board postponed the Burner Away/Family Day until 9 October – with a backup date of 16 October 2021

The suggestion to retrofit the Gators with permanently mounted radios was not implemented because there were no functional surplus radios available.

The consensus of the Board was to continue the current policy that individuals could opt out being rostered for duty if they had COVID concerns.

Chris Norris brought to the attention of the Board that several Club members expressed support for replacing the Sprite with a PW-5 which would be a much better



transition ship from the ASK-21 than the Sprite and would also fit in the Sprite's slot in the hangar. The PW-5 has fixed landing gear, isn't a high performance cross-country ship, but is an excellent single-pilot glider. 42 club members responded to a recent survey to get a sense of their opinions; of the respondents, 29 (70%) were in favor of selling the Sprite and replacing it with a newer glider and 31 respondents (75%) were in favor of purchasing a PW-5.

The Board asked Chris Norris to spearhead the search effort for a PW-5. If a worthy PW-5 is located, Chris would return to the Board for authorization to go forward with purchasing the glider.

With regard to managing Club debt, Ralph Vawter confirmed that the Club still owes members \$32,000 for the purchase of N321K and repays members' loans at approximately \$2,000 per quarter. The loans will be fully paid off in September 2025. The Board's consensus was that the \$19K in the capital investment account should be used to pay down the interest-bearing loans on N321K and securing zero-interest loans from members to purchase a PW-5. This was supported in a unanimous vote to "rebalance Club debt" during the possible PW-5 acquisition.

The possible confusion on how to log a glider flight where an instructor was along as a "passenger" was resolved by confirming that an instructional flight will only be logged when the Club member asks for an instructional flight.

The Board approved the Fall Week-Of-Training for 13 – 17 September at Petersburg (W99) coordinated by Piet Barber, Chris Norris, and Chris Carswell. Piet and Chris also coordinated winch launch training for this Week-Of-Training.

The Board asked Matt Vosika, and he accepted, the Board's nomination to fill a vacancy on the Warren

County Airport Commission if we could work through the non-Warren County resident issue but he was not selected by the Commission to fill the latest. However, there is another opening coming and he may be selected to fill that position.

After an extensive discussion of various aspects of tow rope management (Dacron vs. poly, weak links, splices, etc.), the consensus of the Board was to let Joel Hough, as the tow rope meister, manage tow ropes.

The Board approved Tom Ward's request to use 9Y at the MASA contest on 2 – 9 October 2021.

With regard to "helpful family members" and guests assisting with recovery and staging of Club gliders, there were concerns that our insurance would not cover the damage if someone that was not a Club member caused damage to our equipment. The Board consensus was that we can maintain the *status quo* as long as the "helpful" people are supervised by a club member. For example they can drive the Gator to tow gliders, push gliders out to the runway (by pushing on the wing root only), and can assist with removing gliders from the hangar and returning them to the hangar after Club operations. The Board recommends that such helpers also take the SSA Wing Runner's Course.

The Board approved the request by MASA to provide a tow plane as a backup during the R4N contest 4 – 8 October 2021. MASA provides accommodations for the tow pilot and pays for repositioning and all tows. Andrew Neilson volunteered to fly one of the tow planes to MASA and stay the week to offer back up tows if required.

The Safety Officer, Ron Wagner, was asked by the Board to get a written statement from the PIC involved in the gear up landing of the Discuss during the WoT. A review of the incident, and recommendations from the Safety Officer would guide the Board in determining financial

responsibility. The Board also voted to have Nick Leonard Sr. (an A&P mechanic with expertise in repairing fiber glass gliders) repair the Discus, which should cost the Club much less than having a commercial shop make the repairs. Piet Barber has ordered a gear warning horn for the Discus to prevent gear-up landings in the future.

The Board accepted Mike Christensen's offer to use his hangar for nine weeks beginning the last week of October while his airplane is gone for extensive maintenance. The hangar will be used to store the Husky allowing the Discus to remain assembled and stored in the Husky hangar. The Club would compensate Mike at the going rate for use of his hangar.

It has been some time since the Club's Strategic plan was updated. The Board will take action to address the Strategic plan this Winter. If you have recommendations, or would like to participate, please let a Board member know.

The Board approved Ron Wagner to keep working with Rock Skowbo in changing the traffic pattern at Front Royal to keep gliders on the North side of the field and powered aircraft on the South of the field regardless of which runway is in use. There have been some close calls when powered traffic was not following the traffic pattern. Rock has discussed this with other airport residents, and they also thought

it made sense. Ron noted that the AWOS could broadcast the notice of change in traffic pattern. The Board approved Ron's proposal to work with Rock on establishment of a UNICOM at Front Royal which would allow Club members (most likely the DO) to provide "advisories" to incoming traffic. Our current practice of providing "advisories" to incoming traffic using a hand-held radio is technically illegal. Legal or not, do not hesitate to use a hand-held radio to broadcast advisories to prevent accidents!

The Board decided to postpone the Club's 30 Anniversary party until sometime in the Spring because of the uncertainty of members' participation due to COVID concerns and the financial implications to the club. A huge thank you to Mariam Ellis for working on arrangement and finding a venue for the celebration.

If you are interested in seeing the "sausage being made," the next Board meeting is scheduled for 4 November at 1830 via ZOOM. Just contact Brian Clark and he will provide you the link to the meeting.



**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)

Stephanie Zilora - *President*

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Evan Dosik  
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Erik von Weezendonk  
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Ron Wagner - *Safety Officer*  
Tim Moran - *Membership Officer*

Ken Ring - *Hangar Meister*  
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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 &*

*N34IKS) Meister*  
Evan Dosik - *ASK-21 (N321K) & Grob Meister*  
Guido Kramp / Rob Jacobson - *Discus Meister*  
Richard Good - *Sprite Meister*  
Matt Vosika - *Organizations Liaison Officer*