

Newsletter of the Skyline Soaring Club for September, 2021



SKYLINES



MEET YOUR FELLOW MEMBER

SYED ALI

Interview by Marcelo Morichi

1. When did you join SSC? How did you learn about the club?

A: I joined the Skyline Soaring club in the Spring of 2015.

I was searching for a new activity with my daughter, Maryam Ali. We discovered soaring videos from the Alps on YouTube. With no prior flying experience, I didn't even know that sailplanes exist. A casual internet search led us to Skyline Soaring club, and the rest is history.



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

A: I have been a glider pilot since 2015. I joined the Skyline Soaring club as a student. I wasn't in a rush to get a rating. Instead, I spent the next couple of years as a student, slowly settling into the flying rituals. This allowed me to take in all of the wisdom and insight Skyline's instructors have to offer.

3. What ratings do you have?

I hold a private pilot glider rating.

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

A: My first time on the controls came as a joyride experience in 2014 with a work colleague and friend who holds the powered rating. He learned about my interest in flying and offered to take me up. He rented a Cessna 172 from Leesburg airport, and we flew for an hour. The techie in me was overwhelmed with the whole experience, and I was hyper-focused on how everything ticked. I was offered the yoke a couple of times in the air, but I couldn't maintain the same pitch attitude no matter how hard I tried. It was a windy day, and the air turbulence didn't help. By the time we were back on the ground, I felt queasy, with little desire to do it again.

5. How long and what is your commute like to the airport

A: I live 60 miles away from the club, and almost all of it is spent on I-66. Besides stopping to get fuel for the car, I am generally needed at home to assist my ailing parent. In short, the average commute takes 50 minutes door to door from home to the club.

6. Who were/are your mentors are SSC?

A: I experienced my FAST ride with George Hazelrigg. On the same day, Keith Hilton offered to take me up as a passenger for the longest ride of over an hour. I still remember it well.

After I became a club member, Bob Sallada took me under his wings, and I often flew with him in the early learning stage.

As a new student, I took a slight detour and learned on the flight simulator with Shane Neitzey. It was a massive help to me. Upon my return to the field, I demonstrated flight maneuvers that were otherwise a struggle before.

I benefitted tremendously from the WoT at W99 in 2019 and instructions from Piet Barber and Chris Zaboji.

John Noss was always there to assist with flying and check-ride prep. In addition, I often flew with Jim Kellett and Piet Barber as a student. I flew with almost every instructor in my 2+ years as a student and I am forever indebted to them for the invaluable lessons learned.

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

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

A: Gliding in the Front Royal area offers opportunities to experience the three significant forms of lift: rising thermals, ridge, and wave. Not to mention, it features beautiful views from the sky.

To me, the most memorable glider flight was no less than a James Bond movie experience with all the thrill, except the loud music in the background. In October 2016, towards the end of my student years, Bob Sallada took me up for an experience flight on a wave day. We were the first to fly on this day, and the windsock was stiff with the 18+ knot winds blowing from the S and SW on the ground and straight from the W aloft. Theo Ten Haaf manned the tow-plane. Bob and I got situated in the club trainer, GROB 103-B. We hit the rotor heading NW from KFRR towards Signal Knob with unusual drops

and climbs along the way. Along the way, Bob hit his head on the Grob's rear canopy. I recall him saying that it was the first in his 11 years at the club. Here is how he expressed it in my SPR, "Strong/variable surface winds, prolonged head-thumpin turbulence, excellent wave."

We hit the wave soon after the release at altitude and climbed to 10,800 within no time at all. The moisture accumulation and deteriorating conditions on the ground made us dive for a hole in the clouds with the boards fully deployed. In the pattern entry area for Runway 28, the winds aloft were around 30+ knots. I proceeded to set up for landing, only to discover that the only way to keep from blowing away and climbing was to have the boards half-open and the glider face the Rocks to the West. At this point, Bob took over and made a slipping turn to the right in what appeared to be the half-circle from beam-to-numbers 10 to final Runway 28 in a flash. In Bob's words, "Extremely rough ride returning to [the] airport. I took control early and demoed a rather unconventional approach and landing necessitated by the conditions". We came in fast to offset the turbulence and landed without incident. Of course, that was expected with the Grob in Bob's capable hand for this last part of the flight. It was a lesson in flying that will be near impossible to duplicate. The flight lasted 34 minutes and made for an exhilarating and unforgettable ride.

9. Any close calls

A: A near stall on the turn to final was perhaps the close call that made for an unforgettable experience. I was flying "Sprite", the club glider SGS 1-36. My goal was to practice forward slips on the final approach. In hindsight, I probably thought about it too much, to the point where I stopped aviating.

As I completed the turn from base to final, the wind noise came to a complete stop. My eyes instinctively went to the airspeed indicator, where

the needle was fast approaching zero. The next instant, I leaned forward in my seat as much as the seatbelts would allow for it with the stick all the way forward, pleading for the nose to drop. It was right then that I felt the wings buffet, though the glider pitched forward with wings leveled. To my relief, the glider started to gain speed. Fortunately, I had enough altitude to allow the airspeed indicator to get to 40 mph to let the glider begin flying for me to then start pulling the stick back to reset and safely land in the grass safely area without incident.

On the ground, another glider was getting ready to push back. And Theo Ten Haaf was waiting for it in the tow plane on taxiway, watching my act unfold in plain sight. At the end of the day, while putting the gliders away, he stopped and asked why I dived on final. I shared the details with him. It was an extremely close call, and I am incredibly fortunate to be here to tell the story.

10. What do you do for a living?

A: I am the Engineering Lead at a small but promising startup called Airside Mobile. It entered the market with a popular mobile app for travelers called Mobile Passport Control (MPC). Besides building the team and overseeing product delivery, I enjoy hands-on contributions to the Backend team with Systems Design and bringing solutions to life. Before joining Airside Mobile, I enjoyed a brief stint at IETF as a contributor to standards documents and successful careers in the Telecommunications and Data communications area with different organizations.

11. Where did you grow up?

A: I was born and raised in the port city of Karachi, Pakistan.

12. What do you like the most about SSC?

A: We are a large family, and the camaraderie in the club is the best that it can be.

13. What's on your gliding bucket list?

A: I'd like to experience cross-country flying and participating in contests.

14. What do other members might not know about you?

A: There are four languages spoken in my home today: English, Urdu, Hindko, and Pashto. I am fluent in the first two. South Asia was a happening place a few hundred years ago, and people moved about for, among other things, trade and learning. My lineage spans three countries: northern Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.

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

For some club members, committing to a commercial school was the way to pass the check-ride. Conversely, I favored steady progress over fast-tracking the learning and made the most of my engagement with the CFGs at the club. A student should get together with an instructor and hash out which of the two paths will work best.

It is important that every student has a plan, a way to identify what they have learned and what work remains. When scheduling the time with the instructors, identify what to review from the time past plus what to work on next. The good news is that the learning plan is already baked and readily available to the students through the club website. If you haven't already, login into the club website and click on the "Students" link to get started.



THE AVIATORS

A Book Review by Jim Perlmutter

Trolling through the virtual Arlington Library I found an aviation book that required me waiting nearly a month on hold. The Aviators (2013), by the late Pulitzer Prize recipient, Winston Groom, a former Army Infantry Platoon leader in Vietnam, Washington Star reporter and author of Forrest Gump.

This wonderful read is about the most famous flyers of the first half of 20th century...Charles Lindberg, Eddie Rickenbacker. and Jimmy Doolittle. Interesting in that all three were born before the turn of the last century, had distant fathers, close mothers, were Army trained pilots, Barnstormers, flew the mail, World War I and II veterans, Reserve Officers, true aviation pioneers, national celebrities, eventually extremely wealthy, and all recipients of the Medal of Honor. Edward V. Rickenbacker, a pre WW-I Indianapolis race car winner and leading American Ace of WW-I, Charles A. Lindberg (The lone Eagle) first to cross the Atlantic in 1927, and James H. Doolittle, leading 16 B-25's off the aircraft carrier Hornet to bomb Japan, a mere four months after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Rickenbacker, a high school dropout, Lindberg a college dropout, and Doolittle a P.hD in aeronautical engineering (one of the first) were innovators and natural geniuses into the mechanics of flight. Between the wars each provided innovations for aircraft safety, navigation, and performance, creating airlines, as well as visiting Europe in the late 1930's.

All three predicted the potential of another war by observing German advances in aviation. When WW-II began each were well settled yet found themselves as active consultants to the Army and Navy for their expertise and reputation. The book also speaks to how these three distinguished aviators crossed paths between the wars, during WW-II and even afterwards. Although true heroes the book also delves into the personal life of the

three who weathered family loss, character assassination, and lost at sea survival. All three survived more than one air crash in their careers. I never detected, however, that either of them ever flew in a glider. It is 464 pages of fascinating reading available in hard cover/paper, Kindle and audio.



AUGUST KUDOS

By Ralph Vawter

Joel Hough – I have to give a shout out to Joel for his work as the tow rope Meister. Joel has raised the club’s awareness to tow rope condition and usage to a new level. Joel has been proactive and reactive to the clubs needs with safety and maintenance. The manual is a great tool for all members to evaluate, use and repair tow ropes. Bravo, Joel!

Caleb Smith – If you haven’t met this young phenom, take a minute to introduce yourself at the airport. Caleb is a SSEF scholarship recipient and soloed after 33 flights. He also claimed the Flight of the Day on 8/14 with a 42-minute flight. Caleb has his sights set on the Air Force Academy and a career as a commercial pilot. Pretty good for a 15 year old!



MATHEW MICHAEL LINGER

RIP



We recently learned from his mother that on August 26 Matt took his own life in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

As a teenager in 2012, Matt received a scholarship from the Skyline Soaring Educational Foundation.

Through that scholarship, and subsequent membership sponsored by several Skyline members and by devoted and careful instruction, he made his first solo flight on July 3, 2016 after being endorsed by Shane Neitzey.



Matt’s short life was not easy. As a teenager, he was homeless on several occasions, and his autism made it difficult for him to navigate the normal life experiences, whether in school or in holding a job. Several Skyline members ‘took him under their wing’, providing occasional financial assistance,



lodging, and even a job in addition to mentoring him as a student pilot. His life was changed by flight instruction. Dealing with caring adults in an adult situation improved his self image to the point that his grades in high school improved. His enthusiasm for flying and helping around the field also affected the SSC members who worked with him.

Recently he survived a bout with cancer, and had moved to Texas at the invitation of an acquaintance to make a fresh start where he had found a job and moved from a shelter into his own apartment. He is sorely missed.



WELCOME BACK ROBB HOHMANN

After nearly ten years away from soaring, I returned to SSC August 29 as a probationary member. I had three good flights with Mr. Hazelrigg and was delighted to find I could still handle a glider on the ground and in the air. I want to extend my gratitude to the board for your vote to allow me back into the club after so much time away. I intend to be very active and give back to the club which has given so much to me in the past.

Jim Kellett and me on 26 August, 2011; moments after my first solo. One of the best days of my life.



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

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