

Newsletter of the Skyline Soaring Club for December, 2022

SKYLINES

PARTY!!

A Gathering of Eagles

Folks, our big gala celebration is coming soon now, on December 17, with a keynote speaker who was a U-2 pilot! It is going to be a fine holiday wrap-up for the year with your family & friends and a 31st anniversary celebration of who we are and the soaring we love to do. ***So sign up now by sending your reservation check for \$90 per person.***

Make Check out to: Skyline Soaring Club
Send to: Miriam Ellis
6918 Birkenhead Place
Gainesville, VA 20155



MUSCLE MEMORY IS FOREVER

Ron Wagner

How long does muscle memory last? I recently witnessed a demonstration of muscle memory working perfectly after 50 years of latency. In October, Bill Payne, who had not flown a glider in a half-century, gave me one of my coolest experiences flying gliders.

I've heard of Bill since 2005 when his daughter, Melanie Hughes, became a singer in my band, JoyRide. Picture Linda Ronstadt in voice, attitude, and stature.

When Melanie discovered I am a pilot, she told me her dad had been a Naval aviator who flew jets from carriers. Then he flew Boeing 727s for 26 years for American Airlines, retiring at the then-mandatory age of 60 in 1997. She figured we'd get along well, but Bill lives in New Jersey with Melanie's sister, so I never met him—until last month when he came for an extended visit with Melanie in Manassas.

When I heard he was here, I offered him a glider ride, and he accepted.

Bill and I have more in common than flying thousands of hours in 727s: he has his glider rating. But he earned it in Schweizer 2-33s and hadn't flown a glider in 50 years. Nevertheless, I was hoping Bill could fly a good bit of the ride.

At about 1,000 feet AGL, I gave him the controls, and he did well. However, he soon overcontrolled slightly on bank, and I took the controls to get us centered. I could see he had no



experience flying gliders with the massive wings on the ASK-21. We discussed the angular momentum of those beasts—compared to the frail, fabric-covered wings of a 2-33, and he “got it.” I took the controls two more times in the next 1,500 feet of climb to get us centered, but I could sense the rapid learning going on in the front cockpit. By 2,500 AGL, he was flying the aerotow as most club members do.

At age 85, Bill's 50-year absence from gliders didn't matter, but his vast aviation experience did. The bottom line is that the skills needed to fly an ASK-21 smoothly are more akin to flying a Boeing than they

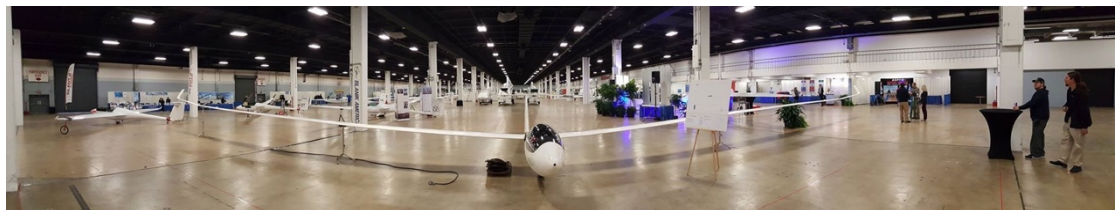
are to flying a 2-33. And muscle memory doesn't seem to disappear—it really is “like riding a bike.” Watching him adjust to an ASK-21 so quickly was an absolute joy.

There was no time to take Melanie for her first glider ride that day, but she saw enough that the following Monday, she put her name on the SSC student-pilot waiting list. She has flown tandem hang-gliding, paragliding, parasailing, aerobatics in a Cessna Aerobat, flew in a Stearman biplane at the Bealton Flying Circus, and she's even done bungee jumping. I look forward to the day she adds “soloed a glider” to her list of adventures. I promised Melanie I wouldn't mention her “height challenge” in this article, so I'll close by telling you to look for a feisty rock and roll singer on the ramp, and that will be her.



THE BIENNIAL GATHERING OF EAGLES AKA The SSA Convention

Yep, February 25 – 27 marks the return of the SSA convention in Reno, Nevada, postponed from 2022 because of the pandemic. Your editor (and one of his sons) is already registered!



I've been to many of these meetings since my first one in 1995, and look forward eagerly to see, chat, and schmooze with pilots from all over the world that I normally get to “see” only through the written word.

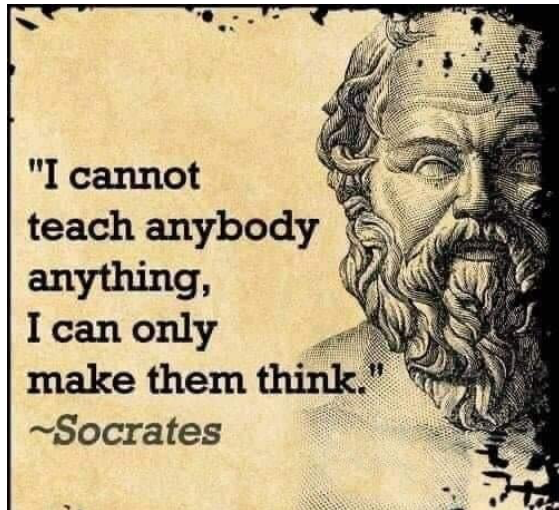
Oh, and not to mention getting to prowl for hours in the display hall, filled with millions of dollars worth of cool toys to drool over.

See <https://www.ssa.org/convention/> and get on board.



THE INSTRUCTOR'S MANTRA

Ron Wagner



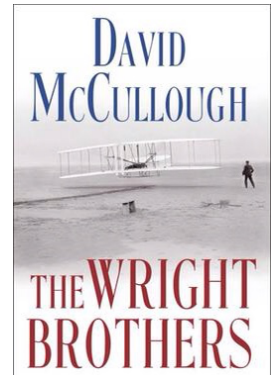
THE WRIGHT BROTHERS

A Book Review

Jim Perlmutter

As we approach our Anniversary-Holiday event on December the 17th, it's appropriate that we reflect that it was a 119 years ago to date that the Wright Brothers made their first powered flight. In that light I reread and highly recommend, two time Pulitzer Prize author, David McCullough's "The Wright Brothers" (2015). McCullough, a Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient, who passed away in August, authored 11 books, on personalities such as John Adams, Theodore Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and subjects as varied as the Brooklyn Bridge, the Panama Canal and the Revolutionary War. His most soothing and dignified voice narrated 15 documentaries including Ken Burns first production, The Civil War (1990). The work of course begins in

Dayton, Ohio, where Wilbur (older by five years) and Orville are even more than their well know bicycle business. Their father, an ecclesiastical Bishop, instilled In all of his five children, a driven work ethic, close family ties, and a constant desire for exploration and knowledge. Their fascination with motion, bird watching, and following the soaring trials of Otto Lillenthal in



Germany and reading all the latest on aerial pursuits of engineering wiz and hang gliding pioneer, Octave Chanute, and Samuel Langley, then director of the Smithsonian, eventually brought them to the windswept dunes of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in 1899. After four years of trial and failures with their own created bi-wing glider with a homemade engine, Orville made the 120 foot flight at 1035 on Thursday, December 17, 1903, and changed the world forever. The book follows the next ten years of improvements and trying to get US Government interest. European enthusiasm especially in France & Germany brought the brothers overseas with aerial demonstrations, flight instruction, and possible business opportunities. Finally by 1909, the US Army, with positive test flights at Ft. Myer, Virginia, insured a contract for production and a flight school at College Park, Maryland. Despite success, which never changed their midwest stoicism, eventual patent issues and lawsuits to competitors, especially Glenn Curtis, claimed an early death to Wilbur in 1912. Curtis use of ailerons vs the Wrights, wing-warping for flight maneuver was the big change and caused the eventual sale of the Wright Company. There are numerous books and articles on the Wright Brothers which are more technical in nature at the George Hazelrigg level. McCullough, however, had a knack of bringing the reader right in the room or Kill Devil Hills, where you learn all the idiosyncrasies of his subjects, including the weather, objects, mood, space and time. The book is 320 pages of quick reading and available in

hardback, kindle, audiobook, and your local library.

Just as an OBTW, earlier this month I was on a golf outing on the Outer Banks and visited the Wright Brothers National Memorial, my first visit since the early 70's. Significant improvements, a great visitor center, displays, markers and knowledgeable Park Rangers. Within the park there is now First Flight Airport (KFFA) with a 3,000 paved runway. I believe Mike Christiansen, recently paid respects to the Wrights on one his long cross country flight excursions. Also couldn't help but notice in all the early photos of the Wrights gliding and powered flights there is a wing runner next to the aircraft.



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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