

*Newsletter of the Skyline Soaring Club for June, 2023*



# ***SKYLINES***

**AOPA AIR SUPPORT NETWORK**  
**The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association**  
Ron Wagner

(AOPA) has a program called the Airport Support Network (ASN), under which AOPA members volunteer to be the AOPA liaison between pilots at their local airports and the AOPA. SSC member Ron Wagner has been the AOPA's ASN Representative for Dulles Airport for nearly 20 years. In all that time, he did not get a single call, which makes sense because few pilots who fly there have a question that an ASN Rep could help with.

Ron recently discovered that KFRR did not have an ASN Rep and got the AOPA to switch his status to become the ASN Rep for KFRR. He says that he'll be happy to go another 20 years without any calls for assistance, but if you have something you think the AOPA can help with, then feel free to pester him about it.

Here is the AOPA's description of the program, copied from the ASN Support page:

Pressure on public and privately owned airports continues to mount. This pressure takes many forms, including curfews, noise restrictions, lack of improvements, residential encroachment, and even calls to close the airport. The AOPA Airport Support Network provides the vehicle for AOPA members to work in conjunction with AOPA staff to preserve and protect airports across the United States. Our goal is to have an Airport Support Network (ASN) Volunteer at every public use airport in the United States.

Our Volunteers:

- Engage with airport management and local elected officials
- Promote the airports value in the community
- Protect America's community airports
- Provide a free beer keg for the pilot's lounge

Three of those are true.

For more information go to:

<https://www.aopa.org/advocacy/airports-and-airspace/airport-advocacy/asn>

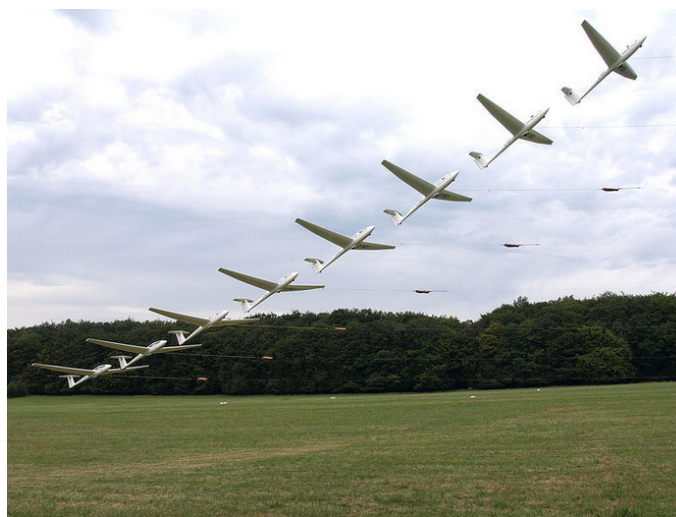


## ZERO TO 60 IN 3 SECONDS - WINCH LAUNCHES ANYONE? PART II

Anand Mohan

Thank you SSC members for indulging my ramblings on winch launches for gliders. To pick up the story from our May 2023 issue of Skylines...

A brief history of winching in these United States



### Side View Study of an ASK 21 Glider during Winch Launch

Winch-launching was actually a pretty common method of getting gliders aloft world over in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Post WWII, aero tow became the preferred method of getting gliders into the air in the USA owing to the availability of comparatively cheap fuel and cheap single-engine tow planes. Winch-launching fell by the wayside in the 1950's

although I'm told Gehrlein (yes, those guys who fixed our Discus) produced winches through the 1960's on a Chevy 283 chassis and later on Buick 410's. As gliders got heavier and 2-seat models came out, some manufacturers made winches on Chevy 464's and 502's but gradually owing to low demand the winches in the US became mainly homebuilt or imported.

Outside the USA, not having our cheap fuel and airplane availability, winching remained a common method of getting gliders airborne.

To this day Canada, the U.K., France, Germany, India, Australia and New Zealand (and I'm sure other countries that I have missed) have a rich tradition of using winches to launch gliders.

### The economics of winching

I haven't done any great data analysis, but anecdotally speaking, a winch launch seems to run an operator about \$15-20/launch. The *average* cost of a tow launch is about \$40, but that number takes a lot of factors into consideration, like different tow planes, various release altitudes, various release locations and cross-country aero tows.

I'm not trying to stir the pot here...each launch method has advantages and disadvantages beyond just the cost. Winch launches may look cheaper, but are usually to 1000-2000 AGL and the release point is about the same place each time. If there's no lift there, it's a sled ride! With a tow plane you have the ability to go where there the lift is (Ponds, Signal Knob...) and release at various altitudes. It is not an apples to apples comparison!

Just like the cost of a tow plane can be all over the place, the cost of a winch varies. A winch in Colorado Springs was up for sale at \$50K; another belt-driven winch in San Diego was being offered at \$32K and an older winch in Odessa TX was priced at \$30K. A British company called SkyLaunch currently

manufactures a SkyLaunch 2 Evolution model winch that is based on a GM V8 Mk VI that can run on gasoline or LPG. Earlier SkyLaunch winches were used in the USA – with an EPA waiver in lieu of an approval-but have fallen out of favor.



### Outside, Controls and Cab of a SkyEvo

So you want to get your ground-launch endorsement...

I finally wore you down, huh? Yes, you too can get your ground-launch endorsement! While researching ground-launching, I contacted the SSA to see if they had any resources that listed all ground-launch training in the USA. They put me in touch with Frank Whiteley (a USAF veteran) of the Colorado Soaring Association. Frank began doing winch launches when he

was posted overseas in England. He got started with winch launches at RAF Wattisham. Frank spoke with me for over an hour and sent a ton of information about winching operations my way. Here is a list of most of the glider ground-launch training providers currently operating in the USA, verified as of the date of publication:

#### Commercial Operations:

1. [Eastern Soaring Center](#) out of Petersburg, WV, which is probably the most convenient location for many of SSC's members.
2. [Training with Soaring Hall of Famer Karl Striedieck](#) out of Eagle Field, Port Matilda, PA for a \$250 flat fee and a BFR to boot. Speak to Ron Wagner and Robb Hohman about their 5-star experience with free meals and lodging included!
3. [Cross Country Soaring](#) out of Faribault, MN. Don Ingraham confirmed that he has a winch, although he hasn't used it much over the last few years!
4. [Big Sky Soaring](#) in Livingston MT near Bozeman (a private field, MT48). The winch is homebuilt but US certified. The husband and wife team of Greg and Ursula were excited to talk about how they run their winch and get folks up to 2500 ft. AGL in a minute or less! They also have a video of their winch on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pr30dfhnNLc&t=38s>

#### Chapters:

These are gliding clubs similar to SSC. Many will probably require membership to train with them for a ground-launch endorsement.

1. [Carolina Soaring](#) in Spartanburg SC. According to Ulrich Neumann, they use their winch a few times a year for regular operations, for special events, or when the tow plane is out of commission. Carolina Soaring also supports an educational program by the City of Spartanburg where graduates get to fly in a power plane and in their winch-launched glider!

2. [Finger Lakes Soaring Club](#) in Dansville NY. According to club secretary Rick Lafford they have a winch which hasn't been used much for the last three years, but they've got it up and running and are going to do winch-launches again this year.

3. [Sandhill Soaring Club](#) (another SSC!) out of Gregory, MI. According to Reid Baldwin, their VP, aero tows are their primary launch method but they do winch launches one weekend day per month and on an ad hoc basis for qualified members who request it on weekdays.

4. [Colorado Soaring Association](#), near Fort Collins, CO. This is Frank Whiteley's home base- and the operation is top notch with well-structured Winch Ops Manuals and clear procedures. Similar to SSC's WoT they hold mini-camps to get members ground-launch certified.

5. [Steamboat Springs Soaring Association](#), just west of Steamboat Springs, CO. Roberto Frias says the club owns no tow planes, so they are a winch only operation. They start in May each year after the snow melts.

6. [Utah Soaring Association](#) in Nephi, UT. Some unique things about this operation- they take their winch out on "safari" to launch from dry lake beds- and their winch can go out to almost 9900 ft. and get you to a 3,500 ft. release height quite effortlessly- although the field at Nephi is much shorter and can't get you to that height. They're justly proud of their winch which "they can pack up and move anywhere" and which was featured in Soaring magazine (Dec 22, Jan 23- "Rocky Mountain Winching Adventure-Two weeks, Five States, Untold Fun!) If you want to experience winching with them, note that you will have to be a member of their club. Also, the winters are very hard on the launch areas near the winch and can easily tear up a glider even on the short take-off roll. If you want to fly with them out of Nephi, call well in advance so they can give you an estimate of when the take-off and landing surfaces will be ready. They need to pay the farmers to go out there and break up the clods of earth and plant new grass!

7. [Associated Glider Clubs of Southern California](#) operating out of L78 in the desert, about 70 miles east of San Diego. I spoke with Alasdair who confirmed that they have an active weekend winch only operation along with winch clinics when there is enough demand. One of the cool things they did is to take their winch out to a club in the Dallas, TX area to do a clinic for 16 odd pilots who wanted to get winch endorsed. In 3 days they managed to get 170 flights in- and the total cost of gas was \$70! That'd be hard to beat with tow planes!

Civil Air Patrol:

Yes, there are CAP Units that do winch tows. There are 3 CAP winches nationally: one in [Los Alamitos, CA](#), one that was moving to [Reno, NV](#), and a unit in NC for which no online resources are available.

Auto tow:

The [Soar Kansas](#) organization out of Yoder, KS offers an auto tow ground-launch one or two days a year as a way for people to get their endorsements. According to Jerry Boone "Some years we have done more, it just depends on if anyone wants to get out the big rope and get all of the people on board. We have a private 7000 ft. long asphalt runway, private airport SN76, so we have the freedom to basically flip the switch and operate the facility in "auto tow" or "aero tow" mode."

There's more than one way to get a glider in the air. If you haven't tried it, maybe look into a ground-launch endorsement? Happy Soaring SSC!



**THIRD TIME'S A CHARM!**

FINALLY the weather gods relented and Skyline was blessed with fabulous soaring weather as

guests of Bill and Sharon Burner at their grass strip airport near Woodstock on June 27!!

One of the interesting things about this airport is how often it is difficult to find it from the air!! Here's a Google Earth shot. One of the valuable landmarks, barely visible in this picture, is a group of three long chicken houses, barely visible here at about the 5 o'clock position from the words "St. Luke", that point to the airport.



Great soaring to over 6,000' by our two K-21s and our PW-5.

It's not just gliding, but a lot of camaraderie with families, guests, and neighbors of our host (here shown on the right)



Not to forget two of Skyline's "Grand Dames"!!



Even a visit by a long-time friend of Skyline, Tom Bryce, who flew in with his lovely Globe Swift.

Photos by George Hazelrigg



## TEN DAYS IN MAY

Piet Barber

In May, I took part in the 20-meter multi-seat national soaring competition held in Mifflin County, Pennsylvania. The contest lasted for ten days, and I arrived at Mifflin with my glider, QQ, on the evening of Mothers' Day. Uwe Jettmar accompanied me during the journey, and Erik van Weezendonk joined us the following day.



The first day was a practice day, allowing participants to familiarize themselves with the airport and fly their gliders. Although the conditions were weak, I decided to attempt the task assigned by the contest director. I managed to reach the first turnpoint but struggled to find lift afterwards. Eventually, I made an off-airport landing in a cornfield near State College. The retrieve was uneventful, and we towed the glider out of the field with my pickup truck.

The second day featured a task that required flying to specific turnpoints. The weather conditions were challenging, with overcast skies and limited marker clouds. I encountered

wave lift but couldn't utilize it fully due to altitude restrictions. I didn't make use of the available ridge lift, which impacted my speed and overall performance. I finished the day ranked 13th out of 15 contestants.

On the third day, the anticipated ridge soaring conditions finally arrived. The task took us through a network of mountains in central Pennsylvania. I flew alongside experienced pilots like Karl Striedieck and Sarah Arnold, navigating the ridges and crossing the Susquehanna River. Although I faced difficulties on the return leg, including a lack of thermals and an unfavorable ridge, I managed to complete the task. Despite my personal accomplishment, I placed 11th in the competition, highlighting the skill level of the other participants.

The fourth day witnessed a change in task due to suboptimal thermal conditions. We flew along the backside of Jacks Mountain, capturing footage of other gliders during the flight. Surprisingly, I achieved 5th place for the day, elevating my overall standing to 8th.

Day 5 involved a long ridge flight, covering a significant distance. I encountered challenges on the upwind journey but managed to complete the task, albeit at a slower pace than desired. I secured 15th place for the day, leaving me with doubts about my performance. However, I decided to focus on enjoying the contest rather than fixating on the scores.

Day 6 featured a racing task with no ridge soaring. Strong thermals and cloud streets characterized the day, allowing for faster speeds. This time, we had a better understanding of our performance relative to others, as proximity to turnpoints determined scoring. Starting early proved to be a disadvantage, but despite ranking 11th for the day, I moved up to 8th place overall due to the challenges faced by fellow competitors.

### Day 7: Another Racing Task!

I started the task first, heading directly across Seven Mountains towards White Pine airport. It felt like the day would end abruptly, so spending time on start-line games seemed foolish, especially considering my slow performance according to the scoresheet.

The next turnpoint, MidState airport, was also on the Appalachian plateau, with few landable fields in between. I flew with Hotel-Hotel for a brief period before we split ways.

Hotel and Hotel-Seven caught up with me later, and we took turns finding good thermals. However, I made the wrong decision and went right instead of following the pack. This cost me as everyone left me behind. We struggled to reach Penns Cave, and the sky looked bleak. Despite the lack of good thermals, I managed to make the turnpoint and surprisingly secured 6th place.

### Day 8: A Two-Thermal Day

It's unbelievable how we've had such great weather for the contest, with 8 flyable days. We were positioned 24th on the grid, and only one glider launched after us. By the time we were off tow, other gliders had already climbed to near cloudbase, while I struggled to find lift. I landed at Mifflin but quickly took off again. Unfortunately, there was no improvement in soaring conditions at that location. The fleet had already started the task by the time we were back in the air. I searched for lift in the start area and eventually found a thermal over the airport. Climbing to 6400 feet, I crossed the start line and joined the course.

Hotel-Hotel and I were likely the last ones on course, with the rest of the fleet far ahead. We felt far behind and worried. Following Tussey Ridge, known for thermals, we maintained a decent speed along the mountains. Papa-Lima joined us on the ridge, while the rest of the pack flew high above. At the southern end of the turnpoint, Papa-Lima unexpectedly turned

left, venturing into questionable and unlandable terrain. We decided not to follow them and instead turned back north, searching for a strong thermal to gain altitude and continue to the next turnpoint. Eventually, we found an 8 knot thermal, climbed to over 6500 feet, and proceeded downwind. There were suitable mountains ahead, and I chose Shade Mountain, relying on ridge lift.

After crossing the Juniata river, the northern portion of Shade Mountain stopped providing lift due to the overcast sky. We had to find a landing spot since there were no thermals to work with. Despite this, we managed to secure 12th place for the day. Papa-Lima, who took a wrong turn at Altoona, ranked 13th after staying on Raystown ridge and landing further back on the course. I recorded the decision-making process for our off-field landing with a GoPro, which could be a valuable resource for those unfamiliar with glider landings.

### Day 9: Wrapping it up

Unbelievably, we had 10 soaring days available and flew on 9 of them. We came in dead last (11th place) for the 20 meter multi-seat class. This flight wasn't particularly remarkable, so I won't go into much detail.

Overall, I am incredibly pleased about all the flying time I got during this contest (about 35 hours and 2700 km).

For a more detailed report, see <http://blog.pietbarber.com/2023/05/2023-20-meter-multi-seat-contest-mifflin.html>





**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)

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