

TOWLINE

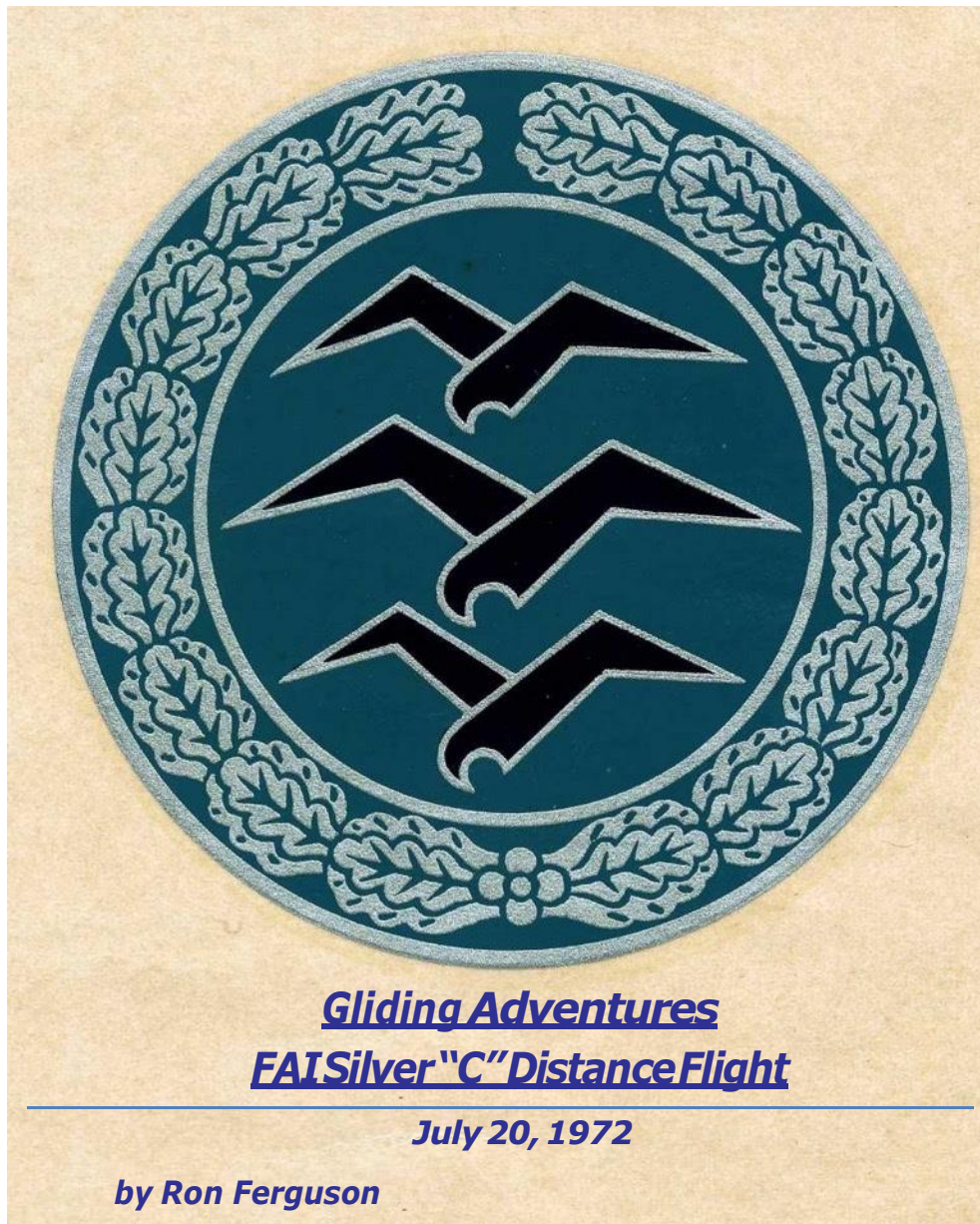


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TOWLINE is the Newsletter of the Seattle Glider Council



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 Ephrata, WA 98823
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SGC BOARD OF DIRECTORS (2024)

Chairman:	Noel Wade	noelw@seattleglidercouncil.org
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2024 VOLUNTEERS & COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Vice Chairman	Matthew Coleman
Treasurer	>OPEN< Randy Scott (Acting)
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Elections Chair	>OPEN<
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Dust-Up Event Coordinator	>OPEN<
Methow Event Coordinator	Brad Pattison
Towcard Data Entry Focal	Randy Scott

SGC SOARING FOUNDATION BOARD 2024

President: Michael Bamberg (exp. 1/1/26)
Secretary: Henry Rebbeck (exp. 1/1/25)
Directors added in 2024: Jeff Baird, Terry Crippen, Marty Gibbins, Henry Irvine, Brad Pattison

SOARING SOCIETY OF AMERICA REGION 8 OFFICIALS

Region 8 Director	Craig Funston
Alaska Governor	Peter Brown
Idaho Governor	Tom Dixon
Montana Governor	Greg Mecklenburg
Oregon Governor	Michael Bamberg

(NEW) 2024 DUES, (RATES & FEES still TBD for 2024)

Membership:

Regular - (includes 1 week of continuous facility use)	\$90
Family - (Spouse/Partner w/facility & voting privileges)	\$35
Youth - (25 years & under, incl. 1 week of facility use)	\$50
Lifetime - (incl. 1 week of facility use per year)	\$1500

Tows (Ephrata)

Hook up and first 1500 feet	\$50
Per 100 feet above 1500 feet	\$1.70
Mid-week surcharge if fewer than 3 tows in a day	\$15 per tow

Aero-retrieve or glider ferry

\$190 / tach hr.

Ephrata Facility Use Fee

Seasonal (April - October, full use of all facilities)	\$100
Weekly (first continuous week included in membership fee)	\$30

Glider Tiedown & Trailer Storage at Ephrata

Seasonal (April - October, reserved trailer spot)	\$220 per glider
Weekly	\$40

Ephrata RV Parking (facility use not included)

Seasonal reserved spot (April - October)	\$550
Weekly (8 nights or less)	\$120
Short Term (3 nights or less)	\$60
EV Charging per day	\$10

Notes:

- All fees are in USD
- SGC and SSA membership required for all tows behind SGC towplanes
- Tow fees are invoiced. All other fees should be paid prior to arrival at Ephrata.

CLUBS & OPERATIONS

Cascade Soaring Society	-	https://www.cascadesoaringociety.com
Evergreen Soaring	-	http://www.evergreensoaring.com
Glider-Rides.com	-	http://www.glider-rides.com
Hood River Soaring	-	https://www.hoodriversoaring.org
High Desert Soaring Club	-	http://www.hdsoaring.org
King Mountain Glider Park	-	https://www.kingmountaingliderpark.com
Puget Sound Soaring Association	-	http://www.pugetsoundsoaring.org
Spokane Soaring Society	-	https://spokanesoaring.org
Vancouver Soaring Association	-	https://vancouversoaring.com
Willamette Valley Soaring Club	-	https://www.wvsc.org



2024 MEMBERSHIP DUES ANNOUNCEMENT from Noel Wade

The primary objective of the SGC Board is to encourage and sustain cross country soaring. Our dues and fees haven't been covering the cost of our Ephrata facility lease and associated fixed costs. For 2024 we are making a minor dues adjustment to improve our ability to pay our lease, and sustain our operations into the future. The change was approved after a committee spent several weeks examining multiple years of SGC financial records, performing cost and income projections, and engaging in good-faith debate. We will continue to exercise careful financial discipline and are always open to feedback and new ideas from our Members!

For 2024, annual dues for Regular Members is increasing by \$15. To ease the burden on families and younger pilots, we are **not** raising the cost for Family Memberships or Junior Memberships.

If you haven't renewed your SGC Membership for 2024, you can do so on the [SGC website](#) now! For those that already renewed, we will be creating supplemental invoices and adding them to your account balance in the coming days. You can check your balance by logging into the [SGC website](#) (<https://www.seattleglidercouncil.org>).

NOTE: Other 2024 rates/fees have **not** been set. A committee is working diligently to finalize these amounts and we will announce them later in February. Thank you for your patience as we work through this unusual off-season!

UPDATES FROM THE SGC SOARING FOUNDATION

The SGC Soaring foundation has been very busy in the past month!

First, Phil Rose completed his term on the board. Thank you, Phil, for your ideas and support.

Next, changes were approved in the foundation by-laws due to changes in the Washington state laws, and to remove elements in the by-laws that did not apply to a foundation. In addition to conforming to the state laws, the new by-laws increase the number of board members. In the past there were 3 board members. The current number is 5-7. This certainly shares the responsibility and ensures that we get more ideas for the work of the foundation.

The new board members are the following (in order of time on the board), Henry Rebbeck, Mike Bamberg, Henry Irvine, Jeff Banks, Terry Crippen, Brad Pattison, and Marty Gibbins. Mike Bamberg is current serving a President of the Board and Henry Rebbeck is Secretary. The new

board members will be meeting shortly to decide on assignments and responsibilities.

Rita Edris has been the foundation Treasurer for 18(!) years. Thank you, Rita, for all you have done. Last December Jeannine Bamberg picked up the bookkeeping responsibilities, along with boxes of the foundation financial records. We hope to get the official Treasurer responsibilities assigned to one of the new board members shortly. The foundation has also begun to use Quickbooks Online to manage the records.

About 16 months ago the foundation received a generous donation to help replace the shade system on the Training Center deck. The request was that we dedicate this new system in honor of Mike and Becky Newgard, who have given so much to the soaring community in the many years of their participation. Not only will it replace the previous shade, but also extend it to shade the whole deck surface. We have been



working with Wyckam, Inc. to design and install a new shade system. Final tweaks were made today and, once the foundation board approves the project quote, we should be able to easily get the new system installed before the Training center opening this spring.

The foundation has provided a grant to the Seattle Glider Council to assist them in overhauling the Cessna 182 engine. This was done to ensure that we could have two fully functional tow planes for all the Ephrata and Methow events this year.

As many of you know we have a number of projects in the queue to update and improve the training center. All of them will consume funds that have been generously donated over the

years. These funds will eventually run out if we don't have additional donations. This time of year, taxes and all, is a good time to consider a donation to the Foundation. Many of you also work for companies that will supplement your donation when you donate to a 501(c)(3) educational corporation. Please consider a donation.

The foundation board is happy to have you share your thoughts and suggestions. Please send your emails to foundationpresident@seattleglidercouncil.org, which will get to all the board members.

Thanks,

Mike Bamberg

TOWPLANE UPDATE by Chris Klix

I am happy to report progress is proceeding very well on our Cessna 182 (79D). I recently called the engine overhaul shop, D&B Aircraft Engines. When I called them three weeks ago, they had not yet sent the case or the crankshaft out for service work, and they said the case could take up to 2-1/2 months, due to the back log of work. However, there were two shops in Tulsa they could use, and he would check on the second shop to see if they could do the work any faster. This time when I called, both the case and the crankshaft had been sent out. The good news is they are now saying about 3 to 4 weeks to complete the service work.

I also double checked with Lake Aero in Chelan, about our previous plan for doing the annual on the Pawnee (78P) after our in-flight insurance is back on line in March, with the plan to deliver the Pawnee and pick-up the C-182 at the same time.

There are no guarantees this will all work as planned, but our goal is, of course, to have both towplanes ready to go by the time we open up for our season at the end of April.

The repairs to 79D engine mount stringer are complete, and all other annual inspection discrepancy work is nearing completion as well.



Cracked stringer after it was removed



New engine mount stringer prior to installation

They also cleaned up and repainted the rudder pedal torque tubes and pillar blocks while they were in the area.

The engine mount was stripped, closely inspected for cracks, and repainted in a lighter color so it can be easier to inspect in the future.





Engine mount, stripped, inspected and ready for paint



Left side with rudder pedal assembly back together after stringer repair

We now have easier access to the battery, located behind the baggage bulkhead.

Access was always a struggle in the past because someone had reinforced the hat shelf using angle aluminum that got in the way of the bulkhead cover to hinge open. So, they made a new bulkhead cover, insulated it for sound deadening, and installed an



access door, something that needed to be done for proper access to the battery.

Also, the rudder was removed to treat exhaust fume corrosion in the vertical fin, a common issue on older Cessna's. Ours is no exception, even though the airplane is kept in a fairly dry climate, this corrosion treatment was long overdue, and included getting inside and mechanically removing as much corrosion as possible, then vacuuming/cleaning and applying Corrosion X treatment. Will recommends, in our non-corrosive environment, this should last for about another five years. While there, they also found some rust on the rudder bell crank flange which they then removed, cleaned, and treated with zinc chromate paint.

So far, I can't speak highly enough about Will Mutter and everyone at Lake Aero. They take the initiative and do what is needed, but stop short when it might significantly affect our bottom line to make sure we are on board with everything. From what I have witnessed so far, their quality of work is outstanding and of course safety is their number one concern, yet they are efficient and under their original estimate.

Wilson, Will's son, will be taking over the business in a few years, once he is fully trained up. He was raised in the shop since infancy, and is a great mechanic. The other mechanic is Matthew Young (Matt), who has been with Will for five years now and has worked out extremely well. His main mechanic of over 25 years retired about three years ago.



LETTERS AND ARTICLES

FAI Silver "C" Distance Flight

July 20, 1972

by Ron Ferguson



The S.H.A.P.E. Gliding Club's best Ka-6CR sailplane, Whiskey Alpha, directly overhead in this low-level aerial photo. OO is the international country designation for a Belgian-registered aircraft (as "N" is the designation for United States-registered aircraft). The Ka-6CR has a 15m wing span and fixed main landing gear. Performance is a modest 34:1.

Flying At Fayence

Gliding has been a passion of mine for almost 40 years. It began in 1970, while I was stationed at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (S.H.A.P.E.) south of Brussels, Belgium.

Having never flown an airplane on my own, I joined the S.H.A.P.E. Gliding Club quite by chance about a month after arriving in Belgium. In the end, flying gliders defined my four years at S.H.A.P.E., and later became a very important activity for the next 30 years.



I posed in front of Whiskey Alpha on the airfield at Fayence, France, just before take-off in our club K-6. On this flight, I completed the third leg of my FAI Silver C Badge – a 50km flight from take-off point – the first-ever achieved by a member of the S.H.A.P.E. Gliding Club. The flight had its moments, though - due to my inexperience at cross-country flying, particularly over the unlandable terrain in the French Alps.

One flight in my early flying days particularly stands out - across the Southern French Alps in 1972, earning for me the FAI Silver C Badge.

Flying gliders in Belgium in the 1970s was never very successful, for several reasons. Our gliding field was Chievres Air Base, a former German airfield during WWII that was given to the U.S. by the Belgian government when S.H.A.P.E. moved to Mons, Belgium from France. The Americans needed to house the executive airplane for the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe – called the SACEUR – a post that was, by NATO rules, always assigned to an



American four-star General (or Admiral if held by a Navy flag officer). Also, on the base was a U.S. Army detachment that flew VIP-outfitted UH-1 helicopters (Huey's) for visiting dignitaries. Due to the sensitivity of this flight activity, no other power planes were allowed to operate from Chievres, and that meant our glider club had to launch by winch tow from a grass strip alongside the runway.¹

¹ *Our winch was a purpose-built 1½ ton Opel truck, converted for winch use by a German company in Munich named Tost. The launching winch was powered by a highly modified 455 cu.in Oldsmobile engine specially mounted in the back of the truck. The engine drove a two-drum winch, with 5,000' of stranded wire cable on each drum. Before launch, the cable was pulled to the other end of the field by an old VW Beetle. After attaching the cable to a tow hook on the glider, the winch operator – sitting in a “cockpit” on top of the winch – reeled in the cable to launch the glider like a kite. If the pilot and winch operator were really “in synch”, you could get a maximum launch height of about 1,000 meters (3,000'), releasing directly overhead of the winch. By comparison, with an aerotow you can fly to the lift, possibly many miles away, releasing at any altitude your pocketbook can afford.*

The other reason for poor gliding was the weather - a sea-climate that's never very cold or hot, and never very dry either. Throughout my time in Belgium, there was always a lot of rainfall - frequently drizzle such as we have in the Pacific Northwest, and in spring and autumn there might be rain for days. Nevertheless, we flew year-round on weekends, grabbing flying days when it was nice, and working on glider maintenance on days when it wasn't.

As a result, the typical flight from our home base at Chievres – even on the best of days – took us barely 5-10km from launch point. We were almost always in sight of the airfield, as our possible altitude gain from climbing in a thermal didn't give us the confidence for longer flights.

Each summer, the big gliding event for our club was to head to the south of France, towing our best gliders – two Ka-6CRs – by car. There, we were in for some wonderful flying at a large gliding airfield at Fayence, in the French region of Provence.



Fayence is a very picturesque village in the southeast corner of France, very close to the Côte d'Azur. The mountaintop village was first settled in the early 10th century, destroyed once or twice by invasions, and built in its present form as a fortified village in the late 14th century. The gliding field is just south of town, situated on a flat plain.



Looking from below, or from within, this medieval village is great for scenic photographs. I haven't been back to Fayence since my last flight there in 1973, but my guess is, it hasn't changed very much in the original part of the village. The local council would probably restrict new development to the outlying areas. Photos this page: www.provencebeyond.com

Fayence is located about 40km northwest of Cannes, and 20km north of the French Riviera. Our gliders remained at the airfield for 2-3 months over the summer, and members who were qualified to fly them would rotate in for 2-3 weeks at a time.

The area is famous for the Mistral – a cold, dry and strong wind that blows from the northwest, mostly in the winter and spring, and sets up gliding conditions that allow for very long-distance sailplane flights. Pilots from all over Europe descend on



Fayence during the Mistral, enabling them to fly long distance flights of hundreds of kilometers across the French and Swiss Alps. At our experience level, though, the non-Mistral summertime was best, as it provided strong thermals and the chance to sample the beauty of flying shorter distances over the rugged Alps. (Another big reason for wanting to fly at Fayence was its proximity to the French Riviera - extending from Saint- Tropez to Cannes - less than an hour's drive from the airfield.



Photos this page: All of the buildings within the old part of the village looked like they were at least 300 years old (maybe 500!), as did the steep stone steps and cobblestone streets that wound around the central village. As in most of old Europe, going 'round the block' was not to be attempted, as you'd never get back to where you started

Silver "C" Distance Flight

My first cross country flight of any consequence was from Fayence on July 20, 1972. That morning, at our informal club member's daily flight briefing, our crusty German chief flying instructor – Hans Sander – pointed a stubby finger at me and said, "Today you will fly ze Silver C distance! *You vill fly to Finon!*" (He meant Vinon, but it came out as Finon in his German-accented English.)

The FAI Silver C Badge is a coveted award for novice glider pilots, consisting of three legs: (i) a duration flight of at least five hours; (ii) a height gain from tow release point of at least 1,000 meters; (iii) and a cross country distance flight on a straight-line course of at least 50 kilometers (slightly over 31 miles). I had already achieved the first two legs at our airfield in Belgium, but the idea of flying 50 kilometers across country at my experience level was *very* daunting.

One other pilot in our club, Bob Zirkle, attempted the 50K Silver C flight the year before from our home base at Chievres, but he landed short of the required distance, just across the border in France. We had a heck of a time getting him and the glider back into Belgium, as he didn't have the necessary border crossing paperwork for the glider. This was before the EU border crossings were removed, and border guards were like tin gods, who were always officious, particularly with Americans. No pilot from the S.H.A.P.E. Gliding Club had ever completed the Silver C. Badge, so if I was successful, it would be a major achievement for our club.

Interestingly, each day that Papa Sander flew one of our club K-6s at Fayence, he would take off in the morning when flying conditions first enabled him to stay up. He'd be away until virtually everyone else on the airfield had landed – maybe 6-7 hours – and





Left side of page, top photo: Heading out for the summer holiday in Fayence was always a major event. In the three summers that I went, I always scheduled my trip to go with Bob and Nancy Zirkle, my two best friends during my tour at S.H.A.P.E. Bob was an Army Warrant Officer who flew in the Huey VIP unit at Chievres (and deserved a relatively cushy job like this after surviving two helicopter tours in Vietnam flying Huey's). In this photo, they have one of the club's K-6s on a trailer and hooked up to their car. Nancy is in the center of the photo, walking towards the trailer. We would caravan down to Fayence, typically spending two days on the road, with nice stops along the way for lunch and wine at the small village bistros.



Middle photo: The first summer we all stayed at the airfield's billets – an extremely basic WWII barracks, with concrete floors, ancient (probably WWII) bed frames with half-rotten mattresses. We didn't do that again, and instead, camped out on the airfield. Meals in the "canteen" were quite good, but it was always nice to BBQ – in this photo, Bob is the chef with the kabobs.



Bottom photo: The airfield sits on a plateau at the foot of the hill that Fayence is built on. It was always hot and dry in the summer, so even though the village of Fayence was close by, you didn't make the trek up the hill more than once before you learned that doing it with the car was the only way. They had lots of hangar space on the airfield, and also lots of tiedown area. The mountain ridge in the back-ground is where we typically towed to, releasing at about 1,000m (3,000') at the ridge top.



One of the best parts about the summer holidays at Fayence was the food in the French Provence region. One of our favorite haunts was a bistro and pizzeria perched on the hillside on the outskirts of Fayence, where we could eat at an outdoor deck that overlooked the valley below.

long after we'd given up and figured he'd landed out, we would spot him returning to the airfield. He'd land, and over dinner regale us with tales of the hundreds of kilometers he'd flown. We were absolutely in awe of this.

This morning, his pronouncement was totally out of the blue, and why I was selected over two or three other club members who were equally proficient I'll

never know. But Papa Sander (as we affectionately called him) was a German autocrat, and in some ways, he ran our gliding operation in ways that might have been similar to his own background. From the scant information we knew about his background,





Top photo this page: *The Rallye 180 was the primary towplane at Fayence. Most of our towpilots were men, but for my Silver C Distance flight it was a young woman who flew in the skimpiest of outfits. Interestingly, in sport flying in Europe, the piloting rule “8 hours between bottle and throttle” doesn’t apply. At Fayence, you always jockeyed for a tow before lunch, not so much because the towpilots always had a couple of glasses of red wine for lunch (always cooled by ice because of the hot Southern France days), but because they would walk off the field for a 1½ hour lunch regardless of how long the tow line was.*



Middle photo: *On arrival at Fayence each year, pilots who had never flown there before had to take a checkride with a local instructor – and most often it was in the gliding center’s Fauvel AV-22 flying wing. This two-place sailplane had a raised rear seat for the instructor, but without a control stick – if the instructor wished to take control, the front seat pilot had to unscrew it from the floor and hand it back to him. The most challenging part of the checkride was the requirement to land on tow – to simulate the possibility where release from tow wasn’t possible – something that is so rare it’s unheard of.*



Bottom photo: *The Fauvel AV-22 on tow above Fayence airfield. As you can see in the middle photo, the French registration for this glider is F-CCGK – a search on that registration pulled up several photos of this same aircraft, still flying as recently as 1997, but now on display at the Musee Regional de l’Air (GPPA) near Nantes, southwest of Paris. One photo shows it after landing on the beach at St. Brévin.*

we knew that he had been a test pilot before or during WWII, but that’s all. He was pushing 70 years of age at the time I knew him, and he was a high-ranking Air Attaché at NATO. Papa’s word was law in our gliding club, but in reality, he was a very kindly old man beneath the gruff exterior. We all knew that an order from Papa Sander was never to be disobeyed. (See the sidebar on Hans Sander at the end of this story.)

As we continued the briefing that morning, our group of four novice glider pilots from the S.H.A.P.E. Gliding Club gathered around the aeronautical chart fixed to the clubhouse wall. Papa Sander then briefed me on my route of flight. My intended

destination was Vinon-sur-Verdon, the home airfield of the French International Gliding Team. While my required flight distance was 50 kilometers, the actual distance to Vinon is about 60 kilometers, on a west-by-northwest course of 290°. Flying at a very conservative average cross-country speed of 60 kph (around 35 mph), we estimated I should be there in little more than an hour’s time. Several possible emergency mountaintop landing sites along my route were pointed out by Papa Sander, and I carefully marked their location on my air chart, hoping like hell I wouldn’t have to use one of them.

This was terrifying stuff for me, as I’d never before intentionally turned my back on the gliding field I’d taken off from, knowing I’d have to fly to another airfield that I’d never seen before and land. Worse, the flight involved flying over virtually unlandable terrain. The hotshot French pilots flew these routes almost every day, but I was nowhere near that caliber. I had 67 total hours in my log book, and



spread across 131 total flights (mostly from winch launch), this only averages 30 minutes per flight.

After the briefing, we readied our two German- built Ka-6CR sailplanes for flight – the very best gliders in our club, but early 1960s vintage. The K-6 (as we called them) was a wooden single-seat sailplane, designed by Rudolph Kaiser, and built by Alexander Schleicher Segelflugzeugbau GmbH at Poppenhausen, Germany (at the time, West Germany). The wingspan is 15m – 49'6" – with a maximum glide ratio of 34:1 (which means it can theoretically glide 34' forward for each foot of altitude lost). The CR model of the K-6 was certified for airworthiness in 1959, so it was about a 13-year old design by this time. Nevertheless, even though there were sleek new fiberglass sailplanes on the airfield, the K-6 was our dream machine.

To ensure success for my flight, Papa Sander would tow off first in "Whiskey Echo", to test the day's soaring conditions. Flying "Whiskey Alpha", I'd tow into the air fifteen minutes later, and if Papa determined the conditions were good enough for me to attempt the cross-country flight, he would fly alongside to give me the go-ahead with a hand sign. We didn't have radios, so this was our only form of communication.

At take-off I had my air chart open in my lap, trying desperately to remember everything from the morning's briefing. I was towed into the sky by a French-built Rallye 180 towplane, releasing from tow directly above the airfield at the agreed-upon 1,000-meter height.

My first task after release was to "notch" my barograph – the sealed instrument that would record my flight, with proof that I had not landed anywhere in between my take-off and final landing. I dove 100' of altitude and as I pulled up to create the barograph notch, I realized I hadn't turned the damn thing on before launch! I tried to reach behind me to flip the on/off switch, but the K-6 cockpit was too cramped. Finally, I loosened my shoulder straps and was just able to turn around to reach it. In my anxiety, it never dawned on me that this would



Top photo: *The view from the cockpit of our club Ka-6CR during tow behind a French Rallye 180 towplane. The red tape marks on the canopy indicate the preferred bank angle when thermalling. Towing behind a towplane was heady stuff for us – not to mention a bit scary, as all of our launches in Belgium were from a winch (glider pilots who learn to launch by towplane find winch launches scary). The normal tow position is to keep the top of the towplane wings level with the horizon ahead. To release from tow, the glider pilot pulls a release knob in the cockpit, then banks steeply to the right to clear the towrope, while the towplane banks to the left, returning to the airfield and landing with the towrope trailing behind. If you're lucky (or good), you'll release in thermal lift, and you climb away.*

Bottom Photo: *Once off tow, the terrain of the French Alps was forbidding (at least for us it was forbidding). We would typically release at mountaintop height – roughly 1,000 meters (3,000') above the airfield – where we often then had to "ridge soar" along the mountain top in order to transition into thermal conditions. Ridge lift is so-called because you utilize the wind blowing perpendicular to the ridge line; the wind is deflected upwards, and it carries you and your sailplane up with it. It means, though, that you are flying very close to the mountain, with your wing tip less than a wing-span away from the terrain. For us flat-land pilots from Belgium, this was another scary aspect of Fayence - but exhilarating! Fayence airfield is at the bottom right of the photo.*



result in an immediate barograph trace that jumped from field elevation to my flying altitude in an instant.

In any case, after all this rigamarole, I settled into flying the airplane and sampling the nearby thermals. Before long I felt pretty good about the day's conditions. A few minutes later Papa Sander flew up on my right wingtip and gave me the sign to go. I saluted him as a good soldier would, banked the glider and pointed it to the west. I was away on my first big solo adventure - and scared witless!

During the morning's briefing, I had marked the course line on my aeronautical chart and jotted down the compass heading. The truth of it was, though, this was the first time I'd ever really looked at an aeronautical chart, and frankly, didn't have much of a clue what I was looking at. Sure, I'd marked the location of the emergency airfields, I'd noted where my take-off and landing airfields were – but in between, I had no idea what many of the terrain symbols meant – or more importantly, how to relate them to what I was actually seeing from the cockpit at 6,000-9,000'. Back at our home airfield in Belgium, we rarely strayed more than 5-10 kilometers from our launch point, and by mentally noting roads and towns and stands of trees, it was easy to get back home without getting lost. We were always within one thermal's climb of getting home too, and making it even easier, we always knew where the "house thermals" were that would get us home.²

² *The pilot license issued to us in the S.H.A.P.E. Gliding Club was a British Gliding Association (BGA) license. One of our instructors, Flight Sergeant Derek Washer of the British Air Force, was a licensed BGA gliding instructor. He was authorized by the BGA to issue our licenses. Unlike the U.S. pilot licensing system, where map reading is a mandatory part of the training, this wasn't so for a BGA-issued glider pilot license. Upon my return to the U.S. in 1974, I had one year to convert my BGA license over to a regular FAA-issued pilot's license, and intensive map reading was part of the curriculum.*

Now, as I turned my back on Fayence, I had a sinking feeling in my stomach of just how ill-prepared I was for this adventure. My thought was to follow a



Top photo: *Another view that provides an idea of how rugged the mountains are in the Southern Alps – this is a two-lane road that snakes around the hillside, cutting through tunnels whenever necessary.*

Bottom photo: *From a distance I thought I had spotted one of the mountaintop emergency airfields, but it turned out to be a military or space satellite antenna facility. I tried to locate it on my air chart, but couldn't find any of them.*

compass heading of 290° as carefully as I could, and at all costs, stay high enough that I wouldn't risk a dangerous mountain landing.

Within maybe five miles of Fayence – taking an hour's flight time to get that tiny distance because I was stopping to climb in every thermal I encountered – I was already lost, but didn't know it yet. Trying to do two things at once in the tiny cockpit that I was squeezed into, I tried to match up *anything* I saw on the ground with the unfamiliar symbols on the chart – but nothing seemed to match. I saw small villages scattered about, with





This photo was taken on another flight in the Fayence area, but it shows the type of terrain I was flying over – i.e., unlandable! Way down below, in the center of the photo another sailplane is visible, something I didn't see at all once I left Fayence headed for Vinon-sur-Verdon. Cloudbases were often quite high near Fayence – sometimes as high as 3-4,000m (9-12,000') above ground, but they were low on the day of my Silver C flight.

roads connecting them, and the best I could do was “force” what I was seeing on the ground to match anything on the chart.

At one point, I decided to turn back, but when I turned the glider 180° from my course, nothing looked familiar in that direction either! I couldn't even tell where I'd come from, much less know where I was going! What a predicament!

Worse, I never spotted any of the three emergency airfields that were carved out on mountain tops for sailplane or power pilots in trouble. I felt I had no choice but to go on.

Almost four hours later – which was far more than enough flight time to fly 50 kilometers, even if I was stopping at every thermal – I still had no idea where I was, and knew I was hopelessly lost.

I might actually have flown further that day, but I finally found myself in a wide flat valley, with mountain ridges on all three sides that were all above my flying altitude. I was essentially boxed in, with no direction to go, and for the last half hour, hadn't found a thermal that would get me back up to mountain top height. Tired, not willing to go on, and without a clue where I was, I realized my flying day was over. There wasn't airfield in sight, but luckily, the valley was cultivated and the farm fields below

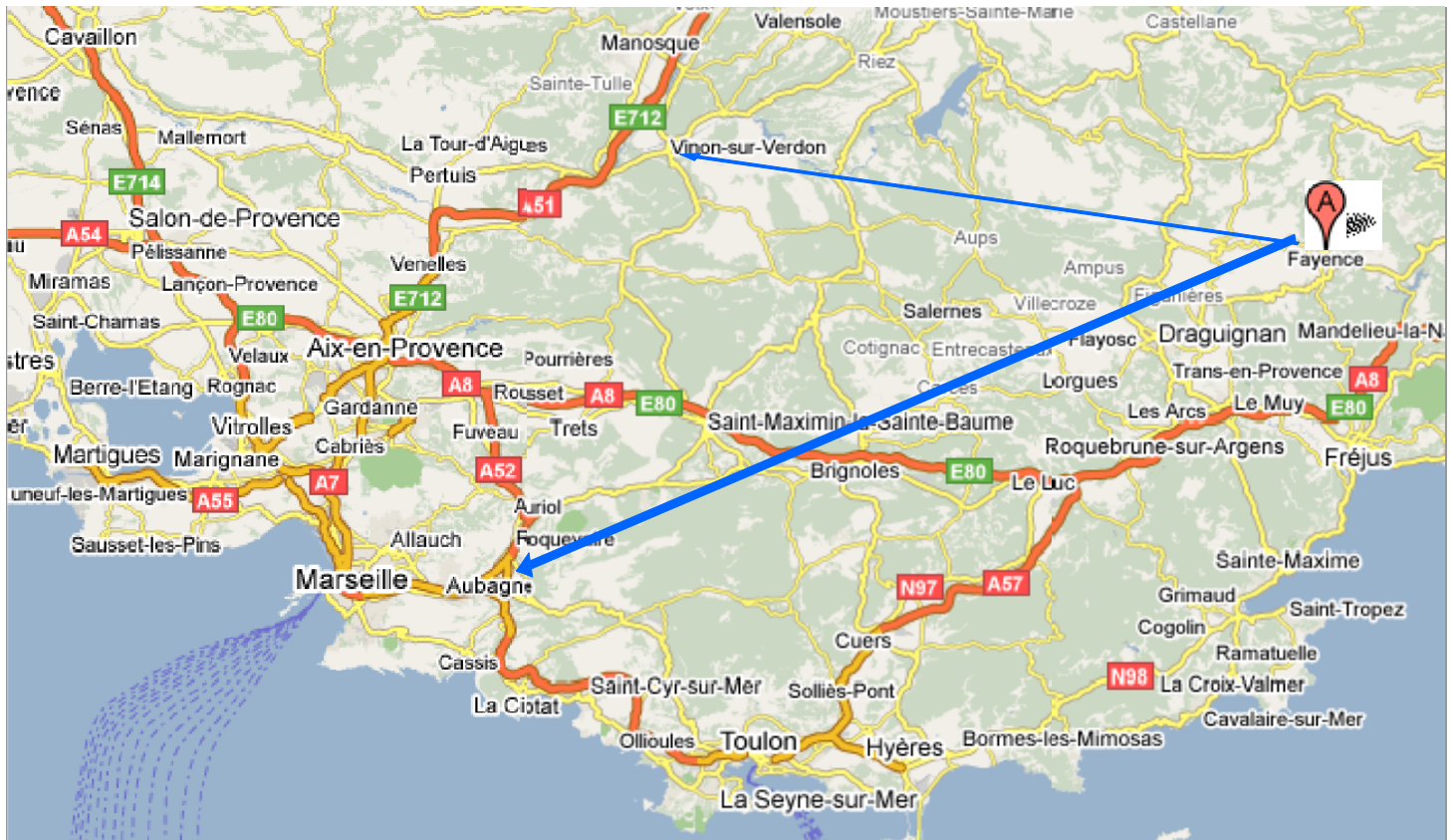
looked landable. With fear creeping into every thought, I made the uncomfortable decision to put the glider down in a farmer's field.

I had never made an “off-field” landing before, but the do's and don'ts were drilled into us during our initial flying lessons. Pick a smooth, flat field – preferably one that's cultivated and just harvested, or one that has a short crop (the last thing you want to do is catch a wingtip on landing). Look for fields where there are no telephone or power wires on the approach, or if there are, ensure the field is long enough to fly over the wires and still be able to land and get stopped before the end of the field. Choose a field aligned with the wind, so that your approach and landing is made directly into the wind. And finally, fly a proper landing pattern - with a downwind leg that will give you plenty of time to see the field where you're going to land. Make a clean 90° turn onto base leg, and set up for a long final approach that gives you plenty of time to do it right.

I thought I had made all the right decisions in choosing a proper landing field, but with only one or two minutes to make these crucial choices, and being nervous as hell on my first-ever off-landing, the next few minutes showed there was room for improvement.

Oh no! As I crossed the western threshold of the field, I spotted power/telephone poles and lines that were invisible from overhead. As I approached them, I pulled the stick back to climb over them, but this bled off speed as I gained altitude to clear the wires – and left me in a slightly nose-high attitude. I quickly shoved the stick forward to regain flying speed, and as I crossed the threshold of the field, I now saw that it was littered with bales of hay – which I also hadn't spotted from the air! I could also tell that the field wasn't as long as I'd estimated – and to make matters worse, there was a tall hedge alongside the road running perpendicular to me at the end of the field. Oh, my God, this was going from bad to worse!





This Google map shows my intended route from Fayence to Vinon-sur-Verdon – a distance of 60 km. My actual flight path took me almost to Marseille, an actual distance of 98 km – and almost 50 km off course

When I was still several feet from touchdown, I managed to dodge a hay bale, but I realized almost too late that the end of the field was coming up fast – *too fast!* Just before my landing gear touched down, I instinctively pulled back hard on the stick, hoping to get enough height to clear the hedge and land in the field across the road.

Amazingly, I cleared the hedge, but that last pull-up used too much of the glider's remaining kinetic energy to maintain flying speed. As I crossed the threshold of the next field, the glider's wings stalled and it landed very hard on the tail skid. Rollout after landing was quite short, but the glider stayed intact, without sustaining any apparent damage. Only my pride was hurt with the ignominious landing that I'd made. I had seemingly made every mistake in the book, but somehow survived it.

I quickly slid the cockpit canopy locks forward, raised the canopy, and laid it on the ground. No sooner had I unbuckled my safety harness, removed my emergency parachute, and climbed out of the cockpit – stiff and barely able to walk after the grueling flight – when a small boy of about 8-10 years of age came running up to the glider.

"Bonjour, monsieur!" said the little boy excitedly. "Bonjour", I replied. "Pouvez-vous me dire où je suis?", I said in my poor French (or something to that effect), spreading my air chart on the wing for him to pinpoint my location.

The boy looked puzzled, scratched his head, and searched all around on the chart. I figured he wasn't old enough to know how to read a map, let alone an aeronautical chart with funny symbols. Suddenly, his face brightened and he turned the chart over to the folded bottom portion, looked at it a bit more, and stabbed a finger at Aubagne – a small village about



10 miles due east of Marseille – and proudly exclaimed, “Ici!” (*Here!*)

On the ground now, without the worries of also keeping the sailplane in level flight, I could see the terrain symbols that identified the 1,000-meter mountains ringing Aubagne. I also quickly saw that if I *had* been able to climb above the mountains at the end of the valley, I would have been heading straight for the coast of the Mediterranean Sea – almost 30° off my intended course line!

We secured the glider, and the boy took me over to his family’s farmhouse a couple of fields away.

After much difficulty with the language barrier between me and the boy’s mother, I finally managed to get a call through to the Fayence airfield to let them know where I was.

It took several hours, but three members of our club, including Papa Sander, came by car across the mountainous back roads with the glider trailer in tow, and with telephone directions from the boy’s mother, they located me at about 7PM.

It was only when we disassembled the glider that a small fracture was noticed in the tail skid’s wooden bulkhead. That forced me to confess to the mistakes in my landing decisions and for that, Papa Sander wasn’t pleased at all. But the joy of finally having a Silver C pilot in the S.H.A.P.E. Gliding Club overcame the displeasure and soon he was smiling.

The long trip back to Fayence was spent reliving the flight at least a dozen times, including a lot of discussion about how I could have gotten so far off course. The narrow mountainous roads were slow going, climbing across several low mountain passes to reach our airfield at Fayence. We finally arrived at about 10PM and stowed the glider. We were all excited at the day’s achievement, and when we heard there was a late-night street dance up in the Fayence town square – with lots of wine flowing – we headed there to celebrate and let off some steam.

Calculations the next day showed that I flew a total of 98 kms (61 miles) – but I was almost 50 km off course at my landing! It was only after some cajoling that Papa Sander admitted our club had never swung the compass in any of our gliders. We discovered that my compass in *Whiskey Alpha* was over 20° in error. It was the first time I’d ever heard of “*swinging a compass*”, and while I’d heard of a “*compass rose*”, I didn’t know what it referred to. In thinking back over the flight, I also realized I had subconsciously selected southwestern ridge routes any time there was a directional choice to make, compounding my compass error.

At the airfield, the staff was quite willing to fill out and submit my flight paperwork to the Fédération Française de Vol à Voile (the French Gliding Federation). With look at my barograph trace without the proper tow release notch, though, the young woman behind the desk – without saying a word to me – tucked the trace into her desk, took out a stack of traces laying in the drawer, rummaged through them, and selected one that looked similar to my flight. It was that trace she submitted with my application. It was duly approved, then forwarded to the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale – FAI – the world governing body in Paris for air sports (the FAI has since moved to Lausanne, Switzerland).

Back home in Belgium that fall, the completed paperwork for my Silver C Badge arrived, along with the lapel pin to accompany it.

In a ceremony at our annual club dinner that winter, the Silver C Badge was officially awarded to me with great fanfare. During toasts to the achievement, my flying friends also bestowed on me an unofficial **Henry the Navigator Award**, complete with a green ribbon and a large compass badge hanging from it – to note my inability to know where I was going.





Photo above; I was in my early twenties when I was posted to S.H.A.P.E., and frankly, I had the time of my life. When I first told my mother of the assignment to Belgium, her response was, “why would you want to do that – you can see everything at a travelogue.” The assignment sparked a love of travel that’s never ended.

*Photo bottom: Our newest sailplane, an ASW-27 racing model, also built by Schleicher in Germany - a fiberglass beauty with 50:1 glide ratio – Silver C distance in one glide. **Editor’s Note:** Ron & Kap were my very first customer when I founded my business, **Pacific AeroSport, LLC**. This photo was taken at the Arlington Airport in our secondary west facing hangar unit.*

Author’s Bio

After my 3+ year stint at SHAPE, my last assignment was at the Air Force Command and Control Center in the Pentagon from 1973-1974. Eight years in the Air Force was enough, and it was time to return to the Pacific Northwest (having grown up in the Spokane area). My first month back in Seattle, I attended an SGC meeting, and standing around afterwards talking with Boeing Employees Soaring Club members, Chris Lomax and Jim McNeil, I inquired about the attractive

young woman standing a few feet away. Jim replied, “Oh, that’s Kap Parks . . . but don’t even think about asking her out, as she doesn’t date guys who own airplanes.” I guess I took that as a challenge, but as it turns out, in August, 1975 I spun my ASW-15b, Foxtrot Zulu, into Tatoosh Ridge (six miles south of Mt Rainier) while flying at the SGC’s late summer encampment (when Ephrata was considered too hot to be inhabitable). I survived . . . the ‘15 didn’t . . . and shortly afterwards – now without an airplane – Kap and I started dating. We married in 1977, and 46 years later we’re still married. The software company that we founded in Bellevue and ran for almost 30 years was sold in 2006, and we retired. We traded in our last sailplane for a motor boat that we cruise as far north as SE Alaska each summer (Kap is the Skipper and I’m the galley mate and line handler – and of course, I drive the boat at least half the time. (The July, 1976 issue of Soaring magazine has an article about my crash into Tatoosh Ridge, titled, “Foxtrot Zulu, Where Are You?”, written by one of SGC’s best pilots at the time, Marion Barritt - and I still consider this to be one of the best action “adventures” – if you can call it that – ever published by the SSA.)

As for SGC work, I was Board Chairman for at least three years, and editor of *Towline* for six years. Working with architect and club member, Gerry Pomeroy, we were instrumental in getting the SGC clubhouse at Ephrata Airport designed. Although our design wasn’t adopted, the \$100,000 that was raised became the impetus for the current clubhouse. In 1999, I worked almost full time preparing and presenting the SGC’s bid to the International Gliding Commission (IGC) for the 2003 World Gliding Championships to be held at Ephrata. We lost the bid because a shyster from France “danced in”, waved his arms, and gave a ludicrous pitch to basically provide free competition entry to Eastern European pilots, and of course, they voted for Fayence, France to be the competition site. In 2002 at the pre-World’s competition in Fayence, this guy put together such a sham operation that the IGC yanked the bid away from the French, and at the last minute awarded it to Uvalde, Texas (where an absolutely incredible competition was held in 2003).





Photo top left: I managed to capture four S.H.A.P.E. Gliding Club members in an interesting pose as they pulled the winch cable back to the club's ASK-13 following an aborted launch. For a military organization like S.H.A.P.E. that was highly structured, the S.H.A.P.E. Gliding Club was surprisingly egalitarian. While we didn't know his "rank" within NATO HQ in Brussels, Papa Sander (on the far right) was a high-ranking Air Attaché civilian. On his left is a young woman (who's name I have forgotten) who was a U.S. Army nurse at the S.H.A.P.E. Hospital. To her left is General D'Genero, an Italian Air Force officer – who was probably the worst pilot in the club (our flight instructor was very nervous about ever letting him fly solo), and the General was never allowed to progress beyond our Ka-8 ab initio single seat sailplane. On the left is Franz Huget – a very nice guy, but also not one of our crack pilots – and we never figured out how he was able to join the gliding club, as he was a Belgian gendarme from the local police station across the highway from S.H.A.P.E. HQ. During the summer of 1973, Donald Rumsfeld – the U.S. Ambassador to NATO at the time – was an active member of the gliding club. "Don" (as he insisted we call him) returned to the U.S. in 1974 to serve in the Gerald Ford White House, and in 1975 was named Secretary of Defense by President Ford.

Photos top right and bottom left: Hans Sander at the controls of an FW 190 during flight control testing of the first prototype. The first test flight was made on June 1, 1939. Retractable landing was a novelty at the time, and weighing an engine failure at low altitude during this first flight, versus having to land in a plowed field with a possible jammed gear in the down position, he elected to retract the gear immediately after take-off to ensure it worked.

We were always amazed at his cool head when flying cross-country in Fayence – now I know why.



Hans Sander – Our Chief Flight Instructor

After I returned to the U.S., I lost touch with Hans Sander. It was only in 2009 during research for my writing that I found many references to him on the Internet – and learned of his noted background. Two books have been published about the Focke Wulf 190 with extensive reference to Hans Sander, including the fact that, as Chief Engineer and Chief Test Pilot for ground and flight testing of prototypes at Focke Wulf from 1937 to 1945, he made the first test flight of that aircraft in 1939.

Another fact we didn't know was that Hans Sander was a holder of the FAI Gold Badge with three Diamonds (FAI No. 551)

An interesting side story of Hans Sander's Iron Cross. The year after my Silver C flight, several members of our gliding club were invited to his home for a social evening. Over glasses of brandy, Hans proudly showed us his Iron Cross, passing it around for us to have a close look. He didn't reveal very much about how he'd earned it, other than to say that he was a test pilot for Focke Wulf. Near the end of the evening as we were getting ready to depart, Hans got up to put the Iron Cross away – and discovered it was missing from the wooden jewelry case he kept it in. After looking everywhere for it, he became very agitated, muttering and mumbling, and then asked each of us to turn out our pockets – essentially accusing one of us of stealing his Iron Cross. Several of us were offended at this accusation and refused, suggesting he look again in the case. There it was, exactly where it had been replaced, and with a sheepish look on his face, he apologized to us.

Hans Sander died in 2000, "the last of the Focke Wulf test pilots."



UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS FOR 2024

- SGC February General Meeting (on-line) February 5th @ 7:00 PM
 - SGC Board Meeting (on-line) February 12th @ 7:00 PM
 - Ephrata Dust-Up (tentative) May 25th thru May 27th, 2024
 - Evergreen Encampment May 27th thru June 1st, 2024
 - Wiederkehr/VSA Cross-Country Week June 1 thru June 8th, 2024
 - Methow Encampment (tentative) June 15th thru June 22nd, 2024
 - Region 8 Contest June 23rd thru June 29th, 2024
 - SSA Juniors Camp July 1st thru July 6th, 2024
 - Mackey, ID July 8th thru July 21st, 2024
- Contact: Tom Dixon, 208-867-6953 or fdixon@msn.com*
Local accommodations are limited, reserve early!
- Ephrata Glider Aerobatic Camp (Tentative) Summer or Fall 2024?

SGC General Meetings are held online the first Monday of the month at 7:00 PM, Jan through May & Oct through Dec.

- All pilots can join by clicking going to the [SGC website homepage](#) and clicking the link under "UPCOMING EVENTS"

SGC Board Meetings are held online every second Monday of the month at 7:00 PM

- Note: this recently changed from the second Tuesday of the month.
- SGC Members are welcome to attend. [Email the SGC Board](#) to request a meeting link.
- A representative from each Club in the Region is invited to attend for maximum coordination & mutual benefit!

--Chris Klix, 2024 SGC Board

On behalf of the SGC Board of Directors
Thank you to the Towline Publishing Committee and all the volunteers that contributed to this newsletter! This publication is such an important communication tool in helping keep SGC the heart of the PNW soaring scene.

Please send any articles/pictures for submission in future publications to:
Towline@SeattleGliderCouncil.org

Note: Deadline for submissions is 7 days prior to the end of the month preceding the issue.

