

# TOWLINE



**PSSA two-place PW6 near Mt. Rainer flying from Bergseth Field, Enumclaw, WA** *(Photo by: Tim Heneghan)*

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## TOWLINE is the Newsletter of the Seattle Glider Council



**SGC / SGCSF MAILING ADDRESS**  
 P.O. Box 7184  
 Bellevue, WA 98008-1184

**TRAINING CENTER LOCATION**  
 30 Airport Street NE  
 Ephrata, WA 98823  
 509-754-3852 [not attended fulltime]



### SGC BOARD OF DIRECTORS (2024)

<b>Chairman:</b>	Noel Wade	<a href="mailto:noelw@seattleglidercouncil.org">noelw@seattleglidercouncil.org</a>
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### 2024 VOLUNTEERS & COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

<b>Vice Chairman</b>	Matthew Coleman
<b>Treasurer</b>	>OPEN< Randy Scott (Acting)
<b>Secretary</b>	Jim McNeil
<b>Chief Towpilot</b>	Ron Bellamy
<b>Towplane Manager</b>	Christian Klix
<b>Ops Scheduler</b>	Dave Reusch
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<b>Airspace Coordinator</b>	>OPEN<
<b>Contest Manager (Region 8)</b>	Noel Wade
<b>Insurance Coordinator</b>	Dave Reusch
<b>Trailer Lottery Coordinator</b>	Tom Dixon
<b>Webmaster</b>	Jim McNeil, Noel Wade
<b>Banqueteer</b>	>OPEN<
<b>Awards Committee Chair</b>	Ron Bellamy
<b>Elections Chair</b>	>OPEN<
<b>Facilities Manager(s)</b>	>OPEN<
<b>Dust-Up Event Coordinator</b>	Matt Coleman & Tony Puglisi
<b>Methow Event Coordinator</b>	Brad Pattison
<b>Towcard Data Entry Focal</b>	Randy Scott

### (NEW) 2024 DUES, RATES & FEES (2024 Tow fees: TBD)

#### 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.

### 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

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

### CLUBS & OPERATIONS

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



## **2024 Seasonal EPH Glider Trailer Parking Lottery** *submitted by: Tom Dixon*

This will be coming soon, a reminder, that to be eligible to participate you must be current on your membership dues and have pre-paid the fee for a season's trailer parking for the April General Meeting Trailer Lottery.

## **2024 SGC RATES & FEES ANNOUNCEMENT** *from Noel Wade*

The Rates & Fees Committee has met multiple times over the winter, working through multiple financial analyses of the club's operations & costs. There are several interesting and innovative ideas being discussed for improving our financial sustainability over the long term, and the committee will continue carefully consider these new ideas as the year goes on. For now, we are happy to announce that **we will not be increasing any Facility, RV, or Tiedown fees in 2024**. The careful work by the last 2 Boards to set rates for these items has properly covered the costs of our major Ephrata amenities:

- The ground lease covering our buildings, RV spaces, and tiedown areas
- Insurance for our property & structures
- Reliable Internet with strong WiFi
- Electricity for appliances in the Training facility, battery-charging in the battery shed, and hookups for the RV spaces
- Water & Sewer for the kitchen, 6 bathrooms, and 4 showers
- Dumpster/Trash services during the season
- Periodic professional cleaning of the facilities
- Cleaning supplies and Paper products for the bathrooms
- ...and more

Seasonal or Weekly Facility, Tiedown, and RV fees are now available for reservation/payment [on the SGC website](#) (you may need to log into your member account to use this page).

Tow Fees will be covered at our General Meeting on March 4<sup>th</sup>. This will be a major topic of discussion at the meeting, as the rate has not been finalized. But **the cost of a "standard tow" at Ephrata will not be higher in 2024** than it was in 2023. A link to join the meeting will be emailed to all SGC members next weekend - please join us to learn more about our plans for towing and tow fees in the future!

Soaring Season will be here before you know it, we can't wait to see you out in Ephrata!

--Noel & the SGC Board of Directors

## **2024 Ephrata Glider Aerobatic Camp Canceled** *from Chris Klix*

Unfortunately, I am sorry to report the much-anticipated glider aerobatic camp I have been trying to organize for Ephrata is canceled. The aerobatic instructor I was hoping to get, Shad Coulson, left AZ Soaring at the end of 2023 and moved back home to Colorado due to some family matters, and was no longer available to do the camp. I then talked to Jason Stephens, also an aerobatic instructor and owner of AZ Soaring, about possibly bringing his aerobatic two place MDM Fox glider up to Ephrata for use in the camp in late September or early October, but when the SSA Convention was moved to October in Knoxville, TN, he said it was just too close to those dates to make it work. Perhaps we can try again at some point in the future.



## **TWO HOOD RIVER SOARING CAMPS** Submitted by: *Brian Hart*

It is official: there will be two HRS (Hood River Soaring) summer glider camps this summer.

**CAMP #1** is the big, or at least relatively new, news. This is a National Junior SSA-approved/sponsored cross-country camp combined with what is quickly becoming an HRS/WVSC (Willamette Valley Soaring Club) and anyone else who cares to join us, joint encampment at Ephrata from June 30 to July 7. *There will be no primary training at this camp*, and while any adults may attend by paying regular SGC membership, facility, and tow fees, please note two things:

- Please follow the adult (26+) or junior (14 through 25) registration link below as appropriate, since there is a lot of important detail there. In addition to juniors, each adult should register, whether attending as a mentor with a dual glider, as a solo experienced pilot, or as an adult cross-country learner alongside the juniors. Adult registration is free, but it is critical that we get a head count: this is an official SSA-sponsored event where we are required to provide meals to all junior attendees as part of their cost of the event. So, we have no choice but to commandeer the cooking and food storage capacity (refrigerators) for that week.
- The SSA significantly underwrites the tow cost for juniors, so there are some particular prerequisites for junior attendees (under the age of 26) they must be SSA members, post-solo, can be licensed or not, but must register and pay using the junior registration link below. To this, we have added a requirement for specific moderate progress toward the Bronze Badge (but certainly not the whole badge!). We will absolutely coach them through this to help them complete these pre-registration qualifications. Juniors should make a trial run through the registration steps now so they can see the items they will need to complete before they can actually register.

The content in my registration forms below is unapologetically exhaustive, if not downright exhausting, but it is all for good reason that you will see when you get there. *Feel free to email me directly at [brian.hart@hartcraft.com](mailto:brian.hart@hartcraft.com) or give me a call (no texts, please!) at (360) 772-0613.*

Here is the official announcement with registration links:

### ***Hood River Soaring Junior Cross-country and Badge Academy 2024, in Ephrata WA***

***Dates: June 30 – July 7, 2024***

*Come join us for our inaugural junior cross-country and badge camp in the beautiful Northwest. Ephrata, Washington is the home of the Seattle Glider Council's cross-country training center and huge dedicated glider runway in the booming thermal conditions of central Washington that nonetheless boast some of the most benign territory for cross-country training and badge achievement. Typical thermal height is 7,000 – 9,000+ AGL, with many small airports and landable dryland farm fields well-distributed throughout the flight area. There is a well-established Proving Grounds that you can use to work up to your Silver Distance, and Gold and Diamond distances are not uncommon.*

*Attendees: juniors age 14 through 25. Adults are also encouraged to register and attend at regular SGC membership and tow rates, whether as mentors or to learn alongside the juniors. There are separate adult and junior registration links below.*

*Cost: \$300 per junior + \$50 SGC junior membership. This includes tent camping, all meals, training, glider and mentor, and one tow per day.*



Note:

- We have a limited number of two-place gliders and mentors available at no charge, and you will be matched with these on a first-come, first-served basis as camp registration checks are received. Additional entrants will go on a waiting list and registration checks held pending until we can find an additional two-place glider and mentor for you, so get your name in early!
- Your preparation for this event should begin now, so our further instructions will include a number of other easy prerequisites such as completing your Wing Runner and Bronze Badge written tests and a few basic flight tasks so that you can get the most out of this camp.

**Juniors Register**

here: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfxNlqG002Vupk-iXbuNPQRSx1QoV0pDqvGTP7HSqzrge7C4Q/viewform>

**Adults Register**

here: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfmm\\_2n01SG5ORmG5JtGj4rQ3Yi3gKy9oShxWUgQuacez9nkQ/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfmm_2n01SG5ORmG5JtGj4rQ3Yi3gKy9oShxWUgQuacez9nkQ/viewform)

Contact information is provided on both forms.

To have the SGC webmaster add them directly to the calendar item for the event, click

here: <https://www.seattleglidercouncil.org/event-5603255?CalendarViewType=0&SelectedDate=2/18/2024>

**CAMP #2** is our HRS primary glider training camp July 15-19 at Hood River. Unlike the cross-country camp at Ephrata, this camp requires HRS membership and is limited to student pilots. We are opening camp to adult students this year for the first time so that adults, whether beginners or those wanting a week of daily checkride preparation and solo work can get the benefit of group instruction and the fact that the instructors will be onsite doing instruction all day every day.

## LETTERS AND ARTICLES

### CANOPY-BELTS-BUTT PLUS

*Submitted by: Tom Dixon*

➤ A little background on my connection with this subject. Back in the late 1960's while employed by a US Government agency I had the opportunity to do a few parachute jumps out of perfectly good airplanes. Fortunately, since then I have not had to repeat that experience. (Not quite, I did have one tandem jump and experienced a failed main chute, that is another story.) All my experiences were free falls, no static line jumps. In the training process I was instructed in detail regarding the issues of parachute harness maintenance and safety and that is what I am going to deal with here. **DISCLAIMER:** There are others who have a lot more experience than me so make sure you are using all resources available to care for your parachute equipment.

**-FITTING:** This is pretty simple, put your rig on, bend over a bit and tighten the chest and leg straps, when you stand up they should be tight. This is the configuration you will be in if you have to jump. OR you can tighten the straps after you are in your glider but this is not very easy to do because of the confines of the cockpit.

**-CONTAINER:** I have noted over the years a lot of parachutes I would not want to use in an emergency due to "stuff" improperly attached to the container. This includes, Spots. handheld radios, bailout emergency kits, water bottles etc. The rule to remember is, do not interfere with the opening of the parachute!!! This starts with free access to the D-Ring/ripcord handle and continues on to non-interference with risers.





**Rules to LIVE by:**

1. Keep the area around the D-Ring/ripcord handle free! Do not attach anything to the left side of the container or past mid chest.
2. Do not attach anything to the harness that will interfere with the opening of the risers at the top of the harness. Look at your rig, you will see at the top of the shoulders where the harness is attached to the risers, there is usually a Velcro cover in this area which when the chute opens will pull apart to allow the risers to open (photo #1).



Attach your Spot and other stuff below this area (photo #2).



Make sure all this stuff will stay attached when the chute opens. SPOT and equivalent, their containers are not designed for aviation use. My wife reinforced all the connections on my SPOT case with backing and stitching. The original VELCRO would probably not stay attached under the jerk when the chute opens so I put a wire tie through it (photo #3).

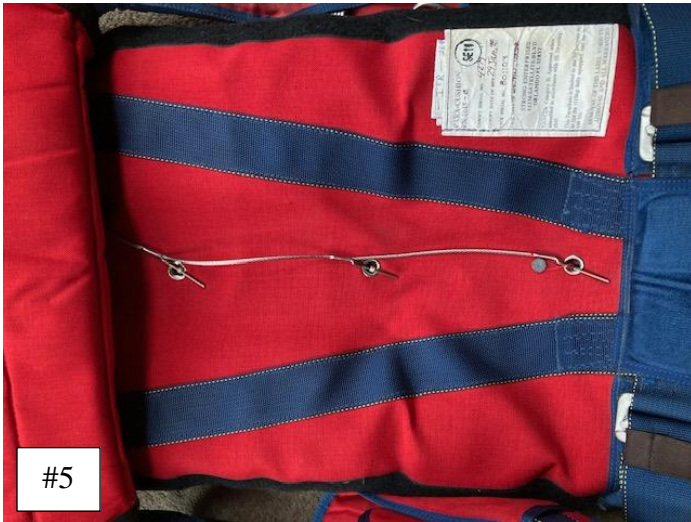


3. BASIC CARE: Just a reminder, the chute must be inspected and repacked every 180 days. I had a ramp check a number of years back when the period was every 120 days. The FAA inspector was having a hard time finding things to inspect in a glider – his first glider ramp check – as soon as he saw my parachute, which was not in the glider, he wanted to see the packing card. My chute was current, just for conversation I pointed out the chute was not REQUIRED equipment, did it matter if it was not current but just there... and at what point would that be an issue? Sitting in the glider, on my body?? Basically, it came down to, if I was wearing it IN the glider. Ok, look at your container starting from the back, the round thing on the back is where the drogue chute is packed. Make sure that none of the drogue chute is sticking out from this cover or that the cover is not located off to the side or worn (photo #4).





Lay the chute on its back and open – STRONG PARACHUTE- the panel cover. You will see three pins going through loops at grommet holes. Make sure the pins are fully pushed through those loops. The bottom pin will have the rigger's seal. This is also the area where the rigger's card is located (photo #5).



Check for any foreign items that might interfere with those pins pulling loose when the ripcord is pulled. Close the cover panel and look at where the D ring/ripcord handle is located. I see a lot of chutes where this is hanging out of the pocket (photo #6).



This is not good; it can get caught on things when handling the chute or getting out in an emergency,

partially or fully pull the pins in the back. The pocket has an elastic strip inside to hold this in place. Make sure yours in under that strip (photo #7).



4. USE: I guarantee your first jump and especially in a crisis situation will be an experience!! The rules are: Canopy – Belts – Butt. There is a reason for this order. If you undo the belts first and the glider is throwing itself around you might become a moving object in the cockpit so jettison the Canopy, release your Belts (this might aid you in getting out, you might be ejected<sup>1</sup>), get your Butt out. There are lots of ideas about this, if the glider is spinning go towards the outside wing etc. My answer is GET OUT!! Once clear, LOOK for the D ring/ripcord handle, don't just feel for it LOOK. I have put pieces of tape on mine to make it more visible (photo #7).

<sup>1</sup>A few years back a glider pilot got caught in a cloud and had to use his chute. Story goes that in the adrenalin moment, not LOOKING for the D ring/ripcord handle but feeling for it, he loosened a leg strap and chest strap.

This is not a John Wayne moment, put your thumb (s) around the D ring/ripcord handle. This will help you hold on to it. Use both hands and pull across your chest to make sure you pull far enough to get the ripcord cable completely pulled.

So now you are out and you have a good canopy. There are lots of videos on the internet to tell you what to do next from drift direction to landing. Go find them.



NOTE: Get familiar with your parachute, do you always take your chute off before getting out after landing?? Remember in panic humans revert to doing things they normally do. Sit in your glider and think about what might interfere with you safely getting out – screens, wires, water bottles, stuff attached to your canopy that might keep it from safely ejecting. Next time you take it to your rigger put the chute on and pull the D ring/ripcord handle. You will find this very interesting. If you have any questions or comments please find someone that has more experience than me.

## A DIFFERENT INSTRUCTION TECHNIQUE

*Submitted by: Tom Dixon*

➤ A few years ago, I visited with a CFG friend about some of the techniques he uses to deal with different training issues. He told me of one student pilot that was having a very hard time not doing large over correcting moves while on tow. The situation was bad enough that on more than one occasion the instructor had to release from tow due to large loops in the tow rope. (PT3). This being a better option than attempting recoveries with big loops. Any attempt to instruct the student in returning to a proper tow position usually made the situation worst because of continued over correction actions. All were done at a safe altitude because the instructor was not comfortable with the student taking the controls until at least 1,000 feet. The CFG and the student were about to end their relationship when another instructor told my friend a simple technique. He called it, “mixing the batter and tap dancing”. The idea was to have the student constantly spinning the stick in small circles and tap dancing in small pushes on the rudder pedals. Sit straight in the seat, and when the tow plane goes up/down/right/left still spinning the stick in little circles and keeping the glider in the correct tow position, ‘lean the arm/hand in that direction and slightly push the proper rudder pedal a bit more while still doing small tap dances. The student had to concentrate on keeping the stick spins in small circles which precluded big over corrections. The idea behind the technique was to teach the student that large stick or rudder movements were not needed to keep the

glider in the proper location behind the towplane. OH, the instructor also gave his student three pieces of Bazooka Bubble gum and made him blow bubbles during the lesson, not sure what the purpose of this was. Whether this is or should be a standard instruction technique who knows but in two more flights after using it the student was (me) doing the complete tows with no more loops in the tow rope. Oh, the same technique works for not over correction during straight flight. To this day I will not chew bubble gum....

## NW Aviation Conference and Trade Show

*Submitted by: Marlene Nelson*



*Kenji Ominato has the intense attention of a next generation glider pilot while teaching him the fundamentals of flying.  
(Photo by: Marlene Nelson)*

➤ The soaring community ‘spread its wings’ at the 40<sup>th</sup> Northwest Aviation Conference and Trade Show at the WA state fairgrounds in Puyallup, WA on February





24 & 25. This event boasts more than 5000 participants and strives to suit the needs of local aviators and businesses with many exhibits by manufacturers, aviation organizations, airports and agencies like WA DOT and FAA. Two days of presentations being conducting continuously in six rooms offered a variety of pilot training and safety as well as maintenance seminars.



*Dad capturing a future young glider pilot dreaming of soaring with a huge smile on his face.*  
(Photo by: Brad Pattison)

Puget Sound Soaring (PSSA) has participated for more than 12 years at this event—most times with one glider and a booth. The soaring community presence was enhanced this year with participation by Seattle Glider Council and Hood River Soaring. Brad Pattison’s ASH-31Mi high performance motor glider (21m wingspan) and the PSSA PW6 two-place trainer/cross-country glider (16m wingspan) bookending the manned PSSA booth made for a prominent display on the Showplex floor.

We secured two slots for soaring-focused presentations both Saturday and Sunday: Brad Pattison (PSSA) *Intro to Sailplane Soaring* and Jonathan Hart (Hood River Soaring) *Gliding into a pilot career* followed by Noel Wade (SGC) *Advanced Soaring*. The presentations lured power pilots and glider pilot wannabe’s and generated considerable interest and signups for glider rides.



*Greg Bahnsen (PSSA) extolling the virtues of Brad Pattison's ASH-31Mi to interested attendees at the Aviation Trade Show*  
(Photo by: Marlene Nelson)



*Tim Heneghan (PSSA), Brian Hart (HRS), Brad Pattison (PSSA), potential soaring pilot asking great questions about flying gliders, Curt Chenoweth (PSSA) at the soaring booth.*  
(Photo by: Marlene Nelson)







Inquiries at the soaring booth/display featuring stunning glider photography of Tim Heneghan (PSSA)--Curt Chenoweth (PSSA) and Brian Hart (Hood River Soaring) there to respond. (Photo by: Brad Pattison)



Soaring display 'spreading our wings' at the Aviation Trade Show in Puyallup (Photo by: Brad Pattison)



Aspiring Glider pilot with PSSA instructor Scott Thiel in PW6 (Photo by: Marlene Nelson)



Hood River Soaring associate with Scott Thiel, PSSA instructor, and Brian Hart (Hood River Soaring) answering attendee inquiries. Brad Pattison (PSSA) and young soaring aspirant in Brad's ASH-31. PSSA Soaring booth displaying Tim Heneghan (PSSA) incredible photography. (Photo by: Brad Pattison)

Picture to the right: PSSA SuperCub N333TM with Blanik in tow out of Bergseth Airfield located just 4 miles N.E. of Enumclaw, WA. (Photo by: Tim Heneghan)



This venue is proving to be valuable in creating more awareness and interest in the sport of soaring in the Pacific Northwest.



► This is the story of my first sailplane – a Schleicher ASW-15B – registration number N15FZ, competition number FZ, which, in aeronautical lingo is pronounced “Foxtrot Zulu”.

My first flight in Foxtrot Zulu was in early spring, 1973, and my last flight was on August 17, 1975. Throughout this brief time, she was the love of my life – but that last flight was a life changer.

By way of background to this story, I learned to fly gliders in 1970 while stationed at SHAPE – the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe – during my second 4-year tour of duty in the U.S. Air Force<sup>1</sup>.

*<sup>1</sup> It was tough duty! When my draft notice arrived in 1966, the Vietnam War was raging at its height. I had chosen to enlist in the U.S. Air Force for four year, rather than two years as a draftee. By good fortune I was assigned as an operating systems programmer on IBM mainframe computers. After my first tour of duty – where I was stationed at one of only two U.S. military installations with the brand-new IBM S/360 computer system – I had been specifically picked for duty at SHAPE in 1969 to set up and maintain their new S/360. My rank was Staff Sergeant, and at the time, for my Air Force career field there was only one possible Vietnam assignment - MACV HQ in downtown Saigon - and it wasn't open to enlisted men. Darn!*

At the creation of NATO in 1949, SHAPE was originally established in Rocquencourt, France, just west of Paris; NATO itself always had its headquarters just outside Brussels, Belgium. When the French withdrew their support from NATO's integrated military structure in 1967, SHAPE was quickly moved to a new facility in Mons, Belgium, about 30 miles south of Brussels. As part of the relocation, the Belgian government also turned Chièvres Air Base – located about 15 miles northwest of Mons – over to SHAPE. The air base became the NATO SHAPE Support Group, operating as a U.S. Army post.

Under U.S. Army authority, the primary purpose of Chièvres Air Base was to house the private airplane for the SACEUR (the Supreme Allied Commander of all NATO forces in Europe). By NATO rules, the SACEUR



is always a U.S. 4-star military general, at the time a soft-mannered Army General, Andrew J. Goodpaster.

A secondary duty of Chièvres was to house a U.S. Army helicopter unit, flying UH-1 “Huey’s” equipped with VIP kits so that high-ranking visitors to NATO could be carried around in style<sup>2</sup>.

*<sup>2</sup> Today, the SACEUR's private plane is a Gulfstream 5; back then, it was a 4-engine prop job. The Huey VIP taxis have since been replaced with Blackhawks.*

The third purpose was to house the military Commissary and Base Exchange (grocery store, military department store and drug store) for use by U.S. military families stationed at SHAPE. The SHAPE Gliding Club was formed and began flying at Chièvres shortly after SHAPE became operational by the U.S, and it was open to membership by all personnel – both SHAPE and NATO – from all NATO countries.

My tour at SHAPE began just before Christmas, 1969. One day a few months after I arrived I was at Chièvres, walking to my car with an armload of groceries from the commissary when I heard a quiet swooshing noise overhead. Looking up, I saw an airplane without an engine flying very low overhead. I was startled – it was so low I thought it was going to crash. At the time, I had never heard of a glider (also known as a sailplane), and part of what startled me was how little noise it made.

I immediately got into my car and drove around to the other side of the airfield to see what the outcome was – and was surprised to see that it had safely landed.





It was a glider from the SHAPE Gliding Club, operating from a grassy area next to a secondary runway that was little used. I parked my car, walked out to see what these airplanes were all about, and before I knew it, I was pushing gliders around on “the pitch”, as the British call the staging area for glider launching.

After hanging around for a couple of hours that afternoon, I was offered a ride in a club two-seater, and I was hooked! It was April 17, 1971.

On May 1st, after thinking it over for a couple of weeks, I joined the SHAPE Gliding Club. Within the first week, I had 20 dual instruction flights in the club’s ASK-13 two-seater – most of the flights only 5-6 minutes in duration, for a total flying time of 2 hours, 59 minutes. That was good, as the first skill to learn was launch and landing, and then later you learned more about how to finesse aerial maneuvers.

I soloed on May 29 – forty-two flights after beginning instruction, with less than 6 hours of total flight time. My instructor, Derek Washer, was a British Flight Sergeant who was authorized by the British Gliding Association (BGA) to award glider pilot licenses. My first pilot’s license was therefore from the BGA.

From that day on, and throughout the remainder of my tour at SHAPE, virtually every weekend was spent flying or working on behalf of the SHAPE Gliding Club. Summer vacations were spent on gliding holidays, and working tirelessly for the club.

We had six gliders, including two two-seaters for training and passenger rides, one decrepit old



*The “pitch” at the SHAPE Gliding Club’s operations on Chièvres Air Base. We operated from a grassy strip next to the main runway. The six sailplanes in the club were a mixed bag, two were owned by the club, two were on loan from the German Air Force, and one was on loan from the British NAAFI.*

British single-seater, one medium performance German-built single-seater, and two relatively high performance single-seaters – called Ka-6CRs. My goal was to gain enough flying hours to fly the K-6 (as we shortened its name), and within just two months, it was my primary plane to fly.

Learning to fly in the SHAPE Gliding Club was incredibly inexpensive. Annual club membership cost only 1,000 BF (Belgian Francs) – equal to about US\$20 at the time! A flight in any club glider cost just 25BF, or about 50¢. The 42 training flights required to earn my pilot’s license, plus first-year club dues, cost a mere US\$41!



*We flew in all weather conditions – or at least, we tried to. Here we’ve waited for the rain to stop, then towed our ASK-13 two-seat trainer from the hangar out to the pitch for a handful of quick training flights.*



On weekend flying days, we were typically restricted to an hour's flight, although flying conditions in our part of Belgium were so poor that flights were often a handful of minutes, and actually flying for an hour was an incredible treat! With those conditions in mind, club rules specified that we could choose our preferred flight time based on how early in the morning one arrived on the field – in other words, an incentive to show up early to do all the necessary volunteer work to keep the club going. That's something I've always liked about clubs.

On July 24th of that first summer of 1971, I transitioned into the K-6, our highest performance glider. The remainder of the summer, I built up hours as fast as I could, but my log book still shows a lot of 7-10 minute flights, with the occasional 1- 2 hour flight.

Almost a year went by – on June 16th, 1972 – when I completed the next huge milestone – a 5-hour duration flight, earning the first leg



*This particular flight, my passenger was the landlord of my apartment in Soignies. For these flights I preferred to fly the club's Ka-7 – an older two-seater from the early 1960s – as its high wing design made it more responsive on the controls than our newer ASK-13. After sightseeing for a bit, and if my passenger was agreeable – and they typically had no idea whether they should be agreeable or not – my favorite stunt was to fly to a nearby road intersection, put the glider into a spin – nose seemingly straight-down – with the road intersection spinning directly beneath us. I would follow that with a high-speed pass, low-level pass over the airfield, then swoop up to make a pattern for landing. I was a brash 22 year-old, and if I had tried this in any club in the U.S., I would have been grounded – and maybe asked not to come back.*



*One of my most rewarding non-flying club duties was “driving” the winch. U.S. military rules did not allow us to operate a towplane, so the club purchased a German-made winch. The “driver” sat in a cockpit above a 350 ci Oldsmobile V-8, with two large drums that held 3,000' of wire cable. The cable was hauled out by an old VW Bug, attached to the glider, and it was then launched to about 2,000' overhead. We communicated via a WWII voice-activated direct phone system (hanging from my neck in the photo). I was the club's Chief Winch Operator, with over 3,000 launches.*

of the coveted FAI (or Fédération Aéronautique Internationale) Silver C Badge for gliding. On the same flight, I also earned the Silver C second leg – the 1,000M (a bit over 3,000') height gain from a release point of about 2,000'.

The third leg of the Silver C – a 50km (30 mile) flight in a straight line from starting point – was almost unachievable in our local conditions – at least at our level of flying skills. It was attempted unsuccessfully a couple of times by other club members. Part of the difficulty was our nearness to the French border (a mere 14 miles south of us – less than Silver C distance), which we weren't allowed to cross without getting into big-time trouble, so our direction to fly was limited.







*Our rather modern-looking clubhouse was actually a WWII-era German Luftwaffe Officer's Club. Chièvres Air Base was taken over by the Germans in 1940 and used for bombing raids on Britain. It had remained unused since the war, and being in really bad shape, we spent countless hours refurbishing it as our clubhouse. We then used it for club meetings and weekend BBQs. The guy at front left is Ray Cipriano, an Army friend from the ADP department who talked me into joining the club.*

Bob Zirkle (who later became an SGC member) attempted it, and got too low near the border, landed on the other side, and it took us two days to get the glider back from the very bureaucratic French authorities. It didn't help that he didn't have a passport with him – only his military ID– and none of the glider's paperwork.)

During this time, I also qualified to pilot two-seat rides with passengers (guests) who came onto the field. With this "rating", I frequently managed to get an additional 5-6 flights each weekend.

With our poor gliding conditions in Belgium, each summer our club packed up two gliders and transported them to the south of France. We then flew for a month at a cross-country gliding camp at Fayence, an ancient walled town on a hilltop that overlooks the airfield below. Fayence is north of Fréjus and northwest of Cannes by about 15 miles, near the French Riviera.

Fayence is famous to glider pilots the world over for the Mistral, a cold, dry and strong wind that blows from the northwest, mostly in the winter and spring,



*The SACEUR's personal transport aircraft - a 1950s era 4-engine "taildragger". General Goodpaster specifically kept this aircraft because of his frequent requirement to fly trans-Atlantic for meetings in the U.S. He wanted something slow enough that he could get a full night's sleep (plus some work done) on the flight. He'd have to stop to refuel at least once on the trip across. As we'd say in the military, "RHIP" (rank has its privileges).*

and sets up gliding conditions that allow for very long-distance sailplane flights.

At our experience level, the hot summertime conditions were better for us. We were not experienced enough to venture very far away in the mountains, yet the local area provided good "ridge lift" and strong thermals, giving us the chance to sample the beauty of flying over the French Alps – at least in varying degrees as we gained flying experience.

My first-ever real cross-country sailplane flight was made from Fayence in the summer of 1972 – a distance of 75km – and I became the first pilot in the SHAPE Gliding Club to earn the coveted (at least, for novices) FAI Silver C Badge in gliding.

**Enter Foxtrot Zulu.** In the fall of 1972, I joined with my two best friends in the SHAPE Gliding Club, Bob and Nancy Zirkle, to purchase our own glider in a 3-way partnership.

The sailplane we ordered was a sleek, brand new ASW-15B built by the Alexander Schleicher







*Photo left: Alexander Schleicher (on the right), with Bob and Nancy Zirkle.*

*The Schleicher factory is in the tiny German town of Poppenhausen, 60 miles NE of Frankfurt, at the foot of the famous Wasserkuppe where Otto Lilienthal made his record-setting glider flights in the 1890s.*

*At delivery time, the trailer for the new glider wasn't finished, so we borrowed a club trailer to pick it up. Bob and I built the trailer, both learning how to acetylene weld along the way. Nancy used her home sewing machine to craft the heavy canvas fabric cover, burning up the motor in the process.*

Segelflugzeugbau (sailplane factory) in West Germany. At a total cost of US\$8,500, my one-third share in this very high-performance sailplane (for the time) set me back almost \$3,000, plus the cost of building the trailer – a fortune on my tiny Air Force enlisted man's salary, where \$10/ week disposable income was normal for me.

We secured a delivery slot from the Schleicher factory for just after the New Year, 1973. We planned to fly this sleek new bird in Belgium during our remaining year at SHAPE, then ship it to the U.S.

Bob was a career Army helicopter pilot, with a few years remaining to retirement; I was finishing up a second 4-year hitch in the Air Force and was due for discharge in little more than one year's time. Our challenge was how to orchestrate things so that we could be in the same part of the country to fly Foxtrot Zulu once we returned

Stateside. With a very elite computer software position in the Air Force – even though I was only a Staff Sergeant – I interviewed for and snagged an assignment to the Air Force Data Services Command and Control computer center in the Pentagon. Bob also put in for a Washington, D.C. posting, but without thinking, he simply wrote "Washington" on the Army's "dream sheet" – not realizing that it might be interpreted as Washington State. Sure enough, when his orders came through, his assignment was to Fort Lewis in Tacoma – the other Washington!



*Preparing to rig Foxtrot Zulu. We built the trailer from plans given to us by Schleicher – and it was very klugey. The fuselage rolls in and out of the trailer on a wheeled dolly in two parallel tracks. The wings are in slings, suspended from the tube ceiling on either side of the fuselage. It was a recipe for trailer rash.*





**Foxtrot Zulu's first flight.** We couldn't wait to fly this amazing new sailplane, and early on Saturday morning, January 13, 1973, overcast as normal for Belgium, we assembled it at Chièvres Air Base for the first flight.

Bob was the most experienced pilot in our partnership - two Vietnam tours flying Huey's, and he'd gone through glider flight instructor training at Lasham Airfield in the U.K. the previous year. Therefore, he was designated to make the first flight. I made the second flight, and Nancy was third. My log book indicates my flight was a winch launch to only 600' - we intentionally didn't "pull back" hard on the stick on these first few launches, as we didn't know how this sailplane handled winch launching (it handled it just fine). My first flight was a whopping 4 minutes in length, and the landing was perfect.

Reluctantly, after that first day's flights, we put Foxtrot Zulu away in the hangar, flying only occasionally in the coming winter months so that we could concentrate on finishing up the trailer. We had plans to take her to Fayence for our month-long summer holiday, and our departure date was set for early July. We also couldn't risk the possibility of a land-out if the trailer wasn't complete, so getting the trailer finished was a first priority.

When we left for Fayence, I'd made only 17 flights in Foxtrot Zulu, for a total flight time of just under 3 hours (that's an average of a little over 10 minutes per flight). Even in a high-performance sailplane, flight time didn't build up very fast in Belgium - particularly at our skill level, and with the local flying conditions.

Once at Fayence, flying time quickly built up. In just seven flights during 2½ weeks, my total flight time in Foxtrot Zulu was over 22 hours - and this doesn't include an additional 11 hours flight time in the club's K-6. We were in seventh heaven in Fayence!

At Chièvres in August, I only got three more quick flights in Foxtrot Zulu before she was loaded on a freighter in Rotterdam bound for the U.S. Hopefully I would meet up with her after I began my new posting at the Pentagon.



We arranged ocean freight for Foxtrot Zulu in the Fall, 1973, from Rotterdam to Baltimore. Gliders typically “live” in their trailer, a 30’ long covered container on wheels, so that made it easy to ship Foxtrot Zulu on a roll-on/roll-off car freighter.

**Foxtrot Zulu Makes Her Debut In The U.S.** Shortly after I signed in at my new job in the Pentagon, I took delivery of Foxtrot Zulu at the Dundalk Marine Terminal in Baltimore. I still had my 1970 Pontiac LeMans that I’d purchased before shipping over to SHAPE in late 1969, and it was already wired for the FZ trailer lights. The customs and freight clearance was quick and straightforward, and after leaving the docks I immediately dropped her off at her new home for the next few months – the Mid-Atlantic Soaring Association (MASA) in Frederick, Md. Our agreed-upon plan was that I’d fly her for the first half of 1974, and then trailer her by car to Tacoma for Bob and Nancy to fly throughout the second half of the year.

My first flight at MASA was on December 1, 1973. It was a two-hour flight, and it was nice to see that conditions here weren’t as dismal as in Belgium.

Flying at MASA began in earnest in late January, 1974. I quickly racked up 28 flight hours in a matter of 16 flights, and I was astonished how fast one can learn in the company of highly qualified pilots. I was making serious cross-country flights, certainly not with any record-breaking flying speeds, as I was still pretty novice. I was learning a lot, though, and very quickly!

By May, I was ready to begin working on my FAI Gold C Goal Flight leg – a flight of at least 300km (186 miles), to a pre-declared goal location, either an out-and-return or triangular course. My log book shows that I made two unsuccessful attempts, landing at small airfields along the course line (the first was at the private airstrip on Arthur Godfrey’s estate in Leesburg, VA (a longtime radio and TV broadcaster and entertainer, who has now been relegated to the dustbin of time). When I went up to the house to make a phone call to arrange for my retrieve, there was a black-tie party going on and I elected to make the call and then stay with the glider.

On May 7th, I completed the 300km Goal Flight with a 201-mile triangle, from Frederick north to Mt. Holly Springs, PA, then south to Airlie, VA, and back to Frederick, MD. (Wow! Three states in one flight!) The flight took a total of 5 hours, 43 minutes – which isn’t very fast by racing standards, at barely 35 miles per hour – but in my mind I was flying on cloud nine.

My last flight at Frederick in Foxtrot Zulu was on June 13th, 1974, and shortly after that I made the round-trip car journey to the Seattle area, delivering Foxtrot Zulu to Bob and Nancy.



*MASA pilots were generous at loaning their sailplanes to other pilots - something I’ve never seen in any other club. After I delivered Foxtrot Zulu to Seattle, I got to fly nine different types of sailplane - the one pictured above was a French-built Edelweiss. I was devastated a few months later when a dear friend from MASA was killed in this aircraft - loaned to her by her fiancé - this accident ended the practice of loaning sailplanes.*

When I returned, and was now without a sailplane of my own, the MASA pilots were unexpectedly generous in letting me fly their sailplanes. Over the summer months, I flew nine different sailplanes; several were higher performance than Foxtrot Zulu.

In August I flew with a good friend, Dieter Schmidt, in the club’s ASK-13 two-seater, setting a Maryland State Two-Place Out-and-Return Gliding Record – a total distance of 108 miles. This isn’t many miles, but the ASK-13 is a fairly low performance training sailplane and we were happy with that record.





A couple of weeks after the State Record flight, I was back in the club's ASK-13, this time for a check ride with another good friend, Vern Chapin, who signed me off with a recommendation to take the FAA Private Pilot Flight Test exam. Up to now, I'd been flying on my British Glider Pilot's license, using a reciprocal agreement that was in effect at the time. As I recall, this was only good for one year (with 9/11, this wouldn't be allowed at all now).

During my weeknights, I studied for the Private Pilot Written Exam, and when I felt confident that I could pass it, signed up on the exam schedule at the FAA office at Washington, D.C.'s National Airport. I passed with no problem. The next week, my log book shows the entry, "Private Pilot Flight Exam Completed Satisfactorily, August 25, 1974", signed, William (Bill) C. Holbrook – one of the legends in gliding in those days, having completed one of the first-ever sailplane flights over 1,000km - (U.S. #7, International #10).

One very memorable aspect of hanging around MASA was the introduction to sailplane racing, where competing pilots fly a pre-determined course, at that time snapping photos of turnpoints from a cockpit-mounted camera – typically of an airport runway – to prove you were actually at the turnpoint. Speed and distances for competition sailplane flights are pretty amazing, oftentimes 200-300 miles around a

triangular or multi-leg course, with the winning pilot's average course speed approaching 80 MPH – and this is in an airplane with no engine!

I was immediately hooked on competition flying, although I wasn't able to compete that year as I'd already delivered Foxtrot Zulu to the West Coast by the time the Region 4 competition was held.

From a non-flying standpoint, being in Washington, D.C. that year was pretty heady – working in the Pentagon in the elite Air Force Command and Control computer unit, and witnessing the spectacle of President Nixon's impeachment for high crimes and misdemeanors from the Watergate affair with a virtual front row seat.

By summer's end, though, I had decided that the Washington, D.C. area wasn't my cup of tea and the Seattle area was where I really wanted to settle down. When my year's tour at the Pentagon was up, I landed a mainframe operating system programmer position at Boeing Computer Services in Seattle and was ready to move west.

*To be continued in another edition of Towline*

## NEW CERTIFICATE



*From Evergreen Soaring,  
Arlington, WA. –*

*DPE Neal Karman congratulates  
Jonathan Cross on earning his  
Commercial Glider Certificate.  
Jonathan is an experienced pilot  
originally from South Africa. He  
has flown in Germany and  
instructed at Lasham, England.*



## UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS FOR 2024

- SGC March General Meeting (on-line)..... March 4<sup>th</sup> @ 7:00 PM
  - SGC Board Meeting (on-line) ..... March 11<sup>th</sup> @ 7:00 PM
  - Ephrata Dust-Up (tentative)..... May 25<sup>th</sup> thru May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024
  - Evergreen Encampment ..... May 27<sup>th</sup> thru June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024
  - Wiederkehr/VSA Cross-Country Week ..... June 1 thru June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024
  - Methow Encampment (tentative)..... June 15<sup>th</sup> thru June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2024
  - Region 8 Contest ..... June 23<sup>rd</sup> thru June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024
  - SSA Juniors Camp..... June 30<sup>th</sup> thru July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024
  - Mackey, ID ..... July 8<sup>th</sup> thru July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024
- Contact: Tom Dixon, 208-867-6953 or [fdixon@msn.com](mailto:fdixon@msn.com)  
Local accommodations are limited, reserve early!
- WVSC Alvord Glider Safari, OR ..... July 20<sup>th</sup> thru July 27<sup>th</sup>
  - Ephrata Glider Aerobatic Camp in the fall..... Canceled due to the anticipated dates being too close to the SSA Convention in Knoxville Tennessee in October 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](mailto:Towline@SeattleGliderCouncil.org)

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

