

## SSA GROWBOOK 2004 Edition

### Introduction

SSA GROWBOOK! is a resource book to help you participate in the effort to grow the sport of soaring and grow the SSA. It is a recipe book containing recipes for growth that have been proven to work. Whether you are trying to start a new soaring club, or to grow your current soaring club, or are trying to launch or grow a commercial soaring venture, you will find useful and effective recipes to grow soaring in this book.

Growth is good for soaring. New soaring enthusiasts provide the lifeblood of our sport. Every challenge we face in soaring - airspace preservation, airport preservation, enhanced flight safety, aircraft certification, or pilot certification procedures, to name a few - would be easier to surmount if we had the additional resources that a larger pool of pilots, and a larger SSA membership roster, would provide.

SSA GROWBOOK 2004 will help you find ways to make soaring grow, and provide you with tips and references to make your growth efforts easier and more effective. In the past, grassroots soaring activists had to spend a lot of time designing and testing a growth program. Now, with GROWBOOK, you don't have to spend any time re-inventing a wheel that was already invented somewhere else. Instead, you can select a strategy that appeals to you and employ it in your community. If you and your fellow soaring pilots persevere in promoting soaring, you will likely see the growth you desire.

Thanks for using GROWBOOK 2004 Edition. I hope it helps you to promote soaring and I hope it helps our sport to grow again.

Safe soaring,

Bob Wander

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## Ask For The Sale: SSA Membership by Bob Wander

Here is the letter I send to every person who contacts me to learn about soaring. It will look nice on your Gliding Club/Flight School letterhead. The letter lists features and benefits of membership, then asks for the sale. When used with your word processor, such a letter can be stored and personalized with just a few keystrokes. Feel free to use it or modify it any way you see fit.

### **Be sure to attach an SSA Membership application form!**

+ + ++ + + + ++ + ++

Charles Guillemont

Dear Charles,

The national organization for soaring pilots is the Soaring Society of America. I strongly recommend membership in the SSA to you. Here's why:

- ◆ SSA publishes SOARING magazine each month
- ◆ SSA promotes our interests in Federal airspace hearings
- ◆ SSA promotes our interests in airport preservation
- ◆ SSA publishes dozens of titles of interest to us all (such as Soaring Flight Manual and Joy of Soaring)
- ◆ SSA provides Glider Flight Instructor clinics all around the country
- ◆ SSA provides an annual national forum for us all in the SSA National Convention
- ◆ SSA provides a national marketplace for new and used gliders and other equipment
- ◆ SSA sanctions all official sailplane races
- ◆ SSA provides direction to the Soaring Safety Foundation
- ◆ SSA promotes the interests of SSA divisions such as the National Soaring Museum, the Sailplane Homebuilders Association, the 1-26 Association, The Self Launching Sailplane Association, and the Women's Soaring Pilot Association.

Joining provides you with the host of services listed above. Most important, membership gets you each month a copy of SOARING magazine, the journal of soaring.

I hope you'll consider becoming a member of the Soaring Society. You'll find it worth your while. Thanks!

Bob Wander

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The SSA Board of Directors took a close look at SSA growth issues during their meeting in Charlotte, NC, in March 1992. Board member Doug Jacobs asked Bob Wander at that time to put together ideas on what we need to do to make the sport, and the SSA, grow and prosper. The following letter resulted. It is included here in GROWBOOK 2004 because it gives a pretty thorough overview of all the problems we face, as well as suggesting some solutions. Think of it as kind of a history lesson.

Dear Doug,

Here is an expansion of the outline I gave you at the SSA Convention, (Charlotte 1992) regarding growing the SSA. I think that growing the sport requires

- 1) recruiting new members;
- 2) hanging on to our current members who are in training but not yet licensed as Private Pilot Glider;
- 3) hanging on to current members who have earned Private Pilot Glider but who have lost the focus that goal-directed flying provides now that the rating has been achieved...and so eventually drift away.

### **1) Getting new members**

◆ Community Education program lectures - a three hour soaring introductory lecture, supported by VCR/TV audiovisuals, including a brief history of the sport - outline enclosed; sample catalog enclosed.

◆ Welcoming visitors at the airfield - the best way to do this at Club sites is to appoint someone each flying day to wear a jacket or hat that says in bold letters "Ask me about soaring!". Believe it or not, something this simple works quite well. Make sure that a handout is available - a copy of Soaring or a copy of Soaring In America works quite well...and the special April '92 issue of Soaring should be perfect, aimed at the beginner as it is.

◆ Recruit women. Women are all but ignored in our sport. This, in effect, excludes 51% of all the people in the United States from our ranks. No wonder SSA is shrinking. When recruiting women, I make every effort to point out that women have no inherent disadvantage in our sport (unlike, say, basketball or golf) and in fact possess the advantage of being fifty pounds lighter than men. I also use the example of women like Helen Dick, Doris Grove, JoAnn Shaw, and others to let women know that they are not alone in their desire to fly. I make every effort to see that each female prospective member gets the name of one of the local women pilots to call and ask further questions.

◆ I can't visit every prospect every month but Soaring magazine can, if we get prospective new pilots to join the SSA. Having that magazine arrive every month does more to keep soaring in the mind of the prospect than just about anything else. Soaring also knits them into the community of soaring pilots by educating them about what's new, what's hot, what's available. For many years around here, the way the locals recruited was to get them to join the glider club first, and then enroll them in the SSA. That's all backwards. Get them to join SSA first - it's cheaper, it's easier, it makes no significant demands on their time, Soaring is an attractive ambassador on their doorstep each month, and it sets the hook for further commitment such as beginning flight training or joining the local gliding club.

◆ Put the cost in perspective. I'm sick of always hearing that soaring is expensive. For the

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average person it's not. A zero time person can get a Private Pilot Glider license for well under three grand with any commercial operator in the country in a 2-33. Yes, that costs more than a round of golf. But if you add the cost of all the golf equipment, the magazines, books, country club fees, green fees, lunches and beers afterwards and the like, you'll find a humdrum thing like golf costs nearly as much as soaring! And by comparison to just about anything else, soaring is an absolutely spellbinding sport! Put another way, you can earn your license in gliders and have spent about the same amount of money as it costs to buy a three year old Yugo. That's pretty cheap!

### **2) Educating new members.**

New members must be provided a good quality flying education or they are likely to quit. [Derek Piggott makes the point somewhere that while new prospects are ignorant (of flying), they are not stupid. They know that a person can get killed flying a sailplane whether we tell them so or not. They are likely to leave the sport if they even suspect that they are getting a poor education in flying, since what you don't know CAN hurt you when you fly. Accordingly, I give new prospects credit for their intelligence by providing several worthy tools for educating them about soaring. These programs benefit the sport locally by providing a decent education to up-and-coming pilots, as well as providing a good recruiting tool for those folks who haven't bit hard yet - they want to nibble for a while, curious to see if they can learn more about the sport before forking over a grand or two.]

- ◆ Glider Pilot Classroom Groundschool has been a key feature of my recruiting success here in Minnesota. The version I teach is a weekend classroom groundschool, 16 hours total. Tuition is \$99. This allows prospects to learn all about soaring and flying basics in the classroom, at no risk, and without spending more than about \$7 an hour to do so. When the course ends they can all take the FAA Private Pilot Glider Knowledge Test. Most of these people continue on to flight training. Almost all of them join SSA.

- ◆ Reading circles/seminars for student pilots. This provides peer group support during the critical early phase of flying, when many get discouraged and want to run and hide. Topics such as A,B,C badges, mastering the aerotow, thermaling, etc.

- ◆ A decent flight training syllabus is a necessary ingredient in the flight training program if we want to retain recruits. I use the flight training program I wrote and published myself. Students know that an instructor who greets them with the line "What are we gonna do today?" is not doing his job. Then they get scared that he will miss something important. Then they quit (see note about Piggott's views above).

- ◆ Exporting primary students may be necessary if the local gliding club(s) do not have instructors sufficient to handle training demand. Send those new recruits off to a commercial operator and get them soloed! Then the club CFI's can re-solo them and supervise them when they return. This saves a lot of wear and tear on local instructors, and is worth considering if the local obstacle to growth is instructor shortage.

- ◆ Import CFIGs from a commercial operation, if need be, to meet local demand for primary instruction. One CFIG working fulltime for 10 days can get a number of pilots soloed or close to solo. Under the right conditions, as a professional CFIG I'd be happy to do this at various places around the country. I suspect others would too.

### **3) Keeping Current Members.**

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It makes no sense to recruit new members, shepherd them through the flight training process by keeping them focused on the goal of solo and then license, and then, on the day they earn the license, to cease all goal oriented flying. I did not have to be a rocket scientist to figure this one out. So, here in Minnesota I got going on providing and/or publicising goals for licensed pilots.

◆ Regattas - our twice-a-year Albert Lea Regatta in Minnesota is a non-competitive event which is lots of fun. Clinics on ground launch, aerotow, limited acro, crosscountry, publications, etc, have all been successful. Format is a three to seven day event with lots of flying and lots of social activities. Lots of fun. Draws pilots and media attention from hundreds of miles away.

◆ Importing Speakers/Luminaries is good for promotion. Coordinated in my area by SSAer Roger Gomoll. The State of Minnesota Transportation Department has an Aeronautics Division which hosts an annual Sport Aviation Day for airplane, ultralight, balloon, and glider pilots. Roger got them to sponsor speakers of interest to glider pilots like Doris Grove, Eric Mozer, Derek Piggott, and others...in return, we really crank out attendance by glider pilots (about one hundred attended this year). Everybody wins.

◆ Annual Awards Banquets are important forums for recognition of pilot achievements. Every gliding area needs one. Recognize those folks who really make growth happen.

◆ Bronze, Silver C Badge programs are very important motivators here in Minnesota. Nationally, it is my opinion that we have allowed the Badge program to languish somewhat...I don't know why...it needs effective promotion. It is a very good program, and probably second to none as a motivator for further accomplishments.

◆ Cross-country Seminars have been excellent off-season vehicles to keep pilots interested and goal-oriented. They also allow pilots to stay in touch socially during the off-season. Topics such as barographs, cameras, computers, vario tuning, flight planning, weather briefing, etc.

◆ Local Awards for crosscountry flying are good motivators - we have a traveling trophy named Delbert which is awarded for modest crosscountry flights from one gliderport to another. It is very keenly sought after by locals, and inspires much scheming and skulduggery, as well as some flying. Somehow, traveling trophies like the Little Brown Jug seem to excite the imagination more than permanent display trophies do.

◆ Contests (sanctioned or not) can be useful at locations where there is a sufficient number of glider pilots at the top of the food chain who are looking around like hungry carnivores for someone to eat. Caesar Creek, Hinckley, and other locations report good results with weekend casual competitions.

Well...there are a few ideas. I know most of them work well from personal experience. Best Wishes and Safe Soaring to You!

Bob Wander

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The following article appeared in SOARING in 1994. It must have hit a nerve because it generated one of the largest responses of any article published during the last ten years. It describes how outsiders often see us when they come to visit our gliderports.

If we are going to get the sport of soaring to grow, we must all work together at grassroots level to eliminate the Cold Shoulder and replace it with a Warm Welcome for every gliderport visitor.

### The Cold Shoulder

by Bob Wander

We soaring pilots are proud of our sport. We want it to grow and prosper. And we know that steady growth is one of the main ingredients in any successful recipe for the future of soaring. But growing the sport demands that we confront some serious challenges. For example, in the 1990s soaring must contend with a growing variety of competing leisure activities. Mountain biking, rollerblading, and video/computer gaming are examples of popular leisure industries which did not even exist fifteen years ago. Another challenge is the fact that millions of Americans find themselves working harder than ever to satisfy the increasing demands of the workplace. For these people and for their families leisure time has become a very precious commodity. They spend leisure time carefully and want to derive maximum enjoyment from it. If they perceive soaring will make heavy demands on limited leisure time, they may decide not to pursue the sport.

Even for those folks who overcome these obstacles and join the soaring movement, the road is not completely smooth. Newcomers must accustom themselves to long drives from a home in the city to a gliderport out in the country. Entry level involvement in soaring demands substantial cash outlays for flight training or for soaring club membership and other soaring related expenses. And newcomers discover they must devote lots of their precious leisure time to mastering the fundamentals of soaring flight.

All these challenges are barriers to growth. But let's not lose sight of the good news on the growth scene. After all, soaring is still one of the most beautiful and interesting sporting activities in the world. All around America automobile drivers still pull over onto the highway shoulder and stop the car so that they can watch gliders landing and taking off at the gliderport. Visitors still make the trek out of town to find the local gliderport and spend hours watching the soaring activities there. Many of these visitors (perhaps even the majority of them) harbor the dream that one day they too will become soaring pilots and take to the sky.

It is ironic, then, that the treatment many visitors receive when they visit our gliderports may be one of the biggest barriers to soaring's future growth. When visitors arrive at your gliderport, how are they treated? Please take a few minutes and really think about it. Do you welcome visitors? Do you and your soaring friends answer their questions about soaring? Do you invite them to participate in the sport in some way, such as attending a

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glider club meeting or gliderport workday or ground school class? Do you provide each visitor a copy of your soaring organization's promotional literature? Do you tell them about SOARING magazine and how it can help them explore the sport at minimum cost? Do you give them an SSA membership application and then invite them to join the SSA? Do you ask your visitors to write down their name and address so that you can mail them announcements about local soaring events from time to time?

If you answered yes to most of these questions, I'll bet your local soaring community is healthy, growing, and is prepared for the future. And may your tribe increase!

On the other hand, if you answered no to most of the questions, I'm willing to wager that soaring is facing a troubled future in your area. Your local soaring clubs and glider schools may be confronted with an ugly combination: declining soaring activity coupled with increasing expenses and other overhead. Confidence about the future may be giving way to nagging doubts as to whether soaring has any future in the local area. And worries like that are no fun at all.

Newcomers visit soaring sites to take in the excitement and beauty of motorless flight. Many of them also come to discover whether they could become soaring pilots. But if they discover that soaring pilots do not welcome visitors, the excitement drains away. The visitor's private dream of learning to soar begins to fade. And every time a visitor's dream begins to fade, prospects for the future of soaring fade a little bit too.

The SSA staff has recently seen a sharp increase in the number of letters received from folks who have abandoned hope of becoming sailplane pilots. The authors of these thoughtful and articulate letters have given up trying to join the soaring movement because of the Cold Shoulder that they usually get from local glider pilots. Each letter tells the same story - only the setting changes from letter to letter. When the visitors arrived at their local gliderport and walked up to clutches of glider pilots, no one said hello to them. No one greeted them, or welcomed them, or even acknowledged their presence. No one asked them if they were interested in soaring. They were simply ignored. After several such episodes the visitors concluded that there was something rather rude about soaring and about soaring pilots, and they drove away from the gliderport convinced that this was no place to spend their time or money. They decided that soaring was a closed society, and that pilots give newcomers neither welcome nor assistance. Pilots give newcomers the Cold Shoulder instead.

I believe our number one problem in soaring is that we so frequently give newcomers the Cold Shoulder. We in aviation sometimes exhibit a sort of tribal mentality that newcomers interpret, rightly or wrongly, as meaning "Don't bother applying for membership in our band - we have all the members we need." We make newcomers feel that they are not quite complete - that is, they are not part of the glorious company of aviators. And if you have had the opportunity to visit a number of general aviation airports and gliderports, think back on the impression you had when you arrived for your first visit, before anyone knew you or thought of you as a pilot. The local pilots doubtless chatted among each other



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with easy familiarity, but probably never acknowledged your presence. You were not a local member of the Tribe of Aviators - you were viewed as a newcomer, or gawker, just passing through. As you think back, you'll probably remember getting the Cold Shoulder more often than not. The Cold Shoulder usually disappears only after the locals discover that you are a member of the pilot tribe, and that you know the language of flying and that you love the same things that all pilots love about flying. Then you receive a warm welcome because you're the genuine article - an active member of the aviation community.

For non-pilots, the Cold Shoulder gets tiresome quickly. They don't understand why they are getting the Cold Shoulder. They have done nothing to deserve it. So before too long, they decide to head on down the road and look for some other place to spend their time and money. Eventually they probably tell their friends and acquaintances what a disappointment it was to get the Cold Shoulder at the gliderport. And as the word gets around the damage done is multiplied.

There is little doubt that this scenario plays out regularly in every region of the country. And there is no doubt at all that everybody involved is a loser when it does. The local soaring organization misses the chance to recruit a solid new soaring devotee. The would-be newcomer who left to pursue other interests misses out on the thrill and beauty of soaring flight. And the SSA misses the chance to grow and to increase its ability to promote and protect our favorite sport.

Soaring needs resources to prosper. We need those resources to preserve our gliding sites, to refurbish or replace an aging glider fleet, to protect our right of access to airspace, to provide opportunity for youngsters to soar, and for a dozen other causes. Newcomers provide new energy and new blood and, yes, new money too - resources which are always in demand. So it stands to reason that when our gliderport behavior discourages newcomers we squander our future resources. It is as simple as that.

We need to rectify this state of affairs. Let's resolve to do a better job with newcomers by trying the following things:

- ◆ Tell our visitors that we welcome their visit to the gliderport.
- ◆ Tell them about our local soaring organizations.
- ◆ Tell them about SOARING magazine. Explain to them the benefits of SSA membership and give them a membership application to facilitate joining.
- ◆ Invite them to come to the next glider club meeting, or the next hangar party, or the annual awards banquet.
- ◆ Have visitors sign their names and addresses in our airport guest book. Then, in a week or so let's follow up by sending a note thanking them for their visit and inviting them to come again.

If lots of visitors receive this kind of welcome, our sport will have a minor revolution on its hands. Our soaring clubs and flight schools will grow larger and stronger every year. And the SSA will grow larger and stronger each year too. Let's all pitch in to eliminate the Cold Shoulder and replace it with the Warm Welcome. Together we can make this decade a

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period of steady growth and genuine prosperity for American soaring and for the SSA. What a great way to get rid of the Cold Shoulder forever!

**Excerpts from letters the SSA has received decrying the attitude newcomers found at various soaring sites:**

*"Rather than fostering my interest they actively tried to damp it"*

*"They offered little encouragement and made me feel very unwelcome"*

*"If this sport continues to close doors on others like it did on me, then it WILL die. I'm young, I'm well off, I'm reasonably smart and I had a great desire to learn how to fly sailplanes and fly them well. Any other sport would have accepted me with open arms. This one just shook its sunburned face and pointed toward the airport boundary gate. "*

*"We are not renewing our SSA membership at this time. I regret this, but am so put off by our recent (gliding club) experience that I do not expect to be back soaring for a while. "*

## Ask Me About Soaring

by Bob Wander

August 1994 Soaring Magazine

Visitors to gliderports sometimes receive the "Cold Shoulder." When they do, they often abandon efforts to learn about soaring. The "cold shoulder" article generated numerous responses from the grassroots soaring community. Some of the responses related first-person "cold shoulder" encounters. Other responses suggested methods to eliminate the "cold shoulder" and help the sport prosper.

### **Grassroots Solutions to the "Cold Shoulder"**

Grassroots soaring activists around the country responded with solutions to the "cold shoulder" problem. Many folks also outlined methods for recruiting new members for their local soaring organizations and for the SSA. Their ideas and suggestions are practical and easy to implement.

Jayne and Frank Reid, Bermuda High Soaring, SC (Bermuda High recruited more new SSA members in 1993 than any other operation in the country): "As for how we are generating new members there is no one special thing that we are doing. Rather, it was first making the decision to make the SSA membership drive an objective for Bermuda High Soaring. Then it was trying to be aware of our objectives each day. We find that Soaring magazine and the ABC Badges are the best inducements for the potential new SSA member."

Dennis Brunotte and Joe Volmar (Adrian Soaring Club, Michigan) sent along the following tips for greeting visitors: "When visitors arrive, smile and approach them. Ask for their names and tell them yours. Shake hands. Be friendly. Invite them to join the SSA and invite them to visit again. After all, some of our visitors have driven a long distance to visit our facility - let's send them home with a positive memory of their first glider experience."

Martin Bael (Finger Lakes Soaring Club, New York): "We are conducting a six-hour Introduction To Soaring course as part of our local Science Museum's educational program. The course fee includes a demonstration ride. The course was oversubscribed and participants are extremely enthusiastic. In our Club Handbook and at our meetings we stress the value of warmly greeting visitors."

Pete Williams (Self-Launching Sailplane Association, Nevada): "There is a gold mine of older soaring pilots who have the time, desire and energy to get the word out and welcome newcomers at the soaring site. I imagine that each soaring operation has a cadre of older pilots who, if approached, would be happy to devote a day a week to this endeavor."

John Hodgson (Minnesota): "Sometimes I fly from Country Aviation, Erwinna, Pennsylvania, and Bill and Mary Joe's organization is superb. A warm smile and a 'How can I help you?' as you walk in makes a visitor feel welcome." (How nice it would be if this kind of welcome was universal!).

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S. Steve Adkins (Minnesota): "SSA chapters should contact EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association) chapters close by and set up glider demo flights at their annual picnics or monthly meetings."

As we work together to grow soaring and grow the SSA let's remember that our primary recruitment arena is the gliderport. This is where most newcomers have their first up-close-and-personal encounter with the soaring movement. The type of welcome they receive goes a long way toward determining whether they will become members of the soaring community. For this reason it behooves us all to examine the impression we make on visitors to our gliderports.

Let's inaugurate a national grassroots recruitment campaign. Working together, we can eliminate the "cold shoulder" and replace it with the "warm welcome." Let's invite visitors to ask us about soaring and then provide them with answers. SSAer Don Horton suggests that we use the phrase, "Ask Me About Soaring," as our battle cry. Perhaps a designated greeter could serve a few hours on weekend afternoons to help with welcoming visitors. A banner, jacket, or T-shirt with the phrase, "Ask Me About Soaring," would give visitors a pleasant welcome and provide them an opportunity to explore the sport. Let's have guests sign in on the gliderport Guest Register and send them invitations to visit again. Let's make sure that we invite power pilots to explore soaring. And let's make sure that visitors receive an application for SSA Membership. The full-color point-of-sale recruiting display board furnished by SSA makes a great recruiting tool, and the membership applications that accompany it make signing up for membership easy.

The next time you encounter visitors at the gliderport, please give them an enthusiastic welcome. Make "Ask Me About Soaring!" your motto and let visitors know that you welcome their questions. Remember that when you were new to soaring, someone took the time to answer your questions and to help you get started in soaring now you can pass that favor along to another newcomer. Grassroots support for "Ask Me About Soaring" will help our sport and our Soaring Society grow and prosper.

### More "Cold Shoulder" Encounters

Max Bacon, Chairman of the British Gliding Association Development Committee: "(In Britain) we too suffer the 'cold shoulder' and our clubs are now making a big effort to be welcoming to strangers."

From California: "The staff at the airport counter were courteous, answered my questions, but volunteered little. Obtaining literature and information about instruction required patience and persistence on my part. In contrast, the pilot/instructor volunteered volumes of information and his enthusiasm was contagious. "

From Ford City, PA: "Just wanted to mention that our family twice had the experience of not being welcome when we stopped at a soaring operation. I had the distinct impression they felt I didn't meet their income level, nor did they want anyone else involved. At the time I was already flying powered aircraft and can tell you that the people and staff on the

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'powered' side of the airport had a totally different attitude."

From Fort Worth, TX: "I felt invisible as I was completely ignored. The two men hooking tow lines and running wingtips carefully avoided eye contact of any sort. I watched for about an hour and then returned to the hangar. Later, I told one of the tow pilots that I was interested in joining the glider club. His reply completely floored me. I had expected something about submitting a membership application but what he said was: 'No. We don't take too kindly to power pilots around here. We have found that they aren't interested in real soaring matters.' Now, this was more than the 'cold shoulder' - it was total and complete rejection! I am left with the impression that the current soaring movement has a serious attitude problem."

From the desert Southwest: "I spent four weekends at the field and no one asked me what my interests were or promoted soaring in any way. I was treated as an outsider. At last I was approached by a senior club member. He told me I was too big to fly sailplanes and that I should just forget about soaring. Period."(Note: the author of the last excerpt is a glider flight instructor with more than 900 glider flights, a towpilot with over 6000 tows, and an airframe and powerplant mechanic - skills in high demand in most gliding clubs! Ironically, when the verbal exchange above occurred, he had just finished reading the 'Cold Shoulder' article!).

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This new section of the Growbook contains promotional ideas, many of them from tireless soaring promoter Burt Compton. Burt is a career Master CFI, an FAA Designated Examiner, a towpilot, and the author of the book "TowPilot Manual". With his wife Kathy, Burt owns and operates Marfa Gliders in west Texas. Contact Burt via his website [www.FlyGliders.com](http://www.FlyGliders.com).

### Give A Better Glider Ride by Burt Compton

I am convinced that we have discouraged many people from getting involved in soaring by giving them a lousy glider ride. Too many initial glider rides result in the passenger becoming uncomfortable or airsick, despite the best intentions of the pilot, who wants to share the exhilaration of a good flight on a warm or windy soaring day.

Now imagine, your passenger is at a social event when someone asks how they enjoyed their recent glider ride. Your passenger replies: "Great scenery, got to fly it, then felt sick." This may be repeated to dozens of people, who may not want to have the same uncomfortable experience in a glider.

The Power of the Press: I am invited to visit several soaring sites each year to conduct Site Surveys for the Soaring Safety Foundation. As part of the survey we discuss safety concerns associated with giving glider rides, especially to members of the press. At three sites I've visited I was shown a news clipping or videotape of a local newspaper or TV reporter's glider ride. Each reporter briefly mentioned feeling airsick but in all three cases, the clubs did not seem too concerned about these comments. How many thousands of potential glider enthusiasts saw these news reports and decided that while a soaring flight looked cool, the potential of becoming airsick was not worth it? Many folks did indeed come out to fly as a result of the media coverage, but did they have a positive experience? Were they cultivated as new students and SSA members? Answer "yes" and we can grow soaring.

Safety and FAR's: The pilot must be properly certified and current. Giving a ride or flight instruction for hire requires a 100 hour inspection of the aircraft per FAR 91.409 (b). The passenger should be told what not to touch. Ask them to grasp their shoulder straps like suspenders during takeoff and landing. If the passenger will be invited to fly the glider, discuss the proper exchange of flight controls. The passenger should be briefed about what sensations to expect during the flight, and how to communicate that they are not feeling well. Assure them that the moment they feel uncomfortable you will begin a smooth descent back to the airport.

Danger of Distraction: A contributing factor to many accidents is the distraction of the pilot. Fly the glider first. Console your sick passenger a distant second. Have the burp bag and a towel handy to toss to them, then concentrate on landing the glider. Do your landing checklist. Worry about cleaning the cockpit later.

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**What Makes Them Sick: Heat.** Make sure they are getting enough vent air. A hat and sunglasses are helpful. If they bring a video camera, suggest they do not watch the entire flight through the viewfinder. Expect them to get uncomfortable during a long, rough aerotow. Reduced G maneuvers and aggressive flying may induce airsickness. Continuous thermaling at 45 degrees of bank with the world turning completely around every 25 seconds may disorient the passenger. Make a few shallow turns in lift and note how your passenger is reacting. Silence is bad. Enthusiasm is good. Check your passenger often. By the time you realize they are not feeling well, it may take you several minutes to get the glider smoothly back on the ground. Shallow bank descents with full airbrake are more comfortable than steep descending spirals at 2 G's!

**Timing is Everything:** Shorter may be better. Once they understand the sensations, they will likely enjoy a longer instructional flight with a CFIG. Give rides when the air is cool and smooth. As you may offer the controls to them after release, smooth air helps the newcomer get the feel of the glider. Do not have them looking at the instruments. Show them the angles of the glider nose and wings on the horizon. Further instruction should be given by a CFIG, so future instructors don't have to undo misconceptions like holding airspeed by staring at the instrument. Demonstrate "attitude flying". It is safer to be looking outside.

**More Regulations:** FAA defines aerobatic flight (FAR 91.303) as "an intentional maneuver involving an abrupt change in an aircraft's attitude, an abnormal attitude, an abnormal acceleration, not necessary for normal flight." The often misquoted reference to 30 degrees nose up and 60 degrees bank refers to the wearing of parachutes (FAR 91.307). Formation flight while carrying passengers for hire is prohibited (FAR 91.111).

**Ambassador For Soaring:** Your club or commercial operation may have spent a lot of money in advertising to invite people to discover soaring. Perhaps they found you via a website or by SSA's promotional efforts. Your passenger may be the spouse or family member of a club member or student pilot. A properly conducted flight will assure them that their spouse or child is flying gliders in a safe environment. As an ambassador for soaring, make a good impression about how safe, smooth and satisfying glider flying can be. And don't forget to invite them to take another flight!

## Growing Soaring by Burt Compton

I have been privileged to represent our Soaring Society while managing the SSA booth at many aviation events such as EAA AirVenture Oshkosh, EAA Sun 'n Fun and the AOPA Expo. Besides talking with potential new members, I have listened to the ideas of SSA club members and commercial operators about how SSA can "grow soaring". Many suggest that a top-down SSA nationwide advertising and marketing effort would help us grow and be permanently successful. In the meantime I have compiled some "grassroots level" ideas on how individual clubs and commercial operators can identify and cultivate new members or customers. They are your "business partners". Get to know them and serve them well.

Soaring clubs and commercial operators are very much alike. They must make some money, pay expenses and grow. There are aspects of business and social activities that clubs and commercial soaring operators might share to achieve growth.

Business Practices Clubs Can Learn From the Commercial Operators:

Create a Business Plan. Estimate how much money the club anticipates earning, the expense budget you can afford and set time-line goals. Club officers should meet often to review the plan to confirm that the expense budget is realistic and goals are being achieved.

Develop a Promotion Plan and designate a club member as the Public Relations Manager, who will actively manage the promotion and marketing of your club services. Make a presentation to the club to motivate members about public relations.

Meet and Greet Every Visitor with an invitation for a glider flight.

Identify the Personalities and characteristics of your current members. Ask how they spent their leisure time before they discovered soaring. Target potential new members with similar backgrounds.

Check Out the Competition. Learn where local people spend their leisure time and disposable income, whether it is for golf lessons, sailboat rentals, motorcycling or skiing. Identify the active people in your community.

Invite People to Fly and Join SSA! It can be that simple. Print business cards for all club members to distribute as part of the invitation to fly. Include the club logo, website, telephone numbers and directions to your soaring site.

Display Soaring Books and Materials. "Soaring In America" booklets, copies of "Soaring" magazine and membership forms are available from the SSA.

Maintain the Schedule. Try not to keep people waiting. Have the aircraft and flight instructors ready to fly the demo and instructional flights.



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### Social Aspects that Commercial Operators Can Learn From the Clubs:

Seek any opportunity to tell people about the challenge, beauty and fun of soaring. Share your enthusiasm and respectfully answer the "dumb questions".

Create a social environment for your customers with airport cookouts, or rendezvous for dinner at a local restaurant banquet room.

Host "hangar flying" sessions and show some of the many soaring videos.

Soaring logo shirts, jackets and caps create an "esprit de corps" and a sense of belonging. Sell quality items that customers will wear beyond the glider field and give you free advertising. Create your own or choose from the wide selection of SSA clothing merchandise for your inventory.

Maintain an E-mail list to announce events or discounts. Send an e-mail newsletter to every current and potential customer in your area. Highlight names and achievements of local soaring pilots. A first solo or badge flight should be recognized with enthusiasm. Send a copy to your local media.

### Two Goals for Clubs and Commercial Operators:

1. Target and pursue your potential members and customers. Interview them – learn where they come from and their personality traits.
2. Serve your members and customers well. Identify then satisfy their individual needs, and exceed their expectations. They are your business partners.

Media: Make repeated contacts with your local media. Send good press releases with photos that suggests a story. If you have any soaring events planned, list them on the internet event calendars. No event planned? Create one! Plan a day to fly youngsters or invite an aviation club to meet at your soaring site. Update and distribute your press releases on a regular basis.

So what can SSA do to help your club or commercial operation grow? This article identified some business ideas and tools. The books, videos, merchandise and support materials are available from SSA. These tools are yours to use at the grassroots level, so get out there and develop your local soaring growth plan!

## "Selling Soaring" Tip Sheet compiled by Burt Compton

I surveyed glider clubs and commercial operators for their "Success Stories". Here are some promotional ideas that worked!

There are aspects of the effort to target and retain members and customers that Glider Clubs and Commercial Soaring Operators can share to achieve growth.

Business Aspects Clubs can learn from the Commercial Operators:

- Create a PR Plan and designate a member as the Public Relations Director.
- Meet and Greet Everyone, with a verbal invitation for a glider flight.
- Stimulate Interest by displaying SSA brochures / membership forms / free copies of "Soaring" magazine to give away.
- Maintain the Schedule. Have the aircraft and flight instructors ready for the demo and instructional flights. Try not to keep people waiting.
- Identify the Personalities and characteristics of your current members.
- Ask how they spent their leisure time before they discovered soaring.
- Target potential new members with similar backgrounds.
- Check out the Competition! Learn where people spend their leisure time and money, whether it is for golf lessons, sailboat rentals, motorcycling, skiing, etc.
- Print Business Cards. All club members should carry cards, printed with the club name, website, telephone numbers, and directions to the gliderport.
- Write a "Business Plan". Club officers should meet often to review the plan to confirm that achievable goals are met, and the expense budget is realistic.

Social Aspects that Commercial Operators can learn from the Clubs:

- Seek Any Opportunity to tell people about the challenge, beauty and enjoyment of soaring. Share your enthusiasm. Answer the "dumb questions".

Create a Social Environment:

- Airport picnics, or rendezvous for dinner at a local restaurant banquet room.
- Schedule "hangar flying" sessions - show some of the many glider videos.
- Design Clothing - Shirts, Jackets and Caps create an "esprit de corps" and a sense of belonging. Sell quality items that customers will wear beyond the glider field, and give you free advertising.
- Compile an E-mail list to send messages about special events or discounts.
- Mail Postcards or a Newsletter - Mail to every customer and potential customer in your area. Mention many names in your newsletter.

Four Key Goals for Clubs and Commercial Operators:

1. Target and pursue your potential members and customers.
2. Realize that each club member or customer is your business partner.
3. Identify and satisfy their individual needs, and exceed their expectations.
4. A glider club or a commercial operation must make money.

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Making money results in growth for the clubs in order to maintain reasonable rates and upgrade gliders and towplanes. Making money allows the commercial operators to secure financing for aircraft and facilities, pay expenses, meet the goals of their business plan and achieve success. Always remember: Making money is always second to SAFETY!

### Adequate Signage For Promoting Soaring

- Place several signs showing the way to your glider operation. Maintain those signs!
- Paint a sign on an empty glider trailer to use like a highway billboard.
- Design large vinyl banners to promote soaring at your airport and at outdoor events
- Create a large decal / vinyl sticker for automobile windows to promote soaring.
- Publish a newsletter by mail or e-mail with news of upcoming events and discounts.
- Maintain a useful web page. Update the page monthly and include a link to [www.ssa.org](http://www.ssa.org)
- Set up Air Show displays. Be prepared with business cards, brochures and schedule book.
- Speak at community and aviation functions. Trailer in and assemble a glider!
- Show the "Discover Gliders!" 20 minute video to groups. It is a visual marketing tool.
- Donate a glider ride certificate to a community organization's raffle or auction.
- Sell gift certificates for demo / instructional flights. Advertise before holidays.
- Sell flight vouchers to "walk-ons" that you cannot accommodate that day.
- Fly the EAA "Young Eagles", Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Invite the media.
- Host a visit by the local high school or college aviation club to your glider field.
- Learn the potential for involvement in a Civil Air Patrol orientation flight program.
- Invite RC Clubs to fly their scale models one weekend morning at your glider site.
- Assemble a "Press Kit". Send Press Releases to the media. Always include photos.
- Submit a free listing in your local newspaper "things to do" / Friday weekend section.
- Fly the media. Arrange for a photo-plane for the photographer. Remember-Safety first!
- Write an article on soaring for a local corporate in-house news magazine.
- Notify your State or local film commission that your glider operation is available for TV commercials, film segments or still-photo shoots. Contact "location scouts".
- Contact local convention planners - they are seeking new activities for conventioners.
- Use the free SSA promotional materials. Call the SSA office toll-free: (888)-335-SOAR.
- Update your club or commercial site data with SSA, so the staff can refer people to you!
- Promote SSA Membership. The only way to receive "Soaring" magazine is to join SSA.
- Save old copies of "Soaring" magazine to give away. Attach your business card.
- Participate in the ABC Badge program. The pilot and your site will gain recognition.
- Install a mentor system for new students / club members. Retention is the goal.
- Teach a Community Education aviation course at a high school or college.
- Contact your FAA FSDO and schedule a safety seminar to educate airplane pilots about glider procedures and ratings. The FAA will mail postcards to pilots in your area.
- Invite pilot groups such as the aero clubs, EAA Chapters, Ninety Nines, Quiet Birdmen to "fly-in" to your glider site on a specific date to discover soaring.
- Market to retirees, airline and military pilots. They can fly with you during the week.
- Create durable name badges for club members / soaring school staff.
- Wear your glider logo caps, shirts at off-airport sporting events, company picnics.
- Hand out your business card or brochure. Never let anyone walk away empty-handed.

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Promote Fun! Promote rides, training, local flying, badge flights and cross-country soaring. Promote flying vintage and home-built gliders, motorgliders and racing sailplanes. Promote every aspect of soaring. As one segment of soaring grows, all will benefit.

### Share the Secrets of Soaring by Burt Compton

When we talk of growing soaring, we often talk of promoting soaring to airplane pilots. Airplane pilots are a large group of skilled men and women who already understand aviation terminology, weather, airport operations, airspace, navigation and the Part 91 Federal Aviation Regulations. The FAA sets a reasonable amount of required ground and flight training for an airplane pilot to add the glider category rating. (See FAR 61.107(6) and 61.109(f) for Private Glider / FAR 61.127(6) and 61.129(f) for Commercial Glider flight proficiency and aeronautical experience.) The new set of skills and knowledge needed to safely solo in gliders and be ready to take the FAA Practical Test are easily within the reach of an active general aviation pilot. Adding the glider category also satisfies the (Biennial) Flight Review requirement of FAR 61.56.

You can invite airplane pilots to try soaring and give them good reasons to do so. Assure them that flying gliders is likely the most fun they will ever have in aviation. Soaring may be the most satisfying type of flying they will ever do, and they will enjoy the challenge of learning to fly the aerotow, flying a ground launch, gaining altitude on the invisible currents of lift and managing the energy of the glider to a precise landing.

Motivate the airplane pilots you know to take dual instruction and earn a glider rating. We often summarize learning to fly gliders with "you will become a better pilot". This sounds like a cliché or hype, so there is more to say. We have some secrets to share:

1. You will develop a keen sense of energy management, able to control your glidepath with great accuracy and confidence, without relying too much on the cockpit instruments – using your eyes, ears, your touch on the control stick and acquiring a sub-conscious connection to your glider. The glider will become an extension of yourself – like a child in a playground – your arms outstretched – gracefully gliding and swooping – your imagination becomes reality.
2. With each glider flight, you learn about the micrometeorology of the buoyant air mass around the glider. You will enhance your ability to observe what is happening in the air around you. You will learn to "read the sky." You will begin to "see" the lift, to accurately predict the presence of lift by the shape and movement of the clouds, or by faint wisps of rising dust. You will note the slight change in the wind direction as inflow to a nearby thermal. Aloft you will recognize and feel thermal updrafts, wave lift, lift streets, changes in the wind, the slight increase of airspeed of your glider as it encounters an updraft, the sounds it makes when in lift, the sighs the glider makes entering sink. These subtle clues are usually not noted when disguised by the noise and vibration of a motorized aircraft. As a soaring pilot, you will try to understand the instinctive motions of soaring birds, then

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develop a passion to acquire a complete knowledge of the art and science of soaring from other pilots who have learned these skills.

3. You will learn precision flying during aerotow and landing. In free flight, you fly as if you are one with the machine, moving the controls just enough to fly a precise straight glide or turn, keeping drag to a minimum. Eventually your "seat-of-the-pants" tells you when you are flying coordinated, the yaw string simply confirms it. The sound of the glider betrays changes in airspeed. All your senses come alive – if you let them. You appreciate the elegance of efficiency, both in nature and in the design of your glider. Precision flying keeps the sink of the glider near the published rate, and airplane pilots discover they fly much smoother after learning to soar.

I believe there is a difference between "learning to soar" and "earning a glider rating." None of the above 3 aspects are necessarily required for the FAA certificate, at least at the refined level that a soaring pilot aspires to achieve.

Earning a FAA glider rating is a narrow path to a goal of obtaining a piece of paper which allows the pilot to carry passengers in gliders. "Learning to soar", utilize lift, fly with precision, be one with the glider, are a higher skill level to be achieved. In my opinion, these aspects of glider flying should be taught in parallel with the training for the FAA checkride. I believe that airplane pilots who "learn to soar" become safer, more proficient pilots, who will stay with us in the sport of soaring because the secrets of soaring have been revealed to them.

Glider flying tasks and areas of knowledge are described in detail in the FAA Practical Test Standards, and in Bob Wander's books "Learning to Fly Gliders" and "Private Glider Checkride". Thomas Knauff has a book specifically for airplane pilots titled "Transition To Gliders". These books are available from SSA Merchandise at [www.ssa.org](http://www.ssa.org). Order and stock these books at your soaring site.

Invite an airplane pilot to fly gliders. Share the secrets of soaring and you will give that pilot a wonderful gift.

## Hidden Soaring Sites by Burt Compton

Why do we hide so many of our soaring sites? Many are necessarily remote, far from a major city due to the requirements of good soaring weather, open airspace, a glider-friendly airport, and reasonable facility leases.

Sunspot Soaring Association, Sunny Daze Glider Club, Andy's Soaring School – where are you? Your name does not indicate your location. In my travels through the decades, I have visited dozens of soaring sites in the United States. Most were difficult to locate. Some are no longer in business. Is there a connection?

Signs: Provide good "signage" to the traveling soaring enthusiast, or for your customers seeking a glider ride. Even with a good road map many soaring sites are very hard to locate. On a lucky day you might see the launching of gliders in the distance. On a typical day, you might drive back and forth along tree-lined country roads hoping for some indication that there is a thriving soaring site nearby.

To promote your site, place and maintain signs near and far from your well-marked airport gate. On the gate should be a welcoming message and a telephone number to call if there is no soaring that day. On the airport, some small directional signs or just a glider logo will direct the visitor to the correct hangar.

Additional signs on your hangar or clubhouse that enhance promotion and safety tell the visitor where to get on the glider ride list, where they can and cannot drive or walk (such as on runways), and where to wait to be escorted out to the launch point. Signs indicating the restroom and drinking water express your hospitality. From another safety aspect, emergency vehicles such as ambulances and fire trucks should be able to quickly locate the rural road needed to come to your assistance, and be able to find the specific location of your glider clubhouse or hangar.

Sign franchises such as "Fast Signs" and "Kinkos" can make you a banner, a plastic sign, or a vinyl lettered metal sign in just a few hours. Most sign makers use computer generated vinyl lettering, and can scan and add your logo to the message. You can also have a nice sign professionally painted. Invest in a long-lasting sign. Plywood warps. Red colors fade faster in the sun than blue shades. I have used all types of signs including the corrugated plastic materials, vinyl banners, large mesh over-street banners, and metal signs. They all last several seasons. Just as important, maintain the fresh look of your signs. Keep the weeds cut down. Replace signs as necessary. Most computer based sign shops will give you a disc of your finished sign artwork (you paid for it) if requested.

Your road signage should be large and simple. A big glider image is eye-catching. A telephone number, short directional message or large arrow should be included. Motorists have less than 2 seconds to see and understand your sign. "Burma Shave" figured this out years ago. Next time you are on the highway, look at the medium sized signs used by Dairy Queen or McDonald's restaurants. "What" and "Where" are boldly stated.

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Websites: We now travel via the internet, browsing soaring websites around the world. It seems that for all the colorful webpages, the jazzy logos and "click on me" invitations, very few clearly indicate the actual geographic location of the site.

Perhaps the local village or town is mentioned, usually as a mailing address. The airport identifier of the airport is often used, but where the heck is "X51" airport?

What is the nearest large town that might be recognized by the general public? Even if you are 150 miles from a major city, give a clue! What major airline airport might be convenient for someone to use to visit your site? How about a good map of the state or region on your website so we can locate you quickly? Linking to a map service is slow and not as good as posting the actual map on your webpage.

Find it yourself: A basic strategy of marketing suggests that you "get into the mind" of your potential customers, so try this: Drive to your soaring site from the nearest major road, interstate exit or airline terminal and consciously see how difficult it may be for your customers to find you. Then go to the internet and assume the role of the websurfing youngster hoping to buy a glider ride gift certificate for Dad for Father's Day. Try to see the path to your soaring site through their eyes. Once they arrive, be sure to ask them how they found you. Make notes on how you can improve the path for your future customers or potential club members. Make your soaring site more visible, with a clear invitation to take an introductory glider flight.

## Promoting Soaring: The CoPilot Program by Burt Compton

I operate a commercial soaring site. My Dad, Fritz Compton, would visit often to fly the towplane or fly our gliders.

He had just turned 85 years old that spring day in 2000. Dad asked me if our Blanik L-23 sitting by the runway was available. I said "Yes, go fly it, Dad – show those other pilots you can still outclimb them." He didn't respond to my remark, one of a son so proud of his father's decades of soaring accomplishments. Instead Dad asked "Are you available for the next hour?" I replied that I had no more students that day. "Get in the back seat of the Blanik", he commanded. I knew what this meant. He did not need to fly alone anymore. As Dad shuffled slowly to the glider, I realized that the Captain needed a copilot.

Dad had been a Captain with Eastern Air Lines since 1939. He logged over 30,000 hours, from Piper Cubs to DC-3's to the Lockheed L-1011. His most cherished flying time was in gliders and he logged it to the minute. Dad started soaring in the 1940's and built our home on a gliderport near Miami, Florida. He was a competitive soaring pilot through the 1970's and was selected as a pilot on the US Team in 1958 for the World Championships at Lezno, Poland. Dad held a second class medical until he was 83 years old. After 65 years of flying airplanes, he simply let his medical lapse in 1999.

Occasionally I am asked how many dual flights I required as a student glider pilot. I usually respond "about 100, I was in no hurry to solo". The truth is that as a young boy (too young to solo) I was often in the back seat of a glider Dad was flying, soaring for hours as I listened to Dad describe his strategy as he would "read the sky". He taught me to observe, to be patient, to think and be one with the glider. We should all aspire to be such good mentors. As I got into the back seat of the Blanik for that last flight with Dad, I was like a child again, ready for my mentor to share the magic of soaring with me. I saw the back of his head and his full head of silver hair. I felt how beautifully the glider responded to his touch. Yes, that was his – our – last flight.

The Copilot Program. When Dad asked me to accompany him in the Blanik, it occurred me that here was a solution for an older pilot, or any pilot at any age.

A young pilot struggling on the fast-track to a pilot certificate might enjoy going for a flight with a veteran pilot. No pressure to perform. Just fly for the fun of it – just for the magic. Soaring well is like mastering a musical instrument. You must be in tune. You must practice. Seek out the masters and listen carefully.

Seeing our wise and talented mentors grounded is a great loss. Their wonderful soaring stories should not be silenced while others download data and relive their flights as dots on a computer screen. Dad may not be able to remember where he left his car keys, but he can tell you every detail of his 320 mile, 1957 national contest flight from Harris Hill, New York to Plymouth, Massachusetts. He could have soared his modified LK-10A sailplane



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farther, across the water to Cape Cod, but he had flown off his chart. At 7,000' over Plymouth, he couldn't see across to Provincetown in the sea haze and had to land. Someday I'll finish that flight for him.

We Don't Have To Stop Flying. Soaring clubs and commercial operators should consider a "Copilot Program". You may have members and customers who still fly well, but they can't turn their head easily to see traffic or locate the gliderport. They may need assistance getting in and out of the cockpit. Offer them a hand. Offer a copilot to clear the turns, monitor the drift, suggest a heading to the airport and help find the windsock. The safe outcome of their flight is assured.

Everyone we have offered a "Copilot" has welcomed the idea. We never use the term "Safety Pilot". Our proud mentors may not appreciate that.

I'm grateful Dad asked me to be his copilot. It was a smart choice. I never had to ask him to stop flying solo. Asking him to give up his car keys was another matter.

My message to (us) older pilots: The Copilot Program will be a way to continue to fly gliders. Know when to accept the offer. To our younger pilots and glider flight instructors: Be willing to ride in the backseat as a senior pilot's copilot. Don't talk too much. Listen and watch them fly – you may learn something special.

## Building Soaring

Part 1, by Gene Hammond January 1996 Soaring Magazine

The Soaring Society of America has, since its inception, attempted to increase the awareness of soaring activity in the United States and the world. In 1992, the SSA Board of Directors instituted a "Growth" program headed by Doug Jacobs to emphasize the necessity of increasing flying activity in sailplanes. There are at least two ways to do this:

- 1) increase activity among the present pilots in soaring, and
- 2) increase the number of members in the SSA.

Increasing the number of hours flown in sailplanes, and promoting that increase through stories in newspapers, magazines, and on television may increase the awareness of the general public, and eventually increase the size of the SSA. Increasing the size of the SSA (more members) offers an immediate impact by enhancing SSA's status with FAA and legislative powers thus providing better protection of airspace and airport access, and offering a longer term increase in flying activity.

The "Growth" program targeted organizations within the SSA as "carriers of the Torch." A counter display promotion was presented to every Club, Chapter, FBO, and Commercial Operator to assist them in promoting the SSA (and soaring,) articles in Soaring by Bob Wander discussed methods of promoting soaring and membership, and discussions with other flying groups on promoting their sport produced a slow, steady increase in SSA membership. The Awards for the leading member-getters are made each year during the General Membership meeting at each SSA Convention.

Since the "Growth" program was developed and introduced during my tenure as President of SSA, I have been very interested in knowing how different approaches have succeeded. In an effort to determine this, I interviewed the top two recruiters in the commercial area and the two leaders among Clubs and chapters.

Frank and Jayne Reid of Bermuda High Soaring, consistent leaders among Commercial Operators in recruiting new SSA members including being number 2 in 1991 and 1992, and number 1 in 1993 and 1994, told me of their methods during an interview this spring; FR=Frank Reid, JR=Jayne Reid, GH=Gene Hammond.

GH: Bermuda High Soaring is listed as being near Lancaster, N.C. I found it after some inquiries to be about 20 miles from Lancaster. Why Lancaster?

JR: Well, it's actually in Lancaster County, but is really in Flat Creek.

FR: But if we put it Flat Creek, you'd never find it, since Flat Creek isn't on the map; hence, Lancaster.

GH: Well, you've got a beautiful place to fly and a great operations building and hangar setup. As I look out the window of the Instructor's room, I see a beautiful grass runway. How long is that?

FR: It's 4000 feet long and about 400 feet wide, consisting of 32 acres of runway, lots of

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grass to cut.

GH: You moved here from Chester?

JR: Yes. Bermuda High had been at Chester for 30 years, but we moved to get out from under the Charlotte Class B airspace and veil.

GH: Let's talk about how you go about recruiting members for the SSA, how you have been top dog for the last couple years.

FR: We didn't start out to do anything special with SSA membership but in 1991, we received a plaque as number 2 recruiter. We hadn't worked very hard to earn that, but decided to increase the effort and try to be number 1.

We simply made membership more visible to our customers at Bermuda High. We started using the application forms, having them out when we talked to perspective students or for people coming in for rides. Some time during the conversation, we made it a point to simply mention a sentence or two about the SSA and how one could become a member. In addition, we framed and hung the posters from the Soaring Safety Foundation around the office. This made our customers aware of the SSA with very little effort on our part. We've discovered that it doesn't take much more time to mention the SSA than when you don't mention the SSA, it's just a couple sentences. Then, when the students come back for the second and third time, you mention it again. Something Jayne does is that when the student solos, Jayne says, "Hey, you earned the A Badge. No, wait, you're not a SSA member. Jeez, you didn't get the A badge. Look what you could have earned," and shows the student the A Badge. It's amazing! The student frequently responds, "Well, maybe I will join," because they, like the rest of us, are creatures who want peer recognition, and the SSA ABC-Bronze program offers that recognition. Not only do they get the little badge, but we point out where in Soaring magazine their name will appear.

JR: We have airline pilots who are not SSA members come for add-ons. After they solo, I'll tell them, "Great flight, if you were a SSA member you would have completed the flight requirements for the A badge, and by passing a simple oral quiz, you would have earned the A badge. Then they'll have a super flight, and when they come down, I'll say, "Now that would have been your B Badge if you were a member of SSA." You just remind them of what they have accomplished and what they could have earned.

FR: Locally, Jayne puts out a newsletter and mentions each flight and each person who earns a badge or even a leg of a badge, and all of a sudden, the pilot is getting that peer recognition. You can always tell when there are some things to go into the newsletter because the students start asking when the next letter is coming out.

Not only do we make the information visible, we make it available. If you notice at the counter where we have our own brochures, right beside them are applications to the SSA and people pick them up!

GH: Has the SSA counter display been beneficial?

JR: We have it on the counter. It's just there to be visible and we may point a customer toward it, but generally, we don't tell them to pick up an envelope, we HAND them an envelope! It's like another poster, and it puts the SSA in front of them one more time. The member forms are there should the customer lose the one we gave them, or if they just browse through the office. When we sign someone up, we use the special envelopes, pointing out that Bermuda High's number is on them, and we will get credit for the membership, plus the applicant gets a free video. We tell the student we get credit for it;

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that last year we were the number one recruiter, they see the plaque, the student thinks that's great and is anxious to sign up to help.

FR: Another thing we do is to give the \$10 rebate back to them right there! In other words, if they will sign up with us right then, we tell them they don't even have to write the check; we make it so easy for them. We'll put the fee on their bill, showing SSA membership \$55 and show a \$10 credit, and when the bill for all the rest is presented, they can write one check. Jayne then turns around and writes a check to the SSA and sends it along with their application. That makes it much easier for them. Instead of walking out the door without writing the check, it's all taken care of. There is really no pressure this way. Of course, our reputation may pressure a student. In fact, one time after describing the many benefits of SSA membership, a transition pilot threw up his hands and said, "I've heard you have to be a SSA member to fly here. I'll join, I'll join." We don't make it a requirement, but we do talk about it to the extent that people feel they do need to join, and I will occasionally jokingly explain, that as a glider examiner, "I've never had a student who was not a SSA member pass the check ride, but...I'm sure you could be the first." We emphasize that the most exciting thing about being a SSA member, beyond Soaring magazine and the Government Liaison work the SSA does, is the continuing challenge of the badges, whether it's the A, B, C, Bronze, or the Silver, Gold and Diamond. There's something there for everyone. We call it the proficiency, achievement, and experience program, an objective beyond just cutting circles in the sky all afternoon.

JR: We also tap another area where we don't see the person. When I talk to someone on the phone, someone who may have never experienced soaring, may not have even gone up for a flight before, I'll send them a letter telling them that if they are interested in further information regarding soaring, or a soaring site in your area, contact the Soaring Society. I also enclose an envelope and advise the person that if they join, they will get a free video if they use the envelope. I emphasize that we promote the sport of soaring and the Soaring Society. Chances are, if they are interested in the sport and interested enough to think about learning to fly a glider, they might be interested in the SSA as well.

GH: This is just from a phone contact inquiring about soaring?

JR: Yes, or a letter.

FR: Jayne has designed semi-form letters where she can type in the name. It comes out as a very personal letter, signed by us, with their name and address at the top. There are different letters for the beginning student, the transition student, or, as previously mentioned, just an inquiry. Each of those has a little paragraph about the Soaring Society. Along with the letter, we send our little brochure and other information, and right along with that, the application form. That form pushes our postage beyond the one-stamp weight. We have examined that several times, but each time recognize that it is worth it. We enjoy promoting the Society.

GH: The Society enjoys you promoting it, too!

FR: Another thing I think people like us, Commercial Operators, need to be aware of (and I think others are becoming aware of it) is that we, Bermuda High Soaring, are getting great exposure by being number one. The Society talks about us from time to time. Some time in the future, Bermuda High Soaring will be mentioned in Soaring magazine, not for any other reason than we were one of the top recruiters. To get your name mentioned in Soaring magazine in a positive way, not in an advertisement that you had to pay for, I

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think helps tremendously. That seems to be almost a reward for our efforts.

JR: I think it shows our interest in the sport, in the Society, that we promote and support it. That's what operators should be doing.

GH: There's a lot of emphasis on growth of the membership of the Society, but at the same time, without a growth of the sport, increased membership is not esthetically productive. Your work at promoting the sport is very valid.

FR: It works well. We're having fun with promoting soaring. I still contend that it doesn't take much additional time to do this and still run our business. What do you think?

JR: I think it should just be incorporated right in with the business. It can become a part of the student soloing, a part of the first long flight, the first two thermal, three thermal day, the first 3000 feet gain, earning the Silver altitude. That will last for a long time. We talk badges, that's the goal. Get involved with soaring. It encourages them to read the magazine and other literature, to recognize the need to know something about different areas, such as out west.

GH: That reminds me. Back in October, 1993, "Sailplane Safety" (Vol. 7, #3) printed your requirements for a pilot to use your equipment for cross country flights. Cross country is one of the things that really promotes the sport and sinks the hook! Once the pilot recognizes the challenge of it, he really gets interested in the sport. I think its outstanding that you encourage your people to go cross country.

FR: That first attempt is a big step. You want them to do it, to give them the vehicle to make it happen. You have to have a lot of safety incorporated in it, as well. If they have too much of a scary situation, you push them out of the fold rather than pull them more tightly to it. We think our requirements are very realistic. If you can't thermal, you can't go cross country, it that simple.

JR: What else can we tell you?

GH: How about a quick review?

JR: O.K. Promoting SSA membership is as simple as it sounds. Make it a priority in your business or Club. Remember what your priorities are. Take the time necessary to make the sale. Help the person get interested in soaring. Turn stumbling blocks into stepping stones.

GH: That's called promotion. That's good business. I would hope other commercial operators and Clubs would recognize the benefits and adopt your methods to their situations, recognizing that what's good for their business is also good for the Society.

FR: I might add that at the SSA Convention in Reno this year, we saw renewed interest from the commercial operators to move forward in recruiting new members. I think the 1994 statistics will bear me out on this. We see a strong move toward competing for that number one spot in recruiting.

JR: Some of the operators have an even greater opportunity to show many more people the face of soaring, simply because many more people find their way to Phoenix and other large sites.

GH: Thank you so very much for taking the time to explain your techniques for recruiting. By all means, keep up the good work!

## Building Soaring

PART 2 by Gene Hammond February 1996 Soaring Magazine

## SSA GROWBOOK 2004 Edition

The SSA has been concerned with the growth of the SSA and soaring in the U.S. In 1992, the SSA instituted a recruitment program toward that end. At the SSA Convention each year, the most prolific recruiters have been honored during the Annual Business Meeting of the SSA, and this interview is with one of those who has consistently been among the top three since the inception of the program, Bob Wander, affectionately known as The Reverend Billy Bob. In Bob's real life he is the owner and operator of a soaring school in Faribault, Minnesota, has written a series of instructional books for learning to soar, plays classical guitar, and has built his own sailplane, a Woodstock.

(Gene Hammond = GH) Bob, you've been in the top three in recruiting for several years. Is anyone challenging you?

(Bob Wander = BW) I'm happy to report that so many other commercial operators and glider clubs have gotten religion about recruiting that I'm drifting back in the pack, not because I'm not trying. These folks have a large clientele from which to recruit, and they're doing a heck of a job of recruiting. That has been my job from the start, to try to light the fire all over the country.

(GH) We've seen a certain competitiveness among the commercial operators that has been missing for many years. It's really exciting as a member of the Board of Directors and past President of the SSA to see the operators take this in hand and try to build new members for the Society. What is your main focus on getting a new member?

(BW) I hope every gliding club and commercial operator gives that question a lot of thought. What I do is this. When new people come into gliding, whether they take my class room private pilot ground school or just show up at the airport for a flight or two and begin their flight training, no matter where they come from, I tell them about the Soaring Society of America. I do that for several reasons;

Number 1, they'll know more about gliding and they'll be safer pilots if they read Soaring magazine every month, which comes with a SSA membership;

Number 2, soaring is not just a sport, but a movement, and the magazine is really the journal of record of the American soaring movement. Almost everything of significance is reported in Soaring.

Number 3, membership in the SSA provides new members the opportunity to pursue the A badge for first solo, the B badge for first soaring flight, C badge, Bronze badge, and the Silver, Gold and Diamond FAI awards, including the 1000 km diploma and all of these other recognitions for remarkable achievements that tend to make them want to become life long members of the Society and life long participants in the sport of soaring. The beauty of this is that everybody wins - it's good for the SSA, it's good for the commercial operators, it's good for clubs and Chapters, it's good for the sport of soaring.

(GH) The use of the ABC program and FAI badge program has been an area I have been watching over the years. Participation in the programs can only increase member's interest in the sport. The challenge creates a long term relationship that so many sports lack. Is there any way to encourage other operators, clubs, and chapters to jump on the bandwagon? Is there any financial gain, any esthetic gain for them for recruiting new members?

(BW) Yes! I think that the incentive is very strong. It's very hard in gliding to recruit new members to the sport. The reason is that soaring appeals to a very small percentage of the

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population. It is, after all, one of the sports that demands total concentration, a substantial commitment of time, and to be honest, a reasonably substantial commitment of money. If you're going to ask someone to do that, to make the commitment to soaring, and to turn them on to what the rest of us in the movement really like, it makes sense to turn them on to the national organization for the movement as well for the very reasons I've stated earlier. In addition, through *Soaring* magazine, we read about our peers throughout the country whose exploits, accomplishments, and adventures we otherwise would not know about. In addition, there is news about new gliders, new variometers, new books, competition news, flight training news, and so on. This simple device turns the new recruit into a life long participant in soaring, and it comes to the doorstep each month! As for the financial incentive, here's what I find important not only for commercial operators, but for clubs and Chapters as well. There is nothing any of these can do to ensure a new participant is turned on to soaring as deeply and enthusiastically as making sure the person signs on as a member of the Society.

(GH) Another feature, call it an incentive if you will, for belonging to the SSA is the influence and involvement of the Society in governmental affairs affecting the soaring community. Reports of progress in regulation, certification of pilots and gliders, airport protection, and airspace discussions appear regularly in *Soaring*. One thing that has bothered me is the recognition that there are glider pilots out there that do not belong to the SSA. They are getting the advantage of the efforts of the SSA, and we would like to encourage them to accept their share of the responsibility and come into the fold, so to speak.

(BW) I could not agree more! The track record of the SSA in issues such as government relations, government liaison duties, certification of aircraft, the safety of soaring, and furthering the cause of accident prevention, and so on, is unrivaled. Those that fly gliders and are not members of the Society are really missing the big boat. I can't help but keep returning to the magazine *Soaring*. That's where the news is. It is THE journal of American soaring, and in my opinion, it's the journal of soaring world wide, probably number one in the world in that regard. Getting the magazine is reason enough to belong but there are a host of other rewards. You get broad based support from a first-rate staff in Hobbs, New Mexico on issues such as some you mentioned - racing, government involvement, aircraft certification, dealing with recalcitrant local authorities who want to deny gliders access to local airports, and a list of maybe 20 other items important to the future of soaring in the U.S. So, if you're into gliding and not a SSA member, I think you're missing about a third or a half of what the whole show is about.

(GH) Recruiters in the past have been faced with trying to define what other benefits beyond *Soaring* comes with SSA membership. Part of this growth program is to alert ALL members and recruiters to ALL the benefits to attract the member and offer a complete package for the glider pilot.

(BW) I agree. What I have found as the key ingredient to turn a new soaring recruit into a new SSA member is to do two things;

Number 1 is to decide that recruiting is important; and

Number 2 is to ask the new soaring enthusiast for the sale.

Give them a copy of *Soaring*. Present them with one of the new membership mailers designed by Nancy Graham and other SSA staff members, which offers a new member the

## SSA GROWBOOK 2004 Edition

premium of the video tape The Quiet Challenge. It is important for a Society member to invite them to try a one year membership. If we can get a recruit to join for one year, chances are excellent we will be able to keep that member for 10 years or more. If you look at the numbers, new members renew their second and third year memberships at a very high percentage rate. The hard part is the first year!

(GH) Those two items, deciding to go ahead and actively recruit new members and asking for the sale, are the real bullet items of a new membership program. There are a lot of other items on a program, but those two things are really key.

(BW) I agree! I know it works really well for Jayne and Frank Reid from Bermuda High Soaring, Ron Clarke and John Schlechte at Central Indiana Soaring, and others. The Reids recruit about 60 members a year! That's a little more than one new member a week! If every commercial operator and club could match that effort, we'd have 50,000 members in five years time!

(GH) Since you mentioned the Reids, we can't let you get away without saying something about Roy Coulliette.

(BW) Ah yes, Roy Coulliette from Turf Soaring in Phoenix, Arizona. He had one of the great lines of all time about recruiting. Roy, at a meeting of the Commercial Operators at the Convention about a year ago, after listening to the pitch we made about recruiting said, "THE WAR IS ON!" Though a man of few words, he left that meeting and installed a membership program which resulted in Turf Soaring being the second leading recruiter in the country the subsequent year. He is REALLY serious about new members! In the past, he had not recruited a lot of members, but since the time he decided to get serious about recruiting, he and his staff put up spectacular numbers on the board. There are about 125 commercial gliding sites in the country, and sad to say, only about one quarter of those sites are making a serious effort to recruit for the SSA. If we could get every site to recruit seriously, there would be a tremendous explosion of growth. The same holds true for clubs and chapters. Some of them like Caesar Creek in Ohio and Central Indiana Soaring take recruiting seriously, but many make no or only a minimal effort to recruit. We all know where we want to go. We want to grow the sport. But yet, we're not all pulling hard on the same oar to turn people on to soaring and then invite them to join the SSA. There's nothing more I'd like to see on a national level than to get every club and every commercial operator really enthusiastic about asking for the sale to get new members for the Soaring Society.

(GH) I don't know how we can enlarge on those comments, Bob. Get serious and ask for the sale. That just about says it all.

(BW) It's that simple; commit to recruiting, and ask for the sale.



## Building Soaring

Part 3 by Gene Hammond March 1996 Soaring Magazine

The Soaring Society of America is continuing efforts to recruit new members for the SSA and for the soaring movement. In previous articles, Gene Hammond has spoken to Jayne and Frank Reid and Bob Wander who offered a view of how a commercial operator can help build soaring with new members. Now he speaks to Ron Clarke, a 15 year member of the Central Indiana Soaring Society, a glider club near Indianapolis. This Club was the leading member-getter in 1995 and Ron describes how his Club goes about it.

Gene Hammond (GH): Well, Ron Clarke, how does a club go about recruiting members?

Ron Clarke (RC): Well, Gene, frankly I guess it all starts with getting the club committed to it. Without that, without the members behind the project, it's probably not going to work as well as you would want.

One of the things that had bothered our Club the last couple of years was the fact that we really didn't feel we had identified ways to bring in new members. There was more luck than good planning that got new members. So, we formed a membership committee and noodled around some ideas as to what we might try to see if we couldn't make up for what we feel is about a 15% loss of members each year. That in itself is a worry to any club considering that there are a lot of fixed costs and with that kind of turnover, there has to be a way to overcome that loss.

(GH): That's right. When I came into the SSA some 25 years ago, the turnover rate was about 30%! Fortunately, we've reduced that some, but not far enough. I'm glad you brought that up because it is not only important to get new members, but to retain the ones we now have. What did your group settle on as a method for getting and keeping members?

(RC): Well, a combination of actions. To put your finger on any one area that really works is not realistic. We took somewhat of a shotgun approach, but we did come up with three or four main areas we were going to focus on. As I said earlier, we decided to get the members behind the campaign because without the club members committed, we felt our efforts would not be as successful. So, we showed the members the financials to demonstrate what it would mean if in fact we couldn't add new members. We might have to increase flying fees, we might have to increase dues. This may seem like a scare tactic, but it certainly got the members' attention. It also got us a few other members to serve on the committee!

I think any club has the ability to find someone from a local newspaper who is willing to put an article together about the club. We found such a member who had a good contact. That made it relatively easy to get a photographer to the field, take him up in a glider, even several times if necessary, get lots of good pictures, and then get the reporter to write the article. Because our reporter, like many reporters, was not familiar with our language and how gliders fly, we ended up helping write the article. This gave us excellent coverage in the biggest circulation newspaper in Indianapolis, a full page in the Friday edition with good photos. My firm conviction is that what helped more than anything with the article was to ensure we had a couple of good club contact points; names and phone

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numbers listed in the article. Why I say that with such conviction is that six or even eight weeks after the article, our phone was ringing off the hook and driving my wife insane with folks phoning about the glider club. Apparently, they keep those articles if something gets their interest.

In addition to that, we also had a little TV slot. Another member knew someone from the local TV station. We coordinated all this to get the activity going just prior to the start of the soaring season, in the February, early March period. The TV slot featured one of the young members of the club, which is always appealing to a TV station; you get a school kid which adds a little extra interest to the feature. Even though we did get good coverage, we don't feel it did as much good as the newspaper article.

We did several other things as well. We decided to reduce our entry fee to the club by one half. I'm not sure how big an effect that had. Certainly it didn't get the people to the field, but once they got there, it made it sound much more reasonable to them. Even with the reduced entry fee, the monthly dues was a welcome addition to the cash flow of the club. We also ran a series of seminars on Saturday mornings during March and April. We advertised this in the local newspapers, including the biggest circulation one, in the "What's Happening in Indianapolis This Weekend?" section. All it said was "Free seminar on gliding at the airfield on Saturday morning at 10:00." Actually it worked out very well. We set up a little slide show in the hangar and had 10-15 people come to that. By getting them into the hangar, they got the feel of the club and got to meet some of the members. One of us would talk about soaring - how to stay up, how the glider works. A second member would talk about joining a year ago, had never flown before, and now has a license and the sequence he went through with the club. Then a third member would talk about the club affairs, explaining the costs, how many flights to solo, and responsibilities of a club member. This presented an opportunity for the "outsider" to see how the club operated. We got about 6 of the 30 members we attracted in a two month period through those seminars.

(GH): That's a great way to recruit. It's quite different from commercial operators, isn't it? Your approach is almost a hands-on introduction to the ancillary parts of soaring as well as the real parts and how a club works and things like that, while a commercial operator takes the neophyte and puts him in the glider and gets him to flying and sells him the membership as part of the ABC Badge program, which all fits into a neat little package for the commercial operator. I can see the difficulty with the club, since in order to be a SSA Chapter, the club has to have 100% membership in the SSA, so the participants have to understand that out front.

(RC): In fact, we ensure they understand that one of the commitments is the annual fee to SSA. Of course, we sell the fact they get the nice magazine along with the other benefits. Incidentally, we have a supply of Soaring with literature such as the "Soaring in America" brochure plus a little brochure on our club with the charges, and so forth. I don't think we took any of those prospective members flying right away. We showed them gliders, but it was the next time before they got to fly.

(GH): So, to summarize what you've said, first and foremost is to get the support of the other club members in developing new members for the club. We've all thought of this as a private little society, and yet, we need new blood all the time. Next, have a good publicity campaign, keep the fee structure at a level that is not oppressive to prospects, hold

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seminars, and have good contacts for all these things. These are all great ideas and you should be complimented for putting these things together.

(RC): Let me add just another point or two. Bob Wander has written and spoken of being friendly and talking up the camaraderie among the members in the club. That was a very big feature for us and got a lot of people's attention when they visited the club. We had good and interested members there to talk to the prospective members to show interest. We were attracting from ab initios with zero flying time to one commercial pilot with 14,000 hours who turned out to be a tow pilot and instructor as well. You have to be willing to find candidates and talk at all levels, so you need members that can talk at all levels as well. I get quite excited about this whole thing. One other thing we did and used as a tool was to take the very nice counter display produced by the SSA and fly them around to different airports within a 30 mile radius of Indianapolis. We identified cities, like Kokomo and Anderson and placed those counter displays along with our club brochures at those airports. That's just part of the shotgun approach we use. We don't know the results of this project at this time but the last thing we've done is offer through the local newspapers a \$10 flight to any students or school kids. This is one of the areas we have put extra focus on, getting young members into our club.

Interestingly, we are at a point now that the club has asked that we not attract too many more members this year because some of the older members are feeling that perhaps it is going to slow down their ability to get a glider when they want, so we are backing off a little bit now.

(GH): That gets into utilization of equipment. If it is not being utilized it is sitting around eating up funds, but if it is busy, it is being utilized and someone is not going to get the glider when they want, but is turning cash. When that happens, members complain that they can't get a glider. This is a great position to be in.

Your approach to recruiting is quite interesting and contrasts extensively from the commercial operators methods. We only hope other clubs and chapters can use some of these techniques to help support their club better and bring more members into the Society. It is obvious that the more people we have in the Society, the better our voice is in places where our voice needs to be heard.

(RC): I'm glad to have had this opportunity to describe our techniques and hope others recognize that it is not that difficult even though it might be difficult to put your finger on the one area that makes the difference, if you concentrate on several important areas enthusiastically, the result is predictable. We are definitely committed!

(GH): I want to compliment your group for a tremendous job of recruiting. Another club that has done a great job is the Caesar Creek group and Pat DeNaples. There are people out there working at the club level to bring in new members and to boost their club, and we can only hope the impetus is as strong in the future as it has been in the last couple years. Thanks a lot for taking the time to talk to me.

## Soaring Website Suggestions

Everybody knows that the Web has made it easier to disseminate information. Many soaring clubs and soaring FBO's use a webpage to provide information to members and/or to the general public on their operation, and this is good.

However, many soaring websites seem ... a bit dull to me. They provide data about Club rules and towpilot schedules and so on, but do not communicate the excitement of soaring flight. Perhaps this is because the website primarily serves current customers and members, rather than being aimed at potential newcomers.

A friend of mine, Don Ingraham, owns a soaring FBO in Minnesota. He designs and updates his own business webpage, named after his soaring business Cross Country Soaring Inc. As you look over the following images, I think you will agree that his website [www.crosscountrysoaring.com](http://www.crosscountrysoaring.com) does a nice, fresh job communicating


1. How much fun it is at the gliderport
2. How welcome you will feel at the gliderport, and
3. How beautiful it is to fly gliders at his operation.

So, browse these webpage reproductions from his website and then take a look at your own flying club's website. Maybe you'll find some things that need improving!

Bob Wander

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Welcome to Cross Country Soaring, Inc.






We are a commercial glider operation based at the **Faribault Municipal Airport**, about 35 minutes south of Minneapolis on I-35W. We offer glider rides, instruction, and tow service. Flying gliders, or sailplanes, is fun, educational, and beautiful. And no, I haven't discovered oceans and mountains in Minnesota (yet). The following pages are filled with soaring photos from all over the world. I have, however, worked up a page dedicated to soaring in Minnesota exclusively. Check it out **[HERE](#)**. By the way, soaring conditions in Minnesota are...GREAT!

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Welcome to Cross Country Soaring, Inc. - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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We are a commercial glider operation based at the **Faribault Municipal Airport**, about 35 minutes south of Minneapolis on I-35W. We offer glider rides, instruction, and tow service. Flying gliders, or sailplanes, is fun, educational, and beautiful. And no, I haven't discovered oceans and mountains in Minnesota (yet). The following pages are filled with soaring photos from all over the world. I have, however, worked up a page dedicated to soaring in Minnesota exclusively. Check it out [HERE](#). By the way, soaring conditions in Minnesota are...GREAT!





The Tow

For those of you new to soaring, here's how we get airborne. The sailplane is connected to a 200 foot rope and towed aloft by a powered tow plane. The sailplane used for rides and instruction is a two-place sailplane. The student, or ride customer, usually sits in the front, and the FAA certified pilot sits in the rear. Both positions have nearly identical controls, and the sailplane can be flown from either position. You may take the stick and fly the sailplane for a while if you like! The two ships climb in formation to about 3,000ft in under ten minutes. The pilot releases the sailplane from the rope by pulling a lever in the cockpit and gently banks away to the right...and it gets wonderfully quiet.



The Flight

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to the right...and it gets wonderfully quiet.



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### The Flight

After release, a sailplane can stay airborne until sundown if it's a nice soaring day. An ideal soaring day is one in which the air is cool and dry, the wind is light, and the sun is hot. Cumulus clouds gather at the top of warm, moist thermals and mark the lift for us. We can circle under these clouds, gaining altitude and watching the world get smaller as we sip on ice-water or snack on crackers. On a good day we can climb a mile (5,280 feet) in about ten minutes, then it's time to head off and do some sight-seeing over local towns and the beautiful countryside, keeping an eye out for red-tail hawks or turkey-vultures to soar with. Most gliders perform best in the 60-70MPH range, to give you an idea of cruising speed, but if you're in a rush to get home, most of the newer ships are rated for at least 160MPH. When we decide to land, we can bring the sailplane into the pattern in just a few minutes. Sailplanes take off and touch down at about 50MPH.

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### The Kid in You




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we decide to land, we can bring the sailplane into the pattern in just a few minutes. Sailplanes take off and touch down at about 30MPH.



The Kid in You

He's in there *somewhere*...

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We have designed instructional programs for varying levels of experience and interest. All our programs consist of carefully assembled study materials, ground school, and flight instruction.

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- A) it will take less time than you probably think;
- B) soaring is an international sport, with sailplane rentals available all over the world in breathtaking locations; and
- C) you can pursue this Sport of Kings right up into your golden years. Some of the best pilots in the world are over 60 and consistently place among the top ten in National and World Competitions.

[More on starting from scratch \(click this\).](#)

start America O... Instruction ... Clipboard0... 7:57 AM

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Gift certificates are printed on heavy-stock, photo-quality inkjet paper at the highest resolution. The recipient can keep this certificate as a memento, and redeem the accompanying duplicate on the day of the ride. The recipient's name is printed on the certificate, along with the level of ride, date and sequence number. Guaranteed speechlessness... for a minute anyway. Then usually a heartfelt confession that this is something they have ALWAYS wanted to do.

You can order a gift certificate by contacting me by phone, e-mail, or snail-mail.

**Cross Country Soaring, Inc.**

Congratulations! This gift certificate may be redeemed for one glider ride at Cross Country Soaring, Inc. located at Fairbault Municipal Airport, MN. Here you will accompany an FAA Certified Commercial Glider Pilot in a two place glider and enjoy the wonder of silent flight. Take the stick for a while or just sit back and enjoy the ride as we float and carve through the sky on our way back to the airport. Bring a camera, sunglasses, a hat, and a jacket if your choice of days is a cool one. We look forward to meeting you!

**Stan Santini**

Certificate #101 Mile High Issue date 12/19/03 Don Ingraham 612-730-3905

The screenshot also shows a navigation menu on the left with links: Cross Countr, Welcome, Balloon Rally, Instruction, Prices, Scholarship, Gift Certificat, Calendar&Lin, Videos, Photos, Site Map, Contact Us, E-mail. The browser window title is 'Gift Certificates - Microsoft Internet Explorer' and the address bar shows 'http://www.crosscountrysoaring.com/gpage.html'. The taskbar at the bottom includes the Start button, several application icons, and the system tray showing the time as 8:01 AM.


# SSA GROWBOOK 2004 Edition

**Pictures at an Exhibition - Microsoft Internet Explorer**

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Address <http://www.crosscountrysoaring.com/gpage1.html> Go Links

**Cross Countr**  
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Instruction  
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Photos  
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Contact Us  
E-mail



**A fine day for soaring**

*If a glider needs to be towed out to the line, just make sure you're not standing between volunteers to drive the Ratzo Retriever and the Ratzo Retriever itself. It's a blast to drive. This little vehicle has eight, big, deep-cell, six-volt marine batteries. It's quick and quiet and fun. These are our kids, Chase and Ali, wishing they were old enough to drive it. This picture shows the area in front of the hangar, with the Twin and the Rallye sitting in the background. The day begins and ends here, with frequent visits throughout.*



*This is the Cross Country Soaring hangar. That's a V-tail Salto in the foreground, an aerobatic glider belonging to Bob Wander. (You can view a nice aerobatic routine performed by an identical Salto on the video page of this site.) Bob has written over 20 books about gliding that outsell all others, and he's recognized nationwide as the instructor's instructor. We're very lucky to have a resource like him around. Behind the camera is the real hangar attraction - a Weber Grill, Cowboy charcoal, fresh-brewed coffee, and a month's supply of popcorn! And yes, that's a swing tied off to the side. Now THAT'S a swing, mate! Don't leave without giving it a try.*

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*Keep your wits about you as you explore the variety of sailplanes in the hangar. Those long wings can sneak up and smack you in the head if you walk looking down. Heard the one about the extroverted engineer? When he goes to a party, he looks at OTHER people's feet! We have lots of engineers in our soaring ranks - I couldn't resist. That's a Schweizer 1-26 with a "sport canopy" (a convertible!) in the foreground. 1-26's are a great value in gliding. For less than \$8K you can have so much fun climbing in the weakest lift, doing loops and "designing roller coasters". Cross country flight is a challenge in a 20:1 ship like this, but a local pilot has flown one nearly 500 miles, from here to Indiana! In the right hands, in the right weather, they can go. Next, toward the door, is a beautiful DG-101 and then the Twin Grob and the 235*

horse Rallye.



*Another day at the office. :-) We operate off the grass runways on most days. This picture shows where we stage when the wind is southerly (RWY 20/02). This grass runway is 2230 ft. long and 120 ft. wide. Gliders need only about half that distance to launch and land. The hard runway (RWY 30/12) is 4254 ft. long and 72 ft. wide. We use this runway under certain conditions, but we prefer the grass runway parallel to it, known as three-zero grass. Faribault airport boasts an interesting mix of aircraft. If you look closely you can see a red bi-plane in this picture. Being a sailplane nut, I look only for towing capabilities*

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*Kids love airplanes, open spaces, grass (with electric open-air cars), popcorn, swings, and -most of all- seeing Mom and Dad excited, with huge smiles on their faces. Don't feel you have to leave them at home with a sitter if you are both coming to fly. One of you will have to watch them while the other is circling four thousand feet up in a thermal, wing-tip to wing-tip with red-tailed hawks. I'm just saying that they will seldom be bored. They are unlikely to self-launch, as our daughter Ali is trying to do here. But the fun is in the trying.*



*A good tow plane has a powerful engine and a wing design that is optimized for climb; it can fly slowly, has good elevator authority, doesn't overheat doing multiple tows, or shock cool during decent; plus it has good visibility and is fun to fly (happy tow pilots are good tow pilots). We are fortunate to have a plane designed for towing - a 235-hp Socata Rallye 235E. It has leading-edge slats and Fowler flaps (it climbs fast with a slow forward speed), a 540 cubic inch, 6-cylinder Lycoming engine (yeah, I'd like to put one in a Mini Cooper, too), and a constant-speed prop. Two of our tow pilots fly for the airlines in their "regular job." Pony-tailed Whitney, here, is one of them. This is actually a rare sight. The airport tractor was in the shop, so they couldn't mow the grass for a week or so. I kinda*

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*During initial ground roll, the pilot's job is to use the ailerons to keep the wings level, use the rudder-pedals to keep the nose of the glider pointed at the tail of the tow plane, and to use the elevator to gently lift the nose wheel off the ground a few inches. It's a game-player's game, where, in the beginning, coordinating the three axes of flight is a real mental workout. Later, like riding a bike, the routine becomes so automatic you almost don't even think about it. When you feel the main wheel gently bumping and lifting from the ground, everything becomes quiet. You're flying...and at a speed where you might be thinking about shifting into third if you were in your car. Long wings are magic.*



*Once off the ground, you ease forward on the stick, keeping the glider low and level with the tow plane. The glider wants to climb! Once the tow plane is up to climb-speed - about 70 mph - it will start climbing more rapidly. You ease the stick back an inch or two, and the glider follows right up behind it. When the tow plane banks right or left, the glider pilot smoothly matches the angle of bank, following the tow plane through the turn. If the glider gets a little low, the pilot eases gently back on the stick; a little high, gently forward. After about five minutes of this, the glider pilot pulls the release knob - clack! and the ropes snakes away, still attached to the tow plane.*

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Pictures at an Exhibition - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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*Just off tow, the glider banks gracefully to the right. The tow plane pilot can feel the glider release and banks to the left, so we are well clear of each other. Everything gets quiet and begins to smooth out. Now your job is to look down upon all the creatures stuck to the planet and work on you evil laugh. Ahh-ha-ha-haaaa! I'm pretty sure that's what Bob Wander is doing in this picture. Laughing at gravity and its effects brings us rather quickly to the art of searching for lift. If we can find air that is rising at the rate we are descending, and stay in that air, we can sustain our altitude. But we want MORE. We want air that is rising many times faster than we are descending, so we can climb! Those puffy white clouds mean something to glider pilots - they are refueling stations!*



*In a nutshell, it works like this: The earth is heated unevenly by the sun. Dark, dry terrain heats up faster than lush, green, wet terrain. The heat builds up in these dark, dry areas (filled fields, parking lots, hilly areas) and eventually releases upward, forming columns of rising air. When this rising air cools to its dew-point, it makes a cloud. So...if you fly under a forming cloud and turn to circle, up you go! It's a bit more of an art to find lift on a "blue" (cloudless) day, but we do it all the time. Instead of clouds, we look for circling hawks or turkey vultures, corn husks whipping skyward in dust devils, haze-domes, or other sailplanes. Or else we fly straight and level and wait for our very sensitive vario instruments to tell us what the outside air is doing. This is a picture of our airport. One of the first things we*

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**Pictures at an Exhibition - Microsoft Internet Explorer**

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*Here, a visiting pilot from England takes to the skies over Minnesota in our Grob Twin II. Tim Allen did a great job in acquiring the feel for a glider he had not flown before, and I thoroughly enjoyed flying and chatting with him. We swapped some photos afterwards, via e-mail, and he writes:*

*"Thanks for the photos. They're a good reminder of a day I'll never forget. I know that traveling 4000 miles for a day's gliding might seem a little over the top, but it's the best day's flying I've ever had in my 16 years of gliding. The views go on for ever, the skies are clear, and the lift was so great, it seemed harder to get down than stay up."*



*After landing, life slows down. Gliders are handled carefully as they are fitted with tail dollies and towed at walking-speed back to the hangar or to their trailers. Bugs are wiped off the leading edges of the wings, canopies are cleaned, batteries are plugged in for recharging. The flight review begins for students; pilots download GPS flight recorders to their laptops and replay their day's flight in 3-D on specialized software. Logbooks are updated. A beer might eventually pop. Hey, it's a tough job, but...*

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Web page images courtesy of Don Ingraham Cross Country Soaring Inc., Faribault MN.  
For updates visit [www.crosscountrysoaring.com](http://www.crosscountrysoaring.com).

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Community Education programs are available in most communities. Typically they are administered by a small department embedded within the local school district. Course offerings commonly include things like ethnic cooking, sailing, ballroom dancing, beginning German, and the like. Why not use such a one-night introductory course to promote soaring and the SSA?

The following program developed by Bob Wander was published in SOARING several years ago. It has helped grassroots soaring activists in a number of markets across the country develop and present an introductory Community Education course about soaring. It includes everything you need to know about designing, promoting, and presenting such a course. Naturally, once you present the course, make sure you invite all participants to visit your gliding operation ... and to join the SSA. Remember to bring SSA membership applications with you to class.

## Community Education Programs and Growing The Sport Of Soaring

Topic: "Introduction to Soaring" Community/Adult Education programs.

Object: Growing the sport of soaring and growing the membership rolls of the Soaring Society of America

Method: This paper describes the steps necessary to develop, promote, and present an Introduction to Soaring course in cooperation with your local Community/Adult Education program.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The sport of soaring has an image problem. Our image problem is that we have no virtually no image in the minds of the general public. We are nearly invisible to the population of the country at large. This impedes growth in the sport - growth which is necessary to provide the resources to assure a place in the sky for motorless flight for many years to come.

Community Education programs (also called Adult Education programs) provide an effective means of educating the public about the sport. Community Education catalogs receive wide postal circulation within each district. The catalogs attract the attention of people who are motivated to look for something new and challenging to learn. The cost of taking a course is usually less than \$15 - a price low enough so that even a simple, one-night presentation on soaring is virtually guaranteed to satisfy the customer.

### **BACKGROUND**

For a number of reasons, these community education programs offer a ready-made forum for promoting awareness of soaring. First, in order to keep their course catalog from going stale, most program directors are always on the lookout for a new and different course to offer - something a little bit out of the ordinary. A one-night Introduction to Soaring course is just what the doctor ordered. Second, the cost of promoting the soaring course

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is borne by the community education program which prepares, publishes, and distributes the catalog. In many markets, this means that the catalog will be distributed to many thousands of households - all at no cost to our sport. Third, the program director will see to it that you can arrange a decent, comfortable classroom equipped with a TV/VCR to enhance your presentation. Fourth, the program will take care of registering all students. Fifth, in most cases, they will actually pay you a small stipend for teaching the class.

The following impressions are worth making:

- ◆ Soaring is a sport with a distinguished history.
- ◆ Soaring is done by ordinary mortals; you don't have to be Superman or Superwoman to enjoy it.
- ◆ Soaring is a sport that youngsters can participate in. A boy or girl can solo at age fourteen and license at age sixteen.
- ◆ You do not have to be an airplane pilot to become a glider pilot.
- ◆ Standards for glider certification are approved by the Federal Aviation Administration.
- ◆ Standards for glider pilot certification are approved by the Federal Aviation Administration.
- ◆ Soaring is done locally in your area by friendly and interesting people.
- ◆ Sailplanes are not just downhill sleds. They can fly for hours on end, and fly hundreds of miles cross-country. They are marvelously efficient flying machines.
- ◆ The dollar cost of soaring is not out of line with the total cost of other sports such as boating, golfing, downhill skiing, etc.
- ◆ The Soaring Society of America is an excellent national organization with a 60 year history of advancing motorless flight.
- ◆ SSA membership and SOARING magazine are a great way to explore the sport at minimum cost.

Note: At your presentation, be sure to distribute a sign-in sheet. The sheet should ask for the name and address of each person attending your presentation. Keep the sheet so that you can mail them announcements of local soaring events from time to time. This is important because you will find that many folks require two or three mailings before they decide to a commitment to explore soaring.

### **HOW TO PROCEED**

STEP 1: Preparing a syllabus.

There are as many ways to do this as there are teachers. The following syllabus is offered as a guide. It has been successful in my marketing area for twenty years!

### **INTRODUCTION TO SOARING**

INSTRUCTOR: (your name and telephone number)

A. A Short History of Soaring.

[The Wrights...gliding advances in the 1920s and 1930s...military gliding in World War II...Schweizer Aircraft Company...the 1950s and 1960s: transition from wood and fabric to fiberglass...the 1970s: the quest for speed and performance...the 1980s: advances in structures (carbon fiber, Kevlar), instrumentation, and motorgliding.]

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### B. How Gliders Fly

[Basic aerodynamics...stability...the flight controls...the atmosphere...sources of lift: ridge, wave, thermal...signposts of lift in the atmosphere...launch methods...landing methods.]

### C. The Gliding Organizations and Activities in your Local Area.

[Local soaring sites...local gliding clubs, the name of an officer in the club, and a phone number and address...local commercial operators, with name, address, phone numbers...local flight training opportunities...information on the frequency and location of local soaring activities...local soaring events of note (regattas, Regionals, Annual Banquet, etc.)...flight accomplishments of local pilots.]

### D. The Soaring Society of America.

[Member services including: SOARING magazine...publication and merchandising of materials such as Joy of Soaring and Soaring Flight Manual...government representation on a national level...the ABC Badge program...Bronze, Silver, Gold badges...sanctioned competitions...how to become an SSA member including distribution of SSA membership application...Affiliated organizations and interests: homebuilding, women's pilot association, the 1-26 association, collegiate soaring, self-launching, antique sailplanes... Annual National SSA Convention.]

### E. How To Become A Glider Pilot.

[Ground instruction...flight instruction in two seat gliders...FAA standards for pilot certification and flight instructor certification...the cost of flight training...the first solo...the Private Pilot License...the Light Sport Aircraft initiative...the fun and excitement of cross-country and badge flying.]

### F. What Your First Glider Flight Will Be Like.

[How to drive to the gliderport...cameras...comfortable, suitable clothing for flying...what to expect...the sensations of flight...bumps...pattern and landing.]

This syllabus will suffice for a presentation of anywhere from one and a half to three hours' duration, depending on the detail with which each topic is developed. I recommend that you make copies of the syllabus and give one to each member of your class. This allows them to follow along and take notes, and also allows them to take it home with them so they can keep the names and addresses of local soaring contacts and soaring sites. Include your name and phone number on the syllabus. Your students will know that you are interested in helping them connect with the local soaring scene. In addition, distribute an application for SSA membership with each syllabus, and take a few minutes to point out that SOARING magazine will make an excellent and cost-effective vehicle for them to learn more about the sport in the coming months.

STEP 2: Preparing a Course Description for inclusion in the Community Education catalog. The course description will be edited as necessary and approved by your local program coordinator, but something like the following sample will probably be pretty close to the mark.

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### INTRODUCTION TO SOARING Sample Blurb

Flying in a sailplane has a magical appeal. This course is about soaring flight, from its beginnings to the present day. Learn how sailplanes fly for hours on end without an engine, what weather soaring pilots like best, how to arrange for a glider flight, how to become a glider pilot, the identity and location of local soaring organizations, the services of the Soaring Society of America, and more.

The effectiveness of the course description will be enhanced tenfold if you can arrange for a picture or photograph of a glider to be included with your course description in the course catalog. It adds a nice cachet to the catalog and catches the eye of the reader. Nothing sells soaring like the sight of a long-winged sailplane. In addition, a picture or drawing of a sailplane helps the catalog reader know that you will be talking about sailplanes, not about ultra-lights or hang gliders.

### STEP 3: Procuring audiovisual support for your presentation.

Soaring is essentially an action sport, not a passive sport. It is about the beauty of silent flight and the excitement of constant decision-making. Communicating this excitement in the classroom will be much easier if you include in your presentation an exciting video of soaring. There are a number of video cassette / DVD offerings available from SSA merchandise department. Perhaps you have one of your own or can borrow one from a friend. Check out downloadable soaring videos on the World Wide web. If you have a video camera you can even make one of your own at the local gliderport. But, however you do it, show a video - it does a great job of getting people excited about the sport. I also recommend the color booklet 'Soaring In America' available from SSA for \$0.50 a copy.

### STEP 4: Identifying and persuading your local Community Education Coordinator to include your course in the catalog.

Identification is easy - just call your local school district and ask for the name and phone number of the coordinator. If you have lots of local school districts, call them all. Then call the coordinator(s) and make an appointment for a personal visit. During your visit with the coordinator, emphasize that you have a syllabus, that you have a course description, that you have audiovisual materials (the videocassette you intend to show). If you have prior public speaking experience on any level, emphasize that too. This is evidence of the thoroughness of your preparation, and will assure the coordinator that you can be counted on to present a well-organized and exciting program which will satisfy the customers. Satisfied customers make coordinators happy.

What if the program coordinator offers objections to including your course in the catalog? The objections below are followed by solutions.

◆ Objection: What about liability?

◇ Answer: You are offering a classroom course only, not demo rides or flight instruction.

◆ Objection: This course is for men only.

◇ Answer: No way! many women soar - they even have their own national organization. Many juveniles soar also - in fact the minimum age for solo is fourteen years, two years younger than the minimum age to operate a car safely!

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- ◆ Objection: recreational flying is only for the economic elite.
- ◇ Answer: Not true. Grassroots soaring pilots (80% of the sport) come from all age groups and walks of life. Recreational flying is in fact a great social equalizer.
- ◆ Objection: The course will be expensive to offer.
- ◇ Answer: On the contrary, it is inexpensive to offer. All it requires is a classroom, a TV with VCR (or a laptop and a PowerPoint projector). You will take care of preparing and distributing the handout materials.
- ◆ Objection: Only a few people will register for the course, and it will have to be canceled as a result. Cancellations are costly and irritate customers.
- ◇ Answer: If the registration is small, offer to teach the course for free. If that is unacceptable, offer to mail information about the sport to those people who did register, so that they will feel well treated by the program personnel.

STEP 5: How to follow up with the soaring prospects who have taken your course.

People who take your soaring course will be eager for further information about soaring. These people are excellent candidates for membership in the Soaring Society of America.

**PLEASE DISTRIBUTE SSA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS TO EACH ATTENDEE!**

Emphasize the beauty of **SOARING** magazine (bring samples with you) and the many articles it contains. SSA Membership guarantees them twelve issues of SOARING magazine, and that means they will be thinking about soaring all during the coming year. **Ask** for their permission to include their names on your local mailing list of people who have taken your course. **Send** them an occasional announcement of local soaring events such as club meetings, regattas, annual soaring banquets, and the like. **Invite** them to attend. E-mail is ideal for this. It makes a difference!

The following impressions are worth making:

- ◆ Soaring is a sport with a distinguished history.
- ◆ Soaring is done by ordinary mortals; you don't have to be Superman or Superwoman to enjoy it.
- ◆ Soaring is a sport that youngsters can participate in. A boy or girl can solo at age fourteen and license at age sixteen.
- ◆ You do not have to be an airplane pilot to become a glider pilot.
- ◆ Standards for glider certification are approved by the Federal Aviation Administration.
- ◆ Standards for glider pilot certification are approved by the FAA.
- ◆ Soaring is done locally in your area by friendly and interesting people.
- ◆ Sailplanes are not just downhill sleds. They can fly for hours on end, and fly hundreds of miles cross-country. They are marvelously efficient flying machines.
- ◆ The dollar cost of soaring is not out of line with the total cost of other sports such as boating, golfing, downhill skiing, etc.
- ◆ The Soaring Society of America is an excellent national organization with a 60 year history of advancing motorless flight.
- ◆ SSA membership and SOARING magazine are a great way to explore the sport at minimum cost.

## CONCLUSION

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I have followed these methods for over twenty years in my region and have had excellent results. It is fun, you will be proud of helping newcomers find out about the sport and get involved, and you may even be paid a small stipend by the Community Education organization. I hope you will give it a try in your community and stick with it for a while - it really is satisfying and a lot of fun...and it certainly is good for the sport.

Safe soaring,  
Bob Wander



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Short descriptive prose pieces can be quite useful as promotional tools. But, if you hate to write, never fear. Two short pieces follow below. The first is short and to the point, and might be distributed at the airport, at air shows, county fairs, Rotary meetings, and the like. The second piece is longer and might be useful in newsletters, websites, etc. Edit or modify these pieces as you see fit. Distribute them any way that you like.

Note: Reprints work best when accompanied by a sailplane graphic or picture or logo. If such a graphic is not included, the reader may be confused as to whether we are writing about hang gliding, gliding, paragliding, ultralight flying, etc.

### What Is Soaring?

Soaring is the art of flying a sailplane. The beauty of motorless flight makes soaring an excellent way to pursue recreational flying. Youngsters can solo a sailplane at age 14 and license at age 16. If you are an airplane pilot, you can learn to soar with an average of ten to twenty dual flights; earning your Private Pilot Glider certificate will require at least ten solo flights as well. Pilot certification is administered by the FAA.

The SOARING SOCIETY OF AMERICA is the national umbrella organization for glider pilots. SSA publishes SOARING magazine each month. SSA offers many other services to members as well. Becoming an SSA member is convenient and inexpensive, and will help you learn a great deal about soaring in America. Annual membership fee is \$55 for regular members (\$22 for members age 18 and under who are full-time students). Write to the SSA, PO Box 2100, Hobbs, New Mexico, 88241, for membership information, or call (505) 392-1177. Try soaring - it's the Quiet Challenge! And visit the SSA website: [www.ssa.org](http://www.ssa.org).

\* \* \* \* \*

The following article was written by Bob Wander for a national sporting magazine and published several years ago. It was intended for a non-pilot audience. Copyright was retained by Bob, and his permission is given for reprints, re-publication, or for any other use of the article as you see fit.

### Soaring Flight

Soaring pilots refer to their favorite sport as "the sport too good for kings". Once you try it, you'll see what they are talking about. Sailplanes (also called gliders) are perfect vehicles for the purest form of flight - flight without an engine. They are beautiful aircraft, with comfortable cockpit accommodations, sleek lines, and long, elegant wings.

The appeal of soaring flight is unique. The soft rush of the wind outside your cockpit is your constant companion as you soar. A glance to the left or right and you see the marvelous long wings of your glider as you wheel gracefully about the skies. On your first flight in a sailplane your host pilot demonstrates how to identify updrafts, and how to maneuver the sailplane so that the rising air can be used to greatest advantage. Soon you see that you are climbing, harnessing the wonderful efficiency of those long wings, rising

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swiftly on an invisible column of ascending air - a sailor in the sky. You bank the glider into a turn to fly in slow lazy circles, thermalling like a hawk or an eagle. On many days you can climb faster in a sailplane than an airplane can climb even with full power! The panoramic view of earth and sky makes you marvel at just how enjoyable and stimulating soaring flight can be. Your initial reaction giddy excitement is followed by a sense of grandeur, as you see the world in a way that only sailplane pilots (and eagles) see it.

Sailplane pilots have soared to altitudes of fifty thousand feet above sea level, and have made cross-country flights covering more than one thousand five hundred miles. While these remarkable accomplishments stand at the forefront of soaring achievements, cross country flights in excess of two hundred miles and achieved altitudes of fourteen to eighteen thousand feet are commonplace in many areas of the United States. Flights of five hours' duration are also commonplace; most experienced soaring pilots have made multiple flights of six to nine hours' duration.

As your first glider flight comes to a conclusion, you hand over the controls to your host pilot. With smooth control inputs the pilot brings the glider in for a graceful and nearly noiseless landing. Your host pilot helps you unbuckle your seat belt and you step out of the glider. You both turn toward the runway in time to see another glider coming in to land nearby. As it nears the ground the glider flares gently, then touches down. A few moments later the glider rolls to a stop. The side-hinged canopy opens and to your surprise a slender, petite fourteen year old girl climbs out of the cockpit - alone! She has just made her first solo glider flight. You join the small crowd gathering around the girl as her flight instructor raises a camera and snaps her picture. Proud parents congratulate their excited and animated daughter on the remarkable step into adulthood that she has just taken. You think back to your own fourteenth birthday, and realize you could have been a soaring pilot for years if you too had soloed at age fourteen! With new resolve to make up for lost time you walk up to the flight instructor and introduce yourself. You tell him you want to learn more about flying gliders. He grins, because he knows just how it feels to fall in love with this serene and spectacular form of flight - he's been in love with soaring for a long time too. He opens his calendar book and you make an appointment. Your journey to the sky has begun.

The national organization for glider pilots is the Soaring Society of America (SSA). The SSA has served the needs of American glider pilots since 1932, making it one of the oldest aviation organizations in the United States. Fifteen thousand SSA members worldwide enjoy the beautiful and informative monthly magazine SOARING, which is the official journal of the American soaring scene. Other membership publications include the Directory of Soaring Sites, which lists virtually all American gliding sites on a state-by-state basis. Addresses and telephone numbers are provided for each soaring site. For additional information about SSA membership write: SSA, Post Office Box 2100, Hobbs, New Mexico 88241, or call SSA at (505) 392-1177 during business hours. You can also visit the SSA website at [www.ssa.org](http://www.ssa.org).

## Youth Programs by John Campbell

Youth are a great asset to any Club or FBO. Never mind whether you are fond of your own kids or anybody else's, consider this: adolescents and young adults have enthusiasm, health, muscle power, and free time that the movement needs. They learn easy (not a pilot yet? GOOD!). They work cheap (no money? GOOD!). They stand to carry our legacy forward many years. Best of all, they are the largest and steadiest source of new members we will ever have. The trouble is they will NOT wander on to the field by themselves! As I wrote in June '94 SOARING, p.11, remember that:

- ◆ Youth DO have to be led by the hand. You have to find them.
- ◆ You have to bring them. You have to set things up for them.
- ◆ Soaring is NOT for everyone. Expect to routinely sift through a variety of kids.
- ◆ Soaring is TAILOR-MADE for turning kids into pilots. It fits their budget and personality best. No American kid knows this, though!
- ◆ Soaring is a HIDDEN group activity. What lone kid could find it?
- ◆ Adolescents are very sensitive to joining groups THEIR AGE.

What it comes down to is that you need a YOUTH PROGRAM to have youth. Given the FAI definition of "youth" ("Junior") as under 26 years of age, some youth require less guidance. If reasonable maturity, financial means, independence, are attractive to you, I advise you to go for the:

◆ COLLEGE CLUB. Write me for the Collegiate Soaring Association Start-up kit. CSA gets 2-3 new Chapters a year, but many don't last long (nothing does on campus). The beauty here is that the "U" is on your side for meeting space, funding, etc. It can be as easy as setting up SEMESTER rates and going to campus once with a slide show, a stack of posters ("1st meeting, U. of \_\_\_ Soaring Club"), and a plan to let the students who show up organize the 2nd meeting. This is how Colorado Soaring Association won the "best SSA Youth recruiter award".

If minimum impact on regular soaring operations with maximum output of new young pilots is your goal, go for the:

◆ YOUTH CAMP. 3-10 days of intensive work in a pre-planned atmosphere can add a quick few SSA Youth Members (ask for the sale!). For primary pilot training, camps are cheaper, faster, and better. It's a popular idea in England--and not just for youth or ab-initios ("Holiday Courses"). For modern American youth, beware the giveaway or "toy-airplane" syndrome which will just burn out your volunteers: if it all comes too fast, too passive (just like MTV!), they may say "Thanks!" very sincerely and never even think of joining the sport.

The 1992 "Youth in Aviation Project" suggested: Don't overestimate the impact of initial presentation; the key to success is continuity of contact or mentoring; promote enjoying aviation as a sport; note that teenagers are very subject to peer influence; note that teens tend to a "what's in it for me" work ethic and an expectation of "quick gratification" in their recreation.

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Allow me to translate those suggestions into concrete terms: At least "ask for the sale" (which club meeting can you make? When do you want to fly?...);

- ◆ Get them a subscription to SOARING
- ◆ Get them out on "regular days";
- ◆ Present soaring as a lifetime sport not a quick thrill;
- ◆ Get them to show initiative as a group.
- ◆ Make them compete.

Any serious soaring club should have a steady-state, year-round:

- ◆ JUNIOR MEMBERSHIP. Harris Hill's is amazing: 11% of SSA Student membership in one spot. This model is also common in Europe. "The Juniors" have their own leadership, responsibilities, events, awards--all dovetailed into making the whole club run better. There can be a very neat symbiosis between what the "Seniors" and "Juniors" can do and want to do.
- ◆ CIVIL AIR PATROL (USAF auxiliary). The average Squadron has a bunch of 14-20 year olds itching to fly. Glider rides count for funded "orientation" flights. More camps are needed.
- ◆ FOUR-H, believe it or not, has a growing aviation program, and reaches lots of kids nationwide. They are one of the newer members of the National Coalition for Aviation Education that SSA joined in 1994.

Working with groups like these is a win-win situation: they get an exciting activity to offer their kids (and soaring scores well on the career-orientation / service / leadership / maturation indices they like), you get a turnkey youth organization with the recruiting all done.

## Caesar Creek Soaring by Pat DeNaples

I asked Pat De Naples, Caesar Creek Soaring Club, what it is that they do in Ohio to recruit so successfully. Pat wrote back the following.

Dear Bob,

Here are some thoughts on why Caesar Creek has been successful in recruiting new members. Basically, it's not what we do to attract new members, it's what we have done for the last 40 years:

1. We own one of the best soaring facilities in the country, with clubhouse, campgrounds, picnic area, fishing pond, as well as the hangars, tiedown areas, etc. that goes with any airport. Caesar Creek soaring is a great place for the whole family.

2. We are a flight training club. We teach people to fly gliders by providing a well organized instructional program numerous CFGs, our own FAA Examiner, and a fleet of 2-place trainers.

3. We provide affordable flying. It's kept affordable by the volunteerism of our membership. Almost everyone contributes to the running of our organization. CFGs, towpilots, the 100+ members who work on eight organized crews one weekend day each month, all help to keep our operation running smoothly.

4. Finally, it's the people, our members. They are, for the most part, very friendly, cooperative, and devoted individuals who really enjoy the sport of soaring and do a good job of selling it to their friends and acquaintances. After talking to you the other day, my wife Mary reviewed the application forms of all the new members from the past two years - more than sixty in all. Fully two-thirds of them say they learned about the club by word-of-mouth, mostly from club members.

In the past we have tried air shows, shopping malls, sport and recreation shows, as well as talks on soaring at various service clubs. There have been newspaper articles and television shows on our activities. We are listed in the yellow pages and have run newspaper ads. It all helps, but the statistics point to personal contact - that is, word of mouth - as the key to our success.

Sincerely,

Pat De Naples, Caesar Creek Soaring Club

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John Schlechte of the Central Indiana Soaring Society (CISS) was one of the architects of a growth plan which achieved spectacular results in Indianapolis in 1994 and 1995. The CISS invited me to do a Safety Seminar in Indianapolis and during my visit there I got a chance to pump John for information about the Indiana program. How in the world did they develop such an effective growth plan, I asked John. Here is the outline for growth that John gave to me. It is the best single document for soaring growth that I have ever seen. Note how it involves every member in the Club.

### Growth Notes By John Schlechte

1. There must be a genuine desire from existing Club members to increase Club membership
  - a. Club will be financially stronger
  - b. Flying fees may be lower
  - c. May be able to purchase more gliders
  - d. Club volunteer work will be spread over more members
  - e. New members bring enthusiasm and new ideas
  
2. Existing members must sincerely welcome guests
  - a. Immediately involve in conversation
  - b. Explain membership fees and benefits
  - c. Demonstrate gliders and explain what's going on
  
3. Initiation fee should be reasonable
  - a. CISS lowered its membership fee from \$400 to \$200
  - b. Full-time students are \$100
  
4. Seek newspaper and TV publicity
  - a. Offer glider rides to reporters
  - b. Submit press releases to "What's Happening This Weekend" newspaper sections
  - c. Publicize Club contests
  
5. Encourage members to refer friends, perhaps offering a \$25 or \$50 flying credit for referrals which result in new memberships
  
6. Offer free "Introduction To Soaring" seminars in April or May
  - a. Saturday morning
  - b. Two hour ground school session (with coffee, doughnuts)
  - c. Introductory flights available that afternoon

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7. Encourage youth to join
  - a. Reduced initiation and monthly fees
  - b. Sponsor a "Youth Soaring Day" in June for junior/senior high school students
    - I. Publicize in newspaper
    - ii. Work with high schools, Civil Air Patrol, Explorers
    - iii. Two-hour ground & flight session for \$15
    - iv. Provide breakfast & lunch
8. Retain existing Club members by making Club membership fun!
  - a. Grill hot dogs for lunch at least once a month
  - b. Occasional family cookouts / beer
  - c. Precision landing contests
  - d. "Bomb drop" contests
  - e. Crosscountry contests
  - f. "Best costumed aviator" (near Halloween) wins free flight
  - g. Have members bring doughnuts / chips to share
  - h. Operate out of a different airport one or two weekends a year (brings in new members, too!)
  - I. Winter projects like glider repainting
  - j. Private / Commercial pilot ground school
  - k. Sell club logo T-shirts, sweats, jackets, etc.
  - l. Ask other members to fly with you when fly the Club two- seaters
9. Meet monthly and have some educational content at meetings
  - a. Keep meetings to one hour
  - b. Adjourn to the nearest restaurant for pizza, beer, etc.
10. Assign mentors to new members during the training phase to add encouragement
11. Encourage public guest flights
  - a. We just increased our price from \$40 to \$50 due to demand
  - b. Might not get a lot of new members from guest flights, but we do get publicity
  - c. Refund half of the \$50 demo flight fee if they join the Club
  - d. Sell gift certificates for guest rides
12. Sponsor and host an annual Club Banquet
  - a. Recognize all A,B,C, Bronze, Silver, Gold Badges
  - b. Recognize towpilots, CFIGs, volunteers
13. Publish an informative and readable Club newsletter
14. Sponsor Safety Seminars
  - a. FAA "Wings Program" qualified
  - b. Make it applicable to power pilots too

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15. Offer an "add-on" glider rating program in conjunction with a University flight school
  - a. Make sure you charge enough for the additional wear & tear
  - b. Don't let add-on program interfere with normal member flights
    - I. Limit to weekdays
16. Make sure CFGs use a flight training syllabus to better train (and retain) students
17. Have the Club maintain an inventory of popular soaring books, log books, bumper stickers, etc.
18. Put Club literature in prominent places in other airports
19. Prepare an annual Club Calendar with soaring events of all types listed
20. Give student pilot flights priority over other flights during morning hours
21. Encourage student pilots to take charge of organizing ground school and weekend flying
  - a. CISS now flies every Friday afternoon due to students' initiative in organizing towpilots and CFGs to be at the airfield

Let's grow soaring and the SSA!

Sincerely,

John Schlechte  
Indianapolis (CISS)



## Effective Recruiters Say...

"At Keystone Gliderport, we ask each new customer to join the SSA. We tell them that they must read the magazine (SOARING) to know what's going on in the world of soaring. And, we always ask mail order customers if they are SSA members. If they say no, we send them an SSA membership application with our catalog." - Doris Grove, Keystone Gliderport

"Explain the benefits of membership, then ask for the sale." - Turf Soaring

"The ABC Badge Program is the greatest thing for recruiting. Every pilot who solos a glider wants those little pins! We always tell our customers when they solo that they could be receiving their A Badge right now if they were members of the SSA. Then we give them an SSA membership application. They almost always join." -Jayne & Frank Reid, Bermuda High Soaring

"The ABC Badge program is a powerful incentive for SSA membership. So is SOARING magazine. I always show people the badges, and the magazine, and ask for the sale. We always keep an adequate supply of new member application right on the counter top at the gliderport. Most of our customers join the SSA in the first few weeks of soaring involvement."- Bob Wander

"At Central Indiana Soaring Society we decided to involve all the Club members in the growth effort. We explained to them the need for new members. Then we asked d for their help. They came through in fine style and we garnered forty new members in a one-year campaign. All of these new CISS members are also new SSA members because every member of our soaring club automatically becomes a member of the SSA." - Ron Clarke

These successful recruiters decided to promote SSA membership and to ask for the sale. If we all tried to make soaring grow, we would achieve the growth we need to keep the SSA, and soaring itself, healthy in the future.