



September 12, 2021

Mr. Jay McDaniel and the
SSA Awards Committee

Dear Jay and Members of the Awards Committee:

As the SSA Director for Region 2, I am writing to nominate Mr. Daniel Sazhin from the Aero Club Albatross in Blairstown, N.J. for this year's SSA Certificate of Appreciation from Region 2. Daniel is very deserving of this award for multiple reasons. While most know Daniel as a truly excellent pilot who holds many records and is a member of the US Team, he also makes extensive efforts to help Aero Club Albatross be an excellent soaring club.

Daniel Sazhin is a 26 year old PhD student, investigating Brain and Cognitive Science at Temple University. His major interest is in how people process information and make decisions in dynamic environments (like flying). He gave a very interesting talk about decision making and safety at the Little Rock SSA convention in February of 2020. His introduction to soaring began in 2005 when he was about 11 years old when his family took Daniel and his brother to Blairstown for glider rides. It is an understatement to say the trip was a recruitment success; Daniel spent a great deal of time over the next 4 years at the airport, soloed in September of 2009 and was awarded the Kolstad Scholarship in 2012. All in all, he has accumulated over 1,700 hours of glider time and an amazing amount of soaring experience.

Very briefly, his resume includes multiple US records, a number of wins at National contests (the 2013 1-26 Nationals at Moriarty, NM and the 2018 Sports Class Nationals in Nephi, UT) and 4 trips to World gliding championships – 3 as a Junior and most recently as a member of the US Club Team in France. To understand how extensive his soaring career actually is, please have a look at his website → <https://soaringeconomist.com>.

While Daniel is well known for his soaring accomplishments at the National and World level, it is important to realize that he is also a very enthusiastic supporter of soaring at the local level. These activities make Daniel an excellent candidate for a SSA Certificate of Appreciation and are outlined below.

- Since 2011, he has been instrumental in organizing Condor soaring events as the contest director for *US Nightly Soaring*. This group of Condor pilots get together on weekday nights to fly racing tasks. As many as 20-30 pilots participate in a given task. The tasks are held in known contest sites that have Condor sceneries like Slovenia, Mifflin, New Zealand, Blairstown, Nephi, and various sites in Europe.
- Since 2016, Daniel has been the Membership Chairman for Aero Club Albatross. As he is young with an enthusiastic personality, he is very good at this task. The club's president, Sebastian Wuerth, says he has brought in many new members over the past few years. Soaring certainly needs these individuals.
- For 3 years, beginning in 2017, he was a member of the Aero Club Albatross's Safety Committee. This is quite an accolade for one of his age. Daniel has become very experienced making long ridge flights out of Blairstown. He has used his practical

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knowledge to help others learn to fly the Allegheny ridges safely. Two good examples include: (1) Organizing a 2020 winter seminar in Blirstown about ridge flying safety. This all day event featured well known ridge pilots such as Karl Striedieck, Erik Mann, Richard Kellerman and others speaking to about 90 attendees on how fly the ridges prudently. (2) He has also created an interactive, online "Ridge Map" that is an excellent resource for displaying local knowledge about the flight characteristics of the Appalachian ridge system (tricky sections, good and bad landing sites, notes about the strength of the ridge lift on different ridges, sink holes, etc.). To view this map, see → <https://soaringeconomist.com/the-ridge-map/>.

- Between 2016 and 2020, Daniel was the NJ State Record Keeper and processed all the claims for the SSA. (This was probably an easy job for him, since he was one of the people setting the most records)
- Surprisingly for someone so young, Daniel was Chief of Maintenance for Aero Club Albatross from 2014 to 2016. In 2018 he undertook a bigger project as head of a group that restored a LS-3 given to the club that was in pretty rough shape. Apparently, he and several helpers improved the finish by filling the worst areas with *Bondo* and then sanding the wings with 320 grit sandpaper. Amazingly, after they finished restoring the ship (slyly named "El Bondo"), he took it to the Sports Class Nationals in 2018 and won the contest.
- Daniel's expertise has been recognized by other soaring groups. As he has always had a strong bond with the 1-26 class, he was chosen as the Contest Director for the 1-26 Nationals at Moriarty, NM in June of 2019. Again, quite an accolade for a young man.
- In 2020, Daniel won a Scholarship from the SSA to help support his quest to become a CFI-G. After obtaining his rating, he established a series of weekend morning training sessions for Aero Club Albatross to help pilots learn about safely flying badge flights and other more advanced training subjects.
- In the summer of 2020, Daniel planned the "Blirstown Little Guys Meet" that was intended to be held at Grimes airport in Pennsylvania that September. This event was designed to be a full week Cross Country camp / stress free Contest with mentorship and seminars for pilots new to contests and/or cross country flying. The Covid-19 pandemic upended the those plans, but did not defeat them. A scaled down, fun event was held at Blirstown over a weekend in its place.

In summary, in addition to his personal soaring success, Daniel is a great asset to soaring at Aero Club Albatross. He is the kind of willing, skilled and enthusiastic individual that every soaring club needs to have to be successful. For these reasons, I believe that he is an excellent candidate for a SSA Certificate of Appreciation.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.



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Regions 2 & 4

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