



August 29, 2020

Mr. Jay McDaniel and the
SSA Awards Committee

Dear Jay and Members of the Awards Committee:

As the SSA Director for Region 4, I am writing to nominate Dr. M.A. Takallu for this year's SSA Certificate of Appreciation from Region 4.

Introduction

Mamad (Mat) currently resides in Norfolk, Virginia and is a member of both the Tidewater Soaring Society as his primary club and the Merlin Soaring Association to which he also makes significant contributions. Before his retirement, Mat was a very accomplished aerospace scientist who worked for NASA's Aviation Safety Program and their Synthetic Vision Systems Project. He has published numerous scientific and technical papers in places such as NASA's *Technical Manuals and Reports* and the *American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics'* journals.

Mat has a long and interesting aviation history which has culminated in Commercial Pilot and Certified Flight Instructor ratings for Single and Multi-engine Airplane, Instrument, and Glider. He is also rated in seaplanes and helicopters. He has been a member of the SSA since 1978 and a SSA instructor since 1981. He is also a member of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), and the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA). Perhaps most importantly, he is the recipient of FAA's highest civilian award, *The Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award* which was awarded to him in 2016.

Soaring Career

Mat started his aviation career by learning to fly gliders as a high school junior at the Doshan Tappeh Airport in Tehran, Iran. His first solo flight was on July 19, 1966 in a Blanik L-13. At the end of 1996, Mat moved to Aachen, Germany where he obtained his glider, motor glider, and airplane licenses while attending the Technical University of Aachen. In the mid 1970s, he earned his FAI Gold and Diamond badges for altitude gain at Issoire, France (LFHA), and his Gold and Diamond badges for distance in Germany. Toward the end of the 1970's, Mat moved to Raleigh, North Carolina to continue his education and earned a PhD in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering at North Carolina State University.

While at North Carolina State, he founded and became the first president of the University's Soaring Club in 1977. This club, now called the North Carolina Soaring Association (NCSA), still exists and operated out of Harnet County airport in North

Carolina before it moved to Crooked Creek, NC. After moving to Virginia to work for NASA in 1985, Mat started another soaring operation called Virginia Soaring, which flew at Wakefield Airport and later at Emporia Airport in Southeastern Virginia using ground launches. He is currently an active soaring flight instructor at his primary club, the Tidewater Soaring Society and also provides instruction and tows to members of the Merlin Soaring Association.

Mat also flies his ASW-27 in the SSA's Regional and National Soaring contests. He usually flies the Seniors contest in Florida and 1-2 other Regional contests every year. In 2015, Mat won a very competitive Sports Class regional contest at Perry, South Carolina.

Reasons for the Nomination

I believe Mat is an excellent candidate for a SSA Certificate of Appreciation because of his long dedication to the sport of soaring and, more importantly, for helping others reach their soaring goals via instruction and mentoring. Some examples include:

- Prior to proposing Mat for this award, I had a long conversation with Tom Walsh, the current President of Tidewater Soaring Society. Tom was enthusiastic about nominating Mat for the award and stressed his Importance to the core of Tidewater's training and flying activities. Mat is a very active instructor there and always takes on one new student each year for primary instruction. (Note - Tidewater assigns their students to one of their instructors as their main instructor for that year).
- In addition to his regular instruction duties, Mat encourages and mentors both students and certificated pilots about cross country flying. For instance, he was a major instructor in the Virginia Soaring Association's Cross Country camp that ran at the Emporia airport in May of 2016.
- On the Regional level, Mat has started, or helped start, three soaring clubs in his career; two of them are still in existence – the North Carolina Soaring Association (described above) and Merlin Soaring Association (more about Merlin below).
- Mat helped Eric Lambert, who is originally from England, get his American pilot's license. After Eric started the Merlin Soaring Association at Merlin Aerodrome outside Richmond, Virginia in 2004, Mat trained Eric as a tow pilot and gave him his formal checkout. He also used his broad experience gained with multiple other soaring operations to help the Merlin group get started on the right footing.
- Initially the Merlin club operated with loaned gliders and a tow service provided by the owner of the field. In about 2011, the Merlin club grew and became independent from the owner of the airport and purchased its own gliders and tow plane. To help Merlin with this transition, Mat helped train the club's tow pilots and also mentored Eric Lambert through getting his CFG rating so he could help teach Merlin's students. Mat's expertise and guidance has been instrumental in helping the smaller Merlin Club grow and become successful.

In summary, Mat is the kind of willing and skilled individual that every soaring club needs to have to be successful. In the past 10-15 years, he has provided his talents to 3 soaring clubs Region 4 – initially to the Virginia Soaring group at Emporia, and more recently to Tidewater Soaring Association and Merlin Soaring Association. For this reason and all of the others outlined above, I believe that he is an excellent candidate for a SSA Certificate of Appreciation. I hope you will agree.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

With Best Wishes

James C. Garrison

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James C. Garrison".

James C. Garrison
SSA Director,
Regions 2 & 4