



## Six Years of Silver Badge Attempts

*Piet Barber, Chief Flight Instructor, SSC*

I must have done the silver distance a dozen times. Unfortunately, I've never documented it, or the documentation that I did was never acceptable to my official observer. I can't think of any way to learn about how to do something than to listen to the repeated failures of another, so I will share them with you.

My first attempt for the silver distance was a ridge flight back in 2000. There was no fancy GPS in the Sprite, but a camera mounted on the canopy rail (the old kind with actual film!), and a dusty but calibrated barograph behind the pilots seat. My task was to do a remote start at Signal Knob, the northernmost point of the Massanutten mountain chain. The other turn point was the southern end of the Massanutten, the tower above the Massanutten ski resort, not far from Harrisonburg. It was my first solo flight on the ridge, and I went the whole distance just like my instructors had taught me. The southern end of the Massanutten -- right next to the ski resort did not have much lift, and I barely skated at ridge top level. I raced downwind of my turn point, and hastily took my turn point photo. I excitedly returned to the field triumphant.

My instructor (and observer), after developing the photos, determined that the turn point photo was not in the correct zone, or wasn't pointed toward the starting point. "I'm sorry, but I'm not going to submit this for a badge," uttered my instructor. He tore the claim form in half. I was heartbroken. Stupid badge leg.

I have done the trip down the Massanutten several time since then. My most memorable at the end of one day of flight instruction. I was teaching a student about to take the practical exam for gliders how to assemble and disassemble my LS-4. Once the glider was assembled, I noticed that there was about an hour and half until sunset. Hmm. I think I can make it. I was next in the tow queue, and got to the ridge. Down to the end and back before sunset. I successfully raced the whole ridge on a time limit, and managed to make it back before the flight became illegal (no position lights).

I've also had problems with the silver duration. I have had too many flights of four and a half hours. My bladder just can not hold out that long, and I must have some sort of mental block against

peeing while in such a supine position in the LS-4. There was one time in the Summer of 2004 when I made a 5 and a half hour flight. I triumphantly returned, proud of my achievement. A five hour flight is really a solid achievement if you have not done it before. I sent the paperwork off to the SSA, but I took my time, and sent it several months after the flight.

It took a long time for my paper to come back from the SSA - several months. The note was not confirming my triumph, it was a letter of defeat. I had not completed the 'continuous surveillance' section of the badge claim form, and I didn't have the GPS calibrated. Certainly I would not make that same mistake again: I shipped off the GPS to get it calibrated that week (for future attempts).

Last May, I made a nice day long flight (another four and a half hour flight) to Waynesboro. It started with a 2000' tow. It was clearly more than 50 km. It was a great flight. I managed to eek my way to Waynesboro in weak 1 to 2 knot lift the whole way. The SSA and FAI won't honor your achievement if you don't submit the paperwork. The maximum time they will honor a claim is six months after the flight. Sometime in November I realized, "oops" That was six months just a few days ago. Oh well.

I have this very complicated piece of equipment for the LS-4 called a SN-10. It is a flight computer that will tell you everything about your flight, where you are going, where you have been, if you have enough altitude to make it to the nearest airport, etc. While it is such a wonderful piece of technology, but it also takes some learning. It's important to learn some of the critical things, like how to declare a badge flight and have its flight declared into the Volkslogger. Last October, I decided to try a ridge flight, declaring the distance from Signal Knob to the Massanutten Ski resort's tower.

After the flight, when I downloaded the flight from the GPS into my laptop, there were no lines showing the task, the turn points, just the flight's trace. A flight from the southern portion of the Massanutten to Scott's airfield 130 km away would certainly qualify for a silver distance. But again, since the flight wasn't declared, I feel the pain of defeat. I'll get it some day. I read up on the Volkslogger's manual, and the SN-10's manual, and now I know how to declare a flight in that fancy computer with a blindfold on.

This winter, I took a nice flight to the ridge, but my aerotow was too high. I forgot to tell the tow pilot that I was interested in a badge flight. It was unfortunate that we towed quickly through



3000'; 4000'. It was nice that he towed me straight to the wave lift, and unfortunate that the silver badge that there is a distance penalty that would have required me to fly 70 km instead. Since I got towed into the wave, I released nearly 5000' MSL and climbed to 12,000 in 10 to 12 knot lift. So that wasn't such a bad deal after all. Another failed Silver distance, despite the fact that I managed to declare the flight into the Volkslogger correctly. In retrospect, towing into the wave was the only way to have any fun that day. The downward portion of the wave suppressed the ridge lift, and nobody made much use of the ridge that day.

Did I mention the time I did the ridge flight, but the on-board battery was so depleted that the Volkslogger kept shutting of in-flight? We had charged it properly, but the battery's useful lifespan was cut short when it was once plugged in backwards. The SN-10 flight computer is very power hungry, and with the battery in the depleted state, plus the excited radio chatter of everybody flying on a good day, there just was not enough for the Volkslogger.

This day was going to be different. "I want you home by 5:30 so you can be home for dinner" my wife shouted as I hurried out the door. I don't think she knows how futile that request is on a day after a cold front has blown through. I had told the two partners in the LS-4 that I intended to fly all day long. (They are really good partners for letting me get away with stuff like this).

I assembled quickly, fiddled with the flight computer to come up with the most obvious easy silver distance flight I could come up with. I recalled that George Hazelrigg did a silver distance flight from Luray to Winchester, or vice versa, so I quickly dialed that task into the flight computer. I managed to get to be first in the tow queue. Takeoff was around 10:30. Mike the tow pilot was about to take me to 3000', but I did my best attempt of "pulling a Collier" and got off at somewhere around 1200' AGL in a weak thermal. I clawed and scratched and fought, until the lift started getting stronger. I eventually connected with the strong lift, and I took it all the way up to cloud base, around 6500'.

Once I reached the top of this thermal, white popcorn was starting to form all the way down the valley, so I set out to Luray. There was no need to play contest-pilot, so I set out onto the task in tip-toe mode, MacCready setting of zero, and used every bit of lift I could find along the way.

There was no problem working what I could find. During

the early part of the day, the thermals were cycling very rapidly. I could be circling under a cu' and after a few hundred feet, that 6 knot thermal turned into a 2 knot thermal. I had to look around very carefully, that blue piece of sky with a vague whisper of mist 2 miles away might be my only chance to get to it while it's strong. I set out to that wisp, by the time I got to it, it was 6 knots up to cloud base. By this time, I was over the eastern ridge of the Massanutten, more than 2/3rd of the way from Front Royal to Luray. The winds were 278 at 9, and I was around 6000', from this altitude, the ridge wouldn't do me much good for lift.

I used up this thermal, and was hanging around cloud base. I headed upwind, and strangely enough, this weird thermal was out in the blue, upwind of the cu. I flew over the new wisps just forming, and headed upwind. 4 knots in the blue. After a few minutes, I was above the clouds, thinking that this is the smoothest thermal I had ever seen. Hey wait a minute! It's not a smooth thermal—It's a wave! I tinkered around, and after a few minutes of patient scratching, I was climbing through 10,000'. My turn point wasn't far away, but I kept working the wave. The silver distance task seemed less important now, and my priority shifted to working the wave instead. I took a 2 mile trip downwind (into the sink) to get to my Luray turn point, starting my task.

I climbed through 12,000, glimpsed a "Ted" airlines (or some sort of blue-white jet liner) flying northbound (fast) along the valley, at a similar altitude. The jet-liner was at my altitude, but about 2 miles east of me. I kept working at the wave lift, and climbed to 14,000. Since I didn't have any oxygen, and it took me more than 20 minutes to climb to 14,000. I turned toward Winchester, my other turn point, and set the speed to 80 knots. If I didn't get my gold altitude last month, this flight would have easily qualified. The wave was right along the way, and made the glide ratio over the ground substantially flat. By the time I got to Signal knob, I was still over cloudbase, and by now, other private ships started to launch.

I didn't get below 9,000 for the rest of the day, and easily got up to Winchester, where I saw more heavy metal go under, and over me; especially around Winchester. There are two airways inbound to Dulles that converge over Winchester. In retrospect, maybe Winchester wasn't such a good idea for a turn point on a wave day. But then again, I didn't expect there to be wave. I stayed in



the wave as much as I could. This was mostly because the main goal of this flight was the duration, rather than the distance. I worked every little nibble of wave lift that I could find, until the flight computer told me that 5 hours had passed.

I pulled spoilers at 9,000 feet, leaving even more wave. I was the last to land, 5 and a half hours after take-off. None of the other Skyline pilots managed to get above cloud base, and the thermals dried up by 4:00 PM, causing some to land out (although nobody from our club got that honor on this day). Total time, more than 5:23. The best part of the flight was that Dick Otis took some fantastic photos of me in the LS-4 on final. His photos managed to make my less-than-beautiful landing look pretty good. <http://tinyurl.com/moztp>

#### **On June 6th, the SSA sent me the letter of congratulations:**

*Congratulations on your flight of May 6 -- you certainly have been busy this spring!*

*I am pleased to report that your 5:23:24 duration flight included an 88.07 km task of the "Distance Using Up to 3 Turnpoints" Type, with a 61.26 km leg eligible as Silver Distance. These accomplishments and your completion of the US Silver Badge #6857 will be listed in the July, 2006 SOARING.*

Let's review the mistakes I have made, and perhaps you can avoid some of the difficulties I have experienced. Here's some advice so you won't have to spend 6 years trying to get your Silver badge.

1. Submit correctly, Submit early. The SSA can't give you a badge if you submit it 6 months after the flight. If there is a problem with the submission, there is a limited amount of time to fix the problem. Submitting early will allow for issues to be resolved.
2. Read the FAI sporting code. It's a rather dry read, but it will help you from making many of the mistakes that I have made.
3. Understand what the maximum altitude you can release and still fly the task you have declared, and have the release altitude meet the one percent rule.

Get the Silver Badge application form from our website (<http://skyline soaring.org/docs/>) and figure out how far your proposed task is, how much 1% of that distance is, and what that means for your aerotow release. The calculations are on the back of the form to help you out.

4. If you use a camera, make a good turn point photo. Make sure that the turn point photo is taken pointing toward the next turn point, and that you are in the correct sector. Make sure it's

mounted, and you have the grease pencil mark on the canopy. Turn point photos are so primitive, so if you can afford it, go get a suitable logger instead. If you have a logger, you can play back the flight in a 3-D animation with SeeYou or Strepla, where you can study the effectiveness of your thermalling techniques, review where you were too brave, or too chicken. It is a very valuable tool for post-flight analysis.

5. If you are using a barograph, make sure it is calibrated less than 24 months previous to the flight. Or if it's not, make sure it's calibrated no more than a month after the flight.

6. Just because you are using a GPS logger doesn't mean that you can skip the calibration. They need to be calibrated in the same way as the old paper and ink barographs. I mailed my Volkslogger off to Craggy Aero, and I got it back within a week.

7. Picking a field more than 50 km away to land is the easiest way to get the Silver Distance. There is no need to declare this sort of task, just have a barograph or a GPS logger like a Volkslogger; and go land someplace far enough away. Shenandoah is far enough, Waynesboro too. If you land out at Waynesboro, you might be able to convince the club members at SVS to give you an aerotow back to Front Royal.

8. If you have a flight computer, make sure you know how to declare a task while you are on the ground. Tasks declared in-flight don't count.

9. OK, get your giggles out now: I'll say it without embarrassment: Learn how to pee while supine. I'm not suggesting you try this on the living room couch, but without practice, you may find it difficult when the moment of need comes. I'm convinced the five hour task is designed to make you learn how to pee in a glider. Whatever you do, don't dehydrate yourself so you won't need to urinate during the flight. It's essential that you give yourself enough fluids to endure the stresses of a long flight. Learn to pee in the air so you won't have to kick yourself about a four and a half hour long flight. Bring along something suitable to contain it. Wear comfortable pants that allow you to... uh... get to the particulars without pinching anything. (I recommend the pee-tot pants.) To further drive the point through, I highly recommend you visit this URL: <http://www.reliefwear.com>; for the story of a great flight nearly ruined by the urge.

10. Don't be afraid to ask the dumb questions about the specifics to a badge flight. It's better to ask beforehand, than to have your guess turn out to be wrong, leading up to another botched badge attempt. Find somebody who knows.

11. Most of all, if you mess up your application, don't complete the flight, experience heartbreak or a setback, don't give up! There's always another spectacular flying day next weekend.

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## **Significant Event**

The White House  
Office of the Press Secretary  
June 20, 2006

**Personnel Announcement:** President George W. Bush today announced his intention to nominate six individuals, appoint twelve individuals, designate one individual, and upon appointment designate one individual to serve in his Administration:

The President intends to nominate **William B. Wark**, of Maine,

to be a Member of the Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board, for a five year term. Mr. Wark currently serves as Executive Vice President for LGH, Incorporated. Prior to this, he served as Project Manager for The Marasco Newton Group. Earlier in his career, he served as Deputy Director for the Technological Hazards Division at the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Mr. Wark has served as a Lieutenant in the United States Navy. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Maine at Fort Kent and his master's degree at The George Washington University.

*Of course they left out Bill's really important qualification — Skyline Soaring Glider Pilot and Duty Officer.*

*Congratulations Bill!*

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## The Day That Could Have Turned into Tragedy.

*Bela Gogos, SSC Member Emeritus*

It was the first Sunday of November in 1942. Being this late in the year the soaring season was over. However, the flying never stopped. Since the members of the club were either high school students or employees of a local factory, flight operations were conducted only on week-ends and holidays

A grass field located four miles from the small city, Papa, my hometown, in the western part of Hungary, was used as our glider port. The members of the club built a hanger large enough to house our three gliders. This was the only structure on the airfield, no club house or even a small office. No aero tow was available. To launch the planes bungee cord or winch tows were utilized.

For initial training up to A badge bungee-cord was used. The launches for B and C badges and advanced flights were done by winch for which an old Buick - 1930's vintage - was used.

On this memorable day the take-off point was from the north-west corner of the field. Perpendicular to the take-off direction there was a relatively small highway just a couple of feet from the take-off point. Next to the highway was a high voltage power line which delivered the electric power to approximately forty thousand homes in Papa and vicinity.

According to the club's operational procedure the first flight on every operational flight day had to be flown by a licensed instructor before a student was allowed to fly. That was the case on this day as well. After the chief instructor landed, he turned to me and said "Bela you are the next. Watch out, there is lots of sink. Your task today is to fly a "figure eight" and end it with a spot landing." A "T" shaped, white tarpaulin fastened to the ground marked the touch-down point for spot landing.

I slid into the cockpit, tied the seat belts and the duty officer hooked up the plane to the towline and signaled the winch operator that the pilot was ready to be launched.

As I completed the figure eight I turned to the base leg then to the final approach. At this point I felt comfortable that my altitude was sufficient to clear the power line and land on the white tarpaulin. However, as I proceeded in the final approach closer to the air field I realized that I was too low to clear the power line. An uneasy feeling went through my body and I felt a knot in my stomach and knew that I had to do something to avoid a bad accident. I had two choices: first to increase the speed of the plane and pull it over the power line, second to fly under the line between two poles, clear the line and land. Since I didn't have time to waste, without hesitation I decided that flying under the line between two poles is the only viable solution.

I was nervously watching the dangerous situation evolving and when I thought that I already cleared the line a giant fire ball, like lightning, blinded me. Despite of this I continued to fly and landed. I was shaken and still blinded on touched down, but alive.

As the plane stopped, I was sitting in the cockpit motionless waiting for the crew to arrive. Two club members gently lifted me out of the cockpit and laid me down on the grass. After a through visual examination they were happy to see that I didn't have any burn or other injuries.

Now the instructor took over the investigation. He talked to everyone who witnessed the incident, then completed the accident report and next day sent it to the National Safety Board.

There wasn't any structural damage done to the sailplane.

The only damages were the broken Pitot tube and a large burned spot on the top of the fuselage in front of the cockpit. They were repaired and two weeks later the plane was back in service

. I was fortunate that the pitot tube caught the wire first and broke it. If the sailplane would have been six inches lower the wire would have been caught by my neck and I would have been instantly killed.

After I recovered from the initial shock the chief instructor walked over to me and inquired about my physical and mental condition. He was relieved when he saw that I was OK. He asked me. "Are you ready for another flight?"-- I replied "Yes, I am" Then he continued. "You are the next to fly. The task is the same, fly a figure eight ending it with a spot landing. At this time allow sufficient altitude to cross the high-voltage power line."

The flight was flawless and the landing was right on the white "T".

Next day there was an article in the local newspaper:

"A local student miraculously escaped injuries when he flew a sailplane into the high-voltage power line. There was a complete blackout for several hours in the area."

These two flights were my last flights for the next 39 years. My sailplane flying was interrupted by WWII, years in the Soviet POW camp and Gulag.

In 1962 I immigrated to USA and was hired by IBM. In 1978 I was relocated to Burlington, Vermont. In a sunny summer day my wife Susan and I drove to Sugarbush glider port, where Susan purchased a 30 minute sailplane ride for me as a Father's Day present

From then on I was "hooked" and became a frequent visitor at various glider ports; Julian, PA, Minden, NV, Wurtsboro, NY, Sugarbush, VT, Gyongyos, Hungary, Warrenton Airpark.

On September 28, 2002 realizing that the time had come to close my sixty-three year long flying career I parted with my beloved, loyal partner, HOTEL THREE, passing it on into capable hands of Jim Kellett, Jim Garrison and Richard Freytag.

And now I live off the beautiful memories of flying. Whenever I am at the Front Royal Airport and see H3 or drive thru the Gogos gap in the Massanutten Mountains my day is brightened and it brings back many memories.

I sealed my #6 Soaring Logbook with the last entry:

**Total Sailplane Time: 2440 Hours** 



*Hotel-3, in the able hands of Jim Garrison, carries on the tradition. photo by Dick Otis*

## Pogo Was Right...\*

This comes to me from a buddy, **Jeff Banks**, in Anchorage – a glider pilot, towpilot, and a 747 driver for Northwest Airlines, regularly flying into the orient. He had arranged to borrow a glider in Washington State in order to fly in a regional contest, and this is his description of his flight from Anchorage to Ephrata:

I finally got my gear and borrowed glider to Ephrata today. My trip starts with Anchorage TSA. It seemed that something alarmed in my chute and I was called away from my flight. Now you all know an emergency reserve chute is not like luggage that you unzip and run latex covered gloves through to have a sorted twist and toss of fabric and footwear.

I showed the inspector the papers signed by the FAA certificated parachute rigger, I showed the rigger's lead seal with his initials. I showed my airline ID and explained I fly 747's regularly out of Anchorage, and that the FBI has my fingerprints and background checks, and that the FAA also gives me random drug and alcohol tests about twice a year.

"Tiss izz not the FAA sir tiss izz the TSA" (sorry oops wrong government agency violating my first amendment rights). Well I pulled the cord and handed the spring loaded pilot chute to one of

the agents...please hold on to this tightly it will spring out a bit and I am not sure I can get it all back in. I carefully unwrapped the chute and let them dig around with those blue dish washing gloves. They could not find what they were looking for and went back to get a copy of the x-ray from the machine. They hid this away from me so I could offer no help, and I just let them dig deeper into my silk chute. I saw my flight push away from the gate and wondered if the other luggage I checked (a tool box with scissors, knives and safety wire) left unaccompanied without the "suspect" passenger.

The TSA agent reached to the lowest bottom part of my chute and a ha! He found a small lead bag that the riggers use to help fold the chute. This one just happened to fold into my chute and was not removed when repacked. I called the rigger and I have a repack refund coming.

The TSA was just doing their job. It irks me a bit that I have no credibility as an Air Transport Pilot working for an established aircarrier.

Kind of reminds me of the joke where a TSA agent is wandering the Captain and the Captain sighs "why are you doing this to me" and the TSA agent says "so you won't get control of the plane"

—**Jim Kellett, Resident Curmudgeon**

\* "We have met the enemy and he is us." 

## Folder Gems...

It's late Monday night. Today was one of "those" days. I'd been to Norfolk all weekend for Navy Drill, and returned Sunday night to torrential rains and flooding in the back yard The house air conditioner froze over (seems you need to clean it more than once a year). Leaving the house this morning, I hear the beltway is closed between 395 and the WW Bridge, which is only half built anyway. I trudged through downtown to find 295 in total gridlock, explained by 6 or more cars totally submerged on the outbound lane. I activated the GPS and launched into parts of SE Washington I'd never been in before – at least grateful I was on the ground and not in the air someplace. The trip home was marginally better.

So here it is 2100 hours and now I find an email from our esteem Newsletter Editor, Sir Phil "On Tuesday we intend to start the Newsletter. Now is the time to get those electronic cards and letters coming". Oh my, I've barely been to the airport recently, and I've already sent my month's allocation of photo fillers. My mind wanders looking for inspiration.

Reviewing the email folder allocated to me by CINCHOUSE, I'm stare at a number of sub-folders, which represent the entirety of emails I've elected to save since joining Skyline Soaring Club in July 1998. Well, it's not complete because I lost all my email folders around 2004 when I was changing computers and email programs. Who knows what pearls of wisdom were lost? Still, my file structure is interesting.

I have a folder for Skyline Soaring (SSC). If I want to save something and have no place else to put it, in it goes. There is not much in SSC, a few ops reports, some stuff on High View Farms. This innovative initiative provided one



educational weekend, but never got off the ground as a recurring event. There is info on TRACON and Winchester AWOS, and only two [Misc] files – one by US Navy Captain Ouimette on the need for America to Wake Up after 911, and one by Greg Ellis on a Car-Jacking Scam Alert. Not much on [Misc] these days; I guess we are all tied of spamming each other.

There is an email from Dave Weaver discussing his concerns about solo aerial photography; which caused much soul searching, a change in camera equipment, lens (for more stand off range) and flying habits – thank you Dave. A few "thank you" notes including several from Sabrina—a delightful UAL Flight Attendant which George Jr got to fly at my expense because I was towing. Joe Parish, who was standing by to help, is still mad at me I think.

I have a folder on the Pax River Airshow of 1995, where I tried to get club interest in taking the K to the air show to garner interest in soaring, the club, and to solicit tow pilots from Navy Test Pilot school. There was little support and someone ultimately decided it was too hard and/or took away too much money from a day of flying. So Richard Freytag volunteered to take his ship to the show. We drove two cars, the trailer and the glider right out to center stage in front of the runway, set up a tent and the glider, and proceeded to have the time of our lives working the crowd and watching the show. I never had the energy to try it again.

There is a whole folder dedicated to Jim Kellett, the "Resident Curmudgeon" and regional director. I seem to have a lot of thinking kinds of exchanges with Jim, who is never shy about expressing his opinion, but always professional in keeping such discussions private. The latest message solicits the consumption of Thai food on Deck (his deck) on Saturdays in lieu of the Mill. I like this idea. Maybe it will catch on.

A recent addition, there is a folder dedicated to my newest effort to get SSC photos published by SSA.

*"Dear SSA, On behalf of the Skyline Soaring Club, Front Royal Virginia, Chief Flight Instructor Piet Barber, I (The Chief Tow Pilot, club pho-*

*Photo from the Kellett Folder by Dick Otis*

tographer and occasional CFI-G) am inquiring about the process for submitting photos for use in your fine magazine, which we (the Skyline Soaring Club members) all enjoy immensely.

Actually, I think Piet just wants his own photo published (see below). Piet hails from South Africa (rumor has it his family owns a huge diamond mine). We are hoping he will buy Skyline Soaring Club a Fleet of ASK-21s in the future, so I'm trying to butter him up by helping him get his wish to be internationally recognized as a future soaring contest winner wannabe."

"Dear Richard: Thank you for taking the time to submit photos to SOARING. You are welcome to send photos to us any time, and you

don't have to send an article with them. We simply like to know the type of plane, photographer's name, who is in the plane, place photo was taken, and type of camera. We are always looking for good photos, so please feel free to send them any time.

Also, if Piet does own a diamond mine, after he buys the new fleet for your club, please ask him not to forget the SSA with a generous donation (or he could just send me some diamonds—they happen to be my favorite stone). Layton."

The biggest collection of emails however, are labeled Pawnee and Towpilots. There are jewels to be had in this collection. But I think I'll save them for some other time. —Dick Otis

## Thursdays at FRR

On June 29th I finally got time to continue my recovery to field currency. Not only did I get to fly but was privileged to see, once again, what makes our sport priceless. I witnessed the rich tradition of one generation pilot passing a wealth of information on to an immensely talented new generation pilot. I snapped a few photos of Jim transitioning Danny Noonan into the Sprite with Dan the Elder and Frank Banas helping. Three days later Danny had Flight of the Day at 1hr 47 min. Sheesh, at his age my Mother was still cutting my meat!

I also was privileged to witness the two prone on the Cirrus' wings while a nasty little thunderstorm transitioned us all into rainforest-dripping slugs. (see Thursday, June 29, 2006 Ops Report).

As the Man says "a day at the airport..." —Phil Jordan



## Stall Spin Killed Pilot

Joe Napsha

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Tuesday, May 30, 2006—David Boehmer watched in horror as the glider plunged into a nosedive.

It's what's known among glider pilots as a stall spin—"it slowed up too much and stalled," Boehmer explained Monday—and for veteran flyer Francis J. Smith, of Robinson, it proved fatal. His glider smashed into a home Sunday afternoon in North Bethlehem, Washington County. No one on the ground was hurt.

"It makes it difficult to understand. He (Smith) was a very experienced pilot. He was the least likely one you could think that might happen to," said Boehmer, of Upper St. Clair, a member of the Pittsburgh Soaring Club.

Smith, 73, a club member for about 25 years, had been flying his 1975 Schweizer SGS 1-35 glider for about 30 minutes when he began his final descent toward Bandel Airport in North Bethlehem, Boehmer said.

A retired US Airways mechanic, Smith was licensed to fly a glider and motorized plane, Boehmer said. The glider had undergone a government inspection, he said, adding weather was not a factor.

The Federal Aviation Administration is investigating.

Boehmer was at the airport watching along with Smith's wife, Helen, when the glider began to plummet from about 500 feet. From their vantage point, they could neither see nor hear the crash, Boehmer said.

Smith frequently worked on his glider at the airport, he said.

It was the first fatal accident in the 41-year history of the 37-member club, Boehmer said.

Smith's family could not be reached for comment.



## Food for Thought...

**Lack Of Medicals Raises Safety Concerns**— Soon, pilots will be flying around the Texas skies without medical exams, with just a driver's license and half the experience of a private pilot -- that's the alarm raised by a story about sport pilots in last weekend's Dallas Morning News.

"If they don't have to get a medical, or if there are ones who do this because they can't pass the medical, then they probably shouldn't be flying," Cynthia Godfrey, operations director of the Mesquite City Airport, told the newspaper (she did have more positive things to say).

Ken Wiegand, head of Collin County Regional Airport in McKinney, countered. "There's a conception that a pilot will have a heart attack and come down on my house..." he told the Morning News. And yet, "I know there are folks out there with weak hearts and

minds going down the highway doing 80."

Historically, pilot incapacitation is a factor in a very small percentage of general-aviation accidents. According to the most recent Nall Report, compiled by AOPA's Air Safety Foundation, there were a total of five such accidents in all of 2004, four of them fatal. One resulted from a heart attack, one from carbon monoxide poisoning, and three (one nonfatal) from unknown causes.

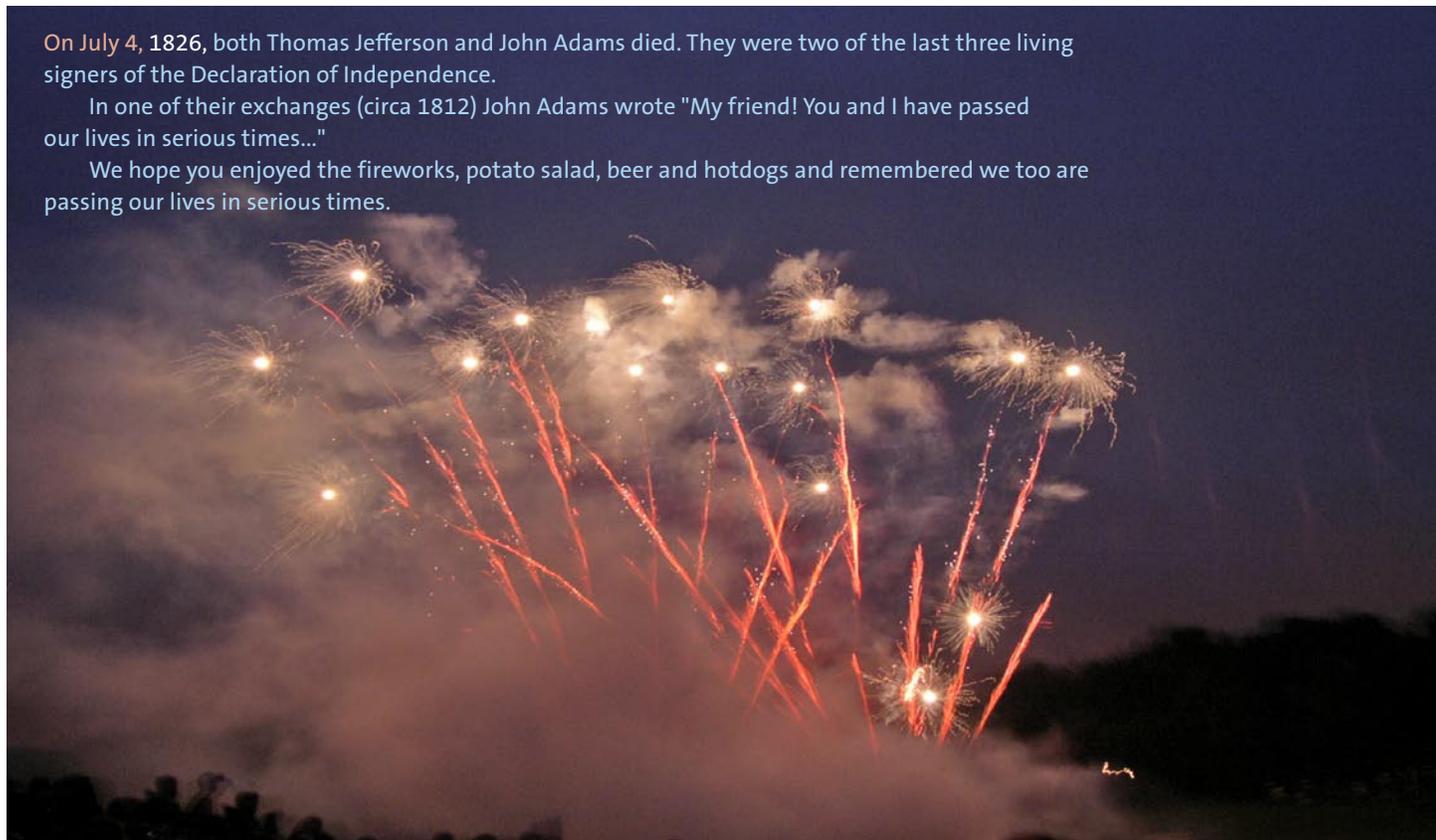
Only one of these accidents occurred with a passenger aboard, and none harmed persons on the ground. Godfrey added that pilots are required to self-certify before every flight. "Most people who have medical problems know their limitations, and I don't know too many pilots who wouldn't say, 'If I can't do this, I shouldn't be flying.' I've been in this business 25 years, and I think 99.9 percent of pilots would be very conscientious about it," she told the Morning News. —<http://www.avweb.com/eletter/archives/avflash/664-full.html#192528>



On July 4, 1826, both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams died. They were two of the last three living signers of the Declaration of Independence.

In one of their exchanges (circa 1812) John Adams wrote "My friend! You and I have passed our lives in serious times..."

We hope you enjoyed the fireworks, potato salad, beer and hotdogs and remembered we too are passing our lives in serious times.



**Copy**  **That!** *Selected flotsam and jetsam from the editor's daily Tsunami of email*

**Glider pilots**— Skyline Soaring has a limited number of covered trailer storage available at Front Royal-Warren County Airport, Club membership required. Interested parties should contact Richard Harris for details—[rharris@skylinesoaring.org](mailto:rharris@skylinesoaring.org)

**Priceless**—The instructors have talked it over, and agree; in order to be signed off for the Private practical checkride, all candidates must be able to perform the following landing pattern procedure:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwB9gC9T-8s>

—**Piet Barber**, Chief Flight Instructor, Skyline Soaring Club

**Moving On Part 1**

**Fred Winter**

160 Sand Rock Road  
Lewistown, PA 17044-9541  
home (717) 248-2146  
cell (202) 271-5211

I have somewhere between 2 and 4 guest beds (including sofas), plus room for lots of sleeping bags. I am 15 minutes from a 5,000 foot runway (Mifflin County airport) with 2 tow planes on call. I am 45 minutes or so from Ridge Soaring, and from Karl Streideick's Eagle Field. "Heavy" traffic is waiting for 4 cars to go by before you can pull onto Logan from the Dunkin Donuts.

Mifflin County will be hosting the 15 meter Nationals in 2007, so find a pilot who will be flying and sign up as crew.

Keep in touch, all, Fred

**Moving On Part 2**

**John Barry**—This is to let you know that I will be going inactive with the club since I am moving to Colorado. I have accepted a position as Superintendent of Schools in Aurora, Colorado. It gets me back to the State I love and it gets me involved in education for kids. The school district has 33,000 kids and 3,000 employees so I will be kept busy. I hope not so busy that I can't get some soaring in from time to time--maybe at Black Forest. I will be moving the first week in July.

I have really enjoyed flying with the Club and you all have a very professional approach to flying--I have been impressed at the safety focus and the passion for flying. I hope I have contributed to the fine reputation Skyline soaring has and I know you all will continue to do great work. If able, I will drop by for some flying when in the area.

If anyone is ever in the Denver region, please contact me at 571 259-3092 or [vista.quest@earthlink.net](mailto:vista.quest@earthlink.net)

Fly Safe and Check Six! —**John Barry**

**Our two Aviation Icom Handheld Radios** now have new battery packs and automatic chargers.

These packs are 1800mAh NiMH batteries rather than the old 750 mAh Ni-Cads and should last about twice as long when

fully charged.

There is also an automatic docking station charger for each radio. These chargers are designed specifically for these radios and will provide the quickest charge the battery can handle then reduce it to maintain the battery at a top charge.

The only special instructions that came with the chargers is that the radios be turned off when charging.

The old charger and timer are stored in the top drawer of the desk. —**Chris Groshel**

**George Ross** completed his Bronze Badge requirements by passing the written test June 15th. Congratulations!

Please welcome the new temp members....Matt Vosika from Middletown, Va. who has a PPL with some glider time and Simon Thornton of Warrenton who had been flying and towing gliders down in San Antonio. Let's all work on converting these assets to Permanent Members!

Please welcome new member, **Jim Stover**, a CAP pilot who checked out to fly, and took the CAP 1-26 for a sortie! on June 29. Welcome aboard, Jim!! (He's also a CFI(G) with – HE claims – zero time giving flight instruction in gliders. . . maybe we can change that..

**Rob Sallada** was also out all day on June 29, and finished up his Bronze badge to complete Club requirements for instructing, and we explored several ways he might work into doing weekday instruction!! This is truly great – Rob LIKES to instruct on weekdays, and is often well available, so look for more activity for students getting intensive instruction during the week. AND (I like this part), if we can find more weekday Towpilots, the Curmudgeon might actually get to fly his own glider!! —**Jim Kellett**

**Sound Familiar?**

**Rent hikes anger Californian pilots**—Pilots flying out of Oceanside Airport, near San Diego, say the local city council's shortsightedness will result in rent increases of as much as 50 percent this year. According to the North County Times, the city council meets Wednesday to consider raising rents on some old hangars from \$400 to as much as \$600 a month and to boost the monthly rate on recently built hangars 34 percent, from a range of \$510-\$740 to \$685-\$990. The airport offers a single 2,712-by-75-foot runway and single FBO. Tie-downs would go up a whopping 78 percent from \$75 to \$125 a month. Oceanside's director of public works, Peter Weiss, who termed the increases "pretty hefty," recently told the council that's the only way he can think of to cover a looming \$80,000 budget deficit at the airport. The local pilots association is complaining that pilots are being expected to pick up the tab for a lack of foresight on the part of the council. —**AVwebFlash 12.23a**

The lamb may lay down next to the lion, but the lamb won't get much sleep. —**Woody Allen**



**SKYLINES**

July 2006

Phil Jordan, Editor

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