NSM NEWS

SPRING 2022

Official Newsletter of the National Soaring Museum

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MARY FLASPHALER SET TO RETIRE

Our bookkeeper, Mary Flasphaler, has made the decision to retire at the end of May. She has been the heart of our museum for 43 years. We are truly going to miss her, but are happy for her well-deserved retirement.

Over her many years at the National Soaring Museum - Mary has done it all ! From flipping burgers and baking cookies to preparing for special events and cleaning up afterward.

She has survived several directors, various boards of trustees, 3 museum beagles and 1 museum poodle. The dogs get the most special treatment of all: regular biscuits and hot dog slices each morning. Needless to say, they love Mary! She has her own furry fan club here!

We are so grateful that Mary decided to work a little longer when I became director in 2016. Mary has the answers to almost any question about the museum, HHSC and Chemung County.

↑ *Snuggles with Teddy!*

↑ *Slice of cake for Bill Schweizer*

Rhapsody of the Heights - Jim Short

"…Abundant lift combined with ease of handling, lack of noise, and relatively few instruments will give pilots a feeling of complete release. Termed "Rhapsody of the Heights", this feeling tends to make pilots forget that a sailplane really is an aircraft and subject to the basic rules of flight. It is all too easy to suddenly find oneself out of lift, too low, and too far from the airport… ***Tony Doherty, Schweizer Soaring School Manual, c. 1967***

This passage from a soaring manual written a half century ago still applies, just as it did when it was written. On a beautiful but breezy mid-west September morning I eagerly brought my recently restored Schweizer SGU 1-19 out of its hangar to test the fall sunshine, rising temperatures and cloudless skies. It wasn't forecast to be a great soaring day, but it just seemed that some fall soaring might be possible. No one else wanted to launch, so maybe this was the time to see if this little yellow 1946 open cockpit utility could find some bubbles and maybe soar a little; if not, this would at least be an opportunity to practice landings.

After a smooth 3,000-foot tow, the glider and I slowly sank earthward until at about 2,000 feet above the ground there was a "twitch" in the atmosphere. The short span and slow speed of 1-19 made it feel like this "twitch" was a little mound of lift into which it might turn. The little mound of lift (actually a nascent thermal), along with the plane's pleasant handling and quick turning characteristics, eventually led to a climb of a hundred feet. The country air smelled like perfume in the open cockpit, and the feeling of actually climbing on this weak day was amazing. The pellet variometer showed a little lift as did the more modern instrument beside it. The view, unobstructed by plexiglass, was spellbinding and unlike that from any other enclosed cockpit airplane or glider.

A half hour or more led to more incursions into these little mounds of air. This was playful and enthralling! When the plane encountered the edge of these miniature thermals, I could just turn into them and explore them to find a little lift. It was still morning, so all this turning into the thermals only amounted to a gain of 200 to 300 feet, which had to be followed by a glide (at 45 mph!) upwind because … the glider was drifting downwind. Nevertheless, the altitude would have been enough to get back into the traffic pattern and make a decent landing.

The flight continued, a little up, a little down. And THEN, there was a 200-fpm thermal that got the little glider up to almost 2,000 feet above the airport. Now there was time to look around and note that we were drifting downwind. But there was still altitude to get back to the airport that was about a mile UPWIND of us. Things were still fine and eventually we got up to 3,000 feet above the ground, but we were now two miles downwind … we had to glide farther back upwind. *Rhapsody of the Heights* was setting in. As time went on, there were longer glides to get back toward the airport. Nevertheless, we were in areas of elongated lift, and it seemed we could glide for a long distance … at least it seemed that way. On a couple of these glides there was time to look out the front and sides and see the beautiful countryside from a vantage point that modern enclosed sailplanes do not offer. It was like sitting on a balcony, just enjoying the Sunday morning. I could look down at some of the ponds and see little ripples fleeting over the water. The cornfields showed a waviness that indicated that, indeed, we were heading directly upwind. There was rhapsody in the air. On this morning it seemed that I could actually gesture the Spirit of the Sky to come into the cockpit and sit down beside me, so we could both enjoy the view. Of course, being open-cockpit, one could wave his hands out of the cockpit, feel the temperature of the wing and maybe even shout for joy. It was a wonderful experience that only a Utility Glider can provide.

It still felt like we could easily glide back to the airport, and we had been up for an hour, but now there was a fatal attraction, a set of sand pits about a half-mile across the wind from our safe course. So, I headed out of the safe lift line and across an area of sink toward those gravel pits which “surely” would provide more lift. The 1-19 and I didn’t even get to the gravel pits and the sink did not abate either. So, now I had to think about how to approach the airport. The standard left-hand pattern was out of the question, so a right-hand pattern would surely work … No, so truncate the pattern … No, so go straight in on a base leg … No, so just aim for any spot on the airport that has grass. None of these options were going to work, and the wind and sink did not relent. Time and altitude quickly ran short, now was the time to check for obstacles, wires, crops, irrigation rigs. We kept on approaching, through little bits of better or worse air, until the 2-foot-tall corn was at our altitude. A little back stick and we softly landed. No damage. No more *Rhapsody of the Heights*; but it was a beautiful day, a bit too breezy, and I was 500 feet short of the airport.

The watchful members of the Wabash Valley Soaring Association soon noticed the bright yellow glider in the bright green field. Then, after a careful check of the field, a tractor was dispatched to tow the 1-19 up onto the airport and closest runway. The towplane came over and off we went again, for a short flight followed by a more standard landing back at the regular glider runway.

The moral of the story? Don’t get downwind of the airport in a Utility and don’t let “*Rhapsody of the Heights”* get to you, no matter how attractive it might seem.

A slight miscalculation at Lawrenceville in the Schweizer 1-19. Fortunately, the airport had a big tractor!

What's Up With The National Soaring Museum's Skylark 4? - Rob Buck

While the ship sold this past summer at the auction during IVSM, the Skylark 4 is still at the museum. Such, however, does not belittle the nostalgic want for that lovely glider … we will consider it a long distance relationship, itching to get better!

The glider is not without challenges, the most glaring is a lack of trailer, but we knew that. There are also some dings and a small wing hole, no instrument panel nor logbooks, and maybe a mouse nest on the back of the center section wing spar. Despite, we are betting on these as only flesh wounds.

Still in the Heritage Hangar

Some have asked why the Skylark 4? Its bigness brings doubt of its ilk and rumors that it is a dog to assemble. In 1963, aged 14, the Skylark 4 was new, as was I to soaring. I had come from model aircraft, appreciating that if it looks right, it flies right, and the Skylark 4 was a beauty. The lower profile fuselage, with its huge but somehow appealing fin and rudder, gave classic design a non-obnoxious hint to the future. Then there was that 18.2 meters of wing! Seeing Alex Aldott's pictures of Dick Johnson's Skylark 4, amongst Texas cumulus, the wing bright white, long and graceful, stopped me flat in my tracks! In those days,18 meters was a lot of wing.

Phillip Wills, the famous British glider pilot and magnificent author, once wrote that the Skylark 4 was “among the most lovely aircraft of all time.” In the summer of 1966, a kind man named Giles Gianelloni let me fly his nearly new Skylark 4. Wills' words were an understatement

Giles was also very clever, showing that with a few simple stands and straps, along with some half decent muscle, the “4” was quite easy to assemble. As brawn over brain teenagers, a friend and I assembled the Skylark 4 with just the two of us. Once the center section is on, the rest is duck soup … hence asking for help is not so rude.

While awaiting safe passage to the shop in Vermont, distant efforts and homework are being done. Trafford and Jean Doherty of the NSM are understanding, supportive and patient. And the Vintage Glider Club in England brings along Bruce Stevenson and David Weeks, so enthusiastic and offering! How fortunate is such comradery … we are a lucky bunch of folks!

Rob Buck flies the Gianelloni Skylark 4

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In Memoriam

Raul Blacksten

October 14,1946 - January 25, 2022

REMEMBERING RAUL - Jeff Byard & Marici Reid

Sadly, we must report the passing of one of The Vintage Sailplane Association's most enthusiastic and active members, Raul Blacksten, 1951-2022. Until the late 1980's, the VSA Western Division was no more than an unorganized group of enthusiasts scattered around the southwestern US, mostly in Southern California. In May 1988, Harry Irvine brought this group together and organized the first official VSA Western Regatta at Hemet, CA. It was at one of these very early Hemet Regattas where I (*Jeff*) met Raul. I believe that he had a Briegleb BG-12 at that meet.

Over the years Raul has attended almost every one of the Western Regattas with examples from his collection of vintage and classic gliders. Besides his BG-12, he had a TG-1 Cinema with Harry Irvine as a partner and a Bowlus-DuPont Albatross project in partnership with Steve Lowry and Stuart Baxter. He also had a Slingsby T-31 Tandem Tutor; and an LS-1 of his own. Among his extensive collection of soaring memorabilia, he had a Bowlus Road Chief trailer, countless books, photos, artworks, models, posters, pamphlets and who knows what all else.

Raul had also attended several of the IVSM gatherings at Elmira, NY. He was a speaker at many of the SSA Conventions around the country and traveled to Europe for a few of the Vintage Glider Club's rendezvous and rallies.

With a Master's Degree in History, Raul had a passion for recording and preserving soaring's past. One of his favorite projects was collecting oral histories by way of conducting interviews with many of soaring's pioneers and luminaries. He was always encouraging the rest of us to document our own soaring experiences. Some will heed his call…please, in memory of Raul, document what you know in writing or other format that will go on after you fly west!

While many recall Raul as having a gruff exterior, he was a master of the written word. Often very humorous and witty, he communicated naturally through the pen. His talents were mostly directed toward a number of soaring-related historical papers that he presented at various symposia and seminars; and his numerous historical soaring articles and columns in various periodicals. He was also the custodian of the Hawley Bowlus history via a personal friendship with Ruth Bowlus and Dick Benbough. His major life's work is arguably his unpublished manuscript about Hawley Bowlus. He also compiled a manuscript on the World War II training gliders.

The Vintage Sailplane Association was a big part of Raul's life. Serving as the VSA Archivist for 21 years fit right in with his history background. He was the VSA Archivist from the spring of 1991 to the fall of 2012, probably holding that position longer than anyone. Additionally, Raul was the Editor of VSA's newsletter Bungee Cord from the summer of 1998 to the summer of 2007.

Outside of soaring, we know Raul liked folk music and played a mean guitar and mandolin. He also dabbled in building his own ukuleles as well, and was active in a ukulele club. With his Scottish ancestry, he regularly frequented Scottish Highland festivals and games around Southern California as part of the Black Watch Highland Society. All of this was in addition to running his family business, Blacksten Industrial Electric Corporation.

I think that we can speak for all of Raul's "soaring" family in saying that he will be missed very much. Now all of us need to step up and take over as keepers of soaring history's flame. I think that I can hear Clio whispering.

REGION 3 SOARING CONTEST - July 17 - July 23, 2022 on Harris Hill

Sign up now on the SSA website

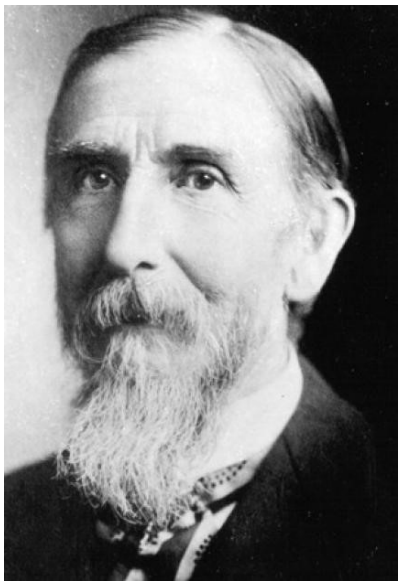
GLIDER RACING GAME by Milton Bradley

Among the many treasures which were part of a recent donation by our favorite artifact hunter, Tom Heitzman, we have this unique board game by Milton Bradley.

If you were born in the 1930s or 1940s, you will remember that board games were all the rage. You could count on receiving one or two for every Christmas and birthday.

Milton Bradley started his business in Springfield, MA, in 1860, and the business continued until 1984, when bought out by Hasbro.

With the Civil War dominating America in 1860, Bradley wanted to create games to counteract the dour national mood. He conceived a game that could provide both factual instruction and moral advice to young people. He developed the Checkered Game of Life, which included a top that spun to indicate the number of squares for a player to advance. Bradley sold 40,000 copies of the game in the first year. The Game of Life is still popular today. And who among us has not played a game of *Candy Land, Chutes and Ladders, Battleship, Barrel of Monkeys, Connect Four, Mouse Trap, Operation, Park & Shop, Rack-O or Twister?*



Milton Bradley 1836-1911

Directions for this *Glider Racing Game* are on the inside of the top cover. The game board is printed on the inside bottom of the box. It comes with a spinner dial and four wood, colored player pieces. The spinner dial was used in place of dice, due to dice having the negative connection with gambling. The box measures 15½" by 10 ¼" by 1" thick.

Bradley's ventures into the production of board games began with a large failure in his lithograph business. When he printed and sold an image of the little-known Republican presidential nominee Abraham Lincoln, Bradley initially met with great success. But a customer demanded his money back because the picture was not an accurate representation - Lincoln had decided to grow his distinctive beard after Bradley's print was published. Suddenly, the prints were worthless, and Bradley burned those remaining in his possession. Looking for a lucrative alternate project, Bradley found inspiration from an imported board game a friend gave him, concluding that he could produce and market a similar game to American consumers. In the winter of 1860, Bradley released *The Checkered Game of Life*.

The game proved an instant success. Bradley personally sold his first run of several hundred copies in a two-day visit to New York

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milton_Bradley

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Moe Acee flies over Hammondsport

Mother's Day Memory from Burt Compton

Mothers . . love them, hug them or call them while you still can. Here's Mom on Harris Hill near Elmira, NY, crewing for Dad at the 1948 National Soaring Contest with his modified Laister Kauffman LK-10A. Dad had rigged a "ham" radio receiver in the crew car for Mom. Since she did not have a FCC amateur ("ham") radio license for transmitting up to Dad, he could only transmit his position from aloft in his sailplane down to her. The system worked out fine and she was usually on site when he landed far away on a cross country soaring flight. Yes, the good old days of having a dedicated crew!

Davidina "Baby" Compton
on Harris Hill 1948

Traff Doherty remembers being there when Fritz Compton's LK was flipped over in a wind storm down on the airport during the 1963 Nationals. Fritz's was the only LK in the 1963 Nationals and was the last LK to compete in an National Contest. During the contest that year, the sailplanes were launched from the airport and from Harris Hill during National Contests because of the lack of space on Harris Hill.

United States Soaring Hall of Fame

Call for Nominations

Nominations for election to the United States Soaring Hall of Fame are currently being accepted. The deadline for the current year consideration is June 30, 2022

Any member of the Soaring Society of America may submit an individual's name for consideration as a Hall of Fame candidate. Each nomination must be accompanied by a detailed statement setting out the achievements or contributions of the nominee, justifying consideration for election to the Hall of Fame.

Please send nominating letters and support material to:

Trafford L-M. Doherty, Director
National Soaring Museum
51 Soaring Hill Dr.
Elmira, NY 14903-9204

Questions? Please call (607) 734-3128 e-mail: director@soaringmuseum.org

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SPRING 2022

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May 1 - Oct. 31
Open daily 10-5

Nov. 1 - Apr. 30
Open daily 10-4

Museum closed on the following holidays:

New Year's Day

Easter Sunday

Thanksgiving Day

Christmas Eve

Christmas Day

NSM Membership Form

Please check the membership category of your choice and return to:

The National Soaring Museum, 51 Soaring Hill Dr., Elmira, NY 14903

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My additional donation _____

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