



The 1-26 Association Newsletter

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The 1-26 Association Newsletter is the official quarterly publication of the 1-26 Association, a Division of the Soaring Society of America.
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The 1-26 Association and 1-26 Foundation were formed for the purpose of stimulating interest in, and promoting the sport of soaring in the Schweizer 1-26 sailplane; to establish standards for competition in the 1-26; to establish categories for record flights made in the 1-26; to disseminate information relating to the 1-26 and flights made in the 1-26, and to give recognition to its membership for accomplishments related to soaring in the 1-26.

September 2022

Please keep those write-ups and high resolution pictures coming. Huge thanks to all who do contribute to this publication with your stories, great 1-26 photos and 1-26 art. Just over a year ago at the 2021 Women Soaring Pilots Association seminar held in Springfield VT, **Alice Palmer** got back into flying a 1-26 again courtesy of **Bill Batesole** and his #003. Her story about how that inspired her and **Mark Palmer** to get a 1-26 of their own to fly in Colorado is included in this issue. Mark's own 1-26 story is also included. More 1-26 lore is restored with permission from **Jim Foreman's** son, Stephen, as we include Jim's wave flight story. With Jim's passing late last year, we no longer have ready access to these gems. If possible, we will bring back and publish great stories through the Newsletter. Another contributor who has great stories is **Dan Nezgoda**, whose love of soaring and the need to grow the sport is outlined here in his write up on 'Roots'. Looking forward to 2023, **Ridge Moreland** reminds us of the SSA Convention in Reno, NV from Feb 23-25. Note, too, his words to all 1-26 restorers that there are more 1-26 projects which, if taken on, certainly help keep our fleet alive and flying. Another thank you, too, for all the notes regarding our 1-26 Association Newsletter. Jo Shaw wrote me and remarked how things have changed from the days of typewriters and Mimeograph machines. Applause and thanks to you, Jo!

Paul Esser—Editor

Cover Image: 1-26E #628 tied out with Schweizer brethren - Wurtsboro NY

Center Image: Alice & Mark Palmer's gorgeous 1-26A , Sunbird - Elbert, CO

Back Cover: Lisa Sergent's photo of a restored 1-26E #580 - Morehead, KY

Picture below was sent in by Mike Lucas who flies #558 in Wasilla, Alaska. This image was taken by Cathy Lucas and features the Talkeetna Range just above the canopy. Thank you very much!



A SUNBIRD IN THE RAIN — by Alice Palmer

Published in the WSPA Newsletter August 2022

During our three year's long effort on the 2-33 restoration project, for some mysterious reason, **Mark** and I began to think about Schweizer 1-26's again. Only now we were toying with the idea of finding a ship in good mechanical condition that just needed a recovering job. Moreover, it had to be a round tail 1-26 (an early model), because they just look so wonderful! So we mulled that over for a long time and never made any decisions, mostly because we didn't have space large enough at home to do a project like that.

We have never lost our love of 1-26's. My dad, **John Goodlette**, bought a 1-26E, serial number 606, which we called "Go Fast," just as I was finishing up my Private Pilot Glider certificate. He knew it would be the perfect ship to build time in and also have fun. And it was fun. I flew it to 30,000 feet in the wave. I got all legs of my Silver Badge in it. Later Mark and partner **Larry Harvey** also had many memorable flights in it.

Fast forward 20 years, and Mark and I found we had to step away from soaring for a while for various reasons. It was time to sell our beloved "Go Fast." Our hearts never forgot the good times we had with that ship.

Last summer at the Women's Soaring Seminar in Vermont, **Bill Batesole** very generously gave us the opportunity to fly his 1-26, serial number 003. We had never flown a round tail before and it was love at first flight! (Anyone interested can read the article on flying this ship in the September, 2021 *Airworthy*.)

Over Christmas, Mark was reading Wings and Wheels ads and dreaming (a favorite pastime of his), and saw a 1-26A, serial number 182 (a round tail, of course) for sale by a private owner at the Texas Soaring Association (TSA). It had been restored in 2013 and has (the ad said), a good trailer. And it was offered for a reasonable price. He showed me the ad and said with a devious look in his eyes, "Do you want a round tail 1-26 for Christmas?"

We had been chatting with **Deb Ings** about our mutual love of 1-26's (she used to own one too), and with our longtime friend **Jon Stark**, who, as owner of countless unique aircraft present and past, is always up for a new adventure. How would they like to go in together as partners? Both immediately said, "Yes, I'm in!"

So, after a bunch of research, Mark and I ventured to TSA in Midlothian, Texas, in February during about the only week that didn't have heavy snow or ice storms in one place or the other. There, we met **Ralph Farra**, who showed us his lovely little bird. We spent the day looking it over. It was in good shape, but, as with most older aircraft, it had some issues that needed to be sorted out. Nothing terrible though, so with the partners' blessing, we loaded the ship onto the aircraft carrier of a trailer and headed north—with 20-knot crosswinds, trying to beat the next wave of bad weather.

The trip home, or at least the first 3 or 4 hours, is a story in itself. We're still amazed that we didn't damage anything since our seller had forgotten a few details about securing the ship on the trailer. We did a lot of improvising on the shoulders of busy highways during strong winds. By the time we got home, we were battle weary and just relieved to have the ship, still on its trailer, safely tucked away with the Phoebus in Jon's hangar.

It sat there for a number of weeks due to high winds and weather, but we finally got it assembled and put into its new home in Jon's southwest hangar bay. We enlisted the help and IA skills of **Mark Buist** to help us do the annual and solve a few of the issues. The most troublesome was the problem with the brake band adjustment that prevented the spoilers from opening more than 60°. No wonder Ralph had told us, "You need to slip that bird on every landing!"

But over a number of weeks, Mark Buist and the partners got that problem solved, the annual done, oxygen system installed, battery relocated, aileron pushrods cleaned, new tire and tube installed, and

A SUNBIRD IN THE RAIN

various other things done. Thank you, Mark!! We still have work to do, but finally it was time to fly our little bird. We have dubbed it **Sunbird** because of its sunny yellow-orange color.

So, on Saturday, June 18, after the runway opened, three of the partners (Alice, Deb, and Mark) were able to have short flights in less-than-ideal weather. Just after Mark landed, the heavens opened up and the Sunbird and its flyers got drenched. Jon didn't get

a flight but will be flying it soon. After our first day, wet, but happy, we all look forward to more fun flights. FUN is the main reason to own a 1-26!

We had long planned to send Ralph pictures of the Sunbird after its first flights in its new home. Sadly, we learned that Ralph passed away a few weeks ago. We hope he knows how much we will love and care for his little bird. Thank you, Ralph. We are so glad we crossed paths.



FLYING THE RACETRACK IN A 1-26 — Mark Palmer (Airworthy BFSS)

Flying from Kelly Airpark at the Black Forest Soaring Society, I hadn't had too many flying opportunities this summer. Actually, only a couple in our new acquisition, 1-26A serial number 182, now affectionately known as "Sunbird." Sunday, July 17th looked like a good day to get some seat time in and stretch a little bit. The forecast looked good for a run around our Proving Grounds Racetrack, about a 31-mile adventure.

I launched about 11:30 behind **Clay Thomas** in the Pawnee. It was already cooking. With the light weight of the 1-26, it was a quick climb, and I was off tow just west of the field at 9900 feet. I banked hard right into a great thermal that took me all the way to 13,500. I then turned and broke for the first turnpoint, Highway 83 and Lake Gulch Road.

Everything in a 1-26, especially one as light as Sunbird, is exaggerated. The lift is stronger, the sink is heavier, and the turbulence feels wilder. The terrain between Kelly and Lake Gulch is always a bit of a sink hole. In the 1-26, it was even more so. Things are simpler too—the Terra radio is inop, so we rely on a handheld. The vario is a Borgelt that makes noise but isn't very helpful. Today I was flying with a Samsung tablet running XCSOAR, but frankly, in a 1-26 a computer is nearly useless. The old 1-26 adage is, "No matter the altitude, you're always five minutes from landing." With that kind of performance, one gets good at keeping landing fields in sight.

I made a beeline for the turnpoint, swung around it and started to head toward the second one: the greenhouses at Dutch Gardens. The sink started to pick up and I really wasn't sure if I could make it. The course between the two points took me down a broad, shallow valley that almost never has lift. I bent the course a bit east

and found another good thermal, around Ambrosich, that took me up to 14,100. Then it was a comfortable straight shot to Dutch Gardens. I could see a cloud forming just east of there, so I rounded the turnpoint and headed right for it. The lift under that cloud got me back up to 14,300. Then it was a direct line to Elbert High School.

Once there I was still at enough of a comfortable altitude to make the run to D Bar D. Right at the turnpoint I found another thermal and, feeling a bit cocky, only climbed to 11,800. Heading to the finish at Highway 83 and Lake Gulch, I immediately hit heavy sink and had to stop halfway there to top off and make the final run to finish the course.

The day was still early, so I thought I'd try the Racetrack again. This time it was sink, sink, sink; so, I moved back toward Kelly. I got down to 8800 feet and made a save over the rocks just west of the field, but it took me a long time to climb back. So, I abandoned the idea of another run and headed out southwest, then north, before coming back to land at Kelly.

So, my first crack at our Racetrack in Sunbird netted me a whopping 40.5 knots over a 31.5 statute mile course with a handicapped speed of 66.9 knots. No records or anything, but it was a satisfying flight. The 1-26 may not be a "glass slipper," but it's perfect for some enjoyable, fun Sunday flying!



President's Column

Ridge Moreland

Returning to one of my favorite targets, 1-26s sitting idled or neglected for decades, I ask again for our members to help enable airframes in those situations to be sold to active 1-26ers who will restore them and/or fly them. The very weathered sample shown in the 1st photo has already been "saved" from certain death in FL. More locally back here at Moriarty, a 1-26 and trailer left totally dormant for 20 years are now for sale and would make a superb winter project to refurbish. Contact me directly about that one. In the near term there *may* be a superb condition 1-26C (and trailer) for sale, featuring the incredible fact that the airframe has only **61 total flight hours** on it, and has been stored securely inside during its lifetime. I've personally seen the glider (2nd photo), and can verify all. Repeating, it *may* be for sale soon, when the owner decides yea or nay on selling.

Please plan for joining us at the next 1-26 Championships at **Caesar Creek Soaring** in just eight (8!) months. Well ahead of that event will be the 2023 SSA Convention in February at Reno, NV. Come volunteer at our Association booth. The 1-26 on co-display will dazzle your eyes.

1-26 Association **scholarships (\$1000 each)** are still available via application, with details on our website.

Mystery photo is of what appears to be the first 1-26 with retractable gear (X2). Recently restored, this just flew for the first time here in early September. Many, many mods were made to the overall airframe. We are hoping for more details from the owner/builder so we can provide more history (with photos) for the newsletter.

-Ridge



#628 at Wurtsboro Airpark

Paul Esser — Editor

Well, when your own 1-26 is not ready to fly and you live roughly between New York City and Albany, where can you rent a 1-26? I found one at Wurtsboro Airpark in Wurtsboro, NY. It's an older airport that has been around since before WWII, and gliders have operated there for about as long as that. Today, many of the gliders based there are Schweizer models. A venerable 2-33 trainer is still used for instruction and rides. Single place gliders such as the 1-26, 1-34, 1-35, and 1-36 can also be found there in the hands of various owners and all flying. Modern glass sailplanes are also plentiful, and the gliders all make use of the ridge right next to the airport when conditions are right.

The 1-26E owned by Wurtsboro Airpark was just sitting in the hangar and looked as if it was ready to go when I found it. I was all over it for a thorough preflight and the airport manager (and tow pilot extraordinaire), Dan Yates, helped me get it staged for a launch. He has towed me a half dozen times so far this season, and is a true wealth of knowledge regarding soaring and all things aviation.

The Wurtsboro ridge has not been my source of lift for the most part so far, but I did try it once with a back seat local and commercial expert named John Bloomfield. John showed me how the ridge worked on a 10 mile out and return on the ridge in late March. We caught a few thermals between the snow squalls and had a great flight in their Grob Twin.

My #628 1-26 flights were enlightening as I learned the area. I have a lot of respect for the 1-26's thermal capability, and I know to stay within glide range of the nearest airport as I build my hours. Days where the lift got me to between six and eight thousand feet are great for extending my personal flying parameters. Come on out and get a tow from this fine operation and look for the ridge days to come at Wurtsboro Airpark!







The 47-Minute Diamond by Jim Foreman (Reprinted with permission)

Editor received these notes by Jim's son, Stephen:

"I do not know for certain that the diamond altitude was in a 1-26, but I think it is very likely that it was. He had not been soaring that long and all his single seat experience to that time had been in a 1-26. He went to the old Black Forest Airport for the wave camp and used one of their ships. It is more likely that he flew what he was familiar with rather than getting checked out in their 1-34. I also recall him mentioning that he would like to complete his diamond badge in a 1-26, which indicates the altitude was in one."

In soaring or gliding, as it is called in many places, there are badges for achievement of certain levels of expertise. For many years there was only the A Badge for soloing a glider, the B Badge for a bit more training and the C Badge for those able to remain aloft for an hour.

As pilots become more proficient and the gliders more able to remain aloft longer, there was an even higher level in which a wreath was placed around the C badge and it became the Silver C. To acquire this coveted badge required more advanced levels of skill; including staying aloft for five hours, gaining a kilometer of altitude and flying to and landing at some point 50 kilometers away.

As in all sports, they keep raising the bar and soaring was no exception. The next level above the Silver C became the Gold Badge. Finally, for the most skilled pilots who could fly higher and further, they added three diamonds which could be placed on the Gold Badge. Each required its own level of performance. One was for flying to a designated landing point 300 kilometers away, another for flying the unheard of distance of 500 kilometers but the most difficult of all was the altitude diamond. This required that a pilot gain five kilometers or 16,404 feet of altitude in a glider. Until a WW-II fighter pilot discovered a phenomenon called the Standing Lee Wave caused by winds blowing over a mountain, about the only way to achieve this award was to fly up through a building thunderstorm. To gain just one diamond usually required vast skills, great personal fortitude, years of trying and in most cases, a lot of luck. When I started flying gliders in 1969, only a scant handful of people in the world held all three diamonds.

Even though I'd been flying for more than 25 years and had several hundred hours of flying time, I had never even sat in a glider much less flown one until I came across one

at a local airport. I took four or five flights with their instructor and was sent off by myself to practice the maneuvers I would have to do in order to become a licensed glider pilot. All my flights consisted of being towed aloft, gliding around for a bit and landing. Finally the day came for me to ride with the FAA inspector who asked me a few questions out of a book, rode two flights with me and added "Glider" to my license. There just had to be more to it than that.

I found a dog-eared copy of Soaring Magazine at the airport and read of a place with the magical name of Black Forest Gliderport in Colorado. I just had to go there if for no other reason than to see what real glider pilots looked like.

I arrived one crisp January day and announced that I had come to fly gliders. To my surprise, they said that they were having a wave camp and all people and equipment was dedicated to that. However, if I could stay around for a while, they would try to work me in. That sounded like a great idea and they checked me into the bunk room which I shared with half a dozen people who were there for the camp. I was in hog heaven; rubbing shoulders with real glider pilots at a place where they had hangars full of gliders. In fact, the only airplanes on the field were the tow planes.

The radio was patched into the PA system and I kept hearing voices muffled by oxygen masks announcing things like, "going through twenty-four at five knots." It finally dawned on me that they were climbing through 24,000 feet and going up at around 500 feet per minute. Unbelievable!

After the gliders were all put away and the office closed, they had a meeting in the club house where they announced the achievements for the day and assigned ships to pilots for the next day. There had been three gold and two diamond altitudes flown that day. Just before we left for town to have a pizza party in celebration, a guy who looked about the age of my kids told me to come by his office the next morning. His name was Dick Sayer and he was the chief instructor.

I figured that he would be impressed with my flying hours and all the different aircraft I had flown but his remark was, "This is it?" as he looked at my dozen or so flights in a glider. Then he pointed out a small single place sailplane tied down on the ramp and told me to get in it, belt

The 47-Minute Diamond (continued)

myself in and close the canopy. "Get used to how it looks from the inside and work all the controls. There's a pilot's handbook in the pocket on the side. Study it and everything you see in the ship. Come see me this afternoon and be able to answer any question I might ask." When I went by, all he said was to be at the meeting. After the meeting, he told me to see him the next morning for an oxygen checkout, find insulated clothing to fit me and that we would do an orientation flight if the wave was running.

The Schweizer 2-32 was the biggest glider I'd ever seen, seemed more like getting into a military airplane than a glider. It also flew like one, nothing like the trainer that I was accustomed to flying. We were first off on tow and shortly after the towplane turned toward Pikes Peak, the air began to get rougher and holding position on tow more difficult. Dick pattered away, pointing out landmarks and telling me the minimum altitudes at certain places in order to get back. I heard him call on the radio that we were finding light rotor and he could see a lennie forming so it looked like a good day.

Light Rotor! I'd hate to think what heavy rotor might be, and what's a lennie. I learned later that he was talking about a thin, lens shaped cloud called a lenticular. They usually mark the location of wave action. Suddenly, as we were about level with the top of Pikes Peak, the air turned smooth and the variometer swung upward showing 600 feet a minute climb. "OK, this is the wave, pull the release," Dick told me. "First thing after establishing your position is to notch the barograph. Lower the nose, open the dive brakes and dive off at least 200 feet of altitude so the barograph trace will indicate that you were off tow and establish a low point for the flight."

After about an hour in the wave, during which he pointed out how to identify landmarks and hold my position over the ground, we had climbed to about 25,000 feet where the lift dropped to less than 200 feet per minute. It was the most amazing flight I'd ever had. We turned back toward the gliderport and Dick pointed out a finger of trees sticking out of the forest as if beckoning us home. "It points at the north end of the runway," he told me. "From this altitude you can see into Kansas and it would be easy to fly right past the field."

As we wasted altitude on the way back, he had me do a few stalls and then a six turn spin. "You fly pretty well for such a low time pilot." Then he told me that the 2-32 was

fully aerobatic and asked if I would like to do a loop.

"Entry speed is 140 and keep pulling to tighten the loop because all you have working for you is inertia." He demonstrated the first one and then let me do a couple; they were fun. At the evening meeting I was assigned a ship and I was first on the takeoff list. Some time later I realized that they were using me as the guinea pig to see if the wave was working before they sent the regular camp members up.

I was sitting on the takeoff runway early the next morning, dressed in the down from a hundred geese, oxygen mask on my face and the regulator clacking away each time I took a breath. An instrument called a barograph was ticking on its mount behind my head. It would record my flight on a piece of smoked aluminum foil.

Dick helped me close the canopy, connected the towrope, wished me a good flight and lifted the wing for takeoff. Slack came out of the towrope, I waggled the rudder and was rolling down the runway. As we turned toward the mountain, I could see a strange wall of dust rising from the ground near the Air Force Academy. It didn't look like the usual cloud of dust blown up by the wind but more like a dirty, brown wall. Then we slammed into unbelievable rotor. I could see the controls on the towplane going lock to lock as he fought the churning air and I thrashed about trying to stay in position behind him. One second my head would hit the top of the canopy and the next I would be slammed into the seat. As I was trying to pull the belts tighter, the emergency oxygen bottle that had been stuffed in between my left leg and the side of the ship came flying out and I caught it like a shortstop as it flailed around inside the cockpit.

Then, as suddenly as the rotor had begun, the towplane shot upward and the air went creamy smooth. I pulled back on the stick to follow the towplane and shot right past him. I felt the nose of the glider being pulled downward so I grabbed for the release knob and pulled. There was no rewarding sound of the rope releasing and I found myself looking straight down the rope at the towplane pointed toward the ground. Then I realized that in my excitement, I was tugging on the spoiler handle instead of the release knob. The rope shot away with a loud twang.

"Now that was interesting," came the calm voice of Dave Johnson, the tow pilot. "You are in the wave and don't forget to notch the barograph."

The 47-Minute Diamond (Cont.)

"Release at ten-eight in strong wave two miles east of the interstate. The rotor is pretty severe, let's not put anyone else up here unless they know what they are doing." he said. I heard the gliderport answered him. "Is he doing OK?"

I glanced at the variometer and found it pegged at the top of the 1000 feet per minute scale. The altimeter was rotating toward 13,000 feet. Notch the barograph! I had forgotten to do that! Just then I was slammed up and then down like a dog shaking a rabbit. I had drifted back into that awful rotor. I had to get back forward into the wave. I pushed the nose down to pick up speed. If the wind was blowing at 60 and I was flying at 60, that meant I was standing still over the ground. I had to move forward so I pushed the nose down some more.

The variometer swung to full down and the altimeter began to spin backward as I fought the pounding wave. The airspeed crept to 80 mph, then 85 but the beating continued. If I wasn't out of the rotor by the time I reached 10,500 feet, I would turn tail and race for the gliderport. Then as suddenly as it had happened before, I was in wave again and I felt the upward acceleration. I raised the nose to slow down but certainly wasn't going to be pushed back into the rotor. The variometer was pegged up and the altimeter spinning back toward 12,000 feet.

I heard the gliderport call a ship number a couple times but didn't realize that they were calling me until they said, "Jim, how are you doing?"

I pressed the microphone button and gave them a status report. A few seconds later the tow pilot called to report that I was in wave and climbing when he last saw me. Obviously my radio wasn't working, at least not the transmitter. During the two trips into the rotor, the microphone cord had become unplugged.

Going through 18,000 feet still in pegged out lift, I spotted something tumbling through the air toward me. I turned to avoid it and watched a green plastic garbage can as it spun by. It must have been sucked up from someplace in the Air Force Academy.

At 24,000 the variometer was still pegged and frost was forming on the inside of the canopy. I was looking down at snow capped Pikes Peak and beneath me, streaks of dust being blown across the ground.

Finally at 28,000 feet the variometer dropped off the peg but I was still climbing at 800 feet per minute.

Then I started trying to remember my release point and tried to calculate how high they said I had to climb for a diamond altitude. Was it 14,400? No, that was the height of Pikes Peak.

Dick had said something about 31,000 feet if I stayed even with the top of the mountain, or was it 32,000, or was that how high the wave window was open?

I scratched the frost off the instruments with a gloved finger and found I still had 600 feet a minute climb and the altimeter stood at 32,000 feet. Frost covered everything except for about a six inch spot where the air vent was blowing frigid air on the inside of the canopy. This was bound to be high enough so I swung the nose to the east and opened the dive brakes.

At 14,000 feet the trees of Black Forest were visible through the clear spot and as I swung the nose back and forth looking for the telltale finger that pointed to the gliderport. I couldn't find it! Then I made a turn all the way around and could see that I had flown past the field. I shoved the nose down and started making slow progress against the wind back toward it. At 10,000 feet I was over the field and the frost had begun to evaporate so I removed the oxygen mask to get a breath of fresh air. "The radio crackled, "Winds at Black Forest are west at 25 gusting 35. Evidently Dick had spotted me because I heard him add, "Don't get downwind of the field, Jim, or you likely won't make it back."

I picked out my touchdown point, flew a short pattern and landed. Dick's voice came over the radio, "Keep the canopy shut, dive brakes open and stick forward. We will be right out to get you." Dirt, trash and weeds blew by as the Jeep pulled in front of me and a rope was attached. One person on each wingtip walked the ship to the tiedowns where it was secured before I opened the canopy.

I removed the ticking barograph from its mount and walked into the office. No one asked how my flight went or how high I had gotten. I was crushed. They seemed to be more concerned as to how long the winds would keep them shut down. I could stand it no longer so I blurted out, "I got to 32,000."

The 47-Minute Diamond (cont.)

Everyone turned to look at me in disbelief. Dick said, "You weren't gone long enough. I figured you fell out and came back." Then he wiped the sweat off the glass of the barograph to see the trace but it was still clouded on the inside, so he clipped the seal. He rotated the smoked drum, "You have a trace and it looks pretty high.

"No one, especially me, breathed as he carefully removed the foil and taped it to a piece of plywood used to hold it during the calibration process. He carefully checked various points on the trace with calipers and then verified them against his master chart. Finally he announced, "Low Point, ten six, high point, thirty-one eight, altitude gain, twenty-one two. Flight time, 47 minutes. He certainly has his diamond!"

"Does he have a notch?" someone asked.

"Does he ever," replied Dick. "About two thousand feet of notch. I also calibrated climb rates of over 3000 feet per minute in places."

I had an altitude diamond but nothing to put it on except a Rotary Club pin. I still hadn't even made a one-hour solo flight to earn a C Badge. I did go on to earn my other two diamonds but certainly neither was as easy or fast.

I had stumbled into one of those very rare situations in which a wave forms off the escarpment of the front range, rips 80 mph winds through the Air Force Academy then boils up in a vertical column of air with speeds as high as 40 mph. This wave condition seldom lasts for more than an hour at most. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time. I worked at Black Forest for about seven years after I retired but saw this condition only one time. While living just north of the gliderport, I did fly the wave more than a hundred times.

With a total flight time from takeoff to landing of 47 minutes, it was the fastest diamond ever recorded. It was also the 200th earned at Black Forest where more than 500 were awarded before it closed due to urban encroachment and political pressure in 1985. No wonder it was known as the Diamond Mine.

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'Roots'

By Dan Nezgoda #225 (Two Bits)

There are times when just a few words written on paper can greatly influence both present and future generations. Author Alex Haley penned a groundbreaking piece of literature back in 1976 called Roots. It was the result of his multi-year quest to discover and understand his genealogical roots. But beyond discovering who his relatives were, he was searching for an understanding of the influences that had shaped who he was and, more profoundly, where he was going. While soaring and great works of literature, like Roots, might have little in common, Haley's quest brought to mind a quest I have been on for the past year. Soaring has made leaps and bounds from the earlier era of Paul Bickle, Al Parker, Carl Herold, A J Smith, Wally Scott and Karl Striedieck. These pilgrims labored and competed to stretch the potential of cross-country soaring performance. They were mastering the hitherto untested principles of speed ring theory, dolphin flight and soaring weather prediction. They explored the incredible cross-country potential of dry lines, reached formerly insurmountable heights by harnessing the laminar lift of mountain waves and flew at seemingly incredible speeds for hundreds of miles down Appalachian ridges. These guys were and are pioneers in the world of soaring. But, in many ways, they were mostly ordinary or regular guys. They were retired air force pilots, movie theater operators, working engineers, schoolteachers etc. They were not millionaires. They were not specialists in aerodynamics or in meteorology or in making money. They did, however, have a unique trait in common. They were all very competitive - competitive with the elements and competitive with their fellow fliers. In addition, they had incredible ingenuity, determination, and resourcefulness. Another common benefit was that they mostly had jobs that gave them gobs of free time to pursue their soaring dreams.

Today, most people involved in the sport would know that soaring has progressed immensely ever since the application of fiberglass/carbon fiber technology to sailplane design. These versatile new materials allowed the full realization of laminar airfoil potential. Soaring aficionados may not know that, though the fiberglass birds were astonishing to many, a few of the pioneers were out-flying the new technology with sailplanes some considered antiquated designs. In regional and national competitions, Ka6's were out flying Libelle's. Sisu's and HP's were out flying Cirrus's. How could this be? Simply put, the guys flying the "outdated" designs were better soaring pilots. They were guys who were not limited by Lift/Drag data. These guys had learned to master aircraft performance with superior pilot performance. Did each one

'Roots' (Continued)

of them long for the brightest and best sailplane available? You bet. Many times they just couldn't get their hands on one or couldn't afford one. So they flew with what they had. Some built their own and worked to improve on their own designs (Dick Schreder's *modus operandi*). These are our own American soaring "roots." These pilots formed our heritage and our lineage. But, as with Alex Haley, many of us soaring folks have forgotten or never knew our roots. We have unwittingly joined a new era mostly devoid of a real connection with our past.

Because of new digital tools and technology, the world we inhabit today is incredible, exciting and innovative, just as anything associated with the "future" should be. As the old timers felt blessed to fly a ship that gave them a 35/1 glide ratio, we can now pilot ships that surpass 50/1. We have electronic innovations which navigate, calculate and "infomate" every aspect of a cross country competition. A Gold Distance, a 300km flight, is now, for many pilots, just a two-and-a-half-hour afternoon trot around the country. If our pioneers were still around (and some are), they would be flying the wings off of these new creations. But I think our rush forward to ever increased performance has let some things get lost. One important thing being lost is accessibility. What I mean by that is in the rush for more performance, we enter a realm where it takes an almost overwhelming amount of money or debt to be competitive. Very few of us can dedicate \$150,000 to a part time hobby. But that is what it takes to be even partially competitive today. The shrinking pool of nationally ranked soaring pilots is a testament to this fact. Competition soaring pilots have always been a small percentage of all pilots. The cost for crossing the performance chasm between a new model, or even a 10-year-old model, is an almost insurmountable leap. While this has not always been the case, now it is growing wider each year.

What about "sport class" competition? Sport class was meant to be a way to "even the playing field." In an earlier day the handicapped 1-26 could compete realistically with a Ka6 or a Phoebe. Today we have high-performance ships flying as sport class. We have ASW-20's and 24's flying alongside 1-26's in sport class tasks. Practically speaking, how can a contest manager prepare a task selection that puts 1-26's flying with ASW-20's? Many times the task must be set short to accommodate the low performance bird (due to weak conditions) and the ASW-20 driver ends up having a relatively low stress "walk in the park". The 1-26 guy may well make it home, but it will take him longer and he has worked way harder with a more stressful flight. The Herold

handicap point system may score the contest fairly, with the good 1-26 flight scoring more than a mediocre ASW-20 flight. Over time, though, the 1-26 guy will feel the negative effects of this heavier mental load and the extra hours in the cockpit. At the end of a sport class contest, it is rare to see the low performance ships at the top of the scorer's sheet, even if piloted by a superb and experienced driver. This "accessibility" detriment will never go away. To mitigate the detriment, at least at the sport class level, the tasks can be set according to performance. Create one task for those gliders with under 30/1, a second longer task for ships 31 to 36 L/D and the longest for all ships over 36/1 while still applying the same handicap scoring system.

Another aspect of soaring now being lost, in my experience, is airmanship. What is airmanship from a soaring perspective? Airmanship is an ability to fly efficiently and safely intuitively. By intuitive, I mean flying without a rigid dependence upon technology. Those pioneers I mentioned before accomplished remarkable cross-country flights not only in lower performance ships (Al Parker 300km in a 2-22) but also with minimal instrumentation. They had a paper sectional map and a pellet or early mechanical variometer. They "felt" the thermals and depended upon the immediate jump in an airspeed indicator to tell them they were in lift; they timed their own climbs to determine the average and they correlated chart with terrain to know where they were. While the high-performance high-tech ship can cruise over miles and miles waiting to find just the right thermal to take him on the next leg of his journey, the little guy is always one thermal away from landing out. He must read the weather, the sky, the ground, and plan much more precisely and accurately than the fellow who can cruise 40 miles with 6,000 ft agl. The low performance sailor must develop intuitive soaring skills in a way the high-performance flier never ever needs. These skills are woefully lacking in the soaring of today. That's not because of us being any less bright than our soaring predecessors. It is more because many of us have never had to really learn them. I believe that the soaring pilot who learns to fly intuitively first, will be a more efficient flyer when he then adds the electronics or the higher performance to the mix.

Still one more overlooked loss that needs more attention is the loss of adventure. Yes, I do mean adventure. With performance at our beck and call, much of the adventure of soaring has been removed from the equation. Modern

'Roots' (Continued)

performance standards make for a very enjoyable afternoon flying along a 100-mile task. But I know from experience that setting off to attempt gold distance in a low performance glider is a REAL adventure, even on a booming day! In addition to the adventure of the flight itself, there is the possibility and often the certainty of landing out. In today's world there are not that many land outs. I recall days where in regional and national contests, the tasking was such that most of the fleet landed out, and the efficiency of the crew was a very large part of the success or failure of the competitor. Nowadays it is as if folks are ashamed of landing out. But in the "earlier days" the out landing was a sign that the pilot had pushed himself and his ship to the edges of their abilities. In addition, because of those more frequent land outs, guys got good at it. Landing their glider in a tea-cup sized field was not a big deal. They developed that skill. Those skills were critical to setting distance goals as they had to take chances and wring out every mile of performance they could get. Nowadays folks with new ships explain how big a "big deal" it was that they couldn't get back to the home glider port and that they had to make an "emergency" landing in a farmer's field. Perhaps the thought of damaging that \$100,000 bank owned liability puts the fear into their bones. But adventure entered into the out landing aspect as well. Most more memorable adventures I have had soaring involved the landing out portion of the flight. I recall the drunken Alabama retired A&P mechanic we met because we ended up having to rescue him after he crashed his golf cart into a culvert. How about that 3 hour wait we had while trying to load my ship onto the trailer while the Christmas parade was going on? More unforgettable was the guy who showed me pictures of the 1,000 lb. alligator his daughter had shot out of the swamp right next to one of the fields I was looking at as a landing spot. My list is long. While not asked for, or even initially desired, I wouldn't trade my adventures for anything. They are the spice that makes soaring cross country so flavorful. Much of the soaring world seems to be barreling along on the freeway of the future. I chose the off ramp and have decided to take a U turn back into soaring of the past. Not that long ago I acquired the actual Schweizer 1-26A which I soloed in as a 14-year-old who didn't even have a driver's license. In the face of all those descriptions of the inadvertent consequences of "progress", I have found a course which engages every fiber of my sense of competition. 1-26 fliers have formed a wonderfully friendly, helpful, but fiercely competitive association of likeminded individuals. They have a hugely informative and active web site. They hold local contests and

a national championship each year. These guys will happily share methods of flying, sealing, equipping, and grooming these humble machines. At the same time, they will run away from you in a heartbeat when in competition. But then they'll happily tell you how they did it that same evening over a beer. This is a camaraderie that is rarely found in any competitive sport. This flying of the original 'One Design' glider also meant it had its own set of regional records and awards which allow folks of modest soaring means to set solo goals for themselves even when not able to attend organized contests. These goals are not typically easy. It takes a whole lot of soaring skill to get a 1-26 to complete a modest 100 mile out and return task, especially when fighting even modest levels of wind (unless you're lucky enough to have ridges to run). Flying in this one class of competition is a true measure of the man, not just the machine. Another attraction is that regional records are eminently reachable without having to fly many hundreds of miles from home. This form of competition, whether it be against other 1-26 drivers or solo against the elements, is ACCESSIBLE for the price of an older, used car. My own 1-26 is one of the nicest around with its trailer that is set up for ultra-easy retrieves. I have under \$10,000 invested!

The adventure of flying the 1-26 compares well to my numerous years of piloting much higher performing ships over much longer distances. Beginning with my quest to repeat all my soaring badges in a 1-26 and then to pursue regional 1-26 records in a place with soaring conditions far removed from my old Minden stomping grounds, I have been having an incredible, small money, small hassle adventure! My advice about returning to our soaring roots might not be well received by many who have the means and motivation to fly top of the line machines. I also know many got into soaring as a sport because of a love of technology. Many newly initiated to the world of soaring have only been exposed to the "modern", with no understanding of the "past". They may not yet feel comfortable entering into the finer aspects of soaring, which is cross country and competition. They solo and get their private ticket. They may fly for a year or so over the home field, convinced that going anywhere outside the limits of the glider port can't be done without a "modern" ship, or at least a piece of older glass. Some get bored of this, and we never see them anymore. We must address this misunderstanding to retain more pilots and grow our sport. My hope is that I can encourage those who miss the adventure, skill, and thrill that soaring gave you in the past. Please take a look back and join us once again while we experience all those early thrills of soaring.

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