

The 1-26 Association Newsletter

Spring – Summer 2025





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.

Summer 2025

As some readers will have noticed, we are not getting as many issues out in 2024-2025. With our apologies and thanks to all who send stories and pictures, we still appeal for more contributions and suggestions. We will be reprinting some older articles from the past; still relevant and worth comparing to 1-26 pilots and gliders today. Restoration stories, record flights, contest yarns and good old soaring wisdom are all worth reading more about.

The recent 1-26 Championships in Virginia ended up being a day short of a valid contest as we were weathered out. But it is worth noting that the spirit and competition were as great as ever. This year's Merlin contest had a guest photographer, Ben Johnson, whom we sincerely thank for his gorgeous contest photos used throughout this issue. We also extend a 1-26 Association thank you to Merlin Soaring Association for hosting us all so graciously. Kristin Farry was instrumental in getting the 1-26 Association connected with Merlin Soaring. We thank her, Paul Agnew, Curt Lewis and so many others for all their help in contest prep and coordination with the team at Merlin to make this contest work. We all are already looking forward to May of 2026 to compete in our 1-26's at Windy City Soaring, Hinckley, Illinois.

Paul Esser—Editor

Cover: Jimbob Slocum in 1-26D #401 at Merlin Aerodrome May 2025

Center: Pierre-Alban Grellet-Aumont 1-26E #686 at Merlin May 2025

Back Cover: Mahlon Hull's 1-26D #424—New Silver Badge steed, WA

Below: A Mexican Registered 1-26 - Tell the editor its story today!



H. Marshall Claybourn Memorial Trophy for 2024

The H. Marshall Claybourn Memorial Trophy for 2024 is awarded to the Schweizer 1-26 pilot who completes the longest straight out flight of the year.

There were twenty Sweepstakes flights of over one hundred miles in 2024, but only five of those were straight outs.

You can now add 2024 to Jim Neff's tally of Claybourn wins. His flight of 233.11 miles from Tehachapi, CA to Mina, NV topped 2nd place Garry Dickson's 137.42 miler from Inyokern, Ca to Bishop, Ca. In third place on the podium, Dale Briscoe, a Central Division Silver pilot (go Dale!), headed south out of Hobbs NM and landed 130.49 miles later near Ft Stockton, TX.

Jim Neff flying #222 in Hamilton, Texas

This is Jim's fourth win in the last seven years, so that makes him an odds on favorite to grab 2025 as well. I can hardly wait to see what he comes up with. Good luck to all of you when trying those straight out flights this year. They are worth the effort. Try one, you'll like it.

Congratulations
Jim, Great flight.

**Ron Schwartz -
1-26 Association
Records Keeper**



Blow Wind, Blow - Jim Hard in #271

Following the cold frontal passage of the previous evening, the wind kept waking me up as it whistled through the eaves all night. By 6:00 AM on Thursday morning, April 25, the same wind was still gusting to 44 mph and my plans to fly cross country that day were set aside momentarily. At 7:00am the gusts were down to 38 mph. By 8:00am, the time scheduled to call the day's crew chief, Paul Esser, and the tow pilot, Chuck Matson, the weather radio was reporting 32 mph. Shortly afterwards, with the barometer rising rapidly and a continued drop in wind velocity, I called and made plans to meet Paul and Chuck at Benson's Airport in White Bear Lake,

a little above 4000 MSL. As soon as Paul had retrieved my weak link and helped put the towplane away, I radioed him to drive to Hudson, WI. I continued on an easterly course and sized up the wind direction and velocity, which dictated more that we should head for Green Bay instead of Rockford. I was able to communicate this significant change in plan to Paul and later reflected on the consequences of him driving truck and trailer to Rockford had he not known I was flying to Green Bay.

Once Paul was on board regarding the task direction, I was able to focus more on my flying. Off we went with the fastest 1-26 speed I had ever made in the

Midwest. Flying a bit south of New Richmond and heading east while roughly following Wisconsin 64, the landmarks went by at an amazing (to me) rate. Forest, Connorsville and Boyceville slipped by. At the one hour point my \$90 K-Mart GPS told me that Benson's Airport was 49 miles behind and that my ground speed between thermals was between 90-100 mph! By comparing ground speed with air speed, I figured the tail wind to be 35-40 mph. Now, if I could just stay in the air for a few hours, a good distance would be possible.



Benson Airport 6MN9 White Bear Township, MN

MN. We would try a cross country flight today provided the tow plane could get me off the ground.

Just before 10am, I met Paul beside the White Bear Township water tower, and we proceeded to rig my 1-26A #271 in the wind shadow of said tower with Slim Flaten's help. Being the first cross country effort of the year, the assembly went slowly. By 12:30 we were on the flight line and proceeding to take off into about a 20-knot headwind. I told Paul that I planned a flight toward Rockford, IL because of the forecast NW flow, but it was obvious on tow that the wind was more out of the west than northwest, so a change in flight plan became a matter to be resolved.

There was no problem staying aloft once I released and found the lift. The thermals were very choppy and difficult to center in, and the cloud base was just

The town of Bloomer went by, as did Cornell, and I tried to keep Paul informed regarding my location by transmitting my location frequently. Thermals were topping around 5500 MSL at the 2-hour point and we were maintaining an average speed of just under 50 mph. Continuing on past Medford and Merrill, Paul reported in and was fairly close behind. He must have been speeding here and there but fortunately avoided any speed traps.

The thermals were choppy, difficult to work, impossible to center, and resulted in an average of 200 fpm despite seeing an occasional 500 fpm on the variometer. Even though the sky looked impressive with lots of CU's, a closer look showed that they had little vertical development. The CU's also had a badly wind sheared structure, which told me the thermals

Blow Wind, Blow (cont'd)

would not be as strong as I preferred. The fact that good speed was being made at all was the result mainly of the tail wind. I thought later that had I only circled and drifted with the wind, I would have averaged 35 mph; so, the importance of these tail winds became clearer.

Passing Antigo, my 1-26 and I approached the most challenging part of the flight. Now to the east there is extensive forest and swamp. Just beyond White Lake, there are no landing spots on course for about 18 miles. Having gone over this area before, I again planned to stay near cloudbase, now at 6000 MSL, and let the wind drift me across this intimidating section. In my opinion this was no course for a beginner. There were too many hazards of this nature in this part of Wisconsin.

I next passed over the North-South valley that contains the town of Breed, WI with its Piso Airport. I landed there just last year on a similar flight. Farm fields are numerous enough in this valley so that there was no immediate concern about landing places. However, forest and swamp made up the countryside

just to the east of Breed. Delaying briefly, I climbed high enough to make the jump toward the next group of landing fields, finally making the seven mile glide to get there. Then the sky became overcast and the CU's did not look very good. Within 5 minutes I was circling over those landing fields at low altitude while simultaneously trying to get back up and determining which of the fields would be best to land in. Two minutes later I was on the ground at 4:45pm in John Oleck's hay field about a quarter mile north of WI 64. John is a retired milk truck driver who I think welcomed the change in his routines as a result of my landing there. Over the next half hour I called Paul on the cell phone to give him specific directions on how to get where I was. He had taken a more southerly route on WI 29,

so he was about 25 miles south of my location at the time of my call.

Within an hour Paul showed up and we trailered the ship with John's help. We finished up around 6:30pm and headed for home along WI 64. At Antigo we stopped for gas and even got in a decent meal at the China Buffet. We were back at Benson's airport by 1:00am. I had flown 233 miles in 4 hours and 15 minutes, a new speed record for me and #271 in the



1-26A #271

Midwest. It was a good start to the cross country season. Thanks, Paul and Chuck.

Jim Hard #271

Editor's note: Jim Hard flew this flight and wrote about it in April of 2002. He grew up in Minnesota and retired to Saint Paul Park, MN and he flew with the two local soaring clubs. He towed and instructed, but enjoyed cross country record setting the most. He recruited his crews from those clubs and all who helped him learned from him. He was a huge fan of the 1-26 and he taught all his crews how to care for this fine design; all its benefits and limitations included. Jim flew West in 2019, but lives still in the memory of all his friends and family.

2025 1-26 Championship Merlin Aerodrome, VA



Photo by Bert Johnson

Remember that same old soaring weather story? It goes something like this: 'Get a bunch of 1-26 pilots together with their gliders and you're gonna get rain'. This last May, unfortunately, was no exception.



Merlin Aerodrome (2VA3), in Amelia Courthouse, Virginia, is one gem of a well established, turf runway airport with gliders and tow planes aplenty. It was the site for the recent 2025 1-26 Championship contest held from May seventh through

May fourteenth, all hosted by Merlin Soaring Association and owner, president, Eric Lambert. Twenty three pilots showed up which included five teams and at least eighteen 1-26's. Jim Garrison, an SSA Vice Chair, joined as the Contest Manager. Competition Director extraordinaire, Wallace, Wally, Berry stepped up to set the tasks, ensure the safety standards and provide the weather reports. Host, Eric Lambert, imparted local area insights and fed all us very well. There were three tow-planes and all contest operations were managed by local pilot Vince Foley and his group of volunteers.

Things got off to a good start with a practice day won by #401, Jimbob Slocum. Good weather made for a very nice race on May 7th, day #1. While all 1-26 contests are open,

fun and welcoming to one and all, there is always serious competition heavily laced into the thinking, planning and flying of each pilot. One such seasoned competitor, Pierre Aumont, won this day in #686. Taylor Gray #655 and Michael Hayter #308 were hot on his tailfeathers. Six teams were flying this year, three of whom included pilots from the Ceasar Creek, Ohio club. One of them was the Hegele/ Lohre Team in #242, of which pilot, Rolf Hegele, won. There were only a few landouts as some pilots pushed to win.

Day #2, May 8th, was another good day. By now pilots and crews were used to the Merlin A,B,C gridding system. Tows here were to 2,500 AGL and the task was a Modified Turn Area set for 1.5 hours North to South. Michael Hayter in #308 won the day followed by Jimbob Slocum in #401 and Curt Lewis in #216. The Team winner was Chuck Lohre in #242. Some pilots landed out and there were a few stories of farmers and their family helping out as we made our presence more known to the locals. Merlin Aerodrome and their gliders were well known to these folks, but 1-26's in numbers such as we presented were new. In retrospect, all went very well and ruffled feathers were smoothed as needed. As Ron Schwartz validly pointed out: it's not a contest if we aren't pushing the limits of pilots and machines.

May 9th was unsoarable, but May 10th showed promise for the needed third day; so the gliders gridded after Wally warned of weak conditions. From the start cylinder no one could maintain much more than release altitude and the

2025 1-26 Championship (cont'd)

day was called off. Daniel Sazhin, flying team with Ron Schwartz in #680 flew anyway along with Michael Hayter in #308 to have a crack at completing the task. Daniel landed out while Michael persevered and made it back under mouse fart conditions.

May 11th was another very such a light day. Keen on getting a third day, gridding and launching commenced. Pilots found what lift they could but ultimately had to work their way back to base and final under lowering overcast skies. One or two landouts happened, including Paul Agnew in #543, who had the Esser/ Leonard retrieve team to get him back from within a mile or two of the airfield.



2025 1-26 Championships

Merlin Soaring Association, Amelia Court House, Virginia, 07.05.2025 - 14.05.2025

Overall results after Day 2

#	CN	Pilot	Total
1.	308	Michael Hayter	1986
2.	686	Paga Grellet-Aumont	1862
3.	655	Taylor Gray	1837
4.	242	Team: Hegele & Lohre	1805
5.	039	Jeff Daye	1727
6.	097	Cathy Williams	1643
7.	401	Jimbob Slocum	1624
8.	216	Curt Lewis	1544
9.	335	Pat Murray	1387
10.	057	Team: Haskell & Tax	1300
11.	400	Kristin Farry	1199
12.	680	Team: Sazhin & Schwartz	1152
13.	543	Paul Agnew	978
14.	687	Team: Breeze-Stringfellow & Hayter	782
15.	266	Richard Thompson	780
16.	153	Team: Clark & Cook	672
17.	465	Team: Kennedy & Swanson	496
18.	157	Judith Galbraith	402

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things up. Michael Hayter, the 2024 Champion from Caesar Creek Soaring Club retains his championship status, there being no official contest. He performed exceedingly well again this year and remains the one to beat going forward. That defines a champion.

There was a Spiffy Award winner: Jimbob Slocum's flaming yellow #401 remains a fabulous restoration in pristine condition. Kristin Farry needs to be congratulated for her work on the Merlin Soaring artwork used for the contest shirts and coasters. Pierre Grellet-Aumont of Aero Club Albatross and Taylor Gray, a Merlin Soaring contestant, both performed very well, coming in second and third respectively. Cathy Williams was again the top female pilot. The Caesar Creek team of Hegele and Lohre held the top team status showing the advantages of team flying to share the load of contest flying. **Please join the 1-26 Championships contest at Windy City Soaring in 2026!**



Michael Hayter in #308



Taylor Gray Landing #655



#242 gave up looking for lift as he sets up for a pattern

Photo by Ben Johnson





A Horse Named Rocketeer—Brad Ruda

I got back on the horse late this morning and early afternoon. Skysight predicted a "fair" day...and that's what it was. It wasn't a good day, and certainly not a "chamber of commerce" day for soaring pilots far and wide. But it was fair enough for a 1963 Schweitzer 1-26B named The Rocketeer, a chief instructor (me), and a chief tow pilot (Zach Babb).



On my SECOND tow of the day, Zach found a boomer of a thermal and wrapped 16L, our Pawnee, into it with the Rocketeer being led around the ring with a red link as its reign.

WHAT HAPPENED ON YOUR FIRST FLIGHT, BRAD? My first tow was great...in fact, the lift was excellent. So, how did I find myself back on the ground in under eight minutes? The YAW STRING got jammed in the canopy. Sometimes when the towplane swings around to hook up, the propwash hits the string just enough that when you close the canopy it gets pinched there. I didn't notice until we were way up there and my Oudie started singing. And that was the 3rd annoying thing about that first flight of the day. I could put up with a missing handheld radio. And I was willing to put up with my oversized Oudie N strapped to my clipboard because I couldn't find its cradle that sits on the RAM. But going out on a thermalling adventure with no yaw string? No way! This was too much! After one or two turns in lift, I yanked the brakes open and raced the towplane back to earth. Thermalling with no yaw string is like trying to walk a high-wire with roller blades on.

But my 2nd tow in the Rocketeer pony was fine. As I say, I cut loose in a decent patch of lift. It made me happy to see that purple yaw string flying free up there ahead of the canopy, the way it's supposed to. I was now climbing through 3,200 ft when I saw this very unique bird in a left turn with me. He was directly opposite my left wing as we went round and round, climbing on up into the cloud-spattered yonder. He looked like he had read the Holtz manual on how to gaggle--of course, he was a bird. But what kind? I never saw anything like that around here

before. Not in my past 3 decades in the Midwest. It looked familiar...like a sea bird of sorts. But it wasn't a seagull. Nope. It had a bent and narrow beak that curved downward at the tip, and it had a big belly like a pelican from the Florida Keys. But its body was way more aerodynamic than a pelican's. And its twig-like legs were long and trailed well behind. It could have been a great blue heron, but its beak curved downward--more like that of an ibis.

What was an ibis doing up here? Did he forget to read the GPS manual? Did he neglect to update the latest database? Has the magnetic north shifted that far askew? Weird, I thought. Here I am, thermalling with a seabird. Is this guy lost? Nope. Am I lost? Maybe.

This bird looks back over at me--definitely judging my form. But thanks to my trusty purple yawstring, I am perfectly coordinated. He's got nothing on me. Or does he? He swings to the north and starts to out-climb me. I shallow my bank in order to drift north, too, and then I climb up to join him once again. He looks over at my own white wings. Hey...imitation is the finest form of flattery, right? Same altitude. Same position. We go around like that. He's still right there--off my left wing facing the opposite direction. We patiently work our way up to 4,100 feet and continue to circle. I wonder what this guy's purpose is. There's really no fish down there amongst shin-high corn and soybeans. We are under a big gray bottom of a cloud that refuses to look like the ones in [The Joy of Soaring](#). And the lift is pretty lethargic. I'm considering giving up the ghost and pressing on into the wind. A little airport named Grandpa's Farm is out there to the southwest. But I know my towpilot has to leave for work soon. He's got a real job now and has to comb his hair and put on a white Polo shirt and everything. And I don't want to land somewhere without a guaranteed ride home.

So I circle round for a bit longer. It's cool in the shade of this old cloud. I glance down to the farm field just west of OC2. Truly a beautiful shade of light green from up here. We had a bad accident end in the beautiful patch of green just over a week ago. I lost a best friend--and a behemoth to aviation. He inexplicably spun his Champ in. He didn't walk away from the wreck, but his tiny little three year old

A Horse Named Rocketeer (cont'd)



Jim Beyer mentors another generation

It's not easy to get back on the horse after a tragedy. But I did it today. Although my nerves were on high alert, the air, I noticed, was the same air that we always fly through. And the glider handles the same as it always has and always will. The physics of flight still operate according to the formulas and diagrams in the textbooks. Nothing has changed. And I'm somewhat the same pilot that I was a week ago. The only difference is that now I will always fly with a little extra ballast--a small little ache in my heart. A hollow jabbing pain. It only weighs me down a bit. Not enough to shift my center of gravity. Maybe just enough to remind me what my strange lost seabird already knows...flying is awesome. Pilots are a privileged breed. But flying is also a very, very serious goddamn business.

grandson survived unharmed. Jim Beyer was a champion for safety. He did everything he could to make sure every pilot he knew became the best pilot he could be. Jim was humble, he guided with a gentle voice. He loved flying and shared his passion by encouraging the youth to get involved. He was there



Jim Beyer

Brad Ruda

at every fly-in breakfast, every Young Eagles event. He gave talks about soaring and soaring safety at our club. We all listened with acute attention when he spoke.

Lt. Colonel James Allen Beyer served 20 years in the United States Airforce and subsequently became a captain with United. He and I grew up together flying at that little 2600 foot grass airstrip down there. That kid was a hayseed swept up into the giant thermal of aviation itself. By the time he went west, he had mastered fifty different types of aircraft.

As I contemplate this thing called flight, the egret-bis-blue heron-crane bird gets bored, looks at me with a sly smile, and tucks into his best McCready pose as he dives and speeds toward Lake Shabbona. At least there he might find himself a meal.

With that in mind, I too, set my course for Lake Shabbona. And well...blame it on a 1-26B's anemic glide ratio of 22ish:1, I got shot down before Zach even left the parking lot.

Brad Ruda

Co-Owner of 'The Rocketeer' SGS-1-26B #212



I get by with a little Help from my Friends—Judith Galbraith #157

2024 was to be my big summer of soaring in the Southwest. First, a week in Moriarty, New Mexico at the Women's Cross-Country Camp as a warm-up for the 1-26 Championship. Then, three weeks later, on to Hamilton, Texas to put my newly acquired XC skills to the test. Following the rural adage of "never go to town for just one thing," I planned a zigzag route from Dansville, NY to Greene County, PA to fill the bed of my truck with furniture to be delivered to my daughter in Colorado Springs on my way to Moriarty, adding only about 400 extra miles to the trip. Add another 100 miles for a diversion south of St Louis to visit soaring friends for a day. All in all, a good plan. I checked the weather forecast all the way along the route: no rain. Great!



Judith in Hamilton, TX 2024

I loaded #157 onto the trailer in Dansville, NY with the help of a new member of the Finger Lakes Soaring Club. 330 miles later I was in southwest Pennsylvania. The next day I met fellow XC camp participant Cathy Williams in Ohio for a *very* long drive to De Soto, MO. That night: rain. But our local contact said the next day would be clear. Wrong. I left at 7:00 a.m. hoping to avoid rush hour traffic

around St Louis and, instead, found myself in the thick of it. Six lanes of wall-to-wall traffic in rain so heavy I could hardly see the vehicles in front of and beside me. Two hours later I finally found my exit and was able to take the time to check the trailer in the side mirror. (Remember the load of furniture obscuring the rearview mirror?) Hey, the wing cradle is...EMPTY!!! (Remember the distracting "help" loading the trailer, when I apparently failed to properly secure the wings to the cradles?) Self-inflicted damage #1.

I don't remember any major bumps on the road, so I'm surmising a gust from a passing semi may have lifted the very wet wing from the very wet cradle and slung it sideways. Fortunately, the wing (that I had spent the better part of a year stripping and refinishing) had jumped

inboard and suffered "merely" a four-inch dent in the leading edge where it smashed down on the cradle support bar. Now what? My audio book for the next leg of the journey just happened to be a meditation on welcoming the unwelcome. How cosmically appropriate.

With only 800 more miles to Colorado I pressed on, hoping that someone at Moriarty would be able to repair the damage and I would be able to fly. If not, maybe I could find someone to fly team with at Hamilton. All three IAs at Moriarty concurred: I would need to get a new piece of wing skin from K&L (the part could be ready in three weeks) and have it shipped to Moriarty (shipping from NY: \$250). But none of them had time to work on it anyway. This is where the magic happened.

Ridge Moreland remembered Bob Hurni had donated several 1-26 wings to the 1-26 Association and they were stored "just down the road" at White Sands Soaring Club in Alamogordo, NM. A phone call with Trever Perkins confirmed that, yes, they had a suitable part and, yes, he had the time to make the repair before the championship. Four hours later #157 and I were in Alamogordo.

Wow, there was a whole crew there to meet me when I arrived: Trever, Lance Grace, Joey Cirri and a couple of other club members swarmed over the trailer like ants at a picnic, removing the damaged wing from the trailer and placing the patient on the operating table. They then found the donor wing (on the bottom of a pile of six wings) and put it next to 157's wing, preparing for the transplant. So far, so good. But I still wouldn't have anything to fly at the XC camp. Then Joey offered to sell me a pair of good wings he had, and we were about to see if they would fit when someone noticed that several welds on my trailer were broken. 157 wasn't going anywhere.



Trailer Rash/ Wing Ding

Help from my Friends (Cont'd)

Hmmm, perhaps that bump I hit getting off the road at a gas station 25 miles back where the trailer had jumped off the hitch had done some damage after all. Had I checked and double checked the trailer hitch after we had put the wing on at Moriarty...or assumed that someone else had? Self-inflicted damage #2.

I get high with a little help from my friends

So, back to Moriarty for a week of not-flying, or so I assumed. But another convergence occurred. Not the atmospheric kind of convergence Moriarty is known for, the kind where glider pilots help each other slip the surly bonds, etc. CarolAnn Garratt, XC camp organizer, had rearranged schedules so I could fly dual with local pilots for the rest of the week. That little taste of the high skies of New Mexico was both instructive

championships! Lance and David had also repaired the trailer, welding the breaks and made several other much appreciated modifications. Total cost: the price of parts, the White Sands Soaring Club fridge filled with beer, and a



Finished and ready to fly



White Sands Soaring Repairs

donation to the 1-26 Association as thanks for the replacement wing skin. Nowhere else on the entire continent could these repairs have been made so expertly and in time for the contest...at any price. Magic!

Gonna try with a little help from my friends

I arrived at Hamilton hoping to do at least as well as I had in 2023 and with the lofty (and, ultimately, unattainable) goal of winning the Virginia Schweizer Trophy. After assembling 157, I gave her a bath to remove 2500 miles of road grime. What

and inspiring. I hoped the air at Hamilton would be that good!

Having accomplished part of my objective of soaring in the Southwest for the first time, I left my truck and all my gear in Alice and Mark Palmer's hangar and flew back to Pennsylvania for three weeks. Returning in late July, I retrieved the truck and headed to Alamogordo. There was my little bird, all healed up and ready for the

repaired wing? It can't be rust. It washes off OK, though. Shiner Bock! They had anointed her with beer. That wing had some real magic in it now, enough to make it back every day (for a cold beer) and win the day *twice*. Thanks, guys!

This is why I bought a 1-26 in the first place — so I could hang out for a couple of weeks every year with the best people in the world. **The flying is pretty darn fun, too.**

Alamogordo Redux by Jeff Friend #263

I recently returned from Alamogordo, NM, where I had the opportunity to visit and fly with the White Sands Soaring Association. It was an awesome experience, although the trip came about because I had damaged the tail feathers on my 1964 1-26B (S/N 263) at the 2024 1-26 Championships in Hamilton, TX. The outside edge of one side of the horizontal stabilizer and elevator hooked a gate post when I made a sharp turn while leaving the pasture I landed in. I was devastated.

As I was preparing to take #263 back to Omaha from Texas, Lance Grace, a member of the White Sands Soaring Association, offered to take my tail feathers to Alamogordo, NM, for repairs. He told me that he'd damaged his tail feathers that week while moving his 1-26, and he said there was a third 1-26 with damaged tail feathers in Alamogordo. He said they would repair all three at the same time. The cost would be my share of the new parts plus filling their club refrigerator with brewed beverages. It was a deal I couldn't refuse! This led me to ask if it would be possible to fly with their club when I drove there to pick up my repaired tail feathers. The answer was yes, and that they'd show me ridge soaring and set me up with a 1-26 to fly while I was there.

The White Sands club was more than welcoming. I didn't know what to expect, but what I experienced was much more than what I could have imagined. First, Lance arranged for me to be a club member for one month; I paid the normal club member rates for dues, glider rent, and tows. Second,

Lance voluntarily served as my host and mentor. He said that if I wanted, and the weather permitted, we could fly every day. Third, each morning I had a text from Lance suggesting local places to visit and what time we'd meet to fly. I visited White Sands National

Park, the Alamogordo Space History Museum, historic Fort Stanton, and I followed the 'Billy the Kid' trail, including a visit to his grave. I even played a round of golf one morning,

setting the course record for the low score by 1-26 pilots from Nebraska. The



club comprises a great bunch of people, and they have very nice facilities, too. Their hangars are neat and filled with a lot of gliders, both club and privately owned. Other than Wick Wilkinson, I think they have the largest fleet of 1-26 gliders in the USA. I counted nine ships, although not all currently air-worthy.

I appreciate that their safety culture was something clearly planned. The first morning I was in Alamogordo, Lance met me for breakfast where he briefed me on their orientation plans, which would lead to my flying solo in one of their 1-26's. The next day, before flight operations started, Lance drove me around the airport to show me where we'd take off and land and where the aim points were when landing. He'd also arranged for me to fly with Bruce Bauer in one of their club's motorized Grob 103's. Bruce's job was to orient me with the local airspace, the runway procedures, emergency procedures, landmarks, and traffic patterns. An example of what Bruce shared was a nearby landmark that marked the beginning of the restricted airspace for Holloman AFB. Holloman is just to the west of KALM and we occasionally saw F-16's passing nearby. Bruce handled the take-off and landing, but he let me fly while we were on tow. He also introduced me to ridge soaring. Less than five miles east of the airport are the Sacramento Mountains. There aren't really any foothills; there's a modest rise in the ground and then the mountains abruptly start. Bruce demonstrated flying along the ridge while we gained enough altitude to fly above and into the mountains. While flying along the ridge,



Alamogordo Redux (cont'd)

The 1-26 Association President's Column



we'd be maybe 250' AGL above the ground on one side the glider, and 5,000' AGL on the other side. He let me take the controls off and on to get a feel

for the thermals and the proper way to turn along the mountain ridges. I keep saying how awesome the experience was, and for a flat land glider pilot like me, it really was. Bruce kept saying that the soaring conditions weren't that good, but compared to eastern Nebraska the soaring conditions are amazing!

The next day, I flew with Lance in a non-motorized Grob 103. It was much easier to fly than the heavier motorized version. Lance had me handle the take-offs and landings and much of the flying. We started with a pattern tow for practice, and on the second flight, we headed towards the mountains. Lance didn't think the soaring conditions were great, but we got into the mountains and reached approximately 10,700' MSL, which was a first for me.

On the third and fourth days, Lance and I flew 1-26E's. For safety, my first 1-26 flight (in a glider generously loaned to me by club member Joey Cirri) was another pattern flight. After that, we went looking for thermals. The soaring conditions that day were not as good as they had been. We found thermals along the mountain ridge, but we never climbed above 9,000' MSL, so we didn't go into the mountains or need to use oxygen, which we were prepared to use. They routinely take their 1-26's into the mountains and they use oxygen because they fly in the 'teens'. It would have been amazing to experience that, but that's the way it goes with soaring weather.

I had a great experience with the White Sands Soaring Association, and I thank them for their hospitality. They mentioned that they might host a 1-26 Regatta in 2025. If they do, I'll be heading back in the hope of experiencing what they consider to be great soaring conditions.

Everyone has a 1-26 story...continued... I wrote about this lingering thought in the last issue of the newsletter and I'm still amazed when a random meeting leads to talk of the 1-26.

Today's episode involved trying to call Cathy Williams using the number listed in the website's 1-26 Member Directory. When a man answered, I engaged my "I'm not a telemarketer" voice and opened with, "Hello, this is Paul Agnew from the 1-26 Association looking for Cathy. Is she available?" There was a pause, then the gentleman let me know that there was no Cathy at that number. I was making my apologies and about to hang up when he said, "Did you say the 1-26 Association?" I paused. "Yes, I did. Are you familiar with the 1-26 Association?" Long, long story short – Dave Willding proceeded to tell me all about his hours flying gliders, almost getting his diamond in the 1-26, and how he had to sell his 1-26 (#204) for a down payment on a house when he was younger. He used to compete, as well, and remembers Ron Schwartz. I looked up #204 in the Aircraft Directory while we were talking and found it's based at Merlin Aerodrome. It's Kristin Farry's other 1-26!

It gets better. Dave has moved to Florida and is now going to check out the Tampa Bay Soaring Society. He's a former CFI-G and is interested in someday instructing again. He also immediately rejoined the 1-26 Association. All from a wrong number.

What a day! Please talk to everyone and ask them their 1-26 story! Let us know what they say.

In other news – work has begun on the tedious process of updating The Log. The last issue went out in 2016 and there is a lot of cross-checking of records and awards to do before we can get all of the data in a printable format. If you have the heart of a historian, please volunteer to help. Expect to see a printed and digital version down the road.

Paul Agnew—President of the 1-26 Association



1-26 Association Spring 2025

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