



Hangar Soaring

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ASSOCIATION.

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Thank you Sarah and Jason
for making the seminar possible.

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THE WOMEN SOARING PILOTS
ASSOCIATION (WSPA) WAS
FOUNDED IN 1986 AND IS
AFFILIATED WITH THE SOARING
SOCIETY OF AMERICA

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Badges , Records and Achievements

Recorded through July 2026

Diamond Goal
Cathy Keller

Gold Distance
Alice Palmer
Katia van Horn

Silver Altitude
Karen Adams

Silver Distance
Isabel Ulland, OR
Sara Stearns, CA

Bronze Badge
Isabel Ulland, OR

C Badge
Deborah L. Ings, CO

B Badge
Sophia Taylor, WA

A Badge

Delenor Wilson, TX
Ashley Hendrix, GA
Audrey Wolf, CO

STATE RECORDS APPROVED Massachusetts

Cathy Keller
General Open Single place
Goal Distance; 187.8 mi
Triangle Distance; 187.8 mi
Free Out and Return Distance;
107.2 mi
Free Distance up to 3 Turnpoints;
194.3 mi
Free Triangle Distance; 94.9 mi

ACIEVEMENTS

PPL-G

Vivian Erickson, FL
Sophia Westbrook, TX



From the editor

"It took a village" to get me to this year's seminar. Lucky for me, it was moved from Waller, TX to Chilhowee gliderport in Tennessee. Although Newport News, VA is literally at the end of the World or continental US), on public transportation. I was able to attend this seminar (my 5th at Chilhowee) with the help of determined glider pilots, WSPA and non-WSPA members. One of my TSS club mates drove me to Merlin gliderport, 100 miles west of here, (he keeps his second sailplane there), where WSPA member, Kristin Farry, a member at Merlin, took over for the long drive to Chilhowee.

On the way home, I again was picked up at Merlin by another TSS member, (who also keeps his plane there because soaring conditions are better further inland than here at the coast) for the last leg of my trip. Having some leg issues and not driving long distances anymore, I would have been unable to attend the seminar. For the first time, I had the distinction of being the oldest participant (the age spread between the oldest and youngest was 70 years!)

Thank you very much to all who were persistent in getting me to the seminar. I enjoyed the gathering very much, meeting long-time friends and make new ones.

Frauke

President's Note



Jason and Sarah Arnold with the Majewska cake

Note the misspelling

Another fantastic WSPA seminar has passed, this time in the Smoky Mountains of Chilhowee Gliderport, Tennessee. Summer showers were no challenge for this group of dedicated pilots. The temperature was sensational, remaining in the high 70's allowing everyone to fly daily and enjoy the week with new and old friends and top-notch instruction and lectures. Tony Condon, Leah Condon, Jayne Reid, Frauke Elber, Kristin Farry, and Diane Dandeneau presented dynamic talks on everything from the latest technology in "Pee Systems for women" to how to maintain your cool when flying with an unexpected "non-revenue" snake or spider in your cockpit. Very important current political issues affecting our sport were discussed in an open forum as well as free spirited aviation-oriented games to fill the brief moments of scattered showers.

Participants climbed into Schweitzer 2-32's, 2-33's, PW-6's for spin training, Blanik L-23 and a privately owned Discus which came from Florida. Evenings were spent dining on the banks of the beautiful Hiwassee River at a B&B which was kindly shared with all 25 of us by Leah and Tony Condon, Margarett Roy, and Terry Duncan.

Sarah and Jason Arnold, who graciously made this year's seminar

(President on page 3)



The youngest and oldest seminar participant
Maia Teo, Frauke Elber

In Memoriam

Amanda Vella



Tragedy struck on May 18th, 2026, when our friend Amanda Vella lost her life while flying her ASW20. The impact of this loss has been felt throughout the soaring and the many organizations Amanda was a part of.

Amanda joined Edmonton Soaring Club in 2022, returning to a life-long passion for flying. Together with her husband, Paul (also a pilot), they readily became part of the community at ESC. She quickly regained her instructor status and became a key member of the instructional team and was well loved by the students. She discovered the joy of soaring and cross-country flight. In her typical analytical, cautious and methodical nature she set out to learn the art of cross-country soaring. She learned from club members and went to the Women's Cross-Country Camp in Moriarty, New Mexico in 2025. Her enthusiasm for the experience and the wonderful people at this clinic was expressed in her article published in Soaring Magazine, Feb. 2026.

Amanda's flying journey began in Nova Scotia as a teenager in the Royal Canadian Air Cadet League. She earned her glider and power wings in the cadet program, then returned to instruct and mentor many cadet glider pilots. She was patient. She was kind. She made it okay to struggle, and okay not to get something right the first time. Long before "failing forward" became a common phrase, Amanda was living it by the way she mentored others. That is real leadership.

Outside of aviation, Amanda was an endurance athlete, enjoyed golfing and attained a sought after CFO position. In addition to a demanding work life she mentored and coached women in the corporate world.



Roses for Amanda

Bernald S. Smith 1926-2026



Bernald S. Smith died shortly before his 100th birthday.

One of the most prominent SSA members and the recipient of many soaring related honors he will be recognized in length by the SSA and future SOARING. Therefore, I will not go into the details of his life

in aviation.

Bernald was a big supporter of women in soaring and was essential during his tenure at the FAI that the Women International Contests were recognized as Women World Championships (2001).

Bernald attended several WSPA breakfasts at soaring conventions.

Frauke

(President from page 2)

possible, were presented with a "pre-award Pelagia Majewska cake". Sarah won this prestigious FAI International award earlier this year. The actual Medal of Honor will be presented to her at the Soaring Society of America Convention in November in Reno, Nevada.

Additionally, Diane Dandeneau will give a presentation of her new (patent pending) urinary control device at the Convention. Not only does this invention assist women in urinary control during their cross-country flights, but this device will assist women to accompany their accomplished male co-pilots on cross country flights with equal their bladder control. The presentation of this device will also be at our upcoming Soaring Society of America Convention in Reno, Nevada in November. Look for Diane to speak at our WSPA breakfast at the convention. Units will be available for purchase at that time.

Please be sure to come by our WSPA booth to educate yourself on the amazing women who have been celebrated on the Wall of Fame, from past to present. We will also have raffles, books to peruse, memorabilia, information on WSPA and lots of cookies and camaraderie. Don't miss us. We will be waiting for you!!!

Lynda Lee LaBerge

Correction

Page 6, column 2 it should read

These annual weekend meetings are a combination of lectures and just fun get-togethers.

At this year's meeting, Ingrid was honored with the Golden Honorary Plaque of the AEROCLUB|NRW: the association's highest distinction and recognizes outstanding contributions to air sports in North Rhine-Westphalia and beyond.

In July, Women's Soaring Pilots Association "WSPA" members gathered at the Chilhowee Gliderport, surrounded by the ridges, rivers, and lush greenery of southeastern Tennessee. The 48th Women's Soaring Seminar was originally planned for the Soaring Club of Houston near Waller, Texas, but its board decided a month before the event that registration numbers were too low for them to proceed. Although the WSPA board respected that decision, the 2026 Seminar was not canceled. Sarah and Jason Arnold stepped in and welcomed us to Chilhowee for the fifth time. Sarah led flight operations, Lynda took charge of keeping everyone well fed, and I was glad to help with the speaker sessions.

Pilots came from "California to New York Island, from the Redwood Forest to the Golf Stream Waters" (Woody Guthrie: this Land is my Land") and ranged in age from 15 years old to their eighth decade. Experience levels stretched from pre-solo student to founding WSPA members, but everyone shared a love of soaring and the sense of community that WSPA brings.

My fellow Kansas Soaring Association members know that one of my favorite ways to kick off an event is with around-the-room introductions and a fun fact. For the Seminar and Pilots' Briefing on Monday morning, I decided to up the ante with WSPA BINGO. For those unfamiliar, WSPA BINGO looks like a standard BINGO card, except the boxes are filled with fun facts about Seminar attendees. Participants had to collect signatures from people who matched the descriptions in the boxes, such as "has their Silver Badge," "has had a rope break," "is a WSPA board member," and "has thermaled with a bird." Only one signature per person was allowed, and no repeats counted. Alex Westbrook was the first to get a BINGO, with five in a row. We kept playing until Sophia Westbrook was one square away from blackout and had collected signatures from everyone. Other non-flying fun during the week included trivia night and introducing everyone to the yard game Kubb, which my husband Tony and I first learned from the McMaster brothers during the 2021 Club Class Nationals at Chilhowee.

Four student pilots attended the Seminar, with Juno and Sophia nearing their check-rides. To help them prepare, CFIF Ed Pickens, assisted by David Laitinen, led a hands-on demonstration on how to rig an L-23 Blanik. Ed also coached them through a positive control check. Designated Pilot Examiners Sarah Arnold and Tony Condon held a daily ground school focused on preparing for the oral exam portion of a check ride. Thanks to Ed and David for bringing the L-23 all the way from North Carolina for us to fly!

In addition to the L-23, we flew Chilhowee's SGS 2-32, SGS 2-33, PW-6, and PW-5. Rakel Poladian came in her own Discus. We managed flights each day, though eastern Tennessee upheld its temperate rainforest reputation with rain showers or thunderstorms most afternoons. Thursday brought the best soaring conditions by far. My highlight of the week was a 2.2-hour flight in the SGS 2-32 with Sarah, even if Tony and Diane Dandeneau beat our duration by three minutes for the longest flight of the week. A big thank-you to the five CFIFs who flew with us during the Seminar: Jason Arnold, Sarah Arnold, Tony Condon, Ed

The 2026 48th WSPA Seminar



Back Row (L-R): Alex Westbrook, Tony Condon, Diego Nace, David Laitinen, Maia Teo, Sheryl Westbrook, Juno Chieccio, Ed Pickens, Jason Arnold, Gerry Wild, Vickie Hankins, Diane Dandeneau and Cathy Keller.

Front Row (L-R): Leah Condon, Kristin Farry, Lucy Anne McKosky, Sarah Arnold, Sophia Westbrook, Jayne Ewing Reid, Terry Duncan, Lynda LaBerge, Rakel Poladian, and Frauke Elber (not pictured: Margaret Roy)

Pickens, and Gerry Wild!

The week brought several flying accomplishments: student Maia Teo landed the PW-6 for the first time on the controls, I made my first flight in two years, Diane Dandeneau soared a glider without a motor, Juno Chieccio was signed off for her check-ride, and Sophia Westbrook earned her Private Pilot-Glider rating!

None of those accomplishments would have been possible without our tow pilots, Jayne Ewing Reid and Jason Arnold, and flight line crew chief Diego Nace. We are grateful to them all. Jayne also gave an interactive and moving talk that reminded us of the commitment we make to each other's safety, and to the pilot on the other end

of the rope, every time we take a tow.

The speaker sessions were just as memorable. Inventor and pilot Diane Dandeneau shared the "FRE," or Female Range Extender relief system, and appointed interested attendees as beta testers. Kristin Farry's "Getting to a Camp or Contest with Your Glider" may be coming to the SSA Convention this fall for anyone who could not join us at Chilhowee. Vintage Sailplane Association President Gerry Wild presented on the restoration of his "Hunk o' Junk," now a beautiful SGU 1-19. Tony Condon talked us through how to decide whether a day at the gliderport is "the day" for a cross-country or goal flight. During my session, I introduced everyone to some of the women featured on the National Soaring Museum's Women's Wall of Fame. Our bonus speaker was Frauke Elber, who used a rainy afternoon to rehearse "The Tall Man in a Dark Suit," for her upcoming presentation about the ship diary of her uncle, who died on a submarine in his early 20s during WWII.

And then there was the food. Lynda had arranged catered meals for us at ScoH, but with help from her friend Vickie Hankins, she quickly pivoted to make sure we were well fed at Chilhowee. The fruit and vegetables from the local Amish farmers market were as beautiful as they were delicious. Between the cobbler, pie, brownies, and cheesecakes from a local baker, there was no shortage of dessert. A few of us stayed at an Airbnb that was also made available for Lynda and Vickie's use. Because it was a duplex and we had both sides, it offered plenty of oven and refrigerator space, along with a screened-in porch overlooking the Hiwassee River. It became a wonderful place to gather after dinner on Monday and Wednesday. Lynda arranged a surprise cake presented at the banquet to congratulate Sarah on behalf of WSPA for being awarded the FAI Pelagia Majewska Medal. Congratulations again to Sarah and thank you to Lynda and Vickie!

This year's Limerick was won by Tony Condon. Tony is thrilled to have the Goddess flying over our living room again after I won her at the 2016 Seminar. The Limerick Contest is a WSPA Seminar tradition that began at seminar in July 1993 at Black Forest, Colorado. Ruth Dusenbery was the first winner and recipient of the Flying Goddess, which now travels with a logbook containing the winning limericks. Now you know a few fun facts and are ready for our next future trivia contest.



**In June WSPA sent out a plea.
Sarah responded with glee!
Between the rain
We found time to train
A wonderful time at Chilhowee.**

Tony Condon

No seminar would be possible with all the helpers (WSPA and non WSPA)

Instructors

Sarah Arnold
Jason Arnold
Tony Condon
Ed Pickens
Gerry Wild

Tow pilots

Jayne Ewing Reid
Jason Arnold

Line Crew

Diego Nace
David Laitinen (came with Ed Pickens and the L-23)
Alex Westbrook
(when not flying)
Seminar participants also worked the line)

Food/ Chef

Lynda La Berge
Vickie Hankins
and their helpers

A Thank You to all

2026 1-26 Championship

By Kristin Farry



Kristin Farry, Cathy Williams, Judith Galbraith
In front of the 1-26 grid



Storm clouds over Chilhowee



Line boss Diego Nace



Three friends
and
Outstanding tow pilots
Sarah Arnolds, Lynda LaBerge, Jayne
Ewing Reid



Sunrise over the mountains
Does that mean rain later in the day?

WSPA members Kristin Farry and Cathy Williams flew their Schweizer 1-26s in the 2026 1-26 Championships, May 13th-20th, 2026. WSPA member Judith Galbraith (participant in prior years) crewed for Cathy.

This year's event was hosted by Windy City Soaring in Hinckley, IL. Twenty-eight pilots participated (including twelve who paired up as teams). Windy City was a fantastic host and fielded an amazing operations team. North-central Illinois is fairly flat and farmers plant a lot of corn. In May, the corn seed was just going into the ground, so land out possibilities were everywhere. This was helpful because soaring conditions during the contest were weak on days, the winds were low enough to launch. The windy city really is windy! Despite high winds, we were able to get three valid contest days in.

Kristin Farry placed third overall, consistently finishing tasks. She was also the winner of the Virginia Schweizer Trophy, the WSPA-sponsored award for the woman with the highest average daily score.

The 1-26 Championships are a great first contest. The 1-26 is a rugged, inexpensive glider and many clubs will allow members to take their club 1-26 to this contest. The 1-26 Association waives the entry fee for first-timers as well as juniors. Tows are free for juniors, too. More experienced participants mentor newcomers—sometimes the newcomers beat their mentors. We've had first-time participants win. Association members volunteer to crew for those who don't have crew, a key enabler for cross country flying. Everyone is flying essentially the same glider, so pilot skill is the major determinant of performance. Pilots can compare flights to learn from each other. There's a lot of fun and social events, too.



Kristin's beautifully restored
1-26 #400

A Day in the Life of a Scholarship Student at Garner Gliderport, More Than Learning to Fly Sailplanes

By Aisha Elrahhal

(Editor's note: Aisha (17) was one of three Tidewater Soaring Society's 2026 scholarship students. An 8 day intensive training camp was provided to the three students. She was no stranger to the club, since her brother won the same scholarship 5 years earlier and she often, as a pre-teen came to the gliderport with him. He just graduated from the Air Force Academy, and Aisha is aiming for the same goal. She wrote this essay after the camp submitting it to several flying organizations that offer flying scholarships.



Every day when I pull into Garner Gliderport, I know I'm going to learn something. It's always about flying a glider. Oftentimes, it's more. Sometimes it's about people. Sometimes it's about life. I never really know what the day is going to bring, and I think that's one of the reasons I love being there.

When people think about learning to fly a motorless plane, they probably picture someone just having fun in the sky. But honestly, some of my favorite parts of being a scholarship student with the Tidewater Soaring

Society happen before anyone even leaves the ground.

One of my favorite things to do is simply watch everyone before the first glider is even moved. Every person has their own morning routine. Some head straight for the coffee. Others grab a snack while they catch up on the latest stories. Before long, little conversations start popping up all over the place. Sometimes they're talking about flying, sometimes about work or a research project, and sometimes they're just catching up with friends. I think it's funny because everyone has their own little way of doing things, and somehow it all works together.

Almost every weekend, at least one person says something like, "We said we were going to start at eight, and now it's 9:30. Come on, guys!" Everyone laughs, but somehow everything still gets done.

I've learned that glider pilots love to debate. If you ask one question, you'll probably get three different answers. Before long, everyone explains why they think they're right. To someone walking by, it might sound like they're arguing, but they're not. They're sharing what they've learned over years of flying and trying to understand why the answer is what it is. Then someone cracks a joke, everyone laughs, and they're right back to getting the gliders ready. It's just interesting to watch because every conversation teaches me something new.

As a scholarship student, I'm learning where I fit in. I try to take the initiative and help wherever I can, but I'm also learning when to step in and when to step back. Sometimes I just stand back for a minute because it's amazing how everyone already knows what needs to be done. Every person has a role, and somehow it all comes together. Observing a few moments helps me to understand how I can assist. They've welcomed me from the very beginning, and that has made learning so much easier. They make me feel like I belong, even though I am just a beginner. They trust me and show they have confidence in me, which makes me feel sure of myself and welcomed.

One lesson I'll never forget happened when I was assigned to find the tire pressure for my assigned glider's tire. While I was searching for it, my instructor and another instructor were discussing this same topic. Somewhere along the line, my instructor asked the other instructor what the tire pressure was for the 2-33 and the other instructor answered with 15 PSI. Upon hearing this, I shot up from my slouching position and announced that I had the tire pressure, and that I could confirm it was 15 PSI, having heard it from the other instructor. They all laughed when my

instructor asked me if I had found it within the glider manual, and I answered "no"; to which he replied that "no" means, that I had to keep looking. I slouched back down in defeat, only to lift right back up with the answer having found it within the manual, feeling proud of myself, until my instructor looked at me and asked, "Where did you find it?" Not, "Are you sure? Show me." After I pointed to the page, he smiled and said something like, "Wow, you found that fast." That moment made me think about how important it is to not only know the facts, but to know where I got the facts from. It was a good laugh we all had, and I will always be fond of that memory.

Another day, I was looking up a question about one of the speeds for the 2-33 and noticed something interesting. One section of the glider manual gave one answer, while another section gave a different answer for what seemed like the exact same situation. Naturally, another discussion started. Everyone had their own input, everyone listened to each other, and eventually someone said, "Well, the important thing to remember is, they're both right." That's when I learned that for older manuals, sections used to be done individually by separate people, and each person used to get their own data from testing the aircraft to use within the manual, hence why two different speeds may be posted for the same thing in different sections of the manual.

Those moments taught me something I'll always remember. In aviation, it's not enough to know the answer. You should know exactly where you found it. That lesson has stuck with me because it reminds me to understand the "why," not just memorize an answer.

One of my favorite memories happened on one of my earlier flights. We were searching for lift, and without even realizing it at first, I flew into a thermal and stayed in it. A few seconds later, I heard my instructor quietly giggling in the back seat. I asked, "Are you giggling back there?" He laughed and told me he was excited because I had found the thermal and was actually staying in it. I think we were both surprised. I know I was. Hearing the excitement in his voice made me even more excited because I realized I was starting to understand what I had been working so hard to learn.

Seeing how happy he was that I was making progress meant a lot to me. It wasn't just about flying better. It was about sharing that moment with someone who had been teaching and encouraging me. Those little moments are hard to describe unless you've experienced them. They create memories that stay with you long after the flight is over. They're the moments that make me fall even more in love with flying gliders.

Another memory I'll never forget happened while we were working on pre-solo skills. We had practiced simulated rope breaks and emergency procedures over and over. My instructor always reminded me, "Anything's game! We have to be ready for anything."

Then one day, a little over 20 feet above the ground, something happened that wasn't part of the lesson. I looked ahead and saw the tow rope hanging loose, flapping around. "Ooh!" was about all I could say. After we landed, my instructor said, "Out of everything we've practiced, that's the one thing that surprised you?" Even though I was surprised, my training immediately kicked in. I flew the glider, followed the procedures, and made a safe landing. My instructor smiled and said, "Good job. That wasn't even planned."

That moment gave me a lot of confidence. It showed me that all those practice rope breaks weren't just another lesson to check off. They had prepared me for something real. I remember sitting there afterward thinking, "I did it. I did it the right way." It's a feeling that's hard to describe, but it's one I'll never forget. Moments like that remind me that every lesson matters and that little by little, I really am learning how to fly.

Around that same time, I was getting close to soloing in the Schweizer 2-33. Unfortunately, a part on the glider needed to be replaced, so I had to switch to another glider for a while. Of course I was disappointed, but that's just part of aviation. Safety always comes first. Looking back, I'm glad it happened because it gave me the chance to learn another glider. As they say, life goes on. You keep learning, you keep adapting, and you never give up.

One of my favorite things to do at the gliderport is simply listen. There are always interesting conversations going on. Sometimes people are talking about flying. Others are talking about work, research projects, weather, or something happening in the soaring community. Occasionally, you can hear pilots talking over the radio as they're flying cross-country. It's just interesting because these are conversations I would never hear from people, I normally spend time with. Every flying day I leave knowing something I didn't know before.

I also love hearing everyone's stories. Even when I was younger and watched my brother learning to fly (Editor: he was one of the recipients of the 2021 TSS scholarship and just at this writing graduated from the Air Force Academy), I remember listening to some of the elder members talking about their lives. Some had been fighter pilots or test pilots. Others shared stories about serving during different wars. Then someone would proudly say the Air Force had the best pilots, someone else would say the Navy was better, and before long another friendly debate would begin. I think it's funny because everyone enjoys giving each other a hard time, but you can also tell they have a lot of respect for one another. Underneath all the teasing is a friendship that has been built over many years.

One of the female pilot mentors, Frauke, has really cool stories she likes to share. I kind of think of her as the mom of the group. I always enjoy hearing her stories about traveling with her husband and flying sailplanes around Europe and across the United States. Every story reminds me that flying isn't just about being in the air. It's about the people you meet, the places you go, and the memories you make along the way.

Another thing that has amazed me is learning about everyone's careers. It's just interesting to hear how they all ended up where they are today. Some members are medical doctors. Some earned ROTC scholarships. Some went to civilian colleges. Others served in the Navy, Air Force, Army, the National Guard, and the Coast Guard. Some became military or commercial pilots, while others became engineers, researchers working at NASA or in private industry. Listening to their stories has opened my eyes to careers and opportunities that I can explore.

I love asking questions about college, internships, research, and different career paths. Everyone is willing to share what they've learned. They never make me feel like I'm bothering them. In fact, many of them come over and start the conversation with me before I even have a chance to walk over and introduce myself. That may seem like a small thing, but it means a lot. It makes me feel welcome. It makes me feel like they truly want me there. The soaring community is full of people who genuinely want to help others succeed. They share their knowledge, encourage new pilots, and are always willing to give advice. They know people throughout aviation and aerospace, and they're willing to help open doors for the next generation. It's exciting to know that the people I'm meeting today could help me in the future, but what means even more is knowing they actually want to help. Their kindness and encouragement have given me confidence to keep chasing my goals.

Every flying day at the gliderport teaches me something new. Of course I'm learning how to fly a glider, but I'm also learning about people, teamwork, problem solving, and the importance of listening. I've laughed at the group's funny personalities, learned from their friendly debates, celebrated little victories with my instructors, and heard stories that I'll never forget.

When I first received the Tidewater Soaring Society's Scholarship, I thought I was getting the chance to learn how to fly a glider. I didn't realize I was also joining a community. Every flying day I leave with something new. Sometimes it's a flying lesson. Sometimes it's career advice. Some-

times it's a funny story that makes me laugh. Sometimes it's a conversation that gives me a new way of looking at the world and my future.

Most of all, I leave Garner Gliderport grateful. Grateful to the people who have welcomed me, answered my questions, shared their stories, celebrated my successes, and made me feel like I belong. They have shown me that soaring is much more than flying. It's about learning from one another, encouraging each other, sharing knowledge, and helping the next person succeed.

I still have a lot to learn, and that honestly excites me. Every flying day brings another opportunity to grow, another lesson to learn, another story to hear, and another reason to fall in love with flying all over again. Learning to fly a glider has been an amazing experience, but the people are what have made this journey truly unforgettable. I realize this scholarship has given me so much more than flight lessons. It has given me mentors, friendships, confidence, inspiration, and a place where I feel like I belong. I came here hoping to learn.

Thank you to everyone that donated their time to me and the other scholarship students. I learned that all the Tidewater Soaring Society's members, who conducted the week-long camp were volunteers, donating their time and expertise to entice a new generation of glider pilots, setting the foundation for future careers in aviation. Two of the instructors came all the way from Florida on their own expenses. That is great dedication to the next generation of sailplane pilots that need to be recognized. TSS volunteers take time off from work to dedicate their time to teaching us how to fly sailplanes. They push their personal schedules to the side to dedicate these 8 days to the scholarship students. I don't think many people realize the time, effort, energy and cost that goes into teaching someone to fly a sailplane. It takes a lot to orchestrate a scholarship soaring camp and I am extremely grateful for the opportunity given to me.

In the News

Kristin Farry finished 3rd in 1-26 championship

Katia van Horn flying in 2026 Standard Class Nationals finished 8th

Isable Ulland flying Sports Class in Region 8 finishing 1st

Asleigh Andrews, flying in Region 9 Sports Class finished 9th

Team Arnold/ Striedieck won Region 5 North contest

Four WSPA members participated in the M-ASA cross country camp. **Cathy Keller** and **Julia Karazinski** both completed the task. **Kristin Farry** and **Cathy Williams** stayed behind to assist her mentee. We all ordered and wore the pink shirts. Unfortunately, Cathy Keller and Julia Karazinski (mentee) had to leave before we got a picture of all of us. Kristin Farry, mentor, and Cathy Williams, camp manager, are in the attached photo.

Cathy Williams

Flights can be found on we glide.



Kristin Farry and
Cathy Williams

This article was the winning entry in the 2025 Richard Collins Writing Prize for Young Pilots. After reading more than 60 entries, our distinguished panel of judges (including Richard's son) selected Katia Van Horn, a full-time flight instructor from Missouri, as the winner of the \$5,000 award. We hope you'll agree that Katia's account of her first soaring competition is a fine tribute to a talented writer and pilot.

Cruising through the Soaring Blues

By Katia van Horn

My first flight instructor and mentor, Ron, had told me to expect good thermals up to 7,000', 8,000', maybe even 9,000'—an exciting prospect because at home in Missouri we only have a few days every year that strong. From 9,000', a high-performance glider like the Discus B I fly can easily glide many miles, depending on the wind direction, and can give the pilot plenty of time to find another thermal. The area around Houston has smooth farmland and contains plenty of airports, ideal for potential landouts, making it a perfect location for a new cross-country soaring pilot.

Unfortunately, as most pilots can attest, weather that happens as forecast is a rare blessing. And we were not blessed that week. Most days clouds were only 2,500' to 3,000' above ground when launch time came. My highest altitude reached was a little over 5,000'. It's unlikely I would even do a cross-country training flight in a Piper Cherokee with ceilings at that altitude, and now I was doing exactly that but in a glider. Before this week, I had a hard time understanding why other pilots often think glider pilots are crazy, but after flying relatively low altitude cross-country soaring flights, I have to agree with them.

The beginning of the contest was eventful for me, but in the wrong way. It hadn't been fun, and I had been hanging onto the weak thermals for dear life, which was even less pleasurable in nearly 100-degree temperatures. It was only my fourth flight in the Discus, and even though launch, aerotow, gaggle flying, setting up my flight computer, and landing at 89TA had all gone well, I was exhausted from the stress. Soaring had always been a peaceful and exciting getaway, but such a tough flight on day one left me blue and apprehensive.

My mother did not raise a quitter, however, and despite the practice day disaster, I was back on the launch grid for day 1. The first official contest day wasn't much better. I barely made the turn points as slowly and inefficiently as possible. After seeing my continued ride on the struggle bus, Ron had the idea to team fly on day 2, which wasn't against contest rules. Having the leadership of a much more experienced soaring pilot was an immediate change for the better. Following the distinctive v-tail HP-18 from cloud to cloud and doubling the opportunities to sniff out a thermal made a huge difference, as did the psychological comfort of not being alone so far from the airport.

Soaring on day 3 with Ron was the pinnacle of my soaring success that week, as I was finally able to fully enjoy the flying. We experienced some of the things that made me love soaring to begin with: watching the ground creep away in a strong thermal, porpoise flying at cloud base, and racing home on final glide. Two new joys specific to those contest flights also presented themselves: perfectly centering a thermal with the HP-18 just across from my wing and announcing, "4A finish!" over the radio after a successful task. The peaceful feeling of soaring had returned at last.

Team flying wasn't without challenges, though. Our two gliders have very different performance. I was outclimbing the HP-18 and loitering at the top of every thermal waiting for Ron to catch up. Flying the same distance as a lower performance glider hurt my contest scores because of the Sports Class handicap system. With my newly restored confidence I was itching to venture out and be more competitive.

I was optimistic about striking out on day 4 and 5 by myself. It turned out that doing well on my own was a false hope, almost like applying to any professional pilot job these days. And on day 4, I almost immediately fell out of the workable soaring band and had to scrape my way back up to altitude while gliders who wisely waited to set out on task shot by above me. Low saves during a contest hurt a contestant's efficiency because it takes longer to go the same or even shorter distances.

I suffered again on day 5 due to my poor decisions, this time my low save was over harsh terrain as the thermals were dying off in the late afternoon. Thankfully, I was smart enough to cast aside my delusions of making that third turn point, and I squeaked back to base with a few hundred feet to spare and landed 4 hours and 41 minutes after my launch. That is my record for longest glider flight, and it's one I certainly won't be inclined to break anytime soon.

Those two unfortunate days of flying were a small letdown from the joys of flying with Ron, but I certainly learned an important lesson: the foundation of contest success is knowing when the soaring day is going to start and end and flying the task accordingly. Once I've mastered cloud guessing and efficient flying, fitting the tasks within that timeframe will be easier. Even in my early days of learning to fly gliders, competing was one of my goals, and after this first contest, I can officially say that I am a competitive glider pilot. No need to mention that I was 12th out of 14 contestants. I'll be racing the Discus again this summer in Houston, and, hopefully, for many years to come, but I'll never forget the full circle moments of racing alongside my first flight instructor.

"4A finish!"



Katia Van Horn is a full time CFI and CFI-I, except when she's taking a month or two off every summer to travel and attend soaring events. She is also a new CFI-G and tows in a Cessna 150 for her gliding club, Midwestern Soaring Association. One of her pas-

sions is helping other youth get involved with aviation and high schoolers are some of her favorite students. Her goals include learning aerobatics, wave soaring, owning a plane, and getting a commercial helicopter add-on rating. Other than flying, she likes to paint, craft, and try new coffee shops.

2026 Anne Morrow Lindbergh Trophy winner Adriana Barragan Ibarri



Adriana Barragan-Ibarri flew an LS-6b 520.7km (nearly 324 statute miles) in Jasper, TN, on March 25th, 2025. This flight earned her a Diamond as well as our Anne Morrow Lindbergh Trophy. She started this amazing flight in Jasper, TN (Marion County Airport). Much of the flight was on the Sequatchie Ridge, but she flew well into Alabama along the Tennessee River Using thermals and even tagged the northwestern corner of Georgia. She was airborne slightly over four and a half hours. Check it out on WeGlide.

Adriana's official AML distance is 411.6 km, because our rules do not allow reusing turn points. We count the distance up to the second time your flight turns at a given point. This turn point rule is under review this year.

Adriana has become a major contributor to aviation flight training with her company Fly ORKA, Inc., (<https://flyorka.com>). She's developed the FlyORKA app that increases the efficiency of flight training. It helps pilots maintain motivation for and progress toward their goals, reducing wasted flight training hours.



Adriana Barragan (right) with Kristin Farry, WSPA Awards and Scholarships Board member, at her company's AirVenture (Oshkosh, WI) booth where she learned that she had the winning flight.

From Military and Airline Flying to Soaring

By Liv Fuller

Coming from the military and powered aviation world, I never expected soaring to change the way I thought about flying as much as it has. I've flown high-performance aircraft, operated in complex environments, and experienced incredible moments in aviation — but gliding introduced me to an entirely different relationship with the air.

My first exposure to soaring was ridge flying out of Dillingham Field in Hawaii, combined with glider aerobatics. I still remember the sensation of silently carving along the ridge with nothing but the wind keeping us aloft. Without engine noise, every movement of the aircraft felt more connected and alive. The glider felt less like a machine and more like an extension of my body.

My second unforgettable soaring experience was wave flying over New Zealand's Southern Alps near Mount Aoraki / Mount Cook. Flying in mountain wave over some of the most beautiful terrain in the world was unlike anything I had experienced in powered aviation. The atmosphere itself became visible — smooth lift, rotor, lenticular clouds, and the incredible energy hidden within the sky. That flight completely hooked me on soaring.

What continues to draw me back is the serenity of it all. There is something special about circling silently in a thermal with eagles nearby, feeling the subtle seat-of-the-pants indication that tells you you've found lift. You begin to feel connected not only to the aircraft, but to the air mass itself. In a glider, you don't just fly through the atmosphere — you learn to understand it.

One of the biggest inspirations for me pursuing my glider commercial rating was the story of the "Gimli Glider." When the Air Canada Boeing 767 suffered a dual engine flameout, the captain — who was also a glider pilot — successfully managed the aircraft's energy state and landed safely with no fatalities. That story always stood out to me because it demonstrated how soaring teaches pilots to think differently. You become constantly aware of glide performance, altitude, energy management, and landing options.

I also flew with a captain who had grown up flying gliders in France. I was amazed by how naturally skilled he was as a stick-and-rudder pilot and how deeply he understood aircraft behavior, especially in abnormal or emergency situations. It reinforced my belief that soaring experience makes pilots safer and more capable overall.

The biggest differences I've noticed transitioning from powered aircraft to gliders are the heightened situational awareness and weather knowledge required. In a glider, you are always thinking ahead: Where is the lift? What field could I land in if conditions change? Can I still make it back to the airport?

One aspect of glider flying that immediately reminded me of military flying was aerotow. Following the tow plane requires the same kind of precision and discipline as close formation flying. You are constantly making smooth, coordinated corrections to keep the tow plane positioned properly on the horizon while "boxing" the wake and staying out of the disturbed air behind the tow aircraft. Over-controlling quickly becomes obvious, and success depends on finesse rather than force. It develops an incredible sense of aircraft position, energy awareness, and coordinated control inputs — skills that directly translate to formation flying and overall stick-and-rudder proficiency.

You also learn to truly read the sky — cloud formation, thermal triggers, convergence, wave, and cloud streets become part of your decision-making every flight. And honestly, thermal hunting is just plain fun. It feels like a treasure hunt in the sky. I've also been impressed by the soaring community and programs like the badge system that continuously challenge pilots to improve their skills. Soaring rewards precision, patience, and curiosity in a way that is hard to replicate elsewhere in aviation.

(cruise on page 10)

(Cruised from page 9)

Most importantly, soaring teaches humility and confidence at the same time. It sharpens your understanding of aerodynamics, coordinated flight, energy management, and off-airport landing considerations. When you fly without an engine, you develop trust in your ability to handle the aircraft and make good decisions.

There's a reason so many exceptional aviators started in gliders. After experiencing soaring myself, I finally understand why.

Blue skies,

Liv "HB" Fuller

Naval Aviator, CFII, MEI, ATP, CPL(G), A&P

www.livtoflyaviation.com



with my instructor after my first solo. Jan Driessen. He is 90 years old, was a Dutch Air Force pilot flying the T-33 and the Gloster Meteor and I was his 648th glider student he's signed off.

@livtofly [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#)

Last Day of WGC2026 in Poland (from the SSA webpage)

Sean Fidler and Sarah Arnold competed in the 18m class



"Another fine day for soaring in Poland – the 11th soarable day in a row, and the final day of WGC2026. The practice period for this contest was consistently cold, cloudy and downright grim. We finish with a contest that will be remembered for its beautiful weather and the excellent flying this allowed.

At the morning pilot briefing it was announced that the total distance flown yesterday was more than 55,000 km. To put this in perspective, note that the circumference of the Earth at the equator is approximately 40,075 km. It's apparently conformed that the Open class task (848 km) was the longest ever set at any World Gliding Competition. No word on where the 18-Meter task (755 km) ranks – probably quite high.

Unfortunately, this was definitely NOT a good day for the US Team here. No one actually got hurt, but we endured a series of small and not-so-small disasters, some simply unfortunate and others self-inflicted. Readers with patience will find the full story below:

It began with a flat tire on Sean's AS-33e. Its main wheel has been giving problems: it's prone to losing air more or less at random. Today it was fully inflated during the tow to the grid, then went mostly flat sitting on the runway. A pump was located and the tire was re-inflated, but there was no way to be sure this would not happen again shortly before launch. We watched it closely and it held air (perhaps it was ashamed to leak in public) and Sean launched successfully. It then held air throughout the flight and subsequent landing. The glider is now disassembled and in its trailer, where the tire is free to leak as much air as it chooses.

Sarah's Ventus had worse problems. During WGC2026 it's been infested by electrical gremlins that have caused issues I've previously related. Today at the pre-grid weight check it registered slightly overweight (perhaps due to some fluky wind) and the electric ballast dump valves failed to work properly (there's no way to manually dump water ballast). As before, the electrical control box was putting up strange messages. She'd acquired a replacement, and decided it was time to install this. The new controller declared itself content, and was happy to dump the necessary small amount of water ballast.

But when Sarah turned on power in preparation for launching, the electrical control box displayed various alarming messages – it apparently objected to something about the avionics batteries (which it had previously tolerated) and refused to connect to them. With little time available for troubleshooting, the workaround was to power instruments and avionics from the large batteries designed to power the self-launch engine. The mostly worked, but left the radio in a strange state: locked to the last frequency used (the airfield landing / safety frequency) with no way to control volume or even turn it off. Sarah grabbed a handheld radio and successfully launched; she'd be forced to listen to the locked frequency during the entire flight.

They launched into a good sky, with plenty of thermal lift available. There was time to look around, and they used it to connect with wave lift, which offered climbs well above cloud base. They found a great climb near the south end of the start line and used it, taking care to stay clear of some nearby airspace where the maximum allowed altitude is 3500'. And they were careful to stop their climb short of 9500', which is the absolute maximum for gliders anywhere in Poland. What they – and their Team Captain – missed was that just north of the 3500' airspace is a sliver where the maximum is 8500'. This is high enough that in normal Polish weather it is unimportant, and I think we all had formed the habit of regarding it as insignificant. Their great climb had taken them into this, and they are thus scored as having landed at the point of entry (which is to say: before having even started the task). Brutal – but entirely our own fault.

At this point you're thinking "How could the day get worse than that?" Well, in Sarah's case it definitely did. Having made a pretty good flight (she and Sean successfully threaded their way through a veritable minefield of tricky airspace), she finished. As you'd expect, the Ventus engine batteries are lithium-based, and it's believed these should be stored at no more than 70% of full charge. They have enormous capacity; using them to power instruments (and an annoying radio) all day scarcely makes a

(WGC on page 11)

2026 Oshkosh / Air Venture

Mark Palmer, editor of the "Airworthy" newsletter posted the following in the August issue (excerpts)

Alice and I finally checked Oshkosh off our bucket list. We had long wanted to attend and finally While we only spent 3 ½ days there, we were amazed and overwhelmed by everything and everyone! AirVenture set another record this year – 734,000 people over the length of the event. There were more than 10,000 aircraft there (and as far as we can tell, only 2 gliders). There were homebuilts, warbirds, classic aircraft, helicopters, sea planes, and everything from ultralights to corporate jets. And a Ford Trimotor giving rides!

We spent long hours touring the vendor booths in the hangars, bought plenty of t-shirts and acquired an inordinate number of stickers and key fobs.

Alice and Gary took a morning workshop on composite construction and Ridge and I took a workshop on wood aircraft construction. I decided this was the year to do it.

We stopped by the SSA tent. A shoutout to all the volunteers who manned the tent, especially **Scott Manley**, who brought his 1-35 and spent hours coaching people on the Condor simulator. There were a few handouts and some back issues of Soaring to distribute to visitors. With the opportunity to touch so many aviation enthusiasts, including kids, it would be great if SSA could recruit more volunteers to make a more impactful presence at AirVenture in the future.

We enjoyed the entire time we were there. There was so much to see, we only were able to take in the Warbirds area. We never got to check out the homebuilts or vintage section.

WSPA members Kristin Farry and Adriana Barragan Iberry were also at this aviation spectacular. (Hangar Soaring hasn't heard from other WSPA members yet.)

(WGC from page 10)

dent in this. She decided the polite thing to do was to do use the engine for a simulated self-launch.

She hit the switch that raises the electric engine from a bay in the fuselage behind the cockpit. It emerged, then stopped, with the controller displaying a "low voltage" message. No big deal – just land straight ahead and sort out the issue later. She moved the switch to the retract position – and things got very exciting: without any action by Sarah, the engine started. Because it had barely emerged from the fuselage, the engine bay doors were in the path of the propellor. It hit one, which broke loose (fortunately not damaging the tail as it departed). The other stayed in place, but took damage from the spinning prop. The sounds were alarming. The glider retained just enough energy to reach the airfield and land short, engine still rotating. By securing the master switch, Sarah was finally able to get the prop to stop."

Sarah finished 29th and Sean, who had won one day ended in 25th place.

STAY SAFE OUTDOORS

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM ...

► HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

More people 50 and older are taking diuretics, antihistamines or beta-blockers, each of which can increase the risk of heat-related illnesses in the summer. If your urine is dark yellow, you're drying out. Drinking water helps, but an electrolyte drink, such as Gatorade, Powerade or Vitaminwater, is better; sip it regularly until your urine is clear and more frequent. Get out of the heat upon any signs of heat exhaustion, including heavy sweating, thirst, pale or clammy skin, headache or dizziness. In as little as 30 minutes, heat exhaustion can progress to disabling or deadly heat stroke, which can damage internal organs. Symptoms can include hot, dry, red skin; profuse sweating; confusion; slurred speech; or loss of consciousness. Move anyone with these more advanced symptoms to a cooler location immediately, then call 911. Bring down the person's body temperature by pouring cool water on their skin or getting them into a cold shower or bath. Give the person an electrolyte drink if available. Do you live alone? Ask someone to check on you twice a day when the National Weather Service issues excessive-heat warnings.

—**James Williams**, emergency medicine physician, Texas Tech University Health Sciences School of Medicine



Artificial non-intelligence (or ANI)-

this is not an April joke
By Frauke Elber

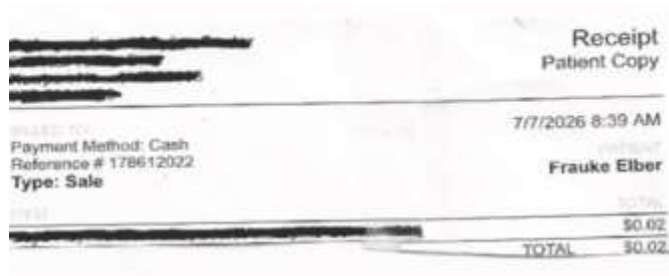
For the last two months, I got a bill from my doctor's office, that I owed the office 2 cents after the insurance had paid. And then on the bill it asked how I wanted to pay, by check, credit card or cash. I paid cash but asked for a receipt. I was very tempted to pay by credit card.

Now, consider what the 2-cent bill cost to be created and mailed:

You need:

- A computer with appropriate program to create the bill
- A person entering the data
- Paper and ink to print it
- An envelope and a stamp (right now \$.78) to mail it
- A person to accept my 2 cents worth and the paper to print the receipt.

The other question I was asking since our pennies are being faced out and a 5-cent coin will be the lowest denomination, do I get credit for the overpay.



Unusual Launch Method

By Frauke Elber

Adnan Mirza, a Pakistani student at Virginia Tech in the 90ies who was a member in the Blue Ridge Soaring Society in New Castle, Virginia, sported this t-shirt in the 90ies at the "Contest of the Long Ears" in Klix, Germany, a popular competition for long-wing sailplanes. He also wore it at the 2002 Worlds in Germany and 2003 Worlds in Poland, competing as "Team Pakistan" with the help of his US friends (he competed in the US in several competitions). The t-shirt became a very popular collector item.

I wore it at the 2005 Women's World Championships in Klix, Germany. The t-shirt never made it back home to the US, being almost yanked from me by the Klix organizing team.

Adnan now resides with his family in the Netherlands.

Membership Dues Structure

[WSPA Membership Application & Renew](#)

WSPA ANNUAL DUES

- Full Members & Associate Members (Mail In, Zelle) \$25.00
- Full Members & Associate Members (PayPal) \$28.00
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- Life Members (Mail In, Zelle) \$350.00
- Life Members (PayPal) \$365.00

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Checks to WSPA should be written *to the order of* **WOMEN's SOARING PILOTS ASSOCIATION**.
On the *Memo line* write the **purpose** of the check.

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