



# Spirals

NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS SOARING ASSOCIATION

MAY 2010

## TSA Annual Safety Meeting

by Jeff Casto

TSA held its annual safety meeting on March 27th. TSA President Bob O'Neal welcomed everyone, extended appreciation to all club volunteers, and then singled out five volunteers, Sam Fly, John Barr, Tony Way, Lou Jokisch and Ann Turner, for exceptional contributions.

Bob then raised the first order of business, the election of Dave White as President-Elect. Having been previously nominated by the board, and having no opponent, Dave was quickly and unanimously elected.

Bob then turned the meeting over to Omri Kalinsky, TSA's new Chief Line Chief. Omri presented a PowerPoint slideshow highlighting the important responsibilities of being a line chief, as well as procedures for safe operations, using the new hand-held radios, youth issues, north flow operations and the new procedure for launching water-ballasted gliders. Information regarding the duties of acting as line chief are on the TSA website and should be reviewed prior to standing line chief duty.

Next, SSA President and Region 10 Director Phil Umphres gave

an informative State-of-the-Organization presentation. Phil stated that the SSA is financially healthy and has a great staff in Hobbs. The magazine has continued to improve and the new archive feature on the SSA website is up and running.

Through the efforts of the SSA, a reciprocal towing program has



been created that allows SSA clubs to provide insured tows for pilots who do not belong to that club but do belong to another insured SSA organization. This arrangement is of special benefit to clubs located near enough to each other that flying from one to the other is common.

Phil reminded TSA members that the 2012 World, 15 and 18 meter Championships will be held at Uvalde, Texas. But he also warned that there has been a steady decline in the number of glider pilots, and that challenges to the use of airspace continue to be an issue.

The next SSA convention will be held in Reno, Nevada in 2012, with a mini-convention in 2011 somewhere in the eastern part of the U.S.

Following Phil was chief flight instructor John Latson with the core of the safety meeting. John gave an overview of a number of accidents that had occurred during the period from March 2008 to March 2009, with four fatal accidents and four fatalities, compared to the same period a year later, with seven fatal accidents and ten fatalities. John pointed out that many of these accidents involved high-time pilots. Several of them could have been avoided with better communication procedures, better towplane procedures and better pattern procedures. John also pointed out that pilots should change radio frequencies to 123.5 when flying cross-country or wanting to chat about location, conditions or tasks.

Terry Stroud then gave an overview of the awards he presents at the end of the year and presented the new cross-country database, which includes a new landing quality estimate on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best.

Andre DeBagey and David Cheek followed with a discussion of the capabilities and potential of the

Spot Tracking System. David is looking into signing TSA up for the Hawktracking service which will allow TSA gliders to be tracked during soaring season.

Tony Weigand ended the meeting with the debut of the new TSA website. His efforts have resulted in a vastly improved web presence for TSA. Improvements include a more esthetic look and feel, better navigation and improved content.

## April Fools Day Wasn't for Fools

by Andre de Baghy

On April 1st, Talihina delivered on its promise. It is unusual that I can make it out on a week day, but in the gliding world the ideal is to soar when the weather is favorable, not when our availability to soar is favorable. The winds were forecast to be strong and out of the south. After the usual breakfast, we headed to the airport where Dick was ready and waiting. We towed out at around 11 am. I opted to go straight to Kiamichi Ridge following Gerry who was the first to go.

The tow was reasonably rough as we worked through the rotor at around 3,000 feet MSL. We contacted the wave at 3,600 feet and I released for assurance at 3,900 feet MSL.

The winds were reading 29 to 33 knots at the time. I decided to go for distance that day to see how much I could log on the six OLC points. Altitude was my second goal. I ran the whole length of

the ridge twice at about 9,000 feet. At that point, the wind was changing and I was registering between 44 and 47 knots. This shifted the whole look of the wave and I lost the lift at 6,000 feet MSL, got shot down in the downdraft to about 4000 feet MSL, and retreated toward the middle of the valley to find a thermal and work my way back up.

At this time Randy and Omri were working the Buffalo Ridge at lower altitudes.

After several tries, I finally found a good thermal and got back into the wave, but it was concentrated in a narrow window so it took some time to get back on the ridge. By this time, Randy had already started his historic climb to 17,800 feet.

I registered a distance of 420 kilometers in OLC for the allowed six turnpoints, and a total distance of 720 kilometers for the day. I reached an altitude of 14,316 feet, but was still climbing.



Randy Teel at 17,800 feet just west of Rich Mountain

We are really blessed to have this area so close to home so we can have these really fun soaring days when, because of the weather, we cannot fly at home.

## ASI Safety Committee Warm-Up Letter for Spring 2010

By Mark Montague

*The following is a letter from the Air Sailing Inc. Soaring Club Safety Committee to ASI members, written by Mark Montague, reprinted with the author's permission.*

Each year, the ASI Safety Committee tries to draw our pilots' attention to some of the ways flights can end badly. The plain, unvarnished truth is that we can't really tell you to concentrate your attention on every untoward possibility. We have to make choices, be selective and focus on some specific problem area each year. Usually, we choose something that has caused someone else trouble in the recent past. What should it be this year? Good question.

While there are many different ways to get yourself into trouble while flying sailplanes—you can collide with another aircraft, you can fly into the ridge, you can trap yourself over unlandable terrain, you can stall out of the turn to final—probably the part of the flight where things can go from “OK” to “not OK” in the least time would have to be the tow. So, let's think a bit about towing, and in particular, about towing early in the season, when we're more likely to be just coming up to speed after a long and unsoarable winter.

Naturally, when we imagine ourselves setting off on another great flight, we imagine ourselves

flying perfectly. Alas, neither you nor I have ever flown a perfect tow, and we never will. So what does this mean? It means that we will somehow have to reconcile the perfect flights of our imagination with the imperfect reality. Most of us do this anyway, in a sort of after-the-fact manner. We get a little bit out of position and take whatever minor corrective action will bring us back into the groove. Usually, this is plenty good enough.

But what if it isn't? That's where things get sticky, and each year, some of us end up in that territory. Which ones of us? No saying. It could be me next time, or it could be you...the point is, there's just no way to tell in advance. All we can say for certain is that we had several really close calls at ASI last season—and that we don't want to repeat them this year!

So, rather than simply dreaming of that perfect tow, why not approach the matter from a different angle: why not ask ourselves, "Where is the boundary between a small error that is eminently salvageable with our present skills, and one that isn't?" In other words, "Just how bad does it have to get before it's REALLY bad?"

The answer will vary from one pilot to the next and from one sailplane to the next. Supposedly minor details such as the location of the tow hook or the visibility from the cockpit position can suddenly make for great differences in how much error is tolerable. Even the same pilot may answer these questions differently

depending on how current he or she is, or how alert he or she is at the time the situation arises.

Thinking along those lines leads us directly to questions such as "when am I far enough out of position that releasing becomes the best action to take?" Let's remind ourselves here of one limit that is absolutely and always non-negotiable: if the PIC of the glider EVER loses sight of the towplane, an immediate release is mandatory! However, depending on the factors just mentioned, as well as others, the prudent pilot may choose to release well before this point is reached.



How much slack in the towrope would make an immediate release the best choice? How fast, or how slow, a tow speed would make releasing the best choice? The answers, obviously, won't be "one size fits all," but time spent trying to answer these questions will be time well spent.

While we're talking about tow pilot speed errors, let's talk for a moment about signals. Do you know the correct signals to ask for a higher, or lower, airspeed? Are you sure? Recent beginning-of-season checkouts have revealed that not every pilot takes off with these signals

firmly committed to memory, so make certain that you know the complete set of SSA standard signals COLD. Will it matter if you don't? Probably not, but if it does, it will suddenly REALLY matter! Be proactive. Protect yourself—and your tow pilots!

What if you can't release? It isn't that rare a situation, particularly in those sailplane types with skids forward of the wheel. Towing through moderate turbulence can wrap the tow rope around the skid so that while the release mechanism is working perfectly, the tow rope never separates from the glider. Has that happened recently at ASI? You bet it has. So, have a plan. Have it BEFORE you need it! Maybe you'd prefer to land on tow; maybe you'd prefer to break the weak link. If you're the pilot in command, it's your call, Captain! Nobody else can make that choice for you. And remember that better decisions are almost always made in advance—when there's plenty of time to consider all the options and ramifications—rather than in the heat of the moment. Give yourself that advantage; you'll never regret it.

Here's another situation. On an instructional flight last season, after the post-solo student had practiced several slack lines, the tow pilot interpreted the final slack line as a release and started an immediate descent toward the field. This represents an emergency arriving out of the blue, and one most pilots have never considered before. Consider it now. What would

you do in this situation?

Here's what actually happened: I am happy to report that both instructor and student pulled the release at the same time. The student clearly was on top of the situation (as he should have been) and recognized a dangerous incident before it had enough time to develop. Bravo! Even a minor delay in releasing might have led to a towplane upset—a potentially unrecoverable situation...and the time between “OK” and “not OK” would have been no more than a couple of seconds.

In summary, give a little thought to the various ways your tow could deviate from perfection, and how far it would have to go before you'd consider the tow no longer worth salvaging. We have a great summer season shaping up, and we can resolve to fly an entirely accident-free season. It's worth it, don't you think, to consider—even before your first flight—just where your personal boundaries are?

## Selling Soaring

by Jeff Casto

In the May 2009 issue of Soaring Magazine, Phil Umphres wrote about how opportunities to sell the sport of soaring present themselves almost daily. I recently had one such opportunity on a plane from Phoenix to Dallas.

Using Southwest Airlines' “sit anywhere” policy, my wife and two daughters took one row and I took the window seat in the row in front of them. A man in his thirties soon sat in the aisle seat, took out

a paperback, and began reading.

My wife, ever efficient, was checking the weather in Dallas on her Blackberry. “It's going to be nice when we get home,” she said, “but Saturday looks bad.” “Hmm, I guess I won't be flying, then,” I replied. At this, the man in the aisle seat looked up from his book. “You're a pilot?”

Thus began a conversation about soaring. He seemed interested and said he had always wanted to try hang gliding or ultralight flying. While not knocking those types of flying, I told him about the virtues of soaring. As we talked, a woman took the seat between us. When I told him he could find more information at the SSA website, the woman jumped in and said, “Go ahead, I'm listening!”

They both wrote down the SSA and TSA URLs. The woman was from the hill country so TSA was a bit of a drive for her. I mentioned that there was a club in her part of the state called the Fault Line Fliers that might be more convenient, but that she was welcome to come to TSA if she liked.

A couple of hours later we landed at Love Field and I said goodbye to my new acquaintances, hopefully after selling them on at least investigating soaring. What I regret is that I had not thought to give each of them my email address and ask them to email me if they had any questions. Next time, I'll be better prepared.

To keep our sport alive, we need new members. Opportunities to sell

soaring can happen anytime. Take advantage of these situations, as Phil encouraged us to do. Growing the sport of soaring benefits us all.

## TSA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

20 February 2010

### Treasurer

A general discussion regarding TSA's investments was conducted. General topic of the discussion was whether TSA should invest in volatile or non-volatile accounts. The general consensus of the Board was that TSA should move into a Vanguard type investment account.

Two electronic approvals are currently required to authorize expense payments. An upper limit of \$10,000 for electronic payments was established.

### Membership

BOD approved Gregory Carr's application.

### Flight Operations and Training

No issues with flight instructors. Doors to the new hanger have been left open and unlocked due to bent rods on the doors. Tom Barkow will be contacted to address this issue.

### Tow Pilots/Tow Planes

No report.

### Old Business

#### Line Chiefs

Omri Kalinski attended the Board meeting as the new Chief Line Chief. The line chief duty signup process was discussed. It was mentioned that youth members

should be scheduled to support the line chiefs, and that they must wear the yellow vests.

### President-Elect Nomination

Dave White was nominated president elect. The membership will be asked to approve (elect) the President Elect at the Safety Meeting.

### Website

It was reported that the website will be operational sometime during the first week of March.

### Youth Membership

Bob O'Neal reported that Dave White has continued to improve the youth program. Bob expressed his thanks to Dave for doing a good job in this important program.

### Aircraft Radios

It was noted that a headset is missing, and that high-quality headsets are needed in the towplanes.

An antenna problem (ground plane?) has been identified for 34Z.

The tow plane radio work at Red Bird Executive Airport has not occurred yet; 42L will be going there for the work.

### Safety

The upcoming annual safety meeting was discussed.

### New Business

#### Water-Filled Glider Operations

The board discussed the procedure for getting the water-filled gliders launched. The consensus was that the water-filled gliders should remain at a safe distance from the runway while awaiting launch.

They should wait until all are ready before pushing out on the runway. A marker (cone) should be placed on the offset to denote the last glider on the offset to be launched before the water-filled gliders begin their takeoffs.

### Contests

The Region 10 contest will be held in Llano, Texas. A tow plane will probably be required from TSA to support the event. As usual, TSA will be able to provide a tow plane as long as there are three available. Tom Barkow has requested the LS-4. Jim Rider will participate in the contest with Tom.

Another event is planned for Cherry Valley, Arkansas (west of Memphis, TN). Some TSA members will be participating in the event.



### Pancake Breakfast

Bob Gibbons said a date for another pancake breakfast needs to be established, possibly for end of April or first of May. Some of the activities for this event could include a talk by Marion Griffith and videos on the last of the F-51 pilots. Wells Morse said he believed a presentation about soaring needs to be included.

### Hanger Space Request

An inquiry was made about renting the west end of the

new hangar for a trailer. The board declined this request.

### Boy Scout Campout

A request for a Boy Scout Campout at TSA has been received.

## Announcements

### Soaring Seminar

The Spring Soaring Seminar is Saturday, May 22nd through Tuesday, May 25th. Participating instructors include Paul Searles, Dave White, Byron Smith, Steve Altman, and Larry Mitchell, who is also the Seminar Director.

Weather permitting, the instructors will provide spring currency checks and flight reviews, cross-country sign-offs, aerobatic instruction toward endorsements and intensive instruction for pre- and post-solo students in preparation for solo endorsements and private checkrides.

The seminar schedule will be as in years past: ground school will begin at 0900 each day with flight operations from 1030 to 1800. The last 90 minutes of each day will be devoted to aerobatic instruction and practice.

A seminar application form and course list can be downloaded from the TSA website.

Prospective attendees may contact Larry Mitchell by phone at 940-597-3038 or by email at [lmitchll@gmail.com](mailto:lmitchll@gmail.com).

## Youth Program News

by Dave White

Here's a quick update on what's happening with the youth program:

1. We'd like to congratulate the latest youth member to solo, McKinley Smith. A great achievement, and we're all proud of you!
2. McKinley's solo has made room for a new member in the youth program. I have sent an offer to the next person on the waiting list and am waiting for a reply. If I don't receive a reply, I will move to the next person in the list.
3. Adult members, your feedback is important to the program! If you see a youth member doing well (or poorly), please either fill out an Adult Feedback form, call me, or email me. I use this information to select those youth members who are in Priority status and, therefore, get assigned instructors and first call on instructor time on flying days. It also helps me keep an eye on what is happening on the field when I can't be there. The feedback forms are in the clubhouse, on the bookshelves where the TV is located.
4. If you see a youth member working without a vest, please stop them and send them to the clubhouse to get a vest. This is required for each youth member at all times while working. In addition, the vest should properly reflect their ability to drive a golf cart.
5. Speaking of golf carts, they should only be driven by youth

members in one of two situations: First, if they are towing a glider. Second, if they have been assigned a specific task to accomplish using the golf cart. They are not authorized to use the carts for personal transportation.

6. We have a new category of youth membership. Those youth members who have not reached their 22nd birthday, but who have completed their private pilot license, will now be designated as Mentors. Their job will be to supervise, train and provide leadership to the other youth members. They will still run wings and other tasks if necessary, but their primary job will be to oversee the youth program.

Currently, Alec Davis is the only youth member in this category, but Stephen Garman is nearing his checkride, as is Bethany Hiller.

7. Youth members, remember that certifying your GPA above 2.0 is an annual requirement. You will be reminded by email when this comes due, usually in January. If your parent sends me a statement that you are in compliance, that is sufficient. If you wish to self-certify, a copy of your report card is required.

8. Last thing—as you all know, I'll be moving to a new club position in the fall. At that time, we will be looking for a new youth program coordinator. If you have any interest in this very important TSA program, please contact me.

## Recognition of Achievement

Instructor Byron Smith congratulates Richard Friedman on his solo flight.



Byron was also recently able to congratulate his son, McKinley, on his solo flight...



AND get soaked in the process!



Congratulations to Richard and McKinley!