



Tapping Into the Energy of Youth with the Civil Air Patrol

by Fred LaSor

Regular readers of *Soaring Magazine* will have read letters and columns in the past year about the future of our sport, especially faced with an apparent decrease in SSA membership figures. Lots of good ideas have been proposed to build and retain our numbers, and I applaud these, but in the long run we need new people taking up soaring if we are to remain strong as a sport.

*Photo above: Staff and cadets of the National Glider Academy's 2004 Summer Camp, Mazon, Illinois.
Photo by Kelly Rhoads.*



Cadet Nick Mikerevich straps' into "Blizzard." The author and two cadets wait for the tow plane to pull the glider onto the active runway. Photo by Stacy Rhoads.

This past summer I participated in a glider training program that has been around for a long time, but which was new for me: the Civil Air Patrol's National Glider Academy. I came away from that experience energized by the enthusiasm of the teenage cadets and optimistic about soaring's future. This is a program I encourage you to look into.

Like many of us I had heard of the CAP. And John Campbell wrote about CAP/SSA cooperation in the August 1999 edition of *Soaring* magazine. But my involvement this year was my first direct contact with CAP; and it was almost accidental.

A student in the Skyline Soaring Club told me last spring of his plans to participate in the CAP summer academy - if they were able to come up with enough instructors. I contacted Camp Commandant Tim O'Brien to offer my services and was invited to join them.

So in mid June I drove to Mazon, Illinois. We were seven CFPs, four tow pilots, three ground instructors, six administrators and 28 cadets of varying experience levels. The administrative staff recorded flight times, monitored safety, coordinated with CAP headquarters at Maxwell AFB in Alabama, and ordered pizzas and fried chicken for lunch.

The folks who organized our glider camp also sponsor a hot air balloon camp (not in Washington, D.C., which would seem like a natural location). Other CAP groups sponsor powered flight camps. As the auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, the Civil Air Patrol can use some USAF equipment for their activities - including tow planes and gliders for this camp.

Emphasis was on safety at all times on the flight line and around all equipment, and the cadets were conscientious in this regard. They also had plenty of opportunity to learn proper

Flies as right: They sure do paint their USAF glider up fancy! As the USAF auxiliary, the Civil Air Patrol has access to Air Force equipment for its programs. Photo by the author.

Flies below: Instructor Brian Collins (Maj. USAF), took off from his Pentagon job to work with CAP cadets for the week. Here he prepares to launch Cadet Danny Tomblin on his first solo flight. Photo by the author.





Cadet Tyler MacDonald shows left before turning downwind to land on Runway 29 at Mitten. Safety is emphasized throughout training, and clearing before turns is a "must-do." Photo by the author. Article continues on Page 36.

ground handling of the equipment, something any glider club will appreciate when they show up to continue flying at some future date.

We started the week with strong crosswinds and marginal

weather, but by the end of six long days all 21 cadets had logged at least 18 training flights. Several cadets were at their second glider camp and others had previous flight experience, so we ended up sending four of the 21 off on their own. All the cadets

