

SKYLINES

SKYLINE SOARING CLUB NEWSLETTER

May 2008

A Visit Down Under: *Skyline member soars New Zealand*

In February and March Miriam and I [Greg Ellis] visited New Zealand and Australia.

On the south island of New Zealand, during our drive from Christchurch to Queenstown, we stopped at Omarama for a flight. I did some spectacular mountain thermal soaring in their beautiful Duo-Discus. It is very different from our area, with their spectacular "Lord Of The Rings" scenery.

Some days later, during a long drive, I spotted what looked from a distance of about three miles to be gliders in a field.

Sure enough, we drove off the road and found ourselves at the Nelson Lakes Gliding Club. We stopped and had a chance to talk for a few minutes with some of the members. There was a photographer there and I was asked to take photos so that everyone, including the photographer, could be in the picture. At the same time I also took the group photos with my own camera.

We then waited to see the first winch launch before continuing on. They seem to have unlimited land; the winch was so far away that we were unable to see it from the takeoff point.

It was a real treat to visit, talk and fly with our soaring fraternity brothers on the other side of the world.

— **Greg Ellis**



Greg Ellis visits with Kiwi soaring pilots at Omarama in New Zealand.

Photo by Miriam Ellis

Spring Training

During three March weekends a group of 10-15 Skyliners, plus a token member of M-ASA, soaked up either new or forgotten knowledge under the generous auspices of Dave Weaver. As many remember Dave was a long-standing SSC member highly regarded for his expertise, professionalism and no-nonsense approach to instructing. He left the SSC over a year ago but retains dual membership with M-ASA and remains active at that club.

Dave told me that this was the largest turnout he's had over the many times he's conducted this course. He did an excellent job of tailoring the presentations to the wide variety of backgrounds of the attendees. While we didn't have anyone in the room who hadn't at least begun flight instruction, the level of glider experience

ranged from months to decades.

Nothing was left out, from aerodynamics and the use of the good old E-6B and plotter in cross-country planning, to the basics of contest flying. People contemplating either the knowledge test or practical flight check were well served, as were those of us who simply needed a refresher. Thanks very much Dave for truly above and beyond service.

A potentially noteworthy side effect of this activity was, I think, a Gainesville location that is central for much of the SSC membership and offers spacious and comfortable meeting rooms at no or minimal cost, as long as at least one of our members resides in the encompassing "old folks community."

— **Bob Salada**

Copy That

Club Events

Our genius webmasters have revised the club's "Events" page so that even a dummy like me can make changes in it. See <http://skylinesoaring.org/EVENTS/>. Click on the event for more detail, or change the view from week to month, etc. Please give it a look. When you know of events that would be of interest to our club members, let me or Vern Kline know about it and we'll get it on the list. Thanks.

— **Jim Kellett, resident curmudgeon**

Transponder for Sale

I have a power pilot friend in Winchester interested in selling his transponder. It's a King KT-76 with encoder. \$350. Anyone interested please let me know.

— **Bob Collier**

Capstan Share Available

Is anyone interested in partnering or syndicating the Capstan with me? It's a 1968 Slingby Capstan T-49B two-place side-by-side, 30:1 L/D, and includes a one-man rigging system and the world's largest Cobra trailer. Partner must have at least a private pilot glider license to keep insurance costs reasonable. If you're interested call me at: cell: (571) 259-0042, office: (703) 335-8185, home: (703) 753-3806.

— **Shane Nietzey**

A Note from Dick Otis

Hi Everyone,

Today I managed to escape the hospital, exactly one week after my operation to replace my aortic valve. Of course I have to go back frequently for lab work and check-ups, but the important thing is I'm moving from the survival stage, to the healing stage which will last for about eight weeks.

It's quite amazing to me, the quantum measurable improvements from day to day. I'm not without my problems but given what my body has gone through the body's healing power seems incredible. I started my freedom with a

shave of my one-week old beard, and a beautiful, blessed, long hot shower.

I appreciate all the cards, prayers and get well wishes – it really helps your morale to know a lot of people are caring about you. A pair of amazing Jesuit Priests (one Catholic and one Baptist – I didn't know Jesuits belonged to specific churches) looked after me starting in the intensive care unit.

I also appreciate everyone respecting my privacy during my hospital recovery. It was not the best of times, but I had the support of my immediate family and the knowledge you all cared.

Now that I'm home I will feel much more like receiving calls and visits.

There is a very long list of people to acknowledge, but to a person the care provided by the National Navy Medical Center surpassed all expectations. As a teaching hospital I was continually surrounded by enlisted, ensigns and Lt. Junior Grades (and their Army counterparts) with the cheeriest disposition and hardest work ethic you can imagine. I consider it a special privi-



leged to have received their care - care that continues in my outpatient status. My surgeon, Dr. Deb, was truly a world-class heart surgeon.

Trish and I are looking forward to when we can get back to dancing, recently our major social and athletic activity. It may be a little longer but I'm going to get back to flying too.

— **Dick Otis, April 18**

Say Again?

I had a conversation today at the gliderport in Switzerland with someone who opined to me that the air traffic controllers in America are completely incomprehensible to a non-native English-speaking pilot. He told me of this website that allows you to listen to many ATC services at different airports (KDCA, but not KIAD in case you were wondering). If you're interested the website is www.liveatc.net. After listening to a few of the controllers on

that website I agree with him about the incomprehensible part.

— **Piet Barber**

From the Spritemeister

Fellow Skyliners,

It's with a heavy heart that I must pass on the following information - the Sprite has been grounded. There will be no flying of the Sprite until further notice. It appears that a minor structural issue that was noticed during the annual inspection in February has become more pronounced and is now a major safety concern. The Sprite is grounded until it can be determined the courses of action available to the club.

— **Vern Kline**

Say Again?

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www.liveatc.net. After listening to a few of the controllers on that website I agree with him about the incomprehensible part.

— **Piet Barber**

Tow Car for Sale

Due to my upcoming move to the New York City metro area I must sell my red 2006 Volvo V50 4-door station wagon. It's the perfect glider tow car with a 6-cylinder engine, automatic transmission, CD/radio, and plenty of storage space for your glider parts and parachute. It has just 15,000 miles and is in excellent condition. \$19,500. Call me at (703) 344-8380 or e-mail dj@denniskjohnson.com.

— **Dennis Johnson, Skylines editor**





Images from Down Under

Greg Ellis visited two soaring clubs located on the South Island of New Zealand. Above left: Greg at the Nelson Lakes Soaring Club. Above right: Members of the Nelson Lakes Soaring Club stand for an American tourist's photo opportunity.

Photos by Greg and Miriam Ellis

Glider Orientation for Potomac Tracon

On Saturday, April 26, Mid-Atlantic Soaring Association's chief CFI, Glenn Collins, Rick Fuller, who negotiated a letter of agreement between M-ASA and Potomac Consolidated Tracon, and PCT staffer, Fred Ninger, hosted a glider orientation display at PCT's facility near Warrenton, VA.

Several hundred area pilots who were attending one of two Operation Raincheck sessions (briefings on flying in the ADIZ and a tour of the PCT facilities) visited the display and dozens of controllers from PCT came to look, ask questions and sit in the glider sitting on the lawn just outside the main entrance. More than a few of the controllers expressed a strong interest in taking M-ASA up on their offer for a free glider ride for any controller.

The occasion also served as a supplement to the training programs for controllers to help them understand and appreciate what the sailplanes that now show up on their radar screens look like and can do. All had received a recent e-mail about what to expect and how to interpret the radar signatures from the gliders and tow planes that were the subject of the March 14 letter of agreement.

The controllers were seriously impressed, expressing surprise at just how far and how high sailplanes on recreational flights go. Without exception, all were enthusiastic.

Throughout the day, the "Soaring – Your Sport for the New Millennium" video played in the lobby. Skyline Soaring Club donated the video to PCT's training director for use in his programs for controllers.

M-ASA made a lot of important friends for soaring today.

— **Jim Kellett**
Soaring Society of America Region IV director



M-ASA's Glenn Collins (third from left) and Rick Fuller (second from right) brief visiting pilots and controllers about glider operations. And yes, the glider being displayed is none other than H3.

Photo by Jim Kellett

Skyline Soaring Club, Inc. is a private, 501(c7) non-profit organization, dedicated to the enjoyment and promotion of the sport of soaring. SSC is based at the Front Royal-Warren County, Va. airport and is an affiliate club of the Soaring Society of America. For information about the club go to www.skylinesoaring.org or e-mail welcom@skylinesoaring.org.

President — Shane Neitzey

Secretary — Craig Bendorf

Treasurer — Daniel Noonan

Membership — Steve Rockwood

Chief Tow Pilot — David Dawood

Skylines Editor — Dennis Johnson

Directors — Robert Creedon, Spencer Annear, Paul Seketa



A Swiss Field Check: “how low can you go?”

Recently, I completed the Segelflug-gruppe Bern, Switzerland (SGBern for short) Spring Field Check with one of the local flight instructors. I found it to be a very interesting learning experience, and I believe you Skyliners might be interested in the differences between the Swiss flying styles from ours.

First, they have an accounting system on student progress very similar to ours from 1998 - with paper and logbooks and that's about it. At Skyline, we're light-years ahead. “We just keep information about their training in the student's logbooks,” and the blocks are as small as the logbooks we use.

Aerotow: As far as I understand it boxing the wake isn't required for a license in Switzerland. I decided to show the instructor how it was done “American Style.” When I demonstrated a smooth transition from point to point on aerotow the instructor wasn't impressed.

“You can go lower.”

“Heck no! I'm just below the wake. That is where I'm supposed to be.”

“Lower! See how far you can go. Let me take the controls for a second.”

He took the controls and showed me just how much lower.

Then once out to the side. Then once above.

The Swiss box the wake not to show how smooth the pilot can maneuver behind the tow plane but to demonstrate to a student how far you can get out of position before the tow plane loses its ability to cope with the tail forces imposed by the glider.

We could go way down on low tow. I was definitely looking up instead of out at a slack line that was starting toward my tail. Eeeek! Releasing the rope would have been interesting, just to know where the rope and whipping-around Tost ring would go. I thought all my lifetime's supply of adrenaline had previously been used up in giving flight instruction, but he managed to find more with this maneuver.

On the left and right sides of tow, we went far further than you ever would in a normal aero tow. The hint is to watch the rudder on the tow plane start to deflect, that's when the tow plane can't cope any longer and starts to yaw. The top part of the aero tow was not that much different than normal high tow. In other words, the difference between a high tow and a too high tow is much



Piet Barber, SSC webmaster in exile, survived a Swiss Spring Field Check at the Segelflug-gruppe Bern.

smaller than the difference between a low tow and a too low tow. I think that's an important lesson to take away from this demonstration.

It's important to note that the objectives of the two exercises (American and Swiss) are completely different. We all know why we do it in the U.S. It's required for the practical test and to get back in position, yadda yadda, but their philosophy for wake boxing is different, to show the student how far is really far out of position, and when it's just better to release.

Slips. I demonstrated some slips to him. I started a side slip. I pointed the nose at a target on the horizon and started to slip left. Unheard of. Not taught. All slips are forward slips. And while we're on the topic of forward slips, they

no longer teach the students do them when too high on final. Slip to final is not required for their license and the procedure in general is discouraged in the training process.

The reasoning behind this is mostly because they use modern gliders with effective spoilers, automatic control hookups (reducing the possibility of a spoiler failure) and the gliders they fly do not slip very impressively anyway. In most of the gliders in their fleet, it's pointless to slip on final if you're too high. You'll just overshoot your intended landing position while flying sideways. Instead, on the next flight, we did a “get rid of way too much altitude maneuver” in the ASK that I had never done before.

At 90-95 kph on final at 200 meters above the ground, the landing point was 520 meters beyond a bunch of high-tension power lines. The plan of the exercise was to be at 200 meters on the altimeter as I overflow the power lines and make a “get rid of way too much altitude” maneuver to get on the runway at the intended spot. Here's a map with markup showing what I'm talking about. <http://tinyurl.com/6czzgq>

Here's how we did it: There was no fancy slip, that skill is not needed. Simply apply full spoilers, dump nose drastically to

pick up speed to about 130 kph and drop like a rock.

When you get close to the ground pull back on the stick to slow down with the spoilers still open. Do this below your normal glide slope. Your speed will rapidly drop off in the level glide with the spoilers still open. It will take only a few seconds to get back to the normal approach speed. Once you intercept the normal glide slope line you can resume a normal landing. This technique is reported to work very well in short fields with obstructions.

Calculated glide slope, 2.6:1, and that's generously high because I started the dive maneuver a little late, so it might even be a lower glide slope. It may have been as low as 2.4:1.

No, this probably will not work in a 2-33. Or better yet a 2-22. But I never

really did this maneuver so explicitly before and was very impressed by it. I knew book-wise that it was possible, but still. You always learn something new when flying in a foreign country. I was skeptical but now I understand the reasoning for the practice. Yes, this was very different for me too.

Pattern: Their IP is cool. It's right on a ridge that just happens to be IP-height at IP distance from the airport. How convenient.

How inconvenient is it that there's a control tower at the airport and we need clearance to land? Bern Belp has chartered air services going to Munich and Amsterdam (at the least) and has a few airlines coming in several times a day.

"Bern Tower. Hotel Bravo 1811 Position Lima Bravo 3000 feet, ready for approach. "

"Hotel 811. Cleared for approach. Land at your discretion."

"Cleared for approach, land at my discretion. Hotel 811"

Last year those three sentences made 20 members in their club quit and it transformed the field into a much different airport than two years ago. Problem is, in case you're noticing, it's all in English. And the units are in feet.

Even though the gliders are all metric, the instruments are all metric, the control tower uses feet. So there's a little conversion chart in every glider cockpit to convert feet to meters, allowing the pilot to easily report positions in feet. Despite coming to Europe, I can not completely escape from archaic measurement units.

Marge: "Now, I know you haven't liked some of my past suggestions, like switching to the metric system."

Abe: "The metric system is the tool of the devil. My car gets forty rods to the hog-head and that's the way I likes it."

— *The Simpsons episode "A Star is Burns"*

— *Your member in exile, Piet Barber*

Demo Rides

Back in 1999, when Skyline first made arrangements to notify local air traffic controllers about our operations, the club offered any controller a free glider ride. Several staff from the ATC facility, then at Dulles tower, took advantage of that offer and several attended our annual safety meetings for a few years.

The appropriate ATC function has since moved from IAD to Potomac Consolidated Tracon in Warrenton, Va. Last Saturday a dozen or more of the controllers on duty attended a glider orientation display organized by M-ASA, and the offer of a free glider at either of M-ASA's locations or at Skyline was made to the staff. Several, who live closer to Front Royal than Frederick or Fairfield, indicated that they would like to take advantage of the offer with Skyline. A few are good candidates for club membership.

So, and this is important, if you're approached at the field

by a controller or supervisor from PCT about a demonstration flight, treat him very courteously and make every effort to work him into the schedule with a flight instructor. These are the people to whom we talk when we make our phone calls before operations and they are good friends to have.

This year's winner of a free glider ride from Randolph Macon Academy's Springfest celebration is Sandy Strawderman from Winchester, Va. She is supposed to contact me, but if you get a query from her the same deal applies, she's entitled to a demonstration flight.

In each of these instances, there's a choice in our logsheet software for corporate payment, meaning flight is charged to the club itself, not the pilot or the guest.

— *Jim Kellett, resident curmudgeon*

Experimental Soaring Society Workshop

The 2008 Eastern Workshop of the Experimental Soaring Society will be held June 13-15 at Garner Gliderport in Orbit, Va., home of the Tidewater Soaring Society. The agenda includes reports on several home-build projects, presentations on composite materials and the South African JS-1 Revelation sailplane, and a German cuisine dinner. For more information contact Jerry Gross at (814) 692-5233 or ggross27@comcast.net or Dave Hudnut at (610) 584-6691 or dhudnut@juno.com.



Until the acquisition of a second tow plane, interim tow procedures will be implemented at Front Royal.

Second tow plane update

Fellow members,

At this time we've collected \$33,200 of the pledged \$39,100. Not bad, but still a little shy of the total. The tow plane committee is searching for the best possible fit to our clubs needs.

Prices range from \$55,000 - \$70,000 with most near the \$70,000, plus title search, on-site mechanic inspections, travel and delivery costs. The \$33,200 member loans plus \$35,000 from the treasury puts us at \$68,200 maximum expenditure, while leaving a significant amount in the treasury as a cash reserve and operational safety net.

— *Regards, Shane Neitzey, president*

After The Land Out: *All you'll need to know to get back home*

Assuming that you don't live on the back side of the moon, you already know that we had a land-out yesterday. [April, 12] As it turns out, the landout was fully successful - no damage, no injuries. As with most landouts there were lots of lessons. It's worth taking some time to review them.

First, a few notes about the day and the landout itself. The day was somewhat better, and somewhat worse than expected. It was clearer and with better lift that expected. The day was also much windier with much more sink that we might have expected. The morning was calm and flat, with very little lift.

Then the sun came out and the lift began-six knots up. It was looking good. Then the wind rose to about 20 knots but pretty much down the runway. With the wind came lots of turbulence, lots of lift and lots of sink. A couple people handled it all just fine, but with very aggressive flying. One pilot got caught in the sink and landed out in the Sprite.

As for the landout I can make several comments, but let's prioritize things.

The first concern in any landout is safety. Never make choices that compromise your safety. Next, is the glider. It's nice to come away from a landout with no damage to the glider. And still next is the retrieve. It's also nice to be able to retrieve the glider from its land-out site.

Case in point, the pilot chose a field that offered considerable safety. The field was large and flat, directly into the wind and with relatively short grass. Save for the excessive wind and greater than 10 knot sink it was an easy landout with some 1,000 feet to spare.

Now for the retrieve, that was a challenge. And this is the focus of my comments.

If any of you have any desire to fly on anything other than plain vanilla days, it's worth having a portable GPS, a cell phone and a hand-held radio. This may be about \$500 of equipment but it's well worth it.

The GPS enables you to specify your exact location. In this case there were two gliders and the tow plane in the air that could all see the glider on the



Frank Banas waits for the SSC retrieve crew after his land out.

ground and relay its location, but finding it while driving was still a challenge.

The cell phone is an absolute necessity. Although we had radio contact the cell phone was the vital link in establishing our needs for the retrieve. A hand-held radio is important because you can break the glider in a way that disables the aircraft radio—breaking off the tail boom can disconnect the antenna.

Lesson 1: When you arrive at the field, give the duty officer your cell phone number, whether you plan to land out or not. Let's keep a piece of paper next to the computer for cell phone numbers, or let's keep an up-to-date list of cell phone numbers taped inside the computer box.

Case at hand, no one was home, the glider pilot had to walk out of the land-out field to a road and then to an intersection to ascertain his location sufficiently well for the retrieve crew to find him. Luckily they had a detailed map and with considerable navigational skill managed to locate the glider. But an hour later things were probably in worse shape than when they had just arrived. The glider was not in a place from which an easy retrieve would be possible. Now for the cell phone again.

We got detailed driving instructions from the retrieve crew and it was apparent that it would take all hands to get the glider.

Lesson 2: Explore first, don't drive into a muddy field. (The retrieve vehicle and trailer got stuck in the mud and there was a "lake" between the road

and the glider.)

Off we go in two more vehicles with seven or eight more people. This retrieve is about three to four miles north of FRR, on the north side of the north branch of the Shenandoah River, about a 12-mile drive. After driving several miles we worry that we may have passed our turnoff. We stop to ask directions of two women, one standing in the road and the other cutting her lawn. They don't know where the road is but urge us on. Turns out that the road is on one side of the first woman's property—it literally went down her property line. So much for getting directions.

Lesson 3: You cannot depend on the locals to know the name of the road they live on.

We find the glider, parked on the far side of a lake. I look across and think, "Well, we can get it, but it ain't gonna be pretty."

There's a lot of water between us and the glider (and a lot of mud under the water), and no way to drive to the glider. Luckily, by the time we arrive the three people already there have discovered a somewhat drier approach to the glider, but it involves getting over a barbed-wire fence. We can handle that.

Lesson 4: A bit of exploration can help a lot.

To get the glider out of the field it will have to come apart and be carried out, one piece at a time.

Lesson 5: Bring lots of people along on a retrieve. It takes about six people to disassemble the Sprite in a muddy field and even more to push the stuck retrieve vehicle out of the mud. It also takes someone who knows how to disassemble the glider.

Lesson 6: Take the time to assemble and disassemble every glider you fly. Learn how to do it, read the manual, and know where the manual is (in the glider, right?). And be sure to do this before you fly on challenging days. Case at hand, the pilot and initial retrieve crew did not know how to disassemble the Sprite. Luckily, two of us in the retrieve crew did know how to do the job.

Next, the glider needs to be fully disassembled. Canopy off, stabilizers off,

wings off. Remember that both wings and the fuselage need to be held throughout the disassembly process, that's why you need all those people). Luckily, the Sprite is light and five of us were able to carry the fuselage out of the field and over the fence, but my back aches a bit today. You'll need more people to retrieve heavier gliders. Piece-by-piece we carry the glider back to the road. We also push the trailer out of the mud and back to the road.

Lesson 7: Someone needs to know how the glider goes on the trailer. By the way, the glider manual doesn't cover this, so you need to be shown personally. I've put the Sprite on the trailer a few times, but still need to think about it each time. I don't do it that often, and it isn't that obvious. The fuselage gets tied down with a special bracket. If you don't know about this you could spend all night trying to figure it out.

The wings get bolted to the trailer in a very special way also. Let me just say that it's real embarrassing to have a successful landout just to damage the glider trailering it back to the airport. And that's quite easy to do.

OK, glider is on the trailer, now to get it home. It turns out that the ball used to hitch the trailer to the retrieve vehicle was the wrong ball and we don't have a correct ball-hitch set. The next half hour is spent trying to rig up a ball to which the trailer can be connected.

Lesson 8: Be sure you have the correct equipment. We really didn't. There were correct balls, but they didn't match the hitches. And the original retrieve vehicle didn't have an electrical connection. So we towed it back with our 4-Runner which did have the necessary electrical connections.

Lesson 9: Don't go driving off into the mud. You're just going to lose the retrieve vehicle.

Lesson 10: Always use a four-wheel drive vehicle for a retrieve, no matter how simple it seems.

This story has a happy ending, although it took about four hours to get there. But it easily could have ended on a sadder note. We need to do some retrieve training and everyone needs to get be involved. Some instructions and checklists would help a bit too.

Perhaps, now that he has recent experience, our latest landout victim could write up some instructions for Sprite retrieves.

— **George Hazelrigg**

Landout: A pilot's perspective

Everyone will do it someday and it will be more pleasant for some than others, but I found that if you use the training we all received, landing out is a cake walk. The hardest part is accepting that you are going to land-out, then it's best to pick a field with plenty of time so you can change your mind without placing yourself in danger.

Today I picked out the field early and circled it to decide the direction I wanted to land, the one thing I couldn't see from altitude was the electric fence in the middle of the field. I was on final performing a steep descent when I picked it up. I just put the spoilers away and glided longer crossing the fence with about 30 - 50 feet clearance. There was a gentle slope up from where I touched down and it helped slow me down. I was hard on the brake but it wasn't that effective on the grass. All in all, not being rushed into the

landing made all the difference in the world. Thanks again to all who participated, George Hazelrigg helped by collecting the information, the nearest road, highway, and my lat' long' from my GPS. Two other things you should carry with you when flying is a pen and paper to take notes. I had a pen but was short of paper.

— **Frank Banas**

Letter of Agreement with the Potomac TRACON signed

By **Rick Fuller**

Undoubtedly you've seen the heavy metal people movers descending from north to south over Frederick on their way into Washington Dulles Int. Airport (IAD). Airliners depart MULRR intersection near Thurmont between 8000 and 10,000 feet, switch from New York center to Potomac Approach and are typically given radar vectors to their final approach course for runways 01 and 19 at Dulles. Other low altitude airways cross Frederick (FDK) serving the Baltimore-Washington Airport.

Minimum enroute altitudes for these legs are as low as 3800 feet over Frederick. Add to this mix the busy VFR traffic in the vicinity of FDK and it can be a crowded sky.

In 2007, The Region IV director Jim Kellett asked M-ASA if the club was interested in establishing unique glider Mode 3/A transponder codes with the Potomac Consolidated TRACON (PCT). Renewed interest in the topic of using transponders in gliders was generated by the mid-air collision between an ASW-27 and a Hawker business jet near Reno, Nevada in 2006. Fortunately, all pilots and passengers survived, but it clearly had the potential for a disastrous outcome.

The new TRACON has responsibility for arrival and departures from Washington Dulles, Reagan National, Baltimore-Washington, Andrews AFB, and Richmond, the fourth busiest airspace in the U.S. With more and more aircraft sharing the shrinking Class E airspace in the Mid-Atlantic region the opportunity to increase the safety of flight for gliders operating from our two airfields was a classic "no-brainer."

M-ASA formed a small group to establish a position regarding the use of transponders in the club and to evaluate a draft letter of agreement offered by the Potomac TRACON. Glenn Collins, Dan Morris, Todd Wichman and Rick Fuller used the first draft to establish our position and, if necessary, to "dig in our heels" to counter any new rules the FAA may impose that might limit our flying.

With the M-ASA consensus set, the transponder group iterated seven drafts of the LOA with Fred Ninger, TRACON support specialist for procedures, who was very cooperative and eager to educate his controllers about our style of flight operations.

At a meeting at the TRACON's new facility in Vint Hill, Va., with Jim Kellett, the M-ASA transponder group and Fred Ninger we agreed that this would be the first in a series of initiatives to reduce the likelihood of mid-air collisions between M-ASA aircraft and other aircraft in the Potomac region. Glenn Collins presented a brief on M-ASA's glider operations and Fred Ninger gave the group a tour of the facility that included an informative discussion with the TRACON's operations manager in charge. The letter was signed on

February 15 and became effective on March 14. This is only the second such agreement in the U.S. The high points of the letter includes:

- Use of transponder code 1230 for all M-ASA transponder-equipped gliders operating from FDK or W73.
- Use of transponder code 0130 for tow planes operating within 10 nautical miles of FDK. The discrete squawk will alert TRACON controllers that there are gliders operating in the vicinity.
- Because of our Temporary Flight Restrictions waiver at Fairfield, tow planes operating from W73 will squawk 1200 for VFR flights or the ATC-assigned transponder code during TFR operations.
- During glider events these procedures may be extended to non-M-ASA event participants.
- The M-ASA operations director will notify the TRACON operations manager in charge and advise him of the expected start and stop times, approximate number of gliders and areas of planned operations.

•In-flight pilot communications to the TRACON are encouraged to communicate location and extent of glider operations.

- Notes to educate the TRACON controllers describing the areas in which M-ASA pilots fly and the nature of our flight operations.

The full letter of agreement is posted on the M-ASA website. We will review this further at the annual safety meeting and listen to the TRACON's procedures when advised that gliders are airborne.

Sidebar: For pilots considering installing a Mode 3/A transponder there's an article by Eric Greenwell, "A Guide to Transponders in Sailplanes," on the Soaring Safety Foundation website at: www.soaringsafety.org/prevention/transponders.pdf.

The article covers developments in avionics, encoders, antennas, batteries and installation guidelines, as well as alternatives to transponders.



Glider pilots meet with controllers at the TRACON's facility in Vint Hill, Va. to discuss transponder codes for sailplanes.



Skyliners,

Shane arranged for our wave window, which is down the ridge west of New Market, to be extended for another year.

The window is pretty well marked by features on the ground—the intersection of Rt. 259 and a little road at Mathias, W. Va., Sky Bryce Airport, the town of Mount Jackson, the New Market airport and the gap in the ridge at Fulk's Run where Rt. 259 goes into the ridges.

Have fun

—Best Wishes, Jim Garrison

