

The Flight Line

News about Sugarbush Soaring

SUGARBUSH SOARING ASSOCIATION, INC.

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From the Presidents Cockpit

There is a lot of news to report this issue of Flight Line so here goes. At the moment we are in the throes of purchasing Pawnee 4L from John Mahony. Sugarbush Soaring will run the towing operation. We will hire the tow pilots, maintain the Pawnee, and all of the things that go with that operation. Bob Messner will head up this operation this year but

is looking for a club member who would like to get involved and run the tow operation next year. A lot of work has gone into this effort to get it this far. Several Pawnees were considered and Bob made a trip to Texas and then on to California to look at two likely candidates. Both were good and even though we purchased neither it gave us a good frame of reference. We finally decided to make an appropriate offer to John Mahony so if he wanted to he could sell us 4L. He decided to sell so here we are. Part of the agreement with John was to have an independent evaluation made of the aircraft and an annual. This is now underway at Montpelier Airport and being done by John Roberti. You are probably wondering how we are going to pay for all of this. Here is the good news on that.

Frank Rodgers is lending us the money at a reasonable interest rate to cover the purchase cost and other items such as Bob's trip and some spare parts. Be sure to say thank you to Frank when you see him!! Solution to our towing operation requires more than one tow plane so we have two solutions for a second tug. First is John Mahony with one of his other Pawnees. Backing that up is a

Pawnee that we can rent from Stowe Aviation if we need it. Bob has made the arrangements for tow pilots to cover the operation of our ship 7 days a week. I want to point out that a lot of work went into setting this up and most of it was done by Bob Messner. Bob deserves many thanks for all of this.

Marty Johnson (Tooth Fairy) has been cleaning and painting the tower with help from **Rick Gehlert**. The place is looking pretty spiffy.



Buddy Duncan built a fixture to emulate the ASK 21 fuselage and some wing stands with jacks to aid in the spar bushing replacement. Buddy and I disassembled these fixtures and piled them in the back seat and trunk of my Tuna Boat (Lincoln

Town Car). That left room in the front seat for **Mary Webster** to ride shotgun with me for the trip to Waynesville Ohio (Dayton) towing the ASK 21. Seventeen hours of driving made Monday and Tuesday pass slowly but we made it to Eastern Sailplane (John Murray's place), re-assembled the fixtures and mounted the wings in place.

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OPERATIONAL MEANDERINGS

I got a great Christmas present this last Christmas – a six part film series entitled “A Piece of Cake”, a fictionalized series dealing with the daily life of a Spitfire squadron during the early portion of WW II. It occurred to me, as we watched this wonderfully done mini-series, that what may be the most beautiful airplane in the world was designed to be an efficient weapon. The form was an accident of the function. It just happened that the only partly understood laws of aerodynamics of the time dictated the shape and the relatively primitive power plant technology of the time resulted in the pulse-thumping sound of that Rolls-Royce Merlin. Accidental? I don't really think so.

I guess where I'm going with this is a suggestion that no matter how crass and worldly the mission of the aircraft, flight inherently is more than that. We are gifted with perhaps the purest purpose in flight when we soar, and our aircraft are designed to a very specialized purpose. Their beauty of form and function is undeniable. Nonetheless, the real world is an important part of every flight we take, and like every pilot before us and like every pilot of every aircraft that will follow us, we must never forget the laws of science and man that

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Opening day for the club will be May 11th and 12th for those with private ships. We will also assemble some club ships then. If the insurance is in effect we can probably do some checkouts and club member flights in them. The real opening day will be May 18th and 19th with assembly and the club dinner on the 18th and the General membership Meeting on the 19th at 9AM. The Board meeting will follow the General Meeting. There will also be the mandatory pilots briefing given on the 11th and the 18th. *If you want to fly you must make one of these lectures.*

From the Presidents Cockpit

(Contd.)

After dinner we worked until midnight and removed the old spar bushing. The next morning we epoxied in the new bushing and returned the wings to the fixture and inserted the wing pins. With a heater we raised the wing pin and bushing to 80 degrees F and then went off to the Wright Patterson Air Museum. Fantastic!! If you ever get anywhere near Dayton this something you don't want to miss. I would say it is much better than the Air and Space Museum in DC. That night when we returned John Murray, Mary and I removed the wing assembly and set the repaired wing up for the ten hour cure at 140 degrees F. In the morning we assembled the 21 and everything was perfect! Mary, John and I loaded the ship up and we headed east. We arrived the next day back in Warren after another seventeen hours. Phew!!

The Blanik is all fixed and should be ready when you are. Heritage in Burlington did a fine job as far as I can see.

Let's have a great and very safe soaring season.

- Ron

Treasurer's Report

Dave Nagley

Over the past several seasons, the financial condition of the club has been challenged in several ways and for various reasons that I will try to summarize below. Sugarbush Soaring derives most of its revenue from membership dues, instructional flights, rentals, commercial rides and various events such as youth camps and regional competitions. The average number of tows from 1989 through the year 2000 was 3,056. Our last season totals were the lowest since 1989 at 2,251 partially due to the events of 9/11 and a subsequent temporary shutdown of operations. Nevertheless, a clear pattern of declining revenue from operations is evident from the numbers going all the way back to 1989.

While revenues have been declining, the club has slowly upgraded its fleet by adding two L23 Blaniks, and a brand new ASK-21 along with improvements to some of the existing fleet. Therefore we have managed to enhance the quality of our fleet despite the underlying financial pressures that have persisted. Club dues, A key source of our revenue up until this past season, have changed very little and have not reflected the realities of increasing costs associated with general aviation. Insurance costs have been increasing steadily and not just this past year as the result of 911. Field insurance costs went up significantly two years ago. Personnel costs have been rising year after year along with fuel and other general costs. Wherever possible, we have cut back on expenses not deemed critical to our operation.

We have been able to reconcile our financial issues in the following ways:

- 1) We borrowed funds from some of the club members in order to finance the purchase of the ASK 21.
- 2) Our line of credit was extended to its limit.
- 3) We invoked a one time assessment of \$250 from the membership last year.
- 4) We borrowed an additional \$18,000 from several of our generous board members.
- 5) In addition we have conducted our day to day operations with the able and valuable assistance of our office and field staff.

Region One Contest

Sugarbush Soaring will be hosting the Region One Soaring Contest again this year. There will be a practice day on Sunday, June 23rd, and the race days will be Monday, June 24th through Saturday June 29th. Tony Lauck has signed on as Contest Manager and Charlie Spratt will be Competition Director in a repeat performance.

Sugarbush Soaring depends on volunteers to make this event successful. It can be a great deal of fun for all concerned, if we have enough volunteers. If you would like to help out, please contact Tony Lauck, (802)583-4405 or send him an email at tlauck@madriver.com. As of this writing, Kate Woodruff and Margaret Roy have already signed up to run Field Operations and Scoring, respectively.

Pilots, if you are planning to enter this contest and haven't already pre-registered, please go to the Soaring Society of America web site and fill out a registration form, or you can contact Tony directly. If you've never flown in a contest, but own a glider and have done your Silver Distance, the Sports Class may be for you.

Along with the flying comes a lot of socializing. The high point of the socializing is the Auction, where soaring related items (and other items, too, but you won't believe what they are if you've not been at a previous auction) are auctioned off for the benefit of the club. If you have something you could donate that you think would be of interest to glider pilots or crews, we need your donation. It will help the club's finances!

- Tony Lauck

Operational Meanderings

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enable us to participate, however briefly, in a moving work of grace and art. However lovely the form, the aircraft and the flight of the aircraft must adhere to the laws of both man and nature. The apparently “accidental” perfection of form and function is the result of a lot of work and experience. The same work and experience is required of the pilot who flies that aircraft. Let’s all make sure this spring that we are “worthy” of the aircraft that we fly. Know the laws of flight – both natural and man-made. Over the winter, skills that may have been honed to perfection last fall, have atrophied, perhaps imperceptibly. Knowledge of regulations governing safety and legality has dimmed or slipped away while the mind was occupied with very different concerns over the long winter. What would have gotten a young “flight lieutenant” in trouble over the cliffs of Dover in 1940, arrogance or ignorance, would still be a problem – even flying the most beautiful aircraft ever designed by man. It’s only a “piece of cake” if you’re prepared and knowledgeable.

- Rick Hanson



New Book Published by Bob Buck



There I was, commuting to work last Monday morning, when all of a sudden, Bob Buck’s voice comes out of my car radio! I turned up the volume (narrowly missing the semi in front of me) just in time to hear Bob telling NPR’s Bob Edwards about flying DC-2s as a TWA captain when he was just 26. Apparently, some disgruntled lady refused to board Bob’s plane in Pittsburgh because she thought he was too young to be at the controls! Needless to say, I was glued to the radio for the rest of the interview. Bob was being interviewed about his new book, *North Star Over My Shoulder; A Flying Life*. That evening, I rushed down to Borders to get a copy. I found three copies on the table inside the door, so before whipping out my wallet, I thought I’d grab some iced tea in the café. But two hours later (coffee shops are like that), all three copies were gone!! They’re selling like hot cakes, and I think I know why.

In addition to its wonderfully evocative title, the book is beautifully crafted. Bob’s love of flying comes through in every sentence, whether he is telling us about taking a 747 to Paris, doing weather research flights in a B-17, or flying Constellations across the North Atlantic. In a flying career that began at the age of 14 when he and a friend built and flew their own glider, Bob has flown everything from Pitcairn Mailwings (one of which he flew across the country at the tender age of 16) to the 747. This book tells the tale. And he doesn’t leave us out. As Bob puts it,

“Once the yellow knob is pulled that drops the tow rope and sends the noisy tow plane back to earth, the environment becomes soft and quiet; there’s a slight swish of air flowing over the sleek body, nothing more. You are alone, with all the world of nature spread out below, and blue sky and white clouds up above. There is no aid or command from the outside, all decisions will be yours alone, only the weather dictates and, if you’re wise, it becomes an ally until it warns you that it’s time to land and quit for the day. Soaring is one of the few things remaining where thought and action are completely yours, and as you recognize this, it shuts out the mundane world and lifts you to an ethereal state” (p. 402).

We’ve all been there.

Bob’s book is great entertainment. But in the end, his greatest contribution is to remind us that we are incredibly lucky. Any of us can go out to our airfield, hop in a glider, and spend an afternoon chasing the cumulus over the hills of Vermont. That is a huge privilege. Flight is wonderful, and because he reminds us of that, so is Bob’s book. Read it !!

- Graham Ramsden

Treasurer's Report

(contd.)

Our loan for the ASK21 comes due this year and the bridge financing from our board members this past winter has already been repaid. With all of these factors in mind the board, last season, reviewed our revenue/cost mix and decided to overhaul our entire financial structure. This was initiated in order to guarantee that we will have sufficient funds to cover our capital equipment needs into the future and to provide a quality environment for all club members and staff. It was decided that in order to accomplish this goal, several changes in our revenue stream needed to be made. We elected to do away with the associate membership category and have all active members pay the same dues. These dues as you all know have been increased. Pricing for rides, instruction, rentals, youth camps and all other revenue producing activities have also been adjusted. We provided for additional funds to be set aside for instructional staff in order to properly meet the needs of our club members. Finally, it was decided that the 2-32 should be sold. The funds that will be derived from this sale should easily cover the ASK loan.

We are confident that the proposed financial plan summarized above will meet the challenge. Our goals are very conservative and are not based on any anticipated increase in revenue. The key is for all of the membership to remain active, to participate in club events, fly, fly often, have a good time and remember that although your dues are higher, they're still very low in comparison to the costs of other activities. There isn't another sport or hobby that can create the level of excitement and satisfaction for such a minimal investment.

As someone once said, "Ask not what the club can do for you but what you can do for the club". Have a great soaring season.



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The Flight Line

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