

# Towlines

The Newsletter of the Albuquerque Soaring Club

September 2006

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## **From the President** *By Bob Hudson*

ALBUQUERQUE SOARING CLUB WEB SITE ATTACKED. I hope you all got a chance to see the change made to the opening graphic of our Web Site. Someone, read Brian Resor, changed our beautiful picture of the Land of Enchantment to a picture of an airboat skimming over an unnamed waterway. Obviously, this is in reference to the fact that it has rained everyday for the last four weeks. Drought, what drought? Clay Phillips came here from rainy south Florida, and he claims he flew more down there, Florida, then he has been able to fly here in the land of perfect weather. Recently I visited the Acoma Sky City. The guide told us they danced in June for rain. He then added that maybe they danced too hard. The good news is that the repairs JD performed on the roof of the club house, seem to be holding.

More good news. It appears that we have won the World OLC League. We came in first in the World and managed third in the States. Yeah, I know it doesn't make sense -- it is the same flights -- but it is how the two are scored. Personally I like being first in the World, after all it appears we will retain our first in the Western Hemisphere in the regular OLC. Your Board has agreed that we will send someone to Switzerland to accept the award. We will soon start looking for donations from outside sources to try and cover the costs. We are not going to use clubs funds.

Now the bad news, if you have been in a coma or in Oklahoma, then you might not be aware of the extreme crisis our nation association, the SSA, is in. To save column space I won't regurgitate the details, you need to access the SSA Web Site and see where we stand. Our Director, Chip Garner, has been involved with the issues and has been keeping us informed on where we are going. I thank Chip for his efforts in getting us back on track.

If you read the comments posted on "Rec Soaring", you will see that there are no shortages of opinions, but the bottom line is that this is not the time to abandon the SSA. We have an opportunity to strengthen the Society and put it back on track. But to accomplish this it is time to clean house. Several positions need to be repopulated, of course that means some folks have to go. I am of the strong opinion that the Society needs to move out of Hobbs...to like Moriarty or Albuquerque, where there is better access to CPA and legal representation as well as better transportation opportunities. Couple these facts and the synergy of having a strong local club and the fledgling Southwest Soaring Museum makes for a more attractive package. The bottom line is that we all need to be upset, but we also need to be proactive in turning this around. If we work together then a stronger SSA may emerge. More to follow. Fly safe!!!

## **Mid Airs**

**(Avoid them whenever possible)**

*By Billy Hill*

By now almost everyone within the soaring movement as well as some of those who are "engine challenged," are aware of the Minden mid air.

This begs the question, what will the Feds do about it? My guess is nothing as the Comair crash is taking stage center at this point. The other reason I suspect nothing of a regulatory nature will come out of it is because everyone survived the crash.

You may recall, (that's assuming you read my last article), that I addressed the issue of "clearing your turns." The whole point behind that missive was to avoid mid airs.

The Minden mid air has caused a number of interesting debates to take place on the Soaring rec. aviation web site. There have been some interesting suggestions many of which are quite good. However, there are clearly some misconceptions out there regarding equipment, ATC and the “see and be seen” rules of FAR part 91.

Some of you may have even gone as far as to read my offering in the August issue of SOARING. In it I discussed the pros and cons, (mostly pros) of equipping sailplanes with transponders.

Transponder equipped sailplanes will: allow ATC to see you; allow TCAS equipped aircraft to see you; allow TPAS equipped aircraft to be aware of your presence.

In the posts on the RAS, there were a few folks who accused the pilots of the biz jet of not performing due diligence regarding the “see and be seen” rule. They pointed out that gliders have the right of way. True, but what if the other aircraft closing in on your little personal chunk of airspace is not aware of your presence? Right of way when a mid air is imminent is not the issue, avoiding the mid air is. After the fact, you can argue who was in the right by filing out a Near Mid Air Collision report with the FAA. The form can be down loaded from [www.faa.gov](http://www.faa.gov).

If you are being overtaken by a relatively high speed aircraft, which in reality is anything that is somewhat faster than you are, then the only difference is reaction time needed to avoid you when they see you or for you to avoid them. The faster the other aircraft is traveling, the less time they have to react when they spot you and vice versa.

In this situation, a sailplane presents the kind of head-on or tail-on silhouette the manufactures of jet fighters would like to be able to build. That is, almost impossible to see until it’s too late. One of the reasons we don’t have a higher number of near misses is because rarely are both the sailplane and, in the case of a jet, in level flight. Additionally because of the Big Sky theory. The sailplane is usually in a shallow glide, (unless it’s doing a pull-up in lift) and the jet is usually descending or climbing.

Even in thermaling flight, we become all but invisible when we are either nose to or tail to the aircraft that is overtaking us. If, during the

course of a cross country flight we do not present a “wing flash” profile to approaching traffic then we are all but invisible. Put another way, during circling flight, we are only somewhat more visible during about 80% of each circle. Wings are level, forget it!

In Europe, the vast majority of mid airs are between gliders/sailplanes. Because of this, they have installed an instrument called the FLARM. It’s somewhat like the TPAS system in that it alerts you to the presence of other gliders which are so equipped. Apparently the FLARM system is not even legal in gliders in this country, although I’m at a loss to understand why that is so.

The down side of the FLARM system is it is only good with other FLARM equipped aircraft, more specifically gliders.

TPAS, depending on the amount of features you equip it with, will alert you to the presence of transponder equipped aircraft. Some of the TPAS systems will give you the relative altitude as well as the distance, but not the bearing which means your scan must include the entire sky. Perhaps this is a good time to visit about the issue of scanning.

Richard Johnson published an article on this subject a number of years ago, the gist of which is as follows. Scanning should be done in segments of the airspace within your field of vision. That is to say that you should focus on the horizon (to get your eyes working at a distance) and then look at airspace in blocks of about twenty degrees. Do this without moving your eyes while you are looking in that segment as this increases the possibility of seeing other traffic. View that segment for a second or so and then move on to the next segment. If, during the course of your scan, you spot a jet fighter, look for at least one and perhaps as many as three more. Fighter pilots, like Nuns, travel in groups.

When flying in the mountain wave, we are parked into the prevailing wind. Said wind tends to prevail from the west which means we become stationary objects in space and are all but invisible to aircraft approaching from the east. From time to time, it’s a good idea to make a ninety degree turn in one direction followed by a one hundred and eighty degree turn in the other direction. That will clear your six o’clock position as well as getting you back into the sweet part of the wave.

So, where and under what circumstances you ask are we at risk the most? I suspect it is when a high speed aircraft is handed off from the enroute environment, (ARTCC), to the terminal environment, Albuquerque Approach Control, that we are most at risk. The center controller has just initiated a handoff to approach control and is awaiting the confirmation of that handoff. At this point, he is most likely not devoting much attention to what's going on with the traffic he is getting rid of. Although the inbound jet is still in a radar environment, he is in sort of an ATC limbo. Not talking to the center controller anymore and hasn't yet made contact with the approach controller who may be busy with other traffic. Now would you like to guess where this occurs? Why just about right over the Moriarty airport! It's a jungle out there kiddies!

Once we have spotted another aircraft, how do you know if it is on a collision course with you? If the aircraft in question does not appear to move relative to you, then you are about to occupy the same piece of airspace! What to do? Remember the thing your wing does best is to create lift, so use that to your advantage. For example, if you are turning, tighten the turn and pull back on the stick. This will put the glider in a spiral dive without involving negative "gees" which takes up valuable time. You want to change the vector as quickly as possible in order to put as much distance between you and the other aircraft as you can.

In order to see what's outside of the machine in which you are committing aviation, you need, at the very least, to start with a clean windscreen/canopy. Collectively, as a club, we are not as careful in this regard as we might be. We should have cleaning equipment stored in our club "operations trailer." Before you take up a club glider, (to say nothing of your own), you should start the flight with as clean and clear a view as possible. The windscreen on the towplanes have been cleaned so seldom that some of the bugs seem to be a part of the Plexiglas.

Along with a clean canopy, make sure you don't have a lot of stuff making reflections in your canopy like PDA's and objects of that ilk. A reflection is a distraction. On the other hand, convex mirrors mounted on either side of the instrument panel will help a bit in

spotting other aircraft in your six o'clock position. The problem is they only work well with other gliders which are close behind you. Canopy reflections are the reason I had to move Yoda from the glare shield to the package shelf. Now he is able to whisper and my ear in order to provide me with enlightenment.

During the course of the discussion of the Minden mid air, it seems that the sailplane which was struck was in fact transponder equipped, but the device was not turned on. Apparently the foreign pilot who was flying it told the NTSB that he was only flying locally and because of that, wanted to save the batteries for the radio.

NEWS FLASH! The NTSB has gone on record saying the transponder was not required to be turned on because gliders are exempt under 91.215(b),(3). Nice try Federal dudes. Go back and re-read that section as it goes on to state in 91.215 (c). If you are in an aircraft, (gliders fall into this category), and are transponder and encoder equipped, then you are required to have it turned on.

In any case, I'll bet he has had a few sleepless nights thinking, if I had only flipped the switch!

Should you decide to put a transponder in your sailplane, it will need to be, if not installed by, then signed off by an aircraft mechanic certified to perform this function. You will then need to have the installation inspected and signed off by a certified avionics shop. By regulation, you are required to have your transponder checked once every twenty-four months. As some wag on the RAS asked. How do I know my transponder is functioning correctly, or do I have to take it to the avionics shop to see if I have to take it to the avionics shop? In order to check your transponder or parrot, (which is a carry over from years gone by and from whence the term "squawk" comes), you merely contact your local Air Traffic Control Facility - while airborne of course - and have them radar identify you. You then ask them what altitude they are displaying on their radar scope and you compare that with what your altimeter says. Check complete. So, what if anything are you going to add to your instrument panel in order to enhance safety? The European FLARM system is not available in this country and as stated earlier, only works glider to glider. The

TPAS system, depending on how much money you want to spend, will alert you to other transponder equipped aircraft, alert you to the relative altitude as well as the distance, but not the bearing. A transponder will alert TCAS equipped jets of your location and give them a three dimensional picture of you. ATC will also see you and issue as traffic, (work load permitting), to those aircraft they are talking to.

I think the transponder buys you the most bang (perhaps that should read no bang) for the

buck. I feel that the greatest threat - flying in gaggles of gliders where I had my mid air not withstanding - is from the faster moving jet traffic. It is for this reason that I have installed a transponder in my Discus. I will combine that with being as careful as I can about clearing my turns and trust that the “see and be seen” rule will prevail.

I’ll be scanning the skies and looking for you at the airport

### Aircraft for Sale

**LS-3** N573 JulietLima is for sale. 1979 Rolladen-Schneider LS-3. Repaired and refurbished by Applebay. Extras: Zuni hook, pneumatic tail wheel, flair from vertical to horizontal tail. New instrument panel: SN-10B flight computer, Borgelt Vario, Microair radio. Komet Trailer. \$31k invested, asking \$28k. photo can be seen at: [www.abqsoaring.org/images/2006/The\\_Jewel.jpg](http://www.abqsoaring.org/images/2006/The_Jewel.jpg) Contact John or Luan Walker. 505-681 7759.

**Discus 2a** Chip Garner is looking for a partner for half of CG, his well-prepared Discus. Contact Chip at 505-660 8509.

**DG-100G** (Delta One) for sale. Excellent condition with trailer, \$18K. Bob Hudson 505.507-6332.

## Moriarty Ops Schedule

Date	OPS 1	OPS 2	Instructor	Tow Pilot
Sep 9 Saturday	McKNIGHT P	SIGALA M	MORRISON B	WRIGHT R
Sep 10 Sunday	CARRIS M	GUILLORY S		CARLTON R
Sep 16 Saturday	RESOR B	HEERMANN A	DAFFER J	HILL W
Sep 17 Sunday	HUSS J	WOODS R		STOGNER M
Sep 23 Saturday	HARMONY D	MORRISON L		THOMAS R
Sep 24 Sunday	MARTINEZ J	BLOCH J	TAYLOR K	TICHY T
Sep 30 Saturday	PHILLIPS C	BOYCE J	BUEHRE K	WADSWORTH H
Oct 1 Sunday	BUENAFE C	FERGUSON K		WILLAN V
Oct 7 Saturday	MOCHO M			WRIGHT R
Oct 8 Sunday	AIKEN G	WILSON B		HILL W
Oct 14 Saturday	STEWART W	KAWAL D		CARLTON R
Oct 15 Sunday	HUDSON R	BANKS H		STOGNER M
Oct 21 Saturday	BROTHERS L	OKANDAN M		THOMAS R
Oct 22 Sunday	HARE J	McKNIGHT P		TICHY T
Oct 28 Saturday	CARRIS M	EKDAHL C		WADSWORTH H
Oct 29 Sunday	GUILLORY S	RESOR B		WILLAN V
Nov 4 Saturday	HUDSON R	BUENAFE C		
Nov 5 Sunday	HEERMANN A	WOODS R		

## **Tow Surcharge**

by Mark Mocho, ASC Secretary

In case you have been living under a rock for the last year or so, I've got some bad news for you. Fuel prices have climbed significantly due to Mideast insecurity, hurricanes and other factors beyond anybody's control. At the same time, Albuquerque Soaring Club expenses have taken some pretty serious hits in the maintenance department. As a result, our operating fund is far lower than what the Board of Directors deems sufficient. Therefore, emergency measures were voted into effect to try to stem the flood of departing cash.

Unfortunately, a phone call to Renny Rozzoni demanding that gas prices be returned to a reasonable level wasn't enough. For some reason, Renny was unable to convince the management of Exxon-Mobil that our situation was untenable. And all this time I thought Renny was the real power behind Exxon.

As a short-term solution, the Board decided on a tow surcharge. The amount will be variable, depending on the height of the tow. Since we base our charges on a minimum height of 1,400 ft. AGL, the surcharge on 1,400 ft. or less will be \$5.00. From 1,500 to 3,000 ft, the surcharge is \$7.50. Over 3,100 ft. will carry a \$10.00 charge.

I know this will be met by dismay and perhaps some anger from our members. Therefore, the Board, in its wisdom, elected me to break the news. They figured (correctly) that my popularity is so low that any negative response will be aimed my way, thus sparing them from any significant fallout. It is depressing to note that I am even less popular than the ASC Treasurer, *who works for the IRS!*

Anyway, according to our Bylaws, any change in tow rates has to be approved by our members. This is the only way to generate some emergency cash without a vote at a General membership meeting, and none is scheduled until probably October at the OLC celebration. At that time, the Board will have met again to iron out a more permanent

solution to the fuel/maintenance expense situation and prepare for a vote by the members.

As if this news wasn't bad enough, a miscommunication with our bookkeeper caused the tow surcharge to go into effect retroactively, without the chance to notify members prior to the August billing cycle. Naturally, this error can be blamed on me too. In an effort to stave off the mobs carrying pitchforks and torches over to Hangar 56, any member who was hit with the surcharge in August will be issued a credit to offset the charges.

Nobody likes to raise the costs in our sport, but with fuel prices running over \$4.00 per gallon, and some multi-thousand dollar repair bills, we don't have much choice. Our tow prices are about half what is being charged by Sundance Aviation and haven't been changed in over two years. In order to maintain some sense of financial stability, this measure was deemed to be the fastest way to try to correct the situation. It is the Board's intent to finalize a new tow price and/or dues structure that will enable us to keep flying.

We're sorry about this, but circumstances have placed us between the proverbial rock and the frying pan, or however that worn-out aphorism goes. Please be assured that we will do everything we can to stabilize the situation without too much impact on the membership. This surcharge is by no means permanent, and if the members will do their best not to damage any aircraft, thus increasing our maintenance costs, we'll get rid of it as soon as possible. And I'll continue to push Renny for a break from Exxon-Mobil.

*<This article is included in the newsletter in place of the Associate Membership Roster, which I'm not sure has any changes this month, anyway. Obviously this is an important announcement and needed to get squeezed in>*