

# Towlines

The Newsletter of the Albuquerque Soaring Club

March 2008

## Safety Down Day

April 19<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m., to be held at the Soaring Museum, Moriarty.

Remember, this is a mandatory event. Those that miss will need to get an instructor check before you can fly in or with club equipment (that includes getting a tow).

Plan now to be there!

### President's Notes *By Bob Hudson*

Happy Easter, Happy St Patrick's Day and Beware the Ides of March! Well Campers, another month has come and gone and with its passing we get closer to the perfect flying weather. This means it is time to arrange your currency flights through Stan Roeske, Chief Instructor, and get back on track for the best flying year of your life!

In an effort to ensure that you have the best year ever you need to also prepare yourself by attending the Safety Down Day to be held on April 19<sup>th</sup> at the Southwest Soaring Museum in Moriarty. As we speak I am putting together the agenda and it looks like we have a good one. If you have friends who are interested in flying, invite them to this very worthwhile set of presentations. The speakers will begin at 9:30 am and will run until approximately 11:30. We will then head over to the club house and perform our spring cleaning.

Speaking of spring cleaning, does anyone have any idea who the two "junky" trailers parked outside behind Ten Zulu's hangar belong to? If you know the answer give me a call at 506-6332, otherwise we will be getting rid of them.

Don't forget that if you need to get your proficiency back or if you need to extend your currency and can't make it out on a Saturday or Sunday, you can "hook" a ride or a tow with our "partner" Sundance Aviation on any week day. Give Rick a call and enjoy a flight without all the weekend warriors hogging your perfect thermal.

On another note, if you recall, I asked for input, in the January *Towlines*, on things we

could do to upgrade our Club House and how to approach the future of our flying assets. Well, I hate to be negative, but I only got three responses. Clay Phillips gave me some good ideas on how to structure a stronger infrastructure geared more to socializing in and around the Club House and Hangar. He suggested a permanent fire pit/bar-b-que/deck area from which we can sit around and enjoy the flying activities as well as the end of the day. I think Clay's ideas have merit and after we take care of some more immediate needs (such as repairing the floor, repairing the ceiling and adding a wind break/mud room, we will consider some of these upgrades.

On the flying assets side of the question, with only three inputs it is hard to put together a long term strategy based on the three inputs I received. So for now we will "bank" the money and move forward.

Looking to the future, we have decided to add a couple of items to the Club calendar. Early this summer we are going to host a Club Breakfast, followed by an evening of bowling and then our annual trip to the "Lab" for an Isotope game. If you have any other suggestions, please pass them to me (Gosh, I hope I get more than three inputs this time.) Watch your *Towlines* for more on these outings.

I like to use this column to bring good news to our membership, but every now and then, you have to add some reality and that is we lost another member in February...Associate Member Scott McDonald passed away suddenly. I do not have the details, but if I get more information I will pass it along. Scott moved from the Albuquerque area to San

Diego a few years ago, but maintained a membership with the club. Laurie and Bob Carlton were fortunate to have seen Scott last summer. We in the ASC hope that Scott's family knows that our thoughts and prayers will be with them as they go through this rough time.

Lastly, the SSA gave the Club a check (\$1,500) for our volunteer efforts with the convention. There was no obligation for the SSA to pay us for volunteering to help out, so your Board has decided to donate the check back to the SSA Eagle Fund and tie it into a matching donation challenge Diane Nixon Black made to the SSA. Ms Nixon Black challenged the membership that she would match any donation up to \$25K. This means that our donation of \$1,500 will be a \$3,000 gain to the SSA.

That's all the news that's fit to print, now go forth and fly, but fly safe. Bob

### **Southwest Soaring Museum**

Just a reminder, the museum is in constant need of volunteers, especially as docents, to help keep the place humming. As we all know, George Applebay is very generous in the way he makes the museum's facilities available to the club. Please respond where and when you can. The best contact in this regard is Kathy Taylor.

### **BFRs**

One of the best rewards for being a club member is the way we get very low-cost BFRs, and with nice and friendly instructors. There have been complaints lately though that members are not scheduling their BFRs early in the morning and are instead hogging the Grob at times when other members are thinking about getting in a little soaring. Plan ahead please and think of the needs of other members who do not have their own ship.

*[The first part of what follows is another in the series of articles on safety issues by our own Billy Hill. The second part was added after his unfortunate incident at Moriarty. It includes a very open and honest assessment of what happened. Be nice to him – bad things*

*have happened to some of us already and most likely will to the rest. – Ed.]*

### **Risk Assessment by Billy Hill**

Any time you introduce a third dimension to an activity you increase the likelihood of a problem or at the very least increase the risk factor.

During the course of flight testing their various aircraft and systems, the folks at Gulfstream make a "Risk Assessment" evaluation using a "test safety hazard analysis" or TSHA, formatted on one of the flight test cards used in conjunction with the test being performed. The TSHA is a brutally honest analysis of what could go wrong with the machine, (in our case read glider) or the people flying it.....that would be us.

As avocations go, soaring is relatively safe hobby, but as in all things involving three dimensions, there is a bit more risk involved. Will the rope break at one hundred feet with insufficient altitude to make a one hundred eight degree turn and thus require a landing straight ahead?

Will you spend time weighing the merits of a one-eighty at that altitude once the rope has broken, or will you make the straight in approach to the field just off the departure end of the runway without agonizing about the consequences of a retrieve within a half mile of the airport?

Scenarios such as the above mentioned are all part of a personal "Risk Assessment" we should be performing as we prepare to fly.

We should be asking ourselves such questions as; am I current enough to fly under today's conditions?

The FAR's claim that ninety days are sufficient to be considered current. Really? Is that enough? Perhaps it is under ideal circumstances. In reality, each of us has different skill levels as regards flying and that level can vary from day to day. How do I feel both physically and mentally? Am I up to the challenge?

A part of the mental issue is of course ego. Are you willing to let your ego write a check your ass can't cover? It's happened to more than a few folks I know and I'm here to tell you that includes me. I've been extremely

lucky in that I've not bent something during the course of my sordid flying career which has included some very poor decisions. A poor decision assessed as such and hopefully never to be repeated is then filed in one's experience bag, which sits right next to one's luck bag. If all goes well, the experience bag fills up before the luck bag is emptied.

So, make a mental check list of all the possible risks associated with a flight on a given day. Weigh them carefully and after having done so, determine if flying is something you should be doing under the circumstances and conditions given.

### **Post Script**

By Saturday evening of the first of March, I had completed all the cleanup and detailing of my Discus and deemed it ready to again take to the skies. Although the next day looked a bit iffy, I headed to Moriarty knowing that at least there would be wave available if not convective activity.

The presence of rotor cu as well as lenuies indicated that there should be lift available. There was even an iteration of the wave with associated low level cu's sitting right over the Moriarty airport. Although the wind was a bit brisk, it was directly down the runway and so by shortly after eleven, I towed out and made ready for takeoff.

The strong westerly flow aloft was marking the advent of a fast moving cold front which would bring with it colder temps, precipitation and a wind shift out of the North. At that point the question I was asking myself was; could I get in a reasonable flight before the arrival of the potentially adverse weather?

I was able to contact the wave and although I was only able to climb to fifteen thousand feet on one occasion, I was able to combine rotor enhanced convection with enough regularity to fly a bit of an OLC cross country.

By about 14:30 or so the day was clearly morphing into a frontal passage and I headed back to Moriarty. The wind sock was out of the NNW and what I guessed to be about thirty or so knots and the air had become quite gusty and turbulent, more so than it was earlier that day.

Since I had not flown the Discus since last November, I elected not to test my ability or that of my trusty steed in making a cross wind

landing under such conditions, and so chose to land on one of the three North/South taxiways. I was making the approach at fifty knots which, at the time seemed like a reasonable compromise given the conditions.

I chose the taxiway on the east side of the club hangar and as I became committed to landing on it, noticed the taxiway sign the city had chosen to re-install just east of said taxiway.

Even with a strong head wind the large sign loomed up at an alarming rate and so I attempted to make a short field landing by planning to touch down just after I crossed over the southern edge of the runway. I figured this would allow me more landable stopping distance before getting to the sign.

Unfortunately I hit the dirt three feet short of the asphalt which bent the landing gear brace and may have done some damage to the gear assembly as well.

Currently the Discus is at George Applebay's shop where both George and Fidel are working on getting the repair started.

Had I remembered the taxiway sign in a timely fashion, I would have elected to land on the most Easterly of the three taxiways and all would have ended well. Of course that didn't happen and so I've spent a lot of time playing "what iffn", of course to no avail.

However, at the urging of the editor, and with the wonderful aid of 100% hindsight, I have considered some what-if issues that could/should have been factored into my risk assessment. I still do not think that I should have left the glider in the barn, even though it was clear that a front would pass and the wind would shift to the north, though it is also clear I was keen to fly and score some OLC points.

I was the only club ship to launch (there were three Sundance flights that day), and climbed well in the wave. Later in the flight I got low north of the field and I think that gave me pause as I considered where I might land should I not find sufficient lift to get me back to OE0. After getting low, I switched to a more conservative mode in order not to get low again.

As I look back, I see the weather as the singular issue which had the greatest impact on the risk assessment process. During the course of the flight, I was watching the weather very carefully as there was quite a bit

of virga west of the airport. I had considered what options were available to me when the wind shift occurred. I knew that the prevailing winds would be from the north. The question then remained, how strong would they be and would they exceed a safe cross-wind value?

I had arrived back over Moriarty at 1,800 feet AGL which gave me ample time to evaluate the wind. I circled the wind sock and attempted to determine the angle and direction of the sock which from directly overhead seemed to be standing very close to straight out of the NNW.

I considered landing on runway two-six on the south side of the asphalt with the idea of turning into taxiway Bravo and angling toward the Sundance area, which on further reflection might have been a better option since there was no traffic in the area nor was there any on the ground. Instead I chose the westerly cross taxiway – and just forgot about the sign the city had resurrected just north of the second parallel taxiway. By the time I spotted it, I may not have been too low to make a quick change to the easterly most taxiway, but at that point I had not even considered that as an option.

I was then focused on landing as short as possible and avoiding the sign. Unfortunately I hit the edge of the runway.

So, there you have it. Of course I've spent a great deal of time beating myself up over this. What we have here is a case of going to the "luck" bag and finding it empty. Now I have yet another "event" to add to the experience bag and an example of what mistakes I will attempt not to repeat.

*[The lesson here for all who read this is that there are a number of issues which must be factored into a decision to fly and that is what risk management is all about. And thanks to Z's willingness to share his misfortune, the rest of us have a great case study from which to learn, mark – and avoid. – Ed.]*

## New Turnpoint: Cabezon Brian Resor

At the bottom of this page you see an image of Cabezon Peak. It's the largest of several volcanic plugs in the region. The name "Cabezon" is derived from the Spanish noun "cabeza," meaning head. Cabezon translates as "big head."

Supposedly, the Pueblo and Navajo Indians believe that the peak has religious significance. You can even visit the Chacoan shrine on top of the peak (I've seen the "shrine." To me it looks like rocks piled by hikers, but whatever...) One Navajo myth explains how after a giant was slain upon Mount Taylor, his head remained as Cabezon Peak and his blood congealed to form the Malpais, or bad-land volcanic flow south of the peak.

Geologists see it more as a result of molten lava working its way to the earth's surface through sedimentary rock layers deposited by an ancient inland sea that covered the area. Time has eroded the softer sedimentary rock leaving the exposed basalt columns, or "necks", to stand as landmarks in this high desert country of New Mexico.

Hikers see it as an awesome little day hike and climb. I've done it several times and never get bored with it. The upper portions are pretty exposed and not for people with fear of heights. There's one little scary climb up a 10 foot wall that blocks a lot of people near the bottom. But, the unobstructed 360-degree

view from the top is magnificent!

For glider pilots, it's one of the newest turn points in the Moriarty database and fills in a void that was southwest of the Jemez Mountains. There currently is a small group of

pilots doing some housecleaning and some upgrading to the turn point database so that we can start fresh this summer. Let us know if you have suggestions and stay tuned for the release in April.

