

Application

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Soaring Location: Windy City Soaring, Hinckley IL, OC2

What Soaring Means to Me

Marek Ziebinski
2006 Soaring Youth Scholarship
Essay

Soaring makes me look forward to my weekends during the summer, and to my summers during the winter. To me, it is hereditary, because my dad is the first generation of pilots in my family, I am the second. Although my soaring career has just begun, about two years ago, it has already become a part of my personality and has changed my views on education, myself, the weather, and the world. When it comes down to what soaring means to me, there is a never ending list of things, plus more that simply cannot be put into words.

Everyone always has millions of things on their minds. A lot of these are the kind of things we like to leave behind when we go on a vacation. For me, soaring works in the same way as a vacation. Once I get into the cockpit, I can't think about anything other than flying. There is way too many things to think about, preparations to make, things to check, and proper procedures to worry about. I can no longer think about the pressures of life because the stress and amount of thinking needed for flying is overwhelming, but in a good way. It places me in a different world where school, homework, sports, chores, friends, and expectations don't mean a thing. It is really nice to be above it all, literally and not, and to see the little cars with the little people that are taking a mind-numbing car ride to work or to the grocery store, doing their daily routines. While they're doing those things, even though I'm right above them, I'm somewhere else.

The lessons learned from flying are endless. Often, these lessons can also be applied to life. Learning to pay attention to detail, like wind speed, sink, the yaw string, airspeed, altitude, drifting, etc., etc., etc., all contribute to the big picture of flying. Details in life matter just as much. It is said that even the little things in life matter, and from experience, I find this very true. Paying attention to the details in life has made me a better person. At times, when flying, we are in a dangerous situation and do not know it, and have to fix it as soon as we find out, or else it might be too late. Life also brings risky situations we are not aware of, and realizing them is a must. A lot of new things came to my knowledge when I began soaring.

It has become a habit, that when I leave the house and walk outside, I cannot help but to look toward the clouds, and not only the things at ground level like I used to. I have now discovered a new world, in the sky, which was always there before, but I never realized it was so interesting. I pay attention to which way the wind is blowing, how fast the clouds are moving, what kind of clouds are they, and how high their base is. No matter if I am at the airport or not, I have to check whether it is a good flying day or not. Whenever I see a hawk or eagle, I look to see how good their lift is and how they use it. All of these things, before I began to fly, simply did not exist in my eyes, or were simply not things of interest. Since these things became of interest to me, I enjoyed learning about them. I no longer thought of education as long and boring days in school, but something that could be enjoyable as long as I want to know whatever it is I am learning. The feeling of knowing about an entire area of things that most people do not is a tremendously good feeling.

Flying has made me realize what I am capable of. It showed me what I can achieve and what is necessary to achieve it. There are a lot of things one has to know to be able to fly a glider, and knowing these things makes me feel, in a way, proud of myself. I'm not trying to say that I didn't think much of myself before I began to soar, but learning to fly certainly boosted my self-esteem and gave me something to really feel good about. It gave me things to look forward to in the future, and not the future that is so far away, like what I want to be when I grow up, but things that I can actually start to work toward.

Soaring has taught me a lot about everything, showed me new ways of viewing the world, allowed me to take breaks from my daily life, and made me realize what I am capable of. I am hoping to obtain my private glider pilot's license this spring, to begin soaring cross country, and to have many more memorable experiences along the way. I am anxious to continue my soaring career throughout my life, achieve my short and long term flying goals, perhaps pursue a profession in aeronautics, and defeat the never ending challenges soaring brings.

CFIG Recommendation

It is my great pleasure to recommend Marek Ziebinski for the 2006 Youth Scholarship Award. Having been Marek's glider instructor through his solo endorsement at age fourteen, I can attest to his extraordinary balance of determination, patience, responsibility, skill, judgment and enthusiasm.

The Ziebinski's are a soaring family. Father, mother and children would pitch the big picnic tent at Hinckley Airport almost every weekend. Long before Marek was old enough to fly, his father, Jacek, would take him up in a 2-33. Marek's hours of soaring osmosis in the rear seat of that ship served him well when it came his turn to sit up front. From his first lesson, he displayed a sense of control and presence rare even in older, far more advanced students.

What struck me most about this young man was how he would often spend hours at the airfield not flying; instead, he would be cheerfully minding his baby sister. The cums could be postcard-perfect all the way to Canada and the thermals like booster rockets, but if little Elizabeth needed babysitting, Marek would strike his name off the schedule, and, with a big smile, spend the rest of the afternoon playing with her. If there was a trace of disappointment in him, it was undetectable. If it is true that one's maturity is measured by how well one handle disappointment, Marek must be near sainthood.

When he is at the controls of a glider, Marek's mature judgment and situational awareness is readily apparent as he scans for traffic or relinquishes a thermal that is edging him too close to the skydivers' jump cone or luring him too far downwind for conditions.

Marek is a natural learner. By this I mean that as a student he exhibits zero defensiveness. If he makes an error, awareness of it enters his feedback loop and results in immediate corrective action and future self-monitoring. This is true in the aircraft and in the classroom. On the occasions I have towed him, he invariably boxes the wake for practice. How man solo pilots till do that? As Marek progresses in his aviation endeavors, he will be known for his eagerness to acquire and hone knowledge and skill; consequently, he will in time, I feel certain, become known as a great soaring teacher.

All the instructors who have worked with Marek say that same thing: "I wish they were all like him." Last season, he progressed from the 2-33 to the 1-26. On a decent soaring day, he remains in the sky until his time slot is up, his day wants a turn, his family needs him or the sun is settings.

If anyone merits the financial support and encouragement of the Youth Scholarship Award, it is Marek.

Signed,
Donald J. Berk, CFIG 2709834
January 23, 2006