

What Soaring Means to Me

By: Justin Frazier

My interest in soaring was sparked this past May when I met Trace Lewis in a sophomore Biology class. We discussed the sport of soaring for several weeks, as I was intrigued by an aircraft without a motor that could fly for hours and go for hundreds of miles (in some cases) and actually ascend without the help of an engine. When it came time for my first venture into the sky, I was both excited and nervous, due to the fact that I had never been airborne before, let alone in a steel and fabric motor-less aircraft from the 1960's. At first this flight was very unnerving, as every sound or bump made me grab my seat. I eventually began to trust the aircraft and to enjoy my flight. This very enjoyable experience left me hungry for more and I was soon taking flying lessons. Eventually I took a job with Sylvania Soaring Adventures as a member of the line crew which further enhanced my knowledge of soaring.

During the soaring season of last year, very seldom did I miss a day out at the field. Learning something new each weekend, I quickly became addicted to the world of soaring flight. Working and flying at Beloit has allowed me to develop a set of skills that not many people my age have the opportunity to receive. For example, my ground crew duties require a high level of situational awareness, the ability to work in a stressful environment, and responsibility.

Among the many enjoyable experiences at Beloit, one flight stands out more than others. It was on one of our rare Friday flying days Trace and I drove directly to the airport after school for what would be my longest glider flight to date. With a flight lasting more than 2 hours, I shared a SGS 2-33 with a fellow line crew member and for the first time, I had the opportunity to share a thermal with other gliders. Throughout the flight I was forced to keep track of up to six gliders at a time, not only in the thermals but also when we all fell out of the sky and seemed to enter the landing pattern at the same time.

By the end of the '07 season, I was a member of the Soaring Society of America and the Chicago Land Glider Council. During this time I had accumulated over 40 training flights, however, due to insufficient funding I was not able to afford the necessary insurance to act as PIC of company aircraft.

In this coming season, I hope to get my private license, as well as my A, B, C, and Bronze badges. Another goal of mine is to gain enough experience flying the 2-33 to transition to the Schweizer 1-26, eventually graduating to the 1-34 after I get my license. On top of my planned experiences as a pilot for the '08 season, I will be crewing for a pilot flying in a regional soaring contest.

In conclusion, if awarded this grant it would be applied to my further education and experience in the sport of soaring by helping me to get my private pilots license. With my license I would like to eventually become a cross-country/ racing pilot flying my own ship in contests around the country. In the more immediate future, I look forward to giving rides to friends and family to help spread the joy of soaring.