

Welcome-Aboard Handout for new High Flights Soaring members

Hi ... I'm Lou, and it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to our soaring club. Obviously, you're interested in glider flying, and in joining the club you've already made a financial commitment in support of our efforts to promote, teach and enjoy the sport of soaring, and for that, I thank you on behalf of all our members and the soaring community.

So ... if you're new to glider clubs you may be wondering, what exactly have I gotten myself into? Well ... If I can, I'd like to give you a brief outline of what we club members expect from each other, what it takes to keep the club functioning well and answer some of your questions along the way.

We are A WORKING CLUB and did you know that YOU VOLUNTEERED to do your part to keep the cost of flying within reasonable levels; the club has no paid staff. That means whatever work is required to get a glider in the air and maintain the facilities has to be done by club members who volunteer their time. Even our Flight Instructors and Tow Pilots, who in other clubs may be paid, here volunteer their time in service to the members. That speaks to the broader point, that all the work that needs to be done to get a glider in the air, cannot be accomplished singularly. It takes "a village to raise a glider." Well, not quite a village but a glider pilot needs at least a tow pilot and a ground crewman for pre-flight prep and launch, and when you're not flying, you'll be assigned duties to assist those pilots who are. Additionally, there are a myriad of tasks that are ongoing to support the glider operation and our members take on those responsibilities in service to the rest of us.

SAFETY AND DISCIPLINE: Launching and flying gliders is not inherently dangerous. It certainly entails more risk than more mundane activities, but those risks can be managed and minimized by adherence to sound practices born over decades of introspection and problem solving, not only by our club members but by the whole soaring community worldwide. The aviation world in general spends an inordinate amount of its resources striving to learn from its mistakes and demanding that its operations are conducted in the safest possible manner. The right way of conducting business has been refined over decades of such introspection and analyses. Of course as a new member, we expect that you may be unaware of "best practices" as you participate in club activities ... you'll need time to observe and learn how things are done and we as veteran members will mentor and encourage you. You may find us unyielding and dogmatic when it comes to certain ways of doing things, but our methods and practices are time-tested and proven to produce safe, efficient and fun outcomes. That said, almost everything we do is constantly being re-evaluated as we strive to do things better. If you see something or someone that's clearly out of place or threatening the safe conduct of operations, "speak up." We also encourage you to ask questions ... in part, it is how we learn.

ASSIGNMENT OF DUTIES: When you joined our club, one of our board members, during your initial chat, made an assessment of your possible skill set (as it pertains to gliders). Based on that assessment and the needs of the club, you'll be assigned duties important to the smooth operation of club activities. There are two jobs that need to be filled on days that we fly, and two additional jobs that enhance and broaden club activities, but aren't necessarily required to get a glider in the air. The two primary workers are the Tow Pilot and the Line Chief - the secondary

workers are the Flight Instructor and Assistant Lineman. Since aerotow is currently our only method of glider launch (there are other methods), it's obvious why we need the tow plane and pilot. He's your ride up! The Line Chief has several responsibilities in helping the glider pilot get ready for his flight, which include opening up and allowing access to our ops area, staging equipment, starting the paperwork which documents the day's activities, supervising ground activities, and assisting the glider pilot in positioning his aircraft at the launch area. The Flight Instructor (IP), if scheduled, acts in his trained and licensed capacity, training and certifying pilots, all the while providing oversight to the whole crew ensuring safe practice and adherence to standards. The Assistant Lineman shares responsibilities and duties with the Line Chief. It can also be quite lonely on the line; the Assistant Lineman prevents that situation, and also makes it possible for each of the crew to fly, when they are qualified, even if they and the tow pilot are the only folks on the field. If unfilled for a time, the IP and Assistant Lineman positions don't preclude glider operations, but in their absence, more burden falls on the pilots and Line Chief to ensure safe operations ... the workforce is cut in half but the same amount of work remains.

When you're new and do not possess advanced glider skills or knowledge, you'll be assigned duty as the Assistant Lineman. The Club's Board of Directors decided years ago that the most efficient method of insuring adequate manpower to conduct ops is through an assignment system as opposed to a "sign-up sheet" method. Our club President, John Scott, has taken on the responsibility for building the quarterly assignment schedule. Board member Jim Densmore assists him with tow pilot assignments. He begins the process by sending all members an email, asking them what club work dates won't work for them, and John gives their requests due consideration when building the schedule. Speaking of the schedule, "when do we fly?" Generally speaking, the club schedules operations on Saturday and Sunday. Starting time for ops varies somewhat: on Saturday, prep for flying begins at 0930, on Sunday prep initiates at 1130. End time for each day depends on how many are flying and daylight available (gliders don't typically fly at night, and none of ours are equipped to do so). That said, it's a rare day when we haven't closed up shop at 1700 (this last Saturday we wrapped operations at 1500). Club members who want to fly outside these hours may do so by pre-arrangement with the Tow Pilot and the Line Chief, or any qualified personnel who can serve those functions.

As noted, John and Jim build the schedule and it is then published on our website (more about the website in a bit). It's incumbent on the members to check the schedule and report to duty when assigned. Now, should a conflict arise after the schedule is published, the individual who is assigned bears the responsibility for finding his or her replacement. A member roster will be made available to facilitate contact between members, and as soon as a conflict arises, every effort should be made to find someone who will take your place - perhaps someone will trade or swap a day with you. Remember that we club members are mutually dependent on each other, and each assigned worker is essential. This should not be too difficult, but if no replacement can be found, please contact the Line Chief, Assistant Lineman, Flight Instructor or Tow Pilot assigned for your work day and apprise them of your situation. (Communication covers a multitude of sins!)

OUR WEBSITE: The club maintains a website to communicate with its members: www.highlights.com. Some of the data contained therein is open to anyone surfing the site, while other information there is restricted to members by user name and password (i.e.

Reservations and Schedule). To log on to the member-only areas, the username is: **hfsc** and the password is: **isoar** . Check out the site ... there's a lot of useful info there including reference material pertaining to our aircraft. The formatting of the work schedule is easy to interpret. The Reservation schedule, while simple, does take some getting used to (we're working on that). Instructions for reserving a glider are included on the page. Remember what the normal club ops hours are for the day you're flying ... they're noted above. If you reserve a glider outside those hours without conferring with those working that day, you'll likely end up waiting for the crew who'll show up at the normal time.

YOUR FIRST DAY: Ok, it's Saturday and you're scheduled to work as Assistant Lineman. From the paragraph above, you know that your show time is 0930. If you're the first crewman to arrive, you'll first have to unlock the green metal entrance gate to the field. Its lock combo is 1227 (those of you who are already pilots will recognize the combination as being a CTAF and Unicom frequency commonly used at uncontrolled airports: 122.7 is in fact Meadow Lake Airport's CTAF). Note: the gate swings open to the south, and is secured open to posts you'll find when the gate is fully open. Secure the lock and chain to the fence making it easy to find when you close up at the end of the day.

High Flights has a trailer which houses our equipment, and it's your next stop. There's ample parking just outside the trailer in an area bounded by small tractor tires. The trailer has no utilities so bring your car phone charger and/or battery brick if need be. Additionally, no utilities mean no heat, light, air conditioning, refrigeration, tap water or food. (Occasionally, some generous soul will leave non-perishable snacks). There's a "port-a-potty" between the trailer and the parking area to handle those needs. When you get to the trailer you'll find another combination lock on its door. That combination is: 2689. If you forget you'll find the combination is in plane sight (pun intended). It's the same numerical sequence as the "N" number you'll see painted on the side of our Schweitzer 2-33 glider N2689H which is tied down directly north of the trailer (if you're unfamiliar with "N" numbers, just ask a fellow member to explain).

Ok, you're in and your fellow co-workers will arrive soon. The Line Chief and Flight Instructor will assemble with you at the trailer, while the tow pilot will bring the tow plane (a Super Cub) over from the hangar which is located between Cessna Drive and the main/paved N/S runway on the northeast side of the field. (Note: Flight Instructors normally work on Saturdays ... occasionally you'll see one on the schedule for Sunday ops. If you need to fly with an instructor, Saturday's your day. We also assign a duty pilot on Sunday, but that person may only have a commercial pilot rating rather than an instructor rating.) Now the pre-flight prep begins and the Line Chief will shepherd you through the process. Half of the work is accomplished at the trailer, while the remaining tasks revolve around the gliders to be flown. In the trailer you'll prepare the flight log paperwork, and on the back of the log you'll find a checklist that enumerates the tasks the ground crew will undertake in preparation for flight ops. I won't go into detail about each item - expect your Line Chief and Flight Instructor to fill in the blanks for you. Ask all the questions you wish ... we want you to have a sound understanding of what we do and why, and we want you to have fun. Also, cut yourself some slack ... we expect you to make some mistakes along the way. We only ask that you give it your full attention. Critical mistakes may result in injury or worse, and please, limit yourself to cell phone use only during

clearly slack moments. (Even then, a completely silent glider can arrive on downwind leg for landing!)

At the end of the day we reverse many of these processes; again, the line chief will walk you through it. The tow pilot usually takes the tow plane to the fuel pit to be refueled. Then he goes back to the hangar to put the airplane away. He may ask the ground crew for assistance; pushing the airplane into the hangar is difficult because there is a slight uphill grade. It's a nice gesture to show up at the hangar to help even if you haven't been asked. Remember though, no driving across the runway unless you are flag-equipped (see below) and have a radio, and are familiar with those procedures. Always minimize vehicle presence on airport paved areas.

GENERAL COMMENTS: It is expected that either you or the Line Chief will use your personal vehicle to tow gliders from the tie down area to the launch point. A tow hitch is not necessary for this task, and stress on your vehicle is negligible, as an empty glider without pilots weighs between 500-600 pounds. Additionally, you may have to retrieve gliders from their landing spot back to the launch point. While operating a vehicle on the airfield, we are required to display an orange and white flag and have a radio. The radio, flags and their mounting apparatus are part of our equipment compliment you'll find in the trailer (the tow pilot brings the radios because they are charged in the tow plane hangar).

One more thing ... there's homework! Yes and a practical test as well! It has to do with ground handling of the glider, specifically as it pertains to the interaction between the glider and the tow plane. The most common form of communication that takes place in glider clubs between the glider and the tow plane occur via hand signals, and a basic understanding of these hand signals is helpful right from the start and necessary to safe operations. Radio communications aren't precluded, but such communication isn't always practical. These hand signals are universally applied at all clubs in the US and are encouraged by the Soaring Society of America (SSA). These signals can be found on line by simply searching for ground handling signals for gliders on the web. There are also numerous texts that contain the hand signals and detail their use. One of my favorites is the soaring text *THE JOY OF SOARING* by Carle Conway. This book is considered the Bible of Soaring and contains much of what you'll need to establish a firm understanding of the sport. There are other fine publications which will help and accelerate your learning, many of which are available for reading on line at no cost.

There's more to learn, but I think we're off to a good start. I hope you'll enjoy your experience at High Flights Soaring Club. Any board member, IP or line chief can assist you with your questions. Thank you for reading, and again welcome to the Club!