NSM NEWS

SUMMER 2026

Official Newsletter of the National Soaring Museum

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NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

NSM executive director, Adam Smith, moved out of the area at the end of May, followed almost immediately by the unexpected death of our director of operations, Don Rumsey. The board of trustees had already determined that Adam Smith would remain director remotely until a new director could be hired. Don would most certainly have been able to keep the museum running smoothly, but his sudden death left an on-site administrative gap that needed to be filled.

Board president, Mike Koerner, called our immediate former executive director, Trafford Doherty, and asked if he and his wife, Jean, would be able to return and see the museum through the transition period between directors. Traff agreed at once and he and Jean returned on May 27 to begin preparations for several significant events, including: The Orchestra of the Southern Finger Lakes Fundraiser on May 30; the Corning Community Band Concert on June 4; and a Horseheads High School class reunion on August 1. All three events went smoothly. In July, Celebrations of Life were held here for our custodian's wife, Sandy Stokes, and our director of operations, Don Rumsey. Also during this period was the added excitement of the Region 3 Contest at Harris Hill on July 13-18.

Traff and Jean have now been at the museum since May 27 and will stay long enough to orient the new director, Beth Clark, who is slated to start her position on August 24. Beth attended the Elieen Collins Space Camp when she was 8 years old, stayed overnight on the hill and got rides in a sailplane and power plane. More recently, she has served as an executive director and as a volunteer at several local for-profit and non-profit organizations. She has also been extensively involved in fundraising efforts throughout the community.

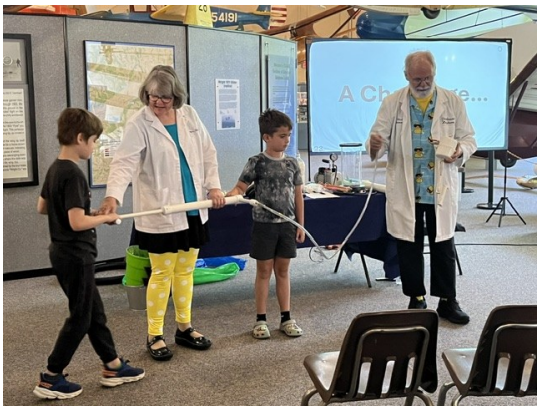
While working at the museum this summer, Traff and Jean have put together an audio tour of the museum and its exhibits. Traff wrote the texts and Jean put the texts and photos into an online program. Anyone can access this audio tour from anywhere in the world, not just in the museum. To take our audio tour, open your phone camera app and scan the QR code below. When "YourAudioTour" pops up, click on it and then click "start". You can also download it to your phone and look at it anytime.

NATIONAL SOARING MUSEUM AUDIO TOUR

Education & Programs - *Adam Smith*

The Air Show

Our summer educational program on July 24 in partnership with The Laughing Classroom was a fun event. The “Air Show” focused on the mysterious principles of air, its properties, and its relation to soaring. Michelle Halprin of the Family Reading Partnership and her performing partner, Richard Hughson, take STEM-related subjects and make them FUN for kids of all ages.



Big Flats Historical Society – Pancake Breakfast

Thanks to Bonnie Schweizer for the idea and invitation to bring NSM and HHSC to the Big Flats Historical Society in June! Programs manager, Katie Huss and HHSC’s Randy and Natalie Fatula transported the Russia Glider and assembled it in front of visitors to the breakfast. Demonstrations were given and questions answered. These small events make a big difference toward making people aware of the Museum and Harris Hill. We have made significant strides in how we partner with other organizations.

Dryden Scout Troop – Aviation Merit Badge Day

Katie Huss graduated her first class of Scout of America aviation merit badge recipients in June. Go Katie! Nine scouts from Dryden visited the Museum to complete the in person requirements for their badge. At the Museum they complete a model glider project, learn about the principles of flight, complete a pre-flight checklist of an aircraft, and perform a successful landing in our flight simulator. This ends up being a full day at the Museum for most troops. Since the activation of the program we have had almost 40 scouts complete their aviation merit badge at NSM. Thanks to HHSC, Eric Shelhamer, and Olivia Tate for assisting in the operation of this program and this group of scouts in June!

Exhibits

Jacob & Emily Barnes
reassemble the Super Albatross

Emily, Jacob & Traff

Visitors - Not many visitors come in their own special flight suit !

NEW MEMBERS

Individual
JoAnn McGee
Brandon Pierson

Family
Jiachuan Pan & Yunchu Li
David Hough

Bronze
Oliver Dotts

Silver
Allen B. Reeves

HHSC Senior
Emily Barnes
Karol Fenzl
Shawn Fleming
Gyan Das
Maryahna McCarthy
Isabella Terry
Katherine Lamoureux
Daniel Piper

HHSC Junior
Sebastian Garcia
Gregory Fatula
Ayla Fleming
Baelynn Gilbert

DONATIONS

Rosalie Grove
James Cole
Brandon Pierson
William Foley
Darrel & Maureen Watson
Melissa Maddox
Andrew Frechtling &
Candace Faber
Dinah Schmidt
William Scharrer
Eric Nelson

ARTIFACT DONATIONS

Luke P. Orrin
Ron Sands
Michael Shoen
Adriana Armstrong
Elise Eaton
Amy Mallin

National Soaring Museum

Donation of Warren Eaton Memorabilia & Papers

The National Soaring Museum was pleased to accept a recent donation of Warren Eaton memorabilia and papers donated by his granddaughter, Elise Eaton of Norwich, NY.

Warren Eaton was a major organizational figure in the first five (1930-4) National Glider meets in nearby Elmira. He won the altitude prize in 1930 and made the first aero tow from what we now call Harris Hill. He was part of the first triple and quadruple glider tows, the first to fly glider airmail during a contest, and the first to radio broadcast from a glider to a crowd below. In the early '30s, Eaton was the most active promoter of gliding and soaring in the U.S. In 1932, Eaton led the formation of the Soaring Society of America and was elected its first president. He served three years, covering much of the young SSA's expenses himself.

In 1934 at Big Meadows,VA, Eaton set a new American soaring altitude record of 9,094 feet.

Also in 1934, Eaton visited glider youth camps in Nazi Germany. Perhaps sensing what might be coming, he advocated before Congress for a much-expanded SSA, to include glider flight training in college ROTC programs, especially at Annapolis and West Point. Unfortunately, Eaton's untimely passing only weeks later left nobody to champion this idea.

On December 1, 1934, Eaton fell to his death from a double tow over Miami's Biscayne Bay. The tow was for publicity photos to promote the winter glider school Eaton was ready to open. His custom aerobatic Franklin PS-2 landed itself with almost no damage; fully restored, it is now on permanent display at the National Soaring Museum.

Elise Eaton is a long time NSM member and patron. She co-authored the book, *The Emergence of Soaring in America: Warren E. Eaton and Aviation in the Interwar Era* (available in the museum gift shop or online) which covers Warren Eaton's death on December 1, 1934. In 2020, after 30+ years employment with the City of Burlington, Vermont, Elise retired to her hometown of Norwich, New York.

MUSEUM OFFICERS

Michael Koerner
President

Ann Lafford
Vice-President

Dr. William G. Howard
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Jennifer Bauman
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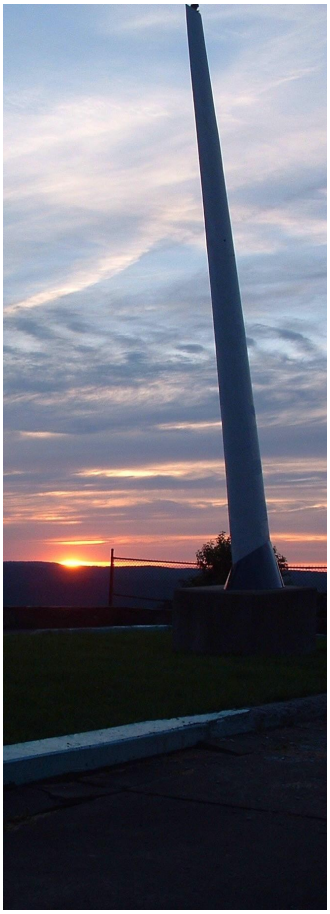


Donation of 1930s Photographs

The museum was fortunate to receive a fabulous collection of 1930s photographs from Amy Mallin, taken by her grandfather and Stevens Tech student, John George Mladinov (later changed to “Mallin”). John was an engineering student at Stevens, and was a member and officer in the university’s glider club. On at least one occasion, John and the glider club brought their sailplane, the SU-1, to Rhodes Farm (now Harris Hill area) for a contest. While on Harris Hill, John took many photographs of the SU-1 and other competing gliders. These never-before-seen photos are a treasure, and they came, each with its own negative! All have been filed in our glider photo archives.

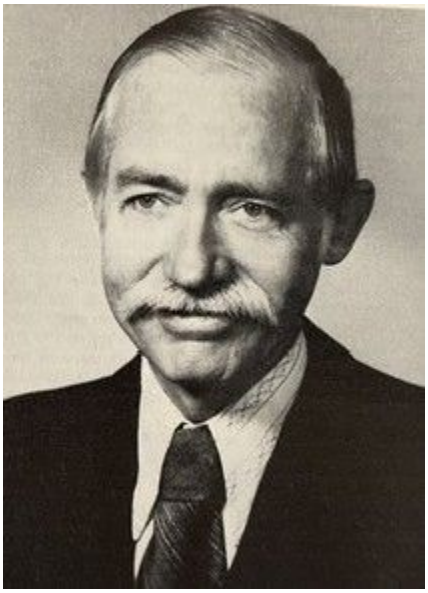
Stevens Institute of Technology is a private research university in Hoboken, NJ. Founded in 1870, it is one of the oldest technological universities in the United States and was the first college in America solely dedicated to mechanical engineering.

If you think that photos of this SU-1 look a lot like the PS-2 - you’d be right! The SU-1 was developed as an attempt to improve the performance of the Franklin PS-2, by designing new wings for it as a student project. The PS-2's straight 36 ft (11.0 m) wings were replaced with 46 ft (14.0 m) gull-wings. Like the original wings, the new wings had two spars, but instead of parallel struts, the new wings used V-struts, terminating at a single fuselage attachment point. Jury struts were also used. Like the original wings, the new wings were a wooden structure, covered in doped aircraft fabric covering. The SU-1 retained the PS-2's original steel tube fuselage.

In Memoriam

Bernald S. Smith

1926 - June 2, 2026



Captain Bernald S. Smith was a pilot with United Air Lines for 38 years, 4 years with Transocean, 31 years with the US Navy and Navy Reserve. He flew in the Berlin Airlift, Korea Airlift, and Vietnam Airlift.

During his life, Bernald contributed much of his spare time to advancing the sport of soaring - through SSA, FAI, OSTIV and many other soaring related organizations. These efforts have earned him almost every existing soaring award.

FAI's highest award - Lilienthal in 1993: "A lifetime of singular and unselfish commitment to soaring. Smith's service is an inspiration to all who know him."

SSA's highest award - Eaton in 1977 and 1997 - the only individual to receive the award twice. His response in 1977 - "I can't believe it! I can't believe it!" In 1997 he thanked the people who elected him to office, saying, "I'd have paid to have them let me do it. We deal with great people in our sport."

If anyone ever deserved it, Bernald Smith certainly merited the Schweizer Award which he received in 2002: "The Paul Schweizer Lifetime Service Award recognizes those SSA members who have made an exceptional, continuing contribution to fostering and promoting soaring over a period of at least three decades."

As may be obvious from these three awards that Bernald Smith's contributions to our sport are far more than we can describe in detail here. We will try to tabulate as best as we can.

Bernald Smith was first elected to the SSA Board in 1963 and became President of the Board in 1969 and 1970. He most recently served as Honorary Vice Chair of the SSA Board. He was responsible for the successful 1970 World Soaring Contest in Marfa and served as a Steward for the Championships. He served on and chaired many Boards for SSA for multiple years including the Technical and Publications Boards and the Insurance Committee. He co-chaired several SSA Conventions held in Reno.

He was Deputy Director of the 1983 World Soaring Championships in Hobbs, NM and Director of Championships for the 1991 World competition in Uvalde, TX. He has served as Trustee of the Soaring Safety Foundation. Over the years, Bernald has especially exhibited a strong interest in urging safety practices and has published many columns and articles on the subject. He was Trustee and President for the National Soaring Museum, leading it through an important time in its history. In recent years, he was an Aviation Group Representative for the FAI Environmental Commission. As achievements outstripped badge goals for pilots, Bernald worked with others to create the World Distance Award for cumulated cross-country flight distances exceeding the circumference of the earth.

Bernald Smith's contributions on the international level have been many, with his efforts for both the FAI and OSTIV. He has been involved in the formation of GPS and its use in soaring and other aviation related activities. He was involved in the development of technical standards for avionics and support equipment. He has been a delegate and an alternate to the IGC and served as Vice President. As the U.S. Delegate to the OSTIV, he was instrumental in negotiating the agreement for publication of all OSTIV papers in Technical Soaring, a magazine which is now the OSTIV publication. He has been the SSA's and FAI's representative to RTCA; thus, serving all aspects of sport aviation. His many travels associated with these activities have always been at his own expense. He is recognized internationally for his lifetime of singular and unselfish commitment to soaring.

The above list represent only a few of the activities with which Bernald Smith has been involved. He has served the SSA and the International soaring scene for over five decades.

In addition to the Awards mentioned above, Bernald Smith has received even more recognition for his many efforts in behalf of the sport of soaring. Internationally he has received the FAI Bronze Medal in 2002 and the Tissandier Diploma in 1990. He is an FAI Companion of Honour and the recipient of OSTIV Special Recognition in 2008. He received the SSA Exceptional Service Award in 1970, 1975, 1982, 1988, 1991 and the Exceptional Achievement Award in 1996. He earned the Silver badge #393 in 1960 and Gold #114 in 1962.

In Memoriam

Rex D. Wells

January 10, 1943 - March 21, 2026

Rex D. Wells, age 83, passed away on March 21, 2026. A longtime member and generous contributor to the National Soaring Museum. Rex was a sailplane pilot and participated in many soaring competitions, as both pilot and crew, from the age of 14, earning his pilot's license at 16. He was also a long-time HAM radio operator, earning his General HAM license 'N3PGI'. He was a member of the Anne Arundel and Laurel HAM clubs. He served on active duty in the U.S. Army from 1964-1966 in Germany and Norway as a member of the military police and as a CID Inspector. Attended Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and worked in construction for Omni, building affordable housing and other commercial structures. He spent 32 years in the Federal Government working for the Department of Health and Human Services on HMOs.

Rex was born in Elmira, NY on January 10, 1943, to Durland H. & Arlene "Arlie" (Ayers) Wells. Husband of Jan D. Wells for 58 years after meeting on a blind date for New Year's Eve in 1962. He is survived by his wife, Jan of Chester, MD, son Garth (Christine) Wells of Kent Island, MD; 3 grandchildren; brother, Christopher of Santa Fe, NM; several nephews, nieces and cousins; and his sister-in-law, Liz Dittman.

Eric Mozer Inducted into the Soaring Hall of Fame

Eric Mozer was informed of his induction to the US Soaring Hall of Fame in April at the Region 5 competition in Perry, SC. An induction banquet is in the planning phase for October 24 at the National Soaring Museum.

“Eric Mozer has been a fixture within the soaring community, both nationally and internationally, since the early 1970s. Born into a famous soaring family, Eric is a legend, placing highly in national championships as early as 1976. He won at least five national soaring championships, starting with the standard class nationals in 1977. Eric has represented the SSA on the US Team at seven World Gliding Championships, starting in 1978, finishing as high as 3rd place in 1991. He chaired the US Contest Committee in the 1980s, served as an SSA Director and a trustee of the SSA Foundation. Eric’s most recent major contribution was to serve as championships Director at the 2024 Uvalde World Gliding Championships.”

- Ken Sorenson, SSA Director

MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

Dianne Black Nixon
Dr. Guerry & Alberta Howard
Dr. Richard & Linda Welles
Steve & Nancy Sliwa
Rusty & Karen Lowry
Jerry Wenger
Elise Eaton
Jan van den Blink
Thomas King
Tom & Jean Riley
Mary R. Nelson
Steve Leonard

Ray & Kittie Alexander
in memory of Floyd J. Sweet

J. R. Daniel
Stu & Lucy Schweizer
Curran & Barbara Sekella
Jan & Clare van den Blink
in memory of Mary Flasphaler

Cathy Williams
in memory of Corky Gill

MEMBERSHIP UPGRADE

Caley Society
Jon & Clare van den Blink

Diamond
Ken & Michelle Sorenson
Elise Eaton

Gold
Rocky Peters

Silver
Shaun & Catherine Keller
Jeff Shingleton

Bronze
John & Rosa Hosp

National Soaring Museum

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Summer 2026

MUSEUM HOURS

April 1 - Oct. 31
Open daily 10-5

Nov. 1 - Mar. 31
Open daily 10-4

Museum closed on the following holidays:

New Year's Day

Easter Sunday

Thanksgiving Day

Christmas Eve

Christmas Day

NSM Membership Form

Please check the membership category of your choice and return to:

The National Soaring Museum, 51 Soaring Hill Dr., Elmira, NY 14903

___ Basic $35 ___ Family $50 ___ Bronze $100 ___ Silver $250

___ Gold $500 ___ Diamond $1000 ___ Cayley Society $2500

My name(s)
as it is to appear in printed matter : _____

Address_____City _____

State_____Zip _____Home phone _____

e-mail address _____

___ My check is enclosed

___ Please bill my Credit Card# _____exp. date _____

(*MasterCard-Visa-Discover-American Express*) V-code _____

Signature_____

Additional tax-deductible donations will be used for museum improvements, including upgrading facilities, restoration shop and new exhibits.

My additional donation _____

Membership Benefits: Unlimited free admission • Invitations to exhibit openings and receptions Guest passes • Subscription to the museum newsletter & journal • Volunteer opportunities Discounts on museum programs and events • Discounts in the museum shop