

# NSM

WINTER 2025

Official Newsletter of the National Soaring Museum

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## MUSEUM STAFF

**Adam L. Smith**  
Executive Director  
Curator

**Emily Meissner**  
Programs Manager

**Jean Doherty**  
Newsletter & Journal Editor  
Membership Coordinator

**Don Rumsey**  
Operations Manager

**Kennedy Parker**  
**Rocky Peters**  
Gift Shop Staff

**Ron Stokes**  
Custodian



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## Welcome Our New Executive Director, Adam Smith

Trafford Doherty retired on December 1 after 8+ years as Executive Director. It has been a productive period for the museum, with the creation of many new exhibits, increases in membership, improvements to the physical plant and growth of the museum endowment.

We were so fortunate to have had several qualified individuals apply for the position of executive director. Adam grew up in Sayre, PA, so was already familiar with our area. He currently living in South Corning, making it a quick commute to the museum. Adam comes to us with a significant background in museum administration, having served as Director of Operations and Facility Manager for the Martha's Vineyard Museum, in Vineyard Haven, MA. He was able to be here for IVSM this past summer and experience the excitement of this great event, while meeting members of the soaring community. Adam worked alongside Trafford during the month of November and "hit the ground running" on December 1.

Jean Doherty will continue to maintain museum membership and produce the NSM Newsletter and Journal from home.

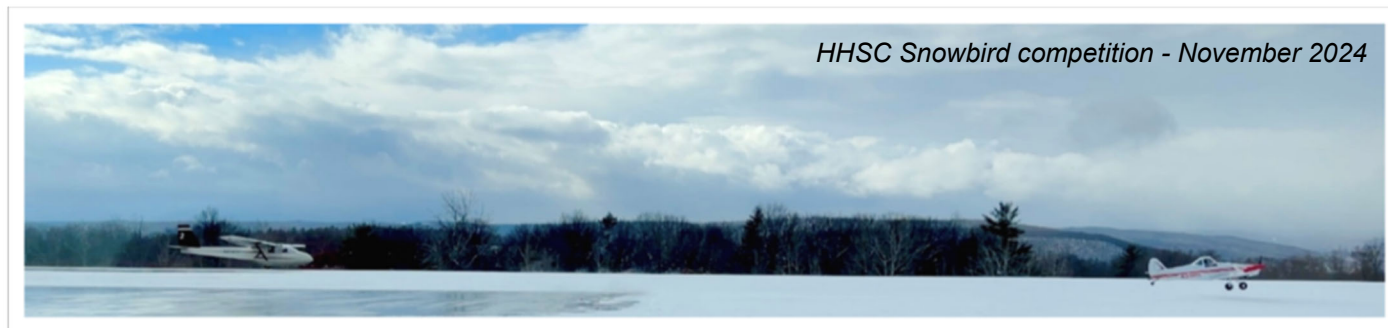
We encourage you to stop by the museum and meet Adam and our new Program Director, Emily Meissner.

## Welcome Our Programs Manager, Emily Meissner

Emily is the new Programs Manager at the National Soaring Museum. She is originally from Phelps, NY, and graduated from SUNY Brockport with her bachelor's degree in Tourism Management in the spring of 2024. She has been volunteering and working for museums for about four years now and is excited to be employed at the NSM. Emily has been involved in the soaring community for a little over three years and is no stranger to the doings on Harris Hill and Harris Hill Soaring Corp. She was on deck to help with this past summer's International Vintage Sailplane Meet and Region 3 Contest and has been working with Janine Acee in preparation for the upcoming Nationals.



## From the Director - Adam Smith



*HHSC Snowbird competition - November 2024*

As we settle in for the latter half of winter on Harris Hill, I am reminded just how lucky we are to have our Museum located in a truly wonderful location. December and January have offered a picturesque, snow-covered landscape, as a backdrop for the striking facade of the Museum. The Schweizer gallery reflecting the frozen airfield which patiently awaits the arrival of Spring and the return of sailplane activity. A quick glance over the ridge to the Chemung Valley below, provides a direct forecast of the weather to come and our smartphones offer their best guess. Peace and tranquility in the morning is often replaced with activity and camaraderie from afternoon patrons or Harris Hill club members stopping in for a cup of coffee. I am grateful for the opportunity to drive up the hill each day, through the fog, into the sunlight; to pass the same rangale of deer crossing over from Lew Storch Road and to count the red tails perched high above the road, guarding the entrance to this landmark in the history of soaring.



*Resident Red Tail Hawk*

Don, Emily, Ron, and I are looking forward to warmer days to come and the chance to put plans into action. We have spent this winter zooming in on where the National Soaring Museum has been and determining where we want to go, as an organization. As a full-time staff of 3, I am reminded each day of the importance of teamwork, organizational communication, and the power of positivity. Don Rumsey as Operations Manager and Emily Meissner as Programs/Education Manager, exhibit focus and effort on our team's goals. Due to their work, we have an optimistic outlook for the upcoming year. We hope to provide a robust and enriching visitor experience to both the first-time patron and long-time members. Through exhibits, tours, educational, and public programs - students, youth groups, and citizens of Chemung County will all have opportunities to interact with the Museum in 2025.



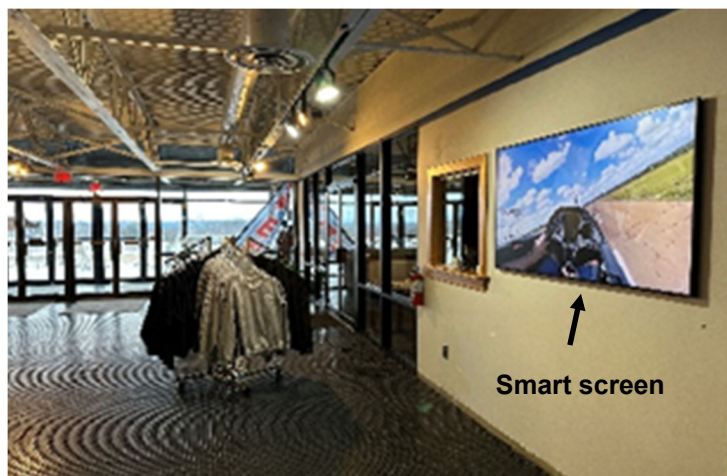
If you are planning to visit the Museum in the near future, you will be delighted to see a few updates to our exhibits. Emily's preparation for educational programs has precipitated the need for wall space in the Frank Gross classroom. Formerly adorning the walls of the classroom were portraits completed in 1982 by Gerald C. Pomeroy to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the SSA's founding. The portraits depict the 15 members who served on the Board in 1932, as the National Glider Association (NGA) reformed into the Soaring Society of America (SSA). Included in the 15 drawings is Warren E. Eaton, who served as the first Board President. These portraits have been moved into our main exhibit space for all visitors to take a closer look.

*Line drawing portraits of the SSA founders, displayed on the hallway wall going to the Schweizer Gallery →*



In other exciting exhibit news, we look forward to the return of the *Gross Sky Ghost*. Designed in the 1931 by Dr. Frank R. Gross, the *Sky Ghost* was the first two-place glider built in the United States. The first multi-place glider flight of over two hours (in the USA) was completed by Gross in this glider. It was also the first multi-place glider entered in the U.S. Nationals when it competed in 1932. The *Sky Ghost* was donated to NSM in 1987 by Dr. Gross. It will be located near the Baker-McMillan Cadet II (also designed by Dr. Gross) and directly adjacent to the Gross Sky Ghost Classroom and the Gross Sky Ghost Award plaque – a scholarship funded by Dr. Gross' generous support of the National Soaring Museum, awarded to youths seeking to pursue the sport of soaring.

We have added an interactive audio visual exhibit. A smart screen adjacent to the museum gift shop provides our visitors an opportunity to view sailplanes in flight, experience first-person views from inside the cockpit, receive information about membership, acknowledge accomplishments made by Harris Hill junior club members, watch live-tracking inflight data during national and world competitions, and more! This exhibit was made possible through generous annual contributions from Steve & Nancy Sliwa, who formed the Sliwa Fund in honor of Steve's mother, former NSM executive director and soaring enthusiast, Shirley Sliwa.



*Jeff Byard, Adam Smith and Rusty Lowry prepare the Kirby Gull for transport, Jeff purchased the Gull from Rusty this past summer*





In the restoration shop, Harris Hill club member, Jim Cramer, has been working on his *Libelle* since late November. He has spent almost every day in the shop, providing information and explanation of his project to Museum visitors in between hours of wet-sanding and buffing. Jim hopes to have his refinishing project complete before the weather breaks. We look forward to seeing his sailplane sparkle in the Springtime!



*Jim Cramer at work →*

From exhibits onto programs and education – At the Elmira Parley Coburn Elementary School, Emily participated in a Career Symposium focused on what it is like to work in a non-profit museum. She interacted with over 100 students in sixth grade and gave them an idea of how fun a day at the National Soaring Museum might be! I am pleased to announce that we will have our first group of Cub Scouts visiting the Museum on February 8<sup>th</sup>. Emily will have the opportunity to work with them and provide a workshop-style educational program for the young adventurers. In conjunction with Emily's intro to soaring, Rob Whitcomb will take the youths and their chaperones on a museum tour, and another generous-with-his-time, Harris Hill club member will show them the HHSC tow-plane hangar and give them a chance to sit in the Super Cub! In March, as part of Women's History Month, we will have several visits from groups with the Girl Scouts of the USA. Educational workshops involving the adventurous lives of women in soaring and our Women in Soaring Wall of Fame exhibit will supplement usual workshops and provide an enriching learning experience. Keep an eye out for upcoming programs and events! Between now and the next newsletter we will host several programs/workshops such as *Soaring Into the Movies*, a *Bird vs. Glider* workshop, and a *Soaring Into Summer* series (in the planning). Several event rentals of the Mooers Community Room and over 23 bus tours have been added to our schedule for the season. Enough to keep us busy for now!



*Illustrations by Dale Gustin in 1959, added to Frank Gross Classroom as educational exhibits*

I have met many members and friends of the National Soaring Museum in just a few short months and I look forward to meeting many more during the upcoming season. Thank you to all those who have provided me with unique stories, information, and advice during my initial period as Director. A special thanks to Traff & Jean Doherty and Bill Batesole for your past efforts and for your unwavering support. NSM is a unique organization with endless potential and opportunity to preserve the history of motorless flight and interweave the sport of soaring into its surrounding community. With the support of our membership and our partnership with the Harris Hill Soaring Club we hope to soar to new heights in 2025!

Adam L. Smith, Director

## **MUSEUM OFFICERS**

**Bill Batesole**  
President

**Michael Koerner**  
Vice-President

**Dr. William G. Howard**  
Secretary / Treasurer

**Adam L. Smith**  
Executive Director

## **TRUSTEES**

Aaron Alsheimer  
Jennifer Bauman  
Dianne Black-Nixon  
Tom Freeman  
Doug Fronius  
Josh Knerr  
Ann Lafford  
Steve Leonard  
Mark Margeson  
Neal Pfeiffer  
Karin Schlosser  
Kyle Schweizer  
W. Stuart Schweizer  
Jan van den Blink  
Dr. Richard Welles  
Phil Westcott

## **NEW MEMBERS**

### **Individual**

Adam Peterson  
Bill Vasilovich

### **Family**

Dr. H. W. Detrich  
Edward & Barbara Smith  
John H. Fleckenstein  
James & Eden French  
Mitch & Kimmie Hudson

### **Bronze**

James & Linda Morzillo

### **Silver**

Robin Dern

### **HHSC Senior**

Brendan Glover  
Rowan McBrearty  
John Booth, III  
Brenda Plate  
J. Rankin Tippins  
Brent Pryslopski  
Brian Jones  
Patrick Conrad  
Lance Hostetler

### **HHSC Junior**

Jacob Bohne  
Ezra Henderson  
Peter Maki  
Marloe Laughlin  
Carter VanPatten

## Paul Villinski - Flight Patterns

Longtime member and supporter of the National Soaring Museum, Paul Villinski, created for us a few years ago a fabulous sculpture evoking the ill-fated flight of Icarus. Built of heavy wire, men's shirt sleeves and melting wax, it makes for a striking exhibit relating to man's early attempts at flight. An avid pilot of gliders and single-engine airplanes, metaphors of flight and soaring often appear in his work. With a lifelong concern for environmental issues, his work frequently re-purposes discarded materials, effecting surprising and poetic transformations.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xX7nZWsY9H8>



Paul Villinski has created studio and large-scale artworks for more than three decades. He was born in York, Maine, USA, in 1960, son of an Air Force navigator. Paul has lived and worked in New York City since 1982. A scenic route through the educational system included stops at Phillips Exeter Academy and the Massachusetts College of Art, and a BFA with honors from the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York, in 1984. He lives with his partner, painter Amy Park, and their son, Lark, in their studios in Long Island City, NY.

"Lately, the things I need to make in the studio seem to choose me, rather than the other way around, probably because I've stopped trying to keep the influence of my own biography in check. After three decades of practice, I'm finally willing to let whatever it is I actually know and care about find form in my work. And, as I grow older, my ideas are increasingly rooted in my childhood. Central to my boyhood, and my work now, are themes of flight; environmental concern and adaptive re-use; community; and addiction and recovery. Although seemingly disparate, in much of my work these are intermingled, united by one more-or-less constant theme: transformation.



Paul Villinski



*"Delivery" from Paul's 2024 exhibition, Flight Patterns. 30-ft model based on a B-25 –dropping groceries.*



Underlying everything is the drive to simply share human experience in a way that elicits feelings of recognition and belonging -- an impulse behind much of the history of art. I want to create images and experiences that allow viewers to "identify," to feel our commonality, to know that they are not alone.

Much of my work has wings of one sort or another. As an "Air Force brat," I grew up surrounded by planes and pilots with clouds in their eyes, and eventually got my own "ticket." I can't glance out the window without studying the sky and wishing I were in it. I'm not alone in this: from Leonardo to Lindbergh to Lenny Kravitz, the desire to "fly away" has had a grip on our collective imagination for millennia. Now and then, I have the extraordinary luck to spend a few hours floating along on currents of warm air, the earth's surface slipping silently by, the mundane anxieties of daily life thousands of feet below the long, white wings of my glider. Back in the studio, I wish I could bring everyone I've ever met along in the tiny cockpit of my sailplane. Instead, I look for forms to describe the longing to enter the sky, to get us all aloft, even from within the confines of the gallery.

Alongside this boyhood fascination was an equally deep concern for the planet. In the mid-70s, having dropped-out of high school, the subsistence-level, values-driven, DIY lifestyles of my hippie friends in southern Maine left a deep impression. I identified with environmentalism, naturalism, progressive politics, and utopianist thinking from the moment I could say "Buckminster Fuller." Convinced that there's too much man-made stuff lying around already, I traded my LeFranc and Bourgeois oil paint for detritus I found abandoned on the streets of New York: lost gloves; crushed beer cans; old vinyl LP's; discarded shipping pallets. Many of these "found materials" have poignant associations for me, like broken NYC Police Line barriers, or empty liquor bottles, which resonate with my family's and my own history of addiction and recovery.

I try to practice a "simple alchemy," attempting to give these cast-off, "worthless" objects surprising new identities, to infuse their stories with new layers of meaning. The beauty that interests me most comes through the struggle to bring things from a place of loss, poverty, despair, into a new life -- to insist on the possibility of transformation. I want to take these humble, damaged, discarded things and find out what they are capable of -- what can be done with imagination, commitment, risk, labor -- with enough love. My work is an exploration of the possible, at the heart of which is hope."

<http://www.artspace613.org/notable/the-incredible-story-of-paul-villinskis-flower-bomber>



*"On Final" - aluminum (found cans), wire, balsa, Flashe paint*



*Beautiful site specific installation of Paul Villinski's LP Birds at Children's Hospital of The King's Daughters in Norfolk,*



*"Aerialist"  
Wings made from discarded knives*



*View from the road up to the museum on a frosty February morning.  
The morning fog makes the Chemung Valley look like one of the ice-covered Finger Lakes!  
There's even a "bluff" off to the left!*

## Year-End Contributions

Peter & Lynn Smith	Neal & Karen Pfeiffer
Jerry Wenger	Juan Mandelbaum & Clara Sandler
Ken & Michelle Sorenson	Jennifer Bauman
Stephen Auburn	Steve Leonard
Doug & Mae Fronius	Kyle & Patricia Busque
Paul H. Schweizer	Roger & Libby Jones
Jeff Byard	George Gera
Stu & Lucy Schweizer	Joe & Nancy May
Heinz Weissenbuehler & Karin Schlosser	Bill Batesole & Anne Nordstrom
Guerry & Alberta Howard	Mike & Fran Koerner
Ira & Sue Blieden	Bruce Bottoms
Tom & Eileen Henion	Ray & Kittie Alexander
Mary Flasphaler	Hank Nixon
Mark & Sandy Margeson	Jeff & Sandy Steele
Phil Umphres	Jim & Simine Short
Chemung Canal Trust Company	Jeff & Denise Stringer
Erik & Sarah Nelson	Ron & Betty Schwartz
Daniel Gross	

## **ARTIFACT DONATIONS**

Luke P. Orrin  
Ron Sands  
Michael Shoen

## **CONTRIBUTIONS**

Peter S. Fuss

## **MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS**

Walter & Irene Cannon  
Skip & Jackie Walls  
Tad & Ruth Manske  
Ron & Gabriele Martin  
Maureen & David Watson  
Steve & Nancy Sliwa  
Rex Wells  
Dr. Neal Snebold  
Stu & Lucy Schweizer  
Roger Hess  
Tom Beltz

## **MEMBERSHIP UPGRADE**

### **Bronze**

Geoff & Sandy Steele  
John & Rosa Hosp  
Jim & Barb Bennett  
Charles & Nancy Bauder  
Linda & Andrew Evenski  
Ron & Gabriele Martin  
Chris & Lianne Groshel  
Robert Wister  
Paul & Nancy Middlebrook  
Michael & Nancy Opitz

### **Silver**

Rob Buck  
Robert Randall  
Bo & Roman Michalowski  
Elizabeth Pataki  
Very Rev. John DeSocio  
Paul Esser & Edith van  
Breems

### **Gold**

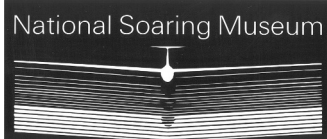
Rocky Peters

### **Diamond**

Ken & Michelle Sorenson  
Elise Eaton

## **SPONSOR A GLIDER**

Gross Family  
Hank Nixon  
Dianne Black-Nixon  
Jan van den Blink  
Gregory Lincoln  
J. R. Daniel  
Dr. Norbert Wethington  
Dr. Walter Cannon  
Stu & Lucy Schweizer



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**Winter 2025**



#### **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



*Schweizer Gallery*

## 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