

NSM NEWS

SPRING 2025

Official Newsletter of the National Soaring Museum

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From the Director - *Adam Smith*

Dear Friends and Supporters of the National Soaring Museum,

As spring returns to Harris Hill, there is growing excitement in the air for what many consider the fifth season of the year - Soaring Season. After winter melts into spring and the trees begin to green, the hill comes alive in a way that is uniquely its own. Soaring Season returns with the sound of tow planes, the sweep of gliders circling overhead, and the energy of pilots young and old preparing to take to the skies. It is a time of renewal and excitement, and there is no better place to experience it than right here, at the National Soaring Museum.

Since stepping into the role of Executive Director, I have been impressed by the deep-rooted commitment of this community. Whether through our staff, our volunteers, or our visitors, there is a shared sense of mission that makes this Museum much more than a collection of artifacts - it is a living tribute to the art and history of motorless flight. It is a privilege to help carry that legacy forward.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this role has been strengthening our close partnership with the Harris Hill Soaring Club. Their commitment to the sport and the education of junior glider pilots is not only inspiring - it is essential to our shared mission. The proximity of the club to the Museum allows for a unique and vibrant collaboration that brings the history and practice of soaring together in one place. It has been a joy to meet student pilots who are learning to navigate the skies just a short distance from the Museum's doors. Their enthusiasm reminds us that soaring is not only about preserving history but also about passing on its magic to the next generation.

This quarter, we have been taking a thoughtful approach as we evaluate our exhibit spaces and long-term goals. It is necessary to take the appropriate time to examine our existing exhibitions, ask questions about what a future visitor may encounter, and consider how to best present the evolving story of American soaring. While we do that important work, we continue to collect ideas, perspectives, and historical material that will inform a stronger, more meaningful experience in the galleries. To support this effort, we are pleased to welcome a student from Hartwick College, Vaughn Wagnecz, who will be joining us this summer to assist with exhibit research and collections-based projects. Vaughn is minoring in Museum Studies and brings valuable experience in both curatorial and archival work. His perspective as an emerging museum professional will contribute meaningfully to our planning and development process.

We are also expanding our educational programming, with new partnerships and opportunities aimed at engaging a wider audience. One exciting initiative is our collaboration with the Scouts of America to offer the Aviation Merit Badge on-site, and the Girl Scouts of the USA to offer STEM and aviation badges; providing young scouts a hands-on introduction to the principles of flight and the legacy of gliding.



Vaughn Wagnecz - intern

Between these partnerships, field trips to the Museum, and events at local schools, the Museum has interacted with over 800 youths in local communities since January!

In addition, we are working closely with the Soaring Society of America (SSA) to design and install a robust glider simulator experience in the Museum. This new interactive feature will allow visitors to step into the pilot's seat and gain a deeper understanding of what it means to fly without an engine using the most up-to-date software and hardware available. A special thanks goes out to Don Kroesch and the SSA Simulator Training Committee for supporting this project.

All of this work is made possible by your support. As members, donors, and advocates, your commitment plays a vital role in sustaining our operations and ensuring the Museum continues to grow and serve the community. Whether you have visited recently or have not been by in a while, I warmly invite you to come see what is new at the Museum. Take a walk through our galleries, chat with our volunteers, or even plan your visit around the Club Class National Competition July 1 – July 10th, taking place at Harris Hill this summer.

As we move forward, I welcome your ideas, your stories, and your continued involvement. The National Soaring Museum exists not only to protect the past, but to inspire the future - and that vision is something we can only achieve together.

With appreciation and warm regards,



Adam L. Smith
Executive Director, National Soaring Museum



The Bowlus rudder, perhaps off the Bumblebee, and wing panels from the BG-6 (fuselage on display in the restoration shop) now hang in the rear hallway on the ramp to the restoration shop.

Grant Funding SSA Partnership, Glider Simulator

In an effort to add interactive experiences at NSM, Executive Director, Adam Smith, responded to an advertisement in Soaring magazine In February in regard to a matching grant opportunity for soaring clubs to build simulator setups running Condor III. Thank you to Donald Kroesch and the SSA for approving our eligibility to submit an application for funding as an SSA affiliate rather than a club. We were approved and Donald will be building the sim for us and delivering it himself. In addition, he will train anyone who is willing on how to act as a sim ambassador to encourage appropriate use and educational effectiveness. The most likely location will be the Frank Gross classroom and its purpose as an educational, interactive experience will be most apparent in youth programs and merit badge requirements.



Education & Programs

Educational and public programs, workshops, and event schedule can be found on the NSM website: <https://www.soaringmuseum.org/events.php> Emily Meissner, Education and Programs Manager, has focused Q1 planning on youth outreach and developed STEM based opportunities for youth visitors to the Museum. We have seen the best traction with the Scouts of America and Girl Scouts of America. Emily and Adam were recently approved as Merit Badge Counselors for the Scouts of America Aviation and Astronomy badge. Girl Scouts can sign up to visit the Museum on a weekend schedule via the website and complete various workshops on offer. Scouts of America Troop Leaders will call ahead to set up a time to complete the requirements of the merit badge. We have certainly seen an uptick in interest for youth group tours and group visits due to advertising, social media, and word of mouth. We are closely tracking how many youth visitors come to the Museum and how many NSM interacts with during off site events such as Horseheads Elementary stem night and the Ithaca Sciencenter glider demonstration operated by HHSC member, Michael Goldstein. Hopefully these statistics will serve us in future grant writing endeavors. Upcoming programs include:

* **Bird vs. Glider:** in partnership with Tanglewood Nature Center – in which the similarities and differences between the two will be examined using raptors, owls, and vultures vs. sailplanes, gliders, and flyers.

* **Wind and Weather:** a look at how weather plays it part in the support (or lack thereof) of soaring.

* **Gliding into Soaring:** a hands on workshop, building and testing miniature gliders.

NEW MEMBERS

Individual

D. Scott Demmin
Jeri Moore
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Phil Jordan
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Nelson Howe
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Shawn Knickerbocker &
Trish Clemons

Silver

Jim & Janet Frantz

Gold

Cole Frantz

HHSC Senior

Adam Smith
Weldyn Allen
Jonathyn Thornton
Grady Booth
Piyali Mittal
John Sands
Tanya Popli

HHSC Junior

Max Palladino
Justin Woodard
Jonah Heard

More on the Holiday Soaring School

After reading the story in the NSM Historical Journal, NSM Trustee, Doug Fronius, offered this remembrance: "Back before Fred and Goldie Harris built what is today, Mountain Valley Airport, and before he founded his soaring school at the Tehachapi municipal airport, The first sailplane to fly in the Tehachapi valley was the Robinson JR-V "Robin" in 1939. During the Arvin West Coast Championships (1938-1941), various cities put up prize money for any pilot who could land in their city on a cross country from Arvin. The city of Tehachapi put up a \$50 prize for the first to land there. John Robinson managed to climb out from Arvin, over Bear mountain, and into the Tehachapi valley. He looked down and decided to land to collect the \$50 instead of continuing into the desert on a possibly much longer flight. He had taken leave from his job to fly all summer and needed the cash, and \$50 was a lot in 1939! Today 86 years later, the Robin is still flying over Tehachapi (but no one ever paid me to land!)"



In Memoriam

Lillian (DeGolyer) Elwood

December 31, 1929 - May 16, 2025



Born in Olean, NY, Lillian was a longtime resident of Hammondsport, NY, where she was also a volunteer at the Glenn H. Curtiss Museum. At the Curtiss Museum, she volunteered at the front desk, helped to organize social and fundraising events at the museum, and was a key player in the museum's annual dollhouse and miniature exhibit. When the dollhouse exhibit moved annually to the National Soaring Museum, Lillian came to join the exhibit, contributing dollhouses of her own and doing us one better by joining the museum as well.

From nephew, Dave DeGolyer: "As a boy, there were several things about Aunt Lil that always stood out to me. You never wondered what she thought (she was never disingenuous, never pretended to feel one way about you while being a different way behind your back). I admired the pluck it took to be forthright and candid, though her delivery was seldom delicate. She was authentic before it became trendy. She had an ever-present twinkle of mischief in her eye, a smile on her face, always curious about what buttons went with what response. She had a very quick wit. She teased. Often. But if you didn't bristle in response, you soon realized the more she teased you the more endeared you were to her heart. If you teased back, she'd light right up with that smile. She was charitable, volunteered, loved to help, and make no mistake she was a driving force if she put her mind to something. Those of us who spent time in her wake are the better for it."

MUSEUM OFFICERS

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President

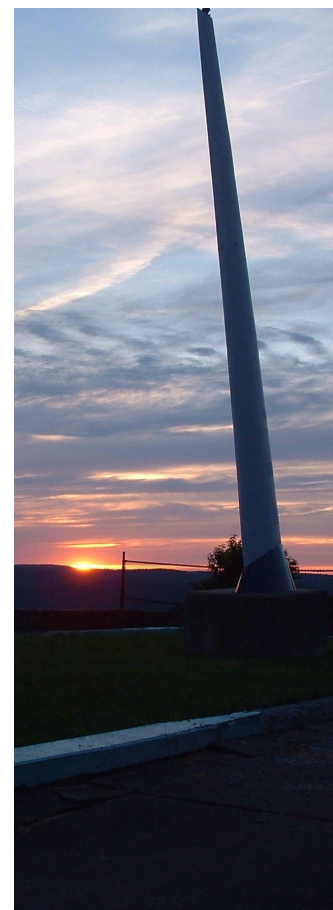
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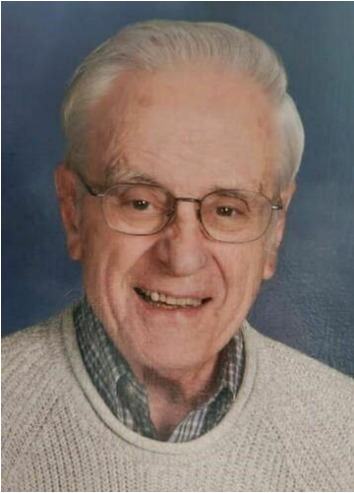
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In Memoriam

Calvin W. Weiss

June 24, 1925 - April 20, 2025



Longtime NSM member and supporter, Calvin William Weiss, 100, of Westerville, OH, passed away peacefully on April 20, 2025, surrounded by his loved ones following a short illness. He was born June 24, 1924, in Cleveland, the son of Albert and Lena Weiss. In 1942, Calvin married Marilyn Taano, of Ashtabula, OH. They lived in Parma Hts. and were married for 69 years before she preceeded him in death in August 2015. Calvin is survived by two daughters, Carol (Chuck) Miller of Gahanna, OH, and Diane Weiss of Euclid; two grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

Cal earned a Bachelor of Science Degree from Baldwin Wallace College in 1946 following his service as a naval officer in the Pacific Theater during WWII. He was recalled during the Korean conflict and served aboard the LST 1073 in Japan and Korea as the Operations Officer and later, Executive Officer.

Calvin began employment at NACA (which eventually became NASA) in 1946 as a technical illustrator, and retired in 1979 from NASA Lewis Research Center, as Chief of Educational Services, Public Affairs Office. As such he was responsible for overseeing the design, construction and operation of the Visitor Information Center. In 1980 he was one of five recipients of a Crown Circle Award, presented by the

National Congress on Aerospace Education for outstanding performance and leadership in the field of Aerospace Education.

His great interest in aeronautics continued in retirement through art work and model building, having several aviation paintings accepted in seven Experimental Aviation Association (EPA) international art contests. Calvin's highest award was third place. Several of his paintings and 4 models are on display at the National Soaring Museum in Elmira NY. One of Cal's paintings, showing a Super Cub after releasing a sailplane, hangs in the NSM lobby.

Cal served as a timer at the 1949 Cleveland National Air Races and Chief Pylon Judge for the 1969 races. He was a member of the Cleveland Board for the International Science Fair, the International Board of the National Association of Model Rocketry, the Board of the Western Reserve Aviation Hall of Fame, the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) The American Airlines Gas Model Club and the Vintage Sailplane Association.

For 40 years., Calvin was a member of the choir and soloist at Parma South Presbyterian church where he also served as a Ruling Elder.

During the last four years, Cal resided at Danbury Parkside in Westerville, where he continued to draw, paint, play bridge, cribbage and chair beach volleyball. He enjoyed the many friends he made there. One of his dear friends was our bookkeeper, Mary Flasphaler. He and Mary would share phone calls monthly. She always spoke highly of Cal.

Cal's watercolor of himself and wife, Marilyn, after her first flight. →



In Memoriam

Mary C. (Dwyer) Flaspahler

Aug. 6, 1938 - April 18, 2025

NSM Bookkeeper and Museum Services Manager for 43 years, Mary Flaspahler, passed away peacefully on Good Friday, April 18, 2025.

Born in Elmira, NY on August 6, 1938, she was the daughter of Patrick & Elinore (Wright) Dwyer.

Mary worked for many years as personal secretary to Robert Hample, owner of Hample Center, Elmira, and then came to the National Soaring Museum in 1977.

She was predeceased by her parents, her husband, Gordon Flaspahler, and her siblings, Patricia, William, Patrick "Jay", John "Mike" and Joseph. She is survived by her sister, Maureen, and nephew, PJ; step-sons, Darryl and Gordon Flaspahler, Jr. and many additional nieces and nephews, step-grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Mary was totally devoted to her job at the soaring museum and never let doctor's appointments, surgeries or deaths in the family keep her from getting "right back to work"! Having worked at NSM for so many years, she had the answer for every question, and amazing recall for details.



Mary & Teddy



Time for treats!

"When Trafford and I first came to the museum as executive director and "chief bottle washer" way back in 2016, Mary was so helpful and supportive. And, best of all, she loved dogs! Trafford had brought his 3 emotional support beagles along (better known as "couch potatoes"), and Mary just adored them. Later on we added Teddy the Miniature Poodle. She would cook hot dogs at home, chop them into little pieces and bring them in for dog treats at the museum. Mary's office would be the first place they would go in the morning. Even after Mary retired, we would be calling her for information and advice. What a great asset she was for the museum those many years. Mary and I had been exchanging text messages 2 or 3 times a week since she retired. I last heard from her on Wednesday and on Friday she was gone. The world doesn't seem quite right without her, but we have some wonderful memories of our years together.

Not wanting any fuss, Mary warned us not to schedule a retirement dinner or anything fancy, because she wouldn't come! When she died, she had instructed that there be no funeral, no obituary in the paper - no fuss. Mary was cremated and her ashes were buried with her husband, Gordon, in Woodlawn National Cemetery."

- Jean Doherty



Donations in Mary's memory can be sent to the National Soaring Museum
51 Soaring Hill Dr.
Elmira, NY 14903



In Memoriam

John "Corky" Gill

March 18, 1933 - March 31, 2025



Beloved Harris Hill personality, John "Corky" Gill, passed away on Monday, March 31, 2025 at the age of 92. Corky was born March 18, 1933 in Elmira, NY, son of the late John A. and Blanche (Walker) Gill. He was pre-deceased by siblings, Tom Gill, Ruth Thomas, and Ellamae Gill Case and William Gill. He is survived by his niece, Diane Wood, and nephews Thomas and William Gill and Levi Case.



from Corky's eulogy by Karin Schlosser:

"Corky loved aviation, his family and his Harris Hill family, Harris Hill Juniors, lovely ladies - preferably in dresses - and dogs. His long life was filled with all. He had a way of attracting good things, with his positive outlook and friendly disposition, his humor and good looks, and with dog treats. Conversations with Corky were always friendly and easygoing. He was a lucky man, and he knew it.

Corky was born on Reservoir Street in Elmira, NY where, with the exception of his years in the USAF, he lived his entire life - many with his brother Tom. Corky passed away at home on March 31, 2025 just days after celebrating his 92th birthday among friends and family at the flight center

Corky started flying on Harris Hill at the age of 13 and owned six gliders; a Ka-6E, Phoebe, Libelle, ASW20, ASW27, and Discus 2cT (with Moe Acee). He logged over 8300 glider flights and at least 6500 hours. He was a member of HHSC for over 70 years and in 2023 the club named the Harris Hill club house **John 'Corky' Gill Flight Center** in his honor. He wrote various aviation related articles and was the author of Goofy's News. He was a friend of the National Soaring Museum, where he visited almost daily, and was actively involved in the early days building exhibits and moving gliders.

In Corky's own words: 'I never met a person yet that I didn't like'; 'I'll get married when I grow up'; 'Oldest Harris Hill Junior'; 'Aviation has been my whole life and I wouldn't want it any other way'.

FAA ratings: Private Glider, Commercial Glider, CFI-G, SEL, A&P Mechanics license; 1979 HHSC Outstanding Senior Award; 2017 Soaring Society of America Certificate of Appreciation for his outstanding service to HHSC and NSM during the past 39 years Charles Taylor Master Mechanic Award (MMA), July 2024. FAA highest award recognizing individuals who have 50 or more years of safe mechanics operations experience

Corky was most proud of his 3 1/2 years as crew chief of the U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron, the **Thunderbirds**, based at Nellis A.F.B., Nevada. He traveled all around the world putting on Thunderbird air shows."

Earlier this year, Corky's niece, Diane Wood, presented him with a Thunderbirds quilt which she made herself. He couldn't have been more pleased. →

For more on Corky's life in aviation, see the NSM Historical Journal, Winter 2024.



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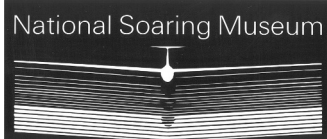
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607-734-3128

Spring 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



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

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Membership Benefits: Unlimited free admission • Invitations to exhibit openings and receptions
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Discounts on museum programs and events • Discounts in the museum shop