

# NSM NEWS

FALL 2025

Official Newsletter of the National Soaring Museum

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Curator

### Don Rumsey

Director of Operations

### Jean Doherty

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Membership Coordinator

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**Sara McMaster**  
**Kennedy Parker**  
**Rocky Peters**

**Nick Peters**  
Gift Shop Staff

### Ron Stokes

Custodian



51 Soaring Hill Drive  
Elmira, NY 14903

607-734-3128

[info@soaringmuseum.org](mailto:info@soaringmuseum.org)  
[www.soaringmuseum.org](http://www.soaringmuseum.org)

## From the Director - *Adam Smith*

One of the things that makes our work at the National Soaring Museum so meaningful is witnessing the quiet power held within the artifacts in our care. A unique early glider, a handwritten logbook, or a photograph from a historic soaring competition. These items may seem ordinary at first glance, yet each carries the weight of an entire story. They hold the memory of flight, of ambition, of risk, and of the unmistakable joy that soaring brings. These memories remind us that our museum is not simply a place where artifacts rest. It is a place where stories continue to speak.

When visitors walk through our galleries, something remarkable happens. Some pause before a familiar object and smile as they recall the sound of a canopy closing or the feeling of lifting off the runway on a beautiful soaring day. Others point out a glider they once helped restore or a pilot who was an early mentor. And then there are those who have not flown, who stop in front of an exhibit simply because it sparks their imagination. They linger over a cockpit they've never sat in, picture a long quiet glide through a soaring sky, and wonder what that experience might feel like. Moments like these show the true reach of our Museum. Our objects connect pilots to their memories, newcomers to new possibilities, and all of us to the wider human story of curiosity and aspiration.

Our responsibility is to make sure these stories remain alive and accessible. Over the past year, we have taken meaningful steps toward this work. We have improved how we care for our collections, strengthened our educational programs, and begun planning for new ways to share our heritage with people who may never have the chance to visit Harris Hill. Whether through digitization, new exhibits, or expanded outreach, our goal is to extend the legacy of motorless flight far beyond the walls of our museum. Every improvement is guided by a simple belief. These stories are worth telling, and they deserve to reach as many people as possible.

Membership is central to this mission. Our members are not only supporters of the museum. You are storytellers yourselves. You carry with you the history, the passion, and the spirit of soaring, and each time you share that with someone, the story widens. When you talk about the Museum, invite a friend to visit, bring someone to a program, or simply explain what soaring means to you, you help shape the future of this community. Your involvement strengthens our work and ensures that the next generation will discover the same inspiration that once drew you to the museum.

As we move toward the close of the year, Harris Hill completes its annual transformation. The brilliant colors of autumn soften, and the off-season offers a chance to reflect on where we have been and where we hope to go. It is a time when we plan, reset, and prepare for the year ahead. We welcome your thoughts, ideas, and hopes for what the National Soaring Museum can become. This museum thrives when its members feel connected to its direction, and we are always eager to hear from you.

As the seasons shift and the holidays approach, I hope this time brings you warmth, peace, and a renewed sense of possibility. Thank you for being part of the National Soaring Museum's story. Together, we will continue to protect the artifacts, share the memories, and inspire the future of soaring.

Warm seasonal greetings,

### Adam Smith

Executive Director  
National Soaring Museum

## ESA Western Seminar 2025

I was invited to speak at the ESA Western Seminar at Mountain Valley Airport in Tehachapi, CA. (ESA - Experimental Soaring Association, formerly Sailplane Homebuilder's Association). This was the first time a representative from the National Soaring Museum has spoken at the ESA/SHA Western Seminar since Paul Schweizer spoke there many years ago. The 2025 Experimental Soaring Association (E.S.A.) Western Seminar was combined with the Vintage Sailplane Regatta and took place from August 29 to September 1. This year's seminar consisted of several days of lectures on specific subjects by experts in the field. Some of the topics covered were: the WACO CG4-A, Open Source Electric Winch Prototype, Auto Camber CMS-25 System and more!

As a representative of the NSM, I decided to speak on the role of museums in modern society and the power we hold as the storytellers of soaring history, past and future.

On Saturday at the seminar, 8 current and/or former NSM trustees got together for this photo. →

L to R: Cam Martin, Jennifer Bauman, Adam Smith, Jeff Byard, Doug Fronius, Dan Armstrong and Josh Knerr. Not pictured: Mike Koerner.



## What's New at the Museum?

We now have the Russia AC-4 in the Restoration Shop as our "climb in - climb out" glider rather than the Schweizer 1-26E #700 which had been in that position for several years.

A local Boy Scout who completed his Aviation Merit Badge at the National Soaring Museum in November is shown below sitting in the Russia. This was the first time he had ever sat in a glider cockpit.



## NEW IN THE GIFT SHOP

Newly-retired American Airlines pilot, Heinz Weissenbuehler, has come up with a creative re-use for old runway and taxiway lights and aircraft parts.

What aviation enthusiast wouldn't want one of these for Christmas? We have a good supply for purchase in the gift shop. Give Don a call at 607-734-3128 or stop in to make a selection.

The NSM gift shop has something for everyone on your list - young and old !

Support your museum by doing some of your holiday shopping right here!



Gliders anyone can fly!



Books on soaring!



Hoodies, tee shirts, golf shirts and lots more!

## NEW MEMBERS

### Individual

Justin Schutt  
Amy Spowart  
Jim P. Hopkins  
Bill Laningham  
Robert Burchard  
Art Boskat  
Michael Marshall  
Kevin Anderson  
Steve Kelly  
Bill Barnes  
Kirk Bittner  
David Zimmerman  
Alan D. Brown  
Boris Kubrak

### Family

Marco & Carla Raaijmakers  
Brian & Lisa Glick  
Mark & Alice Palmer  
Craig Bishop  
John & Peggy Banarhall  
Gary & Chris Carter  
Julia Miles  
Fred Mueller  
John Godfrey &  
Sandra Danoff  
Wallace & Mary Jo Berry  
Fernando Silva  
Kristin Hill  
Sam & Chris Jones  
Janelle Sudduth

### Bronze

Greg Madigan  
Marc & Jennifer Brinker  
Murray & Lyn Forbes  
Shawn Knickerbocker &  
Trish Clemons

### Silver

Allen B. Reeves  
Jim & Janet Frantz

### HHSC Senior

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

### HHSC Junior

Jacob McCausland  
Valentina Kobaykova  
Fuad Zeba Hadilat  
Max Palladino  
Justin Woodard  
Jonah Heard  
Zachary Brink  
Eli Armine

# New Flying Wing Website

Dear Friends of Jim Marske and Flying Wing Enthusiasts,

I am honored to announce the launch of a completely new website and content at [marskeaircraft.com](http://marskeaircraft.com) - created to honor and preserve the life's work of my father, Jim Marske.

Jim often said: *"The beauty of flight lies not just in the mechanics, but in the harmony between nature and human ingenuity."*

Before he passed away in 2024, my dad expressed hope that his work would live on — not only for the flying wing and soaring community that supported him throughout his life, but also for the next generation of designers, builders, and flyers. Rebuilding the Marske Aircraft website from the ground up has been my way of fulfilling that wish, ensuring that Jim's contributions remain accessible and continue to inspire.

Here's what you'll discover in the new website:

- **About Marske Aircraft** — the story of Jim's life, his innovations, and his unique approach to soaring and design.
- **Flying Wing Sailplane Legacy** — photo and detailed content tracing more than six decades of Jim's flying wing sailplane experiments, designs and builds.
- **Marske Aircraft Flying Wing Sailplane Drawings** — digital plans/drawings in full sets or individual sheets preserved for reference, historical records and downloading.
- **Marske Flying Wing Community Blog** — a space for stories, experiences, and dialogue. If you have flown one of Jim's designs, built or rebuilt an aircraft, or taken part in a restoration, I invite you to contribute. This site is meant to become a curated collection and living repository of Jim's legacy, enriched by the voices of those who knew him or his work. Please join and contribute by sharing your stories, experiences and knowledge about Jim Marske and/or his sailplane designs.
- **Books & Resources** — *The Wing and I* (Jim's autobiography), the *Composite Design Manual*, and technical references on micro pultruded carbon rod are available for those who wish to study his methods and design materials. Carbon rod (0.125 in / 3.18 mm solid round) will also be available to order directly from the website soon.

The new site is both a tribute and a valuable resource — but most importantly, it is open to the community. Your stories, photos, and memories will ensure Jim's legacy remains alive and accessible for generations to come. I will be adding new content, photos, videos and stories on a regular basis.

Visit the new site now: [marskeaircraft.com](http://marskeaircraft.com)

I am looking forward to seeing you there.

*Sean Marske*

Marske Aircraft



## MUSEUM OFFICERS

**Bill Batesole**  
President

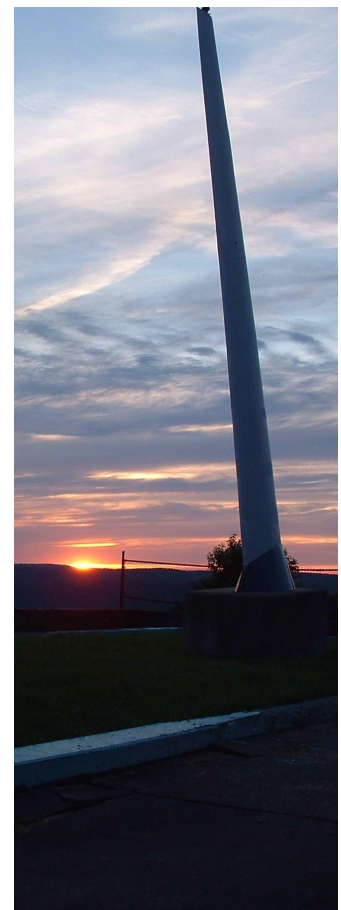
**Michael Koerner**  
Vice-President

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

**Adam L. Smith**  
Executive Director

## TRUSTEES

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



Some of Jeff Byard's gliders on the field



More great shots from the ESA Seminar and Regatta at Tehachapi this summer



Josh Knerr's BG-6

## In Memoriam

### Ray Thweatt

May 2, 1934 - October 24, 2025



A longtime member of the National Soaring Museum, Dr. Raymond Thweatt joined the staff of the Arnot Ogden Memorial Hospital in Elmira, NY as a board-certified anesthesiologist in 1968. He served for three years as the medical staff president. Ray retired from the practice of medicine on December 31, 1999, having improved thousands of patients' lives. He was known as a kind doctor with a gentle sense of humor.

Outside of the medical field, he was a board member of the Tanglewood Nature Center for several years, as well as a member of the Experimental Aircraft Association. He was a member of the HOGS of Corning, NY, the Popular Rotocraft Association, the National Aeronautic Association, the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, the National Soaring Museum in Elmira, NY and the National Warplane Museum in Geneseo, NY. Ray enjoyed fishing, taking care of his animals on his small farm, and hunting deer and pheasant with his stepfather.

Ray is survived by his wife of 68 years, Joan S. Thweatt. He is also survived by his daughter, Sharon T. Kronyak, his son, John R. Thweatt (Marie), his granddaughter, Katherine E. Thweatt (Celeste), his grandson, Cameron J. Thweatt (Cheyenne), his grandson, Sean R. Thweatt, his great granddaughter, Raye Leigh Thweatt, and his niece, Linda Barnum.

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# In Memoriam

## Judy Ruprecht

December 21, 1952 - July 29, 2025



*Judy Ruprecht 1952-2025*

Judy Ruprecht (72) passed away on July 30, 2025 in Fox Lake, Illinois after a yearlong struggle with small cell lung cancer. Judy was born in Arlington Heights, Illinois and grew up in Paradise Valley, Arizona. From a young age, she seemed determined to experience the world on her own terms. She graduated from Saguaro High School a year early to enroll at Arizona State University. To respect her mother's desire that she focus on her studies, Judy parted with her dear Camaro and tried settling into classes and dorm life.

Then one day, alone in the Arizona desert, Judy happened to look up. There, in the sky, she saw something unusual. Determined to find out what it was, Judy followed its path to a little place called Estrella, a sailport some 40 miles south of Phoenix. That's where she learned about the sport of gliding in motorless splendor after dropping away from a towline. Thus began a love affair with soaring, her lifelong passion.

In some sense Judy was meant to fly. Even in grade school she loved to learn and excelled at the complexities of algebra. Now the reward became not gold stars, but the adventure of reading air currents and climbing high above the desert floor. Here was a sport that required one's full attention and mental stamina to achieve even basic success. In a sense, it was also a team sport since it required the skills of a ground crew, a tow pilot, and others working in coordination. Judy blossomed!

As she learned, Judy continually set personal goals, earning both silver (1975) and gold (1980) badges from the Soaring Society of

America (SSA) in recognition of her flying prowess. Early in her career she became an instructor teaching newcomers the joy of flight and later, an examiner certifying the abilities of other pilots. Throughout, Judy was known not only for her knowledge and professionalism, but also for her fairness and an adroit sense of humor.

Judy was also a prolific volunteer for SSA. Over her decades of service, Judy was a liaison to federal agencies including the FAA and advocated for safer air traffic management for all pilots. She wrote regular columns for SSA's publication, *Soaring*, to keep fellow pilots abreast of current affairs in aviation. Eventually, Judy inhabited the role of Badge Lady, with SSA designating her as the primary reviewer of pilots' claims for various levels and types of record flights. Armed with a bespoke spreadsheet that she often referred to as her fourth child, Judy learned the minutiae of soaring as a competitive sport with a myriad of standards and detailed rules. True to form, she went beyond simple acceptance or denial of a pilot's submission. Instead, Judy treated badging as an interactive learning experience. This was noted with gratitude by some pilots even while Judy was turning away a record they coveted.

Over her varied soaring career, Judy was elected to the SSA Board of Directors. In 1989 she was a recipient of SSA's Exceptional Achievement Award (as Judy Lincoln). She went on to earn the organization's highest distinction, the Warren E. Eaton Memorial Trophy (1991), the Exceptional Service Award (2004) for her liaison work, and the Paul Tissandier Diploma (2014) from the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale.

Encouraged by her mother's model for being a confident and seasoned traveler, Judy enjoyed traveling and was skillful at it, whether on an international task for SSA or on a personal journey. A couple of the bigger expeditions were a trip to Japan for an impromptu family reunion and rock'n'roll show and a gorgeously memorable visit to classical Greece. At home she could regale you with all manner of stories about a scenic drive in Wisconsin down Snake Road by her beloved Lake Geneva. She never did forget that Matthew McConaughey once rented a house there.

Judy is survived by her three children, Oris Marsala nee Lincoln (Aaron), Audra Lincoln, Joseph Lincoln; her sister, Jo Ruprecht (partner Deb Dennis); and two grandchildren.

# In Memoriam

## Barbara H. McDowell

January 25, 1930 - September 4, 2025

Barbara Hickox McDowell of Elmira and Dundee, NY, age 95, died of natural causes, September 4, 2025 at Penn Yan, NY

Barbara was born in Binghamton, NY on January 25, 1930 to Elizabeth and Richard Hickox. She was the wife of Boyd McDowell, II, who was President and then Chairman of the Board of Chemung Canal Trust Company from 1976 to 1991. Barbara and Boyd were longtime NSM members and patrons.

Barb was passionate about family and friends, books, birds, cats, literacy, conservation and human rights. Barbara was a Public Elementary School librarian, first at School 11 in Rochester, NY and then at Ridge Road Elementary in Horseheads, NY. She passed along her love of books and reading to her own children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and to countless children in the schools where she taught. She volunteered her time in all the communities in which she lived, including the Metro-Act Civil Rights organization in Rochester, The Nature Conservancy in Naples, FL and most recently at the Finn Academy Elementary School in Elmira, NY.

When her great-granddaughter enrolled at Finn in 2016, Barbara realized the school did not have a library. She spent the next three years collecting funds, books, library furniture and equipment. She organized and ran the library, recruited volunteers and established a functioning school library that is still an important part of Finn today.

Barbara is survived by her children Susan Fisher (Kenneth), Lydia Eldridge (James), Boyd McDowell III (Bonnie Beck), Peter McDowell (Anne), Elizabeth McDowell (Heather Hawkins). Grandchildren Emily Snavelly (Eric), William Fisher (Ashley) Mary Fisher, Amber Neal (Patrick West) Nathan Eldridge (Kelly), Jack McDowell, Jennie McDowell (Andrew Masterson) and Margaret McDowell, and 8 great grandchildren. Also survived by her sister, Jane Baker, sister-in-law, Gertrude Hickox, and 10 nieces and nephews.

Barb was predeceased by her husband, Boyd McDowell II and her son, John Chapin Phelps.

### IN MEMORIAM

Edward J. Nelson  
David Robertson  
Charles "Chuck" Comstock

### CONTRIBUTIONS

Peter S. Fuss  
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Fennell

### MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

Dr. William Doerr  
Robert Hurni  
Ruth Bruning  
Josh Knerr  
John & Margo Brown  
Mark & Alice Palmer  
Dr. Ed Erickson  
Duke & Wendy Carroll  
Jen Baumann  
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 Flaspahler**

Cathy Williams  
in memory of **Corky Gill**

### MEMBERSHIP UPGRADE

Caley Society  
Jan & Clare van den Blink

Diamond  
Ken & Michelle Sorenson  
Elise Eaton

Gold  
Rocky Peters

Silver  
Shaun & Catherine Keller  
Jeff Shingleton

Bronze  
John & Rosa Hosp

## HHSC Summer Operations Team 2025



*One last sunset as a team!*

*L-R Katie Woodard (cash office), Olivia Tate (commercial glider pilot), Eric Shelhammer (certified flight instructor), Ethan Hand (tow plane pilot).*

These HHSC Juniors worked 5 days a week all summer giving commercial rides, lessons and tows. They really made it happen this summer for HHSC. Katie Woodard will be receiving the Gross Sky Ghost Scholarship at the Snowbird Banquet (11/29).

