



SSA ABQ Convention 2008

By Flieger Hucksfeder

Photos by Romero Oscar, Charlie Quebec, and Sierra Tango

OK so what happened? So much that no one reporter could possibly cover it all! If you could be in five places at once you might have a chance. There are always three presentations happening simultaneously, a separate club track, and tense rooms full of politicians battling for our Byzantine soaring future. My usual preference is to avoid the “packed rooms” and look where others are not.

The Condor Soaring simulator available at <http://www.condorsoaring.com> or <http://www.fspilotshop.com> was the first thing that caught my eye. Simulators are cost effective and used by the US Airforce and airlines all the time, so with the costs of tows skyrocketing why not soaring? For \$60 you get software that Scott Manley, the CFGI presenter, had used to create educational soaring modules. Apparently this process has lowered the number of flights to solo by 1/3, allow distance multiplayer learning, and allow stop action replay to drive the learning points home. It has a winch launch simulator too...this is going to get BIG!

Learning for Life, an off shoot of the BSA, has several serious financial prizes for aviation interested youth. Steve Lowry re-stumbled into this opportunity and is having success with it. Last time I checked with the BSA five years ago they were in a state of moral confusion. No work has been done to link up by the SSA. Time to look again.

Dennis Coyne is the new Editor of SOARING magazine. He lives nearby in San Dimas and soloed a glider at Hemet/Sailplane Enterprises. Thirty years of magazine experience mostly in the sports enthusiast sectors should make him immediately successful. He supports focusing articles on the beginner/intermediate sector to grow the sport. With that said, I liked him immediately.



A new book, Competing In Gliders by Briigliadori, was highlighted. Much on the psychology of competing and that was kept interesting by full page illustrations and gorgeous photographs. As I leafed thru it I was reminded of “Winning on the Wing” on steroids. Leo Briigliadori was the featured speaker at the Awards dinner.

I met Richard of Craggy Aero and between him and Andrej Kolar of SeeYou in the booth next door we were able to get my Dell connected and running with the OCSA Volkslogger. Our Volkslogger is now off to Craggy for calibration and battery replacement. We will have a demo of the system at the OCSA March General meeting.



Paul Remde has placed his SeeYou video tutorials free online with YouTube. To get started click: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuCcQsBX3Bk>. He also debuted “ClearNav”, a Chip Garner designed competition glide computer that is very simple to operate. It was designed to require minimal inputs from the pilot. ClearNav goes against the PDA trend with dedicated hardware. Paul also has a free technology newsletter available from his site

<http://www.cumulus-soaring.com>

FLARM alarms were big with the technology crowd. Europe allows them, due to FAA approvals and frequency conflicts we in the USA can't use them yet. This is generally thought to be a collision avoidance technology but it appears the equipment can transmit the climb data to others....is electronic thermal poaching possible?

The SPOT Satellite Messenger is another exciting new tech product. Similar to a satellite ELT, along with your lat/long position it allows a greater variety of messages to be sent (not received) from a “911 Search and Rescue” blast to a focused “I’m OK, Honey”.

Lee Kuhlke from StrePla did a great Bronze-level presentation on thermalling and basic cross-country. I was falling asleep in the back of a dark room when the speaker put up the un-PC “Wild Women Seek Sex Regularly” checklist...OK it really stands for Wind-Wires-Slope/Surface-Retrieveability. Use it before landing out in an unknown field. A nearly forgotten Ed Byers creation, you can tell where ol' Fliieger's mind is at.... We hope to share a copy of this one with all soloed OCSA members someday.



Bill Daniels charged up the crowd with a Winch presentation which highlighted the progress over the last three years. Much has happened! “America Awakens” could have been the title of his presentation. The common stumbling block is finding winch allowable airports. Combined operations are common in Europe, it's just that USA airport managers have no idea about how to handle it and thus turn off. US general aviation

activity is in a tailspin, airports are getting quiet, and managers are looking to increase their number of operations to justify their jobs...winching may have some wiggle room. Rumors are Costello is investigating the options for insuring club winches.

From the number of photographers surrounding him, Roman Wrosz was “The Rockstar” of the winch builders. He had one of two winches on the convention floor, a sidewinder which is expandable to more than two drums. The Hydrowinch winch was also displayed though it was unfinished. It uses a hydrolytic transmission power transfer. TOST was rep’ed again by Klaus Fey (no unit displayed) and the English Skylaunch had a very informative booth with Michael Groves making the trip across the pond (again no unit displayed). The Germans and the English have the experience with installed units in field, but with the dollar so weak, Roman and Hydrowinch have a window of opportunity if they can ramp production up. Anyone wanna buy a new winch?

Russ Holtz spoke on Good Judgment. Many of us have been through this before as much of this info is now FAA required but hearing it again is always good. Probably no other concepts taught in aviation are more transferable to other parts of life. It is probably the core takeaway for youth...and some of us old fuds too.

I missed the OLC program due to politics with the SSA. Hopefully someone will update us....

Frank Whitely this year solo’d the “Clubs and Chapters” Track. Unfortunately this track was unadvertised (i.e. not listed in the main Convention program) and thus poorly attended. Clubs are the key to the growth of soaring. Clubs are the ones who take the newbie out of the MS Flight Simulator, put him into a *real* aircraft, and socially introduce him into the world of soaring. Frank, fight! Don’t let this track die!



The General Membership meeting lacked fireworks until the issue of paying off the SSA debt was brought up. Then Dianne Black-Nixon made an incredible offer! She will match all donations received by the SSA up to a maximum total of \$25 thousand dollars!!! How is that for putting ones money where ones heart is? God bless her and get out your checkbook before May 1st as YOUR contribution is thus DOUBLED. Let’s get rid of the debt.



Bumped into many in the hotel bar and elsewhere unmentioned so far, Biggo Berger from SH, Burt Compton, Pat Russette, Oscar Alonso, Bill Laningham, Ed Slater and the rest of the AGCSC outlaws, Garret Willat, Ian Cant, Kathy Fosha, Dr Gary Fogel, Frauke Elbers (one of the two good looking German ladies at the Convention), Dave Raspet, Bob Wander (tanned from sailing in Florida), and on and on... BTW Steve Lowry and his wife were the ONLY glider pilots I saw out on the dance floor the night the salsa band took stage. Muy Caliente!

The drive trip home was spent driving and primitive camping off a dirt road in a place called "Hell's Canyon AZ". I don't know how my wife, Swantje, finds these places. After the chi-chi hotel living in ABQ, the colorful assortment of rocks and cactus combined with the heehaw of wild donkeys as twilight set in on our campfire brought us back to the reality of soaring in the Southwest. Friends, campfires, and soaring...mucho bueno, muchachos!

