

The Nebraskan

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Weather: Today will be partly cloudy and mild with unseasonably cool temperatures continuing. Winds will be southerly 10-20 mph with a high of 80 (27C). Partly cloudy Friday night with a low of 62 (17C). Partly cloudy again for the weekend with a slight chance of precipitation through Sunday. Expect highs near 80 (27C), lows in the upper 50s (14C).
Barb Branda/The Nebraskan

NU player shoots self, dies...Page 2

Acting good, directing poor in 'MUD'...Page 5

Gliding: More of a sport than art

Gliding club seeks increase in members

By Jeff Korbek
Senior Reporter

High flying. Smooth sailing. Ear popping. Those are phrases used to describe an adventure in flying a 500-pound glider 2,500 feet above the ground. An experience 10 members of the Omaha Soaring Club call "old hat."

The club soared into existence in June 1984 after club president Randy Joslin and an ex-member purchased the glider from a couple in Reno, Nevada. The glider, a white and blue Schweizer, cost them \$4,500.

Joslin, an Air Force captain, said he decided to form the club in order to expose the public to the sport of gliding. Joslin said he is only aware of one other gliding club, a private club on the north side of Omaha.

"We're unique because we offer instruction," Joslin said. "We have two members who are instructors and two more who will be able to teach after they get their instructors license."

The club, based out of South Omaha Airport near Papillion, offers \$28 orientation ride. The ride is used to recruit new members.

"We want people to join our club and the money we charge for rides help defray our operating expenses," Joslin said.

Expenses include: insurance — \$700 a year, hangar rental — \$45 a year, inspection — \$150 a year, and maintenance.

Pilots find gliding safe and relaxing

By Jeff Korbek
Senior Reporter

Flying a glider is unlike flying any other type of airplane, members of the Omaha Soaring Club said.

"It's fun and relaxing and that says enough," Lt. Scott Harrison, United States Air Force, said.

Harrison said he has recorded 90 hours (325 flights) in gliders and has another 60 hours of instruction. He is renewing his instructor's license in order to teach incoming members the "art" of soaring.

"Soaring is more of a sport," Harrison said. "There is an element of risk and skill in getting the (thermal) lifts."

Thermal lifts allow a glider to stay in the air longer. As the glider floats in the air, hot air rising from the ground pushes the aircraft upward. Harrison said the club record is 6,400 feet.

A glider does not have an engine. The amount of time a glider can remain in the air depends upon the pilot and the weather conditions, club president Randy Joslin said. Clear, sunny days offer the best weather because of more thermal lifts, he said.

The initial fee to join is \$200. Members will then pay \$10 a month in dues and an additional dollar each time they fly the glider. Instruction flights are \$2 a ride.

"Someone without experience will spend about \$500 to solo for the first time and about \$1,000 to get a license," Joslin said.

After purchasing the glider, the club was faced with finding a tow plane to carry the glider into the air. Sam Wood, owner of a Piper Super Cub airplane, offered his services.

The plane is ideal for towing a glider, Wood said. The 150 horsepower PA-18 has a flat-pitched propeller which allows a quick take-off but a slow cruising speed.

The club gave Wood, director of operations for the Strategic Air Command war planning computer, a reason to keep a plane he was going to sell.

"It wasn't worth keeping the plane because of the maintenance costs," Wood said. "I'm still losing money, but I'm losing a lot less."

Joslin said the club's biggest problem is having only one plane. He said he hopes they can get enough members to get more aircraft. Joslin is optimistic about an increase in membership.

"We have had a lot of response to the rides," he said. "We're very optimistic that by September or October we will have 20 to 25 members."

Joslin, an Air Force captain, has 110 hours in flying gliders and over 2,000 hours in all types of aircraft. Joslin said he has always had a "big interest" in gliding and formed the soaring club to expose others to the sport.

"I like working with younger people and instruct in a sport that very few have a chance to become involved in," he said. "To pass that on is a real thrill for me."

Fred Wepperling, a retired Air Force pilot, has flown gliders since 1965. He has been a member of the club for about a month after "checking it out."

Wepperling flies gliders "because of the slow speeds and I can come back where I started from."

"The people are more safety conscious," he said.

The small 600 pound Schweizer glider doesn't look as safe as the members claim. But Wepperling, who said he has flown "everything," found the glider the safest aircraft.



Mark Davis/The Nebraskan

Above: Senior reporter Jeff Korbek and Omaha Soaring Club president Randy Joslin sail into the wild blue yonder in the club's Schweizer glider.
Below: Joslin tells gliding stories before taking the club's glider up again.



Mark Davis/The Nebraskan

A glider flight consists of a tow by an airplane to approximately 2,500 feet above the ground. At that point the glider releases the 200-foot cable and begins a slow descent. The

flight of the glider is controlled by wing flaps and a stick controlling upward and downward movement.

The club's glider seats two and does not carry a parachute. Harrison

said a parachute is not necessary unless the glider does acrobatics.

"Safety isn't a factor because of the amount of training," Harrison said.