

What Soaring Means to Me

By Christian Reditich

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CLEAR PROP! That's when I realize all the preparation I have done that day, all the weather I have checked, all the previous flyers of the day that I have talked to, and all the tedious step by step preflight inspections I have done is about to prepare me for this moment of takeoff. Why do I do this? Because having the privilege to be a glider pilot has taught me to, so a question like what does soaring mean to me really gets me thinking and is hard to answer because soaring means so much to me. So to me, Soaring means everything!

I'm Christian Reditich. I'm 14 years old and in 8th grade at Hadley Jr. High. I soloed a Schleicher ASK-21(53) on my 14th birthday on September 18th 2012 at Windy City Soaring Association in Hinckley. I was in the air for nearly two hours on a day with a 17 knot crosswind out of the north. In the following months of the 2012 season, I also soloed a Grob 103 and achieved a personal altitude record of 9,000 feet MSL on a solo flight. My goal for the 2013 season is to increase my experience, skill level, and solo a single place sailplane. In the future I want to go to an aviation university and pursue a professional career in aviation, but never stop soaring of course.

As a 13 year old who always dreamed of flying and being a pilot there wasn't much I wanted to other than fly, I thought I was too young. Before I started flying I believed sailplanes just went up and fell back to earth like a power plane at idle, I was 100% wrong about that! My dad had been taking me out to Hinckley airfield for the day to watch the planes and gliders for as long as I can remember. On a day that still seems like yesterday I was sitting in my house watching TV and my dad asked me if I wanted to go see the gliders. A couple of hours later I was flying with a flight instructor in the front seat of an ASK-21 (D4) for over an hour. I have been flying ever since.

People who are not pilots have asked me what kind of planning goes into having a safe flight. My usual first response to that question is "More than you

think!" I'll tell them some key points like weather from an aviation source, a healthy pilot, a well maintained aircraft, a cared for airfield, and safe airspace. A pilot knows there is so much more but you really have to be a pilot to understand.

Being a member at my soaring club (Windy City Soaring) has given me constant opportunities to participate in club work both on and off season, something one can't get at a normal flight school. During the soaring season I regularly participate in ground work, start up, and shut down. This off season I have gotten the opportunity to still help out my club. We have just finished the process of making our ASK-21 (D4) look like new. I have also been able to represent our club at the 99's convention and attend the Chicago land glider council safety seminar in Elgin, which enabled me to meet members of other clubs whose company I quickly enjoyed. I love how being in a soaring club gave me the opportunity to make new friends at my club whom I look forward to seeing every weekend.

Over the past year and a half I have had the privilege of learning to fly with such a nice community of glider pilots. I was able to have amazing flights with instructors, private pilots, and the best solo flights I could ask for! Having the ability and luxury to fly sailplanes has and will continue to be one of the best aspects of my life. It has taken extensive preparation and training to get to the point I am now and I want to feed my passion and desire for the sport of soaring for the rest of my life. Like I said, soaring means everything to me!