

“What Soaring Means to Me” Martin Panofsky

Greetings! My name is Martin Panofsky. I am from Madison, Wisconsin. I am learning to fly sailplanes at Beloit Airport (44C), near Beloit, Wisconsin through the resources of Sylvania Soaring Adventures. Last year, I turned 15, acquired about 7 ½ hours of flight experience in a SGS 2-33A, practiced soaring flight using Condor (a computer-based, soaring simulator), and passed the required written test for a Private Pilot Rating, Glider Category.

I have been flying gliders since I was 13 (for about two years now). For my 13th birthday, my parents gave me a flight lesson from the FAST program created by the Soaring Society of America. I would like to continue to learn to fly sailplanes because many pilots have told me that I will be a better and safer pilot if I start with glider flight. In 2016, I learned how to takeoff, to fly aerotow, to fly traffic patterns, and to land. I fly an SGS 2-33A, but I have also experienced flying an ASK-21 and a Grob-103. I have flown gliders also in Vermont and Nevada. Flying in these different regions was awesome. I hope to revisit someday those places, and also to find new ones to explore.

For me, soaring is a way I experience the joys of flight: the views, the challenges, and of course the fun. These aspects of soaring blend together and in that way, soaring defines who I am. Soaring also keeps me focused, yet helps me relax and be at peace. As soon as I arrive at the airport my stresses go away and I'm ready to take all the necessary steps to safely reach the sky. The views above the Beloit, Wisconsin area are beautiful. After takeoff from runway 7, I see Pearl Lake and the pretty scenes of Dry Creek outside the canopy. While experiencing and enjoying beauty in the air, there is also satisfaction with the inherent challenges posed by soaring. Some of these challenges include understanding the dynamics of the fundamentals of flight. For me, thinking about and performing cross-wind landings is one specific flying challenge I'm beginning to enjoy. The most fun moments are when you make exceptional landings; when you feel the grass rustle under the landing gear, inches before touchdown.

My 2017 goals in aviation (so far) are to fly solo, to get a Private Glider Rating (I turn 16 in September), and to get checked off for flying new types of gliders. In the future, a big goal is to get an Airline Transport Pilot's License. The short term goals are beneficial to me because they are big steps in the world of aviation. But both end goals, short and long, are also beneficial to others because I can take them flying, give them a taste of aviation, and inspire a new generation of glider pilots. As an airline pilot, I can fly to destinations around the world transporting others to places they need to go. With help from the 2017 Soaring Youth Grant, my training can continue, and I am confident that I can reach my 2017 goals.

Through soaring I have made friends and acquaintances with other pilots and other people involved with airport operations at Beloit Airport. A soaring pilot, Scott, gave me rides to Beloit Airport occasionally. He also loaned me a Condor flight simulator (which helps me practice flying during winter), and he let me accompany him on a flight in a Grob-103. Terry (a glider, power, and hang glider pilot) also gave me rides from the airport, and he let me accompany him on a flight in a Cessna 172. Don B. (a tow-pilot who is a certified flight instructor) took me for a Young Eagle's flight in a Cessna 172. Pat (a tow-pilot and the manager of the Beloit Airport and Sylvania Soaring Adventures) has been a continual source of support and mentorship. Don Coroneos, my CFIG, has been with me from the very beginning and I am so fortunate to have his friendship and wisdom guide me through my aviation journey. With help from the Chicagoland Youth Grant, I will be able to continue to grow as a pilot and to grow my network of aviation colleagues and friends.