

# Airworthy

The Official Journal of the Black Forest Soaring Society

24566 David C. Johnson Loop  
Elbert, CO 80106



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Club Web Page: [SoarBFSS.org](http://SoarBFSS.org)

Airworthy Archive: [SoarBFSS.org/Airworthy](http://SoarBFSS.org/Airworthy)

Facebook Group Page: [BFSS Member Only Page](#)

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## FROM THE EDITOR

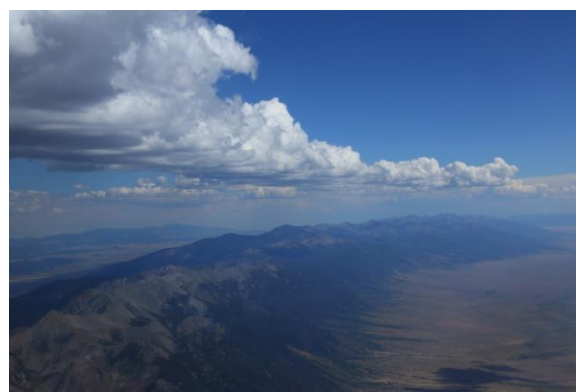
This has been a very difficult issue to put together. After the highs of an epic Labor Day weekend and the success of a rebooted Downhill Dash, all was overshadowed by the sudden death of our good friend and club member, **Steve Johnson**.

Steve was the heart and soul of this club. He was “Mr. Fixit” for everything from plumbing to buildings to instrument panels. Steve was responsible for leading the charge in rebuilding the dilapidated flight office into the wonderful facility we have today. He helped lead the charge to turn one side of Hangar 3 into the shop area it is now. He encouraged everyone with his advice and gentle humor. He especially liked working with young people and was a role model to all. His vision knew no bounds; he often talked of putting solar panels on the hangar roofs to power the club and the airpark. And, of course, in his spare time he’d get in some flight time in his Genesis, Charlie Whiskey. Words cannot express the deep feeling of loss to all of us personally and to the club in general.

We’ll have some tributes to Steve later in this issue. We’ll also cover the Downhill Dash. But through it all, we’ll be thinking of Steve.

“Good Finish, Charlie Whiskey.”

Mark Palmer, Editor



*Labor Day weekend was probably the best soaring of the year in Colorado. Here Clay Thomas shows the high cloud streets heading south on the Sangres.*

## PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE by Bif Huss

In September, we sadly lost **Steve Johnson**, one of our most valuable BFSS family members. Since BFSS’s establishment, we’ve had a lot of members come and go. Few, if any, have contributed more to making BFSS a vibrant club than Steve.

Since I live at Kelly, I can see when one of the hangar doors opens up during the week. I can’t tell you how often I’ve looked across the airpark to see Steve’s car at the club. I think that Steve was always there several days a week. We can thank him for taking on innumerable projects, from rehabbing the clubhouse, overseeing the modernization of the club’s electrical system, building the new shop in Hangar Three, fixing the hangar doors, and countless other major

club projects through the years (not to mention cutting the grass).

Steve was always ready to help. Last year, I took off on what I knew was going to be a long cross country flight. The day was forecast to be a perfect day; good clouds, no thunderstorms, light winds, and great lift. It was midweek so the only person at BFSS was Steve working on one of his usual weekly projects. Usually on a cross country flight, I get my trailer ready just in case I land out and need a retrieve. On this day though, my truck that I use to tow my glider trailer was in the shop. I drove to BFSS in my Jeep, which was not set up to tow a trailer. I didn't worry about it though since I knew there was no chance of landing out. Steve, as usual, stopped what he was doing and ran my wing for the launch.

The first part of my flight was fantastic. I got to Fremont County Airport without turning so I didn't see what the sky was doing behind me. I made my first 360 degree turn at the Wet Mountains and realized I might be in for trouble getting home. The sky over Pikes Peak had massively blown up. I decided to hold over Fremont County for about an hour to wait and see if I could sneak back home, but no luck. The forecasts had been totally wrong. I was going to have to land out today. I could continue south but that probably meant that I would just land out further away from home. My wife, Ceil, was not going to be thrilled to get a phone call to come get me, so I flew back to Fremont County to get as close to home as possible.

I landed without incident and called Ceil. I sheepishly told her that I had landed out at Fremont County Airport in Canon City. I let her know that she would have to use her car (which we had never used to pull the trailer) to come get me. Furthermore, the trailer was up at BFSS (30 minutes north of our then-home in Colorado Springs). It was going to take her at least two hours to come and get me. Additionally, she would have to hook up the trailer and stop and get gas....I'd really blown it!

Since Steve had been at BFSS before I took off, I decided to call him and see if he could help. Steve by this time was at the Colorado Springs Walmart running errands. When I got a hold of him, he suggested that Ceil come pick him up at Walmart and he would drive with her to BFSS to help hook up the trailer to her car. As usual, he completely dropped what he was doing and not only helped Ceil hook up the trailer, he drove with her to Fremont County and helped retrieve me. He was a real lifesaver for Ceil and me on this day. That's the kind of guy he was. He probably did more to keep this club going than the rest of us combined. We have huge shoes to fill with Steve's passing. It will be up to all of us to do our part to fill in the hole Steve left. We will miss him terribly.

## CALENDAR

### Board of Directors Meetings

**October 8, 2019 6:30 – 8:45**

Castle Rock Library

100 S. Wilcox St.

Castle Rock, CO

<https://www.dcl.org/castle-rock/>

**November 12, 2019 6:30 – 8:45**

Castle Rock Library

100 S. Wilcox St.

Castle Rock, CO

<https://www.dcl.org/castle-rock/>

### Memorial Gathering for Steve Johnson

**BFSS Clubhouse**

**Date TBD**—probably early October; watch your email for updates

### BFSS Saturday Potluck Barbeque (after flying)

**October 19, 2019**

### SSA Convention

**February 20-22, 2020**

Little Rock, AR

### Downhill Dash

**Summer, 2020**

## 1-26 Championships and Low Performance Contest

**June 16-25, 2020 NEW DATE!**

Sunflower Soaring, Hutchinson, KS

## Women's Soaring Pilots Association Seminar

**August 24-28, 2020**

Springfield, Vermont

## FLEET UPDATE

**ASK-21** – ClearNavs installed

**2-33** – See Alice's report below.

**AC-4C Russia** – New speaker for vario installed

**PW-5** – Nothing to report

**Blanik L-23** – Nothing to report

**Pawnee** – Nothing to report

### FRIENDLY REMINDER

The dry season is here. Driving on the dry grass can damage it. Please, under any circumstances, DO NOT drive the golf carts on the grass. Driving on the grass could result in deep ruts and a lot of headaches for the club and airpark users.

**Also, please use the gravel path, not the grass, when driving to the west hangar!**

## OPS DUTY CALENDAR

Here is the Ops Duty schedule for October and early November:

Dean, Val	10/05/2019
Fry, Peter	10/06/2019
Gerner, Andre	10/12/2019
Luke, Alan and Roen	10/13/2019
Kinder, Becky	10/19/2019
Kewish, Dean	10/20/2019
Kinder, Julie	10/26/2019
Kolk, Brandon	10/27/2019
Leonard, Dave	11/02/2019
Maki, Jeff	11/03/2019

Every flying member who does not have other duties in the club, such as instructor or towpilot, is on the schedule for line duty. If you are either a pre-solo student or have never performed this duty, Joshua has paired you with someone who has experience. Please check this list carefully to see when you're on duty and if you're working with someone.

Remember, if you can't make your duty assignment, you must find a replacement. Once that is done, contact [Joshua Abbe](#) and let him know so he is aware of the change. Be sure to go to the calendar page on the website and put yourself down for the day you're assigned.

## NEW MAINTENANCE BOARD by Alice Palmer

We now have a maintenance board in the battery room to use as a quick check of inspection status, hours, etc.

SHIP	Next Annual Inspection Date	TFRAL Reference	Hours since last annual	Engine Hours	Flight Hours	Notes
ASK-21 N3HKS (??)	30 Sept 2020	8827.0	↔	8827.0	N/A	N/A
BLANIK N259BA	31 July 2020	2015.75	38.5	2075.25	N/A	N/A
2-33 N65840	Engine reference only	6672.4	5.9	6771.5	N/A	N/A
PW-5 N101GM	31 August 2020	479.45	2.0	N/A	Revised 2020	11/11/2019
RUSSIA N287E	31 Dec 2019	215.5	37.2	N/A	March 2020	N/A
PAWNEE N987GS	31 May 2020	3122.4	134.8	N/A	N/A	N/A

I have volunteered to keep this updated at least once a month with the flight hours that Carrie provides, and to anticipate upcoming inspections.

If in doubt, always use the logbook and the most recent flight hour data from Carrie as your primary source of aircraft flight hours.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**Alyssa Farley** – First solo and A Badge



*Alyssa Farley after her first solo  
Photo by Stan Bissell*

**Donald Hannon** – B Badge and PW-5 checkout



*Chief CFI Raul Boerner gives  
last minute tips to Donald Hannon  
before his first flight in the PW-5.*

**Vitaliy Aksyonov** – Bronze Badge and Silver Altitude (approved by SSA)

Congratulations to all!

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

This month we welcome **Wojciech Tomanek** to the club. Wojciech is from Poland where he flew radio control gliders. He's been volunteering out at the club for the last few weeks so he may already be a familiar face to many of us. He will be flying with Raul soon. Welcome Wojciech!

## THANK YOU!

**Dave Rolley** – For installing a new speaker for the vario in the Russia

**Frank DeBacker** and **Dave Rolley** – For troubleshooting the microphone problem in the ASK

**Pete Gabardi**, **Jeff Sherrard**, **Julie Kinder**, and **Wojciech Tomanek** – For additional help on the line

**Pete Gabardi**– For clubhouse cleaning

**John Gillis** – For assisting Mark Ransom's parents, Bob and Francis, with disposition of Mark's ship

**Steve Johnson** – For troubleshooting the microphone in the ASK, for mounting the maintenance board, for mowing, for work on the 3<sup>rd</sup> hangar shop, for fixing leaks in the hangar roof, for renovating the clubhouse, for maintaining the hangar doors, for keeping the golf carts running, for keeping the tractor running, for keeping the ships flying, for supporting each and every member in countless, behind-the-scenes ways

## STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE by Dave Rolley

As the flying season starts winding down, the Strategic Planning Committee has started its work. The scope of the committee's effort has been established. The committee will be asking the members to participate in an online survey. The survey's purpose is to gain a better understanding of 1) how the membership views the club and 2) the membership's expectations for the club. The survey will likely be sent out late in October. Please participate. The survey results will become part of the foundation of our look to the future of the Black Forest Soaring Society.

## OXYGEN CART USE

According to the "Oxygen Czar," Clay Thomas, with the three-cylinder oxygen cart, we never seem to draw the low bottle below 700 psi. We are still sending cylinders back for refill with 600 or more psi in them.

Clay has noticed some of our new pilots trying to refill the oxygen bottle in the PW-5 or the Russia when there is still 1000 psi in the bottle. We're not doing any real high altitude flying and even on a good day, the bottles never draw down that far.

A good rule of thumb is to monitor the bottle pressure but don't initiate a refill until the bottle is at or below 500 psi. In addition, be sure to determine which bottle has the lowest pressure and draw from that one first.

Clay has been leaving a hose on the "spent" cylinder and has encouraged folks to start their fill there if the cylinder being filled is much below 700 psi.

If you have any questions, consult with Clay or one of the instructors on proper fill technique.

## THE DOWNHILL DASH 2019 by Mark Palmer

After a very long hiatus, I decided it was time to bring back the Downhill Dash. The Downhill was popular in the early years of the club at Kelly but then fell out of favor. The event has been run a few times informally, but was last officially awarded in 1997!

Our Downhill Dash is modeled on the RESCO (SSA Region 12) Dust Devil Dash that has been held in California for 35 years.

The rules are simple: 1) Takeoff. 2) Fly somewhere. 3) Land.

The deal is not to land back at home. You must land out somewhere. It's a free distance contest.

Distances are handicapped by the SSA Sports Class handicaps, which helps level the playing field.

This year the Downhill was held over two weekends, September 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. The reason for two days had to do with the late decision to hold the event and to have a weather contingency. Turned out we needed it.

Saturday, September 7<sup>th</sup> was blue, and it was pretty flat. The soaring forecast, RASP, and Sky Sight all pointed to a no fly day. Nevertheless, both Brian Price (4N) and Bif Huss, (LI) decided to make the attempt. The rest of us did not rig, betting on the following weekend.

Brian ended up staying local, but Bif, with copilot John Gillis, launched in the Duo Discus. Their goal was to at least make Fremont County.

Unfortunately, the weather gods would not be fooled and Bif and John ended up landing at Calhan, 20 nm away. Their valiant crew, Scott Dimick, was there with the trailer in no time.

So Team Huss/Gillis/Dimick took an early lead in the contest. That wouldn't last.

Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup>, was just about as blue as the previous Saturday but the forecast was for better conditions. Bill Gerblick launched in his ASW-24, QS, followed by me in the DG300, EF, and Dave Rolley in his Ventus turbo, FD.

By the end of the day, I had made Calhan, while Bill and Dave fared much better and landed at Flagler, CO. Easy retrieves for all the crews.

The Results:

Bill Gerblick	Flagler, CO	68.72nm
Dave Rolley	Flagler, CO	64.41nm
Mark Palmer	Calhan, CO	18.71nm
Huss/Gillis	Calhan, CO	17.53nm

Miles shown are handicapped miles.

I think everyone had a lot of fun, including the crews. Next year we hope to go much farther and have many more with us. But it was a great way to reboot the Downhill Dash.





Mark Palmer (foreground) and Jon Stark (on the wingtip) disassemble Echo Fox at Calhan, CO.

Photo by Alice Palmer

## 2019 BFSS DOWNHILL DASH

by Dave Rolley

It was interesting getting ready for the Downhill Dash. Sometime after we didn't fly on September 7<sup>th</sup> I realized I likely didn't have maps and turnpoints on my cockpit computer for a trip to Taos NM or Goodland KS. I was right. So, off to the desktop computer to set up for those scenarios. I quickly found out creating a map that covered Kelly, Moriarty NM, and Wichita KS was beyond the online XCSoar software I was using to create maps. Of course, I'm doing this on Friday night. That is better than Saturday morning during the pilot's meeting! I solved the problem, but the alarm sure seemed awfully early on Saturday morning.

### *Pilot's Briefing: Clubhouse 0930*

I was only a few minutes late. Mark and Alice had a good briefing going, supported by Brian Price. The soaring forecast indicated a narrow lift window to the east of something like 2 to 3 hours starting about 1300. The lift should be to something around 4000' – 5000' AGL (at best). Going south looked good. It would have been interesting except for a lot of moisture in New Mexico. The arrival forecast for Taos indicated a strong possibility of thunderstorms. So east it was.

Time to assemble! Why is it when I'm not in a hurry the Ventus almost assembles herself? Saturday she was being somewhat contrary. I think she likes to show that she is in charge

when someone new is watching or helping. Mark (EF) and Bill (QS) got in the air a little after 1300. On the radio Mark seemed to be doing well. Bill was having a more difficult time. At one point I heard Bill say he was at 8200 feet. I was still at the hangar and decided not to rush.

### *Takeoff: Kelly 1425*

My takeoff was much later than I intended. But I always seem to launch late in the day. The tow showed there was lift but it all seemed to be small and not real strong. I finally got off a mile or so NE of Kelly just below 10,000'. It seemed good but the lift really didn't do much but keep me around my release altitude. I decided to try a spot a little south from there that we passed through on tow. That was better but still did not give me the buffer I was looking for to leave the field. I basically flew a big circle around Kelly for almost an hour looking for lift. I was below 9000' before I caught a thermal that got me to about 11,500. Fun thing about that thermal—it was right where I released from tow. I left Kelly about the time Mark landed at Calhan. I told Vitaliy to head for Calhan.

The sky was blue without any cloud markers. I took a path straight from Kelly to Limon. I've found going southeast to US-24 seems to be more difficult if there aren't any clouds. I bumped into a good thermal about halfway to Elbert that put me over 13,000'. That was worth the time. I found another about 10 minutes later that took me to almost 14,000'. That was my high point for the day. While climbing I could see an inversion north of my course line. It seemed to extend all the way back to the mountains and it obscured the main terminal at DIA. Anyway, at this point my goal was, keep Limon centered over the nose and run. I was using the climb band indicator on the computer to decide when to stop for my next thermal. A thermal about 10 miles west of Limon put me above 12,000'. I told Vitaliy to head for Limon. I went by Limon around 10,500'. Called Vitaliy again to tell him to head for Flagler. Things were looking great! I was starting to think that Kit Carson Airport (south of Burlington) was

doable. East of Limon I found an energy line that reduced my sink rate somewhat. Then I bumped into another nice thermal near Arriba (about 15 miles west of Flagler) that took me back to 10,500'. That put me at something like 45:1 to Kit Carson. I told Vitaliy that Kit Carson was possible but to hold at Flagler.

About then I got a call from QS crew (Jeff) asking where I was and what I was planning. When I told him what I was planning I was told I needed to land at Flagler because everything was socked in east of Flagler. That gave me a great big smile.

As I got closer to Flagler, I was running in another energy line, only this time I was going down faster than normal. I found a thermal just west of Flagler that really didn't do much but maintain altitude. Altering course for Kit Carson, I pressed on past Flagler looking for lift. Again, I found a weak thermal that did little more than allow me to maintain altitude. Looking at my watch I realized that I had less than an hour and a half to sunset. I needed at least an additional 2000' to (maybe) reach Kit Carson. With the weak thermals I had been seeing it was at least 30 minutes (maybe 45 minutes) to climb and another 30 minutes on course. And that didn't count any sink I'd encounter. I decided there wasn't a need to push further and returned to Flagler.

#### *Landing: Flagler 1748*

Vitaliy saw me fly over the highway on downwind just before he got to the exit at Flagler. He was on the ramp before I was completely out of the glider.

It is a different kind of flying when you aren't planning to come back to the airport you took off from. It is also nice to know your crew is following you and isn't too far behind. Thanks, Vitaliy! It was a fun flight.



*Fox Delta at Flagler, CO  
Photo by Vitaliy Aksyonov*

## **DOWNHILL DASH** by Vitaliy Aksyonov (crew for Dave Rolley, FD)

It was a nice morning. I came to Kelly at about 0900. Today I'm going to be a crew for Dave Rolley. Frankly speaking, I have flown gliders for several years and even had off-field landings, but I never retrieved gliders or was retrieved by somebody. All times my off-field landings were followed by aero retrieval. That was one of the reasons I decided to be a crew, rather than flying myself.

There were a lot of people at the field since early morning. Busy weekend as usual. Mark and Alice assembled their glider before the pilots briefing. At the scheduled time, all pilots went to the clubhouse and we checked the weather. Information about airfields in the east direction also was shared. When everybody had asked all questions and shared phone numbers, we went to assemble the gliders and prepare to start.

Weather was unsure and blue, pressure was high. That's why nobody was in a rush. But time flies and one by one the pilots moved their gliders to the start.

Dave explained to me what I can expect during trailer towing, how to do some things, which are simple but may be totally unexpected if you don't know them. He went to the start, and I took a seat close to the clubhouse and started

to watch the glideport.aero site, trying not to miss the moment when I needed to drive after Dave.

Information was updated rarely, and later updates completely stopped coming. It appeared that, after some time, Dave was on his way to Calhan and I still thought that he was in the KAP vicinity. Luckily, he made a radio call to me and said that I may move to Calhan. I took his truck, but before I left, we had to move the Pawnee, which was on my way out.

When I was about 1/3 of the way to Calhan, Dave made another call and said that he's moving to Limon now, so I changed the route in Google maps and continued my trip. The cell coverage in that area is terrible. I didn't have a signal for 95% of time. Fortunately, the road is straight and the only turn I need to do is towards I-70.

Before I got to Limon, Dave was flying even further and told me that he was on his way to Flagler. OK. Moving further.

When I was about 15 miles from Flagler, he said that he will try to fly to Burlington if possible. Great! It may be a best result of the day, I thought.

Unfortunately, thermals switched off rapidly and he decided to get back to Flagler. Funny fact: When I was about 1/2 mile from Flagler, I saw him on downwind leg. And Dave landed just a minute before I came to the field. Then it took some time to disassemble the glider and put it to the trailer. It was much easier and faster than assembly. I took a couple of pictures of that place and we headed home.

For about 15 minutes, it was inconvenient to drive in the west direction because of the sunset, but after that the skies were just amazing. I love this time of day in Colorado! So many colors and it's always different.

We came to KAP late. The Moon had replaced the sun and it became little bit cooler, but still comfortable. I said "Goodbye" to Dave and KAP and went home. My car felt so little after his huge truck.

I've got a ton of experience and been filled with fun and happiness the whole day. Thanks to everybody who made this event happen. And I'm looking forward to joining the team next year!



*Bill Gerblick and Quebec Sierra at Flagler, CO  
Photo by Jeff Sherrard*

## **LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE DOWNHILL DASH by Jeff Sherrard (Crew for Bill Gerblick, QS)**

What a great experience. I highly recommend everyone that does not fly, to crew. I was the solo crew for Bill Gerblick and learned a lot!

Here are my lessons learned:

- 1) Know how to get north to Hwy 86, or south to Hwy 24, by going east from the airport through Elbert. It's only a couple of miles... and is saves a TON of time.
- 2) Get a handheld radio so you can be in direct communication with your pilot. It would have been a nightmare doing this without a radio. Also, know how to change frequencies on the radio!
- 3) Make sure your pilot is on glideport.aero, so you can watch their progress on your phone.



4) Our pilots are so good that even when the competition requires a “landout,” they land at nicely improved airports. Wow!

5) Don’t monopolize the airwaves, but let your pilot know when you pass key waypoints (e.g., Elbert, Scout Ranch, Calhan, Limon). I was only 5 to 10 miles behind Bill the whole flight!

6) Take a sectional so you can help with landing options, etc. A Wichita Sectional would be handy going east....

7) There are miles and miles of frontage road along Interstate 70 that are landable (who knew?).

8) The Flagler Airport is the easiest retrieve ever! Third right after you exit the highway. If I would have parked on the runway, Bill would have pulled right in! 😊

9) Bill landed at Flagler once before, during his solo cross country, while working on his Private Pilot certification.

10) Putting the next checkpoint into the map application on your phone allows you to quickly and easily report that you are X miles from the checkpoint.

11) Bill and I have a lot in common: skiing, sailing, Martin Marietta, start-ups. Many things I would not have known without this experience.

I’m really glad Mark Palmer organized this event. It was a fun way to spend a day with my fellow flying enthusiasts! Looking forward to next year already!

**FRIENDLY REMINDER:  
STOP BEFORE THE DROP!**

During the landing roll, assure that the glider’s wing does not scrape across the ground (read: rocks). Before the wing drops, hit the wheel brakes. New saying: “Stop before the drop!”

## N65840 TANKER 2-33 REFURB by Alice Palmer

The 840 team took a fork in the road this month. Work on the fuselage was paused as the team tackled stripping the paint from the wings and ailerons.

Under the supervision of **Doug Curry**, who kindly provided space in his hangar, and with the leadership of **Frank DeBacker**, the team jumped into the messy, smelly task of removing paint.



*The 840 Team tackles the tough jobs.*



*Messy job. Photo by Jeff Sherrard*



**Frank “Paint Strip King” DeBacker** attacks the ailerons.



*Clean and ready for the next step.  
Photo by Jeff Sherrard.*

Just a bit of cleanup is needed before the wings are ready for Doug to begin installing the additional inspection holes required by the higher gross weight mod. This task, along with final fuselage paint coats, will need to be worked into Doug's busy project schedule. The volunteers remain ready to assist as needed.

Work continues on the interior panels with an evening spent repairing the cracks in the rear panel.



*Raul Boerner and Kyle Kendall discuss repair strategies for the rear panel.*

Thank you, 840 Team, for willingly tackling even the yuckiest of jobs this month:

- Frank DeBacker
- Raul Boerner
- Doug Curry
- Jeff Sherrard
- Ed Anderson
- Kyle Kendall

## FOR SALE

Lak 17 AT  
SN 163, 1070 hours, sustainer motor, excellent condition \$70,000. Contact Clay Thomas.



## Parachute for sale

Black Paraphernalia Mini with reserve ,  
manufacture date reads 66-03. Asking \$350.  
Bill Howe. [bhowe2@msn.com](mailto:bhowe2@msn.com), 303-722-6439

## PHOTOS



*Wave over Western Colorado*

### Steve Johnson Flies West

Steve was BFSS. He did more to keep our club going than anyone. From upgrading and maintaining the club facilities, to helping with club maintenance, to cutting the grass, Steve was the guy that got things done. He will be horribly missed. I will surely miss seeing CW in his beloved Genesis at cloudbase.

Bif Huss, President, BFSS

So sad to lose someone who had so much vitality and positive energy, and who was so integral to the health and functioning of our club. Fair winds Steve...you are deeply missed.

Kip McClain

The hardest working man with the biggest heart and the smallest glider. He will be sorely missed.

Stan Bissell

Steve Johnson was one of the best men I have ever known. He was as good a friend as anyone could ever have ... and he had lots of friends. It seems that anytime someone had a problem with anything, Steve was always there with a solution. Steve was one of the first members I met when I was thinking about joining BFSS. I was so impressed by his friendship and his dedication that I knew I would be happy here. I'm so glad I joined. Thank you Steve. What will we do without him?

Ed Anderson

I too am grateful for having known such wonderful friend. Enjoyed the ultimate thermal, Steve.

Donald Hannon

My heart is broken. Steve (CW) was a sweetheart of a man, always positive, always giving, a true gentleman and friend to all. You will be dearly missed my Friend.

Rick Culbertson

Steve was so knowledgeable about everything that is BFSS. He was so kind hearted and never failed to have answers to my numerous questions over the years. A friend to everyone, he will be missed by all.

Denise Beisel

We had our very own gentle giant whose kind, tactful encouragement and work made it easier to learn to fly. His friendship will always be an inspiration, and we truly will never be the same without him. We have been very blessed!

Becky Kinder

Such shocking and sad news. Our condolences to his family and the BFSS family.

Dave and Jeanne Allen





Kelly Air Park is a personal "happy place," and BFSS is a special, treasured cohort to us all — Steve Johnson was every bit an integral reason why both have become such. He was a treasured friend, and I am so profoundly sad for Steve's sudden passing.

It was always a joy to trade greetings with Steve as well as irrepressible smiles about our shared aerial passions, and to communicate as much through gentle jibes about who could thermal more efficiently and skillfully with ever-present hand gestures at the start of a flying day as well as at its close. It was also fun to swing hammers with him and others on the clubhouse and to talk about the next possible upgrades. Steve logged as many hours on the tractor mowing as he did in the air—he led by example with his heart and his hands.

Happily, we celebrated life together with mutual friends at small gatherings on and off KAP over the past 16 years. We also shared notable common ground in our logbooks with flights in 840 (Steve's first solo was in 1978, and I took my younger brother up for the first time in 1987 in that same sturdy ship.)

I also relished sharing thermals with Steve—both in tow formation and in separate gliders. I appreciated how "CW" would hook up to my towrope in minimum time and broadcast a calm, cool "go-go-go" only to hang tight as we corked up in a thermal while on tow to double the climb rate. Similarly, one particular glider flight last year stands out in which Leann and I (in the ASK) worked a choice thermal with Steve, Raul Boerner, and Mark Johnson for the better part of an hour. Such treasured memories weave indelibly into the tapestry of life. Steve consistently had such great moments with just about everyone who came to the field, and that makes his departure such a very hard loss for all of us.

I miss you, Steve—deeply. Blue skies, Brother.

David Bachler

I have never known a more positive, generous, competent and fun man than Steve. This really hurts. I grieve for Steve, even as I struggle to believe he could be gone. I will have a little piece of him in all the cool ideas he built into my panel, and I won't forget.

Brian Price

As I de-rigged yesterday, I thought about when was the last time I saw Steve. It was Labor Day and as usual, Steve was there to help me put my wings away. The great memories of Steve will stay with us forever.

Clay Thomas

Steve means a lot to us all. As it happens, I was GOD today, and we had a good day of flying. It wasn't the same, though, as I looked around and saw pretty much everywhere something Steve had touched, fixed and improved. None of us truly know how much he did for us — I sure don't — and his loss as a friend, positive presence and sterling human being is profound. He helped us all collectively and individually. Godspeed, dear friend.

Dave Fanning

We knew him well. I helped him pick the Genesis to buy because of the large cockpit. He really loved soaring and using his varied handyman skills to help us all.

Tom Serkowski

Like many, Steve was the first person I met at BFSS. He was always there working on one project or another, and always willing to help you with yours. I learned many lessons from Steve and will miss his smile, sense of humor, and presence at BFSS.

Jeff Sherrard



Steve was the ever present, ever positive, ever helpful, kind, thoughtful and cheerful man. A truly generous soul. I and we will miss him. I hope he is soaring in never ending lift.

Val Dean

Of course, like all members, I worked with Steve on some of his many Club projects. But I got to know him well when he helped a group of us who were building our own one-man rigs. His advice and assistance was wonderful, and I got to know his generosity and energy. This is a terrible loss to all of us who knew him.

Bob Weien

Steve, you will be sorely missed.

Jerzy Szwagrzyk

Steve was an amazing human. I'll never forget Steve and our ongoing jokes about me following him west in the 2-33, then shortly followed by me heading east and landing out in someone's backyard! Steve was a fantastic friend and always answered the phone during the week to discuss investment strategies. This will be a tough one for all of us to accept.

Brandon Kolk

Deep sadness felt here in Alabama. I have many fond memories of Steve and how he exemplified the spirit of service. And, I was always amazed at his creativity and ingenuity at fixing things. I have happy memories of helping him fix the door on Hangar Three a number of years ago. I know his absence will be deeply felt by everyone at the club. It's hard to lose someone so suddenly—there is no chance to say goodbye or tell him how much he was loved.

Deonna Neal

Steve was a really cool guy. We always had the most interesting conversations. He will definitely be missed.

Pete Urschel

Going out today to tow held no joy for me. Steve was the smiling face of the club and we will always be a little less with him gone from our lives. Going to the field mid-week for some small errand, I usually would turn in to BFSS and see Steve's GMC and a smile would always come to my face. 'I shall not look upon his like again,' how true.

Bill Gerblück

I cannot find the words to express my profound sadness. I appreciate and share all your sentiments about the loss of such a loving, giving, gentle man. I only knew Steve for a few years but it felt like many more.

I want to share with you some recent conversations I had with Steve. Over Labor Day weekend, he flew CW a couple of days. I saw him after his first flight of the weekend and I said, "How was it Steve?" He gave me that Steve grin and said, "Best day of the year!" A couple of days later, the day that Bif and John went 600 km and everyone else was blasting all over the state, I saw Steve again after his flight. "Did you have fun, Steve?" Again, that Steve grin. "That was maybe the best soaring day I've ever had!"

If I'm not mistaken, that may have been Steve's last soaring flight. Along with many other cherished memories of Steve, that is one that I'll hold in my heart. We love you Steve. We are not whole without you.

Alice Palmer

Best Day Ever! Let that soak in. If your last flight was the Best Day Ever, I think you maybe had a great life. Steve went out on a high note. I would love for people remembering me saying my last flight was the best day ever. May we all have Best Days Ever. Over and over again. I'm so glad I shared Steve's best day ever. It certainly was my best day ever. Godspeed Steve. I hope you caught that 10 knot thermal to heaven.

John Gillis

Steve was Mr. Fix it. He would take me into his world and show me something I couldn't do on my own. Something as simple as putting air in the main wheel of the ASK. No judgment. No criticism for being a mechanical idiot. Just acceptance and instruction on how to make it better. I wish I could know what he knew.

Steve was Mr. Step Forward. Do you remember what a hell hole the clubhouse was four years ago? We had more mice than members. The place stank, the ceiling caved in, the subfloor was a putrid swamp. Steve took it on. As Treasurer he would ask me for funding and I would tell him we could spend the member's funds if he would take it on. He did. He drained the swamp and mustered troops to take on the sagging drywall and rotting bathrooms. Steve stepped into the putrid mess that we had and made it a clubhouse that we could be proud of. We have all thanked Steve but looking back would we have stepped forward? Steve went where no one would have travelled.

Steve was a visionary for the club. He saw our potential and wanted to make it happen. He was always asking me what we could do to make the club better. Can we build out hanger three to make a shop? Can we improve the taxiway, aprons, build another hanger? Can we add solar panels to the hanger roofs and sell power to the county? What can we build and how can we make BFSS better? Every week was a new project big or small. Every week making the club better.

Can I ever replace the thrill that Sharon and I had of hearing CW joining us in a thermal? That radio call was like magic. A loving friend had come alongside. Who better to share the joy. For a moment we travelled together.

Today we lost a great friend and a very loving soul, We are very thankful to have know and flown with a great man.

Chris and Sharon Dunmall

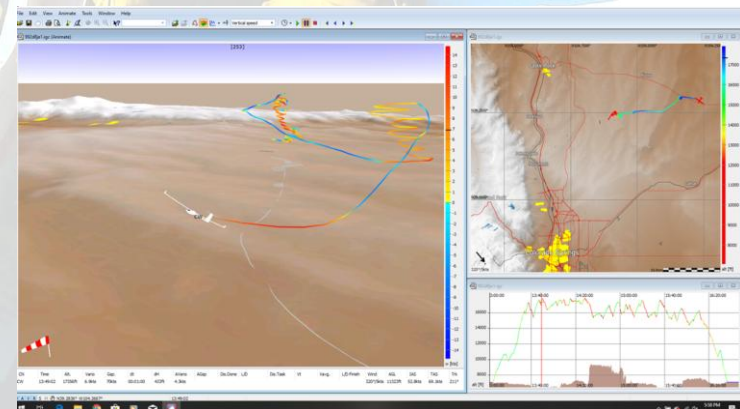
What a great guy, and a great friend and ambassador of soaring. In my short year thus far with the club, Steve was there almost every time I was - smiling, offering advice and encouragement, helping fix pretty much anything, riding that mowing tractor, and of course assembling and flying CW.

On one of my first flights in the PW, when I landed and mentioned some intermittent vario electrical issues, he immediately ran off to get some tools, and we dug into things. Couldn't figure it out, but the next week when I came out to fly, he told me he figured it out and had it fixed. Same when I had some transponder issues with Z1 - immediately off to that big tool collection to get just what we needed, and in the end, everything worked again. You just don't come across such helpful, vibrant and selfless people as Steve very often in a lifetime. I am honored to have gotten to know him even just a little bit.

Jeff Maki



I downloaded his DLC file and watched the replay on SeeYou....I was imagining how big his smile must have been for that whole flight..



So grateful I had the opportunity to have a little bit of Steve in my life.  
Mark Johnson



