

Column: Condor Corner
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Introduction

In this issue of Condor Corner, I will be reporting on Condor activity at the Reno 2014 convention. Then I'll turn most of the article over to my CFGI colleague Mario Gerhardt in the next installment of "My Condor Story".

Condor at SSA Reno 2014

Once again this year, Paul Remde (Cumulus Soaring, Inc.) demonstrated his commitment to the soaring community and his belief in simulation-based flight instruction by sponsoring a Condor booth onto the exhibit hall floor at the SSA's national convention, thereby enabling convention attendees to experience this amazing piece of instructional technology. And again this year, as at past conventions, the simulation booth was non-stop busy. Thank you Paul.

Condor actually had another venue at Reno 2014. Soaring NV bought their excellent glider flight simulation station to the convention. Special thanks go to Laurie Harden (owner) and Russ Holtz (GM/Chief CFGI) for demonstrating Soaring NV's commitment to glider flight instruction excellence.



Soaring NV's Simulation Station running Condor

On Thursday afternoon, I conducted a 2-hour seminar entitled “Making the Most of Condor” or “I Had No Idea Condor Could Do That”. Like most software, the more you know about what Condor can do and how it can be used, the greater its value.

The seminar was composed of a series of 20-minute segments including:

- Condor-specific skills (View Control and other useful Features)
- The amazing Replay function
- Flight Analysis and Ghosts (Flight Tracks)
- Scenario-based Training (Flight School)
- Controlling your Flight Environment (an overview of Flight Planner)
- Installation & Setup
- Aerotowing in Condor (everybody’s favorite)
- Self-Directed Flight Training Initiative (Teaching Yourself to Fly)
- Teaching a Flight Lesson with Condor

The seminar was well attended and well received. We got in a little hot water with SSA staff and convention hall security when we ran over on time, but I lose track of time when talking Condor and apparently the audience was insatiable.

What is clear is that I need to create a “Condor Orientation Self-Study Guide” and make it available on my new website at gliderCFI.com so new Condor users can easily get up to speed on this amazing piece of software.

My Condor Story

By Mario Gerhardt - CFIG

Background

As a 1964 graduate of the Naval Academy, a Marine Corps officer, and a Vietnam veteran, I earned my SEL commercial license with instrument rating in 1968 under the G.I. Bill. My flying activities went on hold in 1970 when I began teaching and coaching soccer at Chagrin Falls High School. I got married in 1973. In 2001 I took my first ride in a glider, and realized what I had been missing. I relearned to fly, got a tail wheel endorsement for SEL, added a glider category rating to my certificate, and in 2012 became a glider flight instructor. Although retired from teaching, this year marks my 45th as head soccer coach at Chagrin Falls. When not flying gliders and instructing at Fun Country Soaring in Wellington, Ohio or the Cleveland Soaring Society in Middlefield, Ohio, I fly a 1947 Aeronca Champ and a 1976 Ogar motor glider.

My Road to CFIG

To admit that I had fun on my first glider flight would be an understatement. When I found out how easy it would be to obtain an add-on glider rating, I joined the Cleveland Soaring Society, but soon found there was nothing easy about earning the rating in a club environment; flying perhaps once a week, if the weather cooperated, and if there happened to be a flight instructor on site. I got lucky that same year while on our annual Christmas trip to Orlando; I discovered the Seminole Lake Glider Port. I took a few lessons, soloed, and then returned to Seminole Lake the

following April for more lessons and my commercial check ride. While officially a commercial glider pilot, all I really had, in my opinion, was my ticket to learn. The questions were what to learn and for what purpose.

Over the next four years, I did what many new glider pilots do; I read a lot and learned from the experts; Tom Knauff, Bob Wander, Russell Holtz and Derek Piggott. I drove to the glider port whenever I could, but I didn't fly much. Money was not the problem nor was the long drive; I simply found nothing exciting about flying alone in the immediate vicinity of our airport.

Wanting to fly with others and seeing our club in need of additional flight instructors, I set a new goal; CFIG. As an instructor, I wouldn't have to fly alone and could learn from both student pilots earning their private pilot certificates and experienced old timers during their club checkouts and flight reviews. By becoming an instructor, I would also ensure my flying future. Since I only flew a 1947 Aeronca Champ and gliders, I would no longer require a medical certificate, and as long as I continued to renew my instructor's certificate, I would be able to teach "advanced" students even after I could no longer fly as pilot-in-command.

As a CFIG candidate, I became a student again. I trained with Jim Craycraft at Fun Country Soaring and Jan Driessen at Seminole Lake. I was happy with my flying but discouraged by my inability to talk and practice teach while flying with an instructor. I stopped taking flying lessons and concentrated on the CFIG written exam. I was disappointed with my test score of 95.

Using Dauntless Aviation's "Ride Ready" and King's Flight Instructor Course I began preparing for the CFIG practical test; knowing I would not take the check ride until I had the confidence to pass the teaching portion of the exam. Practicing teaching skills and the learning the patten of instruction during short real-life glider flights was clearly not the answer and could have become very expensive had I not discovered a much more economical, practical, and efficient solution; flight simulation; specifically Condor.

After reading a number of articles about Condor in Soaring Magazine, I purchased the Condor software, rudder pedals, and a joystick from Paul Remde at Cumulus Soaring. By default Condor starts you out on aero tow, and like almost everyone else, I crashed. I tried it several more times with similar results. I had expected this to be fun and my final step on the road to earning my flight instructor's certificate; instead it was anything but fun. I was frustrated and disappointed. I had purchased Condor to simulate teaching while flying and now I couldn't even stay on tow. I decided I needed expert advice and emailed Scott Manley to ask for help.

When Scott heard I was an aspiring flight instructor who shared his belief in the power of simulation to improve flight instruction, he immediately agreed to help. While he had plenty of long distance Condor students, Scott had been disappointed in the number of glider flight instructors interested in using simulation-based training.



Using Condor to Work Through Instructional Scenarios

Using Skype, Scott led me through the set-up of Condor. He explained how he conducted his simulation-based lessons and we jumped right in. Using Condor's Replay and Flight Plan files, we watched, discussed, analyzed, and flew the maneuvers for each lesson in his syllabus. With the aid of simulation, I gained a better understanding of the aerodynamics of flight, learned how to execute the maneuvers, and most importantly, learned how to improve the student's learning experience, including the use of flight simulation to help prepare students to pass their private pilot check ride.

With our sessions lasting from two to three hours each, Scott and I met online every Thursday until the day I passed my CFIG practical exam. From the comfort and convenience of our respective homes in Wisconsin and Ohio, we went through the PTS maneuvers until I understood them, and could perform, teach, and evaluate a performance of each one. I learned to appreciate how, using flight simulation, Scott was able to show me exactly what I was going to learn, help me learn it, and finally provide me with instant feedback of my flight and teaching performance; skills I would need as an effective instructor.

I did a lot of self-generated homework between my sessions with Scott. Having recorded my online lessons on my iPhone, I was able to listen to the presentations again, usually in my car while driving. I re-flew Scott's flight plans as demonstration maneuvers for my imaginary flight students until I was convinced my accompanying synchronized pattern and explanations made sense; at least to me.

I also became a Condor test pilot. In my readings of Knauff, Piggott, or Langewiesche, when I came across a procedure or explanation I did not understand, I turned to Condor and flew the procedure in simulation. Amazing.

As a teaching tool, the use of flight simulation is truly limited only by the imagination of the instructor using it.

As the novice instructor in both my glider clubs, my teaching last year was limited to club check-outs, flight reviews, and flying with students whose instructors wanted them to fly with another instructor. Eric was one such student. After flying with him, I introduced him to Condor; turns out he had already been using it. He was having a few problems, but with a little Condor coaching, he was able to use the simulation to practice his landings and the other maneuvers that were giving him trouble. His regular instructor soloed him shortly thereafter.



Landing Practice

Promoting Soaring

From time to time, the Cleveland Soaring Society (CSS) and the Geauga County Airport host student field trips from nearby schools. In addition to presentations by the local EAA chapter and CSS, students get to sit in a glider and fly the Condor simulation. From my perspective, flying the simulation was clearly the highlight of the field trips for most students.

The high school where I taught is planning to offer a Private Pilot Glider course as an elective for high school credit. Students completing the course will earn a private pilot certificate with glider category rating. 98% of our students go off to college; many of those institutions being the

country's most elite. Our hope is that a pilot's license will provide our graduates with a rather unique qualification; allowing them to stand out and thereby increasing their chance of admission to the colleges of their choice. Course instruction will integrate simulation-based training with real-life flight instruction, and will be conducted in person and via the Internet.



Future Glider Pilots

Future Plans

I believe improving my simulation-based skills will make me a better real life pilot and instructor. I hope to expand my Condor horizon by finishing all the tasks comprising the XP Challenge, by earning some of the Condor cross-country distance diplomas, by attempting to earn the Condor Silver, Gold, and Diamond Badges, and by participating in Condor competition flying as provided on the condor-club.eu website. I am currently working with CFIG and F.A.A Master Instructor Nyal Williams to learn my cross-country skills.

I am also planning to get my Ohio club members excited about Condor flying during our long off-season; both as a basic skills trainer and as a hands-on introduction to cross-country flying. I will be hosting club cross-country competition flights.

Along with swimming, glider flying and flight instruction represent activities I could still be doing at age 100; allowing me to stay fit both physically and mentally. The time may come when I can no longer fly as pilot-in-command, but I will continue to fly with current, licensed pilots; providing them with refresher training and flight reviews, and getting them involved in the F.A.A. Wings Program.

I will continue to promote the sport of soaring by trying to convince experienced "old timers" that there is a place in soaring for simulations like Condor; that it can be used to maintain proficiency and hone cross-country skills in the off-season.

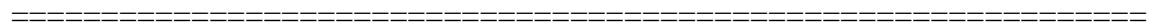
I will continue to convince other glider flight instructors of the value of using simulation to facilitate learning. I believe that for soaring to grow as a sport in the USA, flight instructors need to expand their current role of teacher to that of learning facilitator; involving the many experts in our sport as mentors, adopting new learning technologies, and helping students take charge of their own learning.

In Gratitude

Thank you Scott Manley, Condor, CFIGs Jan Driessen and Jim Craycraft, and DPE Robert Burbank for helping me achieve my goal of becoming a glider flight instructor.

About the Author

Mario Gerhardt is the first CFIG to author a "My Condor Story". May he not be the last. He is a professional educator by trade and an energetic advocate for improving glider flight education through the adoption of appropriate technologies. I consider him a friend and a mentor.



Scott Manley recently traded in his DG-303 and few more Euros for an Alisport Silent 2 Electro. The back of his pilot's license reads: Commercial pilot: airplane single-engine land & sea; instrument airplane; glider. He lives in Madison, Wisconsin and flies as a commercial pilot and glider flight instructor for Sylvania Soaring Adventures in Beloit, Wisconsin. He also provides simulation-based glider flight instruction at-a-distance to glider rating candidates nation-wide.

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