



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of GORDY STAHL



Written by GB (12/2016), transcribed and reformatted by JS (12/2016)

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## Who on earth is GordySoar?

Gordy Stahl lives in Louisville, Kentucky, dotes on his wife and a couple of poodles, and is one of the better-known RC Soaring pilots the world. This is partly because of outspoken nature and his passion for RC Soaring, which has led him to travel extensively to fly with others in the US and around the world.

When I returned to Soaring in 2009, I benefited tremendously from knowing him - both as a mentor and as a guide to keep me focused on my goals. Gordy been generous with his time, helping me and many others to become better at what we do.

Gordy has been testing the FrSky Taranis X9D radio system, and I asked him to tell me what was best about Taranis for RC Soaring pilots. I also asked him about RC Soaring and where it is headed.

**Gordon Buckland:** *What do you see as unique about the Taranis X9D radio to RC Soaring?*

**Gordy Stahl:** During flight testing, after you install your radio in a sailplane or want to switch an existing setup for this new program, you can use the rudder trim on the transmitter to adjust your sailplane's differential as it flies.

The flight would be with no rudder mixing turned on. While it is flying hands-off and level, you simply move the aileron stick quickly side to side to see if the tail "wags" because of the drag effect of too much or not enough down-aileron movement. When set, you simply go in and return that trim lever to the rudder trim.

Landing flap elevator compensation is controlled by a curve, so as the flap stick moves toward full, the camber of the wing changes and finally disappears. The flaps change from camber to brake. For each phase of stick movement, the airspeed will decrease, which means that the elevator needs more or less down to keep the nose on a constant path.

With this in-flight adjuster, you are actually changing the shape of the curve without having to mess with each point in the curve. So you fly along and slowly pull the flap stick down and use the in-flight adjuster to add or remove elevator curve - key words are "in flight!" No using the "that looks about right" system we have been using.

This is crazy cool stuff that is not available on any other transmitter on the market today.

A final flushed-out setup program will be available shortly with a step-by-step setup manual. You load the program (EPEE) into your transmitter and go through the checklist until you get to the end and your sailplane is ready to fly! You can begin to see why many of us have changed to Taranis.

**GB:** *You were once a dedicated power pilot. Why did you become interested in RC Soaring?*

**GS:** I always had a thing for gliders from the beginning. I was born into RC via swap meets each winter in Wisconsin and Illinois. There were many builders back then. Most of the power modelers would build a nice glider, and then sell it cheap at a swap meet to clear bench space for another project.

**GB:** *What makes you so passionate about RC Soaring?*

**GS:** The passion was sort of an accident. My dad bought a glider from a friend, I launched it off of an old hi-start, accidentally hooked a thermal, and that was something I just knew I had to do again

My identity as “GordySoar” was created to get everyone in the hobby to feel as though they knew “me,” so that when I came to their part of the world, they’d be interested in me flying with them. It worked.

**GB:** *Where do you see RC Soaring going in the future?*

**GS:** For a long time, I thought the end was near for RC Soaring, but, in fact, it’s just evolving. The days of the builder are mostly gone. Winch and hi-start launching are becoming a lost art. It’s a shame that so many new pilots will likely never know the satisfaction of earning a flight from the start. What Gentle Lady ever started its flight from 500 feet or 700 feet?

Electric-launch pilots only experience two-thirds of a sailplane’s flight because their flights start when the nose motor shuts off. Many pilots realize this on an instinctive level and wander off to Discus Launch Gliders (DLGs), but most will only launch with a nose motor. That doesn’t grow the hobby - it just dilutes the number of pilots we have in RC Soaring. They split off to DLG or Altitude Limited Electric Soaring (ALES), leaving fewer pilots in any of the disciplines to share the fun. The future is for the younger pilots to determine.

**GB:** *How can we reinvigorate and expand interest at a club level?*

**GS:** This one is simple. Events (contests) are the key to reinvigoration (which means getting the pilots who have been involved, involved again), and it’s also the key to expanding interest in club Soaring.

One mistake that many clubs have made is not distinguishing the difference between members and pilots. Always be on the lookout for new pilots who actually want to fly RC sailplanes, versus belonging.

**GB:** *Which do you think will become the most popular future competitive class?*

**GS:** DLG became popular, but has one major shortcoming - success in the game is often based on a pilot's physical strength. Like many parts of RC Soaring, the race to gain an advantage with higher-performance models priced F3K out of its future.

Electric launch slowly crept in with the invention of the altitude-limiting switch and the Horizon Hobby Radian electric-launch foam sailplane. The altitude switch killed the natural tendency for some modelers to look for bigger, more powerful motors.

The ALES class flared up as a fun-fly competition, but its pilots chummed the waters by crowing about how much fun it was and we sharks came around to make it "competitive." But, it has, in fact, (as a class) remained true to its goal of being a sailplane Soaring event for the everyday pilot. It has no need for \$3,000 airframes or expensive components. Often, a motorized Gentle Lady-type model with a small motor on the nose takes the day because its pilot made his or her times and hit the friendly landing points.

F5J has almost already priced itself out of the future, with its participants racing to buy the most lightweight, expensive airframes and power systems, with hopes that better equipment will put them in the winners' circle.

I believe that the most popular future competitive class will be the Unlimited Mixed Launch Thermal Duration contest, because it provides a format that demands pilot excellence, does not demand super expensive or high-tech models, and is inclusive to all, even DLG, which pilots are trying in Australia. It's one event that allows all disciplines to participate.

Electric launch keeps older pilots in the game and invites new pilots with only a Radian to come fly with the big boys... and learn.

**GB:** *What is the most important change you have seen in RC Soaring since you began?*

**GS:** Because of my constant travels with sailplanes, I got to see the changes as they happened in clubs and on fields. Because of a super group of confidants and advisors, I was able to evaluate and predict what was coming, and be part of the guidance toward avoiding the "end."

However, it isn't "GordySoar;" it's all the really great people I have met who were the brains behind those positive changes. I was just the vehicle of communication and helped make those changes.

I like mixed launch with the winch launch future assured, while electric-launch pilots have a future worth working at.

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**These** are some great insights by Gordy, and I thank him for his time and effort. He often has strong opinions, but he has a heart of gold, and has been the catalyst to engage many pilots in discussions about several important Soaring topics.

I think that we will see more of the Taranis radios at Soaring fields based on their low price, built-in telemetry, and amazing features.

**That's all** for this month. Go downwind and soar.

**SOURCES:**

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