



Emil Sip, 75, of Lovington, waits to signal the next tow plane as one tow plane in the background prepares to haul a glider into the sky at a soaring competition.

KIMBERLY RYAN/NEWS-SUN

## Love of flight keeps Lovington man grounded

BLAKE OVARD  
NEWS-SUN

Some folks know what part they play in the bigger scheme of things, but have a hard time believing their small part is significant. Without some of those folks, things would never get started, and planes would never leave the ground.

Emil Sip is one of those folks who is responsible for getting the planes off the ground.

For the past few years the 74-year-old Sip has served as a flagman for the tow planes at the annual National Soaring Foundation Region 9 Championship at the Hobbs Industrial Air Park.

"Normally when they have a contest they have 20 to 25 participants," Sip said about the annual event. "They line (the gliders) up out by the old B-17 hangar at the airfield and normally there are five or six tow planes. The tow planes come in and hook on to the gliders."

Sip's job is to stand alongside the tow plane so that the pilot can see him, know when to put tension on the tow line and when to take off.

"I stand off to the side of the tow plane pilot so that he can kind of look ahead out of the corner of his eye and can see what I'm doing," Sip explained. "I mimic the other signalman, who is Dennis Wright, the head of the soaring society. When he signals to go around I do too, and the pilot pops the throttle and away they go."

After that plane and glider takes off into the air the next tow plane and glider are prepped and ready for their turn and are ready for Sip to signal them.

"Just about every minute there's another one going down the runway," Sip said

with a smile. "Their dream is to have 50 planes and get them all in the air in less than an hour."

He has always had an interest in flying and that is one of the main reasons that he and his wife chose to move to Lovington from their farm in South Dakota about eight years ago.

As is sometime the case in life, what we want and what we can achieve can be two very different things. Sip found that to be the case when he went to take flying lessons.

"Things just didn't work out," Sip chuckled. "I went to the Hobbs airport and they had an instructor, but they didn't have any planes. Time went on, and eventually they had a plane to give instruction on, but then they didn't have an instructor."

That led Sip to the soaring society where he was told he could learn how to fly a glider.

"It wasn't exactly what I was looking for, but it was something," said Sip. "The instructor there was busy and didn't have much time to teach me very much. Time has gone on and I still haven't learned how to fly."

Wanting to pick up as much information as he could led Sip into volunteering to be part of the annual region 9 championship.

"They needed help with the contest," Sip stated. "And I thought it would be a good way to pick up pointers and learn something. I'd say it's been rewarding and you meet a lot of very talented people. I regret that I don't think too much is rubbing off on me."

Before he decided to pursue his love of flying and his dream of learning to fly,

Sip was a grounded individual. So grounded that he made his living working the land as a farmer, farming corn and small grain and raising pigs.

When their children left home, the Sips found that they really couldn't do all of the farm work by themselves, so they had a decision to make - where to go and what to do. Sip's wife, Adele, has relatives in the Lovington area, and that offered another reason to choose Lovington as the place to move.

"I was getting close to Social Security age, and when the kids went off on their own we couldn't handle everything anymore," said Sip. "Well, when you leave the farm, you have to load up to move the stuff to town. Since my wife had relatives down here who said how nice the weather was, I thought, 'If you're going to load up, just take two days to travel and then unload, instead of just traveling a few miles to town.' In town you don't even have room to turn around."

The one thing that has taken some getting used to for Sip is the overall scenery and landscape of Lea County. The southeast corner of South Dakota, where Sip is from, is a terrain filled with rolling hills, patches of trees, and the Missouri River valley. But that is not to say that he doesn't enjoy the climate of flat southeastern New Mexico.

"I kind of enjoy that if I want to go out in the yard in the summertime, that it's warm but not that bad," Sip said. "I'll come inside and look at the thermometer and it might be close to 100. Here, even though the thermometer says it's hot, if you can get under shade, it's cool. The heat comes from the sun, not the humidity."

"All-in-all this is as nice a place to live

as any place," Sip said. "The weather is really tolerable. They say it gets really windy, but the wind blows everywhere."

The fact that Sip loves flying, gliders and the Soaring Foundation combined with his never wanting to shovel snow again means that he is staying put in Lovington.

Sip does take flying lessons and he has been in the air several times, but he's not sure if he will ever have the opportunity to solo. He says his instructor has given the word that Sip shouldn't ever fly solo in a glider.

"One of the last times that I went up this new instructor that took me up said that he would never let me solo," Sip stated. "He said I have too much arthritis and not enough flexibility."

"You're supposed to have electrical impulses going from your brain down to your hands," said Sip. "Some of these (pilots) have super highways for theirs. I think I was put together with an old back country road. I guess that practice and experience plays a part too."

Sip says that even though he may never make a solo flight he would like to learn how to take off and land a glider.

"I still do want to learn how to take off," Sip said, smiling. "And, I'm not a terrorist. I want to land!"

This July, at the National Soaring Foundation Region 9 Championship, you may see a man in his overalls with signal flags standing close to the tow planes before they take off with a glider behind them. When you do see that man, it will be Sip, and when he's done with his job of directing traffic on the runway, he'll be dreaming of flying and gliding along in the clouds.



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*Congratulations!*

Left to right from back row: Jennifer Rodriguez, Daniel Chavez, Tiffany Lopez, Monica Soto, Daniella Naranjo, Brianna Chavez, Victoria Franco, Marisa Reza, Erica Franco, Ayla Franklin-Williams, Jazmine Garza, Megan Molinar, Alondra Coss, Isaiah Rowley and Elijah Rowley. Not pictured: Kiara Corral, Brandi Corral, Jazmin Juarez

Psalms 149: 3-4 "Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp. For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation."

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