

Advanced Soaring Made Easy – Second edition

Book review by Dr Richard Q Agnew (Australian speed, distance and height record holder)



In the Australian and New Zealand gliding community (and those who have flown there), Bernard Eckey is very well known as a pilot, instructor, record holder and head coach for South Australia. His famous ASH25 two-seater sailplane 'BE' and his brilliant photos of amazing scenery are common place in gliding magazines, as are some of his writings. With almost 3500 hours of safe gliding experience to his credit (including multiple 1000 km flights and one 1116 km FAI triangle) he is more than qualified to explain the entire theory behind advanced cross country soaring.

To me it is no surprise that the first edition of his book "*Advanced Soaring Made Easy*", sold out very quickly. But rather than just reprinting it and resting on his laurels Bernard has now released the second

edition. It contains almost twice the number of pages and is printed in full colour. To say that it is a big improvement would be an understatement. It is essentially a new book with lots of 'bells-and-whistles'. It bridges the gap between the first solo flight and competitive cross-country flying and even prepares the aspiring pilot for the psychological hurdles of the sport. Many of the subjects covered are anything but common knowledge.

Furthermore, Bernard has taken his reader's requests and comments on board and has added large sections to every chapter. He has also improved upon the book's layout and increased the photo to text ratio. Some photos can only be described as spectacular - even spoiled subscribers of gliding calendars will look at them in astonishment

Bernard is known as a communicator as well as a great pilot but above all, he is organised – maybe this is his German blood showing through. As well as making a complex subject appear simple Bernard has included examples and anecdotes from his own outstanding gliding career to help the reader understand.

His book answers many, if not most, of the questions that glider pilots ask - from early solo pilot through to competition pilots and record hunters. It is also a very helpful reference for gliding instructors and coaches.

The 1st edition was, well – good... the 2nd edition is great. Even as a diamond pilot, ex instructor and now record pilot I use Bernard's book in preference to the others that can be found next to my reading lamp, such as:

Helmut Reichmann's classic 1988, *Cross-Country Soaring*, George Moffat's, *Winning II*, the collection of essays in John Joss' 1974 edited volume titled *Advanced Soaring – a handbook for future diamond pilots*, CE Wallington's

classic, *Meteorology for glider pilots*, and last and most recently Leo and Ricky Brigliadori's 2005, *Competing in gliders – winning with your mind*.

High praise, but I believe that in his 2nd edition Eckey has hit the nail-on-the-head very nicely indeed. Two multiple World Champions such as Ingo Renner and Michael Sommer have written a foreword and are obviously also right behind this new work.

Ok – enough waffle - What about the book? – Why should you own this new edition? *Advanced Soaring Made Easy* is broken into twelve bite-size digestible chapters. Having said this, I must admit I read the whole 336 pages in quick succession – yep the graphs, 134 drawings and 163 pictures greatly assisted understanding and made the read so much more pleasurable. Now I use this edition as a ready reference book, especially as colleagues ask this and that...

Chapters include local soaring, gliding and weather, flight preparation, extended local soaring, advanced cross country flying, winning the mental game, flying competitively, a technical chapter, outlandings, safety (lookout, etiquette etc), ridge lift and slope soaring and my favourite subject – wave soaring.

Eckey has included in this edition both Northern and Southern Hemisphere material so pilots can be assured that their flying zone is covered. Readers are also helped by the use of icons. They alert to a new topic or new section of text that may be of particular importance, applicable to a particular part of the world and /or essential to a pilot's technical knowledge.

The first major and most noticeable difference between Eckey's editions of *Advanced Soaring Made Easy*, is the use of better graphics and a much improved layout. Bernard, I am told, did the print layout of the 2nd edition himself. This, I believe, makes this edition a 'must have' because of the ease of reading and flow of information, logic and theme. All chapters contain relevant drawings graphs, tables and the amazing photos aid the description of the subject matter. Almost every page contains information on how to transform new knowledge into practical benefits. Readers will instantly see that specific and systematic training paves the way for even more fun and enjoyment in gliding.

When I started my own gliding journey, I saved up my meagre pennies and lashed out on Reichmann. Now I can admit that I never really understood his mathematical 'stuff'... Then latter came father and son Brigliadori's book (2005). Eckey, on the other hand, has produced a high quality book, that covers all these topics and more, and has somehow managed to price it so that it is even accessible to junior pilots. Other aviators, such as hang glider or para glider pilots, will also find it of immense value and the same applies to power pilots.

If you are looking for reasons to own a book on gliding, the attractive price, the photos and 'niceness' are all huge reasons why you cannot look past the second edition of "Advanced Soaring Made Easy". I suspect that this edition will sell as quickly out as the first one and will be the sort of book that will only be lent out to the most trusted of colleagues – if at all. My Reichmann never was allowed out of the house as it was deemed way, way too valuable and probably a tad mythical. Eckey has managed to break that taboo and now I have a book that I might even

buy two of and keep one in pristine condition – just for me and my personal perusal, and the other for the unwashed...

I have relegated my Reichmann to the bottom of the reading pile... Eckey's 2nd edition is now my 'top of the pops' and will probably remain there – especially Chapter 12...

The only criticism of Eckey is that he hasn't given me tonight's winning Lottery numbers – which I'll need to buy myself a hot ship to go and practice, practice, and practice some more – my new found and sometimes refreshed knowledge.

Fly high, fly long, fly fast and fly safely

Rick Agnew

***Advanced Soaring Made Easy* by Bernard Eckey**

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336 pages with maps, charts, more than 130 graphs, tables, and 160 colour photos.