

I'm 6'5". Everyone always asks me if I play basketball. I flop at basketball! Also in art, every musical instrument I've ever played, throwing a ball, catching a ball and I sing like a cat falling from a 30 story building. I have knobby knees and I consume way more than a healthy amount of maple syrup. I'm late to everything- it's not classy to show up to a wedding right as the pastor asks if there are any objections. I tried to take up running- you can guess how long that lasted (one run)! But I believe I was put on this planet with a talent which eclipses all of my deficiencies. It may seem eccentric or insignificant to some, but to me it is a calling towards a life consumed by my passion. My name is Chris Begemann, and I was born to be a pilot.

My passion for aviation started before I can remember. Every time I heard a plane flying past, I would run to the window or stare up at the sky to see what it was. I would choose toy planes over hotrods and cars. When I was older I would spend hours making paper airplanes and testing them for distance and speed. When I turned 12 my parents bought me a foam RC Airplane and I joined a model airplane club to learn how to fly it. It was my first opportunity to talk with other pilots who shared my passion. I had my first flight at this time and it was a reinforcement of my lifelong yearning towards aviation.

My dreams consist of hopping in a glider and soaring with the hawks, a dream which I get to live. A couple of years ago, at age 15, I joined a local gliding club where I began my flight training. It was the first time I took a flying lesson. Immediately, it was clear that I was made for it. Flying comes so naturally to me, my training was like an awakening of something which I had been born with but had yet to discover its depth. I became the fastest student to fly aerotow and solo, and I continue to push myself to reach new goals, safely. Flying gives me overall confidence in my day-to-day life. I have taken many opportunities to share my passion for flying with others, including instructing the theory of aviation to younger cadets who have the same drive that I do. This is something which I wouldn't have had the confidence to do before I flew solo.

Aviation is the embodiment of pure adventure to me. I still have so much to learn and so many more challenges to face. It's a constant battle to stay up, finding the rising air to lift me and trying to fly the farthest and fastest. It's sheer beauty, exploring new clouds and chasing birds. With soaring, you never stop learning because soaring never stops teaching! An elite group of pilots are ones who have a gold badge, flying over 300KM. I have spent my entire life preparing for this challenge, and I will spend the next season to reach this goal. It will require a lot of hard work and dedication, and is reliant on the weather. I have a supportive group of friends to help me achieve this challenge.

I also take pride in sharing the adventure of soaring with others. On my weekends I volunteer at my gliding club, taking community members for introductory flights, giving them their first taste of the adventure of soaring. I recently had the opportunity to take my mother for an introductory flight. It was very rewarding to see her overcome her fear of flying and appreciate the beauty and adventure of soaring.

One of Ryan's core values which resonates the most with me is "Never stop exploring life". I believe that life revolves around exploring. As a pilot the sky, is no longer the limit, it's my playground. Part of exploring is staying safe, something which is especially important with flying. I also follow another one of Ryan's core values: don't be afraid to ask for help. Although soaring is a solo sport when your in the sky, it requires tremendous support to coordinate flights, launch gliders into the air and to retrieve a glider incase it ends up in a farmer's field- which does happen occasionally!

No one is remembered for their weaknesses. They are remembered for the amazing things they achieved while following their passions. For Ryan, it was skiing. For me, it is flying. I will never stop exploring or asking for help. I hope to spend the next soaring season achieving this goal and I look forward to a future full of exploring!

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Chris Begemann