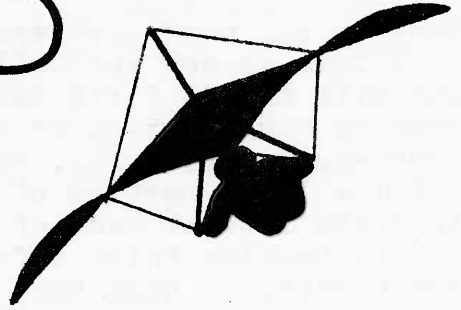


UPDRAFT



NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN MASS. HANG GLIDER ASSN.

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 4 APRIL 1976 Editor: M.Morrissey © 1976 WMHGA

MEETING NOTICE

The MAY meeting of the WMHGA is scheduled for Tuesday, May 4, 7:30 PM, at the ME Bar and Lounge on Route 47 in Hadley. For new or prospective members, the ME is located two miles north of Skinner State Park on Rt 47, and meetings are always held on the first Tuesday of the month.

Featured this month will be the films taken by Spence Smith on his visit to Torrey Pines, along with a number of films of local flying. We remind all members that the monthly meeting is the most convenient time to take care of GSI business, pay up dues, and to submit material and/or advertizing for this newsletter.

EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

Flyers and dealers are again reminded that the monthly meeting is the deadline for submission of all material and advertizing copy for that month's Updraft. This policy is now in effect for its second month, and will be strictly adhered to. We extended the deadline for the present issue due to several promises of ads and articles, however none of the promised material ever appeared, so the result was simply one more issue that failed to make it to the printer in time for mid-month distribution, with nothing whatsoever to show for the delay. Readers may note that not a single word of ad copy from any source except the editor's own shop, and not a single word of material from any other writer appears in this issue. The widespread lack of support

is dissappointing, to say the least, and is certain to lead to the demise of this publication in the near future unless corrected. It costs quite a bit to publish this paper, and it takes material to fill it - lack of both, simply means no more paper.

Readers will note a change in format this month, with the arrival of spring. A sharp increase in our local flying activities should provide us with much more flying tales and much more detailed information on the situations developing at our sites. Therefore, other aspects of hang gliding that had been featured in the winter months will receive less emphasis. Our monthly series of features on the various manufacturers has been dropped, primarily because the technical advances in ultralight aviation have been developing so fast, that it is no longer possible to do a story on a company and have that story remain up-to-date by the time the newsletter is distributed. Information on new ships and products will continue to be presented in a less formal manner, and dealers are reminded that it is their responsibility to get any information that they have to the editor, if they want their products to be mentioned. The monthly feature on flying sites will also be dropped for the summer, although this series may re-appear intermittently. We do expect to make it a regular feature again in the winter. Technical and other informative articles will continue to appear as often as possible, and will serve as a valuable supple-

ment to our news coverage.

This is our springtime issue, and will be the first issue to be read by many new and/or prospective members. Consequently, we have devoted a large portion of it to an in-depth look at each of our local sites. Besides being informative to new flyers, we hope that much of the information presented will be new to the regulars, as well.

SKINNER STATE PARK

Skinner Park opened for the season on April 16, and all established regulations are in effect. Head Ranger Doug Peterson is back for another season, and he and assistant Dennis Underwood have been kept busy writing permits for local flyers. This year, permits are available at the ranger station at the top of the mountain, so there is no need to travel to the DNR headquarters in Amherst. Flyers are reminded that permits are now to be obtained every day, rather than once a year. All WMHGA members who are flying at a Class 3 or 4 level are automatically on the list of those who may receive permits. Class 4 flyers may get on the list by request, and the ConnHGA, Windward Club, and NEHGA have been invited to send lists of their class 4 pilots to Flight Director Chuck LaVersa, so that those names can be placed on the list. Class 3 pilots from other clubs are subject to individual consideration before being placed on the list.

Skinner was first flown in April of last year after Ken Gagne, Bob Robbins, Bob Bouchet, and others had cut the take-off area at the top of the cliff. At the time it was believed that the launch point was on Mitch Drozdal's property. First flight was made by Spencer Smith in his old Sky Sports Lark. First soaring flight was made a couple of months later by Gary Podmore, in John O'Shaughnessy's old Lark.

Those first few months at Skinner also gave the local flyers their first indication of the dangers of mountain flying, with the occurrence of the site's first and only serious

injury. Despite the attempts of all who were present to stop him, Dave Menard launched from the top in a downhill wind. As would be expected, he got rotoed and was pounded to the ground hard enough to result in a severe concussion with a resultant coma that left him unconscious for several months, and with paralysis that is not yet fully healed after a year of treatment.

This accident closed the hill for a time while regulations were formulated to prevent recurrences. Adoption of the GSI system and the requirement of a class 3 rating led to the re-opening of the hill, but the problem of enforcement soon reared its head. Only after Denis LeTendre cut down a state tree to retrieve his kite after one of his many tree landings, and the resulting survey by the DNR, was it discovered that the launch site was actually on state property. Although this led to the closing of the site once again, it meant that once re-opened, Skinner would be regulated with the assistance and authority of state personnel.

By the end of the season, some pretty impressive flying had been going on. Long soaring flights were common, as were high altitude gains above takeoff.

At present, the duration record is held by John Dempsey, who kept the Venus II prototype aloft for three hours and forty minutes last month. Altitude gain is held by Stu Smith, the human variometer, who got his Cumulus Vb at least 15 hundred feet above take-off level recently, and distance is held by Chuck LaVersa with his Dragonfly, who recently flew to the ME Lounge in Hadley, after deciding not to land at LaFleur airport in Northampton because the pattern was too crowded that day.

The coming season should be even more interesting than last year, since the local area has produced a number of excellent pilots, most of whom will be in the new high-performance wings this season. It should be quite a season.

Mt TOM

Mt. Tom was first flown by Bob Stewart over two years ago, and soon became reknowned as one of the east's finest sites. A thousand-footer with a two mile ridge and a high vertical cliff on top, the mountain provides excellent soaring for those pilots with sufficient skill to evaluate its rather funky wind currents.

Always a guerilla site, Tom is nonetheless easily accessible to any pilot who's willing to do a little walking. Up until last fall, it was possible to drive to the top at any time - that was until the landowner found out that we had a key to the gate on the access road! Since then, the lock has been changed, and notice has been served that anyone caught tresspassing will be prosecuted. All this hasn't stopped the flying, tho', and hasn't even reduced it by much. As long as there are west winds in the Pioneer Valley, there will be hang gliders soaring Tom.

Presently, the duration record at Tom is held by Bob Stewart, who flew a Sky Sports (model unknown) for three and a half hours last year. Bob also holds the altitude gain record - 2000 feet, in his Quicksilver, although Stu Smith has approached this in his Cumulus on a recent flight. The distance record for the site is also held by Bob, who flew his Kestrel from the south end of the ridge, all the way down to the north end of Mt Nonotuck and around the corner to land down on Route 5. Distance flights away from the ridge have never been tried, but this will not be the case for long.

NORTH SUGARLOAF

Another guerilla site, this 600' walk-up with a cliff launch faces due west, and it's gigantic landing area makes it an excellent place for the budding pilot to make his first high flights. First flown late last season by Bob Stewart, it has been soared for ten minutes by Chuck LaVersa in his Dragonfly. We know of no significant altitude gain or distance flights from this hill (yet.)

This site received most of its use during the winter due to its easy access by snowmobile. Lately there has been very little activity there. We expect this to be a temporary situation, however, since this hill will take more of a south wind than any of our other sites, which will mean that we will often be able to fly there this summer when those southwest winds are crossing too much for our other sites. Also, as many of our local flyers get into their new high-aspect gliders, we expect to see them flying here prior to trying to get into the more restricted landing areas at the other hills.

PETERSBURG PASS

With the end of the ski season at Taconic Trails, we hope that the regular launch point will once again be available. The take-off across the road has been available all winter, as many of you know, but the summer-time one is much easier to get out of - and you don't have to worry about getting run over by a truck as you lift off. Petersburg was first flown a year or more ago by either Bob Stewart, Brooks Ellison, or Lee Keeler (all three were flying that first day - we don't know who jumped first.) Presently, the duration record is held by Brooks Ellison, who stayed aloft in his Seagull III for about three and a half hours. The current altitude gain record is not known to us, and as far as we know, nobody has yet gone for distance at Petersburg.

Mt GREYLOCK

Greylock Reservation is scheduled to open the second week of May, and at present, only Class 4 pilots will be allowed to fly there. We are negotiating with Mr. Doug Poland of the DNR to loosen the system a bit, so that Class 3's with the appropriate skills will have the opportunity to fly there. Last year this was the case, as long as the Cl 3 checked out first at Petersburg with Brooks

Ellison or Doug Weeks. We hope to get the same system in effect this season - look for a report in next month's newsletter, or come to the May meeting for more information.

First pilot off of Greylock was Lee Keeler in his Seagull III, and that flight opened the door to some of the finest flying that the east has seen. By last season, soaring flights of several hours duration had become common, and towards the end of the season, Jim Fennimore in a Seagull III had set a duration record for the entire east coast on a flight that lasted five hours and forty minutes. Although we don't know the farthest distance flown from Greylock, we do know that Brooks has flown into North Adams, several miles away, and landed in the backyard of a friend's home. Many flights have had altitude gains of over a thousand feet over launch, but the actual record is unknown.

AVON

The ConnHGA has finally gotten their best hill back, albiet on a temporary/probationary and very limited basis. The 800 foot west-facing ridge is open only on weekdays, and is open on an experimental basis, to determine whether hang glider operations can be conducted without too much interference to the nearby farmers and neighbors, including the nearby state police automatic weapons firing range. Rumor has it that the very first official flight resulted in an out-landing on the firing range; we hope this rumor is untrue!

We do know that one report from Avon is true, because Bob Vicari has it on film (see it at the May meeting) and that's Wayne Ripley's flight sans harness. Rusty and over-eager after a winter on the ground, and distracted by a plethora of goodies, including a variometer, and a two-way radio, Wayne jumped off of Avon without hooking into his glider! Luckily, he was able to hold on for the ride to the landing zone, swinging by his hands from the bottom of the control

bar until just before landing. Just before touchdown, he found himself heading for a line of tall trees. At that point, he attempted to turn away from them, but with no way to push out, he only banked into a side-slipping spiral dive. About fifteen feet above ground, he finally relaxed his grip and fell to the ground, surviving his ordeal with only a broken ankle, broken nose, and assorted cuts and bruises to show for the ordeal. Could've easily been worse!

SUNDOWN

An excellent beginner/intermediate area, with its 50', 250', 550' and 600' launches, this area may well be open for the summer by the time you read this. Call information, and ask for a phone number for the Northwind School of Hang Gliding in New Hartford, Conn., and give them a call for up to date information.

SODOM MOUNTAIN

Located in Southwick, off of Route 57, this 250-footer is a good place for beginners to start getting a little higher than you can get in the slot at Mitch's. Facing slightly east of south, it's flyable fairly often in the summertime. Permission to fly may be obtained by the pilot inquiring at the resort office near the hill.

The RUNNY HILLS

South Hadley High and Hospital Hill remain closed due to the fear of injury/liability on the part of the agencies administering the property. However, your Vice-President and public relations wizard, Paul Kjoller, has promised to meet with the appropriate people as soon as possible to discuss GSI insurance and other appropriate measures to get these hills back. As many people are constantly inquiring about when or whether we can start using these valuable training/practice hills

again, we hope that we will have a positive report from Paul at the May meeting.

RATINGS CLINICS

Sometimes the most difficult part of obtaining an upgraded rating is not performing the required tasks for the new level, but doing it in view of a rater. Of course, many flyers are content to get their flights and maneuvers certified as opportunity allows, but others are impatient at the delays that this informal method often involves. This impatience is understandable, but it can serve to make life miserable for those of us who are authorized to issue ratings. After a few days on the hill, when you are unable to plan your flight, watch the weather, talk to your girlfriend or just relax because of the legions of pilots insisting that you watch them fly RIGHT NOW, or making you feel like you've been downright negligent, if not malicious because you didn't happen to see that landing, or how tight that 180 was, or whatever, you're almost ready to let the FAA take over.

Flight Director Chuck LaVersa has come up with a solution. WMHGA will sponsor a series of clinics, to be held as weather and opportunity allow, to provide pilots with the opportunity to perform the specific task requirements for the various ratings and skill endorsements in a single session. Instruction will also be provided, to insure that each pilot fully understands what is expected of him/her, and to be sure that the required knowledge to perform the various maneuvers in safety shall prevail. Instructors who are certified and authorized to issue the various ratings will be hired and paid for their services, in order that they may devote their full time and attention to these often-lengthy proceedings. Fees will be paid by the students to cover the instructors' salaries.

We can already hear the cries: "But ratings should be free!" Well,

as the bard once observed, "Horse-crap!"

Sure, if all the rater does is attest to something he happened to see you do, and issues a rating that he bases upon a close familiarity with your flying over a period of time, so that all he has to exert himself to do is write a note to GSI, it should be free. But how often does this happen?

Normally, to observe a pilot performing the required tasks, and always, if this is to be done in a short time period, this observation requires the rater to spend a good piece of time with the advancing pilot. This is time that he could be spending in other ways, such as flying himself, or giving instruction to paying students, or just doing nothing, relaxing. The point is, if you want to accomplish something in a short time span, and you need the services of a professional flyer, then you have to expect to pay him for his time and effort. Anyone who doesn't see it this way is welcome to stay away from the clinics and get their flights and tasks certified little by little in the old way. Just don't expect it to happen fast.

The first of these clinics was held at Skinner State Park on Saturday, April 17, with Chuck LaVersa and Stuart Smith presiding. It was a class 3 clinic, and all pilots who had logged enough Class 2 level flights, and who seemed capable of performing the required tasks, were invited to attend. Four showed up, and by the end of the day, after an intensive advanced ground school and several flights from the top in a variety of conditions, all were awarded their class 3 ratings, and the four names went on the list for permits.

In the near future, we expect to see a clinic for classes 1 and 2, a class 4 clinic, and a high altitude clinic. This last will involve a trip to 2300' Mt Ascutney, where aspiring Class 3's (and maybe a few

advanced class 2's) will be given an opportunity to fly a really high site, and gain their High Altitude endorsement. Besides a chance to fly Ascutny, this will be helpful in getting certified for Mt Greylock.

Also possible are a cliff-launch clinic at Poet's Seat, and any ideas on other possible clinic subjects are being solicited.

INSTRUCTION

Last fall we ran a piece that tried to warn new pilots of the dangers of taking their flight training from unqualified instructors. Since then, a lot of new pilots have come into the sport. Some have taken their training from a certified school or certified independent instructor, and some have been had by the fakes. If you see a pilot who is out on the hill for the third or fourth day in a row, and still can't get a 100% successful takeoff rate from the mid-station of the slot, you can usually bet that he was one of the ones who got had. The problem is, by the time he realizes it, it's too late.

More important is the fact that a responsible instructor will include a great deal of technical and advanced flying information in his lessons, realizing that it does no good to get someone to the point where they know how to take off and land, unless you also give them an excellent idea of what comes after that.

How can you avoid getting taken by an unqualified instructor? Go to an established flight school? Usually, but that isn't enough - some established flight schools are totally bogus, and survive only by preying upon unsophisticated non-flyers. Also, there are a few excellent independent instructors around, who should not be ignored just because they work alone.

The answer is certification. Before you sign up for a lesson, be sure to demand to see your instructor's ID card, certifying him/her as a GSI or USHGA certified instructor. He/she should be at LEAST a class 3 pilot, and we aren't crazy about a 3; really, a good instructor almost has to be a

class 4 flyer, in order to have the experience required to do a really proper job of instruction. The more you learn about flying, the more true this statement will strike you. But even if he's a 4, be SURE that he is certified as an INSTRUCTOR.

Otherwise, you're not only getting ripped off, you're risking the only body you'll ever have in the process.

POET'S SEAT

The situation at Poet's Seat is still in limbo. After making all the arrangements asked by the Recreation Commission, it turned out that their approval was only a formality, and that they did not have the authority to authorize flying! This final authorization must come from the Board of Selectmen, who are only now beginning to consider the recommendation of the Recreation Commission. It appears certain that the site will still open, however the hours of operation will be very limited during the summer, due to the heavy use of the landing area for other established sports. You can't expect the softball teams to call time out every two minutes to let a hang glider land on second base! Even occasional use will be a boon to the club, however. And of course, the rest of the year, we'll have the place to ourselves.

On GETTING DOWN

Watching the flights at Tom and Skinner lately, one is left to ponder whether many of the people flying these days really know how to put a hang glider back on the ground properly. Outlandings, tree landings, collisions with obstacles and downwind landings have all been common, at our local hills as well as at sites all over the region. It appears that many pilots don't realize that there is a lot more to landing a glider than just trying to have a bit of open space under you at that inevitable moment when your sink rate finally puts you on

the ground. Let's see if we can put landings into perspective.

When you first learned to fly, one of the most basic things your instructor tried to instill in you was to always land into the wind. Reasons for this are many and obvious - your understanding of them is assumed. On your early learning flights, this was automatic. You took off from a little bump, into the wind, and flew in a straight line to a landing, into the wind.

Soon, though, you were flying a little higher, and working on your turns. It probably took only one crosswind landing to make you realize that you have to be aware of your position in relation to the landing zone, as well as your altitude, in order to avoid landing cross-wind. In other words, you must finish your turns in such a manner as to leave yourself with a straight glide to an upwind landing. At this stage of flying, you are already learning to set up an approach.

An approach is simply a flight path designed to put you on the ground at a pre-determined point, heading in a predetermined direction (upwind.) Landing approaches can be of four types: straight in, S-turn, conventional aircraft/sailplane type, or 360.

The straight-in approach is the simplest, and is suitable for beginners on small bunny hills, and for landing areas that are a great distance from the launch, or that offer enormous size. All you do is get downwind of the landing zone, which should require no maneuvering if you took off into the wind, and fly it right down to the ground. As you develop your flying skills, you will discover that the eastern flyer hardly ever gets to do a straight in approach.

The most frequently used type of landing approach for the standard-class hang glider is the S-turn type. In this kind of landing, you never need to be cross-wind or upwind of

-7-



Mountainview Glider Sports, Inc.

300 PLEASANT STREET, NORTHAMPTON, MA 01060

Telephone 1 (413) 584-7233



WESTERN MASS'S ONLY COMPREHENSIVE PROFESSIONAL HANG GLIDER SHOP

Featuring:

The region's most complete hang glider pilot training program with beginner, intermediate, and advanced lessons. Complete training for the beginner, advanced soaring and special skills training for the intermediate, and advanced thermal/cross country for the expert. Lessons available on both standard-class and Dragonfly-type gliders, as appropriate. Training available either seated or prone. Coming soon: our two man tandem Dragonfly for airborn instruction.

Ultralite Products, the world's highest quality line of hang gliders and accessories, including the Brock-82, the world's top quality standard; the Brock-82-S, a mellow-handling short-keeled standard for the beginner or intermediate; the Redtail, a mellow-handling, nimble short-keel glider; the Super Redtail, the ultimate World Cup ship; the Dragonfly I, the world's most popular tip glider; and the hottest ship in the sky today, the Dragonfly II.

Lessons Gliders Accessories Repairs Hardware Materials Literature

your landing spot. If a straight- in approach would make you overshoot, you simply burn off your excess altitude in a series of S-turns, varying the frequency and sharpness of the turns in such a way as to leave you at the proper altitude and distance from the landing spot for a straight in final approach. This style of approach is suitable for most conditions, but it has its limitations, not the least of which is that it is unsuitable for the new high-performance gliders. S-turns will just about always get you down where you want, facing into the wind, but it takes a long time and a lot of distance. From the time you leave the ridge, you are setting up for your landing, and this isn't the hot set-up at all if you like to come out over the landing area with a lot of height, to play around and do maneuvers.

Wouldn't it be nice to have a landing technique that required very little set-up until quite late in the flight? That never required more than a 90° turn (as opposed to the 180's required in an S-turn approach)? And could be entered from a wide variety of directions and altitudes? Well, the conventional airplane/sailplane approach offers all of these advantages. For this reason, sailplanes and all civil airplanes use this form of approach exclusively. Basically, it consists of four "legs" and three turns, the first of which can be anywhere from 0 to 180 degrees, and the rest of which are always 90's. The length of the legs depends upon the altitude you enter the pattern, and the velocity of the wind. From low altitudes, a leg or two, and one of the turns, may be dropped from the pattern.

Working backwards from touchdown we have the final approach, which is straight into the wind, the 90° turn onto final from the base leg, the 90° turn onto base leg from the downwind leg, and the turn of whatever degree is necessary to start your downwind leg, which is made at the initial point. The fourth leg is the initial approach, which is simply the path you fly to get from wherever you are

to your initial point.

Come take a flight with me in my Dragonfly, from Mt Tom down to Don Hicks' yard, and I'll show you how it works. As we hook in, some of the other pilots eye us apprehensively. They know how precisely you have to land these high-aspect ships, and they wonder if we can really hit Don's yard. Let's show 'em how it's done.

Before we take off, we pick a likely initial point, which will be cross-wind from the landing area. Lets say we chose the house two doors from Hicks', towards the corner of Rt 141. As we take off and cruise around, all we have to think about is having a reasonable amount of altitude when we cross that point. Unlike the standard drivers, who are setting up their landings as soon as they leave the ridge, we're allowed plenty of time to play in the sky. We do a few passes, then scoot out over the landing area, and try a couple of 360's. Now we're getting down some, and it's time to think about getting onto the ground.

Note that it isn't our position in relation to Don's yard that counts - only that we can reach the initial point with some altitude. So there we head. Well, we judged it pretty well this time, but if we'd come over initial point with more or less altitude than we now have, we still wouldn't have to worry too much. We're over that house now, and we now turn directly downwind. With the landing area off to the side, we can make a good judgement of how much altitude we must lose before landing. Proceeding on the downwind leg, while we still have enough altitude so that there is no question of whether we can make it back to Don's, we now make a gentle 90° turn to our right. This puts us on base leg, flying crosswind. Here we can get an excellent idea of the strength of the lower level wind by observing the crab angle required to keep us on a base leg that lies at a 90° angle to our final approach. Soon we're down to an altitude where a simple

90° turn will leave us with a straight in approach to touchdown. We make our 90° onto final, followed by a gentle landing directly into the wind.

You may have already noticed the real beauty of this approach - it leaves a lot of room for error. If you choose an initial point that's crosswind from the touchdown spot, you can be at almost any altitude when you start the pattern. If you cross your initial point much too low, you can condense the whole pattern into a simple 180 to get down with minimum altitude loss. If you cross initial point way too high, you just take a long downwind leg to use up the excess altitude. It also allows you to be very conservative.

For example, with three legs and two turns available to eat up altitude, you can afford to be much higher than is ideal when you cross initial point.

On the downwind leg, you can be conservative again - with two more legs and two more turns ahead of you, there's no need to loose a great deal of altitude on the downwind leg. You make your turn onto base leg before there's any chance of getting out of range of the landing area.

Should you turn onto base leg too high, you simply take a long base leg, and/or sideslip your turn onto final. If your base leg turn was lower than planned, you can get back some altitude by continuing the turn into a full 180, eliminating the actual base leg.

Your turn onto final allows yet another altitude adjustment, as you can do either a flat yaw turn, a mild banked turn, or an altitude-eating sideslip turn, as the situation requires.

And at last, if your conservatism has left you a little too high on the final approach, you can still slip in a few S-turns and/or sideslips to get you down on the spot.

Sound easy? It is. Try it.

The final type of approach is the 360 or military approach. This style of landing is used in the armed forces because it is the fastest way to

get from the air to the ground, and if you ever have someone shooting at you, you should consider using it. Otherwise, don't bother. What it involves is coming over the spot with exactly enough altitude to do a 360, and then 360ing to the spot. It looks flashy, but it leaves you absolutely no room for error. If you can do it exactly right every time, well, do it if you like - but can you ever be sure that you'll ALWAYS do it EXACTLY right EVERY time? Enough said.

One more thing should be said in regard to landings, and that's to cover the concept of the sideslipping turn. This has been an accepted way of getting down in all kinds of aircraft since the Wright Brothers - only in hang glider circles is it regarded as a universal no-no. The reason is that an extreme and/or prolonged sideslip could lead to a deflated sail. However, this is the extreme case, and we aren't recommending extreme bank angles or prolonged periods of sideslipping.

Since your primary training, you were taught to keep the nose pushed up into the turn, and to avoid sideslipping. That way, you get the maximum turn with the least possible altitude loss. However, if you're about to overshoot your landing area, that's exactly the opposite of what you want.

Suppose your base leg was begun way too soon, and you have to loose a lot of altitude to get down. You can simply stretch your base leg, but if you carry that to an extreme, you'll simply find that your final approach must be made at an angle to the wind. In this case, you'd like to loose as much altitude as possible in your turn onto final, and the way to do it is to sideslip the turn. By not pushing out into the turn, you'll find that the kite will drop a great deal with only a slight change in direction - just what you want to correct a potential overshoot. Just remember that the glider will accelerate in a side-

slip, so you should be prepared to get rid of the extra speed that you will build up.

Think a lot about what you've just read, and be prepared to practice a conventional aircraft approach from now on. You'll find it allows you more time to do other things on your flights, yet still allows you to be conservative on landings. You'll have a lot more opportunity to correct for errors, and your landings should always be into the wind and on the spot. Go for it.

LOCAL NOTES

It looks like this is the year that hang gliding in western Mass is really going to make some new advances. The area has spawned a number of excellent pilots, and we have a good group of intermediates who are developing quite fast. The days when the experts came from afar to watch the local turkeys crash are over - lately it's been the local experts who have been pulling the visiting "experts" out of the foliage.

The areas where we'll be seeing some real advances are in cross-country flying, and in cross-country's necessary pre-requisite, thermal soaring. Last year we saw a few thermal flights, but they were few and far between, since the amount of lift required to keep a standard-class ship aloft in a thermal is quite great, and not often encountered. When it is, the turbulence accompanying such strong thermal activity is too much for safe flying in that type of glider. However, the new class of high performance ships has turned that situation right around. These ships not only have the sink rate to utilize moderate thermal lift, but have the stability to cope with the turbulence that always accompanies unstable air. Best of all, they have the L/D to travel from one thermal to the next efficiently, and the speed to cover a wide area in a search pattern to seek out thermal lift. There's no doubt that the capability's there - it's just a matter of time before we

learn how to use it effectively. Stu Smith flew a Dragonfly right up into cloud base not too long ago, so the altitude capability can be considered proven! And in the past few weeks, several pilots on the west coast have made flights in the thirty to forty-mile range, all in new flexible-wing gliders.

Chuck LaVersa gave us a taste of what it's all about last week when he flew from Skinner Park to the NE Lounge, and "dropped in" on Bill for a beer. He could've gone much farther if he'd wanted, but would've left himself with no way to get back. The significance of the flight lies not so much in the fact that it was the site's first cross-country flight, as in the fact that it was done on a poor day for cross-country flying!

Chuck in his Dragonfly, Stu (Human Variometer) Smith in his Cumulus, and John Dempsey in the Venus II, along with the occasional visits of Jim Finkowski in his souped-up Dragonfly, have made the sight of a hang glider two thousand feet above Mitch's field a common sight lately.

After a year of flying standard class gliders, most of us have come to think of the local sites as great gliding places that become soarable occasionally. So it is, if you're driving a standard type ship. However, for the high aspect birds, it's soarable just about every day.

There are quite a few of the new breed of birds coming into the area. By the next few months, based on what's here now and what's on order from local dealers, we should have a Cumulus Vb, and maybe two of them, two Kestrels, eight Dragonflies (3 stock Mk I's, one modified Mk I, and 4 Mk II's), a Sun IV and maybe two or three of them, a possible Wind Gypsie, a possible Easy Riser, the Venus II, a Venus III, and a Seagull VII, as well as two Icarus V's, and two Thermix's. And these are only for pilots who are expected to show their faces around Skinner fairly often - no telling what may just drop in for a visit!

Speaking of birds, our friend

John has an interesting experience with a hawk recently. Seems that he was cruising the ridge at Skinner, when lo and behold, a large hawk pulled up off his wing, about thirty yards away.

"Oh, boy," thought John, "I'm gonna boogie after this here hawk, and he's gonna lead me into a thermal that'll put me right in orbit! This is the chance of a lifetime, and here I come!"

With that, he cranked over into a turn and got on the hawk's tail like a fighter pilot after a kill, just waiting for the lift to roll his socks down. Well, the hawk must have had some other ideas, because he immediately proceeded to lead ol' John into a massive sinkhole, then just turned on the power and flapped away laughing while John struggled to reach the landing area before the ground reached him.

Just goes to prove, you can't trust anyone who dresses in feathers. Be skeptical of anything they try to show you, and never listen to anything they say.

MOTOR GLIDERS

With the announcement that the Cato Brothers are planning to market an engine kit for the Icarus II, IIB, Sunriser and Easy Riser series of rigid wings, one is forced to consider whether this form of flight just might be the hot set-up for the future.

The present powered Icarus II is capable of launching by foot from a level strip no larger than many hang glider landing areas, and climbing to 1500 feet on a quarter of a pint of gas - probably less gas than it takes you to get your hang glider from Mitch's to the top of Skinner Park. Once at thermal-effective altitude, the engine can be shut down for soaring, then restarted in flight if needed to get back to the landing area.

Think about it. No more need to climb the mountain. No more soarable mountains left unflown for lack of a

take-off spot or landing area. In fact, no more need for a hill at all, if cross country's your bag. Both sides of Mt Tom and Mt Holyoke become soarable. You can fly on all those southwest summer days. No more hauling the ship around the countryside in search of a place to take off.

Is this the way to go? Could it be the best of all possible ways to get a high performance glider up to thermal effective altitude? Or is it simply an attempt to re-invent the airplane?

As Craig Cato put it, "What could be more natural than to give a bird its muscles?"

Is this the only way to REAL bird-like flight? Or is it just a way of mechanizing the now-natural beauty of hang gliding?

Many people have expressed the opinion that the motor-glider is an unnatural mockery of hang flight. But, we ask, when's the last time you saw a bird walking up a hill to get to a place where he could take off? Think about it...

The following addresses are printed for the convenience of our members and potential members:

Treasurer John Dempsey (dues, ad billings, etc.): 107 Ridge Road East Longmeadow, 01028

President/Editor Mick Morrissey (ads/stories for Updraft, other club business): C/O Mountainview Glider Sports, Inc., 300 Pleasant Street, Northampton, MA 01060

Flight Director Chuck LaVersa (GSI ratings, etc.): 24 Eastern Ave., South Deerfield, MA 01373

Membership/subscriptions cost \$6.00 per year, from April to April. Members first year's dues are calculated at 50% per month, from the month they join until the next April. Every April, all current members are up for renewal at \$6.00 for the new year. Membership applications and dues should be sent directly to the Treasurer, John Dempsey, at the above address. Complete GSI packages go to Chuck, anything else to Mick.