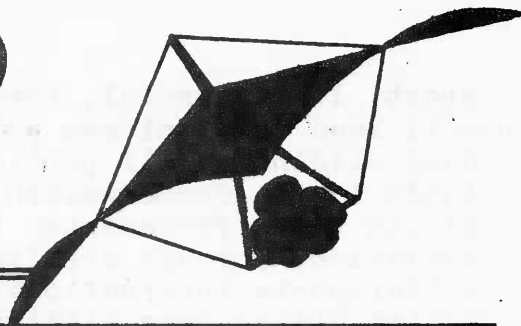


# UPDRAFT



NEWSLETTER OF THE MASSACHUSETTS HANG GLIDER ASSN.

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## MEETING NOTICE

The October meeting of the MassHGA will be held at the ME Bar and Lounge at 8:00 PM on Tuesday, October 5.

For new members, MassHGA meetings are always at 8:00 on the first Tuesday of every month at the ME.

The ME Bar is located on Route 47 in Hadley, two miles north of our most popular flying site, Skinner State Park.

## IN MEMORIAM

On September 21 at Talcot Mountain in Avon, Connecticut, hang gliding in New England lost one of its most prominent participants when Al Mulazzi was killed in a flying accident. As this is written, only the basic facts of the incident are known. Perhaps by our next meeting we will have more information, and will be able to learn from Al's unfortunate death so that similar accidents may be avoided.

The sketchy report that we have received (from the wife of a ConnHGA member who was not present at the time of the accident) indicates that Al failed to hook in when launching his glider from the hundred and fifty foot cliff at the top of Avon, and plunged to his death on the rocks below as soon as he pushed over the edge of the cliff. Flying with a broken arm, Al was unable to hold himself in the ship, and fell.

Well known to most of the hang glider pilots in New England, Al was the man who introduced foot-launched aviation to Connecticut. He was one of the first hang glider pilots in the Northeast, and was a founder of

the Connecticut Hang Glider Assn., serving that organization in the capacity of Flight Director as well as in other positions since ConnHGA was begun. He was also a founder of Zephyr Aircraft of Glastonbury, but had been less active in that company recently. During the past summer, Al had been active as a dealer with the Eastern Hang Glider Dealers Association.

One of the region's most experienced pilots, Al had flown just about every site in New England, and was a frequent visitor to Western Massachusetts. Often a hard-luck flyer, Al had seemed to get more than his share of crashes; some of his friends kidded that they'd never seen him without a cast or a brace. Yet all agreed that he was a good pilot. Many of Southern New England's top flyers, if not most, were first introduced to hang gliding by Al.

Whatever the cause of his fatal crash, Al's pioneering attitude, his hard work for the development of the sport, his sense of humor, and his good company will be sorely missed by pilots throughout the region.

## MassHGA

Primary project for the winter months will be the establishment of the Massachusetts Hang Glider Association as a functioning statewide pilots' organization. The goal is to represent all of the state's serious flyers before springtime, with the intention of having an organization that can deal with state and local agencies on a statewide level for the purpose of promoting the safe and efficient development of the

sport. If successful, the MassHGA will lead to a uniform policy towards hang gliding on all publicly owned lands in the Commonwealth, with all pilots being represented by the Association. Through affiliation with Glidersports International and the United States Hang Gliding Association, regulations, insurance requirements, ratings and other policies will be uniform not only throughout the state, but throughout the sport.

Various approaches are being considered for the consolidation of the state's flyers under the MassHGA umbrella. One possibility is simply to conduct a membership drive, in the hope that the pilots throughout the state will see fit to join yet another organization. Another way would be to invite the various existing clubs to join en-mass, and to retain their identity while acting as MassHGA Chapters. Chapters could exist for the Eastern and the Western parts of the state, or even for Eastern, Central, Western and Berkshire areas. The geographic location of the state's pilots, as well as of the sites, will have to be considered.

Consolidation of insurance coverage will be an immediate goal of MassHGA, and to this end, it is hoped that all clubs and schools that are presently insuring sites through GSI will, in the future, cover these sites under the master policy held by MassHGA, as present coverage expires. If all pilots will then purchase their individual policies through MassHGA, there need never again arise the problem of a club or school losing its policy for lack of signing up enough individual members.

Needless to say, a uniform policy towards hang gliding on public lands should go a long way towards smoothing the path of those who are involved in securing use of privately-owned sites, as well.

Suggestions on the organization of pilots into MassHGA are welcomed.

## INSURANCE

We have been informed that the USHGA has finally obtained a group insurance policy for all members. Coverage is for \$50,000 with a \$250 deductible for liability and personal property claims. The policy must be ratified by the USHGA Board of directors prior to going into effect.

Carrier for the new policy is Utica of New York, and when finalized, the policy will apparently apply to all USHGA members. Dues will go up \$5.00, to a total of \$15.00 per year, for all members.

Although not so spectacular as the \$1 million GSI insurance program, the USHGA policy is much more easily affordable, and it will be interesting to see how this move affects participation in GSI throughout the country. It is not known at present whether sites and landowners will be insurable through USHGA, as is now accomplished through GSI.

## THE MASTERS

The following pilots from the East Coast have been invited to fly in the Masters Tournament at Grandfather Mountain, N.C., which will be in progress as this goes to press:

- \*Chuck LaVersa - Massachusetts
- Doug Heath - North Carolina
- \*Lee Keeler - Vermont
- \*Don McCabe - New Hampshire
- \*Tom Peghiny - Massachusetts
- John Sears - North Carolina
- Chuck Slusarczyk - Ohio
- \*Stewart Smith - N.C. (ex-Mass.)
- \*Terry Sweeney - New Hampshire

Only six pilots from the northeast have been invited, out of a total of forty-two participants who represent the top pilots in the nation in the estimation of the sponsors.

The basic concept of the meet will be to establish which pilot is consistently able to maximize the existing weather conditions. Tasks will be chosen depending upon the weather conditions, and will include soaring, as well as slalom, distance,

duration, landing accuracy, speed and maneuvers. If successful, this will be the most comprehensive and challenging meet ever held.

### MOONLIGHT MADNESS

The skies of the Pioneer Valley were treated to a display of Guerilla Aviation at its finest a few weeks ago, when three intrepid flyers - best left unnamed - took advantage of clear skies and a full moon to sample the joys of night flying. After all, if bats and owls can do it, why not hang gliders?

(The reader is left to his own devices to provide an answer to that question...)

At any rate, the adventure began as several frustrated flyers sat in a funk at the top of Skinner State Park, watching the sun sink towards the horizon while a smooth breeze cooled their backs.

"Gee, too bad we couldn't go up and jump off of (unnamed State Reservation where hang gliding is not yet allowed.)"

Well, everyone was pretty horny to fly, and the idea caught on. Amidst a lot of speculation on the amount of will power and desire that would be required to carry a glider up a six hundred foot hill in the dark, someone popped the suggestion that the gliders could be driven up before the park closed, and left hidden in the brush. That was all it took, and a mad dash ensued. Soon, after braving fifteen miles of rush hour traffic, two carloads of pilots sat gazing at the mountain. A rush of adrenaline, flavored by a taste of anticipated "forbidden fruit", coursed through each member of the group.

The gate was open! The excited aviators immediately shot up the road and presently stood at the top of the overhanging cliff. The special significance of that overhang would later manifest itself dramatically - but we get ahead of ourselves. Takeoff sites were quickly

checked out, and the decision was made to go for it.

The first step was to secrete the gliders and equipment so that it would not need to be carried up the mountain later on. The pilots made a mad dash to the parking lot, and were almost through unloading when a courteous state employee drove up and informed them that the park was about to close, and would they please get their cars down the road and out the gate.

And, by the way, what the hell did they think they were doing with those hang gliders?

Something was mumbled about consecrating wings to the wind gods by leaving them on a mountaintop in the light of a full moon, but the ranger was skeptical, and eventually the truth was out. However, the gig was not yet up. As it turned out, the Department in charge of the hill had never actually said anything to anyone about what could go on in a state park at night. Although the road was closed, and no vehicles were allowed, nobody had ever said anything about what people could or couldn't do up there after closing time, except that they had to get their cars out.

Of course, the local and state police had said a few things about flying there, in light of the fact that the takeoff was directly above a heavily traveled main highway - but that was a whole separate issue, since nobody'd ever asked then what they thought about night flying. And after all, you can't very well startle a driver when he can't even see you, now, can you...?

As it finally came to pass, the cars were out of the park and the gliders, along with three pilots, were on top of the mountain when the park closed and the sun dipped below the Berkshires. One pilot remained on the ground with the driver, with the intention of bailing out the three owl-men if and when that service should be required.

As the stars came out and a

magnificent full moon arose in the east - right out front of the cliff - the three adventurers hurriedly gathered their equipment from the bushes and began their preparations.

The first step was to prepare a launch site. Three possibilities had been spotted during the earlier reconnaissance, but each had its own drawbacks. The first looked to be nearly ideal, but closer examination revealed that there wasn't quite enough clearance for a high aspect glider. Since extensive landscaping was out of the question, it ruled out that site forthwith. Too bad - a little more lateral clearance, and it would've been perfect. The second possibility involved a smooth rock "ramp" that jutted out over the cliff. This spot looked as though it had been designed for hang glider launches. Unfortunately, it was enclosed on all four sides by a chain link fence! Speculation had revolved around the idea of placing a picnic table inside this fence, but some rudimentary measurements soon showed that this was useless, since the fence was too much higher than the top of the picnic tables. That left the third site - an ideal spot, where the road ran right along the cliff edge. Three or four feet past the guard rail cables, down a slope of about fifty degrees, the edge of the cliff dropped away. Unfortunately, the guard fence left only a few feet of running room, and brush had grown to a height of several feet along the fence. Too high and too thick to run through with a hang glider.

Landscaping was out - the flyers' identities were known to the ranger - so all that remained was to arrange picnic tables up against the fence, and run off of them. It was decided, due to consideration for the ranger and for the betterment of the sport's image, to walk back up the mountain after the flight, and put the picnic tables back where they were obtained from.

At last, two picnic tables sat like a raised runway, aiming out over the fence into the void. As the moon crept up the sky, a steady but light breeze blew straight up the cliff. That is, it felt light to the three intrepid airmen, none of whom had ever flown off of an undercut cliff in soaring conditions! Little did they realize that they stood in a relatively dead spot, and that at the cliff edge, considerably more wind was blowing up the face than would be indicated by conditions at the takeoff of a cliff that was not so undercut. Of course, the wind was coming up past vertical - a little bit from behind, as one would pass over the edge!

All was ready. The first pilot, chosen as wind dummy because of his previous night flights, stood at the end of the short ramp and steadied his pale-colored Dragonfly in the breeze. All present wondered if the wing could be seen from the highway, but the traffic proceeded oblivious. The pilot leaned his shoulders into his downtubes and blasted down the ramp.

Bang! What lift! Over the edge and straight up, wobbling a little in position before finally penetrating out into the night. Thirty seconds out, the dimly-seen shape was still above the horizon. He should've tried to soar it! The others, of course, noticed the stallish launch, but disregarded it, believing that the flyer had tried to float it out into the lift. After all, he always tried to go out really slow. Little did they know that he'd actually meant to boogie off fast, in spite of his usual habit, due to being unfamiliar with the mountain.

Almost unrecognizable without his sunglasses, the second pilot now took his borrowed glider and got in position on the picnic tables. In a flash he was off, and again a noseplate reached for the stars as the pilot fought a stall before he was able to penetrate away from the

cliff. As he flew away into the dark the third pilot lifted his Dragonfly onto the improvised ramp, still in the belief that the first two flyers had almost stalled by trying to go out too slow and soar. Still not having any idea that both had tried to go out unusually fast due to the fact that the first didn't know the mountain, and the second had been somewhat freaked out by the first's shakey launch.

"Ah," he thought, "I'll just pull in a hair more than usual, and I'll get clear of the cliff before I try to soar."

With that thought in mind, he leaned into his wing and boogied along the ramp. Halfway down the picnic tables, he knew he didn't have a chance. No amount of pull could keep the nose from coming up, and with a final desperate lunge and the bar to his knees, he felt his wing shoot straight up into the night sky. For seconds that seemed like minutes the ship hung motionless. Then, as it lost what little momentum it had, it broke sharply to the right and spun into the edge of the cliff. The pilot grabbed for branches, and hung on like a leech as his control bar and one leg lay balanced on the cliff edge; the glider lay with one wing on the top and one stuck out over the abyss.

It took some thinking to figure out what was safer - to unhook, or to stay with the ship! Staying with the ship meant a long wait, so the decision to unhook was taken. With the help of some bushes, the pilot clambered up the slope and reached the fence. Once there, he was able to shake the glider loose from the shrubbery - it was disturbingly easy to do - and as the exposed wing was in the airstream, the glider simply did a half roll, coming to rest on its kingpost, on the inner side of the fence.

All that remained was to await the arrival of the rest of the crew, who were walking up anyway, to put the picnic tables back.

The author of this tale, who shall also remain unnamed, has no desire to either encourage or discourage the idea of flying at night. However, if anyone else does plan a similar adventure, he hopes that one more question will be added to the checklist: what happens if the last guy off crashes in the dark?

The third pilot in our tale was lucky, but one can never count on luck in this sport. Think about it.

### LOCAL NOTES

Spence Smith reports that he is having a fantastic time in California where he has been awaiting resolution of the hassles at Makapuu, prior to departing for Hawaii. Jim Finkowski, Spencer's companion on his odyssey, is apparently in Colorado, also flying some fantastic sites while waiting out the situation in Hawaii. As the Makapuu cliffs are now reopened, we expect them both to be on their way soon.

Brooks Ellison finally got his Icarus V into the sky, flying Mt Tom for its maiden high altitude voyage, and then soaring Skinner with it in recent weeks. The ship makes quite a sight in the air.

John Dempsey is almost finished with his modified Fledgeling, and may have it airborne by the time this is printed. We hope to see it soon.

Bob Stewart's Easy Riser has been shipped, and he will have it in the air before you read this - another new, interesting bird in the local sky.

Gary Podmore and Bob Perwak, in a different adventure from the one in the preceding story, flew Skinner park after the last meeting, introducing a new element of flight to the familiar old ridge.

Doug Weeks is back from his extended sojourn in Arizona, complete with horror stories about forty-ft. saguro cactus with spines a foot long in the landing zones.