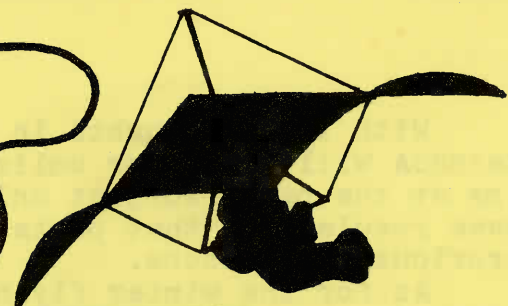


UPDRAFT



PUBLICATION OF THE MASSACHUSETTS HANG GLIDER ASSOCIATION, INC.

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MEETING NOTICE

The April meeting of the MassHGA will be held as usual on the third Tuesday of the month; that will be on Tuesday, April 19th. Starting time is 7:30 PM sharp. Location, as always, will be the ME Bar and Lounge on Rt. 47 in Hadley, two miles north of the Joseph Skinner State Park.

Feature attraction at the April meeting will be the film "To Fly," a production made for the Smithsonian Institute's National Air and Space Museum. It features all kinds of aviation, from hang gliders to space flight, including formation and individual aerobatics in both power and sailplanes, among other things. This has been called the best film ever made on aviation, so don't miss it!

STATUS REPORT: SKINNER

As of this writing, the prospects for the re-opening of Skinner Park as a MassHGA flight park look excellent. On March 24, President Mick Morrissey, Vice President Paul Kjoller and Flight Director Chuck La Versa attended a joint meeting of the Governor's Task Force on the state park and the Advisory Commission on the Holyoke Range at the DEM Regional Headquarters in Amherst.

At this meeting it was decided to hold a special joint meeting of the same two groups on April 7 for the express purpose of deciding the future of hang gliding at Skinner.

Although no official action was taken at the last meeting, the MassHGA contingent had the opportunity to discuss the matter off the record with several members of the groups involved. In all cases, the reactions obtained were quite favor-

able towards hang gliding, and it seemed as though the opinion was widespread that all hang glider pilots should not be penalized for the actions of the unknown few who cut the trees that caused the present closing of the site.

In the special meeting, all members of the groups will hear both sides of the issue in depth, and a decision will then be made.

These groups do not set policy, they can only recommend, but it was explained to us that it is highly unlikely that the DEM would act against any recommendation coming from these groups.

We were also informed on an unofficial level that the regional head of the DEM is ready to reopen the park anyway, with the exception of Sundays and Holidays, and also with the exception of the portions of the year that the park is not fully staffed and open - ie, the winter and early spring.

MassHGA considers these limits unacceptable. The reason given for the Sunday and Holiday ban is the traffic problem on Route 47 and the accompanying hassles for the Hadley police. However, MassHGA's representatives have been assured in the past that the Hadley police are not concerned about the traffic problem, and at any rate that they figure that this is the kind of thing that they get paid to take care of. This opinion comes right from the Hadley Chief of Police.

In any event, traffic congestion on Rt 47 due to spectators would not be reduced by closing the park on Sundays, since experience shows that the spectators are just as numerous when only the training hill is being flown.

P 6,
Lynn Morrissey

With these thoughts in mind, the MassHGA will press for unlimited flying at the park, subject only to the same regulations that pertained in the previous two seasons.

As for the winter flying ban, we will also oppose this, as no other recreational uses of the park are banned during the winter months, so neither should hang gliding be banned. In answer to the objection that this ban is to prevent further wintertime tree cutting, we reply that the sort of person who would cause such trouble is not going to stay away just because there's a rule against winter flying.

At any rate, we hope, and expect, to announce at the April meeting that Skinner Park is again open and operating as a MassHGA flying site.

Should this expectation not pan out, we are prepared to attack the issue through political channels, and we are preparing for just such a confrontation, just in case...

REGION 8 ORGANIZATION

The weekend of March 19th, President Mick Morrissey and Flight Director Chuck LaVersa, along with Brooks Ellison, represented MassHGA at the USHGA Region 8 Organizational Meeting at the Flight Resources Coop in Wilton, New Hampshire.

Present were representatives of all the active clubs in Region 8, which consists of the New England states. These were: MassHGA, ConnHGA, MaineHGA, VermontHGA, New EnglandHGA, the New England Bushwackers, the University of Lowell HG Club, the University of Maine HG Club, the Windward Kite and Glider Club, and the two USHGA Region 8 Directors, Don McCabe and W.A. 'Bill' Allen.

The underlying principle of the get-together was that there should be a Regional organization on some level to facilitate cooperation and communication throughout Region 8. It was declared that there now exists a Region 8 Confederation of Hang Glider Clubs dedicated to this principle.

Each of the above-mentioned clubs is a member of the federation, and every member of each of the clubs automatically belongs to the Regional organization.

It was also agreed in principle that the clubs, in the interest of increased communication, should co-publish their newsletters in the form of a single magazine to be distributed throughout the Region. Implementation of the proposal will be voted upon at the next federation meeting after the various editors have had a chance to determine the economic feasibility of the concept. If it can be accomplished at a reasonable cost, it will be so done.

The format will be to use the present NEHGA Ridge Rider as the primary vehicle, with each club's present newsletter appearing as a section of the larger magazine for the presentation of local news. Items and articles of general interest will make up the remainder of the magazine.

Production costs should not exceed the total of the costs of the various individual newsletters and the additional postage costs of mailing out the larger package to every member should be made up by increased advertizing income.

Hopefully the proposal will prove workable, and if so, it will be in effect within a few months.

Second order of business was the matter of a Region 8 meet to qualify pilots from the Region for the USHGA National Championships.

Since no bid was received in the Region by the March 1 deadline, USHGA policy is to accept the first bid received after that time. As of now, Don McCabe has a bid prepared for a qualifier at Attitash, but is holding off on submitting it until the last possible moment because he would rather see the meet held elsewhere if possible.

It was mentioned that MassHGA might make a bid if Skinner is

reopened to flying in time to plan the event. It was resolved that if MassHGA does bid to hold the qualifier, the other clubs would provide financial assistance towards the expenses involved in such an undertaking.

As an alternative, it was decided to tentatively accept the invitation of the New York State Hang Glider Pilots' Association to make their Nats qualifier at Ellenville a dual meet, to qualify pilots from both regions. This will only be done if no meet can actually be held in Region 8 by the time the New York qualifier occurs.

Also in regard to competition, the Region 8 federation agreed to keep a Regional meet calendar, so that clubs scheduling meets could do so without fear that someone else was planning an event for the same dates.

It was agreed that the federated clubs will send representatives to federation meetings on a quarterly basis. Except for the winter quarter, federation meetings will be scheduled at the times and places of major meets in the region, attendance being made easier since every club is bound to have at least a few pilots at these meets anyway. The next meeting will be during the Nats qualifier, and the one after that will be at the summer Attitash meet.

An interesting observation at the meeting was that, with the exception of the highly professional ConnHGA, our club was the most together outfit in attendance. NEHGA also made a very professional presentation, but seems to be lacking somewhat in goals and direction (see following article.)

A fascinating tidbit of information that we picked up was the policy of the state of New Hampshire towards hang gliding on public lands. The policy is that there can be NO REGULATION of any kind, not even to the extent of requiring appropriate pilot ratings for the difficulty of each site! The theory is that if ANY one can fly on a public hill, then EVERYONE can fly there - qualified or not! Like they say on their licence

plates - "Live Free Or Die."

PROPOSED MERGER

One thing that came out of the Region 8 meeting was an awareness of a possible solution to the primary aim of the MassHGA of organizing all of the Baystate's flyers into a single unified association.

At the meeting, the representatives of the New England Hang Glider Association made mention of the fact that NEHGA, in reality, is no longer a true New England club. At the time of its inception, all six or seven members made up New England's total hang gliding population, and they did indeed live all over the region. However, with the rise of clubs throughout New England as the sport grew, the NEHGA found itself shrinking geographically, until it became, for all practical purposes, a Boston area local club. Representatives observed that they have found the name NEHGA increasingly embarrassing, and that the club is in need of at least a new name, if not a new purpose and direction.

Accordingly, a proposal has been sent to the NEHGA's directors that they join with MassHGA to form a REAL MassHGA, with their club as the Eastern Chapter and ours as a Western Chapter. If NEHGA is interested, we will most likely also ask the Windward Club to join in as a Central Chapter.

Under this proposal, each of the Chapters would retain its separate integrity as a local club, raise its own dues and finances, and so forth. But a MassHGA Board of Directors, consisting of each Chapter's officers, would exist to set policy on a statewide level and to deal with statewide issues.

We may have more to say about this matter by the April meeting, as we hope to get some feedback on the proposal from NEHGA by then.

INCORPORATION

It seems almost certain at this writing that we will have a lawyer at the April meeting to answer club members' questions about incorporating the MassHGA. Hopefully after we hear the answers to our questions, we can vote on whether to expend the funds for this purpose. It seems to be about time we settled the matter, as we've been calling ourselves the MassHGA, Inc. for several months now in anticipation of the completion of the move! We hope to find the process will not be ruinously expensive.

If the proposed merger between MassHGA and NEHGA should occur, we may have an easy way out, since that organization is already incorporated and we may be able to squeeze into their charter for free when/if we do decide to merge. This sure would be a break!

Pete Snyder, NEHGA President, mentioned at the Region 8 meeting that NEHGA might be able to help us in this matter, even before the merger proposal was made. Seems that they have a lawyer who works for them for free, and their charter was designed with the idea of multiple chapters in mind.

More information at the April meeting.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Ads are free to members, and a buck to non-members. Ads must be in writing to the editor within two weeks of each club meeting for inclusion in the next Updraft. The editor refuses to accept responsibility for ads placed verbally during casual conversations, and any errors in such ads, or their complete omission, are the responsibility of the pilot who chose to rely on the editor's memory instead of putting it in writing as directed!

UP Dragonfly Mk II, upgraded to "C" configuration with full negative-G

rigging and airframe reinforcement, coated cables, prone-to-supine convertible rigging, super-pretty sail, special D'fly baggie, excellent condition, perfectly trimmed, with one free lesson in care-and-feeding-of-the-UP-Dragonfly, only \$895.00 ! Mick Morrissey, 527-9075 evenings.

UP Redtail, 19x17, excellent trainer or intermediate glider, 5½:1, under 350 ft/min, super-easy to fly, like-new condition, convertible prone-to-seated rigging, with bag \$495.00 Mick Morrissey 527-9075

Easy Riser, unstarted kit, brand new, \$590.00 Paul LeFebvre, 39 Ridge Rd, So. Hadley (no phone)

Pacific Gull HA-19, 19x15, great-flying glider, excellent condition, Paul LeFebvre, 39 Ridge Road, So. Hadley Falls, 01075 (no phone) \$550

Sky Sports Lark, 18' standard, modified with deflexers, good condition Jim Burrill, 665-3261

UP Brock-82, 18x17, excellent trainer, very good condition, Mark Laversa, 663-7010 \$495 w/ bag

CALANDAR

Calandar items will not necessarily be repeated, so pilots who are interested in any events listed are reminded to make a note of them now; you may not see them in all the issues between initial insertion and the date of the event.

April 19 MassHGA meeting

July 2-4 Attitash NE Soaring Championships (USHGA sanctioned)

August 20-21 Mt Washington/Cranmore Mt Wash. Valley Soaring Championships.

August 6-14 (tentative) Mittersil Invitational HG meet.

October 15-16 Fall HG Festival
Attitash/Cranmore/Pleasant
non-competitive fly-in

RATINGS

Pilots are advised to get into the USHGA rating system as soon as possible. First, because this is the year that USHGA ratings will be required on a widespread basis throughout New England, and second because it will not always be as easy as it is now to change from other systems into USHGA, especially for those who are due for upgradings at the same time as the change in systems.

There are presently two USHGA observers in the MassHGA: Chuck LaVersa and Mick Morrissey. Either of these pilots is authorized to issue Hang 3 and 4 ratings to pilots who have completed the requirements as outlined by USHGA.

Hang 1 and 2 ratings can only be issued by a USHGA Certified Instructor, and at present, the only such critter around is Chuck LaVersa.

New flyers are especially encouraged to get rated, as getting into the system at the early stages is the only way to avoid delay in obtaining the higher ratings when they become appropriate.

UPDRAFT, starting this month, will be printing the requirements for the various ratings. Following are the Hang 4 requirements, both the flight tasks and the subjects that must be discussed at length in the verbal examination. We are giving the Hang 4 stuff first because anyone with immediate need for this information is already in the club. Next month we'll do the Hang 3 requirements, then Hang 2 in June and Hang 1 in July. By the time the Hang 1 information is published, we hope that this year's crop of new flyers will have been recruited into the MassHGA!

Following are the flight tasks required for a Hang 4 rating:

1. Must have held a Hang 3 for at least 4 months (ratings under the GSI system are acceptable) during which time the pilot must have logged at least 60 flights of over one minute duration.

Of these flights, at least 5 flights must have been made at each of 5 different class 3 sites, plus

2. At least five of these flights must have been of over 5 minutes in duration, plus

3. At least 3 flights must include soaring above a low point for at least 5 minutes, plus

4. At least 5 flights must have a ground clearance of more than 250'

5. The pilot must demonstrate his ability to fly controlled figure 8's. He must choose two points which lie across the wind, in conditions when the wind is strong enough to induce noticeable drift in the flight path. The pilot then must

a.- fly over the midpoint of the pylons while flying across-wind and turning against the wind, start the figure 8 with an upwind turn. The crosswind leg is used to establish wind drift information.

b.- Turns should be gentle to medium, flown so as to describe a constant-radius ground track around the pylons

c.- Turns should be altered smoothly as flown around the pylons.

d.- The cross in the 8s should describe straight-line segments, entering the turns confidently so as to require only minor corrections in the flight path for wind-drift so that entry into the second turn is at the same radius as the first.

e. Considerations that are important are the precision of correction for wind drift and the smoothness shown while turning.

f.- Height will reduce the accuracy in judging distance around turns and should be allowed for by both pilot and Observer.

6. Pilot must, on 3 consecutive attempts, land within 20' of a spot after a flight of at least one minute. This requirement is being modified according to the type of glider flown - details of the required distance from the spot for high aspect gliders are not yet available, but will be issued to the Observers in the immediate future. (N.B. - an 'attempt' is just that; a pre-announced try to hit the spot. Lucky hits will not be counted - at least by this Observer - if the pilot has not announced his attempt prior to the flight's beginning.)

7. Landing task. This task replaces the former task of landing within 20' of a 15' obstacle. The pilot must approach a spot at an altitude of at least 150' while flying past the spot in a downwind direction, at a horizontal distance of no more than 75' away from the target. He must then, after passing the spot, turn through 180° and land within 50' of the target. (N.B. - this is simply a conventional aircraft approach into a tight landing area.)

8. The pilot must pass the verbal/written exam (included below.)

9. Tasks may be logged and signed off by a USHGA Observer as they are completed - it is not necessary to do all of the tasks in the same day for the same Observer. In fact, it would be impossible to do so!

The following are the questions that comprise the written/verbal exam for the Hang 4 rating. The test may be administered either way, as the pilot and Observer prefer.

The pilot is expected to have the knowledge to discuss each answer in considerable depth; quick trite or rote answers are NOT sufficient.

The questions:

1. What is a wave?
2. What kinds of conditions occur in and near cumulus clouds?
3. How far downwind from a thunderstorm is turbulence encountered?

4. How should thermals be flown?
5. Discuss roll, pitch and yaw?
6. What precautions should be taken when landing high-performance hang gliders?
7. How are the force of the wind and its velocity related?
8. What is Aspect Ratio? and how does it affect performance?
9. What should be your flying speed when flying in turbulence?
10. What is the difference between an upwind turn and a downwind turn?

Are you an advancing Hang 3? Can you discuss each of these matters in detail? If not, better hit the books, because this is stuff that every expert pilot should know!

Next month, we'll list the requirements for the Hang 3, along with the various special skills that can be endorsed.

LOCAL NOTES

Spencer Smith has left California and is presently down South waiting for the last vestiges of winter to retreat. We expect to see Spence back in the area pretty soon.

Stu Smith will be heading back to Grandfather Mountain next month to resume his duties as a member of the professional Grandfather Mountain Flying Team. Too bad we only get to fly with Stue in the winter!

Jim Finkowski has been wintering at Mittersill, but we may be seeing more of him around this area this spring and summer.

*** PARTY TIME ***

Myles Davis and Mark Droy are having a party at Myles' place and anyone reading this is invited! It's happening the Friday after the club meeting, April 22. The address is 18 North Prospect St, Amherst, and

for anyone not too familiar with Amherst, that's just in back of the Drake, which is near the center of Amherst. More detailed directions will be available to all at the April meeting, or call Myles at 253-7198. BYOB, BYOD, BYOanything. But be there, it's gonna be a good one.

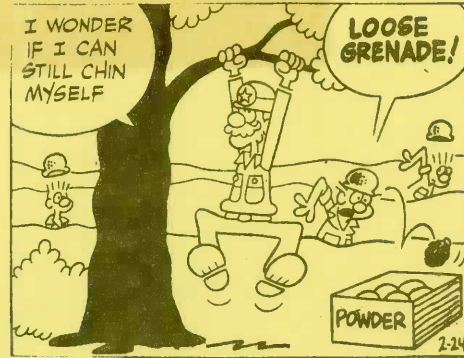
REMINDER

THIS IS THE LAST ISSUE OF UP-DRAFT THAT WILL BE SENT TO ANYONE WHO HAS NOT PAID THEIR DUES BY THE END OF THIS MONTH! You can pay at the meeting, or better yet, in case you forget, sit down right now and send your check to Treasurer Susan McGuire, 69 Bryan Avenue, Easthampton, MA 01027. Dues are \$5 for associate members (newsletter only), \$8 for flyer members who also belong to USHGA, \$10 for flyer members who don't have USHGA, and \$23 for those who want to join MassHGA and USHGA at the same time.

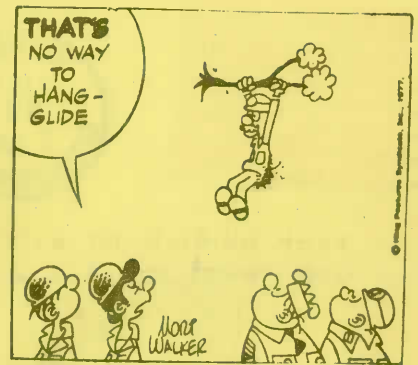
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COMIX



REPRODUCED WITHOUT PERMISSION - WE HOPE NOBODY MINDS!



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP * MASSACHUSETTS HANG GLIDER ASSOCIATION

NAME _____

Enclose appropriate amount:

ADDRESS _____

Associate member: \$5.00 _____

Flying member: \$10.00 _____

PRESENT MEMBER? YES _____ NO _____

Flying member with USHGA membership: \$8.00 _____

USHGA MEMBER? YES _____ NO _____

Flying member, also joining USHGA: \$23.00 _____

USHGA MEMBERSHIP NO. _____

PRESENT RATING _____

Send to:

SYSTEM: USHGA _____

MassHGA c/o
Susan McGuire, Treasurer
69 Bryan Avenue
Easthampton, MA 01027

GSI _____

OTHER _____

Late-breaking News

A PIONEERING FLIGHT

Friday, April 1st, Bob Vicari became the first pilot to make the long-desired trip from the Mowhawk Trail launch site, overlooking North Adams, to the town of Adams, over 6 miles down the ridge. Bob made the trip in smooth soaring conditions in his modified UP Dragonfly Mark I.

Pilots have talked about the flight that Bob completed for over two years, but until now, nobody had actually done it. Bob said that he could've continued the flight past Adams and into Cheshire, but since it was getting dark, he felt he'd better land while he could still see!

Bob has made several cross-country flights from this site in his 'fly, but in the past has gone north, into Vermont. This is the first attempt for distance to the south, and resulted in his longest flight yet. We hope to have Bob's story of the flight in next months Updraft - and maybe a report of an even longer journey!

ANOTHER PIONEERING FLIGHT

In mid-March, Bob Stewart made local hang glider history by becoming the first pilot to take a passenger on an extended soaring flight. This was also the first local dual flight where the passenger was not an experienced flyer. Bob used his oversized SS Bobcat II to go up at Mount Tom with a student who hadn't even been in a glider until that morning, and they stayed up for a half hour.

The only previous dual flights had been by Bob and Rick Orlando at Tom, and by Chuck LaVersa and Greg Martin in a stock Dragonfly II-B at

Skinner Park. Although these were both soaring flights, neither, to our knowledge, were of any great duration, and both involved passengers who were experienced soaring pilots themselves.

A PET PEEVE

We've heard many pilots talk about flying hang gliders tandem, when referring to two people on one wing. Actually, this is an improper use of a specifically-defined term.

In aircraft terminology, the term tandem refers to a two-place aircraft in which the pilots sit front and rear, as opposed to side by side. As you can well see, all hang gliders that have flown with two pilots have been arranged side by side - NOT tandem.

Call it dual, call it side by side, call it two-place - but don't call it tandem, because it isn't!

At a time when hang glider pilots are coming into more and more frequent contact with people in other forms of aviation, it seems more important than ever that we try to use the jargon properly - we aren't going to communicate unless we speak the same language!

MOTOR-GLIDER MEETING

On Saturday, April 2, your editor, Chuck LaVersa, and, this time, John Dempsey, represented the MassHGA at another meeting at the Flight Resources Coop in Wilton, NH. The meeting was hosted by Terry "The Motormouth" Sweeney and W.A. "Bill" Allen, and was attended by pilots from all over the east coast who are either flying or considering flying powered hang gliders. Also in attendance were officials from the FAA General Aviation District Offices from all over New England, representatives from the State Aeronautics Commissions from all the New England states, and several FAA officials from the Flight Standards Division in Washington. Featured speaker was John Moody, the Wisconsin pilot of

powered Icarus II/Easy Riser fame.

The purpose of the meeting was to acquaint the FAA with recent developments in powered flight using foot-launched ultralight airframes, and to lay the groundwork for better and simpler regulation for such aircraft.

Highlights of the meeting were a demonstration flight by Johnathan Windsor in his McCulloch-powered SS Merlin, and several historic films that John Moody showed.

Johnathan's flight was really quite impressive. Launching from the top of a 40 foot training hill, he was airborne before he got to the place where the hill really started to be a hill, and by the time he'd got to the landing zone (about 4:1 away, he'd made several turns and was climbing steeply several hundred feet over our heads. He stayed up, cruising at 5 to 7 hundred feet, above the considerable lower-level turbulence, for almost a half hour before shutting down the engine to make a conventional hang glider approach and landing.

The powered Merlin sounded loud and looked almost silly - but Johnathan had a half-hour flight while the rest of us were grounded for lack of a mountain facing into that day's winds...(I want one!)

Neatest thing about the power unit was that it unbolts from the keel in about five minutes, leaving a perfectly functional hang glider, and was installed for under four hundred bucks, complete. The only airframe modifications required were a sleeve over the back half of the keel, and a bushing and bolt that allowed the pilot's suspension point to be moved forward about 6 inches to balance the 30 pound motor on the back of the keel when flown as a motor-glider.

John Moody's films included a few historic reels of his first attempts to fly a powered Icarus II, and footage of his infamous tumbling flight at the EAA Airshow at Os-

hkosh this past summer. The film was quite thrilling, showing his entry into inverted flight as an accidental result of doing extremely steep wingovers, his pull-through into a $\frac{1}{2}$ -loop to regain level flight, the continuation of the loop into a series of tumbles, with several complete revolutions, and the Riser's almost-instant recovery into level inverted flight, followed by a half roll back to right-side-up, as soon as he cut the engine. Wow.

At the meeting session, some of the problem areas were the fact that anyone can get signed off to fly a powered hang glider merely by checking out with a Certified Flight Instructor - but that the CFI's have had no guidance of any kind as to how to perform such a checkout; and the fact that, because of FAA regulations on home-built aircraft, it is easier to certify and register and operate a homebuilt powered glider than a factory-built one.

John Moody's remarks outlined the problem area, and included mention that if the regulations are left as they are, it will be difficult to operate such aircraft legally in some areas - and that there's no way to prevent them from being operated illegally if the pilots choose not to tolerate the hassles of legalizing their crafts, since they can be set up and flown from any unsupervised open field.

In the meantime, home-built powered hang gliders can be registered as homebuilt aircraft and flown within certain temporary restrictions with a minimum of hassles and expense.

For factory-built gliders, the addition of a motor requires the aircraft to be registered in the demonstration experimental class, and the operation of such a craft involves considerable hassle and paperwork for every flight.

In either case, the pilot must take a third-class medical exam to get a student pilot certificate, and

get signed off for solo in a powered hang glider by a CFI - once he's found a CFI who's willing to sign him off without any formal guidelines on how to conduct the checkout.

CAPE COD MEETING

On Friday, April 1st, Pete Snyder and Bob Lewis of the NEHGA met with officials in charge of the Cape Cod National Seashore to discuss the use of the Cape Cod Dunes by hang glider pilots.

The result of the meeting was an agreement that the environmental impact of hang glider operations on the dunes will be studied, and that hang gliding will be allowed if the report is favorable.

Since it is imperative for the sake of hang gliding that this work be done as soon as possible, NEHGA is preparing a formal Environmental Impact Statement for this purpose.

MassHGA has offered to assist our Eastern Mass colleagues in any way possible in this endeavor.

SPRINGTIME AT MOUNT TOM

On Sunday, March 27, the first weekend of spring was celebrated by an impromptu "fly-in" at Mount Tom. The participants represented a good cross-section of the development of hang glider equipment since the origins of the sport in this area, as can be seen by the accompanying list of pilots and the gliders they had with them.

Over twenty flights were made by seventeen pilots from all over Massachusetts, and also from our neighboring states. Here's the list of who showed up, and what they flew.

1. Chuck LaVersa, MassHGA, UP Spyder
2. Mick Morrissey, MassHGA, UP Dragonfly Mark II.
3. Mark Droy, MassHGA, UP Dragonfly Mark II-B
4. John Dempsey, MassHGA, "White Kite Mark V."

5. Jim Cobb, MassHGA, UP Dragonfly Mark-II
6. Walt Niemi, Windward Club, Cal Gliders Wind Gypsy Mk. IV.
7. Jeff Kemp, Windward Cl, Sun III.
8. Al Stohl, NEHGA, SS Kestrel 220
9. Paul Janowski, W'Ward Cl, Lark
10. Doug Wicks, Windward Club, Hang Flyer Horizon
11. Alan Shapiro, Boston area, Seagull IV.
12. Doug Meehan, Boston area, Electra-Flyer Cirrus III
13. Don Raymond, unaffiliated, UP Dragonfly Mk. I, modified.
14. Name unknown, New Hampshire, SS Kestrel B.
15. Name unknown, New Hampshire, experimental homebuilt HP.
16. Name Unknown, standard Rogallo
17. Name unknown, Pennsylvania, Eipper-Formance Flexi II.

Quite a selection! All that was missing was soarable lift. Pilots had begun congregating at the top of the mountain at mid-morning in the hope that the mild westerly breeze would strengthen, or that thermals from the valley, or even low-level convection from the cliffs, would provide some warm-weather soaring by the afternoon. We were doomed to disappointment (except for Chuck!), but the day still proved informative and a lot of fun.

As the eager flyers waited on the ridgetop for the lift to improve, we were treated to an unusual view of visible air currents. Down below the ridge, several homeowners were taking advantage of the pleasant weather (and lack of wind!) to burn their trash and leaves. Looking down from the mountain, we could see four different fires, each with a rising column of smoke to mark the movement of the air. All of the fires were within a half a mile of the take-off, and were only a few hundred yards apart.

It was interesting - and frustrating - to watch as the light and variable winds sometimes carried

the four different plumes of smoke in four different directions! At other times, the surface winds in the valley would straighten out as all four columns would lean in the same direction - but not always in the same direction that we could feel the breeze blowing at the top of the ridge!

The answer to this puzzle was also visible, thanks to the industrious householders along Hendricks Street. There was a low-level inversion layer at about three hundred feet, accompanied at times by a wind shear of up to 180 degrees. We cursed in vain as the rising columns of hot air and smoke would go straight up, blown only slightly in one direction or another by the light breeze, only to stop dead at the inversion layer and dissipate into the general airstream. No hot booming thermals that day!

Finally, Mark Droy got impatient enough to wind-dummy for us, and launched his D-fly into the strongest puff that he could get. It wasn't enough, and we watched him slowly sink below the ridge until he gave up and headed for Don Hick's yard. A few graceful 360's over the landing zone, and he was down.

Soon after, Chuck LaVersa decided to see if the slight extra sink rate performance in his new Spyder would make the difference. We all watched in suspense as he flew out over the Reservation Road, barely maintaining at ridge level for a few hopeful minutes. But one wrong turn put him into a massive sinkhole, and he too was heading for Hicks' front yard.

By now, the shear at the inversion level had become as great as it could be - a full 180 degrees - and we watched as Chuck encountered some severe turbulence on his base leg and final approach.

Yours truly went next, hoping to use the minimal lift to best advantage now that Mark and Chuck had

shown us where NOT to fly to avoid the sinkholes.

No such luck. Again, a lot of places where the vario warbled for a few seconds, and generally recorded zero sink - but no place where it was possible to turn without losing altitude. After a few minutes of this, it was time to punch through the inversion layer (a bit of rock 'n' roll for sure!) and make the unaccustomed landing approach towards the mountain, under the shear line.

Soon, 13 other flyers had had similar flights, all without soaring for more than a half a pass.

Chuck, who was fine-tuning his new Spyder (he'd had it shipped without test-flying, in his rush to get his grubby paws on it), Mark Droy, Jim Cobb, and Donnie Raymond were all still determined to soar, and hiked back up in the hopes that the lift had strengthened after a whole day of sun on the cliffs. No way! It was exactly as before.

This time, Chuck had the Spyder tuned in and wired, and he climbed a few hundred feet over the ridgetop for a half-hour soaring flight. But the others were out of luck - more zero-sink, but no real lift, and no soaring.

At least we saw something new: we'd been wondering whether this year's new crop of HP's were really any hotter than last years', and the sight of not one, but three Dragon-wagons getting smoked sure answered that question!

Despite the lack of extended flights, the day was a gas. Mt Tom had never seen so many pilots there at the same time, and even more important, the cliffs, which had been eating a glider a week for the past month, didn't claim one this day. In light of the past month's experience it seemed like the lack of crashes at least gave us something to celebrate.

But most important of all - Spring is here - and we're ready!!! See you in the sky.