

COMPETITION AND MORE COMPETITION

Three years ago, hang gliding was just ending the helmetless, all-for-escapism era. Competition was generally considered for cut-throats and glory seekers, and not for free birds.

Whether liked or not, hang gliding is now regulated, and competition is the "in" thing to do among many area pilots. Competition has been used successfully to bring together the sport's participants from great distances, to introduce owners of large sites to the sport, to develop its technology, to involve the public as paying spectators, and, thus, to bring cash into the sport from outside interests such as liquor and merchandising firms.

Being a pilot in competition, one can notice periods of tenseness and restlessness before flights, and a very relaxed atmosphere after a day's competition flying has ended. But the sport has, as yet, failed to produce the cut-throat, win-at-any-cost pilot.

The competition season is here again. The first weekend of May brought us the Bobcat Invitational at Bobcat Ski Area, NH, with 25 competitors and a few hundred paying spectators. It was mostly a fun meet, being billed as a practice for the Regionals. The task was a minimum sink flight, with extra points for a bullseye landing. Malcolm Jones of the E-Z Wider team took first place, \$35, and a new supine harness home.

From our club, Bob Vicari took 3rd, Mark Droy took 10th, and Chuck LaVersa took 14th (Chuck had only one flight). All pilots won prizes, the first 10 received cash, and the remainder were prizes such as ski passes and jars of peanut butter.

On May 20, the First Intergalactic Free Flight Festival took place between the MHGA and the Windward Kite and Glider Club. Six pilots from each club were competing for the famed THPWATPIFFF Award (The High Pilots Who Aced The First Intergalactic Free Flight Festival).

To make a long story short, we lost. But let me lengthen the story to explain how (and further aid the humorous rivalry we have with the Wind-warped Club!)

Points were scored by dropping a bomb (made of baggy and flour) onto a bullseye, then flying over a line at the end of the LZ, turning around, and trying to land on the bullseye. The competition was keen, and Windward was lucky. Walt (Treemee) Niemi showed us some New Hampshire style bushwacking (Amazing!). Jim (Dr. Tomorrow) Raymond showed us how to tease the trees without getting stuck in them (Fantastic!). Paul Janowski showed us the amazing glide angle of his ship (and landed way down in another field, Unbelievable!) Doug Wicks gave us a demonstration on the stall and swoop technique of launching, and Doug Meehan did some amazing wing-overs -- with 10 feet of altitude! Tony Verhulst was boring to watch, he flew like a normal pilot!

Jim Raymond pulled them through with a 15 point bomb drop and a 60 point spot landing.

Flying for the good guys were Bob Vicari (30 pts.), Matt Chapman (30 pts.), Chuck LaVersa (What Bomb?), Brooks Ellison (15 pts.), Mark LaVersa (What Flour?), and Mark Droy (30 pts.). Alternates, flying for support and showmanship, were Bob Stewart, Rob Cummings, and Mike Regish.

Anyway, the score was a tie, 105-105, and our own President Jimmy slyly slipped out his two headed coin to determine the winner. Some dummy on our side called "tails", and we lost.

We're ready for a rematch when Windward feels lucky. It will probably be at Watchusett, a Hang IV site because you have to do cross country to get to the LZ.

But seriously folks....

THE PICO MEET

Rob Cummings

Members of our club are off to a good start. Mark Droy took 4th at the Regionals and qualified for the Nationals. Bob Stewart took 10th for \$100 in the Pico Meet, Chuck LaVersa took 14th for \$50, and Mark LaVersa took 28th for \$20. The meet paid money up to 32nd, so Mark Droy took 33rd.

Although many problems and disappointments in weather and organization occurred, the pilots, after some minor rebattles from other pilots, took on a very professional attitude, and with the weather finally breaking on Sunday, the meet saw over 90 flights that day, not counting free flying, which many pilots did.

All in all, I think everyone had a good 10 days, and a much more promising outlook for our sport in the future.

Sky out!

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Jim Burrill

Attendance was poor at the May meeting. The turnout at the party May 20 was disastrous. The June 10 executive board meeting was cancelled - no quorum. Where were you?

On the positive side, our incorporation papers went into the State, thanks primarily to the generosity of lawyer Philip Vachon and the legwork of Mark LaVersa. The attendance at the May 20 meet with Windward was good.

It seems our flyers consistently outfly pilots from other clubs.

The Department of Environmental Management seems to have accepted our recommendations concerning regulation at Skinner State Park (with the possible exception of Sundays). The regulations are in the process of being reviewed by the State's legal machinery.

Next month we are running a booth at the Pittsfield Air Show, July 2. It will be a chance to make some money and see some interesting exhibits. As there is a hang gliding meet that weekend, most of the people who normally contribute their time will not be available to help. We need about eight people from 11 AM to 6 PM (Free admission!). Why don't you bring your family or whoever and help out!

We are attempting to set up a meet or fly-a-thon on or about July 8 with another club to get some favorable publicity. The money collected will go to some local charity. Keep that date open.

The sale of T-shirts was successful with about 45 made up. You can still have one made for you. Place your order at the June Meeting.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Rob Cummings

Out of over 50 members, 11 showed for the May meeting. For you turkeys who can't remember meetings, buy a calander and mark the third Tuesday of the month as a meeting date. It's easy!

The June meeting of the MHGA will be the third Tuesday of June, June 20, 1978, at the ME Bar and Lounge, Rt. 47 in Hadley. That's 2 miles north of the Slot and the entrance to Skinner State Park. Meeting Time is 8PM.

HANG KNOWLEDGE

Mark Droy

A series dedicated to howto and whyto on gliding know how - this month - something different - an opinion.....

IS IT SAFE ??

Safety - a requisition heavy on the minds of those who wish to fly to

thousands of feet of altitude and float carelessly in valley winds. Safety - we wish to place ourselves in a situation of high risk and always return unharmed. Safety- It is truly all in your head. Flying is inherently dangerous. The individual has such a lack of exposure to it, or in some cases, a fear of it. The variables are numerous, the decisions are numerous, as are the judgements, and pressures to "perform".

Flight is a phenomenon we can make much less risky, and thus less dangerous, by an increase in knowledge and skills, such as those attained by much low altitude practice flying. I know many pilots who won't fly on small training hills anymore - because the room for error is so small when your launching or turning with one wingtip so close to the ground; not to mention being so close to the trees all during the flight.

To tell the public that hang gliding is a safe sport is misleading to them. They assume you mean that Joe Offthetstreet can take a glider out after a few lessons and fly Mt. Tom. (It looks easy!) Even some flyers think the only difference between Mt. Tom and Skinner is 250 feet!

Safe flight is a culmination of many, many hours of practice, in all conditions; and years of weather watching and learning. Safe flying is learning to admit to yourself that it is too windy, and it would be better to fold your kite and walk down the mountain you just spent an hour and a half hiking. It is never flying alone. It is flying for yourself.

Mountains are hard, cold, and uncaring of what splatters against them. But their "emotions" can be discrete enough to coax the unseasoned pilot into thinking that a mountain is just a higher hill to fly. An already mentioned case in point - Mt Tom - a 1000 ft high, 2 mile long ridge, showing a face of rock to the prevailing winds. On a good day it is wonder winds. On a bad one it is heat coming off the rocks so turbulent it makes you think you'll never get to the LZ

in one piece. Get a pilot to think that the mountain is beautiful, even after flying there dozens of times, and he'll be the first one torn up in the Mt. Tom Twisty. It is well said of the mountain, " Hang III's love it, and Hang IV's are scared stiff of it !"

So when is flying safe? When you have lucked out enough times to realize you've been lucky, and you slow down. You think more about why and how you fly, and every flight you try to improve yourself - your launch, your turns, your landing approach.

Flight is a phenomenon you can eat, breathe, and sleep, but you can never take for granted.

THE SPORTING LIFE



FIRST THE WINDSOCK, AND NOW THE PEN

This will be my last issue as editor of UPDRAFT. I wish to thank Jim Burrill Sue McQuire, Chuck LaVersa, and all who contributed articles and news, for their support and ideas.

I'll be placing the task in the competent hands of Dave Scheumann and Joyce Burrill. I thank them and wish them luck. I was planning on staying on longer, but the competition season is taking much time of me, and the newsletter suffers. Thank you all.

See you in the Sky.

Last minute space filler -
Larry Neuman of ElectraFlyer will be one of a three man team to attempt the Atlantic crossing by balloon. Details at meeting.
---you read it first in UPDRAFT---

POWER LINES AT THE "SLOT"

Jim Burrill

Well, the power company finally repented to our inquiry. They said that the lines are not being used and won't be used for the next ten years. (As a paying customer of NU it makes my blood boil to think they erected a power line that they didn't need in front of an otherwise beautiful mountain range that they didn't need. Sounds like somebody goofed!) The rest of the reply was woefully inadequate considering the three months it took them to do it.

They said they would put up markers supplied by us and made it sound like a favor! (Anybody have some 50 ton weights we could use as markers?) We will consider what we should do in response at the meeting.

(Ed. Note...And there will be a response. NU is presently trying to buy land adjacent lines for a right of way for 90 foot high lines. Not only would this be dangerous for us, but it would leave an unsightly scar on the landscape. I think we have just the organization to force the utilities to bury the lines, if we can mobilize other citizen's groups and landowners.)

PEOPLES AND OTHER NEWS

Ralph Bratton, co-owner of the Hang Glider Center, has delivered our club stationary. It is support like this that makes this club professional in every way. John Dempsey has his new (multi colored) kite out and flying, and it is exceptional. I have never seen a glide angle such as that I witnessed for John's kite. Congratulations!. Max Fanaian of Iran, who was flying here for a while last year is still flying in Iran when he gets a chance... He was drafted into the Army!..... Jean Michel Bernasconi originally from the French Alps, and recently from Bennett, is here flying with us in his Pheonix Mariah. A hot pilot with a hot machine!

In typical State efficiency, the rules are not yet in for Skinner, but don't bother flying there unless you hold a hang III (Intermediate). After 6 months of working out this system with the state, I will personally kill the pilot who screws us all and gets the park closed again. So cool..... Mt. Watchusett may be opening soon in central Mass. The thousand footer would take a lot of the traffic off of Skinner.... May 26 to June 4 is the Festival of Arts Invitational at Pico Peak, Vermont. If your not competing, go anyway. It should have most, if not all of the people and professional pilots youve been reading about in books and magazines.... July 2 is an airshow in Pittfield which we have been invited to participate in. No flying, but we can sell T-shirts and have kites set up for display. More on all at the meeting.... An excellent article on flying appeared on this month's HANG GLIDING. "Pteradyne Flight" by Richard Miller gave much insite into the reasons we fly and the goals we strive for. Recommended reading for all pilots.... This newsletter is starting to get large. In striving to get in only important news in, UPDRAFT was cut down from 10 -12 pages a month' to three. Now with the flying season here, it is taking 5 pages, and I didn't have room for this month's installment of "Hang Knowledge". The Newsletter is the largest expense from our budget, but we feel it's darn well worth it, as one of our primary purposes is dissemination of information to our members. Anyway....when I leave here in August we will need a new editor for this publication. The Editor is also the writer, copy boy, typist, distributor, and public relations person. I figure it takes about 8 hours of real work, the rest is running around to the copy shop and post office, and being around the sport enought to pick up all the news. The person who would like to do the job should mostly be committed (to the job, not a hospital), and should be an area flyer. See me at the meeting..... This typewriter stinks.....