

Off Tow Newsletter

Puget Sound Soaring Association, Inc.

Editor: Dave Kremers

April, 2005

Seattle, WA

Upcoming Events:

Flying:

More flying? Ya sure, ya betcha. The season has just begun and there's lots ahead. If you haven't been out yet to get the cobwebs brushed out of your skills bag, it's high time. We are going to see some ideal days coming up to get just that chance, if not some good cross country opportunities. Pay special attention to J.C.'s comments on that option below. And, if you haven't contacted Wayne Ginther about making it to one of our planned trips, please do so soon. With the chance to add trips to Concrete and Hope, B.C. to our list this year this is the time we should be warming up for that and for those special times in warmer climes.

L-13 Update:

The long awaited reinstatement of the Blanik is just around the corner. All issues have been addressed and it is anticipated that the annual will be completed for this coming weekend. And, don't neglect to pat new Maintenance Officer, Curt Bryan, on the back for his efforts to get 3MG back in service. He's put a lot of his time into getting her back both as honcho and as hands-on type along with Tim, Glenn, Stefan and Mark Allen. Thanks, Curt!

Recent Events:

Things in general have been getting better. Meaning, we've been getting more chances to fly. We've had some very busy days at Bergseth in recent weeks, lots of student flights along with the private ship pilots who are showing up in greater numbers. The flying conditions haven't been exceptional by any means, with ceilings between three and four thousand feet, but have been adequate for shaking off the cobwebs.

One notable exception was experienced just this last Sunday by your editor.

It was mid-afternoon and PSSA friend, Steve Hill, called down to say that while working his way home from the north he had encountered a strange situation just north of the point on the north ridge. While the ceiling for the entire day, heavily overcast, had struggled to get to 3600' MSL, Steve had discovered a thermal in a blue hole centered between two cloud banks running north-south that allowed him to get to 3700'. As I was just launching at that point I joined him shortly and was soon circling up with him in this blue opening. I was indicating between 3 and 5 knots up while we continued up and above the cloud banks on either side of us. I was struck by the impression that we were soaring in something not unlike Yosemite Valley, with Mt. Rainier visible at the end down the long channel of blue that extended north to south. Steve was having better success than I partly because he was catching better lift off the edge of the cloud band to the west. It was great fun but, as I was getting a little spooked by the fact that the clouds below were starting to close in on my view of the ground below, and I wasn't exactly sure of where we were at that point, I chose at 4500' to descend through the narrow hole showing terrain below to a point where I could get my bearings. At 3500' I found myself below the cloud ceiling again and noted that I was just west of the back ridge and well northeast of the point where I had started. When I left Steve he was above 5000' and reported that the same thermal eventually carried him close to 7900' out towards the Chester Morse

Reservoir. Steve's theory was that we had encountered a convergence of air currents that had then shot up to form the blue hole thermal. Quite an extraordinary experience on a day when all other flights tended to be short and downhill. As Steve so aptly stated, "The thermals are where you find them".

Another recent happening was a gathering of young "GPS adventurers" who showed up to see what PSSA was up to that day. Charlie Long was helpful in explaining things to a fascinated crowd.



And now for something new and completely different!

If you should know of an opportunity to expose a local group, young or old, to gliding and PSSA's doings, don't hesitate to mention it to Stefan Perrin or Tim Heneghan. We look forward to any chance to expose ourselves to the public and get potential new members into the air. That's why we put out our signs in the local vicinity on our days of operation and make presentations at the local aviation expos in the preseason. Spread the word!

Milestones:

Congratulations to **Dean Gittleman** who has recently soloed and is on his way to earn that ticket!



Dean brings 'er back, solo!

Membership:

We have a new member John Edwards to welcome. John has several power ratings, including CFI and wants to explore the world of “pure flight” with the aim of possibly adding CFGI to his shingle.

Reports From Members:

Our esteemed Training and Safety Officer, J.C. Hauchecorne offers us some insights again as we enter yet another soaring season:

A Hypocrite?

Am I a hypocrite? Here I have been talking about safety and what we can do to prevent accidents, and I have a dilemma. The subject matter is emergency parachutes. I always had emergency safety equipment. Dating all the way back to hang gliding back in 1973. Back then the big issue was, should we wear helmets. There is actually evidence of me flying a Bill Bennett Delta Wing back then without a helmet. Yes, I was flying without a helmet, long brown curly hair flying in the wind, no wonder Audrey fell in love with me... Believe it or not, there was a lot of controversy about flying with or without a helmet. The problem was the helmets we used were motorcycle helmets, which covered up the ear, so we could not hear the wind whistling in the rigging. In hang gliding that is important. Lack of instrumentation, the sound of the air rushing over the wing and through the rigging was the only airspeed indication we had in those days. The other problem was that motorcycle helmets were so damn heavy. Lying prone in a harness with a 5 lb helmet on your head does become tiresome. Nevertheless, over time lighter fiberglass helmets were built with special cutouts for the ears so you could hear the “airspeed indicator”. And over time it became mandatory in some countries to fly with a helmet. In others, you just did not show up on the mountain ready to take off without a helmet. The peer pressure was that great. Then came the safety parachute. Once again controversy ensued. In hang gliding, as in all aviation, take off and landing is very important and crucial. In hang gliding, the legs provide the initial acceleration. Wearing a harness with a parachute attached to it plus what ever else we had on to keep warm was at times very cumbersome Even without a parachute a few pilots stumbled on the ramp. Initially very few pilots had emergency parachutes. But here again, over time, emergency parachutes became lighter and better packed and the parachute no longer posed an issue on take off or landing. Once parachutes became mandatory in competitions, it did not take long for every pilot to wear a safety parachute. The fact was, those parachutes saved many lives!

I was a leader in safety equipment in hang gliding. I also was the first to import full-face helmets to Canada. Consequently, I was instrumental in developing some helmet standards so buyers would know what to look for in a safety helmet. Just like in any thing, a helmet is not just a helmet.

It was the same for parachutes. Just buying a parachute for a hang glider is useless. Proper care and

maintenance of the parachute has to be taught. Most important, having a parachute and to know or not to know how to deploy this parachute in an emergency is crucial. Every year we were holding seminars and practice sessions on how to deploy a parachute.

When I got into flying gliders, purchasing an emergency parachute was natural. Repacking it was not a big deal, and I normally had it done at the beginning of the season. By the way, the rules (ask Jim Conley) call for a repacking every 120 days. Any way, here I am getting ready for the season with all kinds of plans for great adventures, long distances, getting my equipment up to date, and ready to fly. Which brings me to my point. The other day I went to see Dan of Para-Phernalia to have my parachute repacked. To my surprise, he told me he couldn't do it. The parachute is not legal for use in the US, I bought it in Canada, is more than 20 years old and he just can't put his signature on it. All my protesting; that I never used it, it looks brand new, this chute is really comfortable on my back, it's very unlikely that I will ever use it, the chute and I have kind of bonded over the years and I have no intention of dumping it just because it's twenty years old, look at me I am more than twice that age, I am still just as good as new, just ask my wife... No good, Dan would not put his name on it and repack it.

And there was another problem. Tim Heneghan was there with me and he had heard every word, so slipping Dan 20 bucks to pretend we never met was not an option. Seriously, legally I don't need a parachute, or do I? What do the reg's say. Any banking over 60 degrees and any pitch up or down of more than 30 degrees is considered aerobatic maneuvers and requires wearing a parachute. I love to play in the sky. Exceeding the banking and the pitch limits is not difficult. Also, sometimes the skies do get crowded, and bad things can happen. Unfortunately, emergency parachutes are a very expensive piece of safety equipment. By the time the taxman is paid, it will cost about \$1,500.00. That's a shocker. There are so many other things I'd rather spend \$1500 on than a parachute, which hopefully I will never use. Is it worth it? I think it is. Would you drive a car without a seatbelt? Would you ride a bike without a helmet? I think not. Safety has a price. And alas, aviation is not a cheap sport.

Should you own an emergency parachute, yes, I think you should! Should the club own emergency parachutes for each seat of their club ships, yes I do.

Am I a hypocrite? In this instance I am not. As soon as Dan gets back from the "Sun and Fun" exhibition in Florida I will get my new emergency parachute, which I hope I will never have to use. For that, I will get the pleasure to continue abusing any of you glider pilots, plus the club, for not having and wearing a properly maintained and repacked parachute every time you buckle yourself into a glider.

PSSA On-Line:

As you know, PSSA's web page has changed. I think it looks great, plus there are a lot of useful links and interesting things to explore. One of the items we are trying to do is to have a page where every one can post their flights. The idea is, that you can go there, download a flight and review that flight. First of all, in order to view a flight you will need a program that can read the flight log file. I use the SeeYou program, but there are others you may use, as long as the program can read an IGC file. What will you learn from looking at another flight? I always enjoy looking at another flight, trying to find out where he found the thermal, how high did he climb, how fast was he flying between thermals, there is just a ton of information that can be analyzed. It is true, there is not much sense looking at the flight log of an open class ship when you are flying with a 1-26. Look at flights with similar ship as you are flying, then it becomes interesting. Will the conditions be the same again as last week? No! Thermals are different, but they are the same. What got them going yesterday will get them going again tomorrow. Maybe stronger, maybe weaker. They will not have the same shape or drift, but the logging slash that got them going in the first place is still there, the trigger point has not changed. Thus there is a good chance you can find it again.

It is true, simply posting a flight will be of no use other than for bragging rights. With each flight posted we will have to have a description. Weather, cloud base, wind, personal description of the day etc. I think over time we can build a "library" of flights from Bergseth, which will be of benefit to anyone.

Posting a flight unfortunately is not that easy. Actually, it is easy but some hardware is required. The minimum equipment is a recording device. It does not have to be a secure data logger, it just has to be a device that records the flight and lets you download it and convert it to an .IGC file. If you talk to Tim of Wings and Wheels, he has I believe a handheld device that just needs to be hooked up to a GPS and your set. Once you have the capability of recording your flight and have downloaded it to your PC or Lap Top, the fun begins. I am sure you have heard me talking about the AeroKurier Online Contest or OLC. Download the file to them, and you are part of the international soaring community.

Next rainy weekend I recommend, rather than pouting at home, go online and visit www2.onlinecontest.org. Click on the Aerokurier Online Contest Box, Click on North America and choose a date, a club, overall etc. It is amazing what you will find. Did you know that most miles flown in the states in 2004 are by a guy called Doug Levy in Schweizer 1-26? I know Doug, and he is an amazing pilot. All of his flights are posted, and you can look at them online! Way down the list, way down somewhere you will find my flights. Nothing spectacular, but there they are, posted for anyone to look at. The display is not that fancy, simple background outline of the terrain, with the flight path superimposed over it plus a barograph trace. Like I said, nothing fancy, but there it is.

So start with the SeeYou program. Get to know how to use it, add a recorder, start to record every flight, download them to the PSSA and the OLC, and before you know, you will be the leading miles accumulator of the North West.

Cross Country Seminar

Yes, I am planning a XC-seminar just as soon as the Blanik is available. It is very simple, nothing fancy, and you can do it. The objective is to go away from the familiar surroundings, and go XC. There are two ways we will do it. On a given good soarable day we will pick a task; for example, Flying H and back. We will have a preflight briefing, look at the task, look at the outlandings' options and go for it. Either you go by yourself, or, if you prefer, I will come with you in the back seat and we will do it together. There is only one must! You must go and attempt the task. Meaning, either you make it out to Flying H and back, or you land at the Flying H or at the Enumclaw airport. Just before we commit, we call Bergseth ground request a tow, and before you know it we are back in the air. Fun? You bet! Let's wait until we get the Blanik back and we will roll.

J.C. Hauchecorne

Operations:

This month's special Spirit award for exemplary service to PSSA goes to **Dariush Zand** who flew in for the day from Newport Beach, CA to serve his field manager assignment. Way to go, Dariush, great to see you again.

Also, a couple of special announcements for all **Field Managers:**

First,

. One of the responsibilities we have as a club, and this applies to all members, is the maintenance of our leased portion of the property. That includes the mowing of the grass. Thanks to Walt Bergseth, we have a megapowerful monster brute of a device to accomplish this. Anyone who has tried to mow the entire field with the Sears riding mower knows, this is not an easy task. But in the Bergseth Brute its a relative snap. All you need is a check-out from Walt and off you go, doing your part to keep our air field trim. So, field managers,

when there is a lull or while waiting for their next chance to fly, encourage members to address the mowing that might be needed. This is one of those things you could be doing to keep things running smoothly.



Look, Ma, one hand!

Second,

In order to maximize our exposure to the area public, in the past year we have stressed using roadside signs in the Enumclaw area below Bergseth to alert passing motorists to our existence and our flight operations. This year we hope to continue this effort and even to improve on it. To that end, please make an effort to follow the following plan:

- We will have two, possibly three additional signboards to expand our coverage.
- In order to simplify the process of deploying and retrieving the signs, we will follow this routine:
 - All signs will be kept at the corner convenience store at the intersection of the Enumclaw-Black Diamond Rd. SE and SE 416th. The store is called Stop & Shop and is run by a very nice guy named Nick. He has agreed to our leaving our signs there at his store so that they will be available to the field manager to pick up on the way to Bergseth Field.
 - After setting the first two signs out at the convenience store intersection (one right at the store corner and one directly across, kitty-corner, on the opposite side to the road), the others can be set out at the Cumberland Rd./SE416th corner and the SE 408th turn leading to the field. (It should be obvious which signs go where by the arrow and mileage on each.)
 - When the operation is wrapped up, the field manager can retrace initial steps in gathering up the boards to be deposited again at the convenience store on the way home so they will be available to the next field

manager on his/her way to the field.

We feel confident that this system will make it much easier for all field managers to get our signs in place on a regular basis. And, this should give us a better chance to draw more people up to our operations to fly. We need all the opportunities we can get to attract new potential pilots and members.

Field Manager assignments for May:

Sat. Apr. 30 - Stefan Perrin
Sun. May 1 - Curt Bryan
Sat. May 7 - Van Chaney
Sun. May 8 - Curt Chenoweth
Sat. May 14 - Glenn Chouinard
Sun. May 15 - John Ennes
Sat. May 21 - Wayne Ginther
Sun. May 22 - Tim Heneghan
Sat. May 28 - Dave Kremers
Sun. May 29 - Charlie Long
Mon. May 30 - Holiday volunteer

Note: If for any reason you should be unable to complete your assignment or need to exchange with another member, be sure to advise Stefan Perrin of the change at stefanp@nventure.com.

Newsletter contributions:

As always, your input to this newsletter is very important. Please let us know if you have new information, valuable experiences, constructive comments, even gripes which will help to make this a better club offering the safest and most cost effective soaring opportunity in the area. Send items to Dave Kremers (dkremers@earthlink.net)