

Off Tow Newsletter

Puget Sound Soaring Association, Inc.

Editor: Dave Kremers

Summer Wrap-up Edition 2005

Seattle, WA

Upcoming Events:

Are you ready for a picnic? I know that sounds a little strange with the summer swiftly disappearing in our rear view mirror, but when was the last time we all got together and celebrated the sport of soaring. We thought it would be best to wrap together a day at the field to fly, eat, and lend a hand to a few tasks that need doing before the end of the season. We are planning on **Saturday, Sept. 24th** with Sunday, the 25th as a back-up day incase of weather problems.

Stefan Perrin has kindly agreed to be the point man in this endeavor. What with our meager financial resources, we foresee the eating part being handled on a BYOM and BYOB (meat and beverage) basis along with a contribution of one side dish (buns, mustard, salad, baked beans, chips, etc.) to round out the comestible offerings. We do ask that you contact Stefan with a note on what you are bringing, and/or a request for what might still be needed. We will see to it that there is some sort of fire (portable BBQ, burning shed, etc.) on which to roast your flesh of choice. Stay tuned for bulletins from Steve to shed more light on progress.

Recent Events:



Back in the saddle again!

It's been a very strange summer. We had such great plans for a season of progress and then whamo!, we got blind sided. Oh well, that's the way it sometimes happens and we need to get up off the canvas and start swinging again. Not to say that there weren't some interesting and instructive things going on over the summer.

We had a very successful Memorial Day trip to Ephrata with all pilots reaching some exciting new goals. We thank the people of BESC, ESC and SGC for including us in their fine cross country seminar. Every one of us who participate came away with new skills.

We followed soon thereafter with another fine trip to Montague, CA, where we again found some special weather holding plenty of challenges for our intrepid pilots. Once again the Scott and Shasta Valleys gave us many chances to hone our skills capped off with a tour of the slopes of Mt. Shasta herself. All in all a great time with the added bonus of a fine new discovery in the eternal search for the best meal in town.

following Montague there was a chance for two of our family to join a Willamette club at the Alvord Desert for some rugged fun in the dry lake bed and over the Steens Mountains. Former member Don Crawford and current member Mark Allen attended with Mark getting his check out in an Auto/winch launch. Now that sounds exciting. Ask Mark to explain how that worked.

At least half a dozen PSSA pilots were able over the remainder of the summer to get back over to Ephrata to build on the Memorial Day experience. The L-13 was there for that time so there were at least a half dozen flights in that ship alone.

While the single ship pilots were doing their thing, Mark McIntyre was busy wrapping up his glider rating which he topped off with a CFIG rating. Congratulations, Mark. We will look forward to the help you can give us in the future.

We were all gnashing our teeth in frustration over the lack of a local Bergseth operation, but we can now look forward to a resumption of our plans to grow our club and to develop the future pilots of PSSA. Hallelujah!

Board News:

There have been some decisions that your board of directors have made recently which need to be revealed or clarified for the membership.

We started off the season with a new fee schedule which was a definite necessity in light of the financial burdens we have been facing and which better aligned fees with the actual costs of operating and maintaining our fleet.

We instituted a requirement by which the important qualifications of each member pilot were documented at the field in order to keep closer tabs on the currency of all pilots. It was realized that this was a vital measure which brought us into alignment with other organizations of our type and was necessary to avoid situations which would seriously jeopardize our club.

We have established a special membership category called Social Membership which allows former members to remain in contact with us at a very nominal fee of \$50 per year. Along with this invitation to join us whenever possible we extend the opportunity to them to bring someone with them to the field for a free glider ride. We hope this will give them a sense of connection with us and the sport of soaring in a constructive relationship. We will be contacting those people soon to offer this opportunity to help PSSA grow.

The board has made a decision to change the rate to be charged for off-field retrieval which

includes the rate paid for the private use of the tow plane by qualified tow pilots. The per hour (tach time) rate for the PA-18 will be \$80.00 which better reflects the true cost of operation. The cost of a retrieval will be the cost of the tow plus the total tach time at the tow plane rate.

Members are reminded that the \$300 share paid upon initiating a fullmembership in PSSA is not, and has never been, subject automatic refund by PSSA when a member withdraws from the club. Your review of Article III, 8. of the PSSA Bylaws should clarify any misunderstanding regarding this matter.

Be aware that there are bound to be further efforts to ensure the control of our flight operations to be sure that we are always flying as safely as humanly possible. We are sure that these measures will be seen as necessary to make a better club for all of us as well as to assure that our club can continue to operate for the benefit of all who want to enjoy the thrill of soaring. At the recent BOD meeting it was brought to our attention that SSA Region 8 (that's us folks) has by far the worst safety record of all the SSA Regions in the US. There is no disputing the fact that PSSA has done its part to help Region 8 attain this very undesirable distinction. Bergseth Airfield is not a typical glider port with 3,000+' runway(s), clear approaches and easy rope break landing options. PSSA's Board is currently considering various options including stricter training and currency standards for flying at Bergseth. Your input concerning this matter is encouraged and welcome.

In the event that you feel you have not been apprised of the latest decisions made by your board of directors, we invite you to contact any of us for an explanation or future clarification in this newsletter.

Membership:

We welcome **Tom Graham**, a rated glider pilot who comes to us from Arizona where he flew at Turf Soaring, now residing in the Olympia area.

Reports From Members:

Visit to Northwest Sky Sports (by Stefan Perrin)

Toward the end of August, I had an opportunity to fly down and visit Northwest Sky Sports (<http://www.nwskysports.com/>) at Hood River, Oregon. Mark Allen had graciously asked if I wanted to come along when he flew his Cessna 210 to either Ephrata or Hood River. Both of us have been to Ephrata, we decided on a new location and chose Hood River (the distance is just about the same). Mark had also met the proprietor, Gary Boggs earlier in the summer at the Alvord so he had a standing invitation to come visit.

We got underway at around 10 am on a clear Saturday morning from Crest. I had also managed to add my wife to the passenger list for the trip. Once underway, Mark let me fly the entire way down and I knew now why I was invited: human cruise control!

The flight was uneventful as we passed over the Cascades and enjoyed the scenery. We arrived at Hood River in about 50 minutes (would have been 45 had I stayed on course) and parked right next to Northwest Sky Sports.

Gary along with a few helpers was engaged in replacing the throttle cable on the tow plane, which meant an immediate aero-tow was not possible. Instead, he offered us the use of his van to drive into town and get some lunch (there is a small diner near the airport but it is closed on the weekends, go figure). For those who have never been through Hood River, it is a small tourist town along the Columbia and has ample eateries, shopping and accommodations.

Anyway, we enjoyed a leisurely lunch and made our way back to the airport only to find that the tow plane was still being worked on. Evidently the “bigger hammer” was no where to be found. However, not all was lost because Gary just happens to have winch launching capabilities too, so we opted to give that a try.

The winch launch is mounted on the back of an old Chevy truck and works by letting the rope out as the truck speeds down the taxi way pulling the glider into the air, just like running to launch a kite. On the first launch, the weak link broke on Mark, but fortunately, he had about 700 feet and was able to make a normal landing. When my turn came, everything worked fine and we were able to get to about 800’ AGL and proceeded to enter the pattern for a normal landing. We did several more launches, but unfortunately, there were no thermals to get us away from the airport that afternoon.

Finally, we decided to go back and see how work was progressing on the tow plane. The throttle cable was just about in when we got back to the hanger and final adjustments were being made. Soon the 180 was pushed back and fired up only to discover a serious fuel leak on the recently installed fuel pump. This pretty much ended any chances of aero towing that weekend. Instead, Mark went for one more winch launch before the support crew had to leave.

After a bit of hanger flying, we settled our account with Gary and took off for Crest. The flight home was even better because the winds had cleared up a lot of the haze and the afternoon lighting made for a spectacular view of Mt. Rainier’s West side. We also flew over Bergseth to give the grass a quick clipping with the 210 and checked to see if by some miracle, the engine was not back on 333TM, but no such luck.

We arrived back at Crest around 6pm, with me doing my first powered airplane landing. It all went all right until I forgot that you steer with the rudder pedals, and not the yoke. Reflecting back, it was a trip well worth the time, even if you were to drive down. Gary runs a great operation which he is just getting established. The location and soaring conditions have a lot to offer with both mountainous and desert conditions depending on which direction you go. It also provides for a way to get signed off on winch launches, as Gary is also a CFGI.

Training:

The FAA Checkride? Here’s My Two Cents’ Worth. (submitted by Mark McIntyre)

“An article about a checkride? Already passed mine. I want articles about wave flying, 500k goals,

or the latest flight computers... ”

Good point. However, allow me a moment with the budding glider pilots among us and the CFI-Gs who will train them.

I recently took my Commercial Add-On Glider Practical Test with Mr. Jim Yates of Ephrata. Although I've taken over 70 checkrides in my career, I was more than a little nervous as the time approached to schedule this checkride. I'd heard through the grapevine how tough Jim was, how baffling his questions were, and how obstinate he could be. I even tried to schedule my checkride with an examiner from a different region, but my CFI-G reported Jim was the examiner for Washington State and I'd need to schedule my exam with him. So, I got my courage up and called Jim. The date I preferred was agreeable with him and he gave me a list of items to bring to the checkride and several things to prepare ahead of time, including a three-leg cross country flight.

I used Jim's list and the FAA's Practical Test Standard (PTS) to insure I studied all the required subjects.

I met Jim early on a Sunday morning. From the time he stepped from his car, he was pleasant and organized. He explained that we'd review my application, logbook, identification, and existing license. He would announce when the oral exam actually began. Once it did begin, Jim's conduct of the oral exam followed the PTS, so guess what? No surprises.

As we completed the oral exam, Jim briefed me on his expectations for the flight check. There would be three flights, including a simulated 200' rope break. For the two landings other than the rope break, I would be required to touchdown and stop within a 600' long area. As PIC, and in compliance with the PTS, I would be expected to conduct a brief with the towpilot, ensure the glider was properly ground handled before, between, and after the flights, and generally demonstrate that I was in control of the flights. Again, there were no surprises as the three flights included only the tasks outlined in the PTS.

Once we'd concluded the checkride, Jim stayed for an additional hour and a half, at my urging, and shared a wealth of information on soaring safety, cross country planning and techniques, and resources I could use to prepare for my next goal, a CFI-G. It became very clear to me that Jim has a great love for soaring and a deep commitment to raising the knowledge and skill of local glider pilots.

So, if you're preparing for a checkride, or if you're preparing someone else for a checkride, get your hands on a copy of the appropriate Practical Test Standard and call Jim to get his list of additional items. Make sure you're knowledgeable on all the subject areas and that you can consistently perform all the flight maneuvers with the required degree of precision. If you've prepared thoroughly, it won't take Jim long to determine that you're a safe, proficient pilot and the rest of the practical test will be one of the most satisfying and personally rewarding experiences of your life. I promise.

Operations:

Return to Operations (by Stefan Perrin)

Well, we finally returned to operations on Saturday, September 2nd. Our last operation at Bergseth prior to this was on Friday, May 13th. Hmm... Friday the 13th, how odd. As it turns out, we were out of Bergseth for well over three months, which is longer than any time in the past.

During our absence the elk have become quite used to having the field all to themselves all day long. They made this quite evident Saturday with two appearances that day.

We started early in order to get the Blanik assembled and we had plenty of help doing so. Once that was done, we proceeded with a good day of flying. Lift was not spectacular but there was some to be found, along with lots of sink too. Kenji of course showed everyone up with the only hour flight of the day.

We were also able to inaugurate the new runway which was smooth and proved effective in improved staging of the gliders for take off. This will pretty much eliminate moving gliders from the launch position at the last second. Curt's rope catcher also reduced time and leg work in retrieving the tow rope.

So make plans to come out on the next available opportunity to test the new runway, get current and view the wildlife.

Field Manager schedule:

Sat. Sept.10 - John Ennis
Sun. Sept.11 - Wayne Ginther
Sat. Sept.17 - Dean Gittleman
Sun. Sept.18 - Thomas Graham
Sat. Sept. 24 - Tim Heneghan
Sun. Sept.25 - Dave Kremers
Sat. Oct. 01 - Charles Long
Sun Oct. 12 - Justin Long
Sat. Oct. 08 - Mark McIntyre
Sun. Oct. 09 - Branislav Mikulik
Sat. Oct.15 - Marlene Nelson
Sun. Oct.16 - Kenji Ominato
Sat. Oct.22 - Stefan Perrin
Sun. Oct.23 - Kim Sears
Sat. Oct.29 - Dariush Zand
Sun. Oct.30 - Stefan Perrin

Reminder: PSSA ceases field operations for the year 2005 at the end of October to make time for repair and maintenance of equipment until the following year on March 1st.

Note:

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).