The Leading Edge
The newsletter of the MIT Soaring Association
August 2000

Contents

Club news

Mark Tuttle

Sterling town fair: The Sterling town fair will be held at the Sterling airport the weekend of September 9-10, and preparation for the fair will begin the weekend of September 2-3.

Private owners must remove their gliders and trailers from the field for the September 9-10 period,

and are advised to remove their equipment for the entire September 2-10 period to avoid damage from heavy equipment used to prepare the grounds for the fair. The airport will be closed during the fair on September 9-10, sooo...

Springfield encampment: Go on up to Vermont with the club for two weekends of flying and fun. MITSA will be operating from the Hartness State Airport near Springfield, Vermont, during the Sterling town fair. We will move all gliders and trailers from Sterling to Springfield before the Labor Day weekend, and we will fly from Springfield on September 2, 3, 4, 9, and 10. For more information visit the web site at http://people.ne.mediaone.net/glider/spf2000/index2.html. Contact Mark Koepper (mkoepper@erols.com) if you would like to attend, or if you are willing to volunteer to aerotow gliders to and from Springfield or prepare and tow club trailers to and from Springfield.

Contests: Congratulations to Bob Fletcher (90) who flew to third in the Standard Class Nationals at the end of June and to Doug Jacobs (DJ) who pick up second-place honors (missing first by a heart beat) in the 15 Meter Nationals a few weeks earlier. Mark Evans (4ME) and Bill Brine (YN) also had good days at the Region 1 contest, finishing second and third in their classes. Phil Gaisford also flew in the 15 Meter contest, and has written about his experience for this newsletter.

New certificates: Congratulation to Bernie Loraditch for passing his flight test for the private certificate on August 6!

New solos: Rob Cutler soloed on July 6. Rob is the second Junior (he's one of the originals) to solo in the MITSA Juniors program. Eric Frere soloed with MITSA for the first time on July 8. Eric had already soloed elsewhere before suffering a fifteen-year interruption to his training, but he is back. Halil Ozbas soloed on July 15, and Phil Rossoni flew from the back seat of an L-23 for the first time on the same day, after a check ride with Karl Krueger. If you see these guys at the field, congratulate them.

First flights: Matt Tadry became the first Junior to move up to the 1-26 on July 23, staying aloft for 1:05 between a text book take off and landing. Halil Ozbas also flew this F-14 of the fleet for the first time on the same day.

Badges: Fred Looft earned his B badge on July 23 for staying aloft 1:14.

New members: Grant Cary, Steve Chromiak Dipu Deshmukh, Erik Nelson, Halil Ozbas, Yogi Pandey, and John Weimer have all joined the club in the last few months. Grant Cary and Erik Nelson are former members now rejoining the club; Halil Ozbas holds private airplane certificate; and Steve Chromiak holds a commercial airplane certificate, and his daughter Nichole joined the Juniors at the same time. Some of these men have written a bit more about themselves a little later in this newsletter.

MITSA Juniors: The MITSA Juniors program is currently full, and there is a waiting list. Please direct all potential Junior members to Ray Tadry at 978-422-8082 (home), 603-429-6236 (work), or ray.tadry@att.net.

Weather sources: Fred Looft and Mike Newman have built weather pages at

http://www.ece.wpi.edu/ fjlooft/i
and
http://www.dragonnorth.com/weather/.

You might want to take a look.

Minutes of the Board of Directors

Walt Hollister

These minutes have been edited for publication in the newsletter. —Editor

July 6, 2000

Directors present: Phil Gaisford, Steve Glow, Walt Hollister, Carl Johnson, Mark Koepper, and Peter Vickery.

Finances: The operational summaries for May and June show improving numbers of tows and demo flights. There has been no billing from the airport manager for fuel since January. MITSA has paid this year's 3B3 insurance bill, but has not paid the rental for space in their hanger. There has also been no billing for tows by the 3B3 Citabria. Peter Vickery will review the records to determine the present balance with 3B3 so we can keep better tabs on our current financial condition each month. That condition is expected to improve if we can avoid unscheduled maintenance on the tow plane.

Web site: Carl Johnson is looking for comments on the MITSA web site which he has been updating. MITSA is interested in moving toward electronic commerce on the sale of demo flights, hats, shirts, and so on. Carl will seek additional information from "dot coms" that provide such services, usually for a 2% fee.

Juniors: Peter Vickery gave a report from Ray Tadry *in absentia*. The Juniors are now operating on Thursday nights. There is currently a waiting list for membership. Roy Bourgeois has been instructing. Richard Gammon and Ian Clark have been towing. Contact Ray if you want to participate.

Springfield encampment: Mark Koepper will put out an email to the membership. Bruce Easom and John Wren have been working on the details. Web pages on the encampment are in progress.

Minutes of the Board of Directors

Walt Hollister

These minutes have been edited for publication in the newsletter. —Editor

August 3, 2000

Directors present: Phil Gaisford, Walt Hollister, Joe Kwasnik, and Peter Vickery.

Finances: The operational summary for July continues to show improving numbers of tows and demo flights. Peter Vickery has started his review of the operational records so we can keep better tabs on what the actual and projected costs are of each phase of our operation. For example, there still has been no billing from the airport manager for fuel since January. However, by knowing the fuel consumption as a function of tow height and the cost of fuel, he will be able to predict fuel costs directly from the summaries available at the end of each day of operations.

Figure 1: The 1-26 landing. (Photo by John Wren.)

He has also started to identify the fixed and variable cost history of each glider for a comparison with its utilization. With this information the board should be better able to predict the financial impact of any proposed changes to operations or billing.

Operations: Concern was expressed that twice in recent weeks the duty officer had cancelled soaring operations for the day without being present at the field. In both instances, the weather turned out to be better than forecast and did permit limited soaring later in the day. Realize that it may be a great day for pattern tows which are just what is needed for many student pilots. It was agreed that under such conditions the duty officer, the instructor, and the morning tow pilot should at least show up at the field. The president will send a notice to the membership setting policy on this issue.

Maintenance: The purchase of new seat belts was approved for the Blanik trainer not yet refitted.

Web site: Carl Johnson is looking for leaders to handle different portions of the planned new MITSA web site which will provide electronic commerce to handle the sale of demo flights, hats, shirts, and possibly tow fee collection.

Membership: Joe Kwasnik reported that he is currently receiving two to three phone inquiries about MITSA every week. For May, June, and July there has been an average of one new member per week.

Wings Seminar: The Wings seminar produced by John Wren, Phil Gaisford, and Bruce Easom on Thursday and Saturday evenings of last week was given rave reviews. It was requested that the Wings seminar be repeated, perhaps next in the off season.

Figure 2: Flying the ridge a Mifflin County. (Photo by Phil Gaisford.)

15-meter national championships

Phil Gaisford

As the reader may be aware, I normally fly national championships in the standard class. Since this would entail a long drive to Texas this year, the 15-meter class championships in Pennsylvania seemed an attractive alternative. Not only can you drive there in a day, but also here was an opportunity to practice at the site of the 2001 standard-class event.

Mifflin County airport is right in the middle of Pennsylvania and in the heart of ridge-running country. Parallel series of mountain ridges extend for many miles from the northeast to the southwest of the task area. With the wind in the right direction, you only need one short thermal climb in order to reach the farthest turn point at Cumberland, Maryland. The two practice days prior to the contest were just such days, and the local experts used the opportunity to lead large instructional gaggles along the more common ridge routes.

The contest opened on the following day, but the winds were no longer right for ridge flying. On the other hand, the thermals were good, and the contest director together with his advisors succeeded in selecting a 180-mile task that was not too badly affected by the dense bands of cirrus transiting through the area. The weather forecaster thought that Day 2 would be good as well if only sufficient surface temperatures were attained. It turns out that they were, but the threatened spread-out of the resulting cumulus gave rise to testing conditions on the second and third legs of the task through the Blair County area. If you managed to get through the murk as far as the ridge at Mill Creek, the rest of the task to Beaver Spring and home was easily completed on the ridge in only the slightest of southeasterly winds.

There then followed a prolonged break in the contest flying as poor weather first moved in from the west, then occupied the contest area for the next six days. The usual contest antics were performed in this period: grid, then cancel; grid, cancel, and fly around the airport for a bit; and, finally, grid, cancel, and disassemble in the rain. Needless to say, some people got a bit discouraged by all this, and a few individuals dropped out. It began to look as if the four contest days required for a valid result might not be attained. During periods like this you get to appreciate fully the value of the effort put in by the organizers to provide dining and entertainment in the evenings, so that despite the lousy weather it was still possible to make something out of the social events.

But not to worry. The penultimate day, although weak to start, provided another contest day despite a fair number of land-outs, while the winds returned on the final day for a proper ridge-flying finale. For those with an interest in the detail, the flight logs are available from the SSA web site, along with a new viewer named Winscore. The latter allows a replay of the flights of your favorite pilots, with lots of interesting viewing options. You won't find the name of your correspondent in the upper half of the score sheet: a large (and I may say senseless) penalty on Day 1, combined with a surprise land-out after 270 miles of a 280-mile task on Day 4, were sufficient to do the damage. I hope to be able to provide a more favorable report next year from the standard-class event.

Safety seminar

Mark Tuttle

What follows is a summary of material previously distributed by Phil Gaisford and Peter Vickery via email. — Editor

MITSA conducted two safety meetings on the operational aspects of flying gliders from Sterling. The first meeting was held at Sterling's old town hall on Thursday, July 27, with a repeat session on the following Saturday. The meeting was chaired by an FAA aviation safety counselor, and attendees received credit under the FAA Wings program. Attendance was good, but by no means universal. If you were unable to attend, I urge you to refresh your memory of our procedures from the information on our web site at

http://people.ne.mediaone.net/glider/MITSA.

For the benefit of those unable to attend, you should note that there are new launch procedures when taking up slack and a change to the wing runner/relay man signals relating to *hold*. Please be familiar with these prior to reaching the field in order that there is no confusion on the grid. These can be found at http://people.ne.mediaone.net/glider/MITSA/signals.htm.

Pay particular attention to how signals propagate from the glider pilot to the tug pilot. When the pilot has indicated that he or she has completed all preflight checks and is ready to accept the tow rope, the rope will be connected *only* after the person connecting the rope has called out, "Air brakes closed and locked." Only after the pilot has indicated that the air brakes are closed and locked and the wing runner has visually confirmed that this is true will the rope be connected to the glider. (In some gliders, the pilot may deliberately want to begin the takeoff roll with the brakes open. If the brakes are open, draw the pilot's attention to them, then proceed with the launch if the pilot says that it is okay.)

Once the rope is connected, and while the glider wing is on the ground, the wing runner may start the *take up slack* signal. Only the wing runner may initiate this signal and relay it to the relay person and/or tow plane.

If at anytime the glider pilot wishes to stop the launch, the pilot may release the cable. The glider's wing will remain on the ground until the wing runner has received a *thumbs up* from the glider pilot and has determined that it is safe to launch and all slack has been taken up. At this point the wing is raised, signaling to all that the glider is about to be launched.

The wing runner may never initiate an *all out* signal without the corresponding signal from the pilot. However, the wing runner may at any time initiate a *hold* or *emergency stop* signal, or delay a *take up slack* or *all out* signal. If at anytime the wing runner wishes to hold the launch, the wing runner may put the glider wing back on the ground.

This system gives each person in the signal chain the ability to delay or abort each phase of the launch, since each may see problems that the others may have overlooked. However, only the glider pilot has the authority to allow the launch to proceed.

As a concrete example of the need to look out, there have been two tows this summer that launched with a landing aircraft on short final (nearing the highway or over it). Landing aircraft have the right of way. Any mishap during launch with an aircraft on short final could place an unavoidable obstacle in the path of the landing aircraft. Wing runners need to be aware of traffic in the pattern. After receiving the *thumbs up* signal from the pilot, check for conflicting pattern traffic before raising the wing. Do not permit the launch to proceed in the presence of such traffic. If in doubt, do not start the launch: get a second opinion. If circumstances change adversely before the launch has departed, stop the launch. Forward signalers also need to keep an eye on traffic, and should not allow a launch to proceed in the face of conflicting traffic. Once again, please review the launch procedures documented on the web at http://people.ne.mediaone.net/glider/MITSA/signals.htm.

DO reports

Peter Vickery

The board has asked me to provide monthly statistics on towing activity. Since the only source for this information is the operations log completed by DO's each flying day, it is imperative that logs and other forms (and all money collected) be sent to me promptly each week. There is a supply of addressed, postage-paid envelopes in the MITSA trailer in the bottom tray of the stack containing the various forms that we use. Do not send them to Steve Glow, as in the past, send them to me.

On the subject of the logs, it sometimes requires a background in cipher decoding to figure out exactly who did what and to whom. It would be extremely helpful if the relevant columns were filled in, legibly, with the data indicated by the column headings. I realize that with all the activity the DO is involved in, it is not always possible to catch the landing times of private gliders, but please do try to enter the remaining data as accurately as possible.

In recent weeks, DO reports have not been entered on the e-board site (I plead guilty). Please remember to file a report on Mondays (where possible) even if it is fairly short and include information on any jobs that have been completed, such as gliders cleaned, golf carts fixed, and so on, or any squawks that may have occurred.

New members

Mark Tuttle

Dipu Deshmukh: "I work as a contributor in a software consulting firm in Burlington. I had one demo flight a couple of years ago, and was thrilled by the sensation of flying. Phil Gaisford, whom I have known for ten years now, introduced me to this great pastime, and now I think I have sat on the fence long enough. I am also an amateur musician, playing the Esraj, a rare, bowed Indian instrument."

Robert Hunt: "A pelvic surgeon by profession, I realized that I must resume my interest in soaring when my son proclaimed this past spring, 'Dad, you need a new interest.' I took my first flight with MITSA shortly after that. This was followed by six flights with six different instructors at MITSA (Blanik L-23), approximately 30 flights at Bermuda High in Lancaster, South Carolina, with two different instructors (Schweitzer 2-33), and approximately 30 flights with three different instructors (Grob III) at Knauff and Grove in Julian, Pennsylvania. Flying has included a fair amount of soaring and some wave flying, and lots of tows and patterns. I have soloed in the Schweitzer and Grob, and I have passed my FAA written. I am looking forward to participating as a Duty Officer at MITSA whenever I can, once I have earned my private certificate and have built up additional hours. A final word: my instructors have been the best at all three sites. Each brings a little different twist to the art, but each really wants to help you to fly expertly, to fly safely, and to have lots of fun. Kudos to them all."

Erik Nelson: "I was born in Northampton, Massachusetts, but moved at a young age to South Carolina. I started flying gliders at age 12 or 13 and was soloed at 14 by my father/instructor. I was lucky to have access to fiberglass gliders and a group of pilots to fly with, and started flying contests in my father's Pegasus when I was 16. I later flew an ASW-20 and then a '24. I was the first American pilot to fly in the European Junior (under 25) Championships, flying alone in France in 1989, then with Sean Franke in Sweden in 1991, and again with Sean in France in 1993. I was at Harvard from 1990-94, and flew with MITSA at Sterling one summer while taking organic chemistry. (More than one person seems to remember my otherwise-perfect gear-up landing there that year.) I finished medical school and internship in Burlington, Vermont, last year, where I rented Stowe's L-33 and Sugarbush's G-102 to stay current. I moved to Belmont, Massachusetts, at the beginning of July and bought a half-share of Ian Clark's Standard Cirrus, with which I've loved exploring the valleys around Sterling and southern New Hampshire and Vermont. I am now working as a radiology resident at Boston Medical Center, and enjoying being back in the Boston area. I am planning to fly the Dansville regional in August. I also fly power—single-engine and instrument ratings—and would be interested in towing if there's a need."

Yogi Pandey: "I am a vlsi-cad engineer currently working in Marlboro. I was first introduced to soaring in 1992, back home in India, when I took the first joyride in a winch-launched glider owned by the aeronautical department of my graduate school. It was not love at first sight due to the disappointingly short duration of the flight. I gave it another chance when my friends at MIT told me about MITSA. The demo ride with Carl Johnson was just plain *awesome*, and here I am, working on going solo, hopefully by the end of the year. It has been a great, fun-filled exercise due to the wonderful instructors I have flown with."

John Weimer: "I am happy to have joined MITSA. So far, everyone is friendly and knowledgeable. I'm always looking for new experiences, and soaring has always been in the back of my mind. I have no prior flying experience but hope to learn and contribute at MITSA. I'm the director of Investments at Keyport Life Insurance Company. I run money within the company's portfolio, allocating it to alternative assets which include private equity, venture capital, hedge funds, and structure finance. I found MITSA on the web and just came out to the field one day, and Peter Vickery was very helpful. He remarked that no one had died yet, so with that endorsement, I quickly joined. I look forward to being a member and having Karl Krueger explain the wonders of 'more rudder!'"

MITSA gear

Ray Tadry

The following MITSA gear is now for sale:

1. A sport or golf-styled shirt. It is a natural color (tannish-white) with wine-colored (red) collar and sleeve trim. It is 100% pre-shrunk cotton, so I was told that it shouldn't continue to shrink. If you want to be extra sure that it doesn't shrink, don't throw it in the dryer the first two times you wash it, and that should eliminate any potential of shrinking. These are "roomy," so if you normally wear a large, then you should be all set with that size. The shirts are $23.00 each in sizes S, M, L, XL, 2X.

2. A wind jacket. It is 100% nylon, a two-tone style with a royal-blue body and black sleeves and yoke, and with a hood and a draw-string waist. The jackets are $36.50 each in sizes S, M, L, XL, 2X.

3. A bucket hat. These are the "Gilligan" style hats that you see some of the glider pilots wearing. Some of the guys thought these would be better than caps since there should be better visibility, and with no button on top, there should be less likelihood of cracking your canopy, unless you have a pointy head. The hats are $10.00 each in sizes L, XL.

See the trailer on the field for pictures and a sign-up sheet. Please pay in full when you order.