THE LEADING EDGE
The Newsletter of M.I.T. Soaring Association, Inc.
May 1994

Editor: Shaun Keller

Contents

Important Notice

by John Wren, Chief Flight Instructor

AEROBATICS IN CLUB GLIDERS
ARE NOT ALLOWED[a]

NO MEMBER MAY FLY A CLUB GLIDER
UNLESS THEY HAVE BEEN CHECKED OUT
BY A CFI AND RECEIVED
AN ENDORSEMENT IN THEIR LOG BOOK!

Questions? Call John Wren.

[a] Unless by specific authorization from the Chief Flight Instructor.

Welcome Back

by Lee Marzke, President

I would like to welcome back all the club members who have been out to the field this year. Those of you who made it out were rewarded with the appearance of our new Blaniks. If you haven't been out yet, the soaring conditions are great, so come give it a try. (Just ask Ira about his 11,000 ft wave flight.)

Several club members contributed much time to get the club operational for you this year. In particular I hope each of you will thank the following individuals: John Wren and Mark Tuttle (Blanik purchase), Guenther (annual inspections), Lee, Peter Foley, Guenther, Bruce Easom (ferry flights for annuals), Ray Beausoleil, Ian Clark, Mark Evans, Ed Foley, Ken MacDowell, Lee Marzke, Tom Penny, Kerry Richards, Bert Speranza, Larry Timpson, Mark Tuttle, John Urbahn, Terry Wong, and John Wren (unpacking the Blaniks), John Wren (CFI check flights), Guenther, Bruce, Tom Avery (Towplane repairs).

With MITSA's new Blaniks and the 3B3 towplane we expect to be able to provide more flights and less towing delays. However, this added capacity will go to waste if our operations can't handle the increase. In the coming months MITSA will be asking all members to accomplish the following as applicable:

- DO's to become twice as efficient
- Members to honor DO task assignments,
  don't pass them on
- Experienced members to become Commercial or CFI rated
- Obey MITSA's operational rules at all times
- Commit your entire day to MITSA when soaring
- Volunteer for maintenance assignments
- Learn the new operational procedures for 2 towplanes
- Send in DO sheets and money within 48 hours

Remember your commitment to MITSA involves more than your scheduled DO/CFI/TOW assignments. If you are not doing something extra for the club then please ask what you can do.

Happy soaring!

1993 MITSA Award Winners

MITSA awards were announced at the February annual meeting: Nikki Veltfort award for the most accomplished student—**Ed Foley**, C. S. Draper award for the best cross-country flight in a MITSA sailplane—**Larry Timpson**, Thomas C. Thompson award for the person judged most likely to contribute to soaring AND the Sam Francis trophy for the fastest triangle over 100K AND the Eddie Allen trophy for the longest triangle or out-and-return all go to **Mark Koepper**. Jim Nash-Webber award for most enthusiastic new member—**Bert Speranza**.

The 3rd Annual Memorial Day Cross-Country Weekend May 28–30

This newsletter was supposed to go out before the contest and John Wren wrote in the announcement:

> Third times a charm! The weather will be great this year, I have it from a great source. The past two years have not been a great success weather wise. There are two classes, open (private owners) and club class. Awards will be given for each day.

Having delayed the newsletter until after the contest, your editor can say with authority that the weather was *fantastic*! Everyone had a great time. John announced the results:

> Congratulations to Peter Foley, Mark Tuttle, Ira Blieden, and Al Gold. They were all daily winners in the Cross-Country Weekend. Peter and Ira were Day 1 and 2 winners in class A. While Mark and Al were in class B.

Mark Tuttle adds:

> Tom MacJarrett was my coach in the back seat. Saturday was clearly the flight of my life.

THANK YOU JOHN!

Uncrating the New Blaniks

by Mark Tuttle

The day started early for me on Thursday, April 28. A semi-trailer containing our new Blaniks was scheduled to arrive at Sterling Airport that morning, and a dozen people had volunteered to congregate at 10AM to unload and assemble the gliders. An unexpected volunteer was our dealer himself, Vitek Siroky of Blanik America in Seattle. The trailer delivering our gliders was really bringing three gliders—an L-23 and L-33 for MITSA and an L-23 for another club on Long Island—and Vitek was coming to make sure that MITSA didn't put a sledge hammer through a wing panel of the second L-23. Vitek was taking the red-eye to Boston (via Las Vegas), and I was getting up before six to meet him at the Boston airport and drive him out to Sterling.

I always seem to form mental images of people before I meet them that have little to do with reality. For some reason I expected Vitek to be a burly shipper, the kind of guy who picks fights with Teamsters in the afternoon for fun, so my first surprise was to be greeted by a trim, athletic man with a happy smile that said, "Let's go fly a glider." My second surprise was the weight of his luggage: he was carrying more spare parts and tools than clothing.

When we got to my car, Vitek called the trucking company delivering the gliders to Sterling to check on their status. His concern was that as of the previous day, Wednesday, the gliders had arrived in Boston Harbor but had not passed through US Customs. The gliders had been scheduled to pass through customs on Wednesday, but Wednesday turned out to be the day of President Nixon's funeral, and the entire US government shut down that day in memory of the president. Actually, the customs inspectors themselves had been working on Wednesday, but the couriers who carry the paperwork from desk to desk had taken the day off. So as of 8AM Thursday morning, the gliders still had not been released by customs.

While Vitek and I drove from Logan to Sterling, I asked him how he had gotten into the Blanik business. I learned that Vitek was from Czechoslovakia, home of the Blanik factory. He grew up near Prague, and has been flying gliders for several decades. In addition, he had experience working as a shipping consultant who specialized in shipping odd cargo. One example he mentioned was a man who was going to Australia for a few years and wanted to take his yacht with him. He didn't want to sail it to Australia, so Vitek's job was to package it up, put it on a boat, and get it Down Under. And all of this leads naturally to starting a Blanik dealership.

During the drive, we made a few phone calls on my brand new cellular phone, including another call to the trucking company to check on the gliders (they were second in line with customs). I'd never received an incoming phone call on this new phone before, but this morning we kept getting incoming calls, and every time I answered the phone I got a guy saying, "Mmmmellow?" After the third or fourth time this happened, I told him I thought he had the wrong phone number, and he snorted, "*I've* got the wrong number, well, okay buddy!" It wasn't until later that Vitek and I realized we had been pushing the wrong buttons and causing the phone to redial the last phone number, meaning we had called the trucking company four times by mistake!

Vitek and I arrived at Sterling to find John Wren hanging out and Ian Clark flying the Citabria, with no idea when the gliders were going to arrive. John and I took Vitek into Sterling for some breakfast, and we returned to find a dozen loyal members ready to assemble some gliders, but no gliders to assemble. The crowd included Ray Beausoleil, Ian Clark, Mark Evans, Ed Foley, Ken MacDowell, Lee Marzke, Tom Penny, Kerry Richards, Bert Speranza, Larry Timpson, Mark Tuttle, John Urbahn, Terry Wong, and John Wren. Everyone was hanging out and talking in small groups, except for Ed Foley who was pouring over his notes from work in the new airport restaurant. (He clearly doesn't understand the concept of "taking a vacation day.") Peter Foley showed up to observe between business appointments, but he was dressed in a crisp white shirt and tie, and it was clear he didn't want anyone to confuse him with the rest of us. (Poking fun at an instructor who is also a tow pilot is dangerous business: now the rope will be pulled on me in every launch with Peter on either end.)

Eventually, around noon, the truck pulled into the glider tie-down area and the trailer was disconnected. As he was signing the paperwork, Vitek started discussing the need for someone to return at 6PM to pick up the trailer and haul it down to Long Island to deliver the third glider. "They'll send me to pick it up, I'm sure," said the driver. "No one else is going to be able to find this place!"

As if watching the opening of a vault, we gathered around the back of the trailer as the seals were broken and the doors were opened, and the most amazing structure of wooden beams, padding, and glider parts became visible. Someone joked that you could drop it from the back of a C-130 without damaging the gliders inside. The trailer was basically divided into front and back. In the back of the trailer was a huge wooden rack holding four L-23 wings, with a rack holding three horizontal stabilizers on the left wall and a rack holding two L-33 wings on the right wall. In the front of the trailer were two L-23 fuselages on either side facing the front, and a single L-33 fuselage in between them facing the back. Unloading the gliders required removing all three sets of wings and removing two sets of stabilizers and fuselages, then reconstructing the wood framework and reloading one set of L-23 wings. We tried to get Vitek to reload the wings from 117BB, since surely one set of wings is as good as another to him, but he wouldn't agree.

In the middle of all this, with pieces of three gliders strewn across the tie-down area, the inspector from the FAA arrived expecting to inspect the assembled gliders and issue airworthiness certificates. Rumor had it that he was a little miffed that we were so far behind schedule, but he worked in his car a little bit, walked around and chatted with various people a little bit, and seemed to be a nice guy having a good time in the afternoon sun.

The important task to perform before the inspector could do his job was to assemble the gliders. I'm not sure when the L-33 was assembled, but when I starting thinking about assembling the L-23, I found the L-33 already rigged and sitting in the sun with its arms outstretched like a cub waiting for its mother. I was worried that assembling the L-23 would be a mother, based on experience trying to rig 117BB with a dozen club members and spectators pushing and pulling in different directions. Fortunately, Ian Clark took charge (with Lee Marzke) and had the wings snapped in place like a jigsaw puzzle in under 10 minutes. I mentioned to Ian how impressed I was, and he replied that it doesn't take any special skill, it just takes a single person giving orders. Let's remember that.

With this, after the certificates were issued, the rest of the evening was spent repacking the second L-23 back into the trailer, cleaning up the tie-down area, and tying down the new gliders. We were finally done around 7PM, and we all left for dinner and a beer with Vitek at First Impressions hoping that the gliders would fly as well as they looked. Ian Clark drove Vitek back to Logan for his trip down to Long Island to deliver the third glider, and the day was over.

Thanks to everyone who came out to help, and special thanks to Ray Beausoleil, Ian Clark, Lee Marzke, Tom Penny, Mark Tuttle, and John Wren for sticking around to the bitter end.

The L-33 Solo is Here

by Derek Sherlock

The L-33 always looked very pretty in all the literature and advertisements, but seeing our very own Solo up close for the first time was still impressive. It's a great looking ship from the outside, and has a very plush, comfortable cockpit.

It is white with red trim, matching the Blaniks, but in general appearance and style it has more in common with its fiberglass cousins than it does with the L-23. The seating position is more reclined. The stick is shorter. The wings are unswept, and tapered in a way that hints slightly of a Discus. The forward fuselage and tail look like miniature copies of the Blanik, but the aft fuselage tapers to a narrow boom. Like the Blanik, the Solo is a "taildragger", resting on its main gear and tailskid: a configuration similar to most modern gliders, but distinctly different from the club's other single seaters. The main gear is fixed, but very well cowled, and was clearly designed for low drag without compromising on ground clearance. The tailwheel doesn't steer or castor, so a tail dolly is used for ground handling. (A tail dolly which, I might add, needs to have a pneumatic tire fitted. Any volunteers. . .) The rigging is conventional, and all control hookups are automatic.

The Solo was designed as a racing machine, and it shows. It was LET's entry in the international competition to choose the new "world class" glider, and was a promising finalist in that effort. The "world class" is a proposed new one-design gliding class to allow pilots to compete against each other equipped with equal ships. The requirements included moderate performance, and low cost, coupled with relatively docile handling. The idea of gliding as an Olympic sport has been raised many times, and the possibility is one of the motivating forces behind the "world class" glider. The Polish PW-5 was ultimately selected, but LET and several of the other manufacturers chose to produce their designs independently.

Saturday April 30 was the big day. The uncrating, rigging, FAA paperwork, and import inspection had been done during the week by a handful of dedicated souls who took time off work so we'd be able to fly on the weekend.

The first order of business was to get the instructors and some other selected pilots to fly the Solo. Since nobody in the club had flown a Solo before, this was an important step in determining what type of training and checkout would be needed, and what level of pilot experience would be required. So Peter Foley, Lee Marzke, John Wren, Ken Rosenberg, Guenther Eichhorn and myself were each asked to fly it and evaluate it.

Takeoff is pretty straightforward. The towhook is far forward so she stays pointed straight down the runway quite easily. The ailerons become effective very early, and there's lots of ground clearance at the wingtips. Like the Blanik, the Solo is a "taildragger", meaning that at rest it is supported by the tailwheel and main wheel. It is not designed to have its nose scraped on the ground. With neutral elevator, the tail comes up off the ground and the glider takes off in a level attitude.

The Solo is a very pleasant ship to fly. The controls are light and well balanced, but quite sensitive. Visibility is excellent. The cockpit is comfortable and everything is in easy reach.

The short wings make for very effective ailerons. This gives the plane a sporty feel, and it should be a dream to thermal. 1-26 pilots might not notice this as much, but 1-34 pilots will appreciate the ailerons. The elevator and rudder are also more sensitive than anything else in our fleet. Stability about the yaw axis is excellent, and nobody should have any excuses for a sideways yawstring. Pitch stability is not as good, at least not with a lightweight pilot. Combined with the slippery performance and sensitive elevator, accurate speed control might be a little more difficult than in our other ships.

The performance is quite impressive, and reminded me more of a fiberglass ship than of anything metal that I've ever flown. The Solo accelerates quickly, and doesn't sink very fast, even at fairly high speeds. It would make a great ship for sports-class contests (I wonder what the handicap is?)

At the low speed end, the Solo continues to provide plenty of lift right down to just above the stall speed, but is not very tolerant of poor coordination at these low speeds. Heavier pilots reported classic symptoms approaching the stall, but with no nose drop occurring until a wing dropped too. Lightweights like myself found the stall to be fairly abrupt, with the first sign being simultaneous buffet, nose drop and wing drop. A spin will develop quite easily from sloppy flying close to the stall, especially with the airbrakes open. The spin characteristics seemed perfectly conventional to me, although some heavier pilots reported that it would not stay in a spin even when holding full inspin controls.

The airbrakes are very effective. There is a noticeable change in pitch as the brakes are opened and closed. The stick forces needed to correct for this are very slight, but the amount of pitch change is considerable if uncorrected.

The Solo lands conventionally. If you hold it off, it settles naturally in a more-or-less two point attitude. With the stick held back in the groundroll, the tailwheel rolls you as straight as an arrow, with no big rudder inputs needed.

The wheel brake is actuated by a bicycle-brake grip on the stick. It is extremely effective, so it should be used very gently and only with the stick fully back. It would be a shame to see the belly of the L-33 getting scraped up because of overenthusiastic (and unnecessary) braking. The L-33 is very light and rolls to a stop fairly quickly without any braking.

The Solo is an exciting step in the rejuvenation and modernisation of our fleet. We now have three gliders that are under three years old! It had been hoped that the Solo would augment and perhaps eventually replace the 1-26 as our primary ship for early-solo students. Flight evaluation unfortunately reveals that it is not well suited to that role. It's certainly not a difficult ship to fly, but its low-speed characteristics make it inappropriate for early solo students. Instead, the Solo will be made available to licensed pilots subject to a suitable checkout, much as the 1-34 has been in the past. The requirements to fly the 1-34 may be relaxed slightly, possibly dropping the requirement for a private license. The 1-26 will have to continue to be primarily the solo students' ship, until a more suitable substitute can be found.

If you're a licensed pilot checked out for the 1-34, and are current, get together with an instructor (one who has flown the L-33). You'll be given a thorough briefing on the ship, and possibly a dual check flight in an L-23. If you haven't flown for a while (it's been a long winter!), do a dual checkflight and a few solo currency flights first.

See you at the field!

Operations Off the Grass

by John Wren

With the availability of the Citabria as a back up tow plane several changes had to be made in order to make the operation more efficient. The bottle neck has been the fact that we can only stage one glider at a time on the paved runway. To really increase towing we have to increase the number of gliders at the launch point or increase the number of launch points. Several ideas were discussed, but for safety reason we will use the following procedures.

Launching on 34

When using one tow plane the existing launch point on the pavement will be used. Once the decision to use both tow planes is made the following procedure will be used.

The staging area for launching will be moved to the grass for both gliders launching off the grass and gliders launching off the paved runway. The grass launch point will be used until the use of the second tow plane is stopped for the day.

As before, no glider will be moved out to the launch point unless the pilot and glider is ready to fly. The launch point is no place to park a glider! The Blaniks will always be towed off the tar runway.

As on 16, the gliders launching on the pavement will be staged with their tails towards the runway. It is easier to push a glider onto the runway than it is to pull. The glider launching off the grass should be placed just in front of the glider staged for the paved runway.

The actual launching of the gliders on the pavement will change slightly to the normal procedure used on 34. When the pilot is ready the tow plane will be signaled and the tow pilot will go through checks and radio we are taking the active runway. At this point the launch crew will have to wait until the tow plane passes their position before pushing the glider out onto the pavement. There should be little problem here, because it is a mirror operation to 16.

The difference will of course be the grass launch. If the gliders have been staged correctly there will be little obstruction to landing gliders and the glider launching on the grass should be able to be towed right from it's staging point. The glider will be towed off slightly diagonally down the grass strip. For this reason the glider will need to be pointed this way when it is staged.

Unlike the operation on the pavement where we have a little time for delay while we take up slack with the tow plane, this will not do on the grass launch. It will be important that we follow several new steps before signaling the tow plane on to the grass.

The glider pilot must be in the glider and **all** pre-flight checks done. The tow rope attached to the glider. Slack taken out of the tow rope.

The above items would help operations on the paved runway, but are critical to the grass operation. Once you have called for the tow plane the launch should progress quickly. The less time the tow plane is on the grass strip the better. Also, at no time should both tow planes be on the "active." Meaning, as one launch is started down the runway, only then do you call for the next tow plane.

Launching on 16

The only changes on 16 will be with the grass operation. Whether you are using one or two tow planes there will be little change to the paved launching procedure.

As on 34, the grass launched glider will be placed across from the staging area for the glider being launched on the pavement. Of course, because of the raised ground, it will be a little further away.

Soon, we hope to place some "gutter stones" into the ground. There is so little room at both ends that if the gliders are not placed just right it could cause problems.

Having watched this operation evolve over the past few weeks I've seen some of the natural mistakes people seem to make.

1. The signal relay person standing too close to the tow plane.
2. The signal relay person standing in the middle of the grass landing area.
3. Tow ropes being placed incorrectly after being dropped.
4. Concerns over the runway light being to close to the glider launching off the grass.

Points one and two I can answer at the same time. With either one or two plane operations the signal relay person should place themselves well in front of the tow plane and several paces off to the side. When signaling a grass launched glider you should be on the paved runway side of the launch. Because the tow is moving diagonally down the grass, it will be moving away from you if you are on the paved side of the launch.

Point 3. In most cases the tow pilots have been dropping the ropes on the far side of the runway. This is fine, but several people have been dragging it back and staging it on the glider side. At the 34 end this means that while we wait to launch, the tow plane or several planes waiting to take off drive over the waiting tow rope. So with one tow plane at the 34 end leave the rope on the far side of the runway. For all other operations place the ropes near the runway lights. Of course I don't have to tell to keep the ropes clear of the runway lights!

Point 4. In fact if you take a good look at the operation, the gliders are no closer on the grass than they are on the pavement. The fact that we are towing diagonally on the field takes you away from the lights during the early stages of the tow.

DO's need to know that there needs to be at least two tow ropes at the launch area at the start of each operation.

Pilots need to keep an extra good look out. We've had it easy for years, seldom did we have more than a few gliders in the sky at a time. Now we are launching two per cycle. There is a good chance they will land near to the same time. Our pilots need to keep a good look out and understand they may have to share the grass with another pilot. If you find yourself first in line to land do not attempt to land short. Land long so that the next pilot does not need to land over you.

I watched a classic this weekend. Two gliders at the IP. Both waiting for the other to start his landing. The first to start was the higher performance glider, the other a trainer with a low time pilot. As glider 1 had more performance it made a wider pattern. Glider 2 (the trainer) tries to pace itself behind glider 1. As the landing progresses glider 2 is getting lower and flying slower. Glider 1 turns onto base with glider 2 low and still on downwind. Glider 1 has no worries, in fact it now pulls full airbrakes to lose height. Glider 2 has it's breaks close and is getting very low. Soon glider 1 on final lands short and does not fully clear the landing area, glider 2 with no height , no airspeed, and no runway lands over glider1 with it's left wing coming much to close for my blood pressure.

Glider 2 should have recognized the fact he was lower and in a lower performance glider. At the point when glider1 was turning onto a long base, glider 2 which was closer into the field should have turned base to final and landed long.

Remember we are not like powered aircraft. We do not have the luxury of being able to always cycle in behind the plane in front of us. As MITSA puts more gliders into the air or you travel to more active sites, you will need to understand that you must sort out your own pattern first. In some cases putting your glider down before others in the pattern. The later you leave the decision the more of a problem it becomes

A Note on L-33 Ground Handling

by Al Gold

When Ray Beausoleil and I went to untie the L-33, we found a sizable dent on the top of the nose cone, apparently caused by someone leaning on it to lift the tail wheel off the ground, à la the Schweizers. The nose cone is very thin and easily deformed if leaned on, except at the bulkhead just forward of the canopy. Fortunately we were able to work it pretty well back into original shape using our thumbs.

After speaking with John Wren about it, we adopted the standard procedure of always moving the L-33 on its tail dolly, like all the glass ships do, and removing the dolly just prior to take-off, with the glider in position to go. This also means that the people driving the golf cart to retrieve the L-33 need to take the dolly along, a small extra bother.

I'd suggest that if, for some good reason, the L-33 has to be turned without the dolly that the tail be lifted from beneath instead of pushing down on the nose cone.

I hope everyone reading this will pass the message on to others, especially DO's.

A Great 1-26 Flight

by Larry Timpson

Friday April 22, 9:45 AM: Ira Blieden calls: "Look at this weather! You gotta get out and fly!"

I call Peter Foley, who is going to give a power lesson on his lunch hour: he can tow me before or after, at 12:30 or 1:30. That's pretty nice of him; am I imposing? Well, this is soaring.

A nice looking day, with slightly shaggy, thinnish, high cumulus. But windy, with strong gusts coming from maybe 40° left of 34. Decide on the 1-26, largely because a solo retrieve/tiedown is likely. But it keeps trying to wander away and take off without me. Abort? Well, no, this is soaring.

Off at 12:43. Too rough for Peter's power student anyway. Usually a wind like this will break up the lift and put me on the ground before the tow plane.

On tow, there is lift at about 900 AGL, but even I am not that crazy. Peter intelligently tows me straight into the surface wind (about 300°). At 2300 MSL, out toward the school, more lift. Off tow, pretty easy climbing to 4000. Then I've botched it: the thermal is gone and the vario is pegged down (11 knots plus)—not nice in the 1-26. Oh, well, another twelve minute flight. No problem getting back to the field: I have been blown there already.

But here's more lift. There seems to be a sort of street parallel to 34 and a half mile or so west. At altitude, the clouds are moving right down 34.

A long struggle, ending at cloud bases at 8800. Couldn't have done it without that street—everything seems buoyant there. Now the thing is to stay within range of the airport: a continuous cross-country, working hard, straight upwind. Am now five or six miles downwind, and even at 8800 that's a long way into this wind. Of course, I could make Marlboro in about thirty seconds flat, but the runway there is too short for an aero retrieve, so rather not.

Now under a juicy but ragged cumulus. Squeeze up to 9100 at its upwind fringe and head out. But there's lift in the clear air ahead of it. Have occasionally been able to get a little above bases in the clear air to windward of a cumulus; let's see what's here.

Wow! There's lots of lift, and it's getting stronger! I'm working the upwind side of the cloud just like ridge, maybe a quarter or half mile each way. The lift started out at about 1 kt., but now it's varying up to 4.

The most beautiful moment of the flight: some cloud starts to form a few hundred feet below, and in a turn I see the unmistakable characteristic shape of the 1-26, a shadow in a brilliant spot of light, turning gracefully in the exact center of a concentric set of rainbow rings in the ice crystals below. And I had decided it was too much trouble to bring a video camera!

Cloud top at 11,100, but still climbing at nearly 2 kts. A hair over 11,500—above everything!

(Do I admit this?: I'm apt to give myself loud advice when working lift; but now—a touch hypoxic?—I'm shouting and singing! Well, after all: 11,500 in a 1-26 at Sterling!)

Not quite diamond climb, even if I had had a barograph, but pretty close; and a personal best, easily beating 9000 last May, also in the 1-26. Even beating—because of tows to about 5000 MSL—several flights to 12,000–12,500 with students at a MITSA encampment at Sugarbush in '83. (In—guess what—5775S, one of our much-maligned 2-33's.)

Meanwhile, the wind is very strong up here, and it's blowing me over the top of this cloud. There is a delicate cobweb of frost on the canopy, and I don't even have a sweater. Time to think about home.

The street is still working—pretty much zero sink or better most of the time—so I head out at 40–45 MPH without losing much altitude. Almost 20 minutes straight ahead, no turns, a little porpoising, only losing 800 feet—great. But the Route 290 bridge over Quinsigamond has edged ahead of me. I'm going backwards. Hmmm.

Accelerate to 55–70: that works, and thanks to the street I get back to the airport at about 6000.

Around the airport there is now definite wave, quite strong and quite low: climb from 5100 to 7500 before I know it at a perfectly smooth 8+ knots, working back and forth into the wind, within a few hundred yards of the departure end of 34. But it is hard to visualize the wave and stay in it. It is small, not marked at all, and the wind is blowing from different directions at different altitudes. (A GPS might be a big help.)

Strangely, I saw nothing like a wave cloud all day; and yet we see wave clouds near Sterling all the time when nothing workable is to be found.

A couple of minutes before 4:00, the landing: because of the conditions I pass over the runway on crosswind at a conservative 1400 AGL. Just a well, because at that point the vario pegs down and stays there. Downwind is close in, base leg ends up less than halfway from the threshold to the highway, and even at that I am none too high.

Finally, a solo retrieve and tiedown is easy in the 1-26.

Morals:

- Yes, Virginia, the 1-26 is a real sailplane!
- It doesn't hurt to carry a barograph. (Might this have been a Massachusetts 1-26 altitude record?)
- And maybe a GPS and a video camera?

Many thanks to Ira for shaming me into flying; to Peter, of course; and to his student, who was pressed into service as well.

Opening Day

by Ira Blieden (aka Uncle Charlie)

Well there I was, dreaming about soaring. It was the Friday before MITSA's opening day. As usual, I was dreaming of diamond distance.

The day, Saturday, April 15th was forecast to be windy. It was and to make matters worse, a crosswind from the west. I canceled my dreams of Diamond and decided it would be a good opportunity to practice.

The operation was moving well, and I was waiting for a sign of lift when the tow plane decided not to cooperate. It was dreaming about a day at the beach. Thanks to Peter Foley and the new Citabria, the operation resumed about 3:30. My first tow was uneventful. I went up and came down. But it was windy so I decided to do it again for the practice. With the second tow, the fun began. Immediately off tow, I found lift. It was not great, but it was strong enough to balance my down wind drift.

At around 3,500 AGL (1000 over release), and over the rock quarry near Sterling center, the magic began. The lift became smooth and increased to about four knots. Yep, you got it, “WAVE!!!” I spent about an hour pointing and climbed to about 5,200 AGL before loosing it. What an Opening Day! It was almost 2 hours of shear enjoyment!

Little did I know that the following week would be a retake. I went time to 10,600 AGL and found three separate waves! But that is another story.

A Recent Flight

by Shaun Keller

Saturday (30 April 1994) was an excellent thermal day. The weather forecasts, as usual, kept changing between cloudy with rain and cloudy with no rain as Thursday and Friday passed. Finally, a Friday evening forecast called for temperature in the 60s, low wind, and high clouds. It wasn’t obvious that there would be great soaring, but at least it wouldn’t be raining.

Saturday was a big day for the club as a new Blanik L-23 and a new Blanik L-33 had arrived and passed inspection at the end of the week. I wanted to see the new planes, particularly the L-33, but since I own a Grob 102 Astir, I wasn’t going to be waiting around for a chance to fly the new planes. Actually, I almost didn’t go to the field because of uncertainty about the weather and a desire to sleep in, but my enthusiastic friend who owns an LS3 called and said that he was heading out to the field and I should get out there too. Thank you for that phone call!

At about noon there was plenty of sun despite high clouds that constantly threatened to cover the countryside with their shadow, but never succeeded for more than a few minutes. The wind was light to moderate, even at higher altitudes. The experienced cross-country and competition pilots had left several hours earlier in their superships for impressive to me but run-of-the-mill to them several hundred km courses.

I’m coming off a year of inactivity, and aiming for a very active year this time. Since our club started flying again a couple weekends ago after a long and snowy winter, I had managed a check flight with an instructor in a Blanik L-23, and two short flights in my Grob. I have great memories of a flight that I made several years ago from Sugarbush, Vermont to Jay Peak (an total distance of about 175 km), but I’ll need a lot of practice to regain my cross-country confidence.

I was contemplating a no-guts tow to 3k AGL, but at 2k AGL the lift was pegging the vario so I pulled off and climbed to 5k MSL just west of the field. Only a crossroad in a lightly settled wooded area marked the thermal, but I was able to return to the area and climb again several hours later. The thermal bubbled with very strong moments of 6-8 kts up and a dependable average of 2-4 kts up. At least that is what I found as I tried to center the strongest lift. I don’t have much technique and would like to develop a workable climbing strategy. I just try to explore and slowly move into stronger lift. I wasn’t having much luck with steeply banking either because of real bubbles or because I flew out of the core.

It was clearly a good day, but what should I do with it? My friend in the LS3 likes to airport hop and with plenty of nearby airports, that is easy to do. This was only my fourth flight since returning to soaring! I opted to make a large circle of Sterling and explore the lift and sink distribution.

East of the airport is the interstate running north-south and then the Wachusett reservoir with a sizable gravel quarry between the two. There are several quarries and sand pits in the soaring neighborhood of Sterling. I’ve found thermals near them before, but I’m still wondering if that is cause and effect or chance as I’ve never been low enough over them to positively pinpoint the thermal source. This day the thermals had a slight northeast slant as I climbed. No Cu marked the thermals.

I’ve followed the interstate north for an easy hop to the Fitchburg airport several times before and expected to find a thermal or two along the way. There was some strong sink as you would expect on a good thermal day, but also fairly long stretches of neutral air. I lost only a thousand feet before I reached the next thermal near the gravel quarry and Wachusett reservoir. After regaining the lost altitude I headed north along the interstate toward Fitchburg.

Fitchburg is a medium sized airport with several runways and it is easy to see. The Grob’s polar falls steeply past 60 knots so I usually stick to 60 knots between thermals. It didn’t take long to cross the 9 miles to Fitchburg. I caught a thermal and wondered where to go next.

West of Fitchburg about 14 miles is Gardner and a little airport. Go 14 miles west of Gardner and you reach Orange with a bigger airport. If I had been comfortable with going cross-country, those would have been candidates. Instead, I headed for Mt. Wachusett closer to Sterling.

There is something pleasing about flying over a mountain, no matter how small it is. One learns to depend on Mt. Wachusett to throw off a thermal, but the thermals aren’t always in the same place. Still, with some flying around and trying not to worry about the sink, I managed to find a good thermal near the mountain. My circuit of Sterling was about half done.

The area south of Sterling doesn’t seem as inviting to me. Maybe it’s the big airport at Worcester 12 miles south or the enormous Quabban reservoir 25 miles west that seem like good places to avoid. Yet, I’m drawn to Tanner-Hiller airport 17 miles southwest between the Quabban and Worcester just because I know that it’s another soaring site. I head out into the void hoping to get close enough to glimpse Tanner-Hiller and still stay high enough for an easy glide back to Sterling.

I’m looking for Tanner-Hiller. I glance at the map. I look at the landscape. I’m confused as hell. I’m losing altitude. This is not going well. I press on convinced that

I should be able to find Tanner-Hiller. Eventually I see a single strip with some buildings that could be hangers off in the direction where I think Tanner-Hiller should be. I call that success and turn tail for Sterling.

Sterling is a ways away and I hadn't seen any good lift for a while, but I felt sure that I could make it. After cruising for a few minutes and watching Sterling rise on the canopy, I was getting nervous. Then, of course, I found another thermal.

Safe again, I enjoyed playing around trading height for speed and cruising off in whatever direction seemed interesting until I was tired of flying. The flight lasted 3 hours 40 minutes.

BIT Soaring Association

by Ira Blieden

That's right BIT not MIT... And now the rest of the story (move over Paul Harvey!).

I've been working for over a year with a contracting house in India. While we work, we talk and one day Madhav Challa mentioned his alma mater (Birla Institute of Technology & Science) in Pilani, India. On one occasion, he mentioned that BIT is affiliated with MIT and has been for many years. The affiliation includes exchange program for students. Additionally, BIT models it curriculum, and grading after MIT.

But... it does not stop there. In the MID 60's BIT established a SOARING club!!! The club is still active and like many students Madhav took an introductory flight in a 3 seat glider that was launched by autotow.

Hopefully, I'll get Madhav and Alind (a co-worker) out to the field and let them experience New England's scenery at its finest.

News Briefs

Reminder: New Number for Recorded Message

Call **(508) 251-1374** instead of (508) 422-0272.

News on 1-34 Repair and Painting

by Guenther Eichhorn

The 1-34 is getting a long overdue painting, white with red trim, and the rudder is being repaired. Schweizer no longer sells 1-26 and 1-34 parts, but refers repairers to another source. The 1-34 should return to the field sometime in June.

Cross-Country Class Canceled

by John Wren

Due to the lack of response there will be no Cross-Country Class. For the those of you who wish to have this class I am happy to put it on at any time as long as there are at least four or five pilots willing to attend. Contact John Wren at 508-251-2878 or use e-mail 76467.3163@compuserve.com

Help Wanted

Making Ballast Bags

by Al Gold and Jakov Kucan

I noticed last Sunday that there's only one lead shot weight bag at Sterling. I've just acquire a 25 lb bag of shot being cleaned out of an old lab here. Is there someone who can sew a proper container for it? —Al

Jakov, who is in charge of club logistics and says: I'm looking for volunteers to make bags. If you can help, please contact: Jakov Kucan (kucan@theory.lcs.mit.edu) d. (617) 253-5866, e. (617) 576-0735

MITSA People

submitted by various club members

Secret Wedding Revealed!

You may have noticed the ASH-25 sized smile on Kerry Richards. No, student pilots, it wasn't your flying that so pleased this instructor. After weeks of investigation (and a phone call from Kerry saying, "Hey! I'm married!") we have discovered that Kerry and Sue got married! Congratulations!

New Club Member

OK, maybe we will have to wait a while to start pilot training...

Congratulations to Mark and Cathy Koepper on the birth of their son Aaron Mark. He landed at an all up weight of 6lb 1oz.

Larry Timpson Goes For the Gold (and Lands Out)

Well almost. Unfortunately, the Gold was not for Soaring but tennis. But like many land outs, there is some risk involved. On his last game of the day, on his last chance to save the game the unexpected happened. He fell, twisted his leg and damaged a knee and tendon: BADLY. He has since decided to have the surgery done in the UK. Hopefully we will see him back at the field in 8 weeks (the time period in which he needs to have a leg brace). As far as I am concerned, Soaring is good therapy.

About Helping Out

I found the first of these two little bits of nagging. . . blame the second on Derek.—*Editor*

Who's on First?

This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done, and Everybody was sure Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized Everybody wouldn't do it. So Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done!

Which are you?

by Peter Clemence

Some keep their organization strong,
While others join, just to belong
Some volunteer and do their share,
While some there are who barely care.

On meeting days, some always show,
While some there are who never go.
Some always pay their dues ahead;
Some get behind for months instead.

Some do their best; some build, some make,
Some never do - just sit and take.
Some lag behind, just let things go,
And never help their group to grow.

Some drag, some pull. Some don't, some do.
Consider: Which of these are you?

For Sale

Soaring Merchandise

MITSA has some nice stuff available from our Sterling office (pay the D.O.):

- bumper stickers *I'd rather be soaring* $1 each
- MITSA T-shirts (mostly M) $5 each
- US Soaring Team cloth patches $1 each
- 1983 (the latest!) Sailplane Directory (pictures and specs) $5 each
- soaring posters $5 each

About This Issue

by Shaun Keller, Editor

This issue of the newsletter is a blockbuster! It is great to have so much to publish. This is the second newsletter to be created and distributed electronically (that term seems antiquated) as well as printed and mailed.

I spent a few days trying to get the typesetting software working with scanned photos. Mark Tuttle helped diagnose my problems and told me how it is *supposed* to work. With even more experimentation I learned how to make it work. I like the results!

There are still lots of things that can be done with the format and appearance of the newsletter, but my basic publishing goals have been accomplished: anyone with a computer can read and print the newsletter, back issues will always be available, and the newsletter is available to a huge number of soaring enthusiasts via BBS and the Internet.

I'll repeat my standard two requests: 1. Please give me photos (prints) to publish. 2. I'd like you to make an effort to write a paragraph or two about recent flights. Where did you go? What was the weather? What were the decisions you made? Put it on a postcard or e-mail it to me. (32 Kenneth St. West Roxbury, MA 02132-2023 (617) 327-3193 shaun.keller@databoss.com)

Yes, it's a May newsletter arriving in June. I'll be back on time with the June issue.

Photo Credits

The excellent photos of the new Blaniks and their uncrating were taken by Ray Beausoleil. Thank you Ray!

The Slingsby Dart 17R in flight is by Shaun Keller.