THE LEADING EDGE
The Newsletter of M.I.T. Soaring Association, Inc.
July 1995

Editor: Shaun Keller

Contents

Breaking News

There is some exciting news breaking as this newsletter goes to press:

Competitions: At the US 15-meter Class Nationals in New Mexico, Doug Jacobs finished first and Bob Fletcher finished twenty-eighth. At the US Standard Class Nationals in California, Phil Gaisford finished sixth after hanging out for a few days in the top three or four. At the Region 1 Competition in Vermont, Bill Brine and Mark Evans placed seventh and ninth in the sports class (this was Bill's first contest), former MITSA member Harvey Howell placed fifth in the standard class, and former MITSA member Rick Sheppe placed third in the 15-meter class. Congratulations to all these pilots!

Children: Congratulations to John and Deyanne Urbahn on the birth of their son Shepard "named after Alan Shepard who also has the right stuff." Congratulations also to Bob and Michelle Fletcher on the birth of their first child (seemingly moments after Bob pulled into the driveway after returning from the 15-meter nationals!).

New members: We are fortunate to have gained a number of talented new members since the last newsletter. Please welcome: Darla Bindl, Paul Dolivera, Errol Drew, Jerry Engelsman, Bob Fletcher, Bob Freeman, Charles Friedman, John Fulghum, Reggie Gifford, John Hassett, Carl Johnson (a formerly very-active member returned), Joe Kwasnik, Tony Lauck, Lou LeBlanc, Keith Leo, Prashant Sinha, David Vignal, Eric Zucker, and Michael Zucker.

Moving on: Our president, chief tow pilot, instructor, and long-time member Lee Marzke has moved on to a new and exciting job in Philadelphia. We wish Lee well in his new job, and thank him for the years of work he has done for the club.

Fantastic soaring: This spring there have been some fantastic days of soaring. In fact, the first half dozen articles in this newsletter are stories some members have circulated by electronic mail about their flights.

300K Day

by Mark Koepper

Late May 1995

I've been planning "the big 300K" and somehow fixated on one task (Claremont, Southbridge, return). Saturday I talked myself out of making the attempt rationalizing that I would fly the southern part of my chosen task to get familiar with the territory. After all, hearsay had it that North would not be good (this turned out to be somewhat true).

Once in the air the sky looked great in all directions and I regretted not taking a few minutes to prepare a declaration, barograph, etc. I flew Orange, Southbridge and return and arrived back with time and height so I then flew Jaffrey and return. Total distance 142 statute miles (230K) my personal best. I'm not sure how bad the conditions really were North of Keene but I might just have made the 300 task. I'll never know until I finally try it.

To Turners Falls

by John Urbahn

Late May 1995

Let me tell you about my flight this past Saturday. I made it all the way to Turners Falls where the lift was much weaker than at Sterling. It was really great finally breaking the bonds to Sterling. At Turners Falls I was down to 1200 ft agl with the gear down. I stayed patient for ten minutes in some zero sink which then grew so that I could climb out. I was low again just east of Gardener when I hit the thermal from heaven which took me to 8000 feet. At this height Sterling was about a 1 to 3 glide! Lift was at times eight knots and I was several times above the cloudbase. Time aloft was about 5.5 hours. I had no barograph so all this is just a fine flying tale for the winter months.

A Day When Even "Complete Morons" Can Stay Up

by Guenther Eichhorn

That's what Mark Tuttle said when he came back from flying on Saturday, 15 April. He said he had to fight his way down. When I heard this, I thought "This is day to do it." Never mind the morons, but maybe even I could stay up to do a little cross country. One big incentive to try it was the fact that the 1-34 needed to go to Tanner–Hiller for its annual. I didn't want to tow it since there were enough people that needed tows. A day when morons can stay up sounded like I might be able to fly the 1-34 over to Tanner–Hiller without the tug. I decided to go up in the 1-34 and see how it looked. I would have to find at least 3 thermals and work them well enough before I even would try to head out there. In the third thermal I would decide whether it was a GO.

So I got the 1-34 out, checked it out and got a tow. From the way I got bounced around on tow it was clear that there was plenty of activity up there. I released at 2000 ft in a 1500 ft/min thermal and promptly lost it. Oh good I thought, so much for the moron part. But Mark was right, the thermals were everywhere. I right away found another one and climbed to about 4500 ft. By that time I had drifted halfway to Wachusett reservoir. That was not a good start on my way to Tanner–Hiller. I headed back to the airport and a little towards the west. About a mile west of Sterling I found another good thermal that got me to about 5000 ft. By that time I was again over I-190. "This is pretty frustrating business" I thought. And I still wasn't convinced that I really wanted to do that x-country bit. So I headed north–west again. A couple of miles west of Sterling I found another good one. This one got me up to about 5500 ft.

Now it was decision time: Should I go ahead with this crazy scheme? Well, I thought I was still within easy reach of Sterling, so lets give it a try. I pointed the nose at Tanner–Hiller and immediately hit 1500 ft/min sink. I kind of had expected that, so I just pointed the nose further down to pick up some speed. There was a good looking cloud about 7 or 8 miles ahead. I didn't like that sinking feeling at all, but I thought that if morons can do it, I should give it a try. After a while (long to me, but pretty little in actual time) the sink diminished and even once in a while turned a little bit into lift. But never enough to try to work it. I was down to about 3000 ft MSL and really getting worried when the needle pegged up. *Whew*, that was about time. It was a good one and I climbed quickly. By now I was about 10 or 12 miles from Sterling in the middle of nowhere. I was determined to work this thermal up to the cloud base to have some reserve. It didn't take long and I was at almost 7000 ft.

By now I was again in range of Sterling but it seemed not quite enough for Tanner–Hiller (with all that sink in between). But by now my confidence was up enough to go ahead without hesitation. Another 8 or so miles towards Tanner–Hiller I hit another thermal that got me back to about 5500 ft or so. From there on it was a straight shot to Tanner–Hiller. I got there at about 3000 ft MSL or about 2500 ft AGL. And that was just in time. The sky was overcast by that time. I tried to work a couple of thermals just to stay up a while longer, but no luck. I got there just before the thermals closed down. The landing was uneventful. I found a couple of people to help me tie down the glider. Then I could only wait to be picked up. I had radioed the tug that I was landing at Tanner–Hiller, so they knew where I was. I didn't say anything before the flight, because I didn't want to make a fool out of myself and not make it to Tanner–Hiller on a day when even complete morons can stay up.

One problem with Tanner–Hiller is that it is very difficult to find. It would have been quite disconcerting if I would have to fly around in circles trying to find the airport. But a year ago I had bought my Pitts new clothes, which was done at that airport. Having visited the patient frequently to check on its progress during that time, I knew exactly where to go. I had the airport located when I came out of the big thermal at 7000 ft about halfway to Tanner–Hiller.

Am I hooked on x-country flying now? That was the first question Bill Brine asked me after I told him about the trip. I don't think so. Even at 6000 ft I didn't feel entirely comfortable out in the boonies. And just thinking about being in that place at 3000 ft makes my palms sweat. On a day like this I may try for my Silver C, but anything less in terms of weather won't do.

YN does 650K

by John Wren

Late May 1995

Here are some details from our flights.

Soon after Bob Fletcher (90), Phil Gaisford (PG), and John Wren (YN) climbed out over Sterling Bob declared out-and-return to Sugarbush. Shooting up north we used mostly cloud streets to Keene and beyond. After Keene there it nothing but trees and the occasional pond, it was at this point I slowed up. As you went north the cloud base came down and lift weaker. Because of this it was decided to drop Sugarbush and turn Claremont.

Because I was now falling behind, I turned 10.2 miles from Claremont. I know this because YN now has a $2000 GPS system that tells you in an instant how badly you are doing.

Now the race was to the south. At Keene I picked up Ira Blieden (UC) and Errol Drew (204) by radio and we all headed south. PG and 90 made a direct course to Oxford (S of Worcester) while 204 and I did Orange and Tanner Hiller.

A 10kt thermal at Hiller convinced me to head up a cloud street to the north. My plan was to turn Keene and come home. Just short of Keene I was climbing in 5kts, looked down and saw 90 & PG blasting up the same street I had used (only much faster). We all "clicked" Keene and I thought "Great we can all final glide home!" But *Nooooo!* 90 says "Lets do Claremont."

So for the second time we blasted off over bear country to a lowering cloud base. At 18.6 miles (Isn't technology wonderful!) I had enough and headed south to higher clouds. At Keene I climbed out to a final glide to Sterling and listened to what was playing out to the north.

It basically got "soft." 90 got low after Claremont and never recovered, PG slowed up and survived the weakening conditions. 90 landed in a field next to the Conn. River. It was unfortunate because they must have been averaging over 120kph all day.

I returned after 410k at 95kph, my personal best. PG did 512k at warp speed for 3/4 of the flight. 90 400+k and a LO. [John says PG actually went much farther than this, and I think Phil said it was the longest flight of his life. — Mark Tuttle]

The 650k comes from the fact I had to do another 200k to fetch Fletch. We got back to Sterling at midnight.

Memorial Day Weekend Flights

by Phil Gaisford

The last two weekends produced some good cross country soaring conditions from Sterling, yielding flights of 545, 585 and 240 km for me. Flown mostly together with Bob Fletcher in 90, we got some good practice for the upcoming Nationals. Here are some of the highlights of the first of these flights.

Saturday May 20

The days started bright and sunny, with cumulus appearing shortly after 09:00. It took us a while to get ready however, and I was not in the air until about 11:40. 90 launched next, and after meeting up near cloud base we set off. Our primary goal for all these flights was to practice competition soaring, i.e. we don't take off with fixed tasks declared, rather we pick a turn point, then do our best to race around it. As one turn point is approached, we proceed to pick the next, and so on. Needless to say, we tend to pick turn points where the weather looks soarable.

The first choice of TP was Sugarbush. There was plenty of cumulus on track, but few good climbs. Near Monadnock, I took time to climb to cloudbase, since the terrain along the next part of the course is very unlandable. Farther down track, it soon became apparent that conditions were deteriorating to the North, so the flight plan was changed to turn Claremont and then on to Northampton. Conditions improved rapidly as we moved South again. We flew slightly different routes down the second half of this leg, and 90 reached the turn about a mile ahead of me, with a few hundred feet to spare, which he increased to about 5 miles by Southbridge, the next turn.

By now we were in some excellent soaring weather, with lift of 6-7 kts and long streets. I spent most of the next two hours cruising along between 6–7000 ft, and was working hard on assessing various cloud streets by studying their shadows in the ground. We decided on Mansfield as the next turn, which we reached at about 16:00, by which time I was ahead again by a few hundred feet. Our initial selection was to return to Sterling via Southbridge, but it was soon evident that this was going to be much too easy, so we elected to return via Northampton.

Things were starting to look a little weak as we approached the Connecticut River valley again, but an unlikely looking cloud gave us a good climb to near 7000 ft again, which allowed us to round at about 17:10 Northampton with sufficient height for a final glide. This was my first opportunity to try a long glide with my newly upgraded computer (now with three internal altimeters—lots of room for pilot error!) so I took a conservative line to follow one last cloud street before letting the speed build up to burn off the excess height. I opened the water dump valve when a couple of miles out to give it plenty of time to drain, though I was only carrying 100 lbs on this occasion.

So you can see it was all quite straight forward—it just needs a little practice to get it right.

Bits from the Field

by Mark Tuttle

Saturday, May 20: Congratulations to Bob Fletcher and Phil Gaisford! These club members flew together for over 500K on Saturday afternoon. I guess all you need is a $50,000 glider and a cross-country partner nagging you over the radio. 8-). Many other club members had good flights. Total flight times for club members during the day: Kerry Richards, 2:40; Michael Welles, 2:19; Mark Tuttle, 1:45; Wren McMains, 1:34 dual; Steve Sovis, 55; Joe Kwasnik, 46 dual; and Matt Sovis, 46 dual.

Kerry Richards flew the L-33 from Sterling to Fitchberg, Gardner, Orange, and Turner Falls. He could have continued "forever," but clawed his way back to earth, knowing the Lee Marzke wanted to fly. Kerry got down, and almost immediately Lee was drafted to tow in the Citabria! Fortunately, Lee still had a smile on his face at the end of the day.

Sunday, May 21: Sunday was also a reasonably good day, but again I don't have many hard facts since I had my back turned when people were leaving. Phil Gaisford (PG) humbly admitted that he had flown over 300K, and I suspect that Errol Drew (204) and Bob Fletcher (90) also did quite well. Steve Sovis flew solo in the 1-26 for the first time twice that day, and is building a reputation in my mind for the most graceful landings in club gliders. Roy Bourgeois and Al Gold flew Roy's beautiful 1-26, and I understand there is a plot afoot to swap our 1-26 with Roy's, but the instigators are worried that Roy might notice a slight difference 8-). Ian Clark and Steve Moysey are now the proud new owners of Derek Sherlock's Cirrus (42). I (US) flew locally for 3.5 hours in the afternoon, my best flight by well over an hour, and had a kind of aviation epiphany. If I'm forgetting someone here, please tell us about it.

Lee Marzke was going to start the process of checking out a new tow pilot, but the Cessna went down due to battery problems, and Lee ended up towing all afternoon in the Citabria. MITSA owes a round of thanks to the 3B3 partners (Tom Avery, Bill Brine, Ian Clark, Peter Foley, Derek Sherlock, Steve Sovis, John Wren) and to Lee for keeping the club flying during the current round of intermittent Cessna problems. A number of the Citabria tow pilots (perhaps all of our tow pilots) would have loved to fly gliders these last two weekends rather than tow for the rest of us. You can contact the 3B3 partners that have email by sending email to 3b3@crl.dec.com and thank them.

Sterling Silver

by Mark Koepper

It was May of 1993 when I did my silver badge flight. I remember the problems facing me when I pondered flying off to some mysterious destination. I had confidence that I could keep the glider in the air for a couple of hours because I did that fairly regularly, but actually finding another airport and landing there was another story. Worse yet was that possibility of falling short and having to land in a field. I was not at all sure that these fields I'd heard about really existed out there on course (or more likely off course). Even if there were fields I was skeptical about having any clue about size, slope, surface, obstacles like wires and fences or livestock and children. I still am skeptical. I like to land on runways.

Initial discussion about a likely course brought up the notion of going to Mansfield. "Go downwind young man." This sounded good, particularly since I'd flown at Mansfield and figured I was more likely to recognize the area than some airport I'd never been over before. Then I looked at the map. There is a private airport 16 miles enroute called Unknown. Looks easy enough to find lying in a triangle between Rt. 9 the Mass Pike and 495. However no-one I asked had ever heard of anyone landing there. Power pilots said it looked narrow and might not allow a glider to fit between the trees. There just wasn't much information about Unknown. The next chance of landing on a runway along the route is Hopedale. The word here was you have almost no hope of finding Hopedale. It's a single asphalt strip between some steel industrial buildings. At this point I'd be 26 miles from Sterling with 17 miles to Mansfield. I didn't want to be low, in that situation looking for a difficult to find airport.

If you've had similar doubts about doing your silver distance perhaps my thought process in choosing a route may help. Looking more at the map I began to believe that central Massachusetts was the place to be. Airports everywhere. Fly a few miles most directions from Sterling and you will see one. Why fly off into the Unknown with nothing but a prayer and a Hopedale?

My choice in the end was a remote start at Shirley finishing at Orange. I'm not sure if Shirley is wide enough to land a glider. The good news is Fitchburg 5 miles from Shirley with huge X runways screaming at you. I never considered landing at Shirley. On a reasonable day you can easily go in for a picture of Shirley and have Sterling and Fitchburg both as landing options the entire time; try it.

After you take your picture of Shirley follow Rt. 2 past Fitchburg to Gardner. The airport may be little difficult to spot but you should see it by the time you get past Mt. Wachusett. The map shows the runway crossing Rt. 2 but it really lies to the south of the highway and you don't have to worry about dodging tractor trailers if you must land there. At this point you have Fitchburg as an option and most likely Sterling also. But before you go barrelling into Gardner remember that unlike Sterling there are no friendly fields nearby and don't forget that the runway is about 1000 ft. above sea level. So don't plan a glide in arriving at 1500 MSL.

Get nice and high somewhere around Gardner and you're a 14 mile final glide from a completed silver distance. Orange is easy to find. This airport is gigantic with 3 runways and it's right along Rt. 2. You can usually see it from directly over Gardner.

If you declare a remote finish at Orange you have an option. Land or take a picture and fly home. Either way you get the flight. My advice is don't be in a hurry. You can leave Sterling at 1:00 and still have plenty of time to get the flight done and fly home. Use the best part of the day, relax and have fun.

I have all the details for a flight declaration and other paperwork if you want to try this route. I still believe this is the easiest choice although possibilities abound. Stowe-Minute Man to Tanner-Hiller or Sterling to Turners-Falls are some other options.

A Swift Kick In The Pants

by David "Pablo" Cohn

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"Oh I have slipped the surly bonds of earth and danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings…"

Sometimes it just takes a swift kick in the seat of our pants to make us really understand something. I had memorized John Gillespie Magee's words because they began a poem about flight. I fancied myself a poet, and fancied myself a pilot. I thought it was my duty to know this poem that Magee, an RAF volunteer, had written home just two weeks before his death. So I had memorized it. I knew the words by heart; I could, and did, recite them to any other pilot who was sympathetic enough to remain within earshot. Yes, I knew these words by heart. But it took a kick in the seat of my pants before I understood them.

That kick came two years ago, while I was practicing for my glider rating. I already had a single-engine license, and figured that the glider "add-on" would be a pleasant way to pass the summer weekends. After a dozen lazy flights in the two-place Blanik, my instructor had turned me loose in the club's Schweizer 1-26. For those who do not know the 1-26, it is a small single seat glider. One does not so much climb into it as simply strap it on. It was smaller than any airplane I had ever been in; I felt as though I could almost reach my arms out and touch both tips of this, this toy glider.

Sitting on the runway that first time—yes, I felt like I was sitting *on* the runway, surrounded by this close-fitting uniform of plexiglass and aluminum—sitting there, I recalled my instructor's warning: "She'll be a bit lighter on the controls than you expect—if you're not gentle, you'll be all over the sky."

He was right, of course. After three flights, I still didn't have the knack of takeoffs in the 1-26. Trying to hold level at the end of the towrope, I would overcontrol and swoop from 5 feet to 15, then down to brusquely kiss the pavement and back up again. Each takeoff would begin with a couple of such swoops before I could regain my timing and composure, and fall in line behind the tug for my slow ride upstairs.

Once aloft though, the 1-26 was a joy to fly. I had been accustomed ox-like to airplanes that must be coerced by sheer strength of arm to alter their pitch and heading; in contrast, the 1-26 was a playful puppy, turning and rolling at the slightest touch. I soon learned not to consciously move the controls—that would lead to a rough, brutish flight. Rather, I would *think* where I wanted to go; the 1-26 would understand, and if she were capable, would come along happily.

We had only been together for a few flights, the 1-26 and I, but I was beginning to think that there might be more to silent flight than just an add-on rating. I had, for example, read about thermals. Those mythical, invisible columns of air which the hawks and gulls can ride effortlessly all afternoon. I'd read about them, searched for them, and had, from time to time, been rewarded with a trickle of lift that had reached from below to hold me tenuously aloft. My altitude crept imperceptibly upwards, and it was a glorious feeling: I was soaring! Then, like a breath held too long, it was suddenly gone and I sank heavily to earth. Always, the hawks would look down from their lazy circles and nod in disapproval.

It was now late afternoon, and this flight was going to be like all the others this summer. Up to 3500 feet, a few turns here and there like an errant child on a snark hunt. Sniffing for that elusive thermal that might stretch my precious time in the air. Down to 1500, then set up the pattern, airspeed, trim, airbrakes, look around, and land.

A flight like any other. I was already descending through 2000 feet, creeping back to the field on the scant lift from the asphalt highway below. I had been up for 20 minutes. Not bad, I was told, for a student at my level. A turn west over the sand pit to get me in position, and

WHUMP!

I felt the sound before I heard it. The 1-26 jolted as if we'd been smacked from below by some divine flyswatter. A swift kick in the pants. My first reaction, like that of all good students, was panic—a midair? What had I hit? The sputter of the audio variometer rose to a shrill whine and the turbulent air rattled us like a dustpan. What had happened? I had control, my airspeed was in the green, altitude was fine, and my vertical speed was…topped out on the "up" peg. It was then that I finally realized: I had roped a thermal. I had blundered into a rising column of air that was dragging me skyward, whether I wanted to go or not.

Now, "wanted" might have been too mild a word for the situation. I had begun to dream of lift, my nights filled with visions of floating effortlessly, silently among the hawks and gulls. Yes, I wanted this thermal, and I was not going to let it get away.

The 1-26 responded even as I thought it, and cut hard left into a steep bank. (Look first! Whew, we're clear) Nose on the horizon, bring it back to minimum sink speed, start feeling for the core…The sequence came to me like a checklist. I had read this, and had read it well. More bank when the vario tone drops, less as it rises. The vario howled. My altimeter wound up at a dizzying rate—3000 feet, 4000 feet, now 5000. The VSI remained stuck on its peg; I was climbing at least 1500 feet per minute and the ground pulled away like I was riding a glass elevator. Where would it stop?

It stopped just above 8500 feet. Spit me out the top into the smooth air above and there I was. I discovered, to my amazement, that the thermal was still down there below me. I could circle, lose a few hundred feet, and regain the bubbling turmoil that would carry me up again.

Eight thousand five hundred feet. Not high by any standards, but it had taken me less than five minutes to get there. It had been effortless, and now here, silent and all alone in the late afternoon, I could stay.

But I was not alone. As the green earth turned a slow pinwheel below me, I saw for the first time that I had company. Sixty feet ahead and away, casting a wary eye back at this sheet metal pretender from below, a lone gull circled with me.

Our eyes met, and it was clear that this was *his* thermal, into which I had stumbled uninvited. Of course I was uninvited—what bird would welcome the company of so ungainly a contraption? But the gull chose to tolerate my company. I was not nearly so bad as the shrieking metal machines which came and left the airport all day; I was small and quiet. For an intruder, I was fairly innocuous. I would be allowed to stay.

It might have been pathos, too. Anthropologists tell of primitive island cultures that, seeing airplanes fly overhead, built facsimiles out rock and wood. Were they built out of worship? Imitation? As a lure to bring these steel-winged gods to earth? I don't know. But hearing these stories evoked a feeling for those people. Those who, in awe, imitated flight they could never really know. I now wonder if the gull had those same thoughts. "These featherless bipeds have created a white metal bird in my image, which awkwardly rides the same currents of air I do…is forbearance too much to ask?"

And so we circled that afternoon. The gull, a consummate pilot, watching me, and keeping a safe distance. Me, no…us, the 1-26 and I, following around in that silent windswept world.

I said earlier that I had memorized Magee's poem, and that I would recite it to any pilot who would listen. I thought it was unlikely that the gull had heard it before. I don't imagine he heard it that afternoon either, separated by sixty feet and a sheet of plexiglass. But I know he understood it, just as I understood it for the first time when the words came to me then, under my breath:

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling
mirth
Of sun-split clouds and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of—
Wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence.
Hovering there
I've chased the shouting wind along and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up along delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy
grace,
Where never lark, or even eagle flew;
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

—John Gillespie Magee Jr., "High Flight"

L-33 and 1-34 Side-by-Side

by Al Gold

On April Fools Day, soaring conditions tried to make me believe that I was back in Nevada. There were 10 kt thermals to 8,300 ft, and long streets of strong, strong lift. Nature's wonderful joke gave Kerry Richards and me the chance to do a significant amount of side-by-side flying, he in the L-33 and I in the 1-34.

In about a five mile interthermal run, the 1-34 had at least as good an L/D as the L-33 for a range of speeds from 55 through 80+ mph. We had done some similar flying last season at speeds of 65 mph and under, with a clear edge for the 1-34. The high end of the range surprised both of us a bit.

In an 8 to 10 kt thermal, the 1-34 clearly outclimbed the L-33—not a shock given its larger wing area and lower wing loading. I kept shallowing my turn to permit the Blanik to keep up. I don't believe that the observed difference can be ascribed to my superior piloting skills.

We then ran a street that extended from near the north end of the field to past the west side of Mt. Wachusett. Kerry was following behind, out of my field of view. He reported that when we slowed in areas of stronger lift the 1-34 pulled away, and that when we speeded up in the weaker spots the L-33 regained the lost ground.

Given the less than scientifically controlled nature of these observations, I think it's reasonable to conclude that the cross-country performances of the two ships are closely comparable, and that I'd like more Nevada-style soaring days at Sterling.

I was delighted to hear from a Sunday pilot that we hadn't used up all of the good lift for the weekend.

Massachusetts State Soaring Records					
Class	Straight Distance	Triangle Distance	Goal Distance	Altitude	Alt Gain
Open Single-Place	220.0	321.1	200.0	19,604	18,350
Open Multi-Place				13,600	9,300
15 Meter		220.0	321.1	19,604	18,350
Standard					
Fem. Single-Place	54.8			12,850	8,200
Fem. Multi-Place					
Junior Single-Place					
Junior Multi-Place	65.0	39.8		9,753	6,500
Motor. Single-Place					
Motor. Multi-Place					
Sports Class					

Class	O&R Distance	O&R Speed 300 KM	O&R Speed 500 KM
Open Single-Place	336.73		
Open Multi-Place			
15 Meter	313.0		
Standard			
Fem. Single-Place			
Fem. Multi-Place			
Junior Single-Place			
Junior Multi-Place			
Motor. Single-Place			
Motor. Multi-Place			
Sports Class			

Class	Speed Triangles					
	100 KM	200 KM	300 KM	500 KM	750 KM	1000 KM
Open Single-Place		45.7	39.6	54.9		
Open Multi-Place						
15 Meter		45.7	39.9	54.9		
Standard						
Fem. Single-Place						
Fem. Multi-Place						
Junior Single-Place						
Junior Multi-Place						
Motor. Single-Place						
Motor. Multi-Place						
Sports Class						

Figure 1: Massachusetts state records from John Wren. John says, “It would be nice if MITSA could fill in the blanks!”

Preflight Inspection

by Al Gold

On Saturday, June 10, I had yet another lesson in the importance of preflight inspections. As I started to prepare the 1-34, I noticed that the ASI was indicating about 28 mph rather than zero. It did not respond to being tapped. I looked in the pitot tube. There appeared to be a small, light grey object in it, not far from the end. After some scrounging around, I got a paper clip to try to fish it out, thinking it might be a small seed or some such. Adam Deshowitz poked about and pulled out an inch worm. He poked some more. Out came a second—then a third, the last only about 1 cm long, and promptly named a metric inch worm by Darla Bindl.

At his point, blowing gently into the pitot caused the needle to twitch a bit and begin to descend slowly toward, but not all the way to zero. We removed the pitot line from the ASI, and Adam blew into it from that end. He met re-

	L-33		1-34		1-26	
	Johnson Leading Edge Jan '95		Bikle/Johnson Soaring June '71		Johnson Soaring Feb '77	
Speed, Kt.	L/D	% of best	L/D	% of best	L/D	% of best
32					18.8	87
38	28.5	92				
40	29.4	95	27.4	88	21.5	100
42.5			29.3	94		
44					21.6	100
46	31.0	100				
48.5			31.3	100		
50	31.1	100*	31.1	99	20.6	95
60	24.8	80	26.8	86	17.4	81
70	21.8	70	22.5	72	14.1	65
80	18.0	58	19.0	61	11.3	52
90	14.5	47	15.8	50	appx.8–9	35–40
100			13.0	42		
110			10.6	34		
min sink	135 @ 38 kt		147 @ 42.5 kt		172 @ 32 kt	
best L/D	31.1 @ 46 kt		31.3 @ 48.5 kt		21.6 @ 44 kt	
red line			123 kts.			

* Although max L/D is given as 31 @ 46 kts., 163 FPM @ 50 kts. is an L/D of 31.06.
L/D computation: (FORWARD SPEED, kts(NM/hr) * 6076 ft/NM) / (SINK, ft/min * 60 min/hr)

Figure 2: Performance of the L-33, 1-34, and 1-26 compiled by Larry Timpson.

sistance, which ceased suddenly as an object flew out of the front end. Reconnected, all now appeared to be normal. With some question in my mind about whether the ASI itself was inhabited, I took a flight. All was normal.

I have made pitot tube covers for both the 1-34 and the 1-26 out of short lengths of plastic tube, closed at one end with vinyl tape. Though it may be locking the barn door after the inch worm is gone, I URGE ALL SCHWEIZER PILOTS TO USE AND NOT LOSE THEM. The same should probably be done for the Blaniks too.

This is the second time in less than a month that I've found a glider to be less than ready to fly while doing a preflight. (The other was finding water in one of the ailerons of Roy Bourgeois' 1-26.) Like most people, I have always found doing preflights a tedious bore. I find it no less boring now—but I still look both ways before crossing the street.

Wednesday Evening Flying Group

by Steve Moysey

Steve Moysey has started holding small operations for students on Wednesday evenings, and sent in reports about the early meetings. —Ed

Wednesday, June 23: The inaugural session of the Wednesday evening group was held this week. John Fulghum, Richard Gammon and myself met at the field, needing at least one more member to start flying. A gentleman by the name of Lou LeBlanc joined us at around 6 PM. Lou is planning to join the club next Wednesday, after having a trial flight last weekend. So, if the numbers stay the same we should be able to fly next week, weather permitting

The evening was worthwhile, as we spent the time running through the procedure for daily inspection of the Blaniks. Next week I hope to move on to flying the glider!

Wednesday, June 28: Flying tonight! The evening weather was very kind to us, with silky smooth conditions for the students to fly in. It was so SMOOOOOTH. The roughest part of any flight was trundling along the grass after landing!

Student pilots John Fulghum and Joe Kwasnik had good flights and are both making great progress. Mark Tuttle is working toward his commercial rating. This means he has to endure, from yours truly in the back seat, alternating bouts of intense sarcasm and incessant nagging. Keep up the good work Mark!

Roy Bourgeois gave a couple of intro. flights to a prospective new member, Elizabeth, and generally helped move things along - thanks Roy.

Tom Avery stood in for our "regular" tow pilot—many thanks Tom.

We also had a few inquiries about membership. So, all things considered, it was a good evening with Elizabeth and Roy making the last flight a sunset special.

Thanks to Roy, John, Joe, Mark, Elizabeth and Tom for making the evening a success. Oh, and thanks my daughter Lauren for keeping the flight log.

MITSA Ridge & Wave Camps?

by Steve Sovis

There are several encampments being considered including a wire launch encampment and a ridge/wave encampment. Steve Sovis stirred up initial interest by sending the following proposal to the board of directors. —Ed

There has been some informal discussion amongst members (eg. Steve Moysey, Tom MacJarrett, me) regarding the desirability of taking a Blanik (and perhaps other ships) to a wave or ridge site for a weekend or two. In particular, a wave camp in the fall near Mt. Washington and a ridge excursion sometime soon at Franconia were discussed.

How about publishing the idea in the club newsletter and see who else bites? I volunteer to act as a point of contact (via E-mail and answering machine, 617 631-5556) to make the Franconia ridge camp work. I'd need some advise from a veteran of these sorts of things to cover all the bases, but Matt and I could do the legwork. I realize that a considerable amount of effort is necessary and would rely on "committed participates (no work, no fly)" to help get the work done (trailer registration and maintenance, disassemble, car tow, reassemble, aero tows and finances, remote DO duties, block accommodation/camping, a group cookout, disassemble, tow, reassemble). Perhaps one weekend with disassembly/assembly and car tow work done on the Friday/Monday would work. In the event of bad weather the following weekend could be used as a rain date. The ship(s) would then be away from base for only one flyable weekend. If it works well, perhaps someone else would coordinate a wave camp in the fall.

What do you all think? If ok, how else could we get the word out? Handout flyers on the weekend?

Changes to MITSA Field Operations

by MITSA BOD

April 20, 1995

At the last meeting, the board of directors decided to make the following changes to field operations on a trial basis:

1. Replace the daily message on the answering machine with a generic message saying, "MITSA flies every Saturday and Sunday, weather permitting. The airport restaurant opens for breakfast at 8AM, and flying starts at 9AM. Come join us at the field." The DO is no longer responsible for recording a message every morning, but the DO, Instructor, and Tow Pilot should come to the field even on marginal days and wait to see if conditions improve.
2. Rescind the rule that you have to be at the field all day. The new guideline is: "Students are encouraged to spend the whole day at the field, but a member flying club gliders must either (1) arrive at the field by 9AM or (2) stay at the field until the equipment is put away. Exceptions are by DO permission only. People planning to leave early must tell the DO when they plan to leave. People leaving the field must notify the DO when they leave."
3. Clarify the scheduling of glider launches by using a board (but for now, just a signup sheet) with one list for each club glider. The procedure is: "On arrival, put your name on the list for the glider you want to fly. When ready, whether you are flying a club or private glider, put your glider on the launch list. Gliders are launched in list order. If you are on the launch list and not ready when your time comes up, you will go to the end of the list. After landing, scratch your name from the list and put your name at the bottom of the list for the next glider you want to fly."

If you have questions or comments, contact any board member. For example, call Mark Tuttle, (617) 648-1106.

Duty Officer Highlights

by Terry Wong

With the many changes that have been made in operating procedures, I thought it would be helpful to summarize the current standard operating procedures for DO's. Week before: 1) DO calls Instructor of the Day and Tow pilots to confirm availability. 2) DO calls Dir. Operations by Thursday, before weekend, with status report. 3) *NEW* Dir. Operations leaves message listing the DO's, CFI's and tow pilots for the coming weekend by Friday PM. This is so any member having problems knows who to call.

- Day of Duty

    1. If weather is an issue, the DO calls the CFI of the day. It is the CFI's decision whether to cancel the operation. If the weather definitively

rules out operations, the DO will then inform the tow pilots that the operation has been canceled. No message needs to be left. If any question exists as to the weather conditions - THE DECISION MUST BE MADE AT THE FIELD.
2. DO arrives at field by 8:30 am, crew (CFI / Tug pilot) by 9:00
3. If marginal weather or no members show up, crew stays until 11:00 am, DO notifies PM tow pilot that the operation is canceled.
4. DO sets up MITSA sign if flying runway 34.
5. DO sets up Flying schedule list in a permanent place (table), not on clipboard or on golf cart.

A final reminder:

1. Make sure that only members with up to date dues fly gliders.
2. If anyone shows interest in joining the club, provide them with the standard brochure, but also collect their name and address. They will then be added to the MITSA newsletter mailing list.

MITSA FLIES ON WEEKDAYS

As our standard operations are only on weekends, we miss some of the best soaring days on weekdays. However, MITSA gliders are available for use on weekdays to any authorized pilots. Authorized pilots are licensed pilots and students—as long as an instructor is present. The pilot, or a designated pilot is responsible for all aspects of the operations—finding tow pilot(s), instructor (if required), handling payment and operation summary sheets (to Mark Tuttle), logsheets if club ships are used (to Terry Wong), and full responsibility for the glider until it is tied down. The following individuals have notified me that they can be available for weekday operations: Lee Marzke, Richard Gammon, and Tom Avery.

E-mail and Web Notes

by Various Members

From Mark Tuttle:
I've installed a page on the world-wide web listing soaring-related email addresses for people, clubs, and commercial organizations. The URL is

```
http://www.research.digital.com/CRL/
personal/tuttle/aviation/email.html
```

The list is produced by a short perl script that scans messages posted to rec.aviation.soaring. My belief is that a person who posts to a public newsgroup is not concerned about keeping their email address a secret, but I understand that some people might not care to have their email addresses on this list. If you want to add or delete an address on this list, contact me.

From Guenther Eichhorn:
I had some reorganization here during which I had to move all my World Wide Web pages to a new server. Please update all links to my pages by replacing adswww with acro. The new addresses for my main pages are now:

```
Prefix all URLs with:
    http://acro.harvard.edu/

MITSA Homepage:
    MITSA/mitsa\_homepg.html

Aviation Servers:
    GA/ga\_servers.html

Aviation Archives:
    GA/ga\_archives.html

General Aviation Information:
    GA/ga\_info.html

Aviation Image Archives:
    GA/image\_archives.html

Weather Information:
    GA/weather.html
```

From Mark Tuttle:
Vitek Siroky of Blanik America is now online. His email address is viteks@aol.com, and thinking about changing that to something like blanikamerica@aol.com.
Sugarbush
has a home page on the web at http://www.soar.org/sugar/. Quite professional, with the best part being soaring stories from their newsletter. Many of the authors will be familiar to MITSA members. One of them is Bob Fletcher.
Mail sent to mitsa-instructors@crl.dec.com will be forwarded to all MITSA instructors with an email account.

MITSA People

news submitted by various club members

Alfonso Gonzalez Sencion

Alfonso is a former member who contacted Mark Tuttle by email. —Ed

From: alfgonza@sollube.sarenet.es
Do you remember that Spaniard that flew at MITSA some years ago?

I finally got an internet link in Spain and surfing the net I stumbled upon the MITSA WWW server.

I now belong to the Loreto Soaring Club. We are located 90 km north of Madrid close to Santo Tome del Puerto, to the north of Sistema Central mountain ridge (41=BA 12:14 N - 03=BA 35:30 W). A 50km long ridge allows our gliders to fly wherever the wind blows from the north. We also get good thermals in spring, summer and early autumn. And some times we get wave, just last year one of our members got 8000m height. We operate during weekends all year round and every day during July and August.

The club is open to members of other soaring clubs. We accept visitors interested in soaring. So if any MITSA members happen to drop by Madrid they may contact me it they want a flight. I may be also able to offer some lodging in Madrid if they number less than 4.

I saw in your WWW server that you got two L23 and one L33. I would like to know about the experience you have with those gliders. My club is planning to substitute our basic two seaters trainers. At this moment we have 3 Blanik L13 practically at the end of their life. In a year or two we will have to substitute them. Two years ago we got a Twin Astir I, and we found that although it is a docile glider it takes longer time to train pilots with no former experience in flying. A club close to ours acquired a couple of PZL Putchatz. They got mixed results with them, revisions every 50 hr and some maintenance problems. The ASK21 its a fine glider but too expensive and difficult to find. I will appreciate any information about the L23 as an basic trainer and about its maintenance program.

I am also trying to install a newsgroup about soaring in Spain and possible a WWW server. There are not many soaring clubs or pilots in Spain and we have difficulties getting information around.

Best regards, Alfonso Gonzalez Sencion

Contact Mark Tuttle for address and phone number. —Ed

Todd Pattist

Todd is a former member from the 1970's who communicated with Lee Marzke by email about towing practices, and submitted the following bit of club history. —Ed

Lee, thanks for the help on the towing info. Perhaps you'd find the following of interest. This includes part of my introduction when I became president of Cloudbase Club in Waterbury, CT. A quick plug here: we have some shares to sell in the club. The club has 20 members that share an L-23 SuperBlanik and a Grob 102 (retractable gear, glass, standard class). Tows and instruction are provided by the commercial operator on the field. Anyone with a private glider rating is eligible and instruction can be arranged. Anyone who is interested should contact me at my E-Mail address below or (203-346-1335).

I was an undergrad at MIT in EE in 1971. My roommate was in Aero/Astro and he had a friend building a kit hang glider as an undergrad project under the aegis of that department. This was the early days of hang gliders and the Rogallo wing design of the kit was even more primitive than the 4:1 L/D designs with the triangular control boom that later became so popular. This design had bars on either side of the pilot that went under the pilots arms. The pilot controlled pitch by sliding fore and aft to shift his weight. No one seemed to have thought much about roll or yaw control, and the bars prevented weight shift to the left or right. It used clear plastic sheeting as the wing material held on with gray tape to the aluminum booms.

Ultimately, the hang glider was flown by the builder off the dunes at Truro (on Cape Cod) and into the sea. It couldn't make the turn parallel to the waves and ended up 30 yards offshore. Aerodynamically it was strong enough, but hydrodynamically it was a bit too weak. The repaired version had the pilot's cage too far aft and I found myself nearly full forward on the first test flight. My roommate, who was 5 pounds lighter than me, couldn't keep the nose down and ended up in a full stall 25 to 30 ft up. Three months in a back brace fixed him right up.

I was hooked on flying, however, and joined MITSA after seeing a poster in the halls. Jim Nash-Webber was president of the club, Joe Blucher owned the towplanes. We flew out of Norfolk with two 2-33's, a 1-26 (#308), a Ka-7 (later a Blanik L-13) and Joe's 1-34. Towplanes included a Citabria and a Scout. The Scout could just manage the 1-26 with about 250 ft/min climb. Later a 180 was used, followed by a 150/150. To mix with the power traffic a right-hand pattern was used, and to avoid interfering with landing traffic we mostly used an angled take-off from the corner of the runway.

I earned my CFIG with MITSA, did my silver badge in the club 1-26 (Norfolk to Barnstable Municipal in intermittent snowshowers) and won the Region 1 Sports Class in it in 1972. We had a rotating list of cross country pilots who were assigned to the 1-26 and attended lots of contests. When your day came up you flew or went to the bottom of the list, so after doing the silver badge, I headed out on diamond goal tasks every time my name came up. I did more off-field landings in those few years than I have in all the years since.

We used to go out to Wellesley and put up posters offering initial glider rides and instruction. Since most of the other instructors were married, I would convince their wives that the husbands should leave the girls for me. T. Guy Spencer often provided carpool services for the Wellesley members. I met my future wife, Karen, one freezing winter day, in a car that sat idling with the heater running on the Norfolk taxiway while stuffed with pilots trying to get warm. Karen soloed on July 4, 1976, and after flying we went into Boston and watched the country's 200'th birthday fireworks celebration.

Winter flying was just as heavy as summer. I remember one trick we used to keep warm was to build a fire (well away from the gliders) and throw in a softball-sized rock. When it was hot, we'd put it into a wool hat or large sock, then put that into the coat pocket. As I remember, the MITSA newsletter had a slightly irreverent name: "Up Yaws" which kept us up to date on these sophisticated soaring techniques.

After I left MITSA, the 1-26 #308 was damaged and sold to Ron Webster who rebuilt it. Ron moved up to glass and gave the 1-26 to his son who often ties it down next to the Cloudbase Club gliders at the field in Waterbury, CT.

I noticed that MITSA's home page on the web states that the club started in 1968. Actually there was an earlier soaring club at MIT in the 1930's. I used to go through the old MITSA files reading about ground launch towing operations on the frozen Charles River. I had a student, age 70, that had flown with the earlier club. He had taken their open cockpit club glider to Elmira and competed in a Nationals where he made a flight of well over 50 kilometers on the ridge one contest day. I acted as his official observer for a 5 hour/silver altitude flight in our 2-33. I commented that all he needed was the 50k cross country when he told me about the earlier flights. Based on that, I called the SSA and they located a confirming report of the Nationals published in Soaring, which listed pilots and flight distances. As a result the SSA awarded him his FAI silver badge.

He told me a story about the early days that MITSA members might find interesting. It seems they were traveling down the road pulling their glider (I think he said it was a Franklin) in a trailer behind a Model-T Ford when they noticed a trail of smoke behind them. As they pulled over, the glider erupted into flames and all attempts to put out the fire in the fabric and dope structure were futile. It turned out that a wooden trailer fender had broken loose and begun rubbing against the wheel, the friction ignited the wooden trailer and the trailer ignited the glider. Years later, when I was instructing for Yankee Aviation at Plymouth, Mass, I heard that the fabric on a MITSA 2-33 had been inadvertently ignited by a torch one winter day during a misguided attempt to melt the ice holding the skid into the tiedown. I imagine MITSA is one of the few clubs that can claim two engine-less aircraft lost to fire.

Seriously however, MITSA always had a strong commitment to safety. We ran regular winter ground schools, did cross country training, set up trips to Franconia and Sugarbush and promoted pilot proficiency in spot landing and bomb drop contests. Except for a bent tiedown ring in the Blanik wing due to a bad trailer mount, and a cut in the aileron fabric of #308 when one of my fields turned out to have a hidden length of barbed wire, there were no accidents or damaged gliders in all the years I was with MITSA. That's one of the reasons I was so pleased to get your comments on MITSA's present towpilot certification and currency practices.

Todd Pattist `pattist@ix.netcom.com`

Lee Marzke followed up with his memory of history. —Ed

Thank you very much for sending the article and your comments on MITSA in the early 1970's. I really enjoyed reading about the club back then. I can't say that I remember Jim Nash-Webber, but have heard much about him over the years. I was very privileged to meet Doc Draper at one of our annual dinners at MIT, as he didn't get out much anymore.

When I joined MITSA in 1979, my first 2 glider flights were with a fine glider pilot named Walter Lob. Walter, however still liked soaring so much that I didn't get to do much of the flying. I then flew intermittenly with Roy Bourgeois and Walter, and Roy signed me off to solo on my 6th ever 2-33 flight. Even though I was a private power pilot, I now (as a CFI) find this low number hard to believe. I think the combination of seeing exactly what should be done (from Walter) and doing it without much help (with Roy) really worked together to make this happen.

I did hear one story back in the late 70's where Rick Sheppe was instructing (by the sleeping the in the back of the 2-33 method) and woke up in time to land just short of the airport on the lakeshore. The funny part is when Steve Bussolari and Rick are stopped by a police officer while walking the fuselage back to town on the road, as they didn't have a 2-33 trailer at the time. Rick is now living at Post Mills Vermont and has his own club (and piper CUB).

My one gliding incident was while teaching in a 2-33 at Norfolk, where I just about ground looped! A little too late correction of a student mistake and subsequent low altitude S-turn at flair height had my wingtip catch a stand of milkweed plants. This spun the glider 45 degrees to forward while still airborne, then we both watched as the glider slid sideways on the wheel to a stop. The only damage was a bent tip wheel and a little embarrassment.

I forwarded your note to our email distribution list (about 27 members) and have had several positive responses. Good luck with your club.

Ira Blieden continued the history lesson. —Ed

The 70 year old pilot who flew in the Nationals at Elmira in the late 30's was Walter Lob. At a club meeting at MIT, Walter annotated a MITSA film donated to the Soaring Museum.

The "Franklin" was probably the one donated by a "Miss" DuPont after she had a trailering accident.

As for Lee's recounting of Rick Sheppe's "On the Beach" Landing, the Mansfield police officer was writing up the ticket when we requested that he radio the commander and see if this was all necessary. With much disappointment, he let us go. As the next student in line (and a convert from hang gliding), I had a little trouble understanding why Rick wanted to sit one out! We reassembled the 2-33 and I went up with Charley Flagg.

My first flight with MITSA was in the old Blanik with Walter Lob and he became my primary instructor.

As for getting married, MITSA also played a role. Sue joined the club when I did (April, 1978) and to get the family discount, I had to promise the Board we would marry!

Finally, Roy Bourgeois ended the flurry of email with the following pop quiz. —Ed

Here's a quiz for the real MITSA old-timers:

1. What was the serial number of the "old" 1-26?
2. What was the name of the man who donated our current 1-26, and why did he donate it? (Hint: The ship had only 5 hours total time on it).
3. What was the contest number of Joe Blucher's 1-34?
4. What was the name of the guard dog at the Draper Flight Facility and what did he love to do most?
5. Who was member Anne Washington married to?
6. When the club first arrived at Mansfield there was a large vintage airplane stored on the field. What was it?
7. During the 1970s, at which one of the following fields did the club not have an encampment? Sugarbush? Springfield VT? Southbridge MA? Barre-Hiller?
8. What MITSA member organized a dance performance on soaring that the club helped promote?
9. Who was Mrs. Rickett?
10. Who was the club secretary and membership director for most of the 1970s?
11. Name two MITSA members from the 70s who were also SSA Directors?
12. What Glider did the Brown University Club let us use? Who was their chief instructor?
13. What did Kim Vandiver, Jim Nash-Webber and Mike Newman have in common?
14. What was the function of the large steel roofed building that we used as an I.P. for the pattern at Norfolk?
15. What was the "penalty" for landing out in club glider?

News Briefs

SSA

SSA dues are going up from $45/year to $55/year. This is the dues on blank membership application forms I received from the SSA.

The SSA has an email address now: 74521.116@compuserve.com. This is mentioned at the bottom of page 39 of the January issue of Soaring.

Annual Meeting

MITSA held its annual meeting in February. Bob Fletcher from Cambridge Instruments spoke about GPS flight recorders and showed data recorded at the World's in NZ. John Wren spoke about ground launch experiments. The MITSA awards and trophies went to:

- **Nikki Veltfort Award** Most Accomplished Student, Mike Welles
- **C.S. Draper Trophy** Best X-C in MITSA Sailplane, Larry Timpson
- **Thomas C. Thompson Trophy** Most Likely To Advance Soaring, Steve Moysey
- **James L. Nash–Webber Trophy** Best New Student, Steve Sovis
- **Eddie Allen Trophy** Best Triangle, Peter Foley
- **Sam Francis Trophy** Fastest Triangle Over 100KM - not given

Final Word from the Editor by Shaun Keller

My apologies for failing to produce the newsletter, especially to the authors who took time to write articles only to find that I sat on them. It is clear that I don't have the time to produce the MITSA newsletter, so someone else needs to step forward. Please contact Mark Tuttle about the newsletter until a new editor takes over.