THE LEADING EDGE
The Newsletter of the M.I.T. Soaring Association, Inc.
February 1996

Acting Editor: Mark Tuttle

Contents

Annual Meeting and Board Elections

Mark Tuttle

The annual meeting is a time for club members who see each other erratically on the field to get together for a good dinner, and to get in some practice bragging about plans for the coming season. This year, the annual meeting will be held on Sunday evening, March 10, from 5:00 to 9:00pm at Vinny Testa's restaurant on Route 9 in Natick. There will be a cash bar at 5:00, with dinner starting at 6:00.

Vinny Testa's is a family-style Italian restaurant known for enormous servings. Nobody leaves hungry. We'd like this to be a family event, so tickets will be $20 for adults, $10 for teenagers from 13 to 18, and free for kids under 13.

And please vote in the election for next year's board of directors. The last page of this newsletter contains the ballot and the reservation form for the annual meeting. Fill them out and send them to Mark Tuttle before the March 4 deadline.

Vinny Testa's Bar Ristorante
801 Worcester Road (Route 9, eastbound)
Natick, MA 01760
(508) 655-8787

Reservation deadline: March 4

News Briefs

Mark Tuttle

Written Exam Ground School: John Wren taught a ground school in January to prepare student pilots to pass the private pilot (glider) written exam. He must have done his job, because the good news is rolling in day by day: Mike Ellis, Tom Ellis, Steve Glow, Joe Kwasnik, Jim Reardon, and Terry Wong have all passed their exams. Say congratulations to these guys the next time you see them!

Another Written Exam Ground School: Paul Overy passed on word that an instructor with the Greater Boston Soaring Club at Pepperell will be giving a ground school, and has invited MITSA members to participate. The classes have already started (they are scheduled for February 1, 5, 14, and 27 from 7-9PM at the Concord library), but interested students might still consider contacting Heidi Eichenberger at (617) 437-0559.

Steve Moysey: Wedding bells will soon ring for Steve Moysey and Sharon Grady. They plan to be married sometime in June. Wish Steve congratulations the next time you see him, and buy him a beer while you are at it.

Ira Blieden: Ira Blieden writes to us: "I just got back from two weeks in Australia. This, of course, included three days of soaring at Benalla after concluding the business portion of the trip. Basically, I had a great time, flying in the Lark IS28B2, a motor Falke, and a Mosquito for a total of 9 flights and about 12 hours of flying."

Benny Chor: Benny Chor was a member of MITSA up until about 1985. In fact, he got his private pilot certificate with MITSA, and then immediately ran off to Israel to become a world-famous professor of computer science. Benny was in town at the beginning of January and eager to fly. Too bad there was two feet of snow on the ground!

Bob Fletcher: Bob Fletcher is looking for crew at the 15 Meter and Standard Class Nationals this season.

GPS for badge flights: The GPS Navigator and Secure Flight Recorder by Cambridge Aero Instruments has been approved for validation of glider flights under the FAI Sporting Code. Contact Dave Ellis (cai@cerfnet.com) for more information.

Soaring in Hawaii

Mark Koepper

I can't say much for Honolulu. It seemed a lot like Los Angeles to me. My wife Cathy and I had just spent a week on Kauai. That was as close to paradise as I've ever been. Now we were sitting in traffic. A serious shock to the system. There is a gliderport on Oahu though. This is a good thing.

The next day I felt better away from our high rise hotel on Waikiki Beach with its elbow to elbow tourists. On the way across the island we stopped at the Dole Pineapple Plantation and rode the dirt roads between the fields on horseback. We had an 11 year old kid for our guide, just the three of us. There must have been some misjudgment because the kid had by far the slowest horse and we repeatedly left him in the dust. He didn't protest too much when we stopped for him to catch up, but did insist that we arrive back at the corral walking, with him in the lead. No problem.

Dillingham field is one long runway parallel to a steep ridge. The wind blows 15 to 20 knots off the ocean on to the ridge all day and all night, all year. Well, on a few days a year the wind is from the wrong direction or too strong to fly (hurricanes, etc.). Isolated showers drift through all afternoon but pose no real problem. They produce some great rainbows if you look with the sun at your back.

I received a thorough briefing on the Grob 103 and the airfield. This was to be my first flight in a glass ship. Hookup and takeoff are interesting here at Dillingham. There are no line personnel to be seen anywhere. You hook up the ratty looking tow line to your own glider and take off without a wing runner. The first few seconds involve picking up the wing that's dragging along the ground while you steer out to the centerline. Take care to clear the glider that is parked a hundred feet or so ahead. After your initial evasive slalom maneuver, you line up behind the tow plane while compensating for that constant 15 knot crosswind from the left.

Launch failures here are no problem. Either land straight ahead or fly a full pattern. The gliders are staged along both sides of the runway overrun. This is 2000 feet of pavement. So you are well airborne and established on tow before you get to the runway threshold. The runway itself is 9000 feet long so you climb for a minute and a half or so before getting to the other end. Then of course there is another 2000 feet of paved overrun. If that is not enough room you can always go into the huge grass field at the end of the pavement. Ropes are used until they break.

Near the end of the proper runway you turn right and almost immediately hit strong ridge lift. The tow plane may turn either way along the ridge and then you can release at any time. Very seldom are aerotows to more than 1000 feet done here.

Having never flown glass there was an expectation of something special about this flight. The Grob 103 was a real let-down. It seemed big and sluggish and not particularly quiet. Although the span is about the same as my Dart, roll rate was appalling. The ridge flattens out dramatically at 900 feet and slopes gradually to about 2000. Nice thermals were coming off of this slope, but I was not comfortable circling this flying pig until I was very high above the terrain.

Once I had gained some altitude the instructor called out the standard check ride maneuvers (stalls, slow flight, spin entry…). Then she indicated the time had come to enter the pattern. The idea here seemed to me similar to a pit stop at a car race. Great emphasis during the briefing was placed on landing with lots of speed (70 knots was mandated for approach speed!!). Then you were to taxi off of the pavement into a "clear area" between the gliders parallel-parked along both sides. Much was said about the importance of clearing the pavement so as not to get in the way of other launches. Little was mentioned about avoiding a crash into aircraft or people on the ground.

My landings were not up to snuff here. I was scolded about floating "so far down" the runway dissipating all that great kinetic energy. I had better learn to plant the main wheel down while she's still flying. After 6 tows my wife did not want to wait any more for a ride and we left without a sign off.

The next day a different instructor (the owner) did sign me off after 2 more tows. I never did attempt the swerve and screech pit stop type ground run they do there. I shamelessly rolled past all the gliders and turned off at the front of the line with a couple of miles of open space ahead. Silly me. The resting place was the same as my floating landings. But apparently since I had rolled instead of floated I was OK and allowed to take the glider myself.

My wife was not with me this time and she missed a great flight. Cloud base was unusually high that day (4200 feet). While within easy glide of the field most of the island was visible. Contrary to what I was told there were huge burnt stubble cane fields that looked fine for landing to me. If the rental glider were not an issue it would be interesting to fly cross-country jumping to the ridges along the east side of the island.

After about 90 minutes I'd had enough. Although it was tempting to really hold it off and set it down two points on this last landing I didn't. I flew the requisite 70 knot tire burner landing one more time and called it a day.

Moving on ...

Derek Sherlock

In case any of you haven't heard yet, Catherine and I are moving to Fort Collins, Colorado. We'll be leaving New Hampshire towards the end of February, traveling overseas for a few weeks, and starting work in Colorado on April 1. I'll be working for Hewlett Packard, and Catherine will be starting an esthetics business.

I'm moving the Pitts to Fort Collins Loveland airport, and will probably sell my share in the Citabria. Those members who remember Scott Hathcock will be interested to know that he is taking aerobatics lessons, and may end up buying a share of my Pitts.

I don't yet have a new address or phone number to tell you. I'll keep this email address (72607.3126@compuserve.com) unchanged for at least a few months after the move, and will notify everyone of my new email address and phone number when I know them. (And I can still be reached at 603-889-3657 until about Feb 28.)

MITSA has been a very important part of my life for the last ten years. I've really enjoyed the flying, the instructing, and the trips to places like Sugarbush and Post Mills and Franconia and Walterboro and even Toronto (!). But most of all, I've met a great many wonderful people through MITSA, and made some close and valued friends.

Thank you all. May your thermals be strong, your cloudbases high, and your retrieve crews under-utilized!

Derek is one of the people who defined soaring for me when I first joined the club. I've learned a great deal about flying from Derek, and I've enjoyed being around him. I'm going to miss him, and the club will, too. Good-bye Derek, and good luck. —Ed.

Snow at Sterling

Al Gold

During early January, Walter Sakowicz and Al Gold sent condition reports out via email. In particular, Al Gold reported the following. Thank goodness things look better now. —Ed.

On Sunday, Steve Glow and I, with assistance from Paul Lynch and Bill Brine, cleared the snow off the wings, horizontal tails and canopies of all of the gliders tied out at Sterling. The gliders most exposed to sunlight had the smallest accumulations, but those that were shaded had well over a foot on the wings, despite having been cleaned off just a week earlier. I leave it as an exercise for the reader to estimate the weight of that amount of compacted snow. By the way, the most effective removal tool turned out to be the push broom that Steve brought.

We were literally up to our hips in snow, and moving about, though possible, was at the rate of about 10 feet per minute. Unless the thaw that started this morning reduces the accumulation substantially, it will be impossible to get to the gliders without snowshoes or similar equipment after the next storm.

Based only on what I saw Sunday, I think we should plan for a grand opening of the MITSA soaring season on Labor Day weekend.

Wednesday Evening Flying

Steve Moysey

While we are all firmly in the grip of winter, I have a thought for the members…

Last year we ran a successful Wednesday evening flying group. I am proposing to run another group this year, staring on Wednesday, May 22. I know this announcement may sound a little premature, but the snow is driving me crazy and this helps to keep me focused on something positive!

Please let me know if your are interested in taking part in the group, as either a participant, instructor, tow pilot or general help.

The plan would be the same as last year — start flying at around 6pm and end at legal sunset. Non-flyable evenings can be used for ground school. All levels of experience are welcome to come. Doesn't matter if you are pre-solo or want to work on your commercial or instructor rating.

I think everyone who took part last year had a good time. If you are interested, email me at steven_moysey@gillette.com or call me at (617) 643-3107.

Flight Test Preparation

Steve Moysey

I'm really encouraged by the reports coming in from members passing their written exams. John's ground school is certainly paying off.

John Wren and I are trying to gauge the interest in holding a series of practical sessions, covering the needs of the flight test for the private rating. I envisage a series of weekend days, with a small group of students per day to do the flying and cover the oral part of the test. It would be organized on a mini-course format, so three or four students would stick with one glider and instructor for the duration of the course. That way, everyone is working toward the same objectives and the briefings/debriefings are applicable to everyone involved. April would be a good time for this, weather permitting, before the Wednesday evening group kicks off. This could be carried out in parallel to the normal club flying and instructing program.

Any interest? Let me know what you think.

Blanik contest

Jim Dobberfuhl

Blue Ridge Soaring Society is looking into the possibility of holding a weekend meet on May 17th, 18th, and 19th.

There would be two classes of sailplanes.

- Single-Place Class (Blanik L-33 Class)
- Two-Place Class (Blanik L-13 or L-23)

This weekend meet is not an "official" contest. It is meant for pilots who want gain cross-country experience and have a great time. The contest is still tentative, as we are still trying to firm up details. We need to get an idea of how many people or clubs would be interested in coming to New Castle, VA (southwestern Virginia) with their Blanik L-13s or L-23s and flying the meet. Approximately a dozen people have expressed interest in the L-33 class. We would like to have as many or more planes in the two-place class. The courses should be short enough so that two teams could fly the same plane in the two-place class.

Weather conditions in May are usually very good for thermal soaring. There are many turnpoints over friendly terrain. A quick tour of the BRSS facilities at New Castle International (NCI) can be seen at http://www.nrvcom.com/aviation/brss/ Provided enough people are interested in attending, more information will be added to the above homepage giving further developments about the weekend meet.

The approximate cost of the meet would be $150. This fee would cover 3 tows, registration, a camping site (with hot shower and kitchen facilities), and a tie-down spot.

The final decision goes up for vote in our club on February 17th. I need a head count of the approximate number of individuals interested in such a meet before the club meeting. You may contact me, Jim Dobberfuhl, at doberman@vt.edu or Bill King at billking@nando.net. I can also be contacted at (540-552-4513) home.

A linguistic joke

Joan Cook

And since we have some extra space in the newsletter, I'll include this little joke for you linguists out there. —Ed.

The Scottish town of Fife, a well-known fishing centre, hosts an annual international competition whose winner is he who manages to consume the greatest quantity of fish. The particular variety of fish involved is tench, a local favorite, abundant off the North Atlantic coast and exported throughout the whole EEC.

Last year, a local man by the name of Hicks was by many favored to win this gastronomic contest, while others predicted the victory of a former champion from Finland, Sven Oorslaatd. Hicks was a simple fisherman who had long neglected the dental work he required, and in the fiery passion of the final stages of the competition he was bitterly frustrated by the dislodging of one of his bottom molars while completing his eighth portion, causing his loss. The ensuing victory for the Finn was announced by the local papers the next morning in the following headline:

ONE TOOTH FREE FOR FIFE'S HICKS;
SVEN ATE NINE TENCH!

If you want to learn more about MITSA, contact
Mark Tuttle
8 Melanie Lane
Arlington, MA 02174
(617) 692-7635
tuttle@crl.dec.com

Ballot for the Board of Directors

Vote for one person for each position:

- President:
  ____ Steve Moysey
- Vice President:
  ____ Phil Gaisford
- Treasurer:
  ____ Mark Tuttle
- Secretary:
  ____ Carl Johnson
- Membership:
  ____ Joe Kwasnik
- Operations:
  ____ Terry Wong
- Maintenance:
  ____ Guenther Eichhorn
- Logistics:
  ____ Bruce Easom

Sign your name:

- ____

Print your name:

- ____

Mail this ballot to Mark Tuttle, 8 Melanie Lane, Arlington, MA 02174. It must be received by March 4.

Reservations for the Annual Meeting

Reservations requested:

____ Number of adults ($20 each)

____ Number of teenagers, 13-18 ($10 each)

____ Number of children, under 13 (free)

Total amount: $______________

Your name: ____________________________________

Mail this form and a check made out to MITSA for the total amount to Mark Tuttle, 8 Melanie Lane, Arlington, MA 02174. It must be received by March 4.

Remember: the annual meeting will be held on Sunday evening, March 10, from 5:00 to 9:00 pm at

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801 Worcester Road (Route 9, eastbound)
Natick, MA 01760
(508) 655-8787

Proposed motto for the 1996 season:
"To err is human, to moo bovine."

A sandwich walked into a bar and asked for a beer,
but the bartender said,
"I'm sorry, we don't serve food in here."