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

Contents

Annual Dues due April 1

Mark Tuttle

Club members will find a dues statement enclosed with this newsletter. The amount of dues you owe for the 96-97 soaring season is next to your name in the column labeled "current balance." Please send me a check for this amount payable to MITSA before April 1. My address is Mark Tuttle, 8 Melanie Lane, Arlington, MA 02174. If your dues are not paid on May 1, then your flying privileges will be suspended until your dues are paid.

Some members have a positive or negative value in the "previous balance" column. For most people, this represents tow fees that have been under- or overpaid.

Most new members have a negative value in the "prorated credit" column. These new members are receiving credit for their overpayment of dues last year. New members were asked to pay a full year's dues when they joined for the sake of simplicity at the field, but now they are receiving credit for the fraction of the year before they joined. For example, if you joined in January 96 and you paid $330 for twelve months of professional dues, then today you are receiving a credit of $247.50 for the nine months April 95 through December 95 before you joined.

Feel free to call me at (617) 692-7635 during working hours or at (617) 648-1106 before 10PM if you have any questions.

Annual Meeting on March 10

Mark Tuttle

Don't forget the annual meeting on Sunday evening, March 10, from 5-9PM. The meeting will be at Vinny Testa's restaurant on Route 9 in Natick. Tickets are $20 for adults, $10 for teenagers from 13 to 18, and free for kids under 13. The official deadline for making reservations was March 4. *If you haven't made your reservations yet, contact me immediately* at (617) 692-7635 during working hours or (617) 648-1106 before 10PM.

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

News Briefs

Mark Tuttle

More ground school success: Michael Welles sent out email on Monday saying saying that he had passed his written exam thanks to John Wren's ground school: "Took the Private Glider exam this morning, and yes, passed due to John's course and the most excellent peer pressure!! Looks like it is going to be a busy time at the field this spring. Thank you John Wren (since I missed the second class, he made a house call and signed me off yesterday) and Terry and others for the very helpful exam reports. I had yet a different set of questions but the general areas were very similar."

New jobs: Jim Emken's division of SMC has been sold to Cabletron, so he has started work at 3COM, which makes computer networking products such as switches, routers, hubs, and LAN cards.

Parachute repacking: Private pilots with parachutes needing to be repacked might want to contact Steve Moysey, since he was considering collecting club and personal parachutes and taking them to be repacked as a group.

Tost Rings

Jakov Kucan

As you all know, the Blaniks (the L23 and L33) as well as most private ships require the so-called TOST rings to be used for towing. MITSA has a number of them and they come in two colors: black and yellowish/gold. Some members suspect that the yellow rings are not proper TOST rings. These rings are manufactured by Blanik and are just as good as the other kind (and just as expensive!), so please don't throw them away!

If you have any doubts about the ground equipment we are using, ask the director of logistics (Jakov Kucan/Bruce Easom) or the Chief Instructor (John Wren/Steve Moysey) about it.

Snow Status

Steve Glow

Steve Glow sent in the following report on the conditions at Sterling as of February 23. —Ed.

I couldn't help dropping by the field this morning to check out the conditions there and see if operations might be possible this weekend. I figured that with the warm weather and rain the field might be clear. I have been called overly optimistic before.

The good news is that the snow is pretty much gone from the landing area. There is still a little bit around the gliders, but another warm rainy day should take care of that.

There are still fairly large snow banks on the sides of the paved area between the runway and taxiway. These could cause a problem for anyone landing long, and would make bring the gliders up a problem.

There are visible puddles of water on the landing field. I walked up the center of the field part way to test it, and it is positively squishy.

Finally, I didn't see the tow plane around anywhere. I know that it has been up for repairs this winter, I wonder if anyone could give us a status on it? [*Ready soon. -Ed*]

It looks like it will be at least another few weeks before the Mitsoids rule the skies above Sterling again. Anyone else out there want to move to Arizona?

Monarch Butterflies

Brian Jensen

I received the following message by email from Brian Jensen at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. —Ed.

I am a graduate student studying monarch butterflies during their migration. I am studying their soaring flight capabilities. Please let me know if you or anyone in your club sees monarchs soaring during their fall migration. Please send me email at traveler@radiks.net with any information on altitude, temperature, and if the butterflies appear to be riding thermals during their migration. Anyone sending data will be given credit in my thesis, I appreciate any information given. Thank you, and happy soaring to you all!

A bumper sticker seen on the stealth bomber:
"If you can read this, we wasted 32 billion bucks."

The (Next) Board of Directors

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Club web page:
http://acro.harvard.edu/MITSA/mitsa_homepg.html

For more information about MITSA, you can contact the club by email, visit our web page, or contact Joe Kwasnik, our director of membership listed above.

The Leading Edge is the newsletter of the MIT Soaring Association, Inc. The newsletter is editted by Mark Tuttle, and published every other month (more frequently during the soaring season). Please send any inquiries or material for publication to Mark Tuttle, 8 Melanie Lane, Arlington, MA 02174; tuttle@crl.dec.com

Soaring Down Under

Ira Blieden

In early November, my manager asked me if I could go to Australia that December to represent corporate headquarters. I tried my best to hide my smile. I had instantly realized that there was a possibility for a day or two of Australian summer soaring.

My first task was to get the business plan in order. Email to my contact, Erica, set the basic itinerary. I would fly into Melbourne, spend a few days in the Melbourne area, take an early morning shuttle for a day in Sidney, and then fly back to Melbourne. Meanwhile, I called SSA. SSA promptly faxed me a list of soaring sites throughout Australia. With this list and an atlas, I narrowed the choices to about 5 sites. Erica graciously called the five sites and I quickly selected Benalla, home of the Glider Club of Victoria. With Erica's help, I was able to schedule both check flights and an all-day reservation for a DG200. I was psyched and ready to rock & roll over the Australian countryside!

The business went as planned and after 6 long days and an open invitation to come back again next year, I was ready for Benalla. With my excitement ramping up, I asked both Erica and Tom to join me with their families for a day of soaring. A phone call to Benalla confirmed that once I passed the check flight(s), I would be allowed to carry passengers.

Erica and family were busy. Tom's wife and son were busy, but Tom was not. In fact, Tom was very excited about going. He had been a fledging glider pilot in his youth. A soaring club had operated out of a small airport in his home town, and he had been a member for a few years.

Tom and I arrived around mid-day on Tuesday. I checked in at the office where I was greeted by Ann Goodley, the office manager. She handed me a folder of reading material. This included flying and ground handling rules for the club, flight rules and radio procedures for Australia, and information about landing out.

Benalla is located at an old WWII Australian Air Force Base. It is so large that from the office, you cannot see the operation. With some basic instruction by Anne, Tom and I found our way to the flight line. The operation was busy with both private and club gliders on the line. There was also a concentrated course in progress with an instructor from Japan. Every year, Esou (please excuse the spelling) spends his summers at Benalla with about eight Japanese students who come with him to learn to fly. He is also part owner of the DG200.

John Williamson, chief flight instructor, helped coordinate my day. John had me review a photo book of local fields. This was preparation for the sign off for cross-country flight. It was a lesson in how to safely land in "paddocks." John and I climbed into the motor Falke with one task in mind: to prepare me to land in paddocks. This was a useful and extremely important exercise. That day a visiting pilot from Scotland had finished a 500K, only to land 1 mile short of the field. He broke the tail off the Mosquito and luckily with no harm to himself. What is all the hoopla over outlanding? SWERs is the answer. For pilots in Australia, SWERs is a curse word! SWER stands for Single Wire Earth Return. These wires meander the country side providing power to remote farm houses. The SWERs do not run along roads but cut through farm land and are not easy to see from the air. They consist of a single wire strung from the tops of pencil poles. The wires are high tensile strength steel. The poles are needed only every 500 feet, not the 200 feet we see in the US. John also provided me with an excellent review of paddock selection. He stressed keeping away from fields with sheep and cattle, how to estimate crop growth, and how to determine the slope of the field. The Falke flight lasted 30 minutes.

My next flight was with Doug Robinson in a Lark IS-28-B2. This was the traditional check flight. Its purpose was familiarization with the area, pattern, and landing procedures. After a second pattern tow, I was signed off to take my guest up. Tom and I flew for 40 minutes reaching 6000 feet.

My last flight of the day was in a Mosquito, Mike Lima. The DG200 was unavailable as the contract with the owners for use by the club not yet signed for the year. The flight in Mike Lima lasted 45 minutes.

Tuesday was not yet over. I had an excellent dinner at the club restaurant prepared by KayLene and served at a reasonable cost. KayLene owns a share in an open cockpit Slingsby. I said good-bye to Tom, thanked him for all the help, and headed over to Glider City Motel, a short walk from the airport. Most pilots stay on the airport in renovated WWII barracks. With my stay of just a few days, I opted to spend a little extra money in order to guarantee a good night's sleep. After a tour of the barracks (one room per guest(s)) and showering facility, I will probably use the barracks for my next trip.

Wednesday's forecast was for a good (but not great) day. It turned out to be blue with lift topping out at 6000 feet. I decided to take a tow in Mike Lima to practice landings. My second tow that day was more eventful than I had planned for. At about 500 feet AGL the canopy popped open. With my left hand holding it down, I decided to take a normal tow and reviewed my options. I radioed the field, explained the problem, and requested that operations be suspended until I was on the ground. At altitude, I experimented with the trailing edge airbrakes and found that the canopy was not going to suck open more that 2 inches. Mosquitoes have an unusual canopy system. I did the pattern without airbreaks and flaps. At about 5 feet from the ground I opened the airbreaks a little to keep from floating the entire length of the field. Once on the ground, I became an honorary member of the Mosquito Canopy Opening Club, and was nicknamed "Massachusetts Man."

I fiddled with the locking mechanism to learn how to keep this from happening again. I got back on the line, and

I took off again. I flew Mike Lima doing a small out and return to the south. I concentrated on looking for SWER lines, and I hoped for better weather on Thursday.

Thursday's forecast was not very good as high thin clouds would be rolling in. I decided to save some money and unreserved Mike Lima. This would allow me to pay by the hour and only pay for a short flight. I spent the morning fixing the electrical system for Mike Lima, and walking among the various hangers. The club owns about 14 gliders and 4 Pawnee tow planes. As a rough guess, I would estimate 50 privately owned gliders on the field, many of which are kept in hangers.

At about 1:30 I decided to bring Mike Lima to the flight line. A half hour flight is better than none. I was on tow about 2:30 and the sky was starting to open up. After about a half hour of local flying, the thermals were in full force. I started on the north-eastern course line which I had entered in the S & R (Search & Rescue) book prior to take-off. In Southern New South Wales, 40 miles away, a walk to the nearest farm house might take 4 hours. I had also been told to expect about every other farm house to be abandoned! Thermals were up to 9,300 MSL with ground at about 500 MSL. My first turn point was Wangaratta. From there I headed to Yarrawonga on the Murray River. This leg was marked with thin Cu again to 9000 MSL. From Yarrawonga I headed easterly to Corowa also on the Murray. From Corowa it was a straight line back to Wangaratta and on to Benalla. The on-course portion of the flight took 2.5 hours and I covered about 190K. This was my kind of day!

KayLene served a great chicken BBQ. After dinner, with most of the other visitors and I headed with John to a local golf course to see the kangaroos. The kangaroos were out for an evening stroll and were treating themselves to golf course grass for dessert. The forecast for Friday was uncertain with high thin clouds predicted for the morning. John prodded me to stay and attempt a 500K. I thanked everyone for their hospitality, and headed for the motel. I would decide at 6:45 AM when I had to leave to catch the 7:00 train to Melbourne.

My mind was made up. At 6:45, the sky was overcast in all directions. I boarded the train and committed myself to the long trip home. As luck would have it, the weather cleared up late morning. The airline captain must have been reading my mind. As we were climbing out of Melbourne, breaking through the tops of the very high Cu cloud base, he announced the ship's altitude... 17,000 feet!!!!

For those that are interested in the costs in US dollars, the honorary daily membership was $4.00. The 30 minutes in the motor Falke cost 40.00, the total of 2 check flights in the IS-28-B2 cost $50.00, the flight with Tom cost $55.00. The Mosquito cost $150.00 per day. All totaled, my 3 days of flying which included 9 flights and about 10 hours of air time came out to $500.00. If you are interested in soaring at Benalla, all day reservations are only available week-days. The club members have access to the gliders during the weekend. As for getting to Benalla, the train from Sidney to Melbourne stops in the town two miles from the airport. The train ride is about $20.00 and takes about 1 1/2 hours. The cost of staying in the barracks is about $15.00 per day. The phone number is 057-62-1058 and the fax number is 057-62-5599. The rate at Glider city motel is also reasonable.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Erica who made all arrangements, Tom who got me to Benalla, and shared the joy of soaring with me, John Williamson who graciously acted as my host, and also Doug Robinson, Ann Goodley, KayLene Lynch and the members of Benalla Soaring.

Signed "Massachusetts Man"

Thanks

Jon Newman

Steve Moysey received the following email message from Jonathan Newman, a UK pilot who visited MITSA one day while in Massachusetts on assignment for his company. Jon flies with The Soaring Centre (formally Coventry Gliding Club) at Husbands Bosworth, Leicestershire. Jon says the club is a large but inexpensive club with four Puchacz trainers, a Bocian two-seater, a Falke motorglider, three Juniors, a Ka8, a Pegase 101, two Discus B, four Supermonk tugs, and a four-drum winch. The club has phone number +44 1858 880521 and web page http://www.csv.warwick.ac.uk/ phrsq/. —Ed.

At last, your e-mail address has appeared in the newsletter!

I wanted to thank you and all at MITSA for the Herculean efforts you made to get me airborne at the end of the '95 season. If you recall, it was virtually dark, the tug wouldn't fire up and the glider was right the other end of the field.

Since that day, I did not have any free time until the snow closed in. Pressure of work plus a family that was coping with the problems of relocation leaves little capacity for leisure activities. Anyway, following my extremely positive impressions gained at your friendly and enthusiastic club, I intended to join up fully in the Spring, when the weather improves. However, in an ironic twist of fate, my company has now relocated me back to the UK!!! I need 2 inter-continental relocations within 12 months like a hole in the head.

This all comes under the category of "good news, bad news." My family is delighted to be moving back, I have renewed my membership at Hus Bos and the UK job promises to be interesting and challenging. Having a boss who is 3,000 miles away may also be considered to be an advantage. Bad news is that I was really looking forward to doing some flying in this country. Still, I do expect to be out here every 2 months for a week to 10 days. This should bracket a week-end. Do you have a "county" class membership for those that have to travel over 2,000 miles to come to the club?

I should also say that I am most impressed with the newsletter. The fact that you captured my details and it has been arriving is amazing. Not only this, the content has been interesting and substantial. I have also been browsing your web pages. Given the size of the club, the level and efficiency of your organization has been an eye-opener.

Although you have my address, from which I will be redirecting to whatever becomes my UK address, I don't think I ever gave anyone my e-mail address, which is: jnewman@gigasd.com

I would love to continue to receive information and any other stuff that you send out. I leave for the UK around 11 March. I would be happy to act as a contact point in the UK for you or other members of MITSA looking for facilities. I won't know how helpful I can be until I try, so please feel free to ask. One final question - I saw an ad somewhere for the SSA 1996 calendar but couldn't then find the publication or any suitable contact information. Do you know where I can order one from?

Once again, many thanks to you and all at MITSA that saved my 9 months in the US from being a complete aviation disaster (that's how important that one dusk flight was to me). I wish you all the best for the future. I hope that I can find a way to include MITSA in my schedule for my bi-monthly US visits and look forward to seeing you then.

The Flying Frog

Ed Balkovich

The following story sent to me must be true, and would be really funny if it didn't make me want to scream, "I'm a human, not a human resource!" —Ed.

The world, from a frog's perspective...

Once upon a time, there lived a man named Clarence who had a pet frog named Felix. Clarence lived a modestly comfortable existence on what he earned working at the Wal-Mart; but he always dreamed of being rich.

"Felix!" he exclaimed one day, "We're going to be rich! I'm going to teach you how to fly!" Felix, of course, was terrified at the prospect: "I can't fly, you idiot! I'm a frog, not a canary!" Clarence, disappointed at the initial reaction, told Felix: "That negative attitude of yours could be a real problem. I'm sending you to class." So Felix went to a three day class and learned about problem solving, time management, and effective communication... but nothing about flying.

On the first day of "flying lessons", Clarence could barely control his excitement (and Felix could barely control his bladder). Clarence explained that their apartment had 15 floors, and each day Felix would jump out of a window starting with the first floor eventually getting to the top floor. After each jump, Felix would analyze how well he flew, isolate on the most effective flying techniques, and implement the improved process for the next flight. By the time they reached the top floor, Felix would surely be able to fly. Felix pleaded for his life, but it fell on deaf ears. "He just doesn't understand how important this is..." thought Clarence, "but I won't let nay-sayers get in my way."

So, with that, Clarence opened the window and threw Felix out (who landed with a thud).

Next day (poised for his second flying lesson) Felix again begged not to be thrown out of the window. With that, Clarence opened his pocket guide to Managing More Effectively and showed Felix the part about how one must always expect resistance when implementing new programs. And with that, he threw Felix out the window (*thud*!).

On the third day (at the third floor) Felix tried a different ploy: stalling, he asked for a delay in the "project" until better weather would make flying conditions more favorable. But Clarence was ready for him: he produced a time line and pointed to the third milestone and asked, "You don't want to slip the schedule do you?" From his training, Felix knew that not jumping today would mean that he would have to jump *twice* tomorrow... so he just said: "OK. Let's go." And out the window he went.

Now understand that Felix really was trying his best. On the fifth day he flapped his feet madly in a vain attempt to fly. On the sixth day he tied a small red cape around his neck and tried to think "Superman" thoughts.

Try as he might, though, Felix couldn't fly.

By the seventh day, Felix (accepting his fate) no longer begged for mercy... he simply looked at Clarence and said, "You know you're killing me, don't you?" Clarence pointed out that Felix's performance so far had been less than exemplary, failing to meet any of the milestone goals he had set for him. With that, Felix said quietly, "Shut up and open the window," and he leaped out, taking careful aim on the large jagged rock by the corner of the building.

And Felix went to that great lily pad in the sky.

Clarence was extremely upset, as his project had failed to meet a single goal that he set out to accomplish. Felix had not only failed to fly, he didn't even learn how to steer his flight as he fell like a sack of cement... nor did he improve his productivity when Clarence had told him to "Fall smarter, not harder."

The only thing left for Clarence to do was to analyze the process and try to determine where it had gone wrong. After much thought, Clarence smiled and said:

"Next time... I'm getting a smarter frog!"

A mathematician is a person who, when he thinks there are three people in a room and then sees five people walk out, thinks that two people have to go back in to make the room empty.