The Leading Edge
The newsletter of the MIT Soaring Association
November 1997

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News briefs

Mark Tuttle

New members: The club has gained several new members since the last newsletter.

Peter Lofgren walked onto the field one day, started taking lessons, and has been at the field nearly every weekend that an instructor has been scheduled. Peter says, "I caught the flying bug in college and took about twenty hours of lessons in hang gliders at the Aeolis hang gliding outfit in the Groton Hill ski area. I gave that up when I broke my foot on their rocky take-off area. About eight years ago, I took a rather dull glider flight out of Stowe, Vermont. We spent twenty minutes doing figure eights on a mountain ridge on a cloudy day. Then, while on the Cape this summer, I took an aerobatic glider flight. During one maneuver at 4,500 feet — I now know this maneuver as a spin — we ended up nosed straight down doing 360-degree spins and pulled 3.25 G's coming out of the dive, and I realized I wanted to learn how to fly. I found the club on the Internet and just drove out one day in September.

"I work at Brooktrout Technology, Inc. If you have ever called an automatic phone answering system and heard "Press 1 for sales," well, that's the equipment we design and manufacture. As for other fun stuff, lately I spend most of my time on home repair projects. When I do get out, my wife and I do a lot of flat-water kayaking, some hiking, skiing, and antique collecting.

"I've enjoyed my days out with the club, even with a few experiences of no instructor or missing tow pilots. I hope to fly all winter working on my solo license."

George Hossfield has rejoined the club after a long absence. In the September newsletter, George wrote that he had spent most of the last year in England and had tried to fly with a gliding club not too far from where he was living. At the end of September, George wrote to me that he had been to Tom Knauff's operation in Pennsylvania. "I had a great time at Keystone Gliderport. I logged 42 flights: 36 were with Tom Knauff, two were with his wife, and the others were with Dave and Mark Biseli. I still have to work on landings and therefore I did not solo. I did thermal, ridge, and wave soaring. The wave was only one day but resulted in an altitude increase of about 3,500 feet. I hope to see you soon at Sterling." Welcome back, George.

Matt Sovis has also rejoined the club. Matt turned 15 on October 24, and now has his hunting license and medical certificate, and is eager to solo in a glider. Matt Sovis is the son of Steve Sovis, in case you couldn't figure that one out on your own, and was taking instruction with the club two years ago, but then suspended his membership until he got old enough to solo. It is about time that Matt is back into flying, since he has already paid his dues many times over. For years, Matt has been pushing gliders, helping Steve rig the Grob, and working at the Region One contests doing everything from film development to spotting at the start gate, and it is possible that he might also have been willing to sample the beer before it was served at evening parties if there hadn't already been so many volunteers for that job. Matt is also an accomplished sailor, and races a Laser in the Marblehead area.

New ratings: Steve Sovis, Ken Gassett, and Karl Kruger have all added or revalidated glider ratings on their certificates this month. Good job, guys!

Minutes of the Board of Directors

Phil Gaisford

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

September 15, 1997

Directors present: Bruce Easom, Jim Emken, Phil Gaisford, Al Gold, and Carl Johnson.

Maintenance: Glider weighing for weight and balance calculations has been scheduled at Sterling. The tow plane is AD compliant; we have replaced two cylinders with new ones; Jim Emken will get Adam Dershowitz to clarify the tow plane descent procedures; a broken bracket has been replaced; and the battery will be replaced. Replacement canopy pins are on order for the Blaniks. Various pieces of garbage have been retrieved from the inside of gliders, so improved inspection and vigilance is required. Jim Emken will get a quote on changing the pitch of the tow plane's propeller.

Club development issues: Bob Fletcher joined via a telephone conference call and gave us an update. The Greater Boston Soaring Club's board of directors has met and formed a two-person subcommittee consisting of Tom Custard and Jeff Orchard to search for new site. They are under pressure from increasing parachute activity and restricted runway choices. Other issues include a desire for ground launching and advanced cross-country training. The asking price for Sterling airport is $1 million. The current current lease is $2,000/month. Roy Bourgeois will assist in the corporation-formation discussion. Art French and Jim Simpson at Sterling are supportive of a possible move of Greater Boston to Sterling. Some improvements possible at Sterling: a staging area, clearing the far side of the field for operations, and a more versatile tow plane (Pawnee).

Membership: The membership has been increasing lately. Joe Kwasnik's Boy Scout troop is interested in introductory flights, and the board has agreed to subsidize the costs.

Other notices: Don't line up the tow plane until the glider ready. The DO manual will be put into electronic form. With the next meeting, we will revert to meeting on Thursdays.

Minutes of the Board of Directors

Rob Playter

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

October, 1997

Directors present: Bruce Easom, Jim Emken, Phil Gaisford, Carl Johnson, and Rob Playter.

Trailers: The L-23 trailer is starting to rust and needs painting. The 1-34 trailer was painted last season and is in pretty good shape. The 1-26 trailer is a basket case; it is rusting, the wood is rotting, and it needs a lot of work. There is no L-33 trailer. We probably shouldn't buy the trailer in Pepperell.

Winter maintenance space: Can we find some space indoors where we can work on the gliders in the winter? Jim Emken will send out email asking the membership. Bruce Easom will look into space at Fort Devens.

Weight and balance: We will be doing weight and balance for the Blaniks, especially N117BB. We will put them in hangar one at a time for weighing.

Airport status: Bob Fletcher spoke to owners at Sterling about improving the airport in order to attract more gliders. We should ask the owners if we can cut those trees at the end of 34. We also need to cut trees back by the tie-downs.

Citabria: The Citabria syndicate is having financial difficulties. They are increasing their usage rate. They want to charge us for putting stuff in the hangar. The Citabria is a useful resource for us, and helped us out on four to six days this year. How can we help them? Should MITSA consider buying the Citabria then renting it out to interested members? Members could fly the plane for rates less than current commercial rates. Access to the plane could be an incentive for instructors. More people would get power ratings and instructor ratings. This could pay for the use of the tow plane.

DO book: Bruce is nearly done with the new DO book. He will pass it off to Al Gold. It should be examined by the chief instructor, chief tow pilot, and treasurer. We also need to get the new blue book done.

New instructor status: Bruce Easom is going to try to take the CFI written exam this month. Phil Gaisford has scheduled his commercial flight test.

Field checks: At events like the Sugarbush encampment, should club members get a field check prior to flying? Pilots should probably get an orientation flight first, and members shouldn't do ridge soaring without some instruction. Steve Moysey will be at Sugarbush on Sunday. We should get Steve Moysey to decide if particular members can fly at Sugarbush. Carl will call Steve Moysey and ask him to decide how to treat this. An alternative could be that members must get a check out in a Sugarbush glider.

Next meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for November 6.

Figure 1: A very happy Troop 382 with Scoutmaster Joe Kwasnik on the far right.

Boy Scouts take glider rides

Joe Kwasnik

A significant number of smiles were evident on the faces of thirteen boy scouts from Troop 382 of Westboro and their parents on Sunday, October 26, when MITSA hosted a day of introductory glider flights at Sterling Airport for the scouts. The scouts had previously been introduced to the principles of flight and soaring by their Scoutmaster, Joe Kwasnik, during a ground school held at a troop meeting earlier in October. Many of the scouts had experienced their first flight last November when John Wren graciously spent a morning flying the scouts in the Citabria. That experience and their memories of watching the big Blanik's flying that day encouraged the boys to request flights in gliders for this year. We began the day at 8:00 AM by checking out the Blanik L-23's, defrosting the thick layer of frost that covered the ships, and towing the ships to the end of runway 34. The first flight was at 9:50 AM and we ended the flying day at about 1:00 PM after all thirteen boys had flown. Given that the flights were only to 1,500 feet AGL and about ten minutes in length, we may have established some new MITSA records for the most flights launched in an hour, but I will leave that call up to the record keepers. For many of the younger scouts, these flights were their first flights.

I know that the scouts will long remember this day which was made possible only by the great generosity of the club and the many members who helped out in conducting the flights. Special thanks to pilots John Wren and Bruce Easom for flying the scouts, Rich Gammon for doing the tows, Ken Rosenberg for assisting in the quick turn around of the ships between flights, and the many other members who helped out that day. Perhaps we may even get a new member or two from the scouts or their parents!

Where are they now?

Fred Ernsting **fgernsti@eos.ncsu.edu**

Many years ago, Fred was the club's most eager and enthusiastic young member, and he even crewed for few club members at regional and national contests. I wrote to ask him how things were going. —Editor

Thanks for writing. I am doing fine. Yes, I am still flying. As a matter of fact, I work full-time for the largest flight school in North Carolina and fly almost every day as a part of my job. Unfortunately, I haven't been current in gliders for more than two years now. I am also studying meteorology at North Carolina State University part-time. I hope you are doing well, too.

Accident reports

Roy Bourgeois

At the beginning of October, Roy circulated a pointer to an accident report involving a high-time power pilot in a 1-34 with the comment, "If there is anybody out there who still thinks that high-time power pilots 'don't need a lot' to fly gliders, please read the accident summary: a 3,300-hour power pilot with 15 hours in gliders overshoots a 7,500 foot runway! Yikes!" Later in the month, Roy circulated another pointer to an accident report "involving a 1-26 with misconnected elevator cables. Many years ago, a Blanik was lost when the rudder cables were reversed in an annual. I once did a return-to-service flight on a 2-32 that had been totaled and discovered (in flight and luckily without major problem) that the trim was connected backwards. Back in 1990, NESA lost its Grob Twin on an aborted takeoff following a major overhaul on the tow plane which lost power at 150 feet. Inspection of the towplane (which made it back) disclosed that fuel starvation occurred because the fuel on/off selector had been reinstalled backwards. This stuff really happens." The interesting parts of the accident reports are reprinted below.

Accident: September 23, 1997 at Heber City, UT
Aircraft: Schweizer SGS 134, registration: N7636
Injuries: 1 Uninjured.
http://www.ntsb.gov/Aviation/FTW/97A360.htm

On September 23, 1997, approximately 1542 mountain daylight time, a Schweizer SGS 134 glider, N7636, was substantially damaged following a landing overrun at Heber Valley Airport, near Heber City, Utah. The commercial pilot, sole occupant in the glider, was not injured. The glider was owned and operated by Utah Soaring Association of Salt Lake City, Utah. [...] According to the pilot, he turned base to final and "over-shot runway 21" (which is a 7,500 foot long runway). The glider went through a fence and subsequently damaged the fuselage and the right wing. The pilot reported to the Investigator-In-Charge that he has 3,326 hours of flight time in aircraft, of which 15 hours is in gliders. The pilot further reported that he has 53 flights in gliders.

Accident: October 13, 1997 at Fairfield, PA
Aircraft: Schweizer SGS1-26A, registration: N1154N
Injuries: 1 Serious.
http://www.ntsb.gov/Aviation/NYC/98A011.htm

On October 13, 1997, about 1730 eastern daylight time, a Schweizer SGS1-26A, N1154N, a glider, received minor damage when it entered an uncontrolled descent during the initial climb after takeoff from the Mid-Atlantic Soaring Center, Fairfield, Pennsylvania. The certificated private pilot received serious injuries. [...] A witness reported that the glider departed runway 15, an asphalt runway. The glider became airborne after a 20 to 25 foot takeoff roll. When the glider became airborne, it climbed at a high pitch attitude. The tow line was then released, and the glider's pitch attitude increased to about a 75 to 80 degree angle. The glider's nose then dropped and impacted the ground followed by the left wing. The witness stated that the glider had recently undergone maintenance, and that the accident flight was the first flight following the maintenance. Also, just prior to the flight, the witness asked the accident pilot if he performed a "positive control check" on the primary flight controls, to which the pilot responded yes. Another witness stated that he observed the glider takeoff and pitch to an "almost vertical" pitch attitude, when the glider's nose dropped and impacted the ground. Also, that the glider had recently undergone maintenance during which the pilot replaced the flight control cables. Examination of the wreckage by a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Inspector revealed that the elevator controls were rigged backwards, and that when he applied forward pressure on the cockpit control, the elevator surface moved up. No evidence of pre-impact malfunctions were found with the glider during the examination.

Duty schedule

Al Gold

MITSA DUTY SCHEDULE
October-December, 1997

Date	DO	Instructor	AM Tow	PM Tow
10/4	Johnson	Moysey	Gammon	Proops
10/5	Tuttle	Rosenberg	Ryan	Dershowitz
10/11	Sovis	Wren	Clark	Eason
10/12	Drew	NA	Hollister	Fletcher
10/18	Watson	NA	Gammon	Gassett
10/19	Glow	Rosenberg	Kazan	Proops
10/25	Brine	NA	Friedman	Ryan
10/26	Eichorn	Rosenberg	Poduje	Poduje
11/1	Emken	Baxa	Clark	Dershowitz
11/2	Evans	Rosenberg	Easom	Fletcher
11/8	Gaisford	NA	Friedman	Gammon
11/9	Welles	Rosenberg	Gassett	Kazan
11/15	Wong	Baxa	Hollister	Proops
11/16	Gold	Rosenberg	Ryan	Clark
11/22	Johnson	NA	Dershowitz	Easom
11/23	Koepper	Baxa	Friedman	Fletcher
11/29	Krueger	Baxa	Gammon	Gassett
11/30	Kwasnik	Bourgeois	Hollister	Kazan
12/6	Kucan	Moysey	Podjue	Podjue
12/7	Loraditch	Rosenberg	Proops	Ryan
12/13	MacMillan	Baxa	Clark	Dershowitz
12/14	Blieden	Rosenberg	Easom	Fletcher
12/20	Marter	Bourgeois	Friedman	Gammon
12/21	Playter	Wren	Gassett	Hollister
12/27	Wong	Moysey	Kazan	Proops
12/28	Stewart	Bourgeois	Ryan	Clark
1/3/98	Timpson	Baxa	Dershowitz	Easom
1/4/98	Tsillas	NA	Friedman	Fletcher

Figure 2: Bruce Easom flying with a member of Troop 382.

Safety: First… middle… and last

Mike Baxa

> *(Please don't read this. It deals with boring "safety stuff" we've heard before… maybe.)*

Several years ago when I was young and stupid (now I am old and stupid, but hopefully a little wiser), I was doing a cross country from Springfield, Vermont down to Jaffrey, New Hampshire and beyond. Prevailing weather wisdom for the day dictated everyone going to the north and, of course, that meant I had to go south. Upon reaching Jaffrey, the day pooped out to the south, as predicted, and I spent the next 3.5 hours trying to get 45 miles back to Springfield, but mostly just trying to stay in the game. I was about 15 miles from Springfield along the Connecticut River (warning number one) and next to I-91 (warning number two) when it was evident it was time to call it a day and do the off-field landing thing in a valley field (warning number three). Any guesses on the warnings, thus far?

I had my field picked out and had already spotted tall power cable towers (loud warning number four) away from the field along I-91. The field was clear and bordered by a dirt road to the south (warning number five) and a fence-like border with a break in the vegetation to the north (warnings number six and seven) and trees and heavy vegetation on the other sides. At approximately 400 feet I made my pass over the field in heavy sink to set up my downwind leg of my pattern. It should be noted I was flying my Nimbus which has a very high L/D, flaps, drogue chute, and powerful spoilers, but cannot be slipped. (*Attention students and low-timers*: don't every try a 400 foot pattern with the L-23 or a low-performance ship.) Anyway, I was horrified to discover numerous feeder power lines at the road and fence border coming from the big power towers. The mind raced, the adrenaline was pumping now, and intense bargaining began with God. There was no place to go and I would not be able to jump the 100-foot lines and land in this short field or go under the multiple small wires at both ends. The big Nimbus can be an exciting machine to land in short fields even without complications. I was trapped and began to quickly formulate a controlled crash scenario.

FAR 91.3 defines the authority and responsibility of the pilot-in-command including direct responsibility for the safe operation of an aircraft. Following a wire contact "incident" the FAA will investigate the pilot's actions. This may or may not involve interviewing the pilot directly. The pilot may have moved on to bigger and better things, if he has lead a good life. In general aviation there averages 115 annual wire-strike accidents nationwide. You have some chance of surviving, however, your aircraft is likely to be destroyed.

A ten-year study in California documented 216 wire strikes by the NTSB while the two large California utility companies verified 1,232 wire contacts. Translation: our low-flying power friends had a lot of close calls. Rather than filing their required wire contact reports, they were probably busy doing other things, such as changing their underwear, racing home to hug wife and kids, writing donation checks to their church or charities, etc.

FAR Part 77 "Objects Affecting the Navigable Airspace" is used by the FAA to determine if "ground-based objects" are hazards to navigation. It does not focus on low wires unless they are close to an airport. Objects at or higher than 500 feet AGL are considered hazards. An FAA advisory circular, "Obstruction Marking and Lighting," *recommends* objects 200 feet and above be marked. Research on general aviation shows most wire strikes occur below 200 feet with 70% of wire strikes at 100 feet AGL. It has been my casual observation that glider pilots on final approach are often at altitudes below 200 feet. In aviation glider jargon we call it "landing." *Obviously, we are at risk with wire strikes in landing off-field.* Identifying wires once we have entered our pattern for an off-field landing has the potential for something much worse than a bad hair day.

A few other interesting statistics/facts for general aviation are:

1. Wire strikes do not occur only on those hard to see "scuddy days." In fact 90% of all wire strikes occur when visibility is three miles or greater.
2. Pilot experience is not a determining factor. An analysis by the Flight Safety Institute found 55% of all pilots involved in wire strikes had an advanced commercial or CFI certificate.
3. A NASA study of civil helicopter wire-strike accidents showed 40% of the accident pilots knew or were aware of the wires' location prior to the accident. Often, the pilots became distracted or preoccupied with other tasks. Good lesson here for us glider folk, as we all know the workload, mind-racing, and adrenaline flow are heaviest in a difficult off-field landing situation. It is easy to get distracted.
4. Remember: Aeronautical charts *do not* depict most lines constructed at less than 200 feet AGL.

So, what are we to make of all this and what should we keep in mind when we go play away from the airport?

1. *We must maintain vigilance in searching for and avoiding wires.* The question on landing off-field is not "Are there wires?" but rather "Where are the wires?"
2. *Search for poles, towers and support structures, or their shadows.* Although these things can be very difficult to see when above them, they are more visible than wires.
3. *Be aware of any and all man-made horizontal features.* We call these things "buildings" and where there are buildings there will be electric or telephone wires connected.
4. *Look for inconsistent strips of vegetation.* Crop edges and land boundaries hint at the increased potential for wires.
5. *Do not limit your search to "shiny" wires or objects.* Lines or wires often oxidize and lose their reflective properties.
6. *Never fly below a wire.* It is unlikely you can do it and where there is one wire there is often smaller wires below it.
7. *Talk about this issue with our experienced cross-country club members.* These guys have a wealth of first-hand knowledge and experience on this and many other cross country flying issues.
8. *Finally*, whether encountering wires on final, a forced tree landing, heavy wing icing, or control failure… stay calm… think clearly… THINK SURVIVAL … and NEVER EVER GIVE UP.

Oh yeah, *go back and review the warning signs our uninformed and oblivious pilot encountered during his first wire experience do to his poor planning and field selection.* Obviously, the ding-a-ling survived. So, the field was now being shaded by small mountains/hills. At low altitude and in semi-disbelief, the variometer showed a sudden 200 feet up per minute. I climbed to about 1,500 feet in this thermal before racing off to a better field and eventually back home.

My circling above this small shaded field triggered a heat bubble that had been sitting there. Over time, I have replayed the many errors I made on this cross-country flight and by doing so have learned things I won't repeat. The one thing that remains a personal mystery and worry is that in the excitement of getting back home, I forgot what I promised the Man during my version of "Let's Make A Deal." My concern being, He doesn't forget and memory loss may not be a valid excuse!

Source: "A Pilot's Guide to Avoiding Wire Strikes," a safety project of the Wire Strike Prevention Working Group and the AOPA Air Safety Foundation.

Figure 3: Bill Brine, the biggest little Boy Scout in Massachusetts.

One long cross-country flight

Mark Tuttle

After years of circling beneath the clouds in a glider, I have finally flown through a cloud, and it was great. It happened during a 1,200-mile flight from Lawrence, Massachusetts to Palm Beach, Florida, and it ranks in the top three or four flights of my life. Of course, this story has nothing to do with soaring, except for clouds, and for the thrill of seeing clouds from the inside out.

I have been working on my instrument rating at the Lawrence airport with my instructor, Carl Bentley, for about nine months. Carl has a friend, Ed Traub, who has a summer home on Lake Winnipesaukee in New Hampshire, a winter home in Palm Beach, and a wonderfully-maintained Cherokee 180. For thirteen years, Carl and Ed have been ferrying Ed's planes down to Palm Beach in the fall so that Ed can fly the plane in Florida during the winter, and then back to New England in the spring so that Ed can fly up here back in the real world for the rest of the year. This fall, they offered to let me fly the plane down to Florida with Carl in the right seat and Ed in the back seat so that I could get some significant experience flying under instrument flight rules. One of the requirements for the instrument rating is a 300-mile flight with three different approaches at three different airports. We did 1,200 miles with approaches at Norfolk, Virginia; Savannah, Georgia; and West Palm Beach, Florida. The total flight time was 11.1 hours in a 12-hour period.

It took many days for the big day to arrive, because we wanted good weather all the way down the east coast for the sake of fuel planning. Finally, the Weather Channel depicted two massive cold fronts moving across the country in parallel. The first front was scheduled to pass over the east coast on Monday and the second front was scheduled to pass on Wednesday, leaving a band of clear weather down the coast on Tuesday. Carl said "Let's go" on Sunday night, and we left on Tuesday.

The plan was to meet at the Lawrence airport on Tuesday morning between 6:00 and 6:30, and take off at 7:00. I was so excited about the flight that I could hardly sleep, and probably got only four hours of sleep before getting up at five to throw on my clothes and dash up to Lawrence. When I got there, Carl was reading the airplane's flight manual and doing weight and balance calculations. Carl figured that we would be over the maximum gross weight allowed with three heavy guys and their luggage in the airplane, so Carl left his bag in his car, I left all but a shirt and some underwear in my car, and we unloaded equipment on the airplane before Carl felt comfortable with the weight. Then we climbed into the plane. It was a beautiful morning.

While Carl has been putting me through the wringer doing simulated maneuvers, this was the first time I had ever flown a flight on an IFR flight plan. I had filed the flight plan the night before, so our flight clearance was ready for us as soon as we called the tower. We took off, climbed out, and contacted Boston approach control. Then I put on the hood, a device restricting my vision to the instruments on the panel in front of me, leaving the warm sunshine on my neck as the only reminder of what a beautiful day it was to fly.

Our flight took us directly over the JFK airport in New York at 6,000 feet. Just before reaching JFK, Carl told me to lift the hood and look to the right. There was the Manhattan skyline glowing in the orange morning sun, with the Statue of Liberty in the middle of the harbor, and JFK itself laid out in front of us. It was quite a sight. Soon after I lowered the hood again, we heard the controllers talking to "Speedbird," which Carl and Ed recognized as the call sign for the Concorde, and they searched the air below us for a glimpse of the supersonic jet departing from JFK, but it was not to be found.

Since this was my first flight "in the system," things did not go smoothly at first. At first it felt that so much was going on that I even had trouble entering new radio frequencies when the controller in one sector passed me off to the controller in the next sector. Even when I did manage to get the frequency right, I concentrated so hard on changing the frequency that I forgot to scan the other instruments, and the plane banked into turns so dramatic that Carl exclaimed at one point, "Don't take the plane with your eyes!"

In the course of the first four-hour leg of the flight, I slowly got the hang of things, and even began to imagine myself as a professional and responsible pilot, but even that little fantasy was shattered during the approach to Norfolk. Like a powerful car surging to cross a finish line, the workload built up so rapidly that an hour of rational thought was compressed into ten minutes, and I swooped through the localizer and never regained my composure as I scampered down the flight path projected by the ILS to an ungainly squat over the runway. 0 for 1.

We refueled and took off for Savannah. This leg of the flight was relatively uneventful, until the great moment occurred. Carl suddenly told me to take off the hood, and before me stood the tops of cumulus clouds rising up into the air from below. I was stupified by the sudden beauty of the sides of the clouds, with their craggy surfaces of brilliant whiteness textured with crisp, dark shadows. In and out and in and out we blasted through the tops of the clouds. The peaceful contemplation of the instruments under the hood was replaced by this awe-full demonstration of nature's beauty, which was replaced in turn by confusion and disorientation as the clouds blasted by in my peripheral vision as I tried to concentrate on the instruments to keep the plane straight-and-level inside the clouds. Eventually, all good things must come to an end. We passed through the clouds, and the hood went back on. Fortunately, all bad things must also come to an end, since the NDB-circle-to-land approach into Savannah was only slightly less of a problem than the ILS approach into Norfolk. 0 for 2.

Finally, after walking around long enough to ease the cramp out of my right hip, we climbed back into the plane for the final leg to Palm Beach. We flew by Cape Canaveral. Once again, the false air of professionalism returned to the cockpit, and was dispelled by the approach into West Palm Beach. Night had fallen. In the middle of a VOR-circle-to-land approach, I removed the hood at the minimum descent altitude, and was dazzled by the sparkling lights of the town below me. Carl told me, "You are landing on 9, so fly 270 to parallel the runway." This was nuts, because there was no way that a heading of 270 would cause me to parallel the runway, but I knew that Carl must be as tired as I was, so I turned to something like 240 in a half-hearted attempt to turn to 270 before I started to reason with the guy. "Come on, turn to 270." This was insane, because I could see the runway lights below me, and there was no way that 270 would cause me to parallel that runway. Finally, Carl ordered me to turn base, and as I completed the turn before resuming my protest, suddenly I could see the lights for the runway (that stupid *other* runway 9) that we were supposed to be using stretching out to my left. I made a sweeping turn to final, and we landed gently into that welcoming darkness of the airport: "Now i lay (with everywhere around) me (the great dim deep sound of rain; and of always and of nowhere) and what a gently welcoming darkestness." Not quite 0 for 3. Maybe one-half for three, since the actual touchdown was so satisfying.

We headed to Ed's home for dinner and sleep. The next morning we went back to the airport to take care of the airplane, ate lunch, then went off to the beach to roll around in the warm surf for the afternoon, ate dinner, and then returned to Ed's home to spend the evening talking by the pool under the stars. During the day, Carl and Ed taught me all of the fine points to living a good life in Palm Beach. The next day, we took a cheap commercial flight back to Boston, and Mark and Carl and Ed's excellent adventure was over.

"We need to work on the approaches," said Carl at one point. In the course of the trip, Carl took to calling me "Snake" in reference to the rolling, weaving path I had flown during some stages of the flight. Maybe, after I actually get the instrument rating, Carl will be kind enough to call me "Captain Snake."

Flight tests on foreign soil

Mark Tuttle

I have noticed a recent trend in the club for members to train with the club for a new rating, and then go elsewhere for the final sign-off and flight test. In the last year, I think there have been four flight tests away from the field, with two of the tests in club equipment during an encampment. If you are considering doing the same thing yourself, I think there are two things you should keep in mind.

The first concerns insurance. It is important for members to remember that club gliders are covered by insurance only when a club member rated for the glider is the pilot in command, or when a club member is flying solo with a current 90-day sign-off, or during a flight test with an examiner. This means that a student taking lessons in a club glider with an instructor who is not a club member is not covered our insurance. In particular, if you take flight instruction toward your sign-off in a club glider with an instructor who is not a club member, then your instruction flights are not covered by our insurance. This would be true at any club using the SSA's group insurance policy, and is not just "another MITSA rule." This is important to remember, because club members are responsible for damage to club gliders up to the $500 deductible on our insurance policy, and probably for all damage to club gliders during flights not covered by our insurance.

Finally, no matter where you get your certificate — be it private, commercial, or instructor — a club checkout will be required before exercising the privileges of that certificate in club equipment. Local checkouts are another thing you can expect to find wherever you fly.

The MITSA Board of Directors

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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.

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