

Maine Parachute Association

Bill Grusik, President 797-3006

Mattie Crane, Treasurer 346-6023

John Gobel, Secretary/Editor 852-7300

March-April 2002

Newsletter



We had several contributors to this month's Newsletter, so instead of just reading the same boring drivel you get from me every month or so, this month there some new boring drivel!

This time of the year is generally pretty devoid of much flying activities, with the snow and ice fast disappearing and mud becoming the norm. However, we had several informal get-togethers recently, so we'll bring you up to date on those. We'll also do the usual "let's focus on somebody's screw-up" routine, give some safety hints, give you an update on Wes Dagget's recovery, and since we have lots of pictures, we'll put those in with the usual irreverent captions.

Wes Dagget recovering splendidly!

As we reported in the last Newsletter, the winter fly-in at Moosehead Lake was marred by the serious accident Wes had while we were all warming up the planes in the staging area. Wes accidentally hit the throttle while trying to relocate the plane (which was on skis), and the sudden lurch trapped him against the plane which proceeded to smash into the hangar door at a pretty serious speed. In Wes' words, "I was like a bug on a windshield!"

The impact did major damage to his hip, driving the ball on his femur through his hip socket, crushing everything in its path, and lodging itself against his stomach lining. In Bangor, they were going to replace his entire hip, but then he was transferred to Portland where a more experienced team of surgeons was able to reconstruct his entire hip by gluing every piece of bone back in its place. Recent X-rays showed that the operation was a huge success. In fact, according to Wes, the surgeon was going to use his case and his X-rays in talks he gives to medical groups about this reconstructive technique.

There was also severe damage to his sciatic nerve and other nerves that is causing a lot of the pain.

However, he is expected to have that pain disappear in the next 6 to 12 months as that damage heals. Wes gets around on crutches currently, but is expecting to be able to stop using those pretty soon.

Wes is looking forward to flying again as soon as he can get around without pain. He and Jerry Suke are working on developing some restraint mechanism on the throttle so this kind of accident can't happen again. If they are able to come up with some solution, it will be welcome by many PPC pilots, as almost all of us at one time or another had close

calls by hitting the throttle accidentally while warming up the plane. Especially on the Buckeye and some other models, where the throttle takes the form of a joy stick in the center of the console.

To repeat the lesson learned from Wes' unfortunate accident, when the engine is running, the plane should be up against a solid object like your truck, or tree or wall, so even if you make a mistake, it's not going to run you over. Wheel chocks help, although full throttle on the engine will most certainly jump them.



Wayne illustrating to his new student the stroke he is going to use to smack him on the side of the head if he disobeys his orders.

Anybody seen Jerry Parlin?

At the last couple of informal get-togethers, a strange occurrence took place. Ordinarily, Jerry Parlin is one of the first ones airborne at almost any event, in practically any weather, but at the last two, a person pretending to be him showed up without an airplane. A couple of the guys who know him well think that it was actually his sister Sally who looks a lot like him, but who does not fly. If anybody knows what really happened to him, please notify the state police.

Kiwanis Club Fishing Derby fly-in

We were invited to fly at the annual Kiwanis Club fishing derby at Pleasant Lake in Stetson in February. It was a huge success, raising several thousand dollars for charity, with well over a hundred attendees. MPA provided the entertainment, freeing the ice fishermen from staring dumbly at a hole in the ice and instead having them stare dumbly up in the sky watching the powered parachute.

Actually, it was the usual ice fly-in scene – everybody merrily waving, men giving the thumbs-up sign, children wide-eyed with amazement at the colorful wonders in the sky, smiling women throwing their long-underwear towards the pilots, and so on. Your standard Norman Rockwell painting on the cover of Life magazine.

Although the forecast was pretty iffy, the weather turned out to be perfect – in the 20s, ice solid, sun shining, no wind until after 10 AM. There was only one problem – there was only ONE powered parachute there. To provide enough entertainment for all the fishermen scattered all over the ice, the poor guy had to criss-cross the entire length and width of the lake over and over, trying to think of clever stunts to keep up the excitement, yet not bore a hole in the ice with his head.

Anyway, we're invited back next year, so we'll get another chance to flood the skies with colorful chutes and more brilliant flying.

What fog?

The first get-together at Wayne's field without skis this year was exciting in a different way. Dead calm, temperature in the 30s, and pea-soup thick fog. Forever the optimists that we MPA members are, we decided to stick it out and reverse the order of our routine – we went to have our usual 4000 calorie breakfast first. (Actually, Suke may have

broken the 4000 calorie limit – he had what appeared to be a huge bowl of whipped cream, with some strawberries and a giant stack of pancakes cleverly hidden under the whipped cream.)

By 9 AM or so, the fog lifted enough so you could sort of see what appeared to be the end of the runway. To see who would check out the actual visibility by taking a test flight, we had a contest that was based on each of us telling why we want to continue living. Dunbar won, so he gamely took off. He disappeared right at the end of the runway, although we could still hear his engine. We could



That's about all the altitude you could get on that foggy morning in Fairfield, but we had fun anyway. Sort of neat picture, isn't it?

also hear jumbled words coming through the radio – we think he was asking us to wave our arms or light matches so he get back down. Actually, he said from the air he had more visibility than we did from the ground.

After that, we took turns flying circles around the field at low altitudes, with only two planes up at any one time, and in radio contact at all times. With those rules, we were able to get some pretty good flying in, and still be safe since we maintained visibility of each other and of the ground pretty much at all times.



Rules of the Air

The following is an extract of a list submitted by Wayne. As we all know, Wayne is probably our best flight instructor, so his advice should be heeded:

- Flying isn't dangerous. Crashing is what's dangerous.
- The ONLY time you have too much fuel is when you're on fire.
- A "good" landing is one from which you can walk away. A "great" landing is one after which you can use the plane again.
- Learn from the mistakes of others. You won't live long enough to make them all yourself.
- There are three simple rules for making a smooth landing. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are.
- Helicopters can't fly. They're so ugly that the earth repels them.
- Good judgment comes from experience. Unfortunately, experience usually comes from bad judgment.

Welcome new members!

Welcome to our newest MPA members Jim Clark, and Doug Sukeforth (yes, Jerry's brother. Jerry often speaks of him, saying "my brother was an only child").

Jim has been enamored with PPCs for quite a while, and looking to buy one soon. Doug has been flying for a year or two now, and in fact if he had been a member, he would have won the "Big Brass Ones" award at the Christmas party for his penchant for flying in winds that none of us sensible and experienced folks would even try.

Sport Pilot licensing process running into some problems

The Professional Aviation Maintenance Association (PAMA) does not like the FAA proposal regarding the new Sports Pilot proposal. The PAMA president Brian Finnegan says "Hidden beneath the changes in piloting and manufacturing standards is an undermining of the maintenance standards on which aviation safety depends." He was referring to

one feature of the proposal that allows owners to maintain their own aircraft, and to work on those of others for compensation.



Jerry Parlin (or his stunt double) checks out Suke's new engine, while an unidentified pervert checks out his butt.

Oh, those early days...

Instructor on the ground with hand-held radio, talking to a student on his first solo flight:

Instructor: "You're doing well, Tom. Make sure you keep your turns shallow, and watch your airspeed. Copy?"

<Silence>

Instructor: "Tom, are you OK up there?"

<Silence>

Instructor: "Umm, Tom, you've got to key the mike. I can't hear it when you nod."

Mile High Club, anyone?

From AVflash bulletin of 3/11/02...

Mr. Alex Mtetwa and girlfriend Georgia Stevens allegedly got a bit tipsy on their British Airways flight from Johannesburg to London, and then simulated sexual intercourse for all of economy class. Upon arrival in London, the couple was arrested...

The lesson here is obvious – if you're going to be arrested for faking it, you might as well get arrested for doing it.

Guest editorial

Violating editorial policy on brevity, the following submission from Dunbar is printed in its entirety.

WHY THE MAINE POWERCHUTE ASSOCIATION? (MPA)

Respectfully submitted by Dunbar Seamans

I want to share a few thoughts, ideas, and concerns that I have regarding the MPA. My intent is to stimulate some dialogue among the current and past members, as well as those who may not be familiar with this organization.

Why is there an MPA? Should we continue to maintain the organization? What was the purpose for founding MPA? Are we being successful and if so, at what?

Although my timelines are not very accurate, I believe that MPA has been in existence for about three years? Anyway, a group of powerchute enthusiasts got together and with the help of Aero Sports Connections (ASC), we formed a chapter of ASC. We needed a few officers, (five I believe) to be chartered. We had an initial meeting (dinner meeting in Jay) and out of that, we came up with an organization. There may have been 15 or 20 folks at that first get together. Anyway, that was the start of MPA as I recall.

Although we talked about it, we never quite got to put together any bylaws. Our crew really wasn't interested in all the formalities of a bona fide "Club". So, we proceeded with a loose knit group of people who from time to time were able to fly together and we were chartered by ASC as a chapter. I guess that my point with all this is that we never really spelled out what our goal was. And, that may be OK. I believe that all of us had ideas about what our expectations for MPA were. Some wanted camaraderie, others wanted organized fly-ins, and others maybe wanted just to be part of a group of people who shared the same interests in flying powerchutes. However, I think that all of us were hoping that we could further the issues of training and safety regardless what the MPA looked like.

We have had as many as 45 interested people who signed up and paid dues but people come and go for various reasons and I think that we now have as few as 25 or so dues paying members. We also now have an excellent newsletter that comes out periodically and is sent to all the membership. But, now the membership is small, so it is like preaching to the choir if we have news worthy items to pass on to Powerchute Sportsmen. I guess that my point here is that we are not reaching all those whom may benefit from issues relating to Powerchuting in Maine. And it seems to me that a newsletter is a great way for anyone to share anything they may wish to pass on. It is a wonderful forum to express ideas, share technological innovations, seek help and advice about purchases and even post classified ads to move equipment. But without input, and, if it doesn't get to the right people, it really doesn't accomplish what it could.

Now, what about MPA membership? If you are a member, you receive a newsletter. We have had discussions about dues and how much should they be, and we have voted a couple of times and have suggested that if the MPA is a priority, then the amount doesn't matter. Maybe it doesn't, but we sure have only a few who pay dues! In fact, what do we do with the funds raised? Do we carry a balance in the bank? And, if so, why? We can always raise money if it is needed. I believe that there are about 20 BFI's in Maine. Perhaps another 20 in New Hampshire. How many powerchutes are there just in Maine? I suspect there are as many as forty? So, wouldn't it be nice to have all of those folks benefit from the newsletter? I think that N.H. has been doing a newsletter for quite awhile also but I don't know how many they reach.

I have already mentioned above some of the advantages of being a member of MPA, but here are a few more. Some of us enjoy the solitude of flying alone sometimes and we can do that. However, when you fly with others there is that added margin of safety that is there if disaster occurs. Also, periodically it is nice to have someone else preflight your ship, perhaps

giving it a once over that you may not take the time to do every time. Sharing the innovations that we as individuals create can also be beneficial if not for the sake of safety, perhaps that of convenience. And, if my learning experience is at all typical, I learned many things the hard way because there was no one around to guide me. I say now the help is out there and all one has to do is ask and be receptive to others suggestions and just maybe some serious pitfalls can be avoided. MPA can also be the clearinghouse and/or sponsor of the required update seminars and safety sessions that help us to re-certify as BFI's .

It has been said that there are cliques in this sport here in Maine. Well, I agree with that observation. But, I don't agree if the inference is that they are a closed group of folks that do not allow others to participate. Here in Maine there are several people who are willing to train wannabes and newbies to this sport. Perhaps the various methods of training are different but I suspect that all the instructors are after the same outcome, that of preparing a person to fly safely. Ultimately we are hoping that all those entering this sport will become at least BFI's. That will tell us that the newcomer has had the basic training necessary to begin learning how to fly safely. It will also go a long way in showing the Government and the industry that we are trying to adhere to the minimal requirements expected of us as sportsmen. And, that will benefit our sport greatly.

Sometimes I am asked the question "what is the \$200 certification fee that goes to ASC for?" And, that is a fair question. When the sport and the industry runs into trouble with the public or the Federal Government, ASC is there to lobby for our issues. I also want to be sure to include

the other organizations such as Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA), and others who do that also. I have had the privilege to train for and have earned a Private pilot's license and I also have a seaplane rating. I think that they cost me about \$5000. Well, one can get into this wonderful sport of Powerchuting legally for around \$500, and sometimes even less. Now, for all that you can experience from a Powerchute, that is a real bargain.

So...what now? Where is MPA headed? What, if anything should we do? Do we need to fix anything? My intent here was to get people thinking about how we can reach more people effectively and thereby increase the input and participation of more people who enjoy the sport of Powerchuting. Perhaps we could eliminate the dues entirely and just ask for donations toward the newsletter, letting those who wish to contribute do so on their own volition. How about sending the newsletter to all of those people who show an interest in this sport? That would require that the dealers and the folks who train be prompt and efficient getting the names and address of the interested parties into the appropriate hands. When we have any



events like fly-ins that require some funds, just set a minimal registration fee and those who participate carry the burden of cost.

When the going gets tough in any special interest area, such as our sport of Powerchuting, then the squeaky wheel gets the grease, or, the larger the voice, the more power and influence we have. Think about it. Please let your current officers or any other members of MPA hear your ideas and thoughts. Get an e-mail off, or a letter to, or a phone call to the current officers. Their addresses etc. are posted in this newsletter. For the sake of our sport, and your enjoyment, participate at some level. Please, share your thoughts.