

"If it's in the Newsletter, it must be true"

Maine Powerchute Association

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Newsletter



www.mainepowerchutes.org

It's been a while since we published a Newsletter – my apologies for that, but preparation, execution, and follow-up activities relative to the Kitty Hawk adventure have taken up all discretionary time, it seems. But, we also published a lot of material on the web, as well as in several newspapers, magazines, and on "World Talk Radio", so there was plenty of MPA news to go around anyway. Special thanks to Ed Nadeau for all the work he has done on keeping our website up to date with all these activities.

Starting this month, we have a new format – we will publish our standard Newsletter, which is quite "colorful" – this is meant for adults who don't take themselves too seriously and who can indulge in an irreverent view of the world and of themselves, and then we'll have a different edition for those who don't fit into that category. We're still working on that second edition.

Bingham Fly-in

The forecast was ominous, but 7 intrepid MPA members still continued to Doug Sukeforth's so-called "camp" (it's actually the Trump Tower of camps). They were not disappointed, as we were able to get a couple of excellent flights in on Friday, then watch the fog and mist Saturday morning, then fly some more Saturday afternoon.

As it turned out, the weather scared off most other pilots at the Gaddabout Gaddis fly-in (a few miles from Sukeforth International), so the powered parachutes were about the only attraction for the visitors. Naturally, we made the best of it.

Since 6 of the pilots were part of the Kitty Hawk 8 (the Eagle Flight) – we re-created our dramatic landings at Kitty Hawk at Gadabout Gaddis airport. We formed a long straight line on the approach with a couple of hundred yards between us, and did a really nicely organized series of touch-and-gos. Eagle 3 led the way (that's Doug's call sign). We would have received a lot more applause, but only a handful of the local residents were there to watch.

By the way, we added one more "Eagle" to our crew – Eagle Zero was assigned to Herb Micue, who flew with the Bingham Eagle formation. Actually, Herb flew a couple of legs on the Kitty Hawk trip as well.

Thanks once again to Doug for his hospitality in letting the MPA use his facilities for this yearly event. And for his mooseburgers!



A pretty scene from the Bingham fly-in, with Mike O'Donnell doing his best to scare the tops of those trees.

New members

In a wave of enthusiasm that defies logic, we added six new members to our group in the last two months – even though we're puzzled, we welcome them. They are:

Ken Paradis – one of the Kitty Hawk trippers, and the brother of Robin Paradis. He drove one of the rigs, but he is also a pilot who flew several of the legs on the trip.

Gordon Sukeforth – brother of Jerry and Doug, (our sympathies, Gordon!) and also one of the Kitty Hawk trippers, who did an incredible amount of work in preparing the road maps and navigating throughout the journey.

Gary Lavaway – a family membership with his wife Becky, living in Presque Isle. Gary is working towards his BFI, and has a Buckeye and a Paladin.

Clarence Mullen – another family membership (gee, we may have to clean up this raunchy Newsletter, with all these families joining... not!) He and his wife Dena are from Blaine.

Randy Autrey – from the opposite end of the state, Bethel, Randy is also a new PPC pilot, looking for his BFI and some flying company. Randy is our MPA organizer for the upcoming Bethel fly-in event.

Stuart Smith – joins us from Springfield, and flies with our downeast contingent quite a bit – he is also working towards his BFI.

Welcome to all our new members, and as your recent welcome letter states, we hope you'll participate in our many events, and contribute your experiences and energy to our club. Oh, and we won't hold this lapse of judgment of actually joining us against you!

Could this have been one of us?

A young and stupid pilot wanted to sound cool on the aviation frequencies. So, as he was approaching the field for a night landing, instead of making the customary official request to the tower, he said: "Guess who?"

The controller switched the field lights off, and replied: "Guess where!"

Kitty Hawk trip huge success!

As most of you have read on our web-site, we have successfully flown the Maine State flag, and the proclamation from the Governor to Kitty Hawk, North Carolina as part of the EAA's and National Park Service's "50 Flags to Kitty Hawk" program. In this initiative, one pilot from each state was chosen to fly the flag and the proclamation – however in our case, we went as a group, and in powered parachutes!



Since the trip was chronicled on a day-by-day basis, as well as having a bunch more information on the event on our website (www.maineppchutes.org), we won't repeat all that. But, here are some of the highlights.

May to August – planning. We met 5 or 6 times, contacted the newspapers, coordinated with the Governor's office, planned the route, designed and ordered uniforms and patches, recruited pilots and drivers, coordinated with the EAA and the NPS staff, and did a bunch of

other preparatory stuff – like figuring out how to carry enough fuel to fly 55 mile legs with a headwind.

We planned on flying 3 or more planes on every leg, with one of the pilots carrying the flag. The rest of the crew would be driving ahead to the next destination, where the next flight crew of 3 or 4 pilots would be ready to carry the flag. And so on and so on, in a leap-frog fashion.



Yep, that's actually the Governor of the State of Maine. Governor Baldacci was a great sport in heading up the send-off ceremonies for the MPA trip to Kitty Hawk.

Early August – trip seemed finalized. Route was planned, and it consisted of 19 legs, each of 35 to 55 miles. It seemed to avoid major metropolitan areas, as well as large bodies of water. The flight crew and the ground support crew was finalized, with call signs assigned:

Eagle 1 – Jerry Sukeforth, Chief Navigator
 Eagle 2 – Jim Holloway, Flight Operations
 Eagle 3 – Doug Sukeforth, Scheduling
 Eagle 4 – Bill Grusik, Chief Flight Instructor
 Eagle 5 – Mike O'Donnell, Logistics
 Eagle 6 – John Gobel, Group Leader
 Eagle 7 – Dun Seamans, Executive Officer
 Eagle 8 – Rob Paradis, Special Operations
 Eagle 9 – Ken Paradis, Dual duty as pilot and ground support crew member.

The ground support crew, who ended up doing as much work as the pilots, as driving the rigs and finding the remote airports turned out to be

a lot more difficult than any of us thought, consisted of the Roger Chase, Ken Cassidy, Felix Zelenkewich, and Gordon Sukeforth.

Few days before Aug. 14th – what the hell were we thinking – over 800 miles in a powered parachute???

August 14th – all 13 of us showed up at the airport. This was really going to happen! Then the Governor shows up – now we really have to do it! Governor Baldacci was a great sport – sat in one of the planes, although sensibly enough, he wouldn't go for a ride. He gave a nice send-off speech, read the proclamation declaring August 14th to be "50 Flags to Kitty Hawk" day in Maine. Had a nice crowd on hand to watch Bill Grusik and John Gobel take off in a pretty stiff breeze, followed by most of the rest of the pilots, going to the first destination – Bowman field. What was to be the first of many such events, at least two of the drivers got lost on the way to the airport. They were only about an hour and a half late getting there, which was not bad compared to some future episodes.



A typical flag-hand-off ceremony at one of our 19 stops. Here, Jim and Dunbar (at ends), receive the flag from (L to R) John, Mike, and Ken Paradis. Why is Mike using only one finger?

August 15 to 21 – had nearly perfect weather most of the time, and made excellent time. Covered a lot more miles than we expected (see map of our trip). We only had two incidents, with one hard landing and one engine failure, but both turned out OK. See writeups of Day 1

through Day 9 on our website for a more intimate look at our travels.

On Day 8, on August 21st, we were at Currituck County airport, about 35 miles from Kitty Hawk. We planned out our grand entrance, and made arrangements with the National Park Service staff for our official welcoming ceremony and the flag turnover. The grand entrance plans, by the way, did not include crash landings and ambulances and fire trucks.

August 22 - the final day – weather was questionable, with high winds forecast but not clear at what time. We decided to take a chance, so we left right on schedule at 6:45 AM. Our target was an 8:15 arrival.

The winds held up, in fact helped us some, so just like we planned, we arrived at Kitty Hawk on time to the minute (no one was more surprised than we were). We arrived in a neat formation, and touched down at First Flight airport one after another, all 8 of us, separated by only a few hundred yards. A pretty impressive sight, as we were told by all the people there to greet us and by the radio and newspaper folks.

August 23 (and after) – it took a day or two to sink in what we accomplished. It was quite a feat by any measure, and the fact that we did it in such a short time and without any serious mishaps, and ending with the same 13 people with which we started, just made it more impressive. We were the only PPCs doing it, although there was at least one more ultralight group of flag bearers (in trikes).

Post-August 23 – The experience definitely made better pilots of all of us. The distances we covered, the variety of conditions and airports we encountered, the trips over miles of water, the coordination with the other pilots in

the group and with people we met along the way, all added greatly to us as pilots.

We had many laughs along the way, and learned a lot about getting along under stress. I think once we relaxed and started to smell the roses (thanks to Jerry Sukeforth!) the trip was even more enjoyable. We were impressed by the warm and even excited receptions we got along the way at the different airports (with just one or two exceptions).



The infamous ground support crew of the Kitty Hawk adventure. From L to R, Ken Cassidy, Ken Paradis, Gordon Sukeforth, Roger Chase, and Zeke Zelekewich,



The pilots of the Kitty Hawk adventure with the official State flag delivered, and the Wright Brothers monument in the background. (L to R) – Dun Seamans, Doug Sukeforth, Ken Paradis, Mike O'Donnell, Rob Paradis, John Gobel, Jim Holloway, Bill Grusik, and Jerry Sukeforth.

I was quite surprised at the number of people following our trip on the web. We received many many e-mails as well as comments in our guest book on the web, expressing appreciation for the entertaining coverage of our day to day activities, and congratulating us for our accomplishment. Even after nearly a month, I still receive e-mails from strangers in many different states, expressing similar sentiments, and asking if we're planning any other adventures in which they could vicariously participate.

Congratulations on "Firsts"

To Mark Magoon, who just received his BFI; to Greg Gobel, who made his first solo flight in a powered parachute; and to Brenda Sisson who had her first flight in a PPC.

Second annual Top Gun fly-in

Other than a few stray thunderstorms coming through every now and then, we had a wonderful weekend at Wayne's field in Fairfield for our event. Had an excellent turnout with over 15 chutes and about 25 people participating – plus the many on-lookers, of course.

The Top Gun contest consisted of 4 events, and the combined lowest score became the MPA Top Gun for 2003. The events are designed to simply demonstrate control of your aircraft – nothing too fancy, unsafe, or too difficult. The events were:

- High Bomb Drop – dropping a bean bag from about 100 ft into a bulls eye,
- Low Bomb Drop – same as above, but drop it from any altitude without touching the ground,
- Barrier Jump - touch target line at one end, fly over a 3 ft barrier in the middle, then touch at second target line,
- Spot Landing – last event, simply land as close as possible to target line.

Last year's Top Gun, John Gobel was there to defend his title – needless to say, everybody was rooting against him. Including himself, so someone else could take all the razzing for a while.

Twelve brave MPA members signed up for the Saturday afternoon event. Winds were marginal at our target time of 4 PM. The luck of the draw (or the unluck, in this case) had Joel McCabe flying first. He gamely took off, and actually completed all 4 events. Being tossed around by the gusty winds, his score was pretty horrendous, but just completing it showed some damn good pilotage.

Free! A real Optical Illusion!



Stare at this photo for at least 60 seconds. If you concentrate, you'll see a waterfall hidden in the background. It may take several tries.

After watching Joel's flight, the decision to wait for better conditions was unanimous. This made a sort of a mini-folk-hero out of Joel.

So we started the event again around 5 PM. We lost Bob Ellis, who thought it was still too windy, but the remaining eleven got going.

Jerry Parlin, who has not flown for close to a year, was back for this event. He and Wayne Kenney were sharing Wayne's plane. The first pilot in his group of 4 (Joel again) completed his runs, and it was Jerry's turn.

As he came around for his first pass, Jerry tried to gain some altitude by flaring at about 30 feet of altitude. Wayne rigs his plane so he carries a lot of tail. When Jerry with his longer legs gave Wayne's plane full extension, he actually stalled the chute, which then dropped straight down. Showing some quick thinking and good

pilot skills, Jerry caught the fall, but did not have enough altitude to recover and crashed in.

The plane broke the axles and sustained some other damage. Jerry was a little sore but walked away from it. However, after he visited a hospital a few days later, it was discovered that he did suffer some damage to his spine and would have to be in a cast for quite a while.

So we were now down to 8 contestants, as Jerry was out, and of course Wayne had no plane and he was out, and Ed Nadeau respected his wife's wishes to not compete after Jerry's incident.

The rest of the contest did not have any more problems, saw some good flying skills displayed, and had some close scores. Here are the results:

- High Bomb Drop – 3rd–Mike O'Donnell
2nd –Rob Paradis
Winner- Wes Dagget
- Low Bomb Drop – 3rd – Wes Daggett
2nd – Herb Micue
Winner – John Gobel
- Barrier Jump – 3rd – Rob Paradis
2nd – Mile O'Donnell
Winner – John Gobel
- Spot Landing – 3rd – Joel McCabe
2nd – Bill Grusik
Winner – Wes Dagget

And here are the **final results** of the overall Top Gun contest, with the combined scores:

Third Place – 99' 7" – **Robin Paradis**
Second place – 80' 1" – **Mike O'Donnell**
Top Gun for 2003 - 74' 6" – **John Gobel**

Treasurer's Report

Bonnie Micue, our treasurer gives the following update on the status of our finances:

After new membership dues, the payment of \$350 as a donation to the Kitty Hawk fund, and



John figured out how to wear his second Top Gun hat. Being immune to fashion has its upside.

payments for the MPA sponsored Top Gun fly-in, we have \$842.21 in our unrestricted account. We also had \$1400 in the account from Kitty Hawk donors, which has all been disbursed to the pilots.

Special Salute

While a number of people contributed to the success of the Kitty Hawk adventure, I think a special thanks is due to Gordon Sukeforth. Not only did he work his butt

off during the trip, but he also did a masterful job on collecting, collating, sorting, and scanning all the pictures we took onto a single CD. He even created a professional looking cover and title for the 640 pictures on the CD, and even included viewing software on it. He gave one of these to each of the participants. Thanks, Gordon – great work!

Yes, the number **640** is right. Gordon promised to include them all, and he did. Obviously, they're not all masterpieces. So the next time you have relatives who are staying a little too long, you can sit them down in front of the PC and say "OK, let's look at these again, and this time we won't skip any!"



Coming in for the low bomb drop, Joel McCabe takes careful aim before releasing his bean-bag bomb during the Top Gun competition. No, the bean-bag-bomb is an actual bean bag.

Special Quiz – look at picture on Pg.4 – Jerry is smiling, but does his left hand tell a different story?