

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

Maine Powerchute Association

Newsletter

September 2006

www.maine-powerchutes.org

Fly-in summaries

We had lots of weather-related delays and cancellations this year, so some of our less energetic members had a hard time motivating themselves to make the many long and often expensive trips – with price of gas at all time highs, and most of us getting 10 miles a gallon pulling those campers and trailers. However, we had some good flying events anyway, and here are the recaps.

Top Gun (Fairfield)

This is usually our most attended event, but some heavy wind forecasts forced us to postpone it pretty much at the last minute. Unfortunately, some of our boys didn't get the message in time, so they showed up anyway. Yes, we had all the makings of a Chinese fire drill, or a cluster event as we call it.

To make it worse, the weather ended up not being too bad, so we got some flying in anyway, although we did not hold the competition. So, we said "see you next week for the real thing," as that was an open weekend anyway.

So next week comes, and we have the other half who did get the word show up, and the first half who were there the week before and had enough flying did not show up. OK, so we postpone Top Gun competition again, so we'd have more than the 3 of us competing. Again, we had a lovely little fly-in otherwise.

So, here's the official word on the Top Gun competition for the coveted Top Gun 2006 hat.

We will do it at the Presque Isle fly-in at Cyr's field during the weekend of September 29th and 30th. We are so determined to make it happen

that we will fly no matter what. OK, maybe not quite that bad, but if it's not flyable, we will have SOME contest no matter how remotely related to aviation so we can get this behind us. I know, there some of you purists out there who will bitch about this approach, but this is our last chance. And yes, we have to give Robin a good shot!

By the way, if you haven't been to Cyr's field, it is probably the nicest grass field that we've seen – great location for an MPA fly-in. And Robin and Darlene Paradis, who are hosting this event, promised no snow or even frost.

Norridgewock

Many of us were pretty psyched for this event, as the EAA group hosting it has been real good to us in the recent past. But, once again, we had some bad forecasts, and only one person showed up! He decided to leave, and then another person showed up, who seeing that nobody from the MPA was there, decided to leave too.

So, the Norridgewock event went off without the MPA powered parachutes there to brighten up the place. I guess they struggled through it anyway. But, after a rather pleasant start to the weekend, it did end up being mostly rained out.



This is what happens when you fly too low over a swamp. Now that you know, you don't have to do it.

Chute Across Maine (CAM)

We had an excellent week last year, and raised over \$1,800 for charity, so we were all set to do it again, and do it even better than before. But, this event requires pretty much a long week's commitment from the participants, and it just wasn't the right time for several of our group that went last year. Since we didn't have enough fliers, the rest of us decided to create a non-fund-raising event, calling it Swing Up North (SUN – yes, we have an MPA department in charge of clever names creation).

We had an abbreviated week of flying, getting to **Patten** Friday night, just in time to attend the Mainely Sports Planes 5th annual fly-in. That actually was quite an event, with skydivers, big dinners and breakfasts, concession stand, and flying competition. We had 7 chutes up Saturday night, and quite a crowd as well.

We'll put that event on our schedule for next year, as those boys were nice enough to let us fly in the mornings and evenings pretty much without interference from all the fixed wings. Also, it looked like most of Patten showed up to watch.

We left Patten for **Houlton** – about a 28 mile trip (24 if you go straight and not wave to all the Rt. 1 traffic) Sunday morning, and stayed at the nearly deserted Houlton International airport for the day and night. We had the usual cook out that night, followed by the campfire, and the witty and generally highly intelligent conversation (OK, maybe I exaggerate just a tad there).

From Houlton, we flew to **Mars Hill**, which is another 25 mile trip. We stayed at a neat little grass airstrip owned by Jim Wiggins, who was a most hospitable host. We bought him a new wind sock as a gift, since his old one looked like we do – old and beat up and very tattered at the edges.

About 5 miles out of Mars Hill, we had a little excitement – the rubber grommet at the bottom of

Gobel's gas tank wore out and decided to start streaming gasoline from the crack. Not a very pleasant prospect, since the air-gas mixture had to zoom by the hot exhaust. With visions of a pretty fireball in the sky dancing in his head, he decided to set down in the nearest field, but since the airfield was just a bit ahead of it, he got lucky and made it there. Certainly would have made the highlight video! Anyway, Mike had the necessary parts for a field repair, and we continued the journey.

We were joined at Mars Hill by our most distant residing MPA member, Ken Paradis from California. While we were flattered that he'd come all that way just to see us and to taste the Mars Hill cuisine, it turns out that he was visiting his brother (Robin) in Presque Isle. Ken was one of the 13 who made the Kitty Hawk trip a few years ago.



Greg Gobel (left) right after he became Scott Adair's first surviving student to take PPG lessons all the way to solo. Yes, that's real sweat on Scott.

The trip to **Presque Isle** the next day had to be postponed – after a couple of test flights where we flew a mile sideways for every quarter mile forward, and spent much of the time looking straight up at the sky or straight down at the dirt, we decided to just enjoy the Mars Hill metropolis. We visited every one of their restaurants (3, I think), spent hours at their Dollar

Store, and generally had a good time.

When the wind wouldn't let up even by the evening, we drove to Cyr's field, spent the night there, and had some great flying the following morning. We woke up Presque Isle, and then kept them awake through their coffee break. Some of the MPA guys from that area joined us, and we had about 6 chutes up that morning.

We actually should have had 7 chutes up, but one of our distinguished group couldn't get off the ground. Not for lack of effort – he made 17 attempts. You guessed it – our own Sky Man with the back pack – Scott! We voted him as the Most Persistent Man in the MPA. Later, he found that the reason for so many aborted attempts was

that he had a bunch of sand in one side of his chute from his beach flying. Pretty good story, I think! And he's sticking to it.

Lewiston/Auburn Balloon Festival

We had a pretty good turnout for this event, with about 7 or 8 chutes up with the balloons. We saw some of our southern members whom we seldom see, so it was an excellent fly-in.

Once again, we were made to feel very welcome at the Auburn-Lewiston airport. They mowed an area for us, gave us the key to the parking area, and let all of our rag-tag trailers, cars, trucks, and tents stay inside the gates.

They had a ton of hot-air balloons (I'm not sure if balloons are measured in tons) – more than what we've seen before, and they were up at 6 AM just like we were (in the fog, more or less). Unfortunately, the heavy moisture in the air activated the moisture sensor in our digital video camera and shut it down tight, so there will be no balloon shots in this year's highlight video.



From the MPA Home and Garden division, here's a clever way to trim your favorite bush and to also send a message to a neighbor.

However, we did get to fly with the balloon pilots, which is always an adventure. They have no steering, of course, so they can only go up or down sort of slowly and they go where the wind takes them. When we come bearing down at them in our PPCs, their eyes get wider and a genuine look of concern takes over their faces. As you get closer and closer, the look starts turning from concern to panic, as they're never quite sure what sort of control we have to avoid colliding with them. Oh the little joys of flying!

Bowman (East Livermore)

We had the usual suspects show up at Bowman this year, and the fields which are usually an adventure in themselves were fairly dry this year. Our group of about 7 or 8 MPA members were joined by the New Hampshire PPC group, who seem to like this event the best.

Although we had a pretty good breeze most of the weekend, we did find enough envelopes of calmness to get some decent flying in. The standard 4000 calorie MPA breakfast was served at the field, so other than that, nothing too exciting took place. Except maybe since much of the local population shows up at this event, and they stroll around in their Saturday/Sunday best, we were able to get some pretty good "human interest" video footage.

Jerry is back!

As most of us know, Jerry Sukeforth had some serious surgery which kept him out of flying for several months. He is now back in the air with his once-again modified what-used-to-be a Six Chuter, providing us with take-off entertainment like nobody else can.

Jerry's recovery is pretty amazing (he had a heart transplant – yes, he was on the receiving side), but his incredibly positive attitude and mental and physical toughness served him well once again. Welcome back, Jerry – you're a role model for all of us!

Eye-opening safety message

This tip sounds too far-fetched to believe but it's apparently been tested and verified. Dunbar experienced this first hand, and while he can weave a story much better than we can do here, this is the essence of it.

Dunbar volunteered to test fly a PPC before his student soloed it. Even with lots of runway ahead of him, full power just wasn't getting airborne – when he finally did, it was just barely enough to clear the trees. He blamed it on the hybrid chute, on the humidity, the heat, the tailwind, and even (imagine this!) his own weight.

After a clever series of phone calls, it turns out that the metal tape we put on our props has to be glued down flush with the surface – if there's any looseness, it will degrade performance. If it's really loose, like this one was, it simply will not generate enough power to fly!

So Dunbar with some help removed all the metal tape, and tried it again – lo and behold, the rig climbed like a homesick angel! The only variation was the removal of the loose tape.

After some cursory examination of the various chutes hanging around at some of our venues, it became apparent that

most of us do not have those metal tapes glued on very tight, although none had it to the extent that you could put your whole finger under it. So we're probably degrading engine performance to varying degrees.

The advice from those who know – either remove the tape and clean up the prop of all glue and stuff, or make sure that the metal tape is really tight on there. Some of our members put super glue on the edges of the tape, which seems to keep it from separating from the propeller surface - that may be the solution we're looking for.

Anyway, thanks to Dunbar Seamans for researching this phenomenon and helping us avoid future problems!

In case your grandkids visit...

Two antennas met on a roof, fell in love and got married.

The ceremony wasn't much, but the reception was excellent.

A jumper cable walks into a bar. The bartender says, "I'll serve you, but don't start anything."

Two cannibals are eating a clown. One says to the other: "Does this taste funny to you?"

Next events

We have three official MPA flying events left this year, and then the MPA Christmas party and annual meeting on December 17th. By the way, speaking of that, our annual highlight video does not have any funny scenes so far, so we only have

these three events left for us to pick up the slack and do something memorable and recordable and funny and preferably non-fatal.

On the weekend of September 23-24, we have our **Bingham event**, hosted by Doug Sukeforth. This is usually one of our favorite sites, with Doug & Rita's beautiful camp, a couple of good grass

strips, good camping sites, and best of all, no other aircraft around to compete for take-off time.

Doug just got the word that the Gadabout Gaddis fly-in at the near-by airport was postponed a week, but that shouldn't impact our activities since we seldom do much at the actual airport itself with the other fly-in aircraft. So we'll see you out there as originally scheduled, i.e. 9/23 & 24.

We will also try to have our second AND third MPA general membership meeting at Bingham – our second one at Eastport (and then at Fairfield) got washed out, so we have high hopes of actually meeting at Doug's!

The weekend after that is our re-re-scheduled Top Gun event at **Cyr's field in Presque Isle**, on the weekend of September 30th, coordinated by Robin & Darlene Paradis. This has grown into quite an affair, with more and more of us attending every year. The airfield and the facility is just amazing, and the flying in that neck of the woods is beautiful and peaceful (lots of fields around!). A pretty long trip for most of us, but well worth it.



The actual photo taken at the Miss Universe contest about two seconds after it was announced that every contestant would get a PPC ride with an MPA member except Miss Australia.

By the way, in addition to our Top Gun event, and separate from it, Robin is putting together a little engine-out precision-landing contest for anyone who wants to try it – but be warned – he’s been practicing. More on that later.

Another “by the way” – we will only cancel the Top Gun event in case of really bad weather, but not because there aren’t enough contestants there. The HAT has got to go!

Closing out the official MPA flying calendar is the fall foliage fly-in at **Bethel airfield** on the weekend of October 7th and 8th coordinated by Randy Autrey. Generally the leaves are in their full fall spectacular about that time, so it makes for some gorgeous flying and photography.

The Bethel airfield is nearly 3000 feet long, with optional grass area take-offs. There is also lots of camping area on the airfield inside the fencing, and also some pretty spectacular mountain flying near the Maine and New Hampshire border. And Pat’s Pizza is only a half mile away!

By the way, Randy and his lovely and talented wife Cathy have invited anyone who’d rather camp on the river bank to do so, as their property extends right to the river’s edge. The only restriction is to NOT fish in their farm pond, as the huge trout in there are actually their pets. With names and everything.

Another “by the way” – if for some inexplicable reason, we do not hold the Top Gun event at Presque Isle, we will do it at Bethel. Even if the only contest is to see who can start their engine the fastest. The HAT has got to go!

While we have no other flying events scheduled until our winter fly-ins next January and February, we will have impromptu events coordinated by whoever thinks of it. Call your friends and neighbors – get off the couch and let’s get out there!

New members – really!

We welcome three new members this reporting period (whatever that is – month or two?). I’ve seen all three, and they each seem reasonably

normal, except for the fact that they joined our merry group.

Bill Ferland from the Presque Isle area finally joined our group – he was at several of our fly-ins as a guest, so he has actually seen us, which makes his membership even more remarkable. Anyway, Bill has been flying his PPC for quite a while, and is working on getting his sport pilot and his certifications all behind him.

Aimee Crosby is our next new member – she is from the Conway area. She is taking PPC lessons with the intent of getting her FAA sport pilot license, and should be doing her solo any day. She has stopped by one or two of our fly-in events, and actually checked us out. But unlike Bill Ferland, she joined because she couldn’t believe what she saw – all these guys in serious need of reform! Apparently, she loves a challenge, and she’s 28 years old which may explain her unrealistic idealism.

Our last new member this month is Kevin Oliveira from Monmouth. Kevin is also taking PPC lessons, and he also is ready to solo as soon

as the weather cooperates. Kevin also came to the Bowman fly-in and saw us in action, but in spite of that he joined. His lovely and talented wife Jan had their new baby son there however, and we think he was too distracted by his baby-sitting chores to actually notice what we were like.



We had to put at least one flying picture into a Newsletter of a flying club! But it’s actually a picture of Robin with fuel

Anyway, welcome to all three of you – hope to see you at our next few events or at least our Christmas event on December 17th.

Christmas party – coming soon!

Mark your calendars now – December 17th – that’s a Sunday, probably around 3:00 PM in Bangor. We had a record turn-out last year, as well a great time. Details to follow.

MPA Meeting

We were supposed to have election of our MPA officers in July at our general membership meeting in Eastport, but we didn't have enough members there this year, so we kept moving it back with the same results.



All right, here's the truth. The actual photo taken at the Miss Universe contest about two seconds after it was announced that the winner of the "Get a ride with an MPA member" contest was Miss Australia.

At one of aborted attempts to have a meeting, one member made a motion to retain the current slate of officers for another year, as bad as they are, but better than nothing. Another person seconded the motion, and it was voted in 2 to 0 with 1 abstention (he was eating lunch and couldn't talk) – the two votes in favor had to vote that way because if you make a motion or if you second it, you have to vote for it – some obscure rule of Congress. Each of the officers in question said "I guess that's OK for now," so that's where we stand. If we're able to finally have a real meeting in Bingham, we can reverse all that.

Practice pays off!

Robin Paradis decided a few months ago that the only thing missing from his repertoire of flying skills was engine-out landings. So he worked up his courage, and finally took the plunge and turned that key off way up in the air.

Now those of us who have done that know exactly what that feeling is like – the brain racing through dozens of excuses why this just isn't the right time to do it, but finally just doing it, with immediate regrets – oh my God – it's so quiet all

of a sudden!!! But once you've done it the first time, the second is easier, and third even more so, until it's actually sort of fun. I know what you're thinking – it's the opposite of sex.

So Robin practiced it, and got quite relaxed about it. Good thing, too – as he was flying with his brother Ken in the front seat, taking a cross country trip that Robin kept warning his brother was WAY too long (that's Robin's side of the story), they finally ran out of fuel about 60 seconds from their destination. However, they found a nice field, put it down without bones or airframe braking, and could proceed to call each other brotherly names.

Well, as any pilot knows, there's no excuse for ever running out of fuel, but if you're going to do it, do it in the Presque Isle area, do it after practicing dead-stick landings, and do it so there's someone else there to blame! With those criteria met, it's OK to run out of fuel.

By the way Robin, other than the actual fact of running out of fuel, nice flying!

Sport Pilot and "N" numbers

We're so tired of this whole topic that we're not going to say any more about it. OK, maybe at the next fly-in just a little bit. Suffice it to say that we've got to do it, and that quite a large number of MPA members are on their way to do it. We have good documentation on the process, so if you need help, there's plenty of it available.

Future MPA member

Bert was working at the fish plant downeast when he accidentally cut off all of his ten fingers. He went to the emergency room in Bangor. The doctor looked at Bert and said "Let's have the fingers and I'll see what I can do."

Bert said "I haven't got the fingers." The doctor says "What do you mean you haven't got the fingers? Lord, it's 2006 and we have microsurgery and all sorts of incredible techniques. We could have put them back and made you like new. Why didn't you bring the fingers?"

Bert says "How the hell was I supposed to pick them up?"

The End

