

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

Maine Powerchute Association

Newsletter

July 2008

www.maine-powerchutes.org

Tough year for travel

With the current price of fuel, no one is pleased but no one is surprised at the fact that most of our trips to fly-ins cost an arm and a leg (one or the other for gas, and both for diesel fuel). For example, since most of us get about 10 miles a gallon hauling our trailers, and diesel costs about \$5 a gallon, it costs us 50 cents a mile. So a hundred mile trip, 200 miles round trip, is now just about \$100. And that's real money for most of us – not just change.



Early morning scene at Eastport, heading out to round up all the pancake breakfast customers for the annual airport fund raiser

Until about a year or so ago, none of us even took that into consideration when planning for a fly-in – it was what it was. Much different now – especially for the boys at either end of the state, who are looking at \$200 to \$300 for some of our events.

On the other hand, as one of our wise MPA members said, it's a great hobby that most of us love doing, so whatever the damn thing costs,

we'll just pay it. When it comes to boys and their toys, that's always been true.

Update on the last few fly-ins

In spite of some less than favorable weather conditions and the large travel expenses, we had some pretty good get-togethers recently.

Knox County – we had to wait until close to sunset, but we finally got to fly a good chunk – we had 6 or 7 chutes up at the same time. We also had the local reporters there who took some excellent pictures for their newspapers, although none of them wanted to get any from the air. Chickens.

For entertainment, Ray pretended that he was lost, since that area looks a little confusing with all that water around. The only one still up when he sent his “help me” call was Jerry, who came to the rescue. So the dialog went like something this:

“What do you see?” said Jerry.

“Nothing. It's too dark” said Ray jokingly.

Thinking quickly, since he wanted to land by sunset, Jerry said “Turn on your strobes!”

“They're on.” – came the quiet response.

That seemed to stump Jerry.

Anyway, we turned on and flashed the airport lights a few times, and Jerry was able to figure out where Ray was, so it all ended well and we all had a good laugh. Turns out Ray had the airport punched into his GPS, but lost all the settings when he changed his batteries, so when he needed it, it was pointing to Siberia.

Bowdoinham – this is a new event for us, although some of us have flown at that airfield before a few years ago. The airfield owner (Mark Bowker), and one of our MPA guys Gary Bergendoff were superb hosts, and we had a great time. Flying conditions turned out to be pretty good, too.

For entertainment, Steve Goulet had an engine failure shortly after takeoff. He was able to make a turn back to the airfield and dead stick it right on the field – some excellent pilotage displayed there! Since he had to land downwind and cross wind, he broke a wheel and did some other minor damage to the axle, but no one was hurt. Nice flying, Steve!

Steve’s lovely and talented wife Rachel was in the back seat on the flight, and to her credit, she did not give him any instructions on how to land. However, she did think that he was playing a joke at first with all that silence right after takeoff.

Turns out that Steve had used some caulking around the fuel line entrance to his gas tank, which eventually dissolved and blocked his fuel line. A safety lesson for all of us – use the rubber grommets when plugging into a plastic fuel tank.



Ed giving a ride to a lady whose legs are definitely too long for the scary contraption in which they’re flying.



Hampden – as usual, Jeremy Williams and his lovely and talented wife Sheila hosted an excellent event, with bon fire, barbeque, Young Eagles flying, and lots of guests from the surrounding area. We even had pretty good weather most of the weekend. We had a band Saturday night, although some people thought it wasn’t quite as good as the one last year - I think they missed the lead singer girl with the torn jeans.

For entertainment, Scott A. parked his brand new big rig of a PPC hybrid, the Excitor (steer with your hands, accelerate with your foot) on the runway, spread out the chute, then couldn’t figure out how to start it. So while the rest of us were thinking evil thoughts while either circling overhead or waiting to take off, Scott kept cursing the electrical gods for his travails with the starter. Turns out he had a short which kept blowing his fuses – there is a slight and unconfirmed suspicion that it was due to some work he did on his plane.

Scott did make up for his PPC error with some spectacular PPG (backpack) flying, putting on a commendable display of precision control with his foot launch as well as with his little trike.

Eastport – being one of the sites requiring the most travel (oh, say \$200 to \$300 range for most of us), we did not have a big PPC crowd for this splendid event that Ed Nadeau and his lovely and talented wife Carolyn host each year. The scenery there is spectacular, and for a change, the winds were favorable pretty much the whole weekend!

As usual, the Navy had a ship in port – the guided missile frigate USS Hawes was there. By the way, not being a Navy guy, is there an “unguided” missile frigate? How would that work – the missiles just sort of go anywhere? Anyway, it had lots of serious looking weapons on it, and since we were asked not to fly within a quarter mile of it, we complied.

For entertainment, we attended what is claimed to be the second largest Independence Day parade in Maine. I think all of Eastport came

out for this, and it was indeed quite a show. The Navy boys (commanding officer was a woman, by the way) all marched in the parade too, and it was great to see everybody cheering for them, with many spectators yelling out “thank you!”

For more entertainment, Aimee was trying to kite her backpack PPG setup with the little trike in a fairly strong but steady wind, when her propeller shattered. It’s still a mystery, as no line were cut – best guess is the lines pressed on the cage enough to distort it so the prop touched it. Horrible noise and wooden shrapnel flying – can’t buy entertainment like that!

Marriage humor #1

Wife : 'Do you want dinner?'

Husband : 'Sure! What are my choices?'

Wife : 'Yes or no.'

New website feature

As all of you should know by now, our official MPA website www.mainpowerchutes.org has a new feature where we post most of the pictures taken at each event. Darlene Paradis is the primary official MPA still photographer, and she and Aimee post the pictures pretty much the day after each fly-in. Check it out! You can get to it by going to our site, or directly by going to www.mpapix.blogspot.com.

Next events

All fly-in events and dates are listed on our web site (our events as well as some of the well-known other fly-ins), so check it out. Directions are also on the web site.

Top Gun (Fairfield July 19-20)

– this is usually our best attended event, since it is pretty much central to everybody.

And once again, we will be competing for the coveted Top Gun hat- totally OPTIONAL, by the way!

For any rookies that have not seen this show, it is designed to simply demonstrate control of your aircraft through four events flown back to back. Two of the events test whether you can land the aircraft where you want it, and two test whether you can fly over a designated spot. Oh, one more thing – we usually do this on a Saturday afternoon, and we usually wait until there are some thunderstorms around. (OK just kidding on the last point, but it seems to work out that way...). But whether you’re competing or not, we always have a great time at this event.

Again, we thank Wayne Kenney for the generous use of his field, and also Mike O’Donnel for mowing it.

Norridgewock (August 2-3) – The EAA chapter hosting this event usually put on quite a show, and generally have a good turnout with many different kinds of aircraft. The organizers have been real PPC friendly, and we have an excellent spot to set up all our campers and trailers. Good area from which to run some decent cross country trips.

New members

Welcome to two new members this month – Michael DeLong from Brewer, and Larry Dunphy from North Anson. Michael is a back packer flying with Scott, and Larry has a Six Chuter PPC. And they both obviously have an extra \$20 that was burning a hole in their pockets, so they threw caution to the wind and joined in spite of knowing some of us! Anyway, welcome fellows –

hope to see you at some of upcoming events. Remember – no refunds of your dues once you realize what you’ve done.



Her eyes are saying “*He may have won the World Cup, but I’d really rather be flying with the MPA guys!*” Yes, she does have eyes!

Repairman course

OK, we're finally making some real progress, but we're not quite there yet. We have put together the whole course, following the specifics layed out by the FAA – trust me, you don't want to do this ever again. We only had one problem with it – we did not have enough slides for the presentation – they “suggested” 200 to 300 for the entire course – we only had about 50. However, Randy Autrey has since taken many more pictures and explanations to go along with them, so we are now submitting the whole package for final approval.

The course will take place over a weekend in Bethel, ME. Its goal is to train you to perform the required annual inspections on your own PPC aircraft. We will schedule a date as soon as we hear from the FAA. By the way, the AFS-610 section with whom we have been dealing has been very helpful to us in getting this thing ready, so it should be a valuable course that will save us a ton of money in the long run.

We haven't figured out all the expenses yet, but it looks like the cost for each of us should be around \$70 to \$80. Which is much better than the \$350 that most courses want, besides having to fly to Michigan or wherever. It's also better than the \$150 to \$200 a qualified A&P rated mechanic will charge for the annual inspection.



A factory representative is demonstrating what happens to your parachute if you don't check the lines before takeoff.

We have lined up an A&P rated individual as our primary instructor (Ron Hamel), and Jerry Sukeforth, Randy Autrey, and John Gobel will be the other instructors. We will also be inviting an FAA rep from the FSDO at Portland. A good time will be had by all. By the way, your fee will include donuts, and probably lunch both days. Plenty of real coffee also, in case the instruction gets a little boring.



Another scene from Eastport July 4th celebration – Navy ship in the background on full alert at the sight of a PPC.

MPA Adventure Trip 2008

We're going across the White Mountains this year for our annual trip. Mountain flying is somewhat unusual for us, but the few times we've done it, it's been spectacular. We're keeping the eight legs that comprise the trip fairly short, since we may run into some unexpected winds along the way. We'll also follow roads mostly. The whole trip will be about 160 air miles,

We're going to start the trip from Barre, Vermont, and go east through the White Mountains ending up either in Augusta or in Lewiston – we're negotiating it with the airport managers currently. We'll be driving to Barre, VT on Saturday, August 9th, and leaving from there on Sunday the 10th. Should be back in Augusta the following Saturday. The road trip from Augusta to Barre is about 180 miles.

The Auburn-Lewiston Balloon festival is the weekend we're scheduled to come back, so that is why we're thinking it might be fun to end our trip there, and fly with the hot air folks for a while. Check the web for final determination on that one.

There are five or six of us committed to flying the entire route, but you're welcome to join us for any part of the trip. We'll usually leave a location in the morning, fly to our next stop, spend the day there, and leave the following morning for the next stop.

Marriage humor #2

Wife: 'You always carry my photo in your wallet. Why?'

Hubby: 'When there is a problem, no matter how great, I look at your picture and the problem disappears.'

Wife: 'You see how miraculous and powerful I am for you?'

Hubby: 'Yes! I see your picture and ask myself what other problem can there be greater than this one?'

Biennials are coming due

Since we're all at least Sport Pilot certificated by now, it is time for the biennial flight for most of us. Just to refresh your memory, all FAA certificated airmen (from Sport Pilot to Commercial to ATP) must have a flight review with a rated CFI every two years. The review can be in any aircraft in which you are rated.

The biennial consists of two hours of instruction – it is not a flight examination, although if the instructor thinks that you are not qualified to fly, he/she does not have to sign you off. Of the two hours, one is oral questions and instruction, and the other hour is in the air.

At the end of the two hour session, the CFI will make a log book endorsement which makes you legal to fly for another two years. Overall, the process is relatively painless, especially for powered parachutes. However, you do need to brush up on your airport procedures, airspace usage, sectional charts, weather determination, and some of the other knowledge stuff you had on your written exam.



Scene from the Hampden fly-in – lots of Young Eagles around (and quite a few old ones).

At this time we have two CFIs who are rated in PPCs who can give you your biennial – Carroll Werren in Concord, NH, and John Gobel in Maine. The best option is to go to some of the fly-ins, where one or both of us can do it during the day. Cost should be under \$70.

By the way, don't confuse the biennial with the annual. Once you have your license, there are only two things you have to do to stay legal and current. You have to perform an annual condition inspection on your *aircraft*, and you the pilot have to have a biennial flight review every two years. Pretty simple.

Safety tip

Over the years, we've had several incidents where fuel line blockage at the point where the line attaches to the tank caused problems, or even engine failure. One solution that has proven itself to be effective is to use the shutoff valve that has a built-in screen on it – the screen will keep out all foreign objects that are big enough to cause a blockage. Obviously, try to keep all dirt and other things out of your fuel tank, but this is a good backup.

Call Jerry Sukeforth for more information on that, or to order one to replace what you may currently have. And thanks to Mike Theriault and Steve Goulet for the tip!

Sport Pilot sign-offs and exams

Well, we're finally ready to get those MPA members signed off who have been waiting for a CFI endorsement. Carroll Werren is now qualified and available to do the CFI endorsement, which then allows you to take the practical exam with the Sport Pilot Examiner (Gobel) who can then issue you the license as soon as you pass the test.

Both Carroll and I will be available at the upcoming fly-ins, and with the MPA discount, the costs should be more reasonable than any other option we've seen. The CFI endorsement will generally consist of about an hour flight time and an hour oral. That portion is instruction, at the end of which the CFI certifies that you have the knowledge and skill to take the practical exam with a SPE.

The practical exam is generally about two hours oral, and an hour and a half or so on the flight line and in the air. It is NOT instruction – in fact the examiner is not allowed to give even hints as to the answers. It is designed to test what you know, and how well you can execute the maneuvers specified in the Practical Test Standards.

Since an examiner can only do two exams per day by FAA rules, we are limited to 6 people over a Friday – Sunday period. So make sure you call or email if you're interested so we can not overbook an event.

New rule at all fly-ins

Occasionally in the past we've had unpleasant situations arise at some of our fly-ins with neighbors or with other aircraft in the area. I am convinced that at this time, our entire flying membership wants to do the right thing when it comes to our organized events, as well as when just flying alone near home.

It makes great sense to know the area in which you're going to fly, and to know if there are any restrictions or cautions around the vicinity. Generally, whoever is hosting the event will find out the airfield frequency to use, find out if there are any areas over which we should not fly, traffic pattern for the airfield, what

minimum and maximum altitudes we must respect, and any other facts unique to that location.

So, at each fly-in, we will designate one person to provide a flight briefing on Friday evening and if you miss that one, also on Saturday morning before we fly. The briefing will be brief (get it?) and will cover anything you need to know so we don't annoy anyone and that we safely follow all rules of the area. It's a painless exercise that may pay big dividends.

Many fly-ins other than our own will provide a ribbon or some other tag to indicate that you have had your flight briefing, and you cannot fly unless you have that tag. We might consider doing that, but for now, please please please make sure that BEFORE you fly at any MPA event, you get a quick briefing from whoever is in charge of that task.

We definitely want to avoid complaints to the FAA over anything we do – when that happens, the FAA is obligated to investigate, and it's just a general pain in the butt for everybody involved. Furthermore, it gives a bad name to all of us in the sport even if the complaint has no merit whatsoever. Thanks!!!



The USS Hawes crew in the Eastport parade. No, the sailor is just shaking hands with the little boy – he is not recruiting!

Disclaimer

All of the material in this Newsletter has no harsh chemicals, greenhouse gas producing materials, trans fats, or any other toxins in it. So you can safely use it to wrap your sandwich for tomorrow's lunch.