

Off Tow Newsletter

Puget Sound Soaring Association, Inc.

Editor: Dave Kremers

February 2006

Seattle, WA

Upcoming Events:

The really big one will be the season opening operation now scheduled for March 5 at Bergseth Field in Enumclaw. We will be using Saturday the 4th to assemble the gliders at the field after their winter maintenance. This will be a good occasion to commingle with your fellow pilots, so put it on your schedule.

The next event of importance will actually precede the above dates. This will be our presence at the Northwest Aviation Conference and Trade Show at the Puyallup Fair Grounds on February 25 and 26.. This will be our special opportunity to mix with the general aviation community where we can contact pilots who haven't yet had the experience of soaring. If you haven't yet contacted Tim about a time when you can help with this important event, please let him know right away of your interest and availability.

There will be another chance to expose ourselves to the general public, this time at the Museum of Flight Glider Expo. on March 25, 26. Look for more information of this coming to you in March. This is another great opportunity for PSSA and your help will be needed.

Recent Events:

Thanks to Wayne and Judith Ginther for their gracious hosting of our annual Winter Party on January 21st. We had a good gathering with good fellowship and plenty of fine eating. We also had an informative general membership meeting where many ideas were exchanged and plans for the future were discussed. If you weren't there, the minutes of that meeting are available to members under files at the Yahoo Group site.

The new board for 2006 was also announced at the Winter Party. New officers are: President - Tim Heneghan, Vice President - Glenn Chouinard, Secretary - Dave Kremers, Financial officer - Mark Allen, Safety and Training officer - J.C. Hauchecorne, Operations officer - Stefan Perrin. Maintenance officer - Curt Bryan.

Thanks to the enterprise and dogged determination of Maintenance Officer, Curt Bryan, many maintenance tasks have been carried out over recent months to prepare our fleet for the resumption of operations the first week of March. Pictured are some of PSSA's crack team of helpers in action.



Another day in the "Skunkworks"



Alaska Air maint. rep shows how



Maint. chief gets down

Board News:

Your new board has had one meeting since being elected and has opened discussions on a number of topics which will guide the club in the year to come. Principal among these was the issue of safety at Bergseth Field. It was generally agreed that the club must do all it can to insure that accidents of any kind are held at an absolute minimum. Many items to be included in this evaluation of PSSA policies were listed and will be addressed by the board on a top priority basis. It was agreed by all that we must make this effort if we are to have a chance to grow and to become stronger. If for no other reason, we must work to cut the expense of operation, which in a very large part is the cost of insurance. Look for future announcements by the board which will outline the measures we will be taking to make safety the backbone of our Bergseth operations.

Reports From Members:

It's been hard to fit in all the information members have contributed to our newsletter over the past months, so we're taking the opportunity now to do some catching up. What better chance to get us thinking about soaring again and to whet the appetite.

From Dariush Zand

Soaring in Germany,

10 years ago when I went to Unterwussen, Germany to do some soaring I had such a good time that I told myself I will be back every year, well I didn't make it there until September of 2005.

Generally September is very late in the season for soaring in Germany, but I figured I still had a chance of getting a few good flights.

Unterwussen is located in southern Germany on the northern slopes of the German Alps, Just across the border from Salzburg Austria. It's normally a small skiing village. But summertime it offers great combination of ridge lift and Thermal soaring. The club is set up more like our FBO,s where they offer both lessons and rentals. They have a wide array of gliders for rent. When I was there 10 years ago you could rent anything from an open cockpit Grunau Baby to a Discus, this year I noticed that few gliders were missing from the fleet. They were using ASK-13's for training, ASK-21's for check outs, and Ka-8's and PW-5's for solo flights.

My trip started in Washington DC aboard a Lufthansa flight. My very good old friend, Conrad Hartter an ex PSSA member (1976-1977) was the Captain on the Airbus 330 that took us to Frankfurt, From there I rented a car and we both drove to Tübingen, a small town just south of Stuttgart where he lives. After about 2 days of resting I drove another 4 hours to Unterwussen. Unterwussen offers many Guest houses (German version of a Bed and Breakfast) for the skiers in the winter and they are also open in the summer time for Vacationers to the Alps region. I was surprised how inexpensive it was to stay at one these Guesthouses. The one I stayed at cost about 25 euros a night!!! That's about \$30. This place was super clean with very friendly staff. My friend Conrad told me that with the cheap airfares most Germans prefer to fly to Turkey or Greece instead of paying \$8 per gallon for gas to drive to southern Germany. Business is very slow for the guesthouses; I think I was the only one staying at this bed and breakfast as I saw no one else at the Breakfast room.

The glider operation at Unterwussen is named "Deutsche Alpen Segelflugschule" which in English translates to "German Alps Soaring school" (WWW.dassu.de). The school offers launches by both

winch and Aero tow, Surprisingly the aero towing is done with Motor gliders, these are Bergfalke motor gliders with side by side seating and a water cooled Rotax motor. Since I have had previous winch experience I chose to get checked out on the winch. Winch lunches are the least expensive method of getting airborne in Germany. I paid 15 euros per lunch and it included 10 minutes of the glider time. They are using a permanently attached to the ground "Electric" winch. Also I noticed that they were no longer using a steel cable, the towline looked like a 1/4 inch single strand of Kevlar. The Electric winch lacked the jerky pull of a typical diesel powered winch. The airfield is right at the base of a steep ridge in a narrow valley. After release from the winch you can make one or two passes by the ridge to check for lift before entering the pattern.

After I arrived at the field I found the field manager, I was happy to find out that he spoke perfect English (I don't know any German). He directed me to the administration office of the glider operation to fill out the proper paperwork and have my documents (license and medical) checked. This only took a few minutes, for those who are interested in flying in Germany its very important that you have at least a 3rd class medical, It is required in Germany for Glider flying, also for solo flight they require at least 50 hours of glider time. Generally their requirements are very minimal and they are very accommodating to foreign pilots.

Once the paperwork was completed they found me an instructor who again spoke perfect English. He spent a few minutes getting me familiar with the ASK-21. Only 45 minutes after I had arrived at the field I found myself in the front seat of the ASK-21 with the canopy closed, waiting for the winch to pull me up. The first launch we got about 300 meters (900 feet), the instructor told me that I needed to pitch up more aggressively. The second flight we managed to get about 350 meters (1100 feet) above the field. Pattern altitude was at 200 meters AFL (600 feet). This was a nice sunny stable day with no wind or lift. On my third flight the instructor pulled the release at 200 meters to simulate a cable break. This was just enough altitude for us to make a u-turn into downwind for a normal landing. After the 3rd flight the check out was complete. I decided to leave the airfield and go into town to check into my Bed and Breakfast. The people at the field insisted I return to the field after I check into my room for the end of the day Beer drinking session. I did. Once all the gliders and the tow planes are put inside the hanger the field is taken over by a few radio control airplanes and pilots. Everybody just sits around drinking beer, exchanging stories and watching the radio control models fly around. This goes on until dark.

The next two days the weather did not cooperate, with low overcast and drizzle. With Salzburg being only 45 Kilometers away I decided to visit Mozart's birthplace. The next day with weather being similar to the previous day I drove to Munich, about 75 kilometers away. There I found Oktoberfest in progress, with lots of foot traffic in the city center. Just about every man was wearing the traditional Bavarian hat and suede leather pants.

The 4th day at airfield was the most rewarding, I had a solo flight on the Ka-8, I managed to get to 400 meters on the winch (1200 feet) and there was enough ridge lift to stay up for about 1 hour. 10 years ago when I visited in July I remember there was lift everywhere and I ended up with a 3-hour flight in the Ka-8. So if you plan to go there go in July.

Before I left US I exchanged e-mails with the HpH factory in the Czech republic, and asked them if I could tour the factory while I was visiting the Czech republic. This is where they make the Glasflugel 304.

Mr. Jaroslav Potmesil, one of the company owners told me that he would be happy to give me a tour of the Factory.

It was back on the road again. This time it was a 5-hour drive to Prague. I was very lucky since my rent a car was equipped with GPS navigation. I highly recommend, for anyone renting a car in Europe to get a car with navigation. I had bought several road maps of the areas, which I was planning to travel, but never used any of them.

After spending a few days in Prague to do all the touristy stuff it was time to head over to the HpH factory.

The HpH factory is located in Kunta Hora, a small village just about 45 minutes east of Prague. I arrived at the factory about noontime; Mr. Potmesil greeted me at the factory and took time from his Busy schedule to show me around the facility. I was surprise to learn how big the Scale Model making operation is at HpH. Half the factory is dedicated to make scale models of airplanes. These are some of the highest quality models I have ever seen. They can custom make a scale model of any airplane. The quality of both the 304 gliders and the models are First rate. You can never appreciate how many man hours goes into building a Glider until you visit a glider factory.

After touring the facility Mr. Potmesil Invited me to come and watch them testing a small jet engine being fitted to the Back of a 304CZ. This 304CZ was serving as a test bed for possibility of having a retractable jet engine fitted to the future 304 models. Mr. Potmesil told me that engine wont be strong enough to self-launch the glider, but it is intended to prevent the pilot from an unplanned landing. Apparently certification of a self-launch glider in the Czech republic is very complicated and costly. He also told me that their initial calculations indicate a 304 fitted with the small jet engine will cruise in level flight at about 180km/h (about 100 knots).

After about 4pm when the factory closed, Mr. Potmesil offered me to go to their local flying field and fly a 304C. This field would be located near Zbraslavice, a small village 10 kilometers south of Kunta Hora. This field is a big patch of grass about ? mile by ? mile, with 2 big hangers at the north end of it. When we arrived at the field there was no one else there, Meaning no tow pilot. Mr. Potmesil started showing me all the different gliders and powered planes that they store in these hangers. It was getting late and my chances of flying a 304 were now very slim. A few minutes later we heard a single engine plane land and taxi towards us. It was a very interesting looking plane, later I was told it was a Czech built L-40.

This airplane was a low wing, taildragger type configuration, except the tail wheel was located under the cockpit instead of the tail !. It also had an inline 6-cylinder engine. I was now offered to go for a flight in the L-40 instead, I happily accepted. We flew north over Kunta Hora, right over the HpH factory. Mr. Potemsil told me that the city of Kunta Hora had a population of 70,000 inhabitants during the 14th century, but now there are only about 30,000 people living there.

After we landed it was time for me to head back to Frankfurt, the next day I was on the American Airlines flight to Los Angeles.

Now I can't wait until next July to do it over again.

Those of you interested in soaring in Unterwussen, Germany I will be glad to provide you with more info.

Dariusz Zand
425-891-7353

From Stefan Perrin

A Visit to Northwest Sky Sports

Toward the end of August, I had an opportunity to fly down and visit Northwest Sky Sports (<http://www.nwskysports.com/>) at Hood River, Oregon. Mark Allen had graciously asked if I wanted to come along when he flew his Cessna 210 to either Ephrata or Hood River. Both of us have been to Ephrata, we decided on a new location and chose Hood River (the distance is just about the same). Mark had also met the proprietor, Gary Boggs earlier in the summer at the Alvord so he had a standing invitation to come visit.

We got underway at around 10 am on a clear Saturday morning from Crest. I had also managed to add my wife to the passenger list for the trip. Once underway, Mark let me fly the entire way down and I knew now why I was invited: human cruise control!

The flight was uneventful as we passed over the Cascades and enjoyed the scenery. We arrived at Hood River in about 50 minutes (would have been 45 had I stayed on course) and parked right next to Northwest Sky Sports.

Gary along with a few helpers was engaged in replacing the throttle cable on the tow plane, which meant an immediate aero-tow was not possible. Instead, he offered us the use of his van to drive into town and get some lunch (there is a small diner near the airport but it is closed on the weekends, go figure). For those who have never been through Hood River, it is a small tourist town along the Columbia and has ample eateries, shopping and accommodations.

Anyway, we enjoyed a leisurely lunch and made our way back to the airport only to find that the tow plane was still being worked on. Evidently the "bigger hammer" was no where to be found. However, not all was lost because Gary just happens to have winch launching capabilities too, so we opted to give that a try.

The winch launch is mounted on the back of an old Chevy truck and works by letting the rope out as the truck speeds down the taxiway pulling the glider into the air, just like running to launch a kite.

On the first launch, the weak link broke on Mark, but fortunately, he had about 700 feet and was able to make a normal landing. When my turn came, everything worked fine and we were able to get to about 800' AGL and proceeded to enter the pattern for a normal landing. We did several more launches, but unfortunately, there were no thermals to get us away from the airport that afternoon.

Finally, we decided to go back and see how work was progressing on the tow plane. The throttle cable was just about in when we got back to the hanger and final adjustments were being made. Soon the 180 was pushed back and fired up only to discover a serious fuel leak on the recently installed fuel pump. This pretty much ended any chances of aero towing that weekend. Instead, Mark went for one more winch launch before the support crew had to leave.

After a bit of hanger flying, we settled our account with Gary and took off for Crest. The flight home was even better because the winds had cleared up a lot of the haze and the afternoon lighting made for a spectacular view of Mt. Rainier's West side. We also flew over Bergseth to give the grass a quick clipping with the 210 and checked to see if by some miracle, the engine was not back on 333TM, but no such luck.

We arrived back at Crest around 6 pm, with me doing my first powered airplane landing. It all went all right until I forgot that you steer with the rudder pedals, and not the yoke. Reflecting back, it was a trip well worth the time, even if you were to drive down. Gary runs a great operation which he is just getting established. The location and soaring conditions have a lot to offer with both mountainous and desert conditions depending on which direction you go. It also provides for a way to get signed off on winch launches, as Gary is also a CFIG.

From Glenn Chouinard

*The following is reprinted from the column Cub News by Frauke Elber
Soaring and Motorgliding Magazine, Issue 09/2005
(Bold print added by G. Chouinard to emphasize points he finds especially important for us)*

Growth and retention in clubs and the SSA

What attracts members and their families or significant others and friends to come to a soaring site?

All the most successful clubs have a clubhouse in one form or another. All the most successful clubs repeat that the social life of the club is the key to its professional life. Members of Caesar Creek Soaring, Harris Hill Soaring Club, Texas Soaring Association and the Philadelphia Glider Council and Blue Ridge Soaring Society, all large clubs, attribute their growth to the social life afforded by the facilities, and now argue about things like the swing set at the airport, and how to keep membership from overwhelming the organization! What a great problem to have!

As we know soaring, it tends to separate Mom or Dad from the family for the time that he or she spends at the distant "field" at which "the guys" and "the girls" hang out all day and then heaven forbid, have dinner and drinks in town without the benefit of family time. Personally I had hoped to

fly with my son, who now has no interest in flying, but I cannot help but wonder if friends (both boys and girls) at the airport might have made a difference in his life. By bringing families of members into the life at the field, we immediately double and maybe triple the number of people who have an interest in the success of the club instead of its failure. Our youth directors have more work to do, but then they have more people from which to ask for help in their duties!

Beginning to sound a little bit like a party? **Yep, it can be a party if you like, and growing a club means not just being friendly to old members, but to new ones as well, even when discipline on the flight line is a factor. New members do not know the rules, and if we are going to attract them, we need to remember that they are not familiar with the safety needs of the line, and need to have special attention. New people with great enthusiasm are the most likely to join the club, but are also most likely to get offended.**

Absent a present danger we have to cut visitors some slack; our manners are the only way a new person can evaluate the club, the sport and her or his desire to become a part of it. Of course no one wants to become a member of an organization that critiques him or her on the first visit! At the same time line discipline must be maintained. Perhaps assigning a host to visitors is the answer, but if there is no host, then each member must be on his or her toes.

It's easy to see why many clubs do not want to grow; it's work! If a new person approaches one of us who does not have time, then we must take the few seconds out of our schedule to get them politely to someone who does have the time. If we had a host on the field, the new person is not likely to get in the way at all, but is likely to have an enjoyable time. Make a mental note of the person who is on the field that is the most friendly. **Hosting is a job that can be passed among members almost informally, but is certainly a job that any member should be capable of doing. A friendly manner, willingness to listen and to take an interest in other peoples' lives while sharing our love of our sport and exploring how it could fit into a guest's life, are all that are needed.**

Another way to promote friendly relations is to have a guest book on the field, providing space for address telephone and email address. E-mail is the fastest way to get information around these days, and the least labor intensive. "Welcome to DSV" literature on the picnic table or at the new clubhouse is very helpful too. Ops Managers need to remember (or be reminded?) that they cannot do everything by themselves, and should assign tasks to members who are less busy. Appointing a host for the day or half-day to entertain and instruct or to delegate the task, will assure good relations with potential members and keep the line safe at the same time. Finding a way to allow guests to help handle the gliders would be a great experience for them, but they have to be treated much like our juniors or like adults that simply do not know what is expected of them. The guest book information could be garnered by the club's publicist so that e?mail addresses of guests can be added to the group in our computers for dissemination of club news and events, like Soar Fest and contests and even weekday fliers if they indicate the interest!

Other ways to promote friendliness is to have model airplane gliders, available from SSA cheap, for the kids. The club can put its name and logo on the gliders and the kids and the

family will have it and the club phone number for as long as the glider lasts (30 minutes?) but we will have made an indelible impression and may make a member. Advertising is considered a tried and true method, specifically around the holidays, or as birthday presents. Kids games and equipment, when the clubhouse is built, will also show mothers and fathers that we intend to address the whole family's needs.

ZERO SINK, the quarterly newsletter of the Orange County Soaring Association reported that the new season began with "Opening Day." Borrowing the SSA's 'One More to Soar' concept, the organizers had mailed event postcards targeting as many potential glider pilots as they could get addresses on ? no advertising was done for the general public. The first visitors had met OCSA at the Riverside Airshow. Now to make things even more interesting Sailplane Enterprises' Larry Howell waived all aircraft and instructor fees, allowing visitors to fly with Sailplane Enterprises, Cypress Soaring, or OCSA for only the price of a tow.

Opening Day was the brain child of Larry Tuohino, the SSA Region 12 South Governor. Larry wanted an event that would be friendly to pilots, crews and prospective glider pilots. After a wet winter OCSA needed an event to get everybody out of hibernation. Something that would stimulate the eyes, ears, nose and taste buds. The idea was presented to the various groups at Hemet (Sailplane Enterprises, Cypress Soaring and OCSA) every one quickly agreed and the event went off.

Throughout the day cars filled the parking lot. The flying weather was near perfect. Young children discovered the SSA Soaring Coloring books which kept them busy. Forty-five three thousand foot tows were recorded and nearly as many new people experienced Hemet Soaring. All through the evening a video about Joe Stazneck, a 93 year old active pilot and one who can fix anything became the capstone of the evening. After a day of flying a surf band entertained the crowd. The evening ended with a BBQ around the hangar of Ultralights Safaris.

How did Hemet do regarding the goal of finding new soaring pilots? One club signed up a new member on the spot and both since have received e-mails from those who visited and now want to join.

- Frauke Elber

Operations:

Your Ops Officer, Stefan Perrin, has set up a schedule for field manager assignments on a revolving basis, alphabetically arranged. Please make a note of these dates on your calendar so you'll be ready for your assignments. If, for any reason, you can't make your date, make an effort to switch with another member and then **advise Stefan of the change**. If not successful at finding someone to exchange with, be sure to contact Stefan so he can arrange for a substitute.

Also, the board has discussed the possibility of a special clinic covering the responsibilities and procedures for field managers in line with the board's safety evaluation. Stay tuned for this

announcement.

Field Manager schedule: (The more complete and up-to-date schedule including instructor availability can be found on our web site)

Sat. Mar. 4 Stefan Perrin
Sun. Mar. 5 Van Chaney
Sat. Mar. 11 Curt Chenoweth
Sun. Mar. 12 Glenn Chouinard
Sat. Mar. 18 John Ennes
Sun. Mar. 19 Wayne Ginther
Sat. Mar. 25 Dean Gittleman
Sun. Mar. 26 Tom Graham
Sat. Apr. 1 Tim Heneghan
Sun. Apr. 2 Dave Kremers
Sat. Apr. 8 Charlie Long
Sun. Apr. 9 Branislav Mikulik
Sat. Apr. 15 Kenji Ominato
Sun. Apr. 16 Stefan Perrin
Sat. Apr. 22 Kim Sears
Sun. Apr. 23 Dariush Zand

Note:

Newsletter contributions:

As always, your input to this newsletter is very important. Please let us know if you have new information, valuable experiences, constructive comments, even gripes which will help to make this a better club offering the safest and most cost effective soaring opportunity in the area. Send items to Dave Kremers (dkremers@earthlink.net).