

VHGA NEWS!

The Vermont Hang Gliding Association Quarterly Newsletter
Summer 2004

DAN MACMONAGLE AND GREG HANLON FLY TO THE BEACH!



HOWDY, I'M GREG AND THIS IS MY SECOND FLIGHT TO THE BEACH IN AS MANY YEARS. DAN AND I LAUNCHED INTO TEXTBOOK PERFECT CONDITIONS ON FATHER'S DAY AND ESSENTIALLY HAD A CAKEWALK TO THE COAST. FOR THE FIRST 60 MILES I DON'T THINK WE EVER DROPPED BELOW 6500 FEET.



HEY MAN, THAT LAST THIRTY MILES WEREN'T SO EASY, WE HAD TO WORK OUR WAY THROUGH SOME ZERO SINK FOR A WHILE. 92.8 MILES, IN RETROSPECT I WISH I WAS A LITTLE LESS CAMERA-HAPPY AND TRIED FOR GOOD HARBOR. WE WERE OVER THE OCEAN AT 3K AND CLIMBING AT 500 FPM. MAYBE NEXT TIME. HEY, WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THOSE SECRET SQUIRRELS?

A few words from this Knuckle-Head

By Rob Jacobs, VHGA President

It's been an interesting year. The frosting on my personal cake was when Dan Macmonagle hit the beach with Greg Hanlon earlier this year. Dan started flying about the same time I did and he has accomplished far more than I probably ever will. Hats off to Dan, our newest addition to the beach club!

Slow progress is being made on our purchase of the West Rutland launch. The VHGA may need to hire our own legal people to work out the details to procure the property. It seems that the owner's representatives will only deal with other legal types and it has been very hard to communicate with them. Peter Kelly has been working toward

this goal for us. It is within our reach and a top priority. Don and Niece Massoni, with the assistance of Bill Gottlieb managed to get the ramp repaired at Rutland. I had the opportunity to launch from it recently and it is a fine and dandy job! Jon Szarek has taken the reigns of site director for Mt. Ascutney for the remainder of the season, Jake Pierce was originally the site director, but chose to step down and just fly (a very smart man). Big thanks to Jake for getting us all going this spring, and thanks to JZ for stepping in.

I am the proud papa of a new Hang one pilot, my son Nathan, who can now launch better than some and land better than most. He was recently granted his hang one rating from



Morningside after passing his test a couple weeks ago. Nathan is eleven years old

Anatomy of an Accident

By John Arrison

The Regionals were to be held Memorial Day weekend. Saturday was blown out but Sunday seemed like it might be ok with a forecast for diminishing winds in the afternoon. Several years ago I had set for myself a personal wind velocity threshold that I would not exceed. The go, no-go decision was simple - if the weather radio predicted 15 mph or less then I would go, if they said anything higher then I would not. Sunday, they were calling for 20 mph, a clear no-go. I went anyways.

The pilots on launch were analyzing the conditions, strong gusts and the occasional borderline launch window. There was much reminiscing about the strong conditions we flew in the old days - four wire people hanging on for dear life, twang launches. We sure were glad to have survived those days.

I managed to convince myself that it was ok to launch. In the air I found it not too turbulent and I was able to penetrate out as far as the main LZ to catch thermals. The bus came through and I was at 5500 feet and climbing over the back. I was surprised when I encountered some rotor by the south antenna at 6500 feet. That should have been the first hint that the wind was stronger than it seemed. I knew I wanted to land in a big field that day so I crabbed down the Connecticut River as far as

Charlestown where I hit a thermal that carried me away from the nice landing areas by the river.

The LZs southeast of Charlestown are smaller and less frequent than those near the river so my options became limited. The thermals up to that point seemed consistent and I felt that I would not be landing anytime soon, however my next glide was sink city. Just past Rt. 10 in Marlow I spotted a landable field within range. It is ironic that I was the guy lecturing the others on launch earlier that day, "Do not drift past your LZ today, boys!" I arrived at the field at 2000 feet and was prepared to stop but my vario let out a solid chirp and I made a couple of exploratory 360's which caused me to drift downwind of the LZ. Further downwind there were no fields in sight so I decided to head back.

From 2000 feet it looked like I would have no problem returning to my LZ. I soon discovered that my upwind movement was zilch. I had been watching the ponds throughout my flight and I had not noticed any excessive wind indications on the water, but when I took a good look at the swaying trees I began to worry. The glider quickly descended and I knew I was in deep trouble. A few hundred feet over the trees it got very turbulent and at the last second the glider was tossed 90 degrees to the wind and I crashed with

a wing high and a lot of momentum.

After impact I was pretty disoriented and not really sure what had happened because I could not remember the flight! After a while, my head cleared and I got my driver, Beeb, on the radio. I explained to him that I was 25 feet up in a tree but not really sure where that was. There was another tree close to where I was hanging but the control frame was smashed and I had no leverage to get out of my harness. Eventually I did free myself and reached the ground without any further injury. Meanwhile Beeb had rounded up some local help and they soon came to the rescue. The glider was demolished and I had a pretty good bruise to the left side of my face that resulted in an eye-closing shiner. I consider myself extremely fortunate with only minor injury, particularly considering what could have happened. Now for the lecture.

1. Set conservative thresholds when to fly and stick by them.
2. If you are at all like me and can talk yourself into launching when you know you shouldn't then stay home and work in the yard.
3. Never fly past your LZ and hope you can get back.
4. Fly with a friend or driver and have a plan.

Speaking of Knuckle-Heads...

Ed. Look, all I do is cut-and-paste, correct some spelling and prune for length. I am not responsible for content. OK, maybe I'm a little responsible for content, but I sure would like to try and distance myself from this little gem of literary lunacy... (Cue Twilight Zone music now.)

By Chris Hager

After six seasons, I finally decided to do my spots, study hard and take the hang three test so I could fly Ascutney. The last month I have had three opportunities to launch off of the rock. I've approached it like I have my training over the years, the step method (no Rob, no relation to the rhythm method). The first step was a sledder. The second step was a ridge soaring flight. Then on August 8th I had my first honest to goodness thermal flight at Ascutney. Three steps and I'm off. Hey, I'm going up, I'm going up! Look at me...yahoo!...look at me...Uh, I'm going down, I'm going down! Well this isn't so much fun, now is it? I'm back up to a whopping 2000 feet so I guess it's time to turn back and catch some of that...Argh, sinking air! I would not have been a very good miner during the gold rush because

I fell for that three times like a drunken fool rushing into town with his sack of gold to buy that over-priced bottle of whiskey (sorry Rob, I meant Sambuka). Just about then I heard the voice of Mike Barbers (along with the other voices jockeying for position in my head from time to time), "If it's not working, do something else - anything!" So I headed for the newly mowed field near Africa and what to my wondering eyes should appear, but a thermal, which carried me aloft like eight tiny reindeer. From 1000 feet AGL, I turn and pushed out and in no time at all I'm 1000 feet over the top. Look at me! Look at me! All you little people. Little people, I say! Yes, you down on launch. I'm a dog in heat on that golden leg in the sky. I'm a bird, I'm a plane...I'm sinking like a rock again!. Now I know what it feels like to go down the drain. But wait! I don't want to be known as cesspool boy.

What? The voices again. Mike Barber telling me to plow, plow high on my flying tractor into the skies of golden thermals.

Three time I heard the voice that day and every time it was the voice of reason, and every time it took me away. Up, up and away like an eternal Calgon bath with a twist of herbal essence...yes! Yes! YES! But like a dyslexic on Viagra, I eventually had to come down. Some pretty gnarly clouds were building to the northwest. I landed in Kansas before the junk showed up, and stood there in the field all by myself, which isn't all that uncommon, looked up at launch and yelled with all my might, Look at me! Look at me! I feel SEXY!... Now how am I gonna get back to my car?

Thirty Lazy Miles from Ascutney on a Floppy - July 29th 2003

By Dave Morris

The demo-launch from the top of the ski area went well with the help of a light thermal cycle to rustle the leaves and inflate my glider. I had made a point of waiting for conditions to improve but now, heading out over the ski area, the air felt a bit sinky and I was thinking that this might turn out to be a short day after all. With wisps of Cu developing here and there, and a permanent, better-developed cloud bubbling and boiling over the Ascutney peak, the incentive was strong to find some lift.

After an age maintaining height with a kestrel over one of the lower spurs, I managed to make some decent turns in slightly stronger bubbles. The bird led the way and edged over to the left, and we did some figure eights back up and over the ski trails and into the main bowl. Eventually the thermal released from the mountain properly and the bird and I fell into a tight 360. I breathed a sigh of relief knowing that this one was going to cloudbase.

Into the wispies at a little over 6000 feet and it felt great to point my toes at Morningside without having to worry about airspace or lack of landing options, as we do at Mt. Tom and Burke. This glide was initially quite sinky, (to be expected immediately downwind of the Ascutney climb), but soon became nice and buoyant on the line I'd chosen under some dodgy looking clouds. I didn't real find anything solid to core but instead lazily sat in south-southeastward drifting

zeros, then when they fizzled I headed on a more southeasterly glide.

When I arrived at Morningside with about 4000 feet, I could see Jeff mowing the grass and a couple of hang gliders sitting by the road. I later found out that John Sillero had been towing, a shame he wasn't still in the air. With my height I had no intention of landing but I only encountered more sink south of Morningside. A glance back over my shoulder showed a nicely brewing cloud to the north so I turned into wind to try and connect. I always hate these upwind glides that are so logical and necessary but seem to last forever when you could be racking up the downwind miles. Eventually I connected with a weak climb and slowly clawed my way back up to cloudbase, which was now over 6500 feet. I drifted ESE back over the flight park and then headed southwest, towards North Charlestown. I found out later that my GPS track had completed a perfect 'I Love Morningside' heart shape on the map.

After a short glide I found the next weak thermal which carried me into tiger country. There were a few back gardens to choose from if I had to, but at least this weak climb was consistent, so I settled into it and enjoyed the view. I was managing to stay high and that's what mattered. The next climb, near Acworth, took me to 7000 feet and from there I headed more southwards, flying the clouds, towards Alstead. By this time it was late afternoon and the already weak conditions had weakened even more.

I found myself at around 2000 feet over what appeared to be the only safe landing area. To the south a forested hill barred my way to the landing options along the valley leading into Surry.

The sky had blued out completely and the ground below me was mostly swamp, yet I was maintaining my height in something as I edged over the forest. I didn't have enough height to clear the forest on a glide and make it to the southern fields, so I thought I'd just edge a little way over the trees to feel the air. It was working! Zero turned to one up and I tentatively searched for a core while keeping an eye on the garden to the north. At around the point where I couldn't make it back, the climb became consistent. I stuck to it and drifted safely to the Surry Valley. Keene Airport and Mount Monadnock were tantalizingly close as I burbled southwards to a landing in Surry at 6:00 pm, 30.5 miles from launch. The whole flight lasted around 3.5 hours and I couldn't help thinking that if the drift had been stronger I may have made it into Massachusetts.

An easy hitch back to Morningside to meet the crew and sink a few beers before Stevie Prepost gave me a lift back to get the car. Thanks a million Stevie! Ascutney is truly an awesome XC site and we can only hope that the VHGA presentation to the ski area owners will be successful, and that this launch will be open to mile-munching P4's for 2004. Fingers crossed.

* VHGA Annual Picnic * and Vintage Glider Daze

at Morningside Flight Park

When: August 21 - 1:00 pm

Where: Morningside Flight Park

Who: everyone! Kids, grandparents, significant other.

Barbeque: dogs, burgers, corn on the cob, soda's and beer
for the older crowd.

Games and prizes for the Kiddies

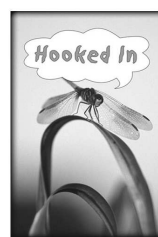
We're setting up the oldest wings we can find, and flying them from the 150 (or less) so if you have a vintage wing (pre-1980) throw it on the rack!

Camp Rob will be in full swing - it's movie night!

It's always fun to do 'pot luck' so if you want to bring a dish (hot or cold) please do! (for the 1:00 pm picnic)

Bugs do it and so will you,

if,



you

HOOK - N

A safety reminder from your VHGA

PREZ cont. from page 1

and one of the youngest hang one's in the USA. I'm just so damn proud!

Keep those Rutland donations coming in! We've collected about \$1300 to date, but far more will be needed. We have a \$10,000 goal to reach, which means if every member throws in \$100 bucks, we're there! Do what you can, it's very much appreciated.

Some of you are receiving this newsletter, and have not renewed for the 2004 season. Please visit the website, download the form, and mail it in before the beautiful fall flying is here! You'll get a shiny new sticker for your helmet and a fine looking membership card! See you all at cloudbase!

*The next
VHGA club
meeting
will be at
6:30 pm Saturday,
August 21st at
Morningside Flight
Park in North
Charlestown, NH.*

V.H.G.A. meeting minutes

The general membership had a meeting on 5/29/04. This is a really brief summary.

Treasurer's Report:

Motion was made by the Treasurer to give the Regional Director \$500.00 to help cover his expenses associated with the position. The motion was approved. Gary Trudeau donated the money to the Rutland Fund.

Ascutney:

- ❖ There is a new ranger this year.
- ❖ Please avoid late car retrieval from the top of the mountain, rangers view cars left on top as a possible missing hikers.
- ❖ Rob Jacobs talked to the state of Vermont about improving the trail to the North West Launch. The state was agreeable. Rob still has to talk to the Town of Windsor about the improvements.
- ❖ The brush on the South launch has been cleared. The landing field for the south launch is overgrown. Steve Prepost will investigate.
- ❖ South West launch is overgrown and should be kept open. John Arrison will investigate.
- ❖ Proposal for Ascutney Ski Resort paraglider launch is still in review.

West Rutland:

- ❖ Jake Schweiger is interested in selling the launch to the club. The club would like to raise \$10,000 through donations to cover legal, surveyor, taxes, insurance and other associated expenses.
- ❖ Peter Kelley is also looking for a permanent L.Z. that the club could purchase.
- ❖ Contact Gary Trudeau if you need an observer.

Burke:

❖ Soccer field and field below upper Burke base lodge are approved landing zones.

❖ Do not land near the kennels or on private property on Kirby Ridge Road.

Mt. Washington:

❖ Dave Dodge will be the new site director. Call him if you plan on flying at 617-734-6269

❖ Mt. Washington is a H4, P4 site. Launches are restricted to designated areas.

New Business:

❖ Rob Jacobs checked on Okemo Ski Area as a possible flying site. Okemo is an east facing site. The owners would like to have people flying the site, however there are no suitable landing fields for hang gliders. Landing areas may be ok for paragliders. The site would cost approx. \$750 per year to insure. As such, the club has decided not to pursue Okemo as a site.

Regional Director Report:

Gary Trudeau, regional director

❖ Tandem pilot paperwork must be filed out for insurance purposes or tandem pilots may lose their rating. Pilots doing tandems without appropriate ratings will lose their regular ratings.

❖ Gary Trudeau arranged a USHGA donation of a GPS to Pittsfield, MA Rescue at Greylock.

❖ USHGA adopted emergency procedures proposed by Gary as a national standard. The procedures detail how to proceed when there is an incident including radio frequencies and when to call 911. The procedures will be issued on a card from USHGA.

❖ The VHGA will adopt these procedures.