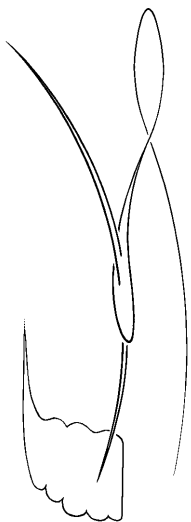


AScent



the journal of the Alberta Soaring Council



Summer 1997

from the president

For ASC, this summer was the best of times and the worst of times. The best part was the Cowley summer camp. After

many weeks of indifferent or poor soaring conditions at most clubs, we were given a break. The weather was unusually good, with just enough instability for excellent thermals. The company was superb, no one got hurt and no aircraft was reshaped. The 25th camp was marked by a special banquet and the unveiling of a plaque designating the Cowley airfield as Canada's first national soaring site.

The worst part is that almost every cent in the ASC bank account was removed by early September. Our best estimate, after considerable investigation and expert advice, is that recovery of any or all of the stolen money is unlikely — so that launching a civil action to recover the funds will not be financially justifiable. The Calgary Police commercial crime specialists have opened a file, but their basic job is investigating crime rather than recovering money.

Although this is *not* a fatal blow to ASC, all of this does put us back to square one. The first step is to re-examine our goals in the light of our current and projected assets, and strictly define the priorities that result. Because of this, our November planning meeting will be critical. Before the meeting, all clubs will receive updated information on our financial status and outlook, and an analysis of basic options related to our major programs, projects and assets. We hope that before the planning meeting comes, there will be in-depth discussion at clubs about ASC priorities and objectives, and that each club will develop some degree of consensus about them. That would greatly help the executive to make the best use of the resources at hand. Here's a sampling of some questions related to our assets, objectives, expenses and activities which the executive and program co-ordinator have pondered in some depth:

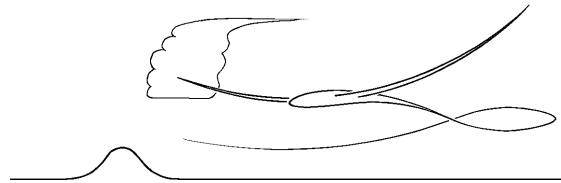
Towplane Should ASC retain the current towplane, trade it for a cheaper one or sell it? In each case, what are the short and medium term cost implications, and what is the most cost-effective way to meet towplane-related objectives? Our chief towpilot and a small committee have been asked to prepare a detailed report before the planning meeting.

Cowley What expenditures are needed here, and how can we make optimum use of this asset?

Administration How much of our income should be spent on the program coordinator? Should the coordinator administer the operating budget as well? How can the complex and time-consuming administrative job be streamlined? ▶▶▶ 21

ASCent

Summer 1997



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Looking north up the Cowley valley: Jos Jonkers
and Rainer Zimm take a turn in the Cu Nim Blanik.
photo: Mike Glatiotis

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High sky, big lift, great camp

Tony Burton
Cu Nim

COWLEY IS ON A ROLL. After a perfect wave camp last October, we had one of the best summer camps in memory — even in the memory of Bruce Hea and George Dunbar, both of whom had attended all of the previous twenty-four! Yes, it was the 25th Summer Camp and all the advance planning meshed with ten days of soaring, no rain delays, 8-knots-and-13,000-feet, no sweltering heat, no ice-cubes-in-the-Oldman-River type weather. Can you ask for anything more? If you weren't there, you missed it all of course — pity.

Several special events were on tap — one literally — two being worked on for over a year in the background. The most visible to campers was the new native limestone monolith at the entrance to the campground carrying a plaque which both honours the wave soaring pioneers of the area (a text copy of the plaque on Centre Peak) and which sets Cowley as the first national soaring site. Several people brought this project to fulfilment:

- Steve Weinhold and Bruce Hea, who proposed the idea two years ago and kept the thought alive,
- Tony Burton and Ursula Wiese, who roamed the countryside for over a year looking for 'the perfect rock' (at one time abandoning all hope and designing a steel cairn),
- Monica Field, supervisor of the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre, who gave support and permission to take a rock from the slide (she was an instant ally as she regularly romps up Centre Peak from the east side and knows our cairn there),
- Volker-Stevin Ltd, for donating the use of their heavy equipment,
- Len Hilliard, of the Volker-Stevin Pincher Creek office, who moved the rock to the airfield,
- Lee Coates, Bruce Hea, and Barry Bradley, who fashioned the concrete base, and
- Ursula and Catherine Southwood, for landscaping the area.

The other long-planned work was the introduction of Ursula's new and larger revision of the book on the history and fun of wave soaring at Cowley, *Stalking the Mountain Wave*. It was well received, and many copies

were quickly dog-eared from the gathering of signatures and checking the index to see who was in it. The wind-up dinner was catered, as we expected it to be a large affair and wanted all the ladies who usually put it together to sit back and relax. We had hoped to make it a community event as five years ago when the Cowley hall was filled but it was not available. Big Rock Breweries were asked to support the occasion and they came through by delivering dispensing equipment and two kegs of their finest. Not much of the *Grasshopper* and *Traditional* was wasted — it was pronounced a generally fine idea by all the thirsty pilots present.

Ferry-in day, 25 July In the afternoon Cu Nim flew in three Scouts with two Blaniks and a Jantar on tow, and then continued with a few more student flights. Arrivals actually started the previous Sunday when Steve Hosier was on a Cowley out and return task from Cu Nim with a Jantar and decided to land at Cowley rather than risk a landout on the way back in deteriorating conditions.

Saturday 12,500 foot bases, 8+ knots. The first day soaring was capped by Mike Cook flying *Zulu One* to Invermere and back in under 3-1/2 hours! Karin Michel flew to Centre Peak with 85 year old Harold Spriggs from Lethbridge who was a pilot from 'way back

The first morning pilots meeting introductions began with a pilot who flew in all the way from Japan via San Francisco and Calgary to attend! Ichiro Sato, manager of the Sekiyado Soaring Center and a working member of the Japan Aeronautic Association (and seriously jet-lagged), was "semi-lost" driving to Cowley when he saw a glider trailer go by and followed Rick Zabrodski to the field. Ichiro made the trip in order to see the CuSonde sensor we use to get sounding data. For a while we thought he may have wasted the trip since when we got the CuSonde back from the Nationals in Ontario, it was missing the battery charger. Todd Benko, a meteorological equipment technician, solved that and the subsequent problem of a deceased battery, and Ichiro got to see the system working after all.

A couple of other pilots showed up from the far east also — Rainer Zimm from Toronto (a former Cu Nim member), and Chris Manning from SOSA. Winnipeg

was well represented, with 11 pilots bringing their one and two barrel club Larks and two private ships. One oldtimer happy to visit was Ralph White who was one of the original Cu Nim towpilots to tow out of Cook's field at Pincher Creek in the 50s. Ralph, the first pilot to earn a Diamond altitude at Cowley, sat in on a few towpilot meetings and was very impressed with all the advances in sailplanes and in the camp organization.

Sunday Low cloudbase (8000 feet going to about 9 later) and 5 knot lift with equally strong sink areas did not allow safe cross-country up the valley (Jack Despres, ESC's only camper, found that out and had the honour of being the first landout victim). It was a busy day nevertheless with lots of launches and local flying.

If you remember the cold summer camp of last year and the enclosing of the camp kitchen in tarps to keep the wind out and the stove heat in, this idea was formalized by Lee Coates and Bruce Hea who had a set of custom covers made that can be hung on any two walls and a doorway. They were up for the camp as a test and will be most welcome at the Fall camps I'm sure.

Monday 10,000 base, five knots on top of the Livingstone Range with lift and bases dropping north of the Highwood pass. It was also bluer and windier to the north. EE found that out leading RM, JM, and Z1 north up the mountains and found that the bridges had been burned once the Highwood Pass was crossed (the others wisely turned elsewhere) and eventually made a landout at Black Diamond.

Without doubt, our most welcomed and happy-to-see-again visitors today were long time Cowley regulars, Stewart and Linda Tittle from Oregon. Stewart was seriously injured two years ago when he crashed on tow due to a disconnected control surface. Today he is cautiously mobile with a cane, slowly improving with a lot of effort, and flying again. There were a few tears with many of their old friends saying heart-felt hellos. Stew had two powerful points of advice for all of us at the morning's meeting: *always* do a positive control check before takeoff; and, if you are fortunate enough to get away with doing something really stupid, carefully analyze *why* it was that you did it to avoid a repetition and getting bit for sure! The end of the day was topped off with a convivial bring your own steak to the kitchen barbecue.

Wednesday The pancake breakfast in front of the Bradley palace and hosted by the coyote towpilots began with the "howl" led by Chief Coyote Barry Bradley at 7 am. A lot of cirrus moved in from southwest in the morning and only ten flights were made, but some wave was found. Three pilots connected, leading off with Mike Glatiotis who got to 29,200 feet. Kurt

Edwards followed later with a high tow and he had his first wave flight reaching 26,000 as did Mike Swendsen, making 20,000 feet. Frits Stevens with wave "guide" Paul Chalifour got way out of shape with the Winnipeg Lark in rough rotor, breaking the rope, and in heavy sink sorted themselves out for an outlanding in the "usual" area a few miles northwest of the airfield. I congratulated Frits later for not losing the Tost ring (that was done three times during the camp, saving ASC over \$100!).

Thursday There was weak wave in the morning and two or three pilots connected, then there was 7-8 knot lift to 12,500 feet. Upper winds of 25 knots produced *a lot* of sink in the valley. By midafternoon, a persistent cloudstreet had lined up out of the Crowsnest Pass and to the east of the south end of the Porkies, and this had many pilots working upwind and frolicking over the Frank slide.

Friday At 7 am, the lennies looked great but again they faded as the morning progressed. Glen Buhr from Winnipeg connected 20,000 feet for his first wave flight and Mike Glatiotis gave two wave flights to newcom-



Tony Burton

Stephen Morgan (above) or older brother Mike have been calling the faithful to the camp pilots meeting and other events for years.

ers in a Blanik. By noon there was 5-8 knot lift going to 12,500-13,000 feet with a threat of TCU in the afternoon. 20 knot westerlies made for rough and somewhat ragged thermals in the valley but the cu looked much better formed east of the Porkies out on the great flat. Mike Cook, Dick Mamini and I had individually worked our way out to the Nobleford area (80 km to the east) before returning. Dick, being lower, found the lift much more broken and had some trouble getting back. For a while it looked like he was doomed for sure but I should have had more faith in his ability to scratch. Terry Southwood and others flew downwind towards Fort Macleod midafternoon under a massive cloudstreet only to find that it wasn't providing much lift on the way back. About this time "Uncle Sam" (Steve Weinhold) came up on frequency as he and a friend finished off an 8 hour flight from near Denver.

By 3 pm the northwest sky was very black and nearing and the surface wind shifted to the north so Dave Fowlow shut down the launches while those downwind struggled to get home against the westerly headwind.

Dave Morgan had a premature release at only 400 feet in his HP-11. Turning back to the field and sorting out where he would land, he flew right into a thermal and climbed away. Only contest pilots are supposed to brag about that while out of earshot of the students!

That evening a huge supercell built up over the mountains to the southwest and the anvil spread over a lot of the territory, but it was never a threat. The setting sun made the anvil glow gold and its reflected light backlit the lower buildups. It was an eerie and awesome picture.

Saturday The clouds were at about 12,000 with 5-7 knot lift. In the middle of the afternoon someone radioed down that he was in wave which surprised everyone because the cumulus tops gave no indication. That got pilots pushing out westward from cloudbase to see if they could connect. It was thermal wave which gave a couple of knots up the side of the cu to about 14,000 before it petered out. It was very scenic and fun.

Today was the big BBQ. The numbers to attend grew



An imposing rock at the campground entrance celebrates a historic occasion.

Tony Burton

during the camp, and included Trevor Florence, Neil Gegenbauer and a friend from the East Kootenay club who flew in from Invermere just for the dinner. One hundred and eleven plus kids converged on the kitchen when the young Stephen Morgan started the affair with a trumpet call to the camp.

First everyone went to the cairn for the short dedication ceremony. ASC president David McAsey welcomed the pilots and visiting dignitaries: the mayors of Cowley and Pincher Creek, the deputy mayor of Cowley and the supervisor of the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre. John Broomhall, representing SAC, officially named the Cowley airfield as the first National Soaring Site and presented framed certificates to the two mayors in appreciation for the historic support local people have given to the sport since soaring regularly began in the mid-50s. Then the plaque on the cairn was "unveiled" when the bunch of wildflowers covering it was dropped.

Everyone quickly lined up for the catered Baron of Beef, beans, salad and all the fixings — and the keg of *Traditional Ale* went fast. The western sky was threatening for a while, but the build-up on the Rockies dissipated. A light shower on the Porkies just to the east produced a bright double rainbow for the seated crowd. Many participants were passing their new books about for signatures.

Sunday The ridge continued to build in with drier

and warmer air giving even higher bases which rose to 14,000 feet by late afternoon over the mountains. The cu were based lower on the flat though, and there was a distinct level difference right on the easterly edge of the high ground. The forecast was excellent, but it took until almost 1 pm before the surface inversion was broken and soaring began in earnest — and the extra stability of the air also caused the lift to shut down fairly early.

While we waited for things to start, pilots wondered if Steve and his small group would climb Centre Peak before we could fly over. Both arrived about the same time and while they were on top, a half dozen gliders did low passes — including a Blanik. The photo-taking was going on in both directions.

The short lift window nevertheless gave me a great trip over the mountains between the Gap and Waterton Park. At first the cu near the mountains looked quite ratty and the lift was broken and I turned back at Beauvais Lake south of the Pass. However just over the course of one climb there, the cu bases got flat and I turned south again. It was an easy and beautiful trip down into the mountains and I turned at the Waterton village at 13,000 feet. On the way back north I saw that many of the cu had shreds of cloud rising into the bases from a few hundred feet below — from previous experience this indicated strong lift — and sure enough, spiralling around these cloud bits gave a solid 10 knots rather than the usual 5-6 out on the sunny west edges.

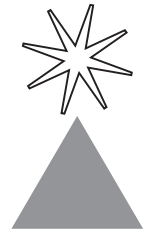
Paul Chalifour used the good soaring conditions in the mountains to try a flight home and got as far as the beautiful little strip at Elko.

Monday Packing-up day had very light winds and the temperature built more. It was probably 30+ in the afternoon as pilots pulled out for home after saying their goodbyes. The only cu to be seen was way back in the mountains; the pilots ferrying the aircraft back to Cu Nim reported a dead smooth tow all the way. It was a good time for the camp to end — the beginning of an official heat wave which gave 35°C for the next three days. Congratulations go to several pilots for achievements earned:

- Ken Melax Cu Nim first solo
- Kurt Edwards Cu Nim handling a no-air-speed problem in the Jantar
- Peter Vesely Cu Nim first solo

Other tender moments were Iain Colquhoun singing off colour folk tunes at the campfire, listening to the tape of the clever soaring songs of Ed Kilbourne on a ghetto blaster in high gear, and finally getting into the swimming hole on Monday afternoon and watching a dog pass by paddling downstream. *

Starbuck to ridge-top



Mike, who flies out of the bottom of a lake, reflects on soaring near land at an angle.

Mike Maskell, Winnipeg Gliding Club

SOMEWHERE, a coyote howled. A moonless night with the stars ablaze and here I am, a flatlander from the prairies, a glider pilot out to conquer the rocks and high country of Cowley, Alberta. More properly identified as the Livingstone Range of mountains just east of the Great Divide border of Alberta and British Columbia, these mountains rise from the valley floor to over 8000 feet asl, the highest being Centre Peak at just over 8300 feet. Yes, I had arrived, near midnight after a trek of over 1300 kilometres to find myself setting up for my ten day stay for the summer soaring camp. My syndicate-owned Standard Jantar, “Double R”, also made the trip — the third such visit for both of us.

In previous visits to this most holy place, success had been measured in terms of just getting there and flying locally, and on one great day a trip of over 200 kilometres was flown north from the gliderport to Chain Lakes, then eastward to Claresholm, south to Fort Macleod and a quick run home. The thermals topped out at over 13,000 and finding my way around the area was a breeze. Other flights were mostly local excursions over the Porcupine Hills just to the east, never venturing further than a few miles away, and certainly never close to the solid rock steeples.

This soaring camp would prove different and flying conditions were beyond all expectations. Other members of the Winnipeg Gliding Club at Starbuck had come with the largest showing ever of four private gliders, our two place Lark, and fourteen members in attendance. Most arrived for the first Saturday with a

few others coming out on Monday. Two members even drove out for just two days midweek — talk about endurance! The drive from Winnipeg is far enough for a week of holidays, but to drive the distance twice in three days shows how strongly pilots are attracted to the site. Fortunately for one of those marathoners, the conditions were excellent with wave making an appearance for his first flight on Thursday and he made a climb to over 25,000 feet.

My first flight on Saturday would be in the back seat of the Lark giving a checkflight to one of our instructors. A 4000 foot tow found us positioned near the rocks in weak thermals and a short climb to 8600 before all hell broke loose. We had discussed the possibility of strong downdrafts near the rocks due to the prevailing west wind and just as we were turning tail for home we encountered a solid ten knots down which seemed to be everywhere. Flaps to negative five degrees and punching the speed up to 75 knots allowed us to run out of the sink hole but leaving us with little altitude over the foothills. A view of the surrounding area did nothing to encourage us about the outcome of the flight with a very real possibility of an outlanding.

We were mid-valley with just over 1500 feet to spare when our left wing was thrust upward. A quick left turn found us in a strong thermal which eventually topped out at 8500 feet. We were breathing again and “tip-toed” over to the Porcupine Hills where we climbed again to 12,000 with a chance now to transition to the north end of the Livingstones near the Gap. From here we had a run down the rocks to the south end and back home for an enjoyable end to a two hour flight. We both had found new respect for mountain flying!

A few days later it was my turn for the Jantar. With strong thermals predicted, it was time to do some exploring. Climbing quickly over the south end of the Porkies found me near cloudbase at 10,000. Sliding west over to the rocks was relatively easy as thermals were present in the valley and streeting along the course-line. The radio was alive with reports of the ridge working with weak lift along the mountain peaks. Being new to this game but having been briefed by several seasoned pilots, I ventured closer to the rocks that I had ever been before.

What a view! Overhead, Mike Glatiotis in his Cirrus *Jolly Miller* marked a nice thermal. Now topped up with a bit of height, I set off for the south end of the rocks. However, for a flatlander, flying here was totally foreign and my nerves got the best of me — I broke off the rocks to the valley to thermal up for some “insurance height”. Feeling a bit better about my situation and with a couple thousand feet of freeboard I flew in towards the rocks one more time. This time it was

much more relaxed and as I passed Centre Peak at 8600 feet I could see some hikers near the summit. A quick wing-waggle to them and I sped away at 80 knots while maintaining my height. A turn at the south end and I was on my way north. The radio was now crackling with three other gliders reporting on the mountains. Sure enough, in quick succession they all passed by with plenty of distance and separation. While passing the hikers again almost at eye level, Mike Cook in *Zulu One* caught up to me and we then commenced to pair fly the rest of the ridge, with Mike in formation as we headed for home. He quickly left me behind as I stopped to top up again in mid-valley. Total flight time was 2.5 hours and I enjoyed every minute of it.

On Wednesday while returning from Lethbridge, I could see lennies stacking up over the foothills. A call out on my hand-held brought the reply that the wave was working and the pilot who responded was climbing through 29,000. My truck with the slide-in camper could do no better than 90 km/h. I arrived around 1700 hours and found Frits Stevens in our Lark with an experienced Paul Chalifour for Frits’ wave check-flight. By the time they had launched, myself and others settled back with our favourite beverage at the campsite, only to hear the radio come to life with reports of the Lark having landed out. It had been a wild ride with rotor, slack rope, and a rope break near the release point. As had happened the previous Saturday, the air spilling off the mountain contained a lot of down, and Frits and Paul got caught up in it. The outcome was that they made their way to the valley and picked a great field four miles north, into wind, uphill, with an excellent access road in. Could you ask for anything better? The retrieve went well and the next morning we assembled the Lark to be ready for more flying.

Another highlight of the camp, not flying related, was tubing down the Oldman River. There are no showers at the airfield and after several days of hot sunny weather, I was in need of a thorough cleaning. Matt Chislett and I found that the water in the Oldman was warm enough to swim and wash up in. The real enjoyment came from trekking upstream to some faster moving water, laying back in the inner tube and watching the world and the gliders go by. After that, a day did not go by that we didn’t head down for a swim.

Evenings consisted of telling tall tales, (and there were many) around the campfire and listening to a cassette tape of Ed Kilbourne, glider pilot and songwriter. On the tape were songs that only a glider pilot could relate to, often comical and one or two inspirational. Looking at those gathered around, their faces illuminated by the flicker of the fire, you could tell that many were reflecting on the flying of the previous few days and looking forward to more to come. ■■■ 23

Cowley reflector reflections

Neville Robinson

THERE USED TO BE A TIME when trying to find the glider field in the dark was rather difficult. The gravel roads twisted and turned with steep descents and climbs, a narrow bridge, T-junctions and intersections which all looked alike at night. One would creep along ... “is this the turn?”... “will this take us to the field?” I have heard of newcomers trying to find Cowley in the dark that have spent hours driving around in ever-decreasing circles. Since the Oldman dam was built with the new roads, etc. — finding it is more straightforward and that final turn in at the intersection leading to the airfield now has some reflectors on a nearby power pole — giving assurance and assistance to late returnees in the dark from outings to Pincher Creek and elsewhere. You *have* noticed them, haven’t you? This is how they came to be there ...

... Two or three gliders had towed up and promptly returned. Putt-Putt and another motorglider putted and buzzed off. Then there I was, strapped into my BG-12 *Jolly Rodger* at the front of some twenty or so gliders. Why I was in line so early I have no idea. The conditions for soaring appeared to be nil. It looked as though the sky was just blue and stable, except for a large black cloud creeping out from Crowsnest Pass. While contemplating, two or three extremely prominent pilots immediately behind called out for me (scapegoat) to hold up on my launch. Hold up! Surprisingly, management at the line agreed.

After a while, it seemed forever, two or three pilots from way down at the back of the line approached me with a hat held out. They had gone door to door, so to speak, down the assembled line and collected a princely sum of two dollars and forty seven cents. “Could I be bribed, and take off as a sniffer? I looked at the sky, that long line of gliders and pilots glaring at me, at the money, and I was off. What that staunch line of ticket holders did not know they had sent off the wimp of wimps — I was going to four thousand feet, no sniffing around at two thousand feet for that lot on the ground.

We towed out towards that now *big* black cloud. At two thousand the towpilot seemed to hesitate, then carry on across the front and around to the far side some five hundred feet above, then turned and headed back underneath it, only to be met by a tremendous clattering of hail, probably still soft at that point. I could hardly see through the canopy which felt was going to cave in. Then I had feelings for the towpilot way out in front of me as we circled back out into the

blue. But lo and behold, my intrepid towpilot was turning back under the cloud edge again, circled, and was out again. “Enough of this” — I released and the towplane rocketed away ... with no banking left into that mess for me.

There was lift everywhere at 4000 agl around my now beautiful big black cloud. No effort — just how I liked it — gift conditions. After a while I heard Putt-Putt call down, “It’s great up here, why are the gliders still on the line?” By return radio I understood that two gliders behind me had taken off and encountered what was now a very bad hail storm and were apprehensive about getting down quickly and safely while the rest on the line were concerned about a hail bill and clean up.

My beautiful big black cloud drifted across the airfield and I flirted around its perimeter, one way then back the other, when lightning appeared on one side. I just floated around to the other side, and at one point I was actually climbing up the southern face of the cloud. I enjoyed my cloud for quite a while. Eventually it drifted over the Porkies and dissipated. However, by now things had settled on the ground and above the field, and all the gliders had taken off to enjoy the balance of the afternoon, myself included. Having had an extraordinary and enjoyable time I eventually landed (I believe I had the longest time of that day).

After securing my glider, I went into town with my friend Paul Moffat to do some shopping and have dinner. Over supper we discussed the day’s events and my ill-gotten bribe money and with a bit of a conscience (not much) wondered what to do with it, eventually coming up with the idea of putting it to good purpose by purchasing reflectors to identify that last intersection into the glider field in the dark.

At the intersection, we found the power pole to be halfway down the steep ditch bank. I had to stand full height on Paul’s shoulders with my arms outstretched to nail the reflectors high enough on the pole. Standing back on the road we admired our project and the benefit it would give to our fraternity for ever. Back at the campground, I was met by a small delegation bearing down on me demanding, “We want our money back!” It turned out that with 2000 foot tows, all they found was sink and hail.

“I can’t give it back.” “Why not?”
“I’ve spent it!”



the 3 in 1 shot

This is a great flying story from California

Sergio Colacevich

from Pacific Soaring Council *West Wind*

THIS IS WHAT I DID. I did the three Diamonds in one flight! It has been easy and difficult, long-suffered, elating, intoxicating, draining of forces but not of resources! This is the story of that flight.

First of all, I realized a long time ago that there is no flight equal to another, mostly because the weather is never exactly the same. Weather, with its changing winds, and areas of lift and sink, rain and overcast, influences our flying so much that it conditions and commands it. Rather than flying a sailplane, what we actually fly is “a summer day”. And what remains in my mind after a flight are the images of the sky and the clouds and the mountains around me and ahead of me, studied, interpreted, and used during the long way toward my goal and then back home.

Success is relative and many personal successes are meaningless to others. I may be able to reach my goal or not, but today I flew, I was around in the sky. And because I love to soar and like to know that I am good at it, I give importance to badges because they give me a measure of my value as a soaring pilot. So I want to earn them to brag, but they will come at their time — the fun is in the trying before achieving, and the more the difficulty, the more the satisfaction. That’s why I do not favour the trend in recent years towards easing our tasks. The badges were instituted many years ago when glider performance was much lower. I think the badges should be subjected to the handicaps. That would be more respectful of the pilots of 20 or 40 years ago. So, when I was working on my Gold Badge with my Libelle, I did not want to do it in the Sierras because I deemed it too easy. I did it in the Coast Range, starting from Vacaville. (I live in Sacramento, California and I fly in the Sierras in the summer and in the Coast Range in winter). I was studying how to do the 500 when I read of Les Sebald, who started from Minden and went down to the Mexican border in wave, doing the three Diamonds in one flight. I learned of Pete Newgard, creator of the RICO variometer, who did the three Dia-

monds in one flight, also using the wave. The concept inflamed me: what a spectacular, difficult, *fascinating* flight to do, requiring plenty of preparation, dreaming, expectation, hopeful trying, and dedication. That was my task and I wanted to do it. But how? The difficulty lay in the 5000 metre gain in altitude. Those guys had gone to 25,000 at a time when there were no airspace limitations and legal limit of 18,000 feet. There are wave windows at Minden, but it is not easy to get both altitude and distance performance on a wave day. However, there is a place where we can consistently reach 18,000 feet in thermals — in the White Mountains, just northeast of Bishop.

18,000 feet is 5486 metres, so if I start from 450 metres (1500 feet) I have my 5000 metres done. It is possible to start with a low point of 1500 feet at Vacaville or Calistoga, but to cross the Sacramento Valley is *very* difficult. It can be done in the spring after a cold front, but on a day like that the clouds probably won’t go to 18,000 on the Whites; in summer, when the Whites work well, crossing the Sacramento Valley is almost impossible and it would need too much time. Notwithstanding that, I was exploring possible tasks that would accomplish my dream. (Please bear with me in this long description of the preparation of the flight — an attraction of soaring flight is the process of preparing for it and then trying to execute it.) Then one day a thought struck me; there is another place where I can find a low elevation, Death Valley! It is below sea level, it is close to the Whites and reachable with some effort from Truckee, where I fly normally in summer.

I began to study the task and I can tell you, this was a lot of fun and excitement. Of course, it looked awkward and marginal, but it also looked *possible*, and this is what kept me working at it. In a few days, the task took form:

Start from Truckee airport [*a little north of Lake Tahoe in the Sierras*], remote start at Bridgeport airport (87 miles southeast), turnpoint at Death Valley Airport (another 179 miles southeast), and finish at Bridgeport, with the intention to come back farther north to Minden and possibly even to Truckee. So, declare 300 kilometres, fly more than 500, get down to 1500 feet inside Death Valley and up to 18,000 on the Whites for the 5000 metre altitude gain — three Diamonds in one flight. The plan had weak points: Would I be able to find a thermal to get up from 1500 feet in Death Valley? Where should I get that low? What will I do if, as is quite probable, I have to land? (I could use Death Valley airport at Furnace Creek or Stovepipe Wells, 20 miles to the northwest). Could I get an aero-retrieve as I had no crew?

Solutions: For the retrieve, there is a towplane at Bishop and a small group of glider pilots — I can get an aerotow and then fly back by myself. For the low point location, study the map. To know how easy or difficult it is to find a thermal there, ask somebody that knows.

Results: The tow-pilot from Bishop will retrieve me if I land in Death Valley. He also says that he has been in Death Valley with his ASW-20, but always above 12,000. He knows of people who have landed there. Then I get a 1:133,000 scale map of Death Valley National Monument and study it and the 1:500,000 sectional. I looked for topographic features like slopes or ridges, widening or bending of the mountain range, etc. One of the most favourable places appears to be a small ridge six or seven miles southeast of the Death Valley airport.

Whenever I spoke with someone who might know, I asked for information about conditions in the valley. Then one day somebody in Tehachapi who is a knowledgeable pilot told me that Death Valley is a trap. He said that if you are caught inside it at an elevation of less than 10,000 feet, you won't be able to get out of there. He knew of many pilots that have wandered around inside the valley for hours and eventually had to land. "Because of the extreme heat, there is an inversion so strong that it persists the whole day and the thermals cannot go above a certain altitude". This information dampens my hopes a lot.

Time passes and things happen. One time I arrive with my Libelle at the north end of Saline Valley, and I can see sixty miles away, in the clear air of the desert, the mountains and the valley where I want to throw myself. Twice I pass above the Valley in a commercial airliner, and of course I look down with great interest. Then, I purchase a Ventus, with all that that means. It makes everything easier. With its tremendous performance I feel almost obligated now.

The "trap" thought is still there, recurring. If what they say is true, that it is difficult to get out of there because of the strong inversion, then I may do the flight when there is instability — in the spring, when the heat is not so developed, or wait for a cold front to pass, sweeping away the stagnant layers of air.

I go back to the maps, study the topography again, and conclude that the place south of the airport is the best. I get 1:124,000 scale USGS maps which show the place and the airport. The place is a ridge about 2000 feet high, and it is the end of the Black Mountains range. This range has steep slopes, and down south reaches 6384 at Funeral Peak. The ridge is tilted towards the centre of the valley, offering its flank to the prevailing southerly wind. It is exposed directly to the afternoon sun. On the other side of the valley, ten miles to the west, the Panamint Range reaches heights of 7–9000 feet and its shaded slopes will provide relatively colder air falling to the valley below and accumulating on "my" ridge. On the other side of the ridge, there is another valley slowly descending to the airport, a long valley narrowing towards the ridge and providing, presumably, a confluence of air currents. And very conveniently, in front of the ridge there is raised

ground that rises to a height of 700 feet above the flat saline valley below. This is good, because many times I have observed that a feature like this is good in producing thermals. If the ridge does not work, I will make a pass over this relief before going away.

So, this is the plan for Death Valley: make a pass above the ridge and the raised ground to explore the conditions then go toward the ridge and fly parallel to it; at an elevation of 2500 feet initiate a dive to 1500; maintain 1500 for at least 10 seconds to have the barograph mark the low point; ease out of the dive to an altitude of 2000 and try to connect with lift along the ridge; if lift is not found when down to 1500 feet, head toward the airport, flying directly over the confluence of the two valleys. Because the airport is at an elevation of -211 feet, I have to be there at 700 feet. This gives me 800 feet for the six mile glide at low speed. I can make it with the 16.6 metre wing extensions which I plan to use.

I have a vague knowledge of this place because I visited it about twelve years ago, while touring with wife and child. We were coming from Las Vegas and stopped at Badwater where there is a spring and a shallow lake of very clear water. Our road map guide reported that the water is undrinkable, hence the name, but is populated by small fish. These small fish are only found here and are relicts of the last ice age retreat. Badwater is 17 miles south of Death Valley airport: after another seven miles a small road climbs out to the right with signs indicating a tourist spot named the Artist's Palette because of the fantastically coloured rocks. The small road makes a tour around the canyons and the high ground and comes back to the main road a couple of miles ahead. We did not stop, but I still remember the general place and those desperate rocks and canyons under the violent heat of midday ... that is what is waiting for me if I go there.

We now arrive at the beginning of 1996. At this point I am quite confident that it is possible to do the task — not easy, but possible. I believe that Death Valley may become a trap, and I think that I have to choose a day when there is instability. So begins the long wait, watching the weather. I look at my local newspaper, at local TV stations and the Weather Channel. The Weather Channel shows very useful moving satellite pictures. Unfortunately, they are only on every 45 minutes or so for few seconds and half the time the forecaster stands in front of California! So, I record one or two hours of the Weather Channel and afterwards isolate those few interesting seconds and replay them again and again.

I wait for a cold front to pass over Death Valley. I need one in late May or June because I need long days. It is a delicate equilibrium — in early spring cold fronts are relatively frequent, but the days are still short; and when days become longer, the cold fronts become rarer. A favourable

forecast occurs on 1 June. I depart on a flight out of Truckee but only get to Mt. Patterson before radioing back to my OO that I am giving up. For the rest of the week I watch the weather, knowing that there is not much time left. There are cold fronts moving toward California, but they dissipate just a bit too far north. Then on Friday, both the newspaper and TV report that mild instability is possible for tomorrow. Saturday morning the TV reports a little cold front over Truckee, useless for me; but the newspaper reports no less than three cold front lines between Truckee and Death Valley — it is worth a try.

June 8: Wake up at 5 am; race to Truckee; feverishly prepare everything. I put the 16.6 meter wing extensions on and fill with water. Linda Westerinen places the baseline on my barograph and helps with other things. Today Bob Korves is my OO. Takeoff is at 11:26. I go to 3000 agl above the field and almost forget to notch the barograph. I did not have time to eat before takeoff so I have to do it now. One at a time and with some interference I manage eating, drinking, and putting on my oxygen equipment while trying not to waste precious flying time. I go toward Mount Rose and see clouds far away, maybe at Mount Patterson. I make 11,500 two miles to the south of Mount Rose, sneak into Washoe valley and cross toward Virginia City. It is 11:50 and I am about 30 minutes behind my tentative schedule. I find lift one mile south of the radio towers, four miles north of Carson City airport. A little later at Mineral Peak I make 12,000 and at the south end of the Pine Nuts I get a good 14,000. I am still about 30 minutes behind my flight plan.

I see the shadow of clouds on the hills that lay between Sweetwater and Hilton Ranch. I calculate the distance, 25 miles, and I have enough altitude to reach them. As soon as I begin the crossing, a terrible thought comes to mind — did I start the barograph? I can't place myself in the act of starting the barograph. The barograph is just behind my head and I cannot turn my neck enough to check it. I unfasten the seatbelts, the parachute straps, and with great effort position myself in such a way that I can look back to my left. Wrong, the window of the barograph is on the other side. Another lengthy effort to turn to the right. As soon as I can see the barograph, I see a well-defined trace happily going up and down. What a relief!

When I reach the hills and the clouds near Hilton Ranch, I find good lift to 17,000 feet. It looks like a good day. The clouds are decidedly to the east of Mono Lake. I cross the desert, and reach the White Mountains at 12,000. There are no clouds on top of the Whites, but rather a few miles to the east of them — the first time I have seen this. East of Boundary Peak, I near 18,000, with the clouds another 500 feet above that. So today the altitude gain can be done. I arrive a couple of miles east of the radio towers on the Whites. South of here I can see clouds above the Inyo Mountains and also to the east, while

some clouds are directly on the way to Death Valley. I cannot see far as the haze limits the visibility to only thirty miles. This too, is an unusual feature around here. Decision time: shall I follow the ridgeline of the Inyo Mountains, not as good as usual today, or shall I take a direct route to Death Valley, today much better than usual? The advantage of going direct is that I can check the conditions for a possible return along the same course. Also, after a few miles I will be in position to begin the long glide towards my designated low point. The advantage of following the ridgeline is its usual strength, which today is in doubt. Also, overdevelopment in the Sierras produces anvil clouds that the wind extends toward the Inyos.

Now at 17,000 feet and 100 miles to go, I decide to leave the security of the nearby mountains to my right and go straight in the direction of Death Valley. With a sense of "OK boys, I am going in", I point southeast towards the clouds a few miles ahead, over rugged, desolate, unknown territory toward an invisible destination. From now on I am really in it, I will either come back or land at the Death Valley airport. All the study, all the preparation, all the fantasizing of these past four years becomes present reality. I am actually doing it, right now.

I reach the first clouds, they give decent lift, and now know I can count on them coming back. I find it difficult to locate my exact position until I cross the lonely dirt road that leads to Saline Valley. A recent article in *National Geographic* described the isolation of this region. I stop under a cloud above a prominent peak called Tin Mountain. I quit climbing at 16,500, realizing that I only have fifty miles to go. I am too high now, so I set the MacCready ring at 5 knots and speed up. I'm going to have a thirty minute glide. I try to see my destination, but the haze does not allow more than twenty miles visibility. I can clearly see the mountain to the south of Stovepipe Wells airport, and I see the road to Death Valley to my left. I also look at the overdevelopment to my right. The cirrus from the thunderstorms in the Sierra have reached the Inyo Mountains which now are all in shade, with small weak cumulus still forming on the ridge. I am waiting to cross the road that goes to Stovepipe Wells, which marks twenty-one miles to my destination. Now I am above the road, now I have passed it ... then all at once I see Death Valley airport, the village at Furnace Creek to the left, the dry lake in front, and "my" ridge to the back. It was as I had imagined it, only harsh, and unfriendly.

Below 10,000 feet the air is warm, and passing 8000 it becomes hot, drying my forehead and face. I decide to close the air vent and from now on will keep it closed. I reach the airport at 6000 and, after passing it and making sure to get in the Observation Zone, I shoot a picture of it. Just past the airport, I find lift! The first lift in the whole glide, and certainly very good news. If I do not find lift where I am going, I may have a last hope before

landing. I pass through the lift and after another couple of miles I shoot another photo, just to be really sure. I did not come all the way here to have the flight invalidated by a poor photo. Still moving at a good speed, I head toward the valley to the east of "my" ridge, pass over Zabriskie Point, do not find any sign of atmospheric movement and cross the ridge. Over the ridge, no lift, no sink. No good. I locate the hill that I marked as being six miles from the airport. If I find myself at 1500 there, I have to leave and go to the airport. I see clearly the loop road that leads to the Artist's Palette, it looks recently paved because the asphalt is dark black.

I go southeast beyond the ridge for a mile, but the air is dead. Bad. I cross the ridge back toward the airport. I am over Artist's Palette now, and the various colours of those rocks are really amazing when seen from above. But I do not feel much moved by the artistry — a dark area with lift producing capabilities would look much more interesting to me at this time. Then, towards the north end of the black coloured road, I find lift. Lift! It's wide enough to circle in, but I'm still high, and the ground from where the lift comes appears elevated, almost 1000 feet. Not much margin if I have to be there at 1500. Feeling much better, although still cautious, I go back to gliding over the relief in front of the ridge for a couple of miles.

I don't find anything there, so I go back towards the centre of the valley, passing even farther away from the ridge, where the relief area begins. I know that the ground beneath me is at sea level, altitude 0 feet. And there is lift here, too! I go straight ahead and I am in lift! This is much better, I am much higher above the ground. The lift continues for over a mile, but I am still above my diving altitude of 2500. I turn and go back for about three miles, then approach again.

I arrive at the intersection of Artist's Palette road at the desired altitude of 2500 and at a speed of 60 knots. Ready to go — go; point down, watch the speed increase rapidly, keep it at 125 knots. At the end of the dive I am at 1600 and continue to go down. All of a sudden I feel low, the ground beneath is close and those rocks that before appeared flattened by the altitude now look tall and impressive. Keep 125, altimeter unwinding to 1500 and lower, I have to resist for 30 seconds. I count, then wait another 10 seconds. I am beyond the area of lift that I had explored before, but the amazing thing is, the netto of the variometer tells me that I am still in lift. Pull up; finished. I've done it.

A quick turn to the left, and it is true, I am in lift, 2-3 knots. I circle tight, I won't move from here while there is lift. Oh, no, I won't move. The lift is variable, every weakness of it drops me into sad mode, every strengthening makes me immediately adjust the circle in that direction. But it continues, and I think if I can get high enough

I will move to the elevated area where I found lift before. There is also lift upwind of here, I just passed through it. At 2500 the lift suddenly vanishes and I abandon the place to go over to the elevated area. Let's see what happens now. I reach it and the lift is still there. Better lift, 3-4 knots. It seems I can make it. I really need to go up, every 100 feet gained enlarges my next search area. The tension is lessened, I now have time to feel the heat. I've been in a closed cockpit for over 20 minutes in scorching temperatures. I will learn later that the heat was 120°. Very little perspiration though, the air is too dry. I continue to drink myself as the books say it should be done.

I am going up securely and when I am higher the lift goes to 4-5 knots. At 8000 I lose the lift, but I regain it by moving northerly, a little downwind. I reach 12,000 with a tremendous sense of liberation, the air is breathable now. Time to reopen the vent. I got here after 35 minutes of climb, not bad at all, and now I'm only 15 minutes late on the schedule. But I am not out of trouble yet. The cirrus coming from the overdevelopment in the Sierras has completely blackened the Inyo Mountains and are very close. Five miles to the west the ground is under its shadow. I have the choice to go north along the east side of the valley, which is completely in the sun with no clouds, or to go west toward sparse small cumulus that still form under the overcast.

I had already almost decided that if I was high enough to reach those cumulus, I would go to them. So I do, and reach 15,000 under them, and again I have the choice to go west to the Inyo Mountains, where there still exists weak cumulus under a very dark overcast, or to go straight north. I decide to go north because I have more choices there and slowly reach the vicinity of Tin Mountain, now in the shade, and climb slowly back to almost 13,000. From here I have thirty miles to go to the pass which will get me back into the Owens Valley close to Bishop. The pass is at about 7500 and I should be able to reach it, and hopefully I can also find some lift on the way.

After starting my glide, I see another cumulus, pretty high to my right and back, but it is about five miles away. I think that I may not reach that cloud in time and anyway, I should get through the pass with the altitude I have. So I proceed slowly toward the pass, which appears more and more well-defined. I see that I can make it, although not by much. The air is somewhat still and the MacCready ring is set at zero now. When I am about five miles from it, I find sink. It's 2-3 knots, but is steady and I see my altitude margin decrease. I cannot do anything else but go straight, and in another mile or so I am barely higher than the pass. It looks like a downwash from the air that crosses the pass. I fly toward a prominent hill in hope of finding some sort of ridge lift. I arrive there about 150 feet above the hill, which has a very steep slope in the approximate direction of the pass. The hill rises about 1000 feet above

a narrow valley. I do a circle in some turbulent lift, then I go toward the slope, looking for ridge lift but find sink instead. I hold on, thinking of a negative gust, but the sink increases and I am immediately lower than the top.

I fly close to the slope but the sink continues, I can visually see my descent against the terrain. I lose altitude so relentlessly that I am forced to examine the narrow valley floor in case I have to land here. The valley is flat with shrubs everywhere but it is absurd to consider landing at 8000 feet. I continue to the end of the hill and turn around it. The wind comes from there and the sink diminishes somewhat but clearly I cannot go back up anymore. On this side of the hill the ground is wider and flat, I am only 500 feet above it and head downhill. Now I am in a gently sloping flat valley and I have to pass around small hills to get away. From there I enter an other flat area surrounded by higher ground. I have to search rapidly for the exit, and I am still low with 2 to 3 knots sink. Turning another hill, I am still in a similar situation, low and looking for the way out. The relentless sink is unnerving, the low altitude is worrying and the hills are oppressive. The flat terrain is all covered with shrubs, the hills are rocky, no trace of human presence.

At one point I find lift against a small hill and I do two turns. I look around but have to run away when the lift becomes sink again. I am in another gently sloping valley, wider than the others, with a big hill blocking the lower portion. Where shall I exit, to the left or to the right of the hill? If I am wrong I may not make it. I have three seconds to decide. I go to the left side; it is closer and I can see a narrow canyon cutting through.

Now I really do not like it. I am going toward the canyon, without seeing the end of it because it does a bend to the right. I am 300 feet above the ground and the terrain does not slope enough, I am losing altitude. I examine the possibility of turning upwind and landing, but with all this brush the consequences would be prohibitive. I keep the possibility in the back of my mind. I'll go through the canyon, it looks like I can make it, but I need speed. I do not want to be caught near the ground at low speed. I push down, my 65 knots become 85, and I get down to 150 feet. Now I am committed, the sides of the canyon have a slope of 45 degrees, they are rocky and rusty. In the middle of the canyon there is a big rock that blocks it, rising 40 feet from the gorge. I aim directly toward it, to a point 100 feet above it. Surprisingly the sink has stopped; evidently I am so close to the ground that the air cannot go any lower. The ride becomes smooth, as I am channelled between the mountain walls. The cut is about 600 feet long, then it turns to the right but I have enough speed to surmount the left side and get into the open.

And here, finally, I am out of it! I am in a large valley with a good slope, I am not trapped any more. I go down-

hill, away from the place, still shaken. I see the bottom of the valley, the map says it is Eureka Valley. The sink diminishes when I have some altitude above the terrain. What can I do now? The closest strip is Dyer, 33 miles away, altitude 4899 feet. I have 6500 and cannot reach it. First of all, find a landable place, then go to the other side of the valley; if there is sink here there should be lift there. It is completely overcast but in the mountains in front of me there are a couple of weak cumulus. I keep looking at an area which looks like a small dry lake, the only place I see where I may be able to land.

When I am in the middle of the valley, just above the road, I find some lift. I have 4500 now, the valley floor is at 3500. I drop all the water. It is still Death Valley Road, intersected here by other two dirt roads. I look hard to see if I can land on the roads. I am afraid of hidden fence lines, and although I cannot see any, I still do not trust the roads. The place is very desolate, with no trace of human presence. (I once talked with a ranger and he told me that sometimes no cars pass here during the whole day.) The lift improves, I get slowly to 5000, then 6000, and then to a very welcome 7000, drifting in a north-northeast direction. This takes me closer to the slope, and when the lift weakens I head downwind toward the mountain, finding some more lift. I find that this is called the Last Chance Range. Well, it is for me. Three to four knots take me above the mountain to more than 9000, and from here it is possible to reach the strip at Dyer, which now is only 25 miles away. I feel much better.

The weak cu disappeared while I was climbing, but still I try to backtrack to the higher peaks of the mountain. I gain another 500 feet. From here I can cross north to another range that lies perpendicular to the wind. Here I reach 10,000 and now I am almost sure to have Dyer made, 21 miles away. I am saved. I am saved. No more thoughts of terrible landings, of searching for a radio contact, waiting for a vehicle, walking in this desolation ... to where? No more excruciating two day retrieves from Truckee. I am really relieved. I am totally happy just to be able to reach an airstrip. After 45 minutes of steady sink and another 45 of slow climb, I was disintegrating with the tension and worry. But now the relief is total, and I realize how tense I was until the last minutes of ascent.

To the northeast there is very dark cloud cover, a thunderstorm with frequent lightning has been going on for the last half hour. It is almost 7 o'clock and I feel isolated in these deserted mountains. The radio has been silent for the last two hours. I'm probably the only glider still flying. I will try to use this thunderhead: "To get to the lift, you have to pass through the rain," said a knowledgeable friend.

So I direct myself toward the nearest dark clouds, a move which takes me above a mining site and a few buildings,

the first signs of human presence in a long time. After two or three miles, finding sink, I am again in pain and begin to suffer, but then I find 3-4 knots. I stop for a few minutes then move again toward the storm, and after a mile I find very strong lift! The powerful surge take me up, I circle in it gratefully, tightly at first, but then find that the area of lift is very large. Thunderstorm lift, magical, immense. The averager shows 8 knots, then 9, then 10 and stays there pegged. I take it all greedily, after such a long struggle, after so much painful travelling in uncertain weak lift. In less than six minutes I am at 16,000, finally high, finally out of prison.

I can reach the Whites from here! I see them in front of me, lower than me, with the gap that opens the way to Bishop down there at less than 8000. Only thirty miles, that's nothing with this altitude. With a light heart I direct my glider toward the mountains. I have to pass through some light showers, dodge intermediate clouds at my height, fight some sink and with the wings still wet I reach the ridge a few miles north of the radio towers on the Whites at 11,500. What a relief, I can land in Bishop now, take a retrieve tomorrow and all this will be behind me. The flight did not go as I expected, but I demonstrated to myself that it is possible to make the flight and I can try another day.

Barely believing my luck, I regroup in a thermal on the sunny side of the mountains. The overdevelopment in the Sierras has disappeared, the Bishop valley is clear, and the cloud cover begins from the Whites now. I stay in the thermal until it weakens and it takes me to almost 17,000. Actually the clouds are about 500 feet higher, but the lift peters out — no wonder at 7:40 in the evening. I am tired after more than eight hours and pretty cold now. A strong feeling to give up and descend comes over me, a sense of general dissatisfaction and uneasiness. I don't like being here, I want to go away, I do not feel well. But this is not characteristic of me, I'm resilient, I love to fly, is there something wrong? I look inside the cockpit, everything looks OK. Then I see the oxygen dial! ... the regulator is set at 12,000, I haven't touched it for the last two hours! I reset it to 18,000 feet and feel the difference right away. In a minute I am again awake and full of determination.

It's late. Down there at the Bishop airport I will be alone, so I can spend another few minutes here, it won't change anything. I would like to test the possibilities for the next time, and because the clouds look higher farther north on the higher peaks, I direct myself in that direction. Bouncing along in areas of semi-lift I reach close to Boundary Peak, where the clouds end. The clouds here look really higher, and I stop to see if one can actually still get 18,000 feet at this time of day.

It is past eight o'clock, and I find weak lift up to 17,700. I cannot go any higher, so I move a bit and find some more

lift, 17,800 — good. Can I make another 200? Can I? Try harder, the lift is weak, but there it comes, 17,900, a hundred feet more, what an irony, don't tell me that I can't do it because of 100 feet. Stay here, fight, try to go up. It does not want to take me up. It is now or never. Why don't you give me another 100? All of a sudden a good turn gets me to 17,950, another 50 and I am all right, I can say I made it even without the last 50 feet. But no, another weak push, I am there! 18,000 feet, a full 18,000! I made it!

Do I have the time to make it to Bridgeport? The time, the time. Let me go in that direction first, then I'll look at the time. As I move towards Bridgeport I find lift again, much better than the one I had to struggle in to reach my altitude. Again to 18,000 and I have to leave the calculations, watch the altimeter and increase speed to not go over. I can't believe that. The lift continues for a mile or so then I am in quiet, steady air.

It's 8:05. Bridgeport is 58 miles away. At 60 mph it will take one hour. At 120 mph will take half an hour. 120 mph is about 100 knots. Let me set the computer. I set the computer so that at Bridgeport I have 2000 agl. I will go faster when I get closer. Will there be enough light? The sun is low, but I do not think I will have problems because of that. Will I be legal? 30 minutes after sunset, but when is sunset?

So straight I go in a still atmosphere, passing over the well known unlandable desert, not frightening from this altitude. I continue to make reference to the ground, do calculations, and rethink the whole flight. How right I was, how wrong I was. How lucky, how unlucky. I feel cold, but I do not mind. I could reach for the sweater in the back. But I know that I am destined to the warmth of the day's end. When I am approaching Mono Lake, the sun disappears behind the peaks of the Sierra. So, this is sunset. But, it is sunset for me here, Bridgeport has been in the shadow by quite some time. I've made it. But I would really like to be legal, how can I talk about my flight otherwise. I change the finish altitude in the computer to 1500 agl, then 1000.

When I arrive at Bridgeport, several lights in town are on, but there is plenty of natural light. I make my call on the radio and the runway lights turn on! "Thank you", I think. (I will learn later that nobody is there, the lights were turned on by my radio call.) I see the arrow on the runway and I land in the direction of the lake. 8:47 pm, nine hours and 20 minutes flying time. Pushing the glider toward the parking area my solitude continues; nobody is around but I do not feel lonely, I am talking to myself and to everybody.

I made it, I made it. I was right, it was possible to do it. It was possible to make it. I made it. I made it. ✱

the Provincials

a good try but another missed trophy-giving

Tony Burton

LAST WINTER'S planning resulted in the decision to hold the provincial contest alternately at Cu Nim and ESC. This year, it was Chipman's first turn at bat. There was a time when it was *de rigueur* for pilots to head for Innisfail on the Victoria Day weekend for the May Day Meet, but two factors seem to have mitigated the urge. First, the two large clubs are now smaller with fewer keen competition pilots so there is a tendency to stay home and work hard to keep club operations going; and second, global warming has recently given us late winters and wet springs with the first long weekend having iffy weather for pilots who have had little opportunity to get cross-country ready. Therefore it was thought that there would be a better chance for a successful contest if it was held at a club locale in mid-summer.

But even mid-summer this year was doomed for Chipman when almost continuous rains around Edmonton in June turned the countryside into mud and very few pilots were ready to fly. With only a few days to go, the contest was cancelled and pushed back to the Labour Day weekend. This time Ursula asked ESC's CFI, Jack Towers (a reverend by profession) if he could provide any guarantee on the weather, but he responded, "Sorry, I'm in sales, not management."

I had arrived a day early with the contest gear and paperwork. The day (and the weekend) had some promise, but when I was rigged and almost ready to push out, I discovered that *Echo Echo's* retractable tow hook was completely jammed. I'm glad I found that out before any serious flying was to be performed. The hook took an arm with two elbows, three hands and two hours to line the bits up to get a bolt back in place!

Nine pilots registered on Saturday 30 August, including Mike Cook who came all the way from Kimberley, BC. Mike Glatiotis roared in with *Jolly Miller* just before grid time and hustled to get ready.

Todd Benko did a sounding in the Scout earlier and further fortified with some synoptic charts, he promised us good soaring conditions with instability possibly giving some overdevelopment and spreadout in areas. The difficulty would be 25 knot northwesterly winds with a cloudbase of only 4000 feet agl.

A 2-1/2 hour task was called. We all launched under a sky rapidly filling with cu and the gate opened shortly before 2 pm. The task time turned out to be just right as the day was going soft at 4:30. At the start, the strong winds and instability were causing good streeting, and the "low" cloudbase was keeping the cu fairly close together. The lift was distinctly stronger as one neared cloudbase so it would pay to stay high.

It turned out that the choice of direction to the first turnpoint was very significant in the consequent performance of the pilots. Some chose to battle upwind with the hope of an easy glide home. This worked well for Bruce Friesen in *Scarlet Lady* who got to Thorhild as his most northwesterly point. But there was a fairly dead area along the way which shot down Mike Glatiotis between Bruderheim and Redwater near the North Saskatchewan River, and Mike Freeland landed close to Thorhild with his new SZD-59. For Mike it was his very first outlanding *and* his Silver distance flight, so that was a worthy accomplishment for a brand new cross-country pilot. Mike Cook, Rick Dawe, and Al Hoar all chose a range of local turnpoints, but Al landed out only a handful of kilometres east of Chipman after being stuck in a very weak thermal for over a half-hour at the end of the day on the way back upwind from Mundare.

Buzz and I had the same idea — to head downwind as far as we dare and count on continued streeting and stronger conditions as the day progressed to get us back. The clouds looked good to the southeast down highways 15 and 16 and off I went. There was not too much sink between the big cu and reliable solid 5+

	<i>name</i>	<i>glider</i>	<i>hcp</i>	<i>dist</i> <i>km</i>	<i>speed</i> <i>kph</i>	<i>pts</i>
1	Tony Burton	RS-15	EE	1.05	201.7	80.7 1000
2	Bruce Friesen	Std Austria	SL	1.24	137.0	54.8 707
3	Buzz Burwash	ASW-20FP	AB	0.94	186.3	74.5 p643
4	Mike Cook	K-5	Z1	0.98	144.5	58.1 512
5	Al Hoar	Std Cirrus	4E	1.00	110.8	0.0 p222
6	Rick Dawe	Std Jantar	JJ	1.00	88.2	38.9 216
7	Mike Freeland	SZD-59	KM	1.00	57.9	0.0 142
8	Mike Glatiotis	Std Cirrus	JM	1.00	30.0	0.0 74
9	Hugh McColeman	Libelle	QL	1.03	0.0	0.0 0

knot thermals if you waited for them. Vegreville, 45 kilometres out, came up quickly so I drifted over town searching for the huge Ukrainian Easter Egg turnpoint which was this town's claim to fame. I could not find it for the life of me (Al had the same problem, and got a 50 point photo penalty for taking a picture of where he thought it was and not quite getting it in the frame), so I was committed to keep going downwind towards the next turnpoint down the highway at Innisfree, 82 kilometres out.

On the way I kept a close look on the progression of the cloudstreet development back towards home, and just short of Innisfree I saw Buzz pass below me heading west. I got to Innisfree in only forty minutes. On turning around and running at cloudbase I could see the very strong edge of a nearly continuous cloud shadow heading almost west towards the large Beaverhill Lake south of Chipman. It was a good feeling to be able to push hard into wind and make decent progress without having to turn except only in the best lift to pick up a 1000 feet a time. I found Buzz once again and circled with him southeast of Vegreville.

The free ride stopped 15 kilometres south of Mundare (24 kilometres from Chipman). It looked too blue to go southwest to Tofield and up the west side of Beaverhill to Chipman, so I headed for the Mundare water tower and took a picture with one hour left to fly. The only option remaining was to go northwards to Andrew or Willingdon, each about 30 kilometres away. I sort of split the difference, and was doing a considerable amount of zig-zagging to go to the best looking cu of the moment, and by the time I was ten kilometres south of Andrew it was in a hole but Willingdon was now 15 east with a couple of good clouds on the way so I turned and headed over. Once there it was 35 kilometres back to Chipman. It took a couple more climbs to have a final glide in the strong crosswind while listening to Andrew Jackson giving detailed and continuous instructions to Mike Cook on how to find his way back from Andrew! (If you haven't flown around there, Chipman is *very* difficult to see from the northeast.) I finished about five minutes after the task time at almost the same moment as Buzz who had chosen the Tofield return route. Buzz did a worm-burner finish to incur the wrath of Temporary Interim Contest Director Al Sunley, and had his score docked a hundred points for the sin.

The congregation in the clubhouse was glad to see one day in the bag, and new Cu Nim visitors to ESC were impressed with the facilities. We were happily telling retrieve stories and other lies later in the evening when someone switched on the TV only to be presented with the news of the car crash which killed Princess Diana — that sobered us all very quickly.

That night a trough moved through and it rained a lot until about 7 am. The high for Sunday was only 16°C and the sky didn't clear until after 2 although the sunshine had been visible in the north since 11 am. The day was scrubbed at the pilots meeting and Todd promised a great soaring day for Monday. A couple of carloads of sightseers headed off to Vegreville to see if there really was an egg on the east side of town, and others scattered elsewhere.

When the sun did appear, flying got going again at 3 with club rides, and various new towpilots were getting checked out in the Pawnees. Andrew took Mike Cook up in the Puchacz to show him what upside-down looked like, Mike Glatiotis had a launch under a late cloudstreet and got to see the countryside a bit further afield than yesterday, and Dave Puckrin was also aerobating his Skybolt homebuilt. All of this took place under the very critical gaze of a deckfull of kibitzers who were "scoring" everything with pretty jaundiced eyes and verbal scorecards. Later, the club fired up the BBQ and a very good steak dinner was layed on. Al Hoar was busy using up his film on photos of the clubhouse as future further encouragement to Cu Nim. After dinner, more entertainment was provided when Dave had a flight in his *Aircycle* ultralight (you are not in it — you are on it) and wound up bending the gear in a rough patch on landing. The resulting temporary repair was an innovative masterpiece involving a lot of rope, an immovable object (the hangar), and the use of the airfield quad as a frame-straightener!

Monday morning arrived with calm and a little ground fog, but by the time breakfast was over the wind had picked up from the southeast. Todd's sounding said the good soaring forecast was holding, but knowledgeable ESC pilots said a southeast wind was bad news for convection — usually due to the influence of Beaverhill Lake. By noon the wind was out of 160° and the sock was stiff. Club flights were not getting above release.

A sniffer was launched in desperation at 2:30 and although he could stay airborne, the thermals were all ripped apart and barely useable. The grid launched just because everyone was strapped in but it was a doomed effort and most pilots were derigging in fairly short order.

It was disappointing, and I was disappointed, that we have now had no official contest for the second year. However, I promised everyone that Cu Nim is guaranteeing great soaring for the Provincials there in 1998, and I'm not even a man of the cloth, just ever-hopeful. In a short wind-up presentation in the clubhouse, Mike Freeland was awarded a little aeronautical prize for his entry into the wide and wonderful world of cross-country soaring. ❁

A letter from Scotland

from Cu Nim member Rod Crutcher, who has moved to Dundee for a year on a medical sabbatical.

Dear Tony and Ursula,

FIRST OF ALL, thank you for the lovely personalized Cowley “Thank You” signed by so many pilots who were there. It was a real treat to receive. The 25th Cowley camp sounded wonderful. Yes, I did miss it although we have had many adventures of different sorts. I look forward to reading the story in *ASCent*.

I have joined up with the Scottish Gliding Union, a great club based at Portmoak, about 45 minutes south-east of Dundee. I’ll send you more details by and by when I put together some sort of story, but I’ll share a few snippets now. It is the largest club in Scotland (about 250 members) and *very* well organized. They have a good sized fleet which includes two ASK-21s, 2 Juniors, a K8 and a K13 and some sort of motorglider that can be used for training. They have a Pawnee for aerotow, but it is used infrequently — almost all their tows are winch. They have a powerful twin drum winch set-up (180 hp diesel) which is very efficient. There are several ridges just near the field, so as long as there is a wee bit of wind, which there usually is, it is usually possible to stay afloat. They have two club EW Barographs and a club GPS ... with all the computer downloading hardware, and software and turnpoint datasets, etc. — lots of “toys for boys”!

I’ve had two flying days with the club thus far. Day one was mainly a winch and site familiarization day. I was treated well — one of their keener cross-country pilots recognized the enthusiasm I have for the sport and decided to give me an in-depth and personalized orientation. Seven dual flights later, I was set free for my first solo. I expected to be impressed with the winch launch — it was steeper than I had imagined — and we practised winch emergency routines from every conceivable height. I was most impressed with the rapid acceleration — literally being slung into the sky in a matter of seconds! The g-forces were unexpected and something that is not experienced on aerotow. The shortest flight was about 20 seconds(!) and the longest (a ridge orientation) 34 minutes. An incredible day.

The field elevation at Portmoak is about 360 feet asl. The air is noticeably thick and circuits (even at altitudes which would be marginal back home) have a greater degree of comfort with air of greater density.

I spent the second day exploring their local ridge and getting used to the countryside. The thermals were weak, but the ridge lift predictable. There is often wave at this site, particularly in the spring and fall. High altitude flights and cross-country in the wave are all possible.

My work schedule here is very flexible and I expect to be able to readily go to the field on the days that look particularly good. They fly throughout the year here every day, putting in around 8-9000 flights per year.

An ASH-25 is at Portmoak on a scheduled basis through the year; [the 26m supership] is shared by all the Scottish clubs. This high-end machine has been well utilized — I’ll find out more about how they have structured the arrangement. Clubs do not seem to have had the problems we did with the ASC’s Grob-103. I hope to get a flight or two in this bird at a later date.

The weather over here, including the soaring weather, is not the greatest. “Indeterminate” is the word that is sometimes used which seems to mean a little bit of everything. The ground is often damp, and there are many varieties of cloud and mist (and the Scottish “Haar”, a mist which comes in off the North Sea with easterly winds). Scottish thermals tend to be weak and transient, so cross-country at the usual cross-country altitudes is a challenge. But, of course, challenge is what our sport is all about! I hope to get involved in some sort of cross-country — likely in the club Juniors — in a bit. I have fantasies of a high and fast wave cross-country flight! We’ll see.

The countryside here is very beautiful. Quite green, and hilly. The highlands are very near and offer many challenging soaring possibilities if one tires of whisky tasting! And, yes Tony, you are right — all the best water here has a head on it!

... I’ll write again in a wee while. Please give my greetings to all the crew! If any are coming over this way I’ll be glad to show them around. More anon.

“Cheerio the now”,

Rod

Club News

Central Alberta Soaring Club

The spring started slowly due to the weather conditions, but started rolling in late June. With Todd Benko as our CFI, we began to look towards his experience to begin work on Bronze badges and the beginnings of a cross-country team. Bold steps for some of us, but it was time for our club to explore the greater challenges and personal rewards this sport offers. Although no record breaking flights were flown, several pilots experienced flights of longer than thirty minutes and some small triangles of ten to fifteen kilometres around the field were flown. We also had two landouts with no difficulties in aircraft recovery. Small but important steps for our club.

The highlight for Brian Davies had to be the flying he did with Todd at Cowley during the summer camp. Club records were broken there with a 2.5 hours flight — and it was also the first time our equipment, the Bergfalke, was in Cowley to participate. In future years, I am sure the turn-out from our club will be greater as we venture more towards the sport of soaring. The highlight for me was the SAC Western Instructors course in Chipman. Some great flying, excellent instruction from Terry Southwood, and great hangar flying sessions with the other candidates. Now that the summer holidays are over, the participation at our field has increased, and if the weather will hold a little longer, we still have the opportunity for some great flying.

John Mulder

Cu Nim Gliding Club

Three working Blaniks and many students have made this a good year at Cu Nim. Many days in May and June saw all of them in the air, often for the one hour limit. I remember sitting on the ground with the tow-pilot wondering what to do next — no gliders on the ground and none in sight — that's how it should be! We have 21 students, up from six last year, with five continuing from '96. Peter Vesely, Larry Mashowski, and Ken Melax soloed. Candace Heath soloed with Cu Nim and now has many Jantar flights. Candace was an Air Cadet instructor and only had to learn to soar — now she is up when others are having trouble. Peter is almost licenced and Ken got his licence in mid September. Membership is 63, up one from last year.

Three pilots from Cu Nim attended the ASC provincial contest at ESC: Tony Burton, Mike Glatiotis, and for the first time, Al Hoar. Saturday was a difficult day

with a strong wind and 4000 foot cloudbase. Considering the conditions, the distances flown were surprising. Terry Southwood has been keeping track of provincial cross-country activity with his Soaring Ladder. (*See the contest and Ladder results elsewhere in this issue*).

This was the first time I had been at Chipman and was very impressed by the clubhouse. This facility made it very easy for the great people at ESC to host a steak dinner for all on Sunday evening. The social aspect of soaring is greatly enhanced by this clubhouse (thinly disguised sales pitch!).

Fences and cattle on the runway have been an issue at the club this year. We are now getting a sturdy fence built around the campground, and our share of the project is only \$758 — the other half of the materials cost is being picked up by Tommy Glass, our neighbour to the north, in exchange for his use of our water system, and the labour (at \$880) is being done by Kirk Thompson for the extra grazing rights he has had this year. All private owners will have to move their trailers within the campground fence if they are not in the hangar or backyards for the winter. The fence will solve the worries of both pilots and rancher on damage during the off season when cattle are on the airfield, and Kirk Thompson has a clear understanding that the cattle will be off the airfield next spring according to the terms of the lease.

Al Hoar

Grande Prairie Soaring Society

Our 1997 season got off to a rather slow start, mainly because of a wet spring. It wasn't until 10 May that we were able to use the field and test fly our new (old) Blanik. Before we went to Cowley we had thirteen flying days at Beaverlodge, with two new students soloing and one getting his Glider Pilot licence.

Beginning this season, we are winch launching strictly with radio signals; no more wing or light signals. Also, on launch itself, there is no need for wing or tail waggle to get the correct speed, since there is direct voice communication between the pilot and winch operator. To make this radio operation practical, we installed a brand new radio in the Blanik and installed a push-to-talk switch on both sticks. With a lightweight headset, the pilot's hands are free except for the right thumb for the switch. The winch operator also wears a headset, and an aircraft radio is installed at the winch with a push-to-talk switch on the dash. With these radios we have a much safer and more efficient operation.

Three of our club members bought a Tern which was sitting rather lonesomely at the Black Diamond field. After shaking the dust off and getting rid of the cob-

webs, we managed to log 56 flights so far, with several two and more hour flights. The high point of our season was the 25th Cowley summer camp. Four of our club members attended and all had great soaring flights. I think that all soaring pilots owe a great deal of gratitude to the pioneers who made this soaring site possible. Thanks are also due to the volunteers who keep it going and improving it year after year. I, for one, intend on going back every year as long as the good Lord lets me.

Since this was also the 60th anniversary for me from the time I started glider flying, I wanted to do something special. Well, I didn't break any records, but I logged over twenty hours with one beautiful flight along the spine of the Livingstone Range with the Tern. I know for some pilots this is old hat, but for me it was the highlight of this year's camp.

Back in Beaverlodge again, we tried to keep operations going between soggy sky and soggy runway. We managed to get one more student to licence stage. Ken Death got his Glider Pilot licence, but unfortunately for our club, he moved away, and we lost a very active and dedicated club member. On 16 August the club members of the local RAA chapter paid us a visit at the airfield and a number of power pilots experienced the thrill of a winch launch and motorless flight. As of 25 September, we have had 31 flying days, including Cowley, and 228 winch launches. A new trailer for our K8 is under construction, and hopefully we can resume cross country flying in the Peace Country next season.

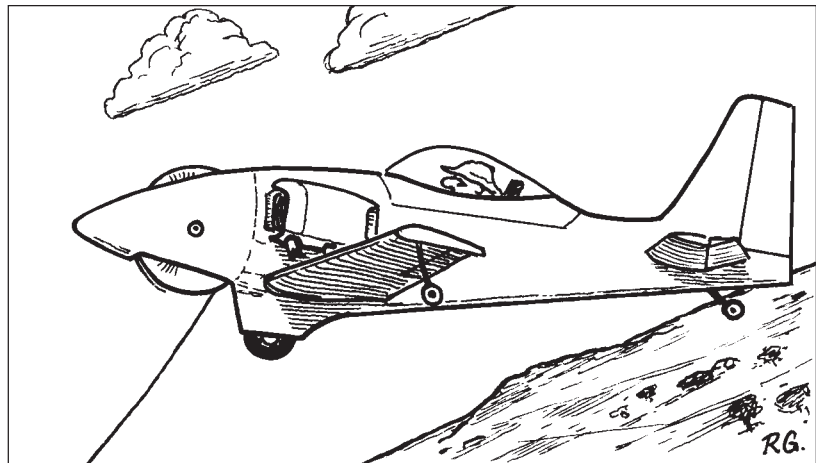
Walter Mueller

Edmonton Soaring Club

ESC club news and our soaring activity is not exactly something we can brag about, however we can blame 90% of it on the very disappointing weather we have had this year. Heavy wet snow early in the season prevented us from flying for a week or two, a lot of rain in June made the runway almost too soft to use and one time even the parking lot was flooded. In the whole of September we had only three flying days and 57 flights! Alas. Next year will be better — how could it get worse.

Here are some of our club stats as of 30 September:

Membership	58	(up 5 from 1996)
Students	6	(3 last year)
Intro flights	93	
Total flights	704	



Walter turned to motorgliding after many years of winch launching.

from Australian Gliding

We did host two major events this year, the western SAC instructors course and the provincial soaring contest, both of which are reported elsewhere in *ASCent*.

The last new member to join the club is a retired RCMP officer. He doesn't know it yet but he is going to be in charge of security and discipline — there may be order in this club yet!

Dick deJong

Cold Lake Soaring Club

We're fat, quiet and happy, recovering from the very busy 1996 when we hosted the Nationals. Overall, we have been enjoying the much-improved soaring season, mostly with local soaring flights and with heavy concentration on student training (Danie LaChance went solo not too long ago). We conducted a lot of fam flights at two events: the Maple Flag open house in May, and a Cold Lake fly-in breakfast in June.

We purchased a replacement 1-26 and are getting it ready for the 1998 season. The 1-26 which was blown over last year is gradually being repaired — does anybody out there know where we can find a right wing? In other news, the club's 9-ton truck was stolen and legal proceedings are underway; steady progress is being made towards a new hangar (possible construction in the spring); and Jerry Vesely built us a first class trailer for the Grob 103 — fine workmanship!

We sent some pilots to the Cowley summer camp and many are looking forward to the fall camp.

Finally, there is a wrap-up BBQ coming up, and then we are "almost" waiting for the traditional New Year's Day flying.

Randy Blackwell

SAC Instructors Course

John Mulder, Central Alberta Soaring

I ARRIVED AT CHIPMAN ON Saturday July 12, with hopes of doing a site and aircraft checkout in preparation for the course. The heavy rain that followed me north from Red Deer cancelled any chance of that happening. Fortunately, the weather was good for the rest of the week.

We started on Sunday morning at the Seniors Centre in Chipman with ground school covering the basic laws of instruction, the first lesson and primary effects of controls. We were finished by 4 pm and headed over to the airfield where we could hear a towplane flying. Terry went up in the Puchacz with Chester for his annual site and aircraft check. When they returned, Terry and I went up and completed my site check. The conditions were good and we soared around the area noting the local features and terrain as well as working some of the rust out of my flying skills.

Monday This was the first official flying day for the course. After a briefing on field procedures, we unpacked the hangar and were flying by 10. This was the first opportunity for most of the participants at the full pre-flight briefing, completing the air instruction, and post flight briefing. The first lesson teaches the use of the stick and rudder to control pitch (raise and lower the nose!) and make gentle coordinated turns. It is surprising how much is involved in teaching these basic flying skills in only a few minutes. Everyone had completed the task and we were finished at 17. This was also our first attempt at stacking the hangar in Chipman. We managed to get everything but the spinner of one of the Pawnee's inside the doors. Dinner was at the Country Kitchen in Lamont that evening.

Tuesday The day began with ground school from 9:00-12:00 on stalls and spins, and finished with the flying exercises. The 2-33s were used to work on teaching the second lesson of turns, and Terry flew with the first four candidates in the Puchacz completing the incipient and full spin recovery and the insidious spin entry from a gentle skidding turn. This entry is a real eye-opener if you have never done it before. It simulates a typical skidding turn that a pilot would make when low and slow on final and trying to make the field. All pilots should take a dual flight and have this very dangerous spin entry demonstrated to show the dangers of slow uncoordinated turns onto final. Mike

Freeland was out to fly his SZD-59 and practise his aerobatics. It was a good display of the maneuverability of this aircraft.

Wednesday Again we started with ground school on crosswind takeoffs and landings. It was also the time for the first candidate presentations on subjects from flying in rain to how a variometer was developed and the advantages of a total energy system. In the afternoon we flew the last of the spin training and I had the opportunity to do some soaring with Frank in the 2-33. We flew formation with the other 2-33 flown by Ryszard and Henning. We flew from Chipman west to Lamont and return, for a total of about 25 kilometres. It was the highlight of the course for me!

Thursday The rain started at about 2 am, and fell heavy most of the night. It stopped by 7 and the skies cleared enough to allow the sun through to dry up the field. Ryszard had kindly pitched his tent over a gopher hole which kept the gopher dry. It began to cloud over again so we took some low tows and practised spot landings. Terry was pleased with the well flown circuits and approaches, and the accuracy of the landings was also impressive. Greg Dwyer from Regina took the spot landing competition even beating out Terry, who managed two takeoffs in one flight and wheel landed the 2-33 from the back seat. He had several excuses but we ribbed him all the same. The ground school in the morning covered benign spirals and off-field circuits and landings.

Friday The rain let up around 7 am and the skies began to clear. The morning began with the dreaded final exam. I was told by Terry not to reveal any of the details but it was reasonably thorough. We had lunch in Lamont and returned to the field at 2 pm, pulled out the equipment, and had the opportunity to polish our skills. The Edmonton Soaring Club put on a great BBQ dinner and we did some hangar flying that evening which was completed at the Lamont Hotel.

Saturday The exam results were released and reviewed. It was no surprise that everyone did well after the excellent instruction we had received during the previous days. Terry gave us the final talk on the responsibilities of being an instructor and then helped complete the application paperwork for the instructor candidates. Thanks Terry. ❁

The Alberta Soaring Ladder

Terry Southwood, ASC Sporting chairman

With the cross-country season at a close, we find fifteen pilots who have posted distance on the new Alberta Soaring Ladder. That's less than I would have preferred, but it's not bad for a first run-through.

In the experienced pilot category, Tony Burton leads the way with more than double the points of his nearest competitor. However, what the numbers do not tell is that Tony has a further five flights totalling *another 1086 kilometres* beyond the ladder flights! Mike Glatiotis appears to have the Boomerang trophy wrapped up with his spectacular flight across the Rockies. People like Buzz Burwash, Rod Crutcher and Bruce Friesen continue to embody the spirit of persistence needed in XC flying, but it was really good to see five new pilots on the list. Congratulations to Ken Freeland on his Silver C flight, and bouquets to Al Hoar and Mike Freeland for posting their first contest results. If you have a flight or three you would like added, just drop me a note with a few details. For example, I know that Walter and Phil from Grande Prairie logged a lot of time on their Tern at summer Cowley, but were grinning too much to tell me about it at the time!

At Cu Nim, Tony and Rod each donated their Team Squad honoraria towards a lottery to be drawn at the Christmas party. "Tickets" for the lottery are earned by any badge leg flown by any Cu Nim pilot during the season — from an A badge at solo, on up to Diamonds. A tip of the hat to Tony for a very innovative way to encourage cross-country and badge flying!

<i>Pop Guns</i>	club	glider	# flts	top 5 km	top 5 pts
Tony Burton	C-N	RS-15	10	1780	2648
Buzz Burwash	ESC	ASW-20FP	3	976	1025
Rod Crutcher	C-N	Ventus	2	747	1003
Bruce Friesen	ESC	Std Austria	3	701	998
Mike Glatiotis	C-N	Std Cirrus	4	639	825
Terry Southwood	C-N	ASW-20	3	660	773
Darwin Roberts	C-N	HP-16	2	503	688
Gerald Ince	C-N	Mini Nimbus	3	509	623
Paul Scott	ESC	Pilatus	2	288	351
Rick Dawe	ESC	Std Jantar	1	88	110

<i>New Guns</i>	club	glider	# flts	top 5 km	top 5 pts
Dave McAsey	C-N	Ka6CR	1	168	264
Ken Freeland	ESC	SZD-59	1	168	210
Mike Swendsen	C-N	HP-16	1	121	158
Al Hoar	C-N	Std Cirrus	1	111	138
Mike Freeland	ESC	SZD-59	1	58	72

Two Guns (students)
 Larry Mashowski, Ken Melax, Peter Vesely — A badges

from the president

from page 2

Grants Knowing our grants may not continue forever, how much emphasis should we place on capital build-up and over what time frame?

Expenses What new guidelines should there be for reimbursement of program-related travelling expenses? How should we now budget instructor training, encouragement of competition, safety training, support of club activities and the other program categories spelled out in the yearly development plan?

Revenues How can we increase hard revenues? Should the ASC membership fee remain at a dollar? Should tow ticket prices and Cowley registration fees be changed?

Communication Should *ASCent* still be published in its current form? How often? (At the sacrifice of some quality, this issue is being printed at half the usual cost.)

I'm gratified by the support offered me and the other members of the ASC executive in the aftermath of our shocking loss. Sadly, the closeness and total trust among fellow pilots that have typified ASC relations will never be quite the same for a long time to come. Although no system is proof against determined and unscrupulous people, we are putting into place a financial system which will make large thefts much more difficult while making it practical for ASC to do business in more than one geographic location. There will be two accounts: an easily accessible operating account which will have no more money in it than is needed for day-to-day business, and a capital account with stringent safeguards to be presided over by the president and a financial board appointed by the executive, charged with overseeing ASC's funds and planning capital investments. The rebuilding job won't be easy, and will require a lot of member time and effort. Fortunately, we have many people with the enthusiasm, the talent and the dedication needed to make it happen.

Thanks for your support through this difficult period, and please mark 29 November in your diary for the ASC planning meeting in Edmonton (see box below). ❄️



The most important ASC planning meeting we have ever had – be there

10 am, November 29

Percy Page Centre, Edmonton
11759 Groat Road

LETTERS

The good word from Stew

Linda and I had a wonderful time at our “family reunion” in Cowley! It feels more and more like home on every visit. Thank you for making it feel all the more so. Linda and I were moved by the welcome and are limited by language to express the deep emotions we feel and the special support given during my life changing journey back to better health. Thank you for the opportunity to express myself to the camp. Every day that I was in the hospital and every day of therapy since my discharge was made all the more easier because of that deep support. As I shared with all, I learned two lessons:

- The *technical* message is “always do a positive control check every time you fly your airplane. Have someone hold the control surface while you actuate the appropriate lever or stick.”
- The *philosophical* message is “whenever you survive a mistake, always think it through until you discover



Stewart and Linda Tittle

Tony Burton

the most appropriate cause of the error.” My mistake was three years before my accident. I fixed the technical problem, but never gave a thought to the *cause* to avoid making the error again. It nearly cost me my life.

Our journey home by way of Montana and Idaho to see other family and friends was just the right end to our continuing great adventure. Soaring the Canadian Rockies is an experience without peer!

Stewart Tittle

Thanks from an oldtimer

Dear gliding friends:

On a recent trip to Lethbridge, my son drove me to your field at Cowley, where I had the most wonderful flight to date! My pilot was Karin Michel. It was on the first day of your meet on July 26 and we had a 70 minute flight and reached 12,500 feet.

Unfortunately, due to multiple sclerosis, I am no longer able to fly myself, so you can imagine how great it felt to be airborne again after a few years (I was a member of Bonnechere). Please convey my thanks to Karen for a wonderful flight.

Harold Sprigg
Pembroke, ON

On ladies at the top

Dear Tony and Ursula,

I've received my pictures back from [my] latest Centre Peak hike. Just a historical note — your book talks about [Linda Tittle] being the first woman on the peak in [1992], and I asked my mother about her hike up there. She was in a party of men and women who hiked the peak in 1951. She thinks they weren't even the first women. I certainly felt like an explorer the first time I went up there. I'm really enjoying the book!

I also took you up on the offer of a glider ride and dropped in to the Black Diamond airstrip on the advice of Kurt Edwards. I had to watch the Turner Valley Gas Plant Historic Site staff deliver an evening campfire program last Saturday [9 August], so Dave McIntyre and I went early in the hopes of getting up in the air. The people we met were wonderful (as are most of the soaring crowd it seems) and we spent an enjoyable afternoon in the sunshine until it was time to take to the air. What an experience! As Kurt suggested, I in-



David McIntyre

sisted on “soaring” and was treated to quite a ride. After I landed, I felt I was still flying. Sure puts life into perspective.

Thank you both for your kindness, and thanks to all the clan for allowing us such an incredible experience. I have appreciated sharing your world for a time, and whenever I see a glider fly overhead I will think of all the fantastic people I met because of your interest in a rock from the Frank Slide.

Monica Field
Area Supervisor, Frank Slide

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Dear Ursula:

... I wish to thank you and the Alberta Soaring Council for the opportunity to take part in your recent “Silver” celebration honouring formal use of the Cowley Glider Strip. I’ve vicariously followed glider pilots aerial accomplishments for years, and yet it was happenstance that I, with Monica Field, recently (July 28th) came face-to-face with some of your soaring members as we stood on the summit of Centre Peak. (As you are now aware, it is possible – while not a picnic – to free climb

the peak’s eastern face.) That lofty introduction, your ensuing weekend’s celebration, and my more recent opportunity to sit at the controls (over Black Diamond) have set in motion the creation of a short story – one of fifty-five Rocky Mountain adventure/discovery/reflective stories (with colour pictures) I hope to publish under a single cover.

I’ve just begun work on the “soaring piece”, and will be happy to share it with you upon its completion. In the interim, I again extend my thanks for your discovery of me, a “lost” Cowley soul, and for the wealth of information you’ve supplied, much of it via your wonderfully informative book.

David McIntyre
Blairmore

Starbuck to ridgetop

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And more did come with the final Saturday being one of the stronger soaring days with thermal strengths of eight knots and cloudbases of 13,000 feet. Frits had found wave near the north end of the range with climb rates steady at 4-6 knots and explored the entire area with relative ease. The only drawback was that earlier in the morning prior to launching, Frits had taken the oxygen mask out of the cockpit and was limited to brief visits to 13K.

The wrap-up BBQ and party was well attended and the dedication ceremony prior to dinner was a moving experience. The Cowley site has now been officially proclaimed a National Soaring Site by the Soaring Association of Canada. Situated near the cookshack, a large limestone boulder with a bronze plaque recreates a stone cairn and plaque placed atop Centre Peak by Steve Weinhold several years ago. It will stand as testament to the pioneers spirit that those before us had in developing the entire sport of gliding and mountain soaring.

Sunday morning dawned clear and cool, but for us travelling home, we did not look up. I attended the pilots meeting and heard the weather report of strong conditions starting early in the morning. As the meeting broke and I made my farewells to those I had met and flew with during the week, the first tiny cu could be seen forming over the rocks to the west ... it would be a long drive home.

A dozen hours later I crawled into my truck camper for the night, weary from the day’s struggle through Saskatchewan. Somewhere, in the distance, I was sure I heard a Coyote howl. ❁

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