



NEWSLETTER - April 2009



President's Page:

Hello -- It's me again.

We are off to a wonderful start to this years flying season with an epic XC's from Mark Gardiner (74.6 miles) and Pete Lehmann (45.9). Way to go guys. The longest March flights in Mountaineer history. More details on

the flights is in the Air times and a write ups by Mark and Pete below.

Ben and I are back in action after Ben broke his arm PGing in Mexico in January. The Drs gave him the go ahead for any reasonable activity saying the bone was 50% healed. Ben did not want to have the Dr. to elaborate on what is considered reasonable. Next weekend we are in a river race in WV with our raft then a slalom course with the C1. After that I am off to California for the U.S. Paragliding Nationals.

Hope to see you in the air soon.

L.E. Herrick

Upcoming events:



The Parachute Pack will again be in the Exhibition Building at the Allegany County Fairgrounds. It will be 4/17/09, unless it looks like the weather for that weekend will not be conducive for flying, in which case it will be 4/24/09, regardless of the weather condition. It will be Larry Huffman's call to make, but we'll send out a "go – no go" e-mail on Thursday, 4/16/09. We'll start about 5 PM on whichever day we end up having it.

Memorial Day Flyin

We weren't able to secure a campsite at Seneca Shadows for Memorial Day weekend so there won't be a fly-in over that weekend this year.



MHGA Airtimes – the only edition

2/15/09 – High Pt; The Pats, H&B, and Pete Lehmann went to Cumberland to fly under a cold and cloudy sky. The light wind velocities were ideal for Pat Brooks' Falcon, and it was soarable as hell with decent lift that occasionally got over 500fpm. Pat Brooks got 1:15, Pat H 1:25, and Pete 1:45. Max altitude was 5,100msl, and all landed at Bartons lz after an aborted attempt to run south along the ridge toward Keyser. JR, baby sitting his beloved new pup Max, was kind enough to run Pat Brooks up the hill to retrieve the vehicle. Oh, yeah, and Pat Halfhill's in love with his big new U2.



2/16/09 – High Pt; Pat Halfhill and Pete Lehmann went back to Cumberland to take another whack at flying. The forecast was a bit stronger and colder than the previous day; with a hint of right cross. JR bailed on flying with his visitors, claiming his puppy Max needed care, but that was just an excuse to avoid the cold. Pat's brother Terry was along to drive. After traveling down from Pittsburgh through intermittent Lake Erie snow showers, they were heartened to have the sky clear as they neared Cumberland .

It turned out they were just a hair late, as the sky began to overdevelop and dump snow showers just as they suited up to launch. Still, both got off after short delays (Pete's launch was a spooky auto-launch: he was putting the glider back on the ground due to increasing winds when he and the glider were picked up two feet vertically. Fortunately he was level and flew out of the slot despite a nasty bit of roll turbulence to provide further excitement).

Pat was already well above the ridge, and they climbed out together to base at 5,100msl (3,250 over launch) at up to 700fpm. They then glided off towards Ft Ashby with their glasses and face shields frosting over in the brutal cold as they dodged snow showers that were an uncomfortable novelty for **Pat**. He then missed a thermal Pete found and **landed at Ft Ashby (6.5 miles)**, while **Pete** made a dumb decision and then got shut down by snow showers and exploded clouds to **land at Springfield for 11.7 miles**. Still, it was a fun, if short, day of flying with real indications that winter is nearing an end and spring flying not too far in the future.



3/12/09 – High Pt; N 3 – 8 mph; Pete and JR arrived at launch to find favorable conditions, but by the time they're set up and ready to go, the wind has diminished to a very light, right-crossed trickle. Pete goes first and initially struggled to stay up and at one point he thought he was LZ-bound, but persistence paid off and he slowly started to climb over launch. JR chose that moment to fling himself off the hill and was rewarded with an

immediate climb right in front of the slot. He and Pete worked that thermal (with patches of 6.0 on the averager) to 4400' and then proceeded south. Pete chose a line closer to the ridge while JR had better luck flying further out front and he found another climb, albeit a much weaker one (1.5), over ABL to 3900'. Pete came out to join JR, but missed that climb even though he was only a couple hundred feet lower. They both proceeded south along the Knobleys slowly getting lower until finally being scraped off at Rawlings, MD for six miles. Pete got 42 minutes, JR got about 50 minutes, and both landings would have earned them a DQ in the spot-landing contest.

3/22/09 – High Pt; NNW 10 – 15+ mph; Pete and Gardinator got off the hill first and were soon beaming out and heading OTB (see their description of the flight elsewhere in this newsletter). Steve Walko and Larryboy were up next in the batting order and both had good launches and got up without major difficulty, although they didn't find the nice elevator that got Pete and Gardinator out of there. JR was the last one to get off the hill and did so in a most unusual manner. From the very first step, he felt significant negative pressure on the glider and by the third or fourth step it looked like he was going to plow into the slope below launch so he decided to abort the take-off. He set the basetube down expecting to whack and turtle, but instead, the basetube slid briefly on the grass slope before the glider popped into the air and he flew away without further incident. It was one of those soiled underwear-moments that everyone would like to avoid. He joined Larryboy and Steve over the ridge, but none of them were able to get very high in the somewhat sporty conditions (pieces of strong lift that were short-lived and difficult to stay with). After getting low once, JR decided it was time to fly south to avoid the possibility of bombing out in the main LZ. He easily made it to Zirks with a bit of a tailwind from 2500'. There, he got his best gain of the day to 3500', but decided it was time for a change of underwear and headed out to land at Barton's LZ after about an hour's worth of airtime. Larryboy did the same thing a little while later, but managed to get 4200' at Zirks and ended up with a couple hours. Meanwhile, Steve found himself alone and didn't feel he was high enough to make the journey south. He ended up getting scraped off the ridge after about an hour and got to experience the joys of landing in the

main LZ on an active day. He pulled it off without damage to glider or pilot. Pete ended up landing near Stephens City, NA for 45.9 miles and Gardinator got the FOTD landing near Lacey Springs, VA for 74.6 miles (and the longest March flight in club history). Well done!!!

Mark Tells All

Well here I am, having to do a bloody book report since I was fortunate enough to have one of the first long xc flights of the season.

It started out innocently enough.....

My buddy JR called me up as usual and presented the sketchy forecast in the best possible light.

I hadn't flown in a couple months, so I was generally motivated, and it probably wasn't gonna be colder than a witch's.

It was my good fortune that Pete came down to Cumberland as well, because the truth is that I basically topped out in my talon and milked it around near cloudbase while Pete pushed ahead in his sport 2.

After he plummeted downwind through the sink and started climbing again, I would pull max string and arrive at his thermal and climb with him.

I repeated this well honored tactic throughout the flight until the lack of performance of his sport 2 and his eagerness to drag me along for a 100 miler got the best of him and he had to land just south of Winchester .

As we were approaching Winchester , he let me know that we would need to cheat south to avoid airspace issues.

I was able to jump a street or two, crosswind to the south, and got onto the ridge at Strasburg.

I dawdled along figuring I had a milk run to Harrisonburg , but the lift shut down around 6 PM and I got scraped off and went out to land near Lacey Spring for about 70 miles after 4 hours in the air.

There were several factors that went into the success of this flight.

The first is the relentless call to arms from my boy JR.....

As most of you know, once you're married with children, there are just so many other things to do.

For many years, JR hasn't given up on me, and without him calling me on every possible flying day and passing along mis-leading weather forecasts, I am certain that I would be flying much less than I already do.

The other major factor is the support of my lovely wife Sheila. I am very thankful.

Not only do we have two wonderful children, she actively motivates me to go flying and doesn't mind living in a broken down shack with a leaky roof and tall weeds in the front yard.



Off the North Mt Launch Mem Day 08

Of course there's Pete, who is desperately trying to retain flying buddies to inspire and challenge him. He has also been relentless in his pursuit to get me out flying more.

On that Sunday, as is often the case, he brought a volunteer driver, Fred Sherick, and also our latest XC prospect Steve Walko.

As I was setting up he simply came over and gave me Fred's cell number, which in hindsight, was a hint that I had better join him if it turned into an XC day.

I recall that as we initially climbed out, I saw that Pete was lower than me and farther back. I radioed and said "so.....what are you gonna do? Stick with what you have and just keep goin?" to which he replied "YUP"I knew what I had to do.

Steve, whose flying experience is mostly through towing, had a nice soaring flight and the usual interesting approach and landing at the infamous Cumberland fairgrounds LZ.

He was kind enough to burn the midnight oil to come and retrieve me, and was rewarded with an arrival at home sometime in the wee hours of Monday morning.

I would like to testify that this should be an inspiration to all of us average hang dangles. We may never reach the consistency of our XC heroes, busting out hundred milers every year or two, but any one of us can break a good one now and then if we just keep flying.



**Your favorite knucklehead,
- gardner**

PS:

I have been reminded that there is an unusual amount of "hang-lingo" in this report, so I will offer a bibliography?

Below.

Bloody book report.....I flunked out of English in my junior year of high school cause I hated book reports so much I just never done em.

xc.....this is shorthand for Cross Country. It is when you fly away from the well known landing field used when you fly a hang glider from a launch site, to an unknown future location until you “run out of air” and have to land.

JR.....a dubious character who has been the lynch pin of the West Virginia Mountaineer hang gliding club for many years

Sketchy forecast.....Hang glider pilots live and die by the weather, which we refer to as “micrometeorology”. It is the study of very localized weather conditions that can help us determine if it is reasonable to drive several hours and burn an entire day trying to launch a hyper light aircraft from a mountainside

witch’s.....well known weather phraseology most often used in conjunction with glass bra.

Pete.....Pete Lehmann is a well known hang glider who owns a world record for hang gliding, has flown over a hundred miles dozens of times, and of those, has flown many in the 200-300 mile range. He is recognized as one of the best pilots in our region.

talon.....That’s the model name of my hang glider and is one of the top performance hang gliders currently being manufactured.

Sport 2.....Although Pete is known world wide as one of the top hang glider pilots, he often flies a lower performing hang glider with this model name and it generally means that the glide ratio at higher flight speeds is less than that of a high performance model.

milking it around near cloudbase.....milking is a term to indicate an unhurried or dawdling pace. In this case, there are generally some scraps of lift around near the bottom of a cloud that has been

thermalled to, but most xc pilots won't waste time there once they have climbed that high.

Plummeting down through sink.....that's what happens once you climb to the top of your thermal and move on toward the next possible thermal. The air that you just went up in has lots of other air all around it going downward that we call "sink" meaning sinking air.

Pull max string.....my hang glider has a string that I can pull to vary the geometry of my planform to increase the glide ratio of my wing during high speed flight.

(I was hoping to make it sound even more aerodynamically technical, but don't know that many fancy words)

100 miler.....the dream of every hang glider pilot is to fly at least 100 miles xc for bragging rights.

Air space issues.....around airports there are areas of FAA controlled airspace that require special rules to operate an aircraft in. (a hang glider IS an aircraft....a craft used to fly through the air)

jump a street or two.....there are sometimes certain weather conditions that allow for clouds to line up and provide for a "street" of lift for us to travel many miles underneath of, with good success. To jump a street can be difficult, because between cloud streets, there is usually an extraordinary amount of sinking air that can put you on the ground.

Scraped off.....ran out of air.

Pete's version of the flight:

MARCH 22 HIGHPOINT : The Gardinator goes to Woodstock ...and beyond

Mark Gardner and Pete Lehmann launched into a fine, cumie-filled sky and almost immediately climbed off the High Point ridge in some very fine lift that got them to around 6,000msl from where they

committed over the back. That was still far below cloud base, and after heading out it still took them a while to get really high. They then stair-stepped up to base in short-lived, erratic lift that was occasionally quite strong, but seldom lasted long. Nonetheless, they finally topped out at 8,500msl and were cruisin'.

By the time we were approaching the Shenandoah Valley I became concerned that if we were to continue eastward under our cloud line we'd quickly (and easily) run into Dick Cheney's DC airspace. So we then began a hard 10 mile jog to the south with a view to getting onto the Massanutten ridge at Strasburg. We were essentially jumping streets, and a dumb decision decked me nine miles short of Signal Knob, west of Stephens City for 45.9 miles.

After scraping me off Mark was still in good shape and easily made it onto the ridge to begin a wonderful, boating cruise towards Harrisonburg . He crossed the Woodstock launch at 6,500msl, looking down on a tiny little hang- and paraglider far below. As it was now near five o'clock the late afternoon lift became huge, fat and strong at 800-1,000fpm. This aerial love fest continued until he got past the New Market gap at which point the ridge becomes smaller and turns a bit further away from the wind. As a result he landed at six o'clock at the base of the mountain east of Lacey Springs for 74.6 miles. Steve Walko arrived to pick him up just at dark and begin the very long drive home to western PA. It was a helluva fine day's flying.

Back at the ridge the three pilots who launched after them had decidedly different experiences. Larry Ball enjoyed the best flight, getting to 4,200msl and flying for around two hours before landing at Bartons. Jim Rowan had what he describes as the nastiest launch he's ever gotten away with at the site. My friend Fred Sherick (who was driving for us) is an EMT and thought he was going to have to figure out how drag JR's broken body up the hill after Jim literally bounced off launch. Miraculously, he safely flew away. However the whole experience had taken some of the fun out of the day and he went to Barton's after :45 to drink a beer and change his shorts. Steve Walko, continuing his campaign to prevent oil prices from sliding further, had on Saturday driven to western Ohio and back before then driving to Cumberland with Pete and Fred...and then accompanying Fred on the

retrieves of Mark and Pete. It was quite the weekend driving marathon. But this time he at least had some solid flying, getting close to an hour before getting flushed and experiencing his first gnarly Fairgrounds lz landing that ended as he flared into a gravel pile.

Ben's Mexico Broken Arm

In January we wanted to avoid the crowds at Valle de Bravo so Ben, LE and Paul from Washington State went to Colima, Mexico. We flew into Guadalajara and took a four hour bus ride. Colima is a wonderful small university town in the mountains of central Mexico about 25 km from the Pacific Coast. There is a nice PG/HG site on a hill about five km from the town. Conditions can be very challenging that time of year.



Colima Launch

We all stayed at a hotel owned by a local pilot. A group of guided pilots from Ottawa were staying there as well. We paid the guides a fraction of their daily guide costs for a one time orientation and then were essentially on our own. Each day a truck would arrive at the hotel to take us to launch. Most of the time there was no charge. The local scene is very laidback and accepting of visitors.

Mostly we just had fun. Flying every day for several hours and landing in a soccer field nearby the hotel. L.E. even got a free taxi ride back to the hotel one day from friendly local taxi driver.

On Thursday, the conditions were very thermic. Ben headed out over the valley into a strong head wind to a landing area just below the launch. The area had several fields with cows in them. One field had just one cow. Ben didn't want to land in the field with just one cow because there are no fields with just one cow. There are only fields with just one Bull and Mexican Bulls are really, really mean. They especially don't like it when someone lands in their field with a big fluffy glider.

Ben cleared the field with the Bull and just as he got over the next field his paraglider hit a wind gust as a thermal popped up. Ben fell off the other side -- crashing into the dirt. L.E. was flying above him and caught the thermal for a low save. "I think I broke my arm" Ben radioed. "I'll be down in a minute" L.E. was relieved it was only an arm the crash had looked pretty bad from the air. Big Ears brought her glider down and she landed right beside Ben. L.E. got some sticks and made a brace with straps, tied the arm up and called for some help on the cell phone.



Ben was taken to the Hospital in an ambulance. "Do you want the public or the private hospital". Needless to say we opted for the private hospital. It was fabulous. Five Star care with outstanding surgeons. The Doctor operated on the broken arm and put in a titanium plate with six screws.



Out Over the Valley - Colima

HG in LZ



The Mexican Bull.



Ben in the Mexican ambulance.

