

# Mountaineer Hang Gliding Association

## Newsletter – August 2006

### PRESIDENTS PAGE

I would like to first start out by saying thanks to Sparky for doing a great job on the newsletters and being the president this year. Sparky has been a person who has given a lot back to the hang gliding community. There are too many things to mention. No one in the club wanted to be president this year including myself, but Sparky volunteered for the job. Doing the newsletter is a thankless job and I have never heard anyone given praise for doing it, only criticism. Sparky, I hate to see you leave the area because as Vice President I inherit the job.

I always pictured myself as being a Vice President like Nixon was to Eisenhower. A reporter once asked President Eisenhower what Nixon had contributed to his administration. He responded that he would have to think about that and get back to him. He never got back to that reporter. I will probably be a president like Gerald Ford who was best known for falling down skiing and not looking very presidential. Presidents are like quarterbacks, they get too much of the credit when things go right and too much shit when things go wrong. The best quarterback in the league cannot complete a pass if the line does not block or the receivers don't catch the ball. Club participation has steadily been dropping the last few years due to many reasons. We have had a lot of good pilots leave the area and flying conditions have not been great for a few seasons. There has been very little new blood joining the club to make up for the pilots that have left to help carry the load. This has led to many problems.

First, the last 3 years only 2 to 3 people show up for the work days. We have four sites to cut and keep opened. When I joined the club in 1996, we would have 6 to 8 people show up for all the work days and cut all four sites in less than a half a day, then we would go flying. The last couple of years, JR and I spent many days busting our ass all day to keep the sites opened which keeps the land owners happy and the sites safe to fly.

Next, the core pilots of the club would bring drivers off and on so on XC days we would have drivers. Now, no one brings drivers except Larry Ball and me. Thank God for Lisa Ball and my wife Jennifer for driving for us. This leads to problems. Many times in the past people who never brought a driver went XC when Larry and I didn't. Then our wives had to drive to retrieve them. This is not fair when only a few club members carry the load for others who don't help on work days or fly for the fair. If you plan to go XC you should ask before you launch or work out your own ride back to the LZ. This attitude of selfishness burns out our drivers because they feel like they have to drive for the whole club.

Thirdly, we need more people to show up and fly for the fair even on the bad days. The past few years, JR and I have carried the load with a couple of others showing up only one day. This year was the 20<sup>th</sup> year for the club flying in the fair. We had a very small turn out and JR flew every day but one. Flying for the fair is important because it keeps us in good with the people who control the LZ.

Even though I am now the president, I cannot change the attitudes of the club members or the weather, but I am worried that if the club continues down the road we are on, we will lose these sites and all the fun that makes the work worthwhile. I have sites closer than Cumberland to fly, but there is something extra special about this area that I love that keeps me coming back to fly. So let's start being a club again and work as a team and have lots of fun!!

Thanks!

Marvin, the Reluctant President



*MHGA Airtimes – the only edition*

**5/27/06; High Pt;** N 5 -10 mph; Gardinator and JR (T2) get 30 and 35 minutes, respectively as they get up at the NW Cliffs. Gardinator had the best gain to 2350', but then squandered it all by flying north to the West Face where he promptly sunk out and landed safely after an aerobatic approach. JR hung on for a few more minutes before succumbing to gravity.

**5/28/06; Spruce Knob;** SE 5 – 10 mph; JR meets Nelson Lewis and his friend Kelly in the LZ and they proceed up to launch where they're joined by the rest of Nelson's family on a beautiful late spring day. Nelson launches first and shows it to be quite soarable. JR launches his Sport 2 shortly thereafter and they both get about an hour with gains to 6000' for JR and 6500' for Nelson. Lift was pretty consistent near launch, but was spotty elsewhere. They both land in the main LZ where the wind was out of the north.

**6/11/06; High Point;** NW 5 – 10 mph; JR launches first on his T2 and struggles to get up. After getting scraped off the main ridge, he ends up at the NW Cliffs down to 1500' before catching something off the spine and climbing to 2700'. He then shares a good thermal (350 fpm) with the Blanik sailplane and climbs to 3900' directly over launch. Larryboy finally launches as JR heads for Zirks arriving there at 2700'. He spends the next 45 minutes boating over Zirks between 2000' – 2500' and is joined by Larryboy who decided he didn't want his buddy, Jimiboy, to be lonely. They eventually get something over the bowl and climb together with Larryboy deciding they would turn left instead of right. At 3000', JR heads out towards Barton's LZ and makes it without problem. He goes long on his final approach and gets a little closer to highway than he intended. The hay was up and a late flare results in a mild whack. Larryboy lands there a couple minutes later and makes it look easy.

**6/15/06; High Pt;** NW 5 – 10 mph; An article about this day appeared in the last newsletter so we won't go into any major details. JR and Homer made it to Woodstock, VA for about 53 miles, Bruce Engen got to Front Royal, VA for about the same distance, Tom McGowan made it to Three Churches, WV for 15 miles (and landed in Nixon's DNL field), Dave Proctor made it to Millison's Mill, WV for about 12 miles, Adam landed at Ft Ashby, WV for 5 miles and Chuck Daus got 2.5 hours and his highest altitude gain to 6000'.

**6/17/06; Fairgrounds;** S 3 – 7 mph; After cutting Pinnacle, Zirks, and Fairgrounds, Marvin takes a sled dive on his Falcon followed by JR on his Sport 2 (that had just fallen off Marvin's truck after not being tied on). JR's launch was a little sketchy and he managed to get only an extended sledder. Ben and Florent flew their bags and showed the flexies how it's done as both soared for 25 and 15 minutes respectively without getting very high above launch. LE DNF.

**7/16/06; High Pt;** N 5 – 10+ mph; Pretty good conditions for those that showed up to fly for the first day of the Allegany County Fair. Florent launched his bag first and

showed it was soarable by getting to 3000', but was then scraped off the ridge after 30 minutes. Marvin launched his Falcon followed by Larryboy and then JR on his Sport 2. The thermals were drifting along the ridge and lift seemed to be as good or better out in front of the ridge as it was over the top. Marvin headed for the LZ after 45 minutes while Larryboy and JR kept climbing out on the valley, but never getting above 3000'. JR eventually flew to the North Pt before cruising back to the LZ for a good approach and landing for 1.5 hours. Larryboy "landed" about 10 minutes later although the seismic shock waves from his whack were felt miles away.

**7/17/06; Fairgrounds;** Light SE; Marvin and JR (both on Falcons) take sleds for Day 2 of the Fair.

**7/18/06; Fairgrounds;** L&V; Marvin and JR (Falcons) get off the hill quickly ahead of a darkening sky. Marvin had an extended sled and JR gets a straight sled, but flies over the Fair on the way out to wave at the spectators. Brian Vant-Hull and Shawn McDuff wait for conditions to get better, but they only get worse as the sky continues to OD and they both end up taking sleds after the air becomes more textured. Hugh McElrath DNF.

**7/19/06; Fairgrounds;** Light SE; JR and Chuck (Falcons) take sleds for Day 4 of the Fair. It was hot, muggy, and buggy with scattered thunderstorms in many locations around the area, but not in the immediate vicinity. Just like it had been and would be for the entire week of the Fair.

**7/20/06; Fairgrounds;** L&V; JR sleds his Falcon for Day 5 of the Fair doing his usual overflight of the fairgrounds waving and yelling at spectators on the way out.

**7/21/06; Fairgrounds;** SSE 10 – 15 mph; JR sets a new speed record on his Falcon making it to the LZ in less than one minute, although there was a 10 – 15 second period where he didn't think he'd make the LZ at all. Gardinator dives off on his Stealth Groundpounder and while he didn't get drilled quite as quickly, he made up for it with a mostly out-of-control approach that luckily ended up as a good landing (this was a day we should have opted not to fly for the Fair).

**7/23/06; High Pt;** L&V; After a long wait for something puffing in, JR was finally able to dive off launch on his Sport 2, but hit nothing at all on his sled to the LZ. Dannyboy followed JR and squeezed out a couple extra minutes for an extended sledder. Stretch ended up with the flight of the day getting above the ridge for eight minutes before joining JR and Dannyboy in the LZ. Larryboy launched last and had a straight sledder to the LZ on this last day of the Fair. This was the Mountaineer's 20<sup>th</sup> year anniversary for flying in the Fair. We flew seven of the eight days, although it would have been better if more pilots had showed up to help out.

**7/29/06; High Rock;** W 0 – 5 mph; JR and Marvin go to the High Rock Fly-In where the conditions proved to be less than ideal. JR took a late-day sled on his Sport 2, Sparky got some airtime at the Pulpit before taking a late sled off the High Rock ramp, Mike Lee

and Marvin DNF. Most of the other pilots there also took sleds, although Pete Schuman managed to get about 45 minutes scratching around launch earlier in the day.

**8/8/06; High Pt;** NNW 5 – 10 mph; Adam and JR (T2) take a late weekday flight. Conditions were a little ratty at first and JR had to struggle at the NW Cliffs before finally getting up above the ridge. He and Adam boated around the valley getting to 4000' out over the Dogpit. There was lots of strong lift and strong sink and it definitely wasn't a "poosh-out" day. Both JR and Adam got low and struggled to stay up at the NW Cliffs, but Adam missed the spotty climb that JR found over the spine and he ended up in the LZ shortly thereafter. After getting back above the ridge, conditions improved and JR was able to cruise south down the valley getting to 6050' over the ball fields in Cresaptown before flying almost to Barton's LZ. He remembered his cooler was back in the main LZ, so he turned around and flew north being pulled onward by the beer-suck. After flying well north of the LZ past the North Pt, JR headed back towards the LZ and literally had to hunt for some sink in order to get down.

**8/22/06; High Pt;** N 5 – 10+ mph; JR (S2) and Dannyboy (HP-AT) take a late weekday flight to celebrate Danny's 57<sup>th</sup> birthday. They're the last of the Mountaineer "old guard" from the early-mid 80's. JR scratched up at the Crotch and once over the ridge, things got easier. Once again, the air was somewhat spanky at times and the thermals were difficult to stay with. Danny headed out to land after 45 minutes and was joined in the LZ by JR after about an hour in the air. JR had the best gain of the day to 2688' and they both got somewhat low a couple times during the flight (1500' or so).



## King Mountain Trip, July 2006

by JR

The King Meet was fun, but the weather could have been more consistent. We (Mark Gardner, aka, the Gardinator and I) arrived at Arco, ID late afternoon on Monday, July 3rd. By the time we checked into the D&K Motel and made it to the park in Moore, ID where most pilots camp and hang out, it was after 6 PM. After meeting a few folks in the park, Gardinator decided an evening glass-off might be worth a shot, so I offered to drive him up to the lower launch if his FWD minivan would make it up the hill. It was a company-owned vehicle and they weren't around to object, anyway.

We met a couple pilots in the lower LZ (5000' msl) who had just arrived from Lakeview and they were also anxious to try for a glass-off flight. They were in a Subaru Outback and the pilot who owned it spent the next 10 minutes trying to convince us that the minivan had a better chance to make it up to launch than his shiny new AWD Outback. As lame as that argument was, we decided that it would be easier to take the van up than to continue listening to such a blatant assault on our intelligence. We made it to the lower launch (7500' msl) without losing the oil pan or muffler, but it sounded a little dicey as we scraped our way up the hill. Everyone set up quickly with light cycles still coming into launch and all three got off the hill by 8:30 PM. The glass-off had kicked in and they reported smooth lift to 12,000' until sunset.

The next day was July 4th and more pilots were showing for the meet that was scheduled to start the next day. We set up on the lower launch after leaving the van in the LZ and catching a ride up the hill with Slide Mtn pilot, Kelly Hatfield and his significant other, Nancy Clark. I had my WW T2 and the Gardinator was flying his Aeros Stealth GP (groundpounder). Kelly was setting up his Litespeed when the under surface zipper blew out, so I offered him the use of my Sport 2 that we brought as a back-up glider. He drove down to the LZ to get it off the van and I helped him set it up and do a pre-flight after he made it back to launch. As a consequence, we were one of the last ones off the hill. There had been big over-development several miles to the north all afternoon, but it didn't keep anyone from flying and didn't seem any closer when we took off. We got up without problem, but never got over 11,000'. With the top of King Mountain being 10,200', that's not really high enough to go OTB and following the Lost River range to the north wasn't an option that any sane person would take given the big development in that direction. After an hour of trying to get high enough to leave, I noticed that the over development seemed to be getting closer. I asked Kelly whether we should be concerned since he was almost a local compared to me. His reply over the radio was muffled and unintelligible, but I saw him heading for the LZ and landing shortly thereafter. I decided that discretion was the better part of valor and went for the LZ, but as I approached the lower LZ at about 7000', I encountered smooth steady lift. I opted to climb for next five or six minutes getting to 11,000' drifting back into the mountains. That's when Kelly got

on the radio and said there was a strong gust front blowing through the LZ from the north and he suggested it probably wouldn't be a good time to land there. I chose to head south seven or eight miles down to the end of the Lost River Range and maintained or climbed slowly until I reached the last peak and the town of Arco. I dove out of the mountains at 13,000' and headed for the Arco airport located a few miles to west on the far side of town. Gardinator had landed there earlier and confirmed my visual on the windsock that there was no wind on the ground. Lift was abundant and I had to hunt for some sink to get down. As I got within 1000' of the ground, I noticed the windsock showing north wind and when I asked Gardinator to confirm that, he replied on the radio, "Dude, don't land now. It's the worst I've ever seen it!" That's about the time the gust front arrived at my position and the leaf-in-the-breeze portion of my flight began. I stuffed the bar, but my T2 was making no forward progress into the headwind. My planned approach was a thing of the past as I struggled to keep the glider pointed into the wind and was just hoping to come down somewhere in the vicinity of the airport. As I got down to about 300', the glider started inching forward slowly and it looked like I might land on the runway, but then the glider's nose rotated straight down and I went into dive-bomber mode. As I approached the earth, the glider leveled out at about 30' and then almost immediately went ballistic with the nose pointed nearly straight up. The right wing then dropped towards the ground and I found myself heading downwind at mach speed trying to get the glider leveled out. Things were happening very fast, but it almost seemed like slow-motion as I struggled to pull in and get the glider to turn left back into the wind before I impacted the terra firma. As it was, I ended up on the deck with the glider heading in an ENE direction with a 30 - 40 mph, 80 degrees crosswind. I decided it was time to assume crash-position and shoved the bar out as I went fetal. The glider whacked pretty hard, but there was miraculously no damage to me or the glider. I was stuck there several minutes trying to hold the nose down and get unhooked. Then I got the glider turned 90 degrees and was pinned there for another 30 minutes holding the upwind wing while waiting for the wind to quit blowing. Eventually, Kelly and Nancy showed up at the airport and parked their truck just upwind of my glider which allowed us to get it put in the bag. I was amazed at how hard it continued to blow well into the evening.

Wednesday was the first official day of the meet, but it was called due to the widespread over development and rain so Thursday was the first of the four days we had left. We ended up at the lower launch again and the flat-slope nature of the take-off coupled with the high altitude, light winds, and added weight of an O2 system certainly "weighed" on my mind as I got in line to launch. I got off the hill without incident, but then struggled to get up. After 20 minutes, I found myself bumping heads with a few other pilots on the spine below launch and soon thereafter we were all heading out together toward the lower LZ. Everyone seemed to choose a different approach pattern and I decided to land long rather than risk a mid-air right low over the LZ. I ended up landing to the south and was surprised at my speed on final approach. Landing at high altitude in the desert heat is a lot different than landing in the fat air where we usually fly. One downtube later, I was financially reminded of that fact. Gardinator made it OTB for 18 miles landing in front of the next mountain range (the Lemhi range), about 15 miles north of Howe. The longest flight of the day was somewhere in the 50-mile range.

Friday found us back on the lower launch, set up and waiting for conditions to turn on. Bruce Engen launched early and was scratching over the spine to the right of launch. Just after he circled out of sight behind the ridge, there was a large puff of dust. A half dozen pilots, including Gardinator and myself, started running/hiking to the location where we thought he'd gone down, but we were initially unable to locate him. A pilot from the upper launch (Frank Gillette) circled over Bruce's glider and eventually we were able to find his position and render first aid. He had a badly broken arm, broken teeth, and a concussion, but he was conscious and considering the way he impacted the hill, he was pretty lucky to even be alive. The EMT's arrived about a half hour later. They checked his vitals and after giving him some O2, they walked him down the hill to the ambulance and took him to the hospital. We tore down his T2 on the steep hillside and carried it down to the road so it could be retrieved later. Then we walked back up the mountain to the lower launch, but by then, most of us were worn out from the high altitude hike and subsequent efforts so we opted to tear down on top. Gardinator flew and had an extended sled

Saturday turned out to be THE day with an outstanding soaring forecast and little chance predicted for over development. The winds were predicted to be L&V so they called Route #1 north towards Salmon for the first time during the meet (they'd called Route #3 OTB towards Dubois and Henry Lake the preceding two days). We were at the lower launch again. Most of the hard-core competition types were launching from the upper launch which is steeper and 700' higher, but it has a smaller set-up area and is more prone to dust devils. The lower launch is shallow, but expansive and you can set up anywhere. There was also a more laid-back vibe on the lower launch. Despite the good forecast, many of the early launchers were struggling and some had sunk out. I was in line, but the ultra-light cross cycles made me decide to back off and let some other pilots play through.

I launched about 2 PM into a weak cycle and was able to get up after flying over the spine to the right of launch. The lift wasn't booming, but consistent and I worked north up the range periodically catching 3 – 500 fpm thermals over the spines in front of the big peaks. The first obstacle after crossing Ram's Horn Canyon is Pass Creek, a pass through the mountains that often creates a strong venturi-effect when the wind blows. Despite the lack of wind, I opted to fly well out in front of the pass and headed for Invisible Mountain on the far side. I reached there at 9000' and promptly caught a sweet 1000 fpm thermal that I took to 16,000'. Gardinator showed up about that time and did his best impression of Stretch flying at me as I was turning. We climbed together for awhile and then I lost track of him. I bopped on north staying mainly between 10,000' – 13,000', but it (or I) was slow going and after three and a half hours of flying the Pig in the punchy stuff, I was worn out. I don't think I'd fully recovered from the preceding day's rescue efforts, either. So at the 40-mile mark, I decided to head out of the mountains and land at the intersection of Hwy 93 and the road to May. My landing wasn't great, but was uneventful and I had a driver parked there who left me a couple beers before heading on down the road after someone else. Gardinator ended up landing north of me at Challis for 69 miles. The winning flight for the day (and the meet) was to Salmon for 105 miles. One rigid wing and one flex wing got to the bonus LZ at the

Salmon rodeo grounds, but the flex pilot failed to see power lines and destroyed his WW T2 after hitting the lines and then impaling the glider on the barbed wire fence posts below. He walked away without a scratch.

The following day, Sunday, was the last round of the comp. They called Route 3 again due to the risk of over development on the north route. We set up on the lower launch and waited for conditions to improve, but the clouds started blowing up in various locations around the area. Some pilots flew and were able to get up and go OTB, some took sleds, and many of us tore down on top. I wasn't sure what to do, but when I saw Lisa Vercella (a SLC x-c pilot) pulling battens, I asked her what she thought about the way the sky was looking. Her response, "It looks like death!" convinced me that beer-thirty had arrived. Gardinator also tore down on top. The longest flight of the day was about 50 miles. That pilot told me he landed his Litepseed with full VG and the bar stuffed going backwards from the gust front as he tried flying around and between the big storm cells that were popping up all along the route.

We hung around an extra day and actually made it to the upper launch with Nancy and Kelly. After setting up our gliders, lightning started striking nearby and we tore down just ahead of a strong downwind mini-gust front. The next day, Gardinator and I headed for SLC to fly Point of the Mountain. It was OD'd when we got there, so we spent the afternoon hanging around Park City looking for Robert Redford, but the odds of us seeing him would have been better if the Sundance Film Festival was going on. We made it to south side of the Point the next morning. There was a good bit of wind so the bags weren't flying, but people were doing HG tandems. For some reason I was completely uninspired by the site and the conditions. Gardinator set up and soared for about 20 minutes before landing on top. He said it wasn't much fun.

We hit the road the road the next day and pretty much beat feet for home. There were only a couple of near-death driving experiences while Gardinator was behind the wheel. I was pretty scared most of the time he was driving and I'm sure my heightened adrenal level and constant vigil kept us from having more of those kinds of experiences. We made it back to his house early Sunday morning and as they say, all's well that ends well.

### **MHGA Labor Day Fly-In**

We'll be at Seneca Shadows Campground – Group Site E from Friday, Sept 1 thru Monday, Sept 4. As usual, the group meal will be Saturday evening and everyone should try and bring a covered dish to share. The club will provide burgers and hotdogs (and cost of the campsite). Some of us will probably go down early on Friday to fly and/or mow the Spruce Knob launch. There is no cell service in the valley, but we'll be using 144.950 for those hams using two-meter radios.