



## NEWSLETTER - May 2008

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President's Page: Greetings - I hope you all are getting some great spring flying.

In February and March, Paul Kunzl, Ben and I traveled to Futaleufu, Chile in Patagonia to search for new paragliding sites. We all were thrilled to discover what we considered to have the potential to be a world class location at the head of the river valley and backed up against the high Andes. We flew and flew for hours with each other and condors over spectacular scenery.

Tragically these first flights may have been the last. The conditions which enabled the flying, destroyed the beautiful Futa Valley two weeks ago when the Chaiten Volcano erupted 40 km away. Over 18 inches of ash fell on the valley and then it rained turning it all into concrete. The region was devastated, the people left and most of the animals died.

Remember to strive to enjoy what we have – none of us really knows what will come next. I hope to see you all soon. Perhaps at the Seneca Rock Fly in on Memorial Day.

Take care -

L.E. Herrick

***Please pay your 2008 dues of \$40 (\$60 for a family) by writing a check to: MHGA and sending it to: Jim Rowan, 13818 Florida Ave, Cresaptown, MD 21502. You'll be glad you did!!!***

### **MHGA Airtimes – the only edition**

**2/25/08; High Pt;** W 5 – 10 mph; Pete and JR spent part of the day cutting trees and clearing brush from the slot below launch. They were rewarded for their efforts with soaring flights that lasted about an hour or a little more. Pete had the gain of the day to 3500', but both were eventually scraped off the ridge as conditions got weaker. Pete landed with his usual aplomb, while JR managed to add only a little more mud to the nosecone of his Sport 2.

**3/23/08; High Pt;** N 5 – 10 mph; The Cumberland X-C season finally got off the ground on a right-cross day without a lot of wind. Pat H (S2) and then JR (S2) launched first and were able to get up, although it wasn't automatic. JR (after getting to 2500') was scraped off the ridge after 20 minutes and followed LE on her sled to the LZ. Ben wasn't quite able to make the LZ and ended up landing his PG in the Dogpit (he avoided becoming Alpo by hiking out). Eventually, Pat and Pete (S2) headed OTB with Larryboy (T2) not far behind. Pat went down first landing at



Greenspring, WV for 10 miles. Pete made it to Paw Paw, WV for 18.5 miles (literally, as he landed in the small field across the river from the nicer LZ's on the MD side of the bridge). Larryboy was able to cross the next ridge (Sideling Hill) and landed at Largent, WV for 26 miles. Meanwhile, back at the ridge, John F was the last to launch and landed in the LZ after almost 1.5 hours in the air.

**4/15/08; High Pt;** N 5 – 10 mph; Tax day turned out to be epic, at least for most of those who were able to show up for flying on a Tuesday. Pat H and Pete launched and scratched their way up in the Crotch to the north of launch. JR followed them off the hill

and flew into the thermal below them, but after climbing to 2650', he lost it and again, got scraped off the ridge and had to land in the LZ where several semi-trailers had been parked to make things even more interesting. At least he pulled off a nice landing. Pat and Pete headed OTB together and reported gains to 9000' as they headed SE. Eric Shiever (on his first flight in over a year) is the last one off the hill and eventually headed OTB after flying down the ridge to Zirks. With JR on the ground, the other boys had their driver and he chased them in Pete's vehicle. Eric was having radio problems and they quickly lost contact with him, but JR was able to keep in radio range with Pat and Pete for most of their flight. He retrieved Pat at Mt. Olive, VA where he lands (using the term loosely since it involved two broken DT's) after 46.6 miles. They continued to chase Pete who was still in the air and headed south along Massanutten Mtn. As they proceeded south down I-81 passing New Market, VA, they watched a hang glider landing alongside Rt.11 and assumed it must have been a pilot flying from the Woodstock launch. They later learned that it was Eric who had flown his Fusion 64.6 miles taking a unique route well south of the usual OTB routes and over some pretty inhospitable terrain. As an indicator of how good conditions were on this day, Eric reported being at 9200' msl at 6:30 PM just before diving into the Shenandoah Valley. He wasn't able to transmit, but he could hear everyone on the radio and knew pretty well where his ride was located. Pete was eventually scraped off the ridge landing 72.6 miles from launch and just 15 miles short of Harrisonburg, VA. They picked Eric up on the way back and rolled into Cumberland, MD about 12:30 AM after retrieving JR's truck from launch.

**4/18/08; High Pt;**  
S 0 – 3 mph;  
Friday of the  
Parachute Pack  
found JR and  
Homer hoping to  
get some airtime,  
but the forecasters  
lied (again). JR  
ended up taking a  
sled in a brief  
respite from the  
downwind  
conditions. Homer  
decided it wasn't  
worth it and tore  
down on top.



**4/19/08; Pinnacle;** SSE 10 – 20 mph; Saturday after the Parachute Pack found Pete, Larryboy, JR, Gardinator (Talon) Larry H (Litespeed) and Pat B (U2) at this rarely flown Cumberland site. The day began light and left cross, but it started getting better as first Pete and then Larryboy and JR launched. They were able to scratch around near launch, barely staying above the ridge, but then just as Gardinator and Larry got in the air,

someone flipped the switch and the winds got significantly stronger and the lift got significantly better. Soon, everyone was climbing at 600 – 800 fpm in a huge thermal under overcast skies. Larry pulled out at 6000' and flew back to the ridge to wait for Pat, but everyone else kept climbing to 9000' before heading NW across Dan's Mtn towards Frostburg, MD. Pete and Gardinator got out ahead, but by hanging back a little, JR and Larryboy got the thermal of the day to over 10,000' under completely cloudy skies with climb rates approaching or exceeding 1000 fpm. It was apparent from watching the smoke laid out across the ground in various places that there was a lot of wind, but the air at altitude was quite benign. Gardinator decided to take a more westerly track and that ended up putting him on the ground at Meyersdale, PA for 22.5 miles. Pete got low flying past Frostburg and had to struggle to stay in the air, while Larryboy and JR had it easy flying downwind from their lofty position.



They got low once south of Berlin, PA and were looking at a golf course as a possible LZ when they stumbled into another nice thermal that got them back to 7000'. Eventually, their progress was halted when they reached Laurel Mtn west of Somerset, PA and lacked altitude (and/or cajones) to continue. JR and Larryboy landed together southwest of Somerset for 40.9 miles with Pete close by at 39 miles. Lisagirl did her usual wonderful job of retrieving her wayward pilots. Meanwhile, back at the hill, Pat was able to get launched, but the strong surface winds on the ridge made the flight less than fun and he chose to land after about a half hour. He was joined in the main LZ by Larry and they were kind enough to get Pete's vehicle at launch and drop it off in Somerset on their way home.

**4/30/08; High Pt;** WNW 3 – 8 mph; Despite the reasonable forecast, it turned out to be mostly cloudy and was even sprinkling as Pete and JR drove up the mountain to launch. Nevertheless, being standard-issue optimistic glider pilots, they set up and the sky slowly started to clear. There were light cycles coming up the hill and Pete was off first, followed shortly thereafter by JR. Both were able to get up and there were even some reasonable climb rates in 3.0 – 5.0 range, but the thermals seemed to fall apart around 4000'. JR had the gain of the day to 4800' after almost being scraped off the ridge. He cruised south to Zirks chasing clouds followed by Pete who arrived there a lot lower. They scratched around the ridge there for 15 or 20 minutes before eventually getting scraped off and landed in the Zirks LZ where the hay was much higher than expected. The landings weren't pretty, but they were successful in that no aluminum was sacrificed.

**5/5/08; High Pt;** 0 – 3 NE; Despite the fact that it was predominantly blowing down, there were birds occasionally climbing in the valley and that was enough to coax Pat H and Pete to dive off the hill in the increasingly rare light puff-ins. They had extended

sleds to the LZ where both pulled off successful downwind landings (going in opposite directions). Pat B, JR, and Tim Hirrlinger waited for conditions to improve, but they actually got even worse and then it was beer-thirty.



**Sun Dog over Spruce Knob**

## Up coming Events



**Site Maintenance** - There will be two perhaps three site maintenance days this summer depending on the rate of growth. We will announce the dates and meeting places as soon as we know. Remember to bring tools, lawn mowers, chain saws, weed wackers, and such if you have them.

If you don't have them, come anyway and help out. We can only fly these sites because we beat back the natural order.

### **Memorial Day Fly – In**

**24-26 May**

We'll be at Group Site E in Seneca Shadows Campground, as usual. The club will buy burgers, buns, and hotdogs for the Saturday dinner and everyone should bring a covered dish. They can call Jim Rowan if you need suggestions on what to bring.

### **Allegheny County Fair & Agricultural Expo 2008**

**20 – 27 July**

Allegheny County Fairgrounds. Meet in the Fairgrounds LX at 6:00. . If it looks good, we may go earlier. Call Jim Rowan for details. Flights are scheduled at 7:00. Hang Gliding / Paragliding, Agricultural products, animals, 4-H displays, midway rides, grandstand displays, games, food, model railroad display



**Chaiten Volcano Storm approaches Futaleufu May 08**



**Ben and LE over Futaleufu in March 08**