

Towlines

The Newsletter of the Albuquerque Soaring Club

May 2006

www.abqsoaring.org

From the President *By Bob Hudson*

What a month!!! First, our guys and gals contributing to the OLC are really clawing out great mileage. This last weekend we saw seven flights over five hundred kilometers alone. Additionally, Geoff Aiken and Jimmy Weir went out and almost busted a State Speed record in the Grob (details below). This is “club” flying at its best.

If you had wandered out to the airport this past week you would have noticed that we have been invaded by your United States Air Force Academy. The AFA brought six gliders and three tow planes down to “hone” their skills in cross country flying. The first week was all Academy officers and instructors. Starting the 22nd, Cadets took over and are working on their cross country skills. We could not have pulled this off if it weren’t for the help of Billy Hill, Mark Mocho and Howard Banks. Also, Sundance was a key player in helping America’s finest to become better pilots and instructors. It makes me proud to a part of an organization that throws open it’s doors to further the sport we all love.

On May 20th, one of the Ops folks didn’t show and we had a wiz bang of a flying day. We had airplanes everywhere and typical, everyone wanted to launch at once. We had a large contingent of club ships, Sundance customers and the Air Force Academy. Connie Buenafe, who was out to fly her airplane, immediately recognized the need and jumped into to help Don Kawal with Ops. If it wasn’t for Connie, we would not have had a safe and efficient launch. The club owes Connie a big pat on the back.

On another note, someone spilled a bucket full of engine oil under the Pawnee in the main hangar and then just left it. Others walked through the oil and spread it to he floor in the club house and then just left the mess for others to cleanup. Additionally, someone unplugged the refrigerator in the hangar which ruined all the contents in the freezer. It seems we have a cadre of individuals who don’t seem to think in terms of community. Remember it is everyone’s club and we need to pull together as a club to make the system work. We can “up” the dues and have professionals maintain the club but then that cuts into our flying activities. So please be good citizens and do your share to keep the clubhouse a place to meet and enjoy the “brotherhood” of aviation.

On May 20th, Chip Garner gave a lecture on how to compete. It was attended by about twenty club members and about fifteen Air Force Academy Officers. I can’t speak for everyone but I learned a lot and I appreciate Chip’s sharing his knowledge and experiences. I hope to have more “lectures” for us. I am currently trying to talk Brian Resor into lecturing us on Badge and Record flying.

To add to Al’s legacy...we were honored to have two Germans (from Hamburg) here to fly with us. Holger and Cornelia Weitzel are traveling around the US and flying an ASH 26. (To date Holger has already bagged two one thousand kilometers flights during his trip.) Anyway, I introduced Al to the Weitzel’s and he immediately started conversing with them in perfect German.

The OLC, the League and State Records

In the **OLC Classic** (the total number of distance points scored) we have gone from being miles behind (sic) Ridge Soaring Irregulars and Aero Club Albatross to being neck and neck for first place in the US. This is the outcome mostly of a couple of great weekends' flying. But note: The other guys are trying a great deal harder this year, so get flying. We need the miles.

The full listing of our flights is on the OLC web site, but worth noting are the great efforts by Carl Ekdahl, Billy Hill, Brian Resor, Art Hale, Chip Garner, Jim Cumiford, Mark Mocho, Kathleen Taylor, Angel Pala, Clay Phillips, Jim Wier, David Harmony, Howard Banks. There were also great flights by our Sundance colleagues, Tim Feager, Joe Shepherd, Bob Leonard, Al Whitesell and Mike Abernathy.

In the **new OLC League**, which measures the speed flown over the fastest two and a half hours of any OLC logged flight, ASC is No 1 in the world for the first three weekends of the contest – and probably also for the fourth weekend.

The fastest three each weekend are used to score. They are: Billy Hill, Jim Cumiford, Kathy Taylor, Brian Resor, Danny Sorenson and from Sundance, Tim Feager, Joe Shepherd and Al Whitesell. For the fourth weekend (May 21st) the speeds and distances were extraordinary. Tim Feager scored 102 mph, Jim Cumiford just over 100 mph and Joe Shepherd 97 mph.

In a **State record** attempt, on that Sunday, Geoff Aiken and Jim Wier took the club Grob 103 and tried for a 100 km speed record. They flew Moriarty-Zorro-Clines Corner and back at over 70 mph but missed the Zorro turnpoint by half a mile. So no record. But their effort is a wake-up call that there are State records waiting to be beaten.

In fact, Kathy Taylor just had a feminine, 15 meter, and sports class State record

approved and Billy Hill and Howard Banks have State records that are in progress, pending GPS calibrations.

Lessons from a retrieve

The club had a land out in mid April where the retrieve turned into an ugly mess. Both the pilot concerned and the retrieve crew have learned a lot – especially about the inadequacy of their approach and the equipment needed.

Here are their stories, first the pilot, Howard Banks, and then the leader of the retrieve, Bob Hudson.

A narrow escape: For the most part, the land out was uneventful. I foolishly had pressed on from a cloud with only modest lift to the next cloud where there was no lift – or at least, no lift that I could find. There was better looking ground to the west, and some scrappy clouds that way, so I headed off, hoping for a save.

No such luck. And the better looking field turned out to be full of cows and do I mean full. I struggled with very weak lift and drifted further west to a likely looking field and landed into wind. The field was rough (lots of vibration), but it was more or less level, no tall vegetation, no rocks, no old car parts. In fact an ideal field. There were even buildings at the end.

I was lucky that there were still ASC pilots in the air and Mark Mocho performed sterling service taking the GPS coordinates, even though he was having his own hard time getting high enough to get home.

First error: In my nervous state immediately after the landing I misread one of the coordinates (105 deg instead of the correct 106 deg). Luckily for me, there were people on the ground who plotted my position quickly and the answer did not fit where I said I was (about 18 miles north of Claunch -- actually about 20 miles). The repeat of the coordinates was corrected over the radio,

and then radio cover was lost as the other pilots landed at Moriarty.

There was zero cell phone coverage. I walked about a mile to the east to the top of a rise, hoping that might help. No good. And then I walked a bit over a mile and half up the hill the other way. Still no good.

There was no sign of any human activity in any direction; the farm buildings at the end of the landing field were empty and the small house seemed to be abandoned. So a good decision: stick with the plane, since the coordinates were known.

My nice empty field turned out not to be empty at all. First sighting, two horses, which emerged from the corral at the bottom of the field. They ventured out as I came back to the plane (getting anywhere involved going under a barbed wire fence onto a dirt road 30 yards from the plane). They circled me as I sat in the cockpit holding my breath. One came up to the nose and snuffled the canopy – found nothing to taste and they left.

Then a handful of cows appeared, one large brown one and five or so younger black ones. They came from a long way away – it was a very big field. They turned out to be well equipped with testicles – not cows. They too circled the plane and ended in a semi-circle in front, slowly advancing. I shrank down into the seat, covered my face with my hat so that there were no beady eyes staring back at them and peered round the edge of the hat. All I could think of was Francois Pin at the Seniors a few years back, whose PW-5 was totally wrecked by a bull who mistook it for a female object. That bull must have gotten lots of cuts from the canopy shards, but I was inside this one.

One of the younger fully-equipped “cows” began to paw the ground and was increasingly agitated. Then the big fella took over. He began to sway his head from side the side, throwing spittle way into the air, the while kicking up large clouds of dust.

Oh Lordie! I thought that I had read someplace that the thing to do was to turn up the radio volume flat out and turn off the squelch – the noise would frighten them away. So that’s what I did. Big mistake. All of them stopped, turned directly facing me with their ears up and began to move forward. I turned the squelch off quick and held my breath.

They slowly lost interest and led by the big one moved away, eating the vegetation as they went.

The radio didn’t connect with anything. I settled down to wait.

A vehicle came over the hill and turned away to the north. I was yelling on the radio in case it was someone from Moriarty. The vehicle was towing a long cloud of dust so I couldn’t make out if it was towing the trailer. Must have been somebody else. (Wrong, it was the retrieve crew going the wrong way – they came within a mile and a half and if they had come down the road to where I was, you would not be hearing any more about the incident.)

The wait stretched out. Eventually the sun began to set. The temperature dropped. I was warmly dressed, but as the sliver of a new moon set too, soon after, it began to get very cold. Eventually I popped the chute and used it as extra insulation. It helped but a lot less than I expected.

The real problem: there is zero insulation from the bottom and sides of the glider. Space blankets (I didn’t have one) wouldn’t have helped much because in contact with anything they simply conduct heat; it seems they work best when in the open air completely enclosing the victim.

It was nearly midnight when headlights came over the hill and down the dirt road by “my” field. I leaped out of the cockpit and began waving my emergency-kit flashlight. Bob Hudson was the first to spot it and I began to walk towards the fence as the two pickups pulled up. It was at this point that

the adrenaline of being rescued ran out. I could feel myself begin to keel over, vision narrowed and I was grabbed by I don't who, pushed through the strands of the fence being held apart by unknown feet and put into the back of Brian Resor's truck by Jimmy Wier, wrapped up and fed hot coffee.

Jim Cumiford reported that there was already frost on the rear of the wings when he went to the plane to shut the canopy.

There will be more about the lessons learned about what we really need to cope with the drop in temperature after dark in the high desert, when more research has been completed. The major problem of course is that a glider has very limited storage for anything resembling a real survival kit.

There are immediate lessons. Take a couple of deep breaths after you have landed, especially if, unlike my case, you have had a bad landing. You may have just one chance to get the correct coordinates to helpers. Learn how to get to the coordinates page on your gps as surely as you know how to get to the release.

Do not rely on cell phones; they are pretty much useless in large parts of the territory we fly over. The aircraft radio doesn't work as a land based communicator. I never heard anything on the radio and the people looking for me never heard my periodic broadcasts, even when we were actually very close.

I was damned lucky. Thanks to the dedication of Bob Hudson, Jim Cumiford, Al Santilli, Brian Resor and Jim Wier I was rescued. I am not sure how bad I would have been if I had been out all night but I can tell you that because of the increasing cold I was pretty much a basket case by midnight.

Retrieve from Hell, the truth: I first heard that Howard was down on my "handheld" as I was driving home from the airport. I immediately performed a 180 degree turn and headed back to the airdrome to see if I could help. Upon arriving at the field I found that Jim Cumiford had hooked up his

truck to Howard's trailer. Inside his truck he had an ace navigator, Al Santilli. The two of them had "plotted" Howard's location on a sectional, which proved to be totally inadequate as the sectional doesn't show dirt/county roads. We recognized this discrepancy and stopped in Estancia to get a road map and "lo and behold" these maps don't have county roads either. This was frustrating because I had a complete set of maps showing all dirt tracks in New Mexico in my truck which was back at the airfield.

We then pressed on towards Mountainair. Howard was blessed to have Jim along as Jim's family homesteaded the area near where Howard landed and he had a good handle on the region. After about an hour we started cross country on a series of dirt roads. One land mark we were searching for was a line of high power poles that the sectional showed should have been within a mile or so of where Howard was "picnicking". Well, after a while we stopped at a farm house, way out in nowhere, that appeared occupied. The lady of the house was most helpful and she tried to assist us. One thing she told us, and confirmed with a phone call to her son, was that there was no string of high power lines anywhere near where we were. (So much for the sectional). I went outside to talk to Al, who remained in the truck, and after what seemed like forever, I went to see what was taking Jim so long. When I got back to the House I found Jim and the lady doing the old "whatever happened to old cousin Steve"... You see, Ms. Fitzgerald knew all of Jim's family and in fact Jim had worked with Ms. Fitzgerald's husband.

Well we finally broke Jim away from the family reunion and took off again in search of Howard. (Let me point something out, we weren't out to save Howard; we just couldn't stand the thought of such a nice airplane being left out to the elements...sorry Howard if the truth hurts.) As Howard said, we passed by him at about a mile or so. We had been calling on the VHF radio religiously every one to two

minutes and as Howard said he never heard us nor us him...true line of sight devices.

After we passed by Howard's location we entered an extremely rugged canyon that we knew could not harbor his plane and the sun was going down. We decided to get Al back to the airport so he could go home and we would "reload" and give it another shot. Now you must remember that Howard's location was only 34 air miles from the airfield, but was about 65 miles by road. We got back to the airfield and met up with Holger Weitzel, the German that is here flying his ASH 26. Holger had already started to plot a location for Howard on a different set of charts. I got out my DeLorme GPS maps and we were able to put Howard's position right next to a road.

Additionally I got my GPS, PDA and battery from my airplane and we loaded up the coordinates and took off again. Brian Resor and Jimmy Weir started off at the same time, only from Albuquerque. We decided to rendezvous in Mountainair and we would strike out together. (It was obvious by the time we started out the second time that Howard was soon to be in a world of hurt as the temperature was already in the forties, down from mid-seventies experienced during the day.)

We got to Mountainair a little after eleven and soon met up with Jimmy and Brian. The main drag of Mountainair was quiet yet there seemed to be a steady stream of "cruisers" who were eyeing these four guys who had maps spread out over the hoods of their trucks, studying them with flashlights and carrying radios...I bet there were more

than a few phone calls made about the impending drug bust about to go down.

Once we had our game plan down we took off and now using GPS we were slowly closing in on Howard. After about twenty minutes, Jim and I noticed that we were traveling over familiar ground. We passed multiple empty farmsteads that would have given you a sense of safety if you were looking for a place to land, yet in reality Howard was nowhere near an occupied farm/ranch. If we weren't out looking for him nobody would have gotten him until day break.

As we passed through an old abandoned feedlot, I noticed a small white dot off in the distance. That small white dot began to move and I mentioned to Jim that I either had auto kinesis or that was someone waving a flashlight in the distance. Bingo. It was Howard. Once we pulled up the relief of finding Howard was replaced by concern as he seemed just to crash in front of us. Initially, he was all smiles and happy to see us and almost immediately he stated shaking and appeared slightly incoherent. Jimmy got him into Brian's truck and started to pour coffee into him.

We then decided to get Howard home and recover the aircraft the next day. We then split, Brian, Jimmy and Howard off to Albuquerque and Jim and I back to the Airport. I got home and into bed a little after three. We started out at 5:30, a long day but extremely rewarding.

(Next month I will recount all the things we did wrong and what we are going to do to become more efficient.)

Moriarty Operations Schedule

Date	OPS 1	OPS 2	Instructor	Tow Pilot
May 27 Saturday	HUDSON R	PHILLIPS C	COLLINS A	THOMAS R
May 28 Sunday	MARTINEZ J	SIGALA M		TICHY T
Jun 3 Saturday	WOODS R	EKDAHL C	DAFFER J	STOGNER M
Jun 4 Sunday	HUDSON R	SANDERS R		WADSWORTH H
Jun 10 Saturday	HARMONY D	BLOCH J	WIER J	WILLAN V
Jun 11 Sunday	HUSS J	BOYCE J		WRIGHT R
Jun 17 Saturday	MOCHO M	FERGUSON K	ROESKE S	WIER J
Jun 18 Sunday	AIKEN G	BUENAFE C		HILL W
Jun 24 Saturday	STEWART W	POZZI G	SAXTON H	THOMAS R
Jun 25 Sunday	CUMIFORD Jr. J			TICHY T
Jul 1 Saturday		WILSON B		CARLTON R
Jul 2 Sunday	BROTHERS L	KAWAL D	TAYLOR K	STOGNER M
Jul 8 Saturday	HARE J	BANKS H	WIER J	WADSWORTH H
Jul 9 Sunday	VREDENBURG P	OKANDAN M		WILLAN V
Jul 15 Saturday	CARRIS M	McKNIGHT P		WRIGHT R
Jul 16 Sunday	LUBITZ M	SIGALA M		CARLTON R
Jul 22 Saturday	GUILLORY S	EKDAHL C		HILL W
Jul 23 Sunday	HEERMANN A	MARTINEZ J		STOGNER M
Jul 29 Saturday	SANDERS R	WOODS R		THOMAS R

We now have a new and official Chief Ops Officer: Connie Buenafe. Thanks for volunteering Connie! Folks, contact Connie if you have questions or issues with the Ops schedule or if you have switches to let her know about.