

# Thermals

## Southwest Virginia Hang Gliding Association

### Old News

1. Congratulations to Randy Newberry on finishing 7<sup>th</sup> in the Regionals
2. Ken James has set up a hang gliding computer bulletin board at (703) 890-6229, 2400 Baud 8-bit no parity, 1 stop bit. Call him at (703) 890-0382 for info.

### New News

1. Steve Conner has been looking into opening Butt Mountain to hang gliding. It is a 2500 foot peak that faces south to west near Mountain Lake. He has permission for a small LZ a 3 to 1 glide away. The top is National Forest, and they have no objections. There is a lot of paper work to do, but it would be a great site.
2. A new gate has been put up on 12 O'clock Nob, but hopefully we can get a new key.
3. Jay Rule (Richard Cobb and Craig Rodger's office mate) has purchased a west facing mountain near Covington. It's on the road to the Hot Springs Airport. He wants to know if we are interested in putting a site on it.
4. Congratulations to Steve Conner on his 38 mile flight from Big Walker Mountain to Newport. He (and Ken Framp-ton) crossed the New River! Watch out Steve, Ken is right behind you.
5. The Newport training hill now has a fence in it. We can still fly there, but it probably not a great place for beginners.
6. Wayne Sayer may have located a new south-facing training hill in Blacksburg. We don't yet have permission but hopefully we will.
7. Bob Simonds talked to a spectator and possible driver. He is retired and available during the week. He said that he is not opposed to driving as far as Bland or Lynchburg. He is new to the area and feels that getting involved with hang gliding will help him learn his way around. This should be particularly of interest to the Roanoke pilots.

Bob Leinwebber  
4573 Buck Run Court, Apartment K  
Roanoke, Va 24014  
(703) 772-9344

8. Bring your dues to the meeting at Wayne Sayer's house Saturday, November 17, 7:00pm. Its 5\$ for this year and 5\$ for next.

### Blacksburg Pilots Fly the West

Wayne smoked a bunch of Denver pilots and got high over the Coors factory at Lookout Mountain. We met at the National Fly-in in Hartsel, Colorado. The first day, we drove Williams Mountain (north of Breckenridge). The scenery was beautiful, but the wind was from the east (over the back). So, we flew the Hartsel training hill called Bald Hill. Its a 500 foot high bump flyable 360 degrees.

The next day we drove to Mount Princeton, a 14000 foot mountain facing east. It had over developed. It looked like rain was heading our way, but many local pilots launched anyway.

I did not even set up, although Wayne did. A small thunder storm came down the valley. Lightning hit the LZ. Finally, it cleared up and Wayne took a slide ride and the locals landed.

Thursday, we headed to Badger Mountain about 25 miles east of Hartsel. The launch is a slope launch in a slot in the trees at about 10500 MSL facing west. The clouds were slowly moving from the east, but little puffs were coming in at launch.

We (about 30 gliders) all set up. Nelson Howe, the Enterprise Wings rep, made a great save about 100 feet over the LZ; he caught a thermal and worked it to cloud base. A bunch of pilots launched, and got up fast, but the wind quit.

Clair Pagan, Denis's wife, was next, but she did not like the idea of a no wind launch (at this altitude) and stepped aside. Wayne stepped up and waited. Larry Tutor carried his glider to the front of the line and ran off in dead air against the advise of the launch director. He dropped his left wing and almost ate it. He flew out front but did not find any lift and landed. Wayne launched next and scratched before finding a thermal. He got to 15400 MSL.

I launched into some light lift. I worked some light lift over some rocks where Wayne got up. I sctatched further down the mountain to a cliff which faced the sun. I worked small bubbles until some clouds (from over the back) shaded the area. I saw a glider backwards at the bottom of the slot, one of the Germans. He was fine but he had broken a leading edge.

After being in the air for about 20 minutes, I headed back towards the LZ. Over the rocks where Wayne got up, I caught a booming thermal. I spent 15 minutes circling and got to 14800 MSL. On my way up, Wayne had left heading west towards Hartsel. He complained on the CB radio that it was raining, and he was sinking out. It was over developing, and some storms and associated verga (rain that doesn't hit the ground) were moving in. I left the lift and tried to fly around the rain.

The ground was one big field all the way back to Hartsel with

one small hill. Wayne sunk out and landed a few miles ahead of me. Lightning struck the ground north of me too close for comfort so I decided to land by him instead of trying for Hartsel. I burned off my altitude and landed. Minutes later, a gust front came thru; I was glad that I was on the ground.

Larry Tutor drove by while Wayne was hitch hiking *in the rain*. He did not stop, but Nelson Howe and the German team did.

No one else had CB's. They used either Maxon USHGA business band or HAMs. The consensus was get your HAM license and a little (smaller than a CB) 5 watt HAM that will also transmit on the USHGA frequencies *and* lets you use the repeaters in the area.

We drove to Salt Lake City and took some training flights at the "soarable everyday" Point of the Mountain.

Then, we drove to Reno Nevada, where Wayne had a convention to go to. We flew Slide Mountain on Sunday morning. Its a huge rocky east facing mountain. The set-up area is a paved turn out on the side of the road, step over the guard-rail for launching on one of three ramps. The ramps are simply buried pallets. There was no one there except a few paraglider pilots, but suddenly the masses arrived. The paragliders soared but did not have the sink rate to get up high. They could (and did) land anywhere.

We set up, and it cycled in. No one wanted to launch first, but they all said that any minute the wind could turn and blow down. After two gliders launched and scratched, I stepped over the guard-rail and went.

I worked some light lift over the rocky slope and managed to stay a few hundred feet over launch. Wayne and lots of other gliders launched, and we all went up, but I stayed above (ahead of) all but a few.

I worked in various thermals to 3500 over. From 2000 to 2500 over there seemed to be a lot of turbulence. I think this was a shear into the prevailing westerly air. I got tired and never worked lift for long enough to get high again. Wayne got to 5000 over by working lift right over the top of the mountain.

Across the valley, there is a beach on the side of Little Washoe Lake. In the sand, I did a nice nosed-in. So did Wayne, after some low level wing-overs.

I met Nelson Howe again, and he offered to let me fly a new Foil Combat. Its the new competition glider from Enterprise Wings, the replacement for the Foil Racer.

The next day Wayne had to work, but I went back to Slide Mountain. I met "Olé" (Jim Olson) the guy who runs the Mexico Safaris. He spends the winter in Mexico, speaks fluent Spanish, and has a big propane-powered truck. This year, he will have new Pacific Airwave gliders: a few Kisses, a bunch of Formulas, and some Visions. He seemed like he would be a good guide.

With Nelson's help, we set up the Combats. They have 8 full battons, 2 half battons, 5 under-surface battons, on each wing (and a nose batton). Other than too many battons, step-up was quick and easy. It had no tip, and tensioning the wing was

done easily with the VG cord. Two rigid also wings set up.

I got ready on the ramp. The side-wires were quite loose, but it didn't cause any trouble. I made a good launch and gained. After one pass, I was 200 feet above. Right in front of launch, a thermal was breaking off. I got in it and felt so comfortable (in control) that I circled back into the hill. I gained about 800 and headed to where I got up yesterday. I gained about two thousand but lost the lift. One of the rigid wings crashed on launch. Evidentially, one of his rudder cables broke, but he was O.K. I saw Nelson getting up fast. Although he passed me, I stayed with the thermal until I was 5800 over, that's 16000 MSL.

I was worried about hypoxia, but I did not feel any symptoms. I could still count backwards from 100. I was getting tired and cold. I flew out over the lake and boated around.

As I set up to land, there was a thermal breaking off. I worked it until it was gone. I made my approach in the nice smooth air below it. I came in over the beach and made a *perfect* landing.

The Combat the a great glider because its so easy to fly *and* has a great sink rate and top-end speed. It reminded me of my old Gemini. The roll response is immediate but not squirly. I flew with some clip-on wheels and could not tighten the VG, but I wish I could have played with it.

Tuesday, I met Wayne at the convention. We drove to Zulu Ridge in Red Rocks. The site is a 400 foot high west facing ridge. The ridge can be top landed but is not flat on top. It is rounded and somewhat bumpy. We had been warned about getting to far behind the top mountain when top landing. out front

The weather was partly cloudy, and there had been some rain in the area earlier in the day. When we arrived the wind was 10-15 and crossing about 30° to 45°, so we waited. The wind direction improved, and we set-up.

Wayne walked to launch. I helped him steady his wing, but it was not turbulent at all. He ran and was flying. He dropped his right wing and started running *again* then he was off. He gained a few hundred feet. The sun was setting, and I carried my glider to the launch area. I had a good launch and soared in the smooth ridge lift.

Wayne started experimenting with top landing. He kept overshooting, but on his third attempt he was down. He started moving his glider toward launch. I flew fast and got low (60-75 over) I don't remember much past here, but I and flew down the ridge with about 20-30 feet of altitude over the top of the mountain. About 20-30 feet behind the top of the mountain, the I turned on final. I had my hands on the down tubes but was still partially prone. At about 8 feet, the my glider suddenly dropped to the ground without any change in pitch. I woke up in the hospital with a nurse scrubbing my face with salt water. I had a concussion and a cracked cheek bone. Thursday, I got out of intensive care. Friday, I flew home. I have almost completely recovered and am back in the air.

I had never watched or attempted a top landing before, but was experienced with highly turbulent LZ's (Walker). I think

my glider stalled after encountering a rotor or severe gradient. Although I was pulled in, should have been flying faster and may have been to far back. It has also been suggested that if I had been fully upright, the injuries may have been less severe. The accident was caused by a combination of a lot of inexperience and a little bad luck.

Always, be vigilant about safety.

Wayne flew the Owens Valley and had some great flights. On his way back, he soared Point of the Mountain and Mount Williams. He even lost his clothes at a hot springs, but you will have to ask him about that.

## Meeting in Blacksburg

Wayne Sayer's house Saturday, November 17, 7:00pm.

Call him at 552-0446 or (work) 552-9012 or me at 552-9856 or (work) 231-7187 if you have any questions. We will try to ghet a new phane and address list together then. Please, distribute this and invite anyone you think would like to come.

— Paul Tidwell

