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MEMBER MILESTONES

In July **Wayne Neckles** earned his Hang 3 Intermediate Rating. Heartfelt congratulations to “Super Wayne” who has super flying skills (including restricted landing area and shallow launch endorsements), is a super nice guy, and the driving force behind the launch improvements in Ellenville and Brace Mountain. Hooray for Wayne!

Super Wayne



Also in July **Nikolay Stoyanev** made his maiden mountain launch at Brace. Well done and congratulations to you, Nikolay.

We wish you both success and safety in all your future flying endeavors.



Nikolay in the LZ at Brace after his first flight

SPOTLIGHT ON ... In this issue, instructor extraordinaire **Greg Black** tells us about his history as a pilot and shares some words of wisdom for his students based on his 30 years as an instructor.

Part I – Greg the PILOT

When did you start flying and what got you into hang gliding? Do you fly anything else? Started flying hang gliders in 1974, master rating in '85. I started flying with my Dad in a 1948 Luscombe 8-E/F, the same airplane that is now in my shop. Here is my condensed version: The first time I saw a person launch a hang glider was off the side of 52, no ramp at all and he went into the trees, blown launch. I was there with a bunch of friends to see what hang gliding was all about. I watched them pull the guy back up to the road and duct tape the glider back together, sticks taped to the broken battens and off he went again. I told the group that this was stupid and did not want to watch, that I was not interested in watching the crazy people kill themselves and I went back in the car to smoke another bone. This was 1973. The following year a friend said he wanted to try hang gliding and I told him of a friend who had one in his garage, we went to look at it and it was an all white standard, no battens but had a five foot marijuana leaf painted on the sail so I just had to have it. The glider had no wires or harness so we took it to the airport where my dad flew out of at the time and bought cable and turn buckles and made a hang glider. The harness was two clothesline ropes from Mom and a 2x4 with holes for the rope, the rope did not even go across the bottom so if the board broke we would have fallen out. Not knowing anything about hang gliding, wind or that we needed to run into the wind we would just load up the glider, a cooler of beer, and hand full of bones and looked for a hill. The fun part was all the cars that would stop by to watch and drink beer and smoke. We would run down the hill, no crashing, no flying, just a lot

of running, for half the summer. Then I got a bright idea that if Bruce and his two sons ran with the rope I had just hooked to the glider, can't remember where. My orders were for them to let go if I yelled, well, a breeze came in, they ran, I ran and the glider zoomed up about 30 ft instantly and I yelled out of excitement and they let go, guess what happened next. Nose high, bar out, real high, no instruction. Gave the glider back to the guy and never went back. The next Spring another friend said he was going to Towaco, NJ for lessons with his Mother and did I want to come along, well I did and I was the last one in my class of 10 to get off the ground, I just wasn't getting it, well, my last attempt was my first flight and I landed on my feet. This was the last flight of the day and just had to have a glider, I bought one that day and did the rest of my training myself on the Bee hill with my friend George. That summer I felt I had trained myself enough to fly the mountain so I drove up by myself, set up and launched on a day when gliders were up at 7 K , I went off the road about ½ mile north of the existing ramp site. Needless to say I really believed I did it this time, that this was it, that I was going to die. I had sucked the bar in so much that water was running from my eyes and I really could not see too well there were so many tears. I can, however, still remember seeing the trees swirling below me as it was really blowing hard. At tree top level I felt at home again and relaxed the bar and came in for a no step landing 10 feet from the spot. Now the reason I landed 10 feet from the spot was not because I was a great pilot but because it just happened to be where I landed. The landing area at that time was just below the road launch at the southern most corner of the corn field. Oh how things have changed. The rest is history and boy do I have stories. I am also a Basic Flight Instructor for Light Sport Aircraft and had a two place Flight Star Sport plane I taught in for years. I also towed hang gliders with it at the airport in Ellenville.



Rare bird – Greg in flight (photos by Sue Sparrow)



Greg in his Freedom Full Race with VG & PE 15 Mylar

Where have you flown that you particularly enjoyed?

Where else would you like to fly? I would like the chance to fly in Hawaii. I flew an ultra-light there for over 35 hours but when I went to the main Island (where I was told it was always flyable) I sat on the launch for four days watching it blow down and never got to fly a hang glider there. I think the best local site is Jacks in PA and Woodstock in VA. I also enjoy flying at Lookout Mountain. I have never been skunked at any of these sites, always good.

I have flown close to 100 different sites around the country, my favorite being Fort Funston which was only 10 mins from where I worked near San Francisco. I would drive there on the way to work in the morning, set my glider up, tie it down behind the bunker and go to work. Half hour before my lunch break I would eat so I had my whole lunch hour to fly, it took just 10 min to get to my glider and I would fly until I had just enough time to get back to work, sometimes I never made it back to work because the shear would set up, well f_ _ _ work when you are 3k above the 175 ft sand dune you just took off from, I think you will agree. I logged over 1300 hours at Fort Funston. My second favorite site is the North Side at The Point of the Mountain in Utah. There are so many cool sites around the country, you have no idea. Where else would I like to fly you ask? Hell, just flying here again would be wonderful.

What was your first hang glider? What do you fly now?

My first real glider was the one I bought in NJ, it was called a Star Ship, it was the first deflexerless glider, a remake of the Bob Cat, it had three battens at the tips

and that was all. I now fly the full race Mylar Freedom with VG by North Wing and I do believe it is the best flying glider I have ever flown, the best handling, and most fun glider ever, and so easy and confidence building that it will make any pilot a great pilot. And it looks cool too.

Who is your flying hero? My Dad, Wayne (Neckles), & Dan Raccanelli

What else do you do for fun? When I get a chance to have fun I like to kayak, mountain bike, ride my 4 wheeler, do things with my girlfriend, (please note these are not in order, LOL) hike, explore the local caves, cook for my students, hell I have so many things that are fun but I really don't have time any more to do to many of them. For now flying my new Freedom VG & spending quality time with Susan are what I like the most.

Part II – Greg the INSTRUCTOR

What do you most like about being a hang gliding instructor? Seeing the look on the students faces ,their eyes popping out and they can't stop yelling after their feet come off the ground for the first time. They truly have little "airgasm" after their first flights, then when they do their first mountain flights, this is very rewarding for me. It makes it all worthwhile. Wow do I feel wonderful giving such pleasure to people. Besides, where else beside the Army can you get paid for yelling at strangers. LOL

What are some of your proudest achievements as an instructor? As a pilot? Believe me, every first flight off the mountain for one of my students is an incredibly proud moment for me. I get attached to every student, this is why I strive for them to be the best they can be, yes I am a little hard on my students but everyone of my students are better pilots then from any other school around and they all know that and appreciate that in the end. Our new hang II's are landing in my training hill LZ and the competition's students can hardly land in the large LZ , I think I make very proud pilots.

What is the most important thing you want your students to learn about flying? Wow, now that is a hard question. That the hard work they put in to the training pays off with a life time of safe and fun and rewarding flying and they will make friends for the rest of their lives. That they are all alone up there and need

to remember to never stop flying the glider, to always "be the pilot".

If you had to choose another profession in life , what would it be? I did not know that answer when my high school counselor asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up and I don't know the answer now.

(Thanks Greg!)

UPDATE ON LAUNCH WORK

Much effort by numerous NASA members and friends has been invested into the improvement of flying sites in recent months. Both the road to the North Knob in Ellenville and the long, long road to Brace Mountain launch progressed significantly over the summer. Thanks to everyone who helped!

Extending the access road to North Knob launch



North Knob, Ellenville

The road was cleared to around 100' from Route 52, cleared of trees and stones and much of it covered with hard packed gravel. The wall along the side continued to grow as well. Legally the right of way was obtained and put into the deed to be held in perpetuity by the club.

Next steps/How you can help:

- A work party is needed to **clear the ramp** and surrounding areas, including chain sawing the trees in front and to the south to keep it clear for turns after launching.
- Anyone with carpentry skills is needed to help **build the set up** area at the top of the ramp where hang checks are done.

- Greg will rent an excavator to **extend the road access**. If anyone is available during the week to help this will make the work go much faster and reduce the club's cost of renting the equipment.

Brace Mountain

Agreement was reached with the Mount Riga Association to permit limited vehicular access along the 1.75 mile hiking path to the base of the vertical path leading to the launch. A team of volunteers from NASA and the local club (both HG and PG pilots) worked in the pouring rain one July weekend to widen the path and remove debris, while Wayne – in his trusty excavator – cleared giant boulders and repaired the bridges along the way. Presently the path can accommodate narrower trucks but future widening may allow larger vehicles to enter. It is a BIG help in conveying gliders and equipment to the wonderful Brace launch and the hope is that this will become more popular as a hang glider site because of it.

Some Members of the Brace Work Party



NASA Membership: Please be reminded that your dues is critically important to the ability of NASA to open and maintain flying sites. Insurance is a major expense that increased in 2009 and again in 2010. The construction work to improve the launches has costs associated with it as well. Therefore it is very important that each member be current with dues payments in order to retain access to NASA sites.

FLIGHT VIDEOS

As more of us fly with cameras we're generating some interesting videos that may also be useful for training and analysis. Please send links to any flight-related videos you have posted on the internet that you would like to share with others and they will be compiled for distribution in the newsletter. They can be links to individual videos or to your personal web "channel". To get us started on this collection:

Wayne Neckles' You Tube channel:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/waynecneckles>

Cathleen O'Connell's You Tube channel:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/cathocopter>

End of this issue of the newsletter - Safe flying everyone!

Thanks to the following members and friends for their contributions to this month's issue: *Sue Sparrow, Greg Black, Cathleen O'Connell*

Contribute an item to the newsletter: Members and friends of NASA are requested to send in ideas, articles, photos, web links, notices, and other content that would be of interest to the NASA community. Contact Cathleen with your suggestions.

