

# SLOPE RACING!

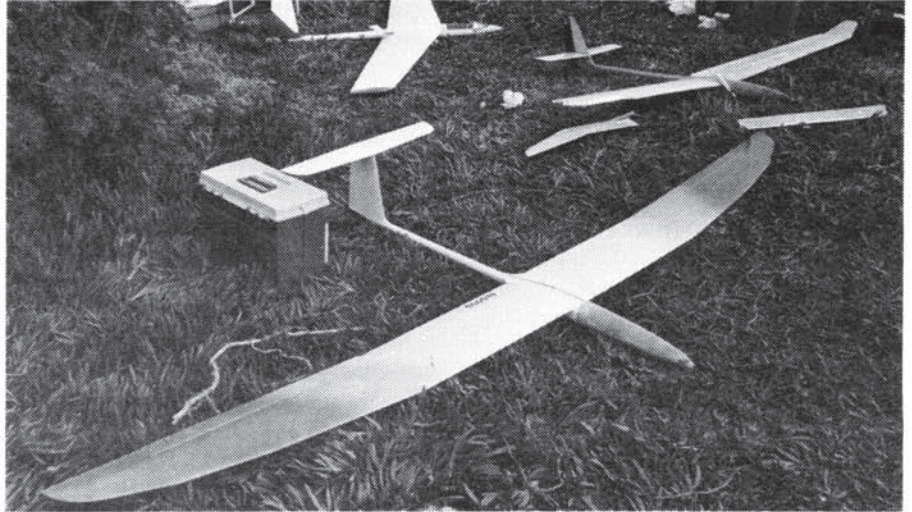
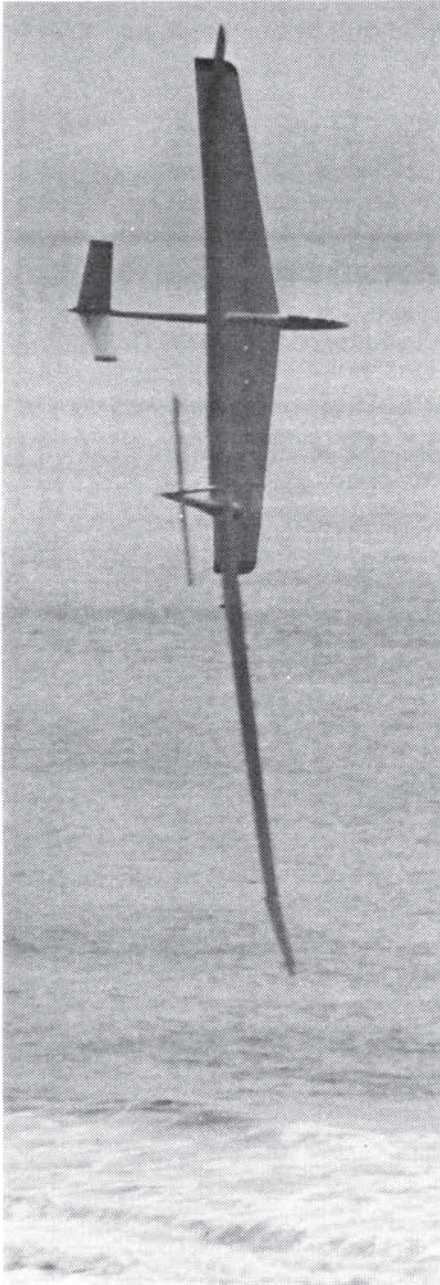
Turning and Burning at Davenport  
with the South Bay Soaring Society

# Slope Soaring News

Vol. 1, No. 6

March-April 1989

\$1.50



### Stretching the envelope.

(Left) High speeds and wing-clicking turns make slope racing the most exciting sport in radio-control soaring. (Above) Contest Director Mike Forster designed and built this impressive, one-off Yahoo. (Below left) Team Snipe, Jerry Bridgeman and Jason Perrin. (Below right) Ron Vann and his awesome Eliminator II...before the crash.



- "Frequing" Out: An AMA Frequency-Bulletin Warning – See page 2! ●
- The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Gregg Okert's New Vader-Plane Business ●
- Site of the Month: LA's Dockweiler State Beach ● Air Mail Avalanche!

# Wingin' It

## "Freqing" Out

I found this notice while browsing the Academy of Model Aeronautics section of the CompuServe computer bulletin board. It involves FCC regulation of our frequencies.

— Charlie Morey

### Frequency Bulletin: March 1989

The month of March, often recognized for its breezy nature, brought winds of concern for the Academy and modelers in general. Several petitions of great importance to the radio control community were filed with the FCC for the purpose of rule making.

Two petitions involve the proposed sharing of the frequencies granted modelers by the FCC in 1982. A bridge crane company has proposed sharing all of the 75 MHz frequencies with surface model users. A second, more recent proposal, was filed by Kenneth J. Seymour. This proposal would result in the shared use of all 72 and 75 MHz model frequencies for commercial personal direction finding and tracking equipment.

Both of these proposals represent a serious threat to modeling activity. Not only could the operation of these devices affect model operation, there is a possible severe safety problem beyond the realm of modeling. As an illustration, a crane lifting tons of material could be interfered with, unknowingly, by a child operating a model car nearby. Other applications such as tow trucks or valve actuators on fuel delivery trucks present a similar safety hazard.

While the use of a tracking device to locate lost children, campers, or personal property by law enforcement agencies suggests a laudable use, their operation on a shared basis with model frequencies also presents a serious safety concern. The range of these devices is anticipated to be 1,000 to 1,500 meters (4,921 feet) on the ground. An operational range of this magnitude results in each unit effectively becoming a single-frequency model site! Consider the ramifications of one of these units in continuous operation in a motor home as it moves about the country!

The Academy, on your behalf, has

filed letters of opposition to these two petitions with the FCC. It appears that the model frequencies were targeted for shared use because they represent a license-free opportunity for commercial application. This presents a considerable savings in time and money for the company. As more information is obtained from our attorney in this matter, it will be made known immediately.

The Academy's attention is focused on two other FCC petitions as well, one submitted by the AMA and another by Glenn Whidden. Both primarily address the issue of requiring transmitters manufactured in the future to meet the AMA's 1991 guidelines for "narrow-band" operation.

Much misinformation and conjecture has been heard recently concerning what might happen in 1991. Actually, that is not a magic date. Coaches will not turn into pumpkins and old radio units will not dissolve to dust. The January 1, 1991 date simply signifies the end of the period designed to phase in all the frequencies which were assigned to service in 1982. It had been hoped that by 1991 all RC model aircraft in use would be capable of operating at a 20 KHz spacing. It appears at this point that such a goal is premature.

The immediate concern is what course of action the FCC might take with these two petitions. There are, in fact, three possible scenarios. The first is that they could refuse the premise of requiring "narrowbanding" for radios produced in the future. That would have tragic consequences since we probably would never be able to affect full frequency usage and it would leave us more vulnerable to commercial interference. We would have no protection against new RC equipment which could be introduced for sale that would meet current FCC specifications, but would not work in many present radio environment situations which need "narrow-band" operation.

The second scenario would involve the FCC acceptance of the "narrowbanding" concept to be applied to all transmitters manufactured from the date of rule effectivity, with provisions for a reasonable period of time allowing the use of existing transmitters. This scenario has been the traditional course taken by the FCC.

The last scenario could develop if the

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### STAFF

Charlie Morey  
Chuck Korolden

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS are welcomed. Unfortunately, we can't pay for them. Editorial material is selected based on its perceived value to the slope-soaring community, and the publisher assumes no responsibility for accuracy of content.

CLUB CONTRIBUTIONS are welcomed. Please keep us notified of your club's events and/or fun flying activities. Material printed will be selected at the discretion of the editors.

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS should be addressed to SSN, c/o Charlie Morey, 2601 E. 19th St., #29, Signal Hill, CA 90804. All contributions requested for return must be accompanied by return postage. The editorial deadline is the 15th of the month preceding the cover date. All material is subject to editing and revision as necessary to meet SSN requirements. We can accept Ascii text files over the phone or work with your IBM-compatible 3-1/2" or 5-1/4" disk. Please call first for details at 213/494-3712. Don't get depressed if you get our answering machine. Just leave your name, phone number and the purpose of your call, and we'll get back to you.

ADVERTISING inquiries should be addressed to SSN, c/o Charlie Morey, 2601 E. 19th St., #29, Signal Hill, CA 90804, 213/494-3712.

SUBSCRIPTIONS are \$15.95 per year in the U.S.; \$22 U.S. currency per year in Canada/Mexico; \$26 U.S. per year in Europe/England; \$30 U.S. per year in Asia/Pacific/Middle East.

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faster

higher

easier

# US sailplanes

FCC perceived a severe operational or safety problem with the continued use of older equipment, resulting in their requiring that all transmitters be "narrowband" at some early date. The past history of the FCC does not suggest that this course of action would be taken.

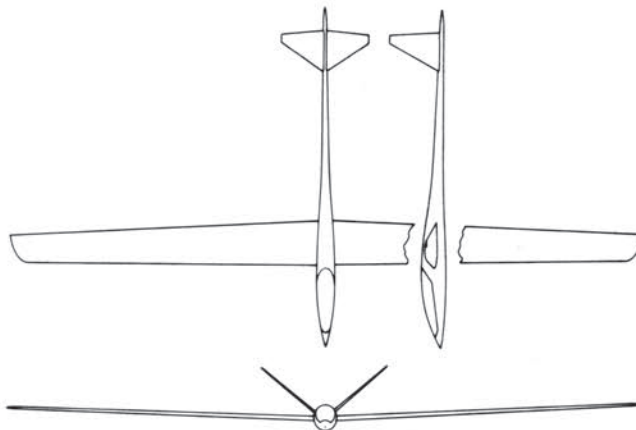
Since there is a strong likelihood of a "grandfather" period for older equipment, the Academy is developing recommended ways that clubs and individuals can use to operate with a mix of equipment. When the final FCC decision is made we can then be prepared to meet any contingency. It should be noted that the FCC rule-making process typically takes a minimum of nine to 12 months. As a result, it will be well into 1990 before final decisions can be expected.

Several other activities are underway to help clubs and individuals in frequency matters. The Academy is considering the use of a service that can provide the exact location and power level of transmitters operating on the commercial frequencies 10 KHz from ours. Being able to disseminate this information to modelers would help with frequency selection and management at flying sites. A companion service already available is the use of an Icom receiver (scanner) at sites. These newly-purchased units are now in the hands of each AMA district Vice President or Frequency Coordinator. The Icom can provide valuable information in the form of the strength of other signals that may cause potential interference. In order to effectively use this information, the Frequency Committee has already begun to gather data that will help us determine what level of interference will cause problems for the various ages and types of equipment. Lastly, the Sticker Station program that allows individuals to determine the status of their transmitters has been greatly expanded. A listing of those stations will be forthcoming.

The Academy is focused on many concerns in radio frequency matters in order to create a safe, enjoyable environment for radio control operation. It is not an easy task. With your patient understanding and the cooperation of the FCC and manufacturers, we believe our goal can be accomplished with a minimum of sacrifice on the modelers' part.



## Umax



**Category :** Slope soarer - light to moderate lift  
Aerobatic - order with 1/64 th ply wingskins. Still good for light lift and very rugged!  
Strictly light lift and/or thermal - order balsa skins. Use medium hi-start or medium winch.

**Controls :** 2 channel (pitcheron) use either electronic or mechanical mixer (electr. shown on drawing)- this gives aileron and elevator control.

**Structure :** Fuselage - Epoxy/glass/kevlar composite molding . Seamless, pressure laminated. Hatch pre-cut, holes drilled, tail mount holes pre-drilled. Weight 7ozs. Lay-up equivalent to 5 layers 4oz. cloth.

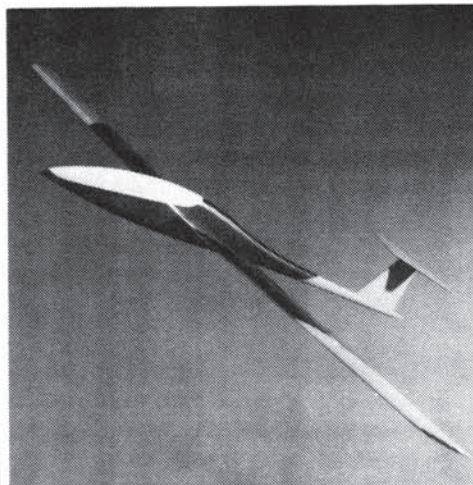
**Wings :** Blue foam cores  
1/64th ply skins (aerobat-cruiser)  
1/16th balsa skins (light lift; spars for winch/hi-start optional)

**Tails :** Sheet balsa, plug on.

**Dimensions :**  
Span = 78.75 ins / 2M Length = 44.5ins  
Root chord = 5.7 ins Tip chord = 3.5 ins  
Area = 362 sq. ins. / 2.5 sq.ft.  
Weight = 18-20 ozs. (airframe only)  
28-30 ozs. total  
Wing loading = 12 ozs/sq. ft.  
Airfoils : Eppler 374

**Status/Pricing :** Available 3/31/89 \$112.95(balsa) \$119.95(ply)  
Pre-skinned cores(ply version only) add \$30.00  
Washington state residents add 8.1% SST

## ROTOR



**Category :** Dedicated slope soarer

**Options :** 2m light lift wing kit-plugs on to same wingrod-fuselage.

**Dimensions :** Span = 58 in ( 2m light lift )  
Root/tip chords = 6.5/4.5 ins  
Aspect ratio = 11 ( 14 light lift )  
Area = 305 (441) sq.ins.  
Weight = 31 (36) ozs.  
Wing loading = 15 (12) ozs/sq. ft.

**Controls :** 2 channel , Pitcheron  
2 servos of 50 oz.-in. torque minimum  
Electronic or mechanical mixing ok

**Wing section :** Eppler 374 @ 7.5% ( 9.5%)

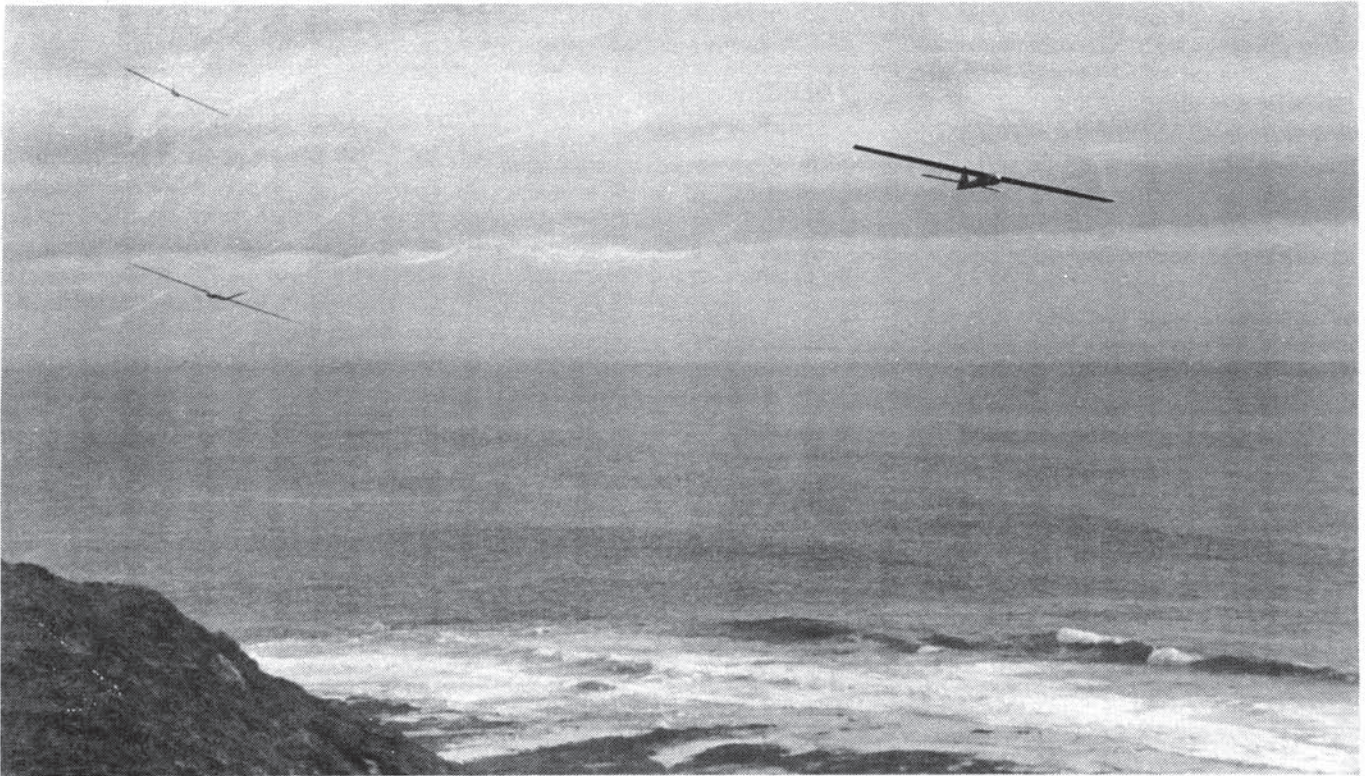
**Structure :** Fuselage - light ply and bass , no glassing required.  
Wing - Standard : blue foam cores , dense obechi skins, spruce LE.  
- Light lift : balsa skins  
Tail - all balsa , nylon bolt mounted

**Pricing :** Standard ROTOR kit \$64.95  
Light lift wing kit \$24.95  
Pre-sheated wings add \$25.00  
(avail. for standard wing only )  
Shipping \$ 3.00  
Wash state res add 8.1%sst

### ORDERING

send check or money order (cash COD OK) to

US sailplanes 2317 N63rd Seattle, WA 98103 206 525 5776



### And they're off and running at Davenport!

Slope racing combines high-tech design and skilled composite-construction building techniques with precise, high-speed flying abilities and an experienced eye for changing wind/lift conditions.

## The Need For Speed!

### Slope Racing Tests Builders' Skills and Pilots' Nerves

By Charlie Morey

Racing improves the breed. Cliché, but true. We've seen it in our automobiles (heard the word "turbo" lately?) and of course, it applies to our sport of radio-control soaring, too. Without competition, our state-of-the-art gliders would be built using tissue and balsa.

It appears that most of the new technology has come from international F3B sailplane competition and from our mimicking full-scale glider construction techniques. Fiberglass is the most popular composite material, and it's reinforced (literally) by such exotics as Kevlar® for toughness and carbon fiber for rigidity. The resulting model is sleek, strong and precise.

Slope racing combines high-tech model building with the excitement of head-to-head competition and the camaraderie of teamwork. It's intense, it's demanding and it's a lot of fun!

The South Bay Soaring Society is a racing club. Of this year's U.S. F3B team, for example, all are South Bay

members except SoCal's Larry Jolly (who won the qualifying event held last fall). So, when the SBSS newsletter, ably edited by John Dvorak, announced a series of slope racing events, we felt it

#### Happiness is...

...winning! Daryl Perkins' preparation, flying skill and racing luck put him in first place when it was over.



was time to make a trip up north.

The club has permission to use a private full-scale landing strip located on a bluff overlooking the Pacific. Located just north of Davenport, the site offers both good lift and a beautiful view. Davenport is the site of SBSS's traditional International Slope Race, an event that died of apathy last year but hopefully is scheduled for resurrection in 1989.

Changing conditions throughout the day kept competitors busy loading or unloading ballast and reacting to organizers decisions. Early on, dead air threatened to cancel the race entirely. Then later, a fog bank swept through the middle of a heat forcing contestants to land quickly or lose sight of their planes. Contest Michael Forster considered calling the event due to weather, but a few minutes later the fog cleared and racing resumed.

The day was highlighted by several brilliant flights by Daryl Perkins (the eventual winner), Mark Allen (ultimately the co-victim in a mid-air col-



**Not bad for a "thermal" plane...**  
 Ron Vann launches Mark Allen's modified Falcon. Allen (Flite Lite Composites, P.O. Box 1493, Windsor, CA 95492) designed and kitted it for state-of-the-art thermal competition but prepped this one for slope racing and was running well until a crash sidelined him.



lision with Snipe pilot Jason Perrin—who had also won both his heats) and Ron Vann (another mid-air casualty). Several of the most impressive sailplanes—Allen's modified Falcon, Perrin's Snipe and Vann's Eliminator II—went home in fragments.

Three sets of five-lap races (maximum four planes per race) were run. Scoring gives one point for a win, two for second place, three for third and four for fourth. Low score at the end would determine a winner, except that ties usually occur when the competition is close. Ties are broken by fly-offs.

In this event, the three heats produced a four-way tie for first place, so the fly-off actually determined places one through four.

Watch for more information on these slope racing planes and others in next month's *SSN*.



**We're talkin' intense!**

Oliver Northrup, concentrating to put his radically-modified little Nisus into third place against the big guys.

**Miller time!**

Flying buddies John Dvorak and Jay Brehm had good reason to be pleased at trophy time! Jay finished first Sportsman; John, first Fledgling.



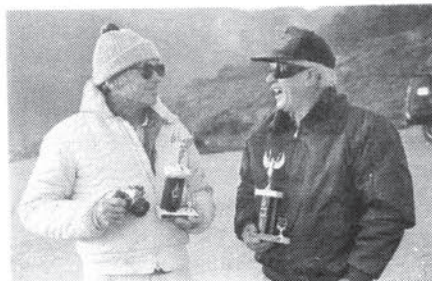
**"That's racing..."**

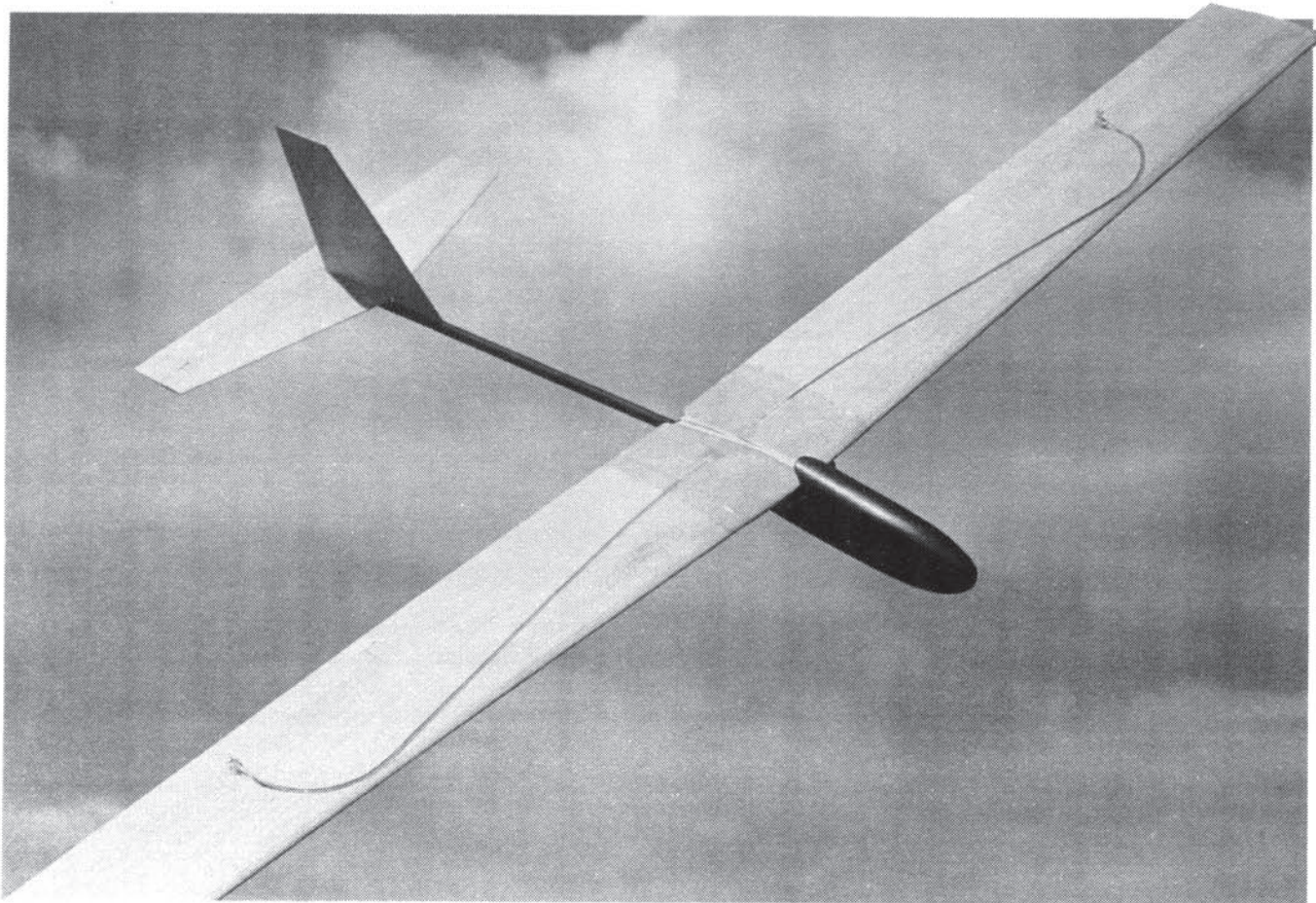
Above: Going, going, gone. Ron Vann's beautiful Eliminator II hits the deck. Below: Jason Perrin and Mark Allen, crawling from the wreckage.



**RESULTS**

- Expert  
 1. Daryl Perkins..... Mueller Comet  
 2. Tom Stone .....Eliminator  
 3. Oliver Northrup.....Modified Nisus  
 4. Mike Forster .....Yahoo  
 5. Sam Shiller ..... Modified Sigma  
 Sportsman  
 1. Jay Brehm  
 Fledgling  
 1. John Dvorak





**High-performance/small-slope/light-lift specialist.**

The 42" pod-and-boom aileron ship can click off quick aerobatics, and with a total weight of 10-12 ounces, it'll fly almost anywhere! (The aileron control-cable grooves are filled on the finished model, by the way.)

## The Sorcerer's Apprentice

### Gregg Okert Tries His Hand At Dick Vader's Magic

By Charlie Morey

**L**ou, the cockatiel, has his beak tucked under his wing feathers. Below him, the noise of a powerful automotive air sander shatters the silence, and a cloud of balsa dust rises into his airspace.

Gregg Okert is plying the skills of his newly-learned trade and creating a facsimile of Dick Vader's notorious 42" pod-and-boom aileron glider.

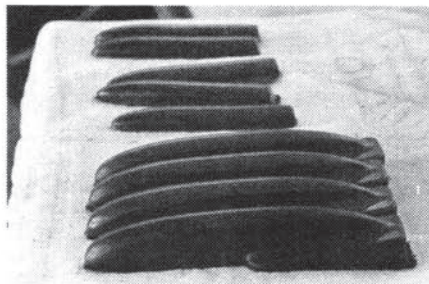
#### The Sorcerer

Vader is local legend. He has built nothing but his trademark pod-and-boomers—both aileron and rudder/polyhedral—for the last decade, polishing and refining the design to perfection. The small ships are designed to fly efficiently on small slopes, and with their relatively huge control surfaces, are very aerobatic even in a light breeze.

An entire plane typically weighs 10 to 13 ounces, depending on the radio system. With a wing area of 1.3 sq. ft., that yields a wingloading of 7.7 to 10 oz./sq. ft. Hand launches are a religious experience. The first 50 feet are free; after that, it depends on your javelin throwing talents...

#### Production-line pods.

Need a high-impact styrene pod for your own design? No problem!



Vader sell his planes completely built, minus radio. All control rods and cables are installed; you simply mount your servos and hook 'em up.

There's only one problem with the Vader planes: For most people, it's impossible to get one. Although Dick appreciates the compliments people give his gliders and he enjoys the local "fame" he's attained, he refuses to get caught up in the rat race of business.

A few years ago, a writer published his phone number with a story about his planes. For Vader, that was a terrible experience. People called from all over the country, at all times of the day and night, and he couldn't even begin to meet their demands for his handbuilt aircraft.

Dick is an artist, and that's how he builds his gliders. To begin mass-production of them would go against his

grain. He's a craftsman. He carefully fits each piece by hand, blending an assortment of high-impact styrene, carbon-fiber arrowshafts, spruce, light balsa and wire into a delightful mobile sculptures.

As a result, he builds only a few gliders a year, hardly enough to keep his Long Beach fans happy, much less the rest of the slope soaring world.

### The Apprentice

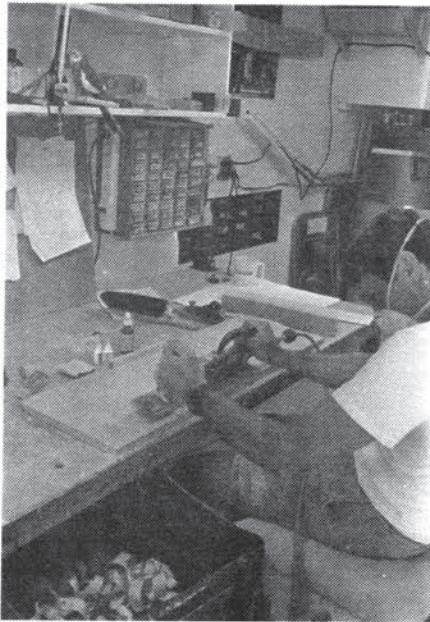
Gregg Okert was one the unfortunate ones. He wanted a Vader plane, but realized he'd probably never be able to get one. So, he decided to learn the sorcerer's secrets. Gregg spent an entire month, every day, with Vader. And Dick, willing to share his methods with any of us, showed him how to build the Vader planes, assuming that he'd build gliders for his own use.

Okert took the information, added his own refinements to the pod-and-boom design, and came out with a new glider that's very similar to Dick's.

As a result, slope soaring enthusiasts who could never hope to get a real Vader plane can now order an Okert model that's an almost-identical clone.

They're still hand built, so don't expect to see them in brightly-packaged boxes at your local hobby shop. But Gregg keeps six to 10 of each model in stock, so turnaround time should be reasonable.

He offers two designs: a rudder/elevator polyhedral floater and the 42" aileron ship. They come fully assembled and finished. They're typically



### Lou's world.

Lou-the-cockatiel oversees Gregg Okert's wing-shaping operation

flown without covering; the balsa surfaces are sealed with a clear finish. Ready for a one-hour radio installation job, they sell for \$100 each.

Okert also offers separate parts: wings, rough pods and finished fuselages. The untrimmed, vacuum-formed styrene pods are \$15 each, a wing goes for \$45, and an assembled pod and arrowshaft boom (no tail surfaces or control rods) costs \$30.

### Ethics?

I did a lot of thinking before I wrote this article. Dick Vader's a good friend,

and I respect him and his work. I talked with him about this unexpected competition, and he's not happy. Who could blame him?

My choices were (1) not print anything about it at all, (2) side with Dick and print an exposé of Okert's actions, (3) side with Gregg at the expense Vader's friendship, (4) simply tell the story as it happened.

As you can see, I chose number four. While I don't agree with Gregg's methods, I have been flying the Vader planes for the last year, and I'm convinced that everyone should have one. Dick doesn't want to go into full production. Gregg does. I'm sure that Dick will still be able to sell as many as he wants to produce and that Okert's sales will not hurt him. There are many slope fliers — especially the Long Beach locals — who demand only a Vader original.

And then there's the obligation of an editor to his readers. Would you have preferred that this story not be published? Or would you rather know the facts and then be able to make your own decision about it?

If Dick decides to upgrade his production, you'll read about it first here in *SSN*. Until then, I'll respect his decision to build gliders for a limited audience. You can order a plane from Gregg at the address/phone listed below.

**Gregg Okert**  
1917 Las Lanos Ave.  
Fullerton, CA 92633  
714/879-7607



## Special Notice to Slope Soaring News Subscribers, Dealers and Advertisers

AS YOU CAN SEE, I'VE COMBINED THE MARCH AND APRIL ISSUES.

Any small business goes through growing pains, and *Slope Soaring News* is no exception. Those of you who read my *Wingin' It* column last month have already heard about the difficulty I've had producing the newsletter in a timely manner. I hope the content and quality have at least partially compensated for its lateness. Combining March and April will help me get the May issue (and all that follow it) to you on time. In the meantime, the problem has been solved. Response has been good to my request for help. I've already received articles from several sources. Thank you! Any of you who feel qualified and interested in sharing some of your knowledge with our readers, please give me a call to discuss your story ideas.

TO COMPENSATE FOR COMBINING THESE TWO ISSUES, I WILL ADD ONE MONTH TO THE END OF YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS, DEALER ORDERS AND ADVERTISING SCHEDULES.

Thanks for your patience! — Charlie Morey



**Mellow out on Dockweiler's gentle slope.**

If you're looking for a good place to relax at the beach and float your polyhedral ship around – and if sunbathers in tiny bikinis don't undermine your pilot's concentration – then Dockweiler's the place to play!

**Site of the Month**

**DOCKWEILER STATE BEACH**

By Campbell MacInnes

So...you have a rudder/elevator plane you're trying to test out, you're just learning, or you're simply tired of the crowds at Hughes Hill? Then Dockweiler State Beach (Los Angeles/El Segundo) is the place to go to!

Dockweiler is rumored to have been an official City-of-Los-Angeles Model Glider Port at one time, although it has become less popular in recent years due to the development of heavier, faster power scalers and its loss of free parking.

The Dockweiler bluff is located about 300 yards south of the main parking lot entrance, directly across the road from the sewage treatment plant. Although you used to be able to park for free in front of the treatment plant, due to ongoing construction, the only parking is in the Dockweiler State Beach parking lot (\$3-5).

Dockweiler has a very low (20') bluff about 150 yards long. Lift is consistent along all parts, although if one is picky there are some sections which are a little irregular. Due to the construction, a hill (40') has been built at the south end and this makes for some more creative

flying.

Dockweiler is great for learning because the beach in front of the bluff is relatively large, and a beginner can practice by flying straight out from the bluff and landing on the sand. The bluff is not high enough to exhaust anyone climbing back up it, and it's always possible to stay on the beach and make practice throws.

There used to be a nice, large, 150' open space to land behind the bluff. With the construction, however, two parallel fences have been erected to "house" the construction and the sand-moving equipment. This reduces the landing area behind the bluff to a maximum of about 50'. The fencing also reduces the chance of a runaway plane going into the road and causing an accident.

Another feature of Dockweiler is the bicycle path directly in front of the bluff for its entire length. The bicycle path is out of the lift area, but just barely.

The glider/bicycle rules are as follows:

1. Avoid the bicycle path
2. See #1
3. If you forget #1 and #2, sacrifice and crash your glider to avoid a bicyclist. Bicyclists have been hit and have also fallen, but to my knowledge none of the accidents have even upgraded to minor, except to the gliders (a glider being run over by a bicycle

makes this noise: crunch, crunch.).

Other great features of Dockweiler are the lifeguard stations (2-3) and the people "laying out" on the beach. The lifeguard stations are always great for quasi-buzzing (quasi-buzzing is when they don't know you're doing it). The people on the beach just make off-bluff landings a little awkward.

**Excuses to Drive to Dockweiler**

It's right next to LAX, so if you have to pick up or drop off relatives, you can go there. If your wife, girlfriend, kids, etc. want to go to the beach, but you want to fly – ta-daa – two birds, one stone. If Hughes Hill and other local flying sites are too crowded, Dockweiler provides a relaxing respite.

**Emergency Supplies**

To the south: Chuck's Model Shop and Hobby Shack, both in Hawthorne. To the north: Everett's Model Shop in Santa Monica or The Hobby Place in Rancho Park.

**How to Get There**

San Diego Freeway to Imperial Highway west. Imperial Highway west to the coast, leading directly into the parking lot. Alternative route from Hughes Hill: go down Lincoln (north) to Jefferson, west on Jefferson to Culver to Playa Del Rey, along the coast to the parking lot (only thing after PDR).





# VINYWRITE CUSTOM LETTERING

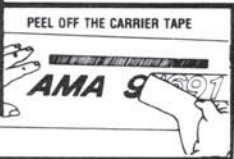
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Precision units made in USA from aircraft quality materials. Two 1/4 scale size units to choose from: Std. - up to 10 lbs., H.D. - over 10 lbs. \$50.00 each + \$3.50 S&H. CA res. add 7% tax.

Send Sase for information on glass 1/4 scale DG 202 fuselage. 1/3 & 1/5 scale retracts available soon.

## Scale Glider Components

7034 FERN PLACE  
CARLSBAD, CA 92009

**(619) 931-1438**

### DON'T MISS IT!

International Scale RC Soaring  
Fun Fly  
Tri-Cities, Washington, USA  
May 26-28 1989

Bring your power scale gliders or scale sailplanes for three days of fun at one of the Northwest's premier slope soaring sites!

For more information, contact  
**Wil Byers**  
632 Meadows Drive East  
Richland, WA 99352  
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# Air Mail

## FLYING MACHINE

Got my first issue last Saturday. That was fast service!

One brief comment: In your Favorite Dealers list, why haven't you listed Danny Spinks' Flying Machine? He's the biggest pusher of slope soaring gliders in the South Bay and helped start the Peninsula Silent Flyers Club. Better include him, too. Thanks!

**George A. Hume**  
Torrance, CA

*That first issue (almost) always gets there quickly, George. I process new subscriptions daily and send them out First Class mail. Subsequent issues slow down somewhat due to the Third Class (bulk rate) service, but I hope that won't become a major problem. Thanks for the kind comments.*

*I agree, Dan Spinks is a great guy, and he runs an excellent shop. He's 101% enthusiast and is totally dedicated to building, flying and helping new pilots get started.*

*Our Favorite Dealers list, however, is a list of dealers who sell Slope Soaring News in their shops. Listing their names, addresses and phone numbers every month is our way of saying thanks for their support and offering them support in return. Dan handed out a bunch of our first (free) issues—he even had extra copies made at the print shop next door! But he hasn't become an SSN dealer, yet, even though I've been sending him a complimentary copy every month with a dealer sign-up form attached. — Charlie.*

## ROCKIN' IN NEW YORK!

Horseheads is next to the well-known Harris Hill soaring area (for full-scale soaring... editor.) in upstate New York. We fly slope mainly. Many scratch builders.

We test the air out here with one-, two- and three-pound rocks. Ideal flying conditions is to fly with the two-pounders — if you don't run into one.

**Ernie Heyworth**  
Horseheads, NY

## "DUNE" IT IN RHODE ISLAND

*(Larry Sribnick of SR Batteries told me about this guy up in Rhode Island who could "walk on water" when it came to building with composite materials and*

*flying on small slopes. Since John Benson is one of our three Rhode Island subscribers, I sent a letter asking for photographic proof of Larry's claims. Here's his response. — Charlie.)*

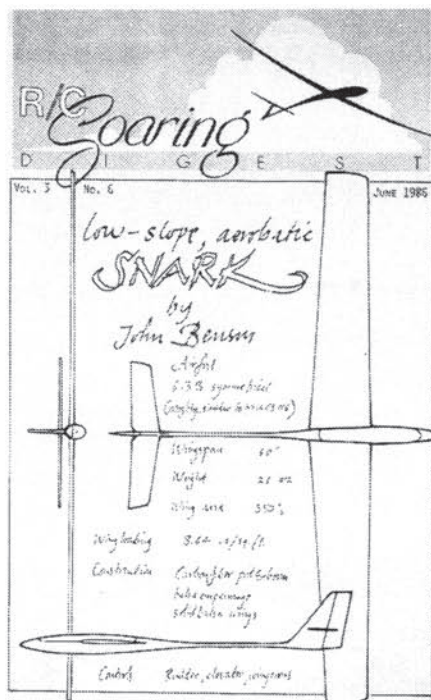
Thanks a lot for your letter. I am enclosing a bunch of junk for you to look at. It was nice of Larry to say such good things about me, but he was probably just taken in by my line of bull. He's a real nice guy.

The only picture I have of flying from a small slope is enclosed. It was published by Jim Gray in R/C Soaring Digest back in 1985. The beach slopes gently up from the water for about six feet and then the dune itself is another five or six feet. Some slope, huh? The model was a Son-of-Savage-type of sloper with a 50-inch span and a built-up wing with a Chambers' foil.

The article (John sent a Xerox copy of an article from RCSD, June 1986) is about my best model which is called The Snark. I flew it at Torrey Pines on a very breezy day, and all the guys who tried it thought it was pretty good. On the same trip, I flew at Daly City with a couple of lunatics called Jerry Freck and Dan White. It was blowing over 40mph. Dan was flying a souped-up, scratch-built SOS-derived model ballasted to 35 oun-

## A slope by any other name...

Where there's a will there's a way, and John Benson is determined to slope soar in Rhode Island. He's perched at an altitude of about 12 feet, atop a six-foot sand dune that's above a six-foot beach.



## Benson's Snark was featured in Jim Gray's June '86 RCSD.

High-tech composite structure and its innovative "slippery" design made the 21-ounce, 60-inch wingspan Snark a lightweight aerobat with full-house, three-channel control. The airfoil was fully-symmetrical, 6.3% thick and shaped from solid balsa. Wing area was 350 square inches for a loading of 8.7 ounces per square foot.

The Snark flew at its standard weight of 21 ounces. I could stay with Dan through most of the maneuvers and even had a slight edge in speed though his flying skill was a helluva lot better than mine.

Around the fall of '87, I put the hobby on hold. I met this lady, see, and got married and bought a house that needed a lot of fixing up. In addition, I got into computer-assisted typeface design which sucks up appalling amounts of time. There are still a few models I want to build, though. Maybe next winter if things slow down...

**John Benson**  
Newport, RI

*I couldn't reprint the entire RCSD story on the Snark, so here's a basic rundown. John was battling the classic small-slope problem: When the wind is light, so is the lift, yet when the wind comes up, it "blows off" the lift instead of making it proportionally stronger and adds turbulence, too. Light planes that fly well in light lift*

are usually hectic to control when the wind speed increases, and adding ballast (without a corresponding increase in lift) only makes the models sluggish.

John reasoned that a very sleek, lightweight design would make light-lift flying possible yet allow the ship to penetrate higher winds, too. The Snark was a plug-in wingeron design, making it much easier for him to experiment with angles of attack and various airfoil/wing-planform designs. The fuselage was a composite-construction, pod-and-boom design with its largest point being 2-3/8" deep by 1-11/16" wide. It had three-channel control with an S-32 powering the wingerons and a pair of S-33s for the full-flying stab and lightweight, built-up rudder.

He used a Dodgson Designs Pivot as a basis for comparison and went through several airfoils: Eppler 387, JC-16 and finally, a fully-symmetrical, 6.7% thick TLAR (That Looks About Right) design. The Snark's best weight was with the E387 at 21-1/2 ounces and an 8.7-ounce wing loading (compared with the Pivot's seven-ounce loading). The JC-16 increased the Snark's wing loading to 10 oz./sq. ft. and improved high-wind performance with a "distinct loss" in light air. The fully-symmetrical airfoil resulted in lighter weight (due to its CG being further back) and superb aerobatic performance but at a significant loss of lift.

The name "Snark" comes from Alice In Wonderland author Lewis Carroll's lesser-known work The Hunting Of The Snark. It's about a group of voyagers in search of a mythical beast believed to be half-snake and half-shark. The Snark's lean, mean look reminded Benson of the story.

Okay. John, thanks for the letter! Hope you'll find time to fabricate new fantasies for us to enjoy next winter. — Charlie.

## CURIOUS

I'm curious to find out if any suitable slope soaring sites exist in the Northeast. If so, what kit would you recommend for first getting into this aspect of sailplanes? I've flown RC electric powered sailplanes before.

**B. Scott Muench  
Ravena, NY**

Almost any hill that faces into the wind will work, Scott. As long as it's not already occupied by power lines, trees, houses or people, that is. Are you anywhere near Horseheads? Ernie

Heyworth says the flying's good there.

Good beginner kits for slope soaring are the same ones that are good for thermalling: Dynaflyte's Wanderer, the Olympic 650, Goldberg's Gentle Lady... basically any two-meter, rudder/elevator, polyhedral sailplane. They're cheap, easy to repair and not too speedy for learner reflexes. I highly recommend getting assistance from a more experienced flier while learning. (Any volunteers out there? If anyone knows of a slope site near Ravena, please contact me at SSN, and I'll pass along the information to Scott.)

Try contacting Larry Sribnick at SR Batteries, P.O. Box 287, Bellport, NY 11713 and/or Sal DeFrancesco at Northeast Sailplane Products, 16 Kirby Lane, Williston, VT 05495. They're both slope soaring nuts who sell good slope soaring products and would be happy to help you out if they can. — Charlie.

## AMA? WHERE DO I SIGN UP?

I've been flying for about two years, and I don't fly at any sanctioned fields or slopes. As my buddies and I get more and more into the hobby, we get more and more competitive. But if I want to enter a contest, I need an AMA number. Why aren't there more articles or applications in magazines to help newcomers learn about it?

**Chad Copsy  
CastroCity, CA**

Contact the Academy of Model Aeronautics at 1810 Samuel Morse Drive, Reston, VA 22090, Chad. They'll send you a membership information package with an application form. — Charlie.

## FULL-SCALE OPPORTUNITY

Recently, I fulfilled a lifetime dream and became a licensed glider pilot. It came about as a result of my RC flying. I belong to the Peninsula Silent Flyers. About two years ago, a member of the Civil Air Patrol Balloon and Glider Squadron 41, based at Los Alamitos, spoke at a club meeting. He explained how an interested person could learn to fly a glider at a very low cost.

I checked with Squadron 41 and found that they owned one hot-air balloon, two gliders, a tow plane and that they had many qualified instructors. No fee is charged for the glider rental or the instruction. The only expenses are the CAP membership (\$72) and a tow fee

of \$15 for aerotow or \$5 on the winch. (Cadets under 18 years old pay only \$5 for aerotow and \$3 for the winch.) These expenses are tax deductible, as is the mileage to and from the field.

Naturally, each person is expected to help prepare the gliders to fly, move them, check tow ropes and secure the gliders at the end of the day. It's really a good deal!

They fly at Los Alamitos every Sunday from 9:00 to 4:00 and every Tuesday from 12:30 to dark. For more information, call Ron Hodge at 213/431-0456 or me at 213/835-5304. Full-scale gliding is great!

**Wayne Bitterger  
Carson, CA**

Sounds like a lot of fun, Wayne! I'll have to try it sometime, but for now, I'd better spend my time trying to get this newsletter out on time. Thanks a lot for the information! How about you, readers? Are you interested? — Charlie.

**Questions? Comments? Complaints? Information or ideas you want to share with fellow slope pilots?**

**Air Mail is a forum for readers' viewpoints. Tell us what you**

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