



The Thermal Flyer

the Arizona Hang Glider Association membership newsletter

January 2002

by Chad Koester, Vice President

...from the VP!?

Well, here we are. It's January, the holidays are over, and the flying season is quickly approaching. In a few months, pilots will be deeply involved in scratching the huge itch that has developed over the course of the past winter. Pilots standing on launched wiping their chins of drool will be waiting for it to get good! Shortly thereafter, drivers on the radio with their pilot thinking, 'what did he say, should I turn here or not?', and pilots talking to their flying buddy saying, 'we're topped out, lets go!' and the buddy saying 'no, we can get another 1000 feet!'. Ahhhhhhhhhhh, the sounds of spring!

There is only one problem with all of this. I cannot count how many times in the last six months that I have heard the statement 'I knew they did that in California, but not here' or 'I used to see people fly up by 19th avenue, but I haven't seen anyone in years' or 'is there anywhere in Arizona you can fly?' These statements used to surprise me, but now it is a normal occurrence. You would think, with over 200 currently registered USHGA members residing in Arizona, there might be a little more awareness to the general population. Why is it that everyone in the world knows people fly hang gliders and paragliders in California, and not in Arizona? VISIBILITY

In California, many flying sites are near very public places. We have the right idea with the sign at Mingus, but Mingus is not our most visible site. Where is Arizona can people causally drive up on a whim and mysteriously bump into a flying experience? (Hopefully not literally!) South Mountain and Shaw Butte are the answer! Well then, why don't more people see us? There a number of people that fly Shaw Butte and growing

numbers of people flying South Mountain again, Why don't they see us? Well, just because a few people happen to see us when we do fly does not account for all the times that we are not there.

At Shaw Butte, many people would only get a change to see us when breaking down in the LZ since only the exercise type would see us at launch and most are too busy with themselves to look up and see us flying. At South Mountain, the stamp LZ is not somewhere the general public would go often nor is the school. We need to apply the Mingus idea to South Mountain and Shaw Butte. A sign on launch at South Mountain and in the LZ at the Butte would give people something to look at even if we weren't there.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I know we have talked about putting up signs before and either nothing gets done or someone vandalizes it. In the mean time, we are flying in remote places like Oatman and the Craters more and more where nobody sees us. So this is my thought (and it hurts to think!): We should develop a standard format sign that we can post at all our flying sites, half will be general info to educate the public, the other half site specific information for potential visiting pilots and even and occasional reminder for ourselves. I can personally handle developing the layout, but I need ideas for content. I have a concept myself of what I would like to see, but I do not want to influence anyone else's thoughts. Bring your ideas to the meeting, or email them to me and hopefully by the February meeting, we can try to have something developed out and get moving.



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Gary Brown

Pilot Interview

TF: HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN HANG GLIDING?

Gary: I always wanted to be a bird, so when I first saw hang gliding in 1975 it was like a dream come true. My roommate also got interested and bought a 18' standard from Lucky Campbell at US Hang Gliders. One day I borrowed it and took it up to the craters without any lessons and unsupervised. It didn't take long before I ground looped it barely getting into the air. It broke every tube on the glider: both leading edges, keel, crossbar, and control bar. With that much damage, I paid my roommate \$400 for the glider, repaired it, (11 splices and sleeves) and flew it for another year. For the next fifteen years or so hang gliding was the most important thing in my life. More than any job, getting married, or having kids. For many

years several of us rented houses within walking distance of the Shaw Butte landing zone. We flew almost every day. Dave Smith and I worked together, a lot of days we would get out of work by 2:00. We would go for a afternoon thermal flight and be ready to go back up when everyone started arriving for the evening glass off. We did this for a lot of years including all summer long. You could go by the LZ everyday of the week and someone would be there waiting to go fly. Unfortunately in the good old days we would lose many good friends and pilots. I've stopped counting but the number of pilots I've personally known to die hang gliding is well above 25. The hardest loss for me was my roommate Steve Johnson. Steve was John Johnson's older brother. I know it had to be hard for John (and for his family) to keep flying and become the great pilot he did.

Hi Kim,
I'm sending a photo of what I believe to be the first AZ flight of 2002! As you can see Myrmidon almost had the second flight!
North launch at Oatman.
Laura Salamone

AHGA