

NWBPA News

February 1996

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A Letter from the President

Welcome to the second installment of the NorthWest Buggy Pilot's Association news!

Here are a few highlights about what has happened in the world of bugging and with YOUR club since the last newsletter.

On Saturday, October 28, 1995, a club meeting was held at Wash-a-way Beach in Grayland, Washington. Topics of discussion included future fun fly locations and the need for a NWBPA pin design. Fun flies were scheduled for New Year's weekend at Sunset Beach in Warrenton, Oregon; and President's Day weekend (February 17 - 19) at Wash-a-way Beach. Talk about a pin design was tabled when the wind came up and it was time to buggy.

There were no activities set for November, however on the 3rd - 5th a few of our members went on an expedition to Alvord Dry Lake in eastern Oregon. Mike Eason and Jon Podmajerski from Everett, Vic Eshpeter from Tacoma, and George Cameron from Tracey, CA, checked out one of the few dry lakes in the Pacific Northwest. Read all about their experiences in Mike's article in this newsletter.

A hearty band of buggiers got together for the New Year's weekend fun fly at Sunset Beach in Oregon. Attendees included Steve Irby; Harold (Max) Facteau; Jon Ellis; Stu and T.J. Murphy; Kurt, Linda, and Konrad Anderson; John Matteson; Phil Thompson; Steve and Judy Millspaugh; Dave Lord; and, Morrie and Kelci Williams. If I missed anyone, I apologize. I'm starting to use a sign-in book for our events so that I don't have to rely on my terrible memory.

Saturday morning was windy and wet, but a little after noontime the rain stopped and the wind began to pickup. By the time people got their buggies ready and their kites out, the wind was 20+mph. Quad 25's or smaller were the order of the day. Great Bugging!

Sunday dawned with hardly a breath of wind and that was the way it stayed all day. There was only a whisper of wind on Monday too, so most of us decided to head for home early in an attempt to beat the traffic.

There were no NWBPA events set for January, but several of our members attended the Buggy Boogie Thang 2 held January 15 - 18, 1996, at El Mirage Dry Lake. Read all about it in the "Buggy Heaven" in this newsletter.

A fun fly is scheduled for President's Day weekend, February 17 - 19, 1996, at Wash-a-way Beach in Grayland, WA. A general meeting will be held on Saturday, February 17th at 11:00 AM, at Wash-a-way Beach to discuss future events.

No other official NWBPA fun flies have been scheduled, but temporarily plan to join us on the 4th weekends of March and April (locations to be determined). If you have any questions, give me a call at (206)788-6355.

Don't forget the Ft Worden Kitemaker's Conference being held March 1 - 3, 1996, in Port Townsend, WA. This year Peter Lynn, maker of buggies and peels, and Ted Dougherty, designer of the original Quadrifoils and now the Quadtracs, will be teaching several classes. There will be many opportunities to pick the brains of these two innovators in the kite traction world.

The Spring Break Buggy Blast will take place on March 10 - 16, 1996, at Ivanpah Dry Lake near Las Vegas, NV. This has become an annual event organized by Fran and Fritz Gramkowski which just happens to coincide with Fritz's spring break from college. Many buggy kichi NWBPA members have already made their plane and hotel reservations.

Pencil in the following dates on your calendar for these other events being worked on now

May 25 - 27 (Memorial Day weekend): Alvord Dry Lake, south eastern Oregon.

July 5 - 7: Westport, WA, Festival (buggying at Wash-a-way)

August 19 - 25: WSIKF at Longbeach, WA, with a

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field trip to Sunset Beach, OR, planned for August 22.

Although it's the middle of winter and I see snow and ice covering the ground outside, I also foresee an exciting buggy season for 1996.

Happy New Year and Great Winds,

Morrie Williams, President
NWBPA

Buggy Heaven

by Morrie Williams

The Buggy Boogie Thang 2 was held at El Mirage Dry Lake near Adelanto, CA, on January, 15 - 18, 1996. Adelanto is the town nearest to the dry lake. It is very small and seems to be suffering badly from the closure of, what must have been a main source of income, George Air Force Base. There is not a lot to choose from in the way of hotels and restaurants. However, about five miles farther south is the thriving town of Victorville, which offers a large variety of eating spots and accommodations spread over a wide area. Also, the town of Palmdale is about 40 miles in the opposite direction and, I understand, it has a lot to offer too.

This 'thang' followed the Kite Trade Association (KTA) convention that took place in San Diego, CA, on January 11 - 14 and, as a result, there were 100 or more buggiers from all over the world out on the dry lake during the first couple of days of the event.

The NWBPA was represented by, George and Zack Cameron, Mike Eason, Dave Lord, Scott Skinner, Morrie and Kelci Williams, Cal Yuen, and Ted Dougherty. Again, if I have forgotten anyone, please accept my apologies and let me know.

On Sunday, January 15th, Kelci and I flew to Burbank, CA, rented a car, drove to Adelanto, checked-in to the motel, had lunch, and headed for the dry lake. Using the excellent instructions provided by Corey Jensen, we found our way to Walt's Bay where the buggiers were gathering. Although the wind was light, several Sputnik's were flying. Buggys

assembled, I selected a QuadTrac 9 for my engine. Even in the light wind, I moved along at about 30 mph. But in a short time, the sun began to set and we thought it was best to pack-up and head back rather than try and find our way in the dark.

There were several hardy soles who camped on the lakebed overnight. Among them were Andrew Beattie from the UK, Dean Jordan and Phillip Chase from Florida, and Dan Rubesh and Corey Jensen from California. There were a few others whose names I have forgotten - sorry.

Initially there wasn't much wind on Monday, but by the time we had our gear assembled, all that was needed was a Quad25 or Quad30. It was a GREAT buggy day and I put on 30+ miles cruising at 25 - 30 mph. This was my first attempt at the infamous "pucker bumps". Beach and dry lake flat runs are great, but this off-road style of bugging is a real change from the normal fare and lots of fun. Kelci rode with Scott Dyer on his two person Manta landsailer and got some great video footage. Next, I took Kelci with camcorder in hand for a tandem buggy ride. Even pulling a trailer I registered 25+ mph. Ask her about the trip over the bumps and what the first words were that she uttered.

Tuesday was another great buggy day with winds from 15-20 mph. Quad25's and Sky Tiger 18's were just perfect for the days activities. Dave Lord and I cruised and explored together for a good portion of the day. We recorded several runs in excess of 43mph!

The wind was wild on Wednesday, blowing dust into every nook and cranny. Not good buggy weather for anyone but the most adventuresome.

On Thursday, the winds were light in the morning and picked up later in the day. A cold front blowing through made warm, windproof clothing a necessity. Those who stayed warm had a good afternoon of bugging.

The winds started at 25+ on Friday morning and went up from there. There weren't many brave soles who flew, but the ones who did used very small sails. Kelci and I tried our QuadTrac 1.5's but decided that they were more work than we wanted to undertake. With the conditions worsening we, along with several others, decided that this would be a great afternoon to repack and get ready for the trip home.

Even though the week ended on a down note (too much wind??), it was a great trip and another opportunity to see old friends and meet and make new ones.

If you have an opportunity to talk to some of the folks

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who attended, ask them about their experiences at El Mirage. I rank it as one of the best buggy spots around, combining long fast runs with excursions out through the "pucker" bumps. It's a blast!

Winter Trek to the Alvord Desert

by Mike Eason

Sometime shortly after WSIKF in Long Beach, in August, Dale and Calvin Vanderhoof (Black Feather Fighter Kites) had sent me a very detailed map of southeastern Oregon and northwestern Nevada with all of the buggyable dry lakes well marked. Color coded information was included regarding specific surface conditions and which dry lakes they had visited and bugged or landsailed. Dale is a long time (for this sport, anyway) kite buggy aficionado and Dale and Calvin also have become avid land yacht sailers since obtaining a two person "Manta" land-sailer last year. Just before the Spring Break Buggy Blast, in March, at Ivanpah dry lake near Stateline, Nevada, Dale had even become a rather accomplished, from my observation, sailmaker and designer, having made sails for his rig suitable for varying wind conditions. I suppose sails aren't too much different from his outstanding fighter kites, just a little bigger I guess? Anyway, it was obvious that Dale and Calvin had a wonderful summer exploring all of the suitable windswept terrain in the west within reasonable travel time from their home in Weed, California.

One location in the southeast corner of Oregon, the Alvord Desert, immediately attracted my attention when Dale first told me of this wonderful place when we were at Long Beach. Alvord is days of driving closer to the Great Northwest, which I must say I now consider lesser because of it's lack of dry lakebeds, than any of the better known buggy sites like El Mirage, in California, or Ivanpah and Roach Lakes, in Nevada, or the now infamous Bonneville salt flats in Utah.

John Podmajerski and I had talked about going there to check it out since right after WIKF/WSSKC '95, in September, and finally got the chance last weekend, November 3-5, 1995. George Cameron, from just outside San Francisco, was planning on meeting us at the lake Friday at around noon, and Vic Eshpeter had said over the phone to expect him sometime Saturday so we quickly packed up and departed the Everett

area about 11:00 PM, Thursday night. What we had expected to be a nine hour drive turned into eleven, plus another hour for getting lost once and having breakfast in Bend, and we first caught a glimpse of the wide expanse of the playa at about 11:00 AM on Friday, after traversing the last leg of our trip over 55 miles of gravel road from the north! This gravel road is so good, though, that we easily cruised along at 60 MPH most of the way. It only felt like the front wheels were floating around some corners. Here, the local residents call this the desert, rather than a dry lake. And the smooth, dry, hardpack clay surface, devoid of any plant life, they call the playa.

Our first full view of the whole playa was a truly incredible sight for buggy pilots. One would easily guess that Alvord is about twice or more the size of Ivanpah or eight to ten times that of El Mirage! The buggyable area is probably about 7 miles by 16 miles, maybe 65 square miles in all, about the same size as Ivanpah but without an interstate highway running through the middle of it. It would be difficult to buggy every corner of Alvord in even a week's time!

Dale had told me about the Alvord hot springs and, upon noticing steam clouds rising from along the side of the road, we slid to a stop to look it over. The hot water boils and bubbles out of the bank right at the edge of the road, collects in small pools, and drains into it's own little creek toward the playa where it forms a small, very shallow pond and disappears into the dry clay. A trail leads about a hundred feet to twin, square cement tubs, one open and one surrounded by a metal shed with no roof, and the whole bordered on two sides by a wide wood deck and seats. The hot water is collected from the stream and delivered by gravity to the edge of the basins by several long two inch steel pipes with tapered round wood plugs to use as stoppers for regulating the temperature. This totally cool, I mean, hot system has been maintained by the many landsailers that frequent the desert, I am told.

About 500 ft. south of the hot springs is the first dirt access road to the playa but we head further south, about a mile, and find the white painted steel drum mailbox of Carl Thomas, whom Dale had said we should meet and say "hi" to for him. The access to the lake here is also Carl's driveway and also the most level access of all, great for motor homes or trailers. The others, while passable, I wouldn't recommend for smaller or lower slung cars. About another mile south is the last and southernmost easy access to the dry lakebed and also the site of a fresh-water spring. The spring is enclosed with a wire fence, including a fence bridge to climb over, to keep stray cattle out. A BLM sign says that the water is not tested for safe drinking, but we knew from Dale that the water was ok and that

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it is Carl's sole source of water. He's 79 years old and we're still alive too, so I'll let you judge for yourself when you're there.

By this time it was already past noon, when we were supposed to meet George in Fields, population 14, about 16 miles south near the real Alvord Lake, the one with water in it. As it were, we met George just as we pulled into the Fields Store and filled up with gas again. The Fields Store is a small country grocery, gas station, motel with four rooms, and a great little lunch counter type restruant that looks like it's right out of 1953. There are only three tables and an ell shaped bar counter, enameled white walls with red trim, and dark red vinyl covered stools and chairs. We figured that we could fit sixteen buggy pilots in for dinner if one stood at each end of the counter and there were no other guests for the meal.

We all headed back up to the playa at 1:00 PM, or so, drove out onto the clay at Carl's entrance and headed north to set up camp on the edge of the hardpack right at the end of the access road near the hot springs. As our luck would have it, the sky was clear and the sun warming things up (to about 45 degrees) because of a high pressure cell parked over the area. The wind varied between zero and 4.5 MPH! So, we set out tents and gear, put together buggies, George flew some super-ultralights he had brought, and we talked about how the wind would, or should, come up soon. You know how it goes. Darkness approached the desert at 4:30 so George and I headed for the hot springs while John continued to stand watch for the wind.

Whoever was in the springs before us had left all of the plugs out of the end of the pipes, making the water rather warm. In fact, you had to ease in slowly, so as to become acclimatized and not burn anything important to quickly. It must have been around 120 degrees! Even after a very short while the outside ambient air temperature, which was already approaching freezing, felt just pleasantly cool when standing on the surrounding deck. It was well past dark by 6:00 PM when we all hit the sack, a welcome rest after having not slept at all the night before.

Of course, we then woke up at 6:00 AM Saturday morning, almost before daylight, and learned later that the overnight temperature had dropped to 9 degrees farenheight. It was still only 16 degrees when John and I drove up to the store for a great breakfast in the warm restruant. We returned to camp about an hour later, maybe 9:00 AM, and with no wind to speak of, George and I headed up to the springs for another hour in the hot tub. A couple of people had been there very early in the morning and were probably upset that we had closed off all of the inlets. Ooops! The water

was now almost cool, even an hour after they had left with all the stops open. But it warmed up fairly quickly while we were there.

Most of Saturday was spent debating the pros and cons of various airfoils for bugging, predicting when the low pressure front that was approaching from the northwest would arrive, flying ultralights, and just waiting for the wind. Finally, at about 3:30, the wind started to build as the clouds came over the Steens Mountains to the west. Four, five, six, and finally seven MPH. Enough for the 5.2 m² Sputniks that John and I had built! So we were off accross the expanse at last. It even got to blowing in the 8-10 MPH range and George was off and running with a high aspect ratio Sky Tiger 40. Neither George or John had ever buggied or even seen such wide open buggy terrain before and one could tell by their faces that they liked it!

The wind faltered a little, George was packing things up for the trip back, and who should arrive down the access road but Vic and Linda Eshpeter, from Tacoma. Vic's lower jaw hung almost to his chest in awe of the sight before him as he got out of his rig! Ocean beaches just cannot compare to these wide open spaces, heaven for buggy pilots. After introductions George left for home and, not even 10 minutes later, the breeze was a solid 16 MPH with gusts to 18-20! "Poor George!" is what we said often during the drive home. It became a little much for the Sputniks, without quick release harnesses, so we landed them and took out my Quad 30, John's Quadtrac 4, and Vic's 5. The 5 was maybe even a little too much power as Vic did a great impression of a jet landing without the landing gear down. Luckily his injuries were minor and we were all off accross the lake again. John and I were flat out racing on a reaching course toward the other side of the playa, when we realized that it was already dark! We had become lost in the van while driving to the other side earlier in the day, so at about two miles out decided it would be best to turn around. John said it felt like we were doing at least 45-50 MPH but I think that our top speed was probably more like 30-35. My speedometer was not working at the time so I'm not sure. It always feels faster than it really is, when your posterior is only two inches off the ground, though! Reguardless, it was a rip!

We all hurriedly packed up in order to make it to fields by six for dinner and had a great meal at the store with some of the local residents. Vic and Linda stayed in a room at the store and John and I were back on the road for home at seven. Some may consider us slightly "kichi" for travelling so far for three hours of great bugging. Maybe we are, as a matter of fact! For

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almost getting skunked, we were lucky to get that last little while of screaming accross the wide-open space of the playa, not caring where the next turn would be. That made it all worth while. I'm told that's called "Aoxomoxoa". Yeah. Cool, dude!

Watshiwa tako buggy kichiwa,

Mike

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