

Recollections of the Wave Camps at White Mountain Airport, North Conway NH 1979- 1984

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29 November 2018*

In the timeframe that I attended the North Conway NH Wave Camps from 1979 to 1984 the turnout of pilots was very good. Soaring pilots came from various states in the USA and of course Canada and I would guess the number was about thirty pilots in the 1979 timeframe. The event was spearheaded by Allan MacNicol, a real great fellow pilot and friend. The information presented here represents my best recollection.

White Mountain Airport was located about 15 miles southeast of Mount Washington and not paved. If you Google Map the area it sat at the current Green Outlet Village, and in fact the southeast end of the runway is still visible. It appears off of Common Court road near the parking lot area as a grass dirt strip. A little further south you will also see a street called Wylie Ct - that was named after the airport manager Wylie Apte. You will find airport history and some soaring history by going to Freeman's site "Abandoned and Little Known Airports" and clicking on New Hampshire and then White Mountain Airport. The first wave flight there was in 1938 by Lewin Barringer flying the Harland Ross IBIS to 9,500 feet.

In 1966 Allan MacNicol organized and ran the first wave camp at White Mountain Airport. My friend Dezi Hamvas was flying out of Northeastern Glider Port in Salem NH and decided to attend that first year adventure. He commented to me that he rented Roy McMaster's Schweizer 1-23H15, was towed up to the Mount Washington area, and flew it into the wave. At that time Allan was towing people right up to the mountain and Dezi managed to get into the primary. He felt he should fly a little slower to stay in the wave, but ended up drifting backwards and into the down part of the wave. At that point and sinking fast he decided to head back in the general direction of the airport. In the process he entered a thin rotor cloud which gave him such bad turbulence that he thought the totally uncontrollable ship would break up. He landed back at the White Mountain Airport safely.

In truth in the early days many of us did not really study about the wave, rotor, or perform any atmospheric analysis prior to the flight - we just went up and flew. That probably sounds ignorant but that is how it was. I know from recent Gorham reports that people are much better prepared on the wave, the prediction of wave occurrence, and oxygen use.

Two accidents happened in the early time frame. In one case a pilot in a 1-23 returning from the wave had the wave window close in on him, and he decided to bail out. Unfortunately the chute didn't fully open and he perished - the sailplane descended into trees and was in relatively good shape. In another instance a Ka6 pilot tried a landing in the Jackson parking lot and the ship was trashed but the pilot survived.

As a side note the 1-23H15 Dezi flew was flown by Roy McMaster in the original Thomas Crown Affair movie. I purchased the ship from Roy in the summer of 1972 and N9860E got me my Silver Distance flying from Salem NH to Sterling Mass in August 1972. As another side note in May of 1976 Roy McMaster gave me a Harris Hill check ride before I flew my Ka6CR-PE there - we released at 50 feet above the field, ridge soared to 500 feet and landed. My lowest tow.

By the time I joined the North Conway Camp in 1979 Allan had come to the conclusion that towing people up to the Mount Washington area was not a great idea. Since the airport was 15 miles away

from Mount Washington Allan had by then developed a strict rule on tow heights and release locations - it was basically 2,000 feet over the field, ie 2,500 ASL and you were not towed up to the Mt Washington area. This eliminated the risk of a tow to Mt Washington and then not being able to get back to White Mountain Airport.

All tows and landings were to the North West. About 3/4th of a mile east-northeast of the field was Rattlesnake Mountain and its bowl - its max elevation is about 1,580 feet ASL. So after your low tow release you would likely fly over to it and hope for ridge lift to get some altitude for entry into a thermal and then some wave. It was also great fun flying around inside the Rattlesnake Mountain 1,000 foot diameter bowl with a bunch of other soaring pilots all hoping for the big one to occur (lift that is). With even a few sailplanes soaring inside the bowl it was likely more risky than weak low level thermalling near a contest start gate. If the lift in the bowl was good I would go out a little over the east side of the bowl ridge edge and look east to Fryeburg Maine. You may want to Google Rattlesnake Mountain, North Conway NH and get a contour elevation map. Its bowl is about 100 feet deep and diameter about 1,000 feet. The lift in the bowl was often quite good.

My first venture to that wave camp was during October 20-27, 1979. My log book notes that the temperature was in the 70s on the 20th and 21st. I had four flights and the longest was an hour in weak lift. On the 25th I took a tow at 7:15AM and spent a few minutes on Rattlesnake before landing back at the airport. Someone had to radio me to put the gear down and I guess the lesson I learned was to make sure you were fully awake before flying that early in the morning. Later that day I had a 1 hour 45 minute flight and didn't make it into the wave - but our friend Dennis Galotti did get his Diamond Altitude - so it was a wave day. On the 27th I had a 3 hour flight past Jackson and landed out in Glen for my first off field landing. All the above flights were in my ASW15B.

We went back up there in 1980 and I had sold my ASW15B and had an LS4a on order along with Dennis Galotti. Hank Krejci had his Pilatus B4 N65317 tied down up there. He allowed Dezi and me to fly it in his absence. So on my first flight ever in a B4 on October 23, 1980 (taking off around 9:20AM) I thermalled into the tertiary wave near the airport and Cathedral Ledge. My notes indicate that I then moved up to a position about 3 miles north-northeast of Glen and assumed I had contacted the secondary. In less than 2 hours, I was back on the ground with a Diamond Altitude claim. Max altitude was 20,200 feet ASL. I had a chest cold that day and did get some canopy frosting that did not dissipate easily during the full dive brake descent back to the airport. Dezi borrowed the B4 next and after quite a struggle at low altitudes got the same wave and was able to make his Diamond climb. His flight was likely on the order of 4 hours. Working at low altitudes he worked up enough of a sweat that his canopy frosted over in the wave up high. Hank arrived at the end of the day and gave it a try with no luck. Also Peter Stauble got the diamond that day in a 1-26 if I remember correctly. My notes indicate that Dennis Galotti got to 25K, Ritts Howard to 22K, and Dezi and I to around 20K.

I went back there 1984 with my LS4a and recorded a couple hour local flight. That was my last White Mountain Airport wave camp adventure.

While I don't have any more "White Mountain Airport North Conway wave documentation" I would be remiss not to mention some of the people present and also the Schusseverien House many of us stayed at. SOME of the participants were: Allan MacNicol, Bob Salvo, Peter Stauble, Roy Bourgeois, Tony Lauck, Dennis Galotti, Ritts Howard, Dezi Hamvas, Steve Dupont, Dana Darling, Roger Merrill, Hank Krejci, Jon Mead, Mike Stevenson, John Carter, Mr. Pukey and his daughter Barbara (Canadians with a Libelle), Bill Nockles, Bob Burchard, Paul Acres, Brooks Dodge, Mike Ledet, several from

Connecticut, and likely a few others. If I remember correctly Mike Stevenson seemed best at capturing the wave.

Many of us stayed at the Schuss in Bartlett which was rented for us by Roger Merrill. The Schuss was a Ski Lodge owned by Harvard and Roger had some connections that allowed us to rent it. He, with his pipe, and his lovely wife wearing a plaid skirt were the preppy couple in the Schuss at dinner time. At the lodge most of us slept in a dorm upstairs which held many people. And everyone used the one upstairs bathroom. A couple of young women who actually lived in a teepee nearby made some fine breakfasts and suppers. I believe the cost per day was \$8.00 including the meals. In the evening the fireplace roared, flight experiences were discussed, and some drinking occurred. For me it was sometimes scary to wake up early in the morning at the Schuss with hopes of getting the wave and listening to the wind howl through the trees. Did I really want to risk flying that day? That thought likely preceded my 7:15AM tow experience mentioned above.

Unfortunately some incidents occurred during this period. Roger Merrill was killed while attempting an off field landing in his 1-35 near Cathedral Ledge. Jon Mead had a canopy break at altitude while flying his Laister LP49, which gave him some frightening moments getting back to the field. The panic was evident in his radio contact with the field. John Carter ground looped (around a fence post) into a horse corral not too far from the airport. No horses killed, just some glider trash, and John somehow never got hurt in a crash. Landouts upwind at Glen and downwind at Fryeburg were fairly common. One of the more humorous occurrences was meeting the friendly Canadian whose last name was Pukey early one morning and him telling us to stand back - seems he knew that the raw garlic he had spread on bread that morning was pretty potent. And I have my sick humor also. One camp get together Dezi had just acquired an ASW19 with a Schreder aluminum trailer. He was new to handling the trailer towing - especially backing up. So when we arrived at the airport he asked me to guide him between two tied down sailplanes while he backed up the trailer. He was doing a fine job but I couldn't resist slapping my hand hard against the aluminum trailer - he slammed on the car brakes expecting the worst. I was howling as he stumbled out of the car and luckily he didn't have a heart attack.

I don't have any more specific information on the White Mountain Wave Camp as far as altitude achievements or how many worked upwind and made it into the Primary Wave.

For completeness, here are my wave flight experiences and rough data:

9/6/76	Ka6CR-PE	near Sterling Mass Wave to 7,300ASL on west side of clouds
7/23/77	Ka6CR-PE	near Sterling, flew in wave above clouds to 8,000ASL
5/20/78	Ka6CR-PE	near Gardner Mass to 9,000ASL
6/24/78	Ka6CR-PE	near Ashburnham Mass to 8,900ASL
5/6/79	ASW15B	over Clinton Mass, wave over cloud street to 12,700ASL for Gold Altitude- my most exciting wave flight
11/17/79	ASW15B	near Sterling Mass to 9,000ASL
10/23/80	Pilatus B4	at White Mountain Airport North Conway NH, to 20,200ASL for Diamond Altitude - another exciting wave of course
3/15/81	Schweizer 2-33	at Plymouth NH, Dual with Dezi to 7,500 ASL, Dennis Galotti flew B4 "inverted" parallel to us in wave - show off!

4/24/82	LS4a	at Plymouth NH to 9,500ASL, mistakenly entered cloud with new T&B indicator, not a good idea
11/7/82	LS4a	at Pepperell/Groton Mass to 11,200ASL
5/21/83	LS4a	at Pepperell Mass/ Hollis NH to 6,700ASL
8/17/85	LS4a	at Pepperell Mass Wave over cloud to 7,900 ASL
9/14/85	LS4a	at Sugarbush west of field a bit to 8,300ASL - nice view of Lake Champlain
9/15/85	LS4a	Ditto to 8,300ASL again
11/5/90	2-33	Passenger ride slightly west of Pepperell Mass near Brookline NH to 8,200ASL - third most exciting wave flight. Loved this flight as I took a passenger who was a pilot in one of the wars. We lucked out and entered wave. He was impressed with the wave and its smoothness - especially so when I handed him the controls to experience something he had no knowledge of!
10/9/04	Blanik	Ride into Mt Washington wave with Dezi as pilot at Gorham, NH to 7,500ASL

Below, I have attached the Tow Card from the 1980 wave camp along with the back of a post card I sent home to document my flight. I have no pictures of the wave camp - sorry for that!

MT. WASHINGTON WAVE CAMP - 1980

TOW CARD

Sailplane Marking _____ Type _____

Pilot _____

Request Height _____ ft.

Location _____

Remarks _____

Actual Height _____ ft.

PLEASE PRINT

Black-eyed Susens with Mount
Range in the background, North Conway,
New Hampshire.

THURSDAY
OCT 23 1980



Published by Blumenthal & Company, Inc., Boston, Mass. 02109



DEAR WAYNE -

CONGRATULATIONS
ON YOUR DIAMOND
ALTITUDE GAIN NORTH
OF GLEN N.H. HIGH=
20,200', LOW = 2500'
GAIN = 17,700', MOUNT
WASHINGTON WAVE CAMP
1980

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