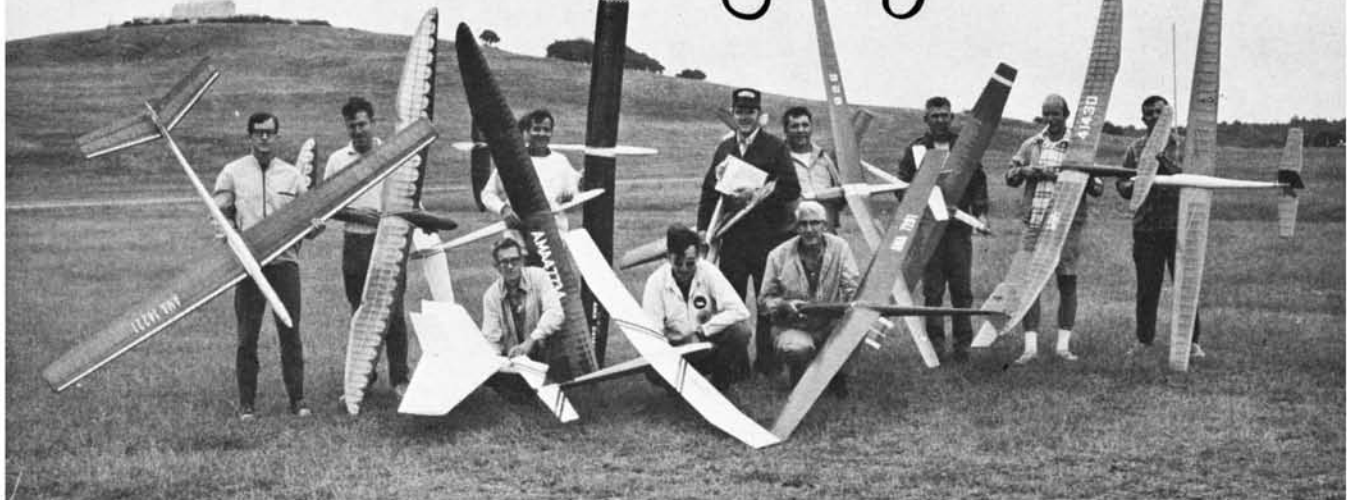


# Lightly Loaded



A return to Kitty Hawk, N.C., to fly gliders once again in the shadow of Kill Devil Hill. The Wright Brothers flew their gliders here in 1900.



The contestants lined up in front of Kill Devil Hill and its 60 foot high memorial pylon, in photo at top. Center shot is of Gene Bange's Gryphon as it turns at the course markers. Below, Hewitt Phillips original design is a maze of cross-coupled linkages, designed strictly for slope.



**H**urricane *Ginger* tried to keep us away from *the Dune*, as it is fondly referred to by the local glider pilots, and in effect, she succeeded although she didn't keep us from flying altogether. The Tidewater Model Soaring Society had scheduled a glider pylon racing event here on Bodie Island, at Nags Head, North Carolina, home of the Wright Brothers' National Memorial, Jockey Ridge, referred to as *the Dune*, and all the sand fleas you could ever possibly want. On Oct. 3rd, the day of the meet, it was a bit cool and the fleas were not hungry—how fortunate!

We had arrived the day before amidst much rain and wind and checked into the Cabana East Motel with Bob Crane, the CD for the meet. After which, we drove down to the dune. From the road it doesn't seem very impressive until you notice the little people on it, who appear to look like ants. What a sand pile! The dune is about 250 feet high (it changes as the wind blows) and its East and West faces have steep slopes perfect for slope soaring when the wind is up and blowing in the proper direction.

After a refreshing night's sleep (it's an 8-hour drive to Nags Head from Ramsey, N.J.) we awoke to an overcast day and a gale blowing from the northwest. We drove to the dune, the first ones there. It wasn't long before others arrived and began assembling their sailplanes. Some things I learned about flying on a dune are: the model is assembled and all openings in same are sealed with tape *before* going up on the dune. The transmitter is sealed in a plastic bag and the model is flown this way—otherwise the transmitter will be ruined by sand and salt. When models are put down, a pile of sand is placed on one wing to keep them from blowing away.

It's a real experience to climb the dune at Jockey Ridge. Those who are weak of heart would never make it. The wall of sand is as near vertical as you could climb. Fortunately it was wet and climbing it was

easier this day. Out of breath and legs crying for rest, I arrived at the top. I really never knew how heavy my camera was until I got to the top. From the top, you can see for 15 to 20 miles.

The wind was blowing against the slope obliquely, not ideal, and the ships with semi-symmetrical airfoils could not stay up long. The *Gryphon* and other heavily loaded ships were getting short flights. Ned Smith's *KA6E* was tried out and the lift wasn't enough to keep it in the air either. The lighter ships, such as my *Monte-rey* and John Sinclair's *Thermic 100*, did just fine. I felt that I could have stayed up for hours, had I wanted or been able to.

People were still arriving and the sky was getting more and more ominous. We spied Carl Lorber trudging across the sandy plain to the dune and called down that we were starting the stopwatch to see how long it would take him to climb up. Carl made it up in record time, 45 seconds, and after a breather sent his *Gag-gler* up for a flight. As the ship flew further and further down the slope, Carl walked down after it. I wanted a picture, so I ran down after him. All of a sudden, from out of nowhere, POW! I found myself staring at the wreckage of Gene Bange's *Mali-bu*, which had just had a mid-air with my head. The only damage was to the glider; the fuselage had broken in half.

At 10 o'clock it started to rain, and since it appeared that the wind would not shift to a better direction, we bade the dune farewell and drove up the coast to the Wright Memorial, about 5 miles away. We could plainly see the monument from the top of Jockey Ridge. Permission had been granted by the Dep't. of the Interior to hold the meet there so upon arriving at the field, the winch was set up and it was decided that we'd fly the LSF closed course, distance event with a two minute time limit. The idea was to see how many laps one could fly around the course in the allotted time. By the time things were set up, the

# by Gene Fuller



Left, we see John Sinclair soaring his Thermic 100, old pod-and-boom design. The ship is even covered with silk and looks like a real old timer. Little guy beside John can't bear to watch. Above, is Ned Smith, tinkering with his KA6E at the top of the dune. Note sand on wings to hold ships in place against the wind. Town of Nags Head is visible off in the distance with ocean beyond.

Photos by Author

weather had improved to the point where we thought it would clear up. The sun almost came out at one time. The pylons for the course were set out 150 meters apart and each pilot flew alone, one at a time, around them. No further mishaps happened other than Ned Smith's *Kurwi* flying off by itself. Ned shut off the transmitter and ran off chasing the ship, which was circling off downwind. Out of curiosity or whatever, Tommy Thomas picked up Ned's transmitter and turned it on again, found



The author tools his Monterey across the face of the dune as Bob Crane gets sandy hands on camera. Monterey is an 'excellent ship for the slope.



John Sinclair's Thermic 100 stayed up in the light lift on the side of the dune. Frank Zaic's wings were popular, penetrate well when loaded up.

The site for the Closed Course Distance event at the Wright Memorial grounds attracted many spectators and Paul Byrum answers some of their questions, at right. Course markers were 150 meters apart, time limit was two minutes. The Memorial Museum is seen in the background.



Skip Schow completes his second lap of the course as he flies overhead. Ship is a Thermoebus, has a Thermic 100 wing and Phoebe fuselage.





The winners, left to right, Skip Schow 5th, John Sinclair 4th, Paul Byrum, who has mind on a larger trophy, 3rd, Carl Lorber 2nd, and Tommy Thomas won 1st, MonoKote and Sterling Schweizer were given as prizes.



Tommy Thomas, first place winner in competition, lofts his original design, Gadfly, on the top of the dune. Tommy makes the fiberglass fuselages for the design, flies with Digit Migit R/C system.



Don Clark launches the Gaggler for Carl Lorber (right). As the Gaggler's wings bend, so does Carl. Carl somehow managed to get through the whole day without problems and went on to win 2nd place. Gaggler plans in FM.



Gene Bange launches his Gryphon near the top of the 250 ft. dune. Gene's Malibu had a run-in with the author, wiping out the former. Gene was stuck with the Gryphon at contest, flying over flat ground. He lost.

Paul Byrum prepares to launch his Easy Rider, an original design. Note plastic bag over transmitter, keeps sand from running into Pro-Line box.



Skip Schow flew his Midwest Delta Hustler, after the contest. Ship is modified to be a slope soarer, engine removed and nose filled in.



that he had the ship under control, and flew it back to the field. Fortunately it was a sailplane and not a pattern ship, or it would have been reduced to splinters during that loss of control. The field was about 50% puddles, and a few gliders including my *Monterey*, decided it was time for a bath and landed in the deepest puddles they could find. After unpacking the radio gear and wringing out the foam rubber, all was ready to go again. (We could have titled this, All Wet.)

The many tourists that visited the Wright Memorial that day got more than they bargained for and stayed to watch our sailplanes fly. The questions flowed and the cars piled up in the parking area.

Flying in the shadow of the pylon monument on the top of Kill Devil Hill, I thought, "This is where it all began—the Wright Brothers flew their gliders here!" Although they didn't have the sophisticated radio gear we possessed, they had a more definite purpose in mind. What they did here was a conquest, what we were doing was relaxation and a hobby. I can only wonder if my feelings were the same as theirs, at the sight of my glider floating in the sky.