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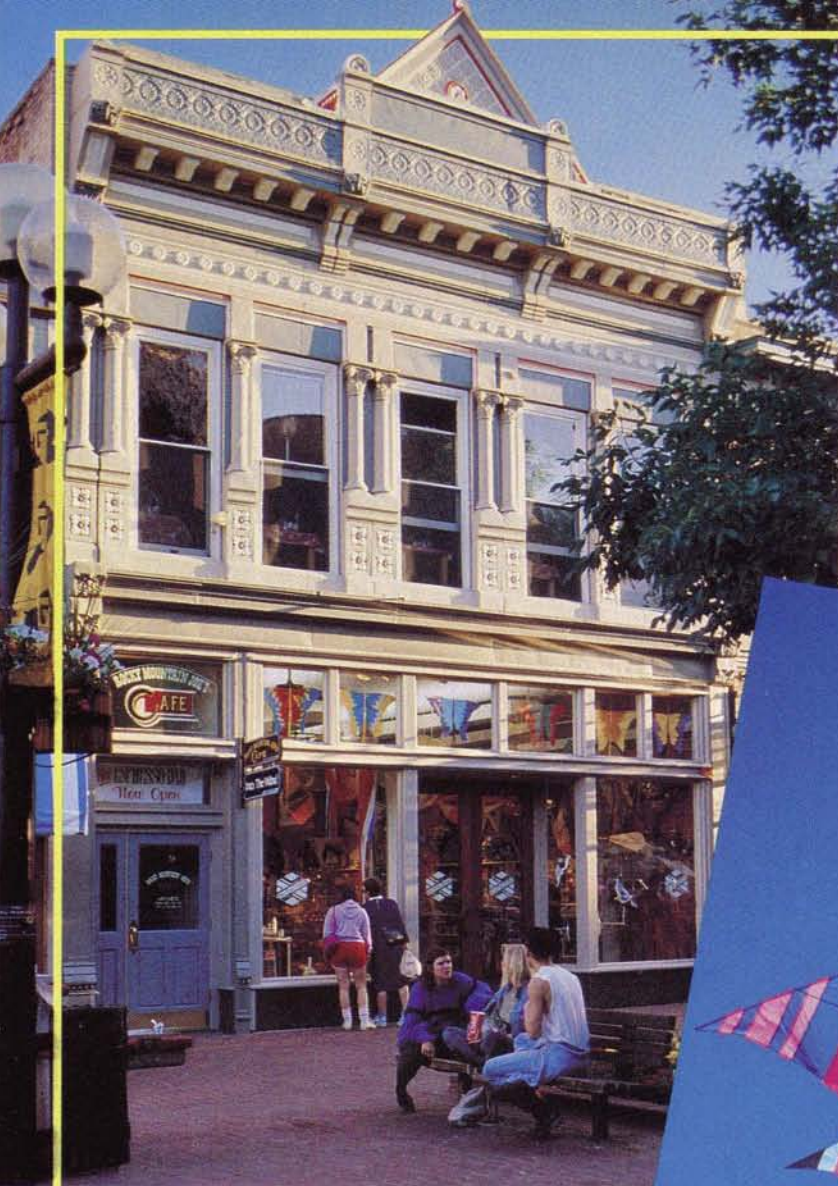
WINTER 1989-90, VOL. 7, NO. 4



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AS SEEN BY
SKYE MORRISON
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succeeding *Kite Tales*
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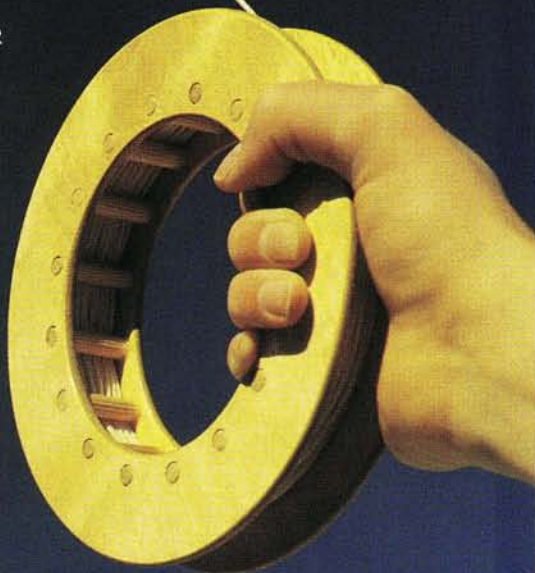
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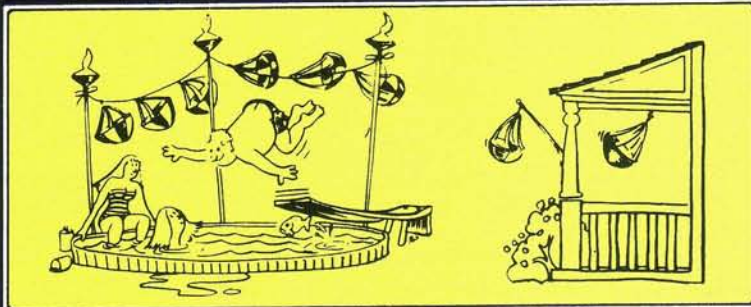
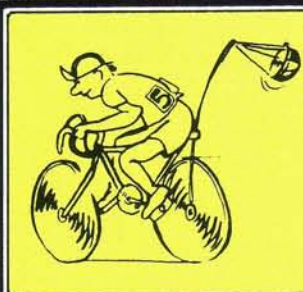
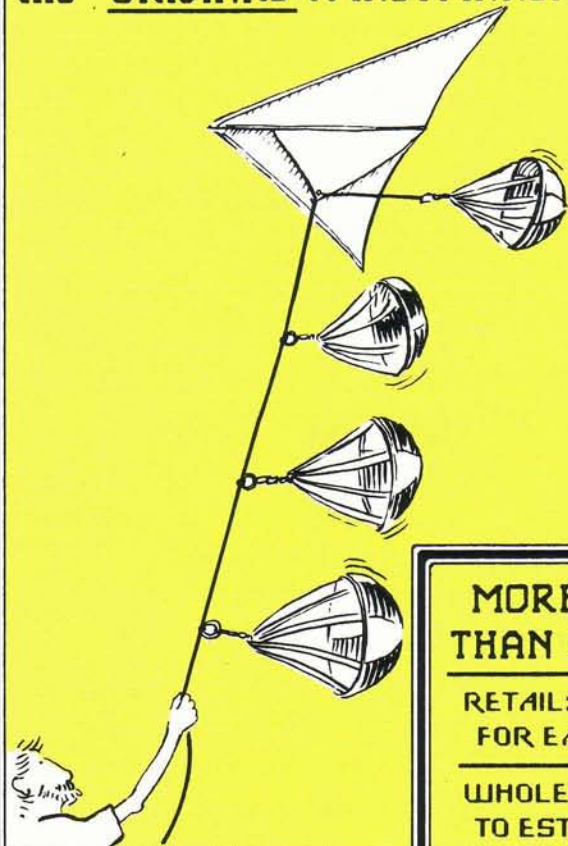


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KiteLines

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In China, flying sculpture is not unusual. This example—a "show" kite—is being demonstrated at Weifang, Shandong Province, People's Republic of China. Photograph by Tal Streeter.

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Kites Are A Bond

Many people have commented about kites and friendship. (You will find echoes of this theme in this issue's articles about China and its kites.)

What is usually said is that kites bring us together. But that truth is so important that I want to say it more emphatically:

KITES ARE A BOND.

It's almost as if kites have some intrinsic power to unite us. From a lonely state one can immediately be joined with others—those others who are flying kites too. And across different cultures and languages one can feel an embracing bond of mutual appreciation—because of kites.

How this happens may be fodder for scholars to study someday. For now we need only to know it is there. Kites are a force. Or perhaps one should say the *interest* in kites is a force. It makes all sorts of very different people equals. It is that equality, that leveling, that makes it

so easy for a kiteflier to shake the hand of anyone else who has held the line of a kite.

We all know that the human race is some kind of totality that has grown over thousands of years on this tiny planet and is still growing toward some unknowable end. But in our daily lives (repairing our cars, eating our apples, walking our dogs), we forget our insignificance in the cosmos and we become the centers of our own little universes.

Kites pull us out of ourselves. They take us into the sky. And they join us on earth.

May your new year—and all your years—be blessed with kites and friendship.

Valerie



Yours truly flying at Fort McHenry in Baltimore.

Alexander Graham Bell would have been pleased

Although known mostly for his work on the telephone, Bell also had a consuming interest in kites. Favoring the tetrahedral cell for its strength and stability, he designed and constructed many tetras during his lifetime.

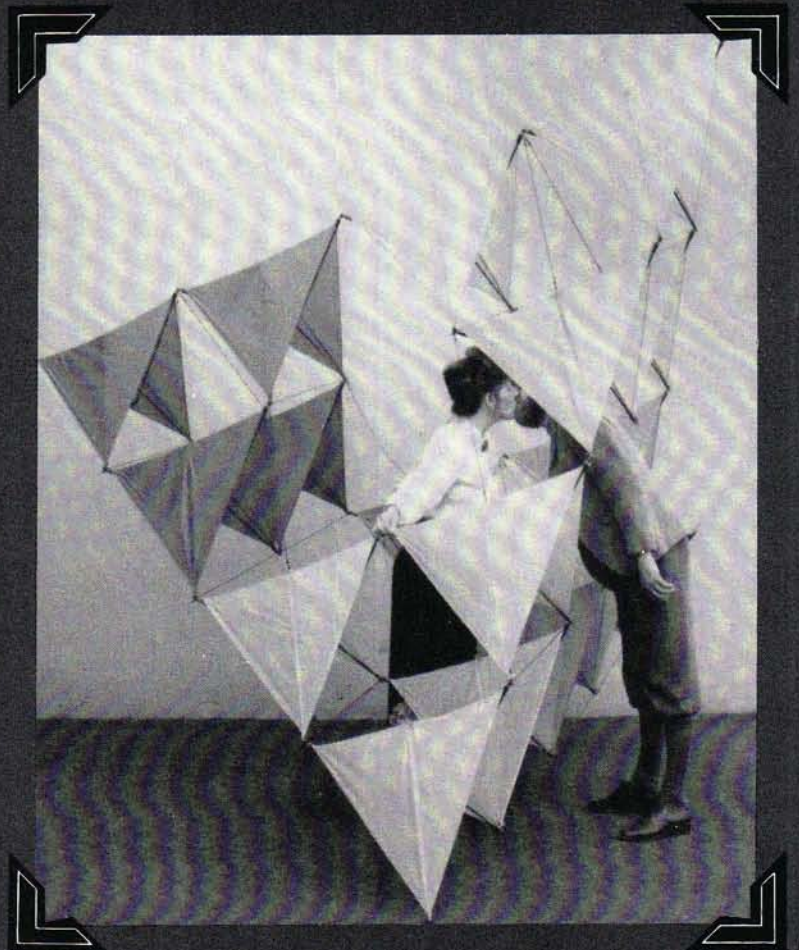
His spirit of innovation is alive today with a little boost from modern technology as embodied in the Professor Waldof Tetra.

The prof and his good lady recreate Bell's famous 1903 photograph with a 16-cell giant, one of the many possible configurations thanks to the unique Waldof universal locking joint. It weighs under 5 pounds, folds down to 28 inches and can be rigged in under 20 minutes from 4 sets of 4 cells.

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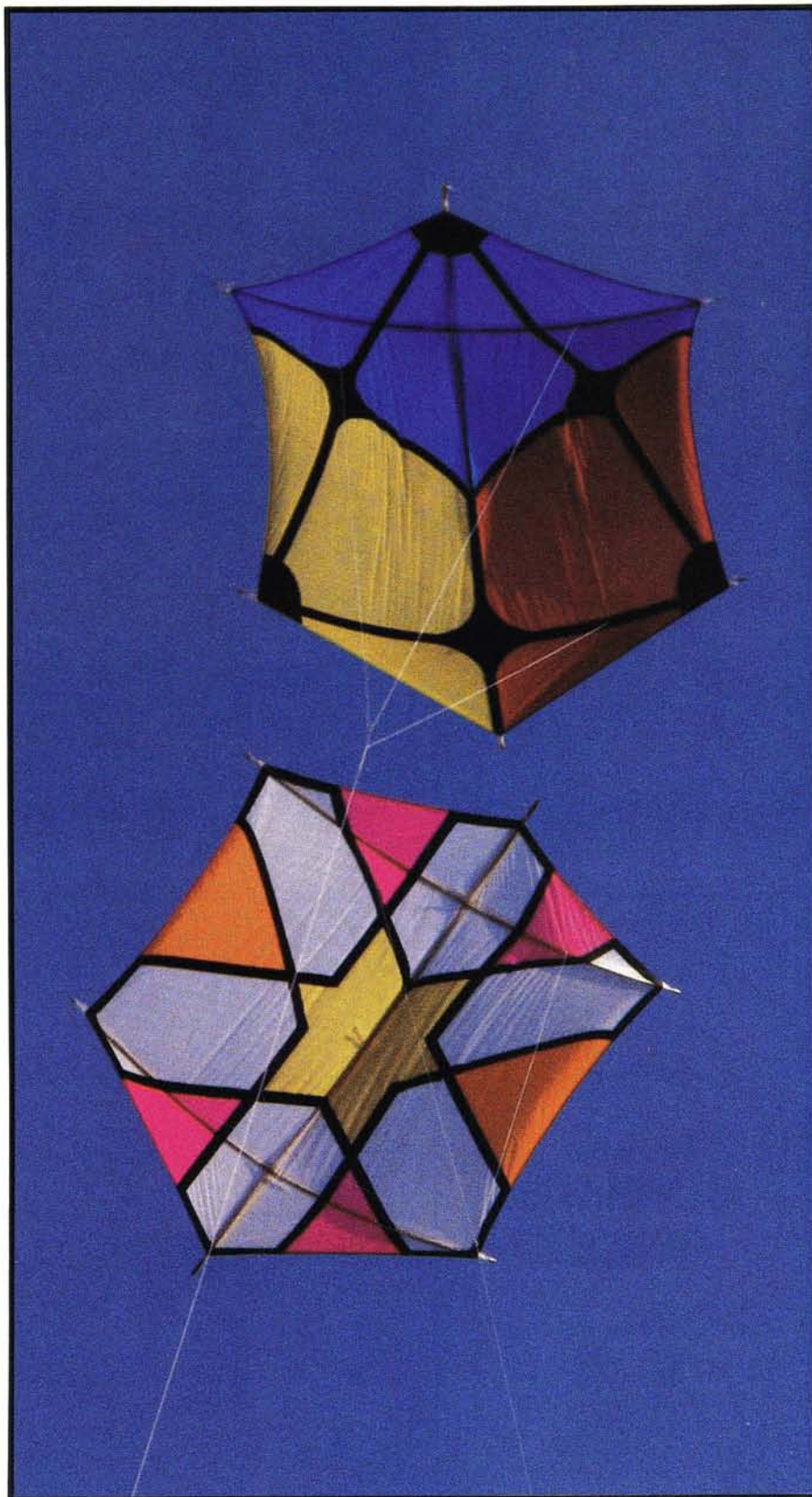


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Of Stunters, Sleds, Wedges & Trains



Arguing the Survey

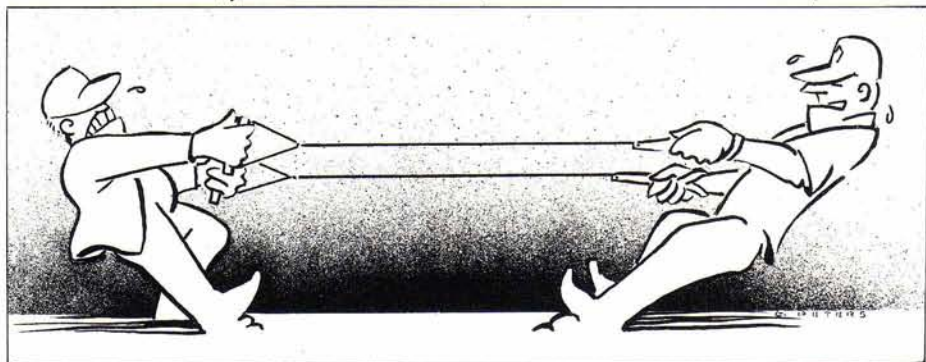
Kite Lines is right: there certainly are a lot of stunt kites available today. And you had the right idea when you conducted "The Great Kite Lines Stunter Survey" (Summer 1989).

Unfortunately, the survey was so poorly executed that it probably did more to confuse than "sort things out."

One problem is that not all the fliers flew all the kites. (But) one person's concept of what a good score is may be different from another's; you even admitted as

ones, written usually by one flier. In this survey, we published reviews of 49 kites by 36 fliers; the average number of reviewers per kite was five. Although each flier was subjective in his/her evaluation, the averaging process made the overall ratings less so.

What we tried to do was to gather evaluations of as many kites as possible, by as many reviewers as possible. It was beyond the scope of this project to systematically evaluate all available kites by the same panel of reviewers. To have put all the



George Peters

much in the accompanying article. Also, in some cases, as few as two fliers flew a particular kite; the Hyperkite Starcruiser may be the second-best kite in the world, but you can't draw that conclusion simply because two out of 36 judges are crazy about it.

The other problem with the survey is that you asked questions about quantitative data. Why ask about pull when you can measure pull with a scale? How can Fire Darts and Spin-Offs be more portable than Hawaiian Team kites and Super Sky Darts when all these kites fit into the same size bag? How can assembly time be less for a Fire Dart than a Super Dart when both kites have exactly the same spar configuration?

The answers are simple. Use a tape measure to determine portability. Use scales to determine pull. And use a watch to determine assembly time and kite speed.

Then just ask the kitefliers how they like the kite.

*Dan Mulligan
Traverse City, Michigan*

The Author Replies:

The points you raise are good ones, but the solution you propose doesn't help as much as I wish it did.

To put the survey in context, I think we must acknowledge that all previous reviews of stunt kites have been subjective

kites on the market in the hands of each panelist would (a) have been beyond the means of even the most affluent member of the kite community, and (b) have stretched the project out even longer.

To limit the kites to those flown by all reviewers would have defeated the project. As it was, we reluctantly did not use reviews of half the kites flown because they were evaluated by only one reviewer.

I suppose it could be argued that each reviewer should have flown all kites in order to rate any of them accurately. The data show that the average number of kites flown by each of the 33 reviewers was 11, but only 9 had evaluated more than 9 kites, and the most prolific reviewer had flown "only" 42 different models. To have cut the panel down to only the frequent fliers would have narrowed the participatory nature of the survey considerably.

To take quantitative data as you propose for each kite would have required a logistical and financial effort beyond our means, although we plan to improve.

I agree with you that some of the individual ratings, such as those you cite for portability, are inconsistent. In a project this size, there's lots of that kind of nit-picking possible, but I think most fliers would agree that those at the top of the list are all very good stunters and those at the bottom were not dealt with unfairly. →

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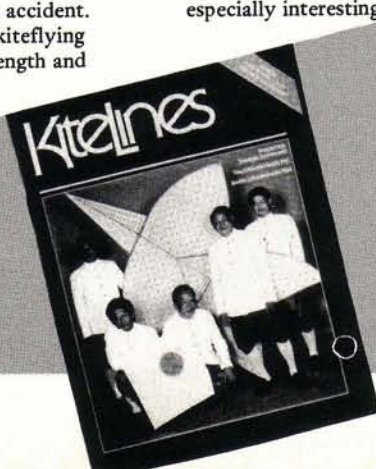
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Favorite issue of Kite Lines:
The Winter-Spring 1987
issue with the article
on Thai kites was
especially interesting.

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Letters . . . Continued

You say that "the answers are simple." We should measure all that objective data, "then just ask the kitefliers how they like the kite." That's simplistic, but I'm afraid not simple. How do we ask the fliers that question? In 25 well-chosen words? How do we tabulate 2,500,000 well-chosen words? Would that solve problems of interpretation or create them? It seems to me that if we are trying to gather comparative information about 150-200 stunt kites, we must sharpen our numerical survey instrument. *Brooks Leffler*

Old Stunters

I liked "The Great Kite Lines Stunter Survey" but I must comment on the statement that ten years ago there were no stunt deltas, large or small.

You may not have had them in the U.S., but we did have at least one over here—the Albatross dual-purpose delta. Construction was of ripstop nylon and wood dowels; wingspan was 102 inches.

With the keel rolled up and secured by built-in Velcro strips, the spreader moved to the front and the dual bridle attached, it was an amazing stunt delta. With the keel unrolled, the spreader on the back and the stunt bridle removed, it was a good single line delta.

I bought my Albatross in 1977, but haven't flown it for years. I have vague recollections of another stunt delta at that time—was it Jilly Pelham's "Phoenix Variant" or is my memory playing tricks?

*John Barker
Middlesex, England*

The Albatross stunt delta was manufactured by Frances Twiss and Chris Eden. Their company (Albatross Kites, later Windy Kites) marketed a complete line of kites and accessories. For an early list of stunt and other kites, see Ron Moulton's book Kites, published in 1978. Editors

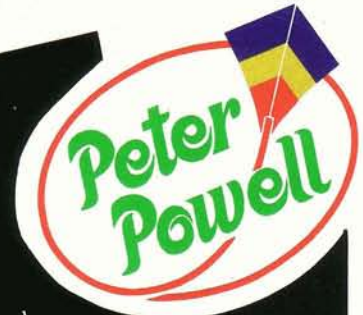
Another Angle on the Wedge

In the Summer 1989 *Kite Lines* you refer to the Flying Wedge kite in the book by Marion Downer, *Kites: How to Make and Fly Them*, as a "notorious nonflier."

Maybe so, but a few years ago I made a Wedge kite from plans in the Edward Dolan book, *The Complete Guide to Making and Flying Kites*. But my kite was bigger (6 x 4 x 2 feet) and the back was closed; the sides were open.

I have also determined that there are

LINE SPECIALISTS



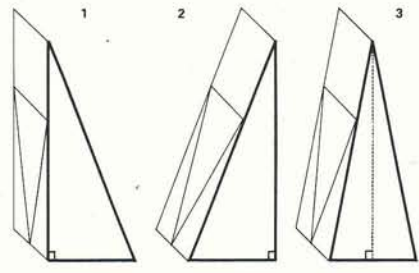
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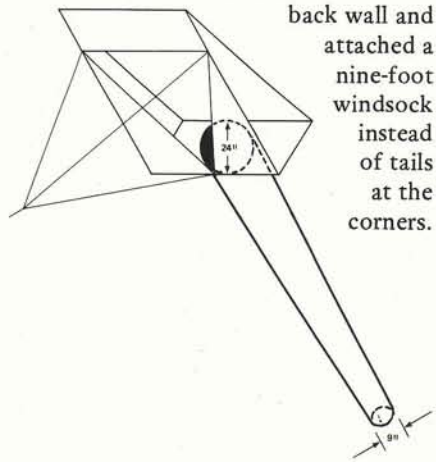
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three types of Wedge kite:



I used #3 but it flew at a low angle so I cut a two-foot hole in the center of the back wall and attached a nine-foot windsock instead of tails at the corners.



Joe Stanley
Portland, Oregon

Obscene and Wild

Thank you for the award ("The Kite Capitals of the World"), but I think the Palmer Method needs to be explained.

Only one person I talked with (Roger Hyde) knew what it was, and everyone else is coming up with obscene and wild interpretations. Help!
Gloria Lugo
Los Angeles, California

The Palmer Method is a system of handwriting taught in grammar schools in the 1920s and '30s (so they say; we weren't there, you understand).
Editors

First Mate

The arch train article (Summer 1989) by Eiji Ohashi and Jack Van Gilder was wonderful. Jack said he first saw an arch train at the 1985 Washington State International Kite Festival at Long Beach.

Bill Lester of Spokane, Washington and I were flying trains that morning because of low winds. Each train had about 100 Conover-Eddys, and it was love at first sight. They began to do a mating dance and before Bill and I could drag them apart, they were engaged.

We pulled down the first 50 or so and then took a good look at the newlyweds. What beauty and grace they seemed to

possess, like a rainbow. This wasn't the first arch train in the world, but it was the first that Jack, Bill and I had ever seen.

Jack's kite trains have awed people for years and he has influenced many others. Len Conover made it simple and inexpensive and, with the help of Margaret Greger, my first was a Conover-Eddy train.

This year at the W.S.I.K.F. Ohashi flew his trains all over the beach. They seemed to be everywhere. One day he put up three arches and flew them over the Dutch kite, the World's Largest. What a sight!

Kite trains are here to stay, and who knows what they will mate with next?

Larry "Ben" Zilar
Kennewick, Washington

Grandiloquent Swallowtail

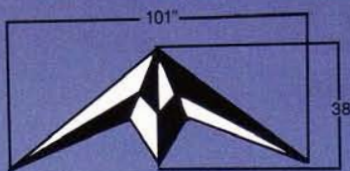
John Loy's article "Sleds for all Seasons" (Summer 1989) was fantastic, with more information in those several pages than in most [articles] twice its length.

After reading it, I sat down to figure dimensions for a Swallowtail from a piece of ripstop 43 inches square. By the next night, construction was completed. The next day, I flew my first homemade kite in over 45 years.

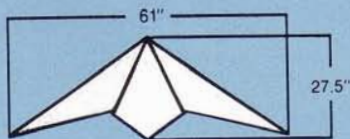
John stated that "sleds tend to be not very pretty kites." However, I say that

WHICH IS HOTTEST OF THE HOT? You decide.

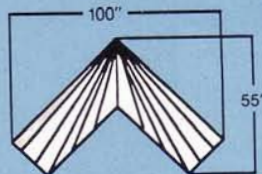
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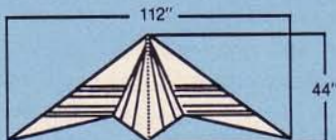


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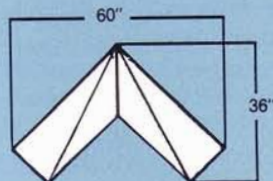
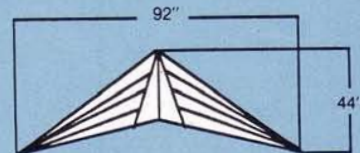


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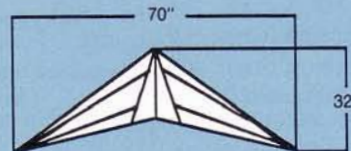
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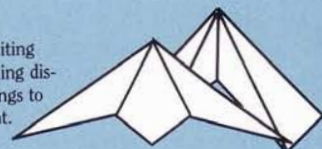


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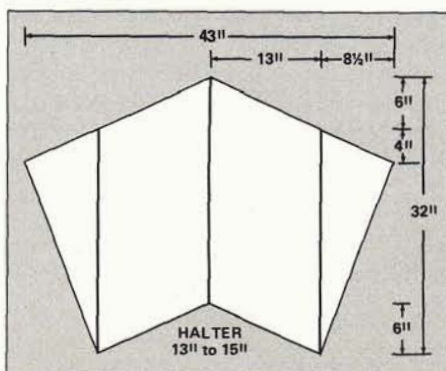
Letters . . . Continued

one's first homemade kite that flies better than anticipated is "beautiful."

I single-stitched the rolled hem, used split rings at the batten points and bridle points, and set arrow nocks at the ends of quarter-inch dowels.

I found that athletic shoelaces do well as reinforcement straps for split rings: cut into 2½-inch lengths; fold in half over the edge of the nylon and sew in place. Since the laces come in many colors, they can match or contrast the color of the kite. (I used red on my fluorescent orange kite.)

Enclosed is a sketch:



John also mentioned that, as a result of his wind tunnel testing, he learned some things that "astonished" him. It would be nice to see another Loy article.

From Austin, Texas, winner of your Grandiloquence Award, I am, sincerely,
John A. Duffy, Jr.

Leap Years and Laboratory Rats

As the person holding the #7 record in your list of "The Recommended 13" for *The Guinness Book of Records*, I fully support your expansion campaign ("For the Record," Summer 1989).

I challenge anyone out there to break my record for 366 consecutive days of individual kite flight. It would give me an excuse to do it again.

But I warn you, laboratory rats forced to fly kites every day for a year have been known to develop ulcers and contract other dread diseases.

Bill Mosley
San Antonio, Texas

Correction

Apologies to Francis Hall, photographer of Ken and Suzanne Conrad in "Our Re-

tail Family Scrapbook" (Summer 1989). We failed to credit him for the photo and we're sorry for the oversight. *Editors*

Our Nearly Permanent Invitation

Your letter in *Kite Lines* can be part of the ongoing dialogue that makes a community out of us kites.

We invite you to write letters for this column. Tell the world your ideas, reactions, opinions, discoveries and experiences. All of us can learn from all of us.

Any letter you write to *Kite Lines* may be considered for publication, so please mark it "not for publication" if you want no doubt to be left about it.

Our invitation is as permanent as we can make it. Your letter in *Kite Lines* can be just as permanent.

Write to us at: *Kite Lines*, Post Office Box 466, Randallstown, Maryland 21133-0466, USA.

Skywalkers of All Sorts

By Mel and Valerie Govig, assisted by A. Pete Ianuzzi

Wild Bill's Cody

A few years ago, Dan Flintjer (Buffalo Cody Kite Co., Buffalo, New York) produced a selection of square box kites that were tight as drums and capable of flight on light winds—perhaps the best classic boxes ever sold. Those boxes are back, and now the conscientious kitemaker has begun making a Cody, a kite with a rich past and a promising future.

I was pleased to find the assembly of Wild Bill Cody* easy and straightforward, at least relatively so for a large cellular

*The kite was named in honor of "Wild" Bill Tyrrell of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, who helped Flintjer with a number of design features and computer patterning of the kite. Some observers have been dismayed that Flintjer is perpetuating a common confusion in Cody history; the kite is that of Samuel Franklin Cody, not Buffalo Bill Cody, another cowboy showman of the same era, not related to Samuel Franklin. Likewise, the word "Buffalo" in the company's name refers not to the cowboy, but to Flintjer's hometown of Buffalo, New York. The debate is on over whether this name game is a rebel streak surfacing in Flintjer's personality or just a very, very inside joke.

kite—and this is a 10-footer.

The kite has the distinctive Cody bat shape, with wings gracefully curved from forward cell to rear. The side panels are constructed with angles like a parallelogram, so that the top surfaces of the kite are forward of the bottom surfaces. The wingtip cords are equipped with small plastic beads to allow fitting over arrow nocks on the spar ends for varying tension, depending on the humidity's effects on the ripstop nylon cover.

Heavy Dacron reinforcing material at all points of contact between fabric and frame, full enclosure of the spreaders, and taped edges all around are examples of the fine workmanship found throughout the kite. These features contribute to the predictably reliable flight of the Cody.

We flew the kite on 500-pound polypropylene "rope" in winds of 8-10 mph. The kite didn't mind the extra weight and drag, but 300-pound nylon probably would be adequate.

For light winds, we moved the bridle lines forward a foot or so to let the kite

float on the breeze. To fly a large box kite, you can search for the towing point that will yield the most lift (in which case you will have to deal with that lift), or you can move the towing point forward so the kite will fly on the widest wind range without becoming unstable. This Cody can comfortably fly as either a lifter or a floater.

Almost any Cody war kite will look good on the ground, redolent of its origins in the history of early aviation and a little menacing in its batlike outline. But the truly noteworthy sight is a Cody that performs. This one does.

A single Wild Bill Cody of this size will probably raise most loads you might have (cameras, banners, windsocks, teddy bears). On the other hand, the kite is docile enough that it can be assembled, launched, flown, landed and disassembled by a lone flier. I like that in a kite.

Another feature of the WBC that I appreciate in big kites is what I call "staged" portability, that is, the ability to break down *part way* for local transport and *all the way* for airlines and foreign busses. The Cody with only its spreaders out is a neat six-foot roll; for maximum compactness, the longerons separate and the kite goes down to a 4½-foot-long bundle.

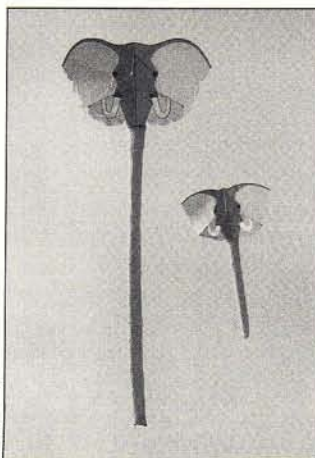
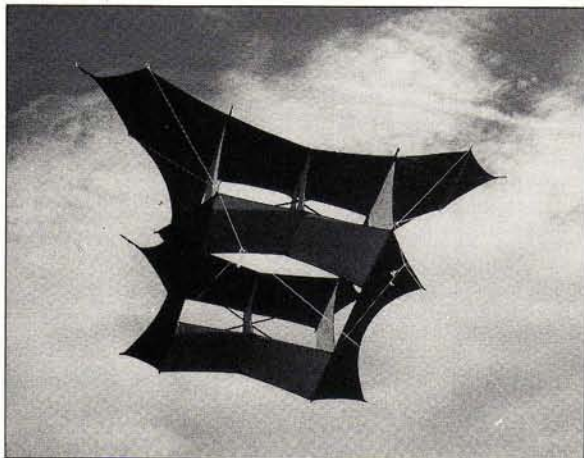
A kite like this might set you back as much as—are you sitting down?—\$1,000.* Buyers may be few and far between, but if they really appreciate a fine Cody they will not call the price unreasonable.—M.G.

No White Elephants

One of the few makers of figure kites in modern materials is Stan Swanson (Condor Kite Co., Seattle, Washington). He is now making kites in the shape of the head and trunk of an African bull elephant. I flew the two sizes in Texas in heavy winds (15-20 mph) and was very pleased with their performance. Since then we have enjoyed them in moderate winds.

The two sizes (about five feet for the baby and 15 feet for the grandpa) are not a simple matter of scaling up or down. The

*There are other Codys on the market, notably the three sizes from Greens of Burnley (England) at prices from about \$40 to \$220. Marvin Dourte of Lebanon, Pennsylvania builds three-footers for \$45, sold at craft fairs only. Vacuum of The Netherlands makes two Codys, about \$200 and \$300. The famous reproduction Codys of Nick Morse (England) are no longer being made. The WBC may come near to filling the Morse niche.



Valerie Govig

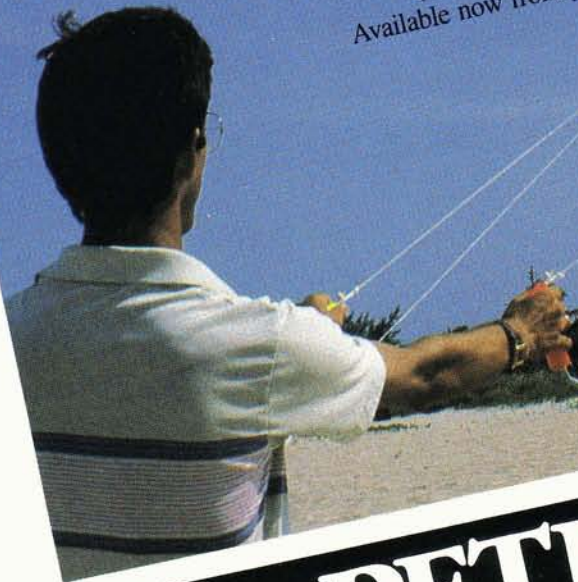
Beauties and beasts—and all of them fly. Clockwise from the upper left: the Wild Bill Cody; two sizes of elephant from Condor Kite Co. (photographed at the same altitude to show relative sizes); and two kites from Martin Lester—the Japanese Crane and the Legs kite.



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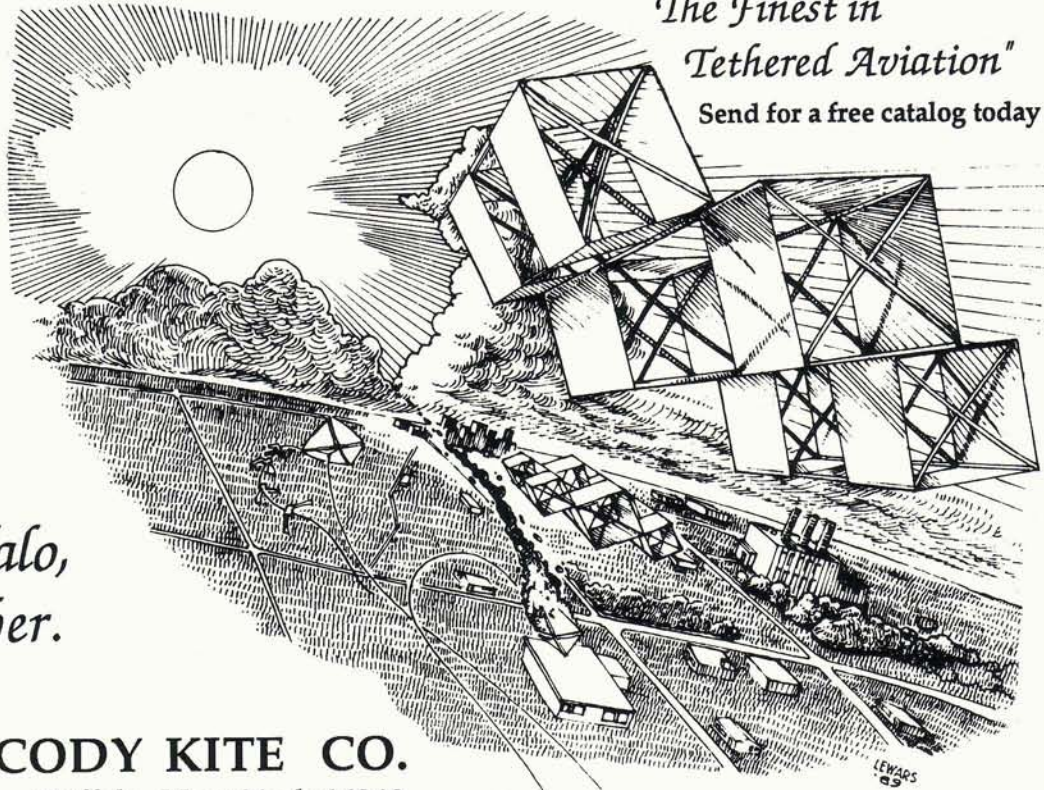
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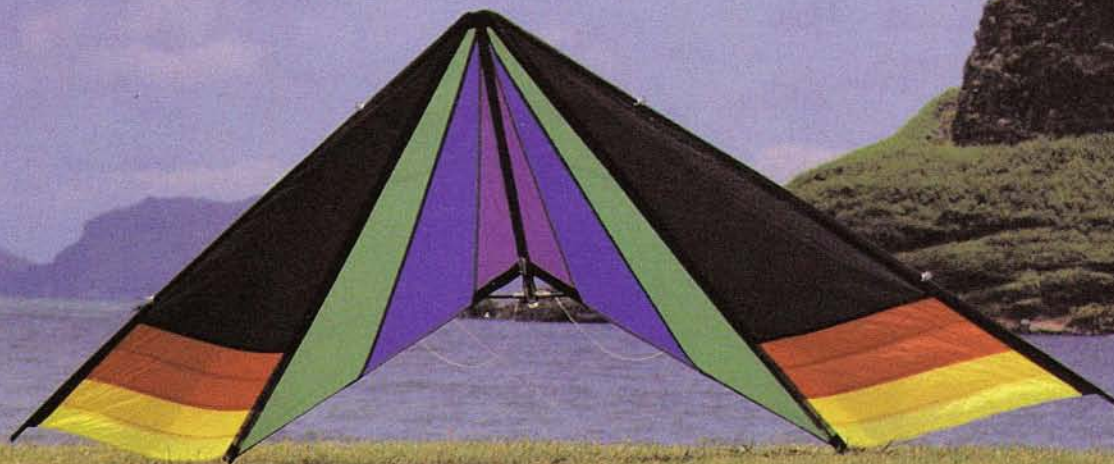
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kite model shown HAWAIIAN TEAM

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designs are a bit different, and of the two we felt the larger kite worked better. The baby was more sensitive to winds at the extremes of the range (a fussy baby). In a heavy wind, its spars bent the ears far back; in a light breeze, it had a tendency, common to flat kites, to dip under the wind and float down the line at the flier. The usual correction to this problem can be made by dropping a handful of peanuts in the elephant's trunk.

The grandpa elephant was a flawless flier in any winds we gave it.

Both kites rose to high angles and gulped line like a thirsty elephant gulps water—a likable trait in a kite.

The elephants assemble very easily on the field and roll compactly for storage. The trunks are attached by Velcro and the baby's trunk becomes its carrying case between flights. The grandpa's trunk, however, is so large that it has to be rolled separately, so the kite comes in two bags, joined by a cord (like link sausages). Workmanship on both kites is excellent.

Naturally, the elephants are good crowd collectors. The image of something flying that in life could never fly has inherent whimsy.

Both the baby and the grandpa elephants would rank very high on a ratio of effort-to-reward, the grandpa perhaps slightly ahead of the baby. Choice of color is a matter of taste: the naturalist will like the familiar gray; the humorist

will go for the pink. No white elephants are available. —M.G./V.G.

Shake a Leg

Two kinetic kites by Martin Lester of England have a lot in common and a world of difference.

On the in-common side, they are both three-dimensional inflated sculptures, both very active in the air and both marked by Martin's usual attention to detail.

On the difference side, one kite has no spars at all and the other has 10, arranged in a rather complex planform.

Japanese Crane

This kite appears to be a byproduct of Martin's Icarus and Canada Goose kites, but it maintains an identity all its own with its extended neck and trailing legs.

The Japanese Crane is a *very high-aspect ratio* kite with all of the problems that wide deltas exhibit in turbulent near-ground air. The bird's legs—actually quarter-inch wooden dowels three feet long—add a pendular weight shift to the native instability of high-aspect-ratio kites. Getting and keeping the Crane airborne is a challenge, but the effect is worth it. The fully inflated bird is so lifelike, even at its low angle and high attitude, that cheers went up from onlookers when we flew it.

The Crane would be a good training kite for fliers new to "keeping it up." Wind shifts start the kite in the wind's direction.

Left to itself, the kite will gracefully arc into the ground. But a quick release of line will point the long neck skyward again and bring the bird back downwind and overhead. The symptoms are in slow motion and you have time to react. The Crane goes back to downwind center and then it all starts over again at the next gust.

I like action in my kites, as long as it is predictable. The Japanese Crane is predictably active and responsive. But don't expect to tie it off to a post. —M.G.

The Long and Short of It

Martin Lester's Legs kite looks like a Flow Form that kept flowing. The short of it is the pair of shorts that take the lead. The long of it are the legs, 82 inches to the tip of the shoes, making the total length of the kite 106 inches.

The Legs kite will not take any prizes for flying efficiency. Most of the time it dances around at a line angle of 25-30 degrees, sometimes less. At its best, in a wind of about 8 mph, it achieves an angle of about 45 degrees.

But for attention-getting, I have never flown anything like it. People just love it.

And it dances, really dances. No doubt by design, the legs bend only at the knees and they do that in a rhythmic Charleston or easy trot. What a banner for a footrace!

Legs is a kite you can launch alone, but you cannot fly it alone. You and your Legs will always draw a crowd. —M.G.

DATA CHART

Name and Shape of Kite	Retail Price	Dimensions (inches)	Weight (ounces)	Major Components	Portability	Assembly Time	Durability	Wind Range	Ease of Launch	Skill Level
Buffalo Cody: Wild Bill Cody	1,000	72x120	88.0	ripstop, fiberglass	G	12 min.	E	7-25	E	I-S
Condor Kite Co.: Elephant (baby)	30	40x62	2.8	ripstop, fiberglass	E	2.0 min.	E	4-12	E	N-I-S
Condor Kite Co.: Elephant (grandpa)	125	72x174	11.8	ripstop, fiberglass	VG	3.0 min.	E	4-20	E	N-I-S
Martin Lester: Japanese Crane	260	72x94	13.0	ripstop, ramin dowel, fiberglass	VG	7.0 min.	VG	8-15	G	I-S
Martin Lester: Legs	175	100x30	13.0	ripstop	E	0 min.	E	5-20	VG	N-I-S

NOTE: Retail Price (in US dollars) is "advertised" or "suggested." Wind range (in mph) covers minimum and maximum speeds deemed suitable by our evaluators. Skill levels are: N-Novice, I-Intermediate, S-Skilled. Other ratings are: P-Poor, F-Fair, G-Good, VG-Very Good, E-Excellent. Dimensions are in the following order: height x width x depth. Measurements and drawings are made with the kite standing up on the floor facing the viewer.

Mixed Cultures & Kites

By Skye Morrison, Michael Steltzer, Tal Streeter and Michèle Velthuizen

Virtually Perfect

Kunstdrachen: Geijutsu Dako (Art Kites) by Dr. Paul Eubel and Ikuko Matsumoto (Osaka, Japan: Goethe-Institut, 1988), in German and Japanese, softcover, 330 pages.

In 1987, Dr. Paul Eubel, Director of the German Goethe-Institut in Osaka, Japan had a wonderfully imaginative idea: make it possible for world-renowned painters (primarily European and Japanese) and Japan's finest kitemakers to work together and see what happens.

An exhibition (currently showing*) and a sumptuous catalog/book provide insight and inspiration for kitemakers and enthusiasts who admit to the desire for "high art" flying in the sky.

It is not a simple problem, nor is it simply a matter of taste, this idea of send-

*The world tour of the exhibition began in June of 1988 and is expected to last four-and-a-half years. The first 15 months, the collection visited eight modern art museums in Japan. In December 1989, the first European show opened in Munich (home of the Goethe-Institut). The tentative schedule thereafter includes Paris, Dusseldorf, Moscow, Hamburg, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Seville, Berlin, Copenhagen, Vienna, London, Montreal, San Francisco and, finally, New York's Guggenheim in the fall of 1992.

Tal Streeter On Kites & Art

As my old *biwa* instructor first counseled me, before the music—religion. Before art in the sky—an appreciation of things that fly. It was this concept that took me to Japan in 1970.

The resulting "kite art" was first shown in a New York City gallery just a few blocks from the Guggenheim. And my kite artworks were acquired for New York City's Museum of Modern Art from an earlier exhibition in Tokyo's famous Minami Gallery. The New York art critics were noticeably "cool" to the idea of kite art then.

Let's hope that the Dutch philosopher Johan Huizinga (quoted by Dr. von Bismarck in *Kunstdrachen: Geijutsu Dako*) is taken more literally when the new art kite exhibition arrives at the Guggenheim in 1992. "Culture energizes its roots in play; play is the contradiction of life's necessities." Play is "purposeless."

Kites are close to this play category wherein we also find all purposeless, non-utilitarian art, so we have, in some eyes, serious play and less serious play.

Art critics take their play *very, very* seriously. Not many of them in 1970 were open to the idea of kite art. Today? Tomorrow? 1992? Who can say?

"L'oiseau amoureux"
by Niki de Saint Phalle



ing images flying up into the heavens. All (most? some? few?) of these kites are essentially paintings hung in the sky.

So those of us who love kites have a leg up on these artist-painters, many of whom, it seems certain, have given little attention to kites and the idea of "sky art."

We should look at their kite art—running the gamut of modern art from romantic realism through abstraction to non-objective forms and colors—in this book and couple it with the underlying strength of our own appreciation, experience and commitment to kites.

Goethe-Institut president (worldwide) Dr. Klaus von Bismarck gives a sensitive philosophical groundwork for this collaboration of art in the sky in his thoughtful introduction to the book.

"The dream of flight," he writes (I am paraphrasing, translating from the German), "is no longer a dream, it is something we long ago realized; but the desire to be lighter than air has stayed with us. The heavens as a play space for our imagination have continued to fascinate us. This is the basis of this kite art. Art crosses borders, takes chances, enters into new territories. Where better than in play with the wind can the freedom which art enjoys develop purely?"

Of the Japanese kitemakers he says, "Their subtle sense of the material aesthetic proves them the inheritors of a great art tradition." Whereas paintings stimulate our imagination by the depiction of fantastic situations, these kite painting subjects enter "not just an imaginary voyage, but are forms and ideas actually hanging, suspended in the sky, carrying a human message."

Some of the artists' personal styles and art forms lent themselves directly without

adaptation to kites. A few adapted their work to the merging of their art and the traditional Japanese kite—its forms, its bones and paper. Not all of the artists took the challenge to heart, appreciating or recognizing its potential.

Photographer Shigeru Jofuku's studio photographs in *Kunstdrachen* are stunning and stunningly reproduced. Additional photographs of the kites flying and under construction give us the fullest enjoyment of these kite objects both on the ground and in the sky. Of interest to Japanese kite enthusiasts will be the descriptions of the regional kites used in the collaboration and the brief history of Japanese kites.

Kunstdrachen is virtually perfect in concept and execution. As the capping flourish to this superb kite event, all of the kites will be auctioned at the conclusion of the exhibition tour, the monies (which should be substantial) to be donated to the United Nations Catastrophe Fund for "Help from the Skies" airlifts!

I am very grateful for all the inspired hands, hearts and minds which brought this project to fruition. I can't imagine a kite library that won't have this beautiful book gracing its shelves. —T.S.

Other Views

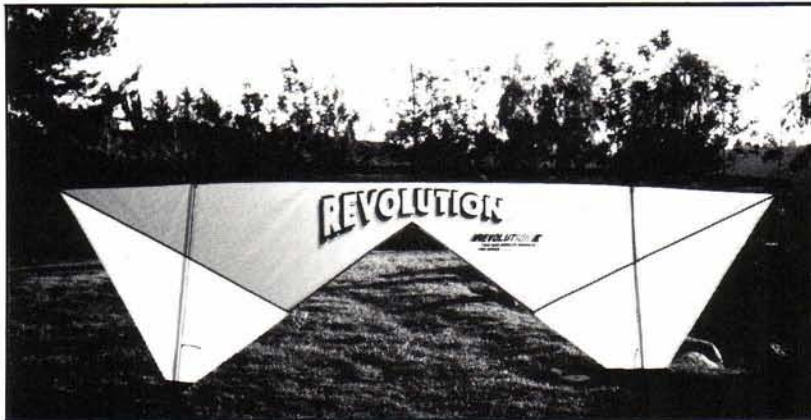
Last year our friend Tomoshi Takahara of Kyoto, Japan wrote: "I went to an exhibition of Art Kites today. There were about 100 kites . . . Some of them were charming, but most were no good either as kites or as art . . . Almost half of them seemed to be too heavy . . . However, I took pleasure in looking at them."

Michael Steltzer of Berlin, Germany, who will sell kites at the exhibition in Munich, says: "I have a problem with the artists being in front of and separate from the kitemakers, who are underexposed." Steltzer also reports from a conversation with Masaaki Modegi that the Japan Kite Association provided much help and information to make the project possible, but in no place was its assistance mentioned.

As many kites know, a forerunner of the *Kunstdrachen* exhibition exists. In The Netherlands, Gerard van der Loo and Els Lubbers invited 21 noted artists to paint Edo-style kites of nylon and fiberglass. The result, The Hague Air Gallery, premiered at Scheveningen in June 1987, and has flown in other places such as the Festival of the Air at Washington, Tyne & Wear, England in July 1989.

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Pretty as a Picture

Le Cerf-Volant en Chine (The Kite in China) by Dominique Baillon-Lalande, with Wang Hongxun and Liu Hanxiang (Meudon, France: Éditions Joël Cuénot, 1987), in French, hardcover, 88 pages.

This book about Chinese kites, written in French, does a great deal to transcend boundaries of culture, time and history in the presentation of a cultural object, the kite. The "author" (and I use the quotation marks purposely) has organized an international kite event in Dieppe, France as a vehicle to promote better understanding between France and China. This book, which divides the experience of understanding Chinese kites into several unusual and useful categories, is the document of the Dieppe/Weifang (China) experience.

The work begins with an excellent synopsis of the history of kites in China, including literary, scientific and social references. The history is supported with a bibliography of specific and general texts (available in French).

The book continues with a chapter on the materials for making Chinese kites. We are spared the how-to aspects which would require a separate volume. Instead, we are shown the first of many excellent photographs of contemporary Chinese kites (based on ancient models) plus clear simple line drawings of basic structure.

The "gallery section" follows with studio photographs of special kites which have symbolic and decorative meaning. The art of the Chinese kite is discussed in this chapter, giving insight to the role kites have in mirroring other aspects of Chinese culture.

An issue which is sometimes ignored in kite books is the differentiation between the kite as a toy, a product of popular art, a tourist object, and an individual work of art. The fifth chapter addresses these distinctions by illustrating street market kite sellers, cottage industry kite-makers and large kite factories in China, and concludes that the kite has successfully existed as a form of cultural expression regardless of how it is produced. Though the point is made, it is sad that there is not a more in-depth ethnography of these different makers.

The final chapter is about kiteflying in China, with particular attention to the festival in Weifang. We find out about the types of kites—all shapes and sizes—and the special equipment required for flying them. The events of the spring fes-

tival in April, when kites are flown all over China, are also documented. The potential of kites to bridge international waters is reviewed throughout this chapter.

This book should be in the library of any kitemaker or flier interested in international issues. Because it is in French, the text will be inaccessible for some. However, the illustrations still make the book worthwhile. Further, the elegant design and rich color printing make this a physically pleasing volume, more than fit for the coffee table. If the book were to be printed in English, I would like to see an expanded bibliography and more detailed captions for the photographs.

Reading the book a second and third time, I hear more than one author's voice. The historical text reads as the work of a cultural scholar. Having met Wang Hongxun on one of my visits to China, I wonder if his voice is within this chapter and if he should have been listed as co-author rather than respected, though secondary, consultant. This confusion could be a product of great distances, different cultural perceptions of authorship and the thorny issue of translation and copyright of research. These issues should be addressed by publishers, authors and editors. A parallel issue exists with kite-making on the international scene.

For kites the opportunity to travel to China through this book transcends these problems. *Le Cerf-Volant en Chine* successfully introduces us to the art of the Chinese kite. —S.M.

Aerial View Deja Vu

Kite Photo: Hand-Made Satellite Ground Surveys by Katsutaka Murooka (Tokyo, Japan: NTT [Nippon Telegraph & Telephone], 1989), in Japanese, softcover, 222 pages, 1300 yen (about \$10).

This is Katsutaka Murooka's second book on the subject of kite aerial photography. His first book was *Kite Photography*, written in 1985 and published by Shashin Kogyo, Tokyo, Japan.

Kite Photo is, in a way, a supplement to Murooka's first book, which was basically a collection of aerial photographs. *Kite Photo* describes the author's personal experiences and the circumstances under which he took the aerial photographs displayed in *Kite Photography*.

However, his new book is also partly autobiographical, partly informative, partly a travelogue and partly a chronological account of what he calls "surveys" (the

subject matter for his aerial photographs). But, because the book contains limited photographs and diagrams, it is by no means a how-to manual.

The range of topics in the book is quite large, but none of the subjects are actually dealt with in detail. Murooka covers such items as: the advantages and obstacles of low-altitude aerial photography, kites, flying line, cameras, mechanisms, his travels around the world, the history and development of both kites and aerial photography, and what probably may be the most interesting topic for ardent kite aerial photographers: the "windmill."

Murooka's windmill is an ingenious device—invented if not perfected by him—which automatically takes a series of photos at set intervals around a 360-degree circle. Through a set of gears and levers, and powered completely by the wind, a propeller- or fan-like mechanism simultaneously rotates the camera and triggers the shutter at designated compass points.

Since the book is written in an autobiographical style, it may be more interesting for the general (sorry, only Japanese-speaking) public and for enthusiastic kite aerial photographers who would—with the help of an interpreter—enjoy reading Murooka's personal experiences. —M.V.

Schimmelpfennig Encore

Lenkdrachen Bauen und Fliegen (Stunt Kite Making and Flying) by Wolfgang Schimmelpfennig (Niedernhausen, West Germany: Falken Verlag, 1989), in German, softcover, 64 pages, DM 19.80.

Once again Wolfgang Schimmelpfennig has put a very informative, useful and good-looking kite book on the growing market. But this one has the special quality of catering to the do-it-yourself stunt kite builders.

Almost all of the classic stunt kites are included: the Peter Powell, Sky Dart, Skynasaur, Spin-Off and Hawaiian. However, because the Flexifoil company refused to allow publication of construction plans for its kites, Wolfgang designed and patented a soft stunt kite of his own, called the Paraflex. This kite is wide and thin like a Flexi, but as sparless as a parafoil. Detailed plans for this unique commercial kite are in the book.

Wolfgang has included more than 100 detailed drawings to accompany the 50 color photos. The excellent graphics in the book were done with care by Wolfgang's

good kiteflying friend Bernhard Maas.

There are lots of tips and tricks regarding proper bridling, knots and splices, as well as intricate sewing.

But the book is not only for construction. It also attempts to inform about the history and aerodynamics of stunt kites. Necessary accessories are explained extensively; there are even plans for making an aluminum control rod for power flying.

The chapter on flying techniques does not have depth and completeness. However, the safety tips for stunt kite pilots are excellent and should be read by all. Unfortunately, they are on the last page of the book.

So what is there to bicker about? Those kite people who actually made the historical inroads with stunt kites are not always credited with their inventions and developments. The detailed instructions for splicing hollow braid line is a copy of the Rainbow No-Knot system developed by Steve Edeiken. No credits are given (and some details are omitted). The design of the Hawaiian was Don Tabor's (Top of the Line Kites) and has been patented by him. No credits are given. Wolfgang should show more respect for such things as this if he wants others to respect his patented Paraflex. Oh, and Paul Garber's name is misspelled Garbor. (Details! details!)

This kind of journalism leaves a somewhat foul aftertaste. Credit should be given where it is due. Therefore, we credit Wolfgang for compiling this information and presenting it so beautifully, if imperfectly.

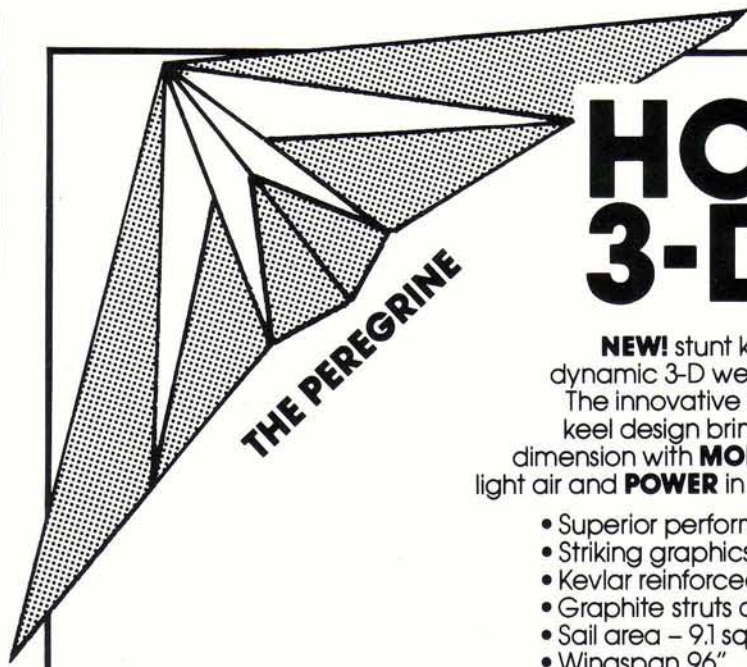
—M.S.

New Edition Notes

From Australia: Beth Matthews has radically improved the production of her book *Kite-Folds*. It's as if she took the *Kite Lines* book review of Spring 1988 as her guide to revision. Well, as they say in Australia, bonzer! The differences make all the difference.

The new edition is typeset instead of hand lettered. It is pleasingly arranged with plans on facing pages so you don't need to flip back and forth to follow the instructions. Attractive full-color appears inside and out. And the addendum "Kites as Educational Tool" is an exhaustive outline of classroom possibilities for teachers. Ten kite sheets are included, making this a kit as well as a book, and giving us a total package that reflects well on the talents of Beth Matthews.

—V.G.



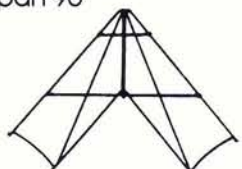
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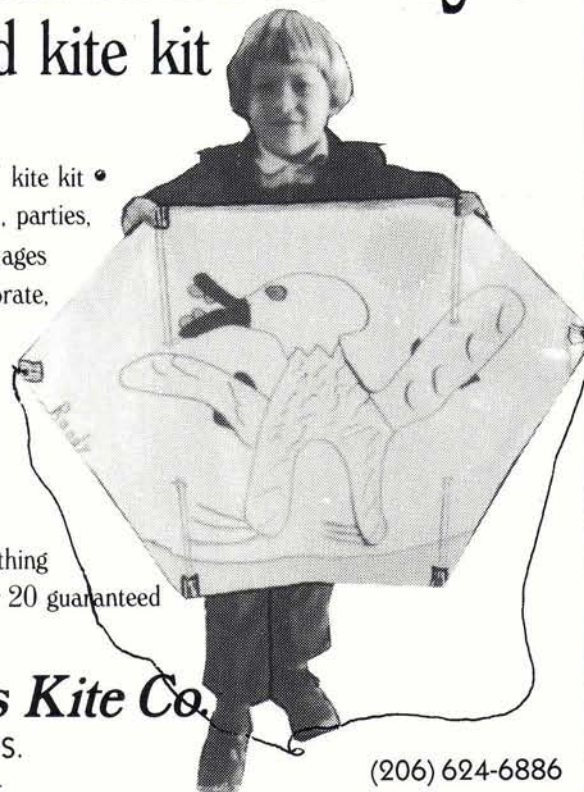
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Bat Master: Takeshi Nishibayashi

An Appreciation by Frank Lee

In 1988, Takeshi Nishibayashi, well-known throughout the kite world as a teacher and creator of original kites, gave two of his bat kites to Kite Lines. We marveled at them for a short time, then passed them to Frank Lee, a local friend and architect, for his scrutiny. Here is his fascinating tale. —The Editors

Hunter Bat

At first, off the ground, the bat kite climbs fast and steady to altitude. It rises nearly straight up to vertical string. Then, at the apex, the strong pull on the line subsides, the bat turns and pivots slowly at the peak, shifting from side to side in deliberate maneuvers, as if scanning for its dinner.

Suddenly, with only the slightest suggestion from me, the bat dives, swoops with several graceful full-force wing flaps and *dive bombs* to the left and right. The kite enters a spiral stall—sometimes weightless, out of string, out of control—and then dives again. The kite makes a final dramatic slow swoop within feet of the ground and then—a wonder—recovers and makes a restful steady climb to the top surveillance platform again.

This entire performance takes place with very little guidance from me. The bat rests for a moment on the limb of a tall invisible tree. Now it scans and hunts again. I have never seen a single-line kite with such a delightful behavior.

Children in the nearby playground squeal with fright, wonder and delight. One comes over to me and asks, “How do you do that, mister?”

A woman, captured by the bat’s dancing, calls it “ominous—possessed.” It is clearly a dark presence in the sky with a controlled spirit of its own.

Bat Biology

The larger of the two kites is 70 inches in wingspan and 31 inches from ear to tail. The smaller is 50 by 25 inches.

Both of the bats are constructed from medium-weight black plastic sheeting with a variety of battens and spars.

If I doubt that these kites are trained (or spirited with bat guts), I marvel at the mammal biology of the finely selected, subtly varying bones spread riblike and



The bat kite flies at Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. “What makes me feel like I am taking a pet bat with a long leash for a walk in the wind?”

neatly bound, like cartilage, to the skin.

The quality of taping is not precise, like engineering, but imparts a sense of its being quickly and certainly placed (the Zen of cellophane?). Tape 3/4-inch wide follows and binds the side edges. It is folded in half and smoothly curved.

Multiple layers of clear tape increase evenly into higher stress areas just as the gods might have done had they used Scotch Tape for making animals. All battens attached to the sheet are fully and tightly enclosed in clear tape, semiexposed, like bone under skin. Holes are neatly punched and reinforced with tape. The kites do not actually self-heal, but they have been very durable over the past year.

Skeleton

Two cross spars—one straight and one fully curved—give a complex and dynamically self-regulating flying shape to the kites. The cross spars are tied to the center spine with small string loops. About 20mm from the spar ends, cellophane tape is rolled to form a stopper.

A series of holes and a reinforcing stick in the double keels allow adjustment of the towing point for varying wind speed. Simple short bamboo dowels connect the bridle through the holes in the keels without the use of knots. (The method is similar to that used for elastic ties on party hats or masks.)

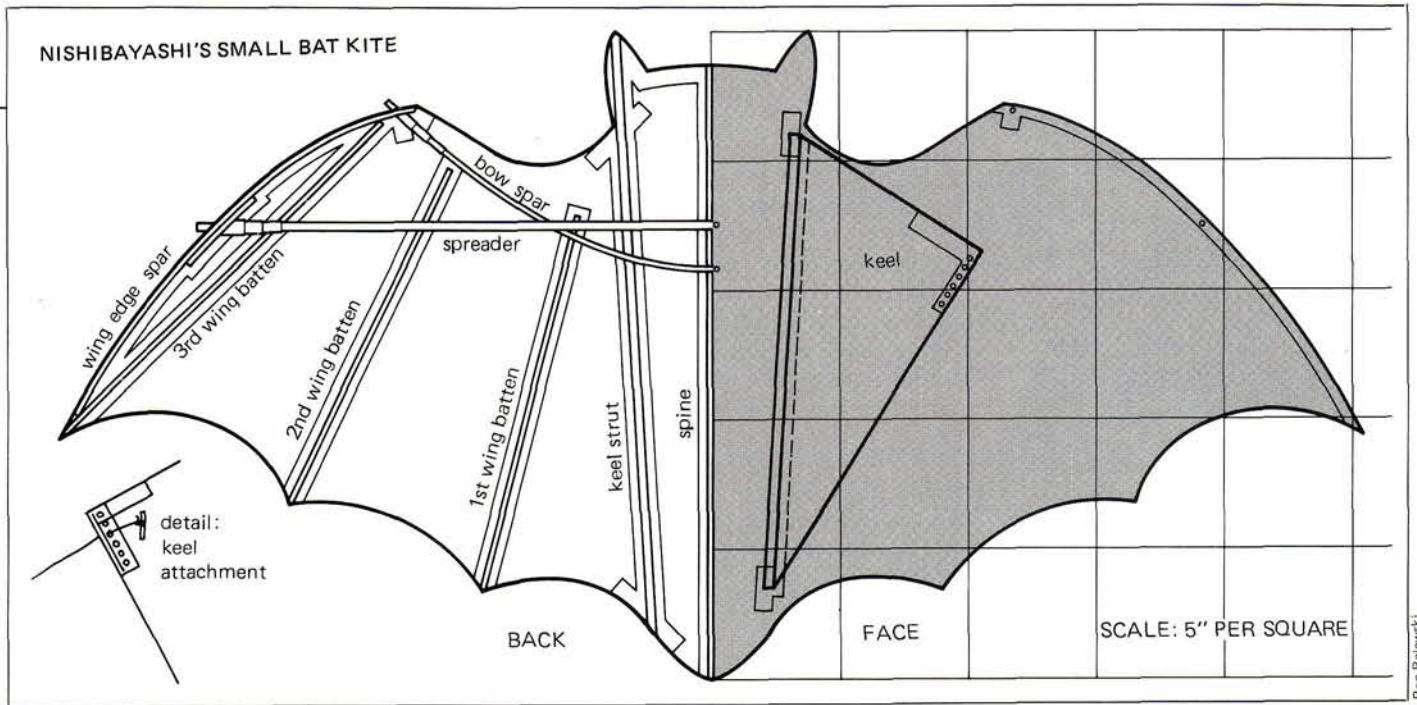
The larger kite has multiple holes along the curved wing edges for holding the straight cross spar. By placing the spar in fore or aft holes, the flier can “balance” the kite’s shape for best flight. I adjusted for stronger winds, although the difference in handling was small.

Character

I have never before experienced kites with such personality and variety of self-control sequences. The maneuvers captured a sense of predatory flying and produced a unique kiteflying experience. I found myself interacting with the kite from an intuitive place, wondering if I was subtly controlling it or not. It was easy to forget that I was on the ground holding string.

At other times, I felt somehow the presence of the designer, as if he were standing behind me, playing with an additional kite string, defying me to anticipate the behavior of his flying mammal.

I have come to prefer the smaller bat, not because it flies “better,” but because it takes more chances and comes close to losing control. The large bat is a more calculating flier with a mature, certain manner. One is a teenager, the other an adult.



Ron Balewski

Meet the Maker

This is how I met Nishibayashi: by flying his kites. Over the course of a year, I have concluded that these bat kites are live, trained actors—or at least possessed with bat spirits. I distinctly felt the hand of their maker directly on my line. If I was assisting the kites' dance with my line, I was receiving instructions to do so.

How could this be? How could this black trash-bag plastic, sticks and tape carry the genetic script for classic bat behavior? How are they programmed? What makes me feel like I am taking a pet bat with a long leash for a walk in the wind?

Kite Lines graciously lent me two of Nishibayashi's published kite books.*

The wonderfully simple illustrations are clear and entertaining. The kite plans are numerous and detailed. Included in the books are at least 7 sleds, 7 birds, 5 fishes, dogs, cats, fighter kites, an elephant, a rat, a sailing ship, glider, U.F.O., the Nishi Sliding Kite No. 1, and enough conceptual building information to create almost any single-line kite that you can imagine—and get it flying.

Nishibayashi's works beg for translation into English.

I have not attempted to copy or reconstruct the bat kites to see if, in fact, they are so subtly crafted. My enjoyment of

Nishibayashi's three kite books, all out of print, are:

Sosaku-no Tako (Creative Kites), a 72-page softcover published in 1974.

Tanosbii Tako-no Tsukurikata (Happy Kite-making), a 160-page softcover published in 1978.

Sosaku-no Tako 2 (Creative Kites 2), a 64-page softcover published in 1981.

Materials

- SAIL: 1 sheet black plastic (polyethylene), about 1.5 mil thick, at least 26" x 51", plus enough for the 2 keels
- SPINE: 1 piece fiberglass, 1/8" diameter, 24" long
- KEEL STRUTS: 2 pieces bamboo, 1/8" diameter, 23-3/8" long
- SPREADER: 1 piece fiberglass, 1/8" diameter, 36-5/8" long
- BOW SPAR: 1 piece fiberglass, 1/16" diameter, 28-5/8" long
- 1ST WING BATTENS: 2 pieces fiberglass, 1/16" diameter, 14-3/4" long
- 2ND WING BATTENS: 2 pieces fiberglass, 1/16" diameter, 14-3/8" long
- 3RD WING BATTENS: 2 pieces fiberglass, 1/16" diameter, 18-5/8" long
- WING EDGE SPARS: 2 pieces bamboo, 1/16" diameter, 19-5/8" long, curved
- TAPE: 3/4" wide clear plastic throughout kite with reinforcements at all hole points. The edges of the head and ears are reinforced on the backside with clear tape. All spars are taped in place along their entire length.
- BRIDLE STRING: 1 piece 72" long folded in half to make a removable two-leg bridle 36" long. Tied to each leg of the bridle is a small bamboo stick (1/16" diameter, 1" long) which is inserted into holes in the keels. Different holes are used for different winds (*see text*). The towing points on the keels are reinforced with small pieces of fiberglass rod (1/16" diameter x 2-1/2" long), secured in place with tape reinforcement. There are six towing points—or holes—on each keel.

NOTE: You may, of course, substitute like or similar materials when you build the kite. For instance, spars may be wood, bamboo or fiberglass. We have listed the actual materials used by Nishibayashi. Measurements converted from metric may be slightly inexact.

the originals leads me not to try—and be frustrated by my simple, crude copy. (I would love to hear from anyone else who wants to take on the task.)

Nishi loves to recite an old saying among the *tako kichi* (kite nuts) of Japan: "When you are fishing, you are looking down; when you are flying kites, you are looking up." I say with a Nishi bat kite you can do both. ◇

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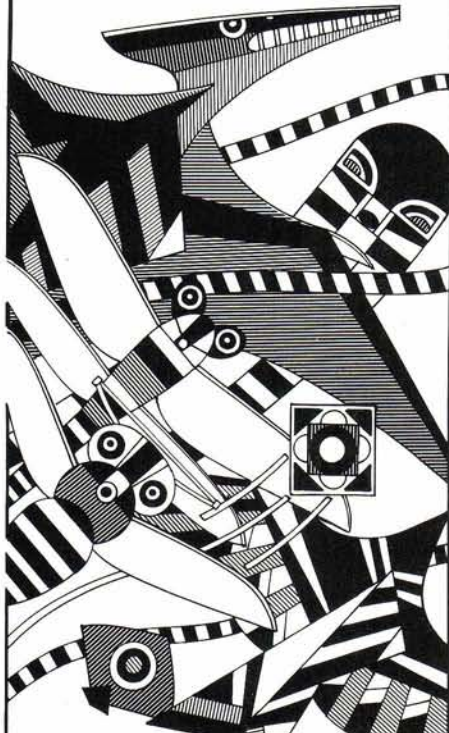
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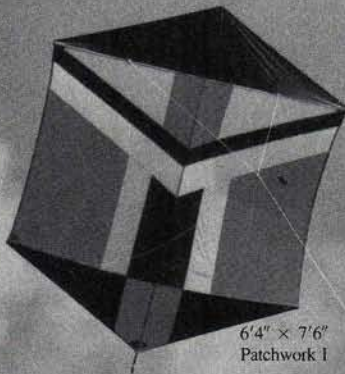
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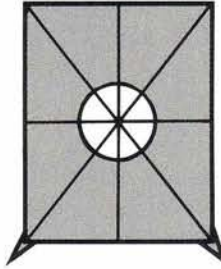
Tips & Techniques

Fighters & 'Foins

1 One-Liners to Remember, or The Hole Truth

From Mel Govig, Randallstown, Maryland: Here are some rules of thumb (and fore-finger) for making or adjusting your Korean fighter kite—things I've learned from *The Survey of Korean Kites*,* Vic Heredia, Wayne Hosking and the School of Hard Knocks:

- The standard hole diameter is one-third of the width (one-fourth the length) of the kite.
- The smaller the hole, the faster the kite.
- Conversely, the larger the hole, the slower the kite.
- The heavier the rear end of the kite, the faster-turning the kite.
- Conversely, the heavier the nose of the kite, the slower-turning the kite.
- An easy ratio to remember is 3-4-5. That is, 3 units for the width of the kite, 4 units for the length and 5 units for the diagonals.



2 Well Trained Parafoils, or The Stegosaurus Connection

Katsutaka Murooka, well-known kite aerial photographer



and author of two books on the subject, writes from Tokyo, Japan: For kite aerial photography, I prefer to loft my radio-controlled cameras using either a rokkaku (about 2.4 meters tall by 1.8 meters wide [8 x 6 ft.]) or a Jalbert parafoil.

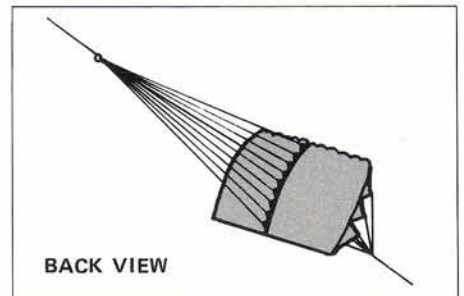
About six or seven years ago, I decided, greater altitude could be gained if more than one parafoil were used. My research uncovered several methods for connecting parafoils in train:

The main methods include (1) branching lines for each kite from a main line; (2) a single through-the-kite line effected by opening holes or cutting depressions in the top centers of the kites; and (3)

placing dorsal fins on the backs of the kites, along the "spine," much like the *stegosaurus*.

I discovered that eight or nine dorsal fins located along the central back provided the best means of connecting parafoils in train. The best length of flying line to these fins was found to be approximately 2 to 2.5 times the kite's rib length (from leading to trailing edge).

For best results, the angle of the flying line attached to the dorsal fins should be the same as (in alignment with) the angle of the flying line attached to the ventral keels. This gives the desirable straight-line extension for the entire train of parafoils.



BACK VIEW

Drogues are necessary for all in-train kites to maintain maximum stability.

The first kite I lofted was about 90cm by 1.2m (3 x 4 ft.). The second kite was the same and the last was 2m by 1.5m (6.5 x 5 ft.).

Distances between kites were: 5 meters (16 ft.) between the first and second kites and 30 meters (98 ft.) between the second and third kites.

Utilizing this combination of kites, I have been able to lift heavier camera equipment, including video cameras. ◇

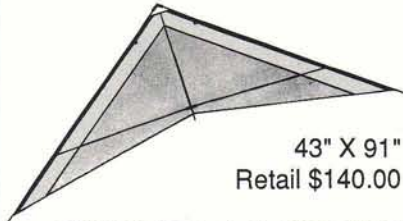
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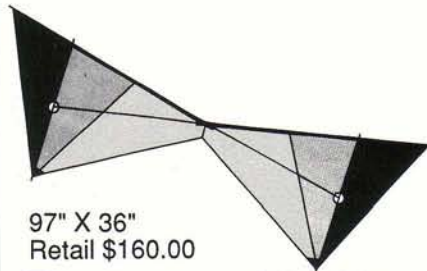
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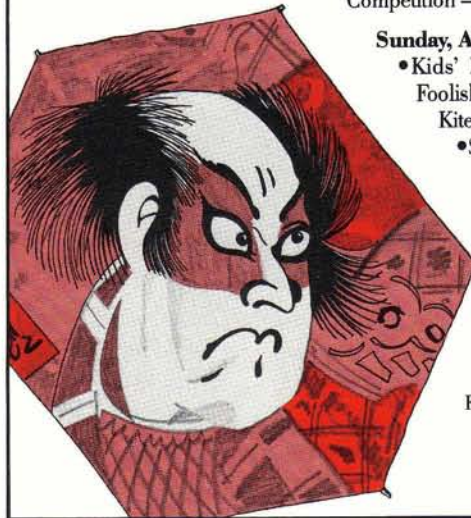
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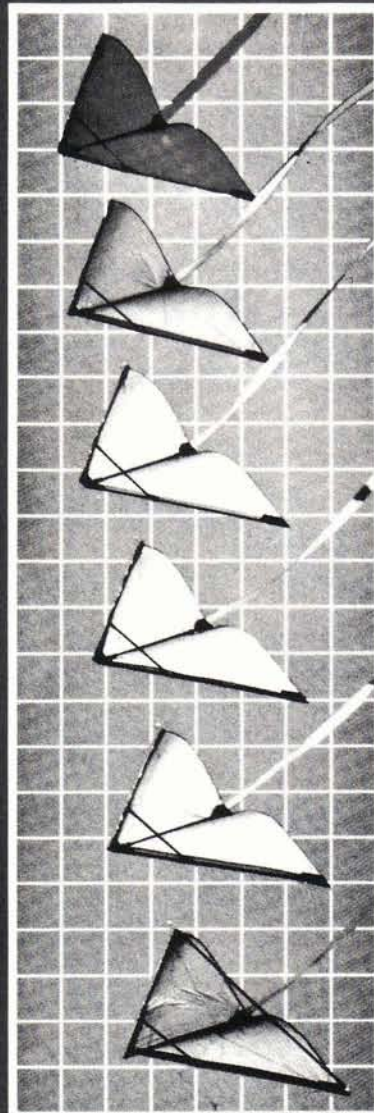
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News, Rumors & Miscellany

The first Kite Festival of Halle, a city in East Germany, was held September 23-24, 1989. Note the date, *prior* to the breaking down of the Berlin Wall. Assorted West German friends were allowed in "by private invitation," according to Michael Steltzer. Most-watched kite of the event: "Lola," a topless flying woman, very large. "At least it shows the East Germans have a sense of humor!" said Michael. We wonder what will be flying next year, after the liberation. For that matter, what will we see from the whole Eastern Bloc next year? Maybe the rumors about Czechoslovakian kitefliers will turn out to be true.

As for the new Berlin stunt kite team, called Up Against the Wall, they're planning to keep their tag for old time's sake.

Showdown in Shoreline Park, Santa Barbara, California: that was the scene in April 1989 when one Ken Slider, who lives across from the park, hired a lawyer to get stunt kites banned there. Why?



Left, Sgt. Wesley Wells assembles his 10-point star. (See story below.)

A real triple bummer happened to Air Force Sgt. Wesley Wells last summer. "I took our two toddlers to the beach," he said, "and soon I had six kites flying simultaneously, tied to rocks. As I relaxed, my daughter picked up one of the rocks, and a tandem delta soared away with its spool bouncing along the sand. The loose line cut the line to my expensive Snowflake kite and it crashed into the ocean. The delta just flew on over the horizon and disappeared. I jumped into the water to rescue the Snowflake, but lost my wallet in the process. I haven't seen the wallet, nor my kites, since." Luckily, Wells stayed with kites and began making them. His star (*center*) won first place in the 1989 Mackinaw City Kite Festival in Michigan.

Noise. Seems Slider felt the buzzing kites ruined his afternoons out on his front porch petting his dog. He raised safety questions too. The park, considered the city's best for kiteflying, was staunchly defended by enthusiast Jeff Pilon, who solicited letters from all over the kite community. With the City

Council hearing coming up on September 5, Jeff hit the media running. Result: the city *put aside funds* to make Shoreline Park a *kite park*, with traffic cones to keep stunt areas clear, and to put out a brochure on kite safety. Jeff says, "We got everything we asked for and then some!"



Soviet On-Site Inspection Team members at the University of Colorado in Pueblo peek at gift bags and kites prior to flying in the One Sky, One World kite fly. From left: Sviatoslav Shasholin (American linguist) and Soviets, Leonid Kolomeyets, Alexander Kulkov and Anatoly Nazarenko.

Another One Sky One World international kite fly for peace has whirled into history, and cards and letters are still rolling in to the headquarters in Denver, Colorado. This year's run, on the second Sunday in October, held many human interest stories.

Most amazing may have been the crowd of over 3,000 in Medellin, Colombia. Makes you think there's more than drugs and coffee there.

In Toledo, Ohio, the Black Swamp Air Force received an "in-

formal endorsement" from retired General Paul Tibbets, the pilot of the Enola Gay (the plane that dropped the first atomic bomb).

And in Pueblo, Colorado, 14 Soviet inspection agents, who had been witnessing the destruction of Pershing missile motors at the Pueblo Depot Activity, flew kites in a dramatic demonstration of the spirit of the occasion.

Read more about it in the *Sky Times*, newspaper of OSOW, P.O. Box 11149, Denver, CO 80211.

Ever since Columbus traveled around the world to find India and misnamed native Americans as "Indians," the real inhabitants of India have had something to prove. So three kitefliers from Bombay set out for the Washington State International Kite Festival in Long Beach, Washington, in August 1989, and went to Washington, DC instead. No kidding. The travelers discovered the boo-boo in New York en route to DC, but by then it was difficult to get a direct flight back across America. They arrived at the festival on Sunday, the *last* day of the event, where they gamely bridled and gave out specially decorated India fighter kites to people who were on their way home.

Oregon doesn't have an Inefficiency Challenge or a Peanut Butter Kite Fly, so we had to do something," Dave Gomberg said. He was one of the 10 fliers who went to the Clothing Optional Fun Fly at Sauvies Island in the Columbia River, Portland on August 6, 1989. "There were a lot of spectators," Dave observed. A few people wore clothes (Dave was one of them), but he said, "They didn't issue patches or pins for this one."

Started in September 1988 on the grounds of Dulaney Valley Senior High School in Timonium, Maryland, the Spur-of-the-Moment Kite Club wins our nomination as the year's best-named kite group.

You're not seeing double. That's witty Dennis Kucmerowski (below) of Boca Raton, Florida getting the upper hand on his quad line kite by means of extra arms sprouted for the occasion. He's part of the "Air Affair" kite festival June 23-25, 1989 at the PGA Sheraton Resort in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.

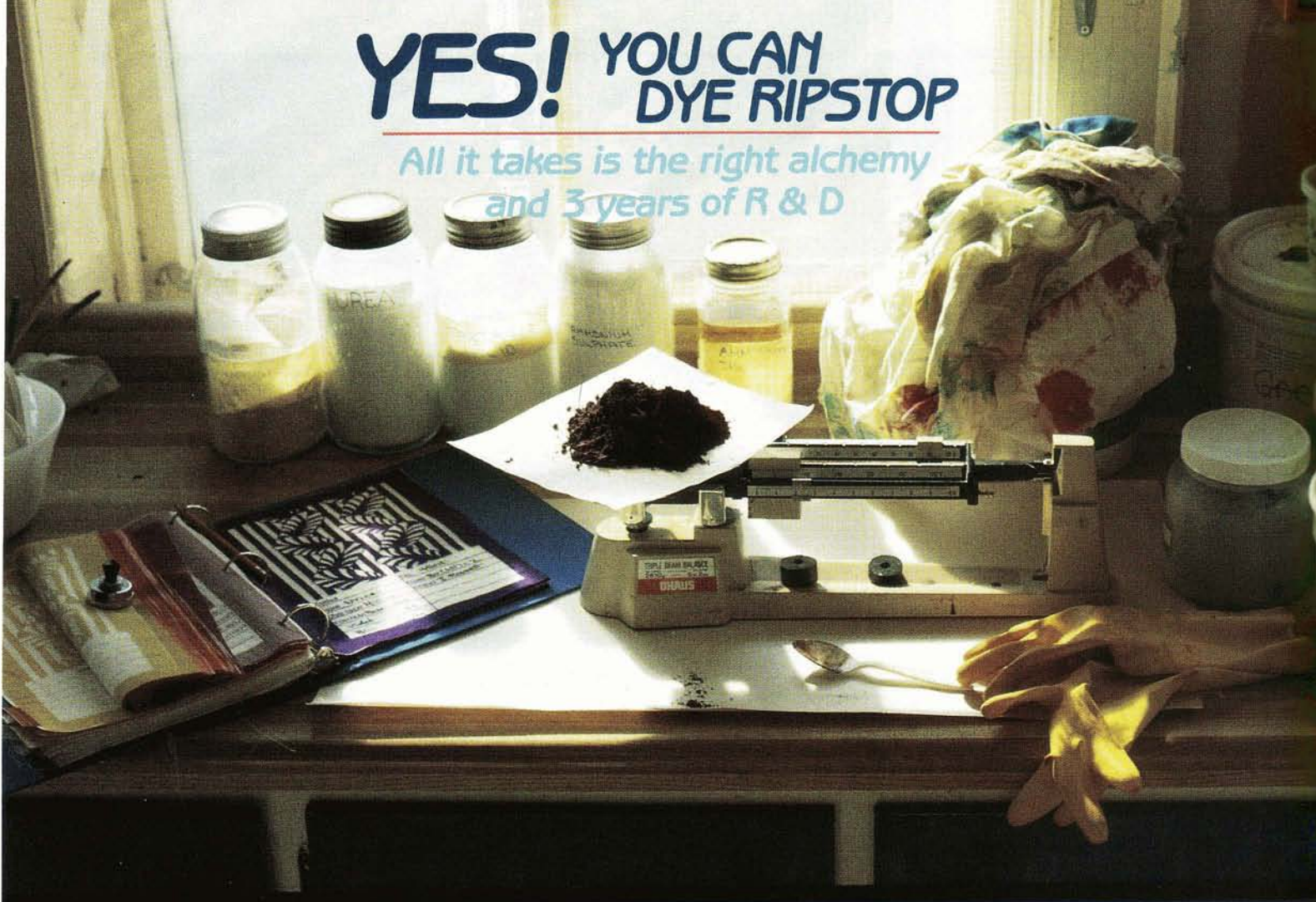


"Art That Flies" is the title of an exhibit at the Dayton Art Institute in Ohio. Starts a three-month run January 16, 1990, featuring kites by Curt Asker of Sweden, Jacqueline Monnier of France and Tal Streater of the USA.



YES! YOU CAN DYE RIPSTOP

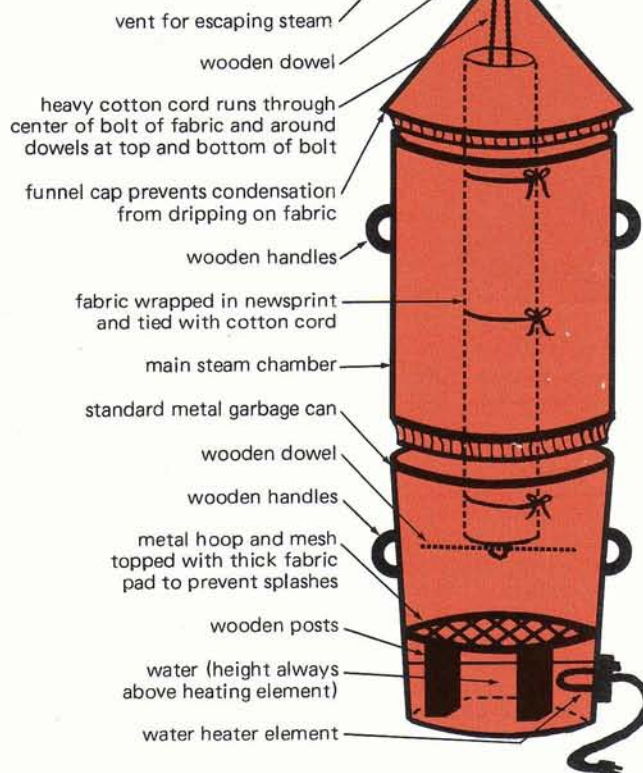
All it takes is the right alchemy
and 3 years of R & D



Article & Photographs by ANNE SLOBODA

A KITECHNOLOGY FEATURE

GARBAGE CAN FABRIC STEAMER (also called The Red Rocket)



COLOR IS MAGIC, and dyeing—the process of coaxing color into fabric—is alchemy, pure and simple. One part art, one part science, one part sorcery, dyeing was one of the trades called “mysteries” in the Middle Ages, and it was deemed worthy of the protection of its own special guild.

Modern chemical dyes are much more reliable than early vegetable and mineral dyes, but are, in their own way, no less mysterious and frustrating.

Like an alchemist of old, I mix potions and powders, stirring, straining and boiling, all the while muttering incantations (the most powerful of which are not printable). When the mixture is ready, it is used directly on the silk screen to print the fabric, much the same as any other type of ink. The big difference is that, once the print is dry, the fabric must be steamed in order to set the dyes.

The Steamer

The steamer is the textile printer's equivalent of the alchemist's "egg," the crucible into which lead is placed, hopefully to be turned into gold.

Dye colors can change dramatically in the steaming process, brightening and sometimes shifting altogether. For example, if you have a compound color like green—made up of blue and yellow—the blue usually does not change very much during steaming, but the yellow becomes a great deal brighter. However, if your steaming time is not quite right or one dye is not compatible with the other, you may end up with straight yellow, straight blue, some yellow, some blue, or blue and yellow streaks—depending on which of a zillion things go wrong.

“ I SUSPECT THAT ONLY POTTERS OPENING THEIR KILNS AFTER FIRING A NEW GLAZE EXPERIENCE THE SAME COMBINATION OF ANTICIPATION AND TERROR THAT DYERS DO WHEN UNROLLING A BOLT OF TEST FABRIC FRESH FROM THE STEAMER. ”

The Pigment

When I began my training as a textile printer and designer, we first-year students worked with textile pigments which are basically paint-like. Pigments are nice, reliable creatures that sit, opaque, on the surface of the fabric and stay the same basic color throughout the entire printing process.

Working with dyes, on the other hand, looked like some bizarre, masochistic rite through which second- and third-year students were dragged kicking and screaming. There seemed to be little point to all the fuss involved with dyes when similar results could be obtained on most fabrics with pigments.

It wasn't until many years later—when I tried making kites—that dyes became part of my printing repertoire. Because kites inevitably are back-lit when flying, and their visual appeal depends on good strong color, the only real choice for a print medium was dyestuff.

Take two sheets of white tissue paper, color one with Magic Marker and one with poster paint and then hold them in front of a light. You will get a fair idea of the difference between dyed fabric and pigment-printed fabric.



Opposite: dye mixing bench. Above: comparison of lotus print unsteamed (dark) and steamed (bright).

The Fabric

Choosing the sail fabric automatically selects which of many different types of dyes you have to work with. This is because dyes are fiber-specific: they can bond only to particular molecular structures which are compatible with their own. If you choose to work with cotton, a dye family called "fiber reactives" is most suitable. For silk or nylon you would need "acid dyes," and for polyesters you would need "disperse dyes."

The Bath/Solution/Paste

Most dyes are sold as dry powders which must be dissolved in water. The same dye can be prepared in different ways to make up *dye baths* (for dyeing large pieces of fabric the same color all over),

“ I USED TO BREAK ONE OF MY PRIME RULES OF STUDIO SAFETY AND KEEP MY DYE PASTES IN THE KITCHEN FRIDGE WHEN THE WEATHER GOT HOT AND HUMID. WHEN MY MOTHER-IN-LAW MISTOOK A JAR OF RED DYE PASTE FOR STRAWBERRY JELLY, I RESIGNED MYSELF TO THROWING OUT THE OCCASIONAL BATCH OF MOLDY DYE. (SHE GOT IT ONTO THE TOAST, BUT I STOPPED HER BEFORE SHE TASTED IT.) ”

dye solutions (for painting by brush or spray) or *dye pastes* (for silk screening or block printing).

A dye paste usually consists of water, a neutral thickener, the dye powder plus various auxiliary chemicals. Acid dyes are so-called because they require an acid pH (as opposed to neutral or alkaline) in order to bond with the fiber, so an acid or acid donor is added to the print paste. The viscosity of the paste can be varied to suit the needs of the fabric and the "taste" of the printer, but usually the consistency is somewhere around that of liquid honey.

Colors

Manufacturers usually offer a broad color range in each dye type they sell, and the dyes are intermixable so, with a little experimentation, you can produce almost any color you wish.

Most printers work with plain white fabric for the ground because that allows the dyes to show their pure hues. It is possible to overprint onto a previously dyed fabric, but then the subsequent colors are tinted by the underlying one, and you have to be very careful choosing your color scheme.

For example, pink would be fine under any of the "warm" colors—orange, red, purple, brown or black—because it would intensify their warmth. A "cool" color—blue or green—would pick up a

brownish or purplish tone from the pink, making it look muddy. Yellow over the pink probably would not show up at all.

Getting Technical

We use a gum thickener rather than a starch thickener because the gums are less prone to breaking down in the presence of an acid than are starches. The dry gum powder is mixed with water in roughly a 1:10 ratio and allowed to stand overnight. This lets air bubbles (from the mixing) work their way out and generally smoothes out the consistency of the paste.

Powdered synthetic dyes in pure form are extremely intense. Most are formulated such that a 5 percent solution of dye will give a full-strength color. The dyes are carefully measured according to a specific formula and dissolved with a small amount of water before being added to the thickened paste. For example, to make up a chocolate brown, which is a fairly complex color, I might use 30 grams of yellow, 10 grams of scarlet, 5 grams of blue and 2 grams of black, mix them together in a solution with 100 ml. of water and then add the whole mess to my liter of prepared paste and stir like crazy.

Finally, once the color has been evenly mixed through the paste, the acid is added

“IN 1981, I READ THE ARTICLE ‘MASTERING NYLON’ IN KITE LINES. IN IT WAS A LITTLE PARAGRAPH ABOUT COLORING RIPSTOP THAT SAID, IN EFFECT, HELP! WITH A CONFIDENCE BORN MOSTLY OF IGNORANCE, I WROTE TO KITE LINES AND THE AUTHOR (BILL TYRRELL) AND ASSURED THEM THAT NYLON, PER SE, WAS REASONABLY EASY TO DYE. I SUGGESTED THAT THEY TALK TO A FEW PROFESSIONAL DYERS AND ALL WOULD BE REVEALED. I RECEIVED ENTHUSIASTIC REPLIES FROM BOTH, PLUS A YARD OF WHITE RIPSTOP FROM BILL. COULD WE TRY PRINTING ON IT AND LET HIM KNOW THE RESULTS? GRABBING A POT OF DYE AT RANDOM, WE PULLED A FEW TEST PRINTS AND STEAMED THEM. THEY LOOKED FINE. PIECE OF CAKE, WE SAID. LET’S SWITCH OVER TO RIPSTOP. WE DID, BUT IT TOOK THREE YEARS OF R & D TO BE ABLE TO DO CONSISTENTLY WHAT WE ACHIEVED ON THOSE FIRST TESTS. I HATE BEGINNER’S LUCK!”

“IF YOU IRON RIPSTOP THAT HAS SMALL PIN OR NEEDLE HOLES IN IT, YOU CAN ACTUALLY WATCH THE HOLES GET SMALLER AND DISAPPEAR AS THE FIBERS RELAX AND RETURN TO THEIR ORIGINAL POSITIONS. THIS CAN BE VERY HANDY WHEN YOU AND THE SEWING MACHINE ARE HAVING A BAD DAY.”

in the form of a “donor.” This is a chemical compound, like ammonium sulphate or ammonium tartrate, that is not in itself an acid, but that will break down in the presence of heat and moisture (i.e., in the steamer, but not before) to produce an acid. Again, all the components are mixed together thoroughly and allowed to stand for awhile. The print paste can then be used on the screen just the same as any commercial printer’s ink.

Serigraphy

Silk screen printing (or serigraphy) is an extremely flexible process. In our studio, we silk-screen the dyes onto the fabric.

Basically, a wooden frame and a mesh stretched over it are simply the means of strengthening and stabilizing a stencil and making it easier to manipulate.

The stencil can be as primitive as a sheet of cut paper laid between the screen and the print surface or as sophisticated as modern photo emulsions (silver salts or halites in a gelatin-like solution) coated directly onto the screen mesh. Whatever method is used, the intention is the same: to block the ink or dye from passing through certain parts of the screen and yet allow it to pass freely through other parts onto the fabric below.

The standard procedure is to pin or tape the fabric as continuous yardage to the surface of a very long padded table. Commercial tables tend to be one bolt long (60-100 yards). Ours is eight yards.

The fabric is pinned so that it is relatively taut, with no wrinkles or bulges, and the selvage runs parallel to the edge of the table. It is preferable that the grain of the fabric be relatively straight, that is, that the threads of the weave meet at 90-degree angles where they cross, because most fabrics will stretch when they are wet by the printing and shrink again as they dry. This stretching and shrinking is repeated each time a new screen is printed and can cause unevenly tensioned fabric to move enough that it affects the finished print.

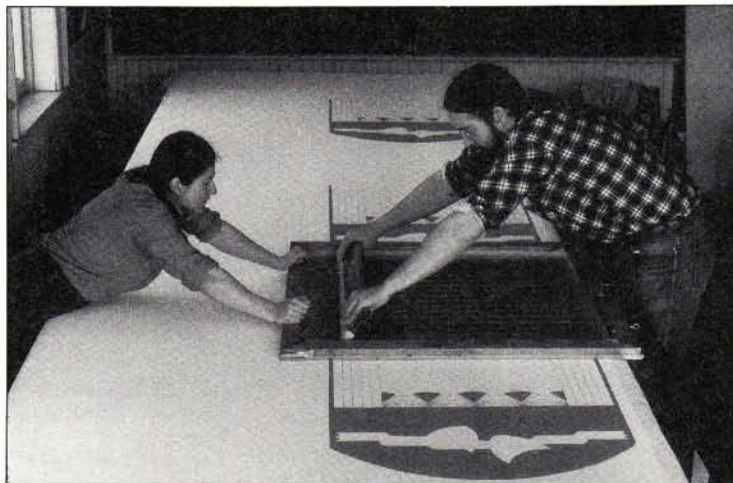
Once the fabric is fastened to the table, the screens for the various colors are “registered” to each other. In our case, this means using a registration rail that runs along the side of the table plus two kinds of hardware on the screen frame.

The image of the screen is made parallel to the registration rail by adjusting a pair of screw eyes in and out. They are set at each corner of the frame on the rail side. An L-shaped bracket is attached to the center of the same side of the frame, and a movable lug is set on the rail so that it butts snugly against the bracket.

If the image to be printed is 24 inches wide and is a repeat pattern, the lugs are set every 24 inches all the way down the rail. If, as in our case, each print is to be a separate entity, then the lugs would be set at about 26 inches to allow a one-inch cut line around each piece.

Our average screen is 36 by 56 inches inside the frame, which is big enough to do an image that is the width of the fabric (41 inches) and almost a yard wide.

Since Rick is quite tall, he can reach a long way across the table to squeegee, but even so we often end up having to pass the squeegee. To do a two-person-size



Better exercise than a rowing machine—and more social, too. Anne Sloboda and Rick Curtis pass the squeegee in cooperative silk screen printing of a puppet theater.



“VERY OCCASIONALLY, THE CAT MANAGES TO SNEAK INTO THE STUDIO WHEN PRINTED FABRIC IS STILL ON THE TABLE, WHICH CAUSES TOTAL PANIC UNTIL THE SHARP-TOED BEAST IS REMOVED. WE ONCE LOST AN ENTIRE TABLE OF WHITE SILK TO A STROLLING FELINE.”

print, we stand on opposite sides of the print table, one at each end of the screen. If I begin by *pushing* the squeegee into the center of the screen, then Rick has to grasp the handle (smoothly) as it comes within reach and complete the pass by *pulling* it toward himself. Then, on the second stroke, he pushes it to me, and I grasp it and complete the stroke as a pull. Awkwardness and hesitation will leave a dark line across the print because a heavier layer of dye will seep through the screen wherever the squeegee stops moving.

Generally, every other image is printed on each pass down the table in order to avoid smudging the previous print when laying down the next one. Thus, two passes are required to lay down a full table of one color.

The screen itself must be washed thoroughly and dried between prints. The entire process is repeated with a different screen for each color in the design. Each subsequent color takes as much time as the first, so a five-color print takes five times as long to produce as a single color print. The economics soon become obvious: we have had to restrict ourselves to two- and three-color prints to avoid pricing our work out of the market.

A printer's trick to add apparent color

is the split-tray technique, often called “bleed.” A bleed is printed by placing two or more colors on the screen at the same time and pulling the squeegee across, allowing the edges of the colors to blend together. This can be done subtly, with shades of the same color, or dramatically, with contrasting colors. The latter method tends to break up the image somewhat, but it is very attention-grabbing.

Once the design is printed and the dye paste has dried on the fabric, we place the length of fabric onto plain newsprint and roll the two up together, taking care not

“I LIKE TO USE BLEEDS, NOT JUST BECAUSE OF A LINGERING FONDNESS FOR THE DAY-GLO POSTERS OF MY HIPPI YOUTH, BUT BECAUSE IT'S SUCH A CLASSIC PRINT TECHNIQUE. FROM JAPANESE WOODBLOCKS TO ART NOUVEAU POSTERS TO ESKIMO STONE CUTS, PRINTERS IN ALL TIMES AND PLACES HAVE USED BLEEDS TO EXPAND THEIR PALETTES. IT IS A TECHNIQUE THAT ADDS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF RANDOMNESS TO THE PRINT AND CHANGES THE COLOR COMBINATION SLIGHTLY WITH EACH PULL OF THE SQUEEGEE.”

to roll in any wrinkles nor to chip the print. Because ripstop absorbs so little moisture, the dye paste sits on the surface and is very vulnerable to chipping or scratching. One must be very careful when handling the fabric at this stage.

Once rolled, the fabric and paper are placed in the steamer and the transformation is completed.

After steaming, the paper is discarded and the fabric is washed in alternating baths of hot and cold soapy water to remove any unfixed dye. If the fabric is not washed thoroughly, the unfixed dyes will dissolve again the first time the fabric gets wet—and make big messy streaks across the undyed areas.

When the fabric has been washed and dried, the cutting and sewing can begin.

Engineered Prints

When I design a graphic for the kite sail, I work from a pattern that has been laid out by Rick, who engineers the kite's physical structure. I fit the image to the shape of the kite—or piece of kite—rather than start with a standard square format and then try to cram it into a diamond or triangle or whatever later on.

This style of designing is called an “engineered print” in the textile trade,



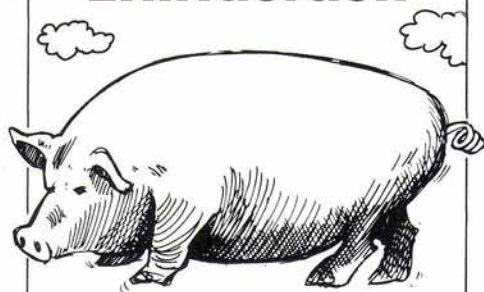
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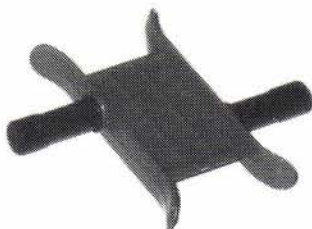
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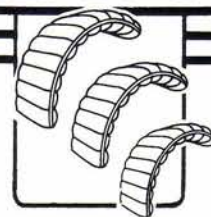


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and is not very common because it locks one into a single end use for the print (unlike the universally used repeat patterns). Even though we chose to work this way for aesthetic reasons, it is also quite pragmatic, because it allows us to print the cut and stitch lines right on the fabric.

Flying Art

Working with flat kites is fairly analogous to working with prints or paintings (except for the outrageous viewing distance), but working with three-dimensional kites combines surface design with sculpture—which is a whole new ball game.

The longer I work with kites, the more design possibilities I find opening up. I think that kiting will attract and create many more kite artists in years to come, even if none of them think to call themselves that.

After all, who can resist hanging their piece on the biggest wall of all? ◇

SOURCES FOR DYEING SUPPLIES

Cerulean Blue Ltd. Complete supplies for textile dyeing. Catalog available. Starter sets and excellent instruction booklets for acid dyes. Cerulean Blue Ltd., P. O. Box 21186, Seattle, WA 98111-3168, tel: 206-443-7744.

Pro Chemical & Dye Inc. Free catalog. Full range of acid dyes. Technical advice by phone. Pro Chemical & Dye Inc., P. O. Box 14, Somerset, MA 02726, tel: 617-676-3838.



ANNE SLOBODA is a textile printer and designer. She and her partner Rick Curtis own Gothic Design, a small silk-screen studio located in an old schoolhouse in Sparta, Ontario, Canada. There they produce hand-printed, limited-edition kites sold under the name Boreal Kites. Anne has survived 14 years in the textile printing business, including six years of specializing in ripstop nylon.

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BACK ISSUES of *Kite Lines* offer a wealth of information, ideas and references. Of our 27 back issues only 3 are still available in original paper, but all 27 are on microfiche, so the serious kiter need never miss an issue entirely. The microfiche may be read in almost any library and paper copies can be made on special copiers. A partial list of the contents of all back issues is given below.



Back issues in paper, \$3.50
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Outrigger kite plans; Paul Garber profile; Two Marconi kite plans; Festivals of Japan; Tails; Paper bag kite; glue gun use.

SUMMER 1977 (Vol. 1 No. 2) Microfiche Only
The Perfect Kite?; People-lifting; Van Gilder's delta train; Van Sant's Trampolines; World Records; Stunt Kites; Mike Weletyk.

FALL 1977 (Vol. 1 No. 3) Microfiche Only
Guatemalan kites; Seagull delta; Reels; Tails; Kite fishing; Ansel Toney; Vietnamese kite; Hazards of aluminized Mylar.

WINTER 1977-78 (Vol. 1 No. 4) Microfiche Only
Medieval dragon; Stacked delta; Tetrahedrals; Hundreds of Sleds; England's Jubilee Year.

SPRING-SUMMER 1978 (Vol. 2 No. 1) Microfiche Only
Rogallo Corner Kite; Lincoln Chang's Rokkaku; Flexifoils; Figure Kiting; Taxonomy Poster; Festivals; Safety.

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Reels Round-up; Van Gilder's Reel; Kite Museums; Chinese Bird; Two-string Delta; Kites in wilderness; Nags Head, Paris.

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Aerial Photo Winners; Mastering Nylon; Big Compass; Kite Retreat Weekend; The HARDEC; Francis Vilbe; New Records.

FIRST QUARTER 1982 (Vol. 4 No. 2) Microfiche Only
Best of Show; Fighter Kites; India's Utran; Flapper by Grauel; New Pelham Book; Singapore Festival.

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Detroit Panorama Picture; Blackheath, England; Rokkaku Challenge; Harpers Ferry Delta; Peter Lynn; Adrian Conn.

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Tyrus Wong; South African Kite Fishing; Space Shuttle Cut-Out Kite; Small Kites; Steve Edeiken.

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Trains and Expandable Boxes; Full Size Small Kite Plans; Kite Clubs; Counter-Rotating Box; Singapore '84; More Stunt Kites.

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Great Kites of Bali; Mama-Sans; Original Conyne; The Hotcakes Kite; Stunt Figures; Will Yolen; Wyatt Brummitt.

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SPRING 1986 (Vol. 6 No. 1) Microfiche Only
Long Beach, WA; San Diego, CA; Calendar-Almanac-Poster; Woglom Parakite; Joining Parafloils; Tips & Techniques.

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People Socks; East Coast Stunt Championships; Chicago Hook & Ladder; One Sky One World; Brandes Flare; Rokkakus.

WINTER-SPRING 1987 (Vol. 6 No. 3) Microfiche Only
Thai Kites; Really Small Kites; Delta Stunter; Berlin, Germany; Calendar-Almanac-Poster; "Hod" Taylor; Kite Clubs.

SUMMER-FALL 1987 (Vol. 6 No. 4) Microfiche or Paper
Kool-Aid Kite Colors; Heat Sealing Plastic; Kites of Thailand; Make 2700 Kites in 3 Days; Ansel Toney; Tony Cyphert.

SPRING 1988 (Vol. 7 No. 1) Microfiche or Paper
Alpine Japan; Budapest, Hungary; San Francisco, CA; The Goble Starbox; The Comics Kite; Calendar-Almanac-Poster.

WINTER 1988-89 (Vol. 7 No. 2) Microfiche Only
Tasmania, Australia; Traction; Stunt Records; Fighters; Long Beach, WA; Mackinaw, MI; Ottawa, Canada; David Checkley.

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Edo Dako (Edo Kites) by Masaaki Modegi, in Japanese and English. An elegant, full-color pictorial tribute to Shingo Modegi (Masaaki's father) and master kitemaker Teizo Hashimoto. Includes brief history of Japanese kites and five types of Edo. Beautiful printing, heavy paper. A kite book to treasure. Hardcover, 78 pp., \$39.95

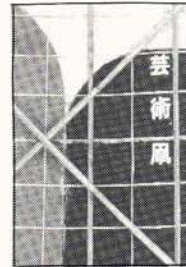


Bessatsu Bijutsu Techo (Fine Arts Journal), in Japanese. The Winter 1982 issue of a quarterly art magazine. This issue is devoted entirely to kites. Contains more than 300 color photos, plus articles by well-known Japanese kite authors. Softcover (in protective plastic sleeve), 216 pp., \$16.95



SPECIAL PURCHASES!

Nihon-no Tako (Kites of Japan), first edition (1978), by Kazuo Niisaka (deceased), in Japanese. One of the most beautiful pieces of kite literature we have ever seen: 10 x 14 inches, 315 pages (253 in color). Rare find from publisher's limited supply. Double-boxed hardcover. \$249 (no airmail shipping).



Kunstdrachen / Geijutsu Dako (Art Kites), by Paul Eubel and Ikuko Matsumoto, in German and Japanese. Large format, many fold-out color pages of one-of-a-kind kites in an international museum collection. Describes the artists, kitemakers and their work which is on a five-year tour. Lavish printing on fine paper, a book like this comes along rarely. Softcover, 330 pp., \$49.95 (no airmail shipping).

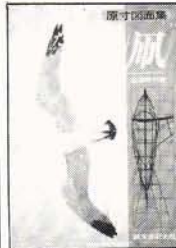
Tori Dako (Bird Kites) by Shuhei Goto, in Japanese.

Detailed plans include full-size seagull pattern.

Softcover, 72 pp., \$14.95.

Habatake Tori Dako (Flapping Bird Kites) by

Shuhei Goto, in Japanese. Full-size patterns for three birds, plus 20-page booklet. Boxed softcover, \$14.95

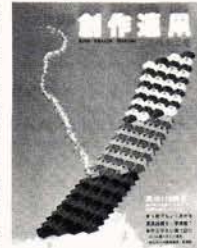


Sosaku Tsure Dako (Kite Train Making) by Eiji Ohashi, in Japanese.

Clear plans and detailed drawings include the Expandable Box.

Innovative designs and construction techniques. Contains full-size patterns for

Ohashi's Star kite and National Flag kite. Color photos. Softcover, 56 pp., \$16.95



Ana Aki Dako, Paneru Dako (Vented Cellular Kites, Panel Kites) by Eiji Ohashi, in Japanese.

Creative configurations for the used-to-be basic box (clock, sunflower, dice,

flags, etc.). Many single- and multi-cell variations. Color

photos. Softcover, 60 pp., \$14.95



Hansen Dako (Ship Kites) by Morio Yajima, in Japanese.

Includes excellent illustrations, numerous details, plus color photos of ships in flight, both single- and multi-masted.

Fascinating and challenging. Softcover, 66 pp., \$14.95



Majiku Dako (Magic Kites) by Takaji Kuroda, in Japanese.

Detailed plans for convertible boxes and "cubic" kites that fold, flip and fly upside down. Sleds and traditional Japanese kites, too. Color photos.

Softcover, 77 pp., \$14.95



Hikoki Dako (Airplane Kites) by Koji Hasebe, in Japanese.

Easy plans for sophisticated cellular kites with wings and fins. Plans include modern jets, the Concorde and a UFO. Realistic. Some color photos.

Softcover, 54 pp., \$14.95

From AUSTRALIA...

Make Mine Fly by Helen Bushell. This new 1988 edition contains a far-ranging collection of tips, techniques, hints and advice (gathered since 1977) for beginners or experts. Includes plans for the patented Trefoil Delta with folded keel. Softcover, 90 pp., \$8.95



Kites for Krowds of Kids by Ed Baxter and Richard Davey. Contains clear plans for 11 kites plus accessories. Good advice for workshops, despite outdated references and regional (Australian) resources and materials. Nice drawings, no photos. Softcover, 24 pp., \$3.95



Kite-Folds by Beth Matthews. This much-improved second edition contains plans for 12 small kites, each made from a single sheet of paper, plus the "Skyvelope." Clever designs, good construction tips, easy directions, color photos. Softcover, 26 pp., \$9.95



From BERMUDA...

Bermuda Kites by Frank Watlington. Authentic plans for five island kites, plus variations, using traditional methods and materials (flour and water glue). Quaint, charming, and fun! Softcover, 24 pp., \$2.95



From CHINA...



Feng Zheng Ji Yi Yu Chuangxin (Kite Artistry and Innovation) by Qinian Wang, in Chinese. Classic Chinese kites oddly mixed with modern Western ones. Many drawings, eight pages of color photos. A possible rarity; supply is uncertain. Softcover, 80 pp., \$7.95

From TAIWAN...



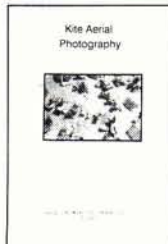
Chung-kuo Feng Zheng (Chinese Kites) by Kin Kan Hsieh and Susan Hsieh, in Chinese and not-very-good English. Large, colorful photos and drawings are adequate (and entertaining) but not detailed. Text is informative, but difficult. Softcover, 84 pp., \$14.95

The Kite Lines Bookstore ... Continued

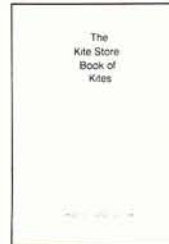
From ENGLAND...



Kite Cookery by Don Dunford. Revised edition of 1979. Contains plans for four simple kites (box, delta, hexagon and dual-line diamond). Includes well thought out theories, construction tips, technical material and aerodynamics in plain English. Softcover, 47 pp., \$2.95



Kite Aerial Photography by Mark Cottrell. Self-published with computer. Everything you need to know about the subject to get started or improve your technique. Good combination of technical data and common sense. Softcover, 44 pp., \$10.95



The Kite Store Book of Kites by Mark Cottrell. Not fancy, but one of the most refreshing and honest kite books in years. Plans for ten kites plus the author's philosophy and a floppy disk of computer programs (BASIC) for kites. Softcover, 48 pp., \$12.95

From FINLAND...

Lennä, Lennä Leijani (Fly, Fly Kites) by Mårten Bondestam, in Finnish. Out of print, very few copies left. Contains many artistic and unusual designs. Moody photographs and fine drawings, including lots of details, are all in black-and-white. Softcover, 80 pp., \$12.95



From FRANCE...

Le Cerf-Volant en Chine (The Kite in China) by Dominique Baillon-Lalande, in French. Many beautiful photos (half in color) of ancient and modern Chinese kites. No plans, but some construction details. Hardcover, 88 pp., \$39.95



From GERMANY...

Lenkdrachen bauen und fliegen (Making and Flying Stunt Kites) by Wolfgang Schimmelpfennig, in German. Colorful and detailed plans to build eight dual-liners (four diamonds, three deltas and a foil). Softcover, 64 pp., \$12.95



GERMANY continued...



Drachen kombinieren und verketten (Kite Combinations and Trains) by Werner Backes, in German. A very complete collection, full of good ideas, instructions and minute details. Clear illustrations and numerous color photos make the book easy to use. Softcover, 128 pp., \$12.95



Drachen aus aller Welt (Kites from Everywhere) by Werner Backes, in German. Detailed illustrations and clear photographs of a 40-kite international sampler. Plans include the Cloud Seeker, Rhombus, parafoil, multi-cell boxes, trains and aerial photography. Softcover, 128 pp., \$12.95



Drachen einfach und schnell gebaut (Quick and Easy Kitemaking) by Werner Backes, in German. An accurate, colorful introductory volume with plans for seven basic designs and dozens of variations, plus accessories. Flying techniques included too. Softcover, 64 pp., \$8.95

GERMANY continued...

Drachenbau mit Erfolg (Kitemaking with Success) by Axel Voss, in German. A thorough little book for beginner or expert. Excellent illustrations, color photos, tips, techniques and plans for 10 kites, from basic to complex, including Der Albatross. Softcover, 64 pp., \$7.95

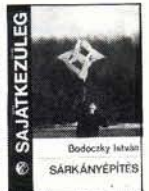


From HUNGARY...

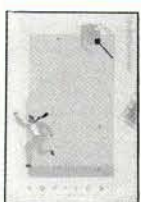
Papir Sarkány (Paper Kites) by Istvan Bodoczky, in Hungarian. How to make a wide selection of kites in paper—in all sizes. Includes standard kites plus some original designs. Fine illustrations and photos show lots of detail. Two paper kite covers included. Softcover, 80 pp., \$14.95



Sarkányepites (Kitemaking) by Istvan Bodoczky, in Hungarian. Contains a wide variety of international kite plans, including commercial designs (Flexifoil and Dunford). Also one-of-a-kind and exotic designs (chula, pakpao, tukkal, Marconi jib and Pomorsev). Excellent drawings and color photos. Hardcover, 207 pp., \$16.95



From ITALY...



Aquiloni (Kites) by Guido Accascina, in Italian. A veritable encyclopedia of kite information: theory, history, plans, tips, techniques, sources, resources—quite up-to-date. Comes with a dozen full-color kite postcards. Small (4½" x 6½") but thick, with 16 pages of color photos. In unusual die-cut box. Softcover, 256 pp., \$17.95

From THE NETHERLANDS...



Vliegers Zelf Maken (Making Kites Yourself) by Harm van Veen, in Dutch. An extensive collection of kite plans from small to large, classic to modern, includes "Flying Jeans." Excellent photographs, fine illustrations, lots of details. Softcover, 111 pp., \$16.95



Kleine Papieren Vliegers (Small Paper Kites) by Harm van Veen, in Dutch. An expertly assembled little book. Includes detailed plans for 10 miniature fliers plus construction and flying techniques. Color photos. Softcover, 32 pp., \$3.95

THE NETHERLANDS continued...

Fotograferende Vliegers (Picturetaking Kites) by Nop Velthuisen and Gerard van der Loo, in Dutch. Nice thorough treatment of kite aerial photography from earliest days to the present. Good advice, photos, plans, kites and technical details. Hardcover, 120 pp., \$19.95



From NEW ZEALAND...

Kites for Kiwis by Colin McGeorge. Contains plans for 10 ordinary kites, plus the "Manu Taratahi," a native design made from local vegetation. Rudimentary tips and adequate illustrations, but New Zealand text requires translating. Softcover, 46 pp., \$6.95



From SWEDEN...

Drakar (Kites) by Olle Nessel, in Swedish. Eclectic assortment of kites from a simple sled to complex creations by artist Curt Asker. Good photography, interesting historical information, few rudimentary plans. Hardcover, 64 pp., \$20.95



From the UNITED STATES . . .

The Penguin Book of Kites by David Pelham. First published in 1976, and still highly recommended for all kitefliers. Includes plans for more than 100 kites plus lots of reference information (aerodynamics and history). Color. Softcover, 228 pp., \$10.95



The Stunt Kite Book by Alison Fujino and Benjamin Ruhe. Covers background well, treats nuts-and-bolts sketchily. A clearly arranged book with plentiful black-and-white photos and drawings. Contains a useful chart of 80 manufactured stunt kites grouped by skill level. Softcover, 110 pp., \$8.95



Stunt Kites! by David Gomberg. The first book on the subject. Thorough coverage of the basics. Tips from 18 well-known pilots; lots of safety pointers and specific techniques. "Homemade" publishing with computer drawings, no photographs. Softcover, 88 pp., \$8.95



Making & Flying Kites by Wolfgang Schimmelpfennig. Fine selection of kites, plans, photos, tips and materials, but should be read very carefully. It's a poor translation from the original German. Softcover, 80 pp., \$9.95

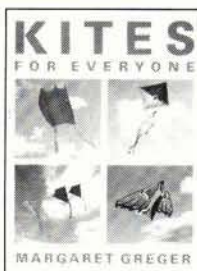


The Big Book of Kites by Jim Rowlands. Identical to the original British *Making and Flying Modern Kites*. Uneven instructions and drawings. Includes 36 kite plans, four pages of color. Limited resources, index. Softcover, 127 pp., \$11.95

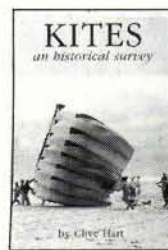


One-Hour Kites by Jim Rowlands. Same as the British book *Kites To Make and Fly*. Standard collection of easier plans includes a few new ones, but directions are skimpy. For beginners. A few color pictures. Softcover, 95 pp., \$12.95

Kites for Everyone by Margaret Greger. Good kite plans plus easy variations, accessories and knowledgeable tips. Recommended for beginner, expert or classroom. Clear and understandable. Second edition, softcover, 136 pp., \$10.95



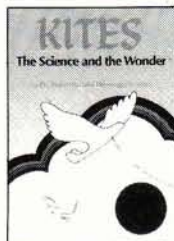
Kites: An Historical Survey by Clive Hart. Revised, second edition (1982). Invaluable reference work with many illustrations and photos. Fascinating research and reading. Extensive bibliography. No construction plans. Softcover, 210 pp., \$13.95
Hardcover, 210 pp., \$29.95



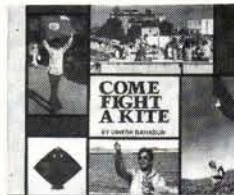
The Art of the Japanese Kite by Tal Streeter. Rare, in-depth personal profiles of Japan's master kite artists. Includes 130 outstanding photos (52 in color). Informative and touching. History and folklore. No plans, but a joy to read and read again. Softcover, 181 pp., \$14.95



Flight Patterns by Leland Toy (from a television kitemaking series, 1984). Good fundamental tips and easy plans for eight basic kites. Plans include a rotor made of foam meat trays and a Mylar fighter, plus fighting strategies. Easy to understand. 2nd edition, softcover, 36 pp., \$4.95



Kites: The Science and the Wonder by Toshio Ito and Hirotsugu Komura. Full of aerodynamics and theories. Numerous diagrams and charts. Originally published in Japanese (1979), the English translation (1983) is not very smooth. Softcover, 160 pp., \$11.95



Come Fight A Kite by Dinesh Bahadur. A 1978 book, now out of print. The only book devoted to kite fighting. Includes history, construction, cutting. Numerous photos and drawings. Softcover, 56 pp., \$3.95

Chinese Kites by David Jue. Contains brief history, tips, tools, designs, techniques and construction details for 10 simple kites using rice paper and bamboo. Includes Flying Lampshade and Double Fish. Color drawings. Hardcover, 56 pp., \$9.95



25 Kites That Fly by Leslie Hunt. Reprint of 1929 original. Contains old reliable plans plus historical data and photos. Lots of details and kites not seen much anymore. Hunt was kitemaker for Weather Bureau. Softcover, 110 pp., \$2.95



Make Your Own Kite by John Jordan. Plans for nine kites from unusual, but easily obtainable, materials. Clear instructions, amusing reading and personal anecdotes. Softcover, 90 pp., \$6.95



Super Kites II by Neil Thorburn. Tested, creative construction techniques and good designs (using mostly plastic trash bags and wooden dowels), plus ideas for reels and accessories. Softcover, 112 pp., \$7.95



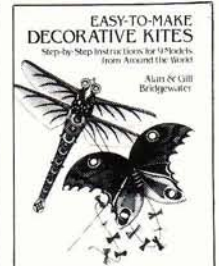
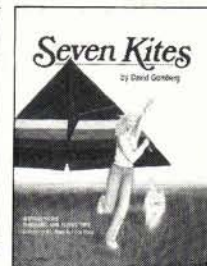
Flights of Imagination by Wayne Hosking. Plans for simple flying objects plus questions, answers and definitions for science students. Softcover, 56 pp., \$6.95

Wil Bear's Kite Book by Wayne Hosking. Simple introductory text and plans. Clear, understandable, includes full-size patterns. Good for beginning workshops. Softcover, 48 pp., \$4.95



Mid-Winter Clearance Sale!

Kite Flight by Botermans & Weve, softcover, 119 pp., \$8.95. *Fun with Kites* by Dyson, softcover, 31 pp., \$3.95. *Seven Kites* by Gomberg, softcover, 88 pp., \$7.95. *Decorative Kites* by Bridgewater, softcover, 48 pp., \$2.45. **Limited quantities available!**



*in the beginning...
the earth was without form, and void;
and darkness was upon the face of the deep
and then, there was light*

ECSKOC

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May 25-28, 1990 Wildwood, N.J.
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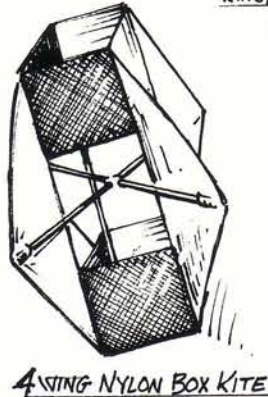
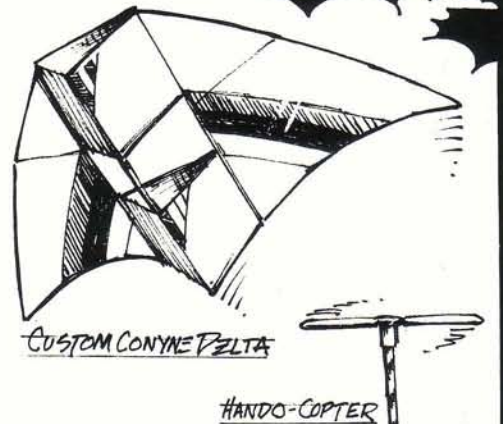
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April 21-22 1990

- Corporate Rokkaku Kite Challenge For Charity
- Philadelphia Regional Stunt Kite Championships

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TWO VISITORS TO NEW CHINA



The China Smile: Children in Weifang, People's Republic of China.

VISITOR 1. SKYE MORRISON

Photographs by
Simon Freidin

A RARE KITE OCCASION IN BEIJING, 1988

April 1988: I am one of a group of kite-fliers from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United States crammed on a train for the overnight trip — about 300 miles — from Weifang to Beijing.

Multilingual conversations, card games and movie filming keep everyone occupied. We have been spared a hovering interpreter on this leg of a two-week journey to kite events in China, and we have no idea who will meet us in Beijing, except that it will be someone from the Sports Federation in China, which is hosting this new international kite festival.

We have just finished six days at the fifth annual Weifang Kite Festival, com-
Continued on page 60 . . .

The kite festivals described in these two articles occurred before the June 1989 student uprising and subsequent repression in Tiananmen Square.

While we abhor these recent events in China, we are anxious to resume and continue the meaningful, peaceful exchange which takes place at China's international kite festivals.

We also wish to maintain contact with our Chinese kite friends as a show of international support for the work they have done in the past several years toward establishing ties with the worldwide kite community.

We have maintained our access to officials and friends in China. They assure us that the Weifang kite festival and others throughout China are indeed proceeding, and visitors from other countries will be warmly welcomed.

The Editors

VISITOR 2. TAL STREETER

Photographs by
John M. Roberts & Tal Streeter

TRADITIONAL KITES IN MODERN CHINA, 1989

People, people, people — they're everywhere in Beijing. The streets are packed with pedestrians, bicycles, cars trucks and motorcycles. In these first few moments in China, we hardly trust our eyes and anxiously try to capture the country on film.

CHINA TRAVEL ADVISORY
THERE WILL BE MORE PICTURES
THAN YOU CAN GRACEFULLY TAKE
EVERY MINUTE OF YOUR VISIT
TO CHINA. DON'T WORRY ABOUT
GETTING THEM ALL ON
THE FIRST DAY.

Do I see any kites in the first 15 minutes of our first day in China? Yes! In
Continued on page 42 . . .

TWO VISITORS TO NEW CHINA: VISITOR 2. TAL STREETER

... Continued

Beijing's suburbs, fluttering above vacant lots, rising from doorways and brick-walled courtyards, there are indeed kites, paper and silk swallows with long streamer tails. On our very first morning we are given reassuring proof that Chinese kites are not simply decorative objects made for export, but a real part of the life and culture of the people in this country where, many believe, the kite was invented more than 2,000 years ago. I can't begin to tell you how important the continued vitality of the Chinese kite is to me or how wonderful it is to have that confirmed so quickly and surely.

My first visit to China was in 1984 at the first Weifang International Kite Fes-

**CHINA TRAVEL ADVISORY
IF THE KITE TUGS
AT YOUR HEART STRINGS,
DON'T HESITATE - BUY IT.
BUT DON'T SPEND ALL YOUR
KITE BUDGET ON THE FIRST DAY.
SOME OF THE THINGS YOU WANT
MAY COME TO YOU AS GIFTS.
MY LUGGAGE ALREADY CONTAINS
SEVERAL ASHTRAYS, VASES AND
A STUFFED PANDA.**

On the road to the Great Wall, city merges with country, sheep graze at the roadside, orchards are just coming into blossom. Further north, the flatlands turn

Institute. Gao is the factory manager in this gray four-story building. Escorting us up the stairs to the second floor, he explains that the kite activity here is limited primarily to storage and shipping; the kites are made, for the most part, by artisans working in their homes.

Sitting around a large table in the middle of the showroom, waiting patiently for our arrival, are the leading kites of the city, their ten faces wearing wide kite smiles. Among the men is Ha Kuiming, known as "Grandfather Kite."

The story of Ha Kuiming and his son Ha Yiqi is well known in the Chinese kite community. Briefly, during the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" (1965-68), along with virtually all "old" Chinese customs, kites and kitemaking were banned. The government decreed that at-



tival. Once again, in 1989, I am in China, this time with our small tour group. We will attend Weifang's sixth annual event and its first meeting of the International Kite Federation. Of course, our kite tour will include other stops and sights.

BEIJING: THE INSTITUTE

Lunch is waiting for us at a new restaurant near the Ming Tombs. It consists of meatballs, sweet and sour pork, tofu, Beijing brand beer, yellow "banana-death" soda, and sea slugs—which do not leap off the lazy Susan on their turn to my side.

In the restaurant's gift shop, I study small dragon kites closely. Their tiny size is fascinating, but they seem to be made for tourists rather than for flying. Also they are expensive at 150 yuan (US \$37.50). More tempting are some flat grasshoppers—simple, direct, nicely drawn and colored—at 20 to 30 yuan (\$5–\$7.50).

into soft hills, then into razor-back mountains. Waves of cumulus clouds pose in the sky just waiting for a kite and their picture to be taken together. It is an absolutely perfect day (and every day thereafter is equally gorgeous—we run out of weather superlatives).

A short distance ahead we see pieces of the Great Wall snaking like a huge writhing dragon around the knobby hills. A tradition for foreign kites is to fly their kites at the Great Wall. On my first visit (in 1984), and on this one, I cannot bring myself to intrude on this historic part of China with an American kite. But returning to the bus, I enjoy a glimpse of a brilliantly hued Chinese phoenix kite rising from behind the Wall's crenelated parapets.

The next morning Gao Lisheng meets us at the door of the Beijing Kite Factory, also known as the Beijing Kite Research

tachment to non-utilitarian objects and traditions which did not benefit Mao's revolutionary ideals was decadent. Ha Kuiming, recognized as one of Beijing's foremost kite artists, was suddenly *persona non grata* and his 200-year-old kite collection was burned by Red Guards.

In forced retirement, Ha surreptitiously set out to record the vast repertoire of the Ha family's Beijing-style kites, rendering them meticulously in miniature. Then he hid the tiny creations to ensure that the designs and techniques of fabrication would not be lost to future generations, particularly his son.

Fortunately, not just for China but for the kite community of the world, Ha lived to see his passion for China's kite heritage vindicated. With the passing of the Cultural Revolution, the elder Ha was restored to his former position as a respected senior among amateur and profes-

sional kitemakers.* Today, Ha Kuiming and his son are esteemed by the Chinese government and have traveled abroad as representatives of China's traditional arts.

The group around the table finds it difficult to arrive at a consensus in response to my first questions about the history of the Chinese kite. They tell me that documents supporting China's claim as the source of kites are undergoing new efforts at scholarship.

We then move to a lively discussion regarding women and kites in China today.

"A young woman may get permission to fly a kite from the privacy of the courtyard at home, but never in public view," says Gao. "Then, if a boy spies her kite, he can find an excuse to inquire as to its owner to make friends." Historically, arranged marriages were the rule in China,

primary suppliers to the Imperial Court."

Several of the men have made kites most of their lives. They pass around photo albums of their kites and themselves as younger men. Ha hands me a dog-eared copy of his remarkable book, the final documentation of nearly 200 years of Ha family kites. I tell him that, in my opinion, it is the finest book available on Chinese kites.*

Each of us has been given several small kites as welcoming gifts. We inquire if we might buy any of the others on display. "Whatever you like," Gao says.

I spin around the display area, admiring the exquisitely made kites—certainly the most glorious I have yet seen—and say, "Speaking for myself, I would like one of each!" I end up taking all the kites that will fit into the largest cardboard box I

which they call "kite stars"—borne aloft in moonlit skies. One of the group mentions kite fighting in southeast China using line coated with powdered glass.

I express my enthusiasm for the swallow kite and they reply that Beijing has been known throughout its history as the City of Swallows. The capital city is a favorite haunt of these birds. If they nest in your eaves, it is an omen of good fortune.

BEIJING: THE SUIYAN

At the luncheon, I draw out Wang Wei Yi, the youngest of the group, who had remained silent throughout the institute visit. He had quit what would have been lifetime employment in a toy factory to start his own kite factory in Beijing under the *suiyan*, the private enterprise system in new China. The younger Wang inheri-



Opposite: Ha Kuiming, "Grandfather Kite," smiles at the Beijing Kite Research Institute. This page: detail of a Tianjin kite shows typical ornamentation; above, Tal Streeter takes instruction in bamboo shaping from Mrs. Xie Xiuzhen, one of the foremost kitemakers in Tianjin.

and courtship is still new in rural areas.

Wu mentions that the upcoming Asian Games will offer kites as souvenir mementos. The Chinese Sports Federation, in this regard, has recently announced its association with the "sport" of kiteflying. This is a phenomenal boost to the acceptance of kites by the populace as a whole.

I ask about the elaborately painted fantail swallow kites which seem to be a Beijing specialty.

"These swallow kites may be made in other parts of China, such as Tianjin," says Gao, "but we feel our Beijing kite quality is particularly high because our kite artists were for many generations the

can lug out of the building—a bit shamefacedly, hoping my greed might be excused as kite fever.

We have made arrangements for lunch at a nearby restaurant, inviting all the kilters we have met to join us. Here we are introduced to a number of intriguing facets of the lore of the *feng zheng* (literally "wind zither"), the generic name for all kites in contemporary China.

The Institute members describe hummers, drums and reed instruments on kites—up to 50 tuned reed pipes on larger kites. They describe picnics at which they tie their kites to a tree, settle down for lunch in the shade, but interrupt their picnic to check frequently the "quality" of the flying kite. They tell of candle lanterns—

ted his kite fervor from his father, Wang Ronghan. The group tells me that the elder Wang introduced to Beijing kitemakers the southern version of the small swallow kites which dart and swoop in pairs on a single line.

The younger Wang owns a mini-van, acquired with profits from his business. In a country where private vehicles are rare, this gives him enormous stature. Up to this point, he has followed protocol, deferring to the group, all of whom are older. But now everyone speaks up, bringing him into the discussion, speaking enthusiastically about his success.

The next day we visit the home and "factory" of Wang Wei Yi. We find the Wang kites are part of a new trend in China: simplification to increase production—and profit. The miniature dragon of the Wang factory, for example, has a papier-mâché head shaped by filling a plaster mold

*In China, a distinction is made between "amateur" kilters, who make and fly kites as an enthusiasm, and "professionals," who work in kite factories. However, as in other countries, the quality of a kite often has no correlation to the labeling of its maker.
—Editors

**Chung-Kuo Ha Sbi Feng Zheng (Chinese Kites of the Ha Family)*, by Ha Kuiming and Ha Yiqi (Hong Kong: Shang wu vin shu kuan, 1986).

TWO VISITORS TO NEW CHINA: VISITOR 2. TAL STREETER

... Continued

rather than by the traditional, delicate technique of forming the paper layers over a precisely constructed bamboo frame.

The little paired swallows are my favorite Wang factory kites. As bird silhouettes, they are elegantly spare art—the wings and split tail rendered in coal black with a tiny patch of red and white at the throat.

While in Beijing, we visit a host of sights: the Forbidden City, the Imperial Summer Palace with the Dowager Empress's marble boat, Tiananmen Square (the "Gate of Heavenly Peace"), Mao's Memorial Hall mausoleum, and as many open markets as we can squeeze into the day. (The days are never long enough.)

her first place at last year's Guangzhou (Canton) competition, one of the regional events which determine participation in the Weifang competition.

The kite is four feet tall and made in three-dimensional layers. At the center is a brilliantly colored pink-tipped peach, symbolizing immortality. Floating on the perimeter are little figures meticulously rendered, the Chinese personages known as the "eight immortals."

Our kite lesson with Xie covers the techniques of bamboo bending. She passes the bamboo back and forth through a small alcohol lamp flame, shaping a narrow slice so precisely it seems to bend against an invisible guide. Each of us

tory's personnel are "workers, not artists." One must examine the new Chinese kites—and Chinese dumplings—carefully, not taking for granted that they will invariably be at the top of the scale.

Early the next morning, we are on our way by train to Weifang.

Passing the open door of a roomette stuffed with gear and people, I inquire if those are saxophones in their long ripstop nylon bags. They answer seriously, "No, kites," then slap their heads in recognition when I identify myself. Pierre Fabre and Gerard Clement keep me standing up in the train corridor for the next two hours looking at photographs of French kites. We are joined by the current president of the Beijing Amateur Kite Association, Ha Quin, who informs us that he is one of the judges for Weifang's competition.



TAL STREETER ON CHINESE TRAINS

Chinese trains—at least the first-class soft sleeper compartments—are one of the great pleasures of travel in China. The trains are reliably punctual, but between stations they clatter along at a leisurely pace. Drawn by a picturesque coal-fired steam engine, in our cozy old-fashioned roomette, we snuggle up with fresh linens and fluffy down pillows.

The China rice bowl stretches out over flat land, disappearing on the horizon, punctuated by glimpses into the backyards of peasant farmers' homes.

A worker, a bright patch garbed in red, waves at the passing train from a golden field of rapeseed blossoms, then returns to hoeing large clods of black clay.

The timelessness of China is accentuated by this poky old train.

TIANJIN

We have come to Tianjin to visit Mrs. Xie Xiuzhen, a kitemaker with horn-rimmed glasses and a constant smile. In China she has trained hundreds of future kitemakers in government-sponsored workshops. In American in 1986, she spent six months demonstrating the kitemaking art in Boston as part of the extraordinary exhibition "Four Thousand Years of Chinese Technology." She had explained to me in Boston that the kitemaking apprenticeship program in China takes no less than three years. At the end of this time, more or less dependent on aptitude, the apprentice can truly claim to be a professional kitemaker.

The next day we are met by Xie at the Tianjin Kite Factory door. In the workshop area, kites hanging on the wall include a complicated show kite which won

takes a turn, getting the sense of it, learning to keep the bamboo moving so it doesn't get burned. We come away with a feeling that, given a little practice—three years?—we would surely qualify for work in the Tianjin factory.

That night we look forward to dinner at Tianjin's famous Goubulibao dumpling restaurant. The Chinese are drawn to this crowded, smoke-filled den for the atmosphere and a variety of steamed and fried dumplings stuffed with pork and who-knows-what. The dumplings finally arrive, cold and poor quality, China's equivalent of Fast Food. My mind turns to the idea of Fast Kites in China.

My ear always buzzes uncomfortably when I hear "factory" following "kites." ("We're going to the rug factory, the tractor factory, the silk factory"—that sounds all right—but "kite factory"?)

Xie is quick to point out that her fac-

Ha describes himself as a "palace-style" kitemaker. Traveling with him is Li Roxin, affectionately called "Inkfish." Li had won the coveted first place award at last year's Weifang national competition. His prize-winning kite was a strikingly original black inkfish (cuttlefish or squid). He draws a picture in my notebook of his entry this year, what appears to be a simple goldfish.

"Xie-xie," I say. (*Xie-xie*, thank you, is the first and often the last Chinese word or phrase foreigners pick up—and I am told the Chinese can't figure out why foreigners thank them so often for every little action.)

WEIFANG

At last the train pulls into the Weifang station. Written in colored chalk on a small blackboard is the greeting in English: "Welcome to the Kite Capital of the World."

We view this rustic sign with wonder, but in the city our group sees the claim reinforced with a huge neon sign right smack in the middle of the kite happy town.

THE FEDERATION

First thing next morning we are summoned to the inaugural meeting of the International Kite Federation board of directors in the hotel ballroom. Our status as board members is a happenstance of our ability to attend the meeting. "Director" is a title we will retain only if we return to subsequent federation meetings.

Seventeen* countries are represented, and later the organizers will announce that 906 foreigners and 200,000 locals attended the festival.

Some of the group have come as bona fide representatives of national and local

task of making an international organization out of such a disparate group?

After the meeting, I sit on the steps of our hotel talking with Thorsten Schacht of Denmark. He shakes his head and chuckles at a statement read by one of the Chinese officials: "Kites began their life in a field in China. . . and ended in promoting tourism."

"Glorious tourism," he mocks.

We agree that the model described in the meeting by Masaaki Modegi of Japan is eminently meritorious: no dues, no rules, no meetings, just coming together "in a mannerly way, to share enthusiasm for kites." Can this suggested style work? Are fragile kite lines immune to the political red tape that would be inherent in a United Nations-like kite organization?

I leave those thoughts and the hotel to

The museum also houses the offices (two small rooms) of the Kite Federation and an auditorium with a deep stage and seating on two levels. It seems likely that this will not be used exclusively for kite-related activities but will serve a broad range of community needs.

At the front of the balcony hang several elaborate, large show kites, extraordinary three-dimensional constructions, including writhing dragons (scales and all, on tubular bodies—not centipedes) and a behemoth which incorporates a life-size, realistically rendered red fox.

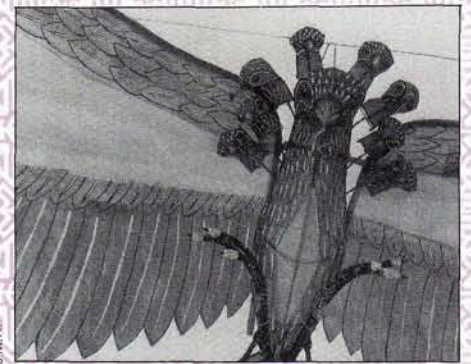
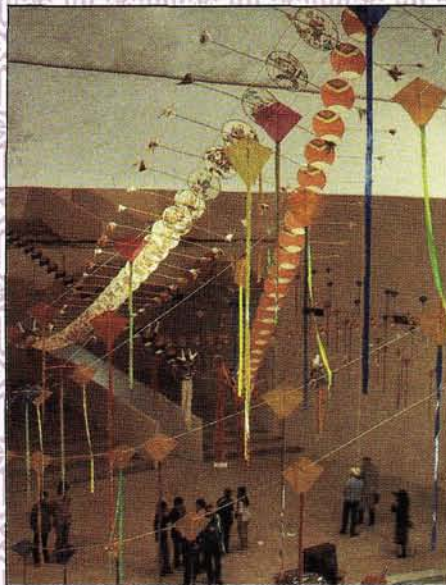
One large room on the second floor is the gift shop, devoted to kites made by "amateur" kitemakers.

Inside the museum, crowded together on concrete walls, the kites are not shown in the best light. One longs for a hint of

TAL STREETER ON CHINESE KITES

Although all Chinese kites are complicated in comparison to run-of-the-mill kites from other countries, a truly complicated bamboo kite structure in China is elaborate beyond description, and the painting—on silk, generally—will be exquisitely detailed. I refer to such kites elsewhere as "show" kites. They are large and multi-layered and often include kinetic elements, gears and mechanisms powered by the wind. These kites are the epitome of China's kite art, spectacular in their imagery and structurally ingenious.

A "simple" kite flown by an average person for the fun of it might be painted (on paper) with Chinese folk heroes, birds or insects. There are virtually no undecorated or unpainted kites, or "pure design" kites similar to those commonly seen in the West and other countries.



A staggering wealth of kites is on view in the Weifang museum.

Opposite: a stunning dragon rides the hall's gentle drafts. This page: left, the kite-filled lobby; right, an intricate hawk kite with eight small heads surrounding the main head. (Eight is a lucky number in China.)

kite organizations, but several are embassy employees with only scant knowledge of kites.

Ji Mingtao, current Federation president (his position just confirmed by acclamation) and former mayor of Weifang, opens the meeting with "heartfelt thanks for your presence . . . participation in collecting, studying and exhibiting, establishing standards, regulations and management . . . to the cause of world kites."

Huge barriers such as language aside, no one in attendance questions for a moment the sincerity or dedication of the Weifang organizing officials. They have accomplished a great deal in assembling this meeting, but are they up to the

*The 17 countries are: Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Germany (West), Greece, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Japan, Korea (South), Pakistan, Singapore, Sweden, Taiwan, U.S.A., U.S.S.R., and Yugoslavia.

visit the new kite museum just a few blocks away.

THE MUSEUM

The Weifang Kite Museum is a large white-washed three-story building in the old Chinese style with a sway-backed, blue-tiled roof. Distinctive in appearance and size, it stands out on the city skyline, perhaps one of the largest buildings in Weifang. Inside, the recent construction dust still lingers.

The museum is filled wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling (the ceiling covered as well) with thousands of kites. On the floor in the center of each gallery are double rows of glass cases jam-packed with miniature Chinese kites. We can get close enough to study details of painting and construction, and it doesn't seem that the guards are inclined to discourage visitors from handling the kites.

the sky and breeze which would bring these still kites to life. A big window in the front of the museum is needed, for the building is wonderfully situated. The biggest and best of the museum's galleries is right outside the front door: blue sky, no trees, the broad, flat dry bed of a river. And, flying there right now, is a flock of Chinese kites.

Running out of the museum, several of us make a beeline for the riverbed to watch old men and young children work strings reaching up into the sky. Scrambling down the sloping stone wall embankment, I am brought up short by a group of sellers and buyers haggling over piles of kites on the sidewalk. They are sturdy, inexpensive kites, for the average flier.

I slow down, approaching the piles, observing the sellers. One gruff, stubble-faced tough-guy type reminds me of the village hero in a kung-fu movie. We circle

TWO VISITORS TO NEW CHINA: VISITOR 2. TAL STREETER

... Continued

each other for a minute, while he sternly gauges my seriousness in kite matters. A crowd gathers to enjoy this street theater.

"You can't just look at them," he growls, frowning hard into my eyes, "you must buy them."

"This is good," I say, pointing to a large, painted brown hawk.

"Will you buy it then?" he asks.

"No," I say, "it is too fine to buy."

"You are right," he says, a broad smile erupting on his face. "It is not for sale. I will fly it for you." And he takes off down the embankment, oblivious to the people waiting to bargain for his wares.

Later, in one of the Weifang kite shops, another kitemaker, Zhang, proudly pulls

A great disappointment in this otherwise splendid affair is that kites themselves are nowhere to be seen. Since we are several hours early, some of us break away from the organizers and carry our kites into the stadium for an informal fly. By the time we are called to the staging area, there are 25 to 30 kites high above the bleachers—much to the delight of the 35,000 paying spectators.

Now the legions of little flowers parade around the stadium, great floats in Rose Bowl style move forward and foreign guests in donkey carts pass in review for the wildly cheering multitude.

The spectacular ends with some of the visitors being invited down from their

clutched tightly to their sides. The kites appear to be of the style and utilitarian quality seen at the riverbed, but some are obviously home-made with newspaper tails and simple painting.

Finally the minibus pulls into the competition parking area. The flying field is a roped-off area of flat, dry, hard-baked salt flats which stretch out in all directions, not a tree or bush in sight. The wind, unfortunately, is almost nonexistent. There are a few kites overhead, and one of them is remarkable: flown from a single line, it consists of three separate dragon-headed trains radiating out in three directions, each head facing at the center a red, spherical "pearl of potential," a symbol of the dragon's power. When we finally unload our gear, we go to inspect the three-dragon train, now on the ground.



Left, masses of colorfully uniformed paraders circle the Weifang stadium to a cheering audience. Above, a train of kites at the festival is one of the few this year seen showing Western influence. Its clean design and modern black-and-white graphics depict the historic Chinese jurist Bao Zheng.

out of a display case a fine dragon-headed centipede kite, lovingly made, lacking only the matchbox into which it was proportioned to fit. He promises to supply this matchbox should I wish to acquire this treasure.

Zhang agrees to make me a small double peach kite, a popular image I frequently see flying, but have yet to find for sale. He works late into the night making the peach kite, packaging it and several others our group orders. The kites are ready for us when we come by the next evening.

THE STADIUM

The first thing we see are the little girls, their fancy costumes sticking out from under winter coats. They stand around in bunches like bouquets of spring blossoms. It is late afternoon and we are at the stadium for the festival's opening ceremony.

seats to dance with the youngest children. Tiny hands lead me out onto the center field. One girl takes a necklace from around her neck and puts it over my head, saying "good luck" in English. Fireworks explode nearby. Frightened by the loud reports, two of the girls hug tightly against my leg. I put a shiny new American penny in each of their hands, wishing them "good luck."

THE COMPETITION

The next day we drive along a two-lane road leading out of the city to the flying fields where the "Ten Most Distinguished Kites" are to be named. It is Sunday, April 2, a holiday, and the main day of this the sixth annual Weifang International Kite Festival. Crowds line the roadway, some in chairs, like parade watchers. While stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic, we see children walking through the fields, kites

Each head is marvelously executed and each has a smaller head on either side of the primary head—nine heads in all!

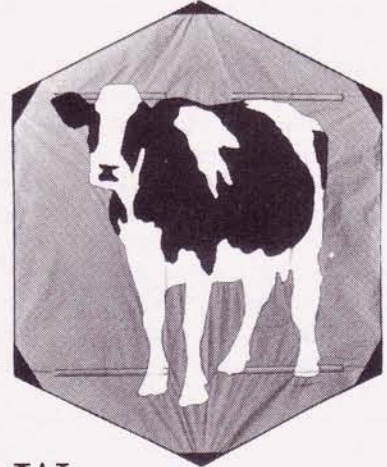
Meanwhile, Inkfish finds there is wind enough for his kite with the assist of a short sprint. He flies a superlative giant goldfish. We are even more impressed as he dismantles it, folding it into smaller and smaller segments until it nearly disappears from sight behind his legs.

We advance toward a long table set up for the judges at the edge of the flying area. I have with me 10 kites from Vermont made by Win Colwell, using graphics by fellow artist Woody Jackson. Keeping in mind instructions to give ourselves a "high profile" with the judges, we introduce ourselves and show them the Colwell herd of nine "rokkacows" and his triple yin-yang rokkaku. Kites in the form of bats, hawks, butterflies, grasshoppers and bees are common sights in China's skies—



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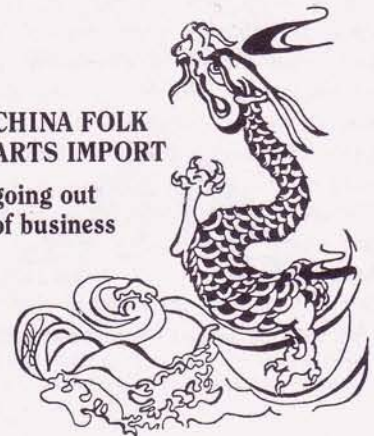


Above flies the giant goldfish kite made by Li Roxin ("Inkfish") of Beijing. It dismantles into a small package for transport by train or bus. Left, three examples of Chinese dragon kite heads seen at the Weifang festival, each with a pair of miniature heads on each side. Dragon tails may be reused but heads must be made new for each year's competition.

26

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TWO VISITORS TO NEW CHINA: VISITOR 2. TAL STREETER

... Continued

but a herd of Holstein cows? And each with its own real cow bell? I think they may appeal to the judges' sense of novelty and humor.

In the end, it is Bill Connors of Horseheads, New York who brings a U.S. entry into the "top ten" with four of his kites (nobody can say if one kite in particular has actually won). Connor's kites are complex in structure and detailed in design. They have consistently won praise and recognition at U.S. kite festivals.

The triple yin-yang rokkaku and a Holstein fly higher and longer than any other kite through the day, and are rewarded with a heavy plaque. Colwell places in the honorable mention or second category of "Ten Most Distinguished Kites." I wonder if this second division has not been devised to ensure that no one lose face. Not only the second ten, but the first ten as well, it seems to me, are distributed more with a mind to be sure that every country and serious entrant go home with a prize.

The actual kiteflying activity for many foreigners is disappointing. The wind simply does not cooperate with the larger kites they have brought. And trying to fly and talk to a television crew at the same time hampers my own flying endeavors (I know: excuses, excuses).

I miss completely the National Competition for China's own regional kite entries taking place a short hike away in an adjoining area. This is a terrible disappointment for me. (Next time!)

Later that night, at the stadium, the opening ceremony is rivaled by two and a half hours of colorful, ear-shattering fireworks. Once again, all the seats in the stadium are filled.

Our last night in the hotel in Weifang, the lobby, restaurant, bar, coffee shop

and, of course, individual rooms are filled with the hum of kite talk, kite gossip, kite politics and kite friendship which continue well into the wee hours.

On our last morning before departing Weifang, we go to the riverbed for one last fly. Tracy Borders (who speaks fluent Chinese and has organized our travel in China) and I are flying a simple black ripstop nylon bat kite she has brought from San Francisco. The bat dips and turns head down in a wind too strong for its frame. An old man and his young grandson are flying a traditional cylindrical double "palace lantern" kite (did China invent the box kite?) They reel in and come over to examine the downed bat. The old man turns it this way and that before observing that it needs additional towing points on the keel for the attachment of the flying line, to allow for adjustment of the angle of attack in different winds.

On an impulse, I pull one of the Rokkacows out of my bag, set it up and ask him to take the line and feel its pull. Then I tell him the kite is his. He looks at me in disbelief and I have to say it several times, putting the reel of line securely in his hand. He wants to give me his double lantern, but I explain that I cannot carry it in my luggage. I ask him to fly my kite in Weifang in the time between this and my next visit.

"It will be my eyes in China," I explain.

"Yes, yes," he says. "You will have good eyes in Shandong province. I will fly it every day in many places. And you will see it flying when you return."

KITE DREAMS

The next morning our group departs Weifang and heads out for further adventures

in Shanghai and the historic lake resort district.

Are there new China kites and smiles there as well? Yes! Above the open plazas are dragons and hawks flown by young men in business suits, their string wrapped around tin cans. Dragon boats, plying the smooth waters of the historic West Lake resort district in Hangzhou, carry kites flying off their sterns. In front of the great Buddhist temples, the thin smoke of incense wafts up to kites flown by children skipping in the courtyards.

There are more kites, kitefliers and kite smiles in China than you dare dream in your most wonderful dreams.

XIE-XIE

In the airport lobby, I press my stuffed panda against a little two-year-old girl's chest. Her arms instinctively surround it before she looks up in confusion at the tall foreigner walking away, looking back with a smile on his face. The child's mother runs across the lobby with child and panda in tow, calling a half dozen Xie-xie's, then lifts the child up into the air, instructing her to give me a kiss on the cheek.

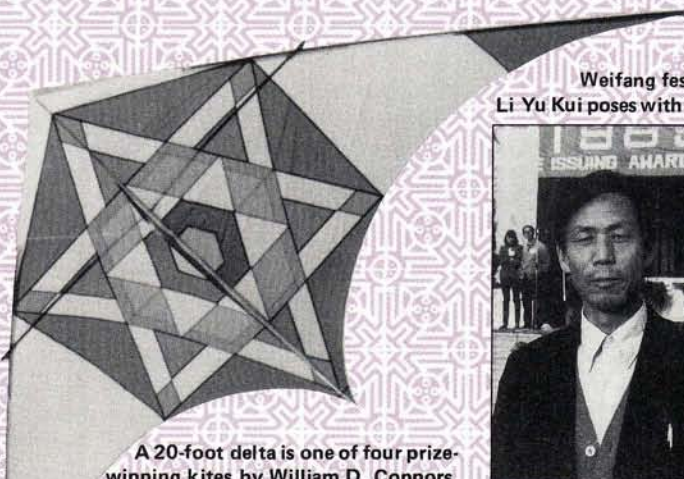
Xie-xie, China, xie-xie.

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TAL STREETER is an artist/kitemaker/sculptor and professor at State University of New York, Purchase. He is the author of the classic book *The Art of the Japanese Kite*. He has exhibited his kites and kite collection in many museums.

A "rokkacow" kite draws an interested crowd at the dry riverbed in Weifang.



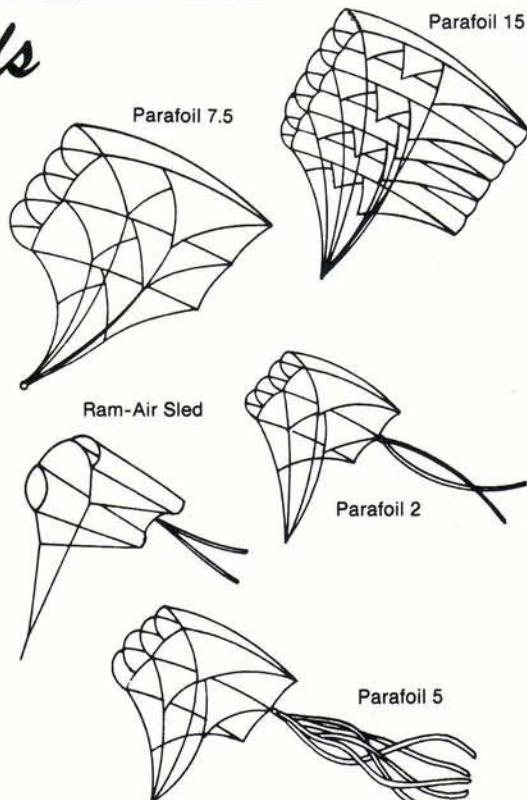
A 20-foot delta is one of four prize-winning kites by William D. Connors.

Weifang festival foreign affairs director Li Yu Kui poses with Tal Streeter at festival's end.



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Kite: Spin-Off

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Low Key, High Style on the Dunes



By Mel Govig



V.G.

The people at Kitty Hawk Kites in Nags Head, North Carolina were good enough to invite me and Pete Ianuzzi to help judge at their second Outer Banks Stunt Kite Competition on October 21, 1989.

The other judges were recruited from the capable corps of the East Coast Stunt Kite Championships (Wildwood, New Jersey), led by George "Corky" Chewning.

We discovered that it is possible to parade a large number of contestants in a short time, to judge them fairly if rapidly

and to avoid the short tempers that often accompany this highly competitive sport. It does help to have big, open dune spaces and steady winds of 12-18 mph throughout the day. There was excellent field preparation, too.

Most of the contestants were in the category called "experienced." There were relatively few beginners or open-category pilots. This also helped to level the judging and give a consistently outstanding display for the spectators.

A fair variety of stunt kites was represented, including Trlbys, Hawaiians, Flexifoils, Spin-Offs, Hyperkites and of course the Mirages from local kite maker Mike Jones. One could see the difference in performance of the kites as well as the fliers.

I had not been to a stunt competition in a full 17 months (though my editor

Michael Allan Jones brushes sand off his Mirage kite following a top-scoring performance in the precision division. Photograph taken at Wildwood, New Jersey's East Coast Stunt Kite Championships, 1989.

Let Me Tell You About Two Kites I Flew in Nags Head...

Kite 1. The MIRAGE

Here is a significant competitor from Jones Airfoils, Nags Head, North Carolina. It is limited in numbers by the individual construction of each kite by Mike Jones himself. If the Mirage can dent the market, it can bolster the diamond-style stunt kite trade established by Peter Powell, Rainbow and Trlby. (The more options and the more *variety* we have in kites, the more *numbers* we will have, both in kites and kitefliers.) The Mirage is one of the most responsive dual-line stunters I have had the pleasure to fly.

Kite 2. The REVOLUTION

This kite has been around for about a year. I had seen a few, but I hadn't had the chance to fly one until now.

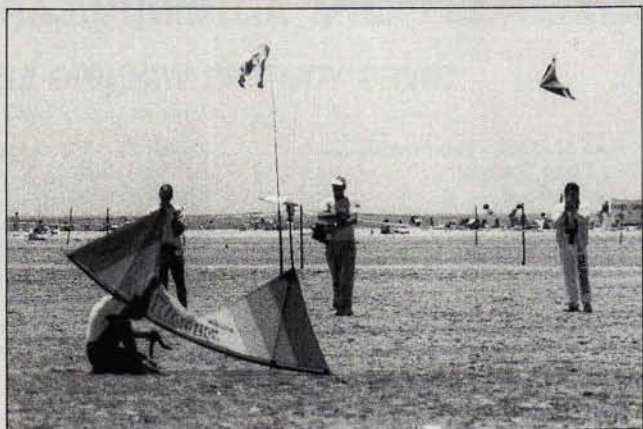
The kite was designed by Joe and Jim Hadzicki out of that seminal city of stunt kites, San Diego, California.

The Revolution is well named—it is really different from any kite we have seen before.

It flies from four lines ("quad lines") and its configuration has been described as like a bow tie or twin diamonds. I'd say it is more like a split-tail delta with a

180-degree angle at the leading edge. It has a mesh band about two inches wide running the width of the kite below the leading edge which probably serves to spoil the laminar airflow and help stabilize what would otherwise be a very slick airfoil. The Revolution's behavior is even odder than its appearance: videos show that it can dive straight down, stop on a dime just before it hits the ground, then go straight up and backwards. It can tip over to the left, hover and then back up to the right without turning.

The directions that come with the



V.G.

Revolution sound ABC simple, and the kite in principle is. All the maneuvers are executed by tipping the two patented curved control handles forward or backward, together or independently.

To make the kite rise, you tip back both handles together. To stop the kite or reverse it, you tip both handles forward together. To spin right, point your right thumb at the kite, making the right side slant back at the leading edge. To spin left, point the left thumb.

Sounds simple, right? Wrong. When the handles are in the normal (home)

had been giving me verbal reports since then). So at first I was concerned about the degree of difficulty in the maneuvers being asked of the fliers. The patterns were beyond what I had come to expect. The sport must be advancing: most of the contestants were able to perform the required stunts, with varying degrees of finesse. Using three judges and a 20-point spread produced no ties, although there were very close scores at times.

I was amazed by several new moves in the freestyle portions of the competition. The Jones Mirage fliers had a dolphin-like motion that they executed with great control both in sustained ground sweeps and in vertical climbs and descents. This technique added an extra touch of rhythm to the musical numbers. Though the tunes selected were often punk rock, the individual performances were practiced and entertaining.

Perhaps the best part of this competition was its modesty. The pilots who

placed in the Outer Banks event were granted "seeding" in the competitions in the spring. This should somewhat reduce the tedium of elimination rounds at the ECSKC. Preliminary contests such as this may be a necessary new stage in the sport and should make the bigger events more enjoyable for all. Seeding also will extend the sport to regions not ambitious enough to claim a major stop on the stunt kite "circuit." Besides, it provides a training ground for new judges (like me), away from any hypercompetitive atmosphere.

The day ended with a classy seafood buffet and awards presentation (the Jones boys took the lion's share of prizes).

A bonus from the weekend was the chance to fly some interesting new stunters (see box).

All in all, the well-organized, down-home Outer Banks Stunt Kite Competition was more enjoyable than most I have attended. I don't plan to wait another 17 months to show up at another one. ◇

position for forward flight, if you pull back on either handle as if it were a two-line handle, the kite will spin like a two-line kite. However, the motion will confuse you (it did Pete and me) and you probably will lose it while you try to reestablish your four-line thinking. I found that the only way I could keep my mind in the four-line mode was to hold my arms outstretched in front of me all the time, consciously stiffening my elbows to keep from pulling and pushing.

The kite torques around the confluence of its two halves. A too-brisk move of the handles to make a spin can twist one half of the kite completely inside out. Likewise, too much angle in the reverse maneuver can cause the two halves to converge or spread, dipping the now-leading edge toward the flier and turning the kite inside out. The range of speed and angle of attack is considerably less in reverse than it is in forward.

In sum, stunt pilots will have less trouble adjusting to the *how* of this new kite than to the *how much*. I spent over an hour learning how not to accidentally move the kite, which requires unlearning most of the techniques of dual-line flying and learning a whole new set of reflexes.

As a devotee of single-line maneu-

verables (fighter kites), I found the difference between the Revolution and other stunters is as great as, if not greater than, the difference between fighters and stunters.

The visual effect of the kite is not what I would call beautiful in the conventional way of stunt kites, but it is novel, strange and riveting. So far, quad line kites have been relegated to the innovative flight class in stunt competitions, where (I predict) they will not stay for long. They will demand their own category, a class specifically for quad-line kites.

I expect that we will see a lot more of the Revolution and its inevitable trail of clones. (Already there are at least two contenders as well as kites being made or retrofitted for both quad lines and twin lines.)

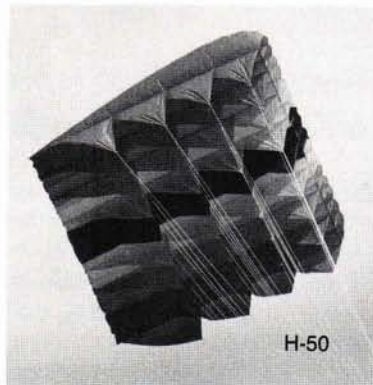
I became mentally and physically engaged with this kite enough to appreciate the amount of concentration and practice it takes to master the form.

I plan to play. I will never compete with the Lee Sedgwicks of this world, but I can foretell a lot of personal satisfaction at mastering the Revolution. I'm sure I am not alone.

—Mel Govig

aided and abetted by Valerie Govig

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Three Fast Conversions

By John Compton

1 How to Make a Kite from a Parachute

I first met Lucien Gibeault of Valleyfield, Quebec at a kite festival in 1987. He told me he had a small ram-air parachute and asked me how to make it fly like a kite. I came up with these drawings and sent them off to him.

I saw Lucien again at a 1988 kite festival and he had his converted kite-parachute with him. It was beautiful.

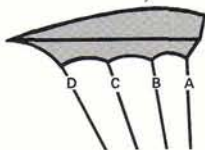
MATERIALS AND TOOLS

The starting point for this conversion is a small ram-air parachute 10 feet wide by 8 feet deep. All the dimensions apply to a kite of this size, so if you are working with something larger or smaller, you will have to adjust the measurements.

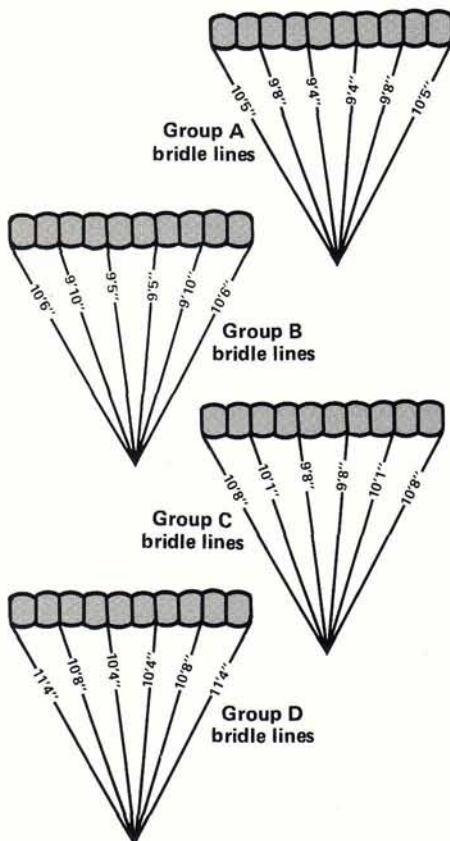
You will need four sturdy metal rings (about two inches in diameter), one *very* sturdy metal ring (or figure-8 descender used by mountain climbers), several hundred feet of 200-pound-test line for the primary bridles and about 10 feet of 500-pound-test line for the secondary bridles (the adjustable ones).

BRIDLE LINES

There are 24 bridle (or shroud) lines in all: four groups of six each. The bridle lines of group A are the forwardmost. The second row of bridles is group B, followed by group C and, finally,

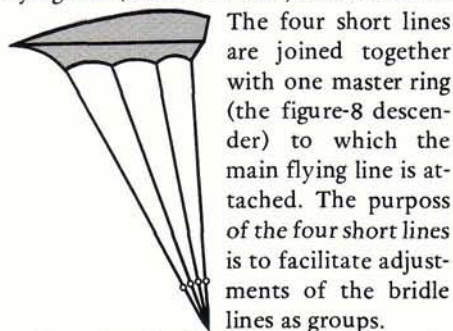


ly, group D, which are the rearwardmost lines. Each bridle line is connected to the tip of a keel. There are six keels, each with four tips (total 24).



Each group of six lines comes together and is tied to a metal ring. There is a separate ring for each group of lines.

Each of the rings has a short length of flying line (about two feet) attached to it.



To make the kite fly at a flatter angle (with more altitude and less pull), shorten group A and/or lengthen group D.

To make the kite pull harder (and fly at a steeper angle and lower altitude), lengthen group A and/or shorten group D.

Minor adjustments to groups B and C may also be necessary.

2 How to Make a Flow Form from a Parafoil

Even though some of you may think that a Flow Form is *already* a parafoil, there are enough little differences between the two designs to make a large difference in the way they fly. Generally, you may find a Flow Form, with fewer bridle lines and less pull, a little easier to fly.

The parafoil we are talking about is the one invented by Domina Jalbert; the Flow Form is the design by Steve Sutton.

WHY DO THIS?

If you already have a parafoil that flies to your satisfaction, there is no reason to cut it up and make a Flow Form out of it. ("If it ain't broke, don't fix it.")

On the other hand, if you have a parafoil which is not flying the way you want it to, this operation may be the cure.

Or, perhaps you're the tinkering kind and this project looks like good exercise.

MATERIALS AND TOOLS

The starting point for this conversion is a ram-air parafoil (or parachute) 10 feet wide and 8 feet deep. All the dimensions apply to a kite of this size, so if you are working with something larger or smaller, you will have to adjust the measurements.

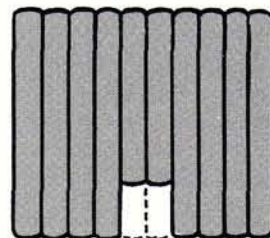
You will need some strong ribbon or edge binding tape, a hot knife or small soldering iron, perhaps a pair of scissors, a large needle, some strong thread and, of course, your favorite sewing machine.

THE JET CHUTE

The cut-out section at the center rear of a Flow Form is the "jet chute." In light winds you close it to help maintain air pressure within the kite. In strong winds you open it to relieve excess pressure.

To make the jet chute, cut out a section from the two center cells along the trailing edge to a distance of 27 inches from the trailing edge.

Do not cut the keels or the cell walls on either side of the opening; leave them in place.



John Compton grins at a camera from his sling under his Flow Form in Toronto's Humber Bay Park.



From March 1987 to September 1988, John Compton of Toronto, Ontario, Canada held the record for the world's largest dual-control kite with his Sutton Flow Form. The square-shaped kite, measuring 22' x 18', has an approximate area of 391 square feet.

Here is some background information from John:

In 1986 I was talking with Toronto kiteflier Ken Lewis about wanting a big kite—a Flow Form—and Ken told me about Steve Sutton, the man who designed and patented the kite. Later, after a couple of phone calls, Bev Jack (another Toronto kiteflier) and I went to see Sutton.

Steve brought out a large parachute kit bag, opened it and slowly pulled out the Beast. There seemed to be no end to it.

Packed in a bag about 2' x 2' x 3' was a parachute with almost 900 square feet of fabric and 24 shroud lines, each 24 feet long. The Beast weighed just over 40 pounds. An

original square-shaped Flow Form, this parachute took Steve three months to build using 2-ounce-per-square-yard ripstop.

I asked Steve how little wind I would need to get the kite up and he said it would fly in winds of 10 mph, right up to 30 mph, due to the heavy duty construction. I quickly bought the kite.

Using plans similar to the ones in this article, I rebridled the Beast—and I did it in a basement room only 10' x 22'.

When I was finished and ready to fly, I took the kite to Humber Bay Park in Toronto. It went up on the first try.

With minor adjustments of the bridle lines, I can make the Beast fly very light in pull or very strong for man-lifting. For normal flying or stunting, I fly it on 1,500-pound-test line, but for man-lifting I use 3,000-pound line.

Sure, I call it the Beast, but it really flies like a beauty.



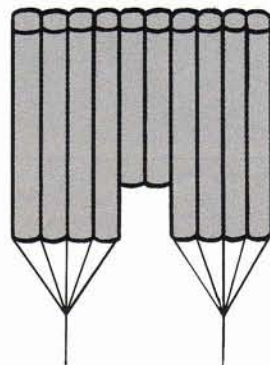
The Beast

3 How to Stunt Your Flow Form

This method of controlling a Flow Form will work with just about any ram-air kite, whether it has "flaps" at the rear corners or not. However, it works a lot better on kites with flaps or, in this case, a square-shaped Flow Form. The process is simple: merely attach additional lines—steering lines—to the rear of the kite.

The kite we are working with requires ten shorts lines, five to each flap. Each line is attached at a point where a cell wall meets the trailing edge. Each of the 10 lines is about 3-4 feet long. They should meet about 3 feet behind the flap.

Each group of five lines is joined together and attached to a steering line. The length of the steering line *must* exceed the length of the main flying line or the kite will not fly properly when all three lines are anchored to the same point.



To stunt the kite, first have it flying (and anchored) on its main flying line. Then, standing clear of—and keeping an eye on—the main line so it does not take your head off, pull on either of the steering lines to make the kite turn. Pull left to turn left, pull right to turn right.

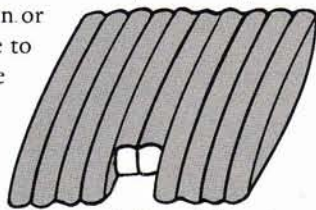
Two people—one with each steering line—can stunt the same kite, but they must be in close communication. If both fliers pull at the same time, the kite will tend to drop—and pull very hard. Then, if one flier releases a steering line abruptly, the kite may loop and crash.

I have found the steering lines very convenient when doing man-lifts. Once I am strapped onto the main flying line in my harness, I can control the direction and altitude (somewhat) with the steering lines.

It is quite a thrill to be able to swing yourself left and right, up and down, while literally dangling from your wind-supported flying machine. ◇

Fold and hem the newly exposed edges or trim the raw edges with binding tape and sew in place.

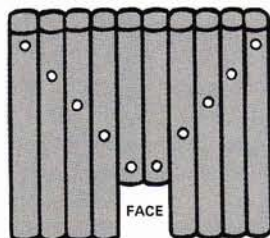
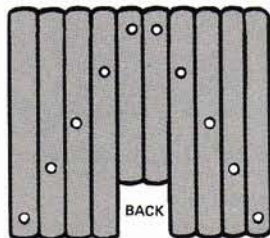
Attach at least six separate lengths of strong ribbon or binding tape to the jet chute opening (I use three along the top and three along the bottom). You will use these ribbons or tapes to close down the opening and maintain pressure in light winds or open it in strong winds.



AIRFLOW HOLES

The holes in the back and face surfaces of a Flow Form are arranged in a V-shape. Note that the point of the V on the back surface is at the leading edge, while the point of the V on the face of the kite is toward the trailing edge.

These holes are approximately three inches in dia-



meter. You can cut them with scissors, razor or hot knife, but in all cases you should hem or edge them with binding tape.

If the cell walls—the inner panels between each cell—do not have holes in them to equalize pressure inside the kite, now is the time to make them.

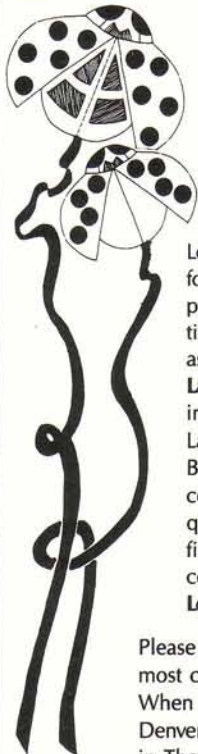
These air holes are also about three inches in diameter. Each cell wall—except the center one—should have four pressure equalization holes. Since the center wall has been shortened (by creating the jet chute), only three holes are needed there. You should cut these holes and seal their edges carefully with a hot knife. Check them from time to time for signs of fraying. If the edges of the holes start to come undone, you can reseal them or remelt them with a hot knife.



MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONCE

As always when working on a fabric kite, you should be very sure of what you are doing before you cut a piece of fabric. Once it has been cut incorrectly, it may be mended, patched or put back together but rarely in the same condition and appearance as when it was whole.

To make a parafoil into a Flow Form requires considerable cutting—and twice as much measuring—so let's be careful out there.



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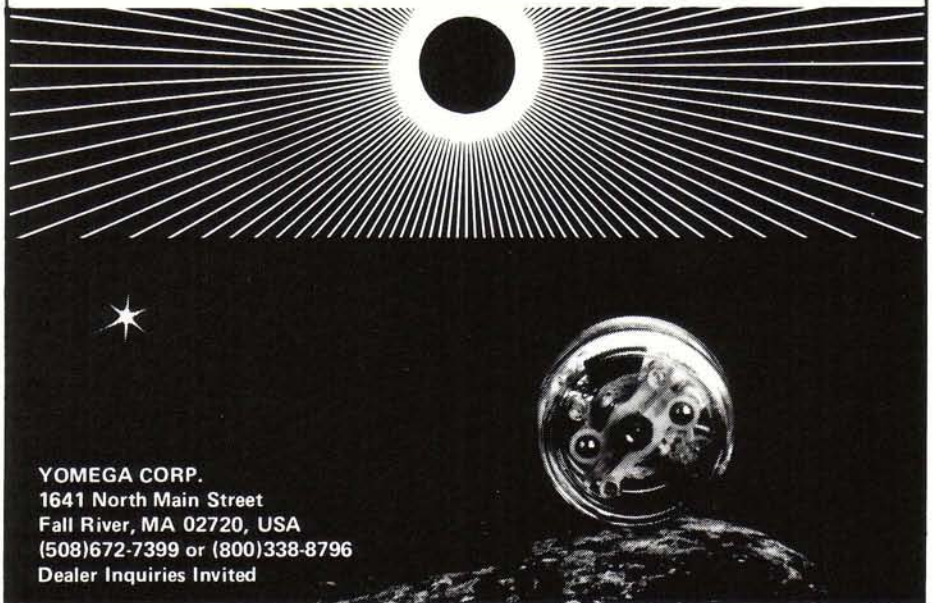


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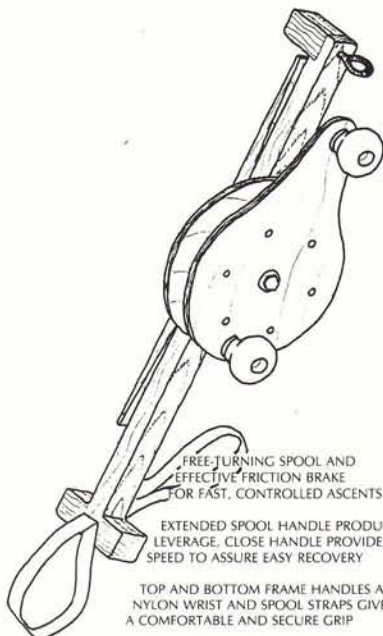
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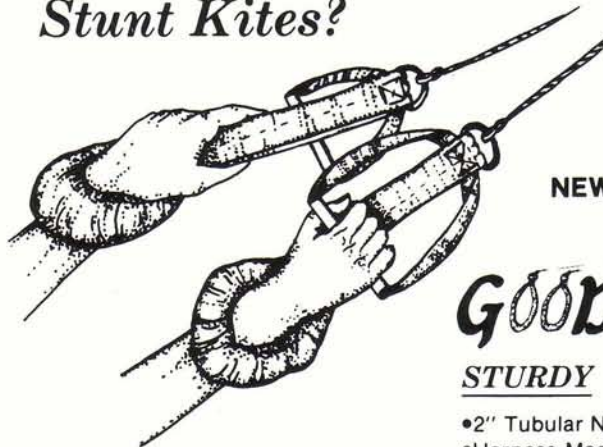
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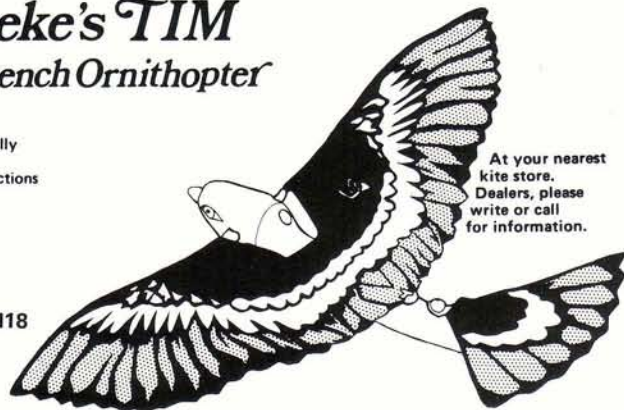
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IT STARTED IN JUNCTION

No coaxing was needed. I quickly accepted the invitation from Bill Lockhart and Betty Street to travel to Junction, Texas for their kite retreat at Texas Tech Center the end of May. Anytime you have Bill and Betty and no distractions, you have a workshop. Their inquisitiveness and ability to share correlative experiences make the time fly.

You have to *want* to go to Junction. A 90-minute drive at Texas speeds from the San Antonio airport, Junction is not on your regular itinerary to or from anywhere. The site at Junction is in a mountain glen, beside a year-round stream, surrounded by high hills. It could have been Oregon, Wyoming or Idaho, but it wasn't. It was Texas. From the airport reception to the food to the late night talks, it was pure Texas.

The planned sessions were led by Bill and Betty, Joel Scholz, Charlie Sotich, Stan Swanson, me and a kite team from Malaysia. But it was the spontaneous events that made the occasion stand out.

Wayne Hosking had brought some Tyvek and we decided to make a kite for our hosts that would picture the "Junction Experience." Starting with the largest rectangle we could manage from the Tyvek without splicing, we cut a cover for a six-foot Edo kite. Alvin Belflower, a Texas-size sign painter from Amarillo, worked out a design that captured the hummingbird of Junction's logo.



After Alvin spent a night and part of a day completing the decoration, Angela Dittmar hemmed the kite on her sewing machine. Stan Swanson provided the material for the spar pockets, and he and Angela sewed them on. The fiberglass rods came from the workshop store. We borrowed a saw from Charlie to cut the sticks, half a mile of line from Joel for brides, end caps for the fiberglass from Stan, a darning needle from Angela, and help from anyone willing. By Saturday night, the kite was assembled. I supervised the bridling in the school lobby.

Amidst a crowd of doubters, I calmly took the kite out Sunday morning in winds of 15 to 20 mph, attached the flying line and launched it tailless into the wind. It flew first time, without adjustment. I was not about to disillusion anyone by admitting that I always do it this way—followed by a 15 or 20 minute correction on the field. If they don't read this report, they will never know that my scientific method is what kiter Alex Dunton calls TLAR (That Looks About Right)—followed by real-time repair.

The retreat was, as they say in Texas, real good. And since I was already in the state, I took some extra time to travel to the town of Pharr, which is about as far south in Texas as you can go without being in Mexico. I wanted to unearth a bit of mystery in the history of kites.

As it happens, I found a whole story there.

—Mel Govig

FANTASTIC KITES

THE DELTA'S BIRTH IN TEXAS

a history recovered by Mel Govig

Bill and Vi Green relax on their front porch in Pharr, Texas, spring of 1989.



Early days at Gayla: Vi and Bill are surrounded by parts of their keel-guided kites in Houston, circa 1959.



Here I was, in Pharr, Texas sitting in the comfortable mobile retirement home of Bill Green, 86, and his wife Vi, 78. Bill is now halted by arthritis and blind. Hard to believe that I had come to the roots of Gayla Industries and the delta kite.

The roots took hold in the late 1940s when the design genius of an architect, the applied talents of an engineer and the energy of an idle *hausfrau* combined to create Fantastic Kites, later to be Gayla Industries, one of the largest kite manufacturers (if not *the* largest) in the world. The company grew when a visionary accountant expanded it into an enterprise that, in its heyday, was approached by a competitor, until then the champion of the cheap kite—not with an offer to buy, but to *be bought*. The personalities:

- Wilbur E. (Bill) Green—the Inventor
(an architect)
- Raymond (Chris) Christiansen—The Supporter
(an engineer)
- Viola (Vi) Christiansen Green—The Force
(a housewife)
- Lester F. (Les) Phillips—The Inheritor
(an accountant)

Talking to Wilbur Green, I found the utter modesty of the man was his most apparent characteristic. His wife Vi (Christiansen's wife until his death in 1957, Green's wife since 1958) is a tightly wrapped bundle of energy who leaves the impression that she is ready to start the whole thing over again right now, if only the two men in her life were alive, whole and creative.

I did not have time on my Texas trip to meet Les Phillips. I did have a good tour of Gayla's Houston plant and met a daughter and son and staff that are dedicated to the company's future.

Some years back I gave lots of talks on kites. One of the specimens I carried with me was a paper Thai flying fish—with a keel. Hearing Bill and Vi Green gave me a case of *deja vu*. As you will see, Bill had been inspired by an oriental kite not unlike the one I had. Bill freely acknowledges the source of his ideas, but vigorously denies the influence of his contribution. Yet it all seems connected.

Francis Rogallo, who designed the

flexible wing in 1941 (and patented it in 1951), is credited with the design that inspired the hang gliders of the 60s and 70s. It has been commonly assumed that delta kites were simply tethered copies of hang gliders. But the first deltas were independently designed by Wilbur Green in 1945 or '46 and widely sold before hang gliders existed.

We know from his personal recount that the Nantucket Kiteman (Alfred E.

Hartig) based his cloth Valkyrie (first made in 1963, patented 1967) on a plastic Gayla kite. Hartig's "Val" became the "generic" model for thousands of deltas to come.

Rogallo did in fact design a kite, patented in 1951, that is similar to the Gayla delta and the early hang gliders. There is a great deal of similarity in the Green and Rogallo patents—and a great deal of difference (notably the spreader).

No question, Rogallo deserves honor for

a great "first," the flexible wing, but his position in a direct line of descent for the delta as we know it today is not certain.

It is probably too easy to overdramatize the role of Wilbur Green in the evolution of kiting. It is equally easy to ignore it altogether. Walk with me through this interview and decide for yourself what place Bill Green, his friend Chris Christiansen and their dearest friend Vi Christiansen Green had in the development of kites.

Wilbur (Bill) Green (WG) and Viola (Vi) Green (VG)

INTERVIEW

with Mel Govig (MG) in Pharr, Texas, May 30, 1989

MG: When was Fantastic Kites started?

WG: As far as I can remember... in 1945 or '46. I'd seen a kite in *Life* magazine, a Chinese kite. When I was a kid I used to make some Chinese kites.

MG: A bird kite?

WG: Yes. We decided to make one, copy it. Chris went out and got a bamboo fishing pole, split it up and made the kite. We flew it the next day and everybody was saying, you should make them for sale. Well, then we got into the bamboo business. Vi chased down sources of bamboo.

VG: I did so much research on it and we were getting it from Formosa [Taiwan]. Bill had special saws made because it was hard to cut. Chris and Bill had to make all the machinery... And no sooner than did we get all that—a year's worth—when the government stopped all imports of bamboo from Formosa because of the beetles in it! We had to start all over again.

WG: We were working our way into the kite business. I designed several kinds of kites...

VG: We didn't know anything about anything. Even the pricing for starters... we didn't even know about wholesalers and retailers and discounts... we knew nothing.

WG: Soon found out.

MG: Your patent doesn't say anything about the laminating process—putting the film on the sticks. Did you patent that along the way?

WG: No, we just glued them by hand.

VG: We used Pliobond, and then we put on the little cups to hold the sticks. Of course, Les [Phillips] improved on that long since. My first husband really had nothing to do with the business except that he was Bill's friend and he was so interested in it, and we sailed together and were real close, the three of us—a three musketeers type of thing...

MG: Early marketing must have been a challenge.

VG: In the sense that we didn't know where to go. We first went to the Chamber of Commerce and talked to the man there and told him what we were trying to do and he sent us over to Foley's department store... and they bought our first kites.

WG: When we got our first [sales] representative, he got the chain stores... in just a couple weeks—all the chain stores in Texas. We went to the Merchandise Mart in Chicago and got... into Marshall Field... and then all the others came in. So we got busy for a while.

VG: More than we could handle!

MG: Did you have a separate manufacturing facility or did you do this in your homes?

WG: No, first we had a small grocery store that was vacated, then a supermarket that was vacated... We had 15 women at the time.

VG: And one man.

WG: When we got up to 400 kites a day, I thought we were really in the business.

MG: Did you cut and seal the kites at the same time or did you cut them separately?

VG: Cut separately. And we found out... they all wouldn't fly straight... the plastic shrunk... We had to hand cut it...

MG: What did you use, just templates and blade?

VG: Yes.

MG: Cut several at once?

WG: About 50.

VG: With an X-Acto knife... I remember up in New York a man at F.A.O. Schwartz saw the bat kite... We had a little tack to put the [kite's] hinge on... so Bill put a sequin over the nail so it sparkled like, instead of an ugly nail showing. And one of the buyers said, ah—sequins yet.

WG: Jewelry.

MG: Is Gayla still to-day run in pretty much the same fashion as you ran it?

WG: No—

VG: Well, he put little fancy tails on the kites.

We didn't have any tails—that was one thing we took pride in: this kite doesn't have to have tails.

MG: Did you maintain your architectural practice after you started making kites?

WG: Oh yes.

VG: Yes, in fact he's still registered—strictly emeritus.

MG: So who really ran the business?

VG: Bill... and I did the bookkeeping and helped wherever I could... My husband died just shortly after we first started—he had cancer and didn't tell us. So Bill got in there and ran his office... and I pitched in and helped Bill. So then we married about a year and a half later.

MG: How many patents did you actually have?

WG: On kites... just two.

VG: We had a winged box kite before that.

MG: Oh... before the delta?

VG: Yes. How did it get the name "delta"?

MG: Because it's shaped like a delta—the Greek character. Your kite became famous as a cloth kite when Al Hartig started making it... his Nantucket Kiteman kite.

VG: I remember that—he copied ours.

MG: Where did you get the idea for the delta, that structure?

WG: I don't think anybody knew anything but the two-stick kite—at least when I was a kid. Of course, the box kite was well known...

VG: Bill, when we came back [from a sailing and fishing trip], in his mind he had worked out that keel. Bill's wheels go around all the time. He's had another invention since then, but he was blind, and we never did anything about it.



One of the Chinese-style kites first made by Fantastic Kites before they made their deltas.

MG: Another kite invention?

VG: No, no... we wouldn't do that to Les, anyway.

MG: When you retired, Gayla bought you out?

VG: We sold it to Les.

MG: Sold it to Les as a going company?

WG: That's right. [In May 1961.]

VG:... The business was getting just too big for us... All the credit in the world goes to Les... He's just created a dynasty... because his family all work there... He was ever so worried about it [buying Gayla]... He only had a year and a half to go for early retirement, but he gave it up to take this on full time. I said, well, can't you wait a year and a half, Les? No, he wanted it right away.

WG: He had it rough going just like we did.

VG: He sure did. Being an accountant, he knew what the future for it was...

MG: When you designed the delta kite, did you know it was going to be a significant departure and everyone would start making kites like that?

WG: I didn't know that they'd follow it or start doing that, but I knew they were entirely different than anything I'd ever seen.

VG: I think Les said one time that Hi-Flier—that we just about put them out of business, I guess, because they asked Les if he would like to buy them out... but he wasn't a manufacturer of that type of kite. The patent, of course, is on the keel... We worked awfully hard—we really did—days and nights and weekends. We were getting too old for it. I was in my 50s and Bill was in his 60s. We just couldn't handle it. The orders were coming in faster than we could make the kites... or get money to make them with... and the string. Remember, Bill, when you got your first string winder?

MG: Oh, laying up string, you had to do that yourself?

VG: Yeah, Bill would be there night after night winding the string. He still had an architectural office and he'd go there to wind string at night.

MG: The delta's patent is dated 1957. You were already making kites then?

VG: Yes, we sold them with "patent pending" on them.

WG: I named Gayla, you know. So Gayla started with this [kite].

MG: Well, Gayla's taken on the world... ships kites to Japan now.

VG: Not too long ago Bill sent another kite to Les that he designed, but I had to try to find something in this little town to make it with, and Les is going to experiment with it. It's an entirely different principle again—a new one...

MG: I don't suppose you have a Gayla kite here, do you?

VG: We don't have a kite! With Bill being blind, he couldn't fly one anyway... and he's got so arthritic that he can't walk very much. At least his mind has been kept very active. ▽

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TWO VISITORS TO NEW CHINA: VISITOR 1. SKYE MORRISON

...Continued from page 41

plete with all the surrounding dinners, tours and ceremonies. This event requires its own book to understand. But the Beijing event is new: this is the first time that a sports group, rather than a tourist office, has organized an international kite festival in China, and there are many surprises in store.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Beijing train station is a sea of humanity. We cannot differentiate regular passengers from waiting friends and relatives from thousands who appear to be living in the station. Although we and our baggage look distinctive, it is miraculous how quickly we are found by our guide,

PROMISING SIGNS

Morning brings sunshine, a cheerful breakfast room, streets teeming with people and the hint of better things to come: Chinese kitefliers are arriving at the hotel to stay with us! This is the first time that international kitefliers are mixed with local and provincial Chinese kites—a promising sign.

In the stubble field next to the hotel, we see Beijing swallow kites flying. On the rooftop, miniature dragon kites are stretched out and tested. In the hallways, large flat kites with exuberant allegorical paintings defend the doors of various teams' rooms.

In the courtyard, between two sections

assistant. What a treat! He follows us around, carefully asking questions of the teams, individual kitemakers and officials at the event. We circle the field, trying to see as many as possible of the 28 teams representing most (not quite all) of China's provinces, cities and regions.

The team from Shengyang Province has made a 100-cell dragon kite in an effort which, they proudly announce, is considered a "special sports activity," encouraged by their employers.

From Tianjin, one of the centers of ornamental kitemaking, comes a kite composed of many cranes and fantastic noise-makers. The kite's creator, Wei Kou-Q, brings the kite down to show me the central "clacker," which is driven by blades like a windmill's. The bamboo in the kite is bent in the distinct manner of kites



who speaks in abrupt, bullish sentences. He shepherds us into waiting minivans for the trip to our hotel "near the city center." The drive takes over an hour. We leave the city and pass the ancient gates, several universities, carts filled with produce, clusters of bicyclists pedaling in all directions and endless streams of trucks honking their way down the road.

Our arrival in the "first class" Da Xing Hotel is puzzling. We are in the middle of nowhere, the surrounding environs bleak in the evening light: gray concrete buildings, deserted streets and no people.

Inside the hotel, the atmosphere is all cream and maroon, much like an old hotel in England where I once stayed, but the plumbing is truly Chinese. The water runs boiling hot, freezing cold or not at all. The toilets gush all night like Niagara Falls, which makes me feel at home, but others in the group are not so amused.

of the building, we watch an elaborate ritual by the Guangzhou (Canton) team disassembling its wooden crates, testing an enormous variety of kites and then reassembling the boxes in different shapes to take them out to the flying field. Without interpreters, we grab cameras and notepads to record these moments before we get into our vans and buses and head for the field.

The site of this festival is different from any other I have experienced so far in China. The area resembles a military drill field with concrete volleyball courts at one end.

CIRCLING THE FIELD

Simon Freidin of Australia as photographer and I as reporter are joined by a new interpreter, Gao Zhengeng from the Sports Commission and Foreign Affairs Office, Beijing. Gao becomes our research

from this port city, which for many years has been one of the few to export kites to the west. The painting on the silk body of the kite is exquisite in detail and color.

Moving around the field, I find another dragon kite of less sophisticated construction, but showing an ingenious use of materials and fluorescent orange and green painting. This dragon has small tree branches for outriggers, tufted with broom-straws, to provide balance for the body. The head is different from those of Weifang, Tianjin and Beijing: flatter, wilder in coloring, and closer to human proportions in the shape. The kite is made by Chin Dong Xing, an "amateur"* from the Guang-

*In China, a distinction is made between "amateur" kites, who make and fly kites as an enthusiasm, and "professionals," who work in kite factories. However, as in other countries, the quality of a kite often has no correlation to the labeling of its maker. —Editors

zhou provincial kite association. The wind is too strong to lift this big dragon—we are experiencing a dust storm—so I am able to see it only on the ground.

My eye is caught by a medium-size kite displaying a painting of the harvest moon. On the flying line, moving towards the landscape, is a messenger kite in the form of a young woman. This kite is named “Cheng Ming Travels to the Moon,” made by Kuoa Quin Xi from Shengyang Province. The maker tells me that he is 57 years old, from a kitemaking family of three generations, and proud to have his grandfather’s kites at home. This last bit of information is surprising because kitemaking was discouraged—and in some places banned—during the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution” (1965-68). Many old kites were destroyed, especially

the fourth generation. Attached to the peach kite is a hummer of bent bamboo and gut string. Its sound is high-pitched and smooth, in contrast to the loud clacking of the Tianjin crane kite.

As we turn back from one end of the flying field, a fantastic beast appears with another team. This original flying dragon bird with a shaped body and folding wings could have come from a space fantasy film. The maker of the kite is Wang Yang, age 30, from Hunan Province. The kite took him one month to build and had to be made in sections so that it could be transported. The painting on this kite is a mixture of traditional color and modern graphics executed by Shu Wan Yi, the most highly regarded painter among this kite group. This work illustrates one of the phenomena of kitemaking in China: it

day and recruit her as a member of the Mama-sans International Kite Team.

THE BANQUET

The “official banquet” is another uniquely Chinese event. This one is sponsored by the Sports Federation and local factories, which produce everything from motorcycles to track suits. We are treated to speeches, gifts, toasts, singing and a great volume of food (some dishes I recognize and enjoy, others I pass by). A band plays Chinese pop music. All the foreign kitefliers are introduced. Dave Checkley* is asked to judge and to designate two members of our group to serve as judges along with the Chinese. All the judges are presented with red silk sashes and elaborate inscribed books thanking them before they have done anything. At the



Opposite: a classic Beijing swallow kite, larger than its flier, passes through the hotel car park on its way to a test fly. This page: far left, an ingenious dragon kite by Chin Dong Xing of Guangzhou (Canton) is made of twigs and broomstraws. Near left, twin dragons fly peacefully side by side, trained to fly from a single yoke.

those from collections of families known to be bearers of such tradition.

The subject matter of this kite indicates changes in attitudes towards the use of folklore in the new China. “Cheng Ming Travels to the Moon” comes from the vernacular literature of China. It is an ancient tale of unrequited love which causes the saddened girl to leave her earthly form and go to the moon. Kites are part of the revival of popular stories as a way of communicating longstanding ideas among the people. The fables are similar to “Robin Hood” or “Cinderella” in Western culture.

At my next stop on the field, I find a peach kite. In China, the peach is a symbol of longevity and peace. The maker is Yin Ja Pei, 60 years old, also a third-generation kitemaker, from Guangzhou Province. He tells me that his son is at the festival too, carrying the tradition on to

is not considered amiss—in fact, it is an honor—to share the expertise of different team members in creating one fabulous kite.

The flying field fills up as we make our rounds. The wind increases, and clouds of dust make it impossible to see or take photographs.

As we return to our vans for the trip back to the hotel, I meet Sun Hui Jian, a young woman who is part of the Hunan Kite Association. She has made a delicate swallow kite, its intricate construction and careful painting in sharp contrast to the dragon bird of her teammates. There are very few women in the amateur kite associations of China; however, many women are employed in kite factories throughout the country. Sun Hui Jian’s teammates tell me that she is a good kitemaker and well liked in their team. I invite her to fly kites with me the next

end of the ceremonies, we are each given a battery-powered quartz wall clock from a local factory. These clocks become our albatrosses: we can’t leave them behind, but we don’t have room to pack them. A lot of clock swapping happens in the hallways for the rest of our journey.”

THE TOURNAMENT

The official competition begins early the next day. Finally we have uninterrupted time to fly.

After much discussion, the vans are placed on the field for use by the international fliers. (The Chinese teams are not allowed to use vehicles as kite anchors.)

We all have stenciled numbers pinned

*This was David M. Checkley’s last tour to the orient. The author and *Kite Lines* acknowledge the indebtedness of the kite community to Dave and his wife Dorothea for organizing these trips.
—Editors

TWO VISITORS TO NEW CHINA: VISITOR 1. SKYE MORRISON

... Continued

to our backs, and the Chinese judges—three elderly gentlemen with long white beards—carefully speak to each flier through interpreters. This is a thorough, serious event.

In Beijing, all the work is seen, no matter what its scale. Of course, the biggest kites make the biggest impression, but the Sports Federation has awards of equal status for the best flying miniature kites and for kites which one person can fly. The complicated rules and regulations are broken down into many categories and subcategories, even to types of dragon kites.

With a pick-up team from four countries and the anchor of a parafoil by Peter

and ten teams (six international and four Chinese) win cloisonné vases inscribed with details of the event.

EXTRAORDINARY AFTERNOON

We are talked into returning for an afternoon flying session by an NBC TV news crew from Hong Kong—fortunately, because this afternoon I find two extraordinary kitemakers.

The first is Tang Chi Ming, a 37-year-old first-generation kiteflier from Beijing, who specializes in life-sized butterfly kites. He explains that he might make ten monarch butterfly kites before one will fly. He makes minute adjustments to fine-tune them, depending on the wind and

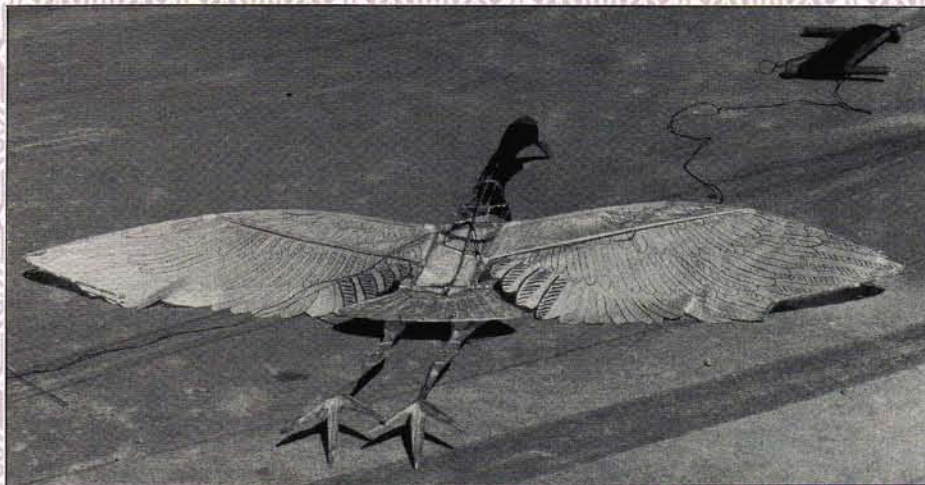
exhibited and flown in Canada and the United States. We agree to meet in the evening at the hotel to negotiate the possibilities.

UNFORGETTABLE EVENING

This evening is to give me an experience filled with insights into contemporary Chinese culture.

Scott Skinner of Colorado accompanies me to the Xi'an team room with Gao. We drink tea, talk about kites in different countries, then ask about the dragon kite.

Zhang Tian-wei explains that he made the head of the kite in 1988, but the tail was part of a first place winner in the 1987 Weifang festival. Kitemakers are allowed to reuse a dragon tail if they make a new head. It is difficult for me to imagine why this head had not won first place, but it is



A delta-like bird kite, partly three-dimensional, rests after flight in Beijing.

A jet kite shows Western influence—and characteristic Chinese detailing.



Malinski of West Germany, I lift my Ascending Angels banners. They have come full circle, having been made in Scotland with British and German help, and flown in Denmark, Holland, Canada and the United States. Finally they have arrived in China, the home of kites.

The Chinese judges are impressed by our smaller kites, such as the Icarus, Flamingo and Canada Goose by Martin Lester of England, but since each is flown by a different person—none the maker—they don't know what to do. We explain how kites among members of the international community are traded and shared.

At the end of the morning, the awards ceremonies take place on the field. The New Zealand team deservedly wins the Qing Qi Cup for overall performance, with Clyde Cook flying kites and banners by Peter Lynn. Many individual kitefliers receive gold, silver and bronze medals,

weather. His work represents the exquisite school of kitemaking which sees kites as imitations of nature. Sadly, the winds today are too strong for flying his beauties.

My second discovery this afternoon is a creation like nothing any of us have ever seen. Within a bamboo cage on the field is a kinetic dragon's head, operated through a gear box in its "brain."

Zhang Tian-wei, a 50-year-old electronics worker from the city of Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, is introduced to me as the maker. He says that it took him two-and-a-half months to make the dragon's head and all of the gears inside, which are hand-tooled.

Watching the jaw open and close, the tongue move in and out, the ears rotate and the eyes move back and forth, I am transfixed. Plucking up my courage, I find Gao and ask if the maker might consider selling me this masterpiece to be

explained that Zhang Tian-wei is from Shaanxi Province, and the first place winner was from Shandong Province, where the festival is hosted.

Since the kite was not a first place winner, he is willing to sell it if his teammates agree and a fair price is paid. The team agrees, and with the ever-helpful Gao explaining the intricacies of the deal, we settle on the price.

A mad scramble around the hotel to borrow money from friends, and the promise of an adventure at The Bank of China the following day, clear the way for the transaction.

Gao has conducted the entire negotiation with skill and sensitivity. He understands the relationship among the artist, the team and the buyer within the delicate complexity of a changing Chinese culture. This experience, I believe, is new in China—mixing traditional trading with the col-



A winged dragon in brilliant colors pulls against its many bridles. This work of Wang Yang and his teammates from Hunan Province mixes traditional styles and techniques with modern graphics.

lective of a team decision regarding an “amateur” maker’s work.

SPECIAL TREATMENT

On the morning of our third day, we leave the hotel on the outskirts of Beijing for our final days in the center of the city.

We visit Ha Yiqi, fourth-generation kitemaker of the Beijing Kite Research Institute. We try to fly kites on Tiananmen Square, but cannot because of security surrounding political meetings there. We have a farewell banquet with the Sports Federation in an elegant central city hotel. We eat Western food at the Beijing Hotel, shop all over the city, and enjoy a late-night, last-minute visit from the Beijing Kitefliers Association.

The last night “packing party” in the hallway of the hotel is hilarious. There are several refrigerator-size boxes filled to capacity with treasures. Sealing tape is at

a premium (always bring at least three heavy-duty rolls on such trips). Somehow, all of it and all of us get to the airport and we receive very special treatment from the airlines.

As we board the plane bound for Tokyo, the pilot announces that the delay in departure is caused by a group of award-winning international kitefliers who have unusual baggage requirements.



SKYE MORRISON teaches textile design and craft history at Sheridan College, Oakville, Ontario, Canada. She has traveled and exhibited her kites and banners widely and is working on her doctorate in folklife studies from the University of Pennsylvania.



Skye Morrison, at home anywhere, beams in Beijing.



A SOVIET FRIENDSHIP KITE TREK

By William S. White



I don't believe there are very many people who can say they have flown a kite all over the Ukraine and in Moscow and had it televised throughout the Soviet Union. But I can.

In August and September, 1988, I was one of a group of 220 American and 250 Soviet citizens on the International Peace Walk, a trek of 220 miles (350 kilometers) through the Ukrainian Republic of the Soviet Union. It was the most thrilling kite experience of my life.

We walked (or rode on special buses) from Odessa, on the Black Sea, to Kiev, the third largest city in the Soviet Union. We stayed in our own tents and sleeping bags on soccer fields of schools or at Pioneer Camps (great places to fly kites). We were divided into groups of 40, consisting of 20 Americans and 20 Soviets. Our group walked together, rode together and pitched our tents in the same area. Fortunately, about three-quarters of the Soviets spoke English, so we were able to communicate. The changes in feelings and understanding and the friendships that developed were astounding.



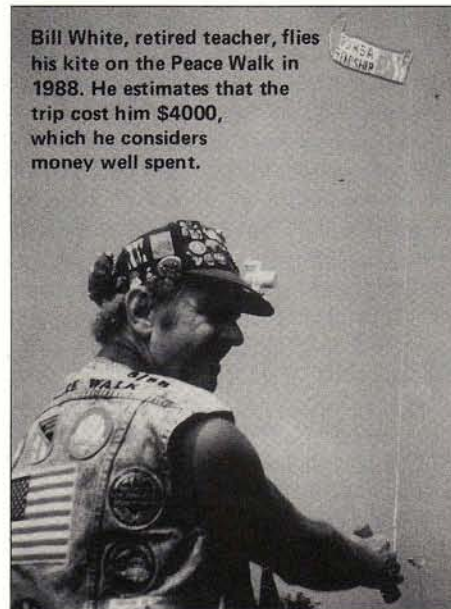
When I learned I would be going on the Peace Walk, I just knew that I had to take a kite!—a special design to fit the occasion. I chose a 10-foot Flexifoil because of its large surface area—ideal for artwork and also for flying in minimum wind.

Starting with a solid white Super 10, I came up with a design and did the artwork myself—with wide felt-tipped permanent markers in red, blue, black and yellow. On the kite's front was the English word FRIENDSHIP and the Russian word for the same meaning DRUZHBA (in Cyrillic). On the two ends of the Flexifoil, I drew the American and Soviet flags, combined as in friendship. The back of the kite I left blank to be used for the

signatures of Peace Walkers and Soviet citizens I met on the way.

Most of the Soviets had never seen a controllable kite, much less flown one. Each time I let a new person take the handles, there were really two of us who were thrilled.

Being so free with the use of my kite led to some spectacular crashes. It was dunked in the Black Sea and in several rivers and lakes. One day the weather turned to rain, and the kite and everyone interested in it were drenched. The kite was crunched in trees, plowed into the ground, buried in the sand, slammed into walls and bashed into fences. Yet it held up like a charm except for a two-inch tear which was easily mended with some rip-stop nylon patch I had brought along.



Bill White, retired teacher, flies his kite on the Peace Walk in 1988. He estimates that the trip cost him \$4000, which he considers money well spent.

In the city of Cherkassy on a Sunday morning, I found a wonderful soccer field to fly in. After about three hours, the stadium started to fill up for a game, and I let about 40 men, women and children try their hands at flying. I was rather glad when I was told I'd have to stop for the soccer game.

My friendship kite and I were well photographed not only by the Peace Walkers and Soviet citizens but by Soviet television crews.

I was interviewed for radio and newspapers, and saw my picture in the press twice. I was very excited when I discovered that a Soviet artist painted a water color of me flying my kite and that it would be displayed all over the Soviet Union!



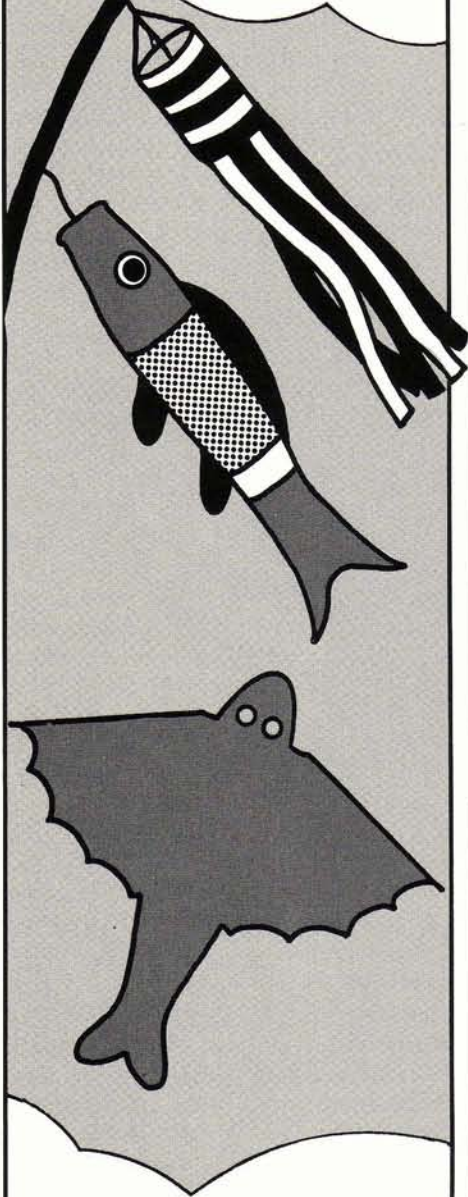
As we walked along the streets, we made many physical contacts—handshakes with men, women and children. But the best were the hugs from the *babushki* (grandmothers) who had set up tables for us with fruits, vegetables, water, bread and honey.

We would call out "Peace and friendship!" and the people would respond with "Mir i druzhba!" while heaping flowers on us.

Many Americans were invited into Soviet homes for dinner, bed and breakfast. I personally stayed in five Soviet homes along the way. I figure that my kite and I made close contact with at least 300 Soviets and left them with good feelings toward Americans.

Then there were the millions of people who saw nightly in the media all these wonderful feelings being expressed between Soviets and Americans. Who knows how much the International Peace Walk, my friendship kite and I have contributed to an improving relationship between Soviet and American peoples? ◇

Kites & Windsocks



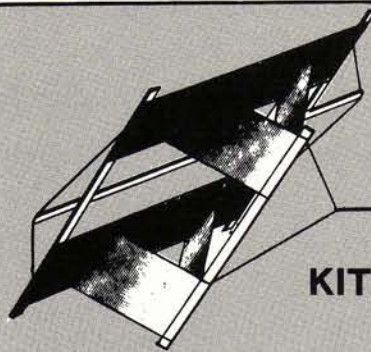
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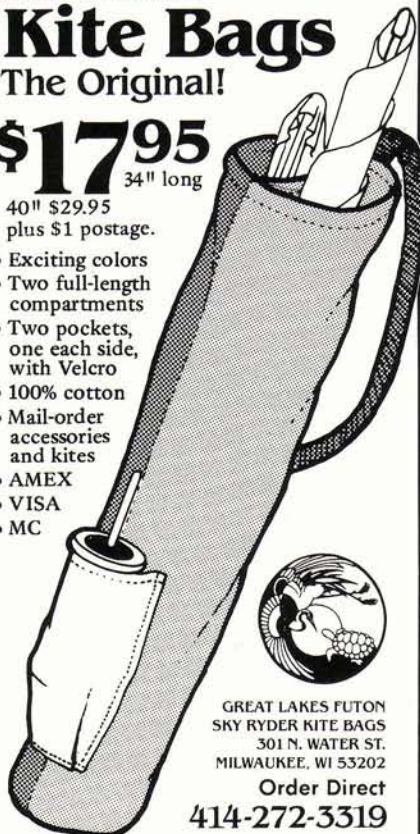
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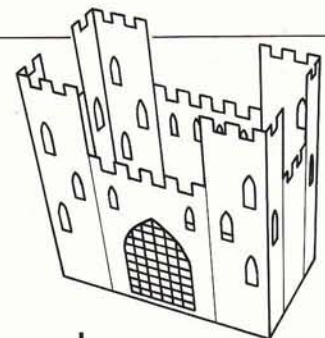
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Score One Out of Four

A New Fastest Stunt Kite

"Hugo Who?" read a sign outside a motel in Ocean City, Maryland. The hurricane that devastated Charleston, South Carolina on Thursday was expected to hit the Maryland beaches the next day, on September 22, 1989. Instead, it barely grazed the area, and substantial crowds came out for the Sunfest celebration. ("Sunfest" had been officially cancelled, but "Kitefest" was press-on-regardless.)

Winds were heavy, of course—even the edges of a hurricane are stormy—and the 25-30 mph winds drew four official contenders to break the world record for fastest stunt kite—one of eight categories—and win the coveted Ocean City gold medal and \$2,000 prize.

A local police officer with a radar gun took readings through the afternoon while the contenders battled exhaustion in repeated dashes across the sky. The kite of choice was the 10-foot Flexifoil or a derivative flown on Spectra fiber line. Most pilots started with 150 feet of line, then shortened it to 100 feet or less for

apparent greater speed (and/or reduced line drag). The fliers traded spars and swapped lines in what turned out to be a group effort.

The final top reading was achieved by Pete DiGiacomo of Canton, Ohio, who hit 120 mph for a new record as fastest stunt kite. Pete plans to split his winnings with the kite's maker, Ted Karl of Akron, Ohio.

Ted told *Kite Lines* the kite is a Super 10 Flexifoil design he modified "in the rib section . . . one-eighth-inch here . . . one-eighth-inch there"—an experimental model made, oddly enough, for *light* winds.

DiGiacomo and the fastest kite.



and G. William Tyrrell, Jr. of Doylestown, Pennsylvania. The two men knew they were opponents, but did not know the size of the other's kite until Sunday morning, when the winds were about right and the two kites were unveiled on the sand.

Typical of monster kites, these had not been test-flown prior to the big day. Also typically, launching these kites required a crew of helpers and hours of patient puttering.

Tyrrell's kite was unusual, though not unprecedented; it was made with air-inflated tubular "spars." Measuring 49.5 feet in both dimensions, the skin presented 1,225 square feet of area to the wind. Colors were Tyrrell's favorite fluorescents: "lime green, watermelon pink and yellow submarine." After laying the fabric out flat on the beach, Tyrrell used a leaf blower to pump air into the tubes. Gradually a long central column took shape on the sand, then the cross-spar filled out in front of the kite. The bridles were then attached—six each vertically and horizontally. Finally, the team carried the kite to a more open location for launch and the flying line was anchored to the tractor provided by the city.

Launch time. The crew hauled mightily on the ropes and the kite nosed up. Then it rippled onto the ground and fell. Between 11:30 and noon, the team tried and tried again, rerigging, reinflating, repositioning. Each time the kite curled or bent backward on itself. A few times the whole monster was fully off the ground for perhaps five seconds. The best, last flight took less than a minute and ended in a huge sidewise dive into the ocean. "If I could just get more pressure," Tyrrell kept saying, blaming the weak blower for the kite's lack of stiffness.

Then Ed Spencer had his chance. His much smaller Eddy, at about 30 feet in both directions, was built in the classic style but with fiberglass filament-wound epoxy spars fitted tightly within aluminum tubes only .75-inch in diameter. Again inadequate stiffness was the culprit. The kite was launched several times and flew briefly once or twice, but inevitably buckled and crashed each time.

Nancy Spencer, whose house had been engulfed in red, white and blue ripstop nylon for weeks beforehand, said, "Ed was going to buy a rug for the bedroom if he won the prize money. Now we'll have to use the kite for a rug." —Valerie Govig



The kite that ate Ocean City? No, Bill Tyrrell's monster inflatable Eddy turns limp at each launch.

Amazing Failures

Other efforts during the Ocean City festival were less successful than the Fastest Stunter, but the boardwalk crowds ogled expectantly anyway.

Mix McGraw and Ray Wong were here from San Francisco, California trying to break their own record of 253 dual-control kites flown in train. They launched their stack of 274 modified Hyperkites several times, but could not make the required loops in the available winds.

Then there was the battle for the biggest Eddy.

Never mind that the definition of a true Eddy may never be exact enough for purists. On this occasion, Bill Ochse of The Kite Loft, sponsor of the festival, had simply defined it as a kite with two spars of equal length, the cross spar positioned 20 percent down from the top of the spine.

Into this broad category stepped Edward Spencer of Marlton, New Jersey,

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Kazuo Niisaka

Japanese painter, writer and recognized kite authority Kazuo Niisaka (also spelled Niizaka) died early in 1988 at the age of 44.

Between 1969 and 1987, Niisaka authored at least 19 kite books, for children and adults, the most kite books written by one person. Most notable of his books is *Nihon-no Tako (Kites of Japan)*, from 1978. Some of his books have been translated and published in English.

Niisaka also contributed kite writings to magazines, co-authored kite books with other well-known kites, and was awarded the 1978 Ministry of Welfare's prize for his children's book *What Is A Kite?* He was a member of the Japan Kite Association and the Federation of Artists for Childrens Books and was listed in *The International Authors and Writers Who's Who*.

In addition to his writing and research, Niisaka often designed, made and painted his own kites. We are grateful to have so much to remember him by. —L.M.C.

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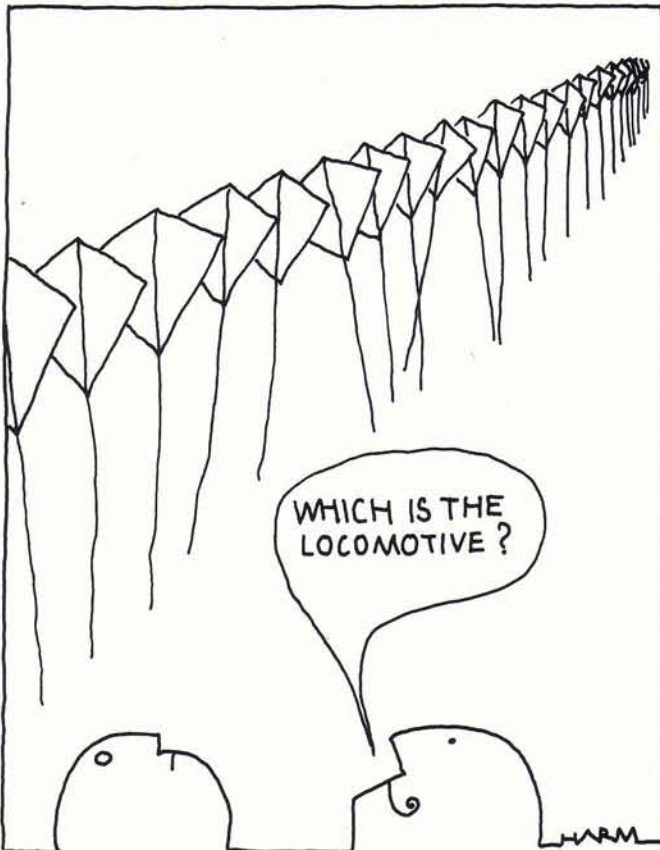
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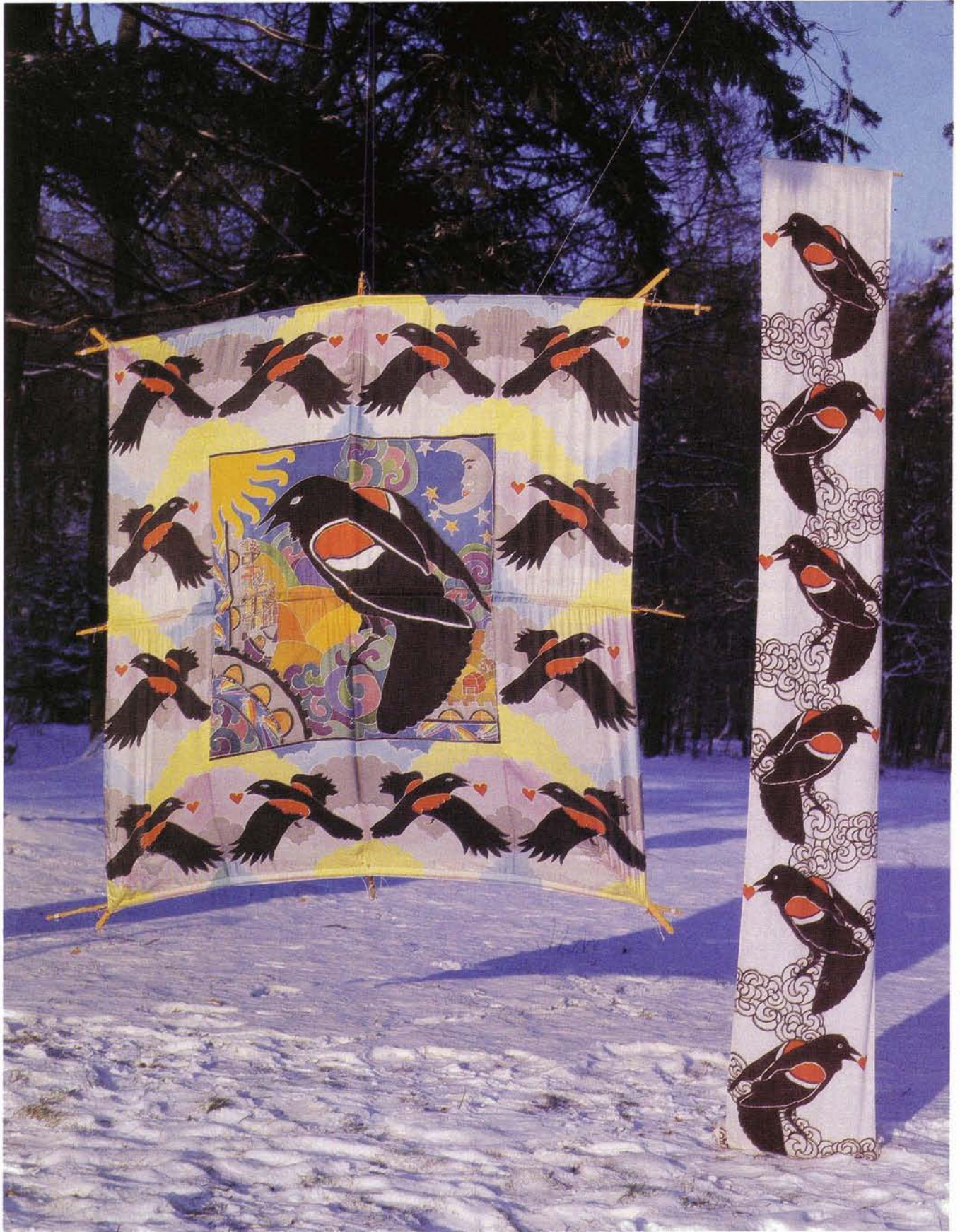
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Number Fifteen in a Series

SKYE MORRISON is a well-known kitemaker from Ontario, Canada who has been exhibiting her colorful kites and banners internationally for many years. Besides teaching textile design, she is very active in the kite community and often gives lectures and workshops on various aspects of kite craft. Articles by Skye Morrison also appear on pages 22 and 60 of this issue. She writes:

"If I Was A Blackbird" is a silk and bamboo Edo-style kite made in 1982. It is two meters square (6.5 feet) with a three-meter banner-style tail (10 feet).

The title of this kite comes from a traditional Scottish ballad. A young man is far from his love and he wishes that he were changed into a blackbird so that he could "whistle and sing" and fly to be with her. This song was, for me, a natural subject for a kite. There is a bird, there is flight, there is long distance travel and there is a love story which parallels those from many countries where kites are used to tell stories in the sky.

This kite was a favorite of mine from a traveling exhibition of my work organized by the Canadian High Commission, Canada House, London, England (that is the Canadian Embassy). The exhibition, called "Skyeworks," traveled to 22 locations in Great Britain, then to Belgium and Germany, where this photograph was taken. I am unclear about the details of the photograph because I received it from a European kiteflier in 1988, over a year after the exhibition of 12 kites had been returned to me in Canada.

Sadly, this kite and nine others in the show were destroyed in transit by water or chemicals. They are now in the same place as those kites which break off the flying line and are never seen in the air again.

Painted silk kites and banners, which I have made for almost 20 years, have given me an opportunity to travel the world, meet kindred spirits and work with a variety of "students" (from inner city kids to deaf art students, from modern art museums to science centers, from filmmakers to pyrotechnicians). Since I am not a performer of the ballads and music which I love, I use the banners and kites to sing the songs in another way.

As a teaching medium, kites are the ideal design project. They challenge the student's aesthetics and technical knowledge, all the while satisfying the dreams of the imagination.

This *Kite Lines* series features a reader's kite picture on a whole page in full color in each issue. Yours could be the next one! What kind of kite photograph qualifies for this honor?

First, the kite must fly well. Supporting information must be included describing the kite's typical flight and giving its dimensions, materials and history.

Second, the kite must be beautiful. Agreed, beauty is in the sky of the beholder. This is an openly subjective criterion.

Third, the kite must show some quality of originality in either form, craftsmanship, color, decoration or use of attached elements. (No commercial kites, please!)

Fourth, the photograph (as a separate consideration from the kite in it) must be of high artistic and technical quality—sharp, well-framed, rich in color. For printing, we prefer 35mm or larger transparencies. We can also use color prints if they are 8" x 10" or larger. Tip: we favor vertical format over horizontal.

The photograph should be taken in one of two modes: as a close-up of the kite in the sky, the kite filling at least one-third of the film area; or as a background-inclusive shot, showing people, scenery, etc., behind the kite. In any case, the kite should be shown well, although not necessarily flying, as long as the supporting information establishes the kite's flyability. In fact, background features give a reference point and sometimes increased interest to a picture.

We suggest you take many pictures of the kite. Snap it in the sky, at festivals, morning, noon and night—even indoors on display. Discard any preconceptions of what a "correct" kite photograph should be. Then send us no more than *five* photographs of *one* kite at a time. To avoid risk of sending an original transparency or photograph, you may send a duplicate for review.

Ship in stiff protective packaging and enclose a self-addressed envelope with stamps or international reply coupons for return of your material—otherwise, we cannot guarantee its return.

Photographs submitted must be not previously published. After publication in *Kite Lines*, further rights revert to the photographer and kitemaker.

Kite Lines credits both kitemakers and photographers. A photographer may take pictures of a kite not his or her own, but in such case should ask the kitemaker's help in supplying information for the submission. *You* are invited to enter! You have nothing to lose but your obscurity. ◇

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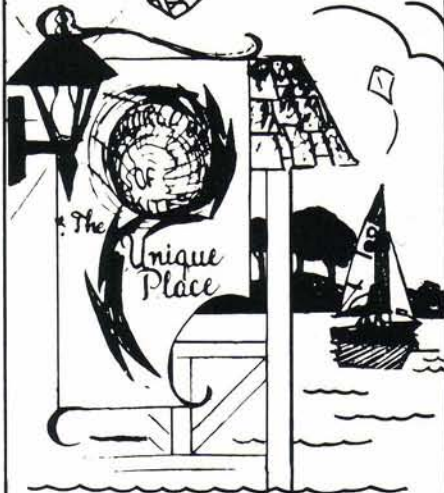
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FOR SALE

KITE INFORMATION & SUPPLIES, contact Tall Tails, P.O. Box 6, Bellefont, PA, 16823.

FLOW FORM kite described in article on pages 52-53 this issue, \$1,000 US. Call or write: John Compton, 280 Wellesley Street East, No. 701, Toronto, Ontario M4X 1G7; (416)920-9430.

RIPSTOP NYLON, white, .75 ounce, 41 inches wide (with Kool-Aid dye instructions from *Kite Lines*), 75 cents per yard, minimum 10 yards, \$2.50 shipping up to each 50 yards. From: Darrell Westmoreland, P.O. Box 125, Montesano, WA 98563.

KITE PATENTS: a one-line description, in list form, of every kite-related patent issued in the U.S.A. Information includes numbers, names and dates. More than 600 patents, about 30 pages. Available for \$50 from Ed Grauel, 799 Elmwood Terrace, Rochester, NY 14620.

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Pocket Kite Calendar Almanac &

1990 World Kite Tours

JANUARY 7-24: INDIA

We will travel to six Indian cities from Bombay to Delhi. After attending the Jawaharlal Nehru International Kite Flying Festival in Bombay, we will travel to Ahmedabad to celebrate the winter solstice, *Makar Sankranti*, when hundreds of thousands of kites flown from rooftops fill the sky all over the city. We will also visit this city's kite museum—one of the world's finest. From Ahmedabad we will continue to the pink city of Jaipur where we will stay at the Rambagh Palace, the former home of the Maharajah. In Agra you will have the chance to view the Taj Mahal in the changing light of sunset or early dawn. In Lucknow you will meet the makers of some of the best of India's kites. We will celebrate our last days in India by joining Delhi's renowned kite clubs for a little informal competition at the Red Fort. Complete deluxe land package is priced at US\$2400, plus international airfare. Leader: Tal Streeter.

MARCH 21-APRIL 9: CHINA

This tour starts in south China in Nantong where we will be among the first Westerners to view this city's unique whistling kites. After the Nantong National and International festivals, we will head north to the renowned festivities of Weifang, stopping along the way to fly kites from the decks of dragon boats plying the waters of picturesque West Lake. We will then go to Tianjin and Beijing, where we will meet with venerated kite masters (for lessons in the traditional arts) and attend the capital city's national festival. Also an optional add-on: the Pattaya International Kite Festival, Thailand, which promises to be one of the biggest and best organized of major events. Complete deluxe land package includes all hotels and meals at US\$2400, plus international airfare. Leader: Tal Streeter.

MARCH: THAILAND

In the capital city of Bangkok, we will attend the 85th annual Royal Thai Kite Competition at the Pramain Grounds. After making our explorations through the rivers and canals which crisscross this exotic city, we will head north to visit the hilltribe villages and elephant training grounds around the city of Chiang Mai. Dates to be announced. Leader: Tal Streeter.

AUGUST: BALI

Indonesia's exotic island paradise, Bali is known for its lush terraced rice paddies and the hospitality of its people. The national and international kite festivals promise to be truly grand this year because they will be part of the revelry for Indonesia's 45th Independence Day. In addition to attending the festival events, visitors will explore the nearby villages, meet local kitemakers and see traditional ceremonies. Dates to be announced.

JOIN US AS KITE INES travels around the world! Each itinerary is designed for kites—novices or experts—to give you the utmost participation in the country's kite traditions, as well as provide for general sightseeing. All travel and accommodations are first class—worry-free. We are happy to make arrangements from all originating points.

JUNE 14-30: EUROPE

We begin in the Netherlands at Europe's premier kite event in Scheveningen and then travel east to Vienna, where participants will meet with Austrian kitefliers and cruise down the Danube together to Budapest. In this charming capital city we will try out the Hungarian breezes as well as the zesty paprika. From Budapest we will travel south to the ancient city of Pecs, where we will stay in an elegant vintage hotel in the heart of the old city from which you may conveniently make a wacky exploration through the narrow, stone-paved streets. We will also take a drive into the countryside to picnic at a sculpture garden situated atop a hill overlooking vineyards and fields of sunflowers, stopping along the way at wine cellars to sample the local brew.

SEPTEMBER 6-24: EUROPE

We will start in London, visiting all the famous sights on our way to the Bristol International Kite Festival, one of Britain's premier kite events. Our next stop is the coast of Normandy where we will fly our kites at the Dieppe International Kite Festival, noted for its great kite diversity, historic surroundings and famous French cuisine. Finally we will travel to exciting, freedom-loving Berlin or the Berlin International Kite Festival. Here we will enjoy the unique experience of flying kites at the site of the former Berlin Wall. Optional add-ons include a kite festival in Halle, East Germany, the first kite event in this country announced as open to the world. An alternative in Basel, Switzerland offers sophisticated old-world ambience for kiteflying among breathtaking mountains.

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HERE IT IS — our latest edition Pocket Kite Calendar & Almanac. It's convenient, handy and a regular part of every issue of *Kite Lines*.

It is our aim—and pleasure—to list the maximum number of events that space will permit. However, there are a few events that are sure to occur on short notice, and then there are those informal flies that many kite clubs hold regularly that are too numerous to fit within the scope of this Calendar.

If you are in charge of a kite event—any kite event—please tell us about it. Send us its name and date, exact location and a contact person, address and telephone number. Also tell us how many years it has been held and give us details about contests, prizes, fees, etc.

We have hundreds of events on computer so it is easy for us to update information from you or respond to your requests for information. Ask us. We give you more than a magazine. —Editors



Scenes from Weifang, People's Republic of China: above, factory workers making kites; front cover, a museum kite of unusual imagination executed with typical delicacy.

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