



Discourse

from the end of the line

August 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ON THE COVER: Kite train in
Bintulu, Malaysia. Photo
by Simon Bond. See more
photos of kites in the field
by Simon on page 33.

AUGUST 2010
VOLUME 3, NUMBER 1

From the Editor	3
Contributors	4
Heather and Ivan Morison's <i>Frost King</i> ERIC FREDERICKSEN	6
Collecting Kite Images	
Kites: From Physics to Fancy ANDREA IMMEL	15
A Timeless Pastime, Kite Flying SCOTT SKINNER	21
Friends in the Field: the American Kitefliers Association SHELLY LEAVENS	24
Kites in the Field SIMON BOND	33
30 Years and Still Flying BARRY NASH	43

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FROM THE EDITOR

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times a year and can be downloaded
free at www.drachen.org
(under "Publications").

One of the great strengths of Drachen's Administrator, Ali Fujino, is her ability to attract great people to work for the Foundation. In this issue, two of those people play an active role. First, Shelly Leavens takes a careful look at the American Kitefliers Association archives to record the early history of the organization.

Then we have a photo-essay by Simon Bond. He has been the Foundation's go-to guy for quick computer fixes, web work, and photo organization for over five years. But he has also traveled for the Foundation to facilitate a variety of projects. He brings a great eye for detail and fresh enthusiasm to photo-documentation of kites.

Andrea Immel shares an online exhibit of kite images from the Cotsen Children's Library at Princeton University. Having collected kite prints for over thirty years, I was fascinated by the images. Most were unfamiliar to me, yet all show the universal appeal of kites. Complementing the Cotsen images are images from my collection.

Eric Fredrickson gives us insight to the art of Heather and Ivan Morison. Their installation, *Frost King*, at Seattle's Open Satellite was, in a small way, facilitated by research done at the Drachen Foundation.

Finally a long time member of the Bay Area Sundowners Barry Nash talks about a quarter-century of flying with this unique kite show. Join with us as we visit kiting through the eyes of our gifted colleagues.

Scott Skinner
Board President
Drachen Foundation

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Bond's creative brilliance has been a valued gift to the Drachen Foundation since 2004. A UW graduate, he is currently working at a design strategy firm and is pursuing a master's degree in real estate development.



Rachel Linkhart

ERIC FREDERICKSEN
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Eric Fredericksen is director of Western Bridge (<http://www.westernbridge.org>), a contemporary art exhibition space in Seattle. He has curated exhibitions from Vancouver to the Netherlands and is a former writer and editor at *The Stranger*.



Anne Mathern

ANDREA IMMEL
Princeton, New Jersey

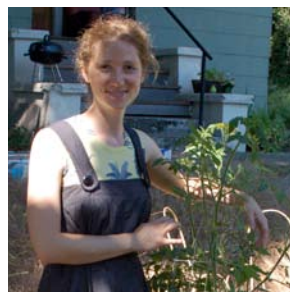
Curator of the Cotsen Children's Library at Princeton since 1995, Immel has written widely on the history of children's books, including her recent *Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, co-edited with M. O. Grenby.



Andrea Immel

SHELLY LEAVENS
Seattle, Washington

A University of Washington graduate with an M.A. in museology, Leavens brings her experience in collections management, community-based organizations, and oral history to her position as Collections Manager at Drachen Foundation.



Mark Leavens

BARRY NASH
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Barry Nash has been a member of the Bay Area Sundowners for 26 years, longer than any other team member. Originally from Southampton, England, he currently lives in San Carlos, California with his wife and children.



Anne Thrall-Nash

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SCOTT SKINNER
Monument, Colorado

A former Air Force instructor pilot, Drachen's board president has flown and designed kites for three decades. Skinner's military training created the structure for him to express himself as a visionary kite artist.



Jose Sainz

HEATHER AND IVAN MORISON'S *FROST KING*

Eric Fredericksen

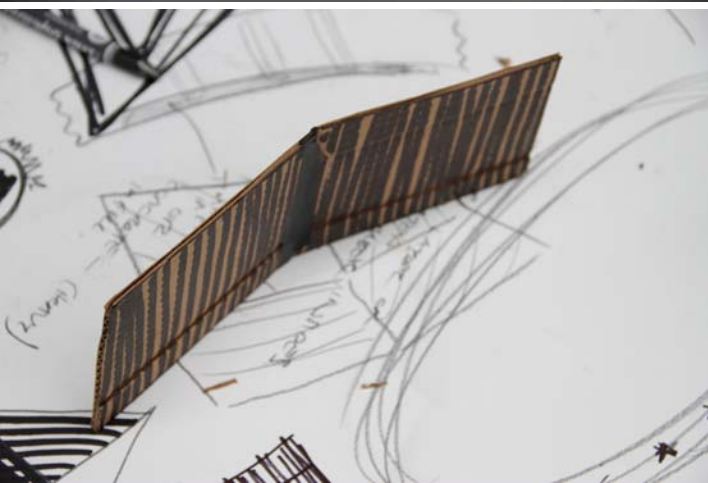
INTRODUCTION BY SCOTT SKINNER

For those of us with no formal training in art, but rather an appreciation that has grown through observation, conversation and experimentation, the art of Ivan and Heather Morison is anything but obvious. Their work moves from whimsical buildings in the depth of the forest, to a mobile bookmobile, to bizarre puppet performances, to imaginary skylscapes, and finally to kites. It is hard for me to get a real grasp on their art, but they have engaged me with their enthusiasm, their imagery, and their thought-provoking voyages.

Their work is always in progress and may take many final forms: fanciful stories, wild and imaginative buildings, close-to-disturbing photography, sculpture, and, recently, very ambitious kites. Within all of these disciplines, I think it is unfair to call them just "artists." Instead, I see them as "participants." They are in the middle of the stories they create, observing interactions with nature, with other artists, and with varied audiences. They are sometimes characters in a play, other times the directors of other actors, and often simply passive recorders of events.

Ivan and Heather have been taken by kites. Like many of us, they started with the simple joys of flying them, but then found interactions with other fliers, and the joy of this basic interaction without environment.

Their ideas are like many of their works: large scale, and in learning about kites they have been tutored by experienced kite-man Carl



Open Satellite

Artists Ivan and Heather Morison prepared for their new work, *Frost King*, with research in the Drachen Foundation archives and were inspired by Alexander Graham Bell's experiments with man lifting kites.

Robertshaw (an Englishman). With his help, they produced a large-scale, tetrahedral-style kite that was debuted for the kite community at 2009's Bristol International Kite Festival. As "outsiders" to our community, their efforts were largely overlooked, but the large and imaginative structure could not be ignored. Here was an example of taking giant steps in kite making without the baggage of innumerable baby-steps. Like S.F. Cody, they just did it.

Their recent installation at Open Satellite in Bellevue, Washington entitled *Frost King* resulted from research done in the Drachen Foundation archives and was inspired by Alexander Graham Bell's experimentation with man lifting kites. Ivan and Heather have promised to revisit kites in the future.

Will it mean more kites, outdoor sculpture, or voyages to new artistic ideas and techniques?

CURATORIAL STATEMENT BY ERIC FREDERICKSEN

Inside a gleaming high-rise apartment building stands a charred and vacant ruin. Built of wood by the English artists Heather and Ivan Morison, this work is a slatted wall scaled to a gallery that barely contains it. The wall has a slight bend in the middle and leans forward into the space, supporting its weight in a position that should seem precarious, but does not, and suggests instability though firmly rooted to the ground. Or maybe it's not falling. It's waiting for a strong enough wind to catch it up, carry it off into the sky. Heather quotes from the science fiction writer Douglas Adams' *Life, the Universe, and Everything* on this point: "There is an art, [...] or, rather, a knack to flying. The knack lies in learning how to throw yourself at the ground and miss." (Adams, p. 75)

Heather and Ivan Morison make art through

active engagement with materials, histories, sites, and processes. They have developed their practice through peripatetic travels that have taken them around England and to Siberia, Tasmania, Ulaanbaatar, Beijing, and now Bellevue, Washington. Working less like tourists than traders, the Morisons return to their home (which has variously been in Birmingham, rural Wales, and as of this year, Brighton) to develop long-term projects informed by their investigations abroad.

In recent years, their interest in post-apocalyptic science fiction and the catastrophic tenor of the times has inspired a series of works informed by research into primitive and countercultural dwellings. Let the title of one 2008 piece, *How to Survive the Coming Bad Years*, stand for this whole. This post-apocalyptic imaginary is only one strand in their practice, but it is an increasingly central one, underlying their research and work during their residency at Open Satellite.

The Morisons came to Bellevue thinking of Detroit. Bellevue – a car-centered, fast-growing edge city of glassy high-rise towers on large blocks connected by broad avenues; a city structured around retail, recreation, and technology, its central civic institution a shopping mall – is a dream of a future of pleasure and consumption. Detroit, Motor City, is a shrinking city of the 20th century, its spectacular high-rise ruins reminders of its mid-century industrial might and its stunning collapse. Detroit was for years notorious for "Devil's Night," the night before Halloween, a hellish holiday celebrated by torching vacant buildings across the city. An imaginative leap brought these two cities together for the artists.

American cities grow from nothing, on the least likely of soils, in the middle of deserts or on top of geological faults, and they



Open Satellite

The Morisons' *Frost King* at Open Satellite in Bellevue, WA.
Structurally it is a wall, a timber frame supporting infilled walls of boards, angled like shutters that admit or deny views through the sculpture as a viewer moves around the form.

decline as quickly as they rise. Bellevue has its gleaming new apartment buildings, but many of them are empty. The lurching boom-and-bust cycle of real estate development spurs speculative construction that, no matter how quickly built, can never quite keep pace with the business cycle that always ends this way, until the next upturn.

Thinking of the ruins of Detroit, Ivan Morison considered visiting them, but chose instead to travel south, driving thirteen hours to reach *Spiral Jetty*, Robert Smithson's massive work of land art on the Great Salt Lake. Formed from rocks bulldozed into the lake in 1970, *Spiral Jetty* is a massive ruin built in a sublime landscape that has been heavily industrialized. The jetty has been regularly submerged in the lake's waters, subject to the water needs of various industries and to the Southwest's perpetual cycles of drought. As the jetty re-emerges from the lake, it collects on its rock surfaces beautiful crystals formed of the lake's rich mineral deposits. These crystals suggest creation amid destruction, a cyclical process rather than the finality of ruin. Ivan collected a few of these and returned to Bellevue to begin work.

It's worth pausing here to consider another Robert Smithson work, *Hotel Palenque*, a narrated slideshow made during a trip to Mexico to see the great Mayan cities there. Instead of working with the ruins of Palenque, Smithson became interested in an unfinished hotel that had become a ruin before it had ever been finished. A new ruin, an artifact of the present, this site became more interesting to Smithson than the grand ruined cities of a lost civilization.

Ivan spent days building maquettes in the Open Satellite gallery, firepits in sprayfoam and crystal, and models for kites that would become the basis for a massive sculpture.

Open Satellite director Yoko Ott reports him running through the space holding folded sheets of cardboard, testing them for their lift potential. Heather then joined him in Bellevue and the work began in earnest, starting with the milling of three Douglas firs. Su Development, the patron of Open Satellite and developer of the building that hosts it, felled the trees to make way for a new apartment building. A cleared site, a sign of the optimism of new construction, provided the basic materials for the construction of the Morisons' ruin. Walter Benjamin's often quoted line, "The work is the death mask of its conception," (Benjamin, p. 65*) is here put into play as paradox, as these dead timbers are brought to life in the form of a ruin, which, as we'll see further on, preserves the potential of a future for itself. [*EDITOR'S NOTE: Page numbers refer to sources listed at the end of the article.]

A grid of 4x6 timbers was put together on the floor of the gallery to make the framework of *Frost King*, and then trucked out, along with the milled fir planks, to Tieton in eastern Washington. There, the Morisons and their crew used propane torches to scorch the wood, a controlled burn which turned their rough-milled, raw surfaces into glossy, charred obsidian crackled in patterns like alligator skin. This technique derives from traditional Japanese architecture: the burned wood is sealed, protected from decay and infestation, and it absorbs the sun's heat when put on south-facing walls. It's an aggressive act that preserves.

This paradox suggests a connection between *Frost King* and the ruins of the Morisons' native England, artifacts of the innumerable disasters given to a nation over the course of a long history. These ruins are protected as heritage sites, preserved in a condition of destruction. The English



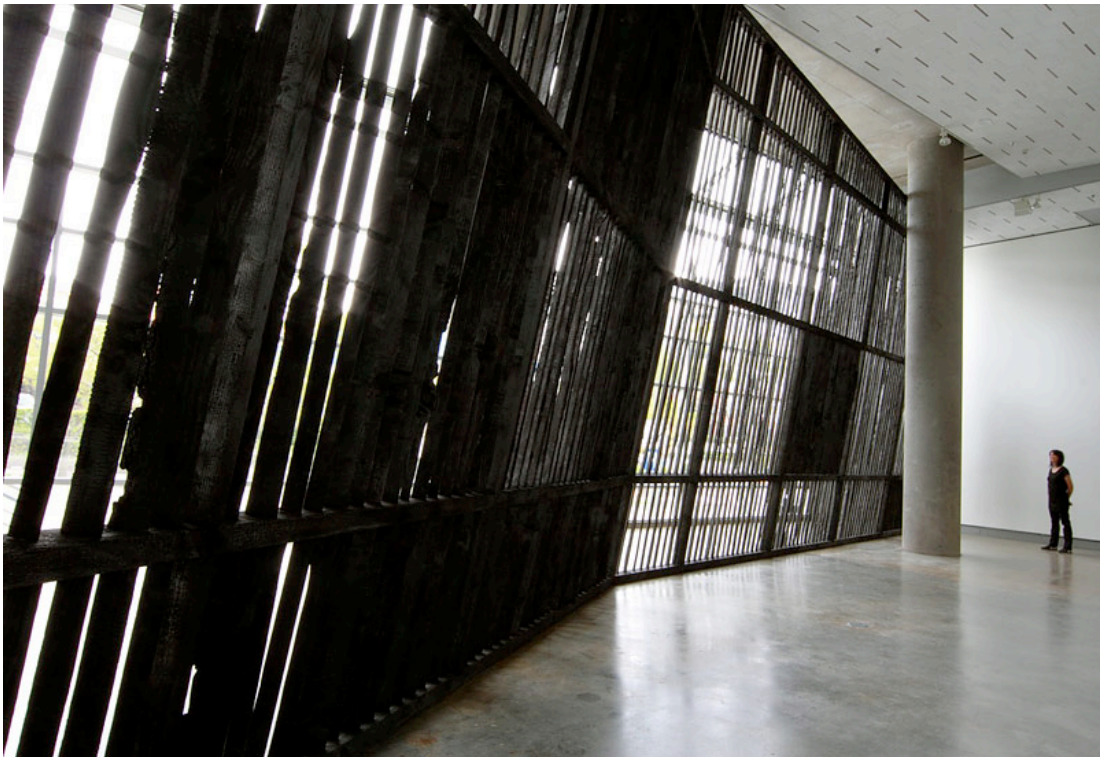
Open Satellite

The milling of three Douglas firs. Su Development, the patron of Open Satellite and developer of the building that hosts it, felled the trees to make way for a new apartment building. A cleared site, a sign of the optimism of new construction, provided the basic materials for the construction of the Morisons' ruin.



Open Satellite

TOP: The Morisons and their crew used propane torches to scorch the wood, a controlled burn which turned their rough-milled, raw surfaces into glossy, charred obsidian. BOTTOM: Ivan (left) and Heather Morison (right) with Open Satellite Director Yoko Ott (center).



Open Satellite

Frost King should seem precarious, but does not, and suggests instability though firmly rooted to the ground. Or maybe it's not falling. It's waiting for a strong enough wind to catch it up, carry it off into the sky.

academic Steven Connor has said “Ruins in fact hold death at bay. Having undergone a pseudo-decay, the process of decay seems to have been arrested in them.”

As architecture, the Morisons’ *Frost King* is more fragment than building. Structurally it is a wall, a timber frame supporting infilled walls of boards, angled like shutters that admit or deny views through the sculpture as a viewer moves around the form. It is a sculpture because it stands, self-supporting, in the space, because it engages the space of the viewer, because it changes as the viewer’s position changes.

And *Frost King* is more than ruin. It can be thought of as a maquette, a model grossly larger than the thing it models. The artists’ readings on Alexander Graham Bell’s investigation into kites as vehicles for manned flight, in the first years of the 20th century, are significant here. In a court deposition related to a patent dispute, Bell described his work with kites. Starting from a simple box kite model, he said, “I constructed larger and larger kites of this kind, until finally I constructed one so large that it would not fly.” (*Beinn-Bhreagh Recorder*, p. 198) As the structure’s dimensions grew by squaring, the weight cubed, making the model impractical at large scale. This led Bell to conceive a tetrahedral structure using compound forms, kites added to kites, such that the weight increased proportionally to the scale. “So I went on making larger and larger compound forms, until at last I constructed a kite known as the ‘Frost King,’ which successfully carried a man on the flying line,” (*Beinn-Bhreagh Recorder*, p. 199) he testified.

The kite’s name likely derives from the title of a fairy tale about King Jack Frost written by an 11-year-old Helen Keller in 1891. Bell was instrumental in Keller meeting Anne

Sullivan, her great teacher. The story brought Keller grief when it was determined to have been largely plagiarized, but one of her original passages in the tale, a description of King Frost’s palace, is worth quoting here:

King Frost lives in a beautiful palace far to the North, in the land of perpetual snow. The palace, which is magnificent beyond description, was built centuries ago, in the reign of King Glacier. At a little distance from the palace we might easily mistake it for a mountain whose peaks were mounting heavenward to receive the last kiss of the departing day. But on nearer approach we should discover our error. What we had supposed to be peaks were in reality a thousand glittering spires. Nothing could be more beautiful than the architecture of this ice-palace. The walls are curiously constructed of massive blocks of ice which terminate in cliff-like towers. The entrance to the palace is at the end of an arched recess, and it is guarded night and day by twelve soldierly-looking white Bears. (Keller, p. 407)

The Morisons’ *Frost King* draws from both kite and story. This beautiful palace, has been arrested in its decline, leaning but not falling, burned in order to be preserved. It suggests a possible future, not frozen in its state but potentially able to reach another state.

Thinking of a faraway (or near-at-hand) future, of a climactic catastrophe where the wind has become a violent tempest, and *Frost King’s* shutters become aerofoils, the Morisons imagine a new ending to the story of King Frost: “At the end of our story the structure flies away with someone clinging on for their life.” This terrifying thought also contains a kind of optimism, a dream of a

future where the maquette becomes what it modeled, a realization of Bell's dream of manned kites. *Frost King* then would shift from sculpture to vehicle, tearing away with its lone, imperiled rider carried off by wind and fate.

Learn more about Heather and Ivan Morison's work on their website:

<http://www.morison.info>

Read more about the *Frost King* installation on the Open Satellite website:

<http://www.opensatellite.org/exhibition-2010-04-HeatherandIvanMorison>

Buy the book *Heather and Ivan Morison* by Open Satellite Publications online:

<http://www.publicationstudio.biz/books/51>

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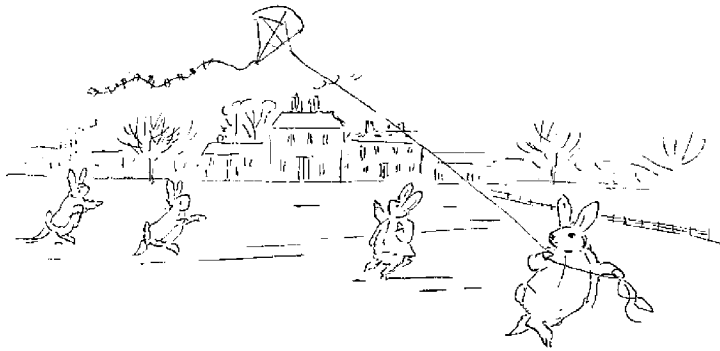
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COLLECTING KITE IMAGES

KITES: FROM PHYSICS TO FANCY

An interview with Andrea Immel



The Cotsen Children's Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library

A Beatrix Potter sketch, one of Immel's favorites.
"Only Beatrix Potter could draw animals doing something they would never do in reality, but make them look natural, not saccharine."

Visit the online virtual exhibit
"Kites: From Physics to Fancy" on
the Cotsen Children's Library website:

<http://library.princeton.edu/libraries/cotsen/exhibitions2/Kites/index.html>

The exhibit "focuses on the more innocent aspects of the kite's history as a children's pastime in Britain and America during the last three hundred years."

SCOTT SKINNER: ARE THESE IMAGES PART OF THE LIBRARY'S PERMANENT COLLECTION? WHY?

ANDREA IMMEL: All the images in the exhibition come from books in the Cotsen Children's Library, a unit within the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections at the Princeton University Library. The collection, which consists of over 100,000 historical illustrated children's books, manuscripts, original artwork, prints, and educational toys, was the gift of Lloyd E. Cotsen, class of 1950 and charter trustee of Princeton University. Mr. Cotsen has always been interested in images of children at play and I keep an eye out for new items to add to the collection.

WERE THEY CHOSEN WITH CONSIDERATION OF ARTIST, OR AS IMAGES OF AMERICANA, OR BOTH? ANY OF THESE ARTISTS "FAMOUS"? ALL OF THEM?

Cotsen's virtual exhibitions are a way to let people who may never work in Princeton's rare book reading room see some of the fascinating materials in the collection. One of the ideas is to show people things that will surprise them. I love to hear people say, "Oh, I had no idea there were pictures in children's books about this," or "I really like this Czech artist – how come I've never heard of him before? What else did he do?" So when researching an exhibition, I try to find as many intriguing images from as many different countries and time periods as possible. Of course, I hope to find terrific pictures by famous illustrators too.

The virtual kite exhibition includes the work

of a very important figure in the history of British children's book illustration. It's John Bewick, the brother of Thomas Bewick, the great 18th century natural history artist, who invented the technique of wood engraving. (See screen 7, item b in the virtual exhibit at <http://library.princeton.edu/libraries/cotsen/exhibitions2/Kites/Kites7b.html>.) John was actually better at figure drawing and the invention of subjects than his big brother. Unfortunately, John died in his thirties of tuberculosis, but he produced an impressive body of illustrations for children's books during his short but extremely busy career. One reason I chose this particular illustration was because of the kite's unusual decorations. So was John copying something he had seen or was he using his imagination?

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE AND WHY DO YOU LIKE IT?

Actually one of my very favorites wasn't under consideration when I was curating the exhibition! Beatrix Potter made a sketch of four bunnies flying a kite just above the salutation of her March 27, 1895 letter to Noël Moore, the little son of her old governess. (See image on page 15.) But there was already a virtual exhibition devoted to Beatrix Potter and so I reluctantly decided to leave it out.

Why do I like it so much? Only Beatrix Potter could draw animals doing something they would never do in reality, but make them look natural, not saccharine. She probably tossed off this charming little drawing. But it is wonderful how she communicates there is something comical about the idea of rabbits getting a kite up in the air but does this without making fun of them.

ARE THESE IMAGES PART OF A LARGER COLLECTION OF CHILDHOOD-SPECIFIC IMAGES?

They aren't organized as a collection per se because we'd have to index thousands and thousands of pictures in thousands and thousands of books to make it truly comprehensive. And many interesting images turn up as single illustrations in books that are not about kites or even games and pastimes. Collections of miscellaneous illustrated short texts have been around for a long time, probably because publishers find the format convenient. Authors can be asked to write the stories around existing pictures, for one thing. Our rare book catalogers try to call attention to unusual subjects in the notes, especially in books with generic titles such as *The Pretty Picture Book for Good Children*. We hope to start developing a visuals database with linked image files in 2011.

WHAT OTHER CHILDHOOD PASTIMES APPEAR IN YOUR COLLECTION THAT MIRROR THESE KITE FLYING IMAGES?

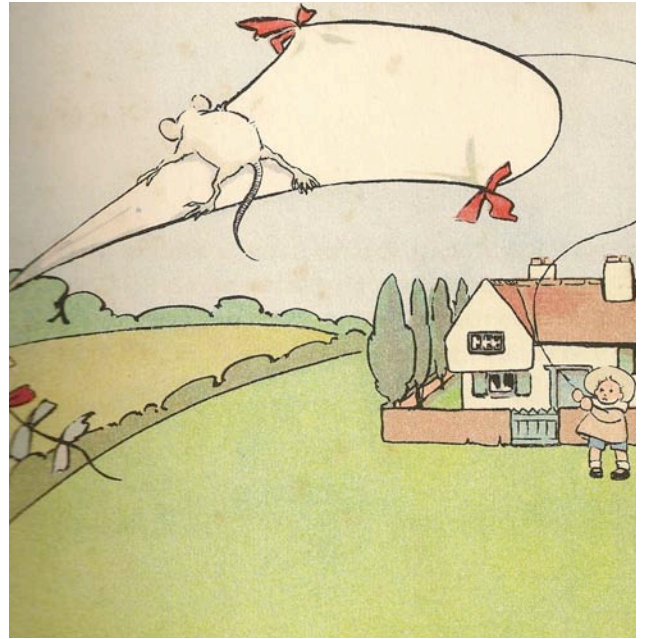
I've found that if I look long enough, the collection will yield up images of almost any childhood pastime you can think of, and that includes watching television...

One unusual pastime that turns up occasionally in children's books is kite riding, for lack of a better term. Kite riders tend to be dolls or small animals like mice, for obvious reasons. As a rule they don't go very far, but their trips can be pretty exciting.

Perhaps the most famous doll kite rider is Raggedy Ann, who goes aloft as additional ballast in Johnny Gruelle's *Raggedy Ann Stories* (Joliet, IL: P. F. Volland, c. 1918). (See page 17, image at left.) And I really like this one from Jessie Pope's *The Adventures of Silversuit* illustrated by Angusine Macgregor (London: Blackie and Son Ltd., c. 1910). (See page 17, image at right.) Definitely a



The Cotsen Children's Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library



The Cotsen Children's Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library

LEFT: Raggedy Ann goes aloft in Johnny Gruelle's *Raggedy Ann Stories* (Joliet, IL: P. F. Volland, c. 1918).

RIGHT: Image from Jessie Pope's *The Adventures of Silversuit* illustrated by Angusine Macgregor (London: Blackie and Son Ltd., c. 1910).

“Don’t try this at home” kind of caper.

DO YOU CONSIDER THESE IMAGES TO BE
LOOKING GLASSES TO THEIR TIMES?

Absolutely. Before curating this exhibition, it didn’t occur to me that kiteflying was traditionally a man’s sport – or was represented as such in children’s books. I didn’t recall girls being excluded from the school athletic field when the wind was up in early spring in Los Angeles and the kites came out.

But I couldn’t even find pictures of girls tagging along behind their brothers and so resigned myself to using the picture from the early nineteenth-century book *Nursery Novelties* to show how deep the gender divide was. I was literally putting the finishing touches on the show, when the illustration of the tomboy, with her kite slung across her back, popped out of a book I was looking at for another reason. Of course there was no leaving her out. (See screen 4, items a and b in the virtual exhibit at <http://library.princeton.edu/libraries/cotsen/exhibitions2/Kites/Kites4.html>.)

DO THESE IMAGES REINFORCE THE IMPORTANCE
OF “PLAY” IN CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT?

Very much so, especially if “play” is defined as leisure with a purpose, where the child is supposed to acquire skills or knowledge outside of the classroom, often by learning how to operate something complex. Two kites are at the center of the wonderful display of educational toys shown in screen 14 of the exhibition. (See screen 14 in the virtual exhibit at <http://library.princeton.edu/libraries/cotsen/exhibitions2/Kites/Kites14.html>.) The theory was that boys had to pick up something about scientific principles in order to fly them expertly. I found it interesting that some authors presented the purchase of a kite from a toy

store as a kind of cheating. A boy would miss out on the full experience of playing with kites if he didn’t figure out what materials he needed, obtained them at a fair price (or cadged them from a servant), assembled the parts, and made whatever fine adjustments were necessary to keep the kite up in the air.

DO YOU HAVE AN ICONIC KITE IMAGE IN YOUR
MIND? WHAT IS IT?

I love the exhibition’s first image – the Adrian van de Venne engraving of the children playing games. (See screen 1 in the virtual exhibit at <http://library.princeton.edu/libraries/cotsen/exhibitions2/Kites/Kites1.html>.) The courtyard is teeming with activity and you can almost hear all the noise they must be making. And yet the little boy flying the kite stands out from the crowd. All his attention seems to be focused on keeping his kite aloft, but somehow he has managed not to crash into any of his playmates. The viewer’s eye is drawn up towards the trees, clouds, and sky, where it rests on the graceful, floating figure of the kite. It reminds me of the wonderful sensation of having your feet firmly on the ground, but feeling your spirit soaring as high as your kite.

DOES THE UNITED STATES HAVE AN ICONIC KITE
IMAGE?

Benjamin Franklin flying a kite in the electrical storm? It may not be strictly but true, but it has everything – a Founding Father conducting a scientific experiment that leads to a major discovery while to all intents and purposes acting like a kid. But a John Falter cover for the *Saturday Evening Post* could be another contender.

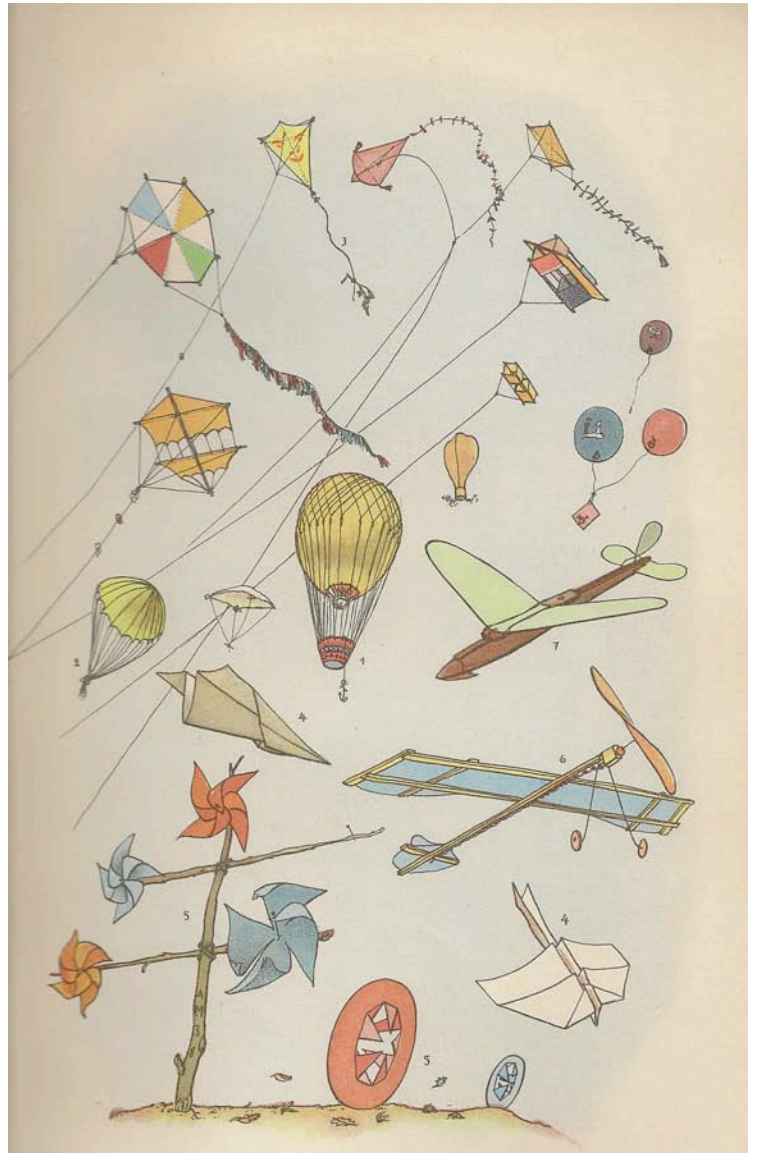
ARE THERE OTHER KITE IMAGES, EITHER
EUROPEAN OR ASIAN, IN THE COLLECTION THAT
YOU THINK ARE NOTEWORTHY?



The Cotsen Children's Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library

LEFT: *Shumi no mamedako*, a set of miniature kites, a souvenir of the annual kite-fighting contest on Boy's Day in Hamamatsu-shi, Shizuoka-ken.

RIGHT: A taxonomy of toys that catch the wind by Alfred Mahlau in Hans-Friedrich Geist's *Spielzeug* (Leipzig: L. Staackmann, 1938).



The Cotsen Children's Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library

The beautifully designed taxonomy of toys that catch the wind by Alfred Mahlau in Hans-Friedrich Geist's *Spielzeug* (Leipzig: L. Staackmann, 1938) has long been a favorite of mine. (See page 19, image at right.)

One of the reasons this exhibition stayed so close to home (England and America) is because the prospect of trying to mine our enormous collections of Chinese- and Japanese-language children's books was too daunting! I'm no expert, but I do love *Shumi no mamedako*, a set of miniature kites that look as if they were part of a big set of collectibles! (See page 19, image at left.) It's a souvenir of the annual kite-fighting contest on Boy's Day in Hamamatsu-shi, Shizuoka-ken.

Someone has annotated the box top, identifying the town each kite represents. Maybe one of the readers of *Discourse* can tell me more about it!

COLLECTING KITE IMAGES

A TIMELESS PASTIME, KITE FLYING

Scott Skinner



"Joux Aeriens D'Aujourd'hui," (first name indistinguishable)
Jeanjeans, from *L'Illustration*, January 1927.



All images Scott Skinner Collection

"Jouets Aeriens D'Autrefois," (first name indistinguishable)
Jeanjeans, from *L'Illustration*, January 1927. The two of these
images have the greatest variety of flying and wind-powered
craft, including very interesting kites.

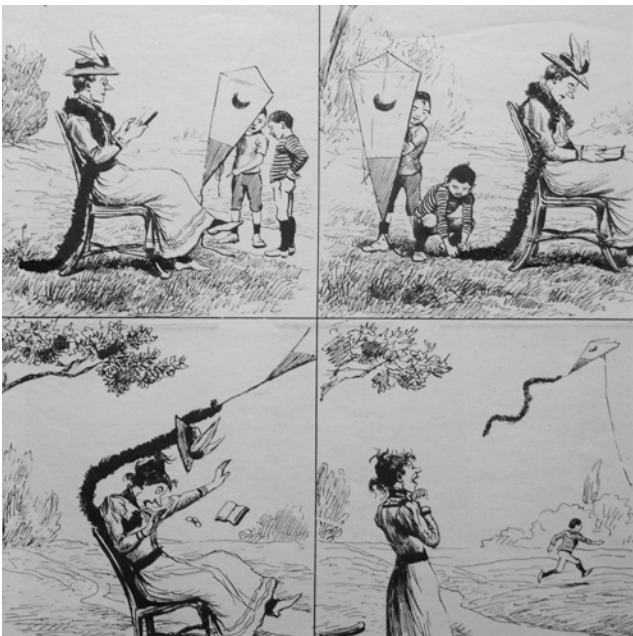
Here is a sampling of kite images from European and American sources, most from the early years of the 20th Century. I tried to choose images from children's publications or from publications catering to young mothers. The images reinforce the notion that kite flying is universal: there are images from Switzerland, Germany, France, England, and the United States. Notable illustrators, a man considered the father of the Sunday Comics, advertisers – all came to kites and their positive message.



"Der Dritte im Bunde," Marie Simm-Mayer (1851-1912).



"The Kite Season: Sending Up a Message," Culmer Barnes, from *Harper's Young People* magazine. I've always loved the composition of this image and the fact that it's really all about the messenger being sent up the line, not the variety of kites. As I'm in the midst of producing six-sided kites, this is a great source, as it shows four different ones.



"Le Boa Volant" (the flying Boa?) from *La Patrie Suisse* (the Swiss Homeland). Artist and publication date unknown.

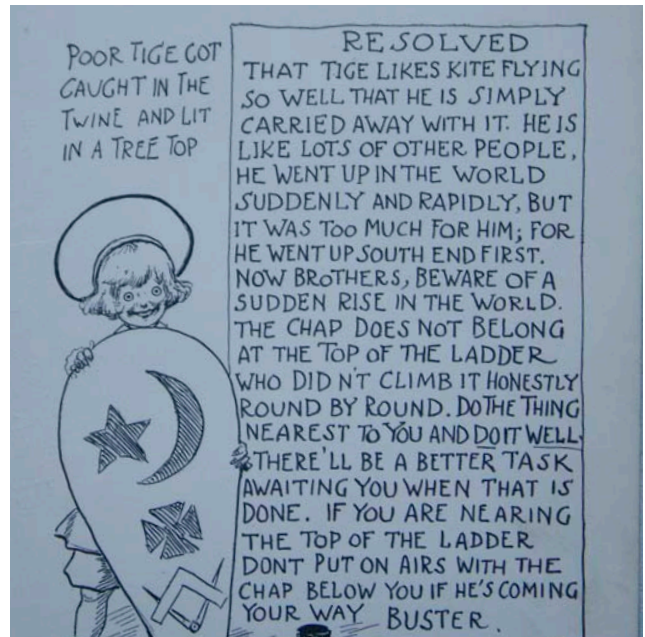


"The Real Business of Life Is Play," Sarah Stillwell (1878-1939), from *Harper's Monthly* magazine, 1903. Few images relate the joy of kite flying as well as this one. And girls can do it, too!

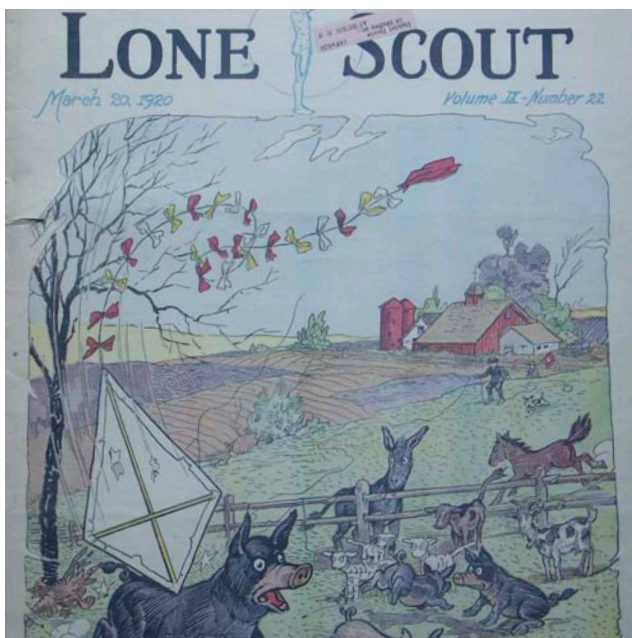
All images Scott Skinner Collection



Horace Gaffron, *Good Housekeeping* magazine cover, March 1937. Horace Gaffron seems to have been “single-name” famous; he’s referred to simply as “Gaffron.” This is a wonderfully detailed illustration of kite flying of that time.



Buster Brown “Resolved” comic panel, R. F. Outcalt (1863 -1928), publication date unknown. Outcalt has been called the “father of the American Sunday Comics” for his introduction of the Yellow Kid. He was the illustrator for the popular Buster Brown comic strip as well as the early Buster Brown shoe advertisements.



Perry E. Thompson, *Lone Scout* magazine cover, March 1920. Advertisers catered to boys’ interests – my favorite, The Eskimo Boomabird (“flying novelty works like a boomerang returning to the thrower in graceful, circling sweeps”).



“A hundred flew off with the string, and Peter clung to the tail,” Arthur Rackham, from *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, 1906. Like all Rackham illustrations, this one is rich in detail and is one of three featuring kites in the book.

All images Scott Skinner Collection

FRIENDS IN THE FIELD: THE AMERICAN KITEFLIERS ASSOCIATION

Shelly Leavens

ar·chive (är'kīv') n.

1. A place or collection containing records, documents, or other materials of historical interest. 2. A repository for stored memories or information: the archive of the mind.

All definitions from dictionary.reference.com

PREFACE

In 1978 Bob Price of Maryland was appointed Chairman of the Archives Committee for the “new” AKA. For eighteen years he and his wife, Jewell, gathered and organized an incredible amount of material: news clippings and ads, membership and financial records, club newsletters, bylaws and meeting minutes, competition rules and awards, videos, correspondence from association presidents and committee members, various memorabilia, and much more. During the summer of 1995, Price was ready to be relieved of the job, and the AKA began to look for a new home for the archives. First it was transferred to Drachen, and after holding it in Seattle for a year, the board of directors determined the World Kite Museum (WKM) in Long Beach, Washington was a better home for the collection. Five 4-drawer metal filing cabinets and 30 boxes of archives were shipped from Maryland and eventually found themselves tucked away in the backrooms of the WKM.

On a recent cloudy Tuesday, I decided to drive to the coast and pay a visit to WKM Director Kay Buesing in order to dig through all the things Price and the other leaders of AKA had decided to save. There is something special about the tactile nature of an archive. Yet, while museums and archives represent access

and authority on our collective past, and as comprehensive or representational as they hope to be, museums and archives can really only offer a rather narrow lens. What is saved provides a constructed view of history, and for the AKA this is no different. The importance imbued in these remaining documents comes directly from those who saved them, and from what they did not or were not able to save. It is up to those who access this information to think about a past that is both documented and inferred. Now, with mass email and digital surrogates filling our servers, it's hard to know what to save and what to toss. Regardless, what I found both surprised and delighted me, as well as made me thankful to all who had helped preserve the archive.

FRIENDS IN THE FIELD

The American Kitefliers Association (AKA) started in 1964 as one man in front of his typewriter, reflecting on the people and ideas of his beloved hobby – kites. Now a household name for American kiting, Bob Ingraham and a few other closet-kitefliers had been corresponding since the early 1960s, exchanging hand-drawn plans, kite tips, and generally taking part in each others' lives with kites as the hub. The initial AKA was hatched as a movement, a strictly adult club, mostly men, who could finally feel free to be open about their love of kites and talk to each other about things like bridles and spars – things most non-kitefliers would relate to other sports entirely or call "kid's stuff." Now the largest kiting organization in the world, the AKA has come a long way, yet it still holds many of the same founding tenets of Ingraham's vision.

pub·lish (pŭb'lish) v.

1. To prepare and issue (printed material) for sale or distribution to the public. 2. To announce formally or officially; proclaim; promulgate. 3. To make publicly or generally known.

We have produced, at great considerable effort, 25 copies of this first quarterly," wrote Ingraham in the Oct-Dec 1964 issue of his *National Kitefliers Quarterly Review*.

It was with sheer excitement I discovered the stack of Ingraham's rare original publications tucked into the back of one of the filing cabinets filling a small room at WKM. I immediately read the first issue cover to cover, and through Ingraham's words, literally re-lived the birth of the AKA. Throughout the entire issue, "The Editor," as Ingraham calls himself, uses his dry humor to poke fun at the few fliers that have joined him in declaring the sport worthy of adult time and hard-earned money. For Ingraham, it had been a long time coming, and it was exposing a part of himself he had felt ashamed and alone with for some time. In every word he types, you can sense his excitement that *finally* he has found kinship, and the fledgling association he has privately nurtured is ready to take flight.

However, while it may have been Ingraham's idea to form "this silly little club," as he called it, he also noted that, "eight or nine members do not constitute a vast national organization of any group, no matter how dedicated... From now on each member is expected to contribute material. This is an order, not a request in any sense." He needed help to really get it going, and to his delight, many soon found his enthusiasm and devotion infectious.

Among his original group of devotees were Tony "The Kite Man" Ziegler of Michigan, Will Yolen of New York City, Walter Scott and Benn Blinn, both of Ohio, Harry Sauls of California, and Francis Rogallo of North Carolina. "Having Fran in our club is sort of like having Michelangelo join your artist club," he quips. "While we deeply appreciate his interest and knowledge about kites, we have no intention of exploiting or

harassing him because of his position. We will only bother him with technical explanations of such things as: ‘Why do kites fly?’ Well, why do they Francis?” Sure enough, the next issue featured a reply from Rogallo, in all seriousness, answering just that question.

With Vol. 1, No. 2, *Kite Tales* now officially had a name, and so did the new association, with a logo on the way. “After asking for suggestions, and getting them, the matter of naming our new kiteflier’s organization got very confused and we arbitrarily went ahead and named it ourselves. We hope we didn’t get anyone mad,” wrote Ingraham to a group that had now grown to a whopping 23 members, including one woman.

Along with Rogallo, they could now add Domina Jalbert and Paul Garber to their list of members, which was looking more like a famous inventors club. [Editor’s Note: Rogallo and Jalbert were soft-kite pioneers. Rogallo invented the Flexikite and is known as the father of modern hang-gliding. Jalbert’s parafoil designs became the standard of parachute design.] “Best of success in your venture which should be very interesting to watch and who will be in it [*sic*],” Jalbert wrote in a letter enclosing ten dollars (membership was only five dollars at the time). Not only were famous inventors card-carrying members, the AKA was getting some national notoriety through the Associated Press, and as Ingraham proudly noted, a mention by news commentator Paul Harvey. Within one year, this “silly little club” had hit the big time.

ten-seg-ri-ty (tĕn’sĕg’rĭ’tē) n.

1. *The property of structures that employ continuous tension members and discontinuous compression members in such a way that each member operates with the maximum efficiency and economy.*

One may easily predict the next chapter.

Over the next twelve years, the association’s membership grew exponentially, with each member glued to the pages of *Kite Tales*. It was a conduit, a sounding board, and *the* way to find out what was going on in the world of kites. Recall in distant memory a time before the internet, email, and web forums, that there was such a thing as an affordable and expedient postal system and that people took time to type letters to each other. The stacks of clippings, kite plans, and correspondence in the AKA archive are a testament to the imperative of communication between kitefliers, a desire that was in part satiated by a now-overwhelmed editor of *Kite Tales*.

It is in spring of 1977 that we first see a change of the guard. Ingraham has sold *Kite Tales* and thus handed the line to Valerie Govig, who then publishes *Kite Lines*. This is the beginning of numerous transitions for the AKA, and as noted in his farewell statement in the issue, “few have the rather unusual and highly important requisites of editing and journalistic training which Valerie possesses in addition to a love for kiting and all it entails.” However, it is with a melancholy tone that Ingraham continues, quoted here at length.

The relinquishing of this cherished task, despite all its magnifying complications and seemingly insurmountable problems, it not without pain and diminishing of our pride in accomplishment. For 12 years we have been in touch with practically the entire world. We have made literally hundreds of personal friendships and reached out from our remote headquarters into virtually all corners of the globe. The membership of the AKA, despite the common concept of kiting as kid’s stuff, is of the highest cultural and intellectual level. We have contributed in a small but relatively important way to the



Drachen Foundation



Shelly Leavens



Ben Ruhe

TOP LEFT: An early bumper sticker encourages membership, and a signed cloth commemorates attendees of the first AKA Convention at Ocean City, MD in 1979. TOP RIGHT: AKA Founder Bob Ingraham with his wife, Hazel. BOTTOM LEFT: The AKA archives housed at the World Kite Museum, Long Beach, WA. BOTTOM RIGHT: Bob and Jewell Price at the AKA Convention in Tulsa, OK in 1995.

socio-economic factor of the world and take pride in the fact that our efforts have made a valued impact upon modern society.

Ingraham had set the bar high and over the next several years the AKA did indeed formalize further, as he had hoped, but also seemed to struggle with its identity on numerous levels. As *Kite Lines*, the “Quarterly Journal of the American Kitefliers Association,” was still finding its footing as a business venture, a new body of members was also forming a non-profit Board of Directors and organizing the “First Annual Meeting” at Ocean City, Maryland, held September of 1978. As noted in the first “new” AKA newsletter, *Letter from the President*, “the meeting was a grand success,” and it seemed to usher in a new era for the AKA as an association. Successful and inclusive as it may have been, the roles of the two entities, *Kite Lines* and the “new” AKA, were difficult to define, which eventually led to frustration and miscommunication.

In years to follow, with the existence of both a non-profit AKA newsletter (renamed *Kiting* in 1985) and the for-profit *Kite Lines*, there was some tension regarding advertising and content. In numerous letters from Govig, she expresses that the AKA was duplicating, rather than merely complementing, her efforts in *Kite Lines*. The AKA newsletter was no longer merely “A Letter from the President,” but had become a full-on entity of feature stories, ads, and member-contributed information, much in the vein of Ingraham’s *Kite Tales*. Govig writes to Milly Mullarky and the AKA in 1982, “This is the basic problem we have with the AKA. We would like the two different organizations to exist in comfortable parallel...overlapping only when jointly planned projects make it useful to share costs and resources. AKA needs a clear

image of itself. In this, I think we could help you.”

Despite some continued friction and not without their own individual hurdles, both *Kite Lines* and the AKA grew independently and flourished simultaneously for many years. *Kite Lines* was glossier than ever, and in 1991, Brooks Leffler was hired as the first AKA Executive Director with a membership approaching 3,000. Ingraham, who passed all too soon in 1995, stayed involved into his later years, in particular helping to write and publish the *Kiteflier’s Manual* in 1990, and as he’d hoped, “get around a bit and fly kites with people I’ve known a long time.” Fast forwarding, kite fliers also saw the passage of *Kite Lines* in December 2000, leaving *Kiting* as the last remaining kite publication of its type. In a rapidly accelerated world where print media is being questioned more than ever, what of the AKA a decade into the new millennium?

as·so·ci·a·tion (ə-sō’sē-ā’shən) n.

1. An organization of people with a common purpose and having a formal structure; friendship, fellowship, companionship, alliance, union. 2. The connection or relation of ideas, feelings; correlation of elements of perception, reasoning, or the like.

Community interaction is at the heart of why people join associations. They want to work with other like-minded people on a common cause or interest – be it the cure for a disease or the pursuit of a hobby like kiting. While the complexity of the AKA and its role to kiting has evolved since the days of Ingraham’s *Kite Tales*, the current association still has the purpose of bringing people together to have a collective, positive impact on members’ lives and society.

Benevolence notwithstanding, running an association with yearly turnover in its Executive Committee, and in tough economic times, is not easy or inexpensive.



Ali Fujino

TOP: Strolling the boardwalk and admiring the kites at the 2004 AKA Convention at Seaside, Oregon. BOTTOM: Kites at the 2008 Convention. The Convention will again take place at Seaside this year.

AKA President Barbara Meyer wrote in a web forum post, dated May 17, 2010, “Our financial situation continues to be a challenge. The auction last year was \$10,000 less than the previous year. Your board has been working hard to cut expenses, and raise income... Your membership, and donations will help keep that loss to a minimum.”

The AKA exists for its members and encourages membership at any chance it has. However, the AKA also wants membership to its association to feel exclusive, a password protected “Member’s Only Club House” on the website and a glossy issue of *Kiting* in the mailbox are two examples, because this is one of the only ways the AKA can bring in the money it needs to stay aloft. This exclusivity is also what makes kiting as a sport, art, science, and ritual pursuit challenging to enter into as a newcomer, and challenging to transition people to beyond their experiences as a child. At a recent kite festival, Meyer’s 19-year-old daughter was the only teenager. Meyer feels this demographic is hard to reach, and specifically noted that she would like to engage more people ages 15-30.

John Baressi, editor of the online *Kitelife Magazine*, wrote a critique of the AKA on the matter in “Kites...Life: Are we doing everything we can to reach out the public?” in the May/June 2010 issue.

At a time when “kite proponents” speak of a desire to increase our ranks (fliers, club members, competitors, whatever), I’m not sure that a “big picture” approach is being properly applied in many cases, or even realized... Of course, it warrants mention that the AKA isn’t some headless corporation or government, although it’s often portrayed that way... The AKA is a body of

kitefliers, just like you and I, a broad sampling of our community, albeit just those folks who were willing to actually step up and take the heat that comes with trying to handle an organization... Point is, whatever you see “the AKA doing” is in fact what we’re doing to some extent, as the board is by majority a panel of folks that we’ve voted for, or not voted at all, which just might be worse.

It’s clear that it takes participation from members for the AKA to be strong and grow, and despite the inherent nature of kites as objects of *doing*, the AKA still has the challenge of staying relevant. Some may cringe at the term, but social media is being looked at as one avenue to attract a new, younger audience to kiting.

Business author Brian Solis began his definition of social media with the question, “How do we ensure that conversations don’t leave us behind?” His answer, “We engage and continually participate.” He continues, “there has been a fundamental shift in our culture and it has created a new landscape of influencers and an entirely new ecosystem for supporting the socialization of information – thus facilitating new conversations *that can start locally, but have a global impact* (italics mine).” Even though Solis is referring to social media, his words brought me right back to Ingraham’s first issue of *Kite Tales*, developed out of the small town of Silver City, New Mexico. It did start locally. It did have global impact. What Ingraham did may not be on the level of the millions using social media, but it was appropriate for his time and was essentially the same thing – the beginning of a vast network. It’s now up to the AKA to make the shift.

Mel Hickman is the current AKA Executive Director and he spoke at length about his

efforts and excitement for what is to come, and to the balance the AKA is seeking. On the virtual side of things, there is a new webmaster currently re-designing the AKA website and the AKA is actively using Facebook. "I think it has incredible potential to be a tool," commented Hickman, "but a URL can't match flying a kite in the sunset or flying a kite as a family." Hickman feels that while the AKA can utilize social media as a way to reach people, it is the work of sanctioning events, hosting a major convention, and generally encouraging people to build and fly kites that truly promote the association's goal of providing opportunities for people *in real life*.

In a recent interview I asked Meyer how she felt about upholding the larger-than-life legacy of Bob Ingraham via the AKA. She commented that she felt the active committee structure was a way the AKA could continue to preserve continuity and also uphold Ingraham's tradition of the organization being by and about *members*. It seems that Meyer's "loud and clear" message of late is not much different from Ingraham's in 1964. "WE NEED MEMBERS," he wrote in bold capitalized typeface. "THE MORE MEMBERS WE HAVE THE BETTER ORGANIZATION WE HAVE."

"I am so proud to be associated with the AKA. It truly does unite kilters around the world in the goal of sharing our mutual love and passion for kites," wrote Meyer in her June 23rd email message to AKA members. Besides a monthly email from the President, membership is shown on the AKA website to include a litany of other benefits, including discounts, insurance, and without fail, *Kiting*. But at the end of this long list (and at the end of the day) there is something that is at the heart of the AKA, at the heart of what Bob Ingraham set out to do. Perhaps it is the best benefit of them all: friends in the field.

Join Drachen Foundation at the upcoming American Kitefliers Association Convention October 12-16, 2010 in Seaside, Oregon! More information online at: <http://www.aka.kite.org/convention.shtml>

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KITES IN THE FIELD

Photographs by Simon Bond



Simon Bond

Although kites are found on nearly every continent on earth, many countries' kite traditions have been poorly documented. It is part of the Drachen Foundation's mission to help research, document, and explore the kite world.

For that reason Drachen has sent me into the field, whether to remote parts of the globe or to historic kite events, to record what I see. I have been to kite museums and festivals around the world, documenting, filming, and photographing.

Traveling is only part of the job – the majority of my work has been in the office, archiving, preserving, and photographing kites and kite-related artifacts in controlled environments.

Easy to spot across the field and always humorous, the classic "Legs" kite created and flown by Martin Lester at the Bristol Kite Festival.



Simon Bond

One of the most beautiful and minimalist kites I've seen, made by French duo Emmanuelle and Philippe Simmonet. Seen here at the Long Beach Kite Festival in Washington State.



Simon Bond

Wide angle shot of the white kite, with Philippe on the left adjusting the kite-lines. The kite is anchored further down the beach.



Simon Bond

On the road to the ancient city of Angkor in Cambodia, I visited a kite maker named Kong Chhonn who owned a rare fifty year old *Ek* (a reed that attaches to the top of traditional Cambodian kites to make noise while flying). Standing in front of his house, the kite maker showed me an *Ek* reed of his own creation, and later demonstrated how it worked by whirling it through the air. The Cambodian kite tradition was almost destroyed by the Khmer Rouge, which makes it very important for kite makers like Kong Chhonn to pass on their knowledge.



Simon Bond

I spent several days documenting kites in a kite museum in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Working in the kite museum, Sareth Roeung painstakingly paints depictions of Angkor Wat onto small children's kites that were later shipped to the Drachen Foundation. While painting Cambodian kites is not traditional, it is quickly gaining popularity as kite makers experiment with new materials and techniques.



Simon Bond

In the remote city of Bintulu, Malaysia, an international kite festival is held every year, helping to bring this developing country into the modern world. Combining the old with the new, this modern kite train is made up of traditional Malaysian figures.



Simon Bond

At the Bintulu kite festival, the Drachen team arrives (unexpectedly, it seems) to represent the USA. Foundation Executive Director Ali Fujino (left) and Mark Wiener (right) stand with a makeshift sign.



Simon Bond

A charming kite museum I visited in the old mountain town of Chiu-Fen, Taiwan. Another part of the museum houses an amazing collection of Chinese kites. The man who created the museum as his hobby runs a quaint bed and breakfast in the top two floors of the building.



Simon Bond

In the foreground, Joe Hadzicki flies his invention, the “Rev” quad line kite, with many others in unison. For the twentieth anniversary of the Rev, avid kites met up for the Bristol Kite Festival in Bristol, England to pull off the largest ever organized mass flying of quad line kites. The Rev kite is the only four line kite that has the stability and control necessary for maneuvering many kites in unison without becoming hopelessly tangled.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Join 100 Rev fliers at the Long Beach International Kite Festival on August 19th, 20th, and 21st as they attempt a “mega” fly! Visit the Drachen Foundation calendar online for more info: <http://www.drachen.org/calendar.html>



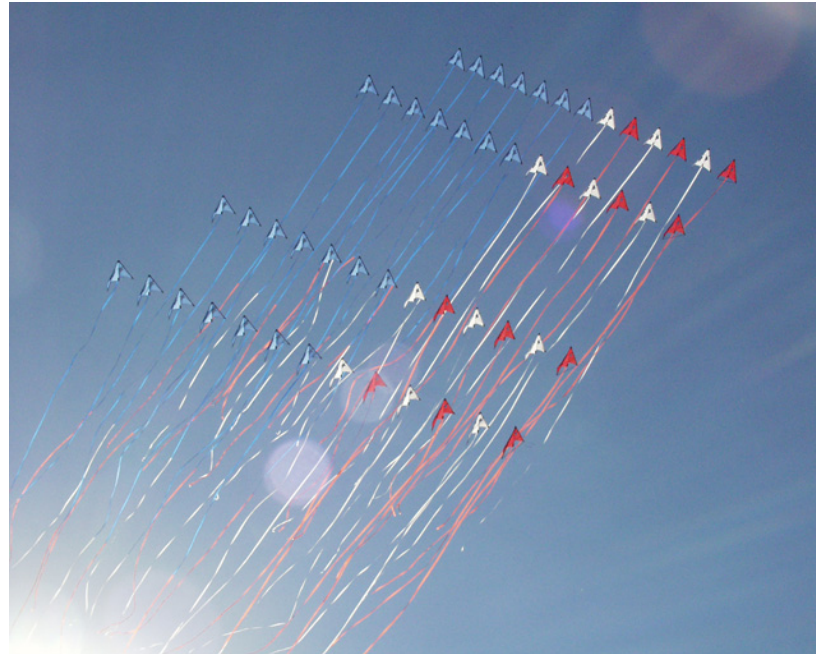
Simon Bond

A mass of kitelines controlled by the skilled hands of team iQuad. It is amazing to see in person how these quad-line kites are orchestrated like marionettes.

30 YEARS AND STILL FLYING

1980-2010: SAN FRANCISCO, BAY AREA SUNDOWNERS

Barry Nash



Bay Area Sundowners

LEFT: Team logo kites in Dieppe, France, 1993.
RIGHT: Kites flying in Dieppe, France, 1996.

With their signature stacks of thirteen Hyperkites pulling 40' long tails, The Bay Area Sundowners have the distinction of being one of the oldest and most entertaining kite flying teams in the world today.

In 1980, Mix McGraw put together a four-person team, flying stacks of twelve Rainbow kites at the Marina Green in San Francisco, California. He named the team The Bay Area Sundowners. I met Mix in 1984 when I moved from England. At that

time there were just two people on the team, Mix and Ray Wong. I joined the team that same year, and the team started flying stacks of twelve Hyperkites, designed and built by Randy Tom of San Diego, CA.

The team has gone through many personnel changes since I joined. Twenty years ago, a two-person team going by the name of The Osterlund Brothers joined the Sundowners just after the first California Open in San Diego. From that point the team members were Ray, Barry, Gordon, and Ken.



Bay Area Sundowners

LEFT: Washington State International, USA, 2002.
RIGHT: Dieppe, France, 2008.



Bay Area Sundowners

LEFT: Rev kites. North Carolina, USA, 2002.
RIGHT: North Carolina, USA, 1999.

We had dreams about being “the best.” We practiced 40 hours per week, in addition to us all having full-time jobs. We were flying our stacks of Hyperkites somewhere in the country or world every other weekend. Back then there was not a “train” category in competition. The team had to compete against single wing flying teams, while flying our stacks. None of us knows how many times we’ve flown around the world in our time with the Sundowners. We have flown in several countries multiple times: Canada, England, France, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, and Borneo. We have flown in 28 of the United States of America, including Alaska.

After the 1994 World Cup in Le Torque, France, the team officially retired from competition. Craig Wong from Team Tsunami joined the Sundowners. Randy Tom also joined us as an alternate flier, so that as long as the team had four available guys, we were always able and ready to fly. The team continued to travel doing shows, mostly internationally.

In 1996, we were invited to Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia to do a show. But upon arrival, we found out that it was really a competition – the Malaysian Grand Prix! We closed the event flying an eight-man routine, with the Sundowners and team Sky Dance all flying stacks of thirteen Hyperkites. This was when we found out that Mark and Jeanette Lummas from Sky Dance were moving to the U.S. Not long after this we asked them to join the Sundowners team, so now we had seven fliers to pull from to make the team.

Now that Mark and Jeanette were on the team, we flew a greater variety of kites: from the traditional stacks of thirteen Hyperkites, to our own logo wings made by Level One, to Revolutions. We set up a six person Rev routine which we first flew at

the North Carolina kite festival, then the next year in Bristol, England, and then in Dieppe, France in 2000. Mark and Jeanette left the team in 2004.

Some of the most memorable things the team has done over the years are flying a number of times for the King of Thailand (and two of the princesses), and flying for the Asian Games where we flew in front of 450,000 people on one day. Also we have flown for three out of the seven sultans of Malaysia and MTV Asia. We also fly at air shows, flying on the same program as the Blue Angels, the Thunderbirds, and Northern Lights – the list goes on and on.

The Bay Area Sundowners currently has five members: Randy Tom, Craig Wong, Gordon Osterlund, Ken Osterlund, and Barry Nash. Check us out on YouTube.

It’s been an amazing ride, and I hope the team has many more years of flying ahead of us.

Thanks for good winds.

Barry Nash, Team Captain
Bay Area Sundowners
www.BayAreaSundowners.com



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