

## **The Early Days of the American Kitefliers Association (AKA)**

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1. Dick Swanson letter February 16, 1968

Answered  
2-28-68

Feb 16/68

Dear Dick:

Now you have what back issues we have.  
The machine ran out of paper on the issues shown.  
This was the 1st issue we received. - Think Ingraham has  
copies of this issue.

The copies had to be made from our copies and probably not  
too easily read. - The one over page is missing - It was  
also of H Seals and we did not copy it last year.  
The 1st issues were not numbered and did not follow good order -  
if it appears not to follow well it is because we chose  
last year to omit sheets as we were copying W. Scott's issues.  
The issue we ran out of paper on is a good one - if you  
can't secure it we will finish the copies. Also some stuff about  
needs -

The stamp - we have a cut for AKA and added our name  
and address under it to have a rubber stamp made - Will loan  
you the cut if you want to make one. This we had made up  
to stamp our kites to identify AKA + us for possible return of lost  
kites -

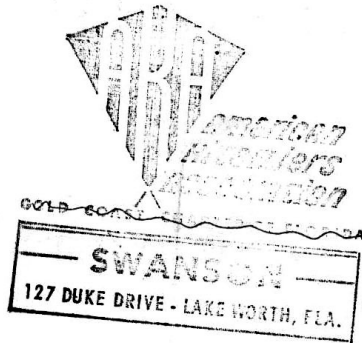
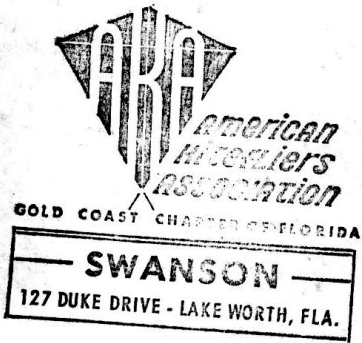
We use indelible ink on cloth - still looking for a good ink  
to use on plastic that will adhere and look nice - am going  
to try white opaque on a steep pad. -

If you want to repay us for past issues you could copy any  
clippings, articles on kites you have including kite plans - We have some  
notebooks eager to devour such information -

Let us know of your content -

The enclosed is our attempt to help the AMA to promote a  
better content -

Dick



	6-	3.60
	2	2.75
+	55	1.00
	<u>275</u>	<u>7.35</u>

2. Domina Jalbert letter October 26, 1973

*JALBERT AEROLOGY LABORATORY, INC.*

170 N. W. 20th STREET  
BOCA RATON, FLORIDA 33432

PHONE 305 - 395-0644

October 26 1973

Hello Dick & Family

That was a hum dinger of an article I just read in Kite Tales.

I have been wanting to write to you for some time but somehow never did get around to it.

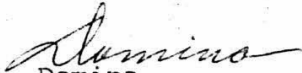
Enclose an article which you may enjoy reading, you do not have to agree with me but it is a good start.

lately we have been involved in Sky Diving units these are roughly 180 sq ft and realy something to watch as compared with the round conventional parachutes.

Didk for my own curiosity. just about how much time did you and your help spend in making the large Airfoil shown in Kite Tales? No doubt youwilll agree that it takes plenty of patient, accurate fabrication, more patient, time and more patient along with some frustration and all of a sudden the darn thing is completed and flies well AMEN.

Keep em flying Dick and I know every member of AKA are proud of your kiting.

Sincerely yours,

  
Domina

DCJ/erb

### 3. Letter to Domina Jalbert November 24, 1973

November 24, 1973

Mr. Domina Jalbert  
170 N.W. 20th Street  
Boca Raton, Florida 33432

Dear Domina,

I can't tell you how pleased I was to get your letter of congratulations. I am so proud of the parafoil that I could bust by buttons. The enclosed is the best picture to date that has been taken of it. It was taken on the Gulf Coast at Rockport where, along with 7 other families, we bought an old tourist court the first of September. This old court has been our summer vacation spot for 20 years and my wife has been going there since she was two years old. We took the sign down when we bought it and converted it to a flag pole where I fly the Texas Flag and my AKA banner. The Robin you sold me years ago flies in the court yard each trip.

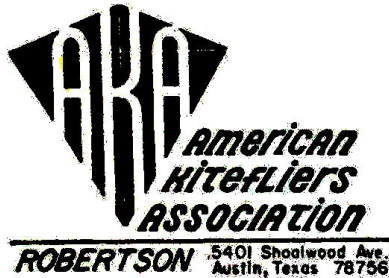
I tried to estimate the number of hours we put in on the parafoil and I even went so far as to break down each operation, such as measuring, cutting the pieces, hemming, etc etc. I believe a reasonable estimate of total man-hours would be between 80 and 100. If we made another one, I'm sure we wouldn't make the same mistakes and the time would be considerably less. I might mention that Bob Ingraham was mistaken about my shroud lines in Kite Tales. As you can see in the picture I made three banks of shrouds and I used four lines to connect corresponding ventrals. Each bank was tied to a heavy nylon cord in the same manner you tied my Robin.

In October we were invited to fly our kites at the Texas Hot Air Balloon Race in Wimberly, Texas. The idea was that they feared too much wind and they needed something going on. Well, we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves even though we didn't have enough wind for kites since the balloons did well. There were a number of skydivers who bailed out of the balloons and attempted to land on the air strip. One fellow rode his O'Brien Hang Glider under a balloon, cut loose, and glided to the "X" on the landing strip. I'd like to see one of your units in action.

Thanks again for your letter. It was a real morale booster.

Sincerely

4. Letter to Domina Jalbert October 27, 1981



October 27, 1981

Domina Jalbert  
170 N.W. 20th St.  
Boca Raton, Florida 33432

Dear Dom,

The Huntsberys from Austin brought me your greetings and I was both delighted and sad. It was so good to hear about you first hand but I am so disappointed in not getting to finally see you in person.

As I am sure you were told, my father-in-law died at noon on Thursday and the services were held Saturday morning. So it was impossible for me to get there. He was 86, had been for his usual walk in the morning, and was picking up pecans in my back yard when his heart gave out on him. A beautiful way to go, but we will all miss him.

I'm sure you saw in Kite Lines that our son, John, finally last his battle with cancer in January of last year.

We've done a lot more kite building since then, and other therapeutic activities such as rebuilding our 1500 ft pier we lost in last year's hurricane Allen. We're starting to think about new kites to build for next year's contest in March. Have you got any fancy designs in the back of your head? My 49 sq ft parafoil you helped me with in 1973 is still in great shape! We fly it often. And I still have the Robin I bought from you in 1969 right after your fire. It's great to have kites that will last and last.

I hope the Houston meeting was successful. The Huntsberys indicated that it was somewhat disorganized. I'm really sorry I missed it though. Next year my youngest should be away at school so maybe we can be free to travel a long distance. I'd still like to come to Florida to see you. And Ned Taylor used to come there too. I haven't heard from him in a long time.

Please drop me a line when you can and tell me what is new with you. I remember the good days when all the AKA'ers would write to each other more.

Always your friend,

*Dick*  
Dick Robertson

5. Mac McCandlish letter April 1, 1970



April 1 1970

Dear Dick

Was glad to get the pictures and clippings, you sure have a nice kite flying family, I think it is a very good thing when a family can do things together and enjoy it so much.

Was nice of you to mention in the article about my help by long distance in the plans for your 15' x 17' sled I still fly mine, no crack ups so far

I would like to have a picture of your French Military kite as I do not have a French Military, nearest one to it is a winged Box kite. The reels are nice but quite a job building them, but a good reel is one thing you can't buy so if want one you have to make it, but it is fun send a picture of yours if you have one

My wife and I went to Bay City Mich March 21 to judge a contest for the Saginaw Valley College, we stayed at the dormitory nice suite all to our selves and ate at the college Cafeteria had a lot of fun, all they had was store kites tho. one stayed up 18 hours. and they were hand held all the time, Well Dick write any time and send me my clippings

Sincerely  
Mac McCandlish

6. Smithsonian Kite Festival letter to David Jue April 12, 1971

*Rec'd  
4-24-71*

THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION WASHINGTON, D.C. 20560 TELEPHONE (202) 381-5157 •



THE SMITHSONIAN ASSOCIATES

April 12, 1971

Mr. David F. Jue  
2460 Waverly Street  
Palo Alto, California 94301

Dear Mr. Jue:

We wish to congratulate you on winning first place in the First Annual Inter-city Kite Contest, sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution and the National Park Service on Saturday, April 10, in Washington, D. C. We were immensely proud to have you here, and it was a privilege to see your magnificent kite in the air.

Thank you for joining us and for making the special effort of coming all the way from California to be a contestant. We would also like to thank you for your generous contribution of your kite to the Smithsonian Institution. You will receive shortly a special letter from the National Air and Space Museum.

We hope you will be able to join us in the future for similar events. In the meantime, all very best wishes to you.

Sincerely yours,

Susan Hamilton  
Program Director

*Hello, Richard! I flew the 15 ft centipede.  
David Jue*





Tel. 617-228-2297

**NANTUCKET KITEMAN**

P. O. Box 1356

Nantucket, Mass. 02554

Jan 31 - 72

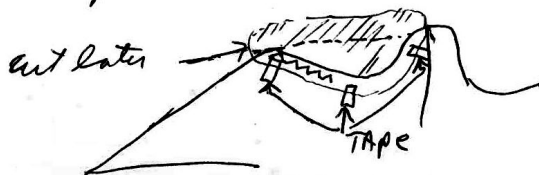
Dear Dick -

Thanks for the nice letter and photos ...  
you know - your oldest daughter looks so  
Juni-like - has she been to the island at  
all? ... Also - Thanks for the invite ... I  
think if Betty and I ever take up all the  
invitations at one time - we could traverse  
this country. That would be nice.

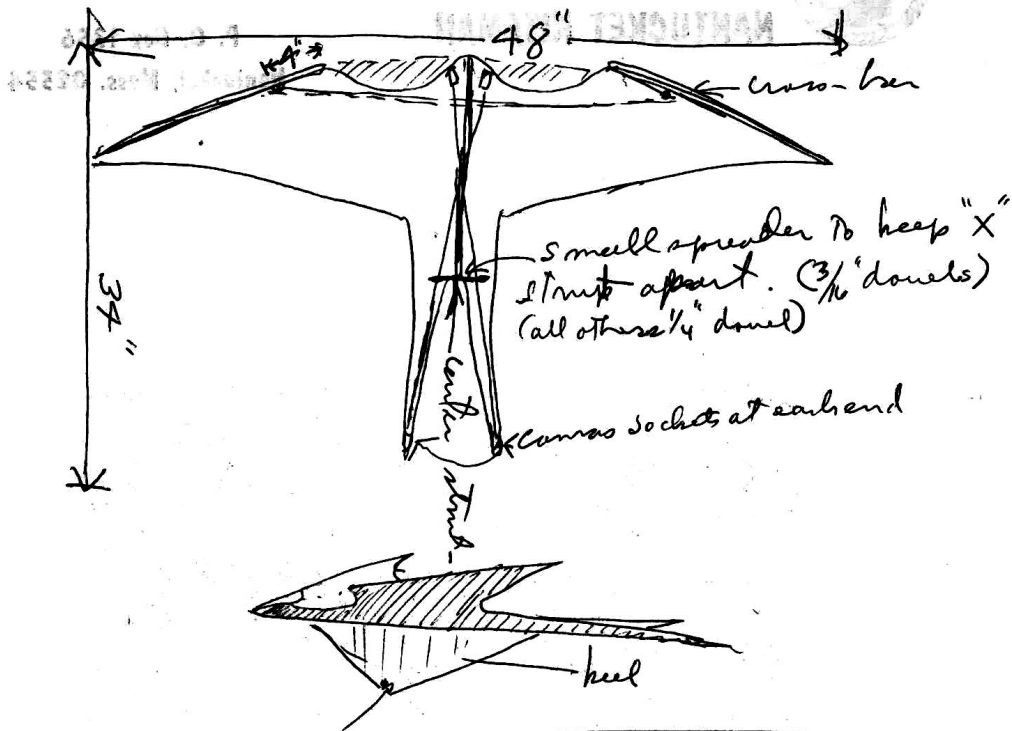
Your family and bits look great!

Now for the swallow-tail - - - -

The vinyl, not plastic - 'cause plastic gets brittle and  
dries out - is sewn - the zig-zag stitch - never  
but - when sewing - use a little masking tape to  
hold it in place so it doesn't slip -

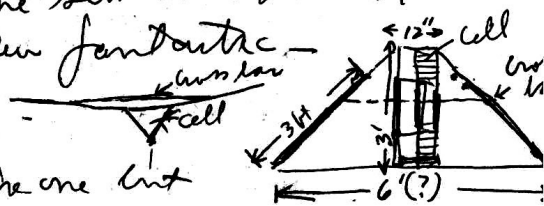


also - I put iron-tape (1/4" wide-) all around the bird - and about a 1/2" wide where the vinyl goes.



She made only 2 but they fly great in model winds - 8-12 MPH. — good luck

Frank Scott once drew up a 3' x 4' combination Val and trench-military - which Gene Lewis made lots on out of Spinibor nylon and it flew fantastic -



Frank said he was going to make one but I don't know if he did...

Just last week found out I'll be featured in April-May (?) issue of a Mag. put out by either "West" or "Great Western Models" - anyway, their in your area and you should see it. — again good luck

8. Letter from Hod Taylor July 9, 1973

Box 88, Rt. # 1  
Austin Minn. 55912  
July 9 1973

Dear Dick:

We got back from a fishing trip up in Canada last Friday, and see that your letter has been here quite awhile, so will try to get something off in a hurry.

It was nice to hear from you again and I will be glad to give you what I can on the Bird Kites that I have been making.

The last couple of years I have been making most all the kites with fold-up covering and joined, removable bamboo spars, struts, longerons and keels. Using light aluminum tubing to join the butts together. Have had quite a time finding good bamboo fish poles. I keep the length of the poles under seven feet, in that my lockers both here and in Florida are just seven feet high.

I have made five of the type of bird kite shown in Kite Tales, each one a little different. Have just cut almost a foot off the tale of the twenty foot bird. By the way, the top kite of the three in tandem, was the twenty footer with the long tale. I have just completed a thirty foot wing span Bird that is a beautiful flier, using the little eighteen as basic, so will stay with that basic for the time. I am always trying to improve the area of lift with respect to the total weight. Most all of my kites are from a little under one ounce to a ounce and a quarter per square foot of lift area.

I do have a couple of other type of bird Kites, but do like the black birds to work with as they are so simple to build.

My day on the drafting board are all in the past, but I will try to make a free hand sketch that I hope you can get something out of it. I lost my sight many years ago, have less than ten percent, so can see very little that I put down on paper, without a very heavy glass.

I took a shot of the eighteen footer, Saturday, that I hope to get back tomorrow to include with this letter, that I hope may help some.

That picture of the three Birds in tandem, in Kite Tales was quite a surprise to me. It had to be a black and white, made from a colored negative by Wyatt Brummitt, and sent in by him. Mr. Brummitt stopped in to Briny Breezes last winter to see some of my kites. He asked for some negatives to make black and white enlargements for himself.

Some of the other publishers in the east are planing on putting out new books on kites and want photos of some of my newer kites. They wanted them a month ago but our flying conditions here are so poor, that I have had trouble to get just the shots that I want.

The artical about Rick and the family was very interesting. I am glad that the boy is still interested in kites while away to the University.

The new Parafoil must be quite a kite. I have four of Jalbert's parafoils, the largest forty-five foot, but never get to fly them of late years, as I have so many kites of my own that I am trying to get into the air.

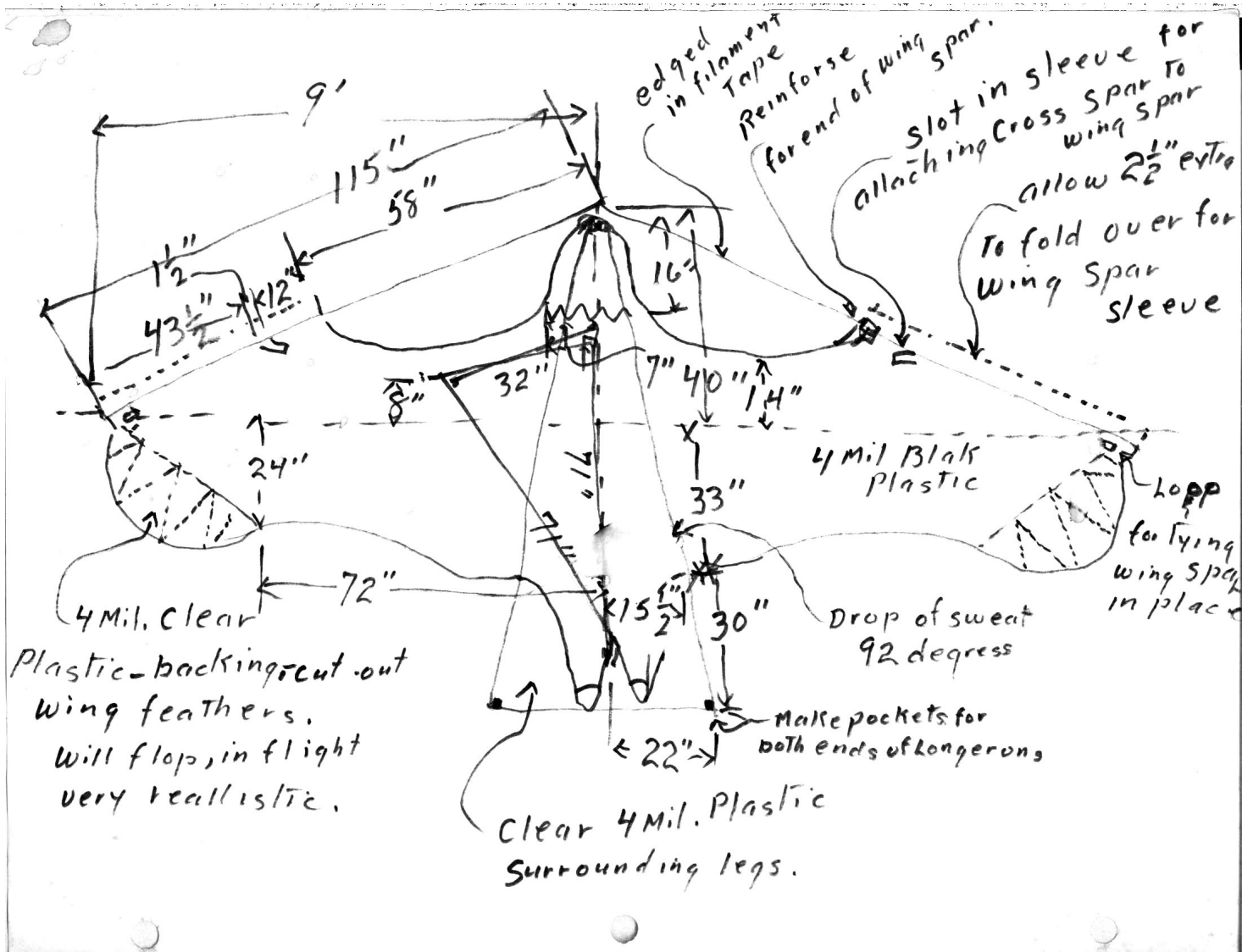
That Mr. Al Heach interests me. I would like to have his address. Surprised to here th t you were at St. Olaf. I was born in Faribault just soith of Northfiels in 1896.

With the very best regards,

*Hod.*

*Photos of the Tandem  
Enclosing a couple more  
and a few extra pictures  
Hod.*

9. 18 ft Turkey Vulture Kite plan from Hod Taylor



10. Letter from Al Beach March 23, 1973

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March 23rd, '73

*Parafail got a first in kite contest as prettiest  
Deltawing " " " - unusual materials*

Hi Dick:

This will have to be a quick note as I wanted to get the enclosed info to you before you go further on the Parafail. If this doesn't turn you on about a Parafail, - nothing will. ( Scuse the typing, I'm doing it )

Thanks so much for all the interesting things you sent including the pictures and all. You are surely well organized.

To answer your question about "welding" polyethelene, here's how I do it. I lay down a smooth piece of plywood, cover it with cut rite wax paper, then the two pieces of polyethelene to be joined, and finally cover with another piece of wax paper. I have a Weller soldering iron and they make a very thin flat ended tip about 5/16 " diameter. When the tip is hot I drag it across the top piece of wax paper. It must keep moving, - but slowly, and it fuses the poly together. If too fast it doesn't bond together, - it too slow it melts the Poly. So you have to practise quite a bit to get the hang of it before trying it on the good stuff. If you find just a small hole burned through, it can be patched with plastic tape. Sometimes the wax paper sticks to the weld a bit, but it can be picked off.

*- electric of course*

You can "weld" vinel too, but I can't weld vinel to poly. However one can sew vinel to poly. When I get some prints made of my 30' Delta Wing I'll send one to you. I put eyes on it using both poly and vinel. Both can be taped very well as you know.

Incidentally I highly recommend that 30' Delta Wing. It just flies beautifully, and with a 45 foot tapering tail I added and big mean eyes on the front it creates a "happening" whenever I fly it. It stops traffic, the Police arrive, the Police Helicopter checked it twice last weekend - but all was O.K., and a crowd forms. I just tie it off and stand there like a proud parent. That design has to be a Rogallo Wing.

Well as you can see I enclose a picture of my Parafail. It's rip stop Nylon and flies remarkably. Its 7 x 8 1/2 and you have the plans I sent you. I also enclose a copy of Jalberts Patent and his blueprints for your interest.

I'm off to Mexico this Saturday fishing for 5 days South of LaPaz, so I'll be in touch when I return.

Best regards, *al*

## 11. Letter from Margaret Greger April 3, 1986

MARGARET GREGER  
1425 Marshall, Richland, WA 99352  
(509) 943-3951

4/3/86

Dear Robertsons,

Here are patterns for the Wycombe Supertube, the two-cell soft sled, which I mentioned is very touchyas to tie on. Since it's a commercial kite, manufactured in England, I suspect that my pattern, made by measuring a kite, may be off a shade. Anyway, if a kite turns out to be a "clapper" it can be corrected with a John Loy harness, a string which pulls the lower spar tips closer together by half. (see Swallowtail diagram in Kites for Everyone).

Also the Peter Lynn soft sled. The dozen I have made have all been dependable fliers, and I appreciate the ingenuity of cutting the fin and sleeve in one piece. This is the kite I gave you.

I'm sending a diagram for Greg's hip pocket hybrid, together with dittos for the AKA soft sled and the Nishi sleeved sled, which were its forebears. Note that I reduced the width of the center cell from Nishi, chiefly to make the kite fit on a width of material. Have not tried other dimensions.

I sent Joel some scraps of 6 oz. sailcloth yesterday, and I believe this wraps up everything I promised you. Let me know if something didn't make the list. We learn more about kites as the ideas spread to other kitemakers, and I am very interested in the soft sleds.

We feel very fortunate to have been able to spend some time with the Austin kitefliers. Please send recipes for the main dishes of the delicious dinner.

Hip pocket diagram will be included in my next book. Use it and share it, but please don't print it.

Catching up since I got home last Friday. My Arizona visit added Halley's Comet and the bridled titmouse to my life list.

We have a club fly April 6. Weather is cool with minimum breeze, usual for these parts.

Hope that you will come this way sometime. Let us know. Hello to John. I'll take LIPS out for the first time Sunday. It wasn't until I was packing that I really appreciated the care which went into making a box for it.

*Margaret*