The American Kitefliers Association



Announcer's Handbook

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Author's Notes:

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Back in 1999, Al Hargus III created and copyrighted **The "No Secrets" Handbook Of Announcing At Kite Events**, which, as far as this author knows, was the first handbook or written series of guidelines on the topic. Al was the AKA Midwest Sport Kite Conference Commissioner at the time, and he obviously felt a need to create the handbook in order to help fledgling announcers in the sport. Taking Al's work as a starting point, this Handbook will attempt to expand the topic(s) and bring the current state of kiting's affairs into the handbook, both in terms of the equipment and technology available today, and in terms of some of the kiting events and disciplines currently in practice. It is hoped that subsequent authors will expand and revise this manual as necessary and practical.

While Al's original handbook is used as a starting point, this manual is a bit broader in scope and covers different, additional topics in more detail. And while some similarities may exist between these two manuals, this manual has been written from scratch, using Al's original handbook as "source" material. Therefore, if errors, omissions, typos, or other faults are found herein, they are solely the responsibility of this author and NONE are attributable to Al Hargus. This handbook is very respectfully dedicated to Al Hargus III.

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I. INTRODUCTION - So you want to announce at Kite Festivals?

Well, let's start there... What prompts you to want to be an announcer?

- --- Has someone solicited or recruited you for the job?
- --- Are you volunteering to be part of "the action" at kite festivals and competitions?
- --- Do you approach announcing as a way to support or "give back" to kiting?
- --- Are you "thrown in" as an announcer because of some last minute glitch?
- --- Or are you an experienced announcer, just wanting to brush up on technique?

Okay, the truth is – it really doesn't matter how you got here. What's really required is:

- --- A willingness to do the job,
- --- A fairly decent speaking voice, coupled with a bit of stamina,
- --- A basic understanding of what goes on at Kite festivals and competitions.
- --- And, YOUR Delightful Enthusiasm!

Nope – nothing more than that! All the rest is "teachable" and this handbook is designed to help you get through the learning process. Yes, and there're even a few things here for you experienced guys and gals, too.

What is the Announcer's job?

Simply put, we can break it down into communicating three kinds of information:

- Part "Keeping it going" helping the Kiters to "run" the event
- Part "Entertaining the Public" putting on the show for the Non-Kiters
- Part "Supporting Kiting" Educating the public as you go along

Yeah, that's really all there is to it! Pretty simple, eh?

Okay, let's start out with a couple of the "Basics."

First - Simply put, the Announcer's job is to communicate with the audience - to be the "bridge" between the event itself and the public, including the other event participants.

It's kind of important that you realize and understand that you are usually speaking to two different "audiences" when you pick up that microphone at an event – those who are "kiters" out there, and a more general audience who may not understand anything about kiting at all. Therefore, the job is really a "mix" of informing both kiters and non-kiters about the event, keeping your commentary interesting and informative to both groups.

Second - Nearly everyone has the ability to speak over a microphone and tell others what's going on, and you will too. Some of the job, of course, is knowing about your subject, which means having adequate kiting knowledge and/or experience, plus having a few little "cheat sheets" available to refer to as necessary. But, most of the announcing job is just the ability to use normal conversation and simple words to describe what can at times be a complex series of events. Yes – just like a normal telephone conversation with your Mom, if you think about it.

Third - What can be tough about Kite Festival announcing is keeping your conversation with the audience SIMPLE, DIRECT, and DESCRIPTIVE. You're really there to "inform" the entire festival audience:

- What's going to happen next?
- Who's going to do it?
- What's special about this event?
- What should the audience look for?
- How is the event scored?
- Why is there a delay?
- When will the activities resume?
- Who sponsored this festival?
- What are the safety considerations?
- Where to get food / first aid / registration info / etc...
 - ...and other, similar information to help the audience enjoy the show!

So – Do you still want the Job? GOOD!!! We knew you would...

II. EVENT ORGANIZATION – Who organizes kiting events?

There may be up to three separate groups involved in a kiting – not counting any sponsoring organizations or peripheral groups. They are:

- 1. The **Organizers** –These may be independent individuals, or a business entity (perhaps a local kite shop), a "League" or even governmental agencies, in some cases. They are the ones who book the venue, pay the insurance and sanctioning fees, and actually "run" the event.
- 2. The **League** For Sport Kite competitions, these are the folks who provide the judges, field directors, and scoring personnel. And in some cases, the league might also be the organizers as well.
- 3. The **Sanctioning Body** in the United States, this will be the American Kitefliers Association (AKA). And overseas, you may run into STACK (European) or AJSKA (Asian) as sanctioning bodies as well.

You will principally be involved with announcing for (on behalf of) the organizers and the leagues. The sanctioning bodies are normally involved only with the organizers.

Get to know your organizers and league officials early on, if possible. They are the folks who have the good background information you can use in the announcing booth, and they will often put a "kit" together for your use. Besides, the League officials are folks you'll meet regularly at competitions in your area, so they'll soon become your friends and compatriots.

What actually happens at a Kiting event?

The following things occur at most kiting events:

- 1. **Registration** Kiters normally register for events ahead of time, but there is usually a way at most events for kiters to register for the event on-site, especially if a competition is involved. The "event organizers" control the registrations, and the Announcer is normally uninvolved except to give directions to an on-site registration location.
- 2. **Setups -** Event setups usually involves setting up registration areas, announcing stations, scoring booths, and information areas, setting up sound systems, lining display and/or competition areas, and possibly some "event vendor" setups as well. The announcers should know where all of these various locations are, but announcers are not normally required to participate in any other setups other than their own. You should be involved in Announcing station setups however, including sound system setups and equipment checkouts.
- 3. **Pilots Meeting** Most Kite Festivals and Competitions begin with a Pilot's Meeting, usually held on the field just prior to the start of

scheduled activities. Announcers should plan to attend Pilots Meetings, since the information given out by the event organizers often includes good information that can – and likely should – be reiterated by the announcer at various times throughout the event.

- 4. **Event Schedule** This is the "meat" of every kiting event. One of the pieces of paper you should BE SURE you have is "The Schedule." It's your crib-sheet to what's happening where and when and you'll be expected to announce the separate events before, and as, they occur. We'll get into more details on this subject in later discussions.
- 5. **Breaks, Lunches, Dinners, and Banquets** Every event has them even kite "festival" participants have to eat. You'll be expected to announce these as well, so find out where the Dinner for tonight is being held, and when on-site lunches arrive, where to pick them up, and how much they cost if lunches are offered by the organizer. If lunches AREN'T offered, you should plan on announcing that too! And if there's a festival Banquet involved, find out where, when, the cost, and who has tickets for sale...
- 6. **Awards Ceremonies** Where competitions are involved, you'll have an "Awards Ceremony" as a result. I've seen them held at Banquets, on the field after competitions have finished, handed out at the end of each individual event, and I've seen Awards Ceremonies held in the sponsor's parking lot after final tear-down is completed. Again, find out and announce where and when.
- 7. **Teardown** What goes up, must come down. Not just with kites, either. The same holds true for festival or competition paraphernalia. So if you set it up, count on being the person who takes it down or at least helps out.

And – a word about Time!

Very early on, you will find out about **"Kite Time."** No, it's not that organizers and leagues are sloppy or don't care about keeping to a schedule – they DO! It's just that fliers on a kite field, particularly during competitions, have a tendency to use whatever time is available to their own best advantage. So the printed "schedule" on your sheet ends up being someone's best estimate of how long a specific event should take. Throw in any setup delays, the variety of weather conditions the fliers might face, add some time in for any late entries, and "the schedule" might end up looking like someone's weird "guess-timate." Go ahead and bring your watch with you to the festival, but just be prepared for printed schedules to quickly slip into Kite Time.

III. YOUR FIRST KITE EVENT - What to expect, and what to do...

All right – **WE GOTTCHA!** You're at your first event, and you think you're already "lost" and are "in over your head." What do you DO about it?

First, take a few seconds to calm yourself and think logically. This is NOT rocket science, as they say. You CAN do it! Besides, someone else has probably set up all of the equipment already, so that's a major chore you won't have to do. You already lucked out, eh?

Secondly, familiarize yourself with the equipment at hand. Learn how to turn the microphone on an off for starters. (See? Wasn't that easy?) Organize what paperwork you have available, and get to know what's in there. (All right! So much good stuff available!) And don't be afraid – ask someone who knows how it all works. (In other words, get yourself some quick training if you don't already know about all the gear.)

Thirdly, open the mike and say "Sound Check" in a clear voice – like you were talking to Mom on the telephone. Notice how you can hear the speakers say "Sound Check" back at you? Well then, you're in business! (Isn't that easy?) Shucks, you're announcing already!

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Now, let's suppose you're one of those bright ones who really WANTS to do it right the first time. (You ARE aren't you?) Well then, here's a simple scenario to follow that'll help you get through your first few hours:

PLAN!!! (Yep – that's all of it! The entire scenario!)

PLAN on bringing this handbook with you to the field!

PLAN to arrive early and meet the "answer person" who knows all there is to know about the sound equipment. Get checked out on the equipment to the point where you're comfortable with it all. Ask all the questions you can. Find out what happens when it all breaks down and the "answer person" has gone to the port-a-potty that's w-a-y across the field there... (Sorry, but it's a valid question to ask!)

PLAN to ask that same "answer person" about communicating directly with the flying field instead of using the sound system. There is usually a portable radio used between the Head Judge, the Field Director, and the Announcing booth to handle the "off mike" information. Get checked out on the handheld radio, too!

PLAN to get your hands on ALL available written info about the event – the event schedule, the flier bios, the "Officials Lists" (Judges, Field Director, Pit Boss, Scorer, etc. for each event), the Lists of the "Required Precision Figures" (for comps), the List of Event Sponsors, the List of Vendors, the

directions to off-site events (Dinners, Banquets, the Indoor Fly, etc.), and so on. Most festival and competition organizers will put packets of this information together as a matter of course – and it's all available to the announcer. Ask for one and be sure to make yourself aware of the contents.

PLAN to attend the Pilot's Meeting (which should be listed right there on your Events Schedule). It's your source for the latest up-to-date information. TAKE PENCIL AND PAPER, so you can take notes. Pay attention to who's running that Pilot's Meeting, too. Chances are about 95% that the leader is either the Chief "Organizer" or the Chief Judge for the entire event. Either way, you've found yourself an "answer person" who has all sorts of good info available.

...and, you've already used up that first hour as an announcer by now! Hurry though - the activity on the field is about to start for real...

OH... And **PLAN** to make your first announcing "mistake" will you? Every announcer makes them. Yep – even the old, experienced Pros! And the way to get around a mistake is to:

- 1. IGNORE IT EVER HAPPENED if you think you can get away with it
- 2. Or say "SORRY" and correct the error
- 3. Or apologize and then MOVE RIGHT ON TO THE NEXT ITEM! If you spend any time "wallowing in it" at all you only draw attention to the error, making a mountain out of the proverbial molehill and by that time you've just pointed yourself out as a "dolt" and you've also completely lost any train of thought you'd established with your audience. Anyway PLAN to make at least one MISTAKE, will ya?

Now, here we go!!! **PLAN** the first things you're going to say...

- 1. TURN THE MIKE ON.
- 2. Welcome everyone
- 3. Name the Festival or Event
- 4. Also name the Organizer
- 5. Give a list of the sponsors (if you have them)
- 6. Announce the beginning of the first event (imagine for the sake of discussion that it's Masters Individual Precision). Explain what will happen in the coming event (MIP) so the general audience knows what to expect.
- 7. Read the list of Officials for this event (Judges, Field Director, and Pit Boss)
- 8. Announce the first flier's name, and any bio information you might want to mention...
- 9. TURN THE MIKE OFF... and relax.

Oops... that first flier was a late entry, and you have their name, but NO bio information... What to do?

1. You can announce his/her name only,

- 2. Or, you can also state that you have no bio information,
- 3. Or (as some announcers do) you can glance out on the field and gather what info you can, then announce "...and John is flying that pretty red Skynasaur Aerobat today! Good luck, John..." or something to that effect.

Yeah, **PLAN** before you speak, here....

And **PLAN**, between fliers, to...

- 1. TURN THE MIKE ON.
- 2. Thank the pilot that just completed his/her portion of the event.
- 3. Announce the next flier's name, and any bio information you might want to mention...
- 4. TURN THE MIKE OFF and relax.

PLAN, at the end of the entire event to...

- 1. TURN THE MIKE ON.
- 2. Thank the last pilot in that event.
- 3. Tell the audience that the first event (Masters Individual Precision) has just ended, and...
- 4. Announce the beginning of the next event (imagine it's Experienced Individual Precision).
- 5. Explain what will happen in the coming event again so the general audience knows what to expect.
- 6. Read the list of Officials for the upcoming event (Judges, Field Director, and Pit Boss the officials change for each event!)
- 7. Announce the first flier's name, and any bio information you might want to mention...
- 8. TURN THE MIKE OFF and relax.

...and so it goes, throughout the day...

You're on your way, Announcer. Congratulations!

...but WAIT! THERE'S MORE!

Within the first hour or two, someone will drop by the announcer's booth and ask that you announce "something." Maybe it's about lunch tickets for sale, and who to see, and how much they cost. Maybe it's a car with its lights left on in the parking lot. Perhaps someone has retrieved a "lost" article and wants to turn it in. Or it might be that so-and-so needs to meet such-and-such in the Scorer's tent. In any case – some very unexpected announcing requests will crop up, and they happen all the time (so begin to expect them, Announcer).

Rather than interrupting the concentration of the pilot in competition however, we recommend that you wait and announce the requested information BETWEEN fliers. Yes, you can **PLAN** that too! And as a matter of fact, it sometimes gets downright "serene" during some events too, so it's actually kind of nice to add a little "chatter" between fliers occasionally. You might want to pull some good information from that bundle of papers you have, or think up some things to say on your own. **PLAN** it all out beforehand. Good topics (if you know the information) are:

- 1. Who those "other" people on the field are, and what they do.
- 2. What the judges are looking for in this event, and how they score it.
- 3. The list of the event sponsors can be repeated, since they're paying for the event.
- 4. What events come later on in the schedule, and how they differ from the one the audience is watching now.
- 5. Special information for the fliers (schedule changes, where dinner is held tonight, when we'll break for lunch, and so forth...)

Finally, there's also a responsibility (Yeah – THAT word...) to spread the word about Organized Kiting in general and the American Kitefliers Association in particular. You might stick that AKA information in several times over the weekend, too.

Yup – you do all that stuff, and you'll be a "regular" on the sound system before you know it! Seems kind of easy once you get the hang of it, doesn't it?

And – if you get lost and/or befuddled – remember, **PLAN** beforehand and - it's just like talkin' to your mom on the telephone! (Hi Mom!)

IV. VARIATIONS ON A THEME, or Kiting Events Explained – briefly.

Okay – you have an idea of what to expect now, so let's detail the different kinds of competitions and activities that go on at kiting events. We'll include a short description of each kind of event, including what to expect from the general audience's standpoint so you can help them understand the event if you've a mind to. So – here's your "crib" on the different kind of events that occur at festivals and competitions.

NOTE - For further, more complete descriptions, please order a copy of the competition rule book from the American Kitefliers Association. It aught to be in every announcer's kit anyway...

1. Sport Kite Competition Events – listed first, mostly because they're the most complex.

Sport Kite Competition Events are broken up in four different ways:

- a. As Novice, Experienced, or Masters by the pilot's competition experience level. There is a forth level used in some competitions called "Open" meaning that pilots of several different experience levels fly together in the same event.
- b. As Individual, Pairs, or Team based on the number of pilots flying.
- c. As Precision or Ballet which are separate disciplines.
- d. As dual or "Multi-line" with dual lines being the standard (and unstated), and "Multi-line" being explicitly stated.

Exceptions to the above (Of COURSE, there are some):

- a. There are NO "Novice Multi-line" events sanctioned by the AKA, so only Experienced and Masters Multi-line events exist.
- b. There are NO "Pairs or Team Multi-line" events currently sanctioned by the AKA either.
- c. There is also a fifth dual-line experience level, called "Beginner," but it is not often used and the pilot does not compete in AKA Grand National events, so a "Beginner" pilot does not accumulate AKA "Points."

You will usually find these events listed only by their initials. For example, NIB stands for Novice Individual Ballet, MPP stands for Masters Pairs Precision, EIMB stands for Experienced Individual Multi-line Ballet, and so forth...

In Precision events, the pilot will fly three "Compulsory" Precision figures before the Judges, followed by a short "freestyle" routine of their own choosing. The three compulsory figures for each event will be chosen from those in the rule book, and announced at the Pilot's Meeting. The expectations in Precision are that the pilot will demonstrate their ability to control their kite before the Judges from a "precision" standpoint. Each

compulsory figure is scored separately, as is the "freestyle" routine. There are different Precision compulsory figures for Individuals, Pairs, and Teams in both dual and multi-line categories.

In Ballet events, the pilot interprets a two to four minute piece of music of his own choosing, by flying his/her kite to the music. The score for the flight is a complex one consisting of several scores regarding the control of kite, interpretation of the music, and flying style, and the complexity and creativity exhibited. One summary score for the entire pilot's flight is rendered by each of the judges.

NOTE #1 – Since a Ballet event is musically oriented with the music chosen by the competitor, the announcer will become the recipient of CDs from the pilots participating in Ballet events. It is recommended that you quickly establish a method of identifying each CD and the track desired, so that you can play the required track for a pilot (or for multiple pilots) when the event is flown. If you have questions or need help, see your "answer guy" for help during the first few times that you announce. Yes, you also need to give the CDs back to the owner after the competitions.

NOTE #2 – Most announcers quickly reach the point where they run the sound system as well as announce the competitions. Therefore, you should expect to be fairly busy during the Ballet comps, since you will be finding the next Pilot's CD and cueing up the required track while the current pilot is flying his/her Ballet routine. It's not a difficult process to master, but the whole concept can be rather daunting if you're not expecting it. Just plan on "getting there" fairly quickly and you'll do just fine.

Mystery Ballet is an event that is sometimes offered as an "Open" event. The event is scored exactly like Individual Ballet, with the only difference being that the pilot flies to music provided by the Announcer, rather than music of his/her own choosing. Yes, the "answer guy" should have a CD to use, or you can bring your own.

Hot Tricks is another "Open" event. In Hot Tricks, pilots fly in opposition to another pilot, with judges selecting the "best" of the two pilots. Each pilot will fly for 30 seconds to music from a specially "timed" CD, alternating with the other pilot until each pilot has flown three times within three minutes. Winners fly on until defeated, with the final unbeaten pilot taking top honors. Both single and double elimination schemes have been used.

Open Unlimited is the event where literally "most anything goes." Fancy costumes and masks. Fliers dancing. Story-telling with Kites. If you can imagine it, someone's probably already done it. The only limits are - A kite must be involved, and the usual moral/ethical limits of "family sport" propriety! This one's scored heavily on innovation and creativity, though the other kiting disciplines still apply too.

- 2. Rokkaku Battles. You may be called upon to announce during Rokkaku Battles. Rok battles use six-sided kites and are flown either as Individual events or as Team events. Several kites are flown at the same time on the same field. The object is to keep your kite in the air and to down all the opposing kites. The last kite to hit the ground (or the last one that remains flying) is the winner. The concept is not difficult to grasp, but the strategies and tactics (and luck) make all the difference, and the action on the field can be very intense.
- **3. Mass Ascensions** are not normally competitive events, but are events where kites of similar design fly together. If judged at all, the judges will usually pick multiple kites as "winners," such as "Ten Best Kites," for example.
- **4. Kitemaking Competitions** ARE true competitions, with much soughtafter prizes and ribbons being given. Competitions in several different kite categories are judged on kite design, structure, craftsmanship, and flyability among other criteria. Each kite must actually fly in order to compete, so no "wall art" kite wins in these competitions.
- **5. Demonstrations** are exactly what the name implies. A pilot (or a pair, or team) will demonstrate their flying skill for the audience rather than flying for a competitive score. These are often routines that were put together as competition pieces, and they are almost always accompanied by music (Yep more CDs). They are normally used as "fill" when the schedule allows. Lunch-break is a good example of "Demo time."
- **6. Featured Fliers** are invited guests at many festivals. As special fliers, they are often granted "perks" like their own flying field or specific "Demo Time" on the main field. If you announce at festivals that has a Featured Flier, you will earn a few Brownie Points with the organizers by mentioning them occasionally or more often. For instance, Ray Bethell is a pilot who is almost always a Featured Flier when he attends events.
- **7. Specific fields** are sometimes allocated to special purposes. For instance, some festivals have a "Learn To Fly Sport Kites Here," a "BIG Kites Only" or a "Single Line Only" field specifically designated.

Beyond that, all the rest of the area is usually an open "free fly" zone...

V. ON THE FIELD FINE-TUNING – So what can you do to improve your announcing performance at kiting events?

Well, you're an announcer now. Feels pretty good, right? But there a whole host of little "tweaks" that'll help you – and the audience – enjoy your performance more. No, nothing where there're major problems – just a few subtle changes that'll help all concerned as time goes by...

- 1. First off, you'll benefit considerably by just **Practicing What You've Learned** so far... So, for heaven sakes keep at it!
 - Maybe you originally got the job because there IS no regular announcer in which case, it's time to cement yourself into the position.
 - But maybe you just filled in for someone who normally has the job and who's back in the saddle now. But if that's the case, you can probably still work at announcing too!
 - - Fill in for the regular announcer for bathroom and lunch breaks.
 - - Handle the "Demo Times" for him/her.
 - - Or take a spare "Wireless Mike" and go interview someone (perhaps that Featured Flier?) between other events.
 - - Or become the regular "sound person," so that the normal announcer only announces. They'll love the help, and you'll probably get some mike time too!

But whatever you do, try to spend some time announcing at every kiting event you attend. It'll pay long-term dividends for yourself, for the league (if you're working competitive events), and for kiting in general!

- 2. Secondly, there's something we all recognize as **Announcer Courtesy**. It's just the difference between "abusing" the audience by being "pushy" or fooling around with "insider jokes" where the audience hasn't a clue what's going on or asking the audience to respond in a nice, congenial way, and providing solid information about what's happening on or off the field.
 - First rule Make whatever you say UNDERSTANDABLE and INTERESTING. A piece of good information, if presented badly, might not even be worth the effort of announcing. Avoid BAD presentation!
 - Secondly THINK before you speak. Do you really want to announce THAT to the entire populace? The time to think about what you say is BEFORE you say it.

- Thirdly If you don't have anything worthwhile to share with a major portion of the audience, SAY NOTHING! Instead use the hand-held radio, or even send a runner.
- Forth PLAN ahead (Yup that word again). If something needs to happen in an hour, plan to announce What and When well ahead of time and be sure to allow enough "lead time" so the audience or participants can easily respond. Do this right and you'll help everyone. But do it wrong, and you'll have lots of complaints to deal with. PLAN and Practice, practice, practice...
- Finally **TURN THE MIKE OFF** when it's not in use. Yes, EVERY TIME! Leaving the mike open is Sloppy, Unprofessional, and DOWNRIGHT RUDE! So if you really want to get someone angry (justifiably so), whine about them over an open mike! And that funny story you're sharing with your pal? Well, it isn't quite so funny when 200 people overhear it, and 30% of them get offended...
- 3. Another issue we've not talked about at all (yet) is the **Field Safety** issue. As someone who's announcing, you become the main "voice" of Safety for the event. And, YES, you CAN use the sound system to address Safety Concerns. Indeed, you're EXPECTED to do so.

As veteran announcer Al Hargus noted in his original announcing handbook written back in 1999, there are really three levels of safety at a kiting event:

- a. Spectator Safety Rules specifying where the general audience can and cannot go. They are intended to keep the general public safe. Enforce the rules, but temper them with gentle kindness... ("We just don't want you to be hurt" is the message to the spectators.)
- b. Contestant/Participant Safety These rules can and should be more strict. The fliers have responsibility for their kites, and SHOULD be responsible for their activities. You should also check the safety rules in the competition rule book from the American Kitefliers Association. These are rules the kiters HAVE to follow.
- c. Specific "Event" Rules These are generally restrictions placed on this specific event, either by the Organizer or by the locality in which the flying field lies. This is stuff like "Stay out of the construction area over there" and "The airport is fairly near, so the FAA asks that we limit kites to 500 foot lines, MAX!"

The announcing rules for Safety are fairly direct. If you see what you consider to be a safety violation (or someone is being unsafe in some other way), SAY SO! If the concern is immediate and dangerous, USE

THE SOUND SYSTEM! Also - Know who the field Safety Marshall is, and ask him to correct the situation right away!

Be especially aware of where spectators are during events. If they wander into unsafe areas or are acting in unsafe ways, tell them so and ask them to stop in a nice way – and contact the Safety Marshall to enforce your request if necessary.

Also, watch out for participants getting into unsafe conditions too. Out-Of-Control kites - especially large kites, "power/traction" kites, or kite trains - can turn a nice, peaceful beach or kite-field into a disaster area pretty quickly. Nip those dangers in the bud immediately. Again – call the Safety Marshall!

VI. PRE-PERFORMANCE PREPARATION - So you're doing well ON the field... But what can you do ahead of time to make your announcing even better and more "Professional?"

Well, as a matter of fact, HERE is where you turn from being an experienced amateur into a real PRO! It's where all the planning and growth and true long-term performance improvements actually take place! Before we go much farther however, you should understand that this'll take a bit of work on your part and consume some of your "free time" (if you have any...).

And – by the way – if you're concerned about such things, you should probably be making your own checklists, since we're going to get into some "personal" things here, and you might want an easy way to check to see if you have 'em all...

That said then, let's begin. We'll focus on four separate areas, and we're guessing that you've already started on some or all of them already. Still – here they are:

- **1. A "Personal" kit** that makes your life easier as an announcer. This is that odd "bunch of stuff" that you take to the beach or field that makes your life easier as an announcer.
- 2. A Permanent "Data" Book that provides much of the background info that you'll need to refer to as an announcer. Bios, and Rosters, and Rule Books things like that...
- **3. An "Event" Book** that pertains specifically to an upcoming event. Schedules, the list of folks who have registered for the event, directions to your lodgings, etcetera...
- **4.** And finally a list of **Memberships To Organizations** that'll help you along the way. The AKA certainly, and Leagues, plus a few other possible "helps." And we'll try to list what kind of help is available, from whom, and how to get it.

Let's start with the easy one first – **The Personal Kit!**

Assumptions: You have access to transportation, know what you need to live in a motel room (or a tent?), how to eat on the road, and what to wear for kiting events. We'll NOT include that stuff in this list, but the assumption is that you'll take care of it anyway.

1. What do you need to stay healthy at the event? Sunscreen? Lip Protectant? Sun Glasses? Insect Repellant? Your own special chair that soothes your aching back? Special shoes or sandals? Rain-Gear? Any special "Beach" medications? Any particular clothing? How about a

HAT? And so on... This list evolves over time, and you can modify it at will.

2. What do you need to Announce? Again, the list includes "personal stuff" – not items normally provided by the event or the league... Paper and 3-4 good pencils, or will your PDA do instead? Perhaps you carry all your lists on your laptop, so put that on the list (as well as the charger and the extra battery). Some sound systems have headphone jacks, and some announcers like to have their own headsets. Some carry wind-meters. Some have their own stop-watches. Some like to have their camera or a pair of binoculars handy. How about your special coffee cup or water bottle? A jacket in case it gets cold or windy? Maybe your "reading glasses" if you need them for some of the paperwork... Again, it's anything you need or that makes your life easier when you're announcing, and it'll evolve over time. And if you're a "snack" kinda person, throw SNACKS on the list as well.

Okay, assemble as much of this stuff as you can, and find/make/acquire something to carry it all in... A canvas bag, perhaps. Make sure there's enough room for at least the books we're going to create below. And if you're a List" person, throw the checklist in there too Set the whole thing aside so you have it handy when you're ready to go announcing! What? You took all that stuff out and redistributed it around the house? Well – grab the checklist you made and pull it all together again. It's time for your next event!

Next, let's tackle the hardest one – **The Permanent Data Book** (...and YOUR personal "Bible")

Assumption: You have access to an Internet connected computer and know how to use it!

- 1. Acquire and 8 ½" X 11" three-ringed binder and at least one package of tabbed page separators.
- 2. Then let's start by building a Kiting Event Calendar. Use the AKA's "Festival" page(s), any League websites and Club websites for your area, plus any other sources you can find including the local Kite shops. You want a calendar showing events you "could" make if someone wanted you to announce. Besides being a good "call list" for announcer gigs, these festivals and competitions are also good info to share over the mike at OTHER festivals... (Yes more "grist" for your announcing "mill!")
- 3. Then let's begin acquiring those pilot bios probably the most difficult of all the information to gather accurately. Search League websites, the AKA website, and any other sites you can think of that might have biographical information on kite fliers. You might also search the local kite club and kite store websites for bio info as part of

their sites. There's also a chance that you'll find some pilot bio info on Kitelife by clicking the "Profiles" button on the main page. Other than that, keep on acquiring bio data at any and all of the events you attend. Build your bio book, and keep adding to it. Believe us, it'll never be a finished work – but as the years go by, it'll become invaluable to you just the same.

- 4. If you're announcing Sport Kite Competitions, you'll also want to acquire League rosters. Get in touch with the Secretary of the League for which you're announcing, and obtain a.) an Officers List, and b.) a Membership List if they have one. While the officers and members will change over time, the data you obtain will probably be reasonably fresh and current. And it also might be another way to add to those missing bios!
- **5. And, collect worthwhile kite-related historical info.** It becomes very useful information to have when you have absolutely nothing to say and no activity is happening on the kite-field.
- 6. Now lest you think you're done there a couple of other things you can collect to help make you "valuable" to the Sport Kiters CDs! While events other than Ballet competitions are running, the sound system will normally play some background music. So if you collect music CDs for backgrounds, you'll be even more helpful to the League. You might collect some old time rock and roll, show tunes, big band music, and even some old "disco" CDs for background music. Stay away from the more radical music though. Avoid Hip-Hop, Rap and Heavy Metal, and any "questionable taste" tracks for example...

And if your league is into the occasional "Mystery Ballet" event, perhaps a good composite CD of tunes pilots might fly with for Mystery Ballet would be an asset too.

And if you REALLY want to get fancy, a couple of CDs with prerecorded "Hot Tricks" tunes, complete with the countdowns, would be especially valuable.

Okay – time to add to your store of useful information again – this time specifically slanted to a particular event – **The Event Book!**

NOTE – Much of the information you collect for the **Event** can be obtained directly from the Organizers a few days beforehand. It consists of:

1. A preliminary copy of the Event Schedule. You can familiarize yourself with the schedule and prepare your own list of announcements ahead of time if you know the tentative schedule.

- 2. A List of Sponsors, and what each sponsor has contributed (if the Organizers will part with that info). You can begin to formulate your Sponsor Announcement plans and "Thank Yous" ahead of time.
- 3. A List of off-site locations that are part of the Event, and directions / maps to those locations. Examples would be the Indoor Fly, the Banquet, etcetera... If you have the info ready, telling people how to get somewhere is easy. You could even have Mapquest Maps pre-printed, provided you have good information early enough.
- **4. A List of those who have Pre-Registered.** These become "known" folks and you can pull what bio information you have on them and get it ready BEFORE the event. Then you only have to worry about late registrants.

Most good announcers have a separate place within their binders where they keep this special Event info. Since it's separate, it's easy to locate and use. Once the event is over, the old info is disposed of, and the announcer begins getting ready for the next event!

Finally – Taken individually, each piece of information isn't really all that much. Taken together, however, having this information and your "tools" kit at your disposal just makes you a much more useful individual to have around. You know more. You have good information and some useful "tools" (your Music CDs, and local Maps, and directions.) to bring to the table, too. You'll soon become a very valuable asset to the organization – meaning you'll spend a fair amount of time with a mike in your hand, if that's what you really want!

Lastly, we'd like to recommend that you **Join some kiting organizations – buy some Memberships**, if you will. It's not only prudent (consider it "payback" if nothing else), but useful too! These memberships will not just cost you – they'll ease your way in the kiting fraternity, and help provide you with some of the necessary information to do your announcing job, too!

1. If you can only afford one membership, the **American Kiteflier's Association (AKA)** is THE one! If you're going to be hanging out with kiters, join the Association whose sole purpose is supporting kiters! The Membership will get you to an excellent online website at < http://www.aka.kite.org/ and an excellent quarterly magazine called Kiting. The AKA is the sanctioning body for all of the North American kite competitions and most of the festivals, and it help cover the liability insurance for nearly every Kite Festival and Competition in the Americas. You can't go wrong. In addition, if you're going to festivals, most of the participants you meet will take it for granted that you're an AKA member.

- 2. If you're announcing at kite competitions, you should probably join **the League** that sponsors them. There are three active leagues in the USA today, and they are:
 - a. The Eastern League http://www.easternleague.net/
 - b. The Bay Area Sport Kite League http://www.baskl.org/
 - c. The Northwest Sport Kite League http://www.nwskl.org/

Find out about your respective league online, and make sure you join and attend their annual meeting, if nothing else. These leagues govern and run most of the competitions across North America, save for one – the AKA Grand Nationals every October.

- 3. You might also consider joining your **local Kite Club**. There are too many Kite Clubs in the USA to list them all here, but your local kite shop can usually put you in touch with someone from the local Kite Club. And if you have no local kite shop, check the club listings in the back of <u>Kiting</u> magazine. The benefits are fellow pilots to fly with locally and kite camaraderie in your nearby community
- 4. In addition, there a couple of **Kite "Historical" organizations** that could use your support, and they return solid research help on a limited basis if asked. They are:
 - The World Kite Museum and Hall of Fame http://www.worldkitemuseum.com
 - The Drachen Foundation http://www.drachen.org

Both organizations have knowledgeable staffs and worthwhile programs and exhibits.

- 5. Since <u>Kiting</u> is the only printed North American "general populace" kite magazine in existence today, it's also worthwhile to mention the other general kite magazine, **Kitelife** Online Magazine at http://www.kitelife.com. Kitelife publishes loads of information and is free to all visitors, though they also offer subscriptions which provide additional benefits.
- 6. It is also worthwhile to become familiar with Steve Ferrel's marvelous website http://www.kitebuilder.com/. While Steve's **Kite Studio** is a for-profit business, there is also a huge wealth of useful free information available on that website including access to a wonderful kite plans database and a forum where you can get access to plenty of folks swilling to share information from around the world about the building of kites.

VII. IT'S ALL ABOUT ATTITUDE – how to go from "acceptable" to "sought after..."

Finally, we've reached the end. Yes, we've exhausted about all this little handbook can teach you – except for one small note here, which can make ALL the difference!

It's ALL about Attitude!

I often tell non-kiters about the wonders of the kiting community. I say: Take anyone... Put them on a Beach somewhere... Add warmth, the Sun, and a decent breeze... And put a kite in their hands...

Now, can you imagine ANY reason why that person wouldn't be just DELIGHTED?

Well, the kiting fraternity is like that – chock full of gracious, wonderful folks, people like you and me, all delighted to be out enjoying the sport they love!

Yet, somehow, cross words and crossed attitudes occasionally creep into this wonderful pastime. Some people apparently feel the need to be "better" than others, or perhaps they just cannot tolerate others being "different" for some reason... In any case, harsh words and hurtful epithets sometimes worm their way onto the kite field – and it's really too bad... Too bad for them. Too bad for you and me, too! And altogether too bad for the sport that we love!

For, to the degree that anyone suffers due to these unfortunate attitudes, we all suffer. And the sport of kiting is really FAR too small for us to be at each other's throats about anything...

But, conversely, to the degree that we are tolerant and <u>IN</u>clusive, rather than <u>EX</u>clusive, we can support and grow our sport and make it healthier!

So, as an announcer, you have the opportunity to really affect the sport we love, especially when you're on that microphone... You can drag the sport down if you want, but you can also boost it WAY UP, too! You can actually help "grow" kiting via the words you choose and the way you use them.

So, I'm asking... and I'll even plead... Please bring your POSITIVE attitude with you to the kite field, and leave any negativity behind - well before you pick up that mike. And PLAN (yup - that word again) to bring your joy and delight out right in front of the entire crowd! If you do nothing else, the sharing of your wonder in, and the delight you derive from, the sport of kiting is the ONE BEST THING you can ever do behind a microphone.

Thanks!

Dave 'geezer' Shattuck