

THEN & NOW



BY MIDGE NEFF-LECLAIR, PhD, HISTORY

Have you ever heard the expression “go fly a kite,” and if you have, did you wonder what it meant? Kites actually date back thousands of years, between 400 hundred to 300 hundred B.C., and are thought to have been invented by Archytas of the Greek city of Tarentum. The Chinese claim that one of their generals, Han Sin, invented the kite in 206 B.C. for use in war. Kites have contributed to scientific

research as far back as 1749 when two Scotsmen, Alexander Wilson and Thomas Melville, attached thermometers to record the temperature of clouds.

Three years later, in 1752, Benjamin Franklin brought electricity out of the sky with a kite, a string and a brass key during a rainstorm, using a square kite with two sticks of equal length, crossed at their centers, and covered with a large silk handkerchief. He attached an iron wire, used a hemp string to attach a silk ribbon to serve as an insulator. He tied a large brass key to close to the knot that held it together. From a dark thundercloud electricity traveled down the hemp string, sparks jumping from the brass key to his finger, proving his theory. (It was a lot more dangerous than he knew- he could have been electrocuted!)

In 1883 in England,

Douglas Archibald fastened an anemometer (wind meter) to the line of a kite, and was able to measure the wind velocity 1,200 feet in the air. Tailless kites can fly higher and at steeper angles than other kites. The people of Siam and other Far Eastern countries developed and flew kites without tails many centuries ago.

During the early 1900s kites played an important part in the United States Weather Bureau’s forecasts. The Bureau used the Hargrave kite, or box kite, invented about 1892 by Lawrence Hargrave of Australia. Those kites were made from spruce wood and covered with cloth. Three or more kites were flown in a line or “train” strung along a line of piano wire. The highest kite recorded barometric pressure, temperature, wind velocity, and humidity by means of a small instrument called a meteorograph.

Kites were important in the building of bridges--- a kite flown line was used for starting the suspension bridge across Niagara Falls. Once a line was carried across the gorge, a heavier line was attached and work could begin after drawing it across.

Several men used kites in their efforts to design a successful airplane. Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, was one of them. He created a large improved Hargrave kite which carried Lt. Thomas Selfridge of the U.S. Army to a height of 175 feet. Bell and a group of engineers designed a number of aircraft, several that made successful powered flights between 1907 and 1909.

Kite photography has long been a popular hobby, but as early as 1887 Douglas Archibald took pictures with a camera attached to

a kite. American inventor William Eddy used kites to take hundreds of pictures during the Spanish-American War.

When Guglielmo Marconi first successfully sent a radio signal across the Atlantic Ocean in 1901, he used a kite to elevate the antenna at the receiving station in Newfoundland. The kite was one of “man-lifting” type developed by Baden-Powell for use in the Boer War.

Since then, kites have often been used to send or receive radio signals-----and to send men in the air during wars to go behind enemy lines to gather information, or to simply land to establish a base. This was done during World War II.

A sturdy “target” kite was 5 feet by 5 feet, of the Eddy type, and often used in WWII for ground to air gunnery practice because

the kites could be controlled to simulate enemy aircraft movement. Kites were standard on many life rafts, and served as a guide to airmen or sailors searching for survivors lost at sea, to locate the raft.

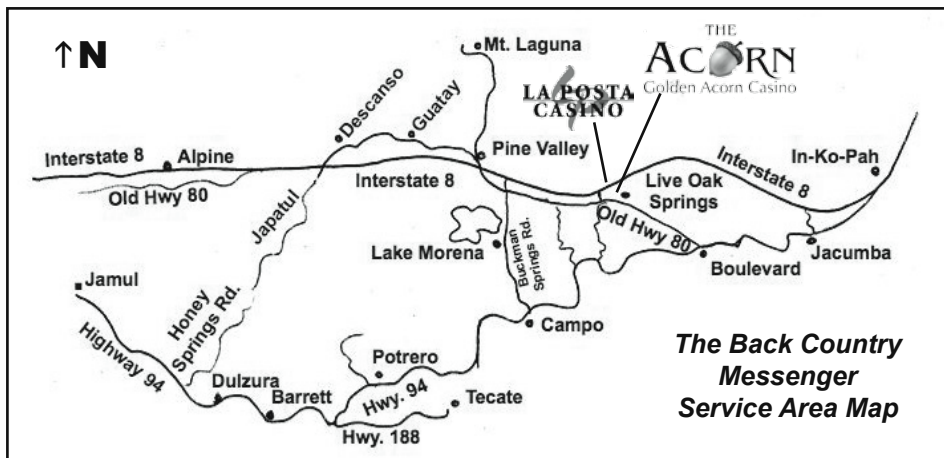
One of the best fliers of all box kites is the “Conyne Kite,” invented by an American, Silas J. Conyne in 1902, made from four sticks of pine, bass or spruce measuring 1/4th of an inch by 5/16th of an inch, and 42 inches long. These are connected by string, the frame wrapped, and covered with tissue or wrapping paper or often cambric cloth. Cloth is by far the most durable.

Directions to make many types of kites are available, and it is a great family project. (My youngsters used to make kites from my old dress patterns). Kite

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A Back Country Guide

To help you find your way around the back country



ALPINE: Motels, fast foods, restaurants, shops, health care, gas& lodging, historical significance, Viejas Casino and Factory Outlet Center, Post Office, churches, library, sheriff, fire protection, and community center.

DESCANSO: The Descanso Junction Restaurant, the Trading Post, Perkins Store & center, Camp Oliver, Historical sites, Post Office, churches, CDF, schools, and library along with a community center.

PINE VALLEY: Gas, restaurants, grocery, dental, lodging, County Park, camping & hiking, horseback riding, Historical sites, ORV area and U.S. Border Patrol facility, churches, library, Post Office and community center.

CAMPO: The Railroad Museum, Motor Transport Museum, Stone Store Museum, fishing and camping at Lake Morena, gas, groceries, Lake Morena RV park,

the Malt Shop and El Rancho Bar and Grill. In Campo the Campo Diner, Circle K, Trading Post, Mountain Health Center, Pacific Crest Hiking Trail, U.S. Border Patrol, ORV sites in Corral Canyon and along the U.S./Mexican border, churches and a library, CDF and Campo Fire, Post Office and community center. In addition, the Golden Acorn Casino.

POTRERO: The Potrero Store, Café 94, Post Office, CDF, County Park, library, schools, a Christmas tree farm, hiking, camping and a community center.

TECATE: The gateway to old Mexico; a passport is required to enter the United States through the International border.

BARRETT: Home of camping, fishing, and the best all you can eat fish fry at Barrett Junction Café.

BOULEVARD: The La Posta Casino and restaurant, Live Oak

Springs Resort, camping, cabins, gas, liquor & deli, markets, library, community center, hotels, Coins and Collectables, U.S. Border Patrol, fire and sheriff depts. The “Sacred Rocks Reserve” is a live-in park that offers overnight camping and motor home traveler’s spaces with full hook ups. Restrooms, showers, swimming pool, and many large oak trees and hiking trails are located within the reserve.

JACUMBA: The Hot Springs Resort and Spa, laundromat, market, Mountain Health Center, library, community center, park, glider port, and churches in town. Off the interstate is the De Anza Resort, a Subway and two gas stations.

IN-KO-PAH: Home to an equipment sales center and the Desert View Tower. The tower is a roadside attraction with gifts, shade, drinks, restrooms and a view for many miles.

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Vol. 4 No. 1
 March 2010

PO Box 71
 Campo, CA 91906
 (619) 933-3789

Available Online:
www.backcountrymessenger.com
 Published on the fourth Monday of each month
 Print Circulation: 3000 + Worldwide on the Web

Published by Campo Online
 Owners: Tony and Lynn Neff
 Editor: Lynn Neff
editor@backcountrymessenger.com

Advertising & Subscriptions:
 Tony Neff
tony@backcountrymessenger.com

Proof Editor: Carmen Sylva
carmen@backcountrymessenger.com



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