Modern Kiting

Something for Everyone



By Susan Skinner

American Kitefliers Association © 2004 www.aka.kite.org aka@aka.kite.org 1-800-252-2550 We remember as children taking a dime-store kite to the park and running like mad. Well, things have changed. The average kiteflier isn't a kid, and running isn't required.

Kiting today is a sport, craft, art, show, battle and competition! There are big kites, small kites, multi-line kites, maneuverable kites, indoor kites and even kites that will propel a person.

The single-line kites of our youth are still plentiful, with more variety in their designs than ever before. Today's kites are, however, works of art, some with hundreds of appliquéd pieces. Unlike the kites of old made of paper and wood, these kites are pure high tech. Carbon fiber rods and resinimpregnated, rip-stop nylon is the "canvas" of choice for today's *kite-building* artists, craftsmen and enthusiasts.

Not the arts or crafts type? Kiting still has plenty to offer. Multi-line kites that are maneuverable for intricate aerial performances may be the sport for you. *Sport kites* have two or more lines and an average wingspan of eight feet. Competition opportunities

abound across the U.S. and around the world. Competition consists of two disciplines: precision and ballet. For a precision event a contestant flies a shape, such as a triangle, in the air with the kite. For ballet a contestant choreographs the movement of the kite to music creating an aerial dance. A contestant, however, doesn't have to be just one person; there are pairs and team events as well. Instead of just one kite and one flier, you have four kites, four fliers and a spectacular display of skill.

Sport kite fliers, however, are not happy to stop when the sun goes down; they grab their ultra light kites and head indoors. Sure, you think, with a big fan wrong, no fan, the only "wind" is made by fliers themselves with their body motion. The kites they fly need so little wind most would fly on a moving sidewalk in an airport. But having control of the wind direction has a few advantages; the flier now has a full 360-degree dome to fly the kite in, so the kite can go from in front of the flier, over the head and turn behind the flier. To not be out-done by the outdoor competitions, it's all choreographed to music as well.

The kiting options don't stop there. If you are the type which prefers a head-to-head competition, then take a look at *fighter kites*. Fighter kites have been around for thousands of years, fly on one line and are maneuverable. Good fighter kite pilots can fly the same precision figures as sport kite pilots, but instead of following imaginary lines they are battling their fellow kitefliers in a kind of mid-air, one-on-one touch football. Points are gained by touching the lines of your competitors' kites.

More of the alone-with-nature type? Then traction kiting can take you there. Kite bugging, kite surfing and kite ATB (all terrain board) can propel a person across land, sea and mountains. Be it a leisurely ride or an extreme experience with plenty of airtime for the pilot, it's up to you. The common aspect of traction kiting is the pilot gets to follow along with the kite for the ride. Three-wheel buggies, modified surfboards or extra large all terrain skateboards are the vehicles, a parachute-looking kite is the motor and the wind is the fuel. A true clean air mode of transportation, that actually lets you enjoy the air you breathe.

Weight-lifter types don't get left out; if you think size matters, *show kites* are for you. These large inflatable kites, on thousand-pound test line, gracefully fill the sky with fanciful and imaginary shapes of animals, people or just swirling colors. No festival is complete without these elegant and powerful displays of kiting extravagance, visible for miles around.

And for collectors of the world, don't forget to tuck a few *miniature kites* in your pocket; even an apartment dweller can have hundreds. Most miniature kites are made with simple paper and bamboo, but if you interested in the record for smallest kite you will need to look at mylar and boron as construction materials.

Modern kiting is a multi-dimensional activity involving a diverse community of artists, performers and sports enthusiasts from around the world with something to match everyone's individual taste for adventure and fun.

To find out more about modern kiting and how to get involved, check out:

The American Kitefliers Association www.aka.kite.org aka@aka.kite.org 1-800-252-2550

And remember to always fly safe!