KITE FACT SHEET

9th Fact: As the airplane became firmly established, the kite became nothing more than something used for recreational flying. The last 50 years have seen renewed interest in kiting. Rogallo’s flexi-wing and Jalbert’s parafoil kites helped develop modern hang-gliders and sports parachutes. In 1972 Peter Powell made the duel line stunter popular. This has led the public to believe that kite flying could be a sport and not just child’s play. Now many adults and children are enjoying this healthy pastime.

6th Fact: The Polynesians have myths about two brother gods introducing kites to man when they had a kite duel. Kite fighting is still a popular event in the Far East.

3rd Fact: Kite flying spread from China via trade to Korea, Japan, and India. Kites were then taken into Japan, about the 7th century, by Buddhist monks. They were used to avert evil spirits and to insure rich harvests. Kite flying became very popular in Japan during the Edo period. For the first time Japanese people below the Samurai class could fly kites. The government tried to discourage this pastime as too many people became unmindful of their work.

5th Fact: There are many stories about how the people of Micronesia used a leaf kite to carry bait out over the water where the garfish fed.

7th Fact: Marco Polo carried stories of kites to Europe around the end of the 13th century. Illustrations of the period show non-flying dragon kites based on military banners. Kites were regarded as curiosities at first and had little impact on European culture.

1st Fact: The exact date and origin of the kite is not known but it is believed that they were flown in China more than two thousand years ago.

4th Fact: About 300 years ago a thief was said to use a large kite to carry himself to the top of Nagoya Castle in order to steal golden statues from the roof. All he got were some scales and he was captured and punished severely when he bragged of his exploits.

8th Fact: In the 18th and 19th centuries kites were used as vehicles for discovery. Ben Franklin, Sir George Caley, Samuel Langley, Lawrence Hargrave, Alexander Graham Bell, and the Wright Brothers experimented with kites and contributed to development of the airplane. Kites designed by Eddy and Hargrave were used to raise meteorological instruments. A schoolmaster, George Pocock, used a pair of kites to pull a carriage at speeds of up to 20 miles per hour. How would one measure the horsepower of this carriage?

2nd Fact: The earliest written account of kite flying was about 200 B.C. describing when the Chinese general Han Hsin, Han Dynasty, flew a kite above a town to determine how far his army would have to tunnel. Thus, knowing the distance, his troops surprised their enemy and were victorious.