

To Fly A Kite

by Robert Hilliard

Kiting has an interesting history in the USA. It seems to have experienced a 20+ year popularity streak from the 1980's up until the early 2000's. During that time a great number of kite manufacturers sprung up and offered all types of kites for the public. The economy was strong and our past time as Americans appeared to gravitate to activities outside the home.

Sport kites also appeared to come into vogue. Sport kite teams were created and numerous kite competitions and festivals were held to accommodate the growing number of people getting into kiting as a hobby. Kite stores were opening up as well as individual kite makers building and offering all types of single-line, dual-line and specialty kites.

All the world was grand with kiting until about 2008. The downturn in the American economy began to cause many kite stores and manufacturers to go out of business. Kites that were once made in America were being manufactured in China to help cut costs and increase profits. In the mid 2000's the popularity of kiting seemed to wane as technology got more involved in our past time. Children, who normally spent their time outside, started staying indoors with their cell phones, computers and gaming units. Adults were affected also finding very little time for leisurely activities and hobbies. Kiting, as we know it, took a big popularity hit.



Today, there are still kite manufacturers in the USA, but you can probably count them on one hand and the ones that actually make their kites here in the states are even more scarce. Brick and mortar kite stores have been replaced with mobile kite units. Many stores reside online only under the auspices of Ebay offering a limited line of kites. Due to this decline, many in the kite community have been asking questions such as, "Will kiting ever return to its former glory?" and "What will it take to make kiting a popular hobby once again?" Many think as long as the economy is in the dumps, so kiting will be also. That could very well be true, but I tend to feel that as Americans, we might need a change in our lifestyle.

In my opinion, our lives have become too cluttered. Taking the time to relax and fly a kite, go fishing or even read a book seems to be far down the priority list. Maybe it's time we break away from our technological strongholds and focus on relaxing activities outside the home... like kite flying. To fly a kite, all you need is some wind, space and of course, a kite. Kiting is an excellent way to relieve stress. Try to attend some kite festivals and any kite club flying days at a local park. The benefits to your health and mental well-being just might be immeasurable. Maybe that's why kiting has been around for thousands of years. Will our bad economy continue? A flip of a coin might answer that. Will the downturn in kite popularity continue? It will as long as we let it.