

PEAK_{OF} FLIGHT

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 500 / JULY 23RD, 2019

IN THIS ISSUE

***A RETROSPECTIVE
HISTORY OF THE
PEAK-OF-FLIGHT
NEWSLETTER***

<https://www.apogeerockets.com/Rocket-Kits/Skill-Level-5-Model-Rocket-Kits/Saturn-V-1-70th-Scale>

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APOGEE
COMPONENTS

PEAK^{of}FLIGHT

A Retrospective History of Peak-of-Flight Newsletter

By Tim Van Milligan

As you can see by the cover page, this is our 500th issue of the Peak-of-Flight e-zine newsletter. To be honest, I never thought we'd reach this particular milestone. Because, just think about it... E-gads, it is 500 articles and tens of thousands of photos and illustrations! The amount of work we've put into it is just too massive to comprehend.

Before you give me all the credit, I have to say that I had a lot of help with these 500 issues by our in-house crew over the years: John Manfredo, Douglas Shrock, Lauren Bzdak, Michelle Mason, Erin Card, Dave Curtis, Chris Duran, and Matthew Martinez. Plus we've had dozens and dozens of guest articles by so many rocketeers that I can't even remember them all. Those are the people that I'd personally like to thank for making this newsletter so awesome.

But the real credit goes to you and our other readers of this newsletter. Without you downloading and reading this publication, and offering your support and asking so many great questions that sparked ideas, we would have never ever gotten to 100 issues, let alone to the 500th issue that we're at right now. So I'm saying "Thank YOU!" You are the real driving force of this newsletter.

How Did I Get Started In Publishing?

I'm a student of marketing. I have been ever since I was in engineering college back in 1986, when I was the advertising salesman of my college newspaper. It was there that I learned about the power of connecting with customers. The rule was: "If you aren't talking to your customers, you can bet that your competition is." What this means is that you have to stay in touch with the people you wanted to do business with, and the best technique is to offer them value with a newsletter.

This Peak-of-Flight was not my first publishing endeavour. Along with Patrick McCarthy and Mike Myrick, we published a rocketry club newsletter when I lived in Cape Canaveral, Florida for our NAR section called Space Coast Rocketry. Because Patrick and Mike were so much funnier than I, the newsletter was very light-hearted and we had tons of laughs putting it out. To be up front, I think I repurposed two or three articles from that newsletter into the early issues of Peak-of-Flight.

When I worked at Estes in the early 1990s, I also put out a

newsletter for the guys that flew international rocketry competitions (FAI stuff). Because its purpose was to disseminate information amongst the team members, it was more technical in nature. The only way to get the information back then, because we closely guarded our secrets for winning contests, was you had to join the International Spacemodeling Society. It was almost like a secret society of rocketeers that was hard to join because no one knew about it (even though we would welcome people that wanted to participate in competition).

What I learned from that experience is that information needs to be shared more widely. I think that everyone on the team came to the same conclusion, because now all the secrets are out in the open. You can find all the tactics and techniques on the NAR's web site under the competition section. The problem we have now is that even after making all the information available and free, you still have to get people to read it. There is so much information being generated every day that there is no guarantee that anyone will ever see it.

So my philosophy these days is to just put all my secrets out into the ether. While they are technically "available," they stay a "secret" because of the low number of people that will ever stumble across them. An example is how I gave away my secrets for running Apogee Components in issue number 454; <https://www.apogeerockets.com/education/downloads/Newsletter454.pdf>. 50 years from now, someone will stumble across that article and find a nugget of information that they can use to put us out of business.

Besides doing those two newsletters, I also submitted a few articles to the NAR's magazines. So I had written a lot of stuff about rocketry before I even published the first issue of



the POF.

Oh... I also forgot. I wrote a book on model rocketry too. In 1994 I wrote the first edition of Model Rocket Design and

About this Newsletter

You can subscribe to receive this e-zine FREE at the Apogee Components website www.ApogeeComponents.com, or by clicking the link here [Newsletter Sign-Up](#)

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Construction.

Writing books doesn't pay much...



TIM VAN MILLIGAN HOLDING HIS COPY OF MODEL ROCKET DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Marketing Applied!

Also in 1994, I took over the reigns of Apogee Components from Ed LaCroix. It was then that I got dunked into the world of marketing. And that (ie. "marketing") is why I started the newsletter.

I've patterned Apogee's marketing after what Vern Estes did with Estes Industries. In other words, what they did in the late 1950s and 1960s is what I did in the mid 1990s. My first task after taking over from Ed was to put out my own printed catalog. But I didn't have very many products. So what I did was to create a number of Technical Reports, and tried to sell those through the catalog. Again, this was patterned after what Estes did, producing a number of reports that you can still read today.

It was slow going back then. Reports don't sell well (they still don't). But slowly Apogee grew, along with the number of products we sold.

But something changed in the early 1990s that significantly changed my fortunes. It was about that time that this thing called the "Internet" started becoming popular. Up until about 1995, the Internet was basically a collection of bulletin boards. Today we called them "forums." But back then, they were the only place to visit. I can remember that when I worked at Estes in 1993, I was assigned to be the official representative for Estes to lurk in the forums and answer questions that modelers had about Estes.

But around 1995, the first web browsers started appearing. Before that, your access to the Internet was through an app through a provider like America Online (AOL) or the one that I used, Compuserve. It was much like using Google Play or I-Tunes from Apple to get to the Internet. It was powerful, but you only got to view what they wanted you to have access to.

But when web browsers appeared, wow did this change things! It was like a jailbreak for your phone. Instead of a person being limited to the forums to talk to customers, a company like Apogee could create a homepage that stayed up, and customers could come to them for information.

This changed my marketing philosophy at Apogee. And I raced as quickly as I could to create a web page so that I could stake a claim to real-estate in cyberspace. I credit that swift movement to make a webpage as the main reason why

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CHECK OUT THE APOGEE  PAGE
CLICK OR  HERE FOR OUR HELPFUL
AND INFORMATIVE HOW-TO VIDEOS
ON MODEL ROCKETRY

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Modul 10: Social Media Marketing

1. Social Media Marketing (SMM) ist die gezielte Nutzung von Social Media zur Erreichung von Marketingzielen.

Plattform	Charakteristika	Marketing-Möglichkeiten
Facebook	Gründet 2004, weltweit größte soziale Netzwerk	Targeted Advertising, Sponsored Posts
Instagram	Bild- und Videoorientiert, Fokus auf visuelle Inhalte	Instagram Ads, Sponsored Posts
TikTok	Videoorientiert, Fokus auf kurze, unterhaltsame Clips	TikTok Ads, Sponsored Videos
LinkedIn	B2B-Fokus, berufliche Netzwerke	LinkedIn Ads, Sponsored Content
Twitter	Text- und Bildorientiert, Fokus auf kurze Texte	Twitter Ads, Sponsored Tweets
YouTube	Videoorientiert, zweitgrößte Suchmaschine	YouTube Ads, Sponsored Videos
Pinterest	Bildorientiert, Fokus auf Inspiration und DIY	Pinterest Ads, Sponsored Pins


2. Zielgruppenidentifizierung: Wer sind meine potenziellen Kunden? Wo sind sie online? Welche Interessen haben sie?

3. Content-Strategie: Was ist meine Botschaft? Wie präsentiere ich sie? Wie oft und wann poste ich?

4. Community-Management: Wie reage ich auf Kommentare und Nachrichten? Wie baue ich eine aktive Community auf?

5. Analytics: Wie messe ich den Erfolg meiner SMM-Kampagne? Welche KPIs sind relevant?

Seed-ix Mail



My objective with the first issue was to put out an article per week. That was a big challenge, because at that time,

ISSUE 01, APRIL 16, 2000

APOGEE

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NEWSLETTER

How are your flying skills?

By Tim Van Milligen

It is pretty simple to judge building skill of a modeler. You empirically look at the rocket and tell by the quality of the craftsmanship. Are the halves first aligned, or are they just rounded off. Is the model bent, or punked? Are the fins glued on straight, or are they crooked? Are they evenly spaced around the perimeter of the rocket? Are the grooves in the tube filled? Is the motor snugly seated, or is it a soft landing? Are the

The other big "flying skill" that I am concerned about is how a rocketeer picks the model for flight. Is it a race against the clock, or do they pump the model as if the rocket was worth a million dollars?

Does the modeler carefully inspect his own rocket for defects? Do they roll out the shock cord fully and give it a good hand rag? Do they inspect ejection baffles? Do they wiggle the motor mount to see if it has come loose on the hot fire? Do they, when the fire is on, if one holds the ejection

And even though HTML format newsletters were possible back then, I insisted that our newsletter be “text” only. Lots of other newsletters were adding graphics and other flashy stuff

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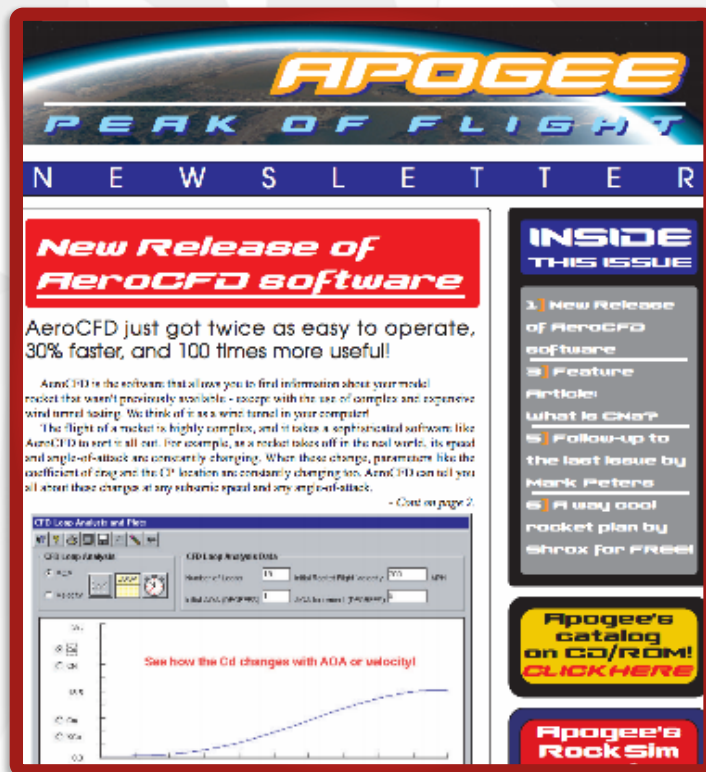
to their newsletters. But the problem was that we were still using dial-up modems to connect to the Internet. Graphics added a lot of bandwidth issues, and many people back then didn't have the capacity to load the graphics. The other issue was that a lot of people back then associated the HTML format newsletters to be spam. They had their email programs automatically block any email that was in HTML format. So in order to make sure our newsletters were read, we kept the email that went out to subscribers as plain old "text" up until issue #316 in July 2012. I felt by that point that the ability to download graphics was easier, and also that people began to accept that HTML-formatted email messages weren't necessarily spam.

Putting out a newsletter every week was very difficult. Especially when the goal is to put out high-quality "how-to" information about rocketry. This wasn't just a blog where I could spout off about anything that was on my mind. I wanted it to be useful to customers, something that was evergreen and would last a lifetime as a reference. After two years of doing it weekly (around issue #77) we switched from being a weekly newsletter to doing one every other week.

The other main reason for going bi-weekly was because our workload doubled when we switched the newsletter at issue #73 to being in PDF format. Making a PDF document with drawings, photos, and other artistic elements required more time to produce. A lot more...

Prior to issue 73, all the newsletters were done as a simple email. Remember, we were only using "text" with no pictures because we wanted to make sure that our emails wouldn't be marked as spam. When we changed to the PDF format for the newsletter, it also meant that we had to archive the issues on our website for people to download them.

Why did we go to PDF instead of just switching over to HTML that you could view in a browser? There were two reasons. The first was the type of content we were producing. Remember, our goal was to produce articles with great



PEAK-OF-FLIGHT ISSUE #73

how-to content and lots of detailed graphics. For example, in our first PDF newsletter, we included a rocket plan that had detailed artwork. I know that when I build from a plan, I like a print-out of the rocket to make construction easier. I figured that our readers are similarly minded, so I wanted to give them something that was easy to print out. Printing a PDF is much easier, and the quality is significantly better than printing out a web page.

The other reason for going to PDF is that I realized that

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another name for “hobbyist” is “collector.” Our readers want to collect the newsletters, like they do old catalogs from rocket manufacturers. So I wanted to give them something they could print out and store in a binder in their rocket library. I myself printed out each of the Peak-of-Flight newsletters for storage. I have to admit that I stopped doing so at issue #400 because I ran out of space on my bookshelf.

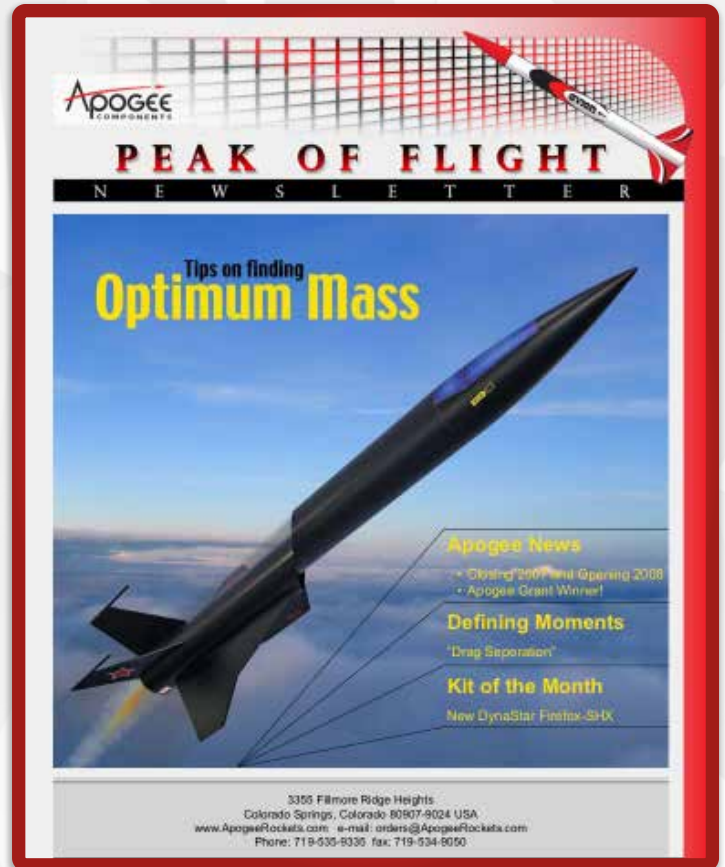
The one downside of going to a downloadable pdf is the file size. When we first started the PDF version, I didn't realize how much bandwidth it would consume with thousands of people downloading the PDF at one time. In fact, the first time we did put it out, it crashed the server.

We had to make two changes because of this issue. The first was to get a server with more bandwidth capacity so it wouldn't crash if it was inundated with thousands of people requesting the PDF at the same time.

The second thing we did was to reduce the quality of the images inside the newsletter for general subscribers. Making the image quality lower does reduce the file size and therefore the load on the web server.

But I really wanted to allow our “best customers” access to high resolution images in the newsletter. After all, the purpose of starting the newsletter was to provide valuable content to our existing clients. So we do create a high-resolution version of the newsletter that our best customers can download - which prints out much better for archiving than the regular newsletter that most of the subscribers read. If you want to get the high-resolution version of the newsletter, all you have to do is become a V.I.R. (Very Important Rocketeer) customer, and we'll give you the link to the high-resolution version of the pdf. You'll find details of our Frequent Flyer Program at: https://www.apogeerockets.com/Frequent_Flyer_Program.

If you go to the archives (<https://www.apogeerockets.com/>)



PEAK-OF-FLIGHT ISSUE #200

[Peak-of-Flight](#) you'll notice that we also have pdf versions for the issues prior to #73 too. We created them a few years later, because people kept coming to the archive page and asking where issues #1 through #72 were. So we just created

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Electronics Hardware Installation Kit

Think of the convenience of getting everything to professionally install your dual-deployment or other electronic payload into a e-bay of your rocket!

Includes: nylon standoffs, screws & nuts, wire, push-switch, drill & tap, ejection charge cannisters, barrier strips, wire ties, and step-by-step DVD instructions.

https://www.apogeerockets.com/Electronics_Payloads/Electronics_Accessories/Electronics_Mounting_Kit

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simple PDF versions of those issues to fill in the gaps.

You'll also notice on our archive page that starting with issue #462 that we have HTML versions of the newsletter. Why is that?

We realized by looking at our website analytics that about 30 percent of our visitors are using their cell phones when browsing. While a PDF is great for physically printing out the issues, it is terrible for viewing if you're on a small screen like a cell phone. For that reason, we started putting a duplicate version of the newsletter as its own web page.

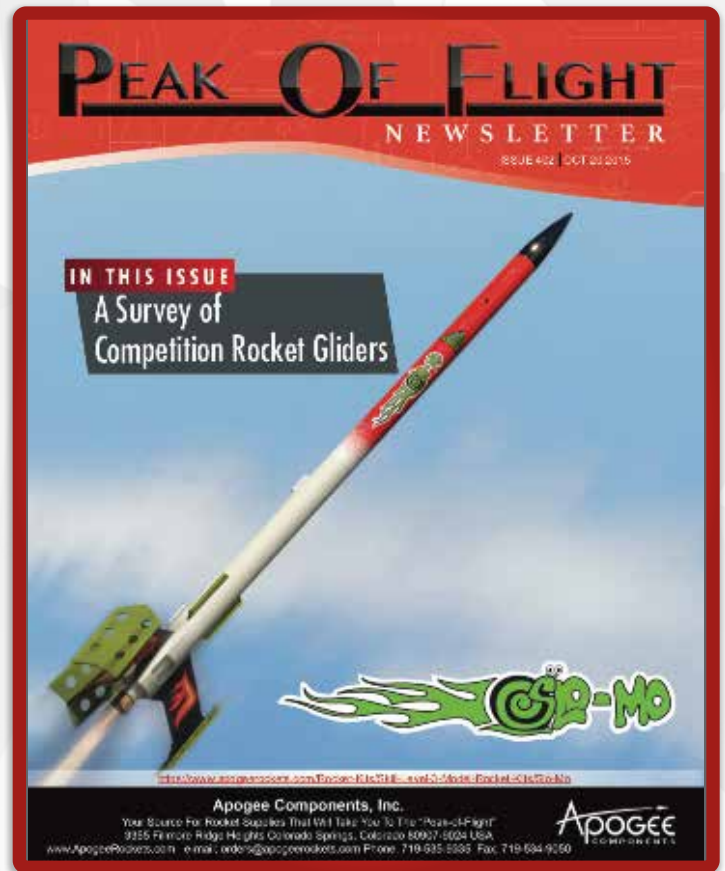
If you're counting, that means that for every issue, we're producing three versions: the low-resolution PDF, the high-resolution PDF, and the web page version. See what work we're doing to accommodate your needs?

Other Newsletters



CURRENT APOGEE WEBSITE

The Peak-of-Flight newsletter isn't the only way we stay in contact with our customers. At the time we came out with issue #209, we also started our "Advanced Construction Video" series (https://www.apogeerockets.com/Advanced_Construction_Videos/all?m=education).



PEAK-OF-FLIGHT ISSUE #400

There were two reasons for this. The first was that we really needed a presence on YouTube in order to keep our name 'out there.' There are a lot of people that find out about Apogee not through word-of-mouth, nor via a google search, but through browsing videos on YouTube. It just made good business sense to have videos on YouTube.

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The second reason was that it gave us an opportunity to show “techniques” of rocket construction. This is very similar to that first issue of the Peak-of-Flight newsletter, where I wanted to talk about flying “skills.” This is not “what” you do, but “how” you do it.

For example, cutting out fins from a pattern sheet sounds pretty simple. But if you don’t hold your knife in the proper way with your hands, it will take you a lot longer to cut the fins and the quality of the edges will be a lot worse. Watching someone cut out the fins, and seeing how they hold the knife and the angle that the blade is positioned relative to the wood is a lot of priceless information. You can learn this so much better in video format that you could in a printed newsletter like Peak-of-Flight.

The Advanced Construction Videos have actually become more popular than the Peak-of-Flight newsletter. At least the number of comments I get from subscribers are more about

it even better in the future.

One thing that I’d really like to do is put more rocket plans in the newsletter. The 25 rocket plans that ShroX did for the newsletter are still pretty popular (<https://www.apogeerockets.com/Peak-of-Flight-Rocket-Plans>). I like them, and I’m sure that other modelers like them too. People still download the RockSim files for them from our website, so I know someone is building them. So I’d like to put more plans into the newsletter, and at this point, I guess I’m asking for submissions. If you have a cool plan that uses Apogee parts and components, feel free to send them our way.

On a different note, we also put out a few newsletters that were specifically targeted at teachers. Again, I was trying to



APOGEE NEWSLETTER VAULT

the videos than the print newsletter. If I ever have to cut back and my choice was to make the videos or the printed newsletter, for me it would be obvious. I would only make the videos. But right now, I don’t have any intention of shutting off the Peak-of-Flight newsletter. In fact, I have a few ideas to make



LIFT OFF LETTER

mimic what Estes did with their newsletter for educators.



We called that newsletter the “Liftoff Letter.” You can find ancient archives of those issues at: https://www.apogeerockets.com/Lift_off_Letter/index_listing.

However, that newsletter was much harder to produce than the Peak-of-Flight, because its content focus was so much narrower. It had to appeal to teachers. I would very much like to bring it back, but I’m not sure when that might be. If you’d like to contribute to that newsletter by writing articles for teachers, please let me know.

Our other current newsletter is called the “Industry

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NEVER LOSE ANOTHER ROCKET



www.apogeerockets.com/Electronics-Payloads/Rocket-Locators/Simple-GPS-Tracker

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Updates Newsletter.” We just started it November 12, 2018, and already it is getting very popular. The primary goal again is to have another touch point with rocketeers so that they know we’re looking out for them. This newsletter is about what is happening in the industry, outside of what is going on here at Apogee Components. I think it is growing so quickly because people really want to be in the know and to hear

information first. If you’d like to receive it free, visit: <https://www.apogeerockets.com/Industry-Update-Subscribe>

Conclusion

I’m pleased at what Peak-of-Flight has accomplished over the last couple of decades, and the impact it has had on the hobby. One benefit that I haven’t talked about is all the great content that we produced in the newsletters. I have to say, it is awesome! Again, a big thank-you goes to all the authors that have contributed over the years. It is a repository that I think it crucial to the hobby.

The one complaint that we have received is that there is so much information in our archives, that it is hard to find something on a particular topic for what you’re looking for.

To answer that, I used to say to people to go get a copy of the book Model Rocket Design and Construction (https://www.apogeerockets.com/Rocket_Books_Videos/Books/Model_Rocket_Design_And_Construction). The third edition (copyright 2008), contains a lot information that originally appeared in Peak-of-Flight, and it is organized in a logical way by chapter and topic. The book makes it really easy to find what you’re looking for. But it has been 11 years since we updated the book, and I could easily stuff even more articles from Peak-of-Flight into it. If you’re looking for information on a particular topic, all I can suggest at this point is to use the search bar on the Apogee website. We’ve updated it over the years in order to help you quickly find what you’re searching for. I use it dozens of times each day myself.

In conclusion, I’d like to thank you for allowing me to give you an inside look at the Peak-of-Flight newsletter, and its history. I know this isn’t the normal “how-to” information you’re

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Check out our Facebook page
www.facebook.com/ApogeeRockets

Looking for
SHOCK CORDS?



Check out our website
for a selection of:

Kevlar, Elastic, Rubber Ribbon cords
Low Power, High Power

www.ApogeeRockets.com/Building_Supplies/Parachutes_Recovery_Equipment/Shock_Cord

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accustomed to seeing here. But you never know. Maybe this is a how-to article about how to start your own model rocketry newsletter. If it helped you in any way, please let me know. I'd love to hear your thoughts and opinions on the Peak-of-Flight newsletter.

About The Author:

Tim Van Milligan (a.k.a. "Mr. Rocket") is a real rocket scientist who likes helping out other rocketeers. He is an avid rocketry competitor and is Level 3 high power certified. He is often asked what is the biggest rocket he's ever launched. His answer is that before he started writing articles and books about rocketry, he worked on the Delta II rocket that launched satellites into orbit. He has a B.S. in Aeronautical Engineering from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida, and has worked toward an M.S. in Space Technology from the Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne, Florida. Currently, he is the owner of Apogee Components (<http://www.apogeerockets.com>) and also the author of the books: Model Rocket Design and Construction, 69 Simple Science Fair Projects with Model Rockets: Aeronautics and publisher of the "Peak-of-Flight" newsletter, a FREE ezine newsletter about model rockets. You can email him by using the contact form at <https://www.apogeerockets.com/Contact>.

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Dollar for dollar, you'll see the most results by advertising in the *Peak-of-Flight Newsletter*. In fact, I guarantee it. If you don't see more results from your advertisement in the Peak-of-Flight Newsletter, I'll run your advertisement for two more issues at NO COST!

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Additional Articles from Peak-of-Flight Containing History of Apogee Components:

Issue #472 - <https://www.apogeerockets.com/education/downloads/Newsletter472.pdf>

Issue #395 - <https://www.apogeerockets.com/education/downloads/Newsletter395.pdf>

Issue #251 - <https://www.apogeerockets.com/education/downloads/Newsletter251.pdf>

Issue #89 - <https://www.apogeerockets.com/education/downloads/Newsletter89.pdf>

Issue #41 - <https://www.apogeerockets.com/education/downloads/Newsletter41.pdf>

