

# The Rainier Paragliding Club Newsletter

Serving the Paragliding Community of Western Washington

[www.rainierparaglidingclub.org](http://www.rainierparaglidingclub.org)

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## The Thermal Column

### Four guys, Four days, Four sites



The long awaited day for departure to fly Goat Mt. was finally here but Goat wasn't gonna be flyable for at least 2 days! There's got to be some way to save this trip. Looking at the weather forecast for the whole state showed that Tiger was our best bet for Thursday and that would put us about half way to Chelan, which looked good for Friday. It was pretty easy to convince Wade, Mike, and Joe that this was a reasonable plan.

We sat up on Tiger launch from about noon to four pm, watching the wind slowly move from SW to W, to just slightly north of west. At about 4pm, Mike led the way and we all quickly followed getting almost a two hour flight.

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On the RPC Web Site: [Calendar & Membership Form](#)

This was one of my longest flights ever because I was too scared to go down and land. By the time I was ready, there were scads of pilots landing, some approaching from the north, others approaching from the south. Finally, after all my buddies had landed, I did some wingovers and asymmetric 360's to get down between other pilots, and finishing off by falling on my butt!



We left Tiger for Chelan stopping on a forest service road at Blulette Pass to spend the night. The following morning, we arrived at Chelan Falls Park at about 10 am. It was noon when we got to launch meeting up with Paul and Ray and a couple of others.

The cycles were coming in from 4 to 12 mph from the SW. I was told that the wind would probably increase, so I quickly hooked in and launched even though two other pilots were already hooked in and waiting. I launched the Green Monster, as I think the others did also.

I immediately entered a good thermal and stayed with it to over 6000 msl before the next pilot was able to launch. By this time, I was just over 8000 ft., this just minutes after my launch. It was very rowdy though, and I was all alone up there, and kind of intimidated by the conditions. Soooo, I bailed out and headed out over the river.

My flight lasted a half hour, equal in duration to all the other pilots. I'm sure we all could have flown longer but the air was just too rowdy.

Arriving back at launch at 3pm, the cycles were now like 3 to 16 mph from the SW. No one seemed to interested in launching. After about an hour, Ray launched and flew right out to the lz. Then Derek launched and hung out over the Green Monster without being able to penetrate for a few moments.



He was then able to top land then immediately folded up. One other pilot attempted a launch and was drug around a bit. This prompted us to drive back down. For me, this ended up being a very intimidating place.

The next day, we all meet at the Goat lz about noon and soon headed up to launch. In addition to the four of us, we were joined by Steve M., Grizz, Ray, Paul K, Derek, and four locals.

There were a very few cummies around, but none were close. The cycles were coming in

from 2 to 8 mph. The launch had plenty of much appreciated shade offering relief from the blistering sun while awaiting your turn to launch. The very friendly locals launched first showing us the way. We all launched and joined them.

With lots of thermals to play in, and the air not too rowdy, I was able to break through 10,000 ft. a couple of times, while others got over 11,000! After hanging out at 9,000/10,000 for a while, I began a cycle of getting high, do acro, getting high, do acro etc.

After a little more than an hour, everyone else was gone, so I too headed for the lz arriving with over 6,000 feet to play in. Doing the earlier acro had kind of warmed me up which helped provide me enough nerve to do my first over the dirt SATs since SoCal last winter. I acro'ed down to my best landing of the trip and kited over to the shade tree where most of the pilots were relaxing.

Since the forecast for Goat didn't look as promising for Sunday, Wade, Joe, and I headed over to the Big Johnson. This also put us closer to home.

The next morning, the forecast for the BJ provided by Jimyb, (thanks Jim) didn't look so good either. Ray and Paul joined us about 1 pm.

The conditions were as forecast. We all flew but no one got high and staying up was work. I had one extended sledder to a humiliating butt landing then drove for the others. Joe had two nice flights. Paul got in a nice flight. Wade and Derek did multiple top landings. Ray had an extended sledder.



And so, on Sunday night, we arrived in Port Townsend about 8 pm. It was an epic trip. Wish you all could have made it.

Wayne Maxwell

## The Short and the Long of It

by Kim Smith



Every December, I can hardly wait until the 23rd and the days will finally start getting longer. This last year was no exception, but the snow and rain just never seemed to stop falling. When it did finally stop, snow was piled so high that my favorite local flying site was buried preventing it from being flown anytime soon.

Well, the snow finally receded enough to allow us to fly in early July. With no one to fly with, I dropped my motorcycle off at the LZ and drove to launch with my truck. My plan was to fly to the LZ, put my glider in the shed, and ride the motorcycle back up to retrieve my truck. Even the best laid plans sometimes have to change with the circumstances. With the motorcycle in place and the wind sock up, I was on my way to the top.

The wind was a little strong, but I had been waiting several months for this moment. Hooked in and with a wall built, I was waiting for a lull. A little tug and the wing was above my head. I turned and pushed towards the edge but before getting there, I was in the elevator and going up. Yeeha!

I flew a little to the left and then a little to the right maneuvering the wing to the center of the lift. It





was great - the first flight from Bremer in 2008. After about an hour, I had an opportunity to top land. It was a little tricky with thermals streaming up both sides of launch, but I finally succeeded in sinking through the lift to land next to my truck. I had a big (Scot size) smile on my face as I headed back to the LZ to pick up my bike.

Two weeks ago, Jim H., Scot, Joel and I flew at Bremer and it was very good. We flew all over the valley with climbs to about 6K. I think we all had smiles on our faces when the day was done.

A few days ago, Scot met me at the LZ and we headed up. Conditions were very light, but we both reversed off for short flights. "Let's do it again!" So we headed up in Scot's rig. Now with both rigs on top it looked very soarable. What to do? Humm! We will call Kathy to come take us back up when we land. In the air, I radioed to Scot that it was really active but that did not stop him. I was above launch and he was not going to let me have all the fun at the rodeo. We were several hundred over, traveling along the ridge having a great bumpy time. I noticed Scot heading out. He was soon down at the pimple and then heading to the LZ. I figured he had had enough and was bailing on me. It was now up to me to top land and go get Scot in the LZ. After several passes I decided it was too thermic to top land and boated around until a weak cycle arrived. It was tough to get down and out of the lift but somehow I managed to squeak into the launch area.



I gave Kathy a call to see if she wanted to fly and if she did, to meet us in the LZ in 40 minutes. She asked if the conditions were good and I told her by the time we get back up it would be just right. I bet you could see my dust cloud from the moon as I drove back down to the LZ.



Back at the LZ, Scot said that he sunk out. Wow! I did not think that was possible in the air we had during that flight. I was just finishing packing my gear when Kathy drove into the LZ.

When we arrived back at launch, we noticed it had mellowed a lot and looked perfect for Kathy to log her maiden voyage on her new wing. I think she was nervous as she was getting ready so I told her to just kite the wing before making her decision to fly. Well, can you guess what happened? She brought it up, stabilized it, turned and launched. "What, you don't want to drive down?"

Scot and I watched as she flew and wished that we could take just one more flight. We knew that if we did and sunk out that we would need to drive back up again and it was already 6:30 pm. We watched and relished her flight vicariously until she landed in the LZ. Two dust clouds could now be seen slowly descending the mountain as the day was coming to an end.

Although the year started out very slow, there have been many nice flights by a number of club members at various sites. We have again passed by the longest day of the year and the days are slowly getting shorter. July will be about done when you read this and we'll have only 2 to 3 months of good flying weather remaining for this year.

The years seem to click by so very fast.

# Mazama, Goat Mountain and Balloons

By Steve Messman

Paragliding is a wonderful sport, not only because of what you do (fly!) but also because of where you go and who you meet. It has taken me to the most beautiful places in the world, shown me the most remarkable sites, and introduced me to the most wonderful people. In past years, I have been honored to make new flying friends in Lima, Peru; Cusco, Peru; Mount Howard; Garmisch, Germany; Lakeview, Oregon; and others. Now, add Mazama, Washington and Goat Mountain to that list. In fact, raise it to very near the top of that list.



The first trip up Goat Mountain caught me with my mouth wide open, bottom jaw dropped to somewhere around my knees, and my eyes as big as saucers as I tried to soak it all in. If I remember it correctly, Mike McIntyre made an open invitation to the club to make this trip, and I am so happy that I jumped on that bandwagon. Launch at 4400 feet, or thereabouts, opened up an entirely new (to me) vista into the Cascades. Glacier covered peaks stretched across the horizon. The air was so clean and clear that a dozen miles seemed to be like one. I have rarely seen such natural beauty.



But really, I don't want to talk about paragliding in this article. So what if I got to 11,000 feet on this trip? I do, however, want to talk about flying of sorts—balloon riding. Not that I would ride one, but Carol did. Today, she wears a T-shirt that displays "I flew Winthrop" and she wears it as proudly as I would any of my paragliding shirts. I am always amazed at Carol. She has such a definitive list of will do's and won't do's. For example, she will fly in an ancient biplane. She will ride a wicker basket attached to a hot air balloon. But she won't get close to flying on a paraglider or a hang glider. The thing that amazes me

the most though, is that she almost always goes with me while we fly, and so because of paragliding, she has met the most wonderful people and been to the most wondrous of places as well.

So for Carol, the first morning in Winthrop, Washington began early. Inside our tent, the alarm clock (yes, alarm clock) went off at about 5:00 a.m. It was a harsh awakening for me, but Carol was so excited, she was up on the first brrrrriiiiiinnnggg. Her adrenaline had been pumping the entire night. I think she was flying in her sleep. None of us have ever had that experience before, have we? By six, we were driving to the balloon launch site to meet Kurt and Melinda of Morning Glory Balloons. We watched Kurt send a small helium balloon up, and we noted his smile as affirmation of the splendid morning that was to follow. The winds were going to be perfect. We listened as he instructed. We watched as he and Melinda set up. We helped crew where we could to become totally involved in the process. Before long, the balloon was inflated and up, then it was Carol's turn to get in the basket. She was the first of five passengers, and her infectious smile said it all. Giddy would be a great description. I knew she was about to have fun. So did she.



The propane blasts drowned out the laughter for seconds at a time. Those of us watching from the ground noted the basket getting lighter and lighter, then it was up and gone. At first the basket blew to the east, just feet off the ground. It stayed low for several minutes while the driver, Kurt, spoke to the passengers and kept them oriented. Then he hit the gas. The balloon lifted to a few hundred, a thousand, two thousand feet, now westward bound.

An hour after it started, the balloon sat in a freshly cut field. The landing was so gentle that Carol didn't even feel the basket hit the grass. I know she had fun because when the balloon set down, there was that same smile, just as big, just as happy as it was in the beginning. The balloon had gone several miles up valley. It had been intentionally buzzed by a small plane so the balloon passengers go a little extra thrill. They had seen sights from a couple thousand feet that only a handful of people have ever seen.

I have to tell you that I truly appreciate that Carol comes with me when I go flying. I appreciate the way that she finds things to do. I appreciate the way she often just sits and waits. I truly appreciate the way she drives. And I just love that smile.



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