

The Rainier Paragliding Club Newsletter

Serving the Paragliding Community of Western Washington

www.rainierparaglidingclub.org

March 2008

The Thermal Column

"Do, or do not. There is no try."
- Jedi Master Yoda



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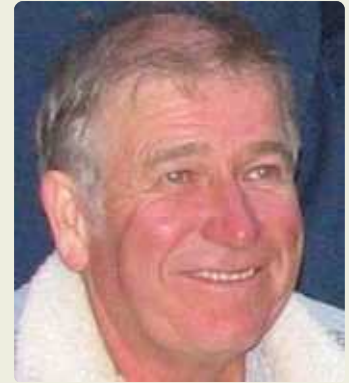
AH air Cut for the Bremer LZ

A couple of weeks ago I noticed that my neighbor had been spending a lot of time home so I asked him why. Work had been a little slow during the winter and things had not yet broken loose. Hmm! "Mike," I asked, "why don't you bring that big T-Rex thing over to the Bremer LZ and let it eat a few trees." Well he did bring it over and it went wild.

Reaching high on the trees, it bit them in half, yanked them out by the roots and stacked them in piles. After a couple of days, about two acres of



small alders had been devoured. As the piles grew taller in size and more in number, my wallet shrunk proportionately until finally these trees were roasted over a hot bed of coals and reduced to a small pile of glowing embers.



As soon as Mike has time and when the weather is dry, he will bring over his Stegosaurus to level the playing field.

Now, marking both the well head and the middle of the newly created field, is a new wind sock I constructed. It sits proudly in the wind flow no longer encumbered by neighboring vegetation.

It is going to be nice to have more room and options for landing in the LZ at the 'Flying K Ranch'. That is, if the snow ever melts and allows us to make the drive to launch. Even today (Mar. 25th) we received a new layer of snow up on the ridge. I hope that the snow is gone by the time we have the Bremer campout this year.



I am looking forward to a better than ever campout at Bremer this year.

See you there.

Kim



How Big is your Bag?

by Doug Etter
Safety Officer RPC

Spring is fast approaching and the flying season will soon be with us (we hope). With that in mind, I want to share a few thoughts about flying safety.



Over the winter while our enthusiasm may stay strong, our flying skills certainly diminish. We get soft. We sit in our easy chairs and do too little for too long. We overeat during the holidays and pack on those extra pounds. We don't exercise as much as we should.

Even though sitting in a Barcalounger of a harness is not the most demanding of activities, it still requires the use of long-dormant muscles and skills. And hiking to launch or from the LZ while humping that 50 pound pack requires a large amount of energy. How many of us have hiked with our gear during the winter just to stay in shape? Not me!

Enough on the physical side. How 'bout the mental focus? Good flying decisions come from a mindset that hones itself through activity. Even though we talk and even dream of flying, our mental acuity for flying also takes a winter break.

Spring flying conditions can sometimes be rather

extreme to say the least. Combine all of the rust on our bodies and brains that have accumulated over the winter, then throw in a little over enthusiasm at just the chance to be in the air again, and we could be setting ourselves up for a bad day.

Every month, the USHPA magazine has articles on Hang Gliding or Paragliding accidents. Often this is one of the first articles I turn to. No, it's not morbid. I want to learn something from someone else's mistake. I analyze the scenarios wondering what I might have done differently to affect the outcome in some other way. Some of the analyses are easy – inexperience for the conditions, plain old poor judgment, mechanical failure, that sort of thing. However, I often sense that the accident was not caused by just one simple thing. It's what the experts call a cascade of events. 'A' giving rise to 'B', which can then lead to 'C' resulting in OUCH. I like to think that changing just one of those variables would result in a different outcome.

The upshot is that we typically enter the flying season with diminished skills of both muscle and mind. Add to that some active spring air and a craving for airtime, and we could just be setting ourselves up for a tragedy. My advice is to proceed with caution. All of our accumulated skills and wisdom will return – probably quicker than we think. Just try not to dig into your bag of luck too early in the year.

No Fooling Around!

by Jim Baldo

As I sit here jotting down a few notes, I find it hard to believe that just a few days ago I was enjoying sunshine and warmth on the Oregon Coast. My deck is now buried in about six inches of snow and it looks like plowing my driveway has become a necessity even though the day for fools (April 1) is only five days away. My six trips to Ecola State Park, located by Cannon Beach, Oregon, this past month now seem like a distant memory.



Ecola is a coastal site, one I hold with the utmost respect. It is the site that introduced me to the thrill of being blown back. I'm as sure it was just dumb luck that allowed me to escape the clutches of the



150 ft. trees that abound in this park, as it was poor judgement that got me into that predicament. I remember clearly as I was traveling backwards across the parking area, having launched in a lull of what were winds too strong for this site, the story of a fellow pilot talking about pulling “really big ears.” It was now I pulling my outside ‘A’s’ lower and lower for all I was worth, while standing on full speed bar. I also remember the feeling of exuberance as I lost altitude in front of the ever nearing row of trees and entered the rotor zone below. This was one time that flying in a rotor was highly preferred to the alternative. I considered myself lucky. In the

site's history, others have not fared as well and have spent many hours hanging high in the forest's canopy awaiting rescue.

Ecola is an innocent enough looking site that works best in SSW winds although there are times when it can also be flown in a west wind. In west winds, the launch is cross and what you feel at launch might not be what is really happening out front. That said, with the numerous gulls and eagles that fly here, you always have the locals showing you the way.

On one particular day, we waited at launch for the winds to increase while we watched the gulls flying by. They were not getting high and were expending some energy (read flapping!) as they passed, but were also finding some lift on the west facing cliffs. Once I was able to conquer my fear of the hike back to launch, I launched and followed their lead to the south where I too was rewarded by lift that propelled me to 500 ft over launch. My good fortunes caused those pilots still waiting at launch to hurriedly unpack their gliders and join in the fun.



On another day, I found myself alone at launch waiting for the arrival of more pilots. As I unpacked my gear, I noticed the conditions getting stronger so I launched while the opportunity presented itself and the wind was still reasonable. Knowing what could happen if I were not careful, I kept a close eye on my penetration directly into the wind. When it began to diminish, I headed out over the ocean and down the shoreline searching for the edge of the lift band. This allowed me to safely travel away from the cliffs and towering trees and exit the lift band to the south where the cliffs are much further inland.

On three other days, I found myself only dreaming of flight as the winds were too strong to safely fly. On one of these days, my patience was inadequate as I opted to leave early to avoid the rush hour traffic only to learn on my arrival home, of the great flying that was enjoyed by those that waited.

As I now glance out my window, I see the asphalt of the main road poking through the snow. My driveway is still nowhere to be seen and I'm afraid I've avoided the inevitable as long as possible. I'm now propelled onward knowing if my driveway is clear, I'll be ready to head out on a moment's notice to more flying adventures.



"Mind what you have learned. Save you it can."
 - Jedi Master Yoda

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Please contribute your stories and photos to the newsletter. Without your contributions, this newsletter can not exist.

The submission deadline for the next newsletter is April. 26th.

**Please Share your Stories
and PHOTOS!**

This month's photos submitted by:
 Chris King, Kim Smith, and Gail & Jim Baldo.