

The Rainier Paragliding Club Newsletter

Promoting Paragliding Fun, Safety, and Education

www.rainierparaglidingclub.org

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The Thermal Column

Looking Forward, Looking Back

by Jim Baldo



Where has the year gone? Thinking back, my past memories are somewhat fuzzy. It seems this past year presented less opportunities for flight. But as the fog of my memory slowly parts, the revelation is that the year might have been different than years past, but just as rewarding.

Over the years, my enjoyment of this sport has changed. My original enthusiasm to fulfill a desire of flight has diminished but not all together disappeared. Just now, imagining that I am traveling between the clouds looking down on the earth below, I can feel a tingling of excitement in my chest. But I've grown to realize, there are other aspects of this sport that I've grown to cherish.

I've heard told that in the sport of paragliding, the flying is the easy part; launching and landing present the real challenges. For me, launching always provides a thrill. Now some of you may say that this is because I still fly at the Toutle where the tree growth has provided additional complexities. While this may be true, independent of the site, I always want my launch to be picture perfect. It's a difficult outcome to achieve but attempting to do so helps put me in the correct state of mind for flying. Paying close attention to the details is important and the more I fly, the more difficult paying attention to details becomes. Of course the details are critical during all aspects of flight.



Wayne Maxwell Launching

Black Cap, Lakeview, OR

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



Landing is also a challenge. Being able to accomplish a soft, no step landing is an admirable goal but one for this pilot, that is rarely achieved. While landing, there are many details to consider some of which are not clearly revealed until very late in the landing sequence. Add to this task, landing in an unfamiliar LZ, and even the simple decisions can become much more difficult.

But there is another aspect of paragliding I've really come to enjoy. On several occasions, I've flown alone but in all of those flights, I've felt as if there was something missing. Flying alone requires a somewhat

shifted viewpoint to really enjoy, one that focuses more wholly on either the challenges of flight or the beauty of nature. The something that is missing when flying alone is sharing the sky with friends.

Friendships are inevitable for paragliding pilots as we all share, on some level, similar needs. We are usually thrust together by weather and economical conditions that limit flying opportunities to a specific geographical area. But as is always the case, this gathering of pilots brings a gathering of needs and values and these are rarely the same from pilot to pilot. As is always the case, these diverse requirements align the members - for better or worse - and this alignment can sometimes overshadow the original reason why the people are gathered in the first place - to fly (or not?) If we can remain honest to ourselves and accepting that the needs and values of others may not be the same as our own, and be accepting that on a personal level we won't always see eye to eye with our fellow pilots, then we can enjoy the flying experience for what it is. If we lose sight of this, the experience will be tainted and we'll be less inclined to partake of the experience in the future. In any case, the overall experience, or at least how we perceive it, will dictate our future actions.



But I've digressed. This past year has provided me with opportunities to fly at locations I haven't visited in the past. This past year has provided me opportunities to share the sky with pilots I've previously met, pilots that I've met for the first time, and some that I've never met at all. It has provided me opportunities to fly in unfamiliar surroundings with unfamiliar challenges. It has provided me with opportunities to add clarity to my flights and make decisions that were not based on being familiar with a fly site. It has opened up my mind to the challenges of flight and has stirred my craving for flight even more. Yes, thinking back, the experience has been rewarding. Although it contained some anger, tension, and fear, these negative feelings were greatly overshadowed by the laughter, joy, and excitement that this year has held.

And now, I anxiously await for a new season of flight, a new season of discovery, and a new season of life.

Vulture Ridge

by Mike McIntyre



It's a Sunday in mid November, and very cloudy all through the peninsula, so none of my local buddies want to go out. With nothing to do, I thought I might have a look at Vulture Ridge, a small but very bald foothill on the south flank of Mount Walker, about 30 miles from here.

All the way there, I'm seeing moderately low clouds covering the tops of the mountains. On a day like today, all our mountain sites were surely clouded in. Arriving at the south side of Mount Walker it

lightens up a little, and there is actually a small blue hole, more or less directly above Vulture, so I'm starting to feel more optimistic. When I get there, a mere ten minute drive off the highway, there is a steady breeze of about 8-10 coming directly out of the south, which is cross but expected here, as the

ridge face is oriented more to the southwest.



Well, this is just about perfect for a first blush, so I lay out, do my preflight (R1234RTS), and let it inflate. Right away this is interesting, because with about 45% cross, this mild cliff like launch site produces a little mechanical turbulence combined with more average lift on the cliff side, which varies from the ground to glider level, and makes it desirable to be able to tease the a's and c's to keep 'er up there and get 'er stabilized. I could be a lot better with more practice, but am grateful to have learned

some of this cliff and/or strong wind kiting technique by watching and listening to Wade Maxwell (Wayne's son), and then practicing it with Ole at North Beach. So I didn't have to set it back down, which is also desirable here because there is a lot of half-burned wood on the ground, all ready to blacken my shiny red glider if I let it.

Because of the cliff like aspect here, it's a little more bouncy and buoyant than you might expect in this light wind, and I get lofted a couple of times walking it to the edge, then just kite there until a little puff lifts me off and I'm flying. The eagles have shown me where the lift is, but they're better pilots than I am, so





while they work it for a few circles and then bench back and up Mount Walker, I only manage to stay at launch level for half a dozen passes or so, before flying out to my chosen LZ (one out of many). The whole flight lasts about 6 minutes, maximum of 120 up and 200 down. Elevation difference from launch to lz is about 250 feet. Conditions were just about right for taking no chances and the first ever flight here.

So why in the world would I still be interested in such a dinky site, what with 2bear and Brinnon just up the valley? Well, as mentioned before, today 2bear and Brinnon were clouded in solid with no chance, so it was Vulture or nothing, and I could fly Vulture solo and walk back to the car. Also, next spring when 2bear, Brinnon, and Blyn are still inaccessible due to snow, I'm pretty sure that Vulture will be available. On the several times I've been out there, I've always seen vultures or eagles soaring, and they almost always fly back the ridge to bench up Mount Walker.

Some day when conditions are right and we've figured it out, one of us will catch that little extra lift that the birds are showing us, gain enough altitude to safely bench back up Walker, and then go cross country to Quilcene. I sure hope it's me.



Annual Meeting Recap

The Annual meeting was held on Nov. 18, 2008. This included elections for board positions for 2009. Your new board is:

President:	Mike McIntyre
Vice President:	Steve Messman
Secretary/Treasurer:	Jim Harmon
Director (Safety):	Wayne Maxwell
Director (Newsletter):	Chris King

It's worthwhile noting that a motion to reduce the board from 7 to 5 members was presented and approved by the attending membership and is reflected in the above list. Other approved items are as follows:

- Update the newsletter and Website to reflect the club goals as stated in the bylaws.
- Remove all references to the newsletter from the ByLaws.
- Donate \$100 to the U.S. Paragliding team.

Mike acknowledged the great work by Steve Messman to keep the website fresh and efficient.

Other items discussed were possible site improvements and the Fort Flagler application status. For more detailed information regarding any of these items, please contact a board member.

From the Editor

This newsletter is the last in my RPC editing reign. During the last 12 months I've tried to present you with a newsletter that depicted the flying activities of the members of the Rainier Paragliding Club. I hope I was at least moderately successful in this endeavor.

I now leave you in the capable hands of Chris King. I would hope you support his efforts by providing him stories and photos of your paragliding activities. The editor's job is so much easier when supported by the members.

And now I drift back into seclusion. I hope all your paragliding activities are memorable and you take the time to share them through this newsletter with your fellow pilots of the Rainier Paragliding club and all who happen upon the RPC website.



2009 Club Officers

President	Mike McIntyre
Vice President	Steve Messman
Secretary/Treasurer	Jim Harmon
Director (Safety)	Wayne Maxwell
Director (Newsletter)	Chris King

(The editor for this newsletter was Jim Baldo.)

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

The editor would like to thank all that have submitted stories, photos, and articles during the last year. I hope I was able to do them justice.