

# The Rainier Paragliding Club Newsletter

Serving the Paragliding Community of Western Washington

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

October 2008

## The Thermal Column

### Taking it To the Line!

by Jim Baldo



Anyone who frequents the CPC website most likely saw my post about my Cliffside “experience”. It was basically an explanation of why I landed by the road, an action that is against the rules of our flying agreement for this site. I explained that the landing was the result of getting too low and having to make a decision whether to risk flying low in a ravine and accept any

“funky” air that might be present there, or land on the side of the road knowing no vehicles were in sight in either direction and that I would have plenty of time to gather up my wing. The side of the road choice seemed “safer” at the time so that is the choice I selected.

This incident “got me to thinkin’.” Why did I even get into a situation where I had to make that decision. Although the incident played out without consequence, it didn't excuse me from fault and I needed to consider myself lucky that I was not seriously injured.



If I were injured, it could have ended my paragliding career. At the very least, I would have to analyze the flight and put a plan into place to prevent it from happening again.

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*Most ridge soaring happens over the highway*

If injured in the ravine, I'm sure I could have rationalized that I should have turned left when in fact I turned right. Or I could have landed by the road and taken my chances there. If injured on the road, then I should have flown into the ravine and I would have been OK. The problem with both these scenarios is that they do not address the root cause of the problem and in truth I really don't know what would have happened.

Looking at events leading up to that landing decision leads me to the fact that indeed, my error occurred much earlier. I had previously made a low save that day and although I was not attempting to make another one, I did put myself in a situation where I had gotten too low and now had to hug the cliff alongside the road to make it to the primary LZ. I, like others, have followed this path hundreds of times in the past. My experience told me that this flight plan was the best one to make it to the LZ so this indeed was where I needed to be. After making this choice, my fate was sealed and I just needed to continue my flight to its final outcome.

So my mistake was getting too low to begin with. End of story! Well, yes and also no. After all, I'd been in that situation before and the outcome was fine. I guess this time I was just unlucky. LUCK! How much of my flying do I want to leave to luck? I'd much rather depend on skill.

So why did I allow myself to get too low before heading toward the LZ? I was not in unfamiliar territory. I've flown Cliffside literally hundreds of times. Maybe that was the issue.

Thinking back years ago when I first started paragliding, I would have never followed the path I followed that day. Instead, I would have given myself more room from the cliff with a easy bail out to the lower valley avoiding an encounter with the ravine or road altogether. Since I am now more experienced, I relied on that experience to push the envelope of flight. This led to the outcome stated above. When safety is concerned, experience takes us closer to the line between health and injury.

Safety is something you need to plan for and take action to achieve. Our safety in flight begins way before our feet leave the ground. It's something we must think about long before every flight. Helmets, reserves, foam pads, air bags; even boots, radios, and cell phones are pieces of safety equipment we often carry but never plan to and hopefully never have to use during our flights. If we ever make a decision based on the use of this equipment, then we have already made the first in possibly a long line of decisions that will get us into trouble.

Accidents are never planned. You never know when one might happen. You can only suspect one might happen when conditions appear to be beyond one's skill level to safely fly. Ignoring the use of safety equipment and therefore planning not to get hurt, is not a successful strategy. In fact, it's foolhardy.

Experience can and does have a negative effect on safety. It's a fact we need to always consider when we make any paragliding decisions. Please be a safe pilot. The actions of our flying decisions usually effect not just ourselves but often our friends and family.

*“A superior pilot is one that uses his superior decision making to avoid situations where his superior flying skills might be required.”*

# THE RPC AT BALDY, 2008

by Mike McIntyre

In October of the last few years, the Northwest Paragliding Club, in conjunction with the Cloudbase Country club, has held the Baldy fly-in on Baldy Mountain in the Yakima valley canyon by Ellensburg. They always invite the whole foot launched flying community, partly in an effort to pay the \$3200 per year expenses on this wonderful site via a \$35.00 per pilot attendance fee. This year they made a specific invitation to the RPC to “come on over”. So about a dozen of us went for at least one day, making up a little less than 20% of the 65 pilots that attended from all over the state.



This is a wonderful spot. It's a little far for a lot of us, has a locked gate access, but was well worth the effort, especially with the great friendly welcome given us by the Northwest Paragliding folks. A large gaggle of us camped along the river, right next to the LZ, and many landed from time to time in the little field adjoining the campground. Others stayed with local friends or family, and one old fella stayed in a motel in Ellensburg.

A few of us arrived early on

Friday, at the invitation of Bob Bunger (lives in Yakima), who devoted a lot of his time giving various groups as well as us, site orientations and obtaining our site waivers, as well as giving us rides up the hill in his seventies 4 X 4 pickup, sprung like a steel pole. Thanks so much, Bob. You made it all possible.

Flying started around noon with “guess who?” Gordon Grise was up there and said to his student that he would without a doubt tell him to go for it in the perfect launch conditions, but why not wait for the “more qualified wind dummies” (I think he meant me) standing close by. Oh well. I launched south off into good launch conditions but with not much lift, then managed to maintain at about a thousand under launch and 750 over the LZ on the west side, until landing in the designated alternate LZ about 2 miles from camp. Before I landed, the pilots still on launch told me by radio that I’m on my own for a ride back to camp. On landing I look up and there stands Steve Messman, who has just arrived and has come over to give me a ride back to launch. Man, am I glad to see him. We all got some flights with maybe a little soaring, and







one pilot from another group soared high above the camp on another ridge and then went cross country to Ellensburg. At least some of us “groundhogs” were green with envy. Other pilots with good local knowledge, but not us, go cross country to Ellensburg while yet another gaggle head to the main freeway, east of us.

On Saturday, we all fly multiple times with some soaring especially in the late afternoon. Evening brings a huge potluck dinner with the main dish provided, along with free beer and soda for everybody. There is a tongue in cheek awards ceremony in which C.J. gets “oldest T-shirt” and Wayne gets “oldest pilot.” Wayne's award comes with a six pack of very good beer which we later helped him drink while nestled around our own campfire.

Sunday brought fewer flights in the morning and everyone started bailing for the long drive home. The whole weekend saw a variety of skill levels, all the way from half a dozen flights to really, really skilled. There were several tandems there providing flights for non-pilots. It was great to get to see our old friends, many of whom we only see once a year or so. Even if the flying was less than stellar for my level of skill, I’m thinking next year, maybe I’ll be the one who makes it to the junk yard near Ellensburg.



# The Rainier Paragliding Club

## Elections: 2008 - 2009

Vote for One in each Position.

Write-ins are allowed.

Voting for more than one in a position will negate the vote for that position.

Vote at Annual meeting, by email (send to Jharmon "at" seashare.org), or online at the RPC website.

POSITION	ý	CANDIDATE
President		Mike McIntyre
		Write-In: _____
Vice President		Steve Messman
		Write-In: _____
Secretary		Jim Harmon
		Write-In: _____
Treasurer		Jim Harmon
		Write-In: _____
Newsletter Editor		Chris King
		Write-In: _____
Director at Large (Safety)		Wayne Maxwell
		Write-In: _____
Director at Large (Google List Admin)		
		Write-In: _____



The annual club meeting will be held in November at which time elections will be held. Ballots are included in this newsletter. Vote at the meeting, by email, or online at the RPC website.

## 2008 Club Officers

President	Mike McIntyre
Vice President	Steve Messman
Secretary	Jim Harmon
Treasurer	Kathy Smith
Director (Google List)	David Griswold
Director (Safety)	Doug Etter
Newsletter	Jim Baldo

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 Nov. 26th.

The editor would like to thank all that have submitted stories, photos, and articles. It's you who help drive the success of the club.