

The Rainier Paragliding Club Newsletter

Serving the Paragliding Community of Western Washington

www.rainierparaglidingclub.org

December 2007

The Thermal Column



The Saddle Soar.....



photo by: Mike Green

did not happen. However, the RPC contributed to the Saddle Mt. fund.

The CBCC thanks all RPC'ers.

In This Issue :

Thoughts from our Pres.	by Kim Smith	Page 2
The Social Scene	by Steve Messman	Page 3
A Higher Calling	by Jim Baldo	Page 4

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

Thoughts from the Pres.

By the time you read this, we will have pasted the winter solstice - finally! The flying around here the last few months has been pretty bleak. Thinking back, my last flight was the inaugural one of the new East Dog launch with Steve in November.

Hopefully, there will be some nice flying days ahead in the remainder of this year. This may just be a dream as there is only one week left in the year and the storms continue to stream in one after the other. At least the days will soon be getting longer.

I have been reading Wayne's reports every other day and wishing I was not so busy at work so that I could travel south. It has been a busy year for me and looks like it is going to continue that way for the next six months or so. With spring approaching, I'm hoping for some opportunities to snag some cross-country flights.

In December, we gathered for our club's holiday



awards banquet. Doug and Lois did a great job with the awards and setting up for the banquet. The food was great with plenty to go around. Thanks again Doug, and thanks for your leadership over the past year. Doug was elected to be the club's safety director. I am looking forward to his discourses on safety this coming year.

With January just around the corner, it is time to get together for our annual reserve repack. Our parachutes get just one day to breathe fresh air before we quickly pack them back in the bag for another year. With that in mind, this is also a great time to unpack the rest of our gear and thoroughly check it out.

I am looking forward to meeting our the new members at the upcoming outings that RPC will be sponsoring this next season. Steve will be keeping everyone posted on the activities in advance.

Take care and fly safe.
Kim Smith



The RPC Social Scene

Dear Santa,

I have to tell you, I stopped believing that you were a good guy a long time ago. I wish I hadn't been forced to, but Washington State made me do it. Yes, you read that correctly, the state made me. I no longer consider you to be a good elf, Santa.



Why? You might ask. Let me tell you. You are supposed to be so magical. You deliver toys to almost six billion people in a single night. Somehow, you get all those gifts into a sleigh that's not much bigger than a Chevy Suburban. I still haven't figured that one out. And, you must have a manufacturing facility up there in that frozen wasteland that's larger than the sum total of all of China's toy manufacturers. How is that possible? You can get into any house, and mostly, you sneak in through chimneys. How do you do all that stuff? Magic! And how do you get into the house even if that chimney goes into a closed stove, or a gas-burning heater, or even a real fire? Magic! Magic, you weird elf! So, if you are so full of magic, why, when I have asked you every year for the past seven years, can't you bring Washington State some decent winter weather? What's with all this rain? Rain, every day! And the wind? You give us either no wind, or wind that's blowing the wrong direction, or wind that's screaming along at a hundred miles an hour. Can't you use that magic to bring us a little change, for a change? Oh! I forgot! You're no longer one of the good guys.

I suppose you could claim that you gave my paragliding club that cool, hard working social director. Big deal! He can't do beans unless you give us the weather he needs. He tries, God bless his soul. He schedules all kinds of events and has all kinds of things planned—like the parachute repack that will happen in February (probably). That's an indoor event, I might add. He's also putting together a calendar for us all that will include trips to Ebey, Chelan, Spokane,

Lakeview, Saddle, Goat, and who knows where else. But guess what. His calendar stops sometime around October and doesn't start back up until March or so—if we're lucky. Six months of rotten flying weather just sucks. But, my guess is that you don't even care. After all, you can fly anytime you want, since your flying reindeer can get through all the same weather that the post office can get through. You know; neither rain, nor sleet, nor hail. But guess what, again. We can't fly our wings in the same weather you can fly your sleigh. We really need a change. Why can't you use that magic of yours to at least bring us some decent weekend weather?

That would be good! If you want to get back on my good-guy list, just bring us some decent weather for a couple of weekends. I don't want to be greedy. We could use some sunshine, about 50 degrees, winds in any direction from 5 to 10 miles per hour, but NO RAIN! A couple of those good weekends in January, February, and March would be great! You still have time for one in December, too. Use that magic of yours for something besides squeezing your fat butt down a chimney. If you do, a whole bunch of us would really appreciate it, and you.

What do I want for Christmas? I want you, Santa, to be back on my good-guy list. You know what to do.

Steve



A Higher Calling

by Jim Baldo



Winter in the Pacific Northwest is not known for its great flying opportunities. In fact, they are pretty bleak for paragliding. But you never know when that next great flight is right around the corner or just over the next rise.

Cliffside is a very popular place to fly this time of year. It has provided many enjoyable winter flights and I'm sure it will continue to do so long into the future. On this particular day, the forecast was encouraging calling for a 10 knot wind. Arriving at the LZ, taking a quick look at the flag located across the Columbia river at the John Day Dam, provided a dismal sight. It was hanging limply from its mast. There were a few paragliders already in the air revealing the air was boaty but not quite enough to sustain flight. Since there is little sense to drive for two hours and not hike the relatively easy trail to launch, I quickly laced up my boots, put my pack on my back, and headed up the hill.

On the eastern slope, the one above the aluminum plant, there are two main launches. This day I continued past the lower launch and headed for the one higher up only another five minutes away. This upper launch is graced by a single tree. In the summer months it provides a luxury found at no other Cliffside launch – shade. Today, that tree would provide no benefit. On reaching the tree, I paused to look at the lone paraglider now decorating the sky. The pilot had found some lift in front of the cliff and was able to maintain altitude. The next glider to launch was not as fortunate and headed to the river to lengthen its glide. This was a route most pilots were taking this day. I could do the same or I could extend my ride by hiking higher on the hill, something I've always wanted to do.

And so, up I went. After five minutes, I was passing the top most launch, one that has not been used for many years but one that holds

sentimental value. It was the one I used on my very first high flight. From here the trail is less evident and the slope steeper. Up I continued, only occasionally following the animal trails as, for the most part, they traversed the gorge rim. Back and forth I trekked continually gaining altitude and occasionally crossing scree. Here, the footing was more treacherous and each step had to be carefully planned. So it went for twenty minutes with my enthusiasm draining along with my energy. The top of the gorge was still far above poking out above the freezing level and dressed in a thin layer of frost. At the frost line was a sparse row of trees. I made that my goal, one I reasoned I could make in another 20 minutes.

My legs, although not wobbly, were quickly draining of energy resulting in making my footing less steady. The surface here was also more difficult to navigate as it consisted of a layer of scree which had long since been filled with dirt. My lungs remained surprisingly strong but I found myself taking small breaks to replenish the energy reserves in my legs. After 20 minutes, the tree line was within easy reach. A few minutes later I was passing the first scrubby trees. Here, the tips of the short weeds



were white. My hike was over and now I needed to find a suitable place to launch.

I was faced with two problems. The first was the direction of the wind which was most definitely cross and even possibly down slope. I traversed closer to the ravine. Here the wind felt better although still somewhat cross. I knew that once the glider was up and stabilized, it would be easy to launch toward that ravine and make the short

glide to the front of the gorge wall.

The second problem was the ground. It was covered with sharp, jagged rocks ranging in size from softballs to basketballs. They represented a sleeping trap waiting to ensnare unsuspecting lines mercilessly tearing their sheathing or



completely severing them. Patience and a light touch would be the key to a successful launch.

Carefully, I laid out my glider and tried inflating before clipping in. As there was some wind, the glider rustled anxiously while I stepped down to the risers. I gently tugged the A's. As the glider began to inflate, I felt my C's go taut. A line had snagged. I quickly released the pressure, cleared the offending line, and tried again. Again I was met with resistance. Returning to the glider, I freed the culprit line along with others that looked suspicious. At this point I decided to clip

in thinking that if the glider did inflate, I may want to immediately launch. Now with my brake toggles in hand, I tried inflating for a third time. And for a third time, my lines snagged.

It was time for a different technique. I rosetted the glider clearing snagged lines as I went. Placing the loosely rosetted glider on the ground, I laid out the bundled lines as I backed slowly down the slope. My fourth attempt was greeted with some success. Due to the cross wind, the downhill side led the way as the glider inflated, dragging the uphill lines across the slope and snagging them once more. The technique held promise but again patience along with aborting quickly before any lines were allowed to drag, would be key.

The fifth attempt was a thing of beauty. The center cells inflated and slowly rose from the ground. One by one the deflated cells on opposing sides were lifted. Still higher the wing progressed taking the lines and nylon with it until its lifeless tips cleared the terrain. At this point, I countered the wing's ascent allowing the sides to inflate and cascade into life. I gently allowed the wing to settle back to earth now sitting in the shape of a very well formed wall. One last gentle tug, and the wing sprang to life cleanly climbing overhead. A quick turn, a few steps, and I was lifted into the smooth Cliffside air continuing yet another paragliding adventure.

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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 Jan. 25th.

