

# The Thermal Column



## Newsletter of The Rainier Paragliding Club



Serving the Paragliding Community of Western Washington, USA

July 2007

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[WWW.RainierParaglidingClub.org](http://WWW.RainierParaglidingClub.org)

time of my flying life happened on our second day at Lakeview. Motivation expert, Paul took a bunch of us to Abert Rim. We hiked up the 400 or so feet to a make-shift launch, then we raised our wings into light and slightly cross winds and flew above the top of the rim to about 6800 feet. The beauty of this flight, and the awesome spectacle as one rose above the rim, will be sealed inside my memory vault forever. I truly wish I had the words to express the absolute beauty of this flight. This is just one of those flights you must experience in your life. I have included a picture of the rim, but for those of you who don't know anything about it, imagine this. Abert Rim is

### Lakeview's Umpteenth Annual Festival of Free Flight 2007

By Steve Messman

The year 2007 saw a great time at Lakeview. The weather was both hot and windy, but, the flying was good. I won't say it was epic, though. Neither the distances nor the altitudes we could fly were for record books--except for those we keep to ourselves. That said, we did learn many things, we did fly far, and we did have a heck of a lot of fun.

The most memorable



the largest geological fault on the North American continent. From start to finish it is 22 miles long, and it is nearly 2500 vertical feet--some of it EX-TREMELY verti-

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cal. Your flight takes you over millions of cubic yards of scree. As you fly higher, your wing tips brush huge building blocks and layer after layer of volcanic basalt, then the top, an entirely new world of sage brush and fresh-water lakes. Beyond that, all we could see was land wilder than the imagination allows.

The week is an all-for-fun competition for both paraglider and hang glider pilots. For paraglider pilots, there are actually two competitions. One is the cumulative distance flown, the second

is a spot landing. For the distance comp, every time you fly, turn in your distance. Yes, it is on the honor system. At the end of the week, the organizers add up your distance. He (or she) who flies furthest wins. This year, Paul Kunzel won first place in distance. Paul had a couple of very nice flights. One was from Abert Rim to the tune of approximately 16 miles. Another was also from Abert, around 10 miles. Yet another was from Sugar, picking up another 14 or so miles.

Wayne was there too, and did super as well. Wayne followed Paul in his distance flights, but didn't fly quite as far. He did fly far enough to win second place for distance. Not only that, Wayne surged his way into a nearly perfect spot landing to win first in that effort.

It was a week of personal bests.



High flights, long flights, beautiful flights happened every day. On the part of the drivers, it was a week of personal bests also. Carol told me this was her best year ever, and she goes to Lakeview with me every year. This year was her best because she "had a buddy." Wayne's wife, Barb, was at Lakeview also. Barb and Carol hung together, read together,

drove together, and picked up Sunstones together. I know that both often felt "used" but in all honesty, having both wives there was wonderful for a number of reasons. We truly appreciated the fact that they drove for us. We especially enjoyed our evenings around the

campfire. We hope that both will return next year, along with other wives and spouses as well.

Will I go back to Lakeview next year? You bet. I hope many of you do also, along with your spouses.

## Bremer does it again!!

By Kim Smith

Well, yesterday marks the first day that the road between Bremer LZ and launch is open to the public 24/7. It has been hard not flying Bremer because of the road being closed since November 2006.

I had planned on flying yesterday



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# Make like a Tree

The Invisible Man



I have been planning on writing this article for a while now - ever since May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007 when I had a bit of surprise on launch at the Toutle and ended up seeing my wing draped over a couple of Alders. I have all sorts of (quasi) legitimate reasons for waiting almost two months to get this article written;



but I think the real reason I have been procrastinating is because it is forcing me to come to grips with the fact that the Toutle's days are truly numbered. First though let me tell you about my little adventure...

It was another early summer day at the Toutle. Kim, Kathy & I arrived there shortly after 2 p.m. and watched the cycles. They were okay, but not terribly strong. Still, after a while we decided it was that time. Kim geared up and launched, I got ready behind him. For the last couple of years I have been fairly vigilant about checking both the wind on launch and for movement in the tops of the trees below launch. On that fateful afternoon both were happening,

but (in retrospect) not as simultaneously as I could have wished. Still, it had never been a problem before, things had always worked out.

So, a good cycle came up the hill and I inflated my wing and took a quick peek at the trees below launch. They weren't moving much, but I was not worried. I started my run off the hill and was airborne. I looked at the trees again and now they were not moving at all.

Still, I figured no problem, something will come through before I get to the trees. The trees got closer and I got lower. I was now looking up at the tops and still no movement. At this point I realized that nothing was going to come through in time to save me. So, I made a left turn and began to parallel the fir trees. I was sinking out nicely and figured I'd do a side-hill landing and hike back to the top in a couple of

minutes. It was then that the cycle I'd been hoping for just seconds ago came through.

I was now climbing, not enough to get over the firs, but enough to prohibit an easy side-hill landing. I was heading straight for a stand of rather tall alders and I

realized that I was not going to clear them. Now my priority was to not hit a



tree square on my nose. I chose a gap between a couple of them and steered for it. The cycle had backed off a little and my glide path was such that I knew I'd be on the ground right about in the middle of the gap. I continued flying into the gap and as my canopy got snarled in the tops of the two alders as my feet touched the ground.

The only real problem I had was that some of the branches had knocked the PTT button off of my helmet and Kim was radioing me asking if I was alright (he got the birds eye view of the incident). It took me a few seconds to find my PTT and let Kim know I was fine. I unhooked and hauled my harness back up to launch. Kim top landed and together we spent about twenty minutes extracting my wing from the

trees. Kim even took the opportunity to get some interesting pictures that I am sure will be featured somewhere near this article. Nothing was damaged (other than a few branches and my ego). Later that afternoon Kim and I were both airborne again.

Since that incident I have been a lot more cautious about timing my launches with the movement of the firs. No movement = no launch. But even with

that level of caution I have noticed that launch is definitely sketchier than it has ever been. Either the conditions, in general, have changed or the firs may have reached a critical height this year, or both.

Recently I had a conversation with some of the usual suspects at launch and I commented on how we might all be suffering from the

boiled frog syndrome. You know - the classic science experiment wherein a frog is placed in a container of water that is slowly heated from room temperature to a level that proves fatal to the frog. However, the frog never leaps out of the container because it has become acclimatized to the conditions and dies before it can take action. I thought I was half joking at the time that I said

this. After more thought I'm starting to believe that this is a serious concern for us Toutle flyers.

Everyone needs to make their own go/no-go decisions and determine their own level of comfort in this sport. For now I plan to fly at the Toutle for the rest of this season. But I don't think I'll be flying there next year. Unless, of course, the water doesn't heat up very fast...



## SOME THOUGHTS ON TOWING

By Wayne Maxwell

Most of us will tow at some time in our flying career. The reasons are many. You want to know what an asymmetric collapse, or inadvertent spin feels like and how to recover. You want to learn a little acro. There is no other flying available. Because it's a hoot. Whatever the reason, here are some ideas to consider.



Since the tow bridles hook into the carabineers, most pilots who tow a lot turn their carabineers around so the tow bridle and gate don't interfere with one another. After a couple of hook-ins, the gate facing to the rear is just as easy as forward.



Don't be a tow potato! When you're up next, have the wing all laid out, and be hooked in ready to go, when the tow line is brought to you. Being ready to get ready, just means fewer tows for everyone, and waste's gas.

Depending on the wind, you may be doing a forward inflation, or a reverse. The usual signal that the pilot is ready, and for the operator to begin the tow, is for the pilot to bow down. That's easy when in the forward infla-

tion position, but a little more difficult when you've inflated in reverse, and have turned around facing forward with the wing overhead.

The tow operator can usually see that you are ready when kiting.

When doing a reverse, I think its easier to hook up the tow bridles to the weak link when in the forward position, and then turn to face the wing. Be careful when turning, that you've led the tow bridals and tow line around the correct way for your turnaround. The operator won't do any thing till you have turned with the wing overhead. When the operator hits the throttle, and the engine begins to scream as the boat jumps up on the plane, stand steady if in the forward inflation position. In that position, you want to feel a pretty darn good tug on the tow

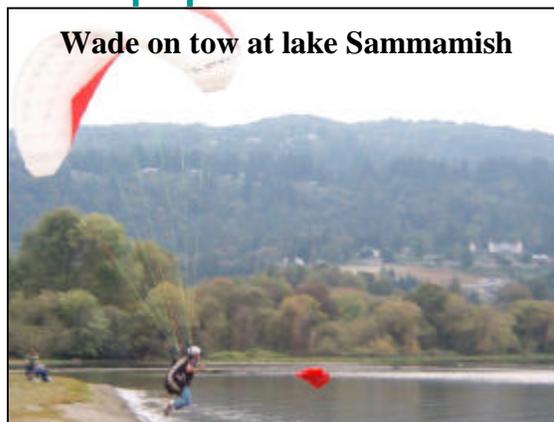


bridals before beginning the inflation. You should maybe be leaning back in a braced posture, to resist the first light pull. That way, all you have to do is keep your butt off the ground, as the boat provides the power. If you've done

a reverse, you can begin to move forward, especially if that helps keep the wing inflated in light wind. When your

feet leave the ground, especially on the first few tows, glance up at your wing every half second or so. The tow system will pretty much keep your harness facing the

**Wade on tow at lake Sammamish**



boat. The wing however, depending on your sensitivity, wing model, and the phase of the moon, may begin trying to point in a different direction. Very easy to control, if you are aware of what is going on. The boat will almost certainly do a big circle, and you will release over/near the launch site. When the circle begins, you want to continue in the same direction till there is maybe 15 /20 degrees (ask your instructor) between your course and the boats course. For the highest tow, you want to be slightly outside the curve. This will require some brake input. If you

allow yourself to be drawn inside the circle, you will end up lower, and piss off the operator.

After your release, tuck the tow bridles under/behind yourself so they can't get tangled in the risers or? Tuck them so that they would not interfere with getting out of the harness, in the event of a water landing.

Now have fun/get scared!!

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but opted to go fly with the invisible man at Toutle. But today I decided to give it a try. Scot Lamb, Kathy Smith and I ventured up the hill to launch. It was a little gusty as I set up and launched. I did climb above launch and a few minutes later Scot joined in the rodeo fun. I radioed back to Kathy to let her know that the air was a little bumpy and she might want to wait a while. We both flew for over 2 hours and Kathy got tired of batting flies so she drove the car down for us (thanks Kathy). It was really nice to be able to drive home in 10 minutes rather than the 40 minutes it took when the road was closed.

I did get over this morning and mowed about half the LZ and will hopefully

finish it this next week. I can not believe all the rocks that are hiding in the grass over there. I think someone is planting them in the grass at night.

I would like to thank WSDOT and Scarsella Bros. Construction Co. For working with us during the Bremer Campout this year. Without

their help it would have been very hard to put on the campout without access through the work zone.

Take Care and Fly safe.

Note; Picture of Scot Lamb getting ready to land at Bremer LZ. 7/28/07



# Application to join the Rainier Paragliding Club

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

USHPA #: \_\_\_\_\_ Rating: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual dues are from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year.

\$24 for Individual membership

\$36 for Family membership living at the same address.

Send completed application and payment (payable to Rainier Paragliding Club) to:

Kathy Smith

P.O. Box 13

Cinebar, WA 98533



John Degoede smelling the tulips as he flies by with his Paramotor.

## *Calendar 2007*

Aug 10-12	Can-Am Black Mountain
Sept 1-3	Pine Mountain Fly-I n
Sept 14-16	* Northern Lite Campout.
Sept 22-23	Baldy Fly-I n
Oct 19-21	*Saddle Soar Campout

(\*) denotes RPC sponsored activity