

The Flocker!

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

What's up everyone? I want to get some good and bad information out to ya'll. First and foremost, your very own local site Lookout has been delivering beautiful pre and post-frontal conditions on weekends lately and made for great gaggle sharing airtime! If there's interest in another Lookout walk-through, email president@rmhpa.org and let me know!

New Requirement for flying at Lookout! Jefferson County, the launch owner, requires that everyone be a member of RMHPA and USHPA(as always), but now also require that each pilot sign their Jefferson County waiver. To best respect the land owner requirements, we need to make sure all pilots are current in memberships and have gotten the waiver signed and to us. The pilot can give their waiver to any officer and we'll get it to Jefferson County. Please help spread the word that it's necessary to get done to keep our site safe. The pilots can get their membership current and print out the waiver on our website in the "Join" section here... <http://www.rmhpa.org/club/join.php> or they can also print the waiver off from the site guide here http://www.rmhpa.org/site_guide/lookout/. Your help spreading the word is priceless!

The RMHPA just added specific site insurance for Lookout with our USHPA policy. This is in response to Jefferson County requirements. They're probably watching us more closely after the events of the last couple years.

Boulder Sites – There's been some issue recently at the North Boulder HG drive up site. If you've ever been there, it's a bit of a hike, and you need to drive up the back side and have a driver to help get the car down. Lately, some pilots that started to frequent the site were leaving their cars up there and had reportedly disrespectful words towards the residents up there. BOPAC has been working to figure out who these people are and the last suspicion is they're college students that found some PG's on ebay. Either way, the landowners have registered new complaints with the Boulder Open Space to find ways they can resolve this issue. They're in the process of making new signs to install on their road indicating "NO PARKING" and will be calling the sheriff to have cars towed in the future. It's our only H2 site on the front range and has a GREAT launch and LZ. Given the sensitivity of our use on Boulder Open Space property, it is terribly unfortunate to have the land owners complain to the Open Space officials. BOPAC and the RMHPA have done their best to show support for respectful use of the roads and we've posted more detailed guidelines for using this site on our website.

http://www.rmhpa.org/site_guide/nbould.htm. I know all RMHPA and BOPAC members are respecting the land owner wishes not to park up there or turn around in their driveways, so this is more for your information than anything. Our free-flight community is small, so if you have any opportunity to express the sensitivity of our flying sites to flying friends, let them know how important it is to tread lightly and keep land owners happy!

Lookout Sponsors!!! The season is here, I'm getting email from travelers wanting to fly Lookout this Spring, and I'm sure we're going to start seeing new faces up there. The new sponsorship process is going to get tested. Since I'm going to personally guarantee that this will be an epic year, we HAVE to work together to make sure we use and improve the sponsorship process. This will keep our flying site safe, and the pilots who enjoy it, using it for years to come. See this link to review the basic PG requirements to fly here... for Local PGs as well as Visiting PG's. http://www.rmhpa.org/site_guide/lookout/

There's more to say, but that's FOR next time. Till then, take care.

BJ Herring

PARAGLIDER CERTIFICATION IN PERSPECTIVE

By Bruce Goldsmith, Glider Designer for Airwave and Champion Pilot
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I know more about the gliders I design than anyone else in the world. I know every little detail. What the good points are, what the weak points are and how they react in nearly all situations. I even know how the gliders react when out of trim, overloaded or underloaded, if flown in cold air or when wet. In summary I, like most designers, know a lot more about my own gliders than any test pilot can find out in two or three test flights. Yet the result of these few 'official' test flights are viewed by some as being of far greater importance, and a more accurate representation of a glider's suitability, than the opinions of those who made it.

Sometimes I speak to pilots who have studied every detail of the certification report of a wing and are worried about a particular result. They may have added up all the numbers for the individual tests to try and get an overall grade for the wing, or be worrying that the front collapse takes four seconds to recover, instead of the three seconds it does on the other wing they're considering buying.

People spend hours passing over these little differences in the test reports, then are surprised when they talk to me about the perceived 'problems' that these results suggest and are shocked to discover I pay little or no heed to them. They're often even more surprised when they find out that I haven't even read the test results! Why would I? I know exactly how it flies anyway and I know that the test results don't accurately reflect this, or a glider's safety. The test reports are of vague interest, but they are not of prime importance. The results are only, unfortunately, important to me because so many pilots think they are important. They have become a marketing tool, used by manufacturers and the certification bodies themselves, but for me their relevance is dubious.

Imagine looking at the safety test results of a car to try to decide if this car was for beginners or advanced drivers! If it had better crash test results would you recommend it for learners to drive? The idea seems crazy, but that is exactly how we interpret the results of certification on paragliders. Maybe there are other fields where safety tests are used to judge the suitability of a piece of equipment, however I can't think of any, as hard as I might try. Only with paragliders do we look at the test results and use them as a measure of how safe a glider is and what level of pilot should fly it.

I'm involved in this process every day and see the flaws in this perception. There are many ways in which the certification process fails to give a balanced and accurate measure of the safety and suitability of a glider. There are some extremely important flight characteristics in which certification does not measure the safety of a glider at all. It's not because there is anything wrong with the certification process per se, it's because certification tests have to be easy to perform, easy to repeat and be standardized. For these very reasons the certification process has limitations.

One very obvious characteristic that isn't measured is the ability of a glider to resist collapses. Over the years there's been many suggestions of ways to measure the resistance of a glider to turbulence so that 'resistance to collapse' could be included in certification. None of them have ever been adopted. Here are a few of them:

- Fly the glider into a standard piece of turbulence such as the tip vortex of a standard wing, for example
- Do wingovers of increasing magnitude until you get a tip collapse (this used to be a DHV test)
- See how far you need to pull the A riser before the glider collapses (but this gives very different result compared to turbulence related collapses)

All these test procedures have different problems and have been rejected by the certification bodies. Because it is so very difficult to design a standard test to measure resistance to collapse, certification bodies simply just don't try to measure it. Yet for pilots it's obvious that this is a massively important attribute of a paraglider.

It's not just resistance to collapses that fails to be accounted for in the certification process. The reactions of a glider to pilot input are also hugely important, yet nearly all certification tests are based on no pilot input at all.

Pilots affect gliders through weightshift and brake application. These inputs can have widely differing effects. In order to carry out the test correctly and fairly, test pilots have to train themselves to not make the natural piloting reactions that they've developed over the years. This is important so that they can do the certification tests in a standard way. It's also supposed that a student may well do nothing when confronted with such a situation, and so 'like a sack of potatoes' is the standard posture for certification tests. In reality it's far more likely that even the beginner will take some form of action, as it's human instinct to react to situations that are frightening. Real pilots react in several ways to a problem: some react correctly, others react wrongly, others still react correctly, but with the wrong timing. Either way the standard 'sack of potatoes' method of piloting is far from reality.

In recent years this 'zero input' style of testing has become more and more of a problem on certified gliders. Gliders are designed to recover properly with zero pilot input and, from what I have seen with my own eyes, at least 80% of reserve deployments are caused by pilots reacting differently from the 'sack of potatoes' way that the gliders have been tested. Many modern gliders won't recover properly if the pilot holds on even five centimeters of brake!

Like the problem of measuring glider tuck resistance, pilot reaction is hard to quantify and even harder still to repeat precisely enough to create a valid test. It's a necessary evil that certification tests just rely on a standard 'sack of potatoes' pilot reaction and again highlights how certification isn't a true measure of how a glider would react in the hands of a real pilot.

Don't get me wrong, I think that certification has its place. It's a safety net to stop unsafe gliders going onto the market place. However, pilots pay far too much attention to it, and far too little to what the manufacturer says. Remember, you don't suddenly put your life on the line because you move from a 1-2 to a 2, however you may do if you choose to jump from a wing a manufacturer says is an entry level intermediate, to one they're calling a 'sporty XC machine', even though they may both be graded 1-2.

No manufacturer wants to release a glider that is dangerous; aside from the awful realities of someone hurting themselves on one of your wings, a company's entire reputation can be shattered if the public perceive a wing to be dangerous. In a nutshell, manufacturers have far more to lose than any certification body if their gliders are either dangerous, or end up in the wrong hands.

It's time for pilots to stop looking at certification grades for the truth about each particular glider and to look towards the manufacturers; they are the people who know it better than anyone else, will have tested it hundreds of more hours than any certification body, and have it all to lose if their opinion is wrong.

From the Editor: A lot of us on the Front Range either just bought a new glider, or are in the market for a new glider. We've been talking about new gliders, comparing new gliders, flying new gliders, &c. I've heard a lot of "DHV-this" and "DHV-that" kind of chat, hence I thought it worthwhile to insert Bruce Goldsmith's opinions on the subject of certification and what to study when looking for a new wing.

THE 2008 RMHPA OFFICERS

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THE 2008 RMHPA PARACHUTE CLINIC

By BJ Herring

The repack this year was a resounding success! Everyone got to throw their chutes in a simulated deployment and as usual several people were extremely accurate in their throws, even while spinning and floundering. It always amazes me how volunteers like Allen Sparks and Mark Windsheimer step up for the RMHPA. Our club is very lucky to have such great members!

At Joe Onofrio Piano, we had 2 hanging stations. We even simulated a deployment on Joe's PPG Buggy!

There were many perfect deployments and even more hilarious deployment scenarios that JY and team came up with. They all seemed to start with "BJ says on the radio "Hey, watch this..."".

Lots of chutes were packed. The amount of knowledge and technique in packing a chute that will work properly is mind blowing. If my chute ever falls out, or get's pulled out at the airport (almost happened), I won't attempt to put it back together on my own! There's just too many ways that look right, that could cause bag lock.



It's a great time of year to look over your equipment for wear and tear. Think about all the points that carry your weight and look them inside/out. Check to make sure your Velcro around the chute and Velcro holding the bridal to the hang straps isn't too tight.

Also during the clinic, we got to meet a bunch of Powered Paragliding (PPG) community and make new friends. They're a fun group in a new sport that's growing fast. They're hungry for information and I think we all benefitted from some great weather conversations.

The entire clinic was focused on safety, from harness inspections, to Parachute replacements to experience sharing. Thanks to everyone that attended, and thanks again to our volunteers! Also, a special special thanks to Joe Onofrio, of Onofrio Piano, who volunteered his shop where we held the clinic. He has an amazing selection of pianos, especially if you like the best of the best!

EDITOR'S SPACE

Our good President kindly suggested that a springtime newsletter should be forthcoming, and I was naturally inclined to take his advice in this regard. He even led the way with his two previous compositions, but I am ashamed to report that there were no followers. I can see it clearly now, that this was all my fault; that's right, I take the blame here, and I believe that I have now discovered my error: I simply have not been making this painful enough for you. But I do have it in for you really good this time, with an essay entitled

PARAGLIDING AND RELIGION

What?!? You don't think an essay about religion belongs in your RMHPA newsletter? To be honest with you, I don't think it belongs here either; however, since **you** didn't come up with a better way to fill this space, you're getting an essay about religion and paragliding. And to make this even more painful to you, I am pleased to announce that the next newsletter will host a brutal essay about Politics and Paragliding! Be forewarned, that I fully intend to use-and-abuse the Editorial Powers you hath given me, to advance my own political agenda and ambitions. Unless, of course, you send me something to publish in its stead. (I'm not too worried about that happening though.)

But to commence: It is generally admitted that it takes a certain amount of *faith*, to fly a glider. To launch (to "jump off a cliff," as the layman so endearingly puts it) into thin air, is a thing that no quantity of assay or analysis can justify. Our frailties are invincible: a mere drop of sixty feet is all it takes to make us splat into liquid red, and yet we hang by string and nylon, over chasms of thousands of feet. We trust the poorly understood aerodynamics of soft fabrics, and the vicissitudes of turbulent air currents, for safe passage. When looked at in this banal and pessimistic light, we must be either fools or some kind of brainwashed religious fanatics (assuming the two are different from one another). Why then do we fly these ghastly contraptions, and risk it all on a whim? Here I single out our religion, to investigate this all-important question.

To which religious persuasion do Paraglider Pilots typically adhere? An unfair question to be sure, but I ask it all the same. On the one hand, there are so many to choose from, so many to adhere to: Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Science, Islam, Nothingness, Magic, Scientology, Taoism – there are *so many* Deities and Prophets to believe in – you've got the Sun and the Planets and the Stars, you've got God, Gandhi, Allah, AIDS, Jesus Christ, Hitler, Mother Nature, Mohammed, Thor, Duga, Diana, Death, Krishna, Kali, Chaos, Nike, Norns...as I say, there are so many choices, so *very* many choices – how then to choose? I expect that at least one of them *must* be the Godhead proper, or maybe some combination of them. Well, I don't pretend I know how to choose, but I know this much, that out of all the Paraglider Pilots I've met, most of 'em seem to be Hippies. No, wait, – I take that back, I was wrong: they're actually (the ones I've met that is) mostly Scientists, since they usually come from industrialized countries where enterprise, technology, and the scientific method logically lead to a strong and unwavering faith in the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Actually, I changed my mind again: now that I really think about it that way, Paraglider Pilots are often Christians. Yep, that's what they really are, they're Christians, and that's cause they need to be saved, and because thermals prove the existence of God. You can't see thermals (at least until they turn into clouds), but they're real and you can feel them, just like God and Jesus. Thermals prove that God exists, if you need them to.

Another thing Paraglider Pilots have, is the need to feel important, which need functions as the inverse square of our actually *being* important. We have the need for something to abuse, for something to be superior to, and for something to hate. We maintain the myth that we are hard working and much abused,

and that our needs and requirements are very few – and hence that we are important. We, as a fact, are not very hard working, and we are not very much abused. Mostly we have a pretty easy time of it, and we presume this must be due to the fact that God loves us, since we cannot earn anything on our own. Yet we do earn our daily cheese and our wine, and we taste them with a discerning palate, and consider ourselves sophisticated aficionados. We are therefore more Jewish than Christian, in our religious nature.

Paraglider Pilots are definitely excellent bird watchers, and we sometimes fly with birds, and we even fancy ourselves birds at times; we must have been birds in our past lives. This makes us more Buddhist than anything else, except that we also worship the Sun (Giver of Thermals), so we're fundamentally Pagans, suckled in creeds outworn, with fairytales fill'd up in head.

Since every flight starts and ends on the ground, Paraglider Pilots have much in common with Duists, who hold that every life knows *two* deaths, the one ahead and the one behind, or in other words that death before birth and that death following the final breath. Most churches concern themselves with one thing only, namely the hereafter ahead; it is upsetting for people to think that someday they will be no longer, but not equally upsetting for them to consider the fact that earlier they had never been. Paraglider Pilots, however, are equally upset about not being in the air, both before and after flight, so Duism lends itself rather well as an agreeable religion. The eschatological implications need not be puzzled over.

It now appears that I have found examples of Paraglider Pilots dabbling in every sort of religion, and I have therefore failed to come to any conclusion. One thing that is for sure, is that you won't find Paraglider Pilots in church on Sunday morning. Parawaiting requires such utter commitment, that there's really no time at all to celebrate religion. Paraglider Pilots are therefore Secular Fundamentalists, and they don't have any time to bother with religion, so as not to miss the all-important thermal cycles of the day. And with that, I think little else needs to be said on this topic.



Kiernan O'Donovan and Denver by Sam Crater