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MEMBERS OF  
PARAGLIDING ASSOCIATION

A PUBLICATION FOR THE  
THE BAY AREA PARAGLIDING

# Ridge Dancer

## Spirale de la Mort *reflections en francais* – by Mike Kellogg

The June '99 Glidell-sponsored tour of the French Alps was a real eye-opener. "That's not paragliding," commented Pierre-Paul Menegoz, our seasoned local instructor, when asked about my tres conservative flying style. Compared to the flying I saw in France, I have to agree.

At L'Isere, a 3,000-foot launch north of the famed St. Hilaire, our base of operations, I gaped as a series of porpoise dives ended in a stall for a French PG team member. Even with a negative spin, line twist, and backwards flying, no chute was deployed, and a top-landing was neatly performed, all in spicy conditions. It seemed everywhere I looked gliders at oh-my-God heights were pinwheeling across the sky.

Rolling their own, cornering at speed, eating well while staying thin, the French are given to friendly handshakes and adrenaline sports. They obviously enjoy life, sit-down meals, and flying (according to Jody, there are some 30,000 FFVL (French Federation de Vol Libre)-certified parapentistes in France).

The day after I arrived (May 26),

looked too well-developed for this homey. With a pair of 10 x 25s in hand, I was admiring the snow-capped Belladonna Range from a nearby overlook. I nearly blew out my Gauloise; three pilots were at least 1K over the Dent du Pra (2623), a fearsome black spire that dominates the horizon. Then other pilots began to materialize out of the ether, many top landing at our cliff-top ville.

*It seemed everywhere I looked gliders at oh-my-God heights were pinwheeling across the sky.*

"Maybe 12 pilots flew 100K today," claimed Pierre-Paul. I was beginning to understand what paragliding was, or at least what it was en francais.

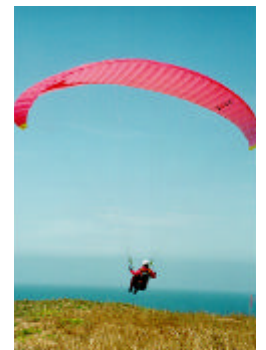
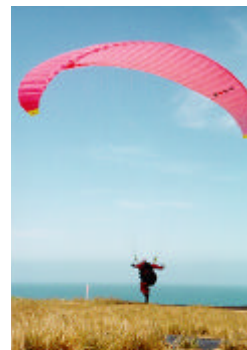
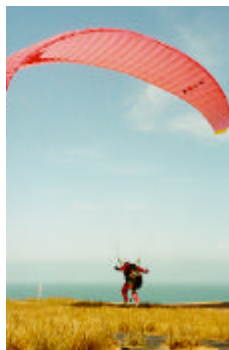
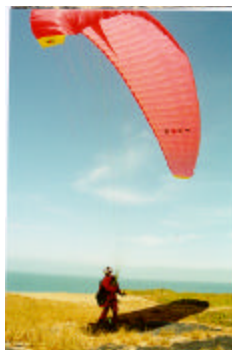
We flew sites throughout the region. Can you say green? Now I can. Lush is really the word, verdant mountainsides, patchwork fields, and the ting, tang, tong of dairy cows. Speaking of which, a local term was "cowed-out", which meant bailing in some farmer's field. I flew eight sites, including the famous Annecy, where I didn't even complete the Petite Tour, but did top-land east of the Dent du Lanfon, where earlier I had seen a bear. Unfortunately malevolent conditions dictated a lengthy hoof down through a forest primeval,

which also contains wolves. My pace was quick.

Although I had some 21 days to visit, the time flew (literally). We walked Grenoble (chaud), toured the Monastery of Chartreuse (sobering), beheld a musical lightshow (magnifique) deep inside the cavern of Choranche, amongst other l'aventures petites:

Le Dent de Crolles -- This 2062-meter limestone tooth looms directly behind Le Chalet, our hotel, which by the way is an endless source of haute cuisine. One evening I was graciously offered a ride to the trailhead du Le Dent, where I began a steep -- the definition thereof -- trek up the mountain. Even though the main path was worn as smooth as the Blarney Stone, I got off-trail three times, the last of which saw me climbing like Rocky in Cliffhanger. A full moon rose over Mt. Blanc and the star-streaked vista was rhapsodic. A giant holy cross marked the mountain's top, and planning to launch au matin, I dedicated the entire trip to my brother, who was killed in a 1997 PG accident. After all, he got me into this crazy, wonderful sport. Unfortunately a windy morning followed a windy night and I had to schlep down.

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Ohhh, what a little breeze can do.

- photos by Gene Pfeiffer

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### Worth remembering :

- Next Club Meeting is Oct 6th @ 8:00 PM at the Round Table Pizza, Oceana at Manor Drive in Pacifica
- Dumps Radio Contact – 151.955 MHz
- Coast Guard emergency phone contact 415.331.8247

# Trips and Stuff - by Jerry Schimke

Last month I was one of the folks, who went to Telluride, CO. Heard the same thing there that I've been hearing all over the place, namely, "Man this summer has seen the worst flying weather I can remember." So, we had a lot of rain and thundershowers. Of course, when you probe a bit deeper, Telluride always overdevelops in the afternoon, and yes, there have been wet seasons before. And still, people got a lot of flying in during this year's Airmen's Rendezvous. I flew 4 out of the 5 days, and twice on three of those days. Never got really, really high (by Telluride standards), but from 14,300 feet msl you can still see a long ways in really beautiful country. That's higher than most of the mountains, so the view is spectacular. In writing about Red Bull Wings Over Aspen, Peter Lindquist's admission of a sequence of three blown launch

attempts in front of the world's best pilots made me feel a lot better about my performance at the Telluride launch. Some days launch went perfectly, but I also had three blown in a row. Man, that's work, picking up everything (including yourself) and climbing back up the hill and laying out at 12,000 feet.

It is reported that flying conditions at Grant Mountain were great over Labor Day. Too bad those issues of site access kept the attendance of BAPA pilots at a low level.

On September 18-19, the paraglider contingent of the Reno Air Show will convene at Slide Mountain. According to David Klein, "launch is typically best from 10:30 till ~12:30 or so. Rarely doable after 1:30 due to west winds." Darron Guberman reports "There is another launch near Slide for the prevailing west winds. Just north of the Rose Meadow windsock is a brush-covered hill. The hill is about 400 feet tall and there is a road cut you can launch from...." In any event, since the Reno Air Show will be under way, if blown out, we're still close enough to go to the races (if desired). So put it on your calendar, September 18-19, Slide Mt. and the Reno Air Show. Call Stan Dempsy (775) 787-8054 for details.

The 9<sup>th</sup> annual Pine Mt. Fly-In near Bend, Oregon is also on the September 18-19 weekend. It's a beautiful high desert locale with a view of the Cascade volcanoes and really big sky. The evening glass-off is fabulous when you launch from the training hill and bench up to fly over the mountaintop - it's a kick.

The last weekend in September seems to be clinic time.

Choose between a thermal clinic in Sandy, Utah and a cross-country clinic by Ed Stein in the Bay Area (see calendar). Mark Axon will join Ed to discuss helpful hints on meteorology as it affects X-C flying. Ed will share his valuable insights on how to do it in the Bay Area. Everyone is invited to the morning lecture session (and to drive, later) but only P-4 pilots will be allowed to participate in the afternoon practical flying portion of the clinic. Call Ed at (650) 615-8262, or email at [espi@aol.com](mailto:espi@aol.com) for details.

The classic "Monster Mash" is scheduled for Hat Creek on the first weekend in October. And put October 9-10 on your calendar for a trip to Owens Valley. The weather treated the spring trip to Owens Valley poorly, but Kari Castle says the weather in September and October is usually great for paragliding. So hone up your high mountain flying skills, and we'll see you there. And then the place to be on October 16-17 is Anderson Flat. No work party, just fun flying, but with a big attraction on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Seems the 16<sup>th</sup> is someone's big birthday, and Kim Galvin invites everyone to the party at Gene's cabin. Be there, have fun.

Then of course, there's the annual fall gathering of a few flying friends at Elk Mt. on October 23-24. It's rumored that there may be a bonfire associated with this gathering. Call Al Baldini at (650) 348-7971 for details.

And start thinking about what to do for the end of the year. Achim Hagemann of Advanced Air Technologies in Hawaii is advertising the 1999 Mauna Kea Fly-In for December 27-31. I've never flown there, but talking with him gets me all enthusiastic. Call him at (808) 968-6856 for details.

Have Fun. Fly Safe.



Dakota 1989 - 1999

# I could'a gone to Hat Creek, but instead.. *by Jerry Schimke*

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As the guy that puts together the BAPA Paragliding Calendar for 1999, I'm always checking out the published schedules and keeping my ears open for events of interest to BAPA members. Often there are events that sound really neat. Some of them I've attended before and know I want to attend this year. Some have been on my list of "must dos" for a long time and I think that this year surely must be the time for me to visit this or that place and try paragliding in yet another exciting venue. Flying high over Hat Creek Rim is one of my favorite ways to spend an evening. Watching the sun set over Burney Mountain, settling down out of the glassoff to the LZ and then sharing some favorite beverage in camp with some of the nicest people around. Always a good time, and for sure this year I was planning to attend and participate.

And then.... Well, my eldest sister, Anita, graciously invited me and my two other sisters to visit her newly completed home and to attend the Mountain Festival in Tehachapi on the Hat Creek weekend. It's been quite a few years since the four of us have had such a reunion. And because there is a place nearby, at about 4000 feet elevation, called Cummings Valley where the locals paraglide, I choose Tehachapi instead of Hat Creek. After a Saturday morning of Mountain Festival parade and craft booths in the park, I had the urge to go paragliding. The wind was blowing pretty hard in Tehachapi, so I expected it to be blown out and really wasn't committed to flying. But I did want to visit the site, just about 4 miles by GPS from Anita's house, and see if anyone else was flying. Nope! No pilots in the air and not a sole in sight in the vicinity of the LZ. I don't advocate flying alone, but as long as I'm here, might just as well hike up the hill and measure the wind speed. Not too bad. 8-10 mph. Ought to be flyable if I catch the house thermal. As it turned out, I missed the thermal, but soared the ridge for a 6-minute flight. On the theory that any flying is better than none, I felt a little bit satisfied and headed back to Anita's to call it a day.

Early in the afternoon on Sunday I arrived at Cummings Valley to find a hang glider pilot breaking down his glider in hang glider LZ. He had flown from Bear

Mountain and said that conditions were pretty punchy. He'd flown about 50 minutes and reached 7200 feet where conditions were ok, but out over the valley he said it was pretty rough, even for Cummings Valley (whatever that meant). Particularly in landing, he was bounced around quite a bit. But still, he thought it would be flyable.

I proceeded to the Paraglider LZ and measured the wind speed at 6-8 mph. Gee, that seems eminently doable. With yesterday's experience under my belt, I figured it would be a shame not to head up the hill a few hundred feet and reassess the situation. It was hot, and the hill is pretty steep, so it took about 20 minutes to get 600 feet up over the LZ for another look-see. Well, the wind was 8-10 with peaks of about 14-15 as the cycles came through. True, I could see dust devils out in the valley from time to time and that provided an amber light in my mind. But they didn't appear to be high intensity with cores closely packed and extending thousands of feet into the air. The air coming straight up the hill seemed very inviting. True, I was alone. I never feel great about flying alone, and seldom do it. But it worked ok yesterday, and I did have my cell phone in case I needed to call 911. And in the worst case, if I crashed, the hillside is pretty bare and my glider would be visible, so someone would hopefully see me. In any event, the conditions seemed very inviting and I felt quite confident that all would work out well. So I laid out my glider, climbed into my flight suit and harness, went through my checklist and hooked in. After building a wall and checking out all the lines, I waited for a favorable cycle, lifted the glider overhead and took off. Climbing immediately and constantly at a very comfortable rate. A few bumps, yes, but these are thermic conditions, and nothing unexpected. The hang glider pilot had mentioned that he found the best lift right over the paraglider launch ridge, so that's where I started to explore the air. Sure enough, it didn't take long to get several hundred feet above launch. The ridge to the west, over towards Bear Mountain looked like it would be fun to explore, so I headed out in that direction. Sure enough, there was lift to get up to the top of the ridge and look around. I could see in the direction of my sister's house but

couldn't pick out its exact location. Still, it seemed like a good idea to try going cross-country and landing in her front yard. So back we go, 1500 feet over launch, heading down the ridge toward Anita's place. Lift wasn't as easy to find in that part of the ridge. The scattered Blue Oaks all over the place had some space between them that looked like I might be able to land without ending in a tree. But I didn't have anyone following me in a chase car, so landing out wasn't a very attractive option. This is especially so since I was always flying within sight of the Tehachapi maximum-security correctional facility and hitchhikers are not a welcome commodity on the roads in the area. If I landed out, I was assured a good hike, and since it was a pretty hot day, the prospect didn't appeal to me much.

So after losing a lot of altitude, my conservative nature caused me to turn back toward launch to regain some height. Looking down at the Blue Oaks below me made me wonder if I had over extended my exploration. What the heck have I gotten myself into? Did I make a big mistake? But no. Here is some lift, right over the little hill where I thought it should be. Not great lift, but enough to give me a little margin of comfort. Then one more little bounce and I'm over the last little ridge between launch and me; and the lift is stronger. I'm OK! Up the face of the mountain I go, moving west again, figuring to head back over towards Bear Mountain.

I had heard that vultures have a defense mechanism, which can result in a person getting plastered with unpleasant fecal material. I don't know whether there is any truth in that, or not. But I had heard it, and it was on my mind as one or another of the birds would fly past me and get in front, lined up perfectly to bomb me if it wanted to. No such behavior was noted. Only a very friendly, "come and play with us some more" kind of an attitude. In fact, they were leading me from thermal to thermal in the direction of Anita's house, so once again I entertained the notion of flying the 4 miles home and going back for my car later.

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# BAPA PARAGLIDING CALENDAR, 1999

Updated September 10, 1999 by Jerry Schimke

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## SEPTEMBER

- 18-19 Reno Air Show (and Slide Mt. Fly-In)  
Contact Stan Dempsy (775) 787-8054 or Jerry Schimke (530) 758-0582
- 18-19 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Pine Mt. Fly-In, Pine Mt., OR  
Contact Raven Young (541) 317-8300
- 24-26 Thermal Clinic at Sandy UT sponsored by Two-Can-Fly Paragliding  
Contact Ken Hudonjorgensen (801) 572-3434
- 25-27 Paraglider I-P, Pine Mt., OR  
Contact Phil Phol (541) 388-3869
- 25 X-Country Clinic by Ed Stein, meteorology by Mark Axon  
Contact Ed (650) 615-8262 or email <easpi@aol.com>

## OCTOBER

- 2-3 Monster Mash at Hat Creek  
Contact Liz Hern for details (530) 527-7134
- 9-10 Owens Valley revisited  
Contact Jerry Schimke (530) 758-0582
- 16-17 Birthday Fly-In at Anderson Flat  
Contact Kim Galvin (510) 748-0451
- 21-24 USHGA BOD Meeting  
Colorado Springs USHGA HQ -- (719) 632-8300
- 23-24 Annual fall gathering at Elk Mountain  
Contact Al Baldini -- (650) 348-7971



Father's Day – 1999 photo by Gene Pfeiffer

## DECEMBER

- 4-5 Joint BAPA/Glidell Reserve Clinic  
Contact Jody Lucas (650) 424-9704
- 11-12 Instructor Renewal (ICP) in San Bruno  
Contact Bob Ost (650) 588-1975
- 27-31 1999 Mauna Kea Fly-In, Hawaii -- Advanced Air Technologies  
Contact Achim Hagemann (808) 968-6856

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## OTHER CLUB MEETING INFORMATION

**Wings of Rogallo** meets every 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month at the Omega Restaurant in Milpitas (corner of South Park Victoria and Calaveras Blvd.)  
Social hour @ 7:00 PM, meeting starts at 8:00 PM.

**Sonoma Wings Hang Gliding Club** meets every 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month at the Round Table Pizza, Hwy 12 and Stonypoint Rd. in Santa Rosa at 7:00 PM.

**Marin County Hang Gliding Association** meets on the last Thursday of the month at 7:30 PM at the Round Table Pizza in Corte Madera. (Come early to start on your pizza)



# Organization

Check us out on the web !  
[www.igi.org/bapa](http://www.igi.org/bapa)

## BAPA Club Officers

President	Mike Galvin	510.748.0451
V. President	Chris Northcutt	415.584.5610
Secretary	Cheryl Cohen	650.593.7458
Treasurer	Kim Galvin	510.748.0451
Site Director	Gene Pfeiffer	408.356.7782
Safety Dir.	Phil Neri	650.737.7926
Activities Dir.	Jerry Schimke	530.758.0582
Past Pres.	Ann Sasaki	650.355.8888
Editor	Steven Pease	650.556.1978

## BAPA Site Administrators

Stables	Dave Sondergeld	650.756.4530
Mt. Tam	Wally Anderson	415.456.3670
Mt. Diablo	M. Zabetian	925.933.9045

## USHGA Region 2 Examiners

Jack Hodges	650.728.0938
Ed Stein	650.367.9707
Kathy Wilde	650.556.1320

## USHGA Region 2 Observers

Ed Levin	Dave Bingham	408.923.0394
Ed Levin	Claudia Lehman	510.893.4787
Ed Levin	John Wilde	650.556.1320
Ed Levin	Kathy Wilde	650.556.1320
Mt. Diablo	Eric Wilcox	415.474.8057
Stables	Dave Sondergeld	650.756.4530

*The Bay Area Paragliding Association (BAPA) is an organization of paragliding enthusiasts. The charter of the club is to promote and encourage the sport of paragliding. BAPA is a registered chapter of the United States Hang Gliding Association (PC006).*

*The material presented here is published as part of an information dissemination service for BAPA members. BAPA makes no warranties or representations and assumes no liability concerning the validity of any advice, opinion or recommendations expressed in the material. Readers are encouraged to report errors of fact to the Editor.*

*The Ridge Dancer is published monthly. Material for publication should be sent to the Editor and may be edited for format or space considerations only. Deadline for submissions is the 15th of each month. Submissions can be made via email to : [spease@interserv.com](mailto:spease@interserv.com). Classified advertisements are free for BAPA members*

*Address changes should be sent to : BAPA Address Change, PO Box 1809, Pacifica CA 94044-9998. To receive the Ridge Dancer electronically (.PDF format) requests may be sent via email to [mgalvin@concentric.net](mailto:mgalvin@concentric.net).*

## **BAPA Meeting Minutes of 9/1/99 – submitted by Cheryl Cohen**

Vice President Chris Northcutt called the meeting to order at 8:08. Eighteen members, including one new member, were present.

### **Notable Flights**

Darron flew from Potato Hill to Elk and back in about 2 ½ hours with a max altitude of 10,500'. Kim reached 8,000' at Potato Hill and had her first XC flights between Mission and Ed Levin. Ginny had her 5<sup>th</sup> sponsored flight from Mt. Tam. Jerry had nice flights at Point of the Mountain and Telluride and soared with reintroduced California condors in the Cummins Valley. Al flew a challenging 57km flight at Golden BC. Jules bought a new wing and has started flying again after a one year hiatus.

### **Officer Reports**

#### Treasurer

Kim reported that our bank balance is about \$3,200. Joel suggested that we look into obtaining and distributing whistles for use at The Dump in foggy conditions. Kim will look into it. New member Mike Bergen has contacts who can offer a first aid class.

#### Site Director

Gene reported that the recent fire near Anderson Flat came within about a mile of the cabin and did not damage the launch or LZ.

#### Activities Director

Jerry has a long list of upcoming activities. Check the calendar, and contact him with any suggestions.

### **Old Business**

A motion was approved to accept last month's minutes.

Kim has not received a response from the officer of the RC club with whom she communicated.

Chris talked to the owner of the problem pit bull. He was very cooperative and will take measures to keep the dog from injuring anyone.

### **New Business**

Jody announced that Ed Stein wants to hold a XC clinic in the end of September. Another Glidell-sponsored reserve clinic will be held in December. Ginny is raising money for the US Women's World Team by selling T-shirts.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 PM.



# PARAGLIDING / HANG GLIDING GIFTS AND ACCESSORIES

Free color catalog featuring a virtually unlimited selection of cool gift items! Examples include several custom really neat Christmas ornaments, jewelry, hand cut and etched beer, coffee mugs and other glassware, great flying stickers, picture frames, office supplies - and more!! Prices are very affordable (even for hard core air junkies!). Prices start at \$2.00!

To request a catalog, email Lisa Tate at Zoolisa@aol.com or contact me at:

## SOARING DREAMS

11716 Fairview Ave.,  
Boise, Idaho 83713  
(208) 376-7914

## Basic Parachute Use...A Practical Perspective for Paraglider Pilots – Part V

*By Betty Pfeiffer with Bill Gargano*

### A COMMON SENSE APPROACH ONCE YOU HAVE THROWN YOUR PARACHUTE AT ALTITUDE

Once you have thrown your parachute the real issue becomes one of control. The following approach should be used as guidelines in establishing your own standard operating procedures (SOP's) -

1. Assess the failure
  2. Note the proximity to the ground
  3. Control the failure
  4. Prepare for impact
- As the reserve is inflating try to grasp the paraglider control lines
  - Gingerly determine how much control you have
  - If there is some control try to maintain the paraglider so as not to interfere with the reserve
  - If it is uncontrollable, disable the paraglider in a symmetrical manner.
  - If possible get a hold of the center of the trailing edge of the paraglider and hold it for the ride down. This is one place you do not risk a reinflation.
  - Disable the paraglider anyway you can being careful not to tangle your body in the wreckage.
  - *Never lose sight of where the ground is.*

### A WORD ABOUT STEERABLE RESERVES

As in any parachute design the steerable reserve parachute concept has tradeoffs. To steer a round parachute, vents are built into the canopy. By closing a particular vent the parachute will turn. The vents cause the parachute to have forward speed. The pilot can control the direction the parachute is pointed by turning into the desired direction of travel.

Some of the advantages of having a steerable reserve include increased stability in the parachute design, the ability to land into the wind and to steer yourself away from danger.

Disadvantages include :

- You can achieve steerability only after your paraglider is disabled and the process of disabling the paraglider and maintaining a disabled paraglider while you reach for the parachute steering lines can be difficult at best.
- Steerable parachutes have a forward glide. If you have no control over which direction the reserve parachute will open you risk the chance of having your reserve glide into your wreckage upon opening.
- If you misread the direction the wind is blowing upon landing, or you are unable to steer the parachute because you are busy trying to deal with the paraglider, you increase your chance of a down wind hard landing.
- If you have a steerable reserve parachute with a singled riser you can face a multitude of

problems.

### A WORD ABOUT PARASWIVELS

If you have a single riser you may want to consider installing a paraswivel in your parachute system. A paraswivel can be valuable if your parachute is descending straight while you are spinning or if you are coming down straight while your parachute is spinning. It could possibly help your situation. The only draw back would be if the paraswivel somehow got tangled in the paraglider lines.

### WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOU ARE DRIFTING TOWARDS POWER LINES WATER OR OTHER DANGER?

Obviously you must try everything in your power to steer clear of danger. If your reserve parachute has a double riser configuration at the shoulders of your harness that goes directly to the reserve parachute, you may be able to pull down on one riser and redirect your parachute. This may require strength comparable to doing a continuous chin up to maintain that input. If you have a single suspension point, you are at the mercy of the wind.

**Next month : The conclusion of this six-part series .**

# I coulda gone to the Hat Creek, but instead...by Jerry Schimke

- continued from Page III

At about 300-400 feet above launch, I notice some vultures circling below me, and out farther away from the face of the mountain than I had been flying. Hey, think I, vultures know where good thermals are. I better get on out there with them. Yup, they knew where the good ones were. By the time I got as far away from the mountain as they were, they had climbed to my altitude. I noticed that they had some unusual coloring at the elbow of their wings. As they circled gracefully in the thermal and I approached, the recognition came -- CONDORS! Could it be? Yes, conditions were a bit punchy, and I was busy, actively flying my paraglider. Where are they? Oh, yes, over there. Are we in the same thermal? YES! Dig those birds! My gosh, how exciting! To be thermaling with condors. Unbelievable! Unexpected! Thrilling beyond words. Three or four times around this thermal and there they go, moving on to another. I follow. They drift back to the original position and we all go round and round some more. One of the biggest (with an orange head) has large numbered tags on its wings. One blue, one red. Each with a large number 8. We fly on and Number 8 comes in to take a better look. Its legs are lowered to slow its speed. It passes 10 feet over my glider, directly between the sun, and me casting an unbelievably large shadow on my canopy as it gracefully continues to thermal with me. How many of them are there? Wow, there are four. No, it's five!

No, I'll be damned if there aren't six of them

They seem as interested in me as I am in them. They continually drift from place to place, choosing the best lift in the vicinity. For 15-20 minutes we continue sharing the same thermals. As we gained altitude, our relative height always within about 100 feet of each other. Sometimes I would be on the top of the heap, sometimes on the bottom. Other times all seven of us would be circling in the same thermal at the same level and all of us within 100 yards of each other. The closest encounter at the same level was about 30-50 feet. I'll tell you for a bird with a nearly 10-foot wing span, that's mighty close. And they were all well mannered. We all circled in the same counterclockwise direction and maintained eye contact.

Then they started to drift back farther up the rough terrain of the canyon, deeper into the forested area, and I lost confidence. When I conservatively headed back towards the launch area, my newfound playmates kept circling farther and farther into the wilderness and I lost contact with them. What exhilaration! What satisfaction! I felt that I had gained new understanding and insight into the flying environment of Cummings Valley.

I flew back towards Bear Mountain and grabbed a thermal, riding it back to the top of

the ridge where the convergence threw me into the sky at 1140 fpm. After attaining 6900 msl, I was ready to fly down the ridge picking up thermals all along the way to Anita's house. I had flown with the condors! I was a sky god!

However, before I got even as far as the condors had taken me 25 minutes earlier, the expected thermals had not materialized. I had flown into 900 fpm sink, and I was low, way back over the wilderness. No longer a sky god, I realized that I was not a condor. The condors had honored me by allowing me to join them for an exquisite quarter to a third of an hour. But now I was once again a frail human being, only visiting this splendid airspace above rugged wilderness, and out of my natural element. I turned back. Surveyed the valley for dust devils or other indications of perilous landing conditions and realized that the adrenaline high was wearing off and I was getting very tired from all the active flying. It was time to land.

*"To be thermaling with condors. Unbelievable! Unexpected! Thrilling beyond words."*

Over the valley and over the LZ, the air was more fluky and agitated than over the mountains. I now wanted to get down fast, so did a few turns in a spiral dive, went into big ears with speed bar and plunked down softly a few feet from my waiting car. What an absolutely wonderful experience it all was. I'd sure like to do it again, but expect that it was a once in a life time experience.

## Spirale de la Mort *reflections en francais* — by Mike Kellogg

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Chamechaude -- No sense bumbling for adjectives on this one; at 2082 meters, it's the highest peak in the Chartreuse. Let's just say I could hear angels singing, see Mt. Blanc as clear as a bell, and perched above the clouds, might as well have been on Everest. Tres sweet.

Mt. Blanc -- First climbed in 1786, this monster of rock and ice is the highest point in Europe. I stood awestruck until drawn skyward via the Aiguille du Midi tram, topping out at 3842 meters, where I strapped on crampons and downclimbed an airy ridge onto a glacier. A client was getting a tandem in radical conditions, and took off through clouds on a huge descent. Suddenly a Welshman I'd met on the tram appeared. He'd taken a basic climbing course back home. He had gear. Let's climb! At 3 p.m. we started up the Cosmiques Ridge (Grade II), which seesaws back to the tram station. Climbing like banshees, we were duly impressed by big

drops off either side, and occasional steepes. Clouds formed and hailed three inches; are we going to die?! And then we missed the tram, which wasn't that bad parce que the sunrise and sunset from the tram station étaient glorieux.

"Spirale de la Mort" -- Usually followed by nervous laughter, this phrase -- our adopted motto -- described extreme spirals that are routine business in the Alps. That afternoon's conditions promised turbulence. Maybe I'd kick it on the balcony and do some reading. NOT! With a deep accent, sponsored pilot and snowboarder Alexis Coudurier offered to take me tandem. Bon vie! Sure enough, Alexis' skill saw us well above launch, the famed Funiculaire waterfall receding below. After snapping shots of Jody, Alexis stated matter-of-factly: "Spirale de la mort." Oh shit, I thought, as we began pulling Gs 1,500 feet off the deck. I was one-quarter inch from blackout, when I stated less matter-of-factly: "It's a little much!" Alexis' english wasn't so good, and he interpreted this as "A little more please; steeper, faster, scarier, s'il vous plait."

WAAAAH! The horizon whipped into a dizzying blur, the spiral of death itself. Sur la terre, once the spinning stopped, fingers had to be pried loose from risers.

It's difficult to sum up the entire trip, but I think Shankar said it best: "SCORE!!"



Launching at St. Hilaire

photo by M. Kellogg

*Just another Father's Day.* Photo by Gene Pfeiffer

