

Gary Brown

Pilot Interview continued

TF: DID YOU EVER GET HURT?

Gary: I've never had a bad accident, but I did manage to scare myself a couple times. In the early 80's Dave Smith and I were over in California flying at Torrey Pines and I forgot to hook in. The local pilots at Torrey usually don't do hang checks because they take off and top land so much. I asked a local pilot if he didn't mind, so we walked down to take off. The wind was coming in crossed so I asked him which cliff face was best to soar with this wind direction? I also asked how to approach for landing if your not too high above with this wind direction. After talking for a couple of minutes I picked up the glider and said "clear", and ran off the edge. Can you believe it? After specifically asking for a hang check, we both forgot. Well, a lot goes through your mind in a couple of seconds. I knew immediately something was wrong. As the glider rose my hands almost automatically went from the downtubes to the basetube. As the basetube started to raise above my head I knew I had forgot to hook in. If you've ever been to Torrey Pines, you know below take off is not a clean cliff face, but has fingers from erosion. I thought letting go might be better than holding on. (I wasn't sure). I fell about 10' down on a "finger". Another 2' outward and I would of fell 300' to the beach. My flying buddy Dave who's still setting up his glider, hears people yelling and looks up and sees my glider in the air past the cliff edge without me. Of course he thinks I'm dead. It takes me a minute to climb back up to take off and my wire man is standing there looking up at my glider soaring and says something like "Your glider sure is trimmed nice" and "I wish I had a camera". By now my glider is about 100' above take off "parked" into the wind. At first I thought my brand new \$2000 Comet was going to fly out and crash in the ocean and I would never see it again. Then I thought "it might just crash back into the cliff face and then I can get it and repair it!" I take time to take off my harness and my glider is still soaring right above us. It slowly does a 180 turn and flies downwind over the set up area a hundred yards or so behind launch. When it flies downwind it's flying pretty fast. When it's into the wind it's almost hovering. It slowly turns back into the wind, this is when Dave Smith yells "maybe we can catch it". So I go running back and here's Dave and I running around underneath my glider with our hands above our heads hoping to catch it. Well it slowly does another 180 downwind and flies way back over the parking lot. We're chasing it but we can't keep up. By now it's starting to get close to the ground. It does a final 180 turn into the wind and comes in over this guy's brand new BMW car. The basetube misses the roof by about a foot. I think the car created a little turbulence because when the glider flew over the car the nose pitched up a little and it came in for a real soft landing. Even though we were still a ways away I knew it hit so softly there would be no damage. As we run up to the glider the BMW owner looks at us and asks "do those things get away from you very

often?" (Like it just blew up off the ground and started flying around.) I can't believe it. First I can't believe I'm alive, and even better I can't believe my glider's ok. So I pick up my glider and walk back through the parking lot, through the landing area, through the set up area, down to launch, hook-in and had a great one hour flight.

TF: WHAT IS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE FLIGHT?

Gary: I have so many. Not any would be considered great flights. I remember late one afternoon soaring a glassoff at Shaw Butte, I decided to try to fly downtown. This was when Sky Harbor only had a 5 mile radius air space. Flying almost upwind without getting very high, I worked thermals until I was able to fly over all the downtown high-rise buildings. It was an incredible view, totally different feeling having tall buildings directly underneath without a lot of landing areas. I picked a small field for landing and made my base leg and final right above rush hour on Central Avenue.

Most of my best memories weren't the flights so much as flying with my friends and the good times we had. I remember one time Gary Waugh called around and got 10 pilots to go fly Mount Ord. It was a fairly new site at that time, most of us had not flown there. Mount Ord is next to the Beeline highway with a southwest facing launch and a 5000' vertical. Launch is difficult. A road cut in the side of the mountain which slopes backward (toward the mountain). Backing up the glider until the rear of your keel hits your left with about 3 uphill steps in front of you to the edge. After that, in the air it's a shallow slope for about 100 yards until the mountain drops away. But we had perfect launch conditions: 15 mph straight in. Out of 10 pilots, one new pilot Hans Heydrich crashed take off into the bushes below. Of course we didn't go by the LZ first. Gary Waugh said just land right next to the bar in Pumpkin Center. Well come to find out there was construction going on in that LZ. 9 gliders headed for 9 different LZ's. Everybody landed scattered in a 5 mile radius, about half suffered glider damage. I went through both downtubes trying to avoid a fence in a small field. By the time everybody eventually made it to the bar we were drinking and partying. Gary Waugh was the only one that actually landed at the bar somehow. His glider was parked right by the front door still set up.

Some pilots might remember that Steve Aycok (and I helped) did most of the prototype test flying of today's powered "trikes". They were actually invented in Europe but the first company in the U.S. to try building them was Soarmaster in the Scottsdale air park. Steve was employed by them, I just hung around for the flying. I'm amazed looking back we didn't get hurt or killed. We really didn't know what we were doing. The 7 hp motor we were working

with would barely get a glider off the ground. The engines constantly failed, and I would never fly without an LZ underneath me. I remember one time a muffler vibrated loose while flying. When it fell off and hit the prop behind me it was a huge explosion. Pieces and shrapnel went everywhere including pieces through the sail. They sure have come along ways today with 50 HP and two seater's. I never would of believed it then with the flimsy gliders we were using.

It was also memorable to have my photograph in the Hang Gliding magazine centerfold three different times. I was also on the cover of Glider Rider magazine.

Hang gliding made a major impact on my life. More than I ever thought it could. I don't think I could comprehend flying for 27 years in the beginning. Flying for me now has to be strictly pleasurable. If it's too windy, too hot, too long of a drive, I'll wait for another day.

Classified

For sale: Moyes Extreme harness with 20 gore chute. Black & white lettering and fits some one 5-10, 170#. \$500. contact John Beaman at e-mail or 775.849.3062. I'll be out at Kemmeries doing lessons and possibly towing.

For sale: Litespeed 155 in new condition 50 hours. Make me an offer. Undersurface is red/gray/red. Used CSX 5 for \$2500 with probably 100 hours. contact flydustin@hotmail.com

For sale: Wills Wing RamAir 154. Fluorescent red LE w/ fluorescent orange under-surface. Sail is still crisp with almost no blemishes. Adjustable VG. Brand new wing wires. \$1,750.00 **High-Energy Sports Pod harness.** Deep-blue pod harness with a small light-blue and a small white stripe going down both sides. Great condition with no rips or tears but it could use a mild bath. Adjustable for a person from 5'9" to 6'5" tall. \$250.00 **20 gore High Energy parachute w/swivel.** Fully inspected and repacked by Betty Phiffer. Brand new deployment bag, new swivel, & new strap. \$100.00 **Ball 651 variometer.** Has the 1 foot increment modification. \$100.00 **"Sport" oxygen system.** \$30.00 **Ball helmet.** White, half helmet version. Structurally sound but it could use a paint job. \$25.00 **Knee-hanger harness.** Black, in new condition. \$30.00 **Parachute swivel.** (uninstalled) New never used. \$20.00 **Drogue chute.** Orange w/ bag. \$15.00 **Pair of black Ultra-Mitts.** VERY WARM Like new. \$20.00 **Wills Wing airspeed indicator.** Like new. \$10.00 **"Jack" hook knife.** \$5.00 **Set of 12" training wheels.** Blue and in great shape. \$15.00 **Water bottle and holder.** Custom made. It connects to a downtube for in-flight use. \$10.00. total: \$2,380.00 Note: will sell all items together for \$2000. Call Ken Bruder(home) 480-962-5974 (cell) 480-206-4184 (work) 480-592-2343 or Ken.Bruder@Honeywell.com

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