

Like Joe Pettit?

I am not a grizzly bear hunter, though I have killed a bear, near Strawberry, Arizona, way back in 1967. It took 7 shots from a high powered rifle to kill him, a mere black bear, although no shot was from more than 15 feet away as he bore down on me. A grizzly, being much larger, may have had me for lunch.

Are my bad landings and bent downtubes the mere black bear and is the grizzly still awaiting me somewhere out there in violent air or the stinking atmosphere of dumb mistakes? Am I kidding myself about my chances of survival?

I don't know, or I am in denial about knowing it.

I watched Rob Richardson die; Old Bill died while hang gliding; I have personally been acquainted with others who are no longer with us due to hang gliding accidents. In just this past year, within Arizona alone, Jim Afinowich and Kim Shipek have suffered severe injury, and in recent years there have been others in our small group who have suffered the same fate.

I could name you persons I have known in my general aviation career who have died from aviation mistakes, but they didn't suffer their fates so close together as my hang gliding friends and acquaintances. I ride motorcycles, and the numbers of ill-fated riders are less in my memory than hang gliding types, although motorcyclists are more conspicuous in numbers and in the news. Just how dangerous or foolish is this pursuit we call hang gliding?

I type this narrative as I sit in the Bisbee Grand Hotel, in Bisbee, Arizona.

Tonight I intend to have a first class meal, drink in various dens of iniquity, and to be on the hill tomorrow morning for more flying in the Miller Canyon Fly-In classic. And I fully intend that tomorrow afternoon we will be back at Nick's Bar for more celebration of this weekends exploits, and, as today, we will lift toasts to Joe Pettit; he wouldn't have had it any other way. Am I callous if I state that this is the stuff of real living?

Lying on a couch and watching television is living death to me. Shrinking from all risk and possibility of death or injury is not living. Those that most fear dieing are the ones that never learn to live, as the song goes.

But must it be hang gliding that is the endeavor of choice? This is a hard question for me to answer and this narrative is more a reflection of my internal emotional struggle than it is an answer to the intellectual question at hand.

I have done many stupid things with automobiles on public highways, I can admit in hindsight. I have ridden motorcycles at speeds and in conditions where a bobble could have wiped me out in a fraction of a second, without time for a corrective response from myself. I've been in

him to speak at this months meeting. I think you will like hearing about Larry's unique story, he too was a man who had the dream of flight. Hope to see you there. (Dixon White would also like to speak but has had to postpone it until the July meeting.)

Dan Schroeder

More from the Prez:

Regarding the "Reality Check" safety system:

I would like to address the safety system's use during this past year. The AHGA's willingness to try something new has been the main driving force behind it's development and refinement. When it comes to introducing it to the rest of the country however, there is a level of rejection that is in need of help. I now believe that the quickest way for this device to become accepted is by having more local pilots sharing their experiences through word of mouth.

The outcome from a group of AZ. pilots who recently went out to Crestline CA. resulted in Rob McKenzie's decision to try them out in his training program. This is no different than the introduction and acceptance of parachutes in the 70's and 80's. The cold harsh reality is that without the club's help in supporting this product's use, it will take years to get it accepted, if at all. Why am I saying this? Because I need help in introducing it to the hang gliding community. One person talking about it is not enough.

As a way of helping out the club for promoting its use, I will donate \$4.00 to the AHGA from any sale made by club members. (That's well over half the profit) The other thing I would like to ask from those of you who currently have the system is that you install it and try it if you have not yet done so. As for my own findings from using it for a year, I can say this much. There is no way I would ever consider not using it. It has now caught five serious problems on launch in just the past year and has proven that it can effectively eliminate human error.

Thanks,
Dan