

Happy New Year!



Hi everyone. It's been a long, wet and windy season these past few months, but the days are now getting longer, and spring will soon be here! Don't forget that spring can be the most challenging time of year, so take it easy until you 'get your wings' back.

You may not have heard much from us lately, as we decided to close the school early last November to take the necessary time to deal with the passing of Brad's mother late in that month. Don't worry though; once things return to normal, we will be back and teaching full time! We are expecting to re-open the school around the 15th of February, coincidentally about the time that the weather starts looking up too.

Even though the school has been closed, and you haven't seen much of us around, don't forget that we are still here if you need any gear, advice, or just someone to call to gloat about the airtime you were recently able to sneak in! We are still around, and will be for a long time.

Current Specials

Are you a new T-1 or T-3? We are selling our **Firebird Monster Tandem** for only \$1525.00.

Perhaps you're a new pilot on a budget? We are also selling a **Pro-design Effect 32** and an **Effect 38** for only \$1000.00 each. These are very nice DHV 1-2 wings that still have lots of life left in them.

For pictures, and a more detailed description of any of these wings, please visit our gear page at: www.discoverparagliding.com/Pages/gear.html and follow the link to each wing.

Look for lots of fun events in the coming year. The annual Tow Fest, a new Wagga competition at Cape Kiwanda, X-C towing clinics, and of course, Towing, Towing, Towing!
(You might even catch us flying around on a PPG in the coming months!)

— *See you up there, soon!* —

Paradventures is pleased to provide Group, Solo, Tandem and Advanced Instructional Programs, as well as our exclusive Winch Training System.

Come find out what we can do for you!

www.discoverparagliding.com

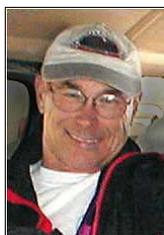
360-694-2160

FlyMexico—The Sequel

By Toby Harris

I don't want to appear as if I'm rubbing anything in, but, as some of you know, I was able to get away to Mexico in early December to join up with Sam Crocker and girlfriend Jan at Valle de Bravo for a week of great flying with FlyMexico.

We arrived in Valle late Sunday night and we all hit the hay quickly. In the middle of the night, one



of my bedboards fell, clattering to the hard tile floor, which sent Sam, who was in the next room, down the stairs to see if someone was trying to break in. I just kind of adjusted my body, too lazy to get up and replace the board. A short time later, three more fell, clattering noisily as did their predecessor. And I, lying with my head and feet elevated while my fanny rested on the floor, laughed until I had tears in my eyes. Fortunately, there was another bed in my room, so I just moved over and we all had a good laugh in the morning.

Going early in December meant we would not be sharing the sky above El Piñon with the annual

presence of Swedish and Norwegian pilots. Instead, we flew only with locals, who are excellent pilots and very courteous. It took only a few moments to get reacquainted with thermal flying. Each day, the lid was a little low. My highest altitude was 10,900'. The launch at El Piñon is about 7400'. Nevertheless, I landed in the Piano LZ below launch only twice. All the rest were X-Cs, two of which took me all the way to Valle.

Apparently, some work was done on the dam and the water level was high. This made the small, intimidating LZ even smaller. It's kind of amazing that, when you have to pull off a spot landing you're successful most of the time. I landed, packed up, caught a taxi back to the restaurant at Jovan to meet up with Sam and Glen (an instructor from Canada, eh?) and enjoyed a wonderful lunch. Edit, our cook, is incredible. Her enchiladas con pollo in verde sauce were delicious. Sometimes there was carne asada, rice, beans, refritos, avacates, pollo con mole, quesadillas and even a delicious flan (pudding) for desert. I, of course, gained a couple of pounds. The food is part of the FlyMexico experience.

We did take off one morning to hike up a mountain to the place where the Monarch butterfly winters. It was an incredible experience. Our Mexican guide told me the mariposa monarca migrates from Canada to this place in Mexico every fall. We arrived early, before the sun's warming rays woke them. When cold and sleeping, they turn the color of tree bark. When the sun warms them, they become active and eventually regain their brilliant red and black coloration and fly off. On the way down the road back to Valle, we were in a virtual blizzard of thousands of monarchs heading downhill to a water and feeding source. Some people travel all the way to Valle just to see this amazing spectacle and it is, indeed, memorable. I took some video.

I should also mention this was a time of great religious celebration for the locals. There were colorful processions down the main streets to the iglesias (churches). There were fireworks all through the night and fiestas everywhere. I wish I could tell you more about the significance of the celebrations.

I'm happy to report there were no injuries during the time Sam and I were down in Valle. There was one botched launch by a local Mexican

pilot, but only a little scrape or two. My strongest lift recorded was about 1200 fpm. I was about 2/3 up the face of El Piñon and caught the core, but I was too close to chance a turn. I kept flying straight, thinking I'd fall out the front and have to deal with a nice whack, but I was still climbing when I got above the crest of the Piñon and could turn. Quite an elevator ride.

After exhausting that thermal, I cruised over to La Pared (the wall) to join Glen, where we both climbed out and headed over the back toward the mesa and Valle beyond. We encountered some sink, but we spread out and I chanced upon a gentle, broad thermal and Glen and a Mexican pilot, Adolfo, joined me. A minute or two later, a sailplane came in from the west, cut it's motor and joined us for a lazy climb out to base. Glen went to play elsewhere and Adolfo (nicknamed Mandril-he lost a leg in a car accident awhile back) and I went on glide for the lake LZ.

I learned a lot in that flight. When going X-C with other pilots, it's good to spread out a bit to improve chances of finding lift. I also learned to be more patient, zig-zagging to different triggers instead of a put-all-your-eggs-in-one-basket approach to getting from point A to wherever you're trying to go.

I have been studying Spanish on and off for many years, but pretty intensely since I returned from Valle earlier in the year. I've got a long way to go, but it was a lot of fun to carry on a conversation with many of the locals, from people in the wonderful shops to taxi drivers and waiters and waitresses in the restaurants. They're gracious, polite and patient people.

I can't wait to go to Valle again, but I may pick another location for my vacation in 2004. Glen, the Canadian instructor, said his area is ideal for going X-C and I may just head up that way in June or July.

It's great to be back in the Northwest again, but I miss the 65-75 degree weather we had in Valle and being able to fly every day. As I said, I don't mean to rub it in, but it was a great trip and I, once again, highly recommend FlyMexico. The trip was seamless from the pickup at the airport by Charlie, to the accommodations, retrievals, transportation and helpful instruction.

