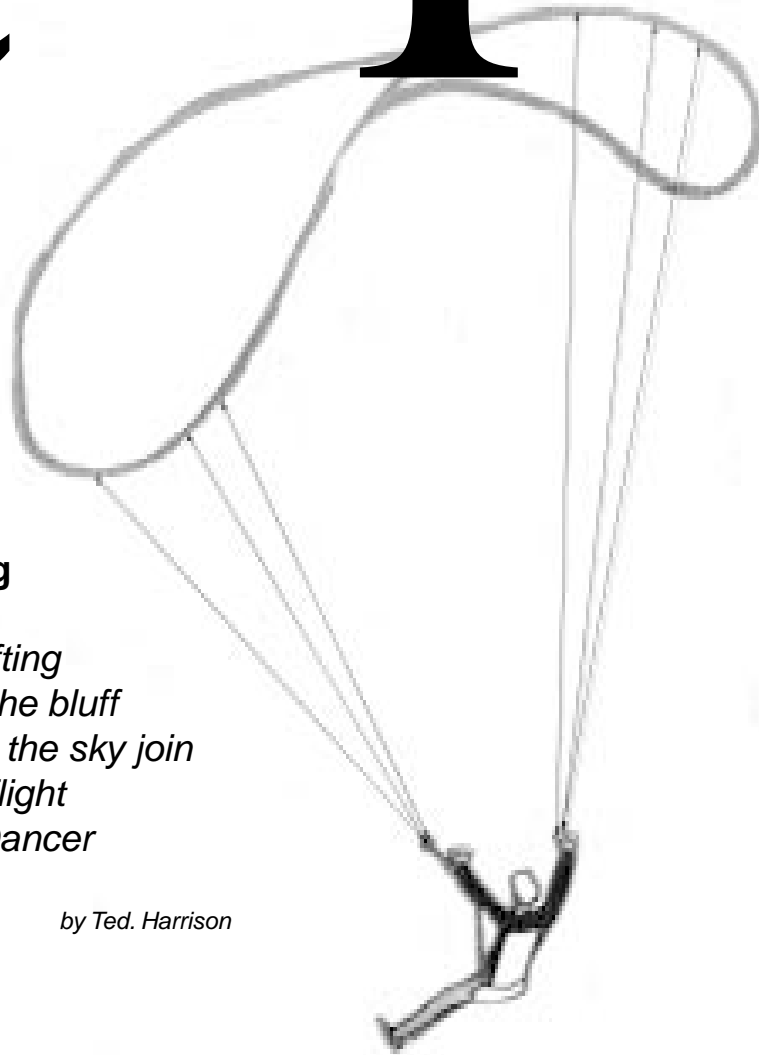


a i r



Sky Dancing

*Floating, Drifting
High above the bluff
The sea and the sky join
in the joyful flight
Of the Sky Dancer*

by Ted. Harrison

September 2000

The Official Publication of the Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association of Canada

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IN THIS ISSUE

4

Letters

From the President and
the Editor

5-6

Jim Orava describes what it's
like to be and fly in Romania

13

President Steps Down

Andre Nadeau's resignation letter

AIR DEADLINES

February 28

May 31

August 31

November 30

Letter from the President

Andre Nadeau

As this poor summer draws to an end, pilots are starting to make plans for winter flying. I am not talking of trekking through treacherously slippery slopes and knee-deep snow to reach launch, although I do expect to do some of that. No, what I am talking about is planning another trip down south where the sun shines and the flying is magnificent.

Five years ago, I was one of only two pilots in Ottawa who did so. What I have noticed is that these trips are becoming increasingly popular with Canadian pilots, at least in Eastern Canada. Last year, six pilots from Ottawa flew in Mexico and I have met many pilots from Quebec there. I hope the trend continues because it means that many more pilots will discover some wonderful flying venues.

This brings me to an important topic that pilots often dismiss too easily and that is the topic of medical insurance. My advice about medical insurance is simple; make sure you have some and make sure that it covers you if you get hurt flying. Although Blue Cross is readily available, it will not cover you if you get hurt while flying.

A pilot from Quebec learned that lesson the hard way last winter and he has literally paid for it. Make sure that you do not fall in the same trap. The CAA will sell you travel medical insurance that will provide you with the coverage you need and at a price comparable to Blue Cross. In addition, if you are already a CAA member, you can buy a yearly policy at a very reasonable cost. It is the best deal I know of if you fly frequently outside

your home province. Another important detail is to make sure that you have your insurance certificate with you at all times because most travel medical insurance requires that you contact the insurance company within a few hours after the accident.

When you are hurt and unconscious, make it simple for your buddies to take care of you by keeping the insurance certificate handy on your body and telling them where it is beforehand.

To close, I want to re-iterate my call for volunteers. The HPAC needs volunteers to tackle a number of important and long overdue activities. These activities cannot be completed without the contribution of Canadian pilots. If you would like to offer your help, please contact your Provincial Representatives.

Letter from the Editor

Chantal Tranchemontagne

From the grumblings I've been hearing, I've deduced that it has been a topsy turvy summer for flying. Nevertheless, pilots across the country have reported superb flying days.

Despite the numerous sky highs, this issue of AIR - understandably so. Pilots are too busy having fun and staying airborne. The pen might be mightier than the sword, but the glider, whether it be para or hang, is infinitely more powerful than the pen. I think you will all agree.

In my case however, the lure of

the written word is luring me away from my position as AIR editor. It's been a year and a half since I started the task of putting together a magazine and getting it into your hands. It proved to be a tremendous job and I enjoyed almost every minute of it. Of course, the position forced me into situations that weren't always comfortable, for example, the whole distribution process - stuffing, stamping, closing and carrying 650 magazines. But in the end, all the unpleasantness subsides and in place comes a great sense of accomplishment.

I'm grateful to have been given the opportunity to work with such a wonderful group of people and with a growing association.

I wish the futur editor luck and a thousand story submissions. As for me, I'm off to write a guidebook for Ulysses and continue my work for enRoute magazine. Maybe with all my hard work I'll finally be able to afford one of those great kites that I so often admire.

Blue skies to all.

Chantal

Romania Flying

Jim Orava

Open phones.
“You’re going to Romania.”

“When?” I ask.

“Tuesday. Start packing!”

Shortly after midnight, September 8th we are held at customs with 36 boxes of camera gear, 4 crates of stunt rigging kit, 12 personal bags, and one paraglider. A tall supermodel from the Romanian Film Company is barking instructions at the airport staff like she owns the place.

Next comes two hectic days of location scouting amongst the mayhem of newfound capitalism. This place is overrun by rabid packs of wild dogs that control the streets, monstrous skeletons of communist overspending built to impress and impose but never finished, trains of covered wagons pulled by scrawny horses sheltering generations of gypsies and all their earthly possessions pass. Everywhere the Pungent smell and smoke of burning trash fills the streets.

As dusk approaches on September 10th, I’m unloading a wildly oversized parabag from another Dacia – ‘the people’s car’ - with the usual grumbling from the driver about extra baggage, this time in front of the Bucharest central train station. As the hustlers swarm I try to repel them with the same “looks that kill” used on the street dogs. As I enter



the central hall, ancient gypsy women stare into the past, the switchboard clangs with a hundred destinations, and dark eyes send sharp messages to be constantly aware. After forking over about a million Lei, I possess a second class ticket to Transylvania, and for the first time in days I feel independent and not chained to a bigger machine.

My glider and I sit amongst the clamor of a dozen trains departing and arriving and a scene reminiscent of Dr Zivago. I realize suddenly how ex-

hausted I am from days of constant movement, scattered meals and jet lag, but as hustlers, soldiers, gypsy children and screaming parents carry past, it is not yet time to relax.

With great lurching and shrieking, peeling sheets of filth and paint the train to the mountains of Transylvania arrives. Techno and eastern rhythms blend with the clatter of the rails as we gain momentum northwards. The clutter of villages grow smaller and further apart, and the movement seems to slow with the increasing night, mist and cold accompanying the increase in altitude. Occasionally someone enters my hallway to open a window and enjoy a blast of cold air, while consuming a cigarette in the deliberate manner of the Romanian smoker. Dark forests, stone towers and steep tile roofs blur past as we plunge further into Transylvania.

We screech to a stop. Outside in the dark many

people scurry on and off the train, dragging bags of cabbage and melons. Parts of slaughtered beasts can be seen sticking out from burlap sacks. In my overtired state, I imagine the parts to be the heads of unfortunate tourists and their residual limbs - how else to feed all the rabid street dogs and keep them at bay?

Brazov. We arrive at half past midnight. My paraglider and I disgorge ourselves from the guts of the metal beast straight into dense fog in the heart of the

Transylvanian Mountain town. Fighting to stay awake, a vendor at a small Kiosk sells me a piece of dark chocolate and by the time it slithers down to my stomach I'm at the front steps of the train station confronting leering faces, creatures from another time and place. I walk past the outstretched hands and hotel propaganda being shoved in my face, and without looking, I throw the glider into the back seat of a white cab made almost invisible by the mist. "Hello," says the driver in a thick British accent. "Where would we like to go tonight?"

Within minutes I'm in a comfortable three-story pension with a window onto the old-world street. I close the windows to prevent nocturnal flying Transylvanian intruders and finally collapse on the pine scented bed. Morning comes slowly though, and the fog is thick, almost drizzle. Darkly dressed folks briskly walk past each other on the street, not realizing the others passing, their shoes clamoring on the cobblestones. I wander down the tiled stairs to the breakfast room with bright checkered tablecloths but with walls and ceiling of such dark wood it seems almost black. On the table, two hardboiled eggs, hard white bread, strong white cheese and dried sausage. Romanian continental!

My enthusiasm isn't dampened by the cave-like breakfast décor or the light drizzle. The 700 meter peak above town has a gondola and I put my wing on back and head out. Passing the Black Church, so named from smoke damage in the early 1500's when it was already 200 years old, I turn up the hill and head to the tram base station. The equivalent of a Canadian dollar buys the trip up and as I sway past the old tower the history of the place becomes more evident. Vlad the Impaler once lived his worrisome life on the top of this wooded outpost, constantly at risk of

conflict with his archenemies the Turks. History highlights this man's vengeance:

In response to trauma inflicted to his wife he cut the heads of hundreds of Turks and proudly mounted them on stakes driven into the ground near where one presently launches! As I walked through the mist one could imagine the long hair of Vlads victims blowing in the wind, a morbid windsock indeed.

Launch into the town of Brazov was now a strong tailwind and the 7-meter "runway" before the 100-meter cliff wasn't screaming at me to launch this day. The LZ deeply buried in a sea of spires, wire, and wrought iron fences also left me with flashbacks of my friend Zdenek's experience in Italy the previous season, with his legs firmly impaled through the fence after first bouncing off the cathedral roof! Another Loonie well spent and I'm on the streets of Brazov once again carrying my glider instead of the other way around. Enough of town, this is Romania, open fields, cutting hay with a scythe, sheep herders, BIG LZ's, Limestone spires and grassy ridges to soar.

Twenty minutes south of Brazov is Brunlok, what Mt. Norquay, AB looked like 20 years ago, a tiny base station and a single rickety old chairlift. Green pastures below in all directions, and a 50-cent-per-lap lift ticket, yep this isn't Whistler. As I clatter along past the manky old lift towers, some wooden, some rusted metal, I spot my first Romanian flyer, flying a faded old single surface hang glider. As the chairlift takes me up, more gliders circle in the light lift, and above me a hawk climbs to base. Ragged old gliders keep flying past, some crossing meters above the rusted squeaking cable.

The end of the climb comes and there they are; the Romanian pilots,

people of all ages with obviously well used gear. Less than 50% helmet use, torn harnesses, faded almost transparent wings, but true unbridled enthusiasm, The no-moaning-just-go mentality of Eastern Europe becomes instantly evident. Paragliders launch with the same momentum of the hang glider - head down and run it till it flies! I line up in the queue to fly and they look at me like I am a Martian when I set up for a reverse launch. Seconds later I'm in the air, looking down on the red village roofs, in the valley far below. After several satisfying light thermal flights, I am rolling my wing in the grazed LZ and I hear a wing touch down behind me. George walks up and introduces himself as the local Paraguide and I recognize the wing as being at the top of the stack all day. Within an hour our next week is planned (with the help of an English speaking sailplane pilot), and the whirlwind paragliding tour of Transylvania begins, starting with dinner and a night spent in another flyers old farmhouse within five bat flaps of Draculas castle.

My time become a blur of Italian trams, windblown ski lodges, mountain shanties, castles, clouds, wind and sun as well as Sinia, Piana Brazov the two big ski areas. Suddenly it's time to go back south to Bucharest and the mad world of movie making, but the ominous Transylvanian Alps have been transformed for me into a magical place of easy access, happy adventurous friends, visible living history, excellent food, involved mountain terrain, and powerful ridge flying. And about Vlads little launch above Brazov?

Well , seven meters of flat grass is enough, even without any special Turkish wind indicators. Landing? Just turn right and pull ears level with the steeple of the Black church, no problem! DA!

President resigns

To all,

From the comments I have received, it is clear that my proposal has no chance of being accepted by the Board of Directors (BoD). Consequently, I am submitting my resignation as President of the Association. My resignation will be effective September 30, 2000. This gives me a month to effect an orderly transition with the individual that the BoD will hopefully appoint soon to replace me and to complete some outstanding activities.

I have to admit that I was a bit disappointed by the number of comments I received regarding my proposal, since I was trying to rock the boat and trigger discussion. I got really worried when my proposal was posted on the HPAC discussion board because I thought that it would lead to more traffic than I could handle. As it turned out, about half the directors participated in the discussion and, although my proposal was a hot issue on the discussion board for a little more than a week, very few pilots made comments. Even though the response was subdued, it is quite clear from the comments that I received that the directors and individual pilots want more time to discuss how best to handle the deficiencies I have identified. I am comfortable that I have done my own analysis correctly and that I believe the solution I brought forward in my proposal is the best one. However, I respect the wishes of other individuals to look at the issues independently and come to their own conclusions. I will be available to provide insight and information towards that end in the coming months.

I want to make it clear that I hold no grudges against anybody and that my resignation as President should not be construed as an intent on my part to distance myself from hang gliding and paragliding. Quite the contrary, I

fully intend to continue contributing volunteer time in support of hang gliding and paragliding in Canada. After careful consideration, I have decided that I will serve the Association more constructively by being a volunteer worker myself as opposed to President. This way, the next President will have an additional, dependable volunteer that he can count on. As a minimum, my commitment as a volunteer will be as follows:

I will continue to be the Transport Canada Liaison for the HPAC. I have made significant progress towards the amendment of CARs to benefit hang gliding but there is still some work to be done. I also need to amend the HAGAR Study Guide to reflect the changes in the CARs once they become effective, and I need to work with TC to amend the HAGAR examination to reflect these changes. I am also writing two articles for Air Magazine over the next year.

I will go back to helping with the operation of my local club. I admit that there are some self-serving aspects to that decision but I am sure that other pilots will not hold them against me.

I am donating the money I earned for devising the Business Plan to the HPAC so that the association can write off Yves Bergeron's debt. For those who do not know about that debt, Yves is the Quebec pilot who had an accident in Valley de Bravo last January. His Blue Cross insurance did not cover his medical treatments or his flight back to Canada. He was faced with paying a substantial bill before the Mexican authorities would allow his repatriation to Canada. Members of the AQVL scrambled for a week to collect money to loan to Yves. Under my recommendation, the HPAC loaned Yves \$1,000 and I personally guaranteed the loan. By getting the HPAC to write off that loan, I am helping a fellow pilot who will be hard pressed to

pay back all his debt as he is still under therapy. For the record, I want to say that I have never met with Yves, and I still believe that he was very irresponsible in not verifying that his travel health insurance would cover him. I hope this never happens to anybody else because it is entirely preventable.

In closing, I wish you luck in charting the future of the Association. I believe I have opened the door for changes that are necessary. We, the stakeholders, must take advantage of that opportunity. I strongly suggest that you try to include Barry Bateman in this process since his interest appears to be on the rise. Good luck and choose my replacement wisely.

-Andre Nadeau

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