

IN THE LOOP

ISSUE 02 | MAR 2019



HI ALL,

Lesotho 360, PG 6

GOOD NEWS, we are now an approved Aviation Recreation Organisation with all of our documents up to date and legal. This was our first and most important goal for SAHPA. It has taken a huge amount of time and effort from our team, who I would like to thank for all of their efforts and dedication in making this happen.

PROGRESS FEEDBACK;

1. Approved ARO - DONE
2. Change from paper to digital - Website has gone live and optimizing in progress.
www.sahpa.co.za
3. Get our processes stream lined, clear and easy to follow - IN PROGRESS
4. Improve communications - This is an ON GOING process
5. SAHPA future - take back control of our sport and become fully self regulating - IN PROGRESS
6. Regular Pilot yearly membership fees - no increase for 2019!

OTHER ONGOING MATTERS:

1. Retain our members, thereby growing our sport. This is our first priority.
2. Keeping our sites open: We are still in ongoing negotiations to keep Sedge flying site open.
3. Accident & incident reporting: reports to be submitted and used correctly.
4. Implement the new ARO.
5. PPG to get its processes up to date.
6. Apply to change the Civil Aviation Training Schedule and Civil Aviation Regulations to suit PG, PPG and HG

Pete Wallenda



TO FOLLOW US...
CLICK HERE



IN THE LOOP | SAHPA.CO.ZA | 1



NEWS FROM THE SAHPA OFFICE

IMPORTANT NEWS:

SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS AND RENEWAL FORM:

Renewal forms are sent via mail to all the members 2 months prior to their licence expiry dates. It is important that you renew your licence at least 30 Days before your licence expires as all pilots must be in possession of the National pilots licence to be allowed to fly legally. The SAHPA card is only a membership card and IS NOT A PERMIT TO FLY.

NB: When the instructor has signed off the paperwork, please note that we only have 60 days to submit the paperwork to RAASA for processing. We ask that you submit the paperwork soon after the instructor has signed to avoid you having to redo all the paperwork

Please contact the SAHPA office if you are not in possession of your National Pilots licence as there are still quite a few licences at the office and we have had no response to emails sent.

With regards to the application/ Renewal forms, there are a lot of pending applications and renewals that cannot be finalized due to outstanding paperwork, fees, outdated forms, etc. If you have received an email kindly send in the outstanding items as soon as possible so that the licenses can be issued timeously. Please make sure that all the documents are in order and signed off by an instructor before sending in the paperwork.

Please note that if you have not received a current National Pilot licence, you are not legal to fly. *Louise Liversedge*

CALLING ALL STUDENTS...

Welcome to the South African Hang Gliding & Paragliding Association. We hope that you will soon be a full member of SAHPA.

YOUR TEMPORARY MEMBERSHIP PROVIDES:

- Aviation third party and site Insurance
- All advantages of our membership, except voting rights, for six months.

Kindly note that you must fly under supervision of a rated instructor at all times and you can fly at any site where the site rules allow students to fly.

Should your Learner's Licence (temporary membership) expire before you are able to complete the requirements for the licence, you can extend it for a further 6 months. For more information you can contact the SAHPA office.

Louise Liversedge



SAHPA T-SHIRTS

SAHPA Office is selling T-shirts @ R250-00 each (postage with PostNet will be R100.00 additional).

Please email office@sahpa.co.za to order and include the size, colour and proof of payment.





RED BULL X-ALPS TIME AGAIN!

2019 is well and truly on its way, and this year that most exciting of events, the Red Bull X-Alps race is happening again!

Most of you will be familiar with this paragliding race – the most demanding race of hiking and flying for approx 1,000km for the athletes. We can follow it on live tracking, and worry about/cheer for our favourites, their tactics, and stay glued to our computers!

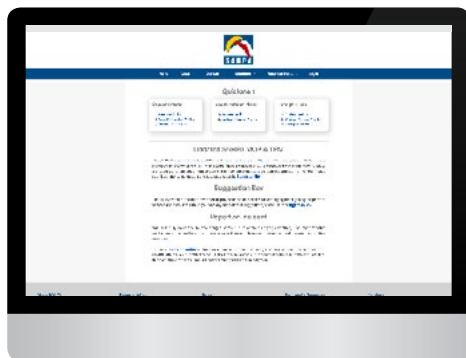
The route has been announced, the Prologue is on June 13, and the race itself starts on 16 June.

Christian Maurer is once again competing, with many of the previous contenders trying again, plus a number of rookies, all hoping to unseat this 5-time champion.

Read all about it on <https://www.redbullxalps.com/>
Can't wait for the event to get under way! *Laura Nelson*

THE WORLD'S TOUGHEST ADVENTURE RACE - THE 2019 ROUTE





NEW WEBSITE

In March we launched the revamped SAHPA website. This was based on an e-commerce platform which will eventually replace paper-based forms by allowing members to electronically submit their licence applications and membership renewals.

The Incident Report is already available online and can be completed in just a few minutes. This will enable a more helpful analysis and feedback loop to increase the skill and knowledge of pilots.

Other forms have already been built, are being tested and will be rolled out shortly. *Louis Stanford*

MARKETING & VISIBILITY

RONNIE BEUKES

Thanks to everyone contributing, and there are so many more stories to tell, but we encourage pilots and friends to make use of the SAHPA media platform, and we ask the members to help us to promote the sport. SAHPA Media, Facebook, SAHPA Youtube Channel. Instagram etc. marketing@sahpa.co.za

FINANCE

Dear members,

We have moved forward significantly since the last update.

At a recent meeting with Aeroclub, we have successfully renegotiated the non-competition pilot membership fee down from R540 to R300, representing a saving of R240 per member. There has been discussion in terms of returning the differential to members, however there is significantly more that the executive committee would like to do for SAHPA members and will use these savings to benefit our general membership (ie. non-competition and non instructor memberships). The general membership fee for 2019 will not increase, however we are reviewing the instructor fee so as to adequately fund the ATO rather than utilising the general membership fee.

The Annual Financial Statements of SAHPA have been audited. While there has been a reduction in profit over the previous year, largely attributable to declining membership, we have however, as with prior years, had the benefit of interest earned on funds invested which has helped significantly. In response, we are introducing a streamlined online renewal process which will hopefully remove a lot of the administrative burden, encouraging membership uptake and will benefit from the savings arising from the renegotiated Aeroclub fee.

Fly high, be safe

Steve Burd

NEW LICENCES FROM 20 OCTOBER UNTIL 11 MARCH 2019

PARAGLIDING BASIC LICENCE

Behrens Mr Michael Mr
Berger AV Arnold Mr
Camerlynck RH Ruben Mr
Cloete PM Pieter Mr
Denton C Cecilia Ms
Matejcek JP Justin Mr
Wells AL Alison Ms
Wood ALJ Anthony Mr

PARAGLIDING SPORT LICENCE

Buttery GH George Mr
Clemente AJ Anthony Mr
Dickson TJ Trevor Mr
Marx DJ Jaco Mr
Murphy DJ Drew Mr
Sexton RP Robert Mr

PARAGLIDING TANDEM RATING

De Villiers JF Francois Mr

PARAGLIDING TFI RATINGS

Fouche H Handre Mr
Laatz A Alan Mr
Paul SM Steven Mr
Shuman SC Serle Mr
Viljoen P Peter Mr

PARAGLIDING ASSISTANT INSTRUCTORS

Arnold BJ Benjamin Mr
Moothilal R Ria Mr

POWERED PARAGLIDING ASSISTANT INSTRUCTOR

Tapson CD Colin Mr

PARAGLIDING INSTRUCTOR RATING

Van Renssen MA Adam Mr

HANG GLIDING NOVICE LICENCE

Le Roux A Alexis Mr

HANG GLIDING C LICENCE

De Kock A Arjan Mr

POWERED PARAGLIDING PILOT LICENCE

Kleynhans HJ Hermanus Mr
Mabelis EJ Edwin Mr
Nel DCJ Daniel Mr
Tapson CD Colin Mr
Van Tonder GD Gideon Mr

PWC SUPER FINAL

The 10th Paragliding World Cup Super Final will take place in Baixo Guandu, Brazil from the 19th to the 30th of March 2019.

Baixo Guandu is a favourite destination for the Paragliding World Cup, with its stunning black granite dome mountains and testing tasks in the land of record-breaking skies.

For the first time in many years we have got a real variety of gliders, with pilots flying wings from five top manufacturers, all CCC certified: Flow, Gin, Niviuk, Ozone and UP.

On the World Cup website (pwca.org), you can now see preview pilot profiles of the high flyers from 2018, who will be taking part in the Super Final.

Four top South African pilots will be taking part: Khobi-Jane Bowden, Russell Achterberg, Theunis De Bruin and Andre Rainsford.

After his stunning performance in the Turkey World Cup last summer, where in two out of the three tasks he stormed ahead and had packed up and gone home way before the others arrived, Russell is definitely a podium favourite for this Super Final.

The pilot quality in this Super Final is going to be amazing. 6 out of the 8 previous overall Super Final winners will be taking part: including Charles Cazaux, the champion in 2009 and only pilot ever to have won both the World Championships and the Super Final.

X-Alps star, Aaron Durogati, the only pilot ever to have won the Super Final twice (2012 + 2016), will be flying high and fast hoping for a third title.

Current Super Final champion Michael Sigel will be hoping to hold onto his title.

Three ladies taking part have each won the ladies Super Final twice. Keiko Hiraki (2009, 2013), Petra Slivova, (2010, 2011) and Laurie Genovese (2014, 2017). Petra Slivova also won the World Cup tour (the predecessor of the Super Final) in 2002, 2003 and 2004. Along with Méryl Delferriere, 10th overall last year, and European Champion, Klaudia Bulgakow (2013), could we see the ladies knocking the men off the Super Final podium this year?

Eight World/European champions will be taking part, six men and two ladies.

29 pilots taking part in this Super Final have already won a World Cup event (20 men and 9 ladies), and 48 competing pilots have already won a World Cup task!

The standard doesn't get any higher than that!

Keep up with Khobi, Russell, Theunis and Andre on the PWCA app, read the live Commentary, and follow your favourite pilots on the tracking to see who the high flyers in this amazing competition will be. *Tracy King*





LESOTHO 360 (INVITATIONAL)

So! Where do you start a paramotor story? Maybe where all of them end... around the breakfast table after an amazing morning flying! And there we sat like usual talking about our dreams of flying all over the world and sharing the experiences that is unique to our paramotor world that only a few of us have the privilege to share.

Me, Ollie a local from the valley of Clarens just had to share with the boys, Arno, Ryk and Gerhard my idea of flying from Clarens to Zastron and back.

And like most of the time there must be someone with a better challenge and Arno just had to say it, "boys we might as well fly right round Lesotho!" the challenge was accepted and dubbed "Lesotho 360".

Digging into the detail the weeks that followed made us realized what a daunting task it was going to be to plan a save and enjoyable trip to this magnitude.

Big discussions were held on the best time of the year, best route to fly and still have backup vehicles and all the "what if" scenarios.

Accommodation, food, medics, flying over the Drakensberg at 10 000ft, paramotor tank range, pilot navigation and emergency evacuation procedures, 4x4 roads and much, much more not to mention the fact that we basically going to cover 1400km of flying in the Drakensberg mountains...

The main thing for all us was the safety and the ground support, access to a pilot if anything goes south.

So, there we were April 2017 ready for a recce trip driving and flying all around Lesotho trying to figure out if our logistical skills lived up to expedition standards. Ollie taking on

the role of ground cru due to a back injury and Ryk and Arno test pilots.

First encounter was the weather, non-predicted rain, battery life running out on navigation devices for pilots, me losing sight, radio contact and cellular contact with my pilots, army check point crossing the Drakensberg, not to mention the pilots losing each other in the rising sun rise going over the Drakensberg at 10 000ft. and a few other little gremlins.

It was interesting, but lessons learned and after doing the trip again in August 2017 and April 2018 we are now geared to invite some brave and fearless flyers to join us for a beautiful and much safer experience... T&C apply.

Here are some notes on our April 2018 trip.

LESOTHO 360 APRIL 2018:

Pilots. Ollie Esplin, Ryk Neethling, Arno Maass, Allard Huffner

DAY 1

Launch from Clarens Golf club, aiming for Ladybrand 135km away.

After about a 2hr very smooth flight we reached Ladybrand at about 9am. Had coffee to warm up our freezing cold bodies and refuel.

Launch from Ladybrand at 9.30am, heading towards Zastron, 155km away.....not so smooth, very thermic conditions.... Battling, actively flying nearly 3hrs, and make it to Zastron at 12.30pm.

Had some lunch and a quick nap at our found camping spot in a local lady's back yard.

That same afternoon, with weather conditions looking great, decided to do an extra 52km to a small village named Palmietfontein, just over the Orange River, into the beautiful Eastern Cape.

All and all a good 340km covered for the day.

DAY 2

Launch from Palmietfontein, heading 78km towards Rhodes, through the most breath-taking mountains you can imagine. No place more beautiful exists. 1h45 later we arrive at Walkerbout's backpackers, and land at their doorstep. Allard had 8 layers of clothes on to keep warm.

Spend the day relaxing and visiting local breweries and cheesery. What a beautiful place!

DAY 3

Launch from 6500ft in Rhodes heading 114km towards Matatiele. Oh, what an interesting flight!!

Reaching speeds of 118km/hr and heights of nearly 12 000ft. (We have gps proof for the non-believers!!)

Reach Matatiele golf course after only 1hr27m. Spend the day waiting it out there for our ground crew who had issues with a trailer.

At 17.15pm we fly 30km East to a Guest farm, because no accommodation available in the whole of Matatiele.

DAY 4

An 80km Flight to Bulwer. Spend the day chilling, and finding a welding engineer to fix the other trailer.

DAY 5

129km flight aiming for Bergville. Only managed 15km before Bergville. Ran out of fuel because of strong head winds in a 3hr12min flight.

Spend the rest of the day and night at Amphitheatre Backpacker's. What a beautiful place!

DAY 6

Aiming for Clarens we hit a very strong headwind and only managed 5 km progress after an hours flying! Yes... we were determined to finish the route, but it was not meant to be... we decided to call it a trip and drove the last few km to Clarens.

We had an absolute ball and will be doing these trips annually. Club PPG Xtreme will be hosting this year's Lesotho 360 before the end of the year.



Except for individuals we are also contemplating a format with 4 flyers in a team. The only 3 rules:

1. You are not allowed to cross over the Lesotho border.
2. At least one of the team members must be in the air for each km. Thus, the 4 combined tracks will be end to end from Clarens to Clarens.
3. Then the most important rule... Have fun!

If you have what it takes... contact any member at Club PPG Xtreme or phone Arno Maass - 082 493 8992 OR Ollie Esplin 082 563 6242 for more detail.

This article was compiled by members of Club PPG Xtreme.

PS... nobody to date has managed to complete the Lesotho 360 end to end... will you be the first?

REVIEWS:

The Lesotho 360 was one of my highlights of 2018!!! Flying over magnificent scenery with friends, covering lots of ground and all with the comfort of a support crew. *Allard Huffner*

SAHPA STATE OF THE NATION ...AND THE WAY FORWARD – PART TWO

As I write this, SAHPA has been re-issued its ATO and ARO certificates and the new structure is getting implemented. The new manuals after they are officially stamped by the authorities and become the manuals that underpin the issues approvals will soon be shared and remember that you all can comment and we really seek this involvement and feedback so we can work further to adjust them as a community. Working from a firm legal standing is always better than not, hence the quick and direct work to get these base documents acceptable within current regulations. Now from this position we can enable the change we wish in both regulations and standards that may be 180 degrees different to the past thinking and status quo.

Paragliding pilots in general seldom (unless they want a new license or rating) read our MOP or actually take interest in what is happening regulation wise that may affect them.

Most SAHPA pilots have never read part 91, the basic rules of the air in which they fly and thus remain completely in the dark about what they can and should not do.

We often tend to operate like a “lost tribe in the amazon forest” – shocked by what we see or hear when we peek our wings outside. This has to change. We need to build a culture of knowledge.

Aviation is dynamic and in a constant state of flux – just look at the RPAS (disruptive technology that is sweeping through aviation just like the cell phone in telecommunication) as we are in the 4th technical revolution and we need to keep pace.

Over many years while our MOP has ostensibly not changed much while the aviation world has been moving. We have not kept pace, thus we need to develop our systems to bring us from 30 year old documentation (give or take) to a set of self-imposed and implementable rules that fit in with aviation and the public around us. This must see us at least 10 years into the future.

We cannot do this with our attitude “it’s our way or the high way”. Who are we really, only 700 “self-adulating prima

donnas” that at times think we can do as we please. I say this frankly and yes maybe some may say that it is a rough stance but you get my point.

If you think this is wrong, ask other aviators or people that are not aviators that listen to us around our camping fires on our fly-aways. Self-proclaimed sky gods the lot of us and we all really need to eat some humble pie.

Taking this into consideration, there is no reason why SAHPA pilots cannot change our attitudes to professional amateurs. There is absolutely no reasons why we should not move with the times and fashion for ourselves our fair piece of the aviation pie taking all into consideration.

The current re-incorporation of RAASA has many pros and some serious cons, which in this article I shall not delve into save to say SAHPA management is grabbing the “avian bull by the proverbial horns” and shall be embarking upon a trajectory to best suit us in our environment.

Before we go into the vision of the Sahpa executive, let me place some simple facts on the table. We set the standards, however we must be seen to be responsible and fair in the eyes of the authorities to allow us to look after our types of flying. We must be able to prove that we fly safely with other air users in an unselfish manner and can ethically manage ourselves. If we all play our part we can ask for more privileges. Simple but the bottom line, actually it is up to us to be responsible pilots and show true airmanship.

Secondly, every recreational discipline in the world is under pressure from increasing commercial airspace users and the costs to provide overall safety to all, especially the public that needs to move around the world is paramount. In regards to the costs, this is where licensing, passenger safety charges that fund the SACAA oversight duty come into the mix.

To this end our (SAHPA) standards, therefore regulations have not been integrated and our manual has been “piece-meal” added to over the years with no particular unified plan to a point where it has become almost unmanageable, disjointed and difficult to align into other aviation legislation.

SAHPA's new committee's principle vision is ease of entry. Ease of gaining and proving experience with simplistic movement between disciplines and finally, from and out of other aviation disciplines to enable growth.

This committee's vision is a mind shift, as well as a fundamental change where we aim specifically in regards to paragliding (we await hang gliding to advise) to have one license and no ratings

With the ethos we seek a license for life which ultimately will reduce the legislated requirement to pay for the many licenses, ratings and any new additions. .

This is in line with world thinking and the new SACAA management shows promising signs of coming around to our way of thinking. If they do not one license is still the way to go.

We believe we have driven a positive differentiated wedge between foot launched and the rest of aviation to enable our sport to be treated differently in a mutually beneficial and positive manner. This needs all of our support.

Upon this single license, we envisage endorsements (no longer ratings) and pilots will gain these by completing simple courses/syllabi thus enabling them achieve new skills and having the knowledge to practice them simply and safely .

To achieve this will take some work but if the principles are correct then all is possible.

LET'S GIVE AN EXAMPLE:

Paragliding and powered versions (as it is defined in the regulations) thereof start the same. They do ground handling, write the same test and then land the same way. There are only a few differences and these can be handled by syllabus modules and simple knowledge tests. In this way one can do a module, obtain the skills for it and after achieving this new standard with a simple endorsement in a log book or on your digital file on the cloud, we can legally now operate accordingly.

"No forms, no authorities no fuss."

Endorsements are legal the world over, they cost pilots nothing, the pilot can operate on this immediately. This is the route we believe would be the most safest and cost effective

We can convert all the old ratings to endorsements and nobody will lose out.

We hope to make entry into the sport simple, accessible and fun again.

There should be much less paper work. But note, not NO paper work – the paper work may be simple inputs on your smart phone.

Let's talk briefly about renewals. For years everybody has complained yes we have not changed the system. We intend to make it easier.... much easier.

Based on risk, the first 5 years are where the risk is for those that fly infrequently

Pilots that have a license and fly year after year should be more current and let's be honest it's really like riding a bicycle – you may just need to be current and this is not difficult. We need to retain all members simply.

The aim is to ascertain competency thus if we have a method to confirm currency and competency then this is the only place that the authorities should /could check for oversight. If your competency /currency is not up to speed a simple skill test can be done which follows world's best practice but more over common sense. We believe this should not be only instructors that can ascertain this but the safety officers may need to skill up. This is easily done.

Pilots that have flown for years and have certain (a yet to be decided) number of flights and experience may not need to complete a "thumb suck" numbers of flights. Pilots that have flown for a number of consecutive years should be credited for this experience and get simpler renewals

There will be a certain acceptable number of hours would show acceptable currency. This is part of our changes we intend to introduce.

Now comes the crux – to make these changes and to grandfather all pilots currently will take some time and support of those that will effect this.

It is not so simple in South Africa. We are governed by the Civil Aviation Act and this further is then controlled by the regulations promulgated by our Minister of Transport. This is what legally gives us our privileges to fly.

People must remember that we are part of ICAO (an inter country international agreement on flight safety and legislation) and therefore we agree internationally to standards that govern our airspace and its use. We have to fit into this, otherwise SA will become in aviation terms the "Zimbabwe of the world."

Many people believe if we comply with our manual we are ok but this is not true.

Our regulations govern our technical standards and both govern the expanded content of our manuals. These have not been effectively aligned as changes have happened around us.

So what is the route forward?

Simply, we plan to change our regulations and technical

standards to enable our manuals. This process is not difficult but is time consuming and must be developed by volunteers. This is underway.

We plan to move away from the nepotism filled approaches from the past including the time restrictions that have after introspection not served us well.

If a pilot completes the requirements – no matter how fast, they should be allowed to exercise those skills and thus the privileges.

SO WHAT DOES OUR FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

It looks like this – one gets a license by completing a basic, easy to instruct and follow, syllabus.

One can add to this any module, be it motor, ridge soaring, tandem, thermalling, competition etc. . Not everything is taught by instructors and responsible safety officers that agree to ethically deliver skill tests and test the pilots to a standard (to protect both themselves and the pilots) may also once again start signing off as in the past.

Endorsements may be added to your digital file and thus logbook. Our costs will reduce and our simplicity of managing our flying will once again return.

This is the vision and this is where we can go with your support. Support for this committee and the sweeping changes is required and positive criticism from informed thinking will be valued.

Mind-sets will need to change and our standards will need to be unwavering yet simply implementable. We need to leave the past behind.

Our biggest drive in this is to reduce the administrative over burden yet still be able to prove and defend our standards etc. if we ever end up in court, as we have a few times and potentially may still.

SAHPA have listened to many of you and the constant work on upgrading and simplifying is a long and difficult project. The past attitudes of our management where we were at logger heads with the authorities never worked but this new way spearheaded by Pete, Steven Ria, Louis and others is gaining trust and creating influence within the minds of those in authority, taking them with us on this journey and guiding them to make it easier for them to administrate and maintain safe skies will and is paying dividends.

Sahpa's website shall become our one stop shop for where we are going – watch it at least once a week when it is launched. *Kevin Storie*

RAASA CLOSURE

There was always disputes whether RAASA was an ARO - It was and it has been officially withdrawn as of 4 March 2019 .

Here is the extract from the government gazette:

CIVIL AVIATION ACT, 2009 (ACT NO. 13 OF 2009)

PUBLICATION OF WITHDRAWAL OF THE DESIGNATION OF RECREATIONAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION SOUTH AFRICA (RAASA) AS AN AVIATION RECREATION ORGANISATION IN TERMS OF SECTION 87(1)(b) OF THE CIVIL AVIATION ACT, 2009

I, Poppy Khoza, in my capacity as Director Civil Aviation Authority and in terms of section 87(1)(b) of the Civil Aviation Act, 2009 hereby withdraws the designation of RAASA as an aviation recreation organisation granted on the 2nd December 2008 in terms of Regulation 149.01.2(1) of the Civil Aviation Regulations, 1997, which was published in the Government Notice no. 11.09 on the 22 November 2010.

All functions and responsibilities that were performed by RAASA in line with their designation will be from the 1 April 2019, be performed by South African Civil Aviation Authority.

The withdrawal thereof shall be effective from the 1 April 2019 and any certificate, licence, permission or registration issued by RAASA and which was valid immediately before the issuing of this Notice, shall remain valid for the period specified in the certificate, licence, permission or registration, as the case may be, unless terminated, cancelled or suspended in terms of the Civil Aviation Regulations, 2011.

WHY AND HOW DO WE GROW THE SPORT OF PARAGLIDING IN SOUTH AFRICA?

It seems to be that the primary focus of sahpa has been that of ensuring that the sport of para- and hang-gliding can legally take place in South Africa. No doubt this is a core requirement, but what about that of growing the sport? If you look at our constitution there are several main objectives, the first two being “to popularize, co-ordinate and administer Hand Gliding (HG), Paragliding (PG), Powered Hangliding (PHG) and Powered Parachutes (PP) in South Africa” and “To encourage the participation in HG, PG, PHG and PP of all South African residents...” Do we as sahpa do this? How has sahpa tackled its top two main objectives of popularizing and encouraging all South African residents to participate in our sport? Why isn't it that the cheapest form of aviation isn't growing? Why do we have approximately 100 students starting the basic license course annually yet we're not seeing a growth in membership numbers? This piece will put forward reasons why we need to grow the sport of paragliding as well as solutions that we believe will assist in achieving this objective.

WHY DO WE NEED GROWTH?

Firstly, why do we need growth? Why not just stagnate the way we have been for recent past – after all, you're still flying, right? Well the reason is quite simply is that this line of thought means that we're all losing. Why? Well let's look at who benefits and how from a bigger sport:

- a. **Instructors:** a growing sport means that there will be more people experiencing the sport – this means that there will be more students for both TFI pilots and normal instructors
- b. **Pilots:** all pilots will benefit from a bigger sport. There will be a bigger used gear market from which to buy or sell goods; we can have bigger and more frequent events such as competitions or other flying events; more pilots flying will lead to greater acceleration and spreading of skills and safety; more people to fly with and share retrieve costs; more sites will be opened and maintained in different parts of the country, etc.
- c. **Dealers:** a bigger market means that there will be

customers to sell gear and offer services to

- d. **The country:** a bigger sport means there will be more instructors and more related businesses – this means that there will be more jobs and services used which has an overall benefit on the economy.
- e. **The public:** a growing sport with increased effective marketing will mean that more people will get a taste of the sport and have their lives enriched in a positive way
- f. **The association:** a bigger and growing association will benefit from increased funds and increased clout in dealing with landowners and government bodies

No doubt the above list is not comprehensive, but the point is clear that a growing and much bigger sport than we have today, will have wide ranging benefits for all stakeholders in our sport. Therefore, if we don't address growth as a priority, we're all losing.

HOW CAN WE ACHIEVE GROWTH?

Firstly, we need to accept that we can't keep doing what we've already been doing because that hasn't worked. Now that we've accepted that we need to do things differently, let's break things down a bit so we can hone in on areas of focus.

We can break down growth into two main components i.e. new growth and increased retention. New growth speaks to getting more members of the public to enter the sport; retention speaks to getting those who start the sport to stay. The following are list of strategies which we would like to implement that will target both these components. Most of these strategies have a common theme – incentives. We're human beings and we tend to do the things because of some sort of benefit to us – hence, these strategies make use of incentives to ensure that growth happens because people will want it to happen, because they benefit directly from whatever action they take. You also note that these incentives are targeted to the various stakeholders involved – TFI pilots, normal instructors, students, and pilots.

1. TFI Instructors Incentive

Who benefits: TFI pilots

Area of benefit: New Growth

How it works: R1000 payment for every TFI student that goes on to become a basic license pilot within 6 months of doing their first TFI flight

Why do we need it: to make sure that TFI pilots do their utmost to sell the sport of paragliding on that very first flight. With the current scenario a TFI pilot benefits when the student returns for another TFI flight, however if we paid them more to sell the sport then this would be financially better for them. NB. Payment is only after the student has become a licensed pilot

2. TFI Student Incentive

Who benefits: TFI Students, schools and normal instructors

Area of benefit: New Growth

How it works: Cost of TFI flight re-imbursed by Sahpa if TFI student goes on to become a basic license sahpa member within 6 months of experiencing their first flight

Why do we need it: to prompt the thousands of TFI students to take that next step and undergo the training of a basic license course.

3. National Targeted Advertising

Who benefits: New students, TFI pilots, schools, normal instructors

Area of benefit: New Growth

How it works: Sahpa will run targeted short online video advertisements on local (e.g. News24, EWN, TimesLive, etc.) and international sites (e.g. Google and Facebook). These ads will be professionally produced and targeted to specific segments with the aim to increase awareness and accessibility of the sport. We tend to take for granted what we know and are oblivious to the fact that the general public don't know how far our sport has come and that it really is a cheap and affordable (middle class) form of recreational aviation. Instructors and schools will benefit from increased business and also from not individually footing the bill for a national advertising campaign that will benefit all schools (both TFI and normal schools).

Why do we need it: to really grow the sport. Convincing consumers to try something new requires marketing and to the right audience.

4. Marketing Website

Who benefits: New students, TFI pilots, schools, normal instructors

Area of benefit: New Growth

How it works: The above mentioned advertising campaigns will be used to drive people to a website that is specially created for converting members of the public from landing on the website to making contact with a school. This website will be professionally run and optimised (where do people click, enhance what works, A/B testing, etc.) to ensure the goal of conversion is achieved. This website will be our face of paragliding to the general public - a medium that really sells the sport. It will contain school information including short videos for each school allowing them the opportunity to sell their services. Includes both normal and TFI schools. The goal will be that contact is made between the school and user, be it the user making contact or the school doing so.

Why do we need it: the current sahpa website name and content are not optimised to convert members of the public. It makes more sense to have a stand alone marketing site that sells the sport to members of the public.

5. School Incentive

Who benefits: Schools

Area of benefit: Retention

How it works: Annual cash prize of R100,000 for the best school where schools are measured by a retention metric. We will analyse the amount of time it takes for pilots to drop off since starting with their basic license course, let's say its 18months. Each school will then be measured for the amount and/or proportion of pilots still flying after 18 months. We will make use of actuary services in creating the retention metric so that it is a fair one that addresses the goal of retention leading to growth

Why do we need it: to keep pilots in the sport. Our current system rewards the schools and instructors financially by means of the basic license course, but then relies on the "club system" to take care of new pilots. The current system does not work and our retention rate is poor. It doesn't make sense for sahpa or any body to dictate what methods to put in place to increase retention. However, by making it financially viable for the schools, it will be in their best interest to ensure that their students not only

finish the basic license, but also keep flying. This will allow the market to come up with winning strategies which over time will be followed by other schools (knowledge sharing) and overall we can expect that retention will increase

6. Normal Instructor Incentive

Who benefits: Normal instructors (Grade A and B)

Area of benefit: Retention

How it works: Same as the schools incentive however this one is targeted to the individual instructor to ensure that they too have a role to play in increasing retention by being financially rewarded. R50,000 cash prize

Why do we need it: Overall the same reason as the school incentive but now taken down to instructor level so that every single instructor has an opportunity to benefit directly and as an individual

7. Subsidized safety or advanced flying courses

Who benefits: pilots, instructors/schools running SIV/ advanced courses

Area of benefit: Retention

How it works: Currently an example of an advanced flying course is that of the SIV course. The proposal is that we subsidize these kinds of courses if a pilot does it within X months since completing their basic license. Here we want to incentivise pilots to progress and become safer and better pilots but give them a realistic timeframe to do this.

Why do we need it: currently pilots can choose do such courses if and when they want. By putting some sort of deadline (X is to be determined by appropriate panel) we will give pilots a reason to not put this off. By increasing experience and knowledge it's rational to expect that safety levels will also increase. One can also expect increased demand for these sort of courses and therefore more instructors/schools offering them

8. Events

Who benefits: pilots

Area of benefit: Retention

How it works: SAHPA organises and runs events that are of benefit to its pilots. Example, a testival type of event where pilots can test out gear – sahpa will pay for the shipping and insurance of demo wings from abroad, have the testival/s, and return unsold demo gear.

Why do we need it: Currently we have 2 competitions in South Africa for pg pilots and no other events. To keep pilots interested and involved it would really help to have regular events (not just comps) that are of benefit to members. Given the current small market size in South Africa demo gear is not an a financially viable option for local dealers to keep. By having our own testival we can give something back to pilots, something that is of benefit to them and something that is only possible if done at a national level. It is quite possible that a growing successful testival will in future pay for itself and even become a revenue generator for sahpa.

9. Recognition and Reward

Who benefits: Pilots, sahpa

Area of benefit: Retention

How it works: Recognition for personal achievements and rewards for content contribution to the sahpa website by means of awards for article/video/photo of the year competitions

Why do we need it: By recognising pilots for their achievements we build a stronger community which will help with retention. By rewarding pilots for content contribution we will have an active website that isn't the sole responsibility of volunteers in terms of content contribution/creation. These types of contributions will also assist sahpa for content in its marketing purposes.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

The following are calculations used to estimate these costs. Assumptions are made and stated where necessary.

1. TFI Instructors Incentive

- Assume 0.5% of 35000 tandems annually take up the offer
- Therefore this equals 175 students x R1000 each for the TFI pilot
- Total R175,000

2. TFI Student Incentive

- Assume 0.5% of 35000 tandems annually take up the offer
- Therefore this equals 175 students x R1300 each to be reimbursed per student

- c. Total R225,000
- d. NB. R1300 is around the average price for a tandem on Signal Hill which no doubt has the majority of tandem students. Elsewhere in the country this amount is lower and therefore R1300 is the upper end of what sahpa will be refunding

3. National Targeted Advertising

- a. 10000 views per video ad per week
- b. Cost per view = 30c (taken from Youtube costing)
- c. Therefore R3000 per week per ad
- d. Therefore R156,000 per ad running 52 weeks in year
- e. Production costs = R40,000 per ad
- f. 5 video ads created targeting different demographics/segments
- g. Total cost R196,000 per ad which equals R980,000 for 5 ads

4. Marketing Website

- a. R100,000 annually to spent on professionals maintaining and improving the site to achieve the conversion goals that we seek

5. School Incentive

- a. R100,000
- b. This needs to be large enough that the incentive is there to compete

6. Normal Instructor Incentive (Grade A and B)

- a. R50,000
- b. This needs to be large enough that the incentive is there to compete

7. Subsidized safety or advanced flying courses

- a. Assume 50 new students eligible to claim a subsidy of R2000 each per annum
- b. R100,000

8. Events

- a. R150,000 to pay for shipping, insurance, medics, etc.
- b. This can be used for multiple annual events

9. Recognition and Reward

- a. R10,000 prize each for photo, video, and article submission of the year
- b. Total R30,000

The above now gives us an idea of the costs we're looking at to fund these initiatives. Of course we could adjust figures by changing assumptions, incentives, etc. Just for the sake of this piece let's assume we do it all because we want growth and we want it now. Adding up the 9 strategies above comes to a total of R1.8 million!

HOW DO WE FUND THESE INITIATIVES

Whatever funding method we come up with it needs to be one that is sustainable i.e. things like outside sponsors are nice but are never a guarantee. Whilst we should always seek additional funding, if we accept that growth is fundamental to our sport and that we all benefit, then this should be something that is part of our normal operations. How do we get this funding? Naturally someone needs to pay. Perhaps we should see who benefits from the various initiatives and then split the costs amongst the direct benefactors, or perhaps we put this cost down to all pilots who will overall benefit from the system. Given that you've read this far I'd like to put down what some are saying is the easiest and fairest way to do this. These initiatives benefit us all, including those new pilots who are not yet even pilots or instructors, i.e. today's students who are tomorrow's pilots and instructors. But we only have 100 students per year - right? Wrong, we also have approximately 35,000 tandem students who do their first flight with us but then don't go on to become licensed pilots. If these 35,000 each paid a R50 development fee we'd have a revenue of R1,75 million per annum. Sure the majority of these students will not benefit from these programs however those who do, will. So the minority who get into the sport will benefit from what they have paid as well as what those who have dropped out also paid. Does this mean that we're asking TFI schools to take from their profits and now subsidize all these initiatives? No, it's proposed that a R50 increase be applied to every new student and that all schools (TFI and non-TFI) increase their prices by R50 per student, which is about the price of a craft beer.

Well that's one idea... We're eager to hear your comments, we're also eager to grow the sport. Please do send through comments, questions, concerns, ideas through to us at sahpagrowth@gmail.com. We'll use email as the means of discussion for now, however soon we'll be opening these kinds of discussions up on our new website.

Stay safe

Ria Moothilal

BUILDING A RACEHORSE

NIRVANA DEVELOPMENT TEAM SA



Little do most pilots realize how much work goes into the creations they fly. We see the visual candy with most manufacturers doing their best to design and color their machines to be visually appealing but the technical design challenges is what eludes most.

I have been fortunate to be part of the Nirvana test pilot team for a few years so I appreciate how much the company puts into making sure the product is well tested before it goes to market. As of late the company's focus has changed from pushing development for slalom racing machines, to creating a platform for long range cross country racing. In past time the company mostly supported the pilots specializing in this field by sponsoring parts but the effort changed after the 2018 Icarus when owner Pavel Brezina experienced the excitement for himself. I don't think he realized what a life altering experience it would be until the moment he found himself in No Mans Land Botswana, alone and dependent on his wits and past experience.

The goal after the race was clear. Lets create a unique racing platform that would improve on everything we had available up to that point. The starting point would be the new F-Light 200. Initially it was designed to be a lightweight easily transportable footlaunch powered paraglider.

WHAT IS REQUIRED?

Long Range XC is about power, fuel consumption, physical weight, speed, reliability and ergonomics. If you are out of balance with anyone of these you fall of the podium if not out of the sky.

If the machine produces more power than required, the pilot will have the advantage of overloading the max glider take-off weight but also will end up with a colossal fuel consumption. The pilot therefore uses the power to load more fuel but the more is

loaded the higher the fuel burn and so the 'evil cycle' continues. Power for XC purposes is about being able to get the weight pilot and payload off the ground in the optimum take-off distance. Not the shortest possible distance.

That gets us to weight. If the optimum amount of power is produced at the cost of physical weight, then the pilot will have a hard time to manage that physical weight on the ground during take-off and landing. Most machines are developed to have manageable weight but what is not factored into the equation by the manufacturers is the payload weight that will be added in a unsupported race like the Icarus. The payload also increases considerably if you have a machine that has a high fuel consumption because the pilot would have to increase the reserve fuel capacity in order to have a range that is competitive with other race pilots.

Fuel Consumption is really where the manufacturers earn their buck. With a dozen engine choices out there and frame designs of all shapes and sizes the manufacturer has got to come up with solutions to reduce drag or improve engine performance. The glider plays a roll in this of course but all things being equal, the PPG design has got to be as aerodynamic as possible and the engine has got to be as efficient as possible and there are too many factors to mention for the length of this article.

When it comes to reliability most pilots will tell you this is the biggest stress. Most Powered Paragliders will show no signs of fatigue for flight periods of 2 hours or less. When you add 40-50 kilograms of additional fuel/ payload and increase the flight time to 4 hours and beyond, we start entering the

realm of unpredictability. One only has to look at the number of race class finishers to see the reality of the above statement. The solution is to test, test and test some more and come up with solutions until the race machine eventually has high reliability. That might very well mean changing the engine type or exhaust type until the problems cease to exist.

When it comes to speed this is a matter of debate. All pilots would like to fly fast, but fast equals higher fuel consumption. I guess my position on the matter would be the ability to maintain an Optimal speed from an advanced glider. Of course this is only applicable to a race such as the Icarus where if you fly to slow you might be separated from race leaders by changing weather or daytime. The size of an advanced glider with reduce drag and with the better headwind penetration, will assist with fuel consumption. Maximum speed will once again effect fuel consumption and bring about the 'evil cycle'.

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH. WELL ITS GOING TO GET TOUGH AND THEN SOME

My first Icarus involved using a Nirvana 230HL and although this machine is known for reliability it's also known for being on the heavy side at 33kg. In fact, I was not able to escape the "evil cycle" during my 2018 Icarus. With allot of power from the 230, came the excessive physical weight. Weight that didn't bother me when flying day-to-day, suddenly became almost unmanageable when the payload was added. More power meant more fuel meant more oil for the mixture (rules of unsupported race) and meant a bigger glider all while you as pilot remain the

same physical size.

My first Icarus X take-off resulted in an extended ground roll as I was overloading the glider and my bagged pods were blocking a portion of the thrust line. On the 1000 mile Icarus race I used a bigger glider to eliminate the ground roll but in the end I was trapped in the 'evil cycle' having to manage the colossal weight of 83 kgs of paramotor, payload, fuel all the while having a bodyweight of 82 kgs. Insane, enough said.

STARTING FROM SCRATCH

The F-Light 200 had a few things going for it. The machine in its entirety only weighed 20kgs with the advantage that the skeleton or body of the PPG was moulded carbon fiber and offered fantastic aerodynamic properties. The engine combined with a 3-blade propeller set offered good performance but questionable whether it would be enough for the additional payload. The fuel consumption figures was what made most sense with 1.9 liters per hour at 50 km/hr cruise setting and 2.5 liters an hour at max speed cruise setting on the fastest Dudek paraglider the company produced. In theory this would mean using less fuel and consumables on a competitive range.

LOW HANGPOINTS

First things first, the Low Hangpoints is a shock to the system of a Nirvana pilot. The F-Light 200 was only available in a Low Hangpoints configuration. I would have to spend a good amount of time getting use to the new configuration and in reality it was far more challenging then I imagined. After 50 hours of practice I was confident but still concerned. My honest comparison would be that Low Hangpoints were allot more

sensitive to changes in harness settings, measurably worse during mid-day thermals and provided less control over the glider during take-off and landing than what I was use to with the traditional High Hangpoints configuration of the Nirvana Instinct. One could explain my experience off to the fact that I had too many hours on High Hangpoints and therefore I'm not a good candidate to judge but an argument is no end to a solution.

FIRST CHANGE

Fortunately for me Nirvana had already reacted to traditional customer reviews and started with the prototype development of the High Hangpoint harness. To my delight I was asked to be one of the test pilots for this program and the rest is history.

WEIGHT

The weight at 20kgs was a winner and this also allowed me to redesign the required payload bringing my total take-off weight down to 132kgs that included reserve chute and 18 liters of total fuel. That's a cut back of 33 kgs. Don't under estimate the effect of 33 kgs. It's the addition of a 12-year old child, or adult Labrador dog, or 2 jerry cans of fuel or the kitchen sink. When was the last time you did ground handling carrying a kitchen sink under your arm?

With less weight came a smaller glider option taking me from a Dudek Hadron XX 24 to a Dudek Warp 20. More speed, better headwind penetration and no ground roll as a result all the advantages of coming in 13kgs under the max take-off weight of the glider!

RESERVE TANK

Besides the weight and 'evil cycle' I was

contending with during the Icarus 1000 mile journey, the biggest thorn in my side or bum was my reserve fuel tank system. Something that worked perfectly turned out to give me two engine out landings on the Icarus. Once right after take-off at the starting line and the second one resulting me doing a landing in northern Botswana on the main highway leading to Zambia. Both situations could have cost me the race but fortunately preparation for race class also means upping your skill level to execute spot lands and interesting take-offs. The reason for my discomfort was the conflict between my baggage bag design and the standard Nirvana reserve tank fuel line which resulted in engine starvation when pinched by the side mounted baggage bag. One had to go and in the end I opted for a weird configuration of my own design. I butchered the standard tank so its only purpose would be to give a ridged structure to hold a bladder tank used by most pilots that don't fly Nirvana. A bladder tank collapses as fuel is consumed and no amount of pinching of the pipe resulted in engine starvation. Problem solved.

TESTING

The proof is in the pudding as they say so the real question on my mind would be if all the benefits would still be present if the machine was loaded to maximum and pushed to the limit. While in Low Hangpoint configuration with the 3-blade propeller the result was not what I had hoped for. The 3-blade propset was not getting to maximum rpm fast enough during take-off and also resulted in not enough thrust to maintain level flight at 43 kts. With allot of head scratching and Nirvana working hard at solving the situation, the

simplest seem to be the winner. Nirvana designed a spacer kit that allowed me to remove one blade transforming the 3-blade to a 2-blade giving me an additional 1500 rpm and a quicker spin-up to maximum rpm with take-off.

With more power came more problems. Nirvana's engine design in a nutshell is to increase longevity and reliability by reducing rpm but increasing power by compensating with displacement. Only sober minds can make sense of that. My engine was running on the maximum temperature with full trim out because the side mounted bags were obstructing the airflow as the design allowed for. Nirvana's engineers are working their own design and that now excludes having my side mounted bags. My solution was to use turbo charger piping in such a way that it directed airflow to the cylinder more effectively dropping the max rpm temperature by as much as 30 Degrees Celsius.

With flight testing on maximum trim open I was able to fix the fuel consumption on 3 liters per hour which is less than half of what I was burning up on the Nirvana Instinct fully loaded.

SUMMARY

If one studies the numbers of the Icarus it becomes quite evident that equipment design is as important as skill level. Without a doubt, winning pilots designed their equipment and layout to find the best compromise between power, fuel consumption, physical weight, speed, reliability and ergonomics to ultimately escape the trap of the 'evil cycle'. The Icarus flight itself is only half of the adventure, the other half is made up of head scratching, engine out landings and long hours of tinkering.
Eugene Cussons

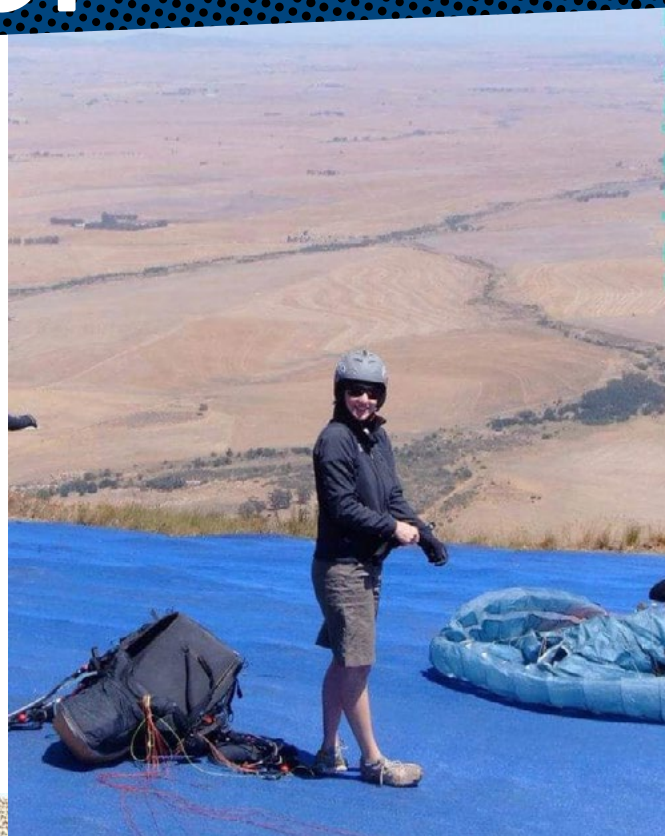
I USED TO BE...

There are in fact many things that I used to be ... probably as many things as I still am and as I will be. The fact that I no longer fly, doesn't make my life any less rich. The real friendships I've made through flying have survived my divorce from this pursuit, and I do love catching up with people on a mountain. I'm probably one of the best recovery drivers you'd be lucky enough to have, however getting my nose out of a book and looking at a GPS may be a challenge. My name is Chrissi, and I used to be ...

I used to be the SAHPA Chairperson. I lasted one year, after which I walked away (I'm sorry Jon, that was not very nice of me at all). With the wisdom of hindsight, I must admit that I really admire people who put themselves forward to serve on the committee, particularly people who serve for longer than a year.

It was without a doubt the worst year of my life (let's name it "The Small Depression") and one which I embarked on voluntarily despite being pre-warned by Andre Rainsford that it had been an incredible tough tenure for him. As they say: pride comes before a fall. I didn't realise at what cost the delivery of this voluntary position would come. I don't really think that much can prepare you for the total onslaught of new experiences (few of which are pleasant) that accompany serving SAHPA. My personal life suffered. My business suffered. My health suffered.

That year started with a bang, when a few weeks in a judge in Cape Town ruled (on an almost decade long case) that tandem paragliding for reward was illegal. After a few visits to our lawyers, we were advised to ground tandem operations (unsuccessfully) until we had lodged our appeal. It was a confusing time for many – unfortunately I was the one in the firing line. I had no prior exposure to the land of law, never mind the realms of the law of the air. There were key individuals who tried hard to support me, however, I needed knowledge to make decisions, so was playing catch up a large part of the time. Add to that the different voices and many warnings against various individuals and their "dubious ulterior motives", and it was all a stark reminder of why I had left the corporate



world to pursue freelancing.

Things may have changed, but like I said, I used to be ... Back then an imbalance or tension had always existed between commercial and private within the ARO (Aviation Recreation Organisation). At one stage it seemed that the only solution to ensuring that commercial tandems were legal (as many people's livelihoods depended on being able to fly tandems)

was to make our ARO the ATO (Aviation Training Organisation). I came so close to taking this step, when a casual remark by a CIA representative, about how much responsibility this entailed, stopped me in my tracks. I decided it was a good idea to understand exactly what he meant, and to my horror discovered that as a director (voluntary or not) of a non-profit, and as SAHPA Chairperson, I would ultimately be responsible for all activities that occurred under the ATO. This was the one thing that no one had whispered in my naïve ears, and it was quite a wakeup call. In addition to a few more sleepless nights, I tried my best, together with the committee, to come up with ways in which we could ensure that we met our duty of care as directors of the ARO. One of a number of initiatives that came out of that chaotic time, was the "In the Loop" newsletter – and I can't say that a little part of me isn't flattered that it has been resurrected as a communication tool.

Other things I struggled with during the “The Small Depression” was that I could not understand why many tandem operators across the country were not interested in creating a sustainable platform for their businesses. Other challenges included getting our MOP rewritten into an acceptable format, then getting it approved by the members and then by RAASA. My committee and a few stand-up members were instrumental in getting this process going, however, the MOP was only signed off by RAASA in the following year thanks to Jon and his committee.

In terms of people, there were some real diamonds who got me through, both from within the organisation, as well as from outside. To be honest, I didn’t really struggle with any of the personalities or characters in and around the sport, but I did observe a lot of unnecessary, sometimes ugly disputes.

I struggled with making the time to run my business, as well as trying to meet my minimum standards of quality (in both my “jobs”). I really prayed hard that there would be no major injuries or fatalities during my time as Chairperson. Unfortunately, this was not to be, and the sport claimed two PPG pilots, and a young PG pilot.

Did I make a difference? Was it possible to even make a difference in a year? I don’t think so, and I do not really know. What I do know is, if faced with the choice of being SAHPA Chairperson for a year versus jumping out of a balloon, the prospect of 365 consecutive roll overs wins hands down ...

I used to fly. And overall, I must admit that I loved it. It was the place I could escape to, a place to feel free, to just be and to lose time without wasting it. I’m not talking about the time lost sitting on the mountain waiting for the wind to be just perfect (which it seldom is). I’m talking about the time between take-off and landing where I wasn’t really conscious of my surroundings other than my fellow pilots, Mother Nature and staying up for as long as I could. It was a time I would be free from “real life” problems like deadlines, load shedding, infrastructure decay, work challenges, politics, relationship issues, poverty, racism, land reclamation ... It was a time during which I chose to enjoy the privilege of free flight.

While I was still an active pilot, I tried to fly as much as I could, however, I have always considered myself to be a bit of a hobbyist who attended as many competitions as possible to make use of the infrastructure, and to increase the circle of flying friends. I was fortunate to travel quite a bit, have flown

at a number of beautiful sites and met some great people in near and faraway places. Paragliding opened up an entire new world to me, including one where injury and death was a relatively common occurrence.

Sometimes I would surprise myself (and probably a few others) with a great flight, and there was a time I was more confident, especially while I was very current. I believe a bit of talent and some intuition, rather than the clever use of any science, got me from place to place. There were times that I was perfectly content in the air, and times that I was extremely anxious – more so about the conditions I was in, than the fact that I needed to find lift. There were times I would thank God for the incredible experience, and other times that I would promise Him that I would do or give up anything if he would just guarantee my safe return to Earth.

I used to be a licenced member of SAHPA. I say used to, because I neglected to let the thing be the thing. My flying wasn’t about flying anymore and there were too many distractions. It had become about serving the community, helping to organise competitions, raise sponsorship, write things, organise charity events, do this ... do that ... and my crippling sense of duty literally crippled my love of the activity and I walked away.

Notwithstanding I have and cherish some amazing flying memories. Maybe those are enough to see me through to retirement. Maybe they are not. Only God knows.

Note: This has been an unusually sombre piece of writing, so if you’d like to read a bit more about some of the adrenalin and fun I’ve had while flying there are three articles here that may be more appealing. *Chrissi Maria*

LET THE MAGIC BEGIN ... (MY TAKE ON THERMALS)
<https://what-is-your-story.co.za/let-the-magic-begin/>

TIPS ON MAINTAINING A SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIP (SOME SILLINESS)
<https://what-is-your-story.co.za/tips-on-maintaining-a-successful-relationship/>

THE SHIFT FROM ROBUST TO RESPECTFUL (MY SIV EXPERIENCE)
<https://what-is-your-story.co.za/the-shift-from-robust-to-respectful/>