

Adam Goes Paragliding



June 7, 2009

I get a call at around 2pm on a Sunday asking me if I'd like to go paragliding. After just watching the movie "Yes Man" with Jim Carey, I had to say, "yes". Steve Roti, a paragliding guru, was going to take me up for a tandem experience and offered for me to go along. I really am afraid of heights but I knew that I probably wouldn't get this kind of experience any time soon. So at 5:45pm on a Sunday my wife Val and I met Steve to go out to Pine Mountain just east of town. I had my helmet, long pants, hiking boots and a long sleeve shirt ready to go. We put all my gear into a backpack that also carried my harness and part of the chute. We had to hike up the mountain with all the gear, which in hindsight was the hardest part. Once we got to our launching area we spread out the parachute and Steve checked the lines for tangles. I got my harness on and Steve told me what we were going to be doing and how we'd do it. Getting going is a three step process:

1. Lean
2. Pull
3. Run

Then there was the getting in your seat process, not too hard, just tuck in your arms and push back (once we were around 50ft in the air or so). We got up rather smoothly, I only remember running about 3 steps and then the uplift from the wind going up the mountain took hold of our paraglider and we were home free. Pine Mountain is about 6,400ft and we started climbing to the summit. I got a little overwhelmed, but dared not show it when we started climbing so high. Steve talked me through every detail. How we would need to lean to turn and so forth. Eventually Steve gave me the controls, which consists of two ropes with a loop to hold onto each. So as I piloted under Steve's direction he took out his camera on a stick. Took our picture with it a few times using a timer. I took pictures with my own camera and Steve noticed how I was putting my foot up and taking a picture of my foot with the scenery behind it. He said "That's the paraglider's photo." I just did it to show that I wasn't on top of a mountain but in mid air! The scenery was magical and the only thing you could hear was the wind. It was a little chilly but totally tolerable. Surface temps were around 67 or so.

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The sun was setting and it was time for us to descend and get out of the air, because once the sun is gone, the uplift goes with it. Landing is an easy process as well.

1. Get out of your seat.
2. Lean forward.
3. Run.

We only ran a couple more steps upon landing, and I can say proudly that I did not fall, trip or make a total clutz out of myself. The day after Steve emailed me this quote: "Paragliders pilots are birds trapped in human bodies, and you got a taste of flying like a bird last night." Thanks to Steve Roti and Dale Richardson for offering me this great opportunity. They're part of the Desert Air Riders, check them out!

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