

In The Air

My most excellent day at the beach.

[Terence C. Gannon](#)



Pacific City Triptych by Michelle Klement

The day started like any other: slowly, at our vacation rental up on the hill, just south of town. Then coffee and a couple of *Beach Buns* from the Stimulus Cafe which lies almost in the shadow of Cape Kiwanda at Pacific City, Oregon. We sat not on the beach, at first, but like the hungry brown pelicans watching the drift boats in the mouth of the Big Nestucca River as the anglers pulled the huge, slick, silvery steelheads out of the river one after another.

After a couple of weeks on the coast, and the prospect of one more before we had to trudge dejectedly back home, life was good. Life was *very*, very

good. It was a beautiful mid-September day and the month had been warm and dry. Warm and dry is what you tend to expect in September on the Oregon Coast, but it's never guaranteed.

Michelle and I then meandered over to Bob Straub State Park and found our usual nook in the sea grass crested dunes, set up our beach chairs, found our books and put the *Ahi* in the sand at our bare feet. Maybe the wind will blow today. Maybe it won't. When you're in a state of almost constant, deep relaxation, the things that might get under your skin at any other time of year just seem to quickly fade away without a trace.

But that day the wind was blowing gently from the northwest. Under these conditions, it's tempting to scale the lee side of Kiwanda and then fly off the north face. There, the lift is predictably good as it funnels up the huge mono-dune created by dried Columbia River silt from the north being blown up the comparatively hard, sandstone Cape.

But Cape Kiwanda was a long walk from where we camped for the day, and busy with the last of the summer tourists. So I just took the *Ahi* to the top of a dune nearby. Despite the wind nearly shearing almost 90 degrees to the fall line, I gave it a gentle toss.

Then the magic happened.

It was the single best flight I have ever had. The lift along the dune was light, but smooth and steady. There wasn't enough to gain altitude of any consequence, but rather just skim along the top of the dune; first upwind, heading north, followed by a quick left turn and back downwind, followed by another prompt turn, this time to the right, so as to never turn tail to wind. There was not enough inherent energy for any wild 'big air' or even VTPR aerobatics, or anything other than this gentle pattern of s-turns in the warm summer sea breeze. But it really didn't matter.

Quite simply, it was heaven.

High performance athletes refer to it as 'flow'. That moment when everything else recedes from consciousness other than the athletic task at hand. Some report that suddenly the basketball hoop looks like it's six feet across, or the cup on the green looks frisbee-sized. Fellow athletes appear to be moving in slow motion while you, the flow-state-intoxicated wunderkind, weave through traffic almost as if it's standing still. For me, at that moment, standing on top of that modest dune at Bob Straub State Park, I was in a state of completely euphoric, utterly intoxicating flow. It was like I could will the *Ahi* up when it began to fade below the crest line. In the muffled distance, I could hear only the sound of the surf, and the gentle rustle of the sea grass, and the laughter of beachgoers who had found their own version of heaven.

For a brief, precious, not-since-repeated moment, time stood still. And life was good. *Very, very good.*

I read, some time ago, about the concept of *state-dependent learning*, which proffers that memories made under certain, specific circumstances tend to be recalled when those same or similar circumstances are recreated. In 1993, authors Alan Poling and Jeffrey Cross wrote about a hilarious scene in Charlie Chaplin's *City Lights* that illustrates the concept. In this particular scene, 'the little tramp' has a decidedly on-again, off-again relationship with a drunk millionaire. In short, when the millionaire is pie-eyed, he's Charlie's best pal. When sober, he treats Chaplin like he has never met him. Over time, Charlie begins to understand the millionaire's memories of him are entirely state-dependent — to hilarious comedic effect. I can't possibly do it justice so do yourself a favour, fire up Netflix and see it for yourself when you can.

The reason I mention this is that I think we may have some quirky version of

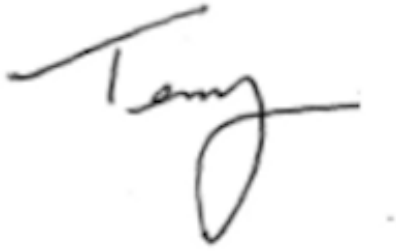
state-dependent learning going on in this particular issue of the *NEW RC Soaring Digest*. It might have even made sense to call it the *Memories* issue because it features at least a couple of stories of events that happened many years ago. My theory is that in the presence of all this RC soaring coverage in one place since the NEW RCSD launched in January, the necessary conditions may have been set up to recover pleasant, RC soaring-related memories readers have had subconsciously locked away for many years. Under this RC soaring-rich environment, readers are triggered to fully recall these happy thoughts, and do so in amazing, intricate detail.

Jim Carlton paved the way for this in the February issue of RCSD with his very popular *What a Day for Soaring!* article, where he described his best RC soaring day ever. Then in this issue, Michael Berends', in his latest *RC Soaring Diaries* column, invites readers respond to his fascinating reminiscences with their own stories of how they got started in RC soaring. Then there is Chris Williams' *Flying Back In Time*, also in this issue, which are his recollections of precious — and quite hysterical — memories from his flying trip to France in 2007.

Like my day at the beach and all of these even better examples, above, I urge all readers to allow themselves to recall their 'best RC soaring day ever', put pen to paper (so to speak) and submit that as an article to RCSD. You can be sure the rest of us would love to hear about it, which might trigger even more of our own memories and cause us to write them down, too. And the virtuous (as opposed to vicious) circle continues 'round at least one more time.

In addition to the great stories above, we have lots of other great articles for you this month — even though we're in the midst of the dog days of summer — so I encourage you to flip to the first story using the link below.

Fair winds and blue skies!



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Cover photo: once again we have *Pierre Rondel* to thank for our cover this month. Pierre provided this very complete set of details of the photo which explain the interesting appearance of the wing accentuated by the angle at which the photo was taken:

"This scratch built JS4 belongs to Gérard Prat, a friend of mine. The fuselage was provided by Paul from Annecy who did the master and the moulds. The wingspan is 4.5m and using an evolution of modified RG15 airfoils: RG15, panel of 366mm, chord 240mm, 12% thickness, 2.6% camber; RG15, panel of 743mm, chord 230mm, 12%, 2.5%; RG15, panel of 514mm, chord 200mm, 11.5%, 2.4%; RG15, panel of 320mm, chord 160mm, 10.5%, 2%; RG15, panel of 175mm, chord 120mm, 10%, 1.5%; NACA63A412, 75mm, 10%, 1%.

Wings are veneered with a hardwood called Anigre, an African hardwood commonly used for plywood, interior furniture, etc. It is frequently sliced and sold as veneer. It is providing, after a careful sanding, a superb and hard surface. The wing covering is made with vinyl, the finish is very closed to composite wings."

Thanks again, Pierre, for the opportunity to feature your work, and this unique aircraft, in the pages of RCSD.

Here where you can find the [first article](#) in August, 2021 issue. Or go to the [table of contents](#) for all the other great articles. A PDF version of this

edition of In The Air, or the entire issue, is available [upon request](#).