

Thankyou Mr Kagayama

This month I'm a bit pushed for time so you'll have to contend with a few thoughts that came to me in the wee small hours. Although not directly about flying - it is related, and something to wile away an occasional winter day.

If you've ever bought a glider from new, then before rushing to unfurl its wings, you may have marvelled at something that had me enthralled – the exquisite manner in which it had been packed at the factory. Every pleat, fold and plastic rib was laid against the next with milli-metric precision. It seemed almost a heresy to disturb such artistry with my clumsy touch. Being an Ozone glider, I was able to ask Mike Cavanagh how the girls (for they were) at the factory could get it so perfect. I think, behind the smile, the short answer was; they are specially chosen ones who have evolved with small hands, a deft touch and hold a doctorate in origami. They also do it repeatedly for a living.

Why mention all that? Well, at the end of each time we fly (or ground handle) we need to repack our glider and don't have the benefit of a nifty lady, simply our own ability to fold it up as nice as we can and hide any faults in the bag – until the next time it comes out. Over the years paraglider folding has been a constant topic of interest; it's featured repeatedly on pg forum, and youtube has lots of clips. In fact, Japan ran the world's first paraglider folding competition that was won by a woman who had also competed in extreme

ironing at National level. Bit of a ringer really.



Amongst all the skills we try to master I feel it's overlooked, yet essential. Reserve repacking is regarded as vitally important and to a degree I think the act of folding our wing away correctly

should be also. The benefits and considerations of folding your glider away properly can be summed up as follows:

- You prolong the life of the wing both in terms of its appearance and the fabric. This can have a knock on effect for re-sale value.

- Each time you prepare for that first take off of the day you don't have knots to contend with. Any faults you pack away re-emerge to be sorted. (I have seen people struggle for an hour – once it took me a complete spanner job!!)
- Gliders are now more sophisticated design-wise and for both safety and performance they need to be checked and packed properly. Plastic ribs have now found their way down the foodchain – we are not talking a few top end gliders any longer.
- Packing up needs to consider the best method for fabric, lines and more recently ribs that combine in a single product.

At this point I must add it's do as I say; not as I do. I'm really not good with soft slippery things that don't stay where they are put. My mum did teach me to knit but I wasn't very good and never mastered casting on/casting off (she did that bit for me), so lots of thin micro lines just seem to snare me without due cause. However, I do have a system that to the ignorant passer by seems quite impressive.

I am a trailing edge first man – there are few around like me. I believe I use a version of the Kagayama method. (Ah ... that's where he got the title) I decided to go arse about face when Ozone put the zip on the wrong end of their saucise bag (they would dispute this). My first (long) bag was the original Cross Country Xcertina which zipped from the leading edge – I did find that more logical – but then I'm English. Being an engineer I read the manual for my M4, but that left me confused – more what NOT to do than to do. So being an engineer and a man - I ignored it! Hence Mr Kagayama won out over Mr Madsen (yet another method).

There are lots of methods out there, many of unknown origin and nameless. If you'd mentioned you were concertina packing a dozen years ago you were more likely to be invited to perform a sea shanty. In those days folding your wing was more akin to folding tea towels and most men could master that. Anyhow, a few questions for you:

- Do you know the recommended way to fold your wing?
- Do you ever study, watch or ask others how they do it?
- Do you leave it connected to your harness or disconnect? Reason?
- Do you have several different techniques to avoid 'sets' (creases in the same place)?
- How many folds lengthways do you make? (Anything with ribs should have no more than three – in the right places).
- Do you store the lower lines inside or outside your wing?
- Are you able to do it when it's windy? Wingtip to wind.
- Do you know the positions of all the ribs in your wing; not just the leading edge ones?
- Do you ever practice folding your wing or look for improved methods? (Aaah only when you come to sell it on).
- How do you store your wing for extended periods (two week plus)?

- Are you sure where you store it is pest and rodent free? (Don't laugh I know a pilot who discovered they make a great two up, two down for a growing family).
- How do you know it is (completely dry)?

I wouldn't dream of telling you how to iron your shirt, but with winter coming and possibly a long layoff from flying it may be a good idea to have a think about some of the above. I have two gliders, and once home they share a single bed, stretched out side by side (nothing has ever happened – no little speed wings). If I think they are damp (and at this time of year the dew is starting to settle early, often as we pack away) then I partially unzip them to let the air circulate around their parts (still no speed wings or even the inkling of a stunt kite). Keeping lines, especially micro-lines untangled is far from easy as they tend to have a mind of their own. One method I remain unconvinced about is the use of 'line tamers' – basically, a pair of 7' sheaths that velcro closed around each set of lines.

I think the message behind all this is that our wings need to be packed carefully and correctly and stored properly. They are remarkably tolerant to our sometimes casual approach, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't be treated as seriously as an A380.

I'll finish on a thought – if we have reserve packing sessions, why not a glider packing tuition session? I'm sure I could learn a lot.