

NEW ZEALAND'S PREMIER SOARING MAGAZINE

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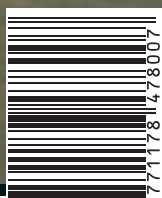


FAREWELL RAY LYNSKEY

A WIN IN FRANCE

ASH 31 MI VS NIMETA

GLIDETIME • CLUB NEWS



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Pg 10



Pg 15



Pg 18



Pg 20



Pg 28



Pg 36

FEATURES

- 10 End of an Era – Ray Lynskey
- 15 2 Seater Glider Racing
- 18 David Meets Goliath
- 20 A Chilling Situation
- 28 The Last Barron Hilton Cup
- 32 Landout
Paraparumu to Terawhiti and Almost Back
- 36 Half a Century on ...
- 42 Jon Hamilton

COCKPIT

- 24 glideTime
- 35 The East Coast Sea Breeze

REGULARS

- 6 Opinion
- 7 Log Book
- 9 GNZ Awards and Certificates
- 39 A Question of Safety
- 39 Airspace Committee Report
- 40 Vintage & Classic Gliding in the Dark
- 43 Tech-Talk
- 44 Gliding New Zealand Club News
- 50 Classified Advertising

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END OF AN ERA

RAY LYNSKEY MBE



Ray Lynskey was one of New Zealand's greatest glider pilots. His death from cancer occurred as he was coming back to gliding after a break to focus on his career. The fact that he was at last able to fly for the sheer joy of it makes his death seem particularly sad.

Ray was our first and so far only World Champion soaring pilot, winning the Open Class in Omarama in 1995. In 1990 he was the first glider pilot ever to fly 2000 km, at a time when most people thought it couldn't be done without night flying. And he did it in New Zealand. His flight: Blenheim, Lumsden, Wairoa (Hawkes Bay) and back to Blenheim took 15 hours, had an average speed of 135 kph and was his 7th double crossing of Cook Strait.

Having flown in five world championships his recent flying had become less driven. He was involved in club activities and was Chief Tow Pilot and a committee member of the Marlborough Gliding Club. He set the benchmarks that others aspired to. World Champion, World Record holder, awarded the MBE for Services to Gliding and the Lillenthal Medal following his 2000 km flight – he was a pilot like no other.

SoaringNZ invited people to share their memories of Ray.

Ray Lynskey was my Nemesis

We fed off each other, competed against each other and pushed each other to better flights. There is no doubt that he is the best pilot I have ever seen. He had a refined style, tunnel vision and determination. He lost all sense of humour once he got going. He got himself churned up as tight as a drum.

Wherever he went he was watched with interest. For so long he, often on a daily basis, did what was thought to be the most that a pilot could achieve in a day. When you have the best pilot performing at his best ability you couldn't get a better result. He set the benchmark that others then set for themselves. Even on a bad day he would be head and shoulders above everyone else.

You hear people talking about how they flew beside him or kept up with him for a while. It was a real kick for them that they'd kept up with the pilot who was top of the range. They'd managed to 'hang with the expert'.

Ray would quite often see things that others couldn't see. He would unravel complexities of the sky, look into the bigger picture and not what was happening at the minute.

He was the biggest pain in the butt when it comes to a flying buddy but it was most interesting. You had to get up early to put one across him. Generally if you were going to keep up with him he would have had to have made a mistake. I thought the guy was just about bullet proof with what he could achieve, where he was going and what he was doing.

During the Worlds contest we had team codes to tell each other our positions but we became fairly sure that the enemy had cracked them. Ray and I knew each other very well by then and we also knew the Omarama conditions. One day he asked me, 'Are you doing what I think you're doing?' I was off track in wave conditions and Ray had figured out that that was where he ought to be too. 'Yes,' I said and he came over too, unknown to the others.

People said it was a shame after the win at the Worlds that he didn't keep flying national competitions as there were many people keen to pit themselves against him and learn from him but I totally get why he didn't. He had put in over a decade of effort into that goal. It had been his life and he had achieved it. He had nothing more to prove. It was time for him to get on with his other life. He deserved to win that contest and he did it his way.

He did actually teach a lot of people a lot of things but he made them work it out for themselves. He could be a selfish pain in the butt flipping back to unselfish and caring. He was a most entertaining person to watch from a distance.

I've never met anyone who used to cane their gliders like he did. He used to overload them with water by miles. He'd be at 22,000 feet in wave doing loops at 100 kts. It was insane. He and I often used to meet on the lower Kaikouras. I'd be heading north out of Hororata for a big flight and he'd be coming south from Blenheim doing the same thing. It just so happened that we'd cross each other there, same time, same place. It became a bit like meeting an old mate for a cup of tea. We'd circle each other and call each other names, we never had anything pleasant to say to each other.

Trevor Florence of Canada sends a slightly unusual picture of Ray. He explains. The photo was taken when Ray visited us here in Canada in 2001. He was flying the 1951 Schweizer 1-23. He was thrilled to fly this "vintage" glider even though he had been flying many different high performance gliders while here. Ray will be missed by all, very tragic event.



Then we'd carry on. By the time we were heading home we'd be on a different track so it wasn't likely we'd meet but we'd call on the radio and compare notes.

Ray was always interested at the end of the day to debrief with whoever had done a good flight that day sharing with guys like John Ahearn, Vaughan Ruddick, Mike Oakley, Nick Reekie and others that were doing long distance flights. That shows a true passion for the sport. He did give back a lot.

TERRY DELORE

An American Perspective

Ray's reputation was larger than life and it preceded him across the world. I entered soaring in 1998 – a few years after Ray became World Champion. But still, it didn't take long before I was in awe of his 'first ever' 2,000 km flight, astoundingly across both main islands of Kiwi-land! Wow! In 2000 I first met Ray at the infamous "High Country Soaring Camp" at Ely, Nevada. He was always first in the air and last to return. His back-to-back 1000 km flights became routine and even boring! But his 'victory loops' were truly highlights of the entire event each year – I would even say 'legendary'. The energy management skill to complete 3 loops at low altitude over the field and then calmly complete a full landing pattern was phenomenal! That trade mark stayed with Ray every year after, until his last year in the USA – 2008. Our sport needs international legends like Ray, and it is a terrible loss that he is gone. I wonder who will replace him on an international level? Ely needs a replacement. Our sport needs a replacement.

But there was more to Ray. With encouragement from Ray and others, my wife Jennifer and I took a wonderful vacation to New Zealand in 2001. We have been back many times since. Ray was a gracious host. He was almost embarrassed that we noticed his photo on the wall with the Queen of England when receiving his M.B.E., though I detected a degree of subdued pride also. Whenever I encounter a person who is clearly operating on a different plane than the rest of us, in any endeavor, I am fascinated to learn

more. I think passion is a common thread and Ray had plenty of passion. His exploits with his grapevines were no less passionate. In more recent times his passion for his new glider and hangar continued the theme. It is tough for the rest of us to rise up to the level of such people, simply because it requires such a phenomenal level of dedication and single-mindedness. I long since gave up any hope of emulating such people. Frankly, I favor a more balanced life.

Meanwhile, in the USA Ray had recently secured a second glider of his own. This, along with his career changes, had him set up for a long and exciting 'retirement' with two summer seasons of soaring each year. How ironic and tragic it is that all this was dashed just as it was getting established. On the positive side, no-one could ever accuse Ray of idly wasting his life. He made the best of the years he had available to him, and none of us can aspire to do better than that.

JIM HERD
Minden, Nevada



Jim Herd's first visit to Ray's vineyard in January 2001.

The following is taken from the Eulogy given by Tony Collins at Ray's funeral. Tony Collins crewed for Ray at both the pre worlds and World competitions at Omarama in 1995 and gives us a personal view of the champion.



Terry Delore pays tribute

I know that the worldwide gliding fraternity and its supporters have often been awed by Ray's gliding achievements over the years. I wish to speak on your behalf and say we have lost a real aviator whose achievements in gliding were at a level most of us could not really comprehend but could only stand in awe of and perhaps aspire to.

Ray began gliding in 1974. I first met Ray in 1982 when I ventured to Omarama from Marlborough with my camping gear as a newly soloed pilot. Ray and I were both members of the Woodbourne Aviation Sports Club, or the Wiggies. Before I left Ray said, "You can crew for me next time." The relationship grew and we developed a mutual respect. As many of you know Ray could get exasperated at times. He never double barreled me but I heard other objects and persons on the receiving end and would quietly listen as he got it out of his system.

Some of us dwell on things that upset us but not Ray. He let it all out there and then got on with the task.

At the conclusion of the 1993 Nationals win at Omarama we packed up. Ray told me that he had spent a huge part of his earnings for years in pursuit of winning a world gliding title and the 1995 World's would be his last effort.

When I visited Ray in the Christchurch Hospital a few weeks back he managed a Ray chuckle as I related a story from that time. On the final day of the Nationals Ray flew the last task in a very quick time. Ray wanted to do the task again as the gate has not closed. We had rehearsed such moves. It meant landing a heavily ballasted glider so that I could catch the wing as he rolled to a halt so as not to spill ballast, put on the wing walker and tail dolly and tow it quickly to the starting grid. Ray remained strapped in

As I sorted the tow rope to hook up to the tow plane, another pilot, the late Mike Rix caught his wingtip on LA's wingtip while taxiing in the opposite direction to get in behind him at the grid. It pulled LA around.

Ray erupted in the cockpit. I really expected him to burst out straps, parachute and all. After I inspected the wing, pulled the glider around facing down vector 27 again and assured a fuming

Ray that there was no damage, I talked quietly to him until he regained his composure. He then hooked up and flew.

He flew the task faster the second time and clinched the championship. I think Mike actually gave him some more drive. Ray would have actually won the championship with his first run of the day but on landing he said, "Tony, I made a few mistakes and knew I could do it faster".

He was always going somewhere in a hurry but knew where he was going even if others didn't. That was how he won the World's. After many blue days he hoped for wave and clouds. As it stood, all the leader had to do to win was to play follow Ray. He had to lose the gaggle. The last day was not in earlier forecasts but it happened.

That day increasingly cloudy conditions made it difficult for other pilots to follow Ray. Ray somehow suddenly managed to vanish from the smooth air of the wave lines. He had dived down and hammered the ridges in an uncomfortable ride - out of sight from other competitors who were left the challenge of finding their own way home!

It was a great moment as we counted down the minutes after Ray's finish while anxiously waiting for German Uli Schwenk's finish. A thirteen minute lead was the lucky number to give Ray enough points to win the World Open title. My stopwatch clicked thirteen. It stretched to twenty three before Uli finished. Then the elation began. It was so good to be part of it. Tears flowed. I could only imagine Ray's inner exuberance and sense of fulfilment.

Another formidable achievement was being the first glider pilot to fly 2000 km (2026km) in 1990. This achievement stunned the gliding world.

Ray was an amazing pilot who competed in many international competitions such as the Worlds at Benalla, Weiner Neustadt, Rieti and Uvalde.

Ray, you are indeed a legend and will be able to continue with your sustainable flight as the rest of us below will be left still struggling to achieve it.

TONY COLLINS

SOME LYNSKEY LINKS

Google "2000km glider flight" to find a copy of Ray's description of his 2000km flight on SOAR. The link is far too long to post here.

The video of the 1995 World Championships Champions of the Wave is available online.

This is a great tribute to Ray.

<http://www.joost.com/0200082/t/Champions-of-the-Wave>





Ray after he landed after flying his Ventus2 for the first time. Photo: Colin Bryan

Ray inspired me to fly gliders and competitions. Period.

My earliest memory of gliding was being hurled off the winch in a Blanik during a Scouts flying weekend when the Marlborough Gliding Club had a winch based at Blenheim Airport. I have no idea of the date or who I flew with. I'm sure Ray had something to do with that operation then.

Shortly after that first gliding flight I remember Dad and his mates telling stories about Ray winning the World Gliding Champs at Omarama... so it was 1995. I saw him around airshows at Omaka as a kid and was mystified by this guy who was a world champion of something to do with flying or was it gliding? I was 11 yrs old.

When I moved back home to Marlborough after uni study and a brief OE I caught up with Ray again at his vineyard in the Waihopai Valley named "Lenticular Vineyard". Funny that! I very excitedly told him how I had discovered the thrill of gliding while a student in Wellington and that this was the best flying ever! I think I showed him pictures of PW5s in Kapiti coast paddocks. He wasn't amused, but he encouraged me to continue to learn cross country all the same!

Finally the day came when I entered my first competition. It was Joeyglide 2006, the Australian Junior Nationals. Ray simply said, "Go for it," and "Watch out for those bloody SWER lines won't ya," handed me his crusty old crinkled task maps from the '87 Benalla Worlds and simply said, "Oh you'll figure it out."

I had a major car accident on the way to Nelson Lakes Gliding Club later that season. Ray called me when I was in hospital to check I was still okay and then he went on to tell me that he had also had all sorts of bits of metal in his body too, from a hang

Ray simply said, "Go for it," and
"Watch out for those bloody
SWER lines won't ya,"

gliding accident. I was blown away by his drive to keep flying no matter what. It certainly kept me focused on the long year of recovery back into gliding

When I bought into an ASW20 Ray had some good safety advice and helped me to learn to look after and fly the beast.

My first solo cross country in Omarama in the 20, Ray casually remarked from across the grid waiting for his aerotow, "Where ya off to?" and after my very vague, stuttered and very nervous reply he said to my complete surprise, "Oh once you get up there, give us a call on the radio." Yeah right! He was loong gone in his old Nimbus 2 by the time I climbed up onto Horrible. Even in the flat blue conditions he was just oughta sight!

The last time I saw Ray in good health (his happy flying self with his new Ventus2) I was just back from Oz again, this time after racing in the Oz Multi class Nationals at Benalla. "Oh, so howdya go in Oz?" he simply said.

"It was awesome!" I said. "Flew my first 500km triangle in the 15m class but I couldn't claim it for a Diamond."

"Oh well, 'spose you'll have to do it again then," and then he walked away. That was Ray's style as a mentor.

I regret never having the opportunity to fly with him but then I realise that was never his style.

Ray was a mentor for me. When on the ground or in the air cruising the wave high above us, a white speck way up there, chuckling on the radio and checking in on us un-worthy mortals as we were scunging along the ridge tops for that elusive wave entry point, he forced you to 'just go and do it yourself.'

Glide On Ray. You've left us 'gromits' one helluva legacy to live up to!

LUKE TILLER

Left: The New Zealand team at Rieti, Italy, Ray on left. Right: National champions Peter Lyons, Ray Lynskey and Terry Delore, trophies presented by Director of CAA, Stuart McIntyre.



AUCKLAND GLIDING CLUB

We were shocked to learn of the passing of Ray Lynskey although some people with close recent associations knew things weren't good. The international profile he had overseas as well as that at home, meant that his passing will be sorely felt throughout the worldwide gliding community. We observed that his obituary in the Marlborough Times was the most read of the online newspapers articles, no doubt due to his standing outside his home province. The whole club joins in mourning a great world record pilot and former World Open Class 1995 Champion.

A (LITERALLY) DIFFERENT VIEW OF RAY

It was a beautiful summer's day with cumulus cloud everywhere when I happened to look over the terrace at the end of our garden in the Awatere Valley. I noticed a yellow car in the river bed in the distance. I thought, that looks like Ray's old yellow Falcon. What on earth is he doing there? I thought, this needs looking into. So Jenna and I drove down the hill and up the Molesworth road to investigate.

When we arrived we noticed two heaps of clothing on the river bank.

This seemed like an opportunity not to be missed, so we collected the clothes and put them out of sight before waiting in the shadows.

Minutes later two bodies emerged from the river totally starkers

and dumbstruck as to what had happened to their clothes. Further minutes passed and we came clean.

It was one of the rare days when the opposite sex managed to drag Ray away from Lima Alpha, his first love.

Chris Richards

I never ceased to be awed by Ray's incredible flying ability, his refusal to leave anything to chance, and his single-minded determination. Only last summer at Omarama, he was showing us all what a fantastic soaring pilot he was - first away in the morning and last back at night, day after day. In a lifetime of reporting sport, I met many fantastic people but only a handful of true champions. Ray was one of those rare people who fitted comfortably into the latter category. He was a great man in any sporting company, and his loss is difficult to come to terms with.

They say that you are never gone as long as someone remembers you. On this score, Ray will live on forever.

His achievement in becoming the first glider pilot to exceed 2000km, and his memorable win in the 1995 world open class gliding championship at Omarama, are just two highlights in a life in which he achieved levels of performance most of us can only dream about.

Rod Dew

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