

Soaring on Invisible Waves

(Excerpt from "A Life's Story: The Satiric Memoirs of a World Citizen")

By

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Tranquility, serenity, snow-covered mountains. You can see the Continental Divide, far away, hundreds of miles on the horizon. You feel at peace with yourself, in resonance with cosmos. You glide on silent wings, or almost so. Your nerves extend into the wingtips of your bird, your sailplane which you affectionately had christened 'Wisp of the Winds'.

At thirty thousand feet you can no longer discern the individual houses of the city; there is no distinction between the Hitlers, the Nixons, the Osamas, the Sadams, and the rest of the politically corrupt.

You had taken off behind Dave's tow plane, winds calm near the ground, but rough like hell over the mountains. A strong, turbulent rotor had indicated the whirlpool of air below the mountain wave. It had tossed your sailplane about like an autumn leaf in the winds. Finally, you had been thrown upside-down, and the towrope had accidentally released at fourteen thousand feet near the top of the peak. You had tried to ride the updraft of the rotor, but in vein: Dave had calmly radioed you "just fly straight ahead, you will catch the wave". Yet, the vortex appeared to suck you down towards the ground, towards the cliffs of Pikes Peak and the trees, towards certain destruction. At twelve thousand feet the Peak had menacingly grown taller and taller, while you turned around to head towards the high plains. Suddenly, it had struck you like the surf of twenty feet high ocean waves. You almost pushed your head through the canopy, but your harness protected you. You felt the sudden upward acceleration, strong, surging, reassuring. Within a split second, the roar of the whirlpool was gone, only the smooth rush of air caressing your wings was heard. You looked at your variometer, the vertical climb indicator, and knew that you had stumbled into the upslope of the mountain wave: five hundred, one thousand, two thousand feet per minute lift. You were back at fourteen thousand feet in no time at all.



Soaring over Pikes Peak

Fifteen, sixteen, twenty thousand feet. You check the oxygen flow in your breathing mask: okay. Your bird sings, vibrating at exhilarating frequencies. You sense the surf of rising air with every fibril of your nerves, and you sing. You sing the songs of a distant past, the traditional rhymes of your childhood, the martial songs of your pre-military training, Schubert's Mueller lieder, and you remember the violin virtuoso and the old lighthouse keeper who had rescued him as the sole survivor of the shipwreck in the North Atlantic.

'What is that?' he had asked in his heavy Northern tongue pointing to the violin case with the Stradivarius. When the violinist tried to explain in his foreign language what music is, the old islander did not understand; he had never seen a violin nor had he heard it played. Finally, the musician had played Bach's Fifth Brandenburg Concerto. The old man, with a distant look in his eyes, after an eternal silence, reached out to the horizon, towards the roaring seas and the gray sky, he pointed to the violin, his ears and his heart. Then he spoke. Although our musician did not understand the words, he recognized their meaning.

While you remember the story told by the musician, you sense as the old man did, that music is not just human artifact; that it is part of nature. You find its harmonies all around you, in the concerto, in your songs, in the ocean and in the atmospheric waves, in the atoms and electrons, in humanity and in your heart. You feel at peace with yourself, in total resonance with the universe and all living souls. Suddenly you know God is alive and abounds everywhere.

At thirty thousand feet life is remote and has diffused out of sight. Everything including your worries is miniaturized to the point of total oblivion. With distance from the ground you gain distance from all your earth-bound troubles, from the mediocrity of your professional life, from the hypocrisy of people in power, and from the misery of human subjugation in a technocratic society. You feel free. It is the freedom of the birds, the eagles, and the hawks. You soar higher and higher reaching out for the mother-of-pearl clouds, those lenticular clouds which consists of myriads of tiny ice crystals formed in the refrigeration of the lower stratosphere.

The old peasants of the North Eastern mountains in Bohemia, the Riesengebirge, had called these clouds, Moatzagotl, after the mountain ghost who roamed around helping all of good heart, but punishing all evil. Moatzagotl; the name a vague distorted memory of Quetzalcoatl, the white god of ancient Aztecs. Returning Spanish conquistadores had brought back from Mexico shiploads of gold, jade, and turquoise, but also tales of prehistoric gods worshipped with human blood in ancient Tenochtitlan and Mexico.

Through centuries of mouth-to-mouth transformation, the god Quetzalcoatl had been degraded and his name bohemianized to the beneficial mountain ghost, Moatzagotl, who suddenly appeared and disappeared in the skies over the snow-covered mountain tops of the Riesengebirge.

Now you are soaring closer to the ghost of the mountain wave, but as sudden and ghostlike as Moatzagotl, the lenticularis vanishes and with it the upwind of the wave. You stay around because the wave often pulses, seemingly breathing in cycles. Yet your bird slowly descends giving away the precious altitude gained through the oscillations of nature.

At twenty thousand feet you decide that the wave has disappeared into the destruction of atmospheric disharmonicities. You glide away from the Peak with mixed feelings. There is still left a trace of that exhilaration lived through during the fantastic ascend, but your mind already meanders, returning to the ground, to the earth-bound memories of life, and the chronicler is reminded of his duty to record the truth and nothing but the truth about SIR, the Synchronous Interfacing Robot, his past, his presence, and his future. On the ground at the airport, a telegram is waiting for him urging his instant return for a history making meeting.