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January 12, 2006

## Dreaming of flying, in a nutshell

**J.K. Perry**  
September 21, 2005

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EAGLE COUNTY - A paragliding rig consists of a wing similar to a parachute, a reserve parachute, harness and seat.

"It's an ultra-light aircraft with a pilot piloting you while you're in a seat," says Dave Champaign of Vail Valley Paragliding.

The sport emerged in the late 1970s. In the '80s European alpinists intent on flying off mountains re-designed parachutes to glide better and sink less sinking. Some modern wings can glide 9 meters for every meter of drop.

Champaign and Greg Kelley, along with others, formed Vail Valley Paragliding in the early '90s to teach others the sport.

"I think people want a sense of adventure," Kelley said. "Most of the people I've talked to dream of flying. This is an avenue you can take to do it. There's no major flying school and it's a pretty reasonably priced form of aviation.

"Most of the experiences I've had in this sport haven't been touched in any other sport I've been

Tom Keough, during launch, lifts his legs and frees himself of the ground. The launch can be one of the more dangerous aspects of the trip. **Special to the Daily/Matt Inden**



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in," he added.

Kelley, a middle-age man with graying hair tied back in a ponytail, also rock climbs and skis. In the summer he paraglides - sometimes competitively - and in the winter, teaches skiing.

Tandem flights run \$150 to \$185 dollars. Obtaining a novice pilot's license through Vail Valley Paragliding costs \$1,500 for instruction and equipment rental.

Students communicate with instructors during flights via radio. Passing the course includes on-the-ground maneuvering of a wing and 25 solo practice flights.

Midway through the course, students are encouraged to purchase equipment to become familiar with their own rig. A new setup costs about \$4,500, or \$3,000 for used equipment. Kelley and Champaign help students when purchasing gear.

Beyond the novice rating, pilots can obtain advanced licensing through further training and flights. Advanced licenses allow pilots to fly at more locations.

Some launch points in the valley include Beaver Creek, Vail Mountain, Bellyache Ridge and Wolcott. Paragliding can be done year-round.

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