

An Old Dream Come True

2008 Interview with Shai Priyadarshi

by John Heiney

Born in India Shai Priyadarshi moved with his family to Scotland at age three, where he lived for 27 years. In his late twenties he started trying to hang glide in Scotland but three years of bad weather forced him to talk his wife, Geraldine into moving to California. But that was not difficult since she was supportive of Shai's dream to fly, buying him his first tandem lesson.

Shai has lived in the USA for seven years, but holds British citizenship. He seems enigmatic at first, having the Indian features with a Scottish accent, but his friendly nature always shows through. He started lessons at Windsports in 2004. He has had beach lessons with Joe Greblo, Paul Thornbury, and Lynden Vazquez and a tandem with Andy Beem. Shai set up the hardware and software, and hosts the webcam that allows pilots to look at Kagel launch. <http://www.windsports.com/kagelkamframe.html>



Shai Priyadarshi

Shai moved to San Diego and became occupied with career and family. In May 2007 Shai came to me by referral from Joe Greblo. I have worked with Shai during his limited free time for flying, and one thing is certain: Shai loves hang gliding! He has done very well in his training and has several soaring flights at Horse and Elsinore. Shai is a socially active and friendly pilot. I think you all will find him a very welcome addition to the San Diego free-flight community. Recently I asked Shai some questions:

JH: What prompted your interest in hang gliding.

SP: All my life I have been interested in flying and things that fly. Around 1978 when I was seven years old I was on vacation with my family in the Swiss Alps. I saw four people jump off a cliff on hang gliders. I thought it was fantastic! That moment has stuck with me my entire life. My nine year-old brother was unimpressed. Though brothers, our dreams were always very different, he's now a doctor by trade, and an author at heart.

JH: Did you know anything about hang gliders before that time?

SP: I had never heard of hang gliding, so it was a



Shai launching in light wind at Horse Canyon on the Dream 205 training glider

sudden moment of realization that I wanted to do that. It took me a quarter-century to start living the dream.

JH: Do you fly any other aircraft?

SP: I have taken lessons in airplanes and sailplanes.

JH: Where do you live?

SP: Pacific Beach, where some people like to party, but I like to walk around the bay with my wife and little girl.

JH: Where did you first fly hang gliders?

SP: Dockweiler Beach, when I took my initial lessons with Windsports. I was living and working in Pasadena at the time.

JH: Do you know how many hours you have?

SP: About ten hours.

JH: What is your philosophy of Life?

SP: Lead with your brain and be good to your fellow citizens of the planet. I believe that people tend to over-complicate their lives. My philosophy is enacted in the Star Trek TV series: logic, reason, love ... and photon torpedoes when you need them.

JH: Do you have a most memorable flight?



Shai's first soaring flight, 45 minutes at Blossom Valley in the wonder wind. The stirrup was hard to find, so I told him to forget the stirrup and focus on the flying.



Shai's dog, Brandy with her goat-head-protecting shoes at the Winchester training site

SP: At this point in my career, every single flight is memorable. My happiest moment in flying was when I got 2000 feet above launch at Horse, and at least 600 feet of that was without my instructor's (that would be you, John) radio-instruction. I remember watching the altimeter and pleading with the Wind Gods to push me another 200 feet. I felt fantastic!

JH: Do you have a favorite flying site?

SP: Horse Canyon. I have had my best soaring flights and have gotten the highest there.

JH: If you could change anything in your life, what would you change?

SP: Add two more days to the weekend.

JH: What does hang gliding mean to you?

SP: It is the physical manifestation of a dream. When you dream, they're mostly of pure concepts. Hang gliding is that same kind of perfect, pure feeling. In the real world you are able to participate in something that normally you would only be able to dream about. When you are flying hang gliders, it is like there is no time; that dimension gets swapped with the normally inaccessible vertical one. You are moving through all three dimensions of space, but time is on hold. That break gives you the freedom to savor the exuberance of what you are doing.

JH: What do you do for a living?

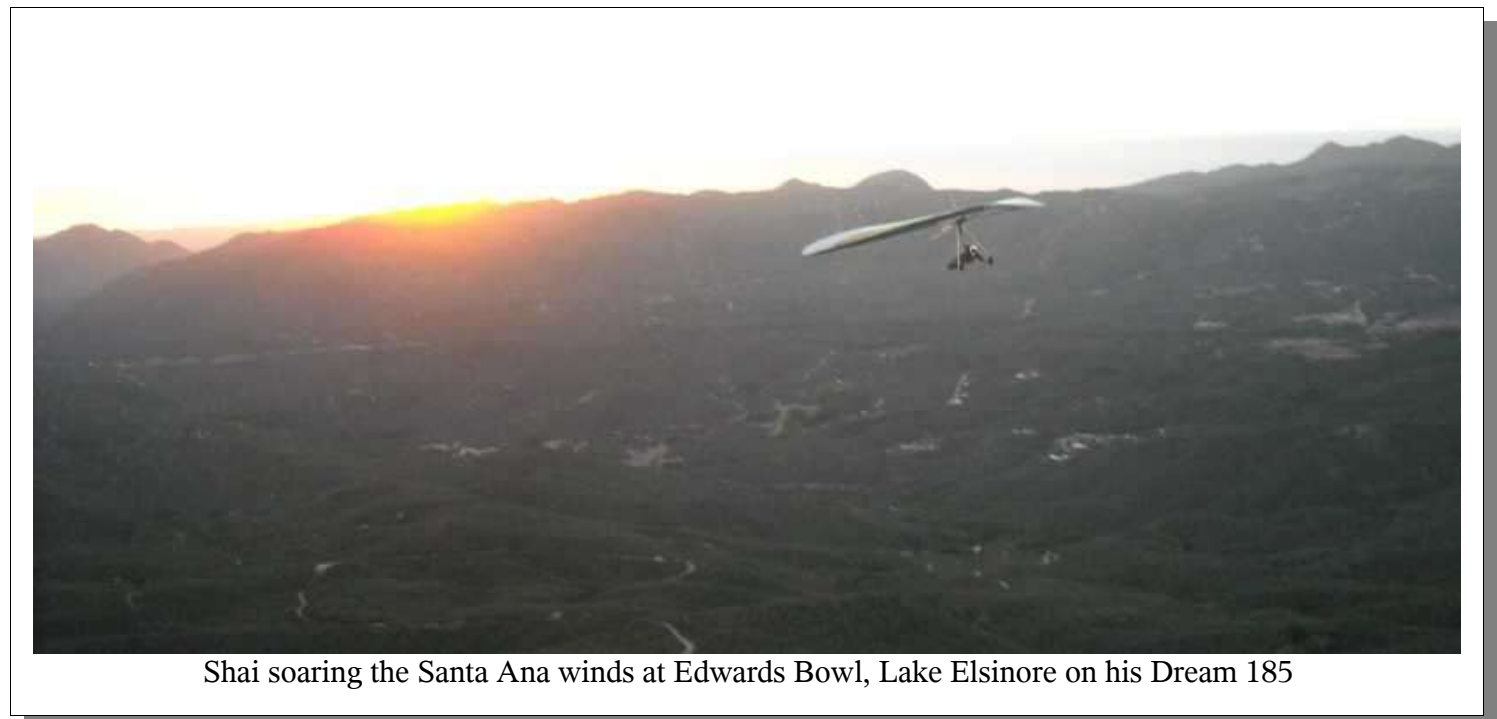
SP: I am a software architect for DivX, a digital video software company.

JH: How do you see your future in the sport of hang gliding?

SP: Two futures: Being a good pilot who has a long enjoyable flying career having mellow soaring and coring flights. In the alternate future, being a fantastic championship winning James Bond of a pilot. In reality, I will probably be the former having dreams of being the latter.



Shai and Dave Whitehall making passes
in the evening glass-off at Blossom



Shai soaring the Santa Ana winds at Edwards Bowl, Lake Elsinore on his Dream 185

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