

# Soaring Australian Thermals

The Collected Papers of  
Garry Speight  
from 1966 to 2015



# Let's be Iconoclastic!

By Garry Speight

*About 2011, I began again to give talks on MacCready theory. By this time it was nearly thirty years since I had published about it. Hardly anyone knew what I had written, and few had thought about the subject.*

*I gave a talk based on the material in the next article, "Best Use of Thermals", to those attending "JoeyGlide" at Lake Keepit in December 2012. The response of the talented young pilots was negative: I had allowed plenty of time for questions or comments, but none came.*

*While my presentation was not perfect, I think the issue was that I was attacking beliefs that are deeply held, never questioned, but wrong. I was breaking icons, and iconoclasts are unwelcome.*

*When I spoke on the same topic at a Lake Keepit Regatta in February 2014, I was determined to face this problem. I introduced my talk with "Let's be Iconoclastic!". To make the point, I tore up copies of a selection of modern-day icons.*

*(And the response of the middling talented older pilots was very positive! Ed.)*

*Originally published in Keep Soaring, March 2014*

My talk today will be iconoclastic: I intend to smash icons. Here is an icon of the Eastern Christian Church.



[Held up this image]

Because Christians would be upset, I will not tear up that icon.

Here is a modern icon that you will recognise.



[Held up this image]

This one stands for this false belief:

- Deciding when to take a thermal is something that winners do naturally. It cannot be taught.

[Tore up and crumpled the image, and threw it on the floor.]

The truth: Everyone can learn it.



[Held up this image]

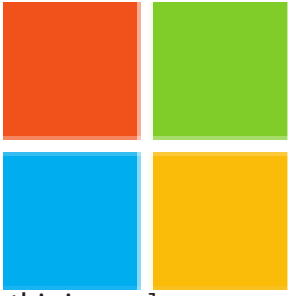
This one stands for this false belief:

- No-one has ever studied when to take a thermal and when to leave it.

[Tore up and crumpled the image, and threw it on the floor.]

The truth: Some very bright people have studied it for generations.

## Let's Be Iconoclastic!



[Held up this image]

This one stands for this false belief:

- The MacCready ring just advises the most efficient speed to fly.

[Tore up and crumpled the image, and threw it on the floor.]

The truth: The ring reminds you of the weakest lift you will accept.



[Held up this image]

This one stands for this false belief:

- Set the ring to the strength of the next thermal.

[Tore up and crumpled the image, and threw it on the floor.]

The truth: Nonsense! Do you have a crystal ball?



[Held up this image]

This one stands for this false belief:

- Set the ring much lower than the lift you intend to use.

[Tore up and crumpled the image, and threw

it on the floor.]

The truth: Set the ring to the weakest lift that you DO intend to use.

For good measure, here is another icon to smash:

[Held up this image]

Well, perhaps not that icon.



[Held up this image]

This one stands for the false belief:



- Water ballast lets you cruise faster.

[Tore up and crumpled the image, and threw it on the floor.]

The truth: Water ballast keeps you from getting low.

[Kicked the torn crumpled sheets of paper away.]