

Cervia on the Adriatic

Festival That's Become a Pilgrimage

"It's not the largest kite festival around the world. And it's not rigidly organized. But it's by far the most fun. There's plenty of time----time to meet with everyone else. There's a hint of the holiday about it. All the rest of the festivals have a tinge of work. Not this one. The spirit's Italian really, isn't it?"

----Peter Lynn

* * * * *

Cervia is a classy beach town on the Adriatic two hours south of Venice. Jammed in summer with vacationing Italians and other Europeans, it is tranquil and underpopulated in the spring, with a gentle breeze blowing in from offshore. Perfect for kiteflying, in short.

Last spring's *Festival Internazionale dell' Aquilone* was the 22nd annual, making it one of the longest running events of its kind. It was eight days of flying on a broad, soft sand beach. Rokkaku battles, night flies with lights, live concerts, workshops for children, a major photographic exhibition, an auction, traction boarding out in the sea, fine dining with an emphasis on pasta, seafood and local wine, and lots of impromptu fun, games and singing were the bill of fare. Upwards of 100 fliers and their families from Europe, along with a sprinkling of guests from around the world, participated. Spectators in their thousands came, day after day. It was the big show in town.

The festival these days is the fruit of a father-daughter collaboration.

Once owner of an art gallery in Paris and an artist of international stature, Claudio Capelli has long combined fine arts with his love of kites. He has been running the Cervia festival for two decades now. When he wearied of the task some years ago, his daughter Caterina stepped in to get him reinterested. She adds new energy and vision. Along with her father's administrative and diplomatic skills and knowledge of French, she contributes two new ones-----fluency in English and an ease with the computer, both vital in this day and age. The two of them make a wonderful team.

When he was young, Claudio recalls his grandfather flying an Eddy kite. He himself became deeply interested when he saw the new stunters being flown in Central Park in New York City in the late 1970s. He took up kiting at that point and soon was involved in cutting edge experiments with kites, as well as painting them exquisitely. His engagement with the Cervia festival began about this time.



Claudio and Caterina Capelli

Caterina recalls vividly the exact moment kites seriously captured her own attention. Her father tied a rope around



Kites Over Cervia

Photographer Marten Bondestam comments: "There is something very joyful, some strong happiness in this picture. It is like children's toys gone wild. Some of these kites are huge, like elephants."

her waist and hoisted her into the air with a kite. She was just 3 years old. She recalls pitching in with festival work at an early age, handing out sandwiches to kites. Now 25, Caterina, when not attending to kite festival business, is working for an advanced degree in philosophy.

This year's festival showcased single line art kites and they were lofted into the sky in their hundreds. There was the usual wide range, from kites big as elephants from Peter Lynn of New Zealand to beautifully painted Rokkakus by Mikio Toki of Japan, from elaborate trains by Iqbal Husain of Switzerland to delicate, imaginative creations by the Sauer sisters of Germany, Kisa and Anke, from a menacing black Delta in the shape of a boomerang by Carlos Martini of Brazil to images of ghostly men by Robert Trepanier of Canada. Then there was the full range of Codys, Sleds, Genkis, Parafoils, Deltas, Tetrahedrals, softies, hybrids, crossbreeds and everything else one could think of by the English, French, Belgians, Dutch, and Scandinavians, and of course the home country Italians.

Off by himself at the edge of the beach, Ray Bethell, of Vancouver, stripped to the waist, deeply tanned, and looking like a Charles Atlas at age 76, endlessly flew his trio of two-line stunters in perfect formation----one with the right hand, one with the left, and one from his waist. A former postman who learned great patience delivering mail in the Australian Outback, Bethell says he clocks 75,000 miles a year attending festivals and putting on his mesmerizing all-day show.

With Michael Alvarez of Perth leading the way, Australian motifs were big at the festival this year. Several fliers brought along big Aboriginal didgeredoo drone pipes to entertain themselves and fellow fliers and a number of participants broke out boomerangs to toss and catch when the wind dropped and kites came down.

As usual, some of the most charming stories were no more than a blip on the screen.

One of those boomerangs thrown to entertain the crowd when it was too calm for kites sliced through a 48-foot hot-air balloon being lofted by Carlos Martini of Sao Paulo and mortally wounded it. The balloon sank to

Cervia Festival

the sand. What few spectators realized was that they had just seen a world record. In the entire history of mankind, the Brazilian balloon was the largest object ever felled by a boomerang.

Only a few were privy to the announcement by Jeanette Bondestam, of Helsinki, that she had turned 6 years old that day and for the first time counted all the way to 100. Although Finnish, she announced this in Swedish. It was duly translated by her mother.

A Swede, Andreas Aagren, of Vesteras, reported that his Viking ship kite escaped when a gust snapped the line and that it sailed off out of sight. Staff at a hotel far from the beach spotted the errant kite on their roof, naturally called Claudio Capelli, and the prize object was duly returned to owner.

Photographer Stephane Clerisse from France fascinated colleagues with his complex diphthonic singing, as done in Tuva, a region between China and Russia. Diphthonic singing involves placing the tongue behind the top front teeth and humming to create a two-tone drone sound that is quite strange to the ear, even eerie. Using circular breathing, Clerisse was able to keep the drone going more or less indefinitely.

Of such stuff are kite festivals made.

The question is put to Claudio and Caterina why they do the festival at all, with all the work it entails obtaining sponsors, setting up tents and fencing, organizing a sound system, arranging transportation, contracting with merchants to sell food and drink, organizing housing and feeding for the kites, publicizing the event, coordinating with the town, setting up special events such as a major show of kite photographs this year, and so on and so on?

Claudio answers for both: “We make people truly happy. And that makes us happy. People come here and they feel free as the breeze. They love to come. They come year after year. It’s a way of introducing people from various cultures of the world to each other. And because all of the guest fliers live together in a big hostel, this makes things more friendly. For many people, it’s a festival, yes, but more than that, it’s now a pilgrimage.”

And, oh yes. Cervia is pronounced “Chair--vee--ah.”

And do you really have to guess who the proprietor of the first restaurant on the beach next to the flying area is named after? The restaurant is called Benito’s.

----Ben Ruhe



Mikio Toki
.....front and back

Faces at a Festival

Big kite festivals draw a wide range of fliers, from professionals to skilled amateur enthusiasts---hobbyists, craftsmen, aerodynamicists, artists, poets, teachers, outdoors people. Following are biographical sketches of six of the kites, selected rather randomly although all proved to be interesting subjects, who attended last spring's international festival at Cervia, Italy.

Iqbal Husain

A Pakistani living in the Ticino, Switzerland where he works as a web content manager for a bank, Husain is passionate about kitemaking, flying, and collecting. His piquant humor is reflected in the kites he makes, mainly trains. One centipede has a crocodile as its head and a string of handbags as the train, another a white chicken trailed by dozens of frying pans, each with a fried egg.

A pig's head followed by salami slices and a cow's head by hamburgers are further examples of this very personal viewpoint.

The drollery penetrates Husain's daily life. When he fills in an immigration landing card when traveling, for example, under "occupation" he claims "18th century Indian gymnastics." "That never fails to produce raised eyebrows," he says.

Although he played with kites as a boy in Karachi, he didn't become interested in them "as a means of personal expression" until he attended a kite festival in Japan in 1984 where he was teaching after receiving a degree from the London School of Economics. There he fell under the sway of kite personages Nishi, Ohashi and Mr. Doi, the last giving him a train of box kites. "It was a train to the heaven of kites," recalls Husain.

Nishi taught Iqbal kitemaking, particularly how to make kites for low-wind flying. Iqbal was fascinated by working and forming bamboo, by the beautiful *washi* paper used in Japan. "I feel happy doing manual work," he explains. The mound of kites he totes in his van attests to that.



Iqbal Husain and kites

Soon he was doing his own variations on traditional designs. The bug bit so deeply he started collecting kites and kite memorabilia as well. He now has a collection of 19th century Japanese woodblock prints, all showing kites, “that rivals Scott Skinner’s collection,” he says. “Also, I like to give exhibits of my kites and hold workshops. They open people’s eyes.” Schools and his local tourist office have his number, in more ways than one.

“But kiting is always a hobby,” says Husain. “My family comes first.”

Husain is now wondering what to do with his collection, which numbers 300 choice kites, 30 Japanese prints, European engravings, books, stamps, posters, and so on. He is talking of setting up a joint foundation in retirement with other kitefliers.

“I’m definitely continuing with kites as a hobby,” he says. “The kids I teach give me motivation. They keep me young. They have no preconceptions, just joy and energy.”

Raoul Fosset

How does a retiree with a yen to attend kite festivals all over Europe and much further afield finance such travel? Raoul Fosset, of Tervuren, Belgium, came up with a good answer. He makes and sells speciality kites.

Fosset came to kites via photography. Having suffered as a boy under the Nazi occupation of his country during World War II, Raoul moved to America after the war at the invitation of an uncle and shortly found himself drafted into the U.S. Air Force. Learning photography in the service, he set up in that business in Arizona but was eventually lured back to Belgium by homesickness. He married there and has stayed on ever since. In 1983, wanting to do aerial photography, Fosset discovered kites beat airplanes, helicopters, and balloons for the sort of work he wanted to do and he soon became an expert with kites. Industrial photography from the air became his forte.



Raoul Fosset
trips,” he says.

Fosset was a founding member of the kite aerial photography movement worldwide in the ‘80s and has lectured widely on the subject. Meanwhile, there were all those kite festivals to attend and friends to meet. He began building kites to sell, got a good reputation, and his business flourished. “I stopped counting after I made 1,000 kites,” he says.

Fosset builds stunters of his own design, GenPkis, Deltas, Rokkakus, and so on. He is good enough with the two-liners to give demonstrations with them. A student of Americans Jose Sainz and Spencer Chun, Fosset often uses appliqué designs to adorn his creations.

Selling kites has permitted Fosset to travel all over Europe, to the U.S. and to Asia. “And I don’t have to cash the family budget to make the

Fosset explains how the kite festival business operates. A festival organizer sends invitations to attend to selected organizations and individuals. A person accepted can expect to receive room and board at the festival, and, if a star performer, perhaps mileage. For this, he is expected to fly a lot of showy kites, maybe fly demonstrations for the crowd, perhaps do some pleasant odd jobs like translating or appearing on TV. Fosset himself is multilingual.

As an example of the contacts a flier makes at festivals, Fosset tells of meeting a Ukrainian couple at Dieppe who he taught about kites. This led to an invitation to come visit in Kherson, near the Crimea, where he helped Sergei and Elena Tarasenko set up a local kite organization. Sergei, an engineer, picked up stunter flying in five minutes, Fosset says, and now has taken up aerial photography. What's next in Kherson? Why, a Ukrainian kite festival, of course, with Fosset as adviser.

Kisa and Anke Sauer



Kisa Sauer (above) and sister Anke (at right), who is flying a stunt kite of her own design.



In a sport pretty much dominated by men, sisters Kirsten (Kisa) and Anke Sauer from near Dusseldorf give kiting a refreshing look. Theirs is an imaginative, artistic, delicate approach---might it be called a feminine viewpoint? Whatever it is, it's original and a breath of fresh air on kite festival beaches.

Anke, a computer graphics professional, spells it out in no uncertain terms: "Our kites are more detailed and delicate. They're finer." Anke's kites tend to be asymmetrical and some of them suggest strung-together atoms or molecules. They are nicely painted in colors that tend toward the acid.

A theatrical set builder by profession, Kisa on the other hand makes kites with an organic look or the look of outer space-----seashells, listening ears, moons.

The sisters design and build independently of each other, although they confer on technical matters.

They, along with Kisa's partner, photographer Tomas Jeckel, and other friends, tend to put their mark on beaches they visit. At immense labor, they sometimes construct enormous sand sculptures of people and animals. Three years ago they created a 160-foot dragon at Berck-sur-Mer. "It got a lot of publicity as the largest sand sculpture of the year in France," says Kisa. Or their wont may be a shamanistic assemblage of random, salvaged objects

arranged in an orderly way, and overseen by flags. Mongolian prayer *omoos* come to mind. Complicated photography projects absorb some of the group's creative energies, including flying and filming kites under water.

The sisters say they learned about kites from a grandfather when they were little girls. "We lived near the Rhine. It was flat and green and there was a lot of space," says Kisa. "My grandfather was so happy. He had given us something wonderful. We kept on and eventually took up stunt kites made of cotton, then we discovered ripstop around 1988. We met a lot of fliers and made friends."

Both view kiting poetically. Anke: "Flying makes a special exhibition hall in the air." Kisa: "One of my recurring themes is planets. I can never fly in space, so I bring my own planets with me, my own universe." Kisa and her kites get around. She flew one of her clamshell kites over the great temple in Angkor, Cambodia. She also flew on the Royal Kite Field in Bangkok.

Feeling "people with fantastic kites are bound to be fantastic people themselves," says Kisa, she and Anke and friends set up an "absolutely unofficial" *Drachensyndicat* (kite syndicate) a few years ago, and have chosen a select few members, living from Vienna to Montreal, from Colombia to Lithuania, and in several countries in Asia as well. "We members try to get together at big festivals like Fano, Dieppe, Berck-sur-Mer, Madison, Wisconsin. And of course Cervia," says Kisa. One syndicate tradition: "Whoever makes the t-shirts gets to recommend members."

As a computer whiz, Anke has a leg up on cyber kiting. She can steer a kite image she creates through a three-dimensional world on her computer. This is beautiful and exciting play, she says.

Because she builds theater sets for a living, sister Kisa is accustomed to using a wide variety of materials-----paper, tissue, wood, plastic. She works with wire a lot. "Whatever you want, I can build it," she sums up. "Ideas for kite projects, they jump at me, say 'here I am.'"

Malcolm Goodman



Malcolm Goodman

A retired electronics engineer in Billingham, England, Goodman saw kites being flown in San Francisco 30 years ago and became an instant convert. On his return home, he starting making his own kites. He hooked up with the late Dave Checkley, of Seattle, to visit China (Weifang, Tianjin, Shanghai, Beijing, the Great Wall) and Japan (Hamamatsu). He wended his way to Singapore where he fell under the sway of Shakhb Gunn. "I fell in love with the beautiful kites, the people, and culture of the Far East and became a collector of Oriental kites right away," he says. "Now I have so many kites I had to build an extension on my house to put them. It's my own kite museum."

Why kites? Goodman explains: "I'm a practical person. I saw that kites represent culture as a whole----they combine making, learning, art."

Charming, well spoken, well organized, Goodman helped out at the Washington Festival of the Air in the northeast of England, where he lives, and soon was running it. He brought major Japanese personages-----Nishibayashi, Eiji Ohashi and Seiko Nakamura-----to the festival his first year in command and they helped make it a smash hit. It continues as one of the great global kite festivals.

Although the event involves a lot of work, Goodman says there is a great satisfaction to running a successful festival and in giving pleasure to a large number of people. There is another bonus. Goodman is offered hospitality

elsewhere around the world in return for the welcome he tenders at Sunderland. He and wife Jeanette have been to festivals all over, including Thailand, Malaysia, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia. Not to mention Iceland and Europe. They were married in Hawaii while attending a kite event, the American Kitefliers Association convention in 1989. Needless to say, choice kites have flowed into his collection from these visits. Valued examples are Chinese centipedes and Japanese warrior kites. The size range is from 4 millimeters to 4 meters. There are of course books in his trove----100 of them, plus porcelains, pins, and other memorabilia. For a look at his kites, bring up Goodman's fine website: www.kiteman.co.uk.

Goodman gives frequent kite workshops and mounts exhibitions from his trove to spread the word about kites. Now on his mind is eventual disposition of the collection. "The kites are getting to be a bit of a burden," he says. His vision is a small farm with fields for flying and outbuildings for a museum and workshops. That's in the future. "The near future, I hope," says Goodman.

Danny Franck

Born and raised on a *kibbutz* in Israel, Franck is one of those free-booting fliers of the new, "extreme" traction kite world, a daredevil aboard buggies and sail boards who delights the crowd with skill and daring in a sport strictly for the young, strong, and foolhardy. Franck comes by the necessary skills easily, he's a hush-hush soldier in the Israeli army, ready to fly a plane, drop by parachute, whatever.

Visiting France, original home of his father, Franck discovered kites and decided because they were light and could be packed down they'd be perfect to go with his mountain climbing hobby. Scale a peak, fly a kite in celebration, make a photograph. Perfect! Franck did ascend Mount Blanc, tallest mountain in Europe, and he did fly a kite from the summit. Then he kept traveling and exploring and meanwhile studied kites. When he got to Australia in his wanderings, he saw his first kite buggy, said "What's that?," got the answer, and was soon rocketing along the beach.

Realizing he needed sophisticated equipment and not having the funds to buy, Franck took up sewing and soon crafted his own traction sail. Attending the World Cup at Long Beach, Washington, in 1997, Franck was assigned to drive Peter Lynn and learned he too could join the upcoming seven-mile buggy race. "I raced, fell behind, got really dirty, finished way behind. But I was really, really pleased. Especially when Peter offered me a job at his works in Ashburton, New Zealand, to help design, test, and fly kites. I had learned machinery on the farm where I grew up, learned physics and math in the military."

After an apprenticeship with Lynn, Franck found himself demonstrating in Sardinia for the big Dutch kite firm Vlieger Op and got himself hired by the company. Since then he has spent summers kiting, the off season in Israel. "I was the first person to do kite boarding in Israel," says Danny, with great triumph. "Definitely!" The sport has grown quite popular in that Mediterranean country. "Boarding is now much bigger than wind surfing," he says



Danny Franck

"Boarding can be hair-raisingly dangerous," Franck says, "but it's the sport for me. Boarders are getting up to six seconds of air time in jumps now," he says. "It's exciting to do, fun to watch."



At the Beach

“Infant” (top left) by Claudio Capelli, geisha train by John Mitchell, undoing a nasty knot.

On Page 15, candy drop for children overseen by Michael Alvarez, Ray Bethell with Drachen Foil, bowling ball as anchor, sand man oversees the scene.





Boomerang Kills Balloon

To keep the crowd entertained at the Cervia Kite Festival when the wind was down, several Europeans threw boomerangs and a Brazilian lofted a 48-foot paper balloon. A misguided 'rang sliced into Carlos Martini's balloon admidships and exited out the other side. Down onto the sand sank the mortally wounded balloon----all 15,000 cubic feet of it. The boomerang was held aloft in triumph. A kangaroo appeared out of nowhere to gloat. It was a world record. In all of history, the balloon was the largest object ever knocked out of the air by a boomerang.



*Guido von Hove
....he threw the 'rang.*





A kite by painter-kitemaker Claudio Capelli floats amid the trees of rural Tuscany.



Philippe Cottenceau's delicate, spiritual kite flutters above a Tuscan church. The symbolism is obvious.

Kite Photo Project Debuts at Cervia

'The World Hanging by a Thread'

Because he has photographed many disasters and sees the world imperiled by pollution, hatred and war, Hans Silvester has embarked on a major kite book project to convey the other side of the equation---hope, beauty, friendship, peace. Creator of more than 25 photographic volumes, including the best-selling *Chats du Soleil* (*Cats of the Sun*), which has sold a half-million copies worldwide, Silvester enrolled artist-kitemakers Philippe Cottenceau, Claudio Capelli, and Robert Trepanier to fly for him where kites could be shown as symbols of purity. The project took them to rural Tuscany and two of the resulting images are shown on these pages.

Capelli sees the project "as a way of introducing various cultures to each other, of organizing people through the medium of play. I don't believe problems can be solved with arms." He makes an irrefutable point about kites worldwide. "There's wind everywhere."

"As a child in post-war Germany," says Silvester, "kites were important to me. It was the only thing we little boys had to play with. This marked me. I've been interested in kites ever since. To photograph kites, you have to deal with nature. You have to know about wind, about temperature, about light." Now resident in the Gordes area of southern France, Silvester met neighbor Cottenceau on a television program. Cottenceau introduced him to the two other master kitemakers, Capelli of Cervia, Italy, and Trepanier, of Montreal. The collaboration followed.



Hans Silvester

It is projected that work will continue for some years, with the group bolstered by Swede Curt Asker, also now a resident of the Gordes area. For the future, the collaborative expects to shoot beside the Leaning Tower of Pisa---symbolism perfectly obvious---and the famous Carrara marble quarries, with their dramatic, pure rock planes. A trip to Asia is also planned.

A major exhibition in a large beach tent of the first fruits of this interesting collaboration was held last spring at the kite festival in Cervia. To make the point he is seeking to make, Silvester titled the showing *La Terra Legata ad un Filo* (*The World Hanging by a Thread*).