

“The OC” Team Looks For Guts and Glory at This Years DDD

By Flieger Hucksfedder

With OCSA’s Larry “Houdino” Tuohino placing second this year (behind first place Marty Eiler), the Orange Team was finally able to enjoy some success. This year the OCSA Orange Team came with a new team shirt and a new attitude...to squeeze some juice out of this year’s Dust Devil Dash. With five years competing under his belt, this was Larry’s highest placing yet at a DDD. “The OC” team pilots, Harry Irvine (4C) and Larry Tuohino (HU), were supported by their crews Ian Cant and Swantje Tuohino. Ian Cant also took over this year as event Contest Director. Other OCSA pilots had indicated they would fly but flaked out (names to be revealed and roasted at the upcoming OCSA Holiday Banquet).

The contest weatherman, Dan Gudgel, announced the day would be windy with few possible thermals to 7500 ft to the far north after 1pm. Looking out the window it was obvious this would be a tough day to stay up, let alone get out of the Tehachapi Valley. The wind was a constant 20 knots. Whereas last year pilots elbowed their way to get in the air as soon as the 10am pilot’s meeting was over, this year pilots hung out huddled in the Raven’s nest until 1pm. First off was Doug Levy, then Pete Kovari (8V), and soon after, Doug Fronius, Marty Eiler (11W), Harry Irvine, and Larry Tuohino, while much later Ron Hodge. The two Dougs decided to head south and immediately dropped out of sight behind Tehachapi Mtn in the direction of Rosamond.



Harry Irvine had initially thought he would use a “IFD” strategy...“**I Follow Doug** (Fronius)” But he wisely held off walking the Rosemond gangplank after it became clear the Rosemond direction was not working. Harry finally decided to go, at around 1:15 PM, and pushed out to the runway. While waiting for someone walking a dog at the end of the runway to be cleared, Harry noticed he had 20 knots on the airspeed indicator which did not make Hemet Harry too happy. Contest director Ian Cant said the tow pilot had directions to take Harry to the burned spot, which is where the lift was to be found, and the tow was on.



After only a 200 ft ground run 4C was airborne. Harry related later that it was

indeed a rough tow, but at 7700 ft over this “burned spot” 4C was soaring free...in 1000 fpm sink. A turn to the West with an increase in speed got Harry out of the sink. Then Harry worked shearline lift in the center of the Tehachapi Valley. He reported ups and downs of 1000 fpm. He finally probed to the West end of the Tehachapi Valley, near Bear Mountain, looking for wave and higher altitudes than the 7200 at which he was topping out. But alas he could find none, so a quick run to the East was made and into more sink which put him at pattern altitude.

From Harry's vantage point of the Mountain Valley Airport's pylon mounted glider wind indicator, it seemed to show the wind had reversed, so Harry thought what the #%@&, I am going to land downwind, so he moved over to the power runway, which is wider than the glider runway, and prepared for the worst. As 4C got lower and closer on final approach, Harry reported that the flood control impoundment catch basin was filling his view, but a retraction of the spoilers, and lowering of the nose eased the situation. Then another glance at the windsock showed him all was well, the wind had not shifted, and he completed his landing. This was Harry's 5th Dust Devil Dash, and the first time he had landed back at the field. Ron Hodge made the same decision.

Earlier in the Raven's Nest, Larry had considered wave possibilities and later when he eyed Marty being released near the cement plant and then disappearing over the edge in to the direction of Cal City, he decided this was the only strategy for any real distance. Larry had flown Tehachapi wave in May with Dan Armstrong and this morning recalculated how low he could get behind Cache Peak until having to abandon the search for a tail-between-the-legs waddle into Cal City. “Gimme a Marty” he told the tow-pilot.

Releasing at 7700 ft and finding 100-200 fpm ridge lift in front of Double Mtn, Larry hung in the light lift buying insurance to 9700 ft. When Swantje called ready to roll, Larry turned HoUdini downwind towards Cal City in a classic “do or die” strategy...find wave or land at Cal City. First he hit 1000 fpm down and watched the altimeter unwind to 7300 ft until he made contact with lift. Turning 180 degrees into the wind he had 600 fpm up on the averager. Big smile. The airspeed on the panel said 40 knots and the ground speed on the GPS read 17 knots...23 knots of head wind. He climbed to 14500 ft and started to crab his way towards Inyokern. Again he found sink...speed up, curve to the upwind, fall off to the downwind...except nothing worked but sink, sink, sink. He heard 8V radio landing at Mojave, moments later 4C announced returning to Mountain Valley, but then 11W mentioned passing Owens Peak. It was possible...continue on!

HoUdino now committed to head directly toward Owens Peak/Boomer Ridge...but no ridge lift was found, drop behind and massive sink, then on a prayer turns toward

Inyokern just hoping the sink will let up. It does...and it's wave again! Turn 180 degrees, zigzag to hold a fixed position over the ground, and gazoom he's back to 13,500 ft. Marty is calling out passing Lone Pine. Breathing a short sigh of relief, the need to move on soon tugged on Larry very hard.

On the ridge or into the valley? Larry chose the valley, hoping to connect again with more wave. All he found was gut-wrenching sink and soon was low over Little Lake. Those OCSAers who have been around awhile have heard that there is a landing strip at Little Lake that appears very attractive to low glider pilots in distress. Indeed a glider pilot had attempted a landing there a few years ago only to find the strip too narrow, catching wing tip, ground looping and totaling out his private ship. Very seductive. Knowing this Larry pushed on hard in the sink towards Cinder Cone Dry Lake. After trying to dance on a few gopher farts, he realized the game might be up. Swantje called on the radio that she could see him struggling. Another jolt of sink and he was suddenly committed to landing.

Larry was finishing his lunch cookies, peeling tape off the wings when Swantje rolled onto the hardpan 15 minutes later. Houdini was soon back in the box, the lawn chairs brought out, and the two Houdinos ended the day opening two beers on a quiet dry lake bed, enjoying the evening light.



Meanwhile the two Dougs, Fronius and Levy, found themselves quickly forced down with high surface winds in fields outside of Lancaster. For Fronius with an inexperienced crew and a light ship, the disassembly looked challenging until the farmer's curious field crew showed up. Many strong hands made short easy work out of getting the lightweight vintage LK-10 onto the trailer. He was then invited into the ranch house (originally built as a duck hunting lodge for the Hiltons) for a beer and soft drinks. Good things happen to good glider pilots!

Amazingly, Marty 11W continued on in a fantastic flight that took him eventually to Ely, Nevada! Readers can view his track on the Online Contest Website at www2.onlinecontest.org or read his narrative in the 9/14 Crystal Results newsletter. Seeing how a great pilot like Marty handles the same day task is a good learning tool. Larry reflected, "We both found our best lift in wave at the same locations, Double Mtn

and the backside of Boomer Ridge. But Marty rode both spots to 18,000, while I only took about 14,000. I guess I had 'gotta-catch-up-itis', abandoning those opportunities too soon. Marty used his extra altitude to get through the tough patch I got squished in. Take a look at Marty's flight on OLC, he really worked it, changing gears at least three times...from wave, to some edgy mountain flying, to working low thermals all the way into Ely. He really squeezed everything out of the day."

Henry Combs sent Marty a congratulatory e-mail which sums up the spirit of on-any-day straight out XC soaring, "This flight shows again that the only way to find out is to TRY."

TRY and LEARN. That's the OCSA report from this year's Dust Devil Dash. *Congrats to the Orange Team!*

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