



# *FLIGHTLINE*

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## In Lieu of Meeting Minutes

Wings of Rogallo has not had a meeting in August.

END

## Wings of Rogallo Pilots Fly Owens Valley

150 Mile Flight Story by Abhishek Sethi 8/22

After a 100 mile flight on Friday, we had a mediocre day on Saturday. It was inverted and clouds had rolled in at Mt. Williamson to kill the lift along the route. Peter and I had relatively short 2-hr flights landing at the independence airport, while Charlie soared for an hour on a single surface glider with a low save.

We caught up on rest and sleep, and had good dinner in town at the Chinese restaurant. The fortune cookie arrived after the meal and read : “You will find success in whatever you embark on”.

**Sunday Aug 14th** : Given Saturday’s weather, we had dreary hopes for this day. We started a bit later than usual and rigged up at Walt’s point



Gliders at Walt’s point

A PG launched first and was able to get up and leave on his route. However, the next few HGs either went straight down or were scratching low. So we waited under the shade of Steve’s glider, hoping for conditions to develop. After a while, the thermal activity at launch provided some confidence. Steve took off and was getting higher, so I launched soon after at 12:42pm.

It took me a while to get up, but was able to climb to 12k at Wonoga peak. As I proceeded north, the tracker app (life360) “snapped” my location to nearby Alabama hills at the base of the Sierras. Watching this and knowing that everyone else sunk out, Peter / Charlie assumed that I

got drilled down and did not even make it to Lone Pine. So they decided to not fly and folded up their gliders at launch. 🙄

Meanwhile, I found the lift to be smoother than Friday with soft edged thermals and also going a bit higher. So I was able to make faster progress along the route.

I worked some lift in front of Mt. Whitney, to climb up to 13k, mainly to get a view of Lake Tulainyo.

Bullet thermal: vario is screaming for half turn

It is the highest named lake at 12.8k altitude and looks like a big bowl on the mountain.

There was a bit of westerly flow, so I was expecting turbulence at Onion valley. However, I was able to get high enough (~15k) before crossing, so turbulence wasn’t an issue, and views were great.

Before long I was at Mt. Tinemaha at 14k. Accounting for westerly winds, I considered doing the valley crossing a little further north. However, I got drilled at next mountain (Birch), and found myself down to ~11k and sinking. Scratching along I came back to Tinemaha, and there was lift there to climb back up to ~14.8k. I then proceeded to make the valley crossing. I put the VG setting to the highest level (it goes more than full on the T3 :), and was on the *Highway to the Danger Zone* towards the Black monster.

I arrived there a bit below the peak at 8.5k. I flew straight to the peak and gained altitude even without turning along the spine. As I reached the peak, the monster boomer was again there to allow me quickly recover all the lost altitude. It was nearly as strong as last time but smoother with soft edges. I tried to exit the thermal at 13k (again, no oxygen), but gained another 1k by the time I was fully out of it. As I headed north, I worked more lift along the way to avoid getting drilled like Friday. There were again zones of heavy sink. By the time I reached the White mtn, a nice cloud street had developed over the range, providing additional lift.

At Boundary peak the cloud street continued a long way towards east. It would have been easy to go far in this direction, with tailwind. However, I had to go home that day, so did not want to go into deep country.



I then headed over to Janie's to see if someone was there. Found no signs of a vehicle, so I turned around to help make the retrieve shorter. I regained altitude at the base of boundary peak, and headed south.

It was already past 5:30pm and my plan was to fly a bit and land in Benton or Chalfant Valley. However, by this time the valley glass off combined with cloud street, had created some of the best conditions for soaring. The lift was smooth and widespread. So I was able to dolphin fly and make rapid progress, even going into some headwind. I moved the target to Bishop, as this would be closest to our way home.

Now the sun was low over the Sierras and entire valley south of bishop was covered in shadows, while Inyos were shining bright. This was one of a kind view while in some of the smoothest glass-off air. This had my fatigue levels go way down, even though I had been in the air for 6+ hours without oxygen. I would highly recommend an evening flight on the Whites range, perhaps taking off from Gunter or Paiute launches.

The cloud street was running another 30 mile south to Mazourka peak, and it would have been possible to glide almost till town of Independence before it turned dark. But knowing my friends are likely up north, I settled for Big Pine. This would also make for a nice round number of 150 miles, and only add 15mins to the drive home. As I dropped altitude and approached the town, the sun faded behind the mountains.

I arrived over the town at 7.5k and identified the field next to large flags near hwy 395 as LZ.

As I slowly descended, the view of the Owens valley at dusk was yet another treat. I studied the LZ as I got lower including trees, power lines, poles. You can't see in this video, but there is a fence right in the middle of this field.

I touched down at 7:35pm, just under 7 hrs after take-off.



My friends were relieved to hear back from me, as our tracking app (life360) had failed and they had spent hours in uncertainty without knowing my exact whereabouts. They arrived shortly after I landed. It turned pitch dark by the time we completed breakdown and had to use flashlights. After some good pizza in Bishop we headed home that night through Yosemite National Park in nearly full moon, and arrived in the bay area around 5am the next morning 😊

The flight is my personal best for both distance and duration. It could be much longer / farther on a better quality day and had we been able to launch 2.5hrs earlier, like we do in peak summer. But will leave that for next time.

This flight provides confidence that I have a fighting chance at Owen Morse's world record for out and return. This is an aspirational goal, but would look forward to joining Willy Dydo / Matt Teat in this quest.

Many thanks to Peter / Charlie for chasing and picking me up. Also thanks to Garrett for driving retrieve, and Willy / Trey / Steve for launching early to show me the conditions 😊

Lastly, for anyone aspiring to fly in the Owens valley, remember to **Respect the Owens**. It's often said : "If you don't launch with the respect for the Owens, you will certainly land with the respect for the Owens" 😊. Fly Safe!!

<https://medium.com/@sabhishek/150-miles-flight-story-6aa0032801e5>

## Potato to Hull: Lucky Volbiv

By Dan Zaslavsky



The idea of flying cross-country two days in a row sounds like a recipe for any pilot's epic weekend. Likely you know the feeling of getting two days off work and having both days be flyable. Eventually some will dream of upping the ante a bit and camping out, unsupported, in-between flying. Known by the French term volbiv (literally fly-camp), it's a common activity in Europe - but due to the abundance of sun here in Sunny California, the idea is often stymied by the lack (or rather, necessity for) water. Sure, we typically launch with several liters of drinking water, and many carry more as ballast in order to get their wing-loading to the sweet-spot. Contemplate the possibility of a long hike in the middle of nowhere in 100+ degree Fahrenheit midday temps and you will quickly realize the severity of not having enough. The obvious solution is to land near water, duh!

Razi and I have been flirting with the idea of crossing the Sierra's like Dave Turner did (from Walt's Point to Fresno), but in reverse - except I decided that was probably a bit too big for our britches and something a bit less epic was probably more appropriate for our (first) shakedown volbiv.

Enter Potato Hill - you're probably already familiar with the place, or maybe you've flown your hang glider from adjacent St. John Mountain. The crux of this trip didn't really revolve around Potato, but rather a small lake and an abutting mountain, Pillsbury and Hull, respectively, just 30 kilometers to the northwest of Potato. I've flown Potato many times - going XC from there is not easy due to how remote the landscape gets if you decide to take the good (convergence) line or how poor the conditions get if you decide to go the safer (Central Valley) direction. On the other hand, I had only flown Hull Mountain once and had a slightly-extended sledder back in 2017, a year after I started flying but still barely knew what I was doing. Rumor has it, hang gliders have had big flights from Hull back in the day and it can actually be an ideal place to fly since it's typically closer to the convergence line than Potato is.

We invited Seb and Deryk, a couple of newer (than me) but (more) skilled (than me) pilots who are competent outdoorsmen and were excited about the adventure. The itinerary was simple: launch Potato, not too early since we didn't need to maximize the day to cover our 30 kilometer goal, land at Lake Pillsbury, get water (potable if available at a nearby campsite or filter the lake water if not), hike up Hull (Google Maps says it's about 7.5 miles and 4000' of



elevation gain, sleep on the mountain and fly back to the car at the Potato LZ the following day.

The weather for July 23rd and 24th was looking ideal: great TOL, hot during the day but perfect at night. I packed as light as possible, as did Razi while Seb flew with an impressive array of camping trinkets plus six liters of water and Deryk brought a separate backpack full of food. If we stay together then we'd surely have enough supplies.



Arriving to Potato launch we found bear scat, which I hadn't seen around there before - none of us had thought about keeping our food "safe." We all had unremarkable launches and started our climb up Snow Mountain, which gave us enough altitude to make the glide to Hull as long as we didn't hit any surprising sink. Deryk and I arrived at the bottom, near the lake, as planned. It was windy AF but surprisingly, the thermals at Hull were still working so Razi and Seb flew for a while before top landing (bastards!). After going for a dip and fetching drinking water, Deryk and I started our trek up the mountain - this is when I realized I fucked up: the hike was slow but brutal and there was no way I was going to be able to do it all that day. After an hour and a half of walking, I decided to put our efforts into negotiating a ride up and boy was it worth it. At the top, we

found Razi and Seb, had dinner, made camp, and passed out.

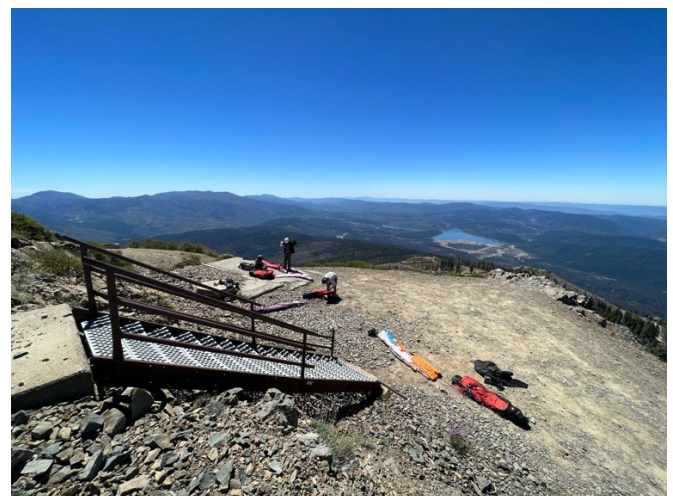






had plenty of time and wanted the best possible observations of the conditions once the wind started to abate enough to give us some hope of flying. Before leaving camp, Razi and Derek collected some “just-in-case drinking water,” heinous liquid from an algae-filled metal trough-like basin that people had been using for shooting practice (read: lead contaminated). On our walk to the peak, a couple stopped their car to chat and serendipitously had extra potable water that they gladly donated to Razi and Deryk - praise the lord.

Once at the top, the wind was nonexistent and our launch pad, while open and at the top of the mountain, was very short and had no bail-out if we needed to forward-launch but had to abort. Everyone had trouble but eventually we all got off, with Razi climbing to 10k feet right straight off launch (which was a bit deceiving because none of us got that high near Hull after that). Our route was the same as the day before but backwards, obviously. Deryk pointed home and disappeared. Seb, Razi and I left together, heading for Snow in hopes to get a great climb but boy did Razi and I get stuck! I heard Deryk say he had Potato LZ on glide and after some epic groveling, Razi found Seb on top of Snow and I wasn't far behind. 11,500' is a nice change of scenery compared to 2400', which is where I was the previous afternoon when I had landed at the bottom of Hull. It wasn't a bad weekend.



We woke up to howling east winds early the next morning - 50kph gusts - this was definitely not in the forecast. We decided we'd hike up to the peak since we

## Editorial September 2022

Going into the last month of Summer, Wings of Rogallo members made the best of August. Mission Peak received most of the love again, but Ed Levin and The Stables enjoyed their fair share of the standard late-Summer attention. The excellent home sites of Wings of Rogallo shared space in the hearts of many members with sites that required hours of driving and overnight stays as the Summer reached the transition to Autumn.

Wings of Rogallo welcomes a new volunteer eager to offer time to Ed Levin, Ella Gambel. Ella helped the greater group promote and organize a ladies' meetup at Ed Levin on Sunday with a great turnout of at least 15 people and lots of happy faces. Seems like eons have passed since people getting together was normal. Ella takes on the Ed Levin Site Chair roll while Spencer commits to maintain the vegetation and machinery for the foreseeable future.

Early August Bay Area pilots made personal bests at Slide, near Lake Tahoe, and Hull. Mid-August, a group made some excellent flights at Owens Valley and Peter Lawrence is organizing newbie-friendly Labor Day weekend trip. In the last half of August, Hull Mountain provided nice conditions for many Wings of Rogallo pilots. Flights of half hour to two hours were common in nice 20 mph wind at launch and decent thermals with Mike Soderstrom getting the best of it this Sunday to 7,200 MSL. Pilots landed helicopter-like landings in the LZ and one day was over the back though the forecast gave no indication.

Winds on the coast have set up a Southerly bias but soarable days are still common and pilots are getting signed off to fly The Stables all the time. Mt Diablo doesn't seem to be getting much attention and the North gate is closed until 9/9. Again, no evidence of flight at Mori Point.

Ed Levin enjoyed lots of free-flight attention in August, mostly in the last half of the month. There was a fine mix of sledders, extended sledders and soaring flights. Along with West and light and variable winds, South wind made a frequent appearance making it lifty on the Southern plateau. The cows made for a complex landing zone on the 21<sup>st</sup> for many hang gliders when one paraglider made it to Mission but could not make it back due to the arrangement of the air layers. The next day was even weirder air and the following Saturday had light lift with small punchy thermals allowing a flight from up top to stay up near launch height, soaring over the 600. The next day was ladies' day with great turnout and reports of the conditions being very good for late August, allowing top landing on a pretty windy day. Monday a paraglider was flying Ed Alps tasks and reported nice air.

Mission showed the free-flight community a good time throughout August (8/2, 5-7, 10, 12-14, 19-20, 23-28, 30). Middle of the month had some hot days with hikers and pilots braving it. Thermals and ridge lift were present most of the month allowing hour+ flights later in the days.

The FCC should make a field day around Mission Peak and Ed Levin when free-flight is active to practice triangulating as there is good evidence that the fines they can levy will make it worth their while. Someone or some people have been practicing HAM-assault, distracting pilots in their critical flight stages. The FCC does not play.

Autumn can be a very special time of year to engage in foot launched aviation activities. There is something special, too, about the change of seasons at the end of Summer. Be sure to share your experience in September so it can be shared on this newsletter.

Skydancer



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