



## Turkey Shoot (part 2)

by Brent McNeely

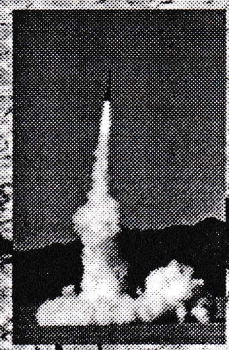
The first big flight of the morning was by Kevin Metzler with his custom built Black Panther. This purple rocket looked a bit like a streamlined lava light with fins. Kevin's rocket put out some serious flames from twin K550s as it lifted from the pad for an awesome flight. Late on Sunday, after Kevin had left for California, we found the junior version of his Black Panther out in the hills while looking for rockets. Apparently Kevin had lost the rocket last year at a launch at El Dorado and had been looking for it. We found the rocket along with the 54 mm motor casing and Adept altimeter.

The weather was so good Sunday morning that I couldn't resist. I prepped a J135 motor for my Orbiter and hauled it out to the pad. The rocket was a hard to load onto the rod because of my custom fly-away launch lugs. But we finally got it on the pad and snapped a few photos. I walked back to the flight line and gave the word. As the countdown began I realized that I forgot to trim the delay down to 8.5 seconds. The delay was way too long. As flames shot from the rocket I new it was doomed. The Orbiter took off at a slight angle which became nearly horizontal by apogee. The chute deployed and I held my breath for the worst. I was surprised as the chute unfolded and everything appeared to be OK. We hopped into my brothers truck and headed out to the far side of the lake bed. We watched as the rocket slowly descended, just missing a van of a parachuter by about 50 feet. Close inspection of the rocket revealed absolutely no damage outside a few scratches from the launch lugs. I was amazed.

Most of the afternoon rockets shot into the air one after another. At the flight line several big projects were being prepped. Three of which were really something to see. Two V2 rockets were being prepped. Cliff Anderson worked on his fluorescent yellow rocket with a big L1400 motor for his flight in the afternoon. Ron Denton and crew slaved over his V2 rocket which was

painted in a camouflagé scheme. Ron loaded his rocket with a huge M motor and multiple 12 and 14 foot chutes. Ron's rocket was prepped with an Adept altimeter and Cambridge Group accelerometer. Not to be topped, Steve Cello and crew worked all day to get his huge Tomahawk ready to fly on an N motor.

The first of the three big flights was by Cliff with his yellow V2. Cliff had been prepping his rocket right next to where I had set up for the day. He took his rocket out to the pad and I got into position for a picture. Everyone got on their feet for his flight. Flight control gave the countdown and black smoke began building under the rocket motor. It took a couple of seconds and then there was a blast of flame as the V2 went blazing up into the sky. A hundred feet or so off the pad there was a crackle as the rocket passed through the sound barrier. The rocket arced up behind the flight line in a gradual curve. Then came the moment everyone dreads. The rocket coasted with nice tracking smoke. And it kept coasting. People kept muttering that thing we all hate to hear: "now would be a good time for a chute," and "now would



even be better," and finally, "Houston, I think we have a problem." It was only seconds before Cliff's rocket became a very big lawn dart. Everyone held their breath because it looked like it was coming down

close to the highway (fortunately there weren't any cars in the immediate area). We looked on in dread as a big puff of dust erupted from the ground about 100 yards beyond the highway as the rocket impacted. No one cheered. There we just lots of moans and '\*\*\*&#s.' Cliff came back later with a pile of plastic, cardboard, and plywood. All he was able to recover for use again was the parachute. Everyone that looked the rocket over gave the same diagnosis: Adept altimeters don't fair too well when a rocket goes through Mach (which this one most definitely did). Not to be deterred, Cliff says he is going to build another V2.

Cliff's V2 flight didn't set a very good tone for the next big flight of the day—Ron Denton's large V2. I followed Ron Denton, Dave Pacheco and Mike Alber out to the far pad. Ron struggled to carry his large V2 singled handed. I can only guess at how much it weighed. Getting the V2 onto the rail ended up being a chore. The rocket was so heavy that they didn't want to risk breaking off the rail lugs. It took five of us to get the rocket into an upright position and put the pin into place to hold the rail upright. I snapped a few more photos as Ron and Dave went through the last few safety checks. Ron armed everything and became a bit stressed when the Cambridge accelerometer didn't power up. However, Ron had all the chutes hooked into the Adept altimeter. He decided to forego taking the whole rocket down just to arm the accelerometer (which was only to record flight data). We walked back to launch control just as Steve Cello and crew were standing the Tomahawk up on a pad. Steve Cello's group followed us back to the flight line. There was a heads up announcement and a countdown. Smoke puffed from Ron's motor and then the flame spewed out. Cliff's V2 on an L motor was impressive, but Ron's V2 on the M1419 motor was amazing. I thought his V2 was going to take the pad with it as it leapt into the air. Ron's V2 followed the path of Cliff's V2 and arced up over behind us. Then came the waiting as the tracking smoke trailed the dark green rocket. Just about the time someone started saying that fated line, "about now would be good," there was a big blast of smoke and chutes appeared. It took a second to realize that Ron had the nose under one chute and the rocket under another. Both drifted to safety across the highway overlooking the area where Cliff's V2 died. There were plenty of woops and yells as the rocket drifted down. Ron later reported an altitude of about 14,000 feet (as I recall).

As the big V2 drifted back to earth, everyone turned around to watch the big white and red rocket standing like a giant in the middle of short stubby launch pads. Steve Cello's Tomahawk rocket was big, really big. And, it is not every day that you see an N2600 motor light only 50 yards from the flight line (it is always after the rocket fires that you realize that you were standing entirely too close to the rocket when it lit!). There was a big countdown and then a huge thundering blast as the rocket slowly lifted off the pad to climb into the sky. The flames off this big monster were extraordinary. All eyes tracked the rocket as it became smaller and smaller in the sky. There was the usual quite and concern as the rocket went into the coasting stage. But the rocket gods were good to Steve on that day and all chutes deployed. The rocket drifted away across the highway and several trucks (and one Hummer) went after the big rocket. The trucks came back about an hour later with the Tomahawk, which suffered some zipper damage. I felt sort of bad for the next few rockets to be launched following Steve's N motor. Somehow an H motor flight does not compare to a Tomahawk on an N motor. I think everyone felt the same and there weren't many more flights that afternoon.

Everyone shook hands, slapped backs, and waved goodbye. We all packed up our trucks and cars with rockets. It was a tiring but happy drive home. Every drive home after a launch is the same—there is a strong smell in the car of ammonium perchlorate throughout the car (which my wife hates, but reminds me of big, big rockets). I can't wait till next Thanksgiving, and it's not the turkey feast I'm looking forward to.

Steve Ainsworth was appointed as government liason for Tripoli Las Vegas for the period of June 1, 1996 through June 1, 1997. Mike Alber was appointed as safety and security officer.

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## Leadership List

President ..... Leslie Derkovitz • 875-1000  
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 Secretary/Treasurer..... Lance Tharpe • 262-9131  
 Prefect. .... Tom Blazanin • 388-9644  
 Newsletter Editor..... Brent McNeely • 873-8222

## Launch Dates

January 18. .... El Dorado Dry Lake Bed  
 February 22. .... El Dorado Dry Lake Bed  
 March 22. .... El Dorado Dry Lake Bed  
 April 19. .... El Dorado Dry Lake Bed  
 May 17. .... Delamar Dry Lake Bed  
 June 21. .... El Dorado Dry Lake Bed  
 July 19. .... El Dorado Dry Lake Bed  
 August 23. .... El Dorado Dry Lake Bed  
 September 20. .... El Dorado Dry Lake Bed

## Meeting Dates

Every Thursday prior to a launch date  
 Graphic Design Courtesy of  
 Brent McNeely & Planet Design, 233-8222

