

TRIPOLI

Vegas

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Website: www.mcneely.net/tripoli_vegas

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June 1998

Delemar Launch

By: Brent McNeely

Next to launching rockets at the Black Rock dry lake bed, there is no better place to launch huge, experimental rockets. Twice a year the Tripoli Vegas rocket club holds a two day launch at this spectacular location. Why is Delemar so great? It is a fairly large dry lakebed in a fairly remote location, but yet within 90 minutes of Las Vegas. The nearest house to this great launch site is about 25 miles away. This remoteness gives an added margin of safety to launching experimental rockets.

It is interesting to note that the now famous Area 51 is only about 40 miles east of Delemar. I've been to Delemar at least six times, but I've never climbed a mountain to look down on the secret government base known as Area 51. This launch would be different. Brandon, my brother-in-law and I decided to check it out.

Both Brandon and I took off on Friday and headed out on our road trip for a rocket launch and Area 51 viewing. It took us about 90 minutes to reach Delemar from Las Vegas. We arrived at about 1:00 in the afternoon to find about 20 members of the club already setup. Brandon and I set up our awning and helped set up the launch system, pads, sound system and wiring.

By 3:00 everything was in place and we hit the road on our quest for Area 51. We headed out to Rachel NV, home of UFOs, alien greys, and Area 51 experts. Rachel was great--very much what I expected. The town consisted of only about a dozen houses and three mom and pop style convenience stores (more gift shops than anything). We filled up with gas, bought a 'Guidebook to Area 51,' and ate at the 'Little Ale-e-Inn'. From there we drove to the base of Mt. Tickaboo--a 22 mile off-road trip. We camped overnight and hiked the mountain the next morning for a very distant view of the government secret base. We then made a bee line for Delemar (40 miles directly east).

Saturday was one of the most frustrating and disappointing rocket launch days I've seen. Although there was zero wind at Tickaboo (except at the peak), the wind at the launch was extreme and could be best described as a gail. And it never let up. The wind destroyed tents, awnings, canopies, and the spirits of the rocket flyers. A few rockets flew, even a couple of certification flights. But as far as the club leaders were concerned, Saturday was a disaster.

Unfortunately, I never was able to find out where the flight cards went to report the names of those gaining level one certification. My apologies and congratulations to those who successfully certified in extreme wind conditions.

In absolute contrast to Saturday's blow out, Sunday was a rocket flyer's dream. It was almost dead calm and 75 degrees. The sky was a perfect blue. You couldn't ask for anything better (except to have the crowd back from Saturday!). People wasted no time getting the rockets in the air. I brought out my Smoke Screen and flew it early on a K185 for a spectacular flight. The rocket grabbed about 7,500 ft. and road the jet stream off the lakebed into the bushes. It took over four hours to locate the rocket.

Following my example, our former club president, Les Derkovitz, flew his home brewed L motor in his custom fiber glassed rocket well into the same jet stream. His flame from his rocket blew bright red as the rocket grunted off the pad. People watched as the rocket drifted under chute into northern Nevada. Les gives his high hands of praise to the newly dubbed 'rocket-finder' expert, my brother-in-law Brandon Edwards who found the rocket after all other failed. Brandon was two for two that day on the seemingly impossible rocket recovery duty.

Mike Alber and family put several rockets up including his famous 'Rainbow Warrior' powered by the I154 black jack while his family sat in the shade of his new super



Dave Pacheco's Tomahawk and launch crew

camper newly purchased to make life at launches a luxury. I'm jealous!

The Timmons brothers may have set the record for most flights at the launch. Every time I turned around they were bringing another rocket to the pad. Amazing!

Vince Catalano brought out a very nice pink military style missile to the pad. The missile was loaded with a big K550 which propelled the pink thing into the blue sky on a plume of white smoke and yellow flames. Nice!

The rocket we all waited to see fly was Dave Pacheco's 19 ft., 9 inch diameter Tomahawk. This fantastic creation was a real joy to dream about. Not only was it impressive in size, it was equipped with a huge 'O' motor. That's 'O' as in 'Oh WOW!' Adding to the mix, Dave and crew equipped the payload with a \$2,000 live video downlink to broadcast the birds eye view of lift off and flight. Make no mistake,

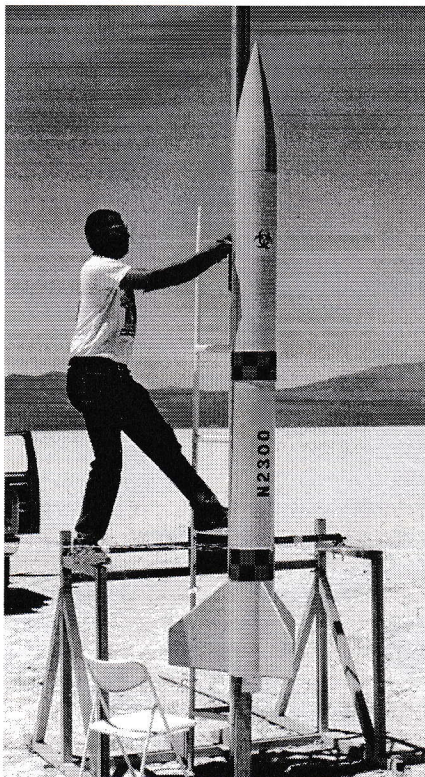
these boys intended to get the whole flight on tape. As you can imagine, it took a while to get the big rocket onto its custom launch pad, armed and ready to go. The mandatory photos added to the wait time.

Dave in his infinite wisdom was very insistent that everyone clear off to at least 1,000 ft. prior to allowing a countdown to commence. A full 10 count was given. Cameras rolled and everyone held their breath. Big motors seem to always light slow. The 'O' motor chuffed, puffed, and then spit sparks as the motor lit. After a matter of seconds the 'O' kicked in and flames engulfed ground zero.

The rocket lifted majestically into the air... for about 500 feet. Then it happened. The motor decided to gut the rocket. The big 'O' pushed and pushed, tearing the motor mount block assembly loose from the rocket. The motor then proceeded to travel through the electronics bay, into the recovery chutes, giving the video downlink payload a good wack as the motor broke free and spiralled up and to the left.

However, motors flying without rockets seldom fly straight for very long. The five foot motor decided to head back to ground with a sweep to the right where it impacted about 200 feet from the launch crew. The whole thing was unbelievable. Who would have known? Dave's sixth sense and insistence on safety may have saved us all some grief. I understand the video captured from the on board camera could be used for a magic motion machine. Ouch!

I think everyone had second thoughts about flying rockets after that. However, Henry Jordan decided it was time to bring his new rocket out from under its wraps. His new N2300 rocket was manufactured out of various 9 inch tubes and a Jim Hart nose cone. The huge rocket was really sharp looking. Henry loaded it onto the same pad used by the Tomahawk and prayed for better results. Everyone cleared the pad to a



Henry arms the altimeter on the N2300

much more remote distance to witness the 10 count. Flames and smoke followed Henry's rocket up for about 10,000 feet where his recovery system took over. Unfortunately the chutes didn't bring his rocket down nicely, resulting a good sized wrinkle in the booster. Henry's response: "its just cosmetic; not anything I can't fix."

Most everyone agreed that the perfect Sunday almost made up for the bad Saturday. For the most part, the flights went very well and people felt it was worth while to come out to the launch. I know I'm glad I didn't bail and head back to Vegas after that windy Saturday.



Vince preps his rocket

Leadership List

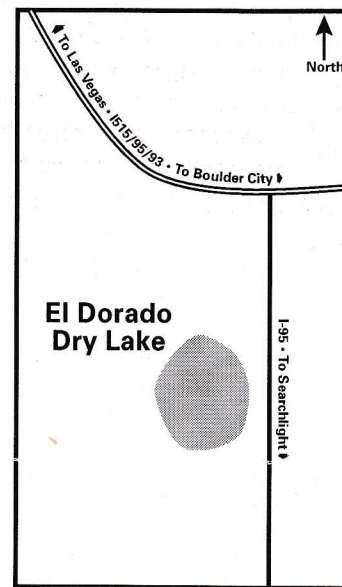
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Launch Dates

June 20..... El Dorado Dry Lake Bed
 July 18..... El Dorado Dry Lake Bed
 August 22..... El Dorado Dry Lake Bed
 September 19, 20..... Delemar Dry Lake Bed
 October 17..... El Dorado Dry Lake Bed
 November 28..... El Dorado Dry Lake Bed
 December 19..... El Dorado Dry Lake Bed

Meeting Dates

Every Wednesday prior to a launch date



MCNEELY  ASSOCIATES

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