

2014 Straight-Out Cross-Country Soaring Results

A Newsletter for Straight-Out Soaring

Results as of October 17, 2014

Henry Combs, a pioneering soaring pilot and mentor, flew with a very simple philosophy. He repeatedly stressed that **flying the farthest distance each Saturday** was always his primary objective and achieving diamond distance was secondary.

“When I release the tow rope, I know I am going to have a forced landing. The question is how long can I put it off and how far away can I go?”



Henry Combs
Artist: Mary Scarborough

The Original Purpose

The original purpose of this newsletter was to summarize the flights of the “Crystal Squadron”, a group of soaring pilots flying out of Crystallaire airport in Llano, CA. Our group follows Henry’s philosophy by flying straight out as far as possible on a regular basis each **Saturday** and sometimes on holidays between late-April and mid-September.

The only requirement for membership in the **Crystal Squadron** is to fly straight out from the Southern California Soaring Academy (SCSA), Crystallaire Airport, 32810 N. 165th Street East, Llano, CA, 93544 (Tel. 661-944-1090)y. SCSA’s website is <http://www.soaringacademy.org>.

Expanded Reporting

As time passes as time does, other types of straight outs have emerged. Pilots are flying during the week, from other airports, in motor gliders, etc. I have expanded the newsletter to recognize these other types of straight outs.

I will still list the **Crystal Squadron** results separately, but I will also list any straight-out flight from anywhere to anywhere, diamond or otherwise. All you have to do is tell me. *See page 2 for the details.*



The Henry Trophy

This newsletter is an informal list of straight-out cross-country flights and not the official Henry Combs Trophy standings. If you are competing, you must claim each diamond by contacting Bob Maronde at 626-285-4470 or at rgmaronde@marondeassoc.com.

The results are distributed weekly from May to mid-September. If I inadvertently left off your Saturday flight or if you want to be on the distribution list, please contact me, Bob Maronde.

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Keeping Score

What is a Crystal Squadron Diamond?

Henry used diamond distance (500 km) as a way to simply “keep score”, and his flights always involved a landing. So, the **Crystal Squadron’s** cross-country “rules” are very simple, and they follow the Henry Combs tradition and philosophy. The object is to fly **straight out as far as possible** on Saturday with distance calculated from Crystalaire (Piñon Ridge a.k.a. the Second Ridge) to **landing**; therefore, out and returns, triangles, turn points, dog legs, etc., **do not** count. As less pilots are flying straight out, I am counting any diamond flight from Crystalaire during any day of the week as a Crystal Squadron diamond. This change will cause only a slight skew in the historical data.

◆=A Crystal Squadron diamond flight from Crystalaire to any **landing** of **at least 500 km or 310.7 miles** distance.

What is a Straight-Out, Cross-Country (SOCC) Diamond?

The purpose of the **Straight-Out, Cross-Country (SOCC)** section is to recognize other types of straight outs while remaining true to the original philosophy of this newsletter. It is also an attempt to address the “**two glider pilots, three opinions**” conundrum about reporting cross-country soaring results. So, tell me about your straight-out flight, diamond or otherwise, and I will list it.

I have defined a diamond for this group as per the FAI rules but with no altitude penalty, declarations or documentation. It’s all on the honor system. Therefore, I will list weekday flights originating from Crystalaire airport, flights not originating from Crystal, flights returning to Crystal, flights not returning to Crystal, motor glider flights where starting the engine terminates the flight per the FAI rules, flights that use remote starts and/or finishes to determine diamond distance as per FAI rules, etc., etc., etc.. But, a flight must still be **straight out** with the distance calculated from Point “A” to Point “B”. You name the two points and tell me the distance.

◆=A **SOCC** diamond flight from Point A to Point B with a distance of **at least 500 km or 310.7 miles**.

Why the Distinction?

One type of diamond honors the Henry Combs tradition while the other recognizes the current reality of soaring. Also, I have Crystal Squadron statics going back to **1987** listing the number of flights versus the number of diamonds. I would like to keep this data consistent for historical reasons. For the **SOCC** group, listing diamond flights without the corresponding number of “attempts” keeps it fairly simple.

Why Diamonds at All?

Again, it was Henry’s traditional way of “keeping score”. And, ...why not?

2014 Crystal Squadron Stats

Results as of October 17, 2014

Crystal Squadron 2014 Flights Over 400 Statue Miles

<u>Date</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Glider</u>	<u>Call Sign</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Landing</u>
Fri., Jul 4	Mike Koerner	Ventus C	CF	492	Nephi, UT

(♦)Crystal Squadron 2014 Diamonds

Dave Raspet	4	Sean Eckstein	1	Total Diamonds	15
Mike Koerner	3				
Karl Sommer	3				
Peter Kovari	2				
Barry McGarraugh	2				

Note: A Crystal Squadron diamond is a **straight-out** flight from Crystalaire to any **landing** of at least 500 km or 310.7 statue miles.

(♦)Crystal Squadron 2014 Cross-Country Flights

Peter Kovari	8	Britton Bluedorn	1	Richard Smolinski	1
Sean Eckstein	7	Chuck Coyne	1	Gary Timbs	1
Karl Sommer	6	Chuck Griswold	1	Ramy Yanetz	1
Dave Raspet	5	Jim Ketcham	1		
Mike Koerner	4	Scott Lance	1		
Barry McGarraugh	3	Brian Neff	1		
Total Flights					42

2014 Henry Trophy Standings

East Zone	Central Zone	West Zone
	Tony Condon	1
		Ramy Yanetz
		Eric Rupp
		4
		3

For anyone wanting an official copy of the Henry Trophy rules or who wish to make a flight claim, please contact Bob Maronde at 626-287-8018 or at rgmaronde@marondeassoc.com.

2014 Crystal Squadron Flights

<u>Date</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Glider</u>	<u>Call Sign</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Landing</u>
Sun., Sep 21	Chuck Coyne	PW6	2EC	90	031 (Dunn) Dry Lake, CA
	Sean Eckstein	ASW 20	PV	90	031 (Dunn) Dry Lake, CA
	Peter Kovari	PW6	2EC	90	031 (Dunn) Dry Lake, CA

Sean's report:

Peter K. (6PK) arranged to fly back seat as a passenger with Cypress Club member Chuck Coyne (2EC) in a PW6, it was Chuck's first straight out cross country flight. I was invited along, and furnished with a crew, to provide the complete squadron experience.

Since it was Sunday, and we all had to be to work on Monday, it was decided to keep the flight short.

The flight was a good introduction, struggling to get altitude to head out on course, scratching low at Apple Valley, being rewarded and climbing above 10k, long glide to landing. I landed at 031 dry lake with Chuck.

We returned to Crystal, then headed out to dinner.



Sean at 031 (Dunn) Dry Lake

Sat., Sep 13	◆ Peter Kovari	DG 300	6PK	352	Austin, NV
	◆ Karl Sommer	Libelle 301	C3	352	Austin, NV
	◆ Dave Raspet	Ventus A	SAS	313	Gabbs, NV
	Richard Smolinski	SZD-55	TW	208	Bishop, CA

Peter's report:

Well, I think we managed to finish out the season with a descent day finally. Dave (SAS), Karl (C3) and Richard (TW) the newest addition to the squadron and myself lined up for a straight out. I launched right after C3 about 11:30 and took a high tow since did not encounter any lift worth releasing in until the high ground east of the Labor Camp. Quickly climbed to 10k, then moved over to Baden Powell under some clouds and topped out at 14k, well on my way toward the Three Sisters north of Mojave. The air was kind but did not encounter much until over Mojave airport where C3 and I climbed at first in light than much stronger lift to above 11k. Moving to Cach Peak got me above 13K cruising fast now toward Kelso Valley and then to Owen's Peak where topped out at 15K.

Not much but rotor like clouds as I was crossing over to the Inyo's at Olancho Peak, (I think it was trying to wave- showing winds directly out of the west at 9kn). There were no visible markers or anyone else reporting anything on the Inyo's until further north by Westguard Pass, and I was just hoping it would work.

Did not find any lift in the usual spots and I started to get below the crest. Concerned that I will have to take any little scrap come my way, I dumped my water ballast and once again; no more than a few seconds later "kaboom" I stepped into 7kn average thermal climbing back up to 14.5k.

Running up the Inyo mountain to the Whites was a piece of cake. Once on the Whites, although there were nice looking clouds that worked, further north over White Mountain Peak once again heavier high cirrus clouds were blocking the sun, screwing thing up but still managed to leave short of Boundary Peak toward Mina at 16k.

The air was kind but produced very little lift on the long glide to Mina just like Dr Jack and XC Sky predicted, and did not encounter anything to brag about until the high ground north of Mina with glide now to Gabbs. C3 and I were fairly close by now (TW and SAS were further back) and once again just like predicted conditions improved.

Circling in the same nice wide fall like thermal east of Gabbs, both C3 and I left for Austin at 16k arriving over the airport at 13000' after a 40nm glide, loosing only 3000' felt really good. Heard SAS landing at Gabbs and TW at Bisop. Congratulations to Richard on his first straight out attempt and thanks to SAS for his assistance in helping him out. Unfortunately the day was getting short and the nearest safe airport was another 50nm which could have taken us into



C3 and 6PK at Austin

2014 Crystal Squadron Flights

Date Pilot Glider Call Sign Miles Landing

passed sunset; we both opted to land at Austin (again) and call it a day and a tough season.

Since the town of Austin shuts down after 8 p.m. we had a late "parking lot" dinner with snacks and beer. The food could have been, better but the company was great!

Karl's report:

At the pilots meeting I got volunteered to go first per Dave Raspet, followed by PK, TW than SAS. I got a tow at 11:30 and noticed that my Vario with audio went on the blink again, the newly overhauled Winter vario did a fine job. Pulled the release a bit over 2K and scratched for 20 min down at around 6K until I found lift that got me to 14K. We PK and C3 left the Mtn about the same time, did not see ea. other until PK joined my thermal over Mojave airport. (next visual was Cach Pk, over Mina and our last thermal NE of the Gabbs Mine) we reported lift to the guys following.

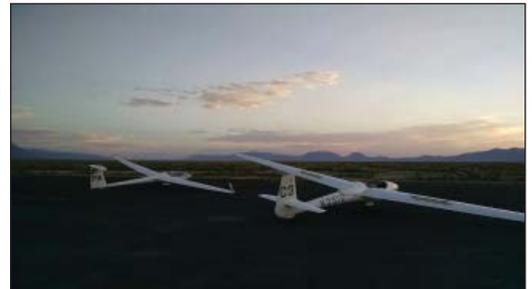


C3 at Austin

Connected with clouds at Cach PK 14K, Boomer 14K, Heiwee 15.7K, connected on the Inyo's abeam Lone Pine 14.6K as per Blipmap high overcast from the W, looked up at Boundary Pk but found a good thermal lifted me up to 17K, Gabbs in reach now.

Over the open Pit Mine S of Gabbs, a smooth thermal up to 15K, followed by the last Lift under a cloud NE of the big Gabbs Mine 16K. Arrived at Austin 13K and my bladder calling, get down now. Was on the East side setting up for left traffic 19, Brakes out gear down but when I entered the downwind with the sun so low I barely could see the runway, even worse on base leg (idiot should have been on the W side) made it safe and the bladder appreciated it. Flying time 6.53 hours.

We derigged in the dark and checked in at the rustic Pony Canyon Motel, all the "fancy" eateries were closed, but we know better and bring along some food. We pulled out some chairs and dined under the stars with a beer having a good time.



6PK and C3 at Austin

Sunday getting gas and coffee driving back together and having Brunch in Bishop, Peters treat thanks again.

Dave's report:

We had a first-time Crystal Squadron member-Richard Smolinski flew Tango Whiskey with us. 6PK (Peter Kovari) and C3 (Karl Sommers) led out and TW followed. I brought up the rear to provided TW any help if he needed it, He didn't need any, he flew up to Boundary Peak then returned to Bishop to land. Richard had experience flying at Bishop but needed to fill in the gaps of getting to the Sierra and to the cross-over points at Lone Pine. Richard says he'll be ready for next year!

Dr Jack promised better lift than last Saturday with no concern for low Buoyancy to Shear, less wind velocity though, with really good lift in Nevada. He delivered; the thermals were still rough but nothing like last week. My average climb rate was 3.1 knots compared to last week's 2.7 knots. I was still 30 miles behind 6PK and C3 when I got to Gabbs so I settled for a landing there. My first trip to Gabbs was in 2001, I've made 21 more since then, the airport hasn't changed much except now we have cell phone coverage there.

Sat., Sep 6	◆	Dave Raspet	Ventus A	SAS	313	Gabbs, NV
		Sean Eckstein	ASW 20	PV	208	Bishop, CA

Dave's report:

Dr Jack promised good lift through out the area getting better in Central Nevada. Winds southerly shifting to the southwest in Nevada. The bad news was a big patch of low Buoyancy to Shear (5) in the mountains. He delivered on all the promised numbers, especially the Buoyancy to Shear.

My start was good with the second ridge working well and I finally got establish from 6.9k' at the Rock Pile. In the mountains the thermals were rough, patchy, and ragged. I don't remember one turn where the vario didn't drop to zero some where in the turn.

2014 Crystal Squadron Flights

<u>Date</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Glider</u>	<u>Call Sign</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Landing</u>
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Crossed to the Inyos from about 13k but didn't have enough altitude to get on top of the Inyos so I tried the south-facing ridge south of Lone Pine. The thermal there was rough and too close to the ridge-it scared me, and I quit it and flew along the front face picking up what I could till I got to Mizurka where the ridge is only about 8.2k' and I work a thermal on top of the ridge. The thermals on the Inyos and the Whites were rough and ragged too. The run from Boundary Peak to Gabbs was easy with good lift to 16.5 k' under clouds. Got to Gabbs by 5:15 but I was beat and landed.

I averaged 54 sm/hour but had a 14 knot tailwind. Thermals averaged 2.7 knots, the 40 sm/hour was below the theoretical for flying to the MacCready airspeed (44). I was way too slow between thermals but the rough, ragged thermals spooked me into being too conservative. I started the flight hoping to get 400 sm but I was happy to quit at Gabbs.

Sean's report:

Conditions looked good for heading north towards the Owens Valley, I got a late start but after releasing at the 2nd Ridge I climbed almost to 12k straight off tow. Crossing the desert with a tail wind and kind air got me to the Backus/Mojave area where clouds were popping and vanishing, which allowed me to get into the mountains and on my way north with no struggling.

The thermals I encountered heading north were STRONG and NARROW, but once you had the altitude cruising north following the ridges went extremely well. I left Olancha peak at 14k and arrived at the south facing slopes on the Inyos at 12k. Unfortunately the Inyos were not as good as I was hoping, but the tail wind made up for it.

By the time I crossed Westguard pass I arrived at Schulman Grove where there were clouds, Unfortunately, I was too low to connect with any lift and scratched my down the mountains and landed at Bishop.

Sat., Aug 23	Peter Kovari	DG 300	6PK	168	Jean, NV
	Karl Sommer	Libelle 301	C3	50	Mojave, CA

Peter's report:

This season has been by far the poorest cross country season that I can remember. This last Saturday was no exception. Although the forecast somewhat improved from Thursday, it was still rather dismal in just about all directions. Karl (C3) and myself had our little pilots meeting, not totally agreeing on the right course. John Shmoldas and Chuck Griswold (7X) showed up late with John wanting to try his luck doing straight outs.

I launched shortly after C3 around noon and took a rather high tow as I did not find anything worth while releasing in. I finally released just under 8k in zero sink east of the Labor Camp and flew to the hilltop directly east, finding weak lift that eventually took me to 8700' than moving over to Lewis finally managed about 10k that put me on course to Apple Valley.

Other than some short climb near Wrightwood, not much over the desert until fairly close to the Apple Valley airport. Moving over to the mines north/east of the field did not produce hardly anything until I moved even further north I than finally stepped into strong shear line "feeling" lift that got me over 8k well on my way to Barstow Dagget.

I must say from this point on conditions were fairly good all the way to the Nevada. Unfortunately the heights were not very good, even by Clark Mountain as well as the mountains west of the state line, where things generally would greatly improve did not produce much greater than 8000'. This may have been the result of some sort of inversion in the region.

I landed at Jean NV where my frustration with the day's soaring conditions were shared by local glider pilots. Karl (C3) opted to go north and landed at Mojave. John Shmoldas threw in the towel and landed back at Crystal. Yet an other character building day!

2014 Crystal Squadron Flights

<u>Date</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Glider</u>	<u>Call Sign</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Landing</u>
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Karl's report:

Even so the weather forecast was less than promising we (PK & C3) decided to give it a try. Launched at noon found a thermal W of Lewis got to about 9K, could not get the elect. Vario going and we had problems with the crew radio, with Sean's help (thanks) I radioed that I will land back at Crystal, when I was down to 8K Rose called loud and clear, "you still want to go? I got it fixed" (Antenna connection not tight enough). So at 1:20 I left the mountains at 11K since PK did not do all that great, I opted to check out going N, gained 1K over Pearblossom from there to the Silver Queen nothing, the solar farm no help either, so I talked to Mojave Unicom while drifting in some gusty thermal "17kts gusting 25 down runway 22" so I landed defeated by the wind again. Pushed the glider to the big apron W of 22 positioned to disassemble. Rose showed up after 10 Minutes guided by a guard, we got busy while the guard (at 3:15 another guard showed up, shift change) was watching how a glider in strong wind gets put back in the box by a somewhat experienced husband and wife team. The Van came in handy to block some of the wind mainly the left wing, (the rebuilt transmission is working good). A huge dust devil started where the airliners are parked by the time I got the camera it got blown apart see picture.



Dust Devil at Mojave Airport

I double checked the crew radio, it has an adaptor to accept the regular antenna connector. Got a few more turns and it checks out good now. The electr. vario not sure, it works on the bench.

At least an other exercise flying, landing and disassembling in very gusty condition.

Sat., Aug 16	Sean Eckstein	ASW 20	PV	114	Baker, CA
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Sean's report:

I launched around 11:30 and took a high tow to the second ridge where I released around the Labor camp, I connected with a slow climbing thermal which took me to Baden Powell where I headed out on course towards Las Vegas sinking all the way.

I spent too much time trying to get altitude back by Krey field and solving a flight computer problem before heading back on course, there were some good thermals but there were also areas of sink that took the altitude gain back. I decided to stop wasting time and get out of the area. Once I got over to Apple Valley I connected and gained altitude only to find myself quickly sinking out and searching for another thermal.

Once I got to Barstow the air was without areas of strong sink and I was able to make 031 dry lake with no problem. I found another slow climbing thermal at the IP with my landing gear down and locked, the thermal eventually got stronger and got me to an altitude were I had Baker made.

After 5 hrs. 20 min. just to get to Baker, I decided I had enough.

2014 Crystal Squadron Flights

<u>Date</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Glider</u>	<u>Call Sign</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Landing</u>
Sat., Aug 9	◆ Peter Kovari Chuck Griswold	DG 300 Discus B	6PK 7X	352 54	Austin, NV California City, CA

Peter's report:

Checking weather predictions for Saturday August the 9th looked very promising for a good run toward the Owens's Valley with some OD predictions for the same areas. Being the ever optimist I half filled my ballast bags with water leaving room for my ship to be able to climb in weaker lift crossing the valley.

I released at the Labor Camp at about 7600' quickly climbing to 11k and then under a little cu forming over Lewis to just above 14k gave me a real good start across the valley. As predicted the air was kind and I did not turn until just north of the Silver Queen, up to 9000'.

A quick run into the mountains to Cache Peak where I connected with a rodeo like thermal; up 10kn one side down 6-7kn down the other side, no matter how tight I tried and it finally spit me out at just above 9000'.. There was a very nice looking shear line just west of Kelso Valley but unfortunately I was too low to be able to get there so I just pushed forward via Jawbone Canyon and back up to 9200'. Although kind of marginal height for Inyokern, I decided by keeping Cantil in my back pocket, headed toward some nice cu's near Walker Pass.

Managed to climb again over Hedi's to 6800' which did give me comfortable glide both to Inyokern as well as the good looking cu's which did take me to over 12k and then over 13k by Owens's Peak. Heading under a cloud street a little west turned out to be a fast ride all the way to Olancha Peak. At this point looking further ahead, the top of the Sierras started to blow up with OD but the Inyo's looked near perfect with a great cloud street right over the crest.

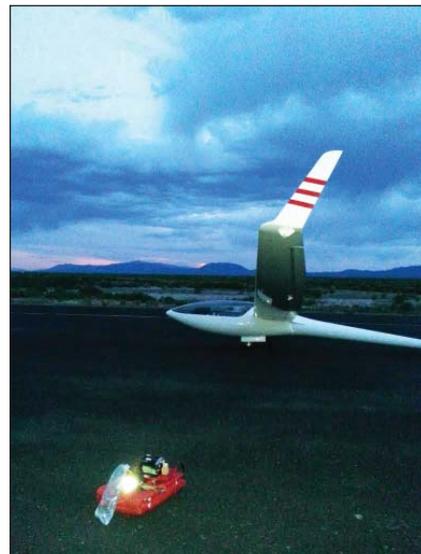
Arrived on the Inyo's at 10k and quickly climbed to above 13k and a good fast run up north with only a couple of turns; arriving at the Whites. By this time both the Sierras and Glass Mountain were blowing up with OD and what we think was the tip of the anvil spread over the Whites blocking out all the sunlight, killing the lift.

I gradually kept sinking away on the west side, hoping for a little lift that could get me on the east side so I may continue. Near White Mountain Peak under a menacing looking now black cu I did manage to connect with about 2k up. As I cranked into this thermal simultaneously I dumped all my water ballast, wanting to maximize on this climb as last chance before having to turn back to Bishop. It all worked out nicely as the climb progressed it got stronger, drifting eastward over the mountain top, all the way to 17k.

Looking at the possibilities; Hawthorne was blowing up as well as the area around Mine showed towering cumulus but toward Tonopah clearly a nice sheer line visible so I headed that way. Via Miller's Dry lake I started my long, nearly 100 mile glide wanting to fly up Kingston Valley and maybe Eureka. The air was once again kind and with a few turns I arrived at Kingston Valley near Hadley heading further east to this really nice looking cloud street. The one thing I seemed to forget about was the time of day; closer 5:30 p.m. Well the cloud street went flat, not producing much more than maybe zero sink, so my tail between my lags slightly under my margin heading back to Hadley airport, right in the blue over the flats I connected with a nice thermal and back up to 14k.

With both Kingston and Austin made, I did venture closer to Eureka, with this area clearly visible but no cigar. Landed at Austin safely. Sean got to Austin after dark and we managed to disassemble with no problems except for the million bugs that wanted to attack the head lamps on top of our heads.

The town of Austin closes down after 8 pm and not even Nick the Serb bar tender was open any more so we just went to bed at the wonderful Pony Express Motel. Yep, another great adventure.



Austin at Sunset

Fri., Aug 8	◆ Barry McGarraugh	Libelle 301	01Q	313	Gabbs, NV
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Barry's report:

Crew availability and the weather forecast made the decision to fly on Friday instead of Saturday. Since Karl recently replaced the transmission in his van, his vehicle was not quite up to long trip into the wilderness yet, and he offered to crew for me. The BLIP maps predicted that Fridays conditions would be slightly better than Saturday with less OD

2014 Crystal Squadron Flights

Date Pilot Glider Call Sign Miles Landing

potential to the north, and slightly better thermal heights in the Mojave area, so we decided to head toward Gabbs. As usual, the problem was deciding when to launch without risking landing at Backus, or running into the over development to the north. A little after 11, we could see Cu's starting to pop along the mountains that ring the south and west end of the desert as well as to the north near Tehachapi. I got off tow near the labor camp at 11:30 in a good thermal that got me up to 12.3K over Mt Lewis under a haze dome, and was on my way to Rosemond 20 min after launch. It was a good start, but I did not find a ripple until I was directly over Backus where I found a choppy thermal that went up to 7.5-8K. I probed to the north of Silver Queen, but only found sink and was promptly driven back to the relative comfort of the choppy thermal over Backus. As I got there, two Hawks flew under me, but they were flapping their wings. Not a good sign. About this time, a small cloud was starting to form well to the west of Backus that looked promising, but it was far enough away that I would probably not be able to get back to Backus if it did not work. Loyds strip and some crop circles were just to the south of the cloud, so I decided to commit to it. After diverting ~6 miles directly to the west, I encountered good lift that got me up to 12K, and on glide to Inyokern. Sometimes even a blind squirrel finds a nut...!

Good lift along the Barren Ridge made the connection to Boomer and the Southern Sierra fairly easy. Strong thermals were working between 12-14K that made for a fast flight to Olancha Peak. By this time, towering Cu's over the Sierras had overdeveloped, and the tops were being sheared off and blowing to the east. Conditions on the Inyos and White Mtns were much drier, but the race was on to get to Boundary Peak before the blow off shadowed the mountains and shut down the lift. I crossed the Owens valley at the switchbacks and connected with a good thermal to the south of New York Butte that got me up to ~16K and on my way north. By this time, it was evident that the cloud shadow was starting to soften the conditions along the Inyos as I glided up to Westgard Pass where I finally encountered a good thermal that got me back up to 14K. To the north, there was what looked like the remnants of a cloud street that was sandwiched between the Whites and the high cirrus that hooked off of White Mountain to the south west toward Chalfant. These clouds had little vertical development and were strangely "pancaked", but they were the only game in town so I headed for them. I pushed ahead, but fell below the ridgeline just to the north of Schulman Grove. I eventually connected with the clouds and found good lift in the canyon to the west of Piute Mtn that got me back up to 15K. The "pancake" clouds turned out to pull really well and they got me to Boundary Peak in short order. The sky was dark from the high overcast toward Bridgeport and Hawthorne, and there was lots of virga hanging to the north/north west, but I could see spots of sunlight on the ground near Mina so I headed that direction. About 23 miles out of Mina, I ran into a good thermal under the flat bottom cloud deck that got me up to 16.4K and well on glide to Gabbs. As I crossed into the Gabbs valley I encountered slight rain between some bands of virga that were hanging to the north of Mina. The high overcast still covered the general area, but the lower layer was drier and it still had well defined Cu's that ran to the north. I think the trip to Austin would have been easy, but Karl had an appointment Saturday evening so I decided to call it quits a Gabbs so we could get him back home early Saturday afternoon. I had extra altitude to burn, so I ran about 10 miles further to the north for OLC points then turned back to Gabbs when I saw Karl and the trailer heading into town. I watched Karl pull into the airport ~5:45, and I landed about 10 minutes after he got there. We had the glider in the box and were back on the road and on our way to Bishop by 7PM where we spent the night. We were up early the next morning and dropped the glider off at the Bishop Airport for the Soaring Academy's Safari next week and were back at my house in Quartz Hill by 11AM. Even though I lost ~ 1/2 hour staying afloat in the Backus area and had the cloud shadow from the Sierra OD to contend with, I still overflew Gabbs ~5.7 hours after I launched. All in all it turned out to be a really good day!



Sat., Jul 26	Sean Eckstein	ASW 20	PV	208	Triangle (White Hills), AZ
	Brian Neff	DG 303		196	Boulder City, NV

Sean's report:

There were two flights out of Crystal, Brian Neff and myself.

Saturday's flight turned out to be a nice flight, thermal up and go, very little struggling. I got towed to the 2nd. ridge and was climbing slowly when Brian Neff, who also joined the straight out flight, reported strong lift north of the 2nd. ridge abeam of the Labor camp, it turned out to be 1k+fpm and took me to 12k. The glide to Apple Valley was smooth but once we reached the hills north of Apple Valley there were nice thermals that took us above 10k. I say us and we because Brian was right with me getting familiar with the route.

2014 Crystal Squadron Flights

<u>Date</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Glider</u>	<u>Call Sign</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Landing</u>
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The glide to 031 dry lake had a couple of teaser thermals, but at 031 there were a couple thermals that allowed the glide to the hills south of Baker, where I climbed as high as possible to get across the Baker sink hole and into the hills north of Baker, the lift allowed a straight glide to Clark mountain were a cloud was forming on the south side, PERFECT, that lead to cloud city on the other side of the range.

Making Boulder was easy, but cloud base by Boulder did not allow enough altitude to cross or go around Class B. There was some slow moving OD at Boulder with rain and lighting so a decision had to be made. Going towards Utah looked like some big OD would become an issue so I decided to head towards Triangle airstrip in Arizona, Brian made a decision to land at Boulder.

The flight was going good and I was going a direction that was new to me, which always adds to the adventure. I crossed the river and once on the other side I pulled up into lift and looked back down into a deep moonscape gorge with the dark blue river running through it. What a view.

Looking ahead there were more cloud streets..... Looking at my radio there was a warning that my battery was low. No problem I'll switch to my brand new battery 2, which I later discovered had become unplugged. I decided that navigating by sectional and no radio could turn into a bigger adventure so I decided to land at Triangle airstrip. There I was greeted by a fellow glider pilot, Jim ?, who towed my glider to his hanger and offered me cold beverages and an air condition office to wait for my crew. Some flights are just brutal.

Brian's report:

I was getting ready to try again Sat for a flight, and ran into Dirk from Cypress and Peter from the Crystal Squadron working on a wing rigger and said I wanted to brag about long flight Friday. I told them I made it all the way to Fox and was going to try again Sat. Peter asked if I was going try strait up again and I said I was thinking of going N east toward LAS. Then I stopped by Sean in PV and asked where he was going, he said he needed to look at the WX and wasn't sure yet. I told him I was thinking LAS but hadn't been that way yet and if he was going I would like to chase along.

Later when Sean was about 30 min about to launch, Peter came by and offered to give me some advice about the land outs along the route to LAS. I said it would help but could he do it while I was in the cockpit, because it was so much trouble to unstrap and re-strap. Peter was real good about it and gave me some advice about the land outs and I told him I was going to try for Baker. He said I should stay near Sean and they could give pointers along the way. I told him I try to keep up and if not just land.

I launched about 11 am and waited for Sean (PV) up by the work camp. He climbed up and when we got about 11500 we were off to Apple Valley and I found PV could do better at speed than I could and he was pulling ahead and getting smaller and smaller. I was able to keep him in sight and we got to Apple Valley about 7500'. PV was searching and found enough so we could press on to Barstow. We got by Harvard at 5k and at 7k We told chase we were going to 031.

We slowly moved east hanging at about 7k, I said to Sean " I have 25/1 to Baker". He warned me we needed to get as high as possible before the Baker sink hole. My reply was ok I will follow you. We had lots of time to look at the places like 031 and Sean gave me info on where and what direction to land on the different places.

Baker was more scraping and looking, with Peter calling us and pointing out dust devils we couldn't seem to find. Peter also told us "don't land here it is 110F" We spent about 30 min in Baker (seemed like a lot longer hot and bumpy).

Finally got alt enough to press on to Cima. The glide to Cima gave me time to ask Sean all about the Cima landout. We climbed the north side of Clark and with Jean made we headed toward Bolder. Finally lots of lift and with 13k we headed east and I was finding it very hard to keep Sean in sight with all the clouds. It got so I had to stare at him just to keep from loosing him. Sean said he was going to press on to triangle.

I looked at my map and it ended just east of BFE and my LK8000 didn't have any airports east. I told Sean I didn't have any data east and I would have to land at BFE. It would have been real risky to try to follow Sean, No map and no data where he was going.

We talked by phone when I got on the ground at BFE and Peter said we should meet for dinner at Jean. They called later and let us know they could not stay at Jean and I said we could see them at Crystal on Sunday.

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Peter and Sean met me on Sunday and we debriefed the trip. Peter gave me some more tips on waypoints north to bishop, and suggested more maps in the cockpit so I don't fly off the chart. He also got a laugh when he found out I was using LK8000. He asked me what I was using to navigate during his chase to LAS and I said a computer. He pictured a laptop.

Peter and Sean were great to fly with and both were the reason I made it all the way to BFE.

Fri., Jul 25	Mike Koerner	Ventus C	CF	114	Baker, CA
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Mike's report:

I landed at Baker.

I launched just after 10 am, found a strong thermal on the second ridge, and was up to 10,500' by 10:30. I transitioned to wave cleanly and was up to 14,000' and still climbing by 11 am. But the lift was weak and there was a good looking cu over Adelanto, so I headed on my way. Sure enough, I had 500 feet per minute under the cu back up to 14,000'. I set my MacCready accordingly and sped out across the desert. That was the last sustained lift of my flight.

There were lots of clouds, to be sure, but apparently from an influx of mid-level moisture... they did not seem to be connected to the ground. I made it to the foothills on the far side of Baker. I was trying to figure out how I was going to make it past the antenna site, which was way above me and far distant, when I suddenly remembered that I needed to fix a drawer in our kitchen which has been broken for several years. For this reason, and this reason only, I turned around and landed back at Baker.

It was 104 degrees and raining on the ground.

Sun., Jul 13	◆ Mike Koerner	Ventus C	CF	352	Austin, NV
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Mike's report:

I flew to Austin on Sunday. I flew on Sunday instead of Saturday because I thought it was going to be a super day. It really wasn't. In fact it took me two tows to get away from Crystal.

Shortly into the second flight I discovered a aileron interference problem, which was not evident in preflight checks. The plane was flyable so I stayed on tow. And subsequently the situation seemed stable, so I put up with it for the rest of the flight. I need to figure out what's wrong and get it fixed before flying again.

No drama on the return trip anyway.

Sat., Jul 12	Peter Kovari	DG 300	6PK	208	Bishop, CA
	Barry McGarraugh	Libelle 301	01Q	208	Bishop, CA
	Karl Sommer	Libelle 301	C3	208	Bishop, CA

Peter's report:

Since it was my turn in the barrel, I eagerly kept an eye on the weather predictions for Saturday. Friday afternoon Dr. Jack showed a rather promising but not outstanding outlook for flying up the Owen's so as I loaded up my van and I also added my two water containers filled with water for ballast optimistically .

Next morning like I usually do before a planned flight, I turned on my computer to check weather one final time and promptly dumped the ballast right in my driveway, predictions looked once again dismal. Never the less, out to Crystal and at the upcoming pilot's meeting with Karl (C3) and Barry (01Q) the consensus was that a milk run; this was not going to be.

I launched right around noon and towed to the second ridge where the lift was very light to non existent. Finally contacted a nice thermal by Morning Mountain and than Mt. Williamson to 9.5K, going to Lewis and Baden Powel got me to around 10.7K and on my way north. Surprisingly the valley air was kind, my flight computer showing about a 7 kn wind from the east. I think the easterly flow was pushing the sheer line our way and with a couple of turns on the way soon was heading toward the Three Sisters west of Mojave where a nice thermal got me to 10.5K. And than this is where the fun began...

As far as I could tell the wind now turned north easterly, with about a 5kn headwind component and the hills stopped working, at least for me. It was now a slow crawl once again (I'm getting tired of this) up the lowlands to Boomer

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Ridge near Inyokern. Thinking that the north side of the ridge should work with the northerly wind flow I soon find myself disappointed and getting washed off into the valley once again. Resigning to the fact that this is the way it is going to be, I continued the slow and low crawl toward Cinder Cone and than Coso dry lakes, taking a couple of stabs at the hills on the way only to be washed off again and again.

By now the winds turned 180 degrees blowing about 8kn out of the usual southerly direction and find myself at 5000'MSL - 1500' AGL over Coso dry lake. Gear down, checking wind, I stepped into a rough thermal which eventually took me back up to 8900' plenty for continuing to Olancha.

The valley around Olancha finally worked well and once over the Owens dry lake I managed to climb to about 12K. While in this nice thermal, from the corner of my eyes I saw a black object "falling" off the Sierra's, diving to the floor of the dry lake, going like a bet out of Haiti's; an FA18 fighter jet. Good thing I continuously run a transponder, hopefully he seen me.

One more thermal over the lakebed and than on top of the Inyo's north of Cerro Gordo, climbing to near 13K going north. Although the lift bend was not particularly high on the Inyo's, I was able to cruise between 12-13K almost to Westgard Pass with only a few turns. Karl (C3) and I both arrived at the Whites together at Schulman Grove. Usually a very good source of thermals, only finding the air glassing off (now around 6 p.m.) and not finding anything.

Barry (01Q) right behind us, all three coming off the Whites, more or less throwing in the towel and landing at Bishop. Nice dinner at Bishop with crew, spouses and friends. Yep, another character building day.

Barry's report:

On Friday, Dr Jacks Saturday forecast looked pretty good, but my enthusiasm waned when I looked at the RAP Saturday morning. Conditions looked weak, but the winds were forecast to be "confused" and light so Karl and Peter and I all decided to head north anyway. I got off tow a little after noon and climbed up fairly easily to ~9K on Mt Lewis and on the Baden Powell to top out at ~10.7K. I headed out across the desert and found fairly kind air that kept me up between 7-9K between the Edwards airspace and Rosemond. Just south of Mojave I ran into a good thermal that topped out ~9.5K that got me on the barren ridge where Peter was reporting good lift. Between the Barren Ridge and Inyokern there was spotty lift, but the conditions on Boomer were not working and all three of us wound up scratching in the foothills in disorganized lift. Peter stayed out in the valley and nearly landed at Coso while Karl and I worked in closer to the ridge and managed to finally get up on top just to the south of Cinder cone. Thermals were topping out between 10-12K, and I finally bailed out at the switchbacks and crossed the valley to the Inyos. Lift on the south facing slopes was working fairly well and I got back on top just to the south of Mt Inyo. Karl and Peter were about 15 miles ahead of me by this time, and they were starting to report soft conditions in the Westguard pass area. I managed a small climb abeam of Waucoba and had just crossed Westguard pass when they both called Bishop as their final destination. About this time I stumbled into a good thermal that got me up to ~13K and on toward Schuman Grove. As I cruised north I encountered spotty lift, but Karl and Peter had both switched over to the Bishop frequency so I decided to join the party at Bishop and peeled off the Whites and into the valley. I decided to trade the extra altitude for OLC points and flew up the valley until I was just south of White Mtn. where I turned back to Bishop. Sue and her sister Loraine had just gotten into Bishop when I arrived over the airport, and I landed a little after 6PM for a flight time of 6:10. Karl and some other glider guys helped push the glider to the tie down area and we got the glider back into the trailer around 7PM. Sue got a room in town while I disassembled the glider, and all eight of us had a nice dinner at the Las Palmas Mexican along with the Cypress Club Members. Karl and Rose took off and headed south right after dinner, and we finally crawled into bed around 10PM and promptly fell asleep. The next morning we met Peter, Sean and Tom at Jacks restaurant and had a nice breakfast. Afterward we parted ways with Peter and company and Sue and Loraine and I decided to head up to Lake Sabrina for a little sightseeing. The lake was pretty, but the water level was VERY low, and it highlighted just how desperate the water situation is in California...

Karl's report:

This is supposedly the HIGH season, sure did not behave that way. Had to change Ox bottle and glue a spacer that came off while Rose drummed up all the other things for assembly, "I can not find your flight bag". It was all nicely packed Volksloger, Winpilot, Spot etc but for some unexplainable reason it decided to stay at home (Should have done the same). How about the offer from my crew? "I will drive back and get it, should make it back in time". I thankfully declined and decided to wing it like in the early days.

I got a tow after Peter and had my share of difficulty to finally end up at 10.5K so I left the mountains after PK reported

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some lift S of Rosamond Dry Lake, 01Q who got to 10.7K over Baden Powel left about the same time. The desert had some thermals that went to about 9K so I pressed on towards Mojave and through a bunch of sink hanging around 5K at Jawbone looking for lift, thinking I have to get to Cantil where is it, never looked for it from this vantage point, probably could have made hostile Honda racetrack.

Just then I got a good kick, took it with my utmost concentration, being thankful and realizing how good it feels going up, 9K off we go Inyokern with Peter reporting lift over the wide spot.

Next thermal over the Walker pass road enough to try Boomer even so PK had no luck got lift further N enough to ride along the ridge to abeam Cinder cone there a good one to 12K abeam Haiwee reservoir enough to stay on top, nearly getting to the top of Olancho Peek.

OK lets go time is running short, crossing to the Inyo's connected with good lift up to 14K now we're cooking, not for long Westguard pass a weak thermal and Shulman grove just as soft, so peeling off down a canyon into the open, reported on 123.5 "300.2 wind 150/13" switched to CT brakes out and landed in Bishop on Rwy12. Two Cypress members helped me push C3 to the transient parking. Thanks guys. Nice dinner at the Mexican Restaurant in good company.

Sun., Jul 6	Scott Lance	PW6	EE	87	Inyokern, CA
	Gary Timbs	PW6	EE	87	Inyokern, CA

From the OLC:

Trying to ferry to Bishop with Gary Timbs but blocked by rain and virga at Cindercone. Should have loitered and waited for it to clear (because it did) but that was not the choice we made... Fun flight though and a BFR too!

Sat., Jul 5	◆ Dave Raspet	Ventus A	SAS	357	Fallon, NV
	◆ Sean Eckstein	ASW 20	PV	352	Austin, NV
	◆ Barry McGarraugh	Libelle 301	01Q	327	Yerington, NV
	◆ Karl Sommer	Libelle 301	C3	327	Yerington, NV

Dave's report:

Took off at 1100 and climbed well toward cloud base at about 11k. I was fortunate that JK (Jim Ketcham) was out ahead of me. Jim reported lift around Rosamond so I headed out from the Second Ridge, Jim reported lift on the Three Sisters so I went there and found good lift, and Jim reported good lift in the Kelso Valley so, despite my dislike for the prospect of landing at Kelso, I followed him there. The lift in the Kelso Valley was as great as Jim had promised. Leaching off Jim got me from Crystal to Walker Pass-Thanks Jim!!!

The mountains worked well and I'm beginning to learn how to run the Inyo/White Mountain freeway. I averaged 99 knots over one stretch south of Bishop. Overall the flight was about 4% better than theoretical. (This theoretical is the same one referenced by Dick Johnson in his analysis of Al Parker's first 1000k in this month's Soaring. It is based on the assumption that there is no lift between the thermals, so using the lift under the clouds without circling provides the potential to exceed theoretical.)

Made two tries at getting across the Carson Sink to Derby but each time my margins started decaying and I had to scoot back toward Fallon. Landed at Fallon about 700 PM and my crew was there by about 745 PM.

Sean's report:

I finally have a flight that I can report and not be embarrassed about. I'm still getting use to the ASW 20.

The direction to the north towards the Owens Valley was agreed upon as the best direction to go. I had a difficult time climbing after release but eventually climbed to 11k and headed across the desert, again struggling, did I mention struggling, and really HOT, but I kept pushing north until I got to the mountains.

I finally got the height to drive into the mountains behind the Barren ridge where there was a good looking cloud, the lift was wide and strong, at times above 1000 fpm, taking me above 13k and on course under a beautiful cloud street all the way to the switch backs at Lone Pine. Crossing the Owens Valley I arrived at the Inyo's at 10k and connected with a thermal taking me to 14.8k. The cloud street continued north on the Inyo's all the way to Boundary Peak where I reached 17k, I glided to Mina, NV. stopping to take advantage of some lift then continued on course to Gabbs. I had my Diamond and was content to land when my crew, Peter Korvari, ask me my altitude which was 12k, and replied

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"You're going to land at Gabbs?"

Sooooo I headed north of Gabbs airport and connected with some good lift that would get me to the mountain range south of Fritz Dry Lake, there I connected with the clouds again and climbed until I had more altitude than I needed and final glide to Austin, NV.

Barry's report:

Sue and I had been invited visit a friend up in Smith Valley on the 4th, so I declared that we heading north with the intent of going to Yerington one way or the other. There was some concern that strong winds in the Inyokern area would blow things out, but we headed out regardless of the prediction with the intention of flying as far as I could and trailing if needed.

I launched a little after 11:30, and got off tow in a good thermal along the second ridge that got me up to 8.3K. Low cloud bases on Mt Lewis and Throop peak limited the climb to ~10K, so I decided to follow a disorganized cloud street/shearline off course to the west and south of Palmdale. There the street hooked to the north and I left the clouds over Plant 42 and headed due north toward the SW corner of the Edwards airspace. Little thermals between Hwy 14 and Rosamond dry lake kept me between 7.5K-9K, and up to the Barren Ridge. By this time, a cloud street had formed between Tehachapi and Cache Peak that ran up to Walker pass. Once I got to the Barren Ridge, I was too low to safely connect with the clouds to the west, so I decided to run along the Barren ridge. After a minute or so, I ran into a thermal that got me high enough to cross over to Kelso Valley. There I connected with the cloud street and things started to run pretty good. The further north I went, the better the conditions got with little wisps of cloud to mark thermals. Running between 13K and 15K along Boomer ridge under the cloud wisps, I made a decision to leave the Sierras and cross over to the Inyos at the switchbacks. I arrived on Mt Inyo at 9K and worked the ridge north until I connected with a good thermal to the south of Mazourka Cyn. That got me up to 17K and on my way to the Whites with thermals topping out at 17.8K east of Bishop. I left Boundary peak at 15K and headed toward Hawthorne and some disorganized clouds that had formed between Mono Lake and Mina. They produced good lift that kept me above 11K and on to Mt Grant where I found good lift that got me to 13K and well above glide to Yerington. I arrived over the field 6 hrs after launch, and an abundance of buoyant air in the valley between Mt Grant and Yerington left me with 4K to burn off. I could have worked the lift over Yerington and pushed on to Silver Springs, but I decided to land since this was our first trip of the year, and I did not want to burn Sue out. I got on the ground at 6:15, tied the glider down, and walked into town to get a room for the night. Sue got there around 7:30 and we had a nice dinner in the casino, followed by an excellent fireworks display in the park.



Karl's report:

Blipmap showed more wind from the W on the 4th than on the 5th. So I opted to fly Saturday enjoying the 4th at home. (still remember the Mojave landing with 38-40 Mph)

SAS Dave PV Sean C3 me in that order. I got towed 11:30. After some searching around I got up to 10.5K and left about 25M after SAS, the usual getting to the mountains 5.5K at the Silver Queen found a thermal to 8.8K got me to the 3 Sisters where I got under a not well defined cloud, YES, here is one, up we went to 14.8 oh nice and cool ride to Boomer, struggle to 11K, thinking has to get better up ahead got back up to 12K all the time looking at the clouds further W, should have could have, nearly falling of the ridge, then just short of Olancha Pk up to 14K, crossing over to the Inyo's short of Walts point. Got up on the Inyo's to about 12K nice clouds now, so I flew straight not to get sucked in up ahead, Shulman Grove I found myself looking for lift, that was smart falling of the Inyo's looking up at White Mtn Pk thinking how did I do this. Ran in a good one that got me back on top, leaving Boundary at 15K and a few thermals on the way enough for a final into Yerington, just about empty on Oxygen.

We brought along dinner which we enjoyed at the scenic West Fork on the Walker River. We drove to the June Lake Loop with cool mountain air, where we camped. Sunday morning while waiting for the Silver Lake Café to open, 7AM, two deer came out of the bushes not minding us at all. Anyway, needless to say the breakfast tasted real good in this beautiful surrounding.

An other very enjoyable weekend.

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Fri., Jul 4	◆ Mike Koerner Jim Ketcham	Ventus C ASH 26E	CF JK	492 73	Nephi, UT Kelso Valley, CA

Mike's report:

I flew to Nephi on July 4th. The day was better than that, but I made some mistakes which cost time and miles. One of the addictive aspects of soaring is that it promotes a sense of what might have been – that you could have gone farther.

Just before launch, Dale, back from his first ride of the day, said that there was good lift on the second ridge and wave as well. I released on the second ridge and climbed straight away to 11,000'. I should have headed out then and there. But instead I wandered around searching for something better, got low, climbed back up with JK, eventually found the wave, climbed above the clouds and headed out from 12,800'... but by then it was 11 o'clock.

My biggest mistake was out on course, searching around under CUs for lift. We don't have time for that. CUs mark the route - the vario marks the lift. If the route you choose under a CU takes you to lift; great. If not; move on. Similarly, if you encounter good lift in the blue you should not forsake it for a pretty CU up ahead. Not all CUs have good lift and not all good lift is under CUs. I'm sorry I had to re-learn this on what might have been a Wyoming day.

Another lesson I had to re-learn is not to wait until the end of a cloud street to climb. That last cloud may not be working. In fact, the last several may not be working. Maybe that's why the cloud street ends! As exciting as it is to bump along for miles without thermalling, we need to stay near cloudbase. Otherwise, when the lift ends, we're stuck staring out across a blue hole from down low.

My route took me further to the west than I've been before. I climbed Sheep Peak north of Vegas without calling Nellis. Although I forgot that the Vegas Class Bravo now extends to 10,000', I still managed to miss it by 116 feet. And I flew pretty much a straight line from Mormon Peak to near Delta. This seemed to work fairly well and it kept me away from the overdevelopment further east.

There was a glider encampment at Nephi with about 60 sailplanes on the ground when I arrived. I was just in time to share their Barbecue!

Some of you may have heard me tell (and retell) the story of Katie's spectacular ATV crash in the hills above Fillmore. That was 9 years ago. We decided to go back and try again. This time I convinced Fran to go too. We went to the same rental place. They remembered us... and yet they were willing to rent to us again. But I screwed up and we ended up on a very steep advanced trail which we were specifically warned not to go on. Katie did fine but when Fran hit the throttle to get up the hill she was bucked off her bike. Fortunately we had chosen to wear helmets this time, but as she lay on the trail her ATV rolled back over her leg and bugged up her ankle. The ATV continued down the trail backwards, picking up speed before executing a 360 degree left roll and coming to a stop back on its wheels. Fran was able to ride it back down the hill. We're still waiting to hear how much a new set of fenders will cost.

Later we explored the unique drainage system of Navaho Lake. Surface water runs down the Sevier River into the great basin while underground flow, vented through a resurgence at Cascade Falls, follows the Virgin and Colorado Rivers to the Pacific.

We also witnessed a wonderful natural fireworks display with very active electric storms Saturday night.

And finally, we watched a do-it-yourself, totally insane fireworks display in the parking lot behind the Indian fireworks store south of Moapa. Powerful rockets and mortars and roman candles were being fired every which way, including horizontally. Some of the adults appeared to be inebriated. Kids with twirlers, firecrackers, whistlers and what-not were playing with them near open car trucks full of pyrotechnics. A 9-year-old lighting off rockets and mortars keep catching his shirt on fire. No one had goggles or protective gear of any kind. There were no police, fire fighters or



Fran before the fall



Lightning over the Virgin Mountains (photo by K Koerner)



DIY Fireworks south of Moapa (photo by K Koerner)

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paramedics standing by. Thunderstorms in the area were generating gusty winds which, for a time, were sending still burning embers back toward the gas station and fireworks storage tent beside the store. And worst of all, no one seemed to recognize the absurdity of this except us. Be careful out there!

Jim's report:

I sank out at Kelso today and had a close look at the wind turbines in the valley. They make the approach to the CN37 pattern a real head turner. I was low enough that I was looking at a downwind landing, did not happen, I relit and went home.

Mike was heading towards Utah last I heard.

Note: The next day Jim did an out to Boundary Peak and return.

Sat., Jun 28	Peter Kovari	DG 300	6PK	155	Sky Ranch Estates, NV
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Peter's report:

It appeared that I was the sole air nut wanting to fly straight out or was crazy enough to even try this last Saturday the 28th. Since I am on rotation with Sean and he indeed stood ready; I felt I needed to at least try.

Weather predictions from the usual sources were poor to dismal so I was less than encouraged.

I launched right at noon despite the fact that the few gliders that took off shortly before were now returning and Dale Masters was shaking his head in discouragement suggesting to wait. As we all know time was ticking and the available daytime shrinking; I opted to go and towed to about 7700' to the Labor Camp without as much as a bump to speak of. A couple of turns later it was clear that the lift on the second ridge at least for the present time was missing and my options were running out for a successful cross country flight.

I headed straight for Krey field hoping to connect with the usual shear line and did arrive now closer to 1 P.M.. The air was buoyant but other than a couple of bug fart little one knotter I was soon in survival mode around the airfield, searching in the usual house thermal areas with very little luck. Now down to 4300' (300' short of TPA) and thinking about landing, I did walk into a nice little thermal that took me back up to 7300'.

Heading toward So Cal Logistics I think I finally connected with the leading edge of the shear line, working light thermals and holding an average of about 6500' and arriving in the Apple Valley area. Surprisingly the winds were very light but so were the thermals. I tip toed in this fashion out to the Slash X where I finally managed to climb to about 8K and was on my way to crossing the flatlands.

Although the air was kind there was not much either in terms of lift and did arrive low ; 3600' at 031 dry lake looking at landing once again. Did connect with a weak thermal over the hills directly north east of the dry lake that eventually got me back on track to the hills south of Baker. Usually I would count on this high ground to produce one or more good thermals but just like the San Gabriel's earlier it was no cigar. I did manage to climb to 7 K just south of Baker and one again tip toed north toward the microwave towers half way to Cima.

The thermal gods were with me once again and although low and just about out of safe glide back to Baker I did walk into a nice steady thermal and back to almost 7K (wow so high !) and on my way to Cima dry lake. This is where the fun began. Although the consensus for wind direction were about 10-15 kn out of the southwest, they actually showed 13kn out of the south east on my flight computer which was absolutely confirmed by my now low drift.

I managed to connect with a thermal near Cima and climbed to about 7K which normally would be plenty to take me to the southwest slopes of Clark mountain. I feared that the south easterly flow would create an adverse downwash from the mountain and unfortunately I did not have enough height to maneuver to the east side of the slopes for a more direct approach. My fears came through and I ended up doubling back to Cima, connecting with the same previous thermal and trying this time going northwest toward the hills bordering Sandy Valley. Once again the high grounds did not produce lift and with my tail between my legs and flying back to Cima once again walked into a nice thermal that steadily drifted northwest and topped out at 9500' right around the Nevada border. My plan at this time being later in the day was to head toward Mt. Charleston and make into Pahrump area. Unfortunately I did not connect with anything that would take me above 10k and I than decided to call it a day and land at Sky Ranch at Sandy Valley.

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<u>Date</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Glider</u>	<u>Call Sign</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Landing</u>
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Nice little, accommodating airport and ran into none other than fellow glider pilot "Uncle Fuzzy" for those who know him.

This was an extremely physically taxing flight; grinding mostly near the ground in 100 plus temperatures. I drank most of my 2 liter water supply and as I usually would pee at least 2-3 times during a trip I did not once. Although my landing was normal I did overshoot my intended touchdown point by a couple of hundred feet which I never do. I am convinced that my judgment was impaired by dehydration and my brain cells were not firing normally.

Upon disassembling I did something stupid again which I rather not elaborate on (feel free to interrogate Sean) which I also credit for this condition.

Moral of the story; in adverse conditions as such, either one should through in the towel or the very least hydrate "prior" to take off as well as during the flight

Sat., Jun 21	Britton Bluedorn	ASW 27	BB	44	Backus Road, CA
	Sean Eckstein	ASW 20	PV	36	Apple Valley, CA

Sean's report:

Apple Valley, again!!! Looking at the weather conditions with a SW flow I decided to head towards Las Vegas. I climbed to 11k at the second ridge pretty fast, than to 12k just out front of Lewis, unfortunately the winds at Apple Valley were already 15+ and not a thermal to be found, the flight ended.

Being a creature of habit I followed the same path that normally works. The lesson learned is contact Apple Valley AWOS, if the shear has already pushed through, head north towards Sun Hill/Palisades to contact the edge of the shear. Although I don't think with Saturday's conditions that plan wouldn't have worked either.

Sat., Jun 14	Dave Raspet	Ventus A	SAS	285	Seligman, AZ
	Peter Kovari	DG 300	6PK	226	Kingman, AZ

Dave's report:

We debated direction and decided to head for Las Vegas since Dr Jack showed critical heights around 7k all the way to past Inyokern for the trip North. Winds from North to Northwest across the Antelope Valley.

Second ridge worked to only 8.5k but 6 PK was reporting lift on the desert so I went. Good lift to about 9k and even the valley east of Barstow work well. O31 to the pass south of Clark Mountain was fine. We were only getting around 10k so we decided to head east towards Kingman and hopefully Williams. Got high around 10k and set out from Clark Mtn towards Searchlight. By the time I got to the hills around Searchlight lift was good to about 9K. Across the river the heights weren't as good, only about 8k so the trip to Kingman took working some 2 knot lift just to get high enough. At Kingman, the high ground south of town worked to 12k and I went on Oxygen for the first time. Had to work 2 knots lift to insure Seligman. Last 20 miles into Seligman I saw nothing workable and went to some high ground Southeast of town but nothing there. Turned back for Seligman and landed just before 700 PM.

This was my third try at this direction and I've made Seligman twice and Kingman once, but with the new bigger Class B at Las Vegas I expect to keep trying this route when the conditions favor Las Vegas.

Peter's report:

Weather predictions were unusual for this Saturday, slightly favoring the Las Vegas route. As it turned out at least for me, conditions were rather poor where lift was anticipated but fairly good in areas where they are usually poor. In retrospect the wind predictions kind of underlined this outcome as they were not the usual southwesterly steady flow toward Vegas but would change more westerly as we got closer to the Nevada border.

I lunched around noon and find little to speak of in the San Gabriel's, finally leaving around 9k calling Krey as the alternate, hoping for some help from the regular shear line.

Arriving around 1 p.m. now down to about 5000' I finally climbed again to 8k and was on my way to Apple Valley. This area usually is a struggle as the shear line blowing through the pass goes through, leaving a laminar flow but this time the winds were almost none existent and the air was kind, climbing again for an easy glide to Barstow/ Daggett airport. Did not find much however until just south of the airport which took me to 8500'.

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Date Pilot Glider Call Sign Miles Landing

On course again toward 031 Dry did not find anything and about half way now down to 3600' turned tale back to Harvard with an 800' arrival. The soaring gods were with me once again as I walked into a nice 2 kn thermal now back to over 8k. From this point on I have to concur with SAS as it was good air through the dreaded stretch to Baker and all the way to Clark Mountain.

At Clark the highest I was able to get was just over 10k not very good height for my ship crossing the Ivanpah Valley and the rising ground toward Searchlight. I heard Dave crossing this area in light but steady lift but by time I crossed the valley I found nothing but sinking air. Turning tail again for Ivanpah dry lake, now down to 4500', I had gear down and locked when once again the gods had me walk into a nice thermal and slowly climbing back to 7500', moving east and up on the rising ground now in buoyant air.

It still amazes me how thermals cycle out and a little later cycle back in. Eventually got to 11,5 well on my was to Bullhead City. Crossing the river and flying toward Kingman in still buoyant air, 2kn little thermals here and there but now late in the day and arriving still at 10K over the airport. I tried pushing forward to Trans Western but about half way there I opted to turn around for Kingman as the air now was glassing off.

A very different flight with changing conditions indeed keeps me addicted to cross country soaring.

Sat., Jun 7	◆	Mike Koerner	Ventus C	CF	352	Austin, NV
	◆	Karl Sommer	Libelle 301	C3	313	Gabbs, NV

See Other Flights for RED's flight (Crystal/Boundary Peak/Crystal).

Mike's report:

The drama this Saturday revolved around my main pin. It lives in the plane: either in the spar or on the back deck; or in my hand moving between the two. I can't recall a time when it was ever anywhere else. Yet when I tried to build my plane early Saturday morning it was nowhere to be found. In addition to several wild conspiracy theories, it occurred to me that I had refilled the oxygen during the week and that the pin is a bit in the way. Although I don't remember doing so, perhaps I had moved it to the oxygen supply cart?

I called my daughter who was by then driving out with a friend to crew for me. She drove back to the house and miraculously found it setting on my tool box in the garage. I have no idea how it got there. She made tracks getting it out to desert, and I was in the air by 10:43; albeit without ballast, having decided the added flight time was worth more miles than the added speed.

But it turns out the lift in the mountains behind Crystal were less than spectacular. I spent an hour wandering between Lewis and Baden Powell without ever getting above 10,000' before deciding to head on my way anyway.

Out on course, things went much smoother with strong lift starting at Rosamond and clouds above 15,000' starting just beyond the rock pile north of Kelso. I made no turns for 130 miles, from abeam Waucoba Peak to near Gabbs; part of which time, from White Mountain to Boundary Peak, I was pushing my rough air limit to stay below 18,000'.

Though Katie was out in front most of the way, I still had about an hour to ridge soar the Toiyabe Range before she arrived at Austin. We got a foot in the door at the International Café just before closing time. On the way home we visited the ghost towns Goldfield and Rhyolite, which have turned into artist communities, and, leaving the trailer behind temporarily, dropped through Titus Canyon into Death Valley.

Karl's report:

Blipmap looked promising going N, but a not too early of a start. Talking with Mike CF on Friday we promised to try N. CF went 1st, Philippe with Ron flying RED 2nd I went on the line and got a tow at 11:50.

By the time I got up to about 8K, Mike left and RED was still trying to get to 10K, I was lucky enough to get to 10K without much trouble so I left the mountains too with RED shortly thereafter. The long glide across the desert was quiet but some bounces, so I found myself grinding at 1800'AGL a bit west of the Rosamond Dry Lake and ending up at 9K now that looks a LOT better. So I moved passed Mojave airport and connected with the Mountains S of Jawbone Cyn 10K, enough for Inyokern, that's where RED left me in the dust. 15K at Boomer 16K up to Olancha Pk crossed over to the Inyos over Lone Pine connected at 12K with a good one to 17K bouncing along the ridge Waucoba, Schulman, White Mtn, twice my maps were on the top of the canopy even my head so I peeled off short of Boundary Pk. to Mina, where I just got enough to glide to Gabbs on the way there I found an other thermal to 14 K but looking farther to Austin I could not find any lift strong enough to push on, it just got soft. Crew consideration were involved too, so I landed

2014 Crystal Squadron Flights

<u>Date</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Glider</u>	<u>Call Sign</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Landing</u>
					<i>at Gabbs. CF was landing about the same time in Austin. RED turned Boundary Pk and made it back to Crystal.</i>
					<i>We stayed at the "Motel GMC" (our Van) had a nice dinner with a cool one, got home at noon on Sunday.</i>
Sat., May 31	◆ Dave Raspet Sean Eckstein	Ventus A ASW 20	SAS PV	388 36	Beaver, UT Apple Valley, CA

Dave's report:

Mike Koerner had alerted us that Saturday would be good towards Las Vegas but, while Dr Jack showed good lift out that way and winds predicted Southwest at 20, Dr Jack also showed some low Buoyancy to Shear, beginning south of the Utah border. I launched at 1130, climbed to about 10.5k and headed out down the ridges to the east. Got to Wrightwood and got hammered with choppy, rough lift I could not work, so I put my tail between my legs and scooted back to the second ridge. By then the lift there was spotty and I was struggling at about 8.5k when Papa Victor (Sean Eckstein) called to say the desert was working great so I left and headed out into the desert and found the good lift.

I followed Sean's advice and stayed away from the hills and the trip to Las Vegas was as easy as any I remember. At Las Vegas I was only getting about 10k so I had to go around the southern extreme of the new Class B. Got to the river too low to make Temple Bar so I turned tail for Boulder City. While not yet under the Class B veil, I got a good thermal that carried to 12k and let me cut over the corner of the Class B and continue. Even though I was avoiding the hills I could not resist Virgin Mountain and from 8k it worked to about 12k. On up into Utah the lift was great.

Just north of Cedar City I could not get enough altitude to get to Parowan so I headed for a west facing ridge, again choppy, rough lift I could not work down close to the ridges. I finally gave up and headed out of the hills for Cedar City and quickly hit good, smooth lift that carried to about 13k. One more good thermal and I arrived at Beaver with plenty of altitude to spare and landed into the wind on the dirt runway.

Averaged 47 knots with average climb rate of 2.9 knots. The Ventus should make 46 knots on 2.9 knots of lift so with the tailwind SeeYou showed of 16 knots, I lost 15 knots due to sloppy, inefficient flying. Something to work on next flight.

My crude analysis of the thermal conditions says that down close to the hills and ridges the wind was swirling and breaking up the thermals making them rough and spotty, like a buoyancy to shear below 5. At greater heights above the flat, smooth desert there was little turbulence to break up the thermals and it all worked great.

One other lesson was that next time Las Vegas is showing only 10-12k critical heights I'm turning east at Clark Mountain and heading for Williams.

Sean's report:

The forecast look good for heading north towards Las Vegas into Utah and no TFR's in our path.

I released on the north side of the 2nd ridge at 7.2k MSL, as I flew towards the ridge I got a reminder to tighten my lap belt tighter, then encountered non stop sink leaving the west end of the 2nd. ridge at 5.8k MSL, arriving just south of Crystal at 5.1k MSL where I encountered a thermal.

I banked into the thermal and my landing gear alarm started intermittently going off, which had not been working when I tested it, my landing gear and spoilers were both closed. I focused on the thermal and once I was at a higher altitude open and closed my spoiler a few times and the alarm went off.

I climbed with (ES) in the thermal to 11k, I received two transmissions form Dave (SAS) in the mountains reporting altitudes at 8.5M, so I decided to head out on course. I arrived with good altitude in the hills north of Apple Valley, I wanted a little more altitude before heading towards Barstow, that was a bad decision. The shear had already passed through Apple Valley and the wind was laminar, I ended up landing at Apple Valley.

2014 Crystal Squadron Flights

<u>Date</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Glider</u>	<u>Call Sign</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Landing</u>
Sat., May 24	Peter Kovari	DG 300	6PK	106	Twentynine Palms, CA
	Karl Sommer	Libelle 301	C3	106	Twentynine Palms, CA
	Ramy Yanetz	ASW 27	TG	100	Warner Springs, CA

Ramy's report:

Straight out from Crystal to Warner Springs via Big Bear, Palm Springs, San Jacinto, and Jacumba, with a yoyo between Jacumba and near San Jacinto. OLC distance is 274 miles.

Peter's report:

Karl (C3) and myself (6PK) figured we will tart the season off with a bang and of course it was a rather short bang. The predictions were favoring going toward Arizona with some areas of total overcast which we never encountered.

We were joined at Crystal by a young fellow who showed up with and ASW 27 and crew. It is too bad I never got to introduce myself, as I later found out from OLC; he was non other than Ramy Yanetz down from the Bay area, heading to Warner Springs.

I launched right around noon and towed to the west end of the second ridge, releasing about 7k. Climb averaged about 2-3 kn throughout the slow climb taking me to 10k. Hoping for better altitudes; I than cruised over to Lewis and Baden Powel but found nothing but smooth air. Reverting back to the Labor Camp than managed to gain back the lost altitude previously. Flew straight down the ridge east passed the Wrightwood ski area, toward some distant Q's near Baldy. Not finding much until reaching the landslide east of Wrightwood and now down 9k. At this point I finally stepped into 5-7 kn thermal witch took me to up to 11.5k, than toward the Q's by Baldy joining Ramy in a really good thermal to 13.5k Nice flying with you Ramy!

Once on course to the east side of the Big Bear range, a few turns by the two mines than a really good thermal north/east of Big Bear Lake which took me back up to 13.5 well on my way toward Twenty Nine Palms and some clouds in the valley. Unfortunately most of the clouds produced little or no lift but still managed to climb back up to almost 12k just west of the airport. At this point C3 reported that his navigational electrons were caput. I also been plaked lately with radio issues and sure enough although I was able to send and receive air to air communications; I could not receive from my ground crew Sean.

Never the less we decided to push on and I did went ahead toward Pot Dry Lake in the blue. Unfortunately although the air was kind I did not get into anything stronger than about 1k down low .Once near Pot Lake I had Iron Mountain made with good margin but given the conditions ahead and the radio circumstances, and since I still had glide back to Twenty Nine Palms I opted to turn around and land with C3.

All in all a good start, great company and dinner. Nice way to start the straight out season.

Karl's report:

Blipmap looked promising to go towards Phoenix 13K Big bear vicinity, about 9K at the river and up to 13K again close to Wickenburg but also some OD. N route showed N wind, so Peter Kovari and myself opted to try E. Clouds looked more like Lennis and not like "Cumulus all over" as was reported the day before.

Peter went 1st I followed after the Tow plane got some fuel. Released close to the 2nd ridge at 3K and had some struggle to get high enough to venture to the labor camp where PK reported lift to 11K. At the start I noticed that the Volkslogger and Winpilot did not work, anyway I figured should at least make it to Hesperia.

PK reported getting to 13.5K near Mt. Baldy about 15 minutes later I got to 13K same location, crossing over Hwy 15 into the hills, no CU's the clouds looked more like wave there too, way S of Big Bear some CU's tooo far, by the time I got to the end of the lake I was so low that I thought I have to make a run for Valley Vista, I stumbled into lift, PK reported 12K around the same area never seen him until he landed at 29 Palms. At 10K I went for Hi Desert with some CU's that did not work as expected, so on I went passing 29 Palms hoping for a miracle, PK had more altitude and reported no luck either. No CU's to the E just a grey high overcast south E looked better but soon the few CU disappeared too.

The 4 of us had a nice dinner at The Rip Co. at 29 Palms. We then trailered back to Crystal. (Blew a fuse trying to connect the VL)

Other 2014 Straight-Out Flights

<u>Date</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Glider</u>	<u>Call Sign</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Start/Turnpoint(s)/Finish</u>
Sun., Sep 14	◆ Ramy Yanetz	ASW 27	TG	424	Warner Springs, CA/Byron, CA
	◆ Eric Rupp	ASW-27	ER	366	Warner Springs, CA/Hollister, CA
	Morgan Hall	Duo Discus	5H	281	Warner Springs, CA/Avenal, CA
	Tom Truax	Paraglider	SD	111	Topatopa Peak, CA/Nuthouse past Garlock, CA

See the following link for Tom's narrative:

http://paraglide.net/log/14/09-14/1_nuthouse_past_garlock_111_mi.htm

Ramy's report:

Bob, as promised, here are my last weekend diamonds. I CC Eric and Morgan who also flew straight outs last weekend.

The three of us had fantastic weekend flying back to back straight outs from our respective airports, myself from Byron, Eric from Hollister and Morgan from Avenal. We set Warner Spring as our ultimate goal and made it there and back the next day, without a crew (and without motor).

We put our faith on the epic forecast and our ability to pull this off, with up to 5 alternate landings at gliderports along the way where we could get tows if we needed to. The soaring conditions along the coastal ranges and Mojave were so amazing it was actually quiet easy. I flew dry both ways, and set a new Byron record in the process.

We spent the night In Escondido, and flew back the next day via Santa Barbara/Santa Ynez area with a 10:30AM launch into strong convergence. Conditions from Warner to Santa Ynez area were fantastic again, but much softer further north making the return more challenging.

So I think we established that it is possible to do straight out diamond from Crystal to Byron area, even without a crew...

Morgan's report:

Alas, my straight line distances were only 438km (Ed. note: airport to airport is 281 sm) between the airports. But back to back diamond declared goal isn't too shabby in September. Unfortunately it would require landing Jacumba to tick the 500k mark out of Avenal going SE like we did.

Sat., Sep. 13	◆ Ramy Yanetz	ASW 27	TG	424	Byron, CA/Warner Springs, CA
	◆ Eric Rupp	ASW-27	ER	366	Hollister, CA/Warner Springs, CA
	Morgan Hall	Duo Discus	5H	281	Avenal, CA/Warner Springs, CA
	Scott Lance	PW6	EE	265	Skylark Field, CA/Bishop, CA

Scott's report:

I've wanted to do a straight out from Skylark field in Lake Elsinore for quite some time and everything finally fell into place for Sat Sept 13th. Although it can be challenging to get out of the Elsinore valley, the forecast for Sat was exceptional and indicated the lift height would be high enough and early enough to get a good start and probably do some serious distance. When Kevin Wayt (who has a knack for picking good days) showed up to fly I knew it was likely to be a memorable day. Cu's started forming early and anticipation built as we rigged. Kevin launched about noon with the intention of doing a big triangle and returning to Elsinore. He took a low tow and I launched next. Lift was excellent with cloudbase about 14,000 and an easy climb to 13,000. Kevin went south heading for the Warner shear line and the Mexico border. My goal was the Sierras so I went north, sort of... Unfortunately there are two skydiving drop zones and March Airbase class C airspace directly in the path of the preferred route so you have to detour almost 15 miles to the east before being able to head north. Normally that's not a problem because I'll head mostly east to Mt San Jacinto to tank up on altitude anyway, but I was worried about wasting the extra time today and there were good looking clouds due north so I took the straightest line possible. With the shorter days this time of year that tactic paid off later in the day when I needed the extra time to make it to Bishop. The 40 mile trip north to the San Bernardino Mtns went smoothly and quickly with just one climb on the way. I again elected to skip an easterly detour to higher ground (to Mt San Gorgonio) because there were good looking clouds directly ahead. I love it when there are markers! I wasted a few minutes in crappy lift in the foothills but quickly moved on and connected with a boomer at the west end of Big Bear Lake. While circling I spotted David Zanze flying out of Warner and we both topped out and then chased each other on an excellent cloud street heading straight to Crystal. At this point I'd had no communication with my

Other 2014 Straight-Out Flights

Date Pilot Glider Call Sign Miles Start/Turnpoint(s)/Finish

driver Mike Kalina because he was tied up at the Elsinore airport with Cypress Soaring Club board of director duties and was not able to leave when I took off. We had agreed he would leave as soon as he could and head for Crystal whether or not he heard from me. We also agreed to contact Crystal and leave updates we could each pick up on the way by. Fortunately we finally made radio contact while still enroute to Crystal and confirmed everything was going according to plan. He was way behind me but at least we were headed in the same direction. There was abundant lift and good markers in the desert so I again chose to skip a detour to high ground (the San Gabriels this time) in favor of a more direct route to Rosamond. I arrived at the corner of R2515 about 9,000, had a decent climb, pushed on to Mojave and had a great climb, and called Mike to let him know I had Inyokern made. Mojave to Inyokern went fast with fat air under a nice cloudstreet. With 14,000+ at Walker Pass I was looking forward to a high and fast run to Lone Pine but things quickly deteriorated and I had a disappointing stretch in some of the most nasty lift I can remember anywhere. With abrupt 8kts up on one side of a circle and 4kts down on the other it was more like cannon fire than thermal lift. After barely getting over Olancha peak and starting to wonder if I could safely make Lone Pine I picked up a couple thousand feet, saw a nice cu forming over Horseshoe Meadows, and started to get optimistic again. I made it to that cu and was rewarded with a fast smooth 5,000 ft climb. Compared to the last 40 minutes of crazy air it was like flying on a different day. There was a good looking cloud steet on the Sierras and I love the view on that side so I did not cross to the Inyos. I had a nice cruise to abeam Independence but got a little distracted taking pictures and got flushed off the spine. With my reserve altitude to Bishop evaporating I sped out into the valley thiking I'd come up short of Bishop and have to land at Independence, but easily made it across to the Inyos and had a nice climb back up to over 16,000 (it was after 6 pm by now and still cranking lift; gotta love the Owens Valley!). From that altitude I could hear Dave and Karl on the radio and thought I heard Dave call a landing at Gabbs. Sounded like Karl was ahead of him and headed for Austin but I couldn't tell for sure. I let Mike know I'd be landing at Bishop and flew up to White Mtn to burn altitude before heading back to land just before sunset. Landing went fine and Mike arrived about 30 minutes later.

Although well short of Diamond distance and not as spectacular as many other flights of the day, this flight was special to me for several reasons:

- It was (almost to the day) the 10th anniversary of my first flight as a glider student.
- It was a goal I set many, many years ago after my instructor Larry Howell told me it had been done from Hemet; I decided that if I were ever able to make such a flight it would validate that I was a pilot of at least reasonable skill and decision making ability.
- It was probably the last flight I'll make in California for quite some time as I will be moving to Texas in a couple months and have no more free time to fly.

I'd also like to say a very grateful thanks to the Crystal Squadron for their encouragement and support in getting me "away from the nest" over the last few years. You guys rock!

Dust Devil Dash Results

All flights started at Tehachapi (Mountain Valley Airport), CA

Note: These flights results are not handicapped.

Sat., Sep. 6	◆	Kevin Wayt	Ventus C 17.6	RW	572	Burley, ID
	◆	Eric Rupp	ASW-27	ER	506	Murphy Hot Springs, ID
	◆	Tom Serkowski	ASH-26E	5Z	498	Lakeview, OR
	◆	Ramy Yanetz	ASW-27	TG	498	Lakeview, OR
	◆	Thorsten Streppel	LS-6A	KD	336	Air Sailing, NV
		Josh Knerr	Std Libelle	FV	292	Dayton Valley, NV
		Tom Riley	Spirit	TR	292	Dayton Valley, NV
		Tom Coussens	PIK 20D	Z9	238	Hawthorne, NV
		Bill Laningham	ASW-24	DB	238	Hawthorne, NV
		Jeff Byard	Genesis 2	AU	157	Bishop, CA
		Doug Fronius	ASW-20	NXS	157	Bishop, CA
		Oscar Alonso	ASW-24	RO	105	Lone Pine, CA
		Cam Martin	301 Libelle	J	105	Lone Pine, CA
		Jim Neff	PW-6	2EC	105	Lone Pine, CA
		Todd Schultz	Prue 215A	3	105	Lone Pine, CA
		Harry Irvine	Std Cirrus	4C	71	Coso Junction, CA
		Ron Hodge	1-26D	417	23	California City, CA
		John Shmoldas	Discus B	7X	23	California City, CA

Other 2014 Straight-Out Flights

<u>Date</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Glider</u>	<u>Call Sign</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Start/Turnpoint(s)/Finish</u>
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Tom Coussens's report"

Hi Bob, thought I might add a story, especially as this was my first real cross country (and definitely not my last!) The conditions were forecast to be blue, but strong and improving to the north. But a funny thing: at 0730, some little cu's started popping and dissipating over the Tehachapi's indicating an early shear line, and a cool but steady breeze came in from the east. At the weather briefing at 1000, Walt Rogers (WX) said it was going to be a great day and to bring a toothbrush.

The hot shots were rarin' to go and the first launch was @ 1045, but the shear line had blown out and the wind changed to out of the south. The early guys seemed to get high and move north pretty well, but then the later guys were much lower. I was gridded, and belted in and on deck when I heard Tom Riley was coming in for a relight. Oh man...

So off we go, towing through strong, narrow thermals in the valley, with an especially strong one just over the copper dome house at 7200 ft, so I marked that one and continued on tow to the max allowable altitude of 7700, hoping I could work the bald spot. But I spotted some gliders circling low over the low ridge to the west. We were way to the east of the bald spot when I had to release and I knew this would be tough, and sure enough, nothing was working in the mountains. I never managed to get above release altitude, and several of us milled around the valley and got lower and lower. I was finally down to 800 ft directly on glidepath to final approach at Tehachapi Muni and looking at tricycles in the front yards of the houses when I managed a half circle in a thermal and started working it. Wow, I was thinking, I may make it out of here! Started climbing out, and at 7,000 a bunch of gliders all converged and I think we all started breathing again. Took that baby all the way to 11,000 and started north, about 40 minutes after release. I stayed west of Kelso and continued to work blue thermals and topped out a bit higher each time. But it wasn't easy, and I never got high enough to feel comfortable. I found a nice thermal in the canyon just SW of Owens and got to 13K and scooted north, but had to dodge around the west side of Olancho Peak trying to climb under a cu, but nothing doing. Found a series of blue thermals on the way to the switchbacks and in transit, listened to guys who fell off the ridge near Kelso Valley and struggled up the valley. Few of them seemed to get any altitude and wound up at Coso, Lone Pine and Bishop. I noodled around Walt's Point till I made 13K. At that time I shared a thermal with WX who decided to cross over, so I did too. To my displeasure, lift in the Inyo's was rare. I wound up skimming the top at 100 meters and noticed how strange the trees looked as I scratched around to find a bump under a cu, and that one did work.

OK, so irony of ironies, I'm attempting to cross Westgard Pass, the place where thermals go to die, and I can see Bishop and know I can get there, and I hit a boomer right over the highway that takes me to 16K. So I proceed at warp speed over the Whites, losing altitude by the bucket load and wind up trying to get some ridge lift off the spine at White Mt Peak, manage to climb above the peak and then find a small thermal just north, enough to get me off the Whites and out over Nevada. At this point I heard Bill Laningham (DB) announces final glide to Hawthorne. So I'm abeam Boundary Peak at 12K and fiddling with the SeeYou target list and trying to decide where to go, and it dawns on me that I should have studied the Nevada map a bit. And I start worrying about my rookie chase crew driving all over Nevada, so I decide to final glide to Hawthorne and join Bill Laningham there.

A great intro to one-way dashes! And a message about Hawthorne Airport: A sweet retired teacher named Betty Easley is the volunteer greeter/airport enthusiast, and she helped us secure the ships and was helpful wherever she could be. An unexpected, major benefit to landing there!

Fri., Sep. 5	◆ Ramy Yanetz	ASW 27	TG	311	Truckee, CA/California City, CA
Wed., Aug. 20	Brian Neff & Greg Forister	DG 505	N963TR	180	28 sm south of Bishop/Crystal

Brian's report:

Yesterday 8/20/14 we released after a long tow with no lift, when we had Independence and told the tow to wait at Lone Pine, when we had IYK we told the tow to go there and he refueled and waited for us to let him know when to fly more south. The flight along the Sierras was right at ridge top the entire distance we never could get much alt above the ridge. At Owens we were able to get to about 12k and went south and then after thinking we were going to finish at IYK we found a 2 knot that got us high enough to make Cal City. we had Cal City the tow took off out of IYK and by the time he got near Cal City we had Fox made from another light one over red rock canyon and we told him to land there and wait. At Silver Queen we got to about 9k and had enough to press on toward 100 and M using Fox as an alternate. When we just barely had Crystal made we told him to meet us there with 100 and M as alternate. It was fun to

Other 2014 Straight-Out Flights

<u>Date</u>	<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Glider</u>	<u>Call Sign</u>	<u>Miles</u>	<u>Start/Turnpoint(s)/Finish</u>
<i>do it on one tow, from Bishop to Crystal the first 48k was a tow, but we let go when we hit the first good lift. Because it was a ferry flight we towed in the direction we were going instead of circling up near bishop to find lift.</i>					
Sat., June 7	✦ Philippe Athuil	ASH 25Mi	RED	480	Crystal/Boundary Peak/Crystal
Sun., May 25	Ramy Yanetz	ASW 27	TG	160	Warner Springs, CA/ Tehachapi, CA
<i>Straight out to Tehachapi. Tehachapi wasn't working when I got there.</i>					
Fri., May 23	Ramy Yanetz	ASW 27	TG	295	Byron, CA/Agua Dulce, CA
<i>Straight out to Aqua Dulce via Santa Paula area.</i>					
Tues., April 8	◆ Tony Condon	Std. Cirrus	KATE	525	Wellington, KS/DeQuincy, LA
<u>Tony's report:</u>					
<i>Spring go South take 2! What a flight!! Excellent conditions in general for the entire flight, character of the air changed a bit once in southern Oklahoma. Very strong NW wind which increased in speed as I went south, but even weak lift 45 minutes before sunset was glassy smooth while drifting nearly 40 mph. Incredible!</i>					
<i>Declared goal was San Augustine, TX for 439 miles, distance from Wellington to DeQuincy was 525 miles.</i>					
<i>Next time obviously need to start further upwind as the land mass doesn't extend far enough south.</i>					
<i>Big thanks to Leah of course, John and Mike for chasing (1400 miles round trip), Rafael for the tow, and Steve for weather and Go Big Or Go Home encouragement.</i>					
Wed., March 12	✦ Tony Condon	Std. Cirrus	KATE	324	Wellington, KS/ De Queen, AR
<u>Tony's report:</u>					
<i>Didn't make it a "Henry Diamond" but got a dogleg diamond distance flight last week following a cold front.</i>					
<i>Quite a flight today. Cold Front blew through here yesterday afternoon with 50+mph gusts. Things had calmed down considerably by morning and left a nice NW tailwind and lots of unstable air in its wake.</i>					
<i>Launch about noon as the first wisps appeared over the airport. Flight went pretty much according to schedule and plan and forecast, just a few thermals short of the goal of Texarkana. Flew pretty timidly most of the day, determined to stay high which i did a pretty good job of except at the very end.</i>					
<i>Thanks KC and John for about 875 miles of driving today, Leah for helping get the glider ready, Raf for trailer/glider prep and the tow, and Steve, John, and Randy for weather and route advice.</i>					

The Henry Trophy



The Henry Trophy
To be permanently displayed at the
National Soaring museum

The Henry Combs Perpetual Trophy was founded April 15, 1995, by members of the Crystal Squadron to honor Henry Combs, his love of cross-country soaring and the type of flying he inspired in the rest of us. Henry retired from flying in 1999 after achieving 205 straight-out 500k diamonds, all in his Libelle H-301 (01Q) which he bought in 1967.

Henry repeatedly stressed that going **straight out as far as possible** was always his primary objective while achieving diamond distance was secondary. He also wanted to make the entire experience fun by involving his crew in activities like fishing, scenic drives and visiting points of interest during the drive home.

In 2000, the Henry Trophy became an **SSA-recognized national award**. It is awarded annually by the Soaring Society of America to the person or persons completing the greatest number of straight-out, diamond-distance, non-motorized glider flights during the previous year in each of three zones - East, Central and West.

The trophy founders hope that this award will carry forth the tradition of flying straight out as far as possible and serve to encourage glider pilots and ground crews everywhere to become active, safety-conscious participants in the sport of straight-out, cross-country soaring.

Henry Trophy Recipients (Number of Straight-Out Diamonds)			
	East Zone	Central Zone	West Zone
2013	Dan Reagan (2)	Tony Condon (1)	Peter Kovari (2) Barry McGarraugh* (2)
2012	No entry	No entry	Peter Kovari (2) Barry McGarraugh* (2)
2011	No entry	No entry	Karl Sommer* (4)
2010	No entry	No entry	Mike Koerner* (6)
2009	No entry	No entry	Dave Raspets* (7)
2008	Steve Arndt (1)	Jim Hard* (1) Chris Prince (1)	Dave Raspets* (13)
2007	Leo Benetti-Longhini (1)	No entry	Karl Sommer* (9)
2006	No entry	No entry	Karl Sommer* (9)
2005	No entry	Jim Hard* (1) Bob Wander (1)	Norm Page* (9)
2004	No entry	Kathleen Winters (1)	Mike Koerner* (6) Barry McGarraugh* (6) Dave Raspets* (6)
2003	No entry	No entry	Norm Page* (13)
2002	No entry	No entry	Philippe Athuil (12)
2001	No entry	No entry	Mike Koerner* (16)
2000	Doug Jacobs (1)	Jim Hard* (1)	Norm Page* (13)

*Note: A pilot can win the Henry Trophy a maximum of three (3) times.

Brief History of the Crystal Squadron

In the Beginning

It all started with Henry Combs (01Q), a pioneering soaring pilot, who has been our inspiration and mentor. Henry started flying straight out in the 1960s from Crystallaire, El Mirage and Tehachapi and was the first to fly straight out each Saturday on a regular basis. During this same time, Wally Scott in Midland-Odessa, Texas, also was flying straight out. As time went on, more and more pilots became attracted to this type of soaring.

On May 4, 1968, Henry did his first straight-out 500k diamond flight from Crystallaire to Phoenix. From 1968 to 1978, Henry racked up 39 straight-out diamond flights including some very long flights to Elko, Nevada (458 miles), and to 30 miles north of Winnemucca, Nevada (484 miles).

The Philosophy is Formed

Henry developed a very simple philosophy regarding straight-out, cross-country soaring:

- “I already paid for the tow, so I might as well stay up.”
- “When I release the tow rope, I know I am going to have a forced landing. The question is how long can I put it off and how far away can I go?”



Slowly It Builds

By 1986, Henry had 104 straight-out 500k diamonds and had attracted a core group of other straight-out pilots:

- Tom Edwards (AJ)
- Mike Koerner (CF)
- Robert Nethercutt (3U)
- John Graybill (SL)
- Fritz Seger (BO)
- Karl Sommer (C3)

These “pathfinders” were very important to the later pilots joining the Crystal Squadron. They found the alternate landing spots, knew the various routes and weather patterns. They made the rest of our lives much easier.

Remember, in the early days it was all pilotage with just charts and a scale:

- No GPS
- No satellite imagery
- No weather models
- No flight computers (at first)
- No flight recorders
- No cell phones

The Name - The Crystal Squadron

In 1990, we were sitting in Barstow after a humiliating flight talking about giving the Crystal Soaring owner/operator, John Stevenson, a thank-you plaque for all his efforts. We were struggling with how to sign the plaque. We thought “From the guys who fly straight out on Saturdays” was too awkward even though it was humorous. At that moment, Rock Swanson (ROC) said, “How about ‘The Crystal Squadron’?” The name stuck!

The only requirement for membership is to fly straight out with us from Crystallaire airport (Southern California Soaring Academy).

Brief History of the Crystal Squadron

The Great Basin

This is the hydrological definition of the Great Basin - all stream water flows into the basin and never reaches the ocean. Within these boundaries, we can experience two or three distinct weather patterns during the same straight-out flight.

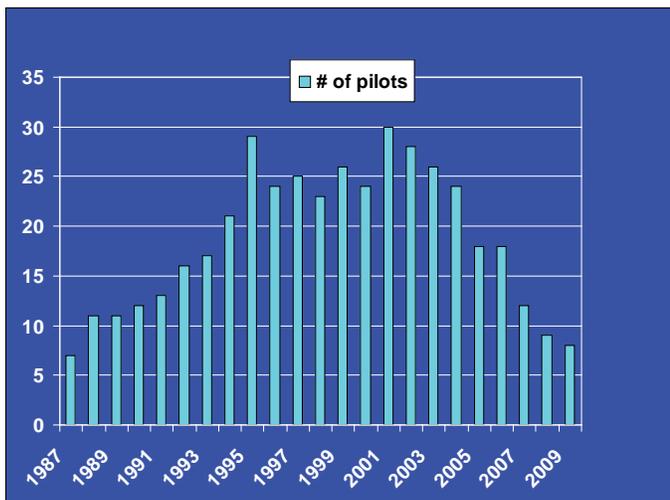
Crystalaire is uniquely situated for straight-out, cross-country soaring because both the pilot and ground crew can easily go one of three directions:

- East toward Phoenix, Arizona. This usually happens early in the season (May, June). The challenge is crossing the Colorado River because it and the large agricultural areas around it usually “kill” the lift over a wide section.
- Northeast toward Cedar City, Utah. The two challenges here are getting past Baker (elev. 922) and the Las Vegas Class B airspace, which is the 9th busiest airport in the United States.
- North toward Boundary Peak where we go one of three ways: toward Reno, toward Fallon and beyond or toward Austin.

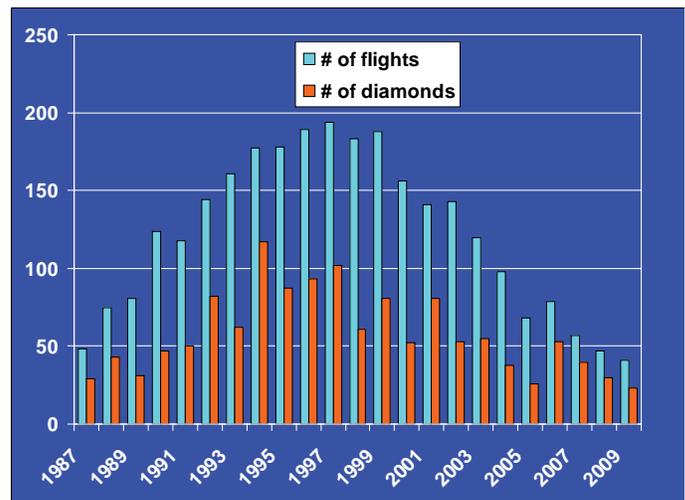
The longest straight-out flight from Crystalaire was in 2007 to Bend, Oregon, by Jim Ketcham (JK) for a distance of 695 sm. In 1994, Mike Koerner (CF) and Hank Marlowe (11W) flew to Weiser, Idaho, for a distance of 680 sm.

In 2003, Jim Ketcham (JK) went to American Falls, Idaho, for 643 sm and Philippe Athuil (RED) went to Aberdeen, Idaho, for 645 sm. All five flights are 1,000Ks.

Interesting Statistics:



The Crystal Squadron started off with 7 pilots in 1987, and, at one time, had 30 pilots flying during the season.



As of 2009, the Crystal Squadron accumulated 2,810 flights of which 1,336 were straight-out 500k diamonds for a 47.5% “hit” rate. Also included are 5 straight-out 1,000k’s.

Brief History of the Crystal Squadron

More Interesting Statistics:

By tradition, Crystal Squadron flights are those flown on weekends and holidays. However, there have been longer flights flown during the week from Crystallaire airport. These amazing weekday flights are noted below:

Crystal Squadron Longest Flights			
Year	Pilot	Landing	Dist.
2012	Mike Koerner	Open Desert, OR	584 sm
2011	Dave Raspet	Susanville, CA	441 sm
2010	Mike Koerner	Rome State, OR	565 sm
2009	Philippe Athuil	Paisley, OR	584 sm
2008	Mike Koerner	Cortez, CO	551 sm
2007	John Gonzalez Jim Ketcham*	Elko, NV Bend, OR	547 sm 695 sm
2006	John Gonzalez Mike Koerner	Paisley, OR	594 sm
2005	Mike Koerner	Burley, ID	603 sm
2004	Mike Koerner	Moab, UT	537 sm
2003	John Gonzalez John Graybill Philippe Athuil* Jim Ketcham*	Alturas, CA Aberdeen, ID American Falls, ID	512 sm 645 sm 643 sm
2002	Mike Koerner	Lakeview, OR	555 sm
2001	Mike Koerner	Heber City, UT	546 sm
2000	Philippe Athuil John Graybill Bob Maronde Kelly Scarborough	Mt. Pleasant, UT	497 sm
1999	Mike Koerner	Heber City, UT	546 sm
1998	Mike Koerner	Wells, NV	490 sm
1997	Hank Marlowe	McDermitt, OR	525 sm
1996	John Graybill Hank Marlowe	McDermitt, OR	525 sm
1995	Mike Koerner	Lakeview, OR	555 sm
1994	Mike Koerner Hank Marlowe	Weiser, ID	680 sm
1993	Mike Koerner	Alturas, CA	512 sm
1992	Mike Koerner	Lakeview, OR	555 sm

*Weekday flight

Philippe Athuil (RED ASH 25Mi) flew from Crystallaire on Friday, August 21, 2009, to Pocatello, ID, for a distance of **1,047.0 km (650.7 sm)**.

Why Fly Straight Out?

Why not!

Crystal Squadron Barringer Trophy Winners			
Year	Pilot	Landing	Dist.
2010	Mike Koerner	Rome State, OR	565 sm
2009	Philippe Athuil	Paisley, OR	584 sm
2007	Jim Ketcham*	Bend, OR	695 sm
2006	John Gonzalez Mike Koerner	Paisley, OR	594 sm
2005	Mike Koerner	Burley, ID	603 sm
2003	Philippe Athuil*	Aberdeen, ID	645 sm
2002	Mike Koerner	Lakeview, OR	555 sm
2001	Mike Koerner	Heber City, UT	546 sm
2000	Philippe Athuil John Graybill Bob Maronde	Mt. Pleasant, UT	497 sm
1999	Mike Koerner	Heber City, UT	546 sm
1998	Mike Koerner	Wells, NV	490 sm
1996	John Graybill Hank Marlowe	McDermitt, OR	525 sm
1995	Mike Koerner	Lakeview, OR	555 sm
1994	Hank Marlowe	Weiser, ID	680 sm

Jim Ketcham (JK ASH 26E) took off from Agua Dulce, CA, on Thursday, July 5, 2007, shut down the engine near Crystal and proceeded to soar to and land at Bend, OR, for **1,120.8 km (694.9 sm)** to win the **2007 Barringer Trophy. This is the longest straight-out flight from Crystallaire.**

Philippe Athuil (RED ASH 25Mi) flew from Crystallaire on Wednesday, June 18, 2003, to Aberdeen, ID, for a distance of **1,040.8 km (645.3 sm)** to win the **2003 Barringer Trophy.**

Jim Ketcham (JK ASH 26E) took off from Agua Dulce, CA, on Wednesday, May 28, 2003, shut down the engine near Crystal and proceeded to soar to and land at American Falls, ID, for **1,036.6 km (642.7sm)**.