

SUNSHINE DERBY 2010

In the pre-dawn hours of January 23rd stillness prevailed over the LaBelle airport. An eerie fog layer wafted across the runway as the dew hung heavy on the grass. In less than two hours, airplanes were to arrive for the start of the 2nd annual Sunshine Derby. But where was the sunshine? Would there even be a Derby today?



As time ticked on and the darkness gave way to light, the canvas of white offered hints of the vastness of the blue sky above. A gentle breeze was developing and the fog bank moved steadily across the airport revealing sucker holes capable of giving up an airplane from its position of flight to its triumphant return to earth. Shortly after 0800, the drone of an engine was heard overhead and an airplane streaked across the sky somewhere enroute to the GPS 14 approach into LaBelle. Moments later, the sounds



grew louder but the elusive plane was nowhere in sight until after it crossed the numbers on the missed approach and appeared, almost as if by magic, on a downwind for 32. The south end of the runway had cleared even though the approach end to 14 was blanketed in the fog. Moments later, Sunshine 9, Tamra Sheffman and Sonia Bortolin arrived at the fuel pumps. The race was on!

Slowly, the remaining contestants of the Sunshine Derby all arrived and refueled before being ushered to their pre-race tie down spots. Jessica Stearns, the Chief Judge, and Terry Carbonell, race chair, gave the final briefing as the pilots and crew listened intently. The ceiling was still relatively low but it was flyable VFR came the reports from spotters Janet Quinn at X36, Carolyn & Bruce Skaggs at X06 and Lynn Graham at X01. All were in place and ready to go.





Sunshine 1, Vince and Donna Minnillo, fired up their Cherokee 140 for their 3 hour, 255 statute mile flight around southwest Florida. While it is typical to let the fastest plane depart first to avoid congestion, the length of the trip and the lateness of the start due to the low ceiling necessitated an early departure of the slowest planes. We did want to see Sunshine 1 and Sunshine 2 back before night fall!



With a mighty burst of speed the racers were off, disappearing to the northwest, one by one. They settled in to their flight strategies with the hopes of being the most precise aviators for the day.



The Sunshine Derby is an annual proficiency race hosted by the Paradise Coast Chapter 99s. The object is to predict your exact time enroute and fuel consumption over the 255 statute mile course. This is not a race about speed, nor endurance; but it is about your airplane and how well the pilot can be the master over time and fuel.

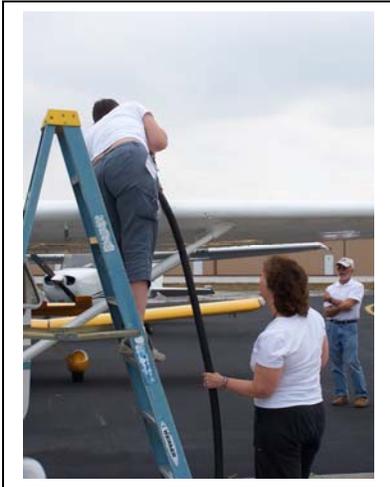


As the race continued on, those left back at the hangar were hard at the business at hand: enjoying the DB Foods barbecue of chicken, burgers and a host of side dishes and desserts. Spectators came by car and by plane from as far away as Kentucky, joining the 99s and the Grasshoppers for a day of fun flying, hangar flying and good food and fellowship.





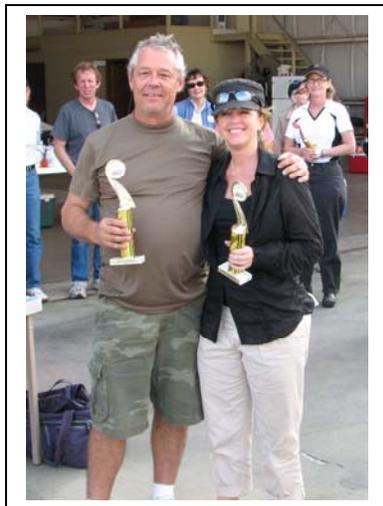
The first to return was Sunshine 4, Jim Deutsch and Graham Foster. The speedy trip at 174 mph let them enjoy the best of both worlds – a quick flight at just under 1-1/2 hours, plus the fellowship and food. Other racers followed them in, the flock being spread out by distance, time and strategy until finally, Sunshine 1 came back to roost after 3 hours, 7.5 seconds. This is going to be close as many of the racers came in within *seconds* of their predicted times. The fueling was an ongoing process with the pump meter being covered while the pilots re-filled their tanks and were verified full by Judy Browser, the fuel judge. Groans and shouts of glee could be heard echoing across the field.



Finally, the moment of truth: who would follow Richard Haldeman and Steve Fort as reigning Champions? First the “bests”: Best Fuel – Sunshine 4, Jim Deutsch and Graham Foster, estimating their fuel within 1/10/gallon! Best time – Sunshine 2 – Terry Carbonell and Vernon Conly, a mere 7 seconds off of their estimated time. And the winners are:



First – Sunshine 2, Terry Carbonell and Vern Conly



Second – Sunshine 1, Vince & Donna Minnillo



Third – Sunshine 4, Jim, Deutsch and Graham Foster



Fourth – Sunshine 11, Susan Carastro & Robin Holtisinger



Fifth - Sunshine 8, Gary Crittenden & Sylvia Massey

We thank all of the sponsors, volunteers, Paradise Coast 99s and to those who flew the race and those who came for the BBQ. All proceeds raised will benefit the Paradise Coast 99s “Wings over Paradise” scholarship fund.