

DeQuincy

By Tony Condon

On April 8th I had another incredible downwind dash starting in Wellington, KS. On April 2nd I had noticed on the long term prognosis charts that the 8th had potential to be a good soaring day in the Midwest. The forecasts showed a cold front passing through Iowa on Monday morning and being at the Gulf of Mexico by Tuesday morning. After my 318 mile flight on March 12th I had been on the lookout for another chance to run downwind. However my first take on this system was that it would be more suited for a start in Iowa, so I emailed my friend Matt Michael in Ames, IA and told him to be on alert.

As the week progressed, the forecasts wavered back and forth. Sometimes they showed a cold front, sometimes not. I was not incredibly inspired but never discouraged enough to quit looking. Starting 5 days out, the GFS forecast on XCSkies started looking like Tuesday had potential, and seemed to improve a bit with each model run, indicating that Tuesday would be a good day for a downwind dash. The wind looked a little stronger than the March flight, and the cloud potential looked a lot better, which was welcome news. The wind direction was nearly identical although there was consistent overdevelopment forecast to the east so it did not look like cutting east on the Kiamichi Ridge was going to be the best course of action.

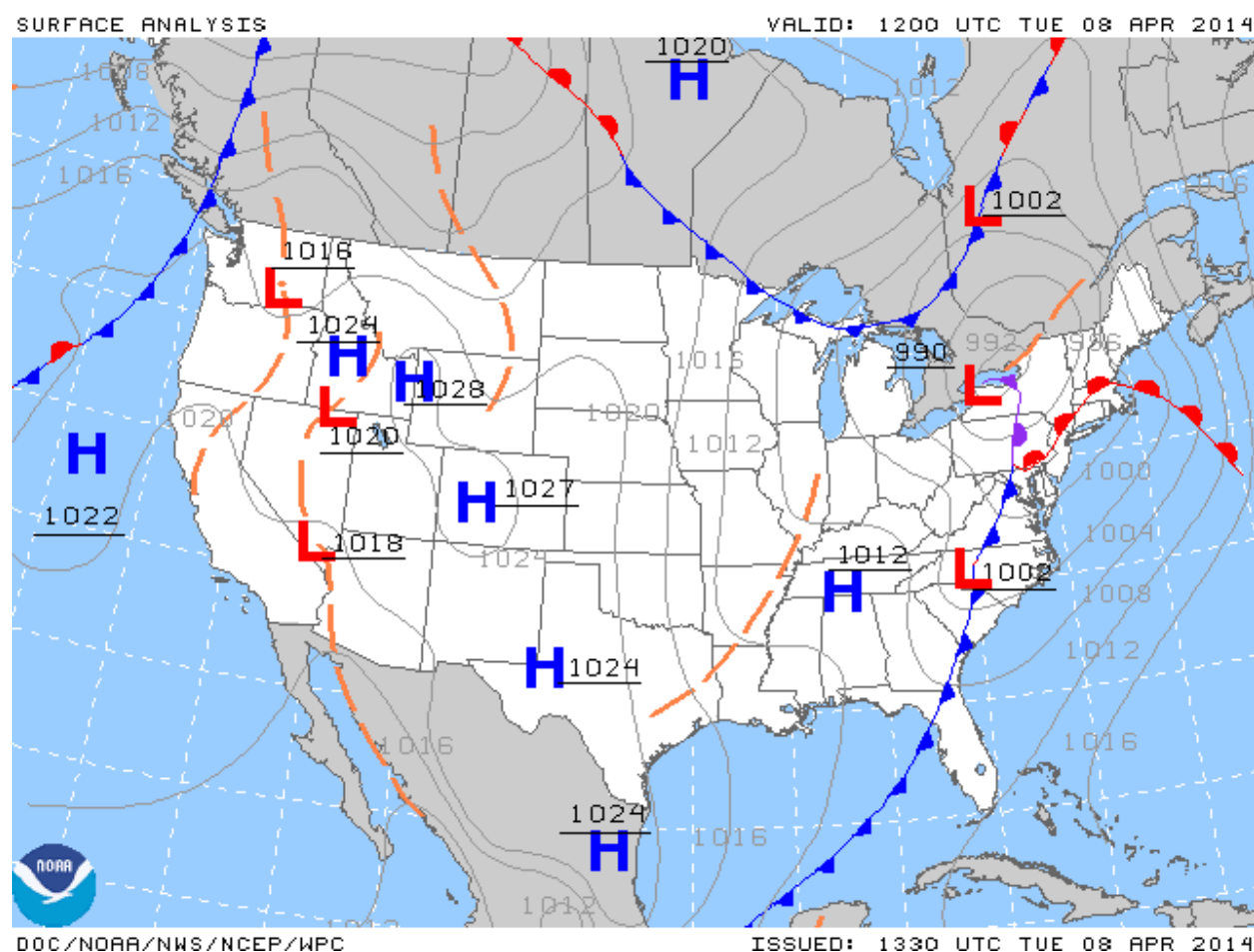
On April 4th, Omri Kalinsky put a message out on the Talihina Soaring group to see if anyone was interested in an outing as the wind looked excellent for a day of ridge soaring. Unfortunately he couldn't get enough interest to justify paying a towplane to make the trip. I had decided that if the soaring was good enough to take off in Kansas that is what I would do.

On April 6th I started to get serious and confirmed that **John Wells** was once again interested in chasing and that **Rafael Soldan** would once again give me a tow from Wellington behind his 172. My driver for the last trip, **KC Alexander**, was unavailable but **Mike Logback** had the beginning of the week off work and was willing to drive. The Standard Cirrus was still resting in my driveway, where it had been since the 4 AM arrival on March 13th after the flight to DeQueen, AR. Everything was in place.

April 7th happened to be my 29th birthday and many of my soaring friends were in on a surprise party that **Leah** arranged. We had a good visit and with the forecasts still looking good, spent a lot of time dreaming about how far I might go. I had been thinking about declaring Paris, TX as a goal, which would be just short of Diamond Distance from Wellington. After coming up just a bit short of the declared goal on the last flight it was very tempting to declare a bit short. However, **Steve Leonard** did a good job of straightening me out and insisted that I once again Go Big or Go Home. So, I checked on his Kansas Open Class Distance to a Goal record (423 miles) and decided to declare the San Augustine, TX airport as my goal, at 439 miles. Of course I intended to keep going past the goal if the day was still working, but in the back of my mind, the idea of flying that far seemed like a stretch.

John met me at the house in the morning. We did a quick forecast review. Overdevelopment and rain was still forecast along and east of the Oklahoma/Arkansas border which ruled out a

ridge run on this flight, and the cloud field wasn't forecast to extend much further west than Dallas. A launch from Wellington appeared to really be in the sweet spot with the forecast wind line staying between the rain to the east and blue to the west. There was a chance that the Bouancy/Shear ratio would degrade to unworkable conditions past Paris, TX, depending on which forecast model you believed, so I kept that in mind.



7 AM Prog Chart

Mike flew down from McPherson in his Wittman Tailwind and arrived just in time to help rig. He reported a strong tailwind on the short flight down. We were set for launch at 11:30 AM. The first cu showed up in the area at 10:45 and by 11:30 there were excellent looking streets to the north and good clouds to the south as well. The only thing missing was the towplane.

A quick call to **Rafael** revealed the problem. The towplane was fine but his parents had driven to Wichita with his car, and the towrope was in the car! Some scrambling and improvising took place, and another rope was manufactured. Launch took place at 12:40 PM into excellent skies. Lift was found immediately and the wind was strong, about 30 mph from 340 degrees. The day was on as I drifted through my start line.

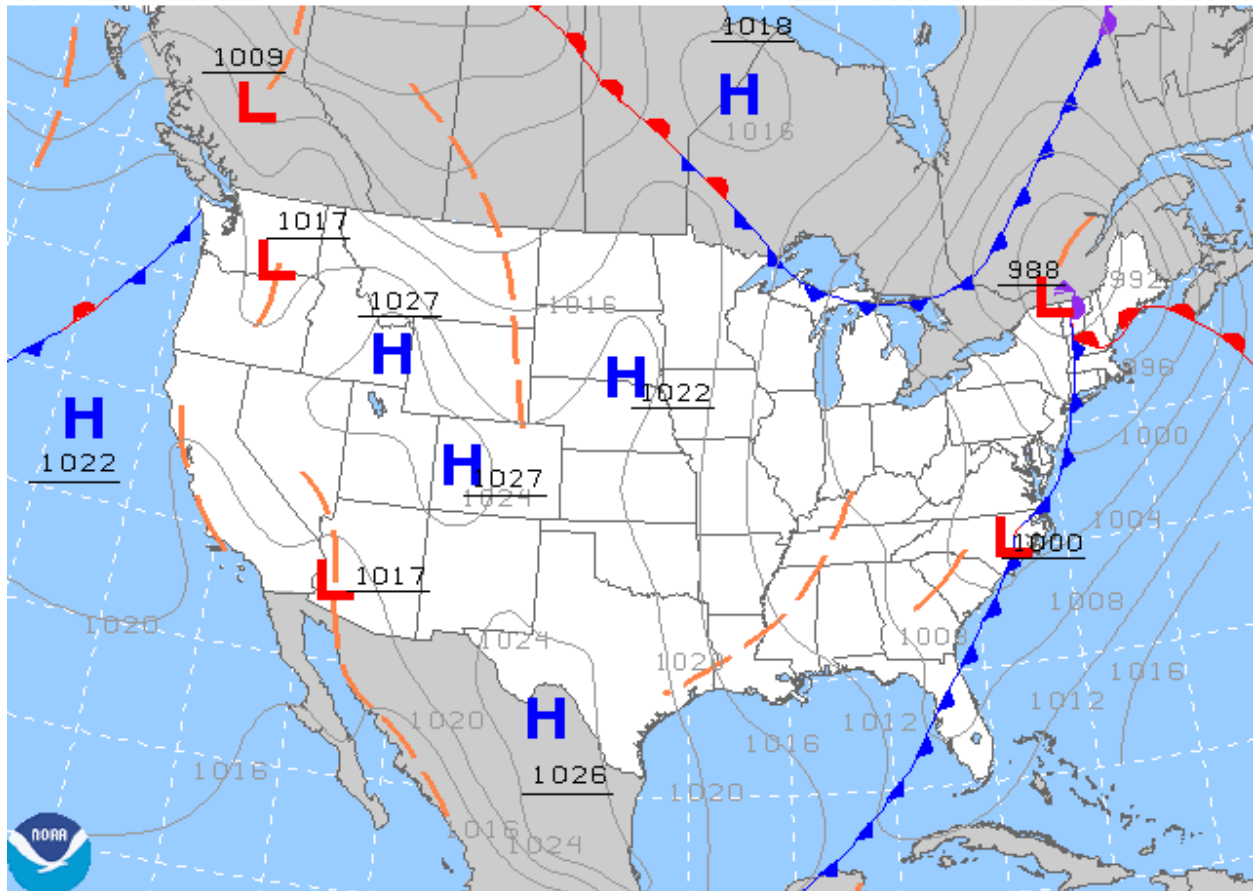


Liftoff!

Mike and **John** were quickly on the road heading south and I was quickly out of radio range. The conditions were really fantastic. There wasn't as much obvious streeting as I had hoped, but there never is. For the first third of the flight though I was usually able to bump along under clouds for quite a while before stopping to circle. That pattern seemed to change once I passed McAlester, OK and was to the west of the Oklahoma ridge areas. At that point something changed and a more classic climb/glide was what I was finding. That was OK though as the wind velocity had increased and I was able to maintain the same average speed while having to do more circling. I was making just over 80 mph average over the ground, and was starting to realize that it was likely that I would make the goal.

SURFACE ANALYSIS

VALID: 1800 UTC TUE 08 APR 2014



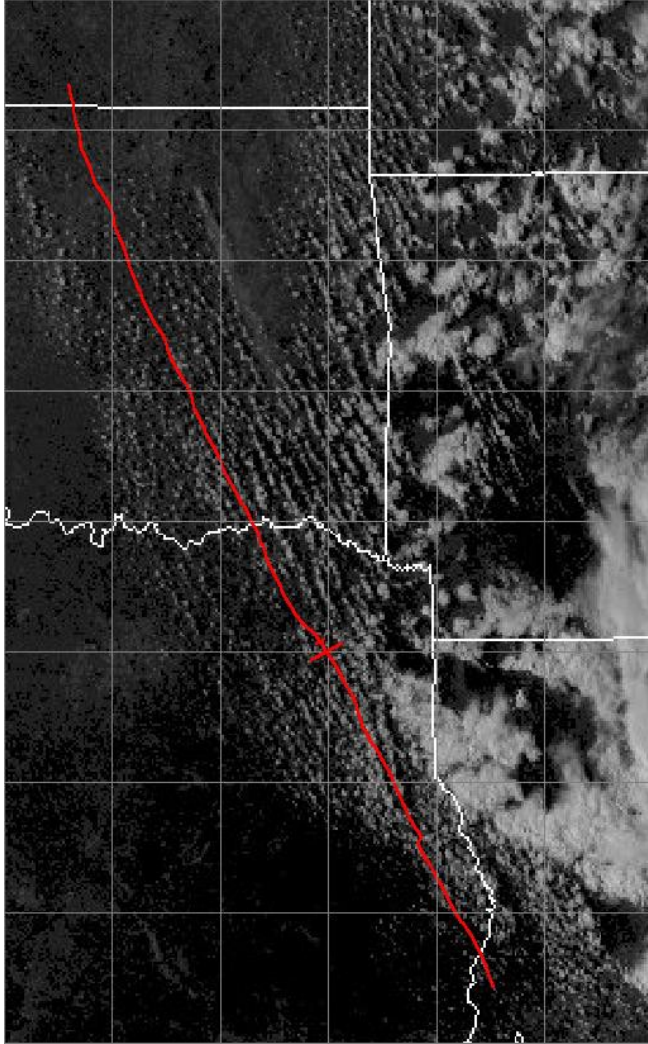
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/WPC

ISSUED: 1920 UTC TUE 08 APR 2014

1 PM Prog Chart

Even with the strong wind I was not finding it a challenge to center or stay in the lift. I was usually above 5000 MSL and never below 4000. As I flew over southern Oklahoma and crossed the Red River near Paris, TX I was now entering an area that had seen an inch or more of rainfall in the last few days. I also was starting to wonder which forecasts Buoyancy/Shear forecast would be right, and even though I could see that the ground below me was wet, the lift stayed good and I arrived at Paris with nearly enough altitude to make Longview, with several airports between. I had been flying over a lot of trees since central Oklahoma and landing options besides airports were limited. Past Longview, the only options were airports as the rest of the landscape was covered in either Pine trees or Pine stumps.

Longview has radar approach control and since the Cirrus is transponder equipped I gave them a call. I had started on a bit of a downward trend and was thinking that a landing at Longview may be required if I wasn't able to climb out. Considering the trees ahead I switched to a survival mode and took basically anything going up as I drifted past the airport. ATC wasn't working much traffic, on account of the wind gusting to about 35 knots on the surface. One Citation pilot queried about the wind and when told, he replied that it was like flying in Wichita. I chimed in that I had taken off from near Wichita. ATC wondered how far I was going and I told



him I hoped for San Augustine and beyond. As I passed the airport I found a series of climbs that gave me a comfortable glide to San Augustine, signed off with Longview Approach, and set out over the trees.

I shifted gears and slowed down a little, but with the wind speed still steadily increasing, was able to get a 100 mph groundspeed with only 55-60 knots indicated, and pretty easily achieving 40:1 and better. There was still plenty of lift too and at about 6:15 PM I crossed the finish line over the goal at San Augustine. There was still plenty of day ahead of me and I found a good climb right after that. From 8000 feet I was high enough to make it past the airport at Pineland and comfortably make the next airport at Newton, TX. I could see the rain to the east and now could see the blue to the west. I was perfectly positioned in the only remaining wedge of cumulus in this airmass. This was right where I wanted to be at the end of the day. The glide was 29 miles at 70:1 and I encountered a weak thermal at 6:45 over Newton. It averaged less than 2 knots, less than an hour before sunset and got me back high enough that I

now could comfortably make DeQuincy, LA and maybe beyond. The wind had increased to at least 40 mph now but the weak lift was perfectly smooth and easy to work.

I set off from 6800 feet at best L/D. Sunset was at 7:35, and I was predicted to make it to DeQuincy at 7:10. Beyond, there was only one airport between DeQuincy and the Gulf of Mexico, and that was at Lake Charles, LA. My Oudie showed a marginal glide to Lake Charles and I wanted to have a lot more confidence than that. Shortly after I started the glide, I passed the magical 500 mile mark. I encountered no more lift and once I was about 10 miles from DeQuincy, decided to commit to the airport there. There wasn't much but trees and swamp between DeQuincy and Lake Charles and I was also racing the sun.



Greetings from DeQuincy, LA!