

TO THROW OR NOT TO THROW

Don Richmond

Hand Launch - the very words stir an ache in the arm and raise the specter of aching feet, tennis elbow (R/C elbow) and lots of little pieces of balsa. But, as a true R/C enthusiast, I finally could not resist the temptation to see what this form of flying was all about.

Fortunately, the club was having a kit bash with the SKEETER as the target kit so I bought one, spent hours (days) building it as light as I could (16 oz's), hired a strong arm to throw it and it didn't survive an entire contest. The strong arm threw the fuselage out from under the wing!!! Glue it together, install a hook, high start launch, fold the wing, and retire from Hand Launch.

Time passes.

Along came the CLIMMAX. A great looking machine, a great performing machine, in the hands of experts - - but could I make one work? Well not the first time. I thought that a tough airplane would be good, so I covered the wing in Obeche. Wrong! About 17 ounces later even the hired arm couldn't throw it and I couldn't fly it (works great at the cliff though). OK back to the drawing board. Actually back to Charlie Richardson for another CLIMMAX (that's two in one year wow!). This time the instructions are followed to the letter-- well almost. A little carbon fiber here and there never hurt anybody.

A few practice rounds and it's time for the first contest. The hired arm is not available so I ask a husky spectator without an airplane to throw for me. Looks are deceiving and big arms don't move fast. I thanked the voluntary arm, threw the CLIMMAX myself and finished near the bottom of the pack. Reviewing the days events it was evident that this hand launch stuff required a good plane, a good arm and a good pilot. I had the plane but needed great improvement in the other elements.

Well POWAY is only 15 miles away so a couple of hours a couple of times a week might improve both my arm and my piloting abilities. OUCH! I can't raise my arm to brush my teeth. This hand launch stuff is not for fogies of my age (3/19/35). CLIMMAX back on the

shelf. Maybe at the cliff on those really calm days.

Phoenix. The group is really having fun with their hand launched models after the real contest is over. I sure wish I had brought mine - just to fit in.

Pasadena. I bring my CLIMMAX and participate in the post contest flying activities. After a couple of launches, a voice from behind says "You will have a useless arm tomorrow if you continue to throw like that." The voice said I should use a Javelin style launching technique. Javelin ??? Of course every New York farm boy grows up throwing the Javelin. Well a few demonstration throws later I more or less have the idea. (thanks Ron).

Next TPG contest. I start to throw (warm-up) and a friendly voice says "Here let me throw that for you." So only because he is bigger than I am and because I didn't want to create an altercation, I conceded. Don Van Gundy threw my poor CLIMMAX higher than it had ever been. I was concerned that the servos might freeze. Great contest. I finished in the upper third of the contestants. I am beginning to like this form of R/C glider flying, but am concerned about what I will do without my strong armed friend.

A phone call from Ron Scharck and he asks me if I am interested in going to the AMA NATS. Of course I am interested, but can I arrange my schedule to permit this gross luxury. With the approval and support of my dear wife, Brenda, I made the necessary arrangements. Now to the tasks of the NATS. The first event is hand launch. Should I enter -- no I think not -- but I will take my CLIMMAX just to fun-fly when the regular contest is over.

But at some point before we left for Lubbock, Texas, I thought I might as well enter all the events. Obviously, a training program for the hand launch event might help. So out to POWAY every other morning for at least 30 throws and lots of air reading and other forms of Voodoo. Surprise -- I usually caught a thermal or two and climbed to more than 15 or 20 feet. What a great experience. Throw, catch a small bump, circle, get a better bump and eventually fly away.

Off to Lubbock for the NATS.

Lots of work to do as we are running the events as well as participating. Not much time to practice, but a few flights Tuesday afternoon before the contest on Wednesday, prove the venerable CLIMMAX has survived the trip.

Wednesday. Hand launch contest day. What am I doing in this event. All these people are much younger than I am and appear to be able to put there aircraft into orbit. Oh well -- there is no graceful retreat.

Round one, with Steve Stricklett as my timer we score 1000.

Round two, with great spotting by Steve we score a 957.

Round three, again with Steve doing a great job of keeping up the signals we score another 1000.

Wow! I'm leading the contest after the first three rounds. Amazing!

Hey this is demanding but great fun. The arm feels fine Let's go for the whole Enchilada.

Round four and things begin to unwind. A hard landing detaches the horizontal stabilizer. A hundred yard dash to the pits, some CA and great assistance by my team mates and we are back on the field to complete the round. Throw -- what!! The CLIMMAX does a loop. Not good. Throw again, aircraft is hard to control. OK add some lead to the battery compartment and throw again. Not the same aircraft as before the hard landing.

The last three rounds were unremarkable and the resulting sub par performance gave me a 6th place in the contest.

Disappointed. Are you kidding. The high point was not on the score card but when former world champion Skip Miller (the eventual winner), asked the score keeper (Jo Joy) "Who is this Don Richmond and will I have a chance to fly against him."

Bottom line - there is no age limit. So get off your duff buy a CLIMMAX, and meet me at POWAY before we go to work. 30 throws every three days will keep you in condition and open the door to a great new area of R/C glider flying.

When in doubt - - **THROW IT!**