

2,598!

BY RICHARD DERMER

**W.O.W.** The city of Enid, Oklahoma likes to use this acronym, “where the Wheat grows, the Oil flows, and the Wind blows.” It pretty much describes this city of 50,000 in northern Oklahoma – home of Vance Air Force base and surrounded by incredibly flat, wind-swept wheat fields. A major center of wheat distribution for the entire nation, the multiple massive grain elevators dominate the skyline.

“WOW” is what the citizens of Enid said at 1:05 PM Thursday, September 10, 2009, when 2,598 duly registered and witnessed kite fliers flew 2,598 kites simultaneously for 30 seconds! While failing to break the “official” Guinness record of 3,710 set by Palestinian children under UN supervision in July, the organizing group of Kites Over Enid is now claiming a North American record under the Guinness standards. Those include one kite per person, 10’ minimum altitude, and kites lifted by wind power only.

Kites Over Enid was the inspiration of the Enid Habitat for Humanity fundraising committee, and it succeeded wonderfully. Habitat board member Stanley Hicks envisioned a record attempt as a great publicity opportunity for sponsors, and was right. With an organizing committee comprised of a number of prominent civic leaders, the event raised over \$50,000 for Habitat, including major sponsorships from three different wind energy corporations and 32 other sponsors.

It was a sight to behold. A vast, open 25 acre flying field of short mowed grass was covered by screaming children and excited adults flying so many kites that it was like being inside a giant popcorn popper, with kernels in the form of white sled kites flying everywhere. Most of the kites were Frustrationless Flier sled kites which were distributed free to 1,700 school children who had been bussed to the event. Other pre-made sleds were sold to the public at the event, and several hundred assorted commercial and home-made kites added color to the mix. In a separate field downwind of the sleds, 15-20 visiting AKA members put up a nice display of show kites, including numerous large foils of Barry Ogletree flown by Rick Hawkins, dual and quad line demos by Troy Gunn, and assorted large deltas, rokkakus, and others.



Mike Klemme

It was bizarre. Who ever heard of a two-hour kite festival, running from 11:30 to 1:30 over the lunch hour of a working weekday? Well, it worked. The event, conceived and executed by a group of non-kiters, was beautifully organized. The Enid Public Works Department had groomed and mowed the huge field repeatedly for weeks prior to the event, and then surveyed and chalk lined and numbered a grid of 120 60’x60’ squares to ensure even distribution of fliers and kites. Police directed traffic and a small army of volunteers coordinated the public parking lot. As buses of school children arrived, they were met by marshalls who escorted them to their proper locations on the grid, registered their names, and issued their kites. Public attendees were registered, sold a kite if they hadn’t brought their own, and directed to a flying location. A small 10’ hill on the edge of the field masked the sound of the generator and made a perfect elevation for the sound system and announcer. The fire department flew a giant flag from their truck’s extended ladder.

When Kites Over Enid first asked me for help in putting on this event, I told them they would need a huge flying field. They found it. I told them they would need a bunch of really dependable kites. Although they thought they only needed to break an old record of 967, they bought 2,500 Frustrationless Fliers from AKA member Cat Gabrel. Cat made several trips to Enid; the first was to film a video on kite construction that aired repeatedly on local TV. She then spent several weekends supervising groups of 20-40 volunteers in building the kites from kit form.

And the date was pinpoint timing too. It had been chosen because it was also the date for a national conference for the wind energy industry, held adjacent to the flying field. We had marked out a VIP flying field just for them. At fifteen minutes prior to the record attempt, 120 wind energy executives trooped outside, were given kites, and lofted theirs into the sky directly upwind of 2,500 others. They were grinning from ear to ear. I don’t think I have ever seen so many businessmen in suits flying kites together.

Organizers of this record attempt are justifiably proud of their effort. Having learned only weeks prior that the July fly on the Gaza Strip had almost quadrupled the previous record, they decided to go ahead anyway. So they are claiming at least a new American record, and are considering another much larger attempt in the future. They have the room, the wind, and now the experience. K



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# KITE PLAN

SYLVIEN VENET'S JESSY

The Jessy is an easy kite to build, with its simple geometric shape based on the number four. It can be built to any dimension, with the same proportions. For instance, if you use 48” spars, each square in the plan is 12”.

This kite can be built with either pockets to hold the spars, or loops at each corner to hold spars fitted with arrow nocks. The Jessy flies well even without a tail. It uses a single tow point, attached at the spot where the two rods cross.

Be sure to bow the kite before flying.



Plan courtesy of Nouveau Cervoliste Belge

