



Race 11, an RV-10, on takeoff.

Pushing Proficiency

Hayward Air Rally

I NEED TO TELL YOU ABOUT the Hayward Air Rally because it's about flying proficiency (always a good thing), it funds three EAA Air Academy scholarships, and it's fun!

You may or may not have heard of the Hayward Air Rally, but it is the longest continually held proficiency flying event in North America. This was its 47th year!

Founded in 1964, the idea was originally conceived by the mayor of Hayward, California. Early on it was called the Hayward Air Race, but it's not really a "race," so the name was changed, more appropriately, to "rally." And a rally it is—a rally about flying proficiency, specifically navigation and fuel management. And know this: *All* airplanes and pilots are welcome, from 152s to Barons, sport pilots to ATPs, GPS-equipped to compass-only, production to experimental. Anyone can win. It's not about what you fly but *how* you fly. Bottom line: Everyone who participates in the Hayward Air Rally leaves a better pilot, and you can't beat that!

In a nutshell, the rally is basically a 500-nautical-mile cross-country divided into two 250-nautical-mile legs. You arrive in Hayward on Thursday and your aircraft is classified, fueled, and "impounded" (parked). Race numbers are then affixed to the aircraft. There are two categories: digital (you get to use all the whiz-bang stuff) and traditional (no whiz-bang stuff—my kind of



people). You declare your category then attend the mandatory rally briefing. There you are briefed on the course and given the *Rally Course Pilot Operating Handbook* (POH). The POH is 40 pages of important and necessary information. (Pilots, don't let the 40 pages scare you; there are pictures.) Your rally numbers are recorded, and you are given the rally frequency and a rally squawk. Takeoff times are staggered.

After the briefing you sit down and plan your flight, and I do mean *plan* it! Then, before you fly, you hand in your time and fuel estimates to rally officials. On Friday—here's where you really get into it—you fly the course and see how close you come to your estimates. There



Scott Allaway, pilot of Race 3, plans his flight.

are penalty points for deviations from those estimates. Like golf, the lowest score wins.

When you leave Hayward you must fly a specific departure route that takes you over a mandatory start point, where rally officials on the ground start your time by noting the rally number on your aircraft. Today, your first stop is Redding (RDD), California, but en route you have to fly over and identify three precise checkpoints. For example, checkpoint No. 1 is N 37° 43.41' W 120° 53.40'. Yes, they also give it to you as Peterson Airport (CA17). At that checkpoint they ask you the question (it's in your POH), "At the west end of the runway, how many T-hangars are just southwest of 'Hawke' on the white concrete pad?" You are given a minimum overfly altitude for each checkpoint and, of course, are to monitor the rally frequency. Circling or "rooting around" looking for the checkpoint is discouraged; besides, that just throws off your original estimates. You're beginning to get the drift (no pun intended), right? This rally is about accurate planning and flying. And it's about challenge—something from which all pilots can benefit.

Before you start feeling the pressure, let me interject something here: This is a competition, for sure, but it's a friendly competition. There's a lot of camaraderie involved, and a lot of good information is exchanged in the process. The whole experience serves to make you a better pilot, and you gain a bunch of new, like-minded friends in the process. It's all to the good!

You're competing against yourself, really. The fun? Meeting the challenge! That's what makes flying, well, flying.

Okay, you found and identified the T-hangars. Now you have two more navigation points on the route, and then you overfly the Redding timing line, where rally officials record your time. Then you land at Redding airport for refueling. Before you refuel you can declare a "fuel vector" for unplanned situations, i.e., weather deviations, go-arounds, etc., and that information is entered on your rally sheet for scoring adjustments later. Fueling is monitored and recorded by rally officials. Now you can get a bite to eat, take two aspirin, whatever. The "race" doesn't start again until you cross the next timing line northbound.

Now, launch for leg No. 2, fly over the prescribed point to start your timing again, and fly over and identify three more checkpoints. Then fly over the stop-time line near Bend, Oregon, your final destination, and land at the Bend airport. Refueling is



Race numbers in place, the competitors line up before takeoff.

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once again closely monitored by rally officials, and all paperwork is turned in. Let the scoring begin! How'd you do?

There are a couple scoring "issues" I haven't told you about yet. If you're not ready for your Hayward engine start time: 100 penalty points; mis-ID a mandatory checkpoint: 250 penalty points; orbiting in sight of a timing line: 300 penalty points. You can be disqualified if you do not cross a timing point or refuel without a rally official present. Or, as it says in the POH, "for wearing black socks with shorts." Also, you get a little break if you're in the traditional class: a one-point penalty per second deviation from planned ETA. (The digital class gets a three-point penalty per second deviation from ETA.)

Lots of details? Well, yeah, but they all serve to level the playing field to make it fair for all and to discourage "trickery." Besides, trickery is not the point; good planning and good flying are the point. Pilots who are up to meeting challenges wouldn't have it any other way. You're competing against yourself, really. The fun? Meeting the challenge! That's what makes flying, well, flying.

The difference between their estimated and planned fuel use after 500 nautical miles? Four-tenths of a gallon. Think they know something about flight planning and navigation?

I can't go any further without telling you about Chris, who basically is the "chairman" of the Hayward Air Rally. I put chairman in quotation marks because in the handbook he lists himself as "Supreme Arbiter of Inane Discussions." He also fills in as "Primary Arbiter for Weather Manipulation." (Everyone is always asking him about the weather!) And, just guessing here since it isn't published, I'm thinking he's also a member of the "Black Socks With Shorts Police." At any rate, he's a fun guy as well as being a serious and safety-conscious aviator. He also has the work ethic of a honeybee gathering pollen and is smart enough to figure and tally the scoring sheets. He's really a pretty incredible guy.

I have to give you an idea of the dedication and volunteerism that goes with the rally. Steve, Chris' brother, comes all the way from the East Coast every year to help. Paul, who first contacted me about the rally, said, "Some people do annual animal hunting trips; I do the Hayward Air Rally." The volunteerism is EAA-like: too many to mention but all do yeoman



Race 71 flies over a timing point.

duty, and all are necessary and very much appreciated. And there are several sponsors who, worthy of note, are singled out and thanked at every opportunity. It all serves to add another touch of class to the spirit and fun that pervades the event.

This year there were 23 airplane entries in the rally. I was told this was a low number. They've had numbers in the 40s in the past. Most flew as crews of two. (Four eyes better'n two, eh?) There were two solos, six first-time entries, and airplane types from Cessna, Grumman, Piper, Lancair, Van's, and Beech, to name a few.

I was in Bend for the end of the rally and watched many of the airplanes arrive. Race 77's airplane said on the side, "The Fred Baron." The pilot's name? You guessed it: Fred. One of my favorites to taxi by? Race 11, an RV-10. (I have a soft spot for experimentals, don't ya know.) In it was a mom—the pilot—and her two kids. As soon as she shut down the kids piled out and headed, lickety-split, for the FBO. Mom said, "They have to go to the bathroom."

By late afternoon all aircraft had landed. As is tradition, most met and gathered at the Shilo Inn hospitality suite. There were hors d'oeuvres and a bathtub full of ice with various cold beverages therein. All were thirsty! I found a chair in a corner, sat there with a writing pad, and listened.

"How'd ya do?"

"Better'n last year."

"Not gonna win but better'n I've ever done."

And, looking over a book that had pictures of the checkpoints, "Oh! There's that dang tower."

The most common lament: "Those stupid winds aloft."

And, "Didn't burn as much as I thought either leg."

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The rally winners: Kregg Cammack (left) and Paul Buenrostro.

“Show of hands. Who stayed up past midnight grinding numbers?”

“If we didn’t win, it’s cold cuts tonight.”

“I’m used to using everything. This time it was just me and that stupid compass.”

The next night after the rally is a banquet and awards ceremony. The results are revealed, trophies are given, and there are cash awards, too. And “Tail End Charlie” (most points) gets an award, also. It’s no disgrace, though, because they by-golly stepped up to the plate and played the game! This year’s winner? Paul Buenrostro and his copilot, Kregg Cammack. Here’s the thing about Paul: He first competed in the rally before he was a pilot. This was his and Kregg’s fifth year of flying the rally together. The difference between their estimated and planned fuel use after 500 nautical miles? Four-tenths of a gallon. Think they know something about flight planning and navigation? (If you want every rally result, you can find it on www.SportAviation.org.)

I mentioned in the beginning the three EAA Air Academy scholarships that the rally awards. The Hayward Air Rally combined with some Northern California and Central Oregon EAA chapters to award the scholarships, to include tuition and round-trip airfare, one for each of the three airport areas: Hayward, Redding, and Bend.

How’s that? Flying proficiency, camaraderie, fun, challenge, and three EAA Air Academy scholarships all rolled into the rally you’ve never heard of (until now), the Hayward Air Rally. That’s good stuff in my book.

Want more? Here’s what they’re thinking: For the 50th anniversary of the rally, they’re considering flying all the way from Hayward to AirVenture! How cool would it be to win the best planning and navigation award from the West Coast all the way to Oshkosh, Wisconsin? That’d be a mighty fine feather to put in any aviation awards bonnet! **EAA**



Lauran Paine Jr., EAA 582274, is a retired military pilot and retired airline pilot. He built and flies an RV-8 and has owned a Stearman and a Champ. Learn more about Lauran at his website, www.ThunderBumper.com.