

Unless you  
probably be printed  
in one of his mags.

Tsunami PILOT REPORT  
by Skip Holm

Tsunami has always been sort of an enigma for me, an aircraft I've always wanted to race but never had the opportunity. One I've known relatively little about, due to the minimal technical but high publicity Tsunami has received. I've also been intrigued by the name Tsunami -- a name that people take the time to explain in some detail, as if the name explanation "Tidal Wave" would somehow describe the character of the "little airplane", as John Sandberg affectionately calls his racer. After flying and getting to know Tsunami, I felt I could better share the insight I gained in this racer by describing each flight phase in a phrase that then would become the acronym T-S-U-N-A-M-I. The above paragraph would, for instance, be titled "The-Super-Unlimited-Never-Awarded-Much-Information" racer.

Then-Steve-Under-Necessary-Anesthesia-Miraculously-Insisted:

"You fly Skip"! Since we're all admirers of Steve Hinton (and Karen --- and the kids --- and Chino cows --- ) and have heard the story of how Steve got hurt in the 1930s GB style racer while prepping for the Disney movie, you probably already know why JR selected me to fly Tsunami (its kind of like the time the US Air Force Thunderbird team, made up of the Air Force's five best pilots, had that accident and the Air Force then had to go see if they had another five best pilots for the new team). Anyway, just to make sure that Steve wouldn't change his mind, I hired my two big relative dudes to further influence Steve toward a slow recovery by blackening both his baby blues. Yea! Success through heir power!

The-Secret-Until-Now-Air-Motor-Info.

After arriving at Minneapolis, Minnesota or Minn, Minn, Minn, Minn or MM, MM, MM, MM etc. as they abbreviate this spot on earth, John Sandberg took me to the secret engine shop "Metal Masters". He also confided in me that this shop is so secret that Doug Arnold thinks it's just a two car garage. Anyway, here he showed me how seemingly novice quasi-car-Merlin engine guys such as Sam Torvik -- Dwight Thorn or himself, are putting engines together that a die-hard Zeuschel engine fan such as myself could almost take as heresy. They're mixing parts from engines, coating engine parts, using car spark plugs, auto

ignition systems, Honda alternators, etc., etc.. I believe this mix and match philosophy of building engines makes it more difficult to determine what part is breaking --- even though the parts aren't breaking! In the old days, when we blew up a Merlin we knew deep in our hearts that we were blowing up the best that Rolls-Royce could build! To my way of thinking, it's just not so macho to destroy a Honda part or a Ford spark plug! Know what I mean?

This-Surely-Upset-No-one-Around-Minnesota-Intentionally.

My first flight in Tsunami was from St. Cloud airport, a wide open quiet kind of country airport with 7000 plus feet of runway. My first impressions of Tsunami were the cockpit being fairly far aft and the seating being more English sports car-ish. I've found that design engineers, members of the croissant crowd and observer pilots like cockpits to be very aft in airplanes. Real pilots or pilots that really fly tend to just like to see where they are going. For those real pilots, Tsunami isn't as bad as Mr. Awesome or as blind as Blind Mans Bluff, nor as good as Stiletto --- and Stiletto is still admired by the croissant folks! However, Tsunami has excellent visibility up and away and the straighter leg seating is also comfortable. I only flew one flight the first day at St. Cloud due to a minor gear problem. Tsunami has had recurring problems with getting its feet down, making them stay down or getting them up. These problems had been solved again in the months before my flight and my gear problem here was only an alignment problem. The cockpit switchology layout on Tsunami is race orientated, with race switches such as spray bar, ADI and fuel pressure being the more easily accessible switches on the instrument panel. The gauge layout follows the same design philosophy, with race gauges taking up the prime real estate and attitude, airspeed or navigation instruments going to the remaining spots. Cockpit instrument orientation is very good but I did request the airspeed be moved into the center of the panel. My second flight at St. Cloud was another familiarization hop with some speed bumps to the speeds we expected to see on Sunday at Reno. I guess an obvious and interesting lesson once learned in any airplane translates to any other. That is: When the airspeed needle is going in one direction and the Mach needle is going in the other direction, pieces of the airplane can also be expected to start going in their own directions. Anyway, at Reno winning speed in the quiet peaceful countryside of St. Cloud, the radiator scoop made a hellatious sound and blew off! For one and one-half days we worked day and night to get it repaired. Actually, the great Tsunami crew worked for one and one-half days while Don Fraser, a local spiritual leader, and myself sat in the VFW club determining how many US citizens knew Saddam spelled backwards meant the US was in trouble in Iraq.

Through-Storms-Under-Nebulous-Areas-Mostly-Incredible.

The secret to cross-country flying is to never be responsible for any navigation. I already knew this fact before JR started discussing maps, headings, frequencies, MEAs, MOAs, FARs, FAAs, FAFs, MAPs, MOMs, POPs, etc., so we finally agreed to an out of cockpit settlement: I would write 123.4 on my hand, would follow him and his MU anywhere and would land where he landed. Amen! The cross-country was basically more fun, more grins and more landing practice. The Yak flaps on Tsunami have approximately the same effect as on a Yak; they set up the approach approximately another 8 to 10 degrees and slow the stall speeds about the same. Although Tsunami stalls at approximately 108 KIAS with approaches flown at 1.2 V<sub>stall</sub> or 130 KIAS, only landings of 130 KIAS resulted in minimum landings. This is due to the aircraft being more controllable during the rollout at 130 KIAS touchdowns. Touchdowns at 120 KIAS, for instance, generally resulted in large bounces, more oohs and aahs from look-i-loos and longer landing distances.

#### The-Sandberg-Uno-Número-Air-Machine-I.

Reno was great on Sunday until Tsunami slipped into that dreaded #2 spot! I mean, it was really great! Actually, all of Reno week was fairly great (is there such a thing as fairly great or is that like being kinda wet, somewhat drunk or almost pregnant). Actually, the only two other teams that were happier than Tsunami's on Sunday were Rare Bear's, obviously, and Stiletto's, not so obviously --- until you realize all the money they've saved by missing a years worth of racing. For me personally though, Reno has always meant that someone won and all the rest lost -- and the losing part is a major downer! Especially if you'd planned, connived, contrived, schemed, dreamed of a different outcome. Plans such as "Go fast and don't look back", "Be a mean Muther", "Pedal to the metal", "Eat my prop wash", etc., etc., are good but have no real depth of a hard analytical thought process. That's why the Tsunami and the Strega teams joined forces this year to defeat THE Bear! The approach was genius in it's simplicity, with it's only fault being its failure in execution. This much thought out approach to defeat the Bear was for Tiger in Strega to 'Get-the-Bear' and then me in Tsunami to simply 'Get-Strega. Great Plan! But Tiger failed and Tsunami was left with having to handle the whole hog. The moral being: Things never go as planned if you have to handle the hog. Hardly ever! As a side note on chasing the Bear; Tiger, who seems to have the record on Bear chasing, had been telling everyone that flying behind Rare Bear was like being in the wash behind a road grader. And now I agree too. On the 6th lap on Sunday, while trying to keep away from the Bear's wash, I ended up flying into it at pylon #4. The resulting jolt was about 7 Gs and made me take a quick look at the airplane extremities such as the wings and tail to make sure they were still aboard. A road grader -- yes indeed! In some ways I feel that this pilot report didn't touch on all the unique handling qualities of this racer, but on the other hand, I expected a far more temperamental beast than I found. It still has some peculiarities that will always keep it

Such on all the unique handling qualities of this racer, but on the other hand, I expected a far more temperamental beast than I found. It still has some peculiarities that will always keep it in the class of the thoroughbred, even more so than a racer Mustang. I enjoyed the "little airplane" and I was impressed with the "homebuilt" durability, handling qualities, speed, slickness, smoothness, character and personality of the air machine T-S-U-N-A-M-I.

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