



Fledgling Hawks Spread their Wings for their 1st Solo Flights

On a windy Santa Ana day (April 12, 2008), Jay and Heather Janda took their first solo flights at Avenue "S" in Palmdale, CA. The day began when the young couple rendezvoused with Joe Greblo and several other pilots at the Sylmar Flight Park. Jay and Heather had started their flight training back in September of 2007, and had been working their way through the Windsports program. With their Hang 2 ratings and several tandems behind them, Jay and Heather were ready to take their first high-altitude solo flights together.

The winds blew strong for most of the day, and it sometimes seemed that the only thing flying would be the little red disks in Jay and Heather's wind meters. They checked the conditions eagerly all day under the watchful eye of their instructor, Joe Greblo.

In the last hours before sunset, the winds finally relented, and Heather hooked in to go first. With Bob Kuczewski releasing her wires, Jay clicking his camera, and Joe's voice on the radio, Heather took her first steps into the high-altitude world of solo hang gliding. Under careful supervision, Heather completed her flawless flight with a safe landing. Jay was next, and he followed Heather's performance with a flawless flight of his own. Their post-flight smiles (in the attached photograph) say what words cannot.

Heather Janda was raised in San Jose, California, and she earned her Bachelor of Science in Anthropology with an emphasis on Archeology and Earth Science from Arizona State University. Heather has put her Archeology career on hold - until retirement - in favor of steady paying jobs to fund her outdoor activities. She still loves putting small pieces of information together to create the bigger picture, but she's now applying those skills to construction architecture accounting and operations. Heather's always been jealous of birds, and her early "Flight Simulator" training (back in the 80's) foreshadowed her future in aviation. Until recently, she had done all her "flying" in the (mostly) earthbound sports of skiing, wind-surfing, and boogie-boarding. After her first high-altitude solo flight, those other sports will never seem the same.

Jay is a native Californian, and as a young tike he dreamed of being a roller-coaster designer. Not too surprisingly, the young boy's dreams of steel and structure led him to a career in architecture. Jay studied Architecture at Arizona State University, and went on to earn his Masters in Architecture from the University of Oregon in 2005. Jay is currently working for a local architectural firm in San Diego while pursuing his California Architectural License. With a solid career in hand, Jay decided it was time to realize the "ups and downs" part of his childhood dream and found a perfect fit in the sport of hang gliding. On April 12th, Jay took the training wheels off of his roller-coaster in the air.

Jay and Heather are great young couple, and they share a nice home in San Diego with their somewhat crazy cat, Hobbs. They've been married 7 years, and they enjoy hiking, camping, mountain biking, snowboarding, boogie-boarding, and now hang gliding together. They have two of the newest USHPA numbers among all of the Hawks, but their love of flight will hopefully make them "regulars" at our local sites before long. Please keep a look out for these rare Hawks (numbers 76 and 77), and give them a warm welcome if you spot them on the ground or in the air. Jay and Heather represent the future of our sport, and we should do our best to keep them flying safely and happily together. :) :)