



## TAKE A RIDE ON THE WIND

By Kenny Miller

MERRITT ISLAND FL-Most folks would be a little annoyed with a windy rainy gray Florida day. But not Tinho Dornellas. Tinho is an expert windsurfer and his life's dream is to teach you how to be a windsurfer.

This thirty-nine year old father of two boys operates out of an obscure Merritt Island, Florida shop in an area where most folks would think of storing furniture rather than buying a sailboard and learning how to use it.

His shop is a few miles down the road from the legendary Ron-Jons Surf Shop in Cocoa Beach, Florida. But, Ron-Jon's isn't interested in Tinho's share of the adventurous windsurfer market. To them, windsurfing is a little too tough for the tourists passing through on their vacations.

Like so many others have discovered, it takes more than inventory to be in the windsurfing business. It takes a combination of knowledge, love of what you do, and courage. Tinho has never been in short supply of any of those characteristics. He proved that when he left his home in Angola, Africa when he was only eighteen.

"I wanted to design boats," say this engineer now turned windsurfing guru. "But, I didn't want to push paper." He put down his calculator and T-square and went off to teach surfing for Club Med® in Portugal.

It was while he was waiting for a wave, he saw one. He watched as it glided across the waves and waited for nothing. He was in love.

With the help and second income from his wife he met while he was instructing for Club Med in the Camen Islands, Tinho opened Calema (meaning strong wind) Windsurfing.

"I had two boards and if there were three customers in the store, it looked crowded," he recalls with a smile. He watched other flashy stores open and close and soon had the formula clearly in mind.

To be successful in the windsurfing business, you had to love to teach and Tinho loves teaching. Tinho even has a portable store. You'll find it parked next to the water on the North side of SR 520 as you head for Cocoa Beach. It's a silver step van and it pulls a trailer full of different size boards and a variety of sails. He takes what's needed to the place where it's needed most but this isn't the first stop for a novice windsurfing student. The first stop will be the store for a little time on a simulator Tinho designed.

Windsurfing is, after all, a combination of balance and physics. You'll also notice a combination of the fearless young blond boys of summer weaving through the waves and leaning into the wind with the gray hairs of the retired set.

"I gave up golf seven years ago," a seventy-two year old former salesman from Michigan says as he ties his board securely on the rack of his small sports pickup. "Windsurfing gives me the right combination of exercise, fun, and inner peace." The sparkle in his eyes confirmed his words.

Calema Windsurfing is known world-wide in the windsurfing community but Tinho has had a little trouble getting advertising to work for him.

"I tried some things in the newspaper and on the radio but they didn't work too well." Then, he discovered "event" style marketing. "We sponsor regatta style events and with all of the skill and the color of the sport, the press and the public are naturally attracted to it. Those events get the phone to ring."

In an area where folks come in droves to watch a space shuttle launch, color zooming around on the waterways right next to NASA catches a lot of interest.

Tinho also speaks out on the environmental side of things every time he gets a chance. He is not a power boat or personal watercraft fan. "They waste energy and pollute the atmosphere," he points out. "Windsurfing uses what's there. Nothing is wasted. There is no pollution."

That is another part of the puzzle that draws him toward the sport and something he teaches his two boys. "We have a duty to leave things better than we find them," he says.

Tinho has spent most of his life doing what he loves. He has introduced fun and adventure to people all over the country and around the world. He is proof that you can do something on a rainy, windy, gray Florida day.

You can put a smile on your face and go for a ride on the wind.