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Testing of a Helium Loop Heat Pipe for Large Area Cryocooling

Jentung Ku

Franklin Robinson

NASA/ Goddard Space Flight Center



Outline

- **Background**
- **CLHP Design and Operating Principle**
- **Test Article**
- **Test Setup**
- **Test Results**
- **Conclusions**



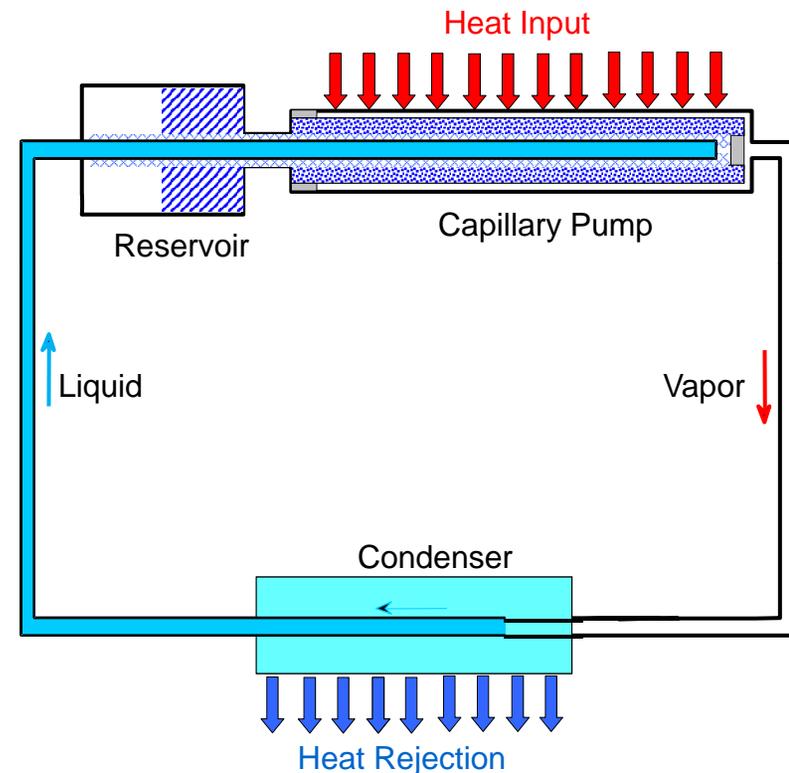
Testing of a Cryogenic Loop Heat Pipe for Large Area Cryocooling

- **Objective:**
 - Experimentally test a cryogenic loop heat pipe (CLHP) to demonstrate its feasibility as a closed-loop system to cool large areas such as optics, detector arrays, and cryogenic propellant tanks
- **Technical Approach:**
 - Reconfigure a CLHP developed under the NASA SBIR program and use a cryocooler as the heat sink (instead of a helium dewar).
 - Test the CLHP in a thermal vacuum chamber.
 - Use helium as working fluid to demonstrate its operation in temperature ranges of 3.0K to 4.0K.
 - Characterize the CLHP performance under transient and steady state.



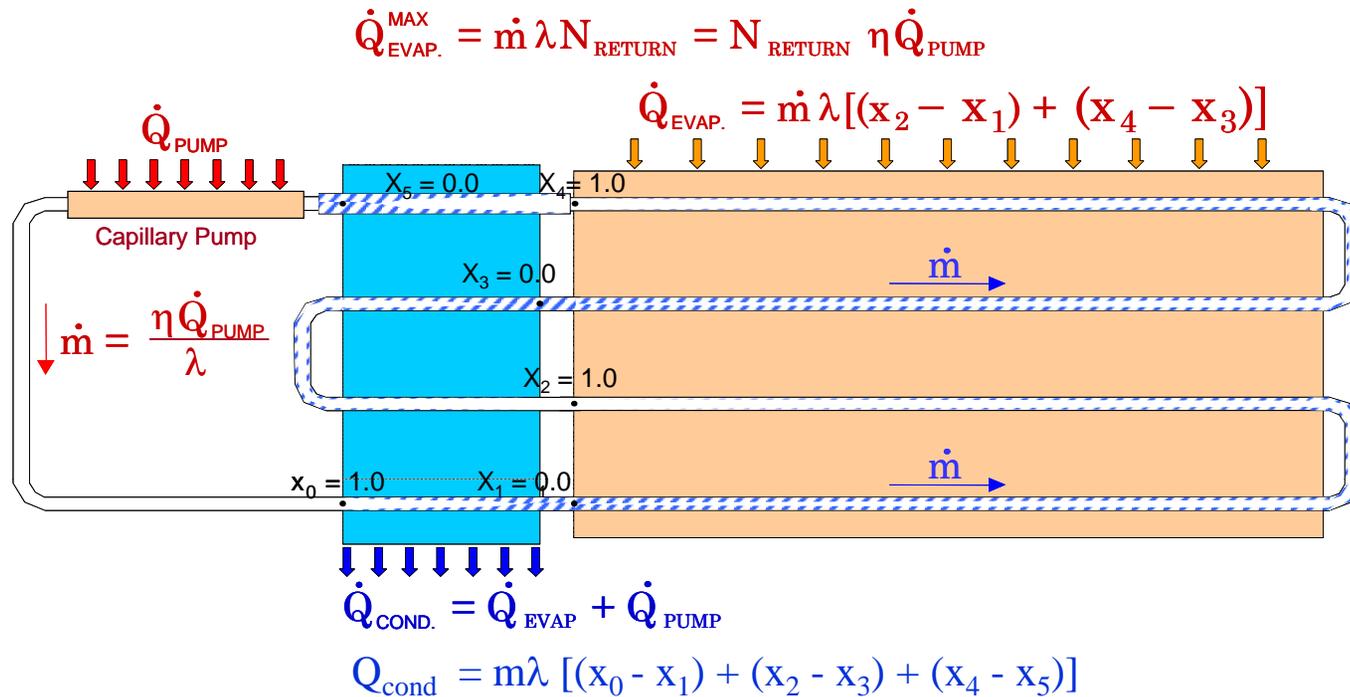
Traditional Loop Heat Pipe

- **Application**
 - Waste heat is acquired over a small area by the LHP capillary pump and transported to a large area (e.g. space radiator) for rejection.
- **No External Pumping Power**
 - Waste heat provides the driving force.
- **No Moving Parts**
- **Robust Operation**
 - Passive
 - Self-regulating
- **High Pumping Capability**
- **High Thermal Conductance**
- **Smooth-walled and flexible transport lines provide flexibilities for design, integration and testing.**





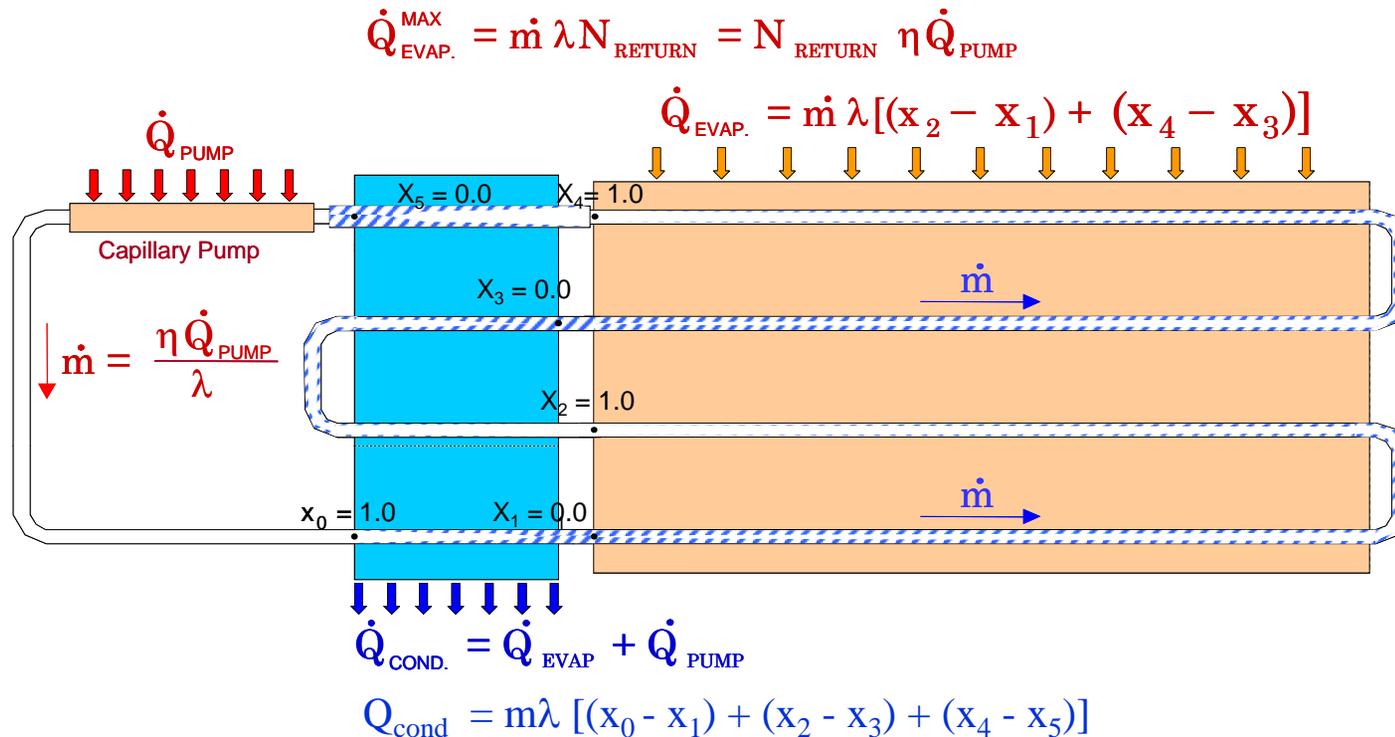
CLHP for Large Area Cooling Applications



- Heat is absorbed over a large area and rejected into a small area.
- An external power is applied to the capillary pump to provide the driving force for fluid circulation.
- The CLHP transport line flows alternately between a condenser plate attached to a cryocooler and an evaporator plate attached to the heat source.
- Vapor condenses into liquid as it passes through the condenser plate, and liquid vaporizes as it passes through the heat source.



CLHP for Large Area Cooling Applications



- The amount of heat that can be acquired is a function of the heat applied to the CLHP capillary pump and the number of passes that the fluid flows through the heat source and the condenser plate.
- The maximum amount of heat that can be applied to the capillary pump is limited by the heat transport capability of the CLHP.

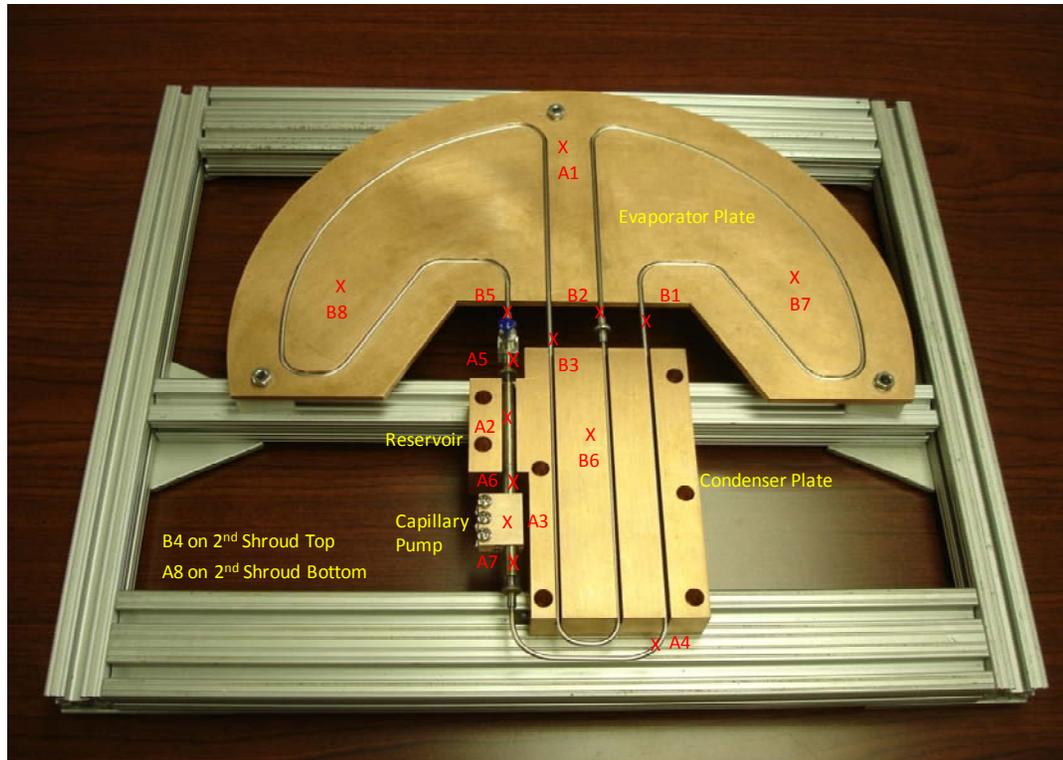


Technical Challenges of CLHP

- **A mismatch of coefficient of thermal expansion between the capillary pump and the primary wick**
 - **Solved by using the same material for capillary pump and primary wick**
- **Containment of the system pressure at ambient temperature**
 - **Solved by using a hot reservoir attached to the CLHP to reduce the system pressure**
- **Start-up from an initially supercritical state**
 - **Solved by using a hot reservoir attached to the CLHP to reduce the system pressure**
- **Parasitic heat gain at cryogenic temperatures**
 - **Minimized by proper insulation**



CLHP Test Article with Temperature Sensor Locations



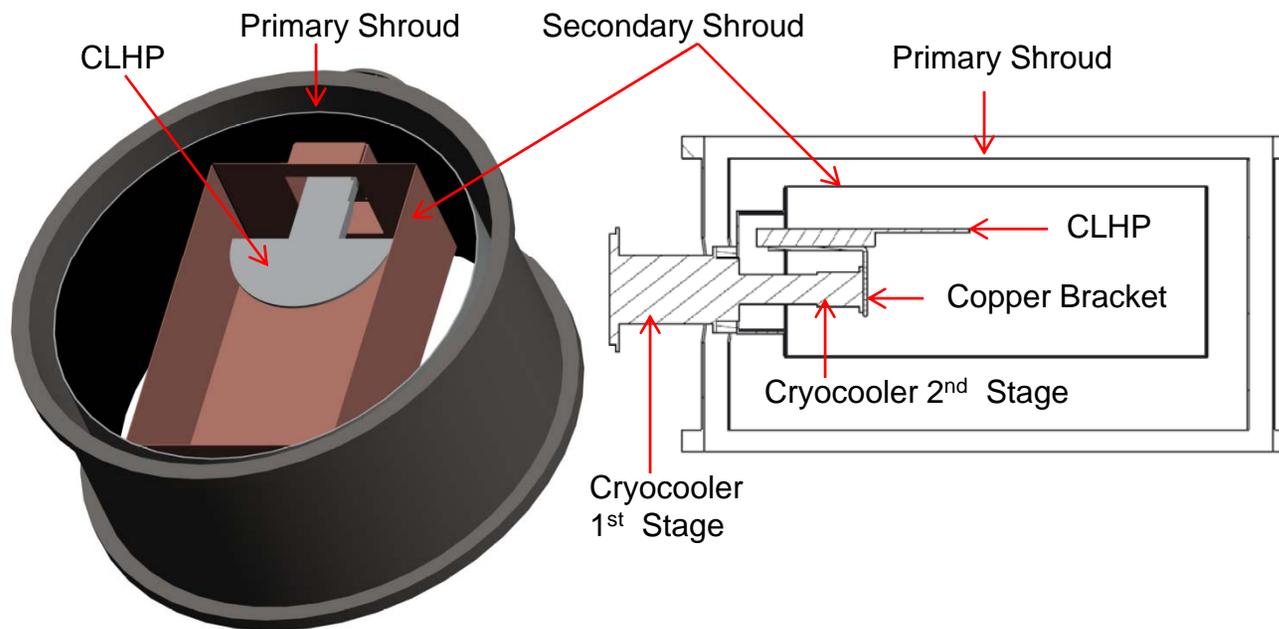
- Delivered by TTH Research in 2007
- Manufactured by ThermoCore, Inc.

- CLHP
 - all stainless steel construction
 - capillary pump: 1/4"OD x 1.5"L
 - wick: 1.2 μ m x 45% porosity
 - reservoir: 1/4"OD x 2.5"L
 - transport line: 1/16"OD x 63"L
- Evaporator Plate
 - copper 10" ϕ 48 in²
- Condenser Plate
 - copper 3" x 5.5" x 1"
- Hot reservoir
 - 1000 ml (not shown)



CLHP Inside Thermal Vacuum chamber

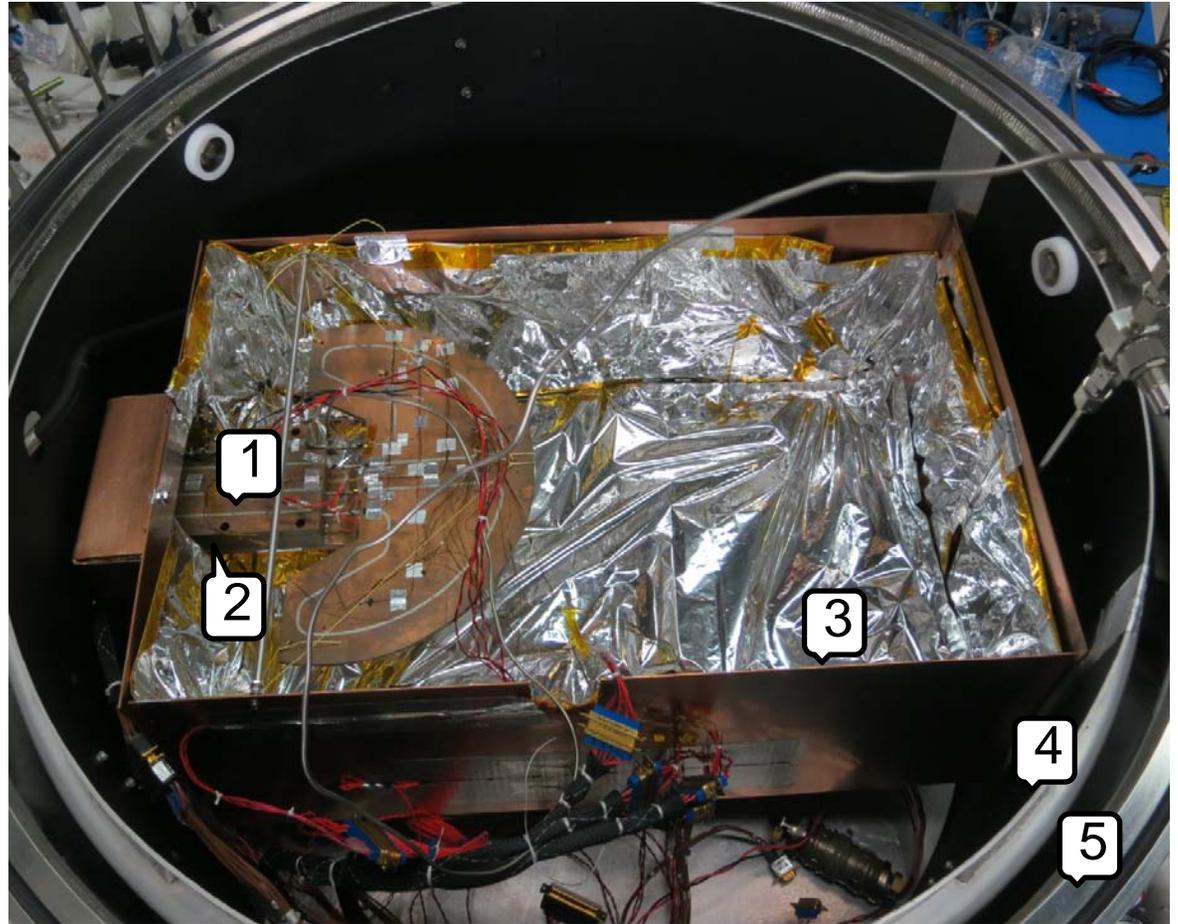
- CLHP was placed inside a secondary shroud which was surrounded by the primary shroud of the thermal vacuum chamber





CLHP inside Thermal Vacuum Chamber

- 1: CLHP
- 2: Cryocooler mounting bracket
- 3: Secondary shroud
- 4: Primary shroud
- 5: Dynavac™ vacuum chamber



- The secondary shroud is cooled by the first stage of the cryocooler.
- The CLHP condenser plate is cooled by the second stage of the cryocooler.



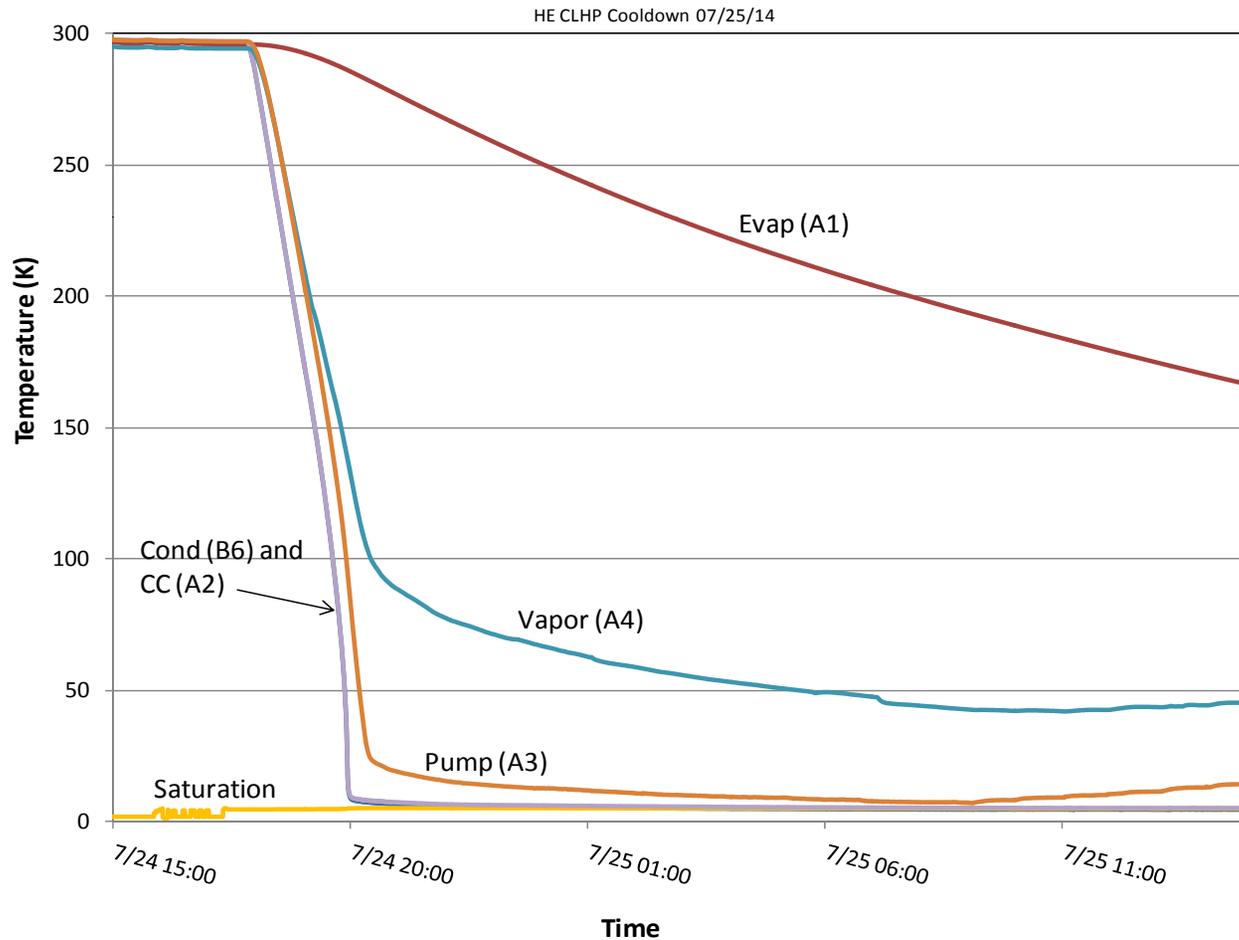
Tests Performed

- **Evaporator Cool Down from Ambient Temperature**
- **CLHP Startup**
- **Variable Heat Loads to Capillary Pump and Evaporator**
- **Power cycle**
- **Pump Capillary Limit**
- **Steady State Long Duration Operation**
- **Evaporator Heat Removal Capability**



Initial Cool-down from 298K (1/2)

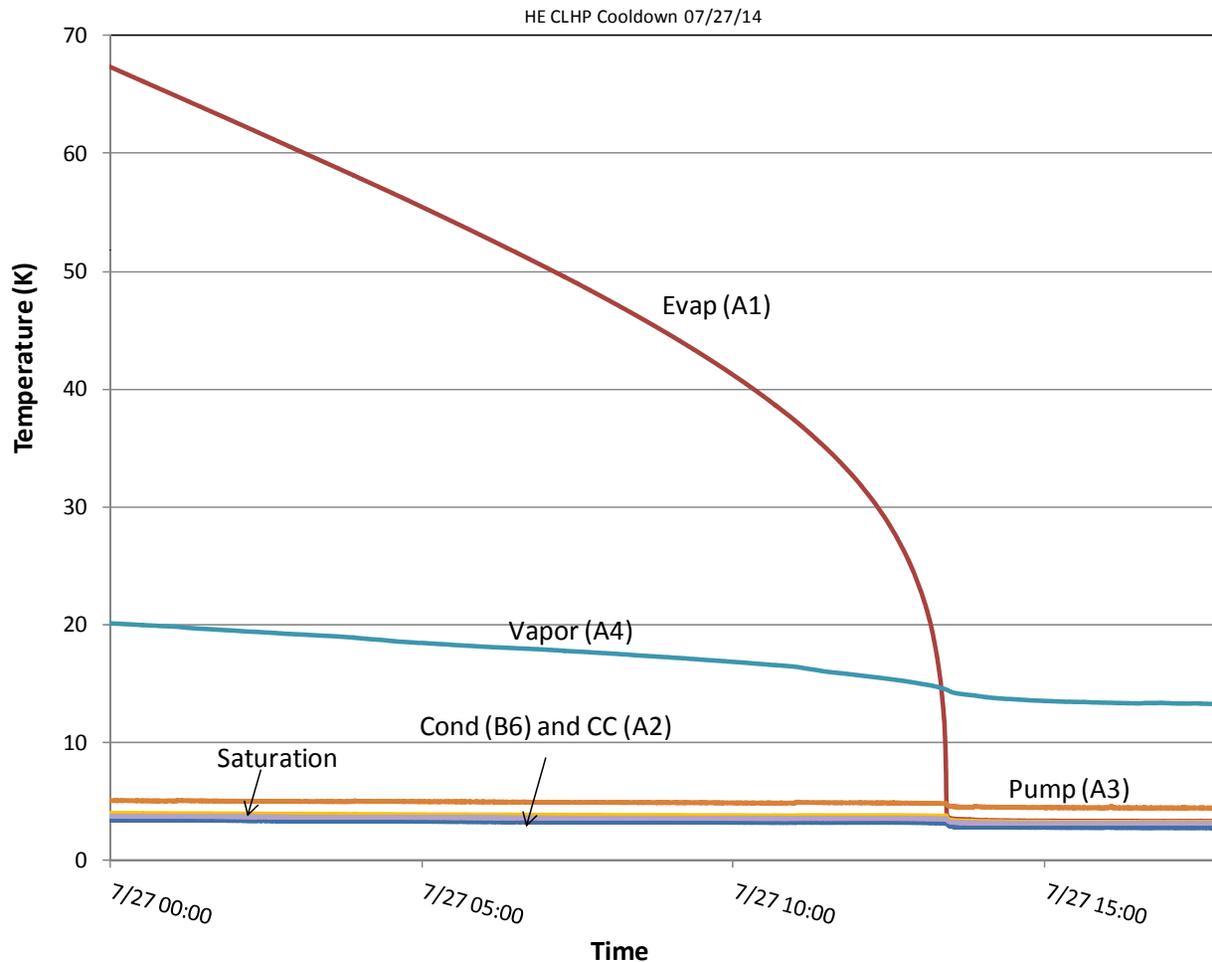
- The capillary pump, reservoir and condenser plate were cooled from 298K to 25K in 3 hours.
- The evaporator plate temperature dropped slowly, and took nearly 3 days to cool from 298K to 4K.





Initial Cool-down from 298K (2/2)

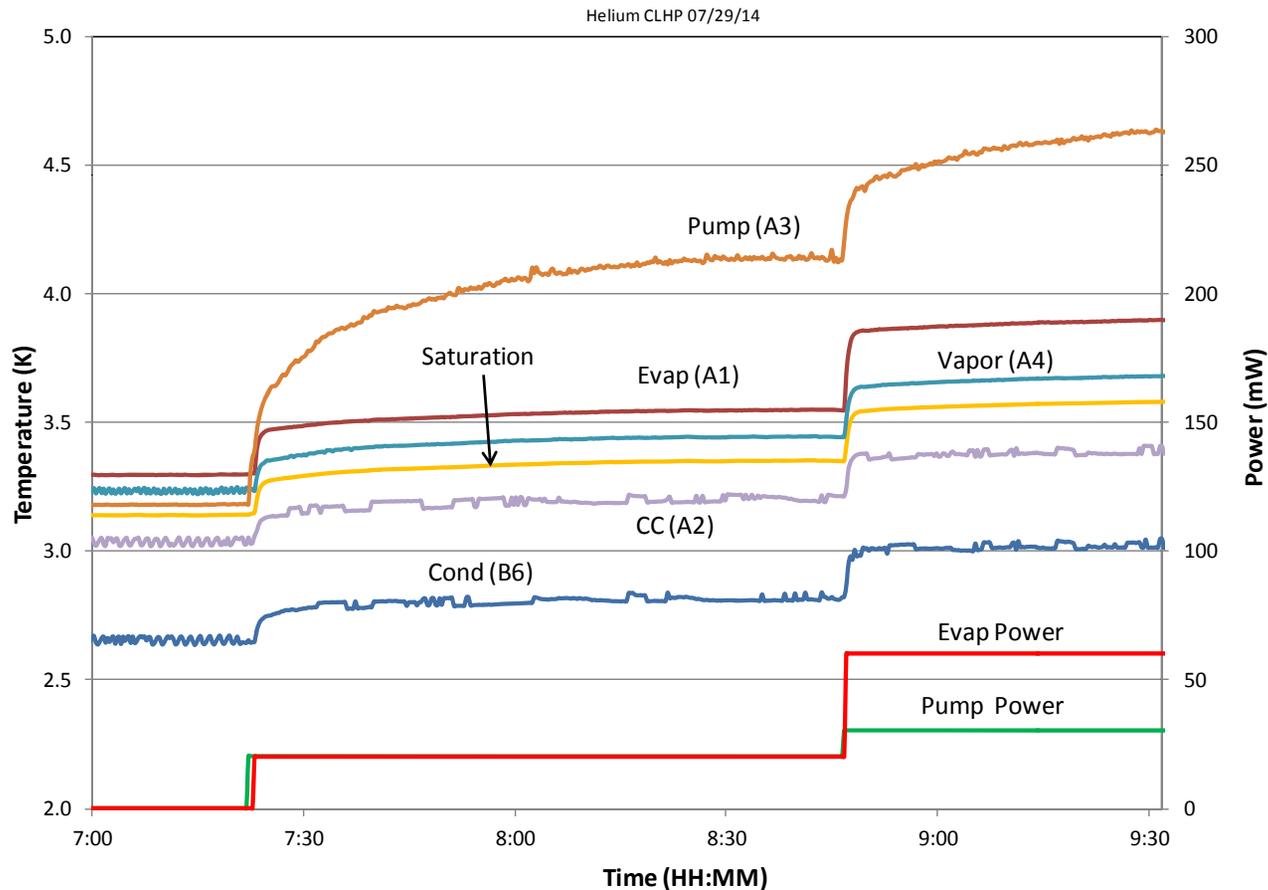
- As the evaporator plate temperature dropped below 50K, the rate of cool-down increased rapidly due to a decrease in the copper specific heat and an increase in its thermal conductivity.





Startup (20mW/20mW)

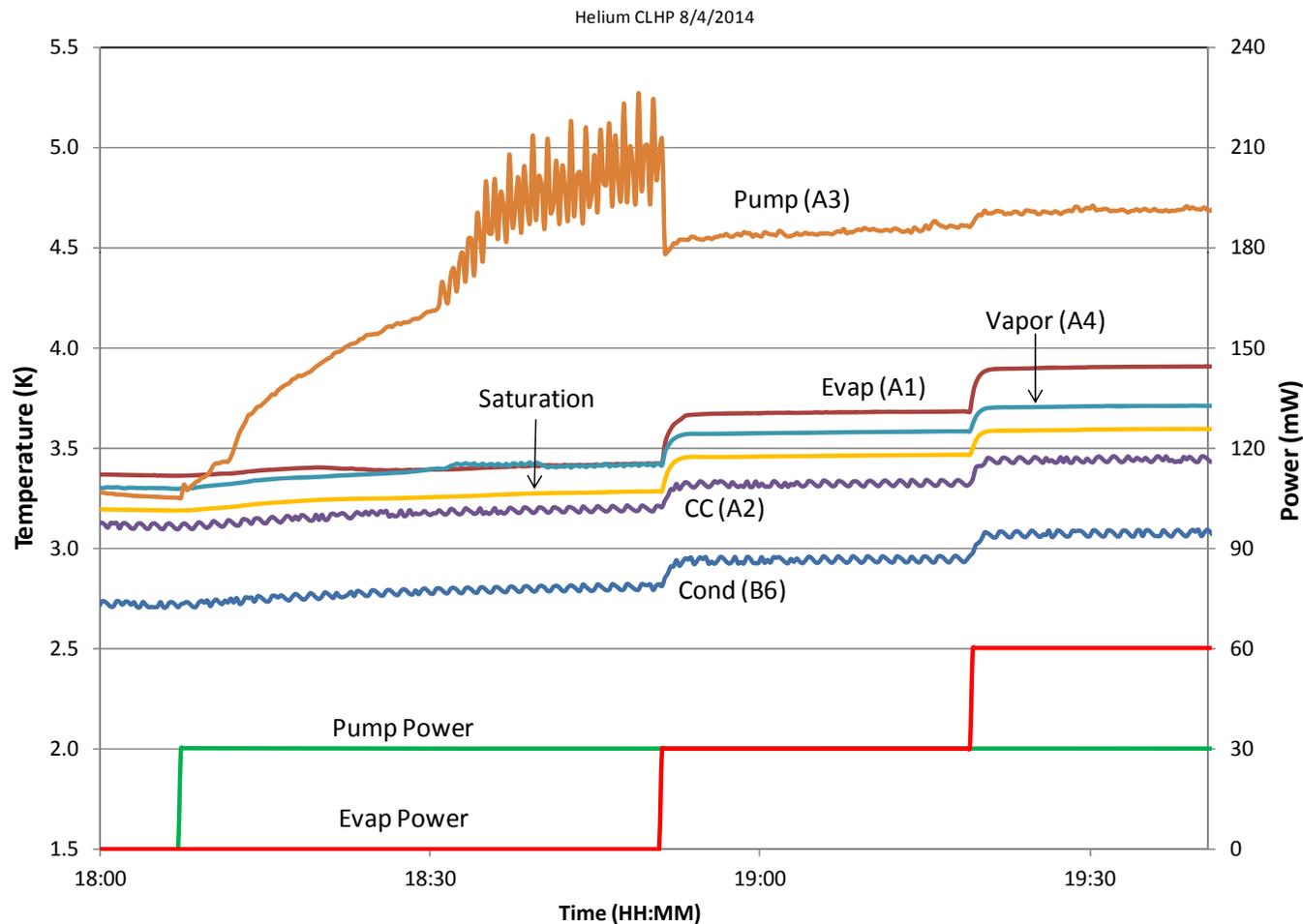
- Loop started successfully with 20mW to pump and 20mW to evaporator.
- Condenser temperature increased due to heat load from pump and evaporator. This caused the saturation temperature to increase.
- The pump and evaporator temperature increase due to heat loads, and was further affected by the saturation temperature.





Startup (30mW/0mW and 30mW/30mW)

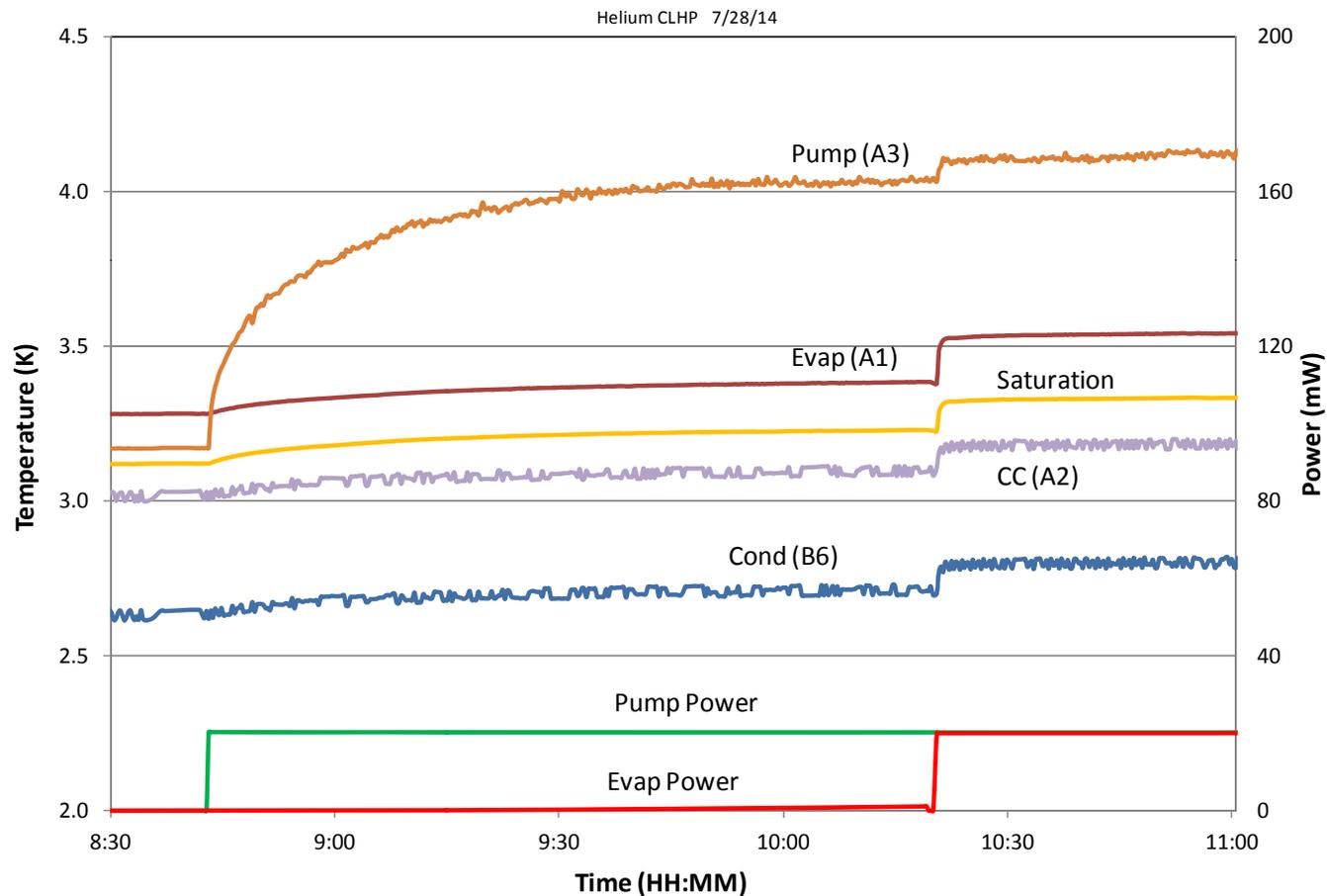
- Startup was not successful with 30mW to pump alone. There was insufficient liquid in the pump without power to evaporator.
- Loop started as soon as 30mW was also applied to evaporator.





Startup (20mW/0mW)

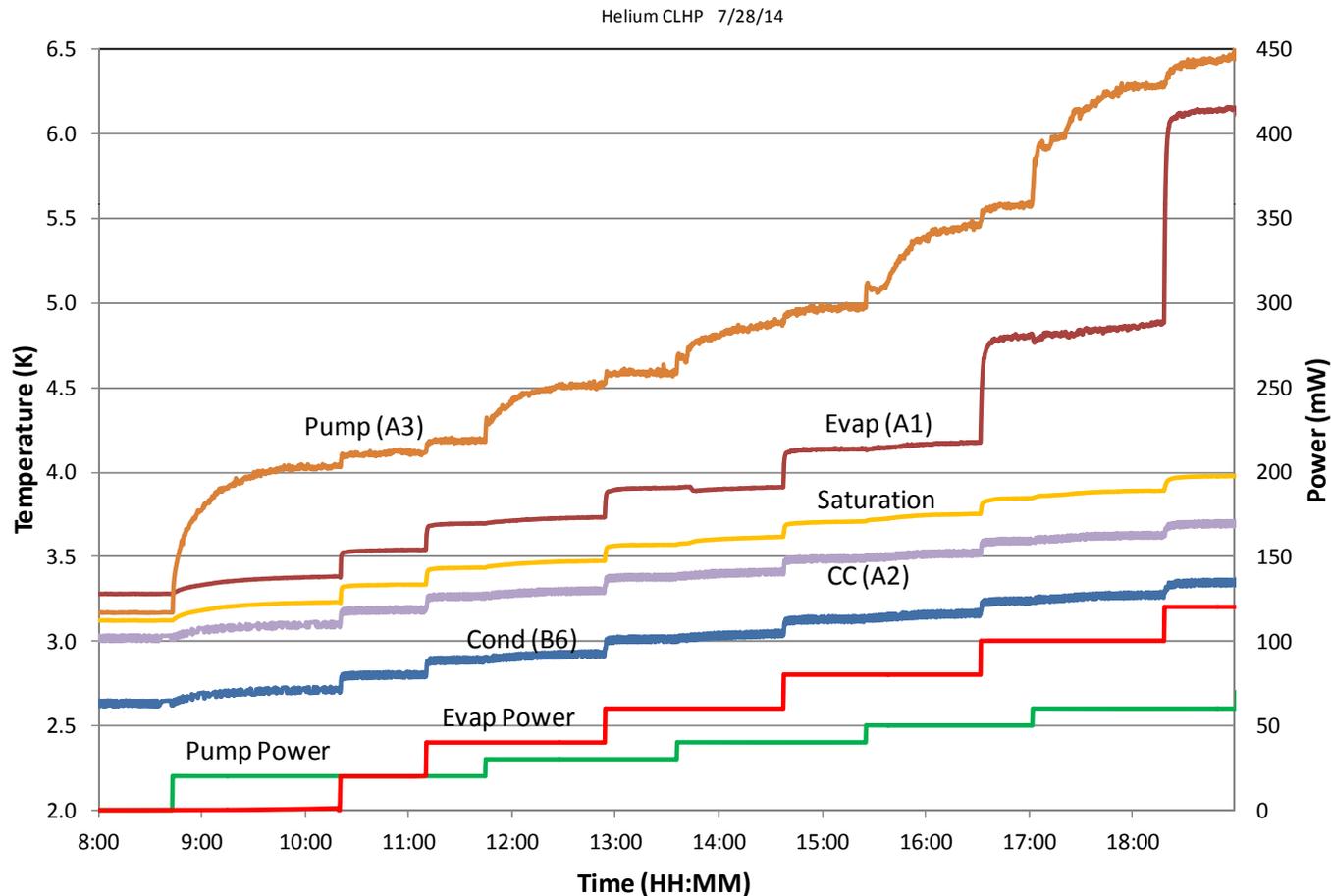
- Loop started successfully with 20mW to pump alone. This was not expected.





Power Ramp-up

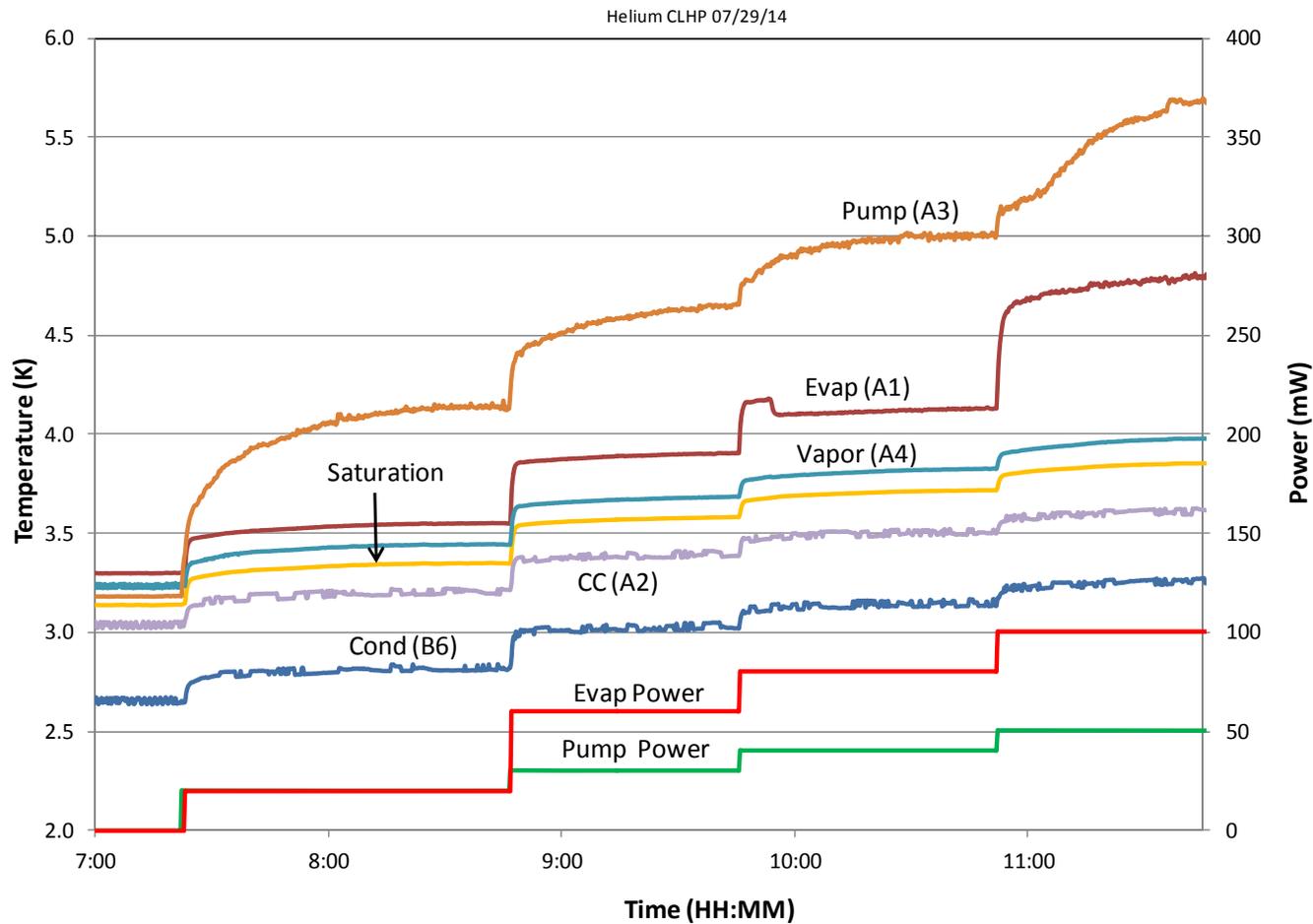
- Loop started with 20mW to capillary pump alone.
- Pump power increased from 20mW to 60W and evaporator power increased from 20mW to 120mW (changed one power at a time).
- For a given pump power, the evaporator could remove twice as much power.





Power Ramp-up

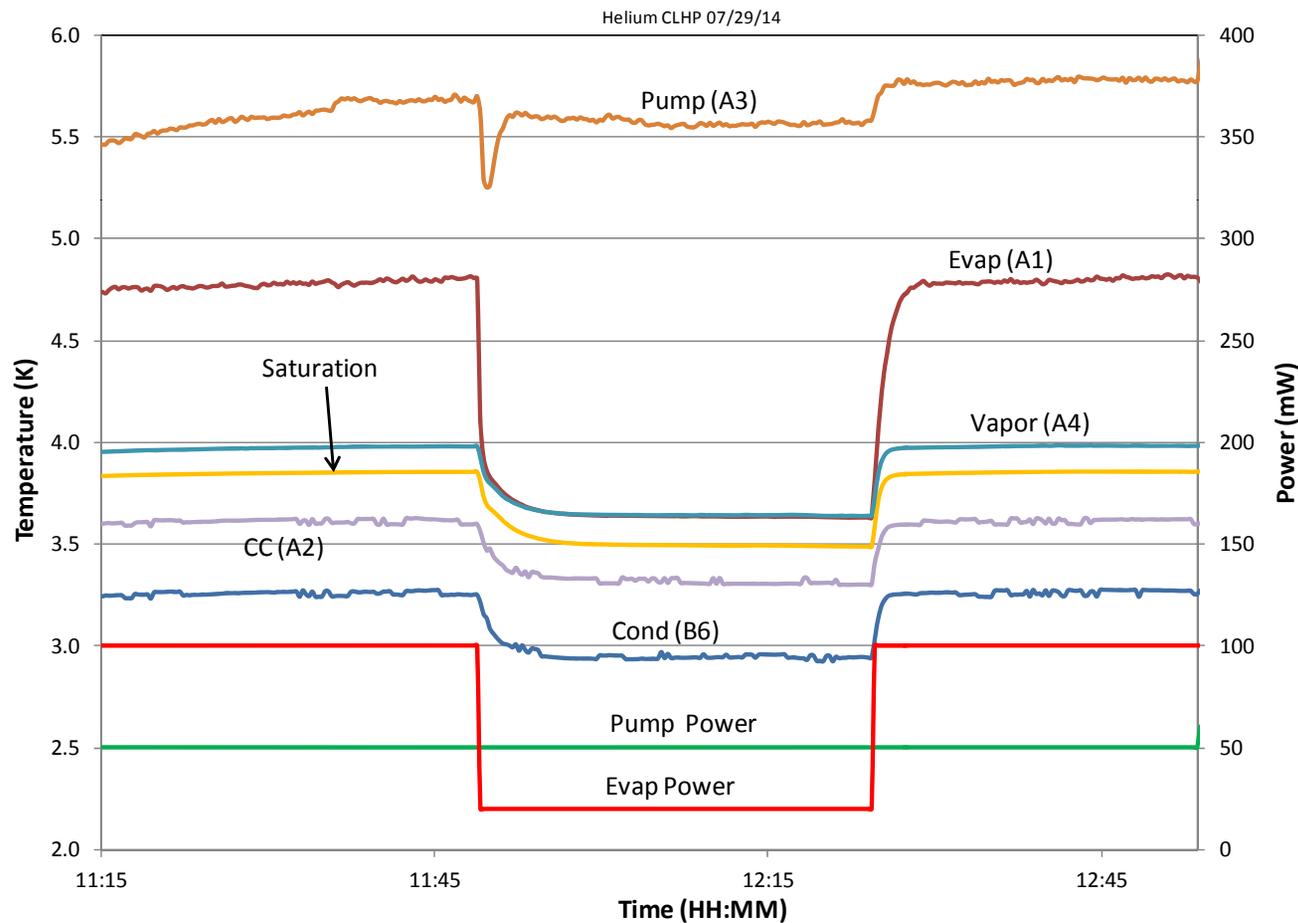
- Demonstrated that the evaporator could remove twice as much power as the pump power for pump power between 30mW and 50mW.
- Both powers were changed simultaneously.





Power Cycle

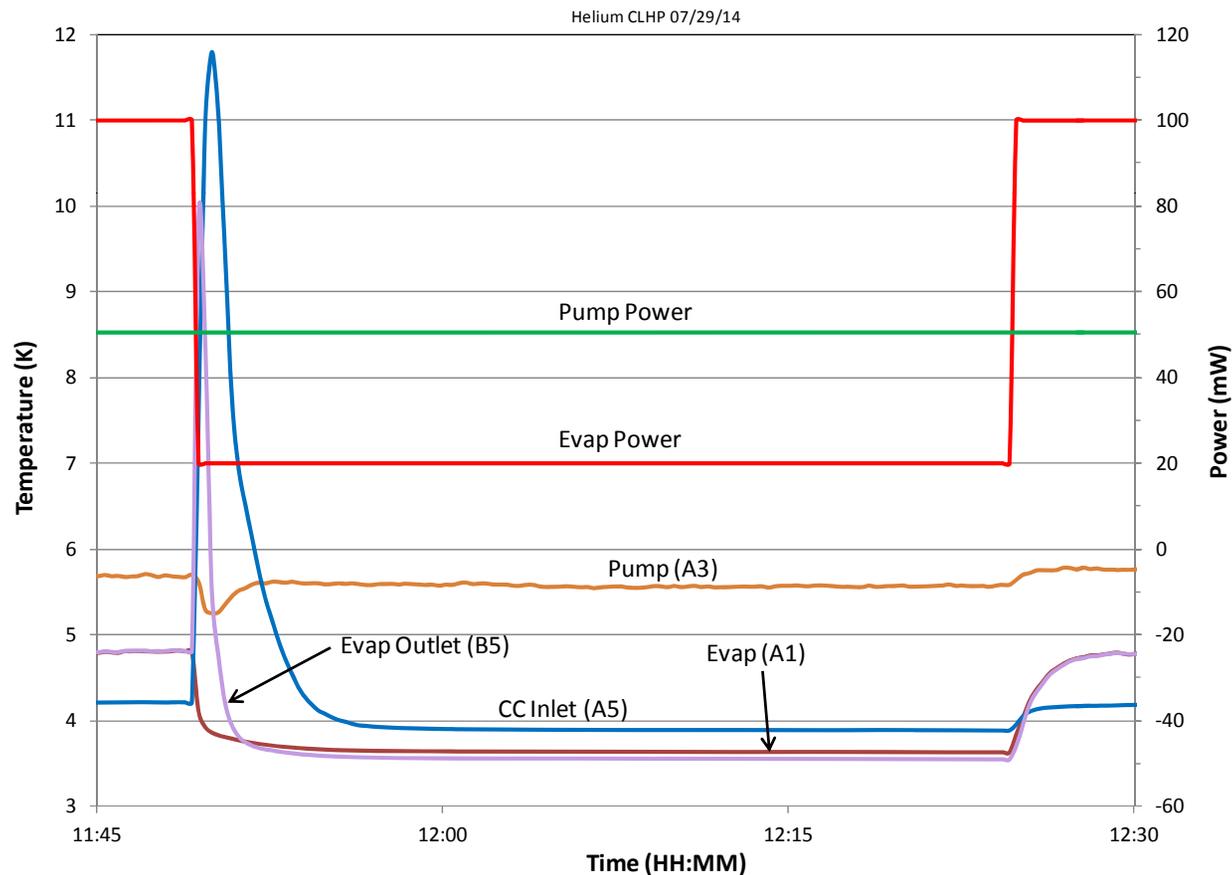
- Pump power was kept constant at 50mW.
- Evaporator power changed from 100mW to 20W to 100mW
- The loop could adapt to a rapid change in evaporator power. The evaporator temperature was the same before and after power change.





Power Cycle

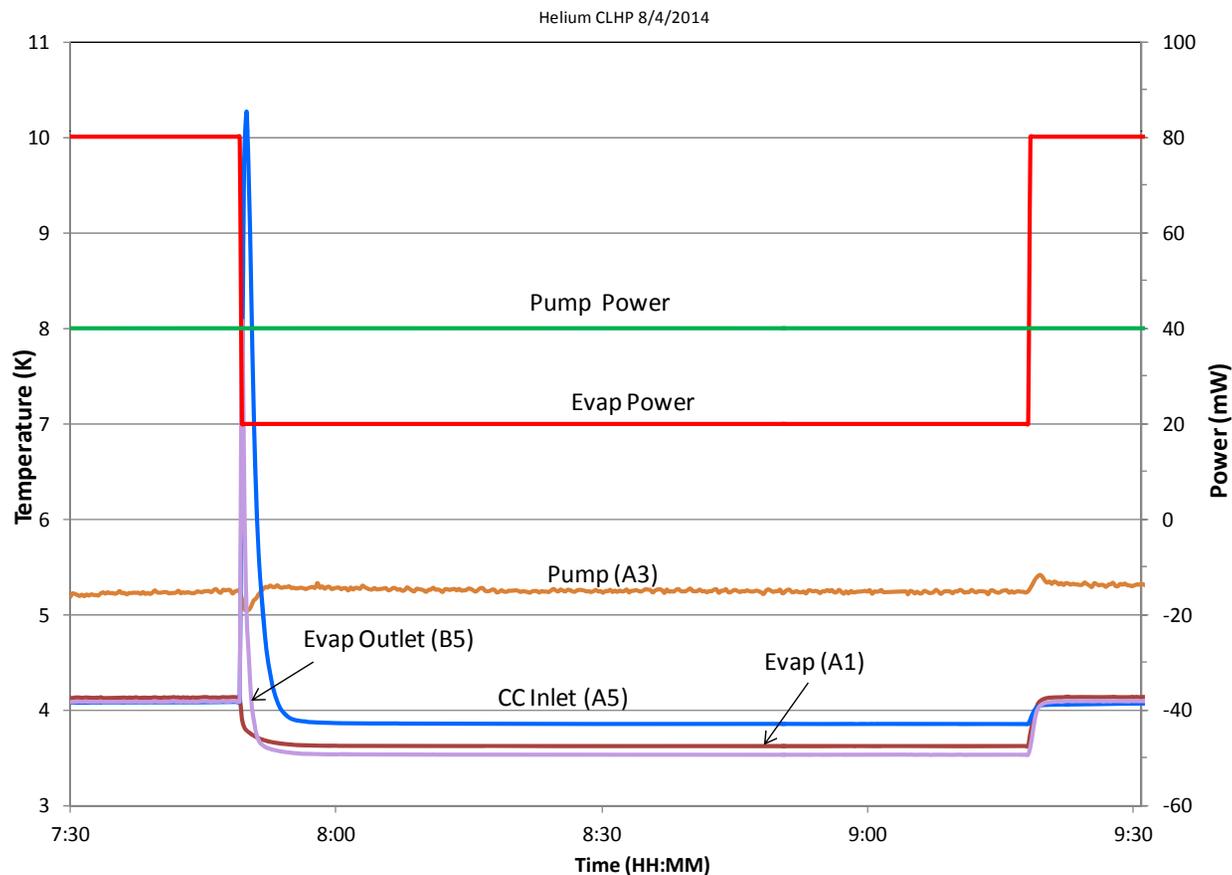
- When evaporator power decreased from 100mW to 20mW, hot vapor was injected from the hot reservoir to the loop, as evidenced by the rise of temperatures of CC inlet and evaporator outlet.
- The fast transient diminished rapidly.





Power Cycle

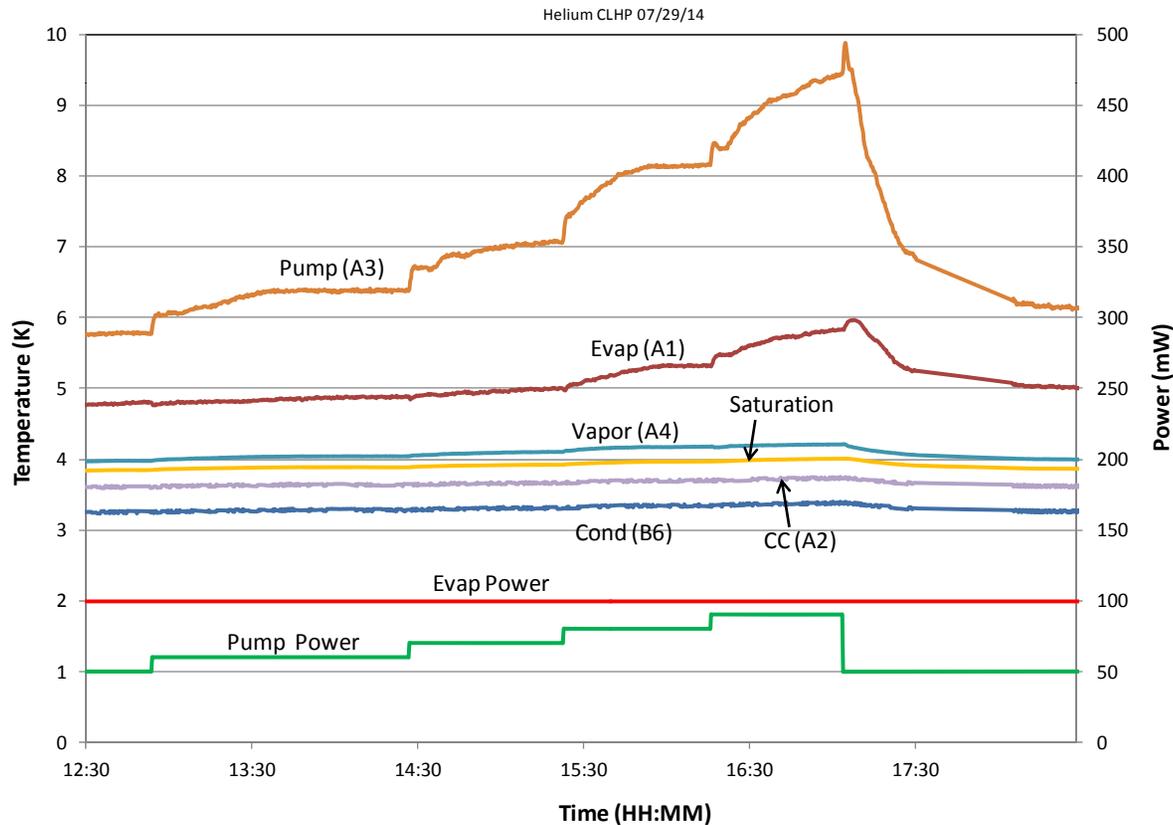
- Pump power was kept constant at 40mW.
- When evaporator power decreased from 80mW to 20mW, hot vapor was injected from the hot reservoir to the loop, as evidenced by the rise of temperatures of CC inlet and evaporator outlet.
- The fast transient diminished rapidly.





Pump Capillary Limit

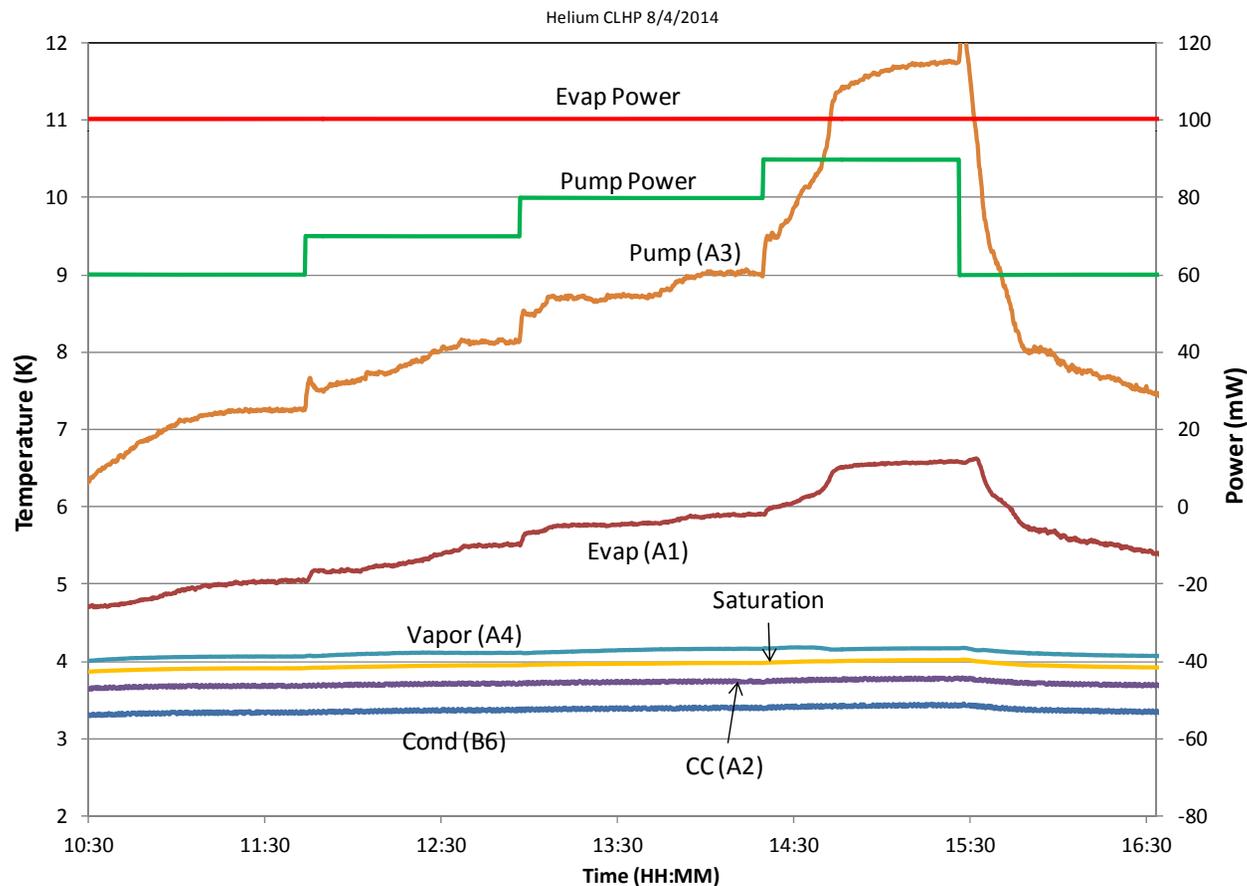
- The pump capillary limit was identified by a steep increase of the evaporator temperature when the pump power increases while keep evaporator power at 100mW.
- The pump capillary limit: between 80mW/100mW and 90mW/100mW.
- The capillary pump recovered from deprime when the pump power reduced from 90mW to 50mW.





Pump Capillary Limit

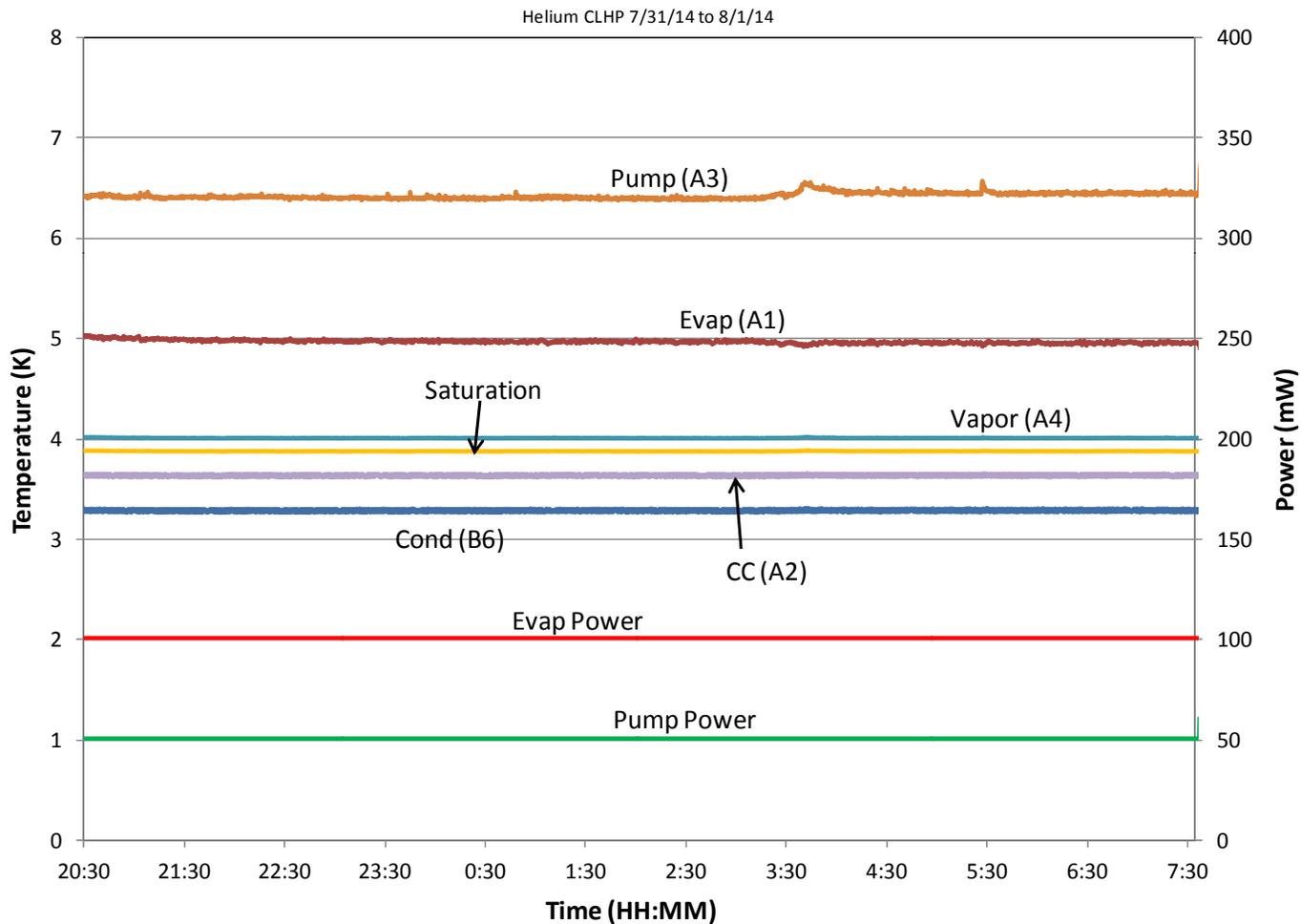
- The pump capillary limit was a function of pump power and evaporator power combined.
- This test showed the capillary limit was between 80mW/100mW and 90mW/100mW. This was consistent with 7/29/14 result.





Long Duration Operation (50mW/100mW)

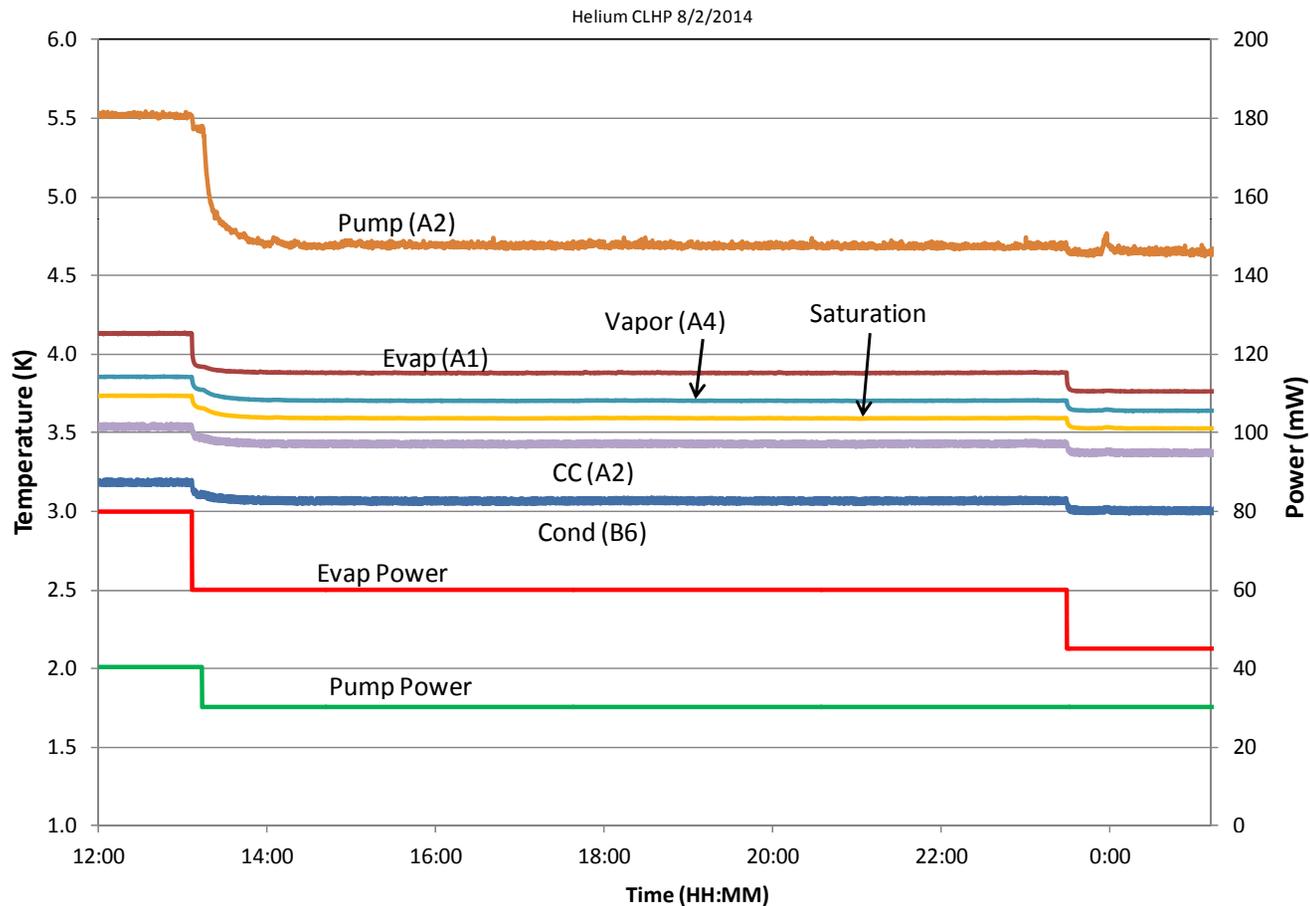
- Steady operation at 50mW/100mW for 11 hours from 8:30pm to next day 7:30am.





Long Duration Operation (30mW/60mW)

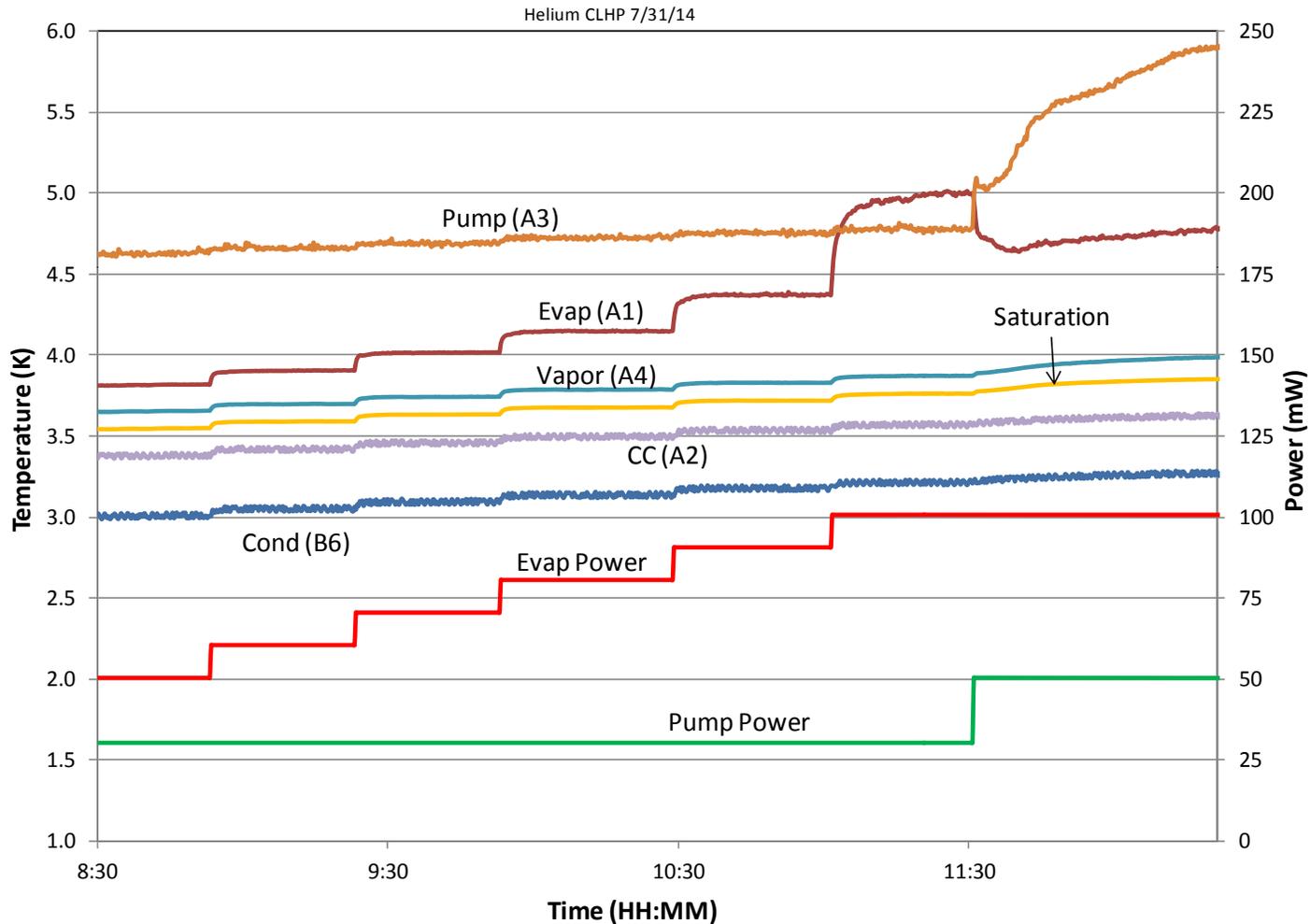
- Steady operation at 30mW/60mW for 10.5 hours (1pm to 11:30pm).
- Smooth transitions from 40mW/80mW to 30mW/60mW and from 30mW/60mW to 30mW/45mW.





Evaporator Heat Removal Capability (30mW to Pump)

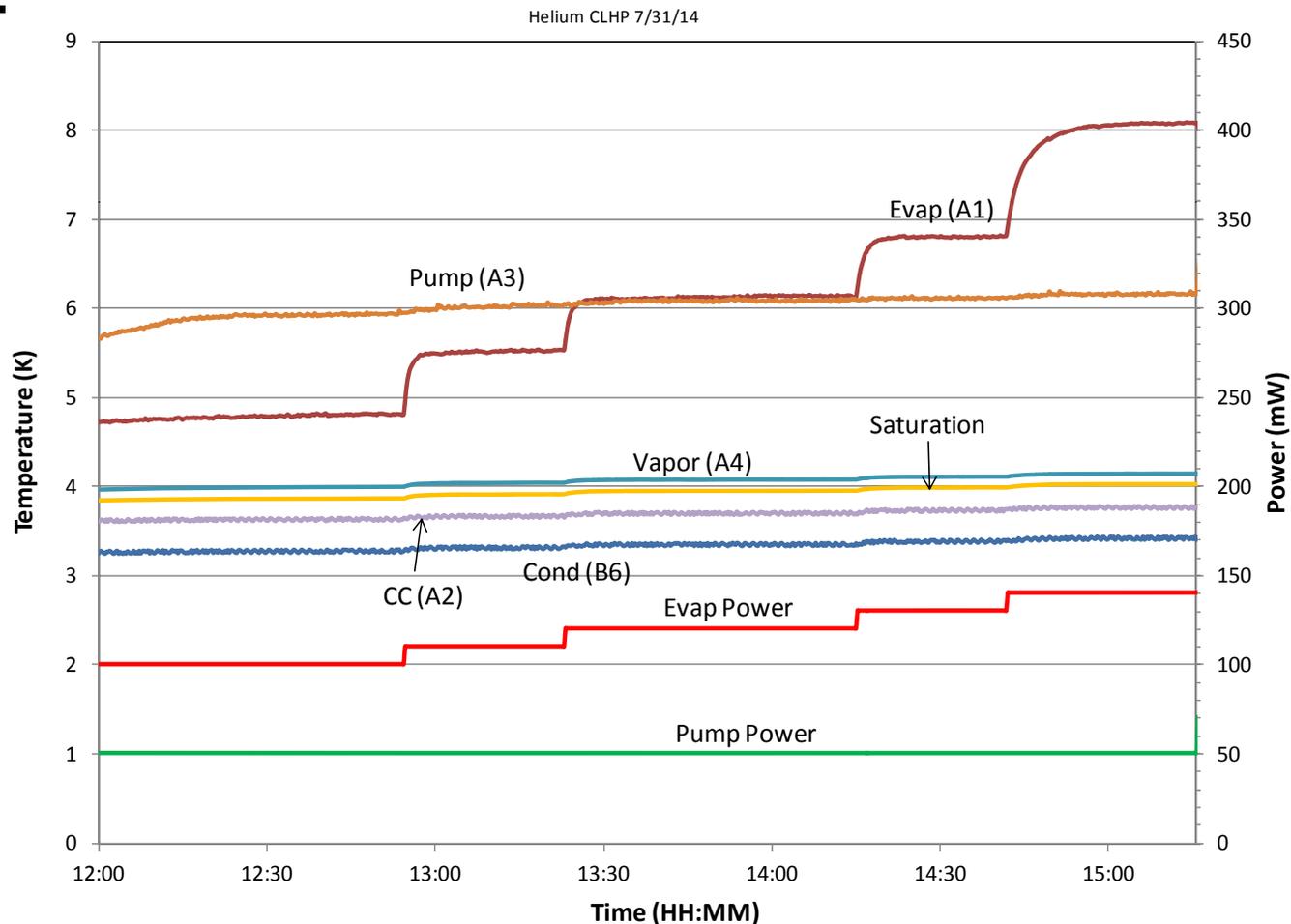
- With pump power at 30mW, the evaporator could remove up to 100mW.





Evaporator Heat Removal Capability (50mW to Pump)

- With pump power at 50mW, the evaporator could remove up to 140mW.
- Maximum heat removal of 60mW/140mW was due to capillary limit (7/30/14).





Summary and Conclusions

- **The helium CLHP demonstrated robust operation under steady state and transient conditions.**
- **The CLHP could be cooled from the ambient temperature to subcritical temperatures very effectively.**
- **The CLHP could start successfully by applying power to the capillary pump and the evaporator without any pre-conditioning.**
- **The CLHP could adapt to rapid changes in the pump power and/or evaporator power, and reach a new steady state quickly.**
- **The evaporator could remove heat loads between 10 and 140 mW.**
- **The CLHP demonstrated steady state operations for up to 17 hours.**
- **The helium CLHP demonstrated excellent performance and verified the feasibility of using a CLHP for large area cryocooling.**
- **In addition to cooling the mirrors of large space telescopes and detector arrays, the CLHP can also be used in applications such as the zero boil-off cryogen tank, fluid transfer lines, and thermal energy storage devices.**



Acknowledgements

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