

# The Comets' Tale

*The Official  
Newsletter of the*



**July 2008**

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### Board of Directors

Mike Ambarian, Dale Nash, Sandy Brown, Emery Balasa and Steve Billings

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The Comets' Tale is the official newsletter and record of the Ventura County Comets, AMA Chartered Club #173 and is published monthly at the Comets' Tale Plaza, somewhere in Ventura.

*Editorial contributions are welcome.*

**Next Meeting: Thursday, 17 July, 2008, 7:30 PM  
at the Oak View Community Center**



**Coming  
Up!**

**Sat & Sun, 16 & 16 Aug.**  
Camarillo Airshow

**NEW DATE!**

**Sat. 23 August**

Electric Fun Fly & Swap  
Meet – Condors Field

**18, 19 October 2008**

Comets' Float Fly, Lake  
Casitas

**1st Sunday of Each  
Month**

Open House at Santa Paula  
Airport

### **Root's Rambling**

Last month I described two airports which came into being in the Glendale California area in the early 1920's. This month I will continue with a discussion of the third airport, the Glendale Central Airport which was in operation from 1923 until 1959. All the information I am presenting is from the wonderful book "Madcaps, Millionaires and "Mose" by John Underwood (Picture1). The included photos are used by kind permission of the author.

Forward-looking citizens formed the Glendale airport Association in 1923. Their purpose was to develop a municipal airport and nurture the infant aircraft industry. Although Glendale never became

## Madcaps, Millionaires and "Mose"

*A pictorial history by John Underwood*



*The chronicle of an exciting era when the airways led to Glendale.*

the manufacturing center its proponents envisioned, it nurtured the seeds of the Southland's greatest industry. Early aircraft resulted in the later Convair/General Dynamics line. Other first planes bear the names of Jack Northrop and Howard Hughes. Local technology made possible such milestones as the Douglas DC-3 and some of the finest military aircraft of the '40s.

The airport was originally laid out with a 1200 ft runway. As the city grew, power lines were strung near the south end of the runway. After several accidents in less than one year Glendale was placed off limits to government aircraft. Unaccountably, the wires were allowed to stand. The city refused to move or bury them.

Early in 1925 Glendale organized its second "air rodeo". The show was a spectacular spectator success, but not a business success. Picture 2 shows the loser of the spot landing contest. One of the early Glendale airport companies was Waterhouse & Royer incorporated in 1925. Waterhouse was an MIT man who had co-

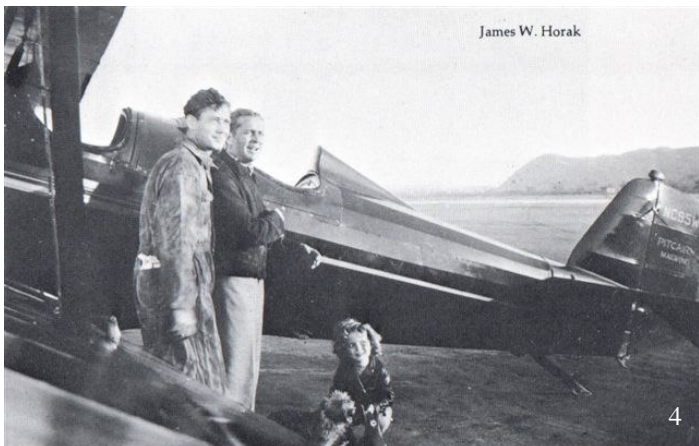


designed the Douglas DT. His contribution to the new company was two of his own designs; one a monoplane called the Cruizair, the other a biplane labeled the Roamair. The Cruizair is shown in picture 3. Before this Cruizair was completed the unfinished design was sold to T.C. Ryan who had a company in San Diego. He completed the design and built it as the Ryan M-1. This eventually resulted in the "Spirit of St. Louis". Waterhouse & Foyer went out of business in 1927.



3

Despite the deplorable short runway with obstacles at both ends, the airport flourished as a filming site. Half the movies made during this era had aviation segments resulting in many filming jobs. Picture 4 shows Shirley Temple with Jimmy Dunn from the 1934 picture "Bright Eyes". Jimmy, warming up to the pilot/hero role, took up flying and for years dropped Christmas presents by



4

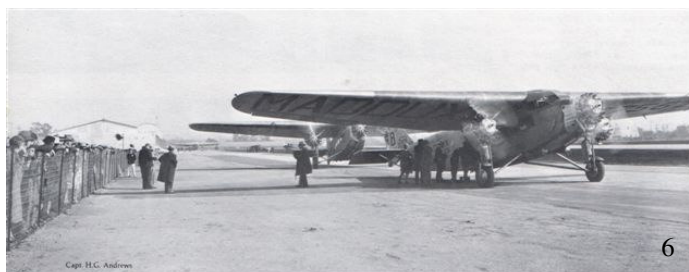
parachute into Shirley's backyard.

It took private investment to achieve a real municipal airport. In late 1928 Capt. Charles C. Spicer formed a



5

syndicate of venture capitalists which eventually resulted in a 175 acre airport with an airline terminal and a 3,800 ft. concrete runway (picture 5). The official opening of the Grand Central Air Terminal was February 22, 1929. Several early airlines began service. A Ford 5AT is taking on passengers in picture 6 and the



6



7

interior aft of the flight deck is shown in picture 7. Many airlines were started. Many didn't last long as the depression got into full swing, but the airline industry became more profitable by the mid 30's. A lot of new airplanes were designed in the 30's. Al Mooney is shown with his long range Mooney A-1 in picture 8. The first really modern transport, the Douglas DC-1, is shown in picture 9. The new retractable landing gear was 99%



8

Dick Whittington



reliable as shown

in picture 10. My favorite airliner from this era is the Curtiss-Wright T-32 Condor. One of American air-

line's "sleepers" is shown in picture 11. It was slow but the 12 passengers were comfortable in their beds on the overnight flights.

A lot of racing airplanes were designed and tested in the 1930's. One example is the Harry Crosby C6R3 at Burbank prior to its first flight in 1936 (picture 12). By the late 30's the private airplane business was improv-



12

ing. Picture 13 shows customer Stinsons at Aircraft Industries,

Inc. and picture 14 shows a range of interesting airplanes. I haven't mentioned Major "Mose" Moseley, his technical school, or the huge and successful flight school for training military pilots in preparation for and during WW-2. I have run out of space (and energy). Get the book for more information.



11



13

The attack on Pearl Harbor turned Grand Central into an armed camp. One side was used for overhaul and repair of training aircraft; the other side was a P-38 base.

There had always been elements hostile to the airport and in the long run they prevailed. The runway was shortened after the war, effectively preventing its utilization by new generation transports. Major Moseley's Grand Central Aircraft Company, still the city's largest employer continued for a time, but the decline began in earnest after the Korean War. Taxes escalated and income from supporting businesses failed to keep pace. By 1959 the airport was put out of business.



14

The area has become the Grand Central Industrial Center. Today it is a thriving community for high technology and manufacturing. Nothing remains of the terminal and runway, but the control tower still stands.

*Bob Root*

## MINUTES OF THE JULY 2008 COMETS' MEETING

The Comets meeting was called to order by Mike Ambarian on July 17, at 7:30 pm, at the Oak View Community Center.

The June minutes were approved. We had no guests and no new members.

**Treasurer's Report:** Welcome back Emery! We have 104 members and finances are in very good shape. The report was approved.

**Safety:** Dennis Fingold had nothing to report.

**Field Marshall:** Nothing to report.

**Park Liaison:** Ken Marsh had nothing to report.

**Old Business:** All who are in possession of Club property were reminded to fill out a VCC Property Declaration of Possession form and return, as soon as possible, to one of the Officers so we can get an accurate inventory of Club owned property.

The new position of Field Marshall and Safety Officer was voted on. Steve Billings was voted into the position with Bud Scolari substituting in Steve's absence.

### **New Business:**

The field has a bee problem and several members have been stung. Some Sting Eze will be placed in the shed for any member who has been stung and needs some relief from the after effects of a sting. Members need to be aware of the problem and, if you camp at the field, please carry out any garbage created so as not to attract more bees to the area.

Mike Ambarian is checking into applying a coating for the field. The field needs to be pressure washed, holes filled in, and recoated with squeegees. Mike is looking into making it a member project and also checking into getting bids for the job to see which path is more feasible.

Dennis Fingold volunteered to redo some more of the table tops which are in dire need of repairs.

Members were reminded of the Warbird Day, Swap Meet and BBQ on July 26<sup>th</sup>. Steve and Mike Stienmetz, once again, volunteered to do their magic at the grill. Thanks, guys! Don't forget to check out the calendar of events on the VC Comets website ([vccomets.com](http://vccomets.com)) for upcoming events.

**Model of the Month:** Bob Root brought in a 9% scale Pitts Model 14. This is a model of the last plane designed by Curtis Pitts. The model is electric powered, has a wing span of 33.5", a wing area of 414 sq. inches, and weighs 32 ounces. The Pitts is powered with a 3 cell, 2100 Li Po battery, drawing 230 watts and uses a 10/6 prop. It is covered with Coverlight covering.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Sandy Brown*



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

1. We are having above-normal problems with yellow jackets at the field. Several members have already been stung. The recommended first aid for the sting is to (1) apply an ice pack to the site for 20 minutes (2) apply "Sting Ese" (readily available at any drug store) and (3) take a Benadryl (**only if you are not allergic or sensitive to Benadryl**).
2. If any members wish to camp at the field, please call Ken Marsh at (805) 646-1962 first. He will notify someone at the Lake that you will be coming. Make sure that you have your Comets' membership card (for presentation at the entry gate). When you leave the field, PLEASE take your trash to one of the large bins in the park, away from the field. It will help cut down on the number of yellow jackets in the area, as food attracts the yellow jackets.
3. Many campers/park visitors are present in the vicinity of our runway, especially on weekends, therefore: do not conduct any low fly-bys when there are park visitors on "our" side of the fence. Do not forget, we do not have a lease. Just one incident could get us kicked out of the park permanently! Thanks for your cooperation.
4. Please check the new roster to make certain the information we have for you is correct. If there are changes that need to be made, please call Emery Balasa at (805) 642-1401.

*Mike Ambarian*

### Propeller Size Chart

#### **How to use the chart to find the right propeller for your engine:**

1. Find your engine size along the bottom axis.
2. Follow the line to where it intersects with the shaded area.
3. Follow each point within the shaded area to its corresponding propeller size on the left axis. This will be your approximate propeller range.

**Note:** Four-cycle engines are typically higher torque engines and should use the larger propellers indicated in the range. Recommended propeller ranges will vary depending on your particular engine and airplane. This chart represents average propeller usage and should be used only as a general guideline. Always refer to the manufacturer's instructions included with your engine.

