

# The Comets' Tale

The Official  
Newsletter of the



December 2013

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Alastair Brennan, George Lanquist, Dale Nash, Lynn Breedlove, TJ Moran

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George Lanquist TJ Moran Steve Steinmetz Alastair Brennan

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, 19 December

## 7:00 PM at the Oak Park Community Center



## Potluck Christmas Dinner!

Get with Marilyn Nash to see what you can bring, if you haven't already!

Coming  
Up!



**Thursday, 19 December**  
Comets Christmas Party  
Don't forget to check with Marilyn!

**25 December**  
Santa Claus brings new stuff to replace all the airplanes and engines that Murphy broke during the year!

**First Sunday of each Month**  
Open House at Santa Paula Airport  
Free Young Eagle rides for kids  
8-18

### Prez. Sez:

Thanks to Dale and the gang at the front of the room for filling in for me. Sometimes the daily 8-5 responsibility goes a bit beyond 5, and I *have* to put it ahead of the club duties. I know...crazy talk...

I hope that most of you have had a chance to fly off the new runway. I did for the first time Thanksgiving weekend. We still have to finish striping the runway, well we have to start. TJ says he will head up this task. Thanks in advance to you TJ for taking the lead and doing this.

Here's one for the builders in the club. I was searching for float plans and came across this:

[http://www.willingtons.com/mymac/Plans\\_Download.htm](http://www.willingtons.com/mymac/Plans_Download.htm)

This web site has a bunch of plans of planes and two sizes of floats. I downloaded the "40Size Floats" and scaled them down a bit. They look like a copy of the Great Planes floats...I've built a couple pairs of those. They typically are "Zipped" DXF (AutoCAD) files. I opened the DXF files in Adobe

Illustrator, sized them, printed the large sheet as a bunch of 8 1/2 x 11" pages, taped those together and started cutting wood.

If this is too much tech-babble and you are interested in playing with this let me know and I can help with some of the techy stuff. I bet a place like Kinko's would print the plan as a single large piece of paper too.

Here's how they looked as of this writing:



I always seem to be a day late and a dollar short...but with all the other stuff I am juggling, maybe these will be done by the next float fly.

Our new club member (Logan Hall) look a bunch of photos and did a really neat write-up for the Ojai Quarterly. This is a magazine about the Ojai Valley (online here: <http://theojai.net/>). There will be a second attachment to the email that has the PDF file of the article, and a printed version on page 7 of the treeware snailmail 'Tale.

The Christmas party is only a few days away. I hope to see you all there. Marilyn took the usual lead on this and has people bringing all sorts of things to eat. And there will be the end-of-the-year raffle too.

See ya at the party!

*Alastair Brennan*

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### Root's Rambling for December 2013

I would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and hope that you all have a wonderful 2014. May all your Santas bring the goodies that you have been wishing for.



This month I have a few racing planes for those interested. Here's Little Toni (1/4 scale)



Shoestring (1/4 scale)



Rivets (full size), above



Several early full size Goodyear (sponsor of the early races) racers in represent the small racers raced after WWII which were later called Formula One.



The 1920's and 30's are known as the Golden Age of racing. Racers typical for the period include the 1925 Curtiss RC3-1 (1/4 scale)





The 1932 Wedell-Williams Model 44, Gilmore Red Lion (1/4 scale)



The 1931 Gee Bee model Z (full size)



The earlier Schneider Trophy Races (1913 to 1931) spawned the development of very fast hydroaeroplanes (as they were called in those days). The Curtiss RC3-2 (1/3 scale) in pictures 10 and 11 won The 1925 race. The Italian Macchi MC 72 (1/4 scale) in picture 12 wasn't ready for the last race in 1931.

This race was won by the British Supermarine S.6B (no other entrants were ready). This was the last race because the British at that point had won it three times. The Macchi MC 72 development continued and it broke the absolute world speed record for the last time in 1934. The speed of 423.82 mph was not bettered until just before WW-II by a landplane. It still stands for propeller driven seaplanes.

*Bob Root*



## MINUTES of the NOVEMBER 2013 MEETING

Meeting was called to order by Club President, Alastair Brennan, at: 7:04 pm

### New Members & Guests:

- No new members or guests
- Club membership as of November stands at 78 members.

### Christmas Party:

- The annual Christmas Party will be on Thursday, Dec. 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00PM

### Treasurer`s Report: ( T.J Moran)

- T.J. presented the Treasurer`s Report. Most significant was the cost and expenditure for the new runway material. Motion was made to accept the Treasurer`s Report and was 2<sup>nd</sup>d. Report approved.

### Safety Officer`s Report: (George Lanquist)

- George Lanquist stated that there had been no problems at the field, however, Berny Hammer brought up that trash was left in the barrels at the field and was scattered by animals. Reminder not to leave trash in the barrels.

### Park Liaison Report: (John Dugan)

- John Dugan brought up that the “Quagga mussle” inspection for the “Club only” Float Fly will start at 8:00AM on Friday the 15<sup>th</sup>.

### Misc:

- Dave Fishman offered to set up a fire extinguisher presentation and demo for sometime in the spring. He got the nod to go ahead with it. Thanks Dave.

### Old Business:

- Nominations for club officers for “Vice President” and “Treasurer”. No one volunteered to take office so the incumbent officers Dale Nash and T.J. Moran volunteered to serve for another year. Thanks guys.
- The Condors Club got their field back for 2 days a week. It will be alternate Fri. & Sat. and then Sun. & Mon.

### New Business:

- The minutes for the October meeting were approved as written.
- Stripes for the new runway covering will be done by John Dugan and T.J. Moran. Thanks for volunteering guys.
- Marilyn Nash has started to organize the “Club Christmas Party” and is making a list and checking it twice for those who are bringing a dish. Naughty if you don`t, nice if you do – if you get my drift. So call Marilyn at Home (805) 532-1433 cell (805) 558-2522 or email at: [sealady@aol.com](mailto:sealady@aol.com).
- Remember the Christmas Party is Thursday, Dec. 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm.
- The 2014 April Float Fly will be on Saturday & Sunday, the 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>.
- Ron Scott suggested that the club newsletter be sent with blind copies. Newsletter editor, Jerry Deanda, thought that was a good idea.

### Model of the Month:

- No model this month.

### Raffle:

No raffle this month. Andy Carlson brought in a truckload of model airplane stuff for sale that belonged to our dearly departed Mike Ambarian. Mike was a club past President who did a great job. He was a friend to everyone and always had the Club`s best interest at heart. You will always be remembered.

### Meeting adjourned at:

7:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

*Lynn Breedlove - Secretary*

## **Another Stupid Story About Purple Belly**

or  
Spot Landing Contest! Some Santa Paula Airport Lore

Some of us used to have impromptu barbecues across the runway, near the tetrahedron after work on nice summer evenings. Nothing elaborate... a hibachi, some hamburgers, hot dogs, Frisbees, airport dogs running around, soft drinks and a beer or two. Not too long after we got Purple Belly the Champ flying someone got the idea that it might be fun to have an informal contest using Purple Belly as the airplane of choice. After all, anyone can fly a Champ, and just about everyone did.

The Rules were fairly simple, but just a little more hardcore than the normal spot landing contest you see at fly-ins... somebody would go to the Michael Dewey Aviation ramp and get Purple Belly and taxi it to the tetrahedron. Anybody we could rope in that was qualified to fly the airplane gave the designated Holder of the Money a couple of bucks and got in line. When his or her turn came up, they'd get in the airplane and take off, fly a normal traffic pattern and when they were downwind opposite the spot (actually the one third line across the runway) they would close the throttle all the way and glide to a landing. The object was to land three point (all three wheels touch at the same time) so that the tailwheel was as close to the line as possible without touching ahead of the line. If any part of the airplane touched early, you were considered to have hit the end of the aircraft carrier deck and crashed. Landing early was a disqualification. The pilot was expected to close the throttle fully and not open it except for maybe using a brief blast of power to clear the engine, then land just over the line. The pilot would do this by skillfully playing his turns and airspeed. Slipping (making the airplane fly sidewise to use up excess altitude) was permitted but considered very bad form. Pilots who had not soloed yet were allowed to fly too, they just had to take a safety pilot. The Honor System assured everybody that the student did all the flying but sometimes the safety pilot would have his hands up and visible when the student landed. Each pilot got two trips around the pattern, one right after the other.

Volunteers marked where the tailwheel touched with high tech instruments... their eyeballs and a rock. The rock only moved when a landing was shorter than where the rock happened to be. There was no second place. Second place was just first loser and only the shortest distance was counted or even recorded. Winning distances were rarely more than 5 feet and the competition could get pretty close. We had some great stick and rudder fliers on the airport in those days, just as we do now.

The winner got all the \$ that the Holder of the Money was holding. That flyer was also rewarded with the responsibility of paying for the airplane rental (\$10 an hour, wet, ha!) and going to the grocery store to buy the barbecue. If the pot was big, we had steak, if it was small, we had hot dogs. Folks brought their own beer.

We did several of these and I don't recall any problems of any type. No accidents, no scary moments, no drunks, no arguments, not even a harsh word. It really was just a bunch of local pilots and airport people getting together and having a good time.

Naturally, when all this was happening, everybody else partied and had a good time. Nobody drank until they were done flying, of course. There was a lot of Frisbee-throwing and, well, some folks kind of got up on the tetrahedron and got spun around, which wasn't all that good for the tetrahedron. Seems like there were always a couple of airport dogs around, too, and that was a nice touch.

I have great memories of the time I won this thing. Hey, lucky is better than good any day, right? OK, maybe I HAD practiced a little. Or a lot. We had tried to get Steve McQueen to fly that day, but he had already opened a beer and declined. We did have quite a few competitors that day though, and one was Captain Perry Schreffler, a retired airline pilot who had flown B-17s over Germany and then flew the Berlin Airlift. "I don't mind losing to you" he gallantly told me. I had a proud moment to hear something like that from such an airman. And Steve McQueen shook my hand and congratulated me, as did a bunch of other competitors.

These events just kind of trailed off. I don't know when or why they finally stopped but it was years before we had another spot landing contest, and those weren't quite as good. There was some FAA involvement and everybody flew their own airplanes. Still fun, but not quite the same.



# THE *WET* AND WILD BLUE YONDER

RC pilots take to the skies (and waters) at Lake Castias for the Ventura County Comets' Fun Float Fly



## Story, Photos and Layout by Logan Hall

Standing on the shore of Lake Castias looking out at the float plane slowly taxiing across the glassy surface of the water, one would half expect to see a pilot pop the cockpit window open to wave at the crowd of onlookers.

At first glance, anyone might be briefly fooled by a close-up photograph of some radio controlled float planes. With the smooth silvery surface of the engine cowling, the subtle yet intricate details of a paint scheme or even an FAA "N" number stenciled across the rear fuselage, the planes darting around through the air are nothing short of impressive in both scale detail and performance.

Twice a year, the Ventura County Comets radio control flying club puts on a float fly event out at Castias, giving those in the sport a chance to get together and do what they love. Pilots from all over California come out to fly, show off their hardware, and check out the flying and sometimes the crashing of a variety of different RC planes.

There's the scale model, where no details are overlooked. There are the simple machines that have a more modest setup like just an engine and a few pieces of foam cut out to make the shape of a plane. And then you have the downright bizarre creation that looks like it has a much greater chance of being a submarine than anything that will ever lift off the ground.

Although all of these planes are as varied as the pilots that guide them through the sky, everything and everyone seem to have one thing in common.

Fun.

It's pretty tough to find someone out there that doesn't have a smile on their face. Brilliantly flashing colors, shiny machines and



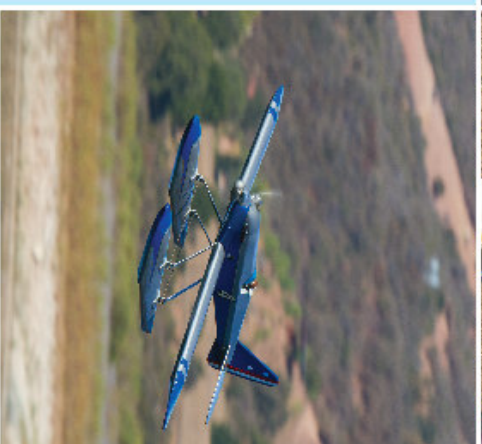
Top photo: A plane darts over the surface of the water just before touching down. Above, a pilot taxis his highly detailed DHC-2 Beaver home after a smooth landing in the October Float Fly event at Lake Castias.

the thrill of flight just seem to appeal to all ages and walks of life.

Keep your eyes peeled for the Comets' next float fly at Lake Castias. If you've got a float plane, bring 'er on out and get 'er in the air. If you don't fly, don't worry. There's plenty to see and a whole lot of flier flying going on. Best of all, there's no telling what might be soaring through the air — or splashing down in the water. Visit [www.comets.com](http://www.comets.com) for more info on the club and upcoming events.



Onlookers gasp as the "Phoenix" makes a ... rough landing. The pilot quickly had it back in the air after minor repairs.



Clockwise from top left, Pilot Cody Weir gets his bird, an Easy Sport 61 OS, ready to soar as Frosty the Snowman takes a seat in the cockpit. An engine roars to life while propeller blades cut through the air. A boat of spectators watches after the DHC-2 Beaver flipped over when attempting a landing. A sleek sport plane makes a low pass over the lake.

