

# The Comets' Tale

***The Official  
Newsletter of the***



**February 2008**

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## *Board of Directors*

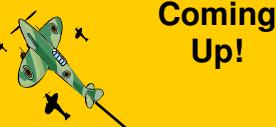
*Jerry Deanda Steve Steinmetz George Lanquist John Gates Ken Marsh  
Instructor Pilots*

*Emery Balasa Steve Billings Andrew Carlson Bob Root Ron Scott  
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, 21 February, 2007, 7:30 PM at the  
Oak View Community Center**



**29,30 March**

Santa Barbara R/C  
Modelers Float Fly,  
Lake Cachuma

**19, 20 April 2008**

Comets' Float Fly at Lake  
Casitas

**18, 19 October 2007**

Comets' Float Fly, Lake  
Casitas

**1st Sunday of each Month**

First Sunday At the Airport  
Static displays, Young  
Eagle Rides  
Santa Paula Airport

## **Root's Rambling**

It's true, we finally had some real winter weather (relative to our usual Southern California perfect weather). For a week in January we had rain and cold. In Ventura we had 4 inches of rain in one day. That was more than we had for the previous year! It reminded me of my days in the Northwest, so I managed to get a lot of building done. I have pretty much finished the big Spitfire model I started three years ago. I'm in the process now of getting everything working. There are a lot of systems in a plane like this. I just finished replacing the small flap servos with more powerful ones to get the flaps to work properly. I finally found the cause of the leak in the pneumatic retracts system (I hope). I had to order a new plastic nipple which the air line is connected to on one retract unit. It was leaking. I'm hoping there isn't any other leak that I haven't found yet. All the controls are hooked up, but it always takes me awhile to get all the controls moving in the right direction with the right amount of deflection. The model looks like it just came out of the paint shop so I am trying to add a little weathering. I haven't tried this before so it's a learning process. I hope to bring it to the next meeting.

I am writing this near the end of January because I will be out of town next week. It's our annual family ski week to Mammoth. I always enjoy skiing with the kids and grandkids (which now includes two little ones 3 and 5 years old). There is nothing quite like following a 5 year old down a mountain under complete

control after she has mastered her ‘snow plow’. What has all this got to do with model airplanes? I don’t know, but I will be gone for a week.

In the newsletter last May I started a little trip down memory lane describing my modeling experiences in the good old days. I talked about growing up with model airplanes in Portland Oregon. The July newsletter continued with my years in Seattle. I thought I would continue this month with my experiences after I moved to Southern California in September 1974. I came down to work for the Northrop Corporation. It turned out to be a good move for my career. I got the opportunity to work on stealth concepts for essentially my entire 20 year Northrop career.

My family and I initially moved into a three bedroom apartment. There was one bedroom for my wife and I, one for our two young girls, and one for storage for everything else we owned (we moved out of a four bedroom house in Seattle). Almost as soon as I got down here my friend Eloy Marez introduced me to Don Dombrowski and his House of Balsa company. At the time he and many modelers I met were racing .15 powered quarter midget racers. Picture 1 shows the House of Balsa Miss Dara racer I built on a small board in the storage bedroom I just mentioned. This model had a relatively low aspect ratio (short) wing and I crashed it at a race over the Thanksgiving weekend. It had gone well for several heats, but I eventually stalled it at the first pylon before it got up to speed. In hindsight I am amazed that I built it and had it ready to race in less than two months at the same time I was starting a new job and looking for a house. Anyway, I thought I could design a better one. We found a house and moved in July of 1975. I then designed, made a mold for a fiberglass fuselage, and built the P-63 Cobra shown in picture 2. I named it ‘Lil Cobra’. Eloy and I started a racing team and eventually started selling kits. By 1976 we had built several of them and were winning a lot of races using Rossi engines. Because of my racing success I got to know Ron Young

at Cox models. Cox was coming out with a new .15 engine at this time. When Ron asked me if I would Race Cox engines I said I would if he could get them to match the performance of our best Rossi. Eloy continued to use Rossi engines and it wasn’t long before I had great Cox engines with factory support. Picture 3 shows the winners at a race in February 1977. I’m on the left and Eloy is on the right. Out of the top five winners three models are Cobras and one is a P-39. The quarter midget club of Southern California was holding races once a month by this time. Over half the entrants were Lil Cobras at most of these races. They were easy to build, flew great, and were a good sport model. During the late 70’s we went to a lot of races in Mexico. They had an unlimited class down there where anything could be raced. This was great. I increased the wing area from 300 sq. in. to 350 sq. in., put a rac-



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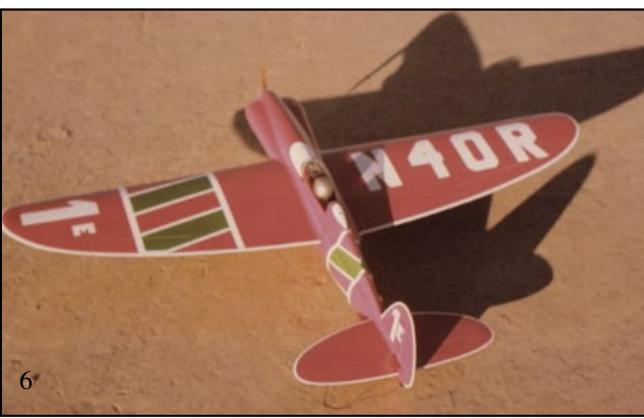
ing .40 in the Cobra, and waxed them. My wife even raced one with a sport .40 in it! Picture 4 shows a couple of these racers.

The quarter midget racing was fun but the serious racing was still Formula I. These are 5 pound airplanes with highly developed racing .40's. I built a couple of the popular Prather Toni kits. One is being held by my oldest daughter in picture 5. The wing folded on the third flight and I decided I could design something

better. The Loving's Love we raced in Seattle was no longer competitive so I designed the Williams Stinger shown in picture 6. I finished two of these

for the 1978 Nationals held in Riverside that year. I completed them the night before the race and tested them in the desert at sunrise before going to Riverside for the races. For improved performance the Stinger had a higher aspect ratio wing than most racers at that time. These racers utilized standard, for the time,

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foam wing construction and I found it wasn't strong enough. The wing folded in the first race. That night I cut a slot in the bottom wing skin of the remaining Stinger and put in a full depth spar. I never had another wing fail with this construction method. Of course it was easier to do before skinning the wing. I also found that this original Stinger had too much wing camber which resulted in increased drag. However, I raced it in Mexico City (6000 ft. altitude) and it was optimum. I sold it to one of the Mexicans and he successfully raced it for several years.

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I redesigned the Stinger and, after a couple of iterations to get the weight down to the minimum allowed, it became a very successful racer. I sold a few kits but it was more complex to build than some so it wasn't very popular. The final iteration is shown in picture 7. I built these two for the 1979 National Miniature Pylon Racing Association championship race in Las Vegas. This 10 heat race over two days is the big race of the year. I had a good engine that

got better as the race progressed, a good airplane, and some luck, and won with the fastest time of the meet in a fly off for first. The two fly off pilots are shown with sponsor Bill Bennett (Circus Circus Casino co owner at the time) in picture 8 before this final race.



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While this racing was going on we still found time for fun flying on Sunday mornings. Picture 8 shows one my original designs from that period. I'm sure it was a copy of something (Kaos?). Note the typical muffler at this time. Mufflers were just coming into use.

I also designed a little Gypsy Moth that utilized a .15 engine. One is shown in picture 10 with my younger daughter's idea of the perfect paint scheme. I believe I used one of my older racing .15 engines in it. Picture 11 shows a much more scale version. This was a very simple to build model utilizing a fiberglass fuselage and foam wings sheeted on the top only.

I also worked with an interesting lady who had a toy design company. She was looking for a flying toy which was inexpensive and easy to fly. She was probably about 15 years ahead of the technology. We decided on a simple electric airplane rather than the helicopters and ducted fans she started with. I started with a free flight model I remembered from about 1954. It was sort of a flying platter longer than its width with a big slot 2/3 of the way back. Although the original free flight model was built up and covered with tissue I found it easy to make them out of hollowed out foam and cover with low temp iron on covering. After some testing I found the slot wasn't necessary or even desirable. I also found that the model was more stable and easier to fly if the aspect ratio was less than 1 (length more than span or width). The final model is shown in picture 12. We flew it single channel with ailerons only, utilizing differential aileron to allow self trimming in the turn. Remember, this was all done mechanically, none of the electronics we have today were available. There wasn't even an ESC we just turned the power motor on and hand launched it. I found the model was more fun when it utilized two channels with elevons for roll and pitch control. This model represents a very early (about 1979) park flyer. I used to do the testing on a local ball field at lunch time. For an affordable toy selling for less than 70 dollars they were looking for something which could be manufactured for under 10! With the radio, electric motor, and NiCad's they never were able to get the price low enough. It was a fun project and they paid for all the materials and equipment. If anyone wants to build one it's a simple project. It utilized a symmetrical airfoil and balanced about 20 to 25 percent chord. Have a great month. Warmer weather is coming.



*Bob Root*

## JANUARY 2008 MINUTES

The Comet meeting was called to order by President Mike Ambarian on January 18, at 7:30 pm, at the Oak View Community Center.

There were no December minutes to approve due to our annual Christmas party. There were no guests.

**Treasurer's Report:** We now have 62 members and finances are in very good shape. The report was accepted.

**Safety:** Dennis Fingold - No report.

**Field Marshall:** Bud Scolari reported that all are locking the gate at the field.

**Park Liaison:** Ken Marsh reported that the Lake will be locking the gate just past the store. Please be sure to lock it behind you when you go through it. The gate by the field should also be locked when you are the last one.

It was announced that John Gates wife, Patricia, has passed away and the club has donated \$50 to the Humane Society in her behalf. A condolence card was also sent.

**Old Business:** Cheers were given to the out-going officers.

Ken Marsh announced that after the February meeting the gate combo will be changed.

The asphalt runway is falling apart and needs resealing again. Committee for checking into resurfacing is John Dugan and Dale Nash.

Dale Nash reported that the paperwork has been collected for doing the road repairs (paving) from Campground O to the entrance gate at our field. Dale will check to see the status.

Lynn Breedlove is still looking for a status board for the impound.

**New Business:** Paperwork was sent in for the April Float Fly, to be held April 18 – 20. John Dugan will be CD.

Don Sorenson is taking over the Comet website for Ron Scott.

Awnings are needed for the Float Fly and have been assigned as an action item for Marilyn Nash, Dale Nash and T.J. Moran.

**Model of the Month:** Joe Horswell brought in his T-Rex helicopter.

Ken March discussed setting up control rods and clevis adjustment.

Don Ashworth announced he is selling items from a previous member if anyone is interested.

Dale Nash is selling 40 tickets at \$10.00 each for a 2.4GHz, FASST, 7-Ch Futaba radio.

Drawing was held and the meeting was adjourned.



Respectfully Submitted

*Sandy Brown*



## **2008 CALENDAR - R/C FLYING EVENTS**

VENTURA COUNTY & AROUND By Ron Scott as of 02-14-08

<b>January</b>	11,12,13 AMA Convention & Hobby Show @ Ontario CA 24-27 Electric Festival @ Apache Junction AZ — <a href="http://www.rccraze.com/azfestival/">http://www.rccraze.com/azfestival/</a>
<b>February</b>	9 Night Fly/Fun Fly 4 to 9 PM— Valley Flyers 23 Float Fly at Santa Fe Dam
<b>March</b>	5-6 Q40/Q500 pylon racing—Valley Flyers 9 Giant Scale Fun Fly and Night Fly—Valley Flyers 16 Fun Fly—Simi Flyers 29-30 Float Fly - Lake Cachuma - SBRCM Club and other Ventura County clubs. No CD, BBQ or raffle 18-20 Western States 3 day electric Fun Fly - Valley Flyers
<b>April</b>	5-6 Q40/Q500 pylon racing—Valley Flyers 18-20 Western States 3 day electric Fun Fly - Valley Flyers 19-20 Float Fly @ Lake Casitas - Ventura County Comets 19-20 RCX Hobby Show @ Pomona Fairplex <a href="http://www.rcx.com">www.rcx.com</a>
<b>May</b>	3-4 20th Annual Gathering of Giants event @ Condor Field 3 Fun Fly & Engine Clinic by Hobby People - Valley Flyers 10 Balloon Drop - Lake Casitas - Comets 11 Electric Fun Fly, BBQ @ Simi Valley Flyers 11 Mother's Day 17-18 L.A. Jets - Valley Flyers
<b>June</b>	7 Electric Fun Fly & Glowpower .15 or less + BBQ @ Comets Field 6-8 Float Fly - Lake Cachuma - Santa Barbara R/C Modelers 7 Giant Scale Fun Fly and Night Fly - Valley Flyers 14 Warbird Event - Condors Field 15 Father's Day 22 Fun Fly, BBQ and Swap Meet @ Simi Valley Flyers 21-22 Q40/Q500 Pylon Racing - Western Championship - Valley Flyers 28 Quaker Fun Fly - Comets - Lake Casitas 29 All Scale Fun Fly @ Canyon Crosswinds - Lake Castaic
<b>July</b>	18-20 County Fair Entry Weekend (805) 648-3376 Fri.-Sun. 10a-5p – See Entry Guide for details 19 IMAC event @ Condors Field (call Andy Portman 805-388-7196) 20 First Annual Warbird Race - Valley Flyers 26 Warbird Day & BBQ + Swap Meet @ Condors Field \$10 entry fee includes lunch 26-27 L.A. Jets - Valley Flyers 30- 8/10 Ventura County Fair
<b>August</b>	8-10 Scale Masters Qualifier Event - Valley Flyers 16 Electric Fun Fly & Swap Meet @ Condors Field 16-17 Camarillo Air show

<b>September</b>	14	Giant Scale Fly-In and Night Fly– Valley Flyers
	28-29	Float Fly @ Lake Castaic Lower Lake– Canyon Crosswinds
	26-28	L.A. 3D Helicopter Classic - Valley Flyers
	27-28?	Float Fly @ Lake McSwane—call Otto Lairson (Pres.) at 209-632-9489
<b>October</b>	4	Helicopter Day and Swap Meet @ Condor Field
	5?	Fun Fly @ Simi Flyers Field
	8-10?	Glider Festival @ Visalia (CVRC <a href="http://www.Soaring.com">www.Soaring.com</a> )
	18-19	Comets Float Fly @ Lake Casitas
	25-26	Lake Cachuma Float Fly SBRCM and Ventura County Comets members only
<b>November</b>	8	Night Fly– Valley Flyers
	9	Warbird Day + Toy Collection @ Condors Field
	11-13?	Float Fly @ London Bridge, Windsor Beach Park, Lake Havasu AZ (Desert Hawks Club)
	30	L.A. Jets– Valley Flyers
<b>December</b>	14	Toys for Tots Fly-In– Valley Flyers
	18	Comets Christmas Party
	25	Santa Claus brings <u>new stuff</u> to replace all the planes and engines that Murphy broke during the year.

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<u>CLUB OR EVENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>	<u>PHONE #</u>
; AVTI (Lancaster) . . . . .	Jerry Budd . . . . .	(805) 943-4970
; Desert Hawks (Lake Havasu). . .	George Field . . . . .	(928) 855-1197 <a href="http://www.deserthawksrc.com">www.deserthawksrc.com</a>
; Comets (Ventura County). . . . .	John Dugan . . . . .	(805) 646-6898 <a href="http://www.vccomets.com">www.vccomets.com</a>
; Condors (Camarillo). . . . .	John O'Brian . . . . .	(818) 991-2139 <a href="http://www.cicondors.com/">www.cicondors.com/</a>
; Camarillo Flying Circus . . . . .	George Bahrman . . . . .	(805) 525-1301
; Giant Scale Squadron . . . . .	Dave Hendrix . . . . .	(213) 758-2935
; Las Vegas R/C Club . . . . .	Tom Hart . . . . .	(702) 566-0668 <a href="http://www.lvrconline.com">www.lvrconline.com</a>
; Port-A-Potti Pilots (Sylmar) . . .	Robby Hombre . . . . .	(818) <a href="http://www.RobinsHobbies.com">www.RobinsHobbies.com</a>
; R/C Marathon- . . . . .	Corona R/C Club . . . . .	(208)486-6063
; Santa Barbara RC Modelers . . .	Jerry Livers . . . . .	(805) 964-1370 <a href="mailto:WWW.SBRCM.ORG">WWW.SBRCM.ORG</a>
; SGVRCL (San Gabriel Valley) . . .	Jim Riccio . . . . .	(310) 973-3696
; The Unlimited (Torrance) . . . . .	Lesley Burnett . . . . .	(310) 320-8369
; Torry Pines Gulls . . . . .	Charlie Richardson . . . . .	(619) 630-8775
; Valley Flyers (Sepulveda) . . . . .	George Finch . . . . .	(310) 459-1577 <a href="http://www.valleyflyers.com">www.valleyflyers.com</a>
; Simi Valley Flyers . . . . .	Al Hoff . . . . .	(805) 581-2884 <a href="http://www.geocities.com/capecanaveral/cockpit/9515">www.geocities.com/capecanaveral/cockpit/9515</a>
Visalia Glider Festival . . . . .	Ed Hipp . . . . .	<a href="http://www.cvrcoaring.com">www.cvrcoaring.com</a>
Canyon Crosswinds . . . . .	Wally Briggs . . . . .	(661)722-0029 <a href="http://www.canyoncrosswinds.com">www.canyoncrosswinds.com</a>
Web Master – Steve @ 661-263-0261		
Perris Lake . . . . .	Oscar Weingart . . . . .	(951) 684-8712
- Santa Fe Dam R/C Modelers . . .	Web Site / Calendar	(626) 821-4133 ..
<a href="http://WWW.SFDRCM.COM">WWW.SFDRCM.COM</a>		
Southern CA - Slope racing Org. <a href="http://www.socalsloperacing.com">www.socalsloperacing.com</a>		
IMAC(International) Min. Aerobatic Club	Andy Portman	(805) 388-719 <a href="http://www.mini-iac.com/DesktopDefault.aspx">www.mini-iac.com/DesktopDefault.aspx</a>
Riverside RC Club . . . . .	<a href="http://www.riversiderccclub.org">www.riversiderccclub.org</a>	
- AMA Calendar of events	<a href="http://www.modelaircraft.org/contest.htm">www.modelaircraft.org/contest.htm</a>	