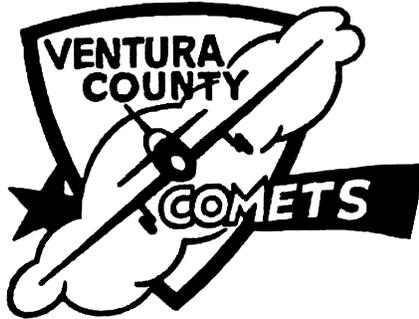


# The Comets' Tale

*The Official  
Newsletter of the*



**February 2012**

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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.

Next Meeting: Thursday, 16 February, 7:30  
PM at the Casitas Springs Community  
Center

## Coming Up!



**Mon., 20 Feb.**

Indoor Electric Fly, Simi  
Valley Recreation Center  
7:30 PM

**Sat., Sun., 21, 22 April**  
Comets Float Fly at Lake  
Casitas

**First Sunday of Every  
Month**  
Open House at Santa Paula  
Airport

## From the President

Hello all. February is here, and the weather has been outstanding out at the field. I have been getting out at least once a week, and many times twice or more. It's never boring out at the field. As an example for the past month or so, Bob Root and Don Ashworth have been working on a scratch-built twin engine electric foamy that flies off both grass and water. It sports a six foot Mylar ribbon, and a marine emergency air horn activated by a servo and powered by an air retract cylinder. You're probably asking yourself, what's all this for? Well, chasing coots off of golf courses, of course! As clarification, in some circles coots are known as mud hens. I believe the name of their new enterprise is "Coots be Gone". They made a trial run at a course up in Santa Barbara, and it didn't go well. The coots just went off into the reeds and hid out until Bob and Don left. But that was before the addition of the marine emergency air horn. They are looking forward to a much more successful outing the next time. It's been fun watching the two of them working on the plane, solving flying problems, and

coming up with an obnoxious sound that would scare coots, and what knows what else, out of the state. So, at the next monthly meeting, or if you happen to run into the two of them out at the field or on the golf course, ask them how their new venture is going. I am sure that you will be both enlightened and entertained.

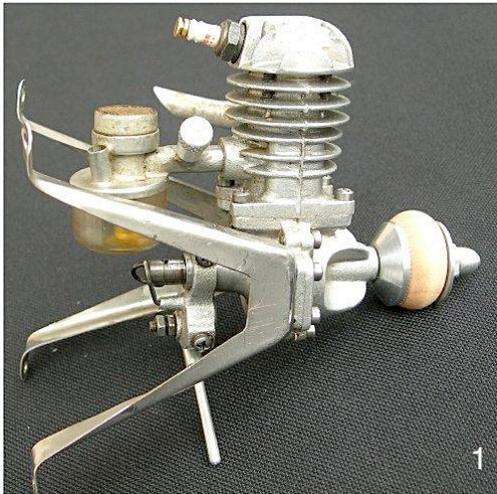
Don't forget that the February meeting is set for Thursday the 16th at 7:30. So for us baby boomers, See ya there, or be square! Safe flying.

*George Boston*

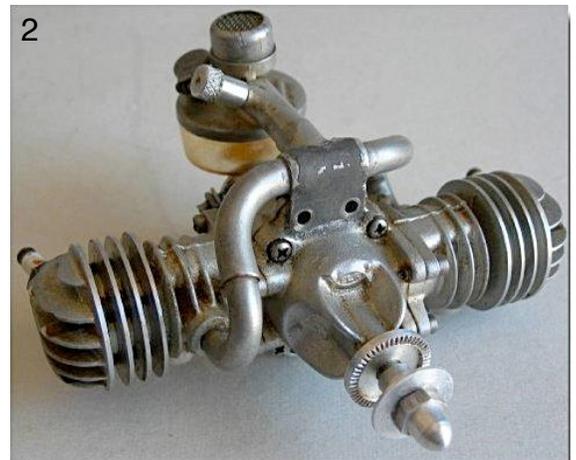
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### Root's Rambling

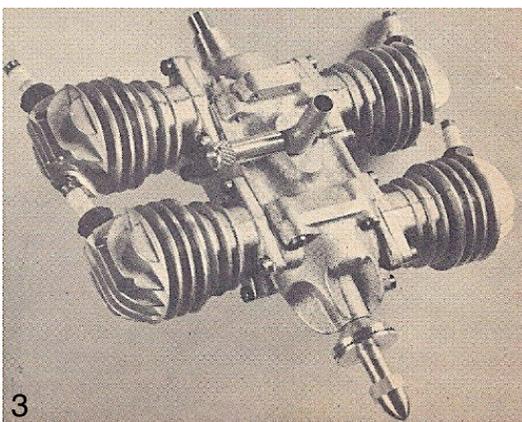
I thought that this month I would discuss a few interesting old model engines. I know, I know, most of you are currently more interested in electric motors, but it's my column. Anyone want to take it over?



One of the interesting engines available in the 40's and early 50's was the Elf which was designed and manufactured by Dan Calkin. He was located



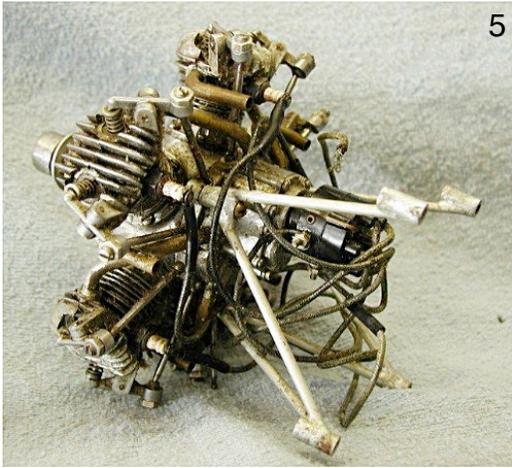
in Portland Oregon where I grew up. Pictures 1, 2, and 3 shows three of his engines. An article I found in the August 1955 issue of Model Airplane News stated that he was still offering various Elf engines including singles, twins, fours, and even six cylinder versions. Apparently he made both glow and ignition versions. These engines were much too expensive for my young budget but I saw a few of them after the war. The twin in picture 2 has a displacement of .



196 cu. in. The four cylinder engine in picture 3 has a displacement of .396 cu. in. It has three main bearings, a single air intake, and a bare weight of 9 oz.

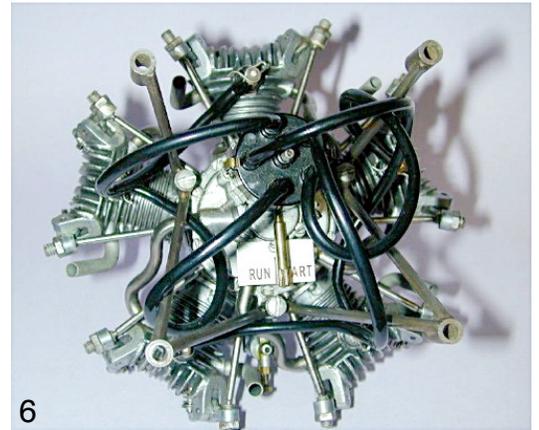


Another engine which appeared immediately after the war

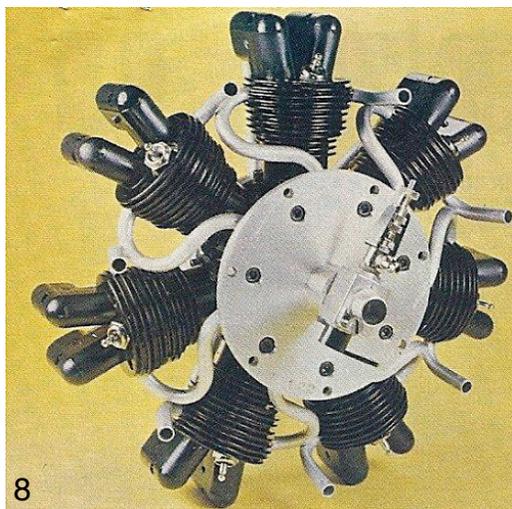


is the Morton M-5 shown in pictures 4, 5, and 6. This is probably one of the most interesting engines ever produced. This engine was brought to the market in 1945 by the Morton brothers of Omaha, Nebraska. The M-5 was based on the pre-war LeBlond 85 hp lightplane engine. It is a five-cylinder 0.92 cu in

spark-ignition engine.

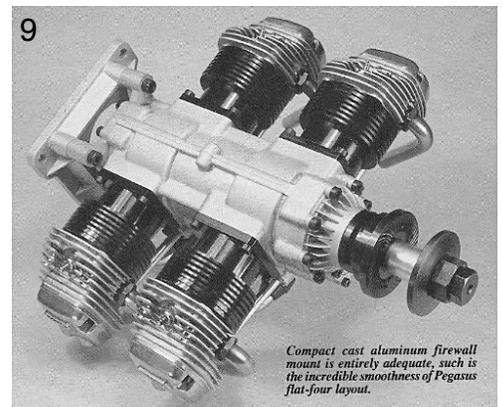


A more modern model radial engine is the 7-cylinder four-cycle Technopower shown in pictures 7 and 8. I found the following information in the March 1982 issue of Model Airplane News: This engine was designed in England by Glenn K. Hargrave in the early 70's and has a displacement of 1.181 cu. in. Production began in Ireland in 1976 but wasn't very successful because of business problems and the company went out of business in 1979. Wally Warner, an American, bought the design and began producing the updated version shown here in about 1982. This engine was inspired by the Armstrong-Siddeley Genet 100 hp motor that first appeared in 1928. Both these model

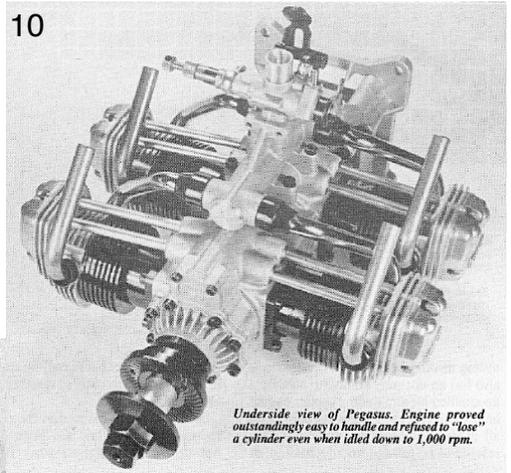


engines follow a full size single-row radial aircraft engine in general design. They have a single-throw crankshaft with a master connecting-rod to which other connecting rods are linked and overhead valves, pushrod-operated by lobes of a cam ring, gear driven from the crankshaft. However the model engines don't have pumped oil circulation or magneto ignition. The major difference between the M-5 and Techno engines is that the older motor has its cam gear and pushrods at the rear, operating exposed rockers and valves, whereas the Techno has its gears and cam ring at the front with covered pushrods and fully

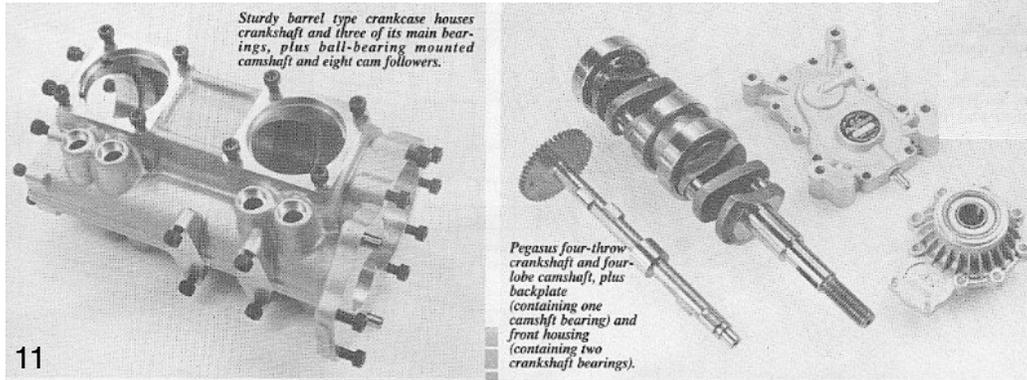
enclosed rockers. Look at all the "stuff" on the back of the M-5. Technopower engines are still available from the company in Santa Ana Ca.



Compare the four cylinder Elf in picture 3 with the O.S. FF-240 “Pegasus” in pictures 9 and 10. This engine was reviewed in the April 1987 Model Airplane News and is still available today. It weighs 4.8 lb. has a displacement of 2.43 cu. in. and develops about 3 hp. Picture 11 gives some indication of why these engines are so expensive. The technology has come a long way in 40 years!



Underside view of Pegasus. Engine proved outstandingly easy to handle and refused to “lose” a cylinder even when idled down to 1,000 rpm.



Sturdy barrel type crankcase houses crankshaft and three of its main bearings, plus ball-bearing mounted camshaft and eight cam followers.

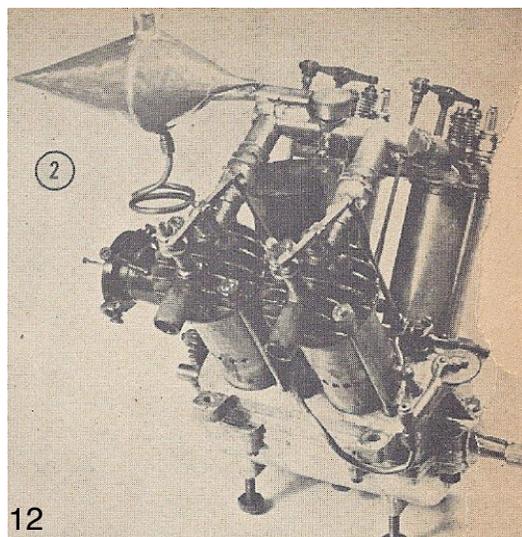
Pegasus four-throw crankshaft and four-lobe camshaft, plus backplate (containing one camshaft bearing) and front housing (containing two crankshaft bearings).

11

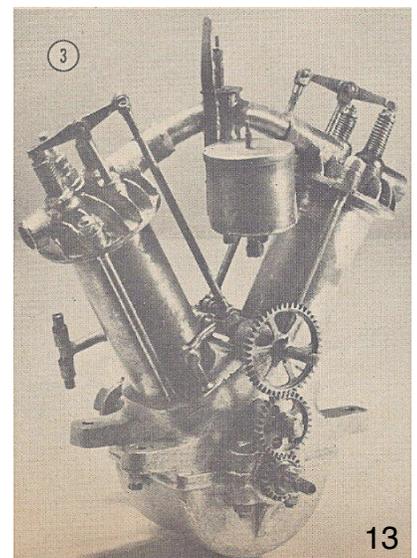
I will conclude my discussion with pictures of a couple of really old model engines. In 1908, David Stanger, an English automobile engineer, designed and built a four-cylinder Vee-type engine that was one of the very first gas motors to be used in a model plane. This engine, shown in picture 12, is a 7.4 cu. in. V-4. Picture 13 shows the 3.7 cu. in. 4-cycle V-Twin used by Stanger in 1914 to set the first official record by a gas engine model plane, with a flight before Royal Aero Club observers, of 51 second duration. This record stood for 18 years. This engine weighed 42 oz. and the model, a canard biplane, had a span of 7 ft. and weighed 10 ¾ lb. The engine drove a 22/18 prop at 2,000 rpm. This information was from a November 1959 American Modeler magazine article.

I have other old engine stories if anyone is interested. After World War two 1/2A engines became very popular. At that time we could afford \$3.95 for an engine so that’s what we used. When these small engines became available in the 40’s and 50’s hundreds of thousands were sold. It was

a cutthroat business and engines for six or seven dollars didn’t sell. I can remember how hard it was to convince myself that \$5.95 wasn’t too much for the latest and best contest free flight engine. The technology advanced very rapidly after the war. This might be a subject for a future Rambling.



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*Bob Root*

## MINUTES of the JANUARY 2012 MEETING

The meeting was called to order by President George at 7:31PM. He wished the group Happy New Year and found that we had a new member and a guest in the gallery. This improved the count so that we had 25 people for the meeting.

The Minutes were approved, yet we found an error with one of the names in the mast head. Jerry was tasked with fixing it. The Treasurer's Report was reviewed. We had a fair amount of income from Float Fly, Float-Fly food and dues. The expenses were mainly raffle prizes.

We have 34 members signed up...2011 ended with 82 members. But don't panic there are many members that have not signed up for 2012. Hint - hint - If you haven't paid and are planning to be part of the fun this year, please renew (send a check).

Both the Field Marshal/Safety Officer and the Park Liaison had no new business, "Calm and Quiet" was heard as a summary for the month.

### **Old Business**

Ken Marsh's name was added (again) to the William Gast trophy

### **New Business**

Runway condition – There was a lengthy discussion on the current condition of the runway and suggestions on how to fix it. As most of you know the new runway surface is already falling apart. There is no warranty on the work so the club is making plans to resurface the runway again.

However what can we do differently this time? The slurry that was used last time obviously did not hold up. To quickly summarize the decisions a few people were tasked with contacting the County Water Board, The AMA Flying Site Assistance, and a grant writer. The grant writer may be able to find some money that is available for hobbies like ours.

In the meantime Mike Ambarian said he will get the supplies necessary to fill the cracks.

Fire Extinguishers – A concern about a fire safety was brought up. This should be a priority with the club. We have fuel, and batteries, and have a fire extinguisher available in the shed. The thought was to bring the fire extinguisher out of the shed at the start of each flying session. In other words the first person to the field gets the extinguisher out of the shed and puts it in an accessible area (by the wind sock?). Chime in with your thoughts. Being proactive means lessening the liability of the club should there be an accident.

Calendar of Events – Did everyone get last month's calendar? Ron Scott has traditionally done a great job of documenting the local events. I have it stuck to my refrigerator so I know where I am supposed to be each weekend. How do the rest of you use it?

Here is a summary of what the Comets will host:

- April 21-22 Float Fly (Friday the 20<sup>th</sup> is club-only float fly)
- May 19: Electric and <.15 glow and BBQ
- June 23: Quaker Fun Fly and Balloon Drop
- July 28: Warbird day / Swap meet / BBQ
- Oct 20-21: Float Fly (Friday the 19<sup>th</sup> is club-only float fly)
- Nov 16-18: Club-Only Float Fly
- Dec 20: Christmas Party

The Park Liaison will speak to the Lake about road closures due to the cross-country runs that happen a few times a year at the park. Be prepared for a few updates.

We ended the meeting with the raffle.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Alastair Brennan*

# Senate joins House in passing FAA bill, exemption for Aeromodeling

M U N C I E – The U.S. Senate late Monday joined the House in passing the first full FAA Reauthorization Bill in more than four years. In passing the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 both the House and Senate included a provision aimed at protecting model aviation from burdensome regulations. The President is expected to sign the bill into law. “We are very appreciative of those in Congress who recognize that model aviation hobbyists have been highly successful at governing themselves and being safety conscious over generations,” said Bob Brown, president of the Academy of Model Aeronautics, representing 143,000 aeromodelers. “We are intensely committed to a safe National Airspace System (NAS), and have proven so. This bill is testimony to a common sense approach to model aviation.”

The AMA’s ongoing attempt to protect aeromodeling from what it believes to be unnecessary and overreaching federal regulations was championed by Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK) who sponsored the amendment. The Academy would like to express its sincere appreciation to the members of Congress and their staffs, with special thanks to John Mica (R-FL), Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-TX), Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) and Tom Petri (R-WI).

“I can’t stress enough the impact that AMA members have had on getting this amendment passed,” said Brown. “Last year, our members sent 90,000 letters of concern to their Congressional representatives, and the collective voice of aeromodeling was heard loud and clear.”

Rapid technological advancements and the integration of small unmanned aircraft systems, or sUAS, has been a challenge for the FAA, which is responsible for ensuring the safety of the NAS. The AMA has consistently contended that aeromodeling conducted by its members, following the AMA Safety Code, is different from commercial sUAS operations. That distinction lies, in part, with hobbyists operating within a defined area, away from people and property, and not for commercial purposes, among other self-imposed rules.

“This legislation is a very positive step,” said Rich Hanson, AMA’s Government Regulatory Affairs representative. “However, there are still steps to come. We look forward to a cooperative effort with the FAA in ensuring that model aircraft may continue to operate safely within the NAS.”

AMA expects that the FAA will issue its Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) for public comment sometime later this spring. The Academy continues to believe that a regulatory approach to model aviation is unnecessary and unwarranted.

The Academy of Model Aeronautics is the nation’s collective voice for aeromodeling, founded in 1936, with 143,000 members in 2,400 clubs in every state, Puerto Rico and Guam. The AMA successfully sanctions more than 2,000 events and competitions each year, and boasts the world’s largest collection of model aviation artifacts and documents in the National Model Aviation Museum situated on the 1,100-acre International Aeromodeling Center in Muncie, Indiana.

## **RANDUMB THOTS:-)**

I hope you all read the note on the previous page. Finally, some good news! Note that while the FAA intends to protect aeromodelers from unnecessary legislation, it's not a done deal just yet. They expect to issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) this spring. I'll keep an eye out for it and try not to let it go unnoticed. In the past, the FAA has been pretty good about asking for input on NPRMs acting on it. It might be time for another letter (email?) writing campaign.

Once in a while, I escape from the Comets' Tale Plaza and manage to stay at large long enough to see a movie. A couple of weeks ago wife Dianne and I saw "Red Tails". We'd seen the trailers and although I wasn't encouraged by the action footage I knew this was going to be a Must See for us.

If you've been hiding under a rock for the last few years, you might have missed the attention paid to the men of the Tuskegee Experiment, the program during WWII to get black pilots into fighters. It was pretty controversial since there were quite a few people in the United States who were certain that a 'negro' couldn't fly an airplane, let alone handle one in combat. The completely segregated training was all done at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. To make a long story short, after months of being held back in ragged P-40s in Italy, the guys finally got P-51s and were given fighter escort duties. And they did great. The Tuskegee Experiment became the Tuskegee Experience.

George Lucas made this movie as a pet project, feeling that the story of the Tuskegee Airmen needed telling. I think when Hollywood tells a true story, they have a responsibility to get it right, but almost every time they do tell a true story, there seems to be a need fool with it. One exception to this would be Ron Howard's brilliant "Apollo 13". "Red Tails" is not one of those exceptions. The story centers on the group's experiences in 1944, toward the end of the war. Tired of flying inconsequential airstrikes in tired P-40s they were keen to get into the air-to-air war. They finally got current P-51s and were tasked with protecting bombers. So far, so good. Lucas got some correct airplanes for the filming, built a few movie prop airplanes and did a whole lot of computer graphics. They mostly look pretty good but it's not quite same as the real thing. A lot of the aerial action had fighters in tight formations during combat, and sometimes those tight formations were right in the bomber formations. Oh well, at least the airplanes moved correctly. There was one, well, kind of 'whiparound' maneuver that never could have happened, but that's Hollywood. Why do movie airplanes always make that low whistling sound when they're about to crash?

Main thing, I was hoping the personalities and history would be good in this movie and it wasn't too bad. It wasn't perfect, though. There is a romance that starts on a pretty hokey note, but becomes pretty sweet. Could have happened, I guess. The thing that bothered me the most was that one of the pilots had a drinking problem. Woo, that's a big Hollywood cliché... those hard drinking pilots. Could have happened, but I am having a hard time with this... I am not convinced that ever happened. Those guys were the best of the best and they knew they were under the microscope. Even if one started drinking, I'm pretty sure he'd get turned in right away. Who wants to fly into combat with a drunk?

There is a bit where two of the Tuskegee pilots attack a German destroyer, and that did happen, although in reality, they were flying P-47s at the time. In fact, they shot hell out of that ship, and that's what the movie shows. There were some scenes of tense interracial encounters at an officer's hangout in town... can't find out if anything like that happened, but again, it sure could have.

I don't think the acting in this thing will win any Oscars.

Bottom line, Dianne called it a great movie and I'd rate it pretty good. OK, the flick is gone from the theaters by now, so this isn't the most timely thing you'll read, but "Red Tails" will make a great renter. I'd say it's about as good as the made-for-HBO movie from a few years ago. In fact, Cuba Gooding Jr is in both of them.

Fly Safe!