

The Comets' Tale

*The Official
Newsletter of the*



January 2014

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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, 16 January
7:30 PM at the Oak Park Community Center**

**Coming
Up!**



**12 - 13 April 2014
Saturday & Sunday
Comets' Float Fly at Lake
Casitas**

**25, 26, 27 April
Friday—Sunday
SBRCM Float Fly at Lake
Cachuma**

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

Prez Sez:

Thanks to all that came to the Christmas Meeting/Potluck. I hope a good time was had by all. And certainly thanks goes out to Dale and Marilyn Nash for setting it up.

At the next meeting we have the contest/activities calendar to discuss. Also the April Float Fly will be here before we know it – it usually takes a bit of planning so we should start now. For starters we need a volunteer for Contest Director (CD). This will officially kick it off and we can get all the paper work in to the AMA and get an ad in the magazine.

The new runway has good and bad days. The bad is some of the glue joint is coming apart due the runway tightening up. TJ has arranged a fix for it and rumor has it he has recruited a few people to help. We will have more information on the result at the meeting. The good news is the few wrinkles in the fabric are settling down. And we still have to stripe it. So expect a state-of -the-runway address at the meeting.

What do you think about getting some buckets of that blacktop (driveway) sealant and putting that on the taxi way? This may preserve the asphalt and it may stop more of it from coming up

See ya at the meeting,

Alastair Brennan

Root's Rambling for January 2014

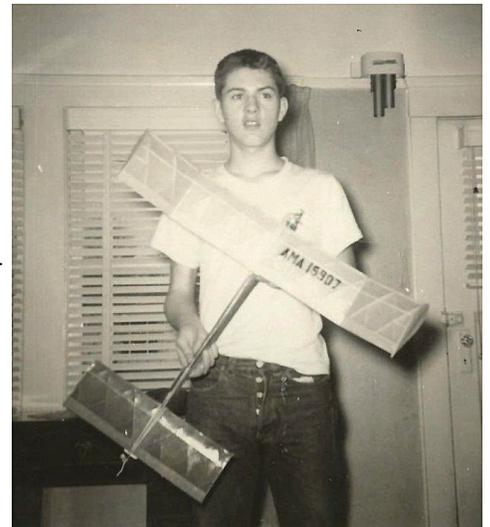
By the time you see this the AMA show will have taken place. Several of us plan to attend. This gathering has changed a lot over the years. The emphasis is now on ready built Things. This got me to thinking about how us old timers got into modeling in the first place. Those of us who have been in the hobby since before ARFs will remember that we had to build whatever we were going to fly. I enjoy building and always have. I enjoy the challenge of solving airplane design, construction, and flying problems. For me, the problems associated with assembling a modern ARF represent the least enjoyable part of the process. However, the younger generation is not much into building. They prefer assembling or even just buying what they need. I conned my grandson Ben into building one model. I felt that he needed to know a little about how our models go together. He built a SIG Somethin Extra from a kit. I don't expect to see him build anything else. He did it for Grandpa but I don't think he enjoyed it much.

So where am I going with this? To remember the old days I got out my photo albums for a little trip down memory lane. I started building "stick models" when I was about 8. That would have been near the end of WW II. The kits were very crude. With no balsa available they had hardwood stingers and spars and cardboard ribs and formers. I had a great mom who let me use razor blades and model airplane glue at an age that probably wouldn't be allowed now. It is certainly a misnomer that I actually built these models. I am sure they must have come out looking pretty bad, but I didn't have anyone to tell me I couldn't build so I was happy. After the war when the kits were real balsa again and they were cheap I really got into building. A couple of kit companies that still sell these kinds of kits had kits that sold for as little as 10 cents! And that included covering. The basic "stick" kit included a sheet of balsa usually 1/16 inch printed to allow cutting out all the ribs and formers with a razor blade and a bunch of small sticks usually 1/16 square. There was usually a piece of thin celluloid for windows, a piece of small wire for the landing gear and a couple of hardwood wheels and sometimes a length of rubber for power. These things were so popular you could get a kit to build a scale model of almost any airplane that had ever flown. They were rubber powered. Most of them were small and few were capable of much actual flight.

When I was 10 or 11 I had built a large number of these models but I hadn't figured out how to get a decent covering job on them. So, I had them all hanging from the ceiling of my room uncovered (I wish I had a picture). I would take one down try to cover it, try to fly it, and eventually destroy it. As time went on I started having a little better luck. I read all the model magazines every month and learned about all the different types of models being built. I had and still have a fascination with flying. It eventually resulted in me becoming an aerodynamicist. At this time I was experimenting with all kinds of simple gliders, both hand launch and tow-line and small control line models. I had a morning paper route and after delivering my papers I would go to the local university sport field and fly hand launch gliders as the sun came up. It was calm and there weren't any thermals. I tried long fuselages, short fuselages, long wings short wings, low tails, high tails, V tails, and no tails. I think I was learning about air planes while enjoying it. I know that years later at Oregon State University I had a better grasp of what they were trying to teach us in the aerodynamics classes than the other students had.

The Boy's club that I belonged to at this time gave us the chance to play in a gym one evening a week. A couple of modelers came by one evening to see who was interested in model airplanes. Hey, that's me! Their plan was to start a club of boys interested in building models. After a couple of weeks this group was down to one. Since the boys club didn't work out they invited me to join their AMA chartered club (sadly the Portland Stardusters club is no longer around). All of the club members were adults except for one other teenage girl. It was great because someone in the club was always willing to take me to the monthly club meetings and flying sessions and occasional contests.

This trip down memory lane is kind of long winded but I do have pictures. One of the first contest models I designed was the 1/2A free flight shown in picture 1. I was about 13 when I built it and maybe 14 in this

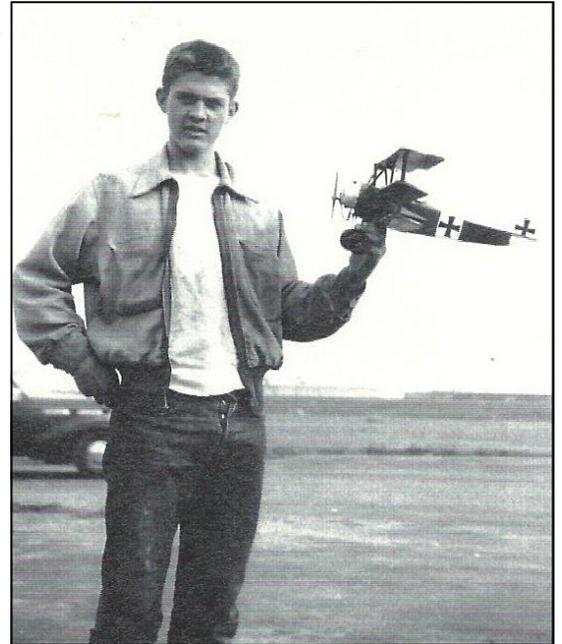




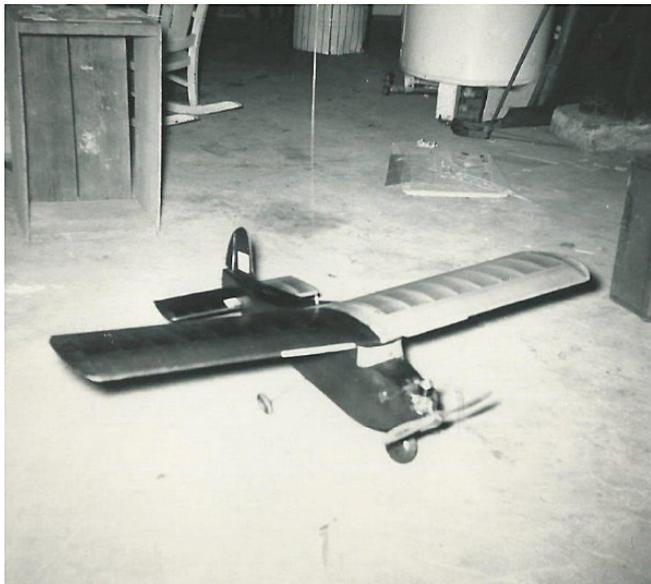
picture. I was building and flying free flight and control line models and competing whenever there was a contest. Picture 2 shows one of the control line models I built from magazine plans. I don't remember many control line contests. This was probably because the Stardusters were a free flight club. Free flight contests were great. There were lots of events. In many cases a new engine was given for first place. I tried to compete in as many events as possible including the least popular events. In picture 3 I am holding a scale free flight Fokker

triplane. It is 1/2A (.049) powered and I built it from magazine plans for a control line model. I lightened it as much as I could and using ideas from a magazine article I added a pendulum guided rudder to improve spiral stability. It flew pretty well and won me at least one engine.

A lot of club members were starting to get into radio control in the early 50s. Radios were crude at this time and getting a model to fly back to where it started was the goal. I built a radio for a high school physics class project in about 1954. Plans were in the Model Airplane News magazine. Club members showed me where to get the parts (wire for coils, resistors, condensers, etc.). An early original r/c model is shown in picture 4. These



early models usually had rudder control only. The rudder was driven by an escapement which is a rubber band powered magnetic device. A signal from the radio powers the escapement magnet and this mechanical movement allows the twisted rubber to power the rudder to a new position. Slightly later the compound escapement came along to allow the rudder to always return to neutral and selective right or left was achieved with one or two blips from the transmitter (transmitter control was a push switch). Throttles weren't available but a crude choke on the venturi could be constructed to get marginal throttle. Sometimes two needle valves were used to allow a different mixture at the low throttle setting. Of course, an escapement had to be used to achieve this, usually being



controlled by the compound escapement which had evolved to having capability for another control. The final version of the compound escapement had the capability for 5 actions. In practice it didn't work very well. Push the button once and hold gave right rudder. Release for back to neutral. Push twice in rapid fashion and hold gave left rudder. Three times and hold gave up elevator. Four blips and hold gave down elevator (if your timing was right). One quick blip allowed another escapement to move the throttle from high to low to high etc. When the button was released the rudder and elevator always went back to neutral. In practice you never knew what you might end up with for control deflection.



About the last model I built before I started college was the J-3 Cub shown in picture 5. I built it from a kit in about 1954. It was 1/6 scale (6 ft.) and I utilized various engines of .19 to .24 cu. in. This picture was taken in about 1958 so I was 21 and going to college. I put floats on it so I could fly it at the Columbia river on one of the back waters. This model had rudder and throttle. Without elevator I never got it to take off. It took off our grass field fine. Notice the transmitter in this picture. It took a lot of room to house all the tubes and batteries required. The modern technology sure makes it a lot easier to get a model into the air than in the old days. And they also sure fly a lot better.

Bob Root

MINUTES of the DECEMBER 2013 MEETING

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

- 7:05 pm

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

- The “Treasurer`s Report was on the board for everyone to view.

New Business:

- Club President Alastair Brennan gave lots on thank you`s for all the help members gave during the year.
- Reminder was given for everyone to pay their club dues.

The meeting was kept to a minimum as this is the “Christmas Meeting” and as always the “pot luck” Christmas Dinner. Its soooooo goood. And as always this one was no exception. The food was great with good variety of dishes.

The owniest problem (with me anyway) is that I caint eat nough to sample all of them goodies. Darn, dang and dagnabit. I would try but no one brought a wheelbarry to git me to ma car. I`m too heavy fer ma wife ta drag me out thar. So I hafta holt back a might on the vittles. Hated ta do it but thar ya go. Everthang shore was tasty. Caint wait til next yar.

We all got pretty full of the great food and then we had our December drawing for those of us who showed up at the meetings and dropped a ticket in the can. We had some good prizes and heck I even won something.

Special thanks to Dale & Marilyn Nash for doing their usual great job of set-up and decorations and also for some great raffles.

See ya next year for business as usual.

Respectfully submitted:

Lynn Breedlove - Secretary

A Mystery Airplane



An easy one! Actually, I can identify this thing, but the history of it is pretty sketchy. If you have details, let me know.

