

The Comets' Tale

*The Official
Newsletter of the*



July 2008

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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. 19 July

IMAC Event at Condor's
Field

Sat. 26 July

Warbird Day, Swap Meet
and BBQ at Comets' Field

Sat & Sun, 16 & 16 Aug.
Camarillo Airshow

18, 19 October 2008

Comets' Float Fly, Lake
Casitas

Root's Rambling

I have finally finished my little 13 percent scale Pitts Model 14 shown in pictures 1 and 2. It is electric powered, spans 32 in., and weighs a light 2 pounds. Flying buddy Dan commented that it looks fragile. I think of it as a light stick model more like those I built as a kid. It flies well but with a very stiff landing gear it tends to bounce on landing (a lot!). I might have to add springs to simulate a bungee system more like the full scale airplane. I built wheel pants but decided, at close to 2 oz., they didn't add enough to the appearance to warrant the extra weight.



Ken Marsh has a new model built by Murray Cooper. It is a scale Citabria Pro built from a Balsa USA kit and is shown in pictures 3 and 4. This model is based on Bellanca's 2 place tandem sport aerobatic Citabria. Ken initially had problems with the engine but he now has it flying. It seems to fly well and looks very scale, especially the way Ken flies it.



I have an interesting book about the history of the Glendale Airports called “*Madcaps, Millionaires and Mose*” by John Underwood. The following is taken from this book. (*The photos are used by kind permission of the author. -jerry*)

Glendale folks had front row seats to the opening of the age of air travel. In 1906, the year Glendale was incorporated, a dirigible piloted by Roy Knabenshue droned over the town. At that time it was a dusty village with a population of less than 2,000.

It wasn't long before they had a flying field. Picture 5 shows the three airports which existed for a time in Glendale. They were Griffith Park, Brand Park, and finally the Glendale Airport.

Six years after Knabenshue flew over, the Griffith Park Aerodrome was opened and Glendale welcomed into its midst a burgeoning community of birdmen. Technically it was outside the city limits, but it was only a mile and a half from the center of town. The citizens of Glendale liked to think of Griffith Park aerodrome as “our flying field.” The resulting newest profession, poorly paid as it was, never lacked a following. In 1912 Jay Gage, a self-taught aviator, moved to Glendale from Dominguez Field. He set up a flying school and a factory, and in 1913 two of the airplanes he sold were the first planes to fly in Panama and Alaska.

About the same time Glenn Martin, with backing from Frank Garbutt and Harry Chandler of the *Times*, built several hangars and set up an airplane factory. He also operated a flying school, which generally made money even when the factory didn't. Martin became something of a film celebrity and the studios usually hired him to fly when the script called for an aeroplane. Martin was forever setting records and occasionally his high flying or some celebrity's visit to his hangars would generate a front-page story. He once commented that he preferred Glendale's “purest and most comfortable air” for his test flying. Early in 1913 Martin announced that a new model was in the offing. He took his new Martin Military Scout



(picture 6) up for the first flight on March 16. It was the fastest airplane he had ever flown. He exclaimed "I believe she'll top a mile a minute!"

In the fall of 1916 Martin merged with consortium of New York financiers and the business was moved to New Jersey. Every one else had already moved, and in the spring of 1917 with the U.S. entering the war, and with civilian flying suspended, Griffith Park (which had come to be known as Martin's Flying Field), was abandoned.

A far sighted business man named Leslie Combs Brand, sometimes called "the father of Glendale", was one of the principal movers and shakers behind the development of the San Fernando Valley. He was a millionaire and he had a keen interest in new modes of transportation. He liked to visit distant places, but loathed the process of getting there.

Brand's mansion overlooked the San Fernando Valley with West Glendale still largely under cultivation. By 1917 flying had come to be commonplace over Glendale. Grover Bell, aviatrix Florence Siedell and a host of other early fliers never failed to draw the envious gaze of Brand. From his doorstep he commanded an unobstructed view of Griffith Park. He used to watch from the roof of his mansion. In 1919 he put in a flying field (it had a seven percent grade) in front of his mansion even though there was far more suitable terrain a mile or so down the road. Brand wanted to commute by air from his very doorstep. This one way field (picture 7) required taking off down the hill and landing up hill independent of wind direction.

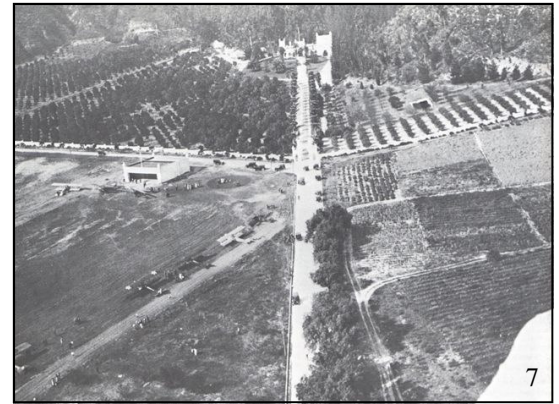


Brand had several airplanes built for him and he enjoyed the notoriety that went with being the owner of a fleet of private planes and his airfield was Mecca to California's flying fraternity. The bar in the clubhouse, amply stocked with the best vintages and finest spirits, was always open. A couple of visiting aircraft (Standard SJ-1 and SE-5a) are shown in picture 8.

Although Brand never learned to fly he enjoyed fraternizing with aviators. They were gamblers like himself. The fliers all loved a party and Brand threw one on April Fools' day, 1921 that topped them all. It was the first "fly-in". Hundreds of invitations were circulated among friends in the film industry and the business world. The catch was that all guests had to arrive by air. It was the highlight of the Los Angeles social calendar. Well over 100 guests were received and a sumptuous luncheon was served. Brand had an oak cask containing fifty gallons of sourmash whiskey and by midafternoon many of his friends were well under the influence of Kentucky's finest. It got a bit out of hand when the bartenders began doling out bottles of his rare prized Russian vodka. Brand had to post an employee at the entrance to intercept some of the contraband. The largest and by far the grandest airplane at the Brand "fly-in" was Cecil B. de Mille's Junkers F.13 shown in picture 9.

Brand was taken ill in the summer of 1924. It was terminal cancer and the disease would take less than eight months to run its course. One day in the spring of 1925, the sound of airplane engines filled the air. The sky above Brand's mansion seemed to be filled with Jennys, Standards and DH-4s. His friends had come to say goodbye.

In December 1922, the Glendale City Council agreed that it was time to establish a municipal airport. At this time there wasn't a single municipal airport in the whole of Los Angeles County. I will continue the discussion of this airport next month.



Bob Root

MINUTES OF THE JUNE 2008 COMETS' MEETING

The Comet meeting was called to order by Mike Ambarian on June 19, at 8:00 pm, at the Oak View Community Center – after our Subway sandwich and pizza supper. A big Hoo Hah to Steve and Mike Steinmetz for taking care of the supper arrangements.

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

Treasurer's Report: We now have 101 members and finances are in very good shape. The report was accepted.

Safety: Dennis Fingold reported everything is good.

Field Marshall: Nothing to report.

Park Liaison: Ken Marsh reported all is good.

Old Business: Emery Balasa, Treasurer, is doing well and has received a replacement for his hip joint. Mike Ambarian will continue to fill in as Treasurer.

The proposed Club By-Laws, included in the May Comets Tale newsletter, were discussed. A motion was voted on, and passed, to accept the Club By-Laws as amended. The new position of Field Marshall and Safety Officer has two volunteers, Bud Scolari and Steve Billings. The Club will vote, on who will take the position, in the July meeting.

New Business: Dale Nash informed the Club he needs to take inventory of all items owned by the Club. If anybody has items belonging to the Club kindly 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.

It was suggested that the Turkey Award go to Bob Cohorst for not getting his hand out of the way when launching Lynn Breedloves' electric wing, resulting in a sliced finger. It was decided that it should really go to Lynn since he was the pilot. The Turkey Award was, once again, voted to go to Lynn.

A park flyer was seen flying near the dam using a 72 MHz frequency. Heads up – if anybody sees flyers utilizing this frequency – let them know about the field. The frequency can be transmitted 3 miles and can take out somebody else's plane.

Model of the Month: TJ Moran brought in an Ultra Stick he restored from someone else's crash. The 10 pound plane has a single center foam float and tip floats. The center float is attached with carbon fiber struts that slide into brass tubes so the float can be removed.

Lowell Martinson had a P51 with mechanical retracts weighting around 7 pounds.

The judges voted for TJ's plane.

The free June Monthly drawing was done. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandy Brown



A Note From Ron Scott:

The "Quaker Fun Fly" event on 6-28 was a "Blowout" - a big disappointment - only 4 people with Quakers came out for the event and only 4 Quakers flew - my 2 Quakers, Ron Golding's, and George Lanquist - at least we had fun anyway. Dan Elsasser had his Quaker Flash but didn't fly. This was a very poor turnout for a club with 100 flyers.

Most of the guys bailed out around 9:30 - 10:00 in the morning.

Overall, I was very disappointed in the lack of turnout for the event. In years past, we have had as many as 30 Quakers at the event.

Last year we had 8 Quakers and I took pictures and put them up on the Comets website - "Front Page".

I guess "Quakeritus" is dying out. I hope we have a bigger turnout next year.

Have a great day,

Ron

WIN an AIRPLANE, or \$20,000, your choice!

The Aviation Museum of Santa Paula is raffling off a Stinson 108.

Tickets are \$100 each and only 1200 will be sold. Additional prizes are cash: 2nd prize is \$5000, 3rd prize is \$2000 and 4th thru 10th prizes are \$250 each. There are additional prizes for "Early Birds", to be awarded to winners who submit tickets early.

For details, visit the website at www.amszp.org and click on 'raffle', or brochures can be had at the CP Aviation office at Santa Paula Airport, and there will be some brochures at the meeting.

Tips & Tricks

Captured on Tape

Before cutting steel control cable, wrap it tightly with masking tape to prevent the strands from unraveling as you cut. It makes it easier to solder into a threaded push rod end too. Remember to wear safety goggles.

Paper Circles

Use a paper punch to cut out little circles of gummed paper. Stick these pieces to the backside of firewall blind nuts. Once you do this, you can fuel proof the tank compartment with resin without fouling the threads of the blind nuts.

Pellon

Fabric stores sell a product known as "pellon." This can be used for general reinforcement and is especially good for wing center sections. Be careful when you do apply it as it does have grain and should be applied in the direction that affords maximum strength.

Custom Trim Sealer

Cut the ends off large aluminum rain gutter nails. Then bend, file, and polish the resulting "rods" to make custom trim-sealer tools that can be inserted into your Top Flite trim-sealing iron.

Instrument Panels

An easy and cheap way to obtain an instrument panel for that sport model is to look through a full-scale airplane magazine for an advertisement showing instruments. I found one I liked and used my scanner to scan the image into the computer, and then pasted it into my word processor, scaling it to different sizes. This could also be done using a copy machine that will reduce. If using the computer any size can be easily scaled. I printed out several different sizes to have on hand. The ones I made were all in black and white, but if you have access to a color scanner and color printer, some really nice instrument panels could be created this way. You could also add color to black-and-white copy instruments using markers or colored pencils so they look more realistic.

Easy Mount Cowl

To prevent cowl screws from crushing balsa, drill a large hole through each side of the cowl. Drill holes through two dowels to make wooden brushings (if you are able, use a lathe). Finally, glue in the now suitable diameter hardwood brushings. The screws can be driven into the engine bearers.

—Taken from the *Talon Tales* newsletter, *Schoolcraft, Michigan* (collected from various sources)