

# The Comets' Tale

*The Official  
Newsletter of the*



**June 2011**

President	George Boston	(805) 646-6992
Vice President	Marilyn Nash	(805) 532-1433
Secretary	Alastair Brennan	(805) 388-0180
Treasurer	TJ Moran	(805) 649-8193
Field Marshal/Safety	Mike Ambarian	(805) 646-6084
Park Liaison	Ken Marsh	(805) 646-1962
Webmaster	Don Sorensen	(805) 968-4288

dsorensen@tri-counties.org

Comets' Tale Editor Jerry Deanda (805) 641-3730 deandamid@charter.net

Comets' Website: [www.vccomets.com](http://www.vccomets.com)

**Board of Directors**

George Boston, Mike Ambarian, Marilyn Nash, Alastair Brennan, TJ Moran

**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, 16 June, 7:30 PM at the  
Oak View Community Center

***Pizza and Soft Drinks will be Provided!***

**Coming  
Up!**



**Thursday, 16 June**  
Comets' Pizza Meeting!

**Saturday, 25 June**  
Comets Quaker Fun Fly  
and Balloon Drop  
At Lake Casitas

**Sunday, 26 June**  
Warbird day -Channel  
Islands Condors Field  
all clubs welcome

First Sunday of each  
Month  
Open House at Santa  
Paula Airport

### **From the President**

June is here and by the time we have our monthly meeting it will be officially summer. Hopefully for many of us the year is flying by (a play on words). Last month we held our annual Electric Fun Fly & Glow Power < .16 with a free hamburger and hot dog lunch for all the participants. We had around 18 fliers and twice as many airplanes. We also had a number of guests attending from the Canyon Crosswinds club out at Castaic. One of them was flying a B24 with four OS .15 engines. It flew good, and with those four engines humming along, it sounded great. The weather didn't cooperate as well as it could have, it was overcast, cold and windy. But, everybody seemed to have a good time and we sure ate a lot of hot dogs.

This month on the 25<sup>th</sup>, we will be conducting our annual Quaker Fun Fly and Balloon Drop. All planes are welcome to compete in the Balloon Drop and a prize will be awarded to the flier that drops his/her balloon closest to the center of the target on the runway. It's always a lot of fun with some of the fliers using really innovative/interesting ways of dropping their balloons without the use of a traditional bomb bay. So if your not tied up, come on out and join in on the fun. We will be starting around 8:30 and should be finished no later than 10:00.

June also marks the meeting that we host dinner (pizza and soft drinks), and conduct our raffle (no cost) by random selection of names from all the members

that have attended our monthly meetings since December of last year. At each monthly meeting each attendee puts their name on a ticket that goes into this drawing. The more monthly meetings you attend the more times your name goes into the drawing, which improves the odds of your name being drawn. **However, you must be in attendance at the drawing to receive your gift if your name is drawn.** We do this twice a year, in June and again in December. Without a doubt, names will be drawn for members that are not at this meeting. When this happens, we pull another name until we hit on someone in attendance. These are always great prizes, with free dinner, so plan on attending this months meeting.

On a final note, we are still having problem with the locks not being locked out at the field. Please, don't leave the locks unlocked on the gates **at anytime** and make sure that you spin the numbers before locking the lock. Locks left unlocked, even when the gates are open are subject to be stolen, and if the numbers haven't been spun, anybody could get our combination number and wreak havoc. **LOCK THE LOCKS!**

I wish you well, safe flying, and look forward to seeing you on the 16th.

*George Boston*

### **ROOT'S RAMBLING!**

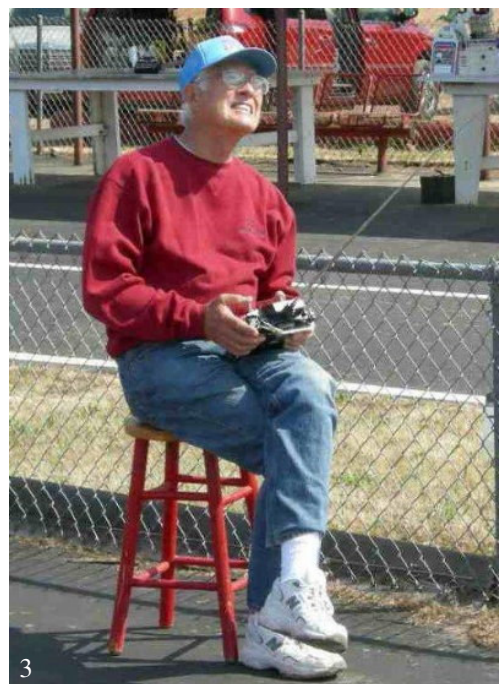
I always wonder what I will write about when I sit down each month to do my bit for our club newsletter. Nothing was coming to mind this month until George Boston sent me some nice pictures he took at our May fly-in for electric and small gas powered models. Picture 1 indicates how noncompetitive our club functions are these days. A few of us (old timers) are enjoying someone else's flying on a sunny but cool day. I have trouble remembering names and especially of those people I don't see often.



I really enjoyed seeing the models in picture 2. The Aeronca C-3 is glow engine powered and has always

been one of my favorite airplanes. It is on my list of models I plan to build some day. The Aeronca champ was always a favorite scale model subject in the old days. It is a nice stable configuration which is what was needed when the radios were unreliable. I don't remember the SE-5a in the background.

I brought an electric powered glider I had converted from a pure glider. It flies well with not a lot of effort required. The wind was blowing and a lot of lift was around if one could find it. Picture 3 shows how to comfortably fly for 30 minutes or so. We had unusually good lift conditions in spite of being so near the lake.







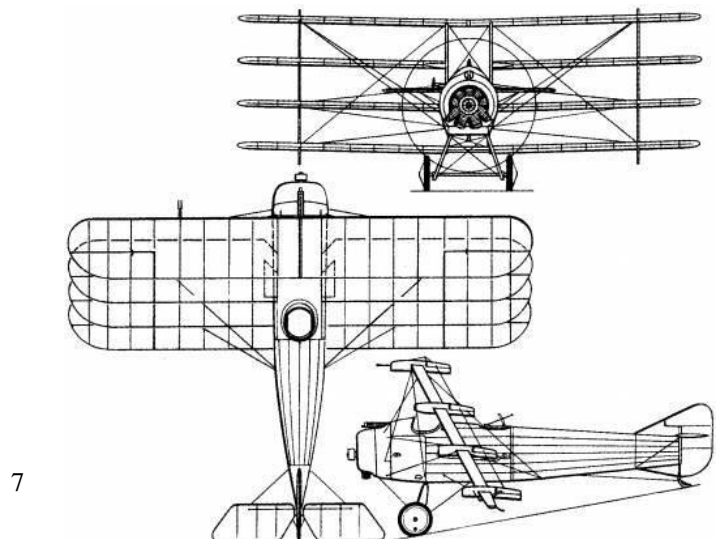
I didn't get to see the B-24 (shown in picture 4) fly as I had to leave early. That also means I missed the great lunch George Boston barbequed for everyone.

Years ago I was working as a consultant spending 10 days a month in Washington D.C. So, like any good modeler, I built (small) models in my hotel room. George was nice enough to take picture 5 of my .061 cu. In. glow powered Jungmeister. I might add it flies well and has a lot of flights but is getting a little beat.



Another airplane I would like to model is shown in picture 6. I have mentioned this before. It is an Armstrong-Whitworth F.K. 10 World War One four wing two seat airplane. It is the only Quad configuration to go into production. I think they made less than 20 of them.

A 3-view is shown in picture 7.



Picture 8 shows what a great looking model it could be.

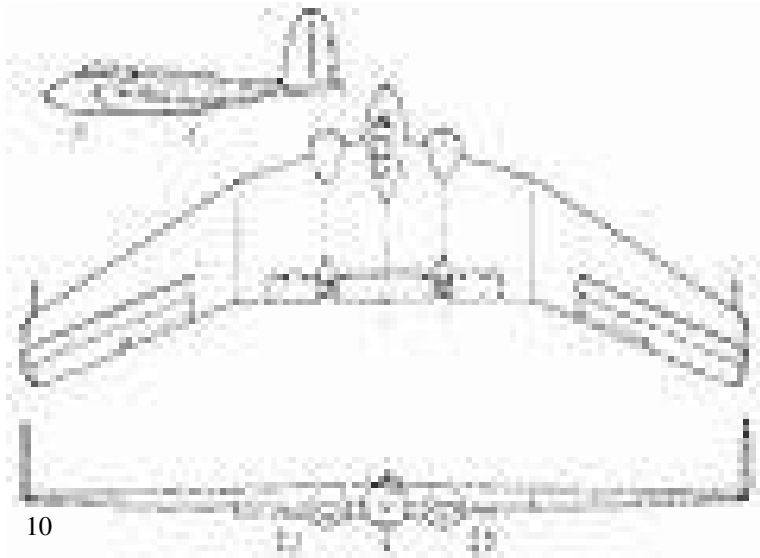


8



9

The opposite of a quad would be a flying wing. Picture 9 shows models of all the British RAF flying wings which were flown in the late 40's and early 50's.



10

An example of Armstrong -Whitworth's contribution to this effort is shown in picture 10 and 11. This was their AW-52. They were experimenting with laminar flow airfoils and they built and flew a 1/3 scale prototype for a bomber about the time WW-II ended. Later the government contracted



11

for two prototypes to carry 4000 pounds of *mail!* One of the planes came apart due to flutter, but the pilot successfully ejected (first time for the RAF). The second one flew until about 1954.

I hope to see you at the June meeting. Remember there is a free dinner (pizza and sub's) and a free raffle drawing. Fly Safely.

*Bob Root*

## MINUTES OF THE MAY 2011 MEETING

The monthly was called to order at 7:34. We had the usual gang or about 30 folks...plus two new guys. Dave and Mike – A couple local guys that have come to join the fun on and off the flying field. Welcome.

We started the meeting with the usual bit of business - Approved the minutes, heard from the treasurer and quickly discussed the Float Fly.

OK I'll slow down...Let's back up to treasurer's report. Currently 75 members plus the 3 life-time members.

In comparison we had:

82 members in 2010

90 members in 2009

111 members in 2008

A steady decline?

The Float Fly was last month and the club made a couple bucks. 63 Registered pilots brought over 130 airplanes - A good turnout. I attended the float fly on Saturday and there were a lot of people. Pilots, guests, animals. Good job to all the workers to keep the flying and fun going.

There was no new news from the Field Marshall. He did give a nod to the Lake for making our float fly area look great.

From the Park Liaison; The combinations on the locks will be changed, the new combo is on the back of your 2011 memberships card.

**Old Business:** There is still no word from our contact at the County Fair. Another message was left, but no reply...Stay tuned.

### **New business:**

1. Safety. We discussed safe and unsafe conditions. Reviewed some of the rules of the flying field. The bottom line is we seem to, as a group, behave ourselves. Keep this in mind and help others from misbehaving.

2. Visitors. When visitors stop by welcome them and give them a summary of how the field works. Frequency board, flying pattern, taxiing, etc. Remember our steady decline in membership. The new people you talk to may become your next best friend. Don't worry about them taking your seat in the peanut gallery - We'll find more chairs and things to sit on.

3. Electric and <.15 glow fun fly. The group decided that a no-charge-BBQ would be part of the fun. By the time you read this it would have happened. Hope you made it, and it was fun. Let me know what I missed.

4. June meeting is the Summer (mid-year) get together. Free Pizza and Sub sandwiches if you show and a free raffle.

A couple things to add to your calendar:

A) There is a Quaker fun fly on June 25<sup>th</sup>. So spruce up the old-timer and bring it out.

B) July 23 is the warbird and swap meet. So bring a fighter and some of the stuff you don't fly or use anymore.

There was no model of the month. Maybe next month someone will have a newly test-flown Quaker?

The meeting ended with the usual raffle and we adjourned at 8:35.

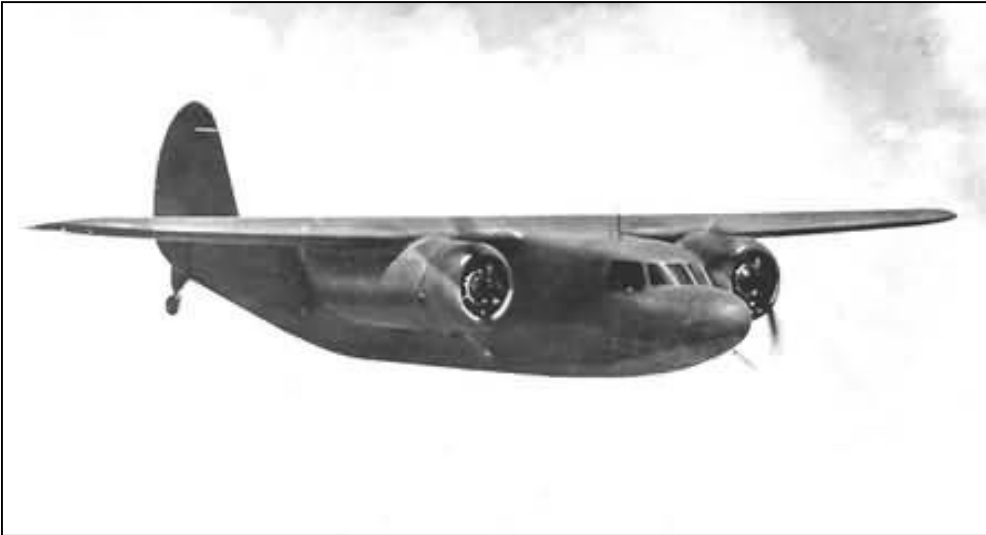
The focus was then passed to Don Ashworth to oversee more of Jim Anderson's supplies. There were still tables of goodies to bid on. I saw a lot of nice stuff go for reasonable prices.



*Alastair Brennan*



## MYSTERY PLANE Revealed



Wow, Even Rick of Oak View didn't recognize this one. And actually, I didn't either. OK, it's a Cessna C-106. I couldn't find an exact year they built these things (there were 2) but it was offered to the Air Force during WWII. Power was two Pratt & Whitney R-1340s, making 600 horses apiece. Wingspan was just under 65 feet. It was made of readily available, non-strategic plywood and did about 195 mph, tops. The Air Force ordered 500 but it never happened because of a shortage of plywood, of all things.

---

**From the Rouge Eagles R.C. Club, Medford, Oregon**

## Propeller Safety

Respect and alertness are mandatory if you want to keep all your fingers. If you continually ignore safety, you or someone close to you will be injured eventually. By adopting good safety practices we can minimize risk and enjoy our wonderful sport for many years.

The most destructive type of propeller injury, aside from being struck by a flying aircraft, is when the engine is operating at or near full throttle. At full speed, a .40-size, two-stroke engine with an 11 x 6 propeller can generate as much power as a 10-inch table saw. Just as a table saw demands your respect and attention, so does an aircraft propeller.

Before you mount your propeller or even start your engine, you should take a moment to review some basic pre-flight recommendations for propeller safety.

### **General Propeller/Rotor Blade Inspection and Preparation:**

1. Look over for obvious nicks or gouges.
2. Flex it gently back and forth along its length and look for cracks.
3. If you find any damage, other than some minor scuffs at the tip, discard/destroy immediately.
4. Wood propellers cause less damage than composite propellers.
5. Remove the sharp edges from composite propellers using fine sandpaper. Just take off the edge. Do not alter airfoil.
6. Always use a balanced propeller. Vibration is the enemy.
7. Make sure the propeller arc is visible by painting the tips a contrasting color.

### **Ground Safety:**

1. Always have someone hold the airplane while starting.
2. Use some form of eye protection, like safety glasses.
3. After starting, move around behind the propeller to remove the glow plug igniter and to make other engine adjustments.
4. Never ever reach over a spinning propeller.
5. Be conscious of the propeller arc. Do not let spectators stand in line with, or in front of, the spinning propeller and don't you stand there any longer than necessary.
6. If starting by hand, use a thick glove or chicken stick.
7. Use an approved spinner or propeller hub.
8. Before starting, be sure the propeller is on tight. If the engine came with backup safety nuts, use them.
9. Have a first aid kit stocked and available.

It's easy to forget these safety items when at the field and some say it's just too much trouble. But safety is everyone's responsibility! →

# Maynard Hill, 85, built model plane that flew across Atlantic

By Emma Brown, The Washington Post

Published: June 11, 2011 4:00AM PST

Maynard Hill, a designer of model airplanes who secured a spot in aviation history in 2003 when one of his creations flew 1,882 miles across the Atlantic Ocean on less than a gallon of fuel, died June 7 of prostate cancer at his home in Silver Spring, Md. He was 85.

A balsa-and-glue virtuoso, Hill was a legend in the model-aircraft world even before his first-of-its-kind transatlantic feat. Beginning in the 1960s, he set 25 world records for speed, duration and altitude, flying his radio-controlled aircraft as high as 26,990 feet, as long as 38 hours and as fast as 151 mph.

Professionally, Hill was a metallurgist at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory who eventually convinced his supervisors that he should be allowed to indulge his hobby at work. He became a pioneer in developing unmanned aerial vehicles — drones - for the military.

He was retired, legally blind as a result of macular degeneration and mostly deaf in the 1990s when he announced at a meeting of the D.C. Radio Control Club that he intended to fly a model airplane across the Atlantic — from the Canadian province of Newfoundland to Ireland. With the exception of Hill, no one thought it was possible. According to international rules, a plane must weigh less than 11 pounds — including fuel — to qualify as a model. No such plane had flown even one-third as far as Hill was proposing. Nevertheless, a group of other retired engineers and computer programmers soon joined the mission, swayed by Hill's optimism and track record.

Working in his basement shop and using special glasses and glue dyed red for better visibility, Hill perfected a tiny four-stroke engine that ran on camp-stove fuel, sipping just two ounces per hour. He mounted it on a balsa and Mylar skeleton with a six-foot wingspan. He did this over and over, building 29 versions of his design - the first 24 of which failed, crashed or disappeared in flight.

Meanwhile, Hill's team helped raise tens of thousands of dollars. It perfected a computerized autopilot system to guide the aircraft on its long journey. And crew members flew Hill's prototypes on countless test flights at a Montgomery County, MD, horse farm owned by Beecher Butts, an octogenarian aviation enthusiast.

In 2002, after four years of full-time work, the team traveled to Cape Spear, Newfoundland, for a first transatlantic attempt. It was a disaster. Three planes went in the drink, two of them after traveling less than 30 miles. The computer experts on the team discovered a fundamental flaw in the navigational software.

Hill, undaunted, urged everyone, including his wife, who had driven a rental van for six days to deliver her husband and four airplanes to the launch site, not to give up. After 12 more months of tinkering, the team returned to Canada. Hill threw his 25th plane, javelin-like, toward the east. A tiny computer in the plane's innards relayed information about its location and altitude. It behaved oddly, dipping and rising in an unpredictable fashion and at one point failing to communicate its position for three hours.

Everyone lost heart, including Hill. But the plane - dubbed the Spirit of Butts Farm - eventually reappeared on tracking devices and flew steadily, arriving at its designated target on Ireland's west coast after 38 hours and 52 minutes of flight. Members of the U.S.-based Academy of Model Aeronautics were there to guide it to a safe landing via radio control. "In the model airplane world, this is no different from Armstrong landing on the moon," Carl Layden, an official observer of the feat, told the Baltimore Sun at the time.

Hill heard news of the landing by phone. Less than two ounces of fuel - a whiskey shot's worth - remained in the plane's tank. "I just grabbed my wife, hugged her and cried like a baby," he said. "I'm an emotional guy."

Maynard Luther Hill was born Feb. 21, 1926, in the Pennsylvania coal town of Lehighton. He grew up admiring Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart but was always more fascinated by tiny airplanes than their full-size counterparts. "By age 9," he once wrote, "I had acquired a fairly serious addiction to balsa wood and glue."

He joined the Navy after graduating from high school in 1943 and served in Panama during World War II.

After the war, Hill earned bachelor's and master's degrees, both in metallurgy, from Pennsylvania State University.

He was singing in a choir at Penn State when he met Gay Brunner, a fellow singer. They were married in 1951. On Day 3 of their honeymoon, he later said, "I told my wife I just had to go out and get some balsa and glue."

Hill was inducted into the Model Aviation Hall of Fame in 1977. Several of his planes, including the Spirit of Butts Farm, are on display at the National Model Aviation Museum in Muncie, Ind. Another plane, a backup for the transatlantic effort, is in the National Air and Space Museum's collection.

"It used to be we said we wanted to be famous," Hill told The Washington Post in 2001, in the midst of his five-year marathon effort to build an ocean-crossing plane. "Now, it's just the actual joy of putting it together and making it work and knowing that you had the brains to do all that."