The Comets Tail

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The Comets' Tale is the official newsletter and record of the Ventura Count Comets, AMA Chartered Club #173 and is published monthly at the Comets' Tale Lair, in Camarillo, CA.
Editorial contributions are welcome.

March 2016

Next Meeting:
Thursday, March 17, 2016 7:30 PM
At the Oak View Community Center

Upcoming Events:

Apr. 3 Simi Valley Fun Fly BBQ and Swap Meet

Apr. 9 Camarillo Flying Circus - Swap meet and Fun Fly

Apr. 18 Simi-Valley, Indoor Electric Fly

Pres Sez:

Hey Gang,

It's that time of year again to pay our annual membership dues. Thanks to the majority of you that have already paid for 2016. Those of you who have not paid yet have until March 31st to pay up or you'll be locked out. We change the combination to all the padlocks on March 31st. The other thing that happens to you if you don't pay your dues is that the rest of us will laugh at you and call you names. Last time I was late, TJ called me a,"melted banana split", it hurt my feelings and I ended up paying my dues right away.

I'd like to welcome some of our newest members to the club that came from the Santa Barbara Radio Control Modelers (SBRCM) when their flying site was closed down earlier this year. The SBRCM donated to the Comets several tables and a lawn tractor and we are very appreciative for their generosity. We hope the new members will be happy flying with us at the Comets Field.

Speaking of the Lawn tractor, TJ has used the lawn tractor to mow the grass at the Comets field. He said the tractor worked fine and the grass looks great! Thanks TJ!

The Take Off and Grow Grant from the AMA that I applied for was due last month and I sent it in on time. The AMA will decide by the beginning of April who will receive the grant. The Comets are planning a few events throughout the year to boost membership.

We are taking T-shirt and sweatshirt orders. To make a purchase, call Marilyn at (805) 532-1433 or e-mail her at sealdy@aol.com, and tell her what you want, the quantity, the size and the color. You will pay for your purchases when you pick up your order, either at a meeting or at the field. If you have any questions, please give me a call.

The colors you can choose for t-shirts or sweatshirts are: light blue, light slate gray, or white.

Same price for all sizes. (small thru XXXL)

The prices are as follows: T-shirts $12, Sweatshirts lightweight zipper or pull over $24, Sweatshirts heavyweight zipper or pull over $30

The price difference for zippered sweatshirt versus pull-over sweatshirt was very small so in the interest of keeping it simple, we left the prices the same.

The deadline to have your order in to Marilyn is May 1st. Delivery of our order should be by the May meeting on Thursday, May 19th

I'll see you at the field,

-Dave

Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order by President Dave at 7:35.

17 people were in attendance and this included a new member

The minutes were approved. The Treasurer reported that we have 57 members - This includes 6 (non-paying) lifetime members.

Treasurer TJ brought up the how to label your model so it complies with the FAA rule. He also brought in and posted some printed material that made the rule easy to understand.

There was no Safety Officer or Park Liaison at the meeting.

New Business

The club is considering buying/purchasing another shed for the field. This is a place to store the recently-donated lawnmower and trialer, folding tables and pop-up shelters...the stuff we use at Float Flys.

President Dave sent in the AMA Take-off And Grow (TAG) proposal. He also had a copy at the meeting for review.

Dave also suggested we continue with a membership drive.

We decided that some club-wear was needed. You know, t-shirts and jackets, etc., with the club logo on it. Marilyn will help with this.

We had a couple entries for model of the month.

I brought a semi scale battery-powered Partenavia P68 Victor. This was a late 70s/early 80s kit built to take a specific brush-motor/battery combo from Astro-Flight. However all those bits were replaced with present-day brushless motors and LiPo batteries (30amps) per motor.

Javier brought a Hobby King “Falcon Trainer” ARF. .17ci gas engine made by NGH. Spans a little over 6’

I won model of the month

The meeting ended with a raffle. Some people won some nice stuff

Meeting adjorned at 8:32

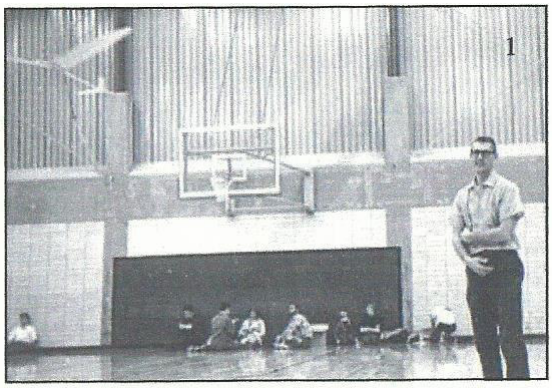
-Alastair

Root’s Ramblings

I am sitting here on a rainy day waiting for the glue to dry so let’s talk about the good old days.

In March 1960 I went to work for Boeing in Seattle after graduating from Oregon State University with a degree in mechanical engineering with aerodynamic option. As soon as I got into an apartment I started building. I built a Goldberg Schoolboy which was a ½ A powered rudder only R/C model. I also built an original small rudder/elevator biplane using escapements. That summer I bought a 1958 Triumph TR-3 and moved into a waterfront home with three other young Boeing engineers. We split the rent and had a ball. In the fall of 1961 two of us got married and moved out, but it was great while it lasted.

When I got married we moved into a duplex with a basement. Now I had a real shop area. During this period we didn’t have much money so I mostly flew control line, free flight, and some indoor in the winter. Pictures 1 and 2 show a hand launch glider and a scale rubber powered Ryan M1 mail plane. Both are original designs. About 1963 I built a Debolt Equalizer from plans. It is shown in picture 3. It utilized compound escapements for elevator and rudder. A couple of years later I acquired a used 6 channel (3 controls) reed radio control. This gave me simultaneous rudder and elevator, and throttle control so I could now do spins and snap rolls!

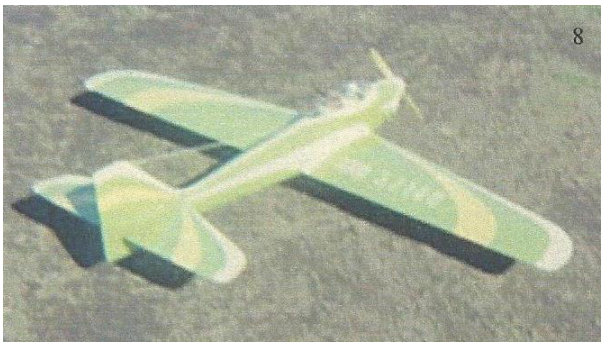


We had two girls, one in 1964 and the second in 1966. That and buying a house took a lot of time. I have great memories of several free flight contests in 1965 where we were chasing our model over the fields with baby Debbie bouncing in the play pen in the back of our old station wagon. I guess you can't do that today. I was sent to NASA Ames Research Center in 1967 for 6 months. We rented an apartment and I built the Aeromaster shown in picture 4. As I was building I stored the building board on top of the upper kitchen cabinets out of the way of the 1 and 3 year olds. Since Monokote hadn't taken hold yet. I finished it with silk and dope after we got back to Seattle.

In 1968 I was able to buy a proportional radio and some of us in the Seattle area became interested in Formula I racing. One of the local club members produced a fiberglass fuselage for a Loving Love racer. The first one I built is shown in picture 5 with my Aeromaster and an original pattern airplane. In Seattle everyone does their building in the winter when it's too wet to fly. The models in this picture represent my winter output that year. Picture 6 shows the entrants for a typical race in the Seattle area in the summer of 1969. In this picture we can see two Loving Loves', two shoestrings, one Rivets, a low wing (?), and a yellow shoulder wing probably a El Bandito.

Another racing event that was becoming popular at this time was Form II, which at the time was similar to the international FAI racing event. My building effort for the 1970 racing season is shown in picture 7. The pink Love was an improvement from the previous blue one, and it was easier to see! The yellow model is an original Form II Firecracker. The Firecracker was a successful racer in the mid '30's. Both models were powered by Supertigre racing .40's. Picture 8 is an original pattern model built at the same time.


7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The next year the Love design went thru more refinement and is shown in picture 9, and the new Firecracker got retracts (picture 10). After seeing the Firecracker win FAI at the 1970 Spokane Internats the old American Aircraft Modeler magazine bought my construction article for the Firecracker and it was published in the Jan. '72 issue. By now the Form I races in the Seattle area had less design variety as shown in picture 11.

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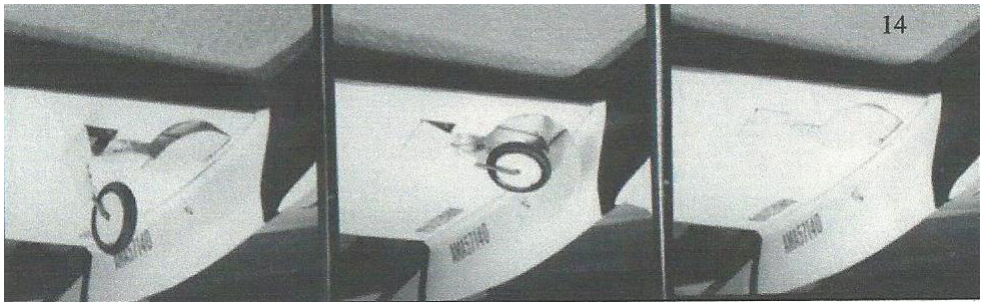
The Loving Love model was an interesting design and became very reliable as we refined it. The fiberglass fuselage was built with what today we call vacuum forming. A fellow Boeing engineer designed it and sold the fuselages. They were very light and strong. After a crash we usually just patched it up and built a new wing. I experimented with a lot of different NASA laminar flow airfoils to find the one that worked best for me. The wing was foam covered with 1/16 balsa and a lot of fiberglass out past the joint at the landing gear. The top of the wheel pants were glued to a wet suit material gasket which was then glued to the fiberglass on the wing with a flexible adhesive. Since all the load was in shear this worked very well. By the time I moved to California in 1974 I had decided that even though the design is very clean with no landing gear strut it still has a lot of drag associated with the large angle dihedral joint where the landing gear is fastened.

As time went on my ideas for the ideal FAI design changed. For the '72 Nationals I entered a new Chambermaid design (picture 12). I chose this configuration based on a small racing airplane from the '30's. It was easy to build but not fast enough. For the '73 Nats in Oshkosh I designed a new model based on the Folkerts racers from the '30's. A friend from Boise also built one and picture 13 was taken at the 1973 Nationals. The American Aircraft Modeler magazine editor liked this design and it was published in the July '74 issue.

12


13

I built several Phony Folkerts models with fixed landing gear but the original model had retracts as shown in picture 14. I was really pleased with the gear door design. The homemade landing gear and the inner and outer doors were all powered by one servo in the middle of the wing. This was in the days before electronics. The mechanical design was published in American Aircraft Modeler magazine. Any airplane history buff will recognize that the full scale racer had retracts in the fuselage, not the wing. I couldn't figure out how to do that, so that's why the model is a Phony Folkerts.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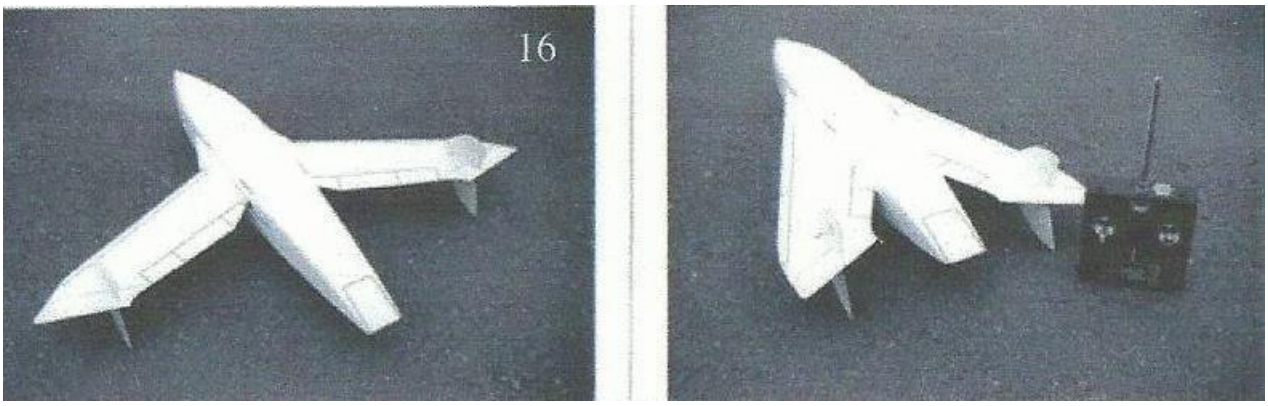
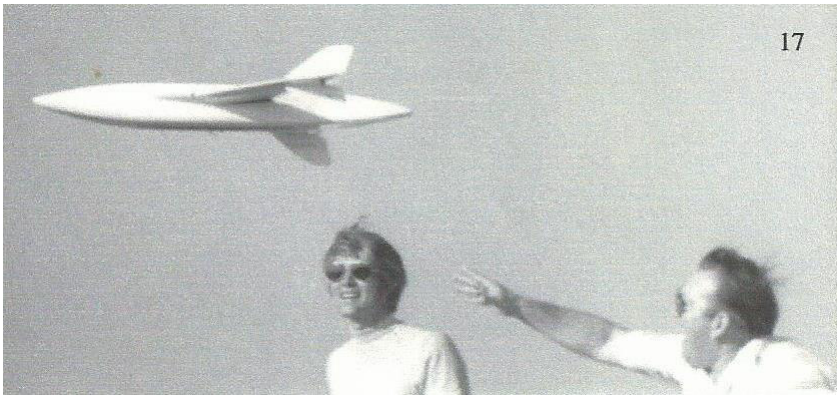
Although I have been discussing all the racing models I also built and flew various other models during this period. A view of one wall of my shop in Seattle is shown in picture 15.


15

Another interesting effort during this time is shown in picture 16. This was a Boeing concept for a fighter that used wing sweep rather than elevators for longitudinal control. I designed and built a model and the mechanical stuff to make it work.



My memory is a lot of flexible control runs going over the pivot point. The model had a fast servo to sweep each wing and one for each wing tip elevon. All the servos were in the fuselage. It would sure be a lot easier today with all the small servos which are available. The vertical tails were kept in the stream wise direction by a mechanical link back to the pivot.



The model flew as shown in picture 17. It was a glider only so we needed good slope lift to fly it. The man launching it was my boss at the time. Aerodynamically the elevens and wing sweep both worked. We never could get upper management to put any money into it and the company patent office also wasn't interested, but it was fun while it lasted.

-Bob

Randumb Thots :-)

So have we all gotten our FAA drone certification numbers yet? If you haven't done it by now, it's going to cost you five bucks. I got mine recently when it became necessary to re-up in the Comets. I haven't flown a model in a long time, but still needed the number, so there I went.

Odd how it's gone, and I didn't see this coming at all. It used to be that "drone" pilots (we called ourselves R/C pilots then) had to build their models and then learn to fly it, either with help or on their own. Pilot proficiency arrived at a big cost in time, money and effort, especially since there was no foam in those days and models were built by hand from fragile balsa wood. Contrast that to now, as any fool with an iPhone can "fly" one of those multicopter things.

So, between the low price of admission, ease of flying these things and the new technologies in cameras and point of view flying, it's gotten too easy to misbehave, and we're seeing lots of bad behavior. Automatic controls and point of view flying in fixed wing models has not helped much. I realize lots of people fly these things responsibly, but when the ones who don't are flying, they sure make headlines.

When I was in high school, the Los Angeles Times published an article with the title "Model Planes Growing Peril to the Airways." They said that R/C models could fly at 200 mph, climb to 20,000 feet, and fly for as long as 30 hours… without noting that those were all records, and that we normally made 15 minute flights below 800 feet and well under 100 mph, almost always at formal flying sites, far from airplanes with people inside. The controversy died down pretty quickly once the modelers wrote letters, invited real journalists to flying fields and the AMA stepped in.

This time, the threats were real, the knotheads are common, it didn't go away and here we are. I have not heard of an actual collision between a drone and a full size airplane yet, but if things had continued, it was just a matter of time and it may happen yet. And this coming from a pilot who's happily flown off an airport where I've been both the model pilot and the full scale pilot on the same day. People have been hurt and there was even an accident in Korea where an agricultural R/C helicopter hit someone and killed them. (and I was never able to get details on that one, sorry)

So, we loop back to the FAA certification program. It won't fix everything. It may not even fix much and as much as I detest government trying to control everything, I can see the need for this. It at least provides some guidance for operators (I just can't call some of them pilots) of these things and a beginning of a way to administer this kind of flying. The really encouraging development to me is that GPS-equipped models will have ceilings and flight corridors programmed in, and they'll be updated automatically to hold down much of the foolishness.

But you gotta admit, this hobby/sport will never go back to the way it was.

Fight Gravity! (safely)

-Jerry

AMA Charter Club #173

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