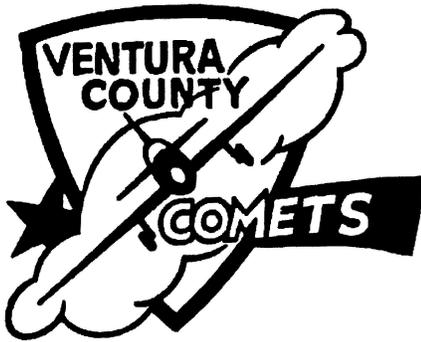


The Comets Tale

*The Official
Newsletter of the*



MAY 2013

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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 May 7:30 PM at the Oak View Community Center

Coming Up!



Saturday, 18 May

Comets Electric & Small Gas Fun
Fly at Lake Casitas

Sunday, 19 May

Fun Fly and BBQ
Camarillo Flying Circus

Fri.-Sun., 7-9 June

Santa Barbara R/C Modelers Fun
Float Fly at lake Cachuma. No
Raffle or BBQ

Saturday, 22 June

Comets Quaker Fun Fly & Balloon
Drop

Saturday, 27 July

Comets Warbird Day,
BBQ & Swap Meet
\$10 Includes Lunch!

First Sunday of each month
Open House at Santa Paula Airport

Prez Sez

The Float Fly was a couple weeks ago. How did everybody do? We had great weather, "postcard day" on Saturday with little wind until the afternoon. Sunday was close to the same, but the wind came up a little earlier. Big "thank you" to those that helped with the raffle, transmitter impound, launch/retrieve and BBQ. All of this help made for a successful weekend.

I went to the Camarillo Flying Circus club's scale fly-in and swap meet. Lots of deals going on. I didn't see any of the flying as I had to leave just as it was starting, but they had a number of pilots signed up and relatively simple routine the pilots had to fly and an array of models... scale-ish foamies to more elaborate big planes.

Here's a couple for those of you with smart phones. I have an Android phone (Apple fans don't hate me), and found a few apps for the R/C world. One called "RC Tools" – The icon is a transmitter. Within the app it has battery time calculator, power calculator, CG and MAC (mean aerodynamic chord) calculators, and all sort of other tools. The other app I thought was fun is an r/c simulator called "Absolute RC plane sim" (icon: picture of a high wing trainer). The trainer is version is kinda tame, but if

you put the control rates on high you can fly some aerobatics with it.

May meeting - We fell out of routine last month and we are back on schedule for the Third Thursday, right. You guys remember the time and place? See ya there.

Alastair Brennan

Root's Rambling Part 2 of 3

(this might look a little familiar... it's a re-run from a few years back, really great stuff!)

The other Seattle area airport we visited regularly in the mid 1960's was the Sand Point Naval Air Station. For several years the U.S. Navy put on a great air show at Sand Point. This always included the Blue Angels. There was also a big model competition at this airport every year. King County began acquiring small farms on a peninsula along the western shore of Lake Washington in the late 1910s. In June 1920, a groundbreaking ceremony was held for King County's first airfield. Purportedly, Bill Boeing flew his first airplane from the field. Picture 12 shows the area in 1922. In 1924, aircraft squadrons of the "Battle Fleet" established a camp at Sand Point. In April-September 1924, four Army Air Corps planes began & ended a "round-the-world flight" from Sand Point. On September 28, 1924, a World Flight reception was held at Sand Point, with an estimated public attendance of 40,000. In September 1925, King County authorized clearing of a 2,640' landing strip followed by grading, leveling and sowing in grass. In 1926, Sand Point was still no more than a series of farms, a field served as a runway, the station commander worked out of a farmhouse, and Naval Aviation Cadets were billeted in a chicken house. In mid-1926, King County jail inmates were used to clear trees & undergrowth to expand the airstrip. In October 1926 King County deeded the entire peninsula (approximately 411 acres) to the U.S. Navy for developing a Naval Air Station. On September 13, 1927, a visit by Charles Lindbergh & his aircraft, the "Spirit of St. Louis", drew an estimated public attendance of 50,000 to Sand Point.



In 1929 a seaplane runway was constructed near the shore hundreds of loads of fill to develop expanded landing facilities. Hundreds of WPA workers filled in



most of the point's "gently rolling land", buried what remained of Mud Lake & the marsh, and eliminated Pontiac Bay. This fill material was graded & much of it covered with a slab of concrete for landing strips (picture 13). A typical user of this area in 1939 is shown in picture 14. In 1939 Commander A. W. Radford noted in a memo that grading of the airfield involved more than 1,500,000 cubic yards.





Picture 15 is a photo of the Sand Point runways while under construction, with the existing hangars visible at the top left. By 1941 the urban development of surrounding Seattle had come close enough to the base that aircraft were no longer permitted to carry live bombs. The base turned into an air transport & ship staging area for Western Pacific operations during WW2. It also continued to be used for training, with schools for aviation metal smiths, machinists and radiomen.

At times, Boeing used the field, as did Pan American Airlines. In 1943 the main runway was lengthened to 5,050'. During World War II, NAS Seattle's peak work force encompassed 7,400 military & civilian personnel. By 1946, 4,600 Navy, Marine Corps, and civilian personnel called Sand Point home or

worked on the base (picture 16). During the years following WW2, the Navy was choosing its permanent post-war bases. Many closed because they couldn't meet the requirements of the jet age: 6,000' runways were now the minimum standard. In 1949, the Navy decided that NAS Seattle, the pre-war major naval installation in the Northwest, was suitable to train Reserve forces and support a moderate number of aircraft, but could not be expanded as a major fleet support station. The location of the base, with the length of the runways



constrained by Lake Washington, sealed its fate. It was thus designated a Naval Reserve Air Station.

Bob Root

MINUTES of the APRIL 2013 MEETING

As if.

Since there was no meeting last month, there are no Minutes.
Watch this space for an exciting account of the May 2013 meeting.

**That Mystery Plane,
SOLVED!**

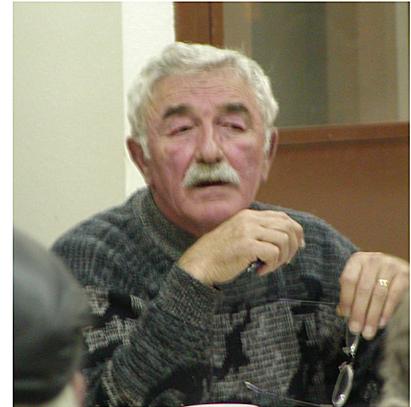
Here's an unusual thing, based at Santa Paula Airport...an Air & Space 18A. First, although this aircraft can do some the things a helicopter can do, it's not a helicopter. If you look carefully, you can see a propeller blade in the pusher spot, behind the cowl and ahead of the tail. The engine (a 180 hp IO-360 Lycoming) powers the propeller. That big main rotor on top is only powered just before takeoff. Here's how it goes... you get in, start the engine and taxi like an airplane. After an airplane-like runup, you taxi into



position, gather up your nerve, move the lever on the left side to the pre-takeoff position, hold the brakes, open the throttle wide and wait until the main rotor comes up to speed (about 370 RPM, I'm told.) When you lower the lever and release the brakes, the main rotor is disengaged from the engine, the collective pitch goes to positive and the thing jumps straight up into the air about 10 or 20 feet and just flies away. Honest. It's fun to watch and amazingly noisy. In fact, I'm told this autogyro is not capable of a running takeoff like an airplane, or any other gyrocopter, for that matter. After that, it seems to climb almost as steeply as say, a loaded Cessna 172, then cruises around 80 mph, burning about 9 or 10 gallons of gas per hour. Landing is fun to watch, too. It flies an approach like an airplane and flares like one, too, but it slows down to almost a standstill (or an actual standstill if there's a bit of wind), alights lightly on its back feet and stops after a ground run between zero and 30 feet. It can't hover or make a true vertical landing. So, if just hopping up out of the mud is your issue, and the trees aren't too tall, this is an alternative to a helicopter, and a bit cheaper to operate. A Super Cub can go almost anywhere this thing can, carry a heavier load, cruise 30 mph faster and do it at a fraction of the cost. After all that development, they built an aircraft that does a pretty good job of combining all the disadvantages of a helicopter and a fixed wing aircraft. BUT, it sure is an interesting aircraft. Owner Al Ball finished up the restoration of this thing about a year ago. It was pretty rough when he started, but there is a warehouse full of new production parts and he did a lovely job. He's still shaking the bugs out, but if he offers me a ride, I'm going!

Very Sad News

I got a phone call from Marilyn Nash this morning (Sunday, 12 May) and she told me that the Ventura County Comets has lost one of our best, Mike Ambarian. Mike passed away in France while visiting relatives last Tuesday, 7 May. He apparently died of an aneurism in his sleep. Mike was a retired firefighter and contributed a lot to the Comets as a worker, President and advocate. He'll be returned here for burial, but so far nothing has been determined about a memorial service. Great guy, truly one of the Good Ones and he'll be missed. I'll keep you posted.



Better News

After a stay in the hospital to successfully battle a lung infection, our guy Ken Marsh is returning home and doing much better.

Some Float Fly Pictures





Here's a pretty nifty retrieval boat... just a simple hobby shop boat, with a bit of tubing covered with some pipe insulation on the bow. Worked great!



A very tidy electric Seawind



When TJ is flying, it's all concentration!

Bob Root took these two photos of the F2YSea Dart that has attended a couple of our Float Flys. Two electric ducted fans power it.



I believe this model is all balsa, and has retractable skis on its belly like the real ones did. This last Float Fly marked the first successful flights for this very challenging model. Bob reports it left the water fine and flew stably, even when it lost the hatch, followed by a battery powering one of the motors. (you can see the hole in the top of the fuselage in the flight shot). Convair built five of these things in the early 50s and flew them from Mission Bay in San Diego. Not a very successful program with vibration problems from the skis, but this is still the only seaplane to exceed mach 1. One broke up during a demonstration for the brass hats, killing the pilot. I believe one is still on display at the San Diego Aerospace Museum.