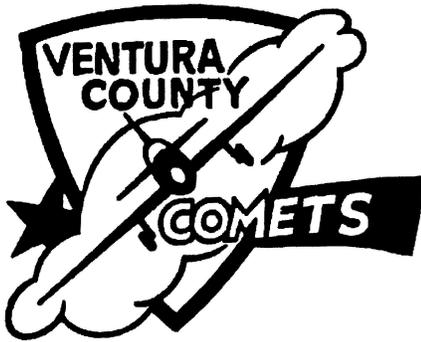


The Comets Tale

*The Official
Newsletter of the*



SEPTEMBER 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, 19 September
7:30 PM at the Oak View Community Center**

Prez Sez

Coming Up!



Saturday, 12 October
BBQ and Fun Fly and Swap Meet,
Simi Valley Flyers

**Saturday & Sunday 19-20
October**
Comets Float Fly at Lake Casitas

**Friday – Sunday,
25, 26 & 27 October**
Float Fly, SBRCM at Lake
Cachuma
No raffle or BBQ

First Sunday of each month
Open House at Santa Paula Airport
For October (Oct. 6th) they'll have
the Flying Flea Market

A week ago we had our quickly scheduled Warbird-Day-leftovers BBQ. Did you make it out there? We had a good group. Members stopped by just to hang out and others brought stuff to fly and both groups brought their appetites. Thanks to Mike and Steve for making this a success.

At the BBQ we had a little impromptu Fun-Fly thanks to Rodney. Rodney organized a few simple tasks for the planes: Spot landing, number of loops in 45 seconds and number of touch-and-go's (goes?) in 2 minutes. Even though it wasn't scheduled we had a few people take up the challenge and show off their skills. I think this was entertaining for both pilots and the peanut gallery. Thanks to Rodney for organizing this at the last minute

How about making this an annual event? Maybe turn it into a mid-summer-pot-luck Fun-Fly? Let me know what you think.

Runway plans are moving forward. We have ordered the covering and it will be delivered sometime in the next couple of months once we, as a group, settle on a date. This means we need to assemble a work party for a

day at the field to install it. Initially we think we need 6 volunteers to make this a success. The idea is have the runway fabric delivered later in the fall when the weather is cooler. One thing to consider is how to shave down the high spots on the runway before we cover it with fabric. If you have an idea, please share them.

Next month (October) is the Float Fly, the 19th and 20th is the weekend – mark your calendar and finish slapping-together that float plane. I am sure there will be a flying the day before (Friday) once the pieces are in place, either to work or fly, or both.

See ya at the field!

Alastair Brennan

Root's Rambling

I have three pictures of my Piper Clipper built from a Pat Trittle short kit. It was a fun project, weighs 25 oz. and flies great. I modeled it after the 1949 Clipper I owned and learned to fly in (picture 4). The kit builds just like the old rubber powered models I built in the 40's and 50's. Great fun!



I am including a few pictures George Boston and I took at the Comet's July war bird fly in. The most popular model seems to be the Vought Corsair.



Ron Scott had the smallest (pic 5), but they came in all sizes (pic 6 and 7).



Other attendees are shown in pictures 8, 9, 10, and 11.



It was popular to fly your P-51 inverted as much as possible (pic 12). No one seems to be flying the inverted yellow one in picture 13.



I will close with a picture of my well-worn Fokker triplane having fun (pic 14).

Bob Root



MINUTES of the AUGUST 2013 MEETING

Meeting was called to order by Club President, Alastair Brennan, at:
7:32 PM.

New Members & Guests:

- There were 19 members present – no new members or guests.
- Current membership is 72 members.

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

- Treasurer`s report given by T.J. As always, if members want additional details, they can contact TJ using the contact info on the masthead.
Treasurer`s report was 2ndd and accepted by the membership.

Safety Officer`s Report: (George Lanquist)

- George reported that there have been no problems.

Park Liaison Report: (John Dugan)

- John Dugan not in attendance, however, it was reported by George Boston that everything is ok.

Reminders:

- None.

Misc.:

- Warbird weekend had 13 flyers and lunch was served. A good time was had by all.
- Jerry Deanda explained that the mystery plane in the Comets Tail is – short explanation – a concept between the U2 and the SR-71, but never got built.

Old Business:

- The IMAC event took place at the Condors field – it was reported that it was a fun event.
- It was reported that no real progress has been made toward opening the Condors field but will continue to move forward – earliest possible opening is probably this fall.
- Discussed schedule for runway covering & possible problems – installation may be scheduled in the fall.

New Business:

- The church group is coming in again on August 28th thru Sept. 3rd and the field will be closed for use.
- A Fun Fly is scheduled for Sept. 7th to use up the left over food from the Warbird weekend.
- Andy Carlson announced that an auction/sale would take place at the November meeting for Mike Ambarian's models etc.

Model of the Month:

- Rodney Cooper presented an old design "V" tail slope glider called the "Switchblade". Reported by Rodney to be very fast. It was also a very interesting model.



Raffle:

- During the raffle break an old movie was shown of "the Real Thing fun fly", probably about 30 years ago. Berny Hammer was in it and I'll be darned he was young once and he didn't look like Santa. Good launching! You're the real thing.
- Leo Gabriels again donated the raffle prizes and people won interesting stuff.

Meeting adjourned at:

8:39 PM.

Note: Secretary, Lynn Breedlove will not be at the Sept. meeting. Ron Golding will sit in for Lynn. Thanks Ron.

Respectfully submitted:

Lynn Breedlove - Secretary

Mystery Plane, Kind Of

Ah, last month I tossed a bit of a curve to ya'll. This was never an airplane at all. The model is something Kelly Johnson of Lockheed had built to try to sell this thing to the Central Intelligence Agency. I have a version of this photo in high resolution and you can read C. Johnson on the folder in the corner of the suitcase, and it identifies this thing as the A-3. Story I got was that the CIA was afraid their U-2s would be shot down over Russia and so they asked for a radar-evading and/or really fast platform for cameras that would have a better chance of getting in and out with the photos. Since the U-2 was nicknamed Angel, the new airplane came to be referred to as Archangel, and the series of proposed designs all got numbers. This is the third one, hence, A-3. I've seen things written that say one thing they did to reduce drag was to remove the stabilizer, but I'm pretty sure there was one version that had a horizontal because I can see it in the suitcase... right there in the lower left corner. Looks like it would plug on at the top of the vertical and you can see the break for it in the two photos on the bottom.

Kelly had the model built to show to the bigwigs in Washington, and he wanted it to travel easily, but in secret. So, the model was made to be easy to assemble and disassemble so it would fit into that cheap suitcase and make it easy for it to blend in with other luggage, kind of hiding in plain sight. One guess is the model is red so it would attract attention and be less likely to be left out by accident. Hmm, maybe. Anyway, I'm pretty sure this thing was carved by hand from jeultong, a Malaysian wood that we still use now and then at Lockheed. Looks to me like the model has held up well for its age.

Well, the CIA didn't like this one too much and asked Kelly and his team to keep thinking. Eventually, they got to the A-12, several of which were built and flown, and the A-12 led to the SR-71 Blackbird.

My contact at Lockheed tells me the model hung around for 50-odd years and resurfaced recently, now declassified, obviously. And he's the guy who sent the additional photos. He says I can look at the model when I'm in Palmdale, which is hardly ever. I'm still hoping.



Purple Belly in the Riverbed

A True Story of The Champ in action

This story is kind of a confession, so let's just keep it between us flyers, OK?

Purple Belly had been flying for a while when it got a set of oversize tires. Same wheels, but the tires had a bit bigger outside diameter. I don't remember why this happened but I could guess that the tires were an odd size, in stock and nobody wanted them. So the next time Purple Belly needed new sneakers, it got those. They weren't all THAT big, but they were noticeable and of course everybody who flew that airplane (and they were legion) started thinking about the fact that these bigger tires, well, expanded the envelope of places where Purple Belly could land and take off. Including me. Now I have to say I didn't actually decide to try landing off airport, it just kind of happened. Call it a target of opportunity if you will.

It was in the winter, after a huge storm had blown thru the area and the Santa Clara River had been very high. As I flew alone over the river near Fillmore, I noticed a really big area of sand that had been scoured flat and level by that high water. It was white, obvious and very clean looking, and the water was long gone. Curious, I wandered over to have a closer look. This is when it occurred to me that a guy might just be able to land on it in a Champ with big tires. "OK", I thought... "I'll just make a low pass and see if it's really that smooth." I lined up into the wind and got pretty low, I guess about 50 feet over the sand and gave it a good look. I could see some small ripples, but no logs or rocks or holes or anything else that seemed scary. "Not bad" I thought. "Now I'll just do a touch and go using my very best soft field techniques and see if it's packed enough to hold me up." So I made a pattern to circle around into the wind again, slowed, got to a three-point attitude and touched down gently. No worries, it didn't bog down or anything so I added power and went around again, this time intending to land and stop. Ha, my first off-airport landing! This is where the trouble started. I circled around again and landed just like before, only this time I pulled the throttle closed as I touched down and pulled the stick back. And that's where Purple Belly wanted to stop. I learned something there... that the power and smooth landing had kept the wheels from taking much of the weight of the airplane, and me and when the airplane slowed and settled, the wheels sank into that nice, dry, pretty, white sand.

Realizing that I was about to get stuck, I added some power, and as the airplane continued to slow (pretty rapidly, actually), I added some more power and then all the power Purple Belly had, some 75 horsepower, on a good day. All that power (?) turned out to be enough to taxi at about a walk and I knew I was stuck. I won't tell you what I was thinking, but you can be sure it wasn't "Goodness me, I'm stuck." I started to dread the long walk to a telephone to call the owner, who was also my boss, and tell him his airplane was stuck in the sand, pretty much a mile from anything. I couldn't believe the fine mess I was in now but I doggedly turned around and taxied downwind to the end of the sand to try to take off anyway. Even taxiing downwind took full throttle, but I turned around into the wind with the hopeless optimism of the Complete Idiot and tried to fly. Purple Belly of course did not gather any speed at all for a few feet until...

For some reason, it finally dawned on me that if the sand was that soft, the tailwheel must have been digging in like a plow back there. Keeping the stick back protected us from going over on Purple Belly's nose, but also made a ton of drag that the poor little Continental could not overcome. Besides, Champs sit kind of heavy on their tailwheels anyway, so, I just carefully let the stick come forward so the tail just lifted out of the sand. Woo, when the nose came down a bit, that poor mishandled airplane accelerated just like it was on a concrete runway, took off and flew with not a care in the world. Those big tires really DID work; it was just the goofcase pilot who gummed things up.

It was a long time before I told anyone about this, and so far, that's my last off airport landing. I'm a little smarter now and I realize I got a cheap lesson from Purple Belly and the Karma Monster. And heaven only knows where else that airplane went with those tires. I never asked anybody.

By the way, although it was a dumb thing to try, landing off airport is not against any FAA regulations, although sometimes there are local laws about that. BUT, as an FAA guy told me once, if you land off field and crash, your pink backside belongs to them for violating Federal Aviation Regulation 91.13, Careless and Reckless. Yeah, I was that lucky.

First Sunday Open House at Santa Paula Airport in October (the 6th) will feature another **Flying Flea Market**. If you have stuff to sell, you can contact the Aviation Museum of Santa Paula at 805-525-1109 to make arrangements. Or you can wander around and see what's for sale, admission is free.

Dianne and I will be on vacation and will not be there this year.