

The Alameda Aero Club Newsletter

April 2005

President's Corner

And Then There's Pure Fun...

At our gathering "Long Winter Nights" in January, I won a raffle prize. I never win anything—not even ugly, fat guy contests. This time I didn't win just any prize, I won a ride in Chief Pilot Ben Free-love's Pitts. I felt four years old again, apprehensive, a little scared, but also thrilled...I couldn't wait.

After trying to get our schedules and the weather to agree, Ben and I decided on March 17. March 17 was gray with a 12,000 ft. ceiling. I was edgy and a bit nervous, but Ben said the day was fine for our purposes and so we piled into 05D for the brief flight to Tracy, where the Pitts is hangared.

The highly polished Pitts sparkled like a jewel. It's tiny with stubby little wings and a big engine, a stripped-down, form-follows-function, performance machine. It has the most rudimentary of creature comforts. It makes the club C172s look like corporate jets when it comes to seats, sound insulation, etc. You climb into a narrow aluminum opening, slide your feet up a pair of trays and sit on a lump of styrofoam with a stick between your legs. All the electrical and flight control cabling are out in front of God and everybody.

If you think our Chief Pilot has the instincts of a barn-stormer, think otherwise. Ben patiently gave me a thorough talking-to about what to expect, how we would do no maneuvers below 3000 ft., etc. Then, for the first time in my life, I was fitted with a parachute! (My attitude toward skydiving and such, is: "why would anyone in their right mind want to jump out of a perfectly good airplane?") So then, after the extensive pre-flight briefing, I was secured into the five-point belts and, unceremoniously, a barf bag placed between some cables where I could easily reach it. So trussed up worse than a Christmas turkey, we took off.

The Pitts takes off as though shot from a cannon. In the aerobatics area near the junction of Interstates 580 and 5 we climbed to a safe altitude. The San Joaquin Valley looked like a golf course—a soft green for as far as the eye could see.

Then the fun began: loops—not just one, many. In a Pitts, aileron rolls are almost a matter of think 'em and they happen. Wing-overs, spins—many, many spins—hammer-head stalls, added up to the most exhilarating flying I've had in years.

Flying back to OAK, we were immersed in flying the real world. Some ATC was hassling a pilot who called in on 135.4 when the frequency has been changed to 125.35. I resisted the impulse to throw 05D into an aileron roll. I reflected on how this was a reminder that in spite of all the expense and irritation; in spite of how we're supposed to fit into the system; and, how we're supposed to emulate the dry attitude of the professionals—the dirty little secret is that flying's a hell of a lot of fun. We, especially me, need to be reminded of this from time to time.

Other notes: When Ben and I were taxiing to 30 Tracy, we saw a C172 that wheel-barrowed in for two successive touch-and-goes. We both winced. Please remember to flair when flying our airplanes!

John Ewing has resigned as club Maintenance Officer to take a real job flying Cessna Caravans. Few of us know or understand the many hours John spent making sure our airplanes were safe and ready to fly. Also, John was instrumental in getting the FAA off our backs due to our sometimes-chaotic paperwork. John's will remain a club member, but let's all wish him well in his new career and say thanks.

Steve Bevitt, President

New Instrument Pilots

On Thursday, March 17, Allan Goldstein took to the skies with DPE Richard Batchelder. After the requisite departure procedure, holding pattern, DME arc, various approaches and unusual attitude recoveries, Mr. B. presented Allan with a Temporary Airman's Certificate, ASEL Instrument Airplane.

Congratulations Allan!

In spite of numerous work/life pressures, Hamish Reid decided to do his instrument check ride with DPE Richard Batchelder on Thursday, March 24. After successfully running the gauntlet, better known as the "Instrument Rating PTS," Mr. B.

found Hamish's performance worthy of bestowing a temporary airman certificate, ASEL Instrument Airplane.

Excellent work, Hamish!

John Ewing, CFII

New Board Members

Due to some shuffles in priorities among board members, we're trading hats. I am taking the role of maintenance officer, with Ben Barron as able assistant, and will enjoy the challenge of continuing to obtain timely, quality maintenance at a fair price. We've had enormous escalation in the costs of keeping the fleet up and running. Some of this has been bad luck, and some economic reality. To cope with future costs we are making changes in the way we do business with maintenance personnel and will make efforts to ensure we have the best deals possible on major expenditures. Maintenance is the backbone of any flying club, and we will cut no corners in bringing you properly maintained planes and logbooks. My experience in maintaining my own plane, as well as my contacts among the mechanically certified, will help in interacting with maintenance personnel and making the best decisions for the club. I welcome any comments and questions from the membership. Thanks for letting me thus serve you.

Ginny Wilken, Maintenance Director

Hello, I must be going ...

It seems only a few weeks ago that I started instructing and became the club's Maintenance Officer. In reality, it has been over three years. As I look forward to starting a new flying job, it's a good time to take a look back.

When I joined the club, our planes sat on the ramp most of the time and we were lucky if they flew 30 hours a month. Now, with several dedicated instructors, a pack of motivated student pilots, and many enthusiastic weekend fliers, the club is a hive of activity and club planes routinely fly over 50 hours a month.

During my tenure as Maintenance Officer, three engines reached TBO and were replaced, two aircraft were repainted, and the board arranged the

purchase of another C172, N6605D. Several helped break-in those engines, ferry planes to the painters, and taxi planes to and from maintenance. These events went unseen by most of you, but to those involved there was always a small bit of excitement and adventure in the process. My heartfelt thanks to the plane captains who keep the planes flying, to all the members who patiently write detailed squawks, and especially to those who graciously accept the news that the aircraft they had scheduled was not available due to unexpected maintenance.

As a club instructor, I gave numerous flight reviews, instrument proficiency checks, aircraft check-outs, and prepared 15 pilots for practical tests. After giving over 2000 hours of instruction, I can say without reservation that I enjoyed every minute. I couldn't have asked for a more rewarding group of pilots with which to train. I will no longer be instructing full-time, but I will remain a club member and instructor. Once my new schedule settles down, I plan to continue instructing part-time. Why? Because there's nothing quite like watching a student's first solo or seeing the look on a pilot's face after successfully completing a check ride.

My wish for the club is continued success, but that comes with a gentle reminder. It takes the cooperation of dedicated club members for that wish to come true. The Aero Club exists because, in the minds of its members, it **MUST** exist. Please, make some time to volunteer and keep your club viable. With your help and determination, the sky really is the limit.

John Ewing, CFII

36B leaving, 31V for sale

Well, I've proved for myself the old saw about how to making a small fortune in aviation: start with a large one!

It is with real reluctance that I am taking N7336B off the line. I just cannot afford to keep it on lease-back anymore. Between the cost of insurance and maintenance, it just hasn't pencilled out. (Read: I'm losing my shirt!)

Thanks to all who flew 36B, and if it has made some of you better pilots, it's been worth it. I plan to keep 36B as my personal plane and sell

N3931V. 31V is a nice little plane and a real kick to fly. If I could justify it to myself, I'd keep them both, but it just doesn't make sense. I've already made my small fortune!

Dave Penney, CFII

Flight Training: Taking the Short Approach

AAC member David Diamond's Flight Training: Taking the Short Approach, is a full-color book introducing flight training for prospective and new student pilots. He is a private pilot, not a CFI, so he writes from a unique perspective. The author's sense of humor makes for an informative and fun read. Short Approach has many 3D illustrations created by the author, whose work appears regularly in AOPA's Flight Training and AOPA Pilot magazines. Buy the book through the author's website (AirDiamond.com) or any ASA retailer.

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What is this? Convair L-13!

The L-13 was a failed attempt by Convair to enter the liaison aircraft market. It was capable and well-designed but proved more expensive than the planes it was intended to replace.

In 1945 Consolidate-Vultee (Convair) designed a new craft as a follow-on to Stinson's L-5 Grasshopper after it acquired that company. The resulting Model 105 was an all-metal, high-wing plane with an angular front and a narrow, circular tail section. The wing's slotted leading edge and slotted flaps produced a short takeoff, clearing a 50-foot obstacle after rolling only 230 feet. Instead of tandem seating, the Model 105 sat two pilots side by side, plus room for four passengers. The wings could be folded along the fuselage and the tailplanes folded upward. The Army tested the Model 105 as a liaison candidate and rejected it as too novel, however in 1947 the Air Force ordered 300 copies as the L-13.

All L-13s remained stateside during the Korean War. After being declared surplus, the L-13 was replaced by the cheaper Cessna L-19 Bird Dog.

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The aircraft pictured in the March 2005 newsletter was probably one of several radial-engined conversions (Lycoming R-680-E3, Jacobs R-755-A2, or Pratt & Whitney R-985-7).

*250 hp Franklin O-425 engine.
Max. speed 115 mph, ceiling 15,000 ft., range 488 miles.*

Source: Warbirds: an Illustrated Guide to U.S. Military Aircraft, 1915-2000, by John C. Fredriksen.

Jay Smith, Newsletter Editor



Convair L-13



Photos courtesy Gabriel Schlumberger

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