

The Alameda Aero Club Newsletter

November 2005

President's Corner

I live in north Berkeley. When you're coming in VFR from the north west, or from the San Pablo practice area, the ATC will say something like "...cross the Mormon Temple at or below 2500 feet, make right traffic for 27R." Not said is that you'll be passing over my house.

The other day, I saw a 172 chugging back to OAK, directly overhead, white with green trim. 4AC, or, maybe 05D? To my dismay, I realized it was 05D. There it was, in front of God and everybody, an oily black underside, a nasty, jet-black smear over what should be a lovely white bottom.

Which brings me to the subject of this month's rant. All of us must take some pride in ownership. We should never allow ourselves to forget that we, as a club, own 12R, 9UL, 4AC, and 05D. 05D's underside looks bad; there was something sticky and evil looking under 12R's carpets at the last 100 hr. Is this how you'd treat your own airplane, or home or apartment, or car?

Unfortunately, one of the questions concerning communal ownership is who actually takes responsibility for the property. (If you detect a reference to the book, The Tragedy of the Commons, step to the front of the class.) AAC generally faces this question by having an active Maintenance Officer and Plane Captains to take some of the burden off the MO. But we can do more.

Suggestions: when you're at the club help clean the pit we call a clubhouse. Years ago Gary Wren turned me on to one of the big responsibilities of the President: empty the trash. I try to do that every time I'm in the clubhouse. Some vacuuming would also be appreciated.

Chad Scott has tried manfully to drum up volunteers for "birdbaths," ritual washings of the beloved 172s. Please sign up.

Now that we have something of our own maintenance facility, remember this is a part of the club, not a service. Ask Stan Scolnik or Ginny Wilken how you can help. Sorting screws and fasteners helps. Taking a rag to the cowling inside reveals future leaks as they happen. It's all easy, relaxing and doesn't take one-tenth of the brains that so many of

you have. These are our airplanes, we must take care of them.

Or, a simple solution: when we next repaint our birds we do it in Oakland Raider colors, dull aluminum and lots of black. We'll never do anything with the interiors—who knows what communicable diseases can hide in a 172? Maybe everybody will think it's a deliberate part of a tough, OAK grunge image that we're trying to cultivate.

Steve Bevitt, President

Keeping Our Planes Flying

Last month I worked on three club planes, 4AC, 9UL, and 12R. I invite you to gain from such experience as I and the club have. Stan and Ginny can't do it all. Lend a hand for your profit and the club's!

I met our mechanic, Stan, and helped with 9UL and 4AC, as did Ginny and other club members. We discovered a crack in 9UL's carburettor. Ginny got the rebuild company to give us, free, a replacement for the cracked part. 4AC needed a carburettor heat cable. 12R needed its annual inspection.

Ginny, Ben Barron, I and other club members helped prepare 12R for its annual by removing inspection plates, denuding the interior of seats, carpets, and trim panels, changing the engine oil and filter, and removing the spark plugs. Ginny and I finished the job by cleaning 12R's oily belly.



Stan and Ginny working on 4AC

I was not surprised that working on airplanes isn't much different from working on automobiles. Most recent cars are more sophisticated than our Cessna 172s. 9UL's

Marvel-Schebler carburettor would look at home on something from the 1930s. I savored my part in finding the source of 9UL's fuel leak. The best part is that I enjoyed working with Stan, Ginny, other club members, and saving the club money. I liked the feeling of helping keep my---our---airplanes in good condition.



Marvel-Schebler carburettor

Jay Smith, Newsletter Editor

Greetings From Our New Mechanic

I'm Stan, the latest addition to your growing club. Some of you have already met me, but for those who haven't, look for the black Volvo wagon running around between the ramp and our newly acquired hangar. I am responsible for the maintenance of the aircraft and Ginny will be my number one assistant. We'll strive to keep the airplanes maintained and available for you to fly and enjoy. I am available part-time time, on call. Feel free to call about any problems or questions about the aircraft. I can usually be reached on my cell at 650-922- 3074. (I live in San Mateo). I've noted the condition of cowlings attach fasteners, which will soon be upgraded.

Stan Scolnick

Special VFR

The past few weeks have brought unusual weather: more fog and clouds than normal for this time of year, the fog burning off later and rolling in earlier than forecast. For those without instrument ratings,

this delays planned trips, forces earlier-than-expected returns, and generally squeezes the number of hours in a day we can fly. What to do if you're waiting to depart OAK and you see clear skies as close as 880, but ATIS is reporting 7 miles visibility and 900 foot ceilings? Or if you're returning and the field has just gone from scattered to broken 800 and 4 miles visibility? Try a Special VFR clearance.

Special VFR (SVFR) is an authorization to operate in instrument meteorological conditions (IMC) without going IFR. SVFR is defined as "aircraft operating in accordance with clearances within controlled airspace in meteorological conditions less than the basic VFR weather minima. Such operations must be requested by the pilot and approved by ATC." See 14 C.F.R. § 1.1. SVFR is governed by 14 C.F.R. § 91.157, which provides that SVFR operations may only be conducted with an ATC clearance, clear of clouds, when flight visibility is at least 1 statute mile, and during the day, unless the pilot is instrument rated and the airplane is IFR certified. See § 91.157(b). Further, SVFR is available in only in the "lateral boundaries of the controlled airspace designated to the surface area for an airport." § 91.157(a).

Let's unpack these requirements. First, SVFR is available only in controlled airspace surrounding class C, D, E and some B surface areas. SVFR is not available, and not needed, in class G airspace, because the VFR minima for much of G are already the same as SVFR minima. Second, SVFR is available when the weather is below VFR minima. At OAK, those minima are 3 statute miles visibility and the ability to remain 1000/500/2000 feet away from clouds. See 14 C.F.R. § 91.155. To operate SVFR, however, you need only 1 statute mile of visibility and the ability to remain clear of clouds. Visibility, incidentally, is measured one of two ways under § 91.157. If you're in the air, it's flight visibility. If you're on the ground, then it's either the reported visibility at the field (i.e., ATIS, ASOS, AWOS or other official report), or if there's no official reported ground visibility, the visibility from the cockpit of an airplane in the takeoff position.

Next, you must have a clearance to operate SVFR, and you must request it: the controller cannot suggest it to you. See FAA Pub. 7110.10R CHG3 at 4-5-1; 14 C.F.R. § 1.1. The controller cannot know whether you have the ability to remain clear of clouds. Thus, on an initial call for a VFR departure, you may hear "Cessna 4312R, Oakland surface area is below VFR minimums. What are your intentions?" At that point you may ask for SVFR clearance. The controller must expressly grant you a clearance before you can proceed SVFR. In at least two cases, pilots have faced sanctions for proceeding into controlled airspace under SVFR condi-

tions without clearances. In the first case, the controller advised the pilot that the field was below VFR minima and asked the pilot to state his intentions. The pilot responded "Requesting a ah, well . . . we'll land." The controller responded, "understand you're going . . . to go ahead and land." That was not a clearance, the NTSB held, only an acknowledgment of the pilot's stated intentions. The pilot lost his ticket for 30 days for reckless flight (§ 91.13) and flying VFR in below-VFR conditions (91.155). See Garvey v. Ahl, NTSB Order No. EA-4701 (Sept. 8, 1998). In the second case, a pilot approaching controlled airspace was advised by the tower that the field was below VFR minima, with a ceiling of 600 feet. The pilot requested SVFR and was told to "standby one I have to get one from approach." The pilot interpreted this to mean that he was to continue until he received the clearance. He had a near-miss with a departing airplane. The NTSB rejected his claim that the controller's response had been ambiguous, and found that he had been reckless (§ 91.13) and had unlawfully entered controlled airspace when ceilings were below 1000 feet (§ 91.155(c)). He lost his ticket for 60 days. See Richards v. Smith, NTSB Order No. EA-3639 (Aug. 6, 1992). The message is that you need a "clearance" to operate SVFR, because when ATC clears you to operate SVFR, it's shouldering a greater burden to keep you away from IFR traffic.

When should you request SVFR? Think carefully before you do. If you're departing OAK SVFR, the chances are that the weather 5 nm from OAK (i.e. outside OAK's surface area) will not be that much better than at OAK, and SVFR does not relieve you of § 91.119's minimum safe altitude requirements. See AIM 4-4-5(c). Your SVFR clearance out of OAK may thus deliver you to downtown Oakland, where the conditions are only marginally better than at OAK. If the ceilings aren't at least 1600 feet, you won't be able to remain 1000 feet above obstacles within 2000 feet (14 C.F.R. § 91.119) and 500 feet below the ceiling (14 C.F.R. § 91.155). Legally, you can't go forward. You might also have trouble going back: since IFR traffic has priority over SVFR traffic, see AIM 4-4-5, you may be delayed getting an SVFR clearance back into OAK. If the weather over OAK deteriorates below 1 mile visibility while you're waiting for your return SVFR clearance, you've gone from a precarious situation to an emergency. No matter what you tell Tower about your unlimited flight visibility, you cannot land if ground visibility, as reported by the ATIS or AWOS, is less than 1 statute mile. See § 91.157(c). This is why SVFR is sometimes called a "clearance to nowhere," and it's a good reason to be cautious about requesting

SVFR clearance.

The second reason to be cautious about requesting SVFR clearance is that departing SVFR or continuing VFR into SVFR conditions means you're knowingly going VFR into IMC. Continued VFR flight into IMC remains one of the leading factors in fatal general aviation accidents. See 2004 Nall Report (AOPA). Indeed, SVFR requires only 1 statute mile of visibility. That may mean the horizon is obscured, increasing your chances of becoming disoriented. Moreover, at 100 kts, you will have just over 30 seconds to identify and avoid a fixed obstacle; much less if that obstacle is another plane moving towards you. So while SVFR is the FARs' recognition that not all IMC is pea soup fog, it's not license to throw out the prudence that's kept you safe this far. Nonetheless, if you're out at the Diablo practice area and the stratus layer beats you back to OAK, you may be able to get back in SVFR. Just be sure to leave yourself a safe alternative in case Tower can't accommodate your request.

Frank J. Riebli, Attorney at Law

With the Patriots at Byron

Thanks to John King, my first instructor, for inviting my son and I backstage at his act, the Patriots. He's involved with the Naval Aviation museum at Schellville and extended me an invitation. I suggested the 8th. He said, "Oh no. That's Fleet Week. Bring your son down to Byron and see the team." The usual machinations around stratus, flying out of KHAF, but it cleared enough that we could get out. Listening to the traffic I got sucked into landing on 30 at Byron, into a crosswind. I did a crosswind slip to landing pretty well. Just one little bounce. So we got to see the circus.



The flight home was uneventful, though the 145hp 172F was having a hard time bucking a headwind west of Byron, so we hung a left and went over Altamont with the cars...

Charles Warren

AAC Board Members 2004/2005**President**

Steve Bevitt president@alameda-aero.com

Vice President

Mike Klinke vicepres@alameda-aero.com

Treasurer

Chad Scott treasurer@alameda-aero.com

Secretary

Ginny Wilken secretary@alameda-aero.com

Membership Officer

Judy Barron membership@alameda-aero.com

Maintenance Director

Ginny Wilken maintenance@alameda-aero.com

Deputy Maintenance Director

Ben Barron maintenance@alameda-aero.com

Newsletter Editor

Jay Smith newsletter@alameda-aero.com

Web Master

Brad Dispensa webmaster@alameda-aero.com

Chief Pilot

Ben Freelove chiefpilot@alameda-aero.com

Volunteer Coordinator

Chad Scott activities@alameda-aero.com

Non-Board Member Officials**Colonel Video**

Ginny Wilken videos@alameda-aero.com

Bookkeeper

Dona Lynch kotb@alameda-aero.com

Plane Captains**4312R**

Jay Smith 12r@alameda-aero.com
650-591-0342 ext. 235: Tuesday, Wednesday 11:30
a.m. - 9 p.m., Thursday, Friday 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
510-547-8428: all other days and times

854AC

Kurt Borowski 4ac@alameda-aero.com
510-523-8757

739UL

Greg Savidge 9ul@alameda-aero.com
415-279-2061

6605D

Ben Barron babarron@comcast.net.
510-527-4830