

The Alameda Aero Club Newsletter

October 2005

New Private Pilot - Michael Schonberg

On Monday, September 12th, Michael Schonberg met with DPE Richard Batchelder. Though both 9UL and 4AC refused to be airworthy that day, Michael persevered. After some talking and some flying, Mr. B presented Michael with his very own Temporary Airman's Certificate ASEL. Congratulations Michael!

John Ewing CFII

President's Corner Back to the Future

As many of you are aware, maintenance has been eating us alive---the cost of keeping our mid-seventies C172s alive just spirals upward. The total in 2004 was somewhere around \$130,000. Faced with such an outlay, the Board decided to hire a mechanic. This decision has been brewing for nearly a year; we just needed the right candidate and a convergence of luck, the stars, etc. Well, it looks like the details have been worked out thanks to the unstinting efforts of our Maintenance Officer, Ginny Wilken.

What this represents for the club, I hope, is something of a "back to the future." When I joined the club in '91, Bob Stover attended to the administrative end, Doug Johnson watched over the maintenance of our airplanes like a hawk, and Pierre Boudreaux fixed the airplanes. Three fine men. Alas, none of them are still with us.

I don't mean to paint this as a golden era, or state of innocence. The club almost collapsed financially in the early nineties because of huge, unforeseen expenses occasioned by a C177RG (91V for you old-timers). At one point, Bob Stover was using his own credit card to keep the club afloat. This is to say, we'll always be facing unforeseen expenses; but now we'll have someone on our side---our very own mechanic---managing maintenance costs.

We believe that having one person dedicated to keeping club airplanes flying is an important step in improving our maintenance and our paperwork, while controlling spiraling labor costs. Also, this will be no "bootleg" operation. The Port of Oakland is

fully aware of our intentions and any mechanic will be fully insured. As always, safety will be our top priority.

This move should not be interpreted as a knock on Oakland Aircraft Maintenance. We have to understand where they're coming from: they have enormous overhead and expenses. They have to charge the rates they charge or go out of business. However, their clientele should be the carriage trade, not a club with humble C172s. Fortunately for OAM, the last time I was in the shop I noticed they were working on a Lancair, a Socata Trinidad, a Beech B36TC, and a couple of twins. This is where their business is going and I say more power to them. No doubt we'll use them again. And, I have nothing but thanks to Justin and company for the many times they've put themselves out to keep our airplanes flying.

We're entering a new/old era, let's hope it all works out as planned.

Steve Bevitt, President

Keeping Our Planes Flying

We're completing our transition to in-house maintenance, with new member Stan Scolnick as our resident A&P mechanic. He brings years of experience and wisdom to our fleet, plus an unstoppable get-it-done attitude. Our temporary hangar is at Port-a-Ports, where we're collecting the bits and pieces to ensure we can perform common maintenance tasks speedily. We welcome any member to hang out and help on occasion, to learn a bit about what it takes to keep an airplane healthy and legal. From time to time, we'll solicit assistance on 100-hr and annual disassembly and maintenance. No experience required; we're happy to train, and we hope to raise a bit of consciousness, if not pride, in the fleet and its condition.

Please be kind to the planes when you fly, and leave them in great shape for the next pilot. Park in the correct tiedown spots. Take paper cups and candy bar wrappers with you, and dress the prop to horizontal. Continue to record squawks and notify us, even of things you'd just like to see happen. Ask us anything about how better to manage the planes in flight. Be considerate in scheduling, with attention to the actual time you plan to fly, and please cancel any unused reservations. Rumor has it that we may be very close to having our internal web-based universal scheduler and database operational, and this will help immensely in tracking plane use and hours. But until then, what you

tell us on the scheduler is our only resource in planning maintenance.

Thanks for your patience and cooperation. Club maintenance is not a service; we are doing our own housework now, and we can take responsibility and pride in the result.

Ginny Wilken, Maintenance Officer

Pilot Performed Maintenance

[Editor's note: Alameda Aero Club members are owner-operators. This article is not legal advice.]

As a private pilot and owner-operator, what maintenance can you perform on the planes you own? More than you might think. Most of us are familiar with Part 43's statement that holders of a pilot certificate (except for sport pilot) "may perform preventive maintenance on any aircraft owned or operated by that pilot." 14 C.F.R. sec. 43.3(g). In preparing for the private pilot exam, we learn that preventive maintenance involves simple things like greasing wheel bearings. Preventive maintenance includes much more than simply greasing wheel bearings, however, and sometimes pilots can perform much more extensive repairs.

Subsection (c) of Appendix A to Part 43, lists repairs the FAA considers to be "preventive maintenance." The 32-item list includes service to: landing gear tires; shock struts; landing gear wheel bearings (such as cleaning or greasing); defective safety wiring or cotter keys; seats or seat parts; broken landing light wiring circuits; bulbs, reflectors and lenses of position and landing lights; fuel and oil strainers; and, batteries. You may also lubricate parts of the airplane not requiring disassembly of structural parts; refinish "the decorative coating of [the] fuselage;" repair cabin upholstery; make "small simple repairs" to fairings, cover plates and cowlings; replace side windows; replace safety belts; replace seats (so long as you don't have to disassemble a "primary structure"); replace wheels (so long as no weight and balance computation is required); replace prefabricated fuel lines; and, replace "self-contained, front instrument panel-mounted navigation and communication devices that employ tray-mounted connectors." Two things you should note about the items listed as preventive maintenance, however: the list is exhaustive, and if any maintenance item on it involves "complex assembly opera-

tions," then that item is no longer considered preventive maintenance a pilot may perform. In any case, pilots are permitted to perform a broad range of services to their airplanes.

A pilot may perform any maintenance, preventive maintenance and alterations to an airplane that a mechanic or repairman is authorized to perform so long as that pilot is "working under the supervision of a holder of a mechanic or repairman certificate," and the mechanic or repairman personally observes the work and is "readily available, in person" for consultation. 14 C.F.R. sec. 43.3(d). Why is this relevant? Because the Club just engaged a holder of a repairman certificate to perform maintenance on club airplanes, and our hope is that you, as a part-owner of these airplanes, will assist him in maintaining our airplanes. Under his supervision, you can perform much more involved maintenance. This will not only keep our maintenance costs down, but also teach you more about the airplanes you fly.

Some final notes: First, under Part 43 no person may approve an airplane for return to service after preventive maintenance without noting that service in the airplane's maintenance records. 14 C.F.R. sec. 43.5. Second, remember that no person may carry any person in an aircraft that has been maintained, rebuilt, or altered "in a manner that may have appreciably changed its flight characteristics or substantially affected its operation in flight" until someone with at least a private pilot certificate flies the airplane and makes an operational check of the maintenance or alteration, and then logs the flight in the aircraft records. 14 C.F.R. sec. 91.407. Finally, We are required by 14 C.F.R. 43.13 to use the methods, techniques and practices prescribed in the manufacturer's maintenance manual, and use any special tools or apparatus the manufacturer recommends. Finally, the maintenance must leave the airplane, part or appliance in a condition at least equal to its original condition. In other words we can't just start pulling equipment off our airplanes for service.

Frank J. Riebli
Attorney at Law

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