

USUA FLYING CLUB 1

NEWSLETTER

November 1990

FROM THE LEFT SEAT

by Tom Simmons

On October 20th & 21st, USUA #1 hosted a season-ender, fly-in at Whitman Strip and I think the only simple description would be : Wow!

On the first day, I would not be surprised to find that 100 people attended. Although I made no formal count, I would estimate that 15 planes were flying, and 20 or so cars lined the taxiway. Good citizenship was observed by all, and pilots wishing to demonstrate aerobatic skills were able to do so without imperiling other pilots or ground crews. Bomb drop and balloon popping events added to the festivities.

The second day was less crowded, but no less fun. A nurf ball drop was added to the contests, and a good, safe time was had by all. Jim Laurenson supplied intro rides to a small army of would-be ultralight pilots; Chuck Tippet, Spud Parsons and Tom Alder contributed mightily to the supplying and safe operation of the contests; and other people too numerous to list by name helped at cooking, organizing and a list of other tasks, large and small.

Perhaps most impressive, to me at any rate, was the high level of personal responsibility that every pilot seemed to take in ensuring safety for all. The standard was self-imposed, and did not in any way detract from personal freedom or flying activity. In fact, we maintained a full and active pattern for much of the two days, and never had an anxious moment. Now that's something we can all feel proud about.

Many thanks to everyone who helped to make this fly-in a resounding success, either through their efforts or their attendance. If this be ultralighting, fly on!

Fly Safely!

ADVISORIES

Though club membership has seen some ebb and flow during recent years, I am pleased to say that we are welcoming some new members, and welcoming back some old members who had let their memberships lapse.

This late-in-the-season activity has not made my belated plans to publish a full member list any easier, but it is in the works. Current planning calls for a club list to be mailed sometime in December. It will not be attached to the newsletter, but will be mailed separately to all members.

FREQUENT FLYERS

by Tom Simmons

The season's ended and it's time to tote up the frequent flyer points. To my surprise and undying pleasure, there are more than five or six names on the list.

This has been a real flying season! Here's the score.

Tim Hansen	(too numerous to count)
Tom Simmons	22
Jim Laurenson	13
Chuck Tippet	13
Tom Alder	11
Andy Schaffer	8
Rob Brooke	7
Jim Gildea	6
Dick Walker	6
Jim Birnbaum	5

Jerry Eastman and Spud Parsons were not club members when we first started counting. But they have since joined USUA #1 and both have certainly exceeded the minimum requirement of five flights, although an exact count is not available. That brings our frequent flyer total to 12 pilots; not a bad showing.

It should be added that scoring methods were far from scientific and the possibility certainly exists that not every pilot got his full ration of points. If you made it past the five, don't worry if you think I missed a few. But if you aren't on the list, and think you should be, call me. I'll tell you what I had listed, and you can tell me what I missed.

Patches will be ordered as soon as I get a final count. For those who earned

theirs, wear them with pride. You're more than an armchair pilot, you're a USUA #1 Frequent Flyer.

VOTE EARLY AND OFTEN

We will begin entering names in nomination for the slate of club officers for 1991 at the November 1st meeting. If you want to nominate someone, see if they're willing to serve. If you're interested in the future of USUA #1 and its activities, think about volunteering for office yourself. Your club needs you.

DRAT!

by Tom Simmons

All of the omens for September 30th were positive. The weatherman was calling for showers and winds, which meant - as it has all season - that the actual conditions were perfect for ultralight flying. The air was clear, visibility was good. I was back from a week at the beach and ready for a quick trip to the fly-in at Shannon.

Traffic on the Beltway and Rt. 66 was light, so it took less than an hour to get to Whitman Strip. It seemed that the gods themselves wanted me to fly.

Which was what made it all the more perplexing to find, just seconds after taking off, that I was back on the ground with a thud, surrounded by bent tubing, a broken axle and prop, and one sheared landing gear. That wasn't supposed to happen. Oooops!

I had performed a thorough pre-flight. In fact, I had already been up in the air

once, just to see what it felt like. It felt great.

Spud Parsons, Tim Hansen and Jim Critchfield were in on the flight, so I landed, reported in, and we prepared to depart. Jim was fine-tuning his plane and agreed to meet us in transit.

Tim took off. Spud took off. We were using the short runway that faces east, so I taxied past the last hanger, checked the long runway for cross traffic, accelerated over the bumpy area at the crossroads, and took off.

At full power, and full climb attitude, I suddenly felt a dramatic reduction in RPM's. But the engine was still running. I pushed the stick forward to avoid stalling and moved the throttle back and forth. No improvement.

Straight ahead, I saw the fence and tree line. It looked too close for a straight in landing. I didn't think I could get onto the ground and stop in time.

How high was I, anyhow? Not very. Maybe 50 or 75 feet AGL. No chance of doing a 180° turn. Plus, I was close to a stall. Fence straight. Road right. Unmowed field to the left. No immediate options and no time to develop one.

I turned slightly left to extend the distance to the fence and put the stick farther forward to gain control authority. I crossed the electric wire into the unmowed field. The ground was getting closer. There was still no stick pressure to speak of. I pushed it forward until the last possible moment and then tried to flair. No flair. Impact.

The Sport is a truly wonderful airplane, but alone among Quicksilvers, its shortened wingspan (28 ft.) and its true weight (who knows!) make it land like a bomb if it doesn't have plenty of speed over the wings. In trying to extend my decision time, I must have cost myself precious speed. My turn put me into a shallow bank and I landed hard on the left side of the airplane.

After stopping and reviewing the damage, I had leisure to find the cause. My rear plug wire had fallen off. In nearly 200 hours of flying, this plane has never even jiggled a plug wire loose. Now, one had fallen clean off. On the short runway. At the most critical point of my take-off. Shit happens.

The damage to the airplane was not really very severe. A broken axle and two bent tubes. A shattered prop. I had scheduled some maintenance for this winter anyhow, and this will encourage me to really do it. A top-end on the engine. Noise suppression kit. Examine and replace nuts and bolts in key areas. There was already minor damage to the axle, so I had planned to replace it. But that's not the point.

The same problem on the long runway would have caused no more than a five minute delay in departure. I would have had an easy, straight-in landing, and time to diagnose and fix the problem. Then off to Shannon. Using the short runway is a calculated risk, and I have always known that. I have no doubt that I will use it again in the future.

However, looking back on it, I cannot be sure I made all the best decisions. There was little time, and I was not expecting the problem. It's possible that a straight-in landing would have been better after all. I don't know.

What I *do* know is that the next time I use the short runway, I'll be concentrating on my option list so that a quick decision is available. At least until I have enough altitude and airspeed to give me more time.

MY FAVORITE ACTOR (PART II)

by Jim Laurenson

Part I of this saga left me taxiing my Quicksilver MXL-II to a parking space next to Jerry Eastman's gyro during "Aviation Awareness Day" at Jimmy Stewart Airport in Indiana, Pennsylvania, after flying 135 miles one Saturday morning from Reese's field near Frederick, Maryland (see last issue). Little did I know how the ease of that part of the flight would contrast so much with the difficulty of the return trip.

After being directed to a parking space by someone holding two orange batons (another first for me), I got out and shook hands with my wing/blade mate Jerry who I had not seen or talked to (but heard) during the entire flight! I also met Jerry's gyro friend from the area, Ron Iaconis, who owns a place with its own strip about 10 miles northwest of Jimmy Stewart. After comparing flight stories over hot coffee and the great lunch provided by the airport, and after receiving the complimentary plaque everyone got for having flown to the airport (now hung proudly in Hangar 3 at

Whitman's; uh, you'll have to look closely for it on account of its size), I decided to hang out my first shingle ever for introductory flights (after getting an OK from the FBO). The line, as they say, formed instantly.

For two solid hours, I was an intro-flight machine. And they loved it! I'm sure at least a few new ultralighters were born that day, and it feels great to have been part of it. One guy, who had never flown in anything in his life, had just finished getting an intro ride in a general aviation aircraft at the field, and he walked right on over and hopped in my ultralight! This was a born ultralight pilot.

My departure time for the journey back to Reese's (which I needed to do because of plans I had for the evening) was passing. I knew that the later I left, the more I would have to push that throttle and stick forward to get back in time. Unfortunately, when I checked with Flight Service and monitored the winds for a moment (headwind at about 15 mph), it became clear that I was not going to make it before dark. So instead of making it at least part way, I decided to go with Jerry back to Ron's. A nice place to stay with great company obviously was preferable to an uncertain place to stay with no company. Little did I know that the weather forecast of tailwinds and clear skies in the morning could not be more wrong!

Our flight to Ron's was great and very quick (due to the tailwind). Swooping over the last hill, we saw what could only be described as paradise. Oh, what I would give to have a spread like his! A beautiful 1,000 foot strip

(that Ron built himself) on a hill overlooking his house and the several open, rolling fields in the area.

After eating a fantastic dinner of sloppy joes, home-grown corn-on-the-cob, and several other home-grown vegetables, we all flew around some more while I gave several intro flights to family and friends. Afterward, we tied down the aircraft (some of you will like this; I tied mine to a tractor, a trailer, and a telephone pole) and proceeded to top off the evening with good conversation (about flying of course) and several videos (about -- can you guess? -- flying [no, Judy, not sex]!). With plans spinning around in my head to be up at the crack of dawn to take advantage of the tailwinds and clear skies, I eventually slipped into a deep and contented (at least partially; I wasn't forgetting I had ruined my plans for the evening) sleep.

I thought as I woke that the Iaconis' alarm clock that I borrowed was very weird -- but at least pleasant -- for making the sound of rain rather than a buzz or a beep. It quickly dawned (ha ha) on me, however, that the rain was real, and it was heavy. Being the incurable optimist that I am, however, I got up and prepared to leave anyway. Unfortunately, I didn't have a boat to get to the field, so instead I decided to stay at Ron's for a while and enjoy another fantastic meal. Finally, the rain eased and we waded to the field to assess the situation. The clouds were hanging very low, and the wind was screaming from the southeast (the direction we were headed). Not good signs.

Well, practically blind with optimism, clouds, and rain at this point, Jerry and I headed to Jimmy Stewart anyway to gas up and head home. After waiting there for a few gales to pass through, I suddenly heard this voice of Tom Simmons in my head that said "A hole!" So with a cheer and a wave to Jerry -- who looked up startled from the table where he was intelligently sitting and wolfing down pancakes or something -- off I went into my first sucker hole (perhaps to be renamed Simmons holes?) of the day.

As I indicated in Part I, the start of this trip made me feel a bit *deja vu-ish*, probably about our flight to Corning, NY. Well, that feeling was a fart in a gale of wind, so to speak, compared to my feelings 10 minutes out of Jimmy Stewart. As I was approaching Ebensburg airport still several miles away by my reckoning, the clouds were rolling right on in from every direction, down to the ground. I was quickly getting boxed in. I also could not reach Jerry, who I thought would have raced on up behind me by then. Just after I decided I better find a good looking hay field to set down in, Jerry came on the air saying something about "had the goddamned wrong button pushed on my goddamned radio" and "where the hell are you?" and "my Loran says the airport is right over there, so just follow me."

And there it was, closer than I thought. (That's the last time I make fun of Jerry's Loran...hmm, nah.) So we landed, fueled up, and took off for one of the most interesting, perilous, and round-about flights I have ever had. (Okay, it wasn't that interesting, perilous, and round-about; I'm just

trying to get you psyched up about the next -- and last, I promise -- part of this story in the next Newsletter.)

CONGESTED AREAS

Last month, after publishing the complete text of F. A. R. Part 103, I wrote to John Ballantyne asking for illumination on the definition of "congested areas" and "open assemblies of persons." You know, those things we're not allowed to fly over, regardless of our altitude.

John has responded, and the answer is: "Don't ask." Sort of. Here's what he wrote:

"Well, I have used the answer to these questions as a gag in seminars. Something like, 'if FAA gets complaints, it was congested' or 'if the inspector and his wife are fighting, you were in a congested area' or something similar.

"But these answers are very close to accurate. FAA deliberately has gone for many years without defining 'congested' or 'assembly of persons.' They answer that you don't want FAA to precisely define these words because the resulting definition would be very stringent.

"So, aviators are left with only a vague idea that FAA doesn't want us flying over people - and that is just the way FAA wants it to be."

In practice, this boils down to one common sense rule: if you are flying over anything that might fall into either definition, fly too high to be identified. Preferably so high that no

one can prove you're even an ultralight.

FLIGHT PLAN

September 6 - Club meeting, Washington Gas Light, Springfield Center, 7:30 PM.

MARK YOUR CALENDERS

On Saturday, February 23rd, at the Aviation Museum of Byrd Field in Richmond, USUA #6 and USUA #1 are hosting a Safety Seminar for ultralight flying. John Ballantyne, Bill O'Brien (FAA) and Homer Kolb will be presenting. The seminar should be fun and informative for all attendees.

More important, however, is the fact that Bill O'Brien is, by his own definition, either our best friend or our worst enemy. He will be wielding singular power over the future of ultralight flying, and solid attendance at events such as this one could go a long way toward convincing him that ultralight pilots are a serious, safety-minded group of aviators whose privileges should be protected. Think about it.

CLASSIFIEDS

QUICKSILVER MX - Excellent condition, always hangered, hand-deployed chute, instruments and pod, new fabric, other updates. \$3,000. Call Jim, eves. (703) 266-9532

ROTAX 277 - with geared reduction drive. Zero hours since complete overhaul. \$350. Call Tom, anytime (703) 548-3347

GENERAL INFORMATION

The United States Ultralight Association's Flying Club #1 is a non-profit, educational club dedicated to the sport of recreational ultralight flying.

Meetings are held at 7:30 PM on the first Thursday of each month in the auditorium of the Springfield Operations Center of the Washington Gas Light Company, unless stated otherwise in the newsletter. To reach the WGL Center, take the Edsall Road West exit from I-395; turn left at the second light (Industrial Road); continue until the "Y" in the road; bear right and continue until you reach the WGL Center at 6801 Industrial Road on the left.

1990 Chapter Officers

President	Tom Simmons	703/548-3347
Vice-President	Tom Allder	703/914-8922
Secretary/Treasurer	Charles Maples	703/941-8167
Member at large	Jim Laurenson	703/266-9532
Member at large	Paul McLung	703/787-0631

***Members are encouraged to submit items for inclusion in this newsletter. Articles and non-commercial classified ads will be run, space available, free of charge for current members. Commercial ad rates are: full page - \$20.00; 1/2 page - \$10.00; 1/4 page - \$5.50; business card - \$3.00.

Articles and non-commercial ads may be mailed to Tom Simmons, 311 North Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA 22314; or faxed to 703/548-3138. Commercial ads must be accompanied by a check.

Membership Application: mail to Charles Maples, USUA Flying Club #1, 4656 Conwell Drive, Annandale, VA 22003

Application must be accompanied by \$15 annual dues.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE: HOME () _____ WORK () _____

ULTRALIGHT TYPE _____

USUA MEMBER # _____ UL REG. # _____