



Northern California
Aerobatic Club

CHAPTER 38

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THE ACRONAUT

Volume 8 - Number 5



San Francisco from a HH-65C

In This Issue

President's Post	2
Windblown—Open Cockpit in a Laser	4
Wing Nuts.....	6
Calendar.....	6
Paso Robles Info	7
New Members	8

Arguing with a pilot is like wrestling with a pig in the mud, after a while you begin to think the pig likes it.

— Seen on a General Dynamics bulletin board. It was Mark Twain who said, "Never try and teach a pig to sing. It's a waste of your time, and it annoys the pig."



2007 Membership Dues

Renew today!

Use the form on the last page or go to the website (www.iac38.org) and you can link to Paypal (use the 'About IAC 38' tab), to renew or start your membership for 2007. \$25/year, or \$30/year for a family. Please provide all requested info/updates on the form.

Prez's Post

Darren Pleasance



Greetings Chapter 38ers...

We're at T-minus 1 month and counting for our Paso Robles contest so I hope all of you are getting geared up for what I'm sure will be a fantastic event.

Last week we had a terrific showing, and really great time, at the Calaveras County Airport day with a very strong turnout from the local community, and perfect weather. Many thanks to those who were able to make it up there since it's so important for us to continue to support the airport given their support of our aerobatic practice area.



Calaveras Airport Day

Unfortunately, I wasn't able to make it this year due to a quarterly, in-person IAC Board meeting that we had in Memphis, Tennessee that same day. As always, the Board meetings are a great opportunity to connect with a lot of the icons in our sport including many members of the U.S. Aerobatic Team, plus many individuals most of us only see or hear from in the

magazine. It's really a great group of people, all of whom are interested in preserving our sport and making it as available to as many people as possible. While there is certainly a high level of debate on most of the topics that get raised, and often differing points of view, there's consistently a common thread of just trying to do the right thing for the organization and its members.

One debate I found particularly interesting, and that highlighted the challenges the Board faces, was around whether to require competitors flying the Advanced sequence this year to fly a 12 figure, or 15 figure free. The driver of this debate was that CIVA (the international aerobatic governing body) requires a 12-figure free and that's what the handful of people who make the U.S. team next year will be flying at the Advanced World Aerobatic Contest (AWAC), while the majority of pilots in the IAC have no interest in competing at the World level, and find a 12-figure free to be overly taxing on the plane and pilot, and see it as yet another indicator of "category creep".

Given this, there were really only three options on the table:

Option 1: Require all competitors to fly a 12-figure free this year so it's an even playing field during the year, and so that at Nationals, the top competitors would have demonstrated their capabilities to fly at this level and would therefore have proven their "worthiness" of being on the AWAC team.

Option 2: Allow all competitors to fly a 15-figure free, and choose the AWAC team from this group, recognizing that this doesn't necessarily replicate what these pilots would experience at the World level, not does it take into account that many pilots who are currently considering a run for the World AWAC team, have already created 12-figure frees. However, this option would likely result in getting more pilots to fly Advanced

Option 3: Create a hybrid, where any competitor who wants to fly a 15 figure free will be allowed, while anyone wanting to compete for a spot on the World team, must fly a 12 figure free. This would be a compromise, and potentially disadvantage 12-figure free pilots from winning the National Champion trophy since a 12-figure free is inherently harder to score as high on versus a 15-figure free, but would create greater consistency for the small number of pilots striving for a shot at the World Championship, while preserving the ability of the other ~95% of pilots who don't have World aspirations to compete in a more "reasonable" set of rules for Advanced.

This was a very interesting debate, as it came down to deciding where to drive the highest level of "consistency". Should there be greater consistency with CIVA, or should there be greater consistency within the U.S., or is consistency not as important as ensuring that as many competitors as possible have an opportunity to compete and that they have maximum choice in how they choose to participate in the sport.

After a very long debate, the Board came out along the lines of Option #3. This was largely driven by a desire to ensure



"goings-on" around the Chapter. For one, Howard and I have had an interesting adventure over the past few weeks as Howard turned into an unintentional test pilot in mid-April by piloting the worlds first open-cockpit Laser. Read more about this later in the newsletter.

I'm also starting to fly a T-6 for kicks so will keep you all posted

no pilots were excluded from being able to fly Advanced simply due to a 12-figure rule, while also providing as consistent a "qualification setting" as possible for those handful of pilots wishing to compete for a spot on the National team. Of course, there are trade-offs to this, but there were trade-offs to all the options and, in the end, the Board leaned to the side of the hybrid option.

The interesting aspect of this for me was how the IAC is trying to represent a fairly diverse set of stakeholders, each of whom contribute immensely to the overall health and success of the organization, and for whom the right answer for one may actually be the wrong answer for the other. You try, of course, to avoid "splitting the baby" and ending up with a solution that's not satisfactory at all for anybody. In this case, I'm still a bit of mixed mind on what the "best" answer was for this scenario, but in the end, I voted for Option #3 above



Howard Departing

on what that experience is like.

Our Chapter also continues to thrive as we steadily add new members every month, with 13 new members already this year, while also maintaining a high level of involvement among our more tenured members. A hearty welcome and thanks to all of you!

Lastly, in terms of upcoming events, watch for several more critique days in the coming weeks, under the leadership of Andrew Connolly, and also make sure to mark your calendars for the first weekend in June for the second annual "Pine Mountain Lake" fly-in and airshow. It was a blast last year so I encourage all of you to find a way to get up there if you can.

And then, of course, make your way down to Paso Robles on June 7th-9th for the annual Paso Robles contest, our marquis event of the year!

Blue skies,

Darren



Andrew and Dave

since it seemed like the best compromise that would support both the grassroots and the more serious competitors.

Of course, there were a number of other issues just like this one that came up at the Board meeting. This experience just gives me a greater appreciation for the work that all the volunteers are doing on the Board in their efforts to walk the fine line in support of our diverse set of members.

Beyond the Board meeting, there have been lots of other

Windblown – Open Cockpit in a Laser!

Howard Kirker



Friday, April 13th (remember that!). A nice, sunny afternoon in the Bay Area, gentle winds, perfect for flying. A great day to continue my familiarization process with the Laser. As some of you know, for the past

month or so I have been giving Darren's Laser some exercise while he is off working/traveling on his always busy schedule; this would be my sixth flight. It's a wonderful airplane, with just a touch more capability than my Great Lakes, and it is taking me no small amount of effort to make the transition to higher speeds, faster roll rates, and some bona fide vertical capability! Without the comfort of the overhead wing for sight cues and the sound and sensation of the wind and wires for speed and attitude input, I'm feeling a sort of sensory deprivation as I attempt to explore an expanded aerobatic envelope. Little did I realize

The "Event"

Preflight, engine start, taxi, run-up, and take-off were all normal. Two climbing 90-degree turns and a right-downwind departure from LVK's 25R, all normal. Passing through about 2,000 feet, I turn north toward the Practice Area, continue climbing with aggressive clearing turns, check the engine instruments, all normal. It doesn't take long in the Laser to reach 6,000 feet, and passing over Los Vaqueros reservoir, it's time to level off, pick up airspeed, adjust trim, set throttle, prop, and mixture, and head direct to

"CUT"!

What do I mean "cut"? I mean, stop the action/story, because there is a missing segment. I don't know what happened next. It is a total blank! Even today.

My recollections begin again, hazily, a few microseconds (?), or seconds (?), or minutes (?) later. My senses and consciousness return slowly, vaguely – as after a serious g-induced grey-out or g-loc (note: the g-meter later confirmed no unusual forces). Perhaps I went into shock?

It's lighter upward, darker below; there's my right hand on the stick, and it looks to be roughly neutral; things seem relatively stable; I'm in an airplane; I'm still alive. This is good!



Canopy before the "Event"

But my slowly gathering awareness shouts that something is very, very wrong. Visually, everything is grey and indistinct. My eyes are tearing. Deafening noise. Howling wind. Sensory overload, but it begins to dawn

on me that I must have a canopy issue -- perhaps it's come loose and needs to be secured? My left hand reaches for the locking handles and my head turns to the left to look. All in slow motion. While my brain starts to wrestle with the possibility that this actually may not be the best course of action, my eyes, in the fog of wind and blurred vision, register a jagged shard of Plexiglas at the canopy rim.



Still processing information excruciatingly slowly, I start to understand that I am now flying open cockpit! The Plexiglas bubble has shattered and departed. And yet, as if in one of those old-time comedy routines, I can't stop my hand from reaching up to confirm that the canopy bubble is, indeed, missing. Yep, gone.

Now a cascade of thoughts, in no discernable order, compete for attention:

- My eyes are being blasted by the wind; Damn, my glasses are gone!
- There is absolutely no windscreen to shrink behind, this is painful and frightening!
- Need to slow down – throttle back, nose up. air-speed, altitude? – can't make them out.
- What now?
- Stay under control.
- Think!



Canopy frame and locking handles

As I wrestle with the plane, my mind, and what to do next, at some point I note a discomfort below my headset's left ear cup. Reaching to feel the cause, I discover my glasses dangling from the helmet's chinstrap; Miracle #3! Carefully grabbing and repositioning them, I could now see -- and my situation no longer seemed quite as desperate. These weren't just sunglasses, but prescription sunglasses -- with thick lenses!

Yes, I believe there were two prior miracles. First, I consider my survival, thus far unharmed, of this terrifying incident -- the shattering and departure of the canopy bubble -- to be Miracle #1; I know that others have not been as fortunate. And second, recovering from my state of suspended consciousness upright and under control has to be Miracle #2. I believe the canopy (and my active control of the airplane) departed at about 150 mph, and this particular Laser is slightly out of rig; it tends to have a slight roll to the left when slower than 150, and a slight roll to the right above 150. The "event" seems to have occurred at just the right speed and trim.

Okay, glasses are on in this howling windstorm; don't lose them now! Keep your head straight. Left eye is still blurry (it turns out there was some gunk on the lens), right eye isn't too bad, given the oscillating turbulence. Slow the airspeed to about 100 mph. Altitude is about 3,500 feet; bring the power back in and try to maintain that until things get sorted out. Wind/prop blast increase, but I know that altitude is life. Perplexing question: where had about 2,500 feet gone/how long did I "nap"?



Canopy frame on the hinged side

So, now the key remaining issue presents itself -- do I think I can see well enough to get back to the airport and land this thing? I can't really turn my head around to check out the aircraft, but wiggling the stick and rudders produces normal responses, so I conclude the Laser has not been severely damaged. Call the Tower. No response. Again. Same. Too much wind noise. My lips are sticky and dry from the wind, so it's hard to talk. Fly closer to the Class D. Adjust squelch, try again. After several more attempts, communication is established, and I am cleared to approach and land. Right base to 25R, final at about 100, nose-high flare, slow, tail-wheel-first touchdown, and roll out. YES! Miracle #4.

The Aftermath

What actually happened? There was only one witness to the "event", and he doesn't know! On shutdown, I see that almost all of the Plexiglas is gone, yet the canopy frame is still in place. The Laser's canopy has two locking pins on the left side, front and back, individually engaged into the fuselage structure, and a piano hinge along the right side. The front pin is inserted, the rear is not. I climb out, avoiding remaining sharp pieces of the bubble, and exercise the canopy locking handles/pins/hinge a few times. Seems normal. I depart still perplexed as to what happened, probably in aftershock; bird strike, propagating stress cracks from the mounting screws, canopy opened and resealed? I am, however, certain that I am a very lucky man. Not a scratch on me! I go home, recover, relax, rethink, tell my wife. She is, of course, relieved and happy that I'm OK, but less than thrilled at this stark confirmation of risk that accompanies this wonderful, addictive sport of ours; she will always worry. I call Darren; he's his typically supportive self, thinking of me more than the plane. We agree to check it out in a day or two.

Subsequent examination of the Laser revealed further damage, strongly suggestive of a violent opening and closing of the canopy. The fiberglass canopy frame was flexed/cracked in a number of locations around the perimeter. The rear six inches of the hinge was pulled loose and distorted. The swing-over restraining strap was torn loose. The ignition/mag key and a toggle switch on the instrument panel were bent, and there was damage to the sheet metal panel and surround. And there was some cosmetic fabric damage on the empennage, apparent cuts from departing pieces of Plexiglas.

Chapter 38 Event Calendar

MAY 2007

- 12th** Fly-out/Practice Day, Tracy and NJ. 10am to 4 pm.
- 13th** Chapter Meeting, Livermore Airport, Attitude Aviation, 4pm.
- 27th** Fly-out/Practice Day, Tracy and NJ. 10am to 4 pm.

JUNE 2007

- 3rd** Fly-out/Practice Day, Tracy and NJ. 10am to 4 pm.
- 2nd** Pine Mountain Lake Fly-In Posted by Vicky Benzing: Chapter 38 members and friends are invited. The field will close at 3:00 pm for the air show so please arrive early. We will be selling tickets to the BBQ after the air show in advance, so if anyone wants to attend the BBQ please let me know as soon as possible (we're going to limit tickets to 250 and I guarantee that we will sell out). This year is not a fundraiser, just an event to promote good will between the airport and the community.

7-10th Paso Robles Aerobatic Contest

JULY 2007

- 19-21st Canadian Open Contest.** Brought to you by Chapter 8 of Aerobatics Canada. Abbotsford International Airport (CYXX). Abbotsford has some of the most beautiful scenery around and the contest is a great time. Take a look at the link: www.aerobatic-club.ca/

Unlikely a bird strike. Unlikely just a Plexiglas failure. Most plausible; the entire canopy rotated open 180 degrees under flight load, it did not depart but smashed against the right wing, the bubble shattered (the pieces of which trailed down the side of the fuselage, missing me), the frame rebounded back across, smashed down into the cockpit and instrument panel, rattled around, ...???... , and ultimately managed to reseal itself, with the front spring-loaded pin engaged. I somehow missed all of this, both mentally and physically, but I must have been the cause. We have played with torqueing/bending the frame, sans bubble, and this scenario seems possible -- if the front locking pin had been only partially seated, and pulled out/worked loose under air loading. So I try to recall. Canopy closed and locked prior to start; check. Canopy confirmed locked prior to run-up, check; 10 minutes of flight before any issues; check... But was the front locking pin FULLY engaged (it can be balky)? Honestly, I'll never know, but it seems not.

So we're getting a new bubble made and will have the frame repaired. We'll also improve the locking handles/pins. Fortunately, the damage to the airplane was not structural and was largely cosmetic so it should be as good as new with a few hours of fiberglass work and some canopy-fitting expertise. Of course, I'll forevermore obsess on the "canopy closed" checklist item. What other "lessons learned" can I suggest for fellow aerobats? You've probably heard or read them before:

- When *#@?*** happens, fly the plane.
- Remember that altitude is your friend.
- And make sure your canopy is fully and securely latched. Check again!

I hope something like this never happens to any of you, or if it does, that you have an equal share of good fortune. I now consider Friday the 13th to be a very lucky day!

Fly safe.

Howard

Special thanks to Howard for taking the time to write such an outstanding article. —*Editor*

It is a good thing to learn caution from the misfortunes of others.

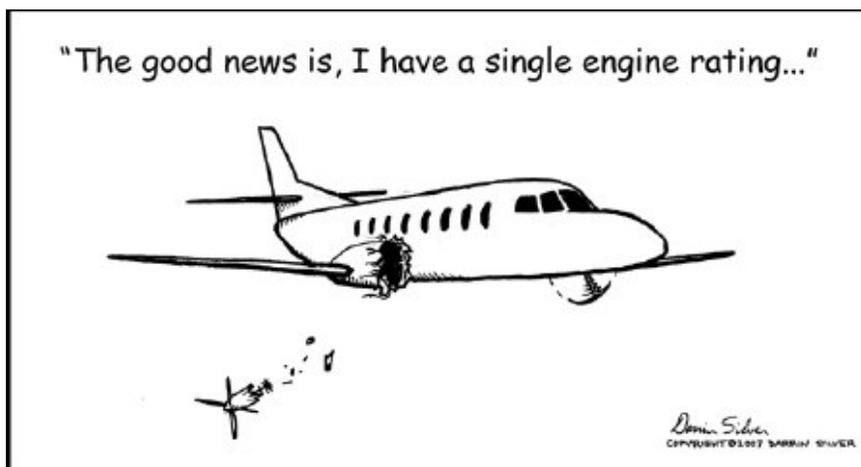
— *Publilius Syrus*

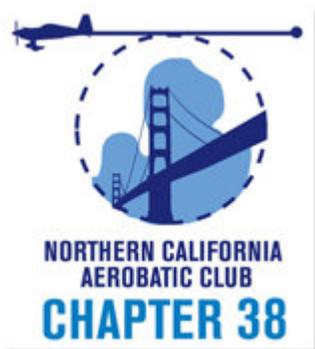
The emergencies you train for almost never happen. It's the one you can't train for that kills you.

— *Ernest K. Gann, advice from the 'old pelican,' 'The Black Watch,' 1989*

WingNuts

Darrin Silver





2007 Paso Robles Aerobatic Supremacyfest

June 8th - June 9th, 2007

Paso Robles, California

Schedule and General Information

Online Pre-Registration

You are encouraged to pre-register for the contest. If you pre-register by Tuesday May 29th we'll print out all the forms and have them waiting for you to sign at registration. Click the link below to pre-register. If you don't want to pre-register, you can still use the link to create all the forms and print them out yourself.

[Pre-registration for 2007 Paso Robles Aerobatic Supremacyfest](http://www.iac38.org/contests/registration.php) at:
<http://www.iac38.org/contests/registration.php>

Schedule

June 6, Wednesday	All day	Setup. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED . Box is CLOSED
June 7, Thursday	All day	Registration, tech inspection, & practice. Box open until sundown
June 8, Friday	07:00am (SHARP) 08:00am - sundown 07:30pm	Briefing Contest flights Pizza party at the airport
June 9, Saturday	07:00am (SHARP) 08:00am - sundown 07:00pm	Briefing Contest flights Awards banquet at the airport
June 10, Sunday		Make-up flights, if weather is a factor

Flight Order

1. Unlimited and Primary
2. Intermediate
3. Advanced

Contest Director

[Tom Myers](#)
 Work: 650-605-2343
 Home: 650-328-2141
 Cell: 650-799-6854
 e-mail: pasocd@iac38.org



Paso Robles Airport (KPRB)

New Members

Che Barnes

Michael Lella of Groveland, CA.

Michael is a new IAC member and was talked into joining the club by his new Pine Mountain Lake neighbor Wayne Handley. Wayne said that one of the best things about aerobatics, besides learning how to push the limits of the envelope, is the quality of the people who participate in IAC.

Michael does not have any experience in aerobatics, but has always wanted to learn how to handle an airplane in all kinds of attitudes. He just sold an RV4, and is buying an Eagle in Texas, one that was featured on the cover of the August 2002 IAC magazine.

Right about now he is headed down to Bud Davisson's Pitts camp to get some landing experience and then off to Dallas to pick up the Eagle. Little by little, he wants to learn some basic aerobatics and then, hopefully, start competing. Michael is excited about the prospect of improving his flying and meeting a bunch of great people, who like him, really know how to enjoy life!

A few weeks ago he and his wife flew down to Tracy, joined the club and met some of the members. Michael says, "The caliber and quality of people reminded me of the great guys and gals with whom I competed with for years in hang gliding. I miss those days, the challenge and the special bond we shared which words could not describe. I imagine this sport will fulfill that need, and I really look forward to the experience."

Welcome aboard Michael!

Bill Dykes, of Redding, CA. Referred by Tim Brill.

Wayne Handley, of Groveland, CA.

IAC 38 is delighted to have Wayne Handley as a member of our local chapter. Wayne started competing in IAC events in 1983 with 15,000 hours already logged. He has since played an integral role in the aerobatic and air show community. Wayne is a former Unlimited Aerobatic Champion and has won numerous other aviation awards for his extraordinary accomplishments as an agriculture pilot and a preeminent air show pilot.

Wayne spends much of his time providing first class aerobatic instruction. To find out more take a look at his website:
www.waynehandley.com

Welcome to IAC 38!

For Sale: Sabre 320 Unlimited Aerobatic Monoplane



The Sabre 320 is a high-performance monoplane designed by Dan Rihn, built by Alan Geringer, and modified by Zivko Aeronautics with advice from Leo Loudenslager. It is fitted with an Edge wing and a high-compression Lycoming AEIO-540 built by Dick DeMars and top-overhauled by Lycon. The airplane has won medals at World and National Aerobatic Championships. **Specs** Built in 1990, 970 TT, 229 STOH, annual done 5/06 @ ~970 hrs, MT 3-bladed composite prop, MTV-9-B-C/C200, overhauled 9/25/03 at 941 hrs, King radio & transponder, impeccably maintained, always hangared, NDH

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<http://www.dcai.com/sabre/>

Hangar Available

Gary Augustine has a 50' x 50' hangar at Byron with space for aerobatic airplanes. Call him if interested. 925-759-5600 (c) or 925-779-9496 (h).

IAC Chapter 38 Membership Application/Renewal Form

Name: _____

Spouse: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

E-mail 1: _____

E-mail 2: _____

IAC #: _____

EAA #: _____

Certificate #: _____

EAA Expiration Date: _____

Judge: Regional National

Competition: None Basic Sportsman Intermediate Advanced Unlimited

Aircraft: _____

N #: _____

Referred By: _____

Dues: Single Membership (\$25/year) Family Membership (\$30/year)

Send with check, made payable to "International Aerobatic Club Chapter 38", to:
Howard Kirker, IAC38 Treasurer - 2279 Ocaso Camino - Fremont, CA 94539

Chapter Meeting:
May 13th 2007, 4 PM
Attitude Aviation
Livermore Airport



Che Barnes
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