



NOTAMS.

NEWSLETTER OF THE AVIATION MUSEUM OF SANTA PAULA

Third Quarter • 2013

August, 2013

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"Keep the aeroplane in such an attitude that the air pressure is directly in the pilot's face."

Horatio C. Barber, 1916

GhostWalk



DEE HELSEL

GhostWalk, the annual fund-raiser for the Santa Paula Theater Center, will be at the Santa Paula Airport this year and is being hosted by the Aviation Museum. We are very excited about this. GhostWalk has become quite the fall tradition for the local residents as well as people from all over Ventura County. This is the 19th year of this street-theater presentation and many of the patrons have been coming since its inception. "That's a lot of batteries for those flashlights," says Artistic Director, Dee Helsel. "I think the fun of

it is a walk in the dark at spooky Halloween time, with the crisp night air, hot chocolate and cookies at the snack table, and wonderful story telling from six 'departed' ghosts."

The theater is delighted to be returning to the Airport this year. It has been the starring venue twice before and the atmosphere with all the vintage planes feeds the imagination of the writers and the "ghost walker" patrons that each year turn out in droves. It used to be that you could walk up and usually get a ticket for whatever time of tour you'd please. But it has become such a popular fall entertainment, that unless you reserve tickets, a majority of the tours are sold out.

This year's tales are especially exciting in that a majority of them are based on true events or residents, and all the stories feature the popular Santa Paula Airport. Since most folks in the area don't own a vintage plane, it is fun for the crowds to be guided around the colorful little airport to see the flying beauties close up. GhostWalk's tradition is to offer historically-based entertainment that is not only highly creative, but informational about the Santa Paula area.

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MITCH STONE

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS REPORT

It's been a busy few months at the Aviation Museum. The Wine and Wings Casino Royale fundraiser in May was our best ever, in terms of

attendance and funds raised. Thanks to all the volunteers who came out to make this event possible, and of course to everyone who showed up for all the fun.

The preparation of the museum hangar is moving forward. The new floor is done, and that's the last major improvement needed before we can get on with the important business of completing the displays. We are getting close!

The Santa Paula Theater Center's annual GhostWalk will be held at the airport for the third time this coming October. The museum hangar will serve as the box office for the event, and we will lend the Stinson as a prop for one of the stories. It's great when organizations in Santa



Paula can support each other's efforts. (I would say so even if I wasn't on the theater board and the GhostWalk committee!) All of the ghost stories will be aviation-themed of course. GhostWalk opens October 11th and runs for three weekends. Don't miss it!

This last month we began the painstaking process of sorting through our large collection of aviation objects and memorabilia, and deciding what to keep for future exhibits and research. We've accumulated a lot of material that isn't suitable for our collection, but that would fit perfectly into someone's home or hangar. It sounds like we need to hold a sale, so that's exactly what

we're going to do, on First Sunday in October (the 6th). This will be a one-time opportunity to pick up some unique items and support the museum at the same time. More details are coming, but that's another date you'll want to reserve now on your **NOTAMS** calendar!



GhostWalk *continued from page 1*

Since almost all the flying is done during daylight hours, Artistic Director, Dee Helsel, welcomes all airport personnel and pilots to come and serve as guides for our Halloween tour. "Bring your own flashlight. We'll provide you with a script and training and you can proudly walk our guests from ghost to ghost and show off."

DATES: The last 3 weekends in October
Oct. 11, 12 & 13 • Oct. 18, 19 & 20 • Oct. 25, 26 & 27

TRAM: A tram is available for handicapped patrons every night at the 6:30 tour.

PARKING: In the restaurant parking area and enter the Museum through the walk-in gate.

TICKETS:

- \$10 discounted adult ticket (first weekend only)
- \$15 adult ticket
- \$8 children (7 and older) and students
- Tours leave every 15 minutes starting at 6:30, last one at 9:00

RESERVATIONS: are advised (sold out most nights) call the "Haunt Line" at 805-525-3073 after October 1st.

WEBSITE: www.ghostwalk.com



Torn FROM THE SCRAPBOOK

JANICE DICKENSON

In the last NOTAMS newsletter, I promised another Roger Harvey story in regards to Ralph Dickenson. Here it is... enjoy!

CAMARADERIE AMID THE BLUNDERS

Statistics have always shown that aviation is safer than driving, however, no amount of training and experience in any endeavor can completely eliminate the human error factor. It happens sometimes. Back in the 1950s...

Having just finished lunch, Roger Harvey was killing some time before returning to work on the ranch by sitting on a bench outside the old Airport Cafe. He heard a round engine and looked up to see Ralph Dickenson's Beech Staggerwing coming in for a landing. Noticing with alarm that the landing gear wasn't down, Roger got up and started running. He ran as fast as his legs would go trying to get out to the runway in time to wave a signal to Ralph to go around. When he realized he wasn't going to make it in time, while still running, he pulled off his cowboy hat and flung it out in front of the Staggerwing. With startling accuracy, the hat flew between the propeller blades and the windshield and Ralph saw it, turned to look at Roger and, maybe thinking this was one of Roger's pranks (that he was well known for), Ralph scowled at him as he flew by.

The sound an airplane makes as it is grinding its way down the runway on its belly is very distinctive and makes any person cringe as the ghastly noise details the damage being done. Once Ralph's airplane stopped and all was quiet, I'm sure it didn't take a moment for him to realize the reason Roger had thrown his hat. Ralph was quite a character and his way of acknowledging Roger's effort was to get out of the airplane, look over at Roger and say, "Dammit

Roger, why didn't you run faster!"

This wasn't the only incident Ralph had with his Staggerwing in his 35 years of flying it but this one was pilot error. Yes, even Ralph. The two red lights telling him his gear wasn't down eluded his notice and there was no horn to announce it.

Of course, accepting that he had no one to blame but himself, Ralph was left open to take all the ribbing and sniggering that came his way and it did and for years to come. Camaraderie among pilots is very strong and with it comes ardent friendship, assistance whenever it's needed and always the diligent effort to help you see the humor in your tragedy if not for your benefit, then everyone else's. Marshall Dickenson, being both a Staggerwing owner and Ralph's brother, had double the

fun. But as they say, there are those who have and those who will, and in Marshall's case it was true. His time came, only he had the great misfortune of doing it during lunch hour.

As Rex Wells remembered, the whole "airport gang" was in the Café eating when someone announced, "Marshall's bellying in!" The Café emptied out onto the tarmac. Everyone's first priority, of course, is always to make sure no one is injured and to help handle any emergency. Fortunately, albeit the Staggerwing was in a damaged state and lying flush with the ground, Marshall was not hurt. So, the second priority came into play. When Marshall got out of his airplane, he looked around to see

his comrades lined up along the edge of the runway, in reverent pose, with their hats over their hearts - Ralph included. Quick-witted as his brother, Marshall proceeded to pace off the distance from his airplane to the point of impact, stopped, turned to the crowd and stated, "Yep, exactly the same!"

As a footnote, Ralph and Marshall had Rex Wells install truck horns under their seats after their respective incidents. These horns were rigged to sound off if the throttle was pulled back to a point without the landing gear down in place. The earsplitting noise could not go unnoticed even by the hearing impaired—you could feel it!—but it eliminated any chance of them ever forgetting their landing gear again.



RANDUMB THOTS

JERRY DEANDA

One day in about, oh, 1977 or so, I loaded my buddy Mike in the back seat of The Champ, also known as Purple Belly, (I'll explain the capitalization in a minute...) and flew to Santa Susana at the west end of Simi Valley to see a friend about something that I can't even remember now. I'd never been there before and I'd been warned that the place was a challenge, with a foothill sticking out of the ridge where final approach was supposed to be. I was about a 150 hour private pilot and still a bit green on flying taildraggers, but I didn't think too much about it, I knew lots of airplanes went in and out of there all the time and there would be plenty of room for The Champ.

It was a short hop over the ridge from Santa Paula although it was a turbulent day and Mike was getting airsick in the back seat. I found the airport with no problem but feeling sorry for Mike, I was in a bit of a hurry to get on the ground. We got in the pattern and I couldn't see a windsock but I was pretty sure the prevailing wind had me coming over and/or around that foothill, which is what I'd been told to expect, so I set up to land to the west, got a little fast and overshot the runway.

No worries, I figured I'd just go around and try again, but I thought I caught a glimpse of a windsock as I flew over the runway, and it said I was landing downwind. OK, so I flew out a ways, did the ol' 90 degree turn followed by a 270 degree turn and then I was on final approach to land to the east. It went pretty well, I got the airplane down right near the end of the runway but man, that runway looked short. With the fence coming up I tried to use those mickey mouse, cable operated, heel brakes to stop the airplane... yeah, those brakes they'd always told me to use ONLY if the airplane was already stopped. The thing swerved once to the right and I added a little more brake on the left side, and it tried to whip around to the left and look back at itself. Adding right brake seemed to make it worse and I knew right away that I was going to

see my first groundloop from inside the airplane. As the plane pirouetted to the left, I just kept the stick all the way back and looked out at the right wingtip, curious to see if it would hit the ground. It didn't, but got within a foot or so and out of the corner of my eye I saw poor Mike in the back seat get tossed against the right side of the cockpit. Then about a metric ton of dust and gravel sprayed out sideways from the right wheel, the plane stopped and that was about it. At least the tail stayed down. The engine, still idling, skipped a beat or two, then ran on placidly as if nothing had happened. I leaned over to see if the right wheel was where it was supposed to be, still standing on the right brake. It seemed OK, so I quickly taxied off to see my friend. I noticed that I actually had about another 400 feet of

runway, which would have been plenty. Oh well.

On shutdown, we got out and gave the airplane a good look, but couldn't find anything bent or wrinkled, which was a giant relief. There were some weeds stuck between the wheel and the tire, though. And I noticed the wind was out of the west, as usual, and I'd landed downwind after all. What a ding dong.

The trip home went fine and Mike hung pretty tough about it. At least the air had smoothed out a bit.

Well, the upshot of all this is that the Santa Susana Airport does not exist any more. It closed some time in the '80s and I've been trying to convince everybody ever since that the groundloop doesn't count because the airport where it happened doesn't exist any more. My Certified Flight Instructor wife Dianne wanted to know if I logged the groundloop and well, yes, I did. In ink. I couldn't convince any of my other pilot buddies either. I guess I own that groundloop, my first and so far, last.

Oh yeah, The Champ. My first job out of A&P mechanic school was at a place on Santa Paula Airport called Air Repair, now long out of business. (CP Aviation

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RANDUMB THOTS

continued from page 4

has those two hangars now.) We mechanics conspired to build that airplane up out of parts squirreled away by our parts manager. We had the fuselage sitting on the landing gear before the boss noticed and asked whose airplane it was. There was a long, awkward silence before the shop foreman said, "Well... it's yours." The boss allowed us to finish the airplane and even found the engine for it. He rented it out for ten bucks an hour including fuel, and it never sat still long enough for the engine to cool off. It became the second taildragger I ever flew, but by far the most important one to me as I learned a LOT in that thing in some misadventures over a few years. We called it The Champ (everybody knew which Champ you were talking about), Purple Belly (another story), the Cramp, and the Chimp.

I'll tell some of the other sordid tales (some may even be true) about this airplane soon, if anybody cares.

NOTAMS.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

MYSTERY PHOTO CONTEST!

JANICE DICKENSON



Do you know what was going on at Santa Paula Airport on the day these photos were taken?

Four identifiable people can be found in this photo. Yes, their heads are either down or their backs to us... we don't want to make this too easy! (Hint: it was in the 1980s.)

Name the happening and identify at least two of the people. The first person to stop by the museum next First Sunday (September 1) with the answer will win an Aviation Museum hat! Either way, we'll publish the answer in the next edition of NOTAMS.

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TIN TOWN 'TOONS™





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OUR MISSION

*To educate the public of all ages
in aviation and its history,
both in general, and as it relates to
Santa Paula and to inspire, motivate
and challenge the younger
generation to carry on the dreams
of our aviation pioneers*

AMSP CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

SEPTEMBER

1 First Sunday

OCTOBER

6 First Sunday & Hangar Sale
11-13, 18-20, 25-27 GhostWalk

NOVEMBER

3 First Sunday



Become a Museum Member Today!

Make checks payable to and mail to:
Aviation Museum of Santa Paula, Inc.
800 E. Santa Maria St., #E • Santa Paula, CA 93060
*Membership and donations are renewable annually
and tax deductible to the extent allowable by law*

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Yes, I'd be interested in Volunteering at the Museum. Call me.