

# Hot Air



## Message from the President

April 2014

At the March monthly meeting, we had an interesting and productive discussion of our clubs position on flying FPV (First Person View) aircraft at our Del Cerro and Entradero Park flying sites. The result of this discussion is a recommendation that we adopt the AMA policy position on FPV. The AMA states that FPV be flown with a spotter with a buddy box in the loop. Having a spotter on a buddy box provides the benefit of a person that maintains spatial orientation for the FPV pilot regarding obstacles and location, Additionally, being on a buddy box provides the ability to take over an aircraft that is in trouble.

If you are going to fly FPV at one of our PSF sites, a spotter and a buddy box are required. All other site specific rules involving aircraft weight, allowable flying areas, landing approaches, flight hours, safety, etc. apply. We will continue to discuss and evolve the PSF approach to FPV flying at both our sites over time. Please bring your thoughts on this topic to our monthly meeting or to one of the club officers so that we can accommodate this new flying technique at our fields without jeopardizing our use of the sites.

Chris Newton has been doing an excellent job compiling and publishing our monthly Newsletter and maintaining our web site. If you have any information, photographs, building tips, events or other stuff that you believe would be of interest to the rest of us, please feel free to forward it to Chris for publication.

We have a diverse group of members with a tremendous amount of experience in our hobby. We all enjoy seeing what others are up to, learning new

techniques or sharing general information, even if it is off topic. Don't hesitate to bring information and ideas to Chris to share with the rest of us.

With baseball up and running at Entradero, we have started seeing the usual open gates and lost locks. Please lock gates that are found open and report any missing locks to a club officer. We will pass the information along to the appropriate folks.

### Next Meeting

**Wednesday,  
April 2nd  
7:30 pm**

**La Romeria Park  
19501 Inglewood Ave**

Our monthly Fun-Fly at Del Cerro will be held **Saturday, April 5th**. Avoid the baseball restriction at Entradero, charge up a couple of gliders and head up to the hill. Because of weekend baseball, we will continue to hold Entradero Fun-Fly's at Entradero on Fridays. This month's Fun-Fly will be held **April 18th**.

If you haven't renewed your PSF membership for 2014, you can do so at the meeting or download the forms from the website and send them to John Spielman.

Hope to see you at the monthly meeting or one of the fields. Fly safe.

- Jeff

### Upcoming Fun-Flys

**Del Cerro      April 5th  
Entradero     April 18th**



## Confessions of a Rookie F3F Pilot - Part I

*(This is the first of a two-part article submitted by club member Steve Kratz. - Ed)*

I thought it might be fun to reflect on my first F3f season of competition in 2013 and share some of my experiences flying, competing and surviving as a rookie in the ultra-competitive So Cal slope racing scene. First of all, I want to make very clear that I am not an expert F3f racer as a result of my experiences in 2013. In fact, I have achieved the dubious reputation of “Mr. Last Place”. It isn’t uncommon for some of my fellow competitors who consistently finish near the bottom of the pack to greet me with relief at each event, grateful I showed up which guarantees they won’t get stuck in last place.

This is not all bad, since the fact that I am not very fast makes me sort of popular at F3f competitions. Especially since all the competition results are reported within 24 hours and retained in perpetuity online. Anyone suspecting me of false modesty can do some fact checking at [www.f3xvault.com](http://www.f3xvault.com).

Regardless of my string of last places, I did have a great time and learned more about flying in a single season than I did in my three previous years of non-competition flying. I guess the best place to start this tale is at the beginning.



Lots of expensive F3f hardware at Point Fermin

### **"Introduction To Destruction"**

I decided to take the plunge down the F3f rabbit hole after flying a couple of rounds the previous year. I found that shifting gears from unstructured fun flying to conforming to the highly regimented process of competition flying was incredibly

challenging, so much so that I wasn’t sure I could even manage to keep up with the fast paced launching, racing, landing and plane prepping let alone be remotely competitive.



F3f launching is an art form

I showed up for the annual SCSR F3f pre-season tune up and introduction event at Pt. Fermin to hopefully get some set up advice and practice flying an actual timed event. The first few rounds went well and I received some great coaching and plane set up assistance even before tossing my plane off the cliff. After several rounds of launching, flying, landing, ballast fiddling and working the corner pylons (referred to as “button pushing”), which is a responsibility for all F3f participants, I seemed to be getting the hang of the very quick cycle times between the various pieces of the F3f puzzle.

As I was standing atop the ridge bringing my plane in for yet-another landing, I found myself distracted with thoughts of how to better fly the course. Since planes can’t land themselves and the pilot of mine was momentarily “absent”, I realized too late that my Typhoon was approaching the landing zone way too hot, too high and pointed straight at me. After pawing at the flap stick too late to reduce speed I made the fateful decision to go around and try the landing again.

I watched with dismay as my plane transitioned from a 20 mph headwind into a 20 mph tailwind and abruptly stalled out of the sky behind the ridgeline. As I slowly made my way towards the



## Confessions of a Rookie F3F Pilot - Part I (cont.)

debris field that used to be my sailplane, I realized that my first season in F3f was going to be much longer and more expensive than I had imagined.

### Beginner's Luck

After the first few contests, I was working hard to overcome my weaknesses in technique and a persistent fear that I was going to bean myself in the head with a fast moving model trying to follow the standard procedure of finishing the turns with the plane pointed directly at your face. It was only after several close calls and some very vocal coaching that I discovered the trick of quickly rolling the plane away from the turn at precisely the instant it's pointing at you. This is the preferred method for going fast and preventing mayhem at a coastal F3f site like Fermin.



Rounding base A

The next race was scheduled at Vincent, near Palmdale, and is considered by many So Cal F3f'ers as the premier inland race venue. I was excited to fly here in the interest of expanding my horizons beyond the local slopes and only became slightly anxious after driving several miles of sketchy fire roads that lead up thousands of feet to a mountain summit overlooking the distant city of Palmdale.

Now it would have been nice if this was actually the contest site, but it wasn't. The course lay further out and down a ridge that could be accessed by a "road" that looked suitable only for mountain goats or tracked vehicles. I briefly considered making up some excuse to avoid cramming myself into one of the overloaded 4WD vehicles which had heads, arms and expensive molded sailplanes sticking out of every window

and walking the rest of the way. Deciding that risking death was preferable to the heckling I would have to endure by walking, I stuffed myself into the nearest ride.

With all the vehicles finally parked precariously on the ridge which sloped steeply away on both sides, we tumbled out and set up the course. Planes were assembled and transmitters powered up as a couple of the veterans chucked their aircraft off the ridge and into the rapidly building lift. Within minutes, planes were making blistering DS runs over the ridge at astonishing speeds.

The course itself was situated in a front-side bowl on the west facing ridgeline with the corner poles located on rocky promontories about 100 meters apart. In fact, rocks seemed to be everywhere now that I was taking the time to survey the area. There must be a landing zone somewhere around here, but where? These guys aren't going to drop their expensive molded planes into a rock garden after every round, are they?

After asking one of the Vincent veterans about the landing area, I was escorted over to an approximately 20-ft diameter patch of gravel on top the ridge which contained a few remnants of hay sticking out of it. "That's it right there. You just crab your plane along the ridge and drop it right on top" He must have interpreted my stunned expression as some form of mental deficit because he stood there pointing to the unlikely "landing zone" like it was the most obvious feature for miles. Finally deciding that I was either satisfied with his reassurances or beyond help, he abruptly turned and walked away to finish his pre-race preparations.

Squinting into the blowing sand and accompanied by the spooky whine from the speeding aircraft overhead, I meekly prepped my gear with a growing realization that I was in way over my head. About then someone with a wind gage yelled excitedly "It's going to blow over 30 today boys!" Great. I estimated the odds of my plane surviving the day at about 100 to 1 and any chance of leaving here with my self-confidence intact was effectively zero. But since I'm not smart enough



## Confessions of a Rookie F3F Pilot - Part I (cont.)

to know when to quit, I powered up and walked over to launch.

There was a brief wait in line before launching which did nothing to help calm my nerves. But soon I was relieved of my plane by a helpful launcher who gave it a quick inspection, pronounced it airworthy and asked "Ready?" With a nod from me and an Olympic javelin style launch, my plane rocketed high over the bleak desert landscape. Like it or not, I was totally committed to flying and somehow landing my plane in the toughest conditions I'd seen yet.

I proceeded to gain altitude and get a feel for the gusty winds which seemed to blow from every direction simultaneously and my little 2 meter Typhoon was behaving like a bucking bronco in the high level turbulence. A few laps around the course made it clear that I would have to load up with all the ballast I had to achieve some measure of control in these conditions. The next challenge was getting it back down in one piece. Fortunately, I was guided over to the landing zone by none other than F3f champion Warren Day. As he explained where to stand and what landmarks to use to position my plane for touch down, I began to relax a little. "Stay in front of the ridgeline and let it float up the ridge to the landing spot. That's it. Flaps up...now!" The plane settled right onto the microscopic landing pad as if I had done this a thousand times before. "See, it's a piece of cake!"

Landing successfully on the first try gave my confidence a much needed boost, but I wasn't fooling myself. I was still going to need a miracle to get through 8+ rounds of racing and landing at Vincent.

After a brief pilot's meeting, the action began with the flight order lottery, button pushing assignments and racing. My first flight on the clock began with the wind pushing over 25 mph and building. A couple of rounds later and after taking maximum time on the start clock to climb out, I dove into the course and began banging out turns. The little Typhoon was ripping through the air far faster than I thought possible. So fast that mid-run I flipped the dual rate switch all the way

down to minimum to keep from over correcting. As I finished and pulled up into the landing pattern, I barely heard the CD yell out my time over the now gale force wind. "54.65" was what I thought I heard. After I repeated this time the CD corrected me, "44.65!" Wow! This was 15 seconds faster than my personal best @ Fermin and I began to sense the adrenaline pump that F3f addicts talk about. Not only was this a personal best, but I ended up with the fastest time for that round flying against 3 meter race planes.

Stumbling up the rocky trail to the landing zone, I was already strategizing about the next steps to ramp up my racing program. Another smooth landing and back to corner duty until the next round.

The rest of the day went by in a blur of launching, racing and landing with most of my landings being passable and only a couple of close calls, but I struggled to match my early fast time. As my times stalled and then went backwards, the others continued to drop their times into the 30's with fastest time for the day @ 30 seconds flat.

Finally the conditions caught up to and overwhelmed my limited flying skills. While landing I allowed my plane to get blown back over the ridge in the 30+ mph wind and into a bristling rock garden. A smashed flap was the result, ending my racing for the day. Even after winning a round I ended up solidly in last place. Regardless of the last place and a damaged plane, I resolved to ramp up my efforts by upgrading to 2 proper race planes to ensure I had a backup to keep me in the game when a plane got damaged.

*(Stay tuned for Part II in next month's newsletter - Ed)*



Report from the Treasurer

**Peninsula Silent Flyers  
Balance Sheet  
As of February 28, 2014**

	<u>Feb 28, 14</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
Raffle Fund	600.00
WFCU Checking	782.19
WFCU Savings - Entradero Fund	1,562.02
<b>Total Checking/Savings</b>	<u>2,944.21</u>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<u>2,944.21</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<u><b>2,944.21</b></u>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
Equity	
Opening Balance Equity	3,411.35
Unrestricted Net Assets	-467.39
Net Income	0.25
<b>Total Equity</b>	<u>2,944.21</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<u><b>2,944.21</b></u>

For the month ending 2/28/14, we saw no major changes from the prior month. Accounts remain steady going into the next month with expected income from renewals to be shown in the next report. Happy flying!

- Mike

Membership Reminder

*With the new year, comes a reminder that membership renewals are now due. If you've not already done so, please renew ASAP. You can find the [2014 membership package](#) at the website.*

*Our trusty secretary (John) will certainly welcome your renewal at the next club meeting or via mail.*

**Club Officers and Volunteers  
(again) for 2014**

- President: Jeff Chambers  
310-370-0771
- Vice President: Jerry Lake  
310-370-6697
- Treasurer: Mike Lewis  
310-987-8178
- Secretary: John Spielman  
310-378-0951
- Newsletter: Chris Newton  
310-347-6806