

# The Manager's Approach



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Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports

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## *SWAAAE Conference*

Last month I attended a conference presented by the Southwest Chapter of the American Association of Airport Executives. The focus of this conference was airport management, which was discussed in individual seminars on various aspects of airport operation. Discussion topics ranged from airport electrical issues to the FAA grant process.

There were airport managers and directors from throughout the western region, from Alaska to Arizona, in addition to representatives from the FAA, CalTrans Division of Aeronautics, airport consultants, vendors, and the odd pilot. I found the event very informative and came back home with a long list of things to consider doing at our airports. Also, the relationships I developed will certainly help me perform my job as Airports Director more effectively.

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## *Installation of Fire Detectors*

We are installing heat detectors in hangars #6 through #10 and will be hooking them to a fire panel that will automatically alert the fire department in the event of a fire. Dennis has already run most of the wire and installed the detector mounting boxes. When he is finished, a certified fire system installer will come out to install the detector heads and commission our newly installed fire panel.

As our budget will allow, we will continue to install more heat detectors in the other hangar rows. Our goal is to get detectors installed in all of the old hangars first and then move on to the all-metal hangars.

## *Hangar Construction*

There isn't another topic that gets more airtime in my office than the issue of getting more hangars built at both Columbia and Pine Mountain Lake Airports. As a matter of fact there are a few pilots that have ganged up on me and now have "scheduled harassment days" when they come to my office and inquire about the status of the hangar "Request for Proposal" or RFP.

I have completed my draft rewrite of the RFP and am now working on an evaluation matrix by which the various proposals will be graded. This matrix will be included in the RFP so the bidders can understand what items in their proposal will enhance their chances of winning the bid.

There will be 2 separate proposals, one for Columbia and one for Pine Mountain Lake. At Columbia we are looking at building 12 T-hangars and a group of executive box hangars. Pine Mountain Lake will have T-hangars and smaller box hangars. Several local pilots and some hangar development corporations have expressed interest in bidding the project(s).

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## *Deer at Pine Mountain Lake*

January's Airports Committee meeting discussed the deer problem at our airports. At Columbia we have removed all but one stubborn deer. But, at Pine Mountain Lake Airport the problem is a long way from being solved. The next Airports Committee meeting will be held on Saturday, February 28 at 1:30 PM at the Groveland Community Hall. This is so the Pine Mountain Lake pilots and residents can participate in the continuing discussions on the deer problem.

## *Stupid Pilot Tricks*

I enjoy writing about stupid pilot tricks much more than the other issues around the airport. Maybe it is because I feel I can possibly heighten awareness among pilots about those careless or unsafe things some of us do without intention. I think it may also have something to do with the thought that I am editorializing. In other words, I can express my opinion about certain pilot actions that I feel are not considerate, appropriate or are downright dangerous.

Several readers have commented about my *Stupid Pilot Tricks* column. One individual sent me an email indicating that, while he approved of the content of my articles, he took offence to the title of the column. This concerns me because I don't want to turn off the readers of the *Manager's Approach*, thus having the opposite affect of my intended purpose. The title of this column is based on the following definitions from Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.

**Stupid** – given to unintelligent decisions or acts.

**Pilot** – one who is qualified to handle the controls of an aircraft.

**Tricks** – an indiscrete or childish act; a ingenious feat designed to puzzle or amuse.

Using these definitions I could title my column "*The performance of childish acts, or feats of ingenious design that persons qualified to handle the controls of an aircraft perform, while experiencing unintelligent moments*". This title seems a bit long. So for the moment I'll keep the current column title. If you also have strong feelings about the column title, please let me know.

Now to this month's featured item. First, I have to say, that I don't know for sure that an actual pilot performed this stunt, but whoever did it has vehicle access to Columbia Airport. Most everyone that has vehicle access is a pilot or works at the airport.

Earlier this week Dennis came to my office mentioning that someone had raced their car

up and down the runway the previous night and had spun donuts in the middle of the runway. When I checked it out, there were indeed tire marks all up and down the runway and numerous donuts spun at various locations.

Is this a childish or unintelligent act? A feat designed to puzzle (the Airports Director) or amuse (the driver)? You bet. Was it dangerous, illegal, and something that will get you kicked off of Columbia Airport for a long time? Most certainly!

I know that this is not the first time this has happened and I know cars have also raced up and down the runway at Pine Mountain Lake Airport. I know that some of the drivers are also pilots.

My hope is that these people would get smart and take their cars to the racetrack where they can safely test their driving skills, impress their friends without endangering aircraft, thus keep their tie-down or hangar. Do you know how long the waiting list for a hangar is? It would be a shame to be put at the bottom of the waiting list as a result of doing something really stupid!

*Stupid Pilot Tricks is a monthly article that attempts to raise awareness of safety and courtesy issues around our airports.*

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*The Manager's Approach* is a monthly publication from the Tuolumne County Airports Director for the purpose of keeping our community informed of local aviation and airport issues. You can contact me at:

Tuolumne County Airports Department  
Jim Thomas, Airports Director  
10723 Airport Road, Columbia, CA 95310  
209-533-5685  
jthomas@co.tuolumne.ca.us