



Volume 25: Issue 3 • May 2010  
A Monthly Publication of the Pine Mountain Lake Aviation Association

**“WWII P38 Pilot Experiences”**  
*May 8th Presentation at  
Norm and Patty Peebles’ Hangar  
21231 Jimmersall*



**Captain James Kunkle, (Ret.)**

Before he was eighteen and could join up, Kunkle had a job with Lockheed assembling P-38 wing sections, but as soon as he was old enough he enlisted for pilot training. Lieutenant James K. Kunkle, P-38 and P-51 Fighter Pilot, joined the 401st Fighter Squadron, 370th Group of the 9th Air Force and carried out 36 combat missions in support of the Normandy Landing operations and bombing missions in Germany and the Ardennes.

After taking off from Roye/ Amy, 42 km southeast of Amiens on September 16 1944, he was attacked near Aachen in Germany, after having attacked two enemy aircraft in order to protect the formation in which he was flying. He was badly burned but was able to eject and open his parachute and was rescued by soldiers from the US Army's 1st Division. He was decorated with the Distinguished Service Cross. He is credited with shooting down five enemy aircraft. He continued his career serving our country as a test Pilot

Captain James K. Kunkle has been nominated to receive rank of Chevalier of the National Order of the Legion of Honor.

We look forward to his presentation on May 8<sup>th</sup>.



**Honored Aboard the USS Ronald Reagan, VFA-22** members, from left, Capt. James Kunkle (USAF retired), Steve Ritchie, and Col. Phillip Conran (USAF retired) photo from Santa Barbara News Dec. 6, 2009



With bright yellow spinners and distinctive twin-booms glinting in the June sunshine, a P-38 Lockheed Lightning of the USAAF's 79th Fighter Squadron, 20th Fighter Group hurtles low over Pegasus Bridge as they race across the Normandy landscape shortly after the D-Day landings on June 6, 1944.

Flying from their base at Kings Cliffe in Cambridgeshire they have been tasked to support the advancing allied forces; they will strafe and bomb the enemy lines, destroying enemy communications, armor and ground targets, causing as much chaos and disruption as they can.

## President's Message - by Michael Lella

I've received several comments from some of our members that the April 17<sup>th</sup> Potluck Meeting was *one of the best PMLAA meetings* – EVER. The credit goes foremost to our speaker, Capt. Charles Plumb for his very compelling presentation, to Wayne for inviting him, and to Silvano and Antonella for hosting the meeting in their beautiful hangar.

For those who missed the meeting: I would think that getting shot down over enemy territory on his 75<sup>th</sup> and last mission, five days before being scheduled to return home, taken prisoner, tortured and forced into solitary confinement for nearly six years, would leave one with a deep-seated anger and a host of psychological, physical and emotional problems. Instead, Captain Plumb adapted to the adversity and figured out how NOT to regard himself as a victim. To top it off, after surviving this horrific POW experience, when Captain Plumb returned home, his wife had filed for divorce.

It all seemed like a tragic story, but through strength of character, Captain Plumb was able to turn this adversity into a blessing, a winning situation. To me, that was the moral of the presentation and it was an honor to hear him speak. My regrets to those who missed this meeting; it was indeed something special.

Our next meeting will be at Norm and Patti Peebles' hangar, May 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm. Our featured speaker is Capt. James K. Kunkle (Ret.). He is a friend of Charles Plumb's, a fighting WWII member of "*The Greatest Generation*," and was a P-38 and P-51 pilot over Germany.

It should be another extraordinary night and we encourage you to bring enough food for guests, just as you did at the April meeting. In fact, Captain Plumb was so impressed with our abundance of great food, hospitality and community that he may return to join his friend Captain Kunkle. If so, I will encourage him to bring some copies of his book for signing.

## PMLAA Organization Status

PMLAA's President Michael Lella hosted a Board of Directors Meeting at his home April 24. The club remains in excellent condition:

- **Membership** - 200 Memberships, equivalent to approximately 369 individual members
- **Treasury** - General Funds of \$ 9,478.22 and the Scholarship fund currently has \$ 2,170.29
- **Calendar** - Many interesting activities coming up

## Member Activities

### PMLAA Members' Roads Led to Phoenix



Mike and Virginia Gustafson and Bruce and Patty Rossio visited Kent and Sandy Blankenburg in their lovely new home (with car showroom).

Other Blankenburg visitors in March included Grant and Roberta Naylor, Roger and Jan Sloan, Alan and Yuni Guadenti, Wayne and Karen Handley, and Randy and Marie Barber. It's so nice to see Kent and Sandy settled in their new lives.

### Eagles Nest Fly-Out



On a sunny Friday in April, twenty-five PMLAA members in thirteen airplanes embarked on a flying adventure. Air-show performers have to be evaluated and re-certified each year. Wayne Handley is authorized to evaluate and certify air show performers. He went to Eagles Nest to check out three pilots in their warbirds, and he kindly invited us all along. We flew to Eagles Nest airport, near Sacramento where we were treated to a personalized air show as the three pilots went through their maneuvers for Wayne's inspection. Dan Vance in his Hawker Sea Fury, and Brian Sanders and Dennis Sanders in their P-51 Mustang all passed with flying colors. All three pilots also race in the unlimited class at Reno.

# VOLUNTEERS COMMITTED TO IMPROVING OUR AIRPORT



We know you appreciate the value of Pine Mountain Lake Airport on our personal property and our overall community. Unfortunately, over the last several years much of the routine maintenance at our airport has not occurred. This maintenance shortfall is attributed to the financial crisis of our state and local governments. County financial conditions and available resources are not likely to improve in the next few years. Therefore, we have organized a group of volunteers committed to *finding solutions to this problem*.

Over the last few months we have met with the county engineer and elected officials to survey the drainage issues and the severe cracking that is occurring on our runway and taxiways. We have also met with private contractors to gain additional insight and perspective on the possible solutions to these worsening and dangerous issues. The message is consistent -- we must address these issues now or the remedy and cost are going to be much worse in the future.

Here are a few images that vividly demonstrate what has happened to our taxiway and runway. Many cracks are now wide enough that the interior surfaces of the splits are now falling into the cracks creating a widening gap and large chunks of asphalt have separated from the surface.



**Typical 1 inch crack across taxiway**



**Cracks with sides breaking down**



**1 inch crack, 2-4 inches deep in runway**

Our fundraising committee has been in high gear, in addition to the preparation for the June 5th fundraiser party and auction; we have already collected nearly \$9,000. With these initial funds and your support we will immediately begin repairing the cracks on the runway and taxiway in order to take advantage of optimal weather conditions. We have faith that you all will contribute enough to complete the project.

We are counting on your help to finance this important project. Please mail your tax-deductible contribution to: Silvano Gai, PO Box 903, Groveland, CA 95321. Make checks payable to "EAA Chapter 1337 – PML Airport," or you can send your donation with your dinner reservation. We look forward to seeing you at the fundraiser event on June 5.

*Sincerely, the Pine Mountain Lake Fundraiser Committee*

# Pine Mountain Lake Airport Fundraiser, Saturday June 5th



Join us for a fabulous fun-filled evening at Camp Tuolumne Trails, located at 22988 Ferretti Road, just 3 miles past the airport. Festivities begin at 5:30 on the beautiful decks overlooking the Sierras. Refreshments and appetizers will be served while you witness the "magic of flight." Then enjoy a sit-down dinner that includes world famous BBQ Diestel Turkey. Dinner is \$35 per person and proceeds from the Silent and Live Auctions will benefit the Pine Mountain Lake Airport.

**Live Auction items include:** one week stays in Italy, Hawaii, Pismo Beach, Fabulous Aircraft Rides, Collectible Art, Golf Outings, Wine, Dinners, and more. Questions? Call Linda Craig (209) 962 6757



**Seating is limited, so make reservation early!**

RSVP Linda Craig  
PO Box 514  
Groveland, CA 95321

Make Donation and dinner checks payable to EAA Chapter 1337 - PML Airport

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Number of seats \_\_\_\_ x \$35 = \_\_\_\_\_  
Additional donation for maintenance and repair of PML airport \_\_\_\_\_ Total \_\_\_\_\_

***From the Director  
- by Jim Thomas, Airports Director***

**New Hangars Status**

Gold Country Hangars is finishing up the construction of their new hangars. At this time there is some electrical work to be completed, the perimeter of the hangars needs to be paved, and the fire hydrant must be installed and commissioned. Once these are completed Gold Country Hangars can apply for their Certificate of Occupancy and, once issued, the tenants can begin occupying the hangars. Then, we will notify our temporarily relocated tie-down tenants that they can return to their original tie-downs.

The quality of the new hangars is impressive and I'm sure the new hangar tenants will appreciate the convenience of the bi-fold doors. I'm certain the hangars will provide years of good service and protection for the aircraft stored inside them.

I'd like to remind people that the hangars are not owned or operated by the County, thus the Airports Department is not involved with renting them out. The County entered into a 40-year ground lease with Gold Country Hangars, LLC who built the hangars and who will be responsible for all maintenance of the hangars. Anyone wishing to put their name on the waiting list for the hangars can contact my office and we will provide you with the contact information for Gold Country Hangars.

Editor's note: *Update – the hangars are now ready and being occupied. They look great!*



***Special Thanks to Wayne Handley***



Wayne Handley, (PMLAA Speaker Coordinator), takes a moment at Airport Day 2009 for a photo with two community youths.

Our organization has become accustomed to excellent presenters. I am sure you have wondered how is it that PMLAA can attract such top notch presenters to our community, such as Charles Plumb and Jim Kunkle. A big part of the answer is "Wayne Handley." His "network of friends" continues to be a vast asset to our PMLAA organization, as well as a testimony to Wayne's accomplishments and character. We appreciate Wayne's continuing efforts to bring great speakers to our organization!

***Camp Tuolumne Trails thanks the  
PMLAA members who helped on  
Volunteer Day, April 17<sup>th</sup>***



Judy Michaelis and Patty Peebles paint kids' cabins at camp

***Thanks to our April Meeting Hosts***

Our aviation community extends special gratitude to ***Silvano and Antonella Gai*** for hosting the PMLAA April meeting in their lovely hangar.

## **Airport Fundraiser Update**

- Silvano Gai

Preparations for the airport fundraiser on June 5<sup>th</sup> are proceeding well. If you have not yet reserved your dinner, please do it now: there are only 200 seats and half of them are already sold. See the fundraiser flier attached to this newsletter. It will be a great night with something for everyone – great food (courtesy of Diestal Turkeys), a great location (courtesy of Camp Tuolumne Trails), lots of cool auction items you'll want to bid on, and a fun "magic of flight" demonstration.

With the amount of cash that has been donated so far, the EAA board has awarded the fixing of the cracks on the runway, taxiway and ramp to Ken's Asphalt. The south taxiway has been fixed first, but then this crazy weather has forced Ken to stop. Hopefully, by the time you read this, the runway and the ramp will also be fixed.

While we were able to negotiate a great deal allowing us to get the most urgent issue addressed right away, our airport is still in need. If you have not yet done so, please make a financial contribution. *It's everyone's airport*, we hope everyone will contribute.

The funds that we are now collecting will put us in a strong position to encourage the County to step up as well. We plan to address the County supervisors in the near future in hopes of acquiring the AWOS before next winter.

I hope to see you all at the June 5<sup>th</sup> party.

### **Corrections to April Newsletter**

- It was reported that James Kunkle (May Speaker) was a prisoner of war during WWII. He was shot down over enemy territory, but was not a prisoner of war.
- It was reported that there was going to be a July meeting, however, there will not be a July or August meeting.

## **PMLAA Pilot Assists Wayward Bird**



### **The Case of the Missing Peregrine Falcon**

Recently, one of our PMLAA pilots, Allen Craig, was called to duty to help find a valuable peregrine falcon, which had a mind of its own and departed for parts unknown.

Mike Horvath, the PML limnologist (lake scientist), who also consults at the Moccasin Fish Hatchery, called the Gustafsons looking for assistance. On duty at the hatchery is a falconer (Ron Kearny) whose birds are commissioned to chase away the other birds that eat the fish. One of the peregrine falcons escaped and took off into the Sierra. It has a radio transmitter on it. The falconer needed a pilot with a low and slow airplane to take him up and "look" for the bird.

Mike G. gave Mike Horvath the names of a couple of PMLAA pilots with "low and slow" aircraft. Al was placed in contact with Ron, and arranged a flight once the weather permitted. Al reported that he and Ron, the falconer, had a great time searching for the bird. Lo and behold, their mission was a success! The bird was recovered in rough terrain near Sonora the afternoon of their adventure. Great Work, Al!

*Remind your Visitors:*

*Please Do Not  
Overfly the Lake!*

## PML Airport Hangars Available

Legacy Aviation Development is working with Jim Thomas to get all the new hangars at Pine Mountain Lake either leased or sold to local pilots. At this time, there are two hangars available for lease or sale. If interested call PML/Columbia Airport Director, Jim Thomas at 533-5685

### IMPORTANT NOTE!!!!!!

**Please pay your annual dues (\$20) by 15 May 2010** to ensure you are included in the Roster. The Renewal forms are on our website [www.pmlaa.org](http://www.pmlaa.org) Be sure to answer the new question on the renewal form and tell us which of your contact info is OK to print in the Roster: address, phone, email. The Roster is mailed to members only for personal use only. Thanks, Carol Simpson, Roster Committee.

### Member Classifieds: Seats Offered at Reno Air Races Sept. 15-19

Hi! We are new PML neighbors building at the 9 end of the runway and soon to be residents! We are long time Reno Air Race fans and get two boxes every year. We offer seats to other friends and fans. If you are interested in joining us, let me know. Here are the details:

#### September 15-19, 2010

#### Air show center - Box seats - B-50 & B-49 adjoining

- 5 days of air racing & air shows (we only go for 3 days Fri-Sat-Sun)
- 5 days of pit passes
- 6 classes of racing: biplane, formula one, sport, T-6, jets & unlimited
- Canadian Forces "Snowbirds" will be performing
- \$320 per seat (no change from last year)

See [www.airrace.org](http://www.airrace.org) for RARA Air Race & Air Show details

- *Available Seats:* The adjoining boxes B-50 & B-49 hold 20 minimum (with expansion up to 30). We have 17 confirmed thus far.
- *Parking:* 3 VIP parking passes still available (FIFO). Handicap parking is also available thru RARA for a fee.
- *Cooler passes:* Cooler passes are available thru RARA for a fee and allow for cooler entry, drop off and pick up service each day.

If you're interested, please contact Janet & Ed Gregory 510-693-7546 or email [janetg@kickstartall.com](mailto:janetg@kickstartall.com).

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**Do you have  
your tickets  
for the  
June 5 Fundraiser?**

**Mark your calendar:**



<b>May 8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Jim Kunckle, WWII P38 Pilot</b>	<b>Potluck @ Peebles' Hangar 21231 Jimmersall 6:00pm</b>
June 5 <sup>th</sup>	PMLAA Fundraiser in conjunction with EAA Chapter 1337	Camp Tuolumne Trails, 22988 Ferretti Road. 5:00pm. Advanced reservations required.
July/August	No Meeting	
September 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Speaker and location to be announced	
October 2 <sup>nd</sup>	PMLAA Airport Day	
November 6 <sup>th</sup>	Speaker and location to be announced	
December 11 <sup>th</sup>	"It's A Wrap!"	

**PML Aviation Association**  
PO Box 131  
Groveland, CA 95321

**Have you paid  
your Dues?  
Next meeting: May 8th  
Peebles' Hangar**