

Flying the U-2 and T-38

Lt. Col. Jon "Huggy" Huggins on March 1st

Potluck Dinner: Jeff and Vicky Benzing's Hangar at 6:00 PM



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Lt. Col. Jon "Huggy" Huggins was born in Southern Texas where his father was an engineer for NASA and he attended elementary school with the children of the Apollo program astronauts. He knew at the age of eight he wanted to be in aviation in some form. He entered the Air Force ROTC scholarship program and was offered a pilot slot by the Air Force. He is a current instructor pilot for T-38s and U-2s assigned to Beale Air Force Base. As you might imagine, not many people get to fly a U-2. Only 862 have flown it in its 55-year history. When asked what it took to fly the U-2, "Huggy" answered, "You have to be a little bit twisted and a little bit weird and a little bit of a nut case, ha, ha!" He describes flying in the U-2 at 70,000 feet... "You never get time to relax in the U-2. It's an airplane that will always try to bite you when you are not paying attention. You know when you get up there you may have a couple hours where you have to drive to the area that you can operate in. We can sit back and settle into the cockpit, lots to do, and then you have an hour or so, where nothing is going to happen. You can just monitor the aircraft and enjoy the view. And, you know, the view is stunning. You're up high, but the colors as you get in the high altitudes, it starts like a light pale blue on the horizon, and then the more

you look straight overhead the more it goes from dark blue and indigo to black. It's just stunning."



Only seasoned mature pilots are chosen to fly this airplane as it is physically demanding and the pilots fly solo for long hours with no wingman or chase planes. The nature of their missions alone requires experienced aviators. Lt. Col. Huggins has 2200+ hours in the U-2 and 3600+ hours in the T-38. Additionally he has completed 11 months in the MC 12 Liberty reconnaissance aircraft and has flown 109 missions in Afghanistan. In his spare time he enjoys general aviation with an emphasis on the Warbird community. He is a member of the Patriot's Jet Team, the premier demonstration jet team in North America. Lt. Col. Huggins is also an airshow announcer.

President's Column

By Lynne Orloff

O kay, so Mother Nature heard me and we got some winter temperatures and rain after all...but we had good weather for the meeting. Our speaker, Barbara Hunter Schultz and her husband, Phillip, were able to fly their Twin Beech 18 in on the Saturday. They stayed with Mike and Paula Sandling and enjoyed the visit so much they want to come back. Barbara would even like to present another of her books. She had an entertaining topic in the character of "Pancho" Barnes and had us laughing and enjoying the many stories surrounding this famous, sometimes infamous, aviatrix. Barbara's contacts and historical information is varied and wide. Her many photos of aviation of yesteryear was generously shared with us. It was an enjoyable evening for all. Thank you again, Kay, for the use of your wonderful hangar.

Our next speaker is an instructor pilot in T-38s AND U-2's! Lt. Col. Jon "Huggy" Huggins flies an iconic aircraft of the stuff Clarence "Kelly" Johnson designed from contract to flight in nine months. We sure can't do that in today's contractual world! In fact it takes more than nine months to agree on a contract alone in today's military acquisition world! Vicki and Jeff Benzing are friends of "Huggy's" and convinced him to join us and share his stories of flying these wonderful and adventurous airplanes. Not many get to fly at 70,000 feet! Jim Phillips heard Lt. Col. Jon Huggins speak and knew you would enjoy him. Thanks, Jim, Vicki and Jeff...for sharing! Come join us this next month for another excursion into aviating at its very best.

Social Column

By Dian Martin

Many thanks to Kay Meermans for hosting our first meeting of the year, February 1st, in her beautiful hangar. We all enjoyed hearing about the colorful antics and accomplishments of the legendary Pancho Barnes, told by Barbara Hunter Schulz.

Jeff & Vicki Benzing will host our March 1st meeting at 6:00 p.m. In keeping with the theme of our speaker, a U-2 instructor pilot, why not pull out your family secret recipes and make this a really special potluck for our guest speaker. We were a little light on the entrees this past meeting so we would appreciate a little help in this area for March. Setup for the meeting will be Saturday morning at 10AM. We look forward to seeing you all there.

James (Red Dog) Wolf

By Larry Jobe

One of our dearest and oldest friends died Thursday, February 6th. Those of us who have been long time residents all knew Red Dog. Retired Navy pilot from props to jets, husband to Marion (Frog) Wolf and father to Teddy and Max. Alzheimer's claimed the last several years of his life but did not diminish the fond memories we have of him. A certified character, in the best sense of the term, he once climbed to the top of one of the Blimp hangars at Moffett field to get a young Navy man to reenlist- and he was afraid of heights. Red Dog and Frog owned a Cessna 150 and a Baby Ace which he flew often and, with Red Dog's encouragement, Frog learned to fly in. Red Dog would fly low over Pine Mountain Lake Airport in the Baby Ace, throttle back and serenade us with his yodeling which could be quite startling if you hadn't seen him coming as the Baby Ace at idle was almost silent. Red Dog's good stories, readiness and willingness to help his fellow aviators will be missed and remembered.

Frog has asked "No flowers. Just remember him fondly and people who feel they must can donate to an Alzheimer group or a military group."



From the Airports Manager

By Jim Thomas

Many people drive around the airport; some to access their aircraft, some to access another's home, some for convenience, and others to just see what is going on at the airport. All people using the airport for non-aviation purposes need to be fully aware that the airport exists to provide support for aviation and for this reason aircraft have the right of way over all others including cars, trucks, golf carts, motorcycles, bicycles, and pedestrians.

The vehicle speed limit at the airport is set by County Ordinance 18.08.030 Control and Speed, which requires that no vehicle travel faster than 25 miles per hour anywhere in the airport. On the aircraft parking ramp the maximum vehicle speed is 15 miles per hour, and when in close proximity to parked aircraft the speed limit is 10 miles per hour. Following the speed limits helps assure safety at the airport.

Also, the airports office expects everyone in a car or truck to cross the runway at the far west end, only after stopping at the hold line and looking both directions twice. The first look should be for aircraft on the runway and the second look should be for aircraft in the air. The west end of the runway is the safest place to cross and doing so significantly reduces the possibility of a conflict between an aircraft and a vehicle.

Another issue that should be brought to a vehicle driver's attention is the need to keep the vehicle's wheels on the pavement. There are numerous locations around the airport where vehicles have driven off the pavement and the tires of the vehicle have kicked gravel onto a taxiway. Gravel is not a friend to a propeller because a turning propeller can pick up gravel off the pavement which can damage the propeller blade or be thrown into a wing or horizontal stabilizer causing damage. If you need to yield the right of way to an aircraft, please do so by driving on to an existing ramp but don't drive off the pavement. If you need to pass a pedestrian, golf cart, bicycle, etc. stay on the pavement and pass them once they have moved out of the way.

Last, it must be continually emphasized that at the Pine Mountain Lake Airport aircraft have the right of way over all others. If you are traveling on the airport and see an aircraft, you must yield the right of way to the aircraft. The best way to do this is to move off the taxiway and simply wait for the aircraft to pass. If you see an aircraft on final approach to the runway, cross the runway if you can do so quickly and without interfering with the pilot's approach. If you cannot safely cross the runway quickly without

interfering with the pilot's approach then you should simply wait behind the runway hold line, which is the double solid and double dashed line located 125' back from the runway centerline. Pilots should be 100% focused on flying their airplane during take-offs and landings. Crossing an active runway in front of an aircraft can be very distracting.



Safety Column

By Marle Hewett

We all saw it; an unbelievably bad approach and landing attempt at SFO resulting in death and destruction. The weather was CAVU to the moon. There was no wind to speak of. Yes, the instrument landing system was out-of-service. No big deal, right?

Unconfirmed facts: 1) The flight crew all but stalled the airplane right into the sea wall on the approach to runway 28L. 2) The airplane was way below approach speed and low (obviously) as it hit the sea wall. 3) The flight crew reported having difficulty engaging autothrottle.

The crew seemed overwhelmed and incapable of flying a manual approach with no automation (no ILS, no autothrottle). Indeed their attention throughout the approach seemed to be totally focused on trying to engage autothrottle (reported but not confirmed).

Here are some confirmed facts: 1) The FAA Certification requirements for commercial aircraft require the designer to demonstrate that the basic flight control system (whether it's mechanical or fly-by-wire) meet a failure rate of no more than 1 failure in 1 billion flight hours (1×10^9). 2) The FAA Certification requirements for automated operations (autopilots, autothrottles) must meet a failure rate of no more than 1 failure in 1 million flight hours (1×10^6). These requirements are met analytically during certification through reliability and safety engineering studies conducted by the manufacturer and approved by the FAA.

So, if you're flying in an airliner where the cockpit crew does not have the necessary proficiency to fly

the airplane and make a safe landing without a coupled autopilot or autothrottle either IFR or VFR, your chances of surviving the flight are diminished a thousand times ($10^9 / 10^6$).

Can you believe this? Our automated systems are wonderful when they're used for their intended purpose. I spent a good bit of my career in industry after retiring from the Navy in flight control automation and digital fly-by-wire technology development. I believed in all that automation. What I didn't anticipate was that in certain corners of the world, automation would come to be considered essential to flight, that learning to fly the plane without the automatic systems engaged was not considered important.

How does this relate to us in the general aviation world? It's amazing how fast even our simpler, less sophisticated autopilots can get us into trouble when the system doesn't perform as anticipated, or we "miss-program" it, or we "set it and forget it", or fail to "crosscheck" it against our flight instruments (instrument scan) or our instrument proficiency is lacking, or we just don't completely understand how the system works.

It's sad.

PHI Cares

By Janet Gregory

Medical emergencies can happen to anyone. They are unplanned and unexpected. That's why it is nice to have PHI Cares assistance if emergency medical transport is needed. You hope you will never need them but Steve and Joy Thompson see PHI Cares as a PML Action Hero.

Pine Mountain Lake is a wonderful retreat. Steve and Joy Thompson started out as part-timers; then weekends got extended until finally, 18 years ago they made PML their full-time home. Steve said, "when we decided to move here full-time our Modesto friends thought we were crazy. There isn't even a movie theater or a hospital there!" Netflix took care of the movie theater issue and when PHI Cares became an option, Steve and Joy signed up immediately.

Steve woke early that cold November morning. Joy was still snuggled in bed. Steve wandered into the kitchen for coffee but things just weren't right. He had trouble fixing coffee; his left hand wasn't working. He thought he was still tired and headed back to bed. But, he didn't make it and fell. Joy heard the thump and came running.

Joy immediately called 911 which set everything in motion. Groveland Fire responded quickly with an ambulance. But the ambulance did not head "down the hill", it headed "up the hill" to PML Airport, just 10 minutes away where a PHI Cares helicopter was waiting.

The local PHI helicopter is based at Columbia Airport. It took Steve directly to Doctors Hospital in Modesto for immediate medical attention. Minutes matter in many medical situations like this. Joy headed down Priest Grade and by the time she arrived two hours later, Steve was cared for and resting comfortably.

Reset the clock to today, Steve is golfing and enjoying life. PML is fun because we have communities within the community. Steve is part of the golf and tennis communities. Others are part of the aviation, lake or equestrian communities. Joy and Steve see that the aviation community is also an important lifeline for PML.

PHI Air Medical is the leading US air ambulance provider. They operate out of 65 bases across the country with two bases right in our back yard at Columbia (O22) and Modesto (MOD). Each base maintains crews of pilots, nurses and communications specialists.

Safety, confidence and welfare are PHI priorities. PHI monitors aircraft movement from take-off to landing. They bring in the closest available helicopter, dispatch ground services, accommodate inter-facility transfer and physician consultation to ensure the best possible air ambulance service.

PML has a group rate and PHI recently reduced our membership rate to \$30 per year which is inexpensive "insurance". For information, go on the PML website www.pinemountainlake.com, search "PHI" for lots of information. You can also call 1-888-435-9744 (Mon-Fri 8a-4p), tell them you participate in the PML group rate.



Sniffing the Spitfire

By Beth Stanton

I love Reno Stead field at twilight. The desert mountains silhouette the gold sky. The roar of incessant activity is temporarily hushed. I roam the pits, making myself invisible as shadows gather darkness.

I marvel at the astounding assemblage of horsepower and history gathered at this single point on the planet. The planes sleep. Some rest undisturbed, others are lit with surgical brightness as magician-mechanics perform procedures so they may race another day. I slip wraith-like amongst the slumbering beasts.

The Spitfire catches my eyes. I was transfixed when I saw her fly today for the first time. I approach quietly, circling, taking in her size, shape, curves. Her lines are more graceful than her more muscular Mustang cousin. I gently touch her dull brown exterior, reminded of the female of bird species, less gaudy than their male counterparts. I stand on tiptoe to peer into the cockpit. The canopy is cracked open and as I get closer, I catch a whiff of her scent. Like a bloodhound, I lean in closer, catching notes of wood, oil, and the boldness of heroes.

Our senses are the portals through which we mortals experience the world around us. Total immersion activities, like flying, engage the senses in an

exquisitely integrated way that is one of the joys of being human.

When flying, we **see** the world in a whole different way from our usual two-dimensional, earth-bound perspective. Our horizons literally expand witnessing the interface of earth and sky. We **hear** the memorized music of engine and prop as song. We **feel** with coordinated movement and muscle memory as we fly by the seat of our pants. Unless you are incorrectly siphoning gas or have a very strange relationship with your plane you don't actually **taste** it. However, to keep this metaphor going, I will offer that we *taste the excitement*. The **smell** of acrid electrical, smoke or fuel sends alarm bells to our nervous system.

And yet there is much more to our olfactory than alerting us to danger. Our sense of smell is connected to the limbic system, the most primal, emotional part of our brain. A scent conjures memory instantly like no other sense can. Unbidden ghosts of scent can haunt us unawares: a hint of your grandmother's soap, wood smoke on a winter's night, the perfume of your lover's skin.

For me, how a plane smells is as integral to it as how the gauges read or the control surfaces move. Aerobatic airplanes smell of hot metal, av gas, sweat and adrenaline. The Extra, Pitts, Decathlon...each have their own unique signature. Leaning into an airplane, I close my eyes and inhale deeply. Perhaps this is odd, but I don't care. I'm imprinting a memory; I'll always remember.





2014 Meeting Calendar

| Date | Program | Time & Location |
|-------------|------------------------------|--|
| March 1 | Lt. Col. Jon "Huggy" Huggins | 6:00PM Vicky and Jeff Benzing's Hangar |
| April 5 | Dr. Ken Orloff | 6:00PM location TBD |
| May 3 | Jonna Doolittle Hoppes | 6:00PM location TBD |

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