

**Thousand Oaks
August**



**Soaring Society
2011**

TOSS is a District X Member of the Academy of Model Aeronautics, CharterClub # 1493

<http://www.tosoaring.com/>

Minutes of the TOSS Meeting Held 8/31/11

Present were:-

Art Chemielewski, Bill Bertram, Charles Babcock, Jay Harland, Jim Pendergrass, Greg Wright, Lex Mierop, Gary Filice, Don Northern, Mike Stern, Derek Bennett, Andy Tiffin, Bob Swet, and Steve Miele.

Treasury balance as of today: \$1417.97

-A new member signed up this month, Joseph.

-Dean Clark, life member, donated \$40 to the club! Thank you, Dean.

Old Business

-BUBW contest had 12 entrants in the contest. Good flying conditions and everyone had a good time. See the scores below for the official results. Thanks to those who traveled down from Bakersfield to participate.

-Molly Tucker from La Reina School is completing her project, a report on TOSS as a writing project.

-Last winch motor had been subjected to examination and test by Valley Alternators. They found a problem with one of the brush guides and straightened it out. They did a torque test run-up on the motor, and it was up to snuff!

-The latest winch schedule has been published by Jim Pendergrass.

New Business

-The TOSS SC-2 contest is coming up for Sept. 25th, and Lex Mierop is going to be the CD.

-Pursuant to the contest announcement, there will not be a formal radio impound since most pilots fly on 2.4 GHz. Frequency conflicts on 72 MHz will be resolved before the contest. The usual assignments for winches, stakes, markers, scoring help as well as landing judges stand. TOSS members who are physically able, please show up by 7:15 AM to help with the set

up. Andy Tiffin will check into the Botanical Garden rest room for availability. Should the Botanical Garden not be available TOSS will likely pay to have the Redwood School restrooms available?

Happy Camp property, Ed Jones is still working on that with Supervisor Foy. Maps have been gathered along with other pertinent information. The Santa Rosa Park property is still in flux.

-The yearly dinner is planned for the second weekend in November, Saturday the 12th. This year, the "TOSS Women's Auxiliary", some of the wives, are planning something special for the dinner. If you (or your significant other) is interested in lending a hand, please call Debbie Filice at 805.660.7534.

-The possibility of having a hand launch contest on Saturday is out of the question due to flag football using the field for the rest of the season. Therefore we should consider a regular club Sunday to be given over to the HLG Contest. This will require a club vote and approval. There are also some possible off field sights that might serve as a place to run a contest. The date was set for sometime in November - to be determined. Lex is looking to put on a pre- contest seminar on HLG flying and what kinds of tasks are done in a HLG contest.

-Flying site acquisition news from Bill Bertram: The old Bordiers Nursery property is with a holding company, and that company is not interested in any use of the property unless it is purchased or rented. As for the

T.O.S.S BENT WING CONTEST SCORES

MIKE	REAGAN	FIRST	OPEN	2172
JIM	LUKEN	SECOND	OPEN	2162
MIKE	STERN	THIRD	OPEN	2132
GARY	FILICE	FOURTH	OPEN	2105
DEAN	CLARK	FIFTH	OPEN	2074
GUS	PIANGERELLI	SIXTH	OPEN	1845
BOB	SWET	FIRST	WOODY	2101
JERRY	TONNELLI	SECOND	WOODY	2072
DON	NORTHERN	THIRD	WOODY	1955
GEORGE	GILLBURG	FOURTH	WOODY	1940
STEVE	MIELE	FIFTH	WOODY	1726
JAY	HARLAND	SIXTH	WOODY	1517

AN ERROR WAS MADE ON THE FIELD WHILE SCORING — DON NORTHERN CAME IN THIRD IN THE WOODY CLASS AND JERRY TONNELLI WAS FOURTH.

T.O.S.S. 9/11/11 CONTEST RESULTS
ALL PILOTS FLEW AS EXPERT

OPEN CLASS			
FIRST	GARY	FILICE	1358
SECOND	MIKE	REAGAN	1339
THIRD	MIKE	STERN	1258
FOURTH	BILL	NIBLEY	1186
WOODY CLASS			
FIRST	DON	NORTHERN	1334
SECOND	DON	McNAMEE	1237
THIRD	TERRY	KOPLAN	1205
RES CLASS			
FIRST	MIKE	REAGAN	1304
SECOND	BOB	SWET	1300
THIRD	BILL	BERTRAM	1044

IT WAS A GOOD DAY FOR SOARING LOTS OF LIFT AND SMOOTH AIR, WITH CLOUDS IN THE AM AND SUNSHINE AROUND 11:00AM. \$65.00 WAS TAKEN IN FOR THE COFFERS AND \$30.00 GIVEN OUT IN PRIZE MONEY.

TOSS Members....

About two months ago I received an email from Jon Charnas, our previous web master, about an inquiry that he received from Molly Tucker. She was interested in learning more about TOSS. I sent Molly an invitation to meet us at Redwood field at the usual time and place not knowing the details of her inquiry.

The very next Sunday, and for a few more after that, TOSS had the pleasure of being host to a very mature, 14 year old young woman who was interested in the activities of TOSS and soaring. I am proud to say as Club president, and this is proven in the text of her project, that our members made her feel very welcome.

Molly is in 9th grade at La Reina School. When she was just 9 years old, Molly expressed an interest in writing and every year since, sans one, has participated in a summer writing course through Johns Hopkins University. The topic of her current summer project was, write about a group or society, Molly chose us! The essay that she wrote is titled "*TOSSed into the Air*". With her permission, I've included it for you all to read.

Molly has also informed me that her teacher's name is Cara Diaconoff and she's written two novels: *I'll Be a Stranger to You* and *Marian Hall* and a collection of stories called *Unmarriageable Daughters*.

Respectfully,

Steve

(The essay continues followed by her teacher's comments — Ed)

TOSSEd into the Air

By Molly Tucker

Since as long as I can remember, I have seen small, colorful specks in the sky every Sunday. There were blue ones and yellow ones and multicolored ones all flying up and down, whooshing around in the sky. As I learned over the years, these specks were remote controlled airplanes, otherwise known as sailplanes or gliders, that flew without a motor. Of course, since those beautiful planes were remote controlled, someone had to be controlling them. And as it turned out, there was a whole society behind those planes: the Thousand Oaks Soaring Society, or TOSS. The members of TOSS, a group of elderly men, would turn up every Sunday morning on the field of the local middle school. Finally, one Sunday, I headed out to that very field to check out what exactly went on down there and to figure out what exactly made them return week after week. After all, I had admired their planes for most of my life.

However, before I went, I decided to look into sailplanes to see how exactly they had come to be. I learned that all flight used to be gliding flight, as engines weren't around when da Vinci drew up a flying machine in 1490 and when people like Otto Lilienthal in Berlin and Percy Pilcher in England tried to fly gliders in the 1800's. It was the Wright Brothers that established a glider design that worked well, focusing on aerodynamics as well as power, and later adding engines. Just after World War I, gliders began to hold more significance as Germany started developing them after they were banned from using powered aircraft by the Treaty of Versailles ("History of Gliding & Soaring"). Gliders continued to im-

prove and become more popular, thus causing the formation of the Soaring Society of America in 1932. Currently, there are about 12,000 members of the SSA (“What is the SSA?”) and about 140 soaring locations across the U.S.A (“Where to Fly?”).

Armed with this knowledge, I arrived at the field at around eight in the morning on a rather cloudy Sunday, and there were only two men there already. I approached one of the men, who was rather portly and wearing a light checkered shirt, shorts, sneakers, and a straw hat, adorned with a pin on which the name Don Northern was inscribed, and who was pulling bright red plane parts from his car. I introduced myself, wondering if I’d be accepted by this group. However, whatever bits of doubt I had had completely evaporated when the man flashed me a grin and began animatedly explaining how his plane worked while putting it together.

After his glider was assembled, Don and I went up the wide, concrete steps to the field where the other man was already setting up. There, I saw a great red apparatus set up that consisted of a spool of white cable, which extended out all the way down the field and then came back to a large, steel wheel. Next to the spool was a red plastic panel with a large black button in the middle. Don called the other man, Bill, over and the two of them got ready to launch. As I learned, launching was a two-man show. Don hooked the line to his plane, placed his foot on the black button, and then started his plane up while quickly pushing up and down and up and down on the button. His glider streaked straight up, up, up into the air, giving off a low whistle as the wind whipped by. The bold red of the plane seemed to glow against the dark grey clouds in the sky. Then, the plane gave a little dip, and the line slipped off as it soared up further. A loud grinding noise made me look down and I saw Bill sitting in a forest green lawn

chair, working the machine. Don said, “We old men don’t want to have to walk all the way to the end of the field to get the line, so we have this ol’ thing do it for us.” He smiled at the machine, then focused his eyes back up on his plane. As I stared at the machine, I found that sure enough, the line was coming back in fast, that big wheel spinning. I turned my attention back to Don’s plane and saw it zooming around the clouds. Don began to explain that gliders had to rely on thermals, or upward air currents, to stay aloft because they had no motors. Then to entertain me, he did some flips, which his plane wasn’t really built to do. Those tricks caused him to lose quite a bit of altitude, so he began to land. His plane inched lower and lower, circling over one area in the field until, *bumpity-bump* – it softly hit the ground.

I blinked a bit, as I had forgotten to do so while watching the glider, and turned around. I saw that more men in their fifties or sixties had arrived without my noticing, all wearing light tee shirts, either shorts or jeans, sneakers, and one of a whole range of different hats, from baseball, to straw, to sun hats. The men were carrying planes of all different sizes, shapes and colors. As Don explained to me, there were planes made of all different material: the high-tech planes made of carbon fiber, the traditional planes made of balsa wood, and some that were mixes of the two. As I scanned the field, I saw men were chatting to each other as they went about tweaking this or that and I could hear hearty laughs permeating the chilled air. At one point, I heard one man mention to another, “Nice day, innit?”

The reply came, “Yeah, it sure is. Look at that cloud! That’s sure to bring precipitation and there’ll be lots of thermals on either side of it.”

There were more conversations like this from the others, and I was amazed to see these men throwing out these complicated ideas in such an offhand fashion.

I spent the rest of that morning talking to more men, including the president of the club, Steve. He presented me with almost more information than I could handle about the club, but was extremely nice. At one point during this surge of information, he started to talk about the gender of the members. He told me that, though I only saw men today, there had been some great women flyers in the club. He regaled me with a story about a young woman who had placed very well in a contest and had been a pride and joy of the group. I later found out that there is actually a society for women pilots called the Women Soaring Pilots Association with over 200 pilots all over the world (“About WSPA”). I left the field that Sunday satisfied with what I had learned and excited that I was finally able to meet the men on the field I had watched for so long.

Two Sundays later, I returned on competition day. Two weeks ago, I had heard from everyone I had talked to about this day. It fell on the second Sunday of every odd month and, as far as I had heard, was a blast. That day, I wasn't so worried about being punctual, as barely anyone had been there the last Sunday exactly at 8. I arrived at ten past eight, and when I got out of the car, I realized how misty it was. The fog was so dense, that I could barely see a few feet in front of me. As I got closer to the field, I saw about ten men already on the field, including quite a few I didn't recognize. I walked up the stairs to the field and saw that these men were hard at work transforming the lone, lifeless field into bustling competition grounds. I saw wooden stakes in the ground with caution tape running between them, marking off certain areas of the field. I saw not one, but two launching machines situated between the two lines of caution tape, and another one nearby just in case. By the baseball cage, there was a blue tent set up with a few older men behind it and a sign announcing something called a BUBW competition and

stating a fifteen-dollar entrance fee. Under the tent was a table on which I saw a calculator, a sign up sheet, a moneybox, and a few various assorted clipboards. I then turned my eyes to the street, where cars lined up and down the street, ranging from small sedans to larger SUVs, to a black Chevy that looked a million years old. Men were gathering outside their cars talking, laughing, and admiring one another's planes.

As I stood taking in the scene and marveling at how official everything looked, a man whom I had never seen before approached me and inquired as to what I was doing. When I explained to him, he smiled and told me that I had come on a good day. Then, he went on to explain to me exactly what this competition was. He told me this was a Built Up Bent Wing competition (thus BUBW) named for the shape of the planes. He then informed me that the planes that were going to be flown that day were called RES (rudder, elevator, spoiler) which were essentially planes with which you could only control the rudder, a part at the back of the plane that controlled the turning of the plane; elevators, flaps at the rear of the plane; and spoilers, flaps on the wings. He went on to tell me that some people had driven from out of town just for this competition, which explained the faces I didn't know. Then that man left to get his plane all ready and I continued to take in the scene.

Just as the first man left, one of the men I had met two weeks before, whose name was Andy, approached me and said hi, welcoming me back again. Then, I saw Don come up the stairs carrying a different plane that was a gorgeous azure with white tips. A huge smile appeared on Andy's face when he saw Don and he leaned over to me, pointed at my clipboard on which I had been recording everything I saw, and exclaimed loudly, "Can you write down in your notes that *Don Northern* was late?" Then, just for pure joy, he shouted, "Don Northern was

LATE!”

Don shook his head and laughed, replying, “Always somethin’ wrong, isn’t there?”

Then Andy left to get his own plane and soon Bill, who had been sitting at the blue tent and working at this or that, walked onto the field to announce a Pilots Meeting. All the men who had entered into the competition gathered around and Bill began to explain the rules. He first announced the two categories: “Woody” for the planes made of balsa wood, and “Open” for all other planes. He then explained that there were three rounds: four, six, and eight minutes, and two tasks for each of the rounds. For the first task, the pilots had to land inside one of the three circles that had been drawn in chalk about halfway down the field. If they landed inside the circle, they got a certain amount of points. There would be a scorekeeper in that area, who would determine whether the plane landed in or out. The second task involved a tape measure that was laid out on the circle. It started behind the circle and went into the circle, and was pinned down right in the center. For that task, the pilots would land as close to the very center as possible and would then, using the tape measure, figure out how far from the center they had landed. This tape measure was unique in that it didn’t include inches or meters. Instead, numbers from one to one hundred had been handwritten on it, with one hundred being at the center of the circle. After he had explained how the competition worked, he went on to explain exactly where one should walk, as marked by the caution tape, and then explained the “no fly zone.” This was a section right next to the field, and right before houses started, where there were some electrical lines. If a member of TOSS flew in this area, their round would be disqualified. If an out-of-towner was caught flying in this area, they’d get one warning, and would get their round disqualified the next time. As he went about explaining these rules, someone shouted out, “Hey,

I thought you were a Republican, Bill!”

A few guys chuckled as Bill shifted his feet, looking a bit uncomfortable, and mumbled, “Well... well...” He recovered himself and finished off by telling everyone that if the fog cleared up soon, the event would finish up by 1:00. Then, he let everyone get back to readying their planes, telling us that he’d let us know when the competition was to begin. I glanced up at the sky, and saw that the fog, though not quite as heavy, was still present. I still couldn’t see all the way down the field.

After Bill went back to the tent to do more work, a man approached me, as he was curious about what I was here for. After I introduced myself, he immediately launched into a story. “These guys here, they dream of flying,” he began. When I gave him a quizzical look, he explained, “You know, there are the water people, the land people, and then the air people: these guys. They love to fly!” He smiled and added, “It’s in their DNA.” He then continued on with a story of his own. “When I was a boy, I’d fly model airplanes. But it wasn’t enough for me. You see, I wanted to fly like the birds. So I took up hang gliding.” He smiled again when he saw the astonished look on my face. “One time I was flying around Mt. Whitney, and I heard a loud screech right behind me. I looked around, and there, flying behind me, was an eagle. I was really flying with the birds.” He was looking right at me as he told the story, but I could tell that his eyes were in another place, in the sky with that eagle. He then went on to ask me if I preferred water, land, or air. When I replied that I honestly didn’t know, he remarked, “Well, that’s something for you to find out!” Then, rather abruptly, he left.

I was still reeling from the intensity and beauty of the story, when Steve came up to me to see how everything was going. We started to talk a bit about politics, and then he said,

“These guys may look similar, but when it comes to politics, they are all over the map, from conservatives to liberals, to guys who couldn’t care less what goes on!” He went on to tell me that the men could get into pretty heated arguments, though he himself always stepped out of things before they got too intense. After presenting me with that new side to the group, one I had already witnessed a bit earlier during the Pilots Meeting, he left to go help with something on the field.

About fifteen minutes later, I began to see blue patches appear in the sky. I could actually see the top of a nearby hill as well as all the way down the field to the parking lot beyond. Seeing this change in weather, Bill announced the start of the competition. Men started to get partners who would time them for the four, six, and eight minutes they’d be in the air, and then started to launch one by one. The grinding of the launching machine filled the air and colorful gliders filled the sky: the mix of blue and gray up above being accented once again by green and blue and purple and red specks, zooming around. Below, the concentrating pilots were clutching their radio controllers and listening to the calls of, “1 minute to go! 30 seconds to go!”

After I had had enough of watching the launching, I walked across the field to a raised bit of ground where another baseball field was located to watch the landing of the planes. For the first time, I could clearly see the circles, etched perfectly into the grass with bright blue, pink, and yellow tape measures lying across them. I began to watch as the planes above me circled in the air, catching thermals and eventually heading down the field for a last hurrah, before starting the landing process. With about fifteen to thirty seconds to go, the pilot would steer the plane into a path down the field towards the circles, where he was a standing, his eyes glued on his glider. His partner would frantically call out the seconds as the plane neared the circle. I of-

tentimes felt myself holding my breath as I'd see the plane coming in for a landing, with the pilot leaning on one leg, face scrunched up in concentration. Many a time, the plane would land just short of the circle to the utter dismay and annoyance of the pilot, but sometimes that plane would find itself gently hitting the ground right inside that line of chalk. In that case, I could see, even from my position above them, their jubilant expressions and even the little spring in their step as they headed back to the launching area to time their partner. When someone landed well, there would always be a few more jokes penetrating the warm air.

After few hours of trekking back and forth between the launching and landing areas, I was starting to feel lethargic and overheated. But then the excitement was brought up a few notches as I heard the yell of "Free flight!" and saw Don yelling at his plane. "I forgot to turn on my transmitter!" he called, dropping his radio control, which was now useless. He ran to his car with a few other men to chase the plane, like a caged animal that had suddenly escaped. My eyes were drawn up to the sky where I saw his plane, the white tips shining against the sky, which was now a brilliant blue. It was circling the field, and I began to feel my hopes rise. Maybe it would just land in the field after all. But just as that thought occurred to me, the glider passed into the "no fly zone," and beyond the electrical wires, where it began to soar over the houses. As I watched, my mouth dropped, and I silently wished for a safe landing, trying not to think about what would happen if Don couldn't find his plane. The glider grew smaller and smaller until I could barely see it, so I turned my eyes back to the field, where the air was buzzing as men who happened to be at the launching area exchanged surprised looks and words.

About fifteen minutes later, Don drove back. He somberly got out and opened his trunk where his plane safely rested. It took him another fifteen minutes to patch up his glider. Finally,

when he returned to the field, plane under his arm, and a faint smile on his lips, someone shouted out to him, “You really should join the National Free Flight Society!”

Don laughed.

The guy, now serious, said, “Pretty lucky, weren’t you?”

As it turned out, the plane had landed on someone’s roof, but in such a way that Don was easily able to grab it. He responded, “Yeah, I was perty lucky. Perty lucky.”

As the morning progressed, I began to be able to identify each pilot by his plane. The plane with the purple rudder belonged to Jim, the plane with the dark tip belonged to George, and the one with the blue tips was Mike’s. I felt like I had known these guys all my life by the time everyone finished their tasks at around 12:30. The men at the blue tent finished up their complicated calculations and announced the winners: a man named Bob, and Mike with his blue-tipped plane, who both received twenty-five dollars. Then everything was over. I said goodbye to Steve and Don, and both let me know I was welcome around the field anytime I wanted to come and hinted that I should come and start flying with them regularly.

As I left that field with the hot sun beating down on me and sweat shining on my flushed face, though all I had done was watch and talk, I felt this strange feeling inside. It was one that was making me grin ear to ear while trying to convince me that my schedule really wasn’t too busy to come and fly gliders every Sunday morning from now on. I dwelled on that feeling, and found it to be true happiness. That happiness, I thought, had been caused by the overall positivity and welcomeness each man on the field possessed. Each had gone out of his way to provide me with information about the group and inquire about me; feeling genuinely excited to have me around. As I wondered why they would feel this way about just a stranger, I began to see

that it wasn't just me. They were just generally cheerful people, something I attributed to a few things. First, I found myself wondering at the true camaraderie of these men. They would make fun of each other, even teasing each other about their political beliefs, and yet they remained friends at the end of the day. As I thought back to the outburst in the morning about Bill's political beliefs, I realized that I had later seen Bill and the man who had teased him talking and laughing as if nothing had happened. They would never let anything petty like a difference in beliefs get in between friendship.

However, though this friendship contributed to the jollity that was brought to the field, I felt there was more to it than that. I had learned that day that these men were actually different, and that had surprised me. Since they dressed the same and shared the same passions, I had assumed they thought the same things. Coming out, I realized they were all unique individuals: both men and women as it turned out, with different cars, coming from all different backgrounds and all with different careers, if they weren't already retired. Then, words I had heard earlier in the day came rushing back to me that explained everything. Though these guys were in fact unlike, there was one thing that brought them together: the fact that they were all "air" people. It was that flying DNA that could bring all types of people together, no matter who they were, and result in boundless amounts of happiness.

And just as I came to that realization, I remembered, I never noticed a bit of competitiveness at the end of the competition when everyone was waiting to hear the winners. When Don, such a superb flyer, didn't even place, he just said, "Well, it wasn't my day today," with an "I couldn't care less" shrug and went on to ask someone about his plane. And when the winners were handed their twenty-five dollars, they looked almost as if they wanted to give the money

back. I found that winning wasn't even on their minds – it was all about the fun, the bonds of friendship, and that dream they all had: to fly.

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Dear Molly—

Thanks very much for your subculture analysis revision. You've really done a wonderful job of it. What's particularly good here is that you went back into a draft that was already strong and made further revisions that make it even more complex and interesting. Really, I'm very impressed by this all around: not only by the grace of your writing but by your intrepidity in seeking out this group in the first place (and your imaginativeness, too—it doesn't seem an especially "obvious" group to pick). And then the impressiveness of the project comes back around to the writing again: the way you both remember so many details and are able to record them in a way that's not only engaging and entertaining but productively reflective.

As I said at one point in an embedded comment, I think one idea that comes through really well in the essay—particularly well, indeed, for the fact that you don't explicitly state it but just leave it to be suggested—is that the activity of flying and the joy the

men take in being together somehow proceed from the same root. This comes across most avowedly, in fact, in the idea about them all being "air" people. It's very graceful the way you introduce the idea of air, water, and land people earlier in the essay, in the conversation with Bill, and then return to it at the end. It's a skillful way to handle an important motif: to suggest it, or plant a seed, early in a piece and then let it sort of semi-consciously grow in the mind of the reader before being explicitly named again.

In short, then, this is great work. I think you should definitely show it to other readers and teachers, and you might even consider trying to publish it somewhere—in a school newspaper, for example, or an outlet that got a larger audience than that. In the meantime, you've written a piece that is beautiful, fun, and instructive for the reader as well as showing what you learned about an interesting and little-known "subculture." —Cara

