



# Sacramento County Sheriff's Air Squadron Newsletter

SERVING THE SACRAMENTO COUNTY SHERIFF SINCE 1941

SEPTEMBER MEETING

## Aerial firefighter pilot:

### Ongoing demand creates a hot zone for pilots

Returning to Sacramento from a long work-week in SoCal I heard numerous ATC call-outs to fire-fighting aircraft.

And I wondered how one becomes a firefighting pilot.

So, I checked with Cal Fire and found that pilot backgrounds are diverse, including military, bush and airline flying. Tailwheel and low-level flying experience – over terrain – are big factors in hiring.



Demand for aerial firefighter pilots is increasing, industry experts say.

"Retirements and brisk airline hiring drain the already-small applicant pool", said Dean Talley, a former Coast Guard and firefighting pilot told me.

Currently there is no standard training program for the profession. One career path into the hot zone is serving as a pilot in an observation aircraft, then transitioning to the right seat of a larger tanker

Average annual salary range for a Forest Service pilot is \$73,600 to \$113,800. But contractor pilots, who traditionally are paid by flight time, can earn income in the hundreds of thousands of dollars in a busy season, said Talley.

Here in California aerial firefighting crews must make incredibly low flights over burning terrain in order to help extinguish the flames. And when retardant is dumped it can be a spectacular sight.

This month our Newsletter focuses on member's experiences in flying around and sometime through these hazardous smoke areas.

It's the cooperation of boots-on-the-ground and aerial firefighters that allow these gigantic wildfires to be put out.

**Dale Terry, Newsletter Editor**

### Cal Fire Tour



Visit to Cal Fire's largest air tanker base

5500 Price Avenue

McClellan Park, Sacramento

September 22nd, 4:45 pm

Now staffed year round, Cal Fire's McClellan base battles fires in both NorCal and SoCal.

All-together, Cal Fire's fleet includes more than 60 fixed and rotary wing aircraft. It is largest civil aerial firefighting fleet in the world.

Tour starts promptly at 5:00 pm, members should arrive 15—minutes early.

## AROUND THE SQUADRON



By Ron Richey

**Welcome Back!** So stated Vice Commander **Doug Hunting** to the Air Squadron members who attended the first meeting in the **HUT** after eighteen long months!

Commander **Ken Lux** and facilities manager **Bill Cox** spent a considerable amount of time and effort in making sure the Hut was cleaned and squared away. **Chic** provided his usual outstanding meal fare of prime-rib.



Guest speaker **Jarett Haffner**, Garmin's regional sales manager for the southwestern states, gave an hour and half presentation on the latest Garmin avionics packages, the various model numbers and their A/C application.

Jarett spent time demonstrating the features of the Garmin GI 275, which looks like a standard three inch panel mount round gauge, but in actuality is one of Garmin's new magic boxes that



can be configured as an AI, a PFD, a MFD or ESI.....and maybe even tells time? All in one small package.

Garmin has something for everyone.....only limited to one's imagination and pocketbook.

Sheriff liaison **Shelly Hodgkins** took copious notes in order to brief Sheriff **Jones** on the latest Garmin products.

Imagine landing at the Monterey Airport (KMRY) at the beginning of the annual **Monterey Car Week**, with tickets in hand for the **Gordon McCall's Motorsports Revival**, considered to be one of the most exclusive events of its kind in the country, hosted by the **Monterey Jet Center**.

As you taxi in, you can't believe the number of corporate and private jets lined up on both sides of the taxiway and yet the 'Follow Me' vehicle is leading you right to the very front of the line.



As you and your super model wife (currently modeling for Ferrari) step out of the world's most expensive and well equipped Cessna 152, you are greeted as arriving celebrities. It was just another day in the life of Master Instructor and legend **Mike Traud** and wife **Renee.**

My son **Jeff Richey**, who owns and operates **Richey Sportfishing** out of South Lake Tahoe and lives near the intersection known locally as the Y (Hwy 50 & Hwy 89), has recently evacuated his home due to the still uncontained **Caldor fire**.

Jeff's decision to evacuate before an official order is given (hopefully the brave firefighters will eventually get the

fire under control) was based on several factors, one being the difficulty of exiting the Tahoe basin with only a couple escape routes available, Hwy 89 north around the lake and a few ways east to the Nevada state line. (Hwy 50 is closed) The second and just as serious, is the air quality in the Tahoe area. Jeff said that the smoke is so thick, that mid-day looks like nighttime.



The falling ash appears as the first dusting of winter snow. The accompanying photo of what looks like a fog bank with a dark spot in the middle, is actually a photo of Emerald Bay and the dark spot is the famous Fannette Island where Mrs. Knight built her tea house.

The 'snow' coming down and gathering on the ground was ash from the Caldor and Tamarack fires.

**Steve Cassinelli** reported on his return flight from Tillamook (KTMK) to Exec, he had to file for 15,000 to stay above the TFRs across Oregon and into California.

**Stan Stewart** said that he and his wife **Pamela** did not experience any smoke issues on their trip returning from the EAA Air Adventure in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. (How many of you could convince your wife to fly to KOSH? Wonder what that cost?)

Stan did mention on a recent lunch trip over to Livermore (KLVK), the vis was barely VFR. Checking *ForeFlight* on a fairly regular basis over the past week or so, shows most of the airports in the Sierras' and into Nevada with very low visibilities in the ¼ to ½ mile range due to smoke.

## Safety Brief:

### Must you fly the ODP?



By Bill Cox, CFII

It's true that for Part 91 pilots, Obstacle Departure Procedures, or ODPs, are not mandatory. However, when flown correctly, ODPs ensure terrain and obstacle clearance.

That alone is a strong argument for using them whenever terrain and obstacles can't be comfortably avoided visually. That could be a low IFR day—but it could also be a clear but dark night, or even a good VFR day in an area you're unfamiliar with.

For that reason, the ODP can be a great tool for the VFR pilot, too. If there's any doubt about clearing obstacles as you climb away from an airport, flying the ODP should be an easy choice.

When an instrument approach is initially established for an airport, the need for departure procedures is assessed. The procedure designer conducts an obstacle analysis.

If a departing aircraft may turn in any direction from a runway within the limit of the assessment area and remain clear of obstacles, that runway passes – and no ODP is established. The fact that an ODP is established means there is something in the way of departing aircraft – like maybe a big pile of rocks.

Flying the procedure correctly *is* important. ODPs are little understood and often under-emphasized in training. Since they're usually text-only, they can also be difficult to interpret. They're not listed with the airport approach charts (unless you're using Jeppesen charts) so they can be difficult to find.

When departing a Class G (non-towered) airport, you shouldn't assume that your clearance accounts for obstacles. ODPs are rarely assigned by ATC. A clearance direct to the first fix on the flight plan doesn't imply that the path is clear. It's up to you to use the ODP if necessary to keep from hitting anything.



ODPs may be flown without ATC clearance unless you have been assigned a specific departure procedure. You don't need explicit ATC permission to fly the procedure. But you should advise ATC if you intend to. That way the controller won't be surprised when you show up

on a course or heading other than direct to the first fix on your flight plan.

So, while ODPs are not mandatory, they sure look like a good idea to me. If you choose to do it on your own, just remember those rocks and towers won't be getting out of your way and it now becomes your job to figure out how to miss them.



## Commander's Column:

### When Smokey Bear needs help - Cal Fire!

Hello Air Squadron!

Our September 22nd Air Squadron meeting will be a tour and briefing of Cal Fire aviation operations at McClellan.

I want to thank Cal Fire for this opportunity given all the fire activity in California. Our gracious host Chief Ben Berman agreed to our tour several months ago and is looking forward to meeting us.



Cal Fire's mission emphasizes management and protection of California's natural resources; a goal that is accomplished through ongoing assessment and study of the State's natural resources and an extensive Cal Fire Resource Management Program.

Since my business is based at McClellan Park, I see first-hand very large airtanker aircraft regularly pass through our

airspace. These converted DC-10s are impressive to watch.

McClellan is Cal Fire's largest tanker base – with 12 additional airbases and 10 helicopter bases strategically placed throughout our State.

Here's a photo of one DC-10 that is stationed at McClellan.



And then there are contracted aircraft, including converted B747s that supplement Cal Fire's assets.



You may not know that Cal Fire oversees enforcement of California's forest practice regulations, which guide timber harvesting on private lands. These reviews and inspections ensure protection of watershed and wildlife, as well as renewal of timber resources.

In addition, Department foresters and fire personnel work closely to encourage and implement fuels management projects to reduce the threat of uncontrolled wildfires. Cal Fire Foresters promote conservation emphasizing the importance of our trees and forests to each of us, our families and all Californians.

I have met many Cal Fire personnel over the years and have found these "fire heroes" to be dedicated to fire protection and stewardship of our over 31 million acres of California's privately-owned wildlands.



I am told that the Department also provides varied emergency services in 36 of the State's 58 counties via contracts with local governments.

Cal Fire is busy!

The Department's Fire Prevention Program consists of multiple activities including wildland pre-fire engineering, vegetation management, fire planning, education and law enforcement. Typical fire prevention projects include brush clearance, prescribed fire, defensible space inspections, emergency evacuation planning, fire prevention education, fire hazard severity mapping, and fire-related law enforcement activities.

It's hard to believe, but beyond its wildland firefighting role, Cal Fire is an "all-risk" department.

It may very well be a Cal Fire engine and crew that is dispatched to the scene of an auto accident, or to a home where a child has become the victim of a drowning incident. The Department is always ready to respond - medical aids; hazardous material spills; swift water rescues; search and rescue missions; civil disturbances; train wrecks; floods, earthquakes and more.

Let's all keep these brave Cal Fire men and women in our thoughts and prayers during these devastating fires.

So, be sure to put this month's meeting on your calendar --September 22, 2021 (1645 - 1815). Watch out, this is not our usual 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday date!

We are required to walk-in together at Cal Fire, so please be punctual and meet in the [Cal Fire parking lot at 1645](#).

*Let's Fly!*

**Ken Lux, Commander**



## CHUCK ASBURY: VIEW FROM THE LEFT SEAT

(Ed. Note: High time Command Pilot Chuck Asbury will periodically contribute to the Newsletter with views on aviation, interesting travel stories and commentary on flying both yesterday and today.)

### Thinking of olden times

**Days of yore.** Pilots long gone from our ranks. Stuff adds up, as we take a look back at a few of them.

Like **George Steiner**, who tallied dozens of Atlantic crossings delivering fighters, bombers and transport aircraft as WW-II raged. A typical mission required him to pick up a new B-24 at Michigan's Willow Run airport, and deliver it to India, via Blueie West One, Greenland, Iceland, Ireland, Scotland and then into London.

Or **Joe Cugene**, who ferried a new B-25 from McClellan Field to Nadzab, New Guinea where in a night mission he made a direct hit on the main Japanese fuel and ammo dump near Rabaul that lit up the skies and illuminated a surfaced Japanese submarine. Instinctively, Joe attacked with his remaining bombs and sent it and the crew to the bottom.

Or **Harold Nielsen**, who piloted his B-25 in the Pacific and attacked enemy installations on Guadalcanal, Saipan, Truk, Guam and others in the Admiralties. Once, following a raid he found his bomber alone, then suddenly surrounded by three Zeros. Holding his fire, he audaciously waved at them. They too, waved, then peeled off and left.

Or **Dudley Moore**, who flew recon missions in B-25s between Curacao and Dutch Guyana searching for German U-Boats.

Or **Judge Roth Mason**, who flew combat patrols in the North Atlantic in a TBM, saving his crew when an electrical fire broke out in the cabin and knocking out his radios while still 200 miles from his carrier. While a crewman ripped out the burning fires with his bare hands, Roth resorted to the mental gymnastics needed to calculate the reciprocal back to the carrier, which by then was dozens of miles somewhere else. Or **Bill Paynter**, who, while testing aircraft antennas in icing conditions at Oakland, at

night, in IMC, was surprised when ice caused both antennas to break off into the murk. Then the engine failed. Nothing to do but descend, hoping he was still over the water. Breaking out at 400 feet he found himself on short final. Hmmmm...

Or **John Otto**, a tank driver in Patton's Third Army, that stopped when nearly out of gas. Up roared Patton, asking why the hell Otto wasn't charging into the Germans. When Otto reported his condition, Patton got on the radio and within minutes a C-47 landed in the adjacent field where crewmen threw out five-gallon Jerry cans of gas. When you're a general, things happen.

Or **Harry Arnold**, who earned both Navy wings of gold, and Air Corps wings of silver, then flew a PBY from Florida to South America, across the South Atlantic to Ascension Island, the Gold Coast of Africa, across the Arabian Desert to Sudan and Ethiopia, over the Red Sea to Pakistan, Burma and finally India, where he flew both land and then sea rescue missions.

Or **Dale Halsell**, who learned to fly in 1936, and received word in 1941 that his draft number was "Two," which prompted him to enlist and seek pilot wings and then instruct others. He wound up with 6,000 hours in multi-engine patrol planes, where on one patrol near Victoria he spotted a Japanese submarine, inside the harbor.

Or, finally, **Jack Richey**, who by the age of 16 had three submarine combat patrols in the Pacific under his belt. The calmness required, while a couple of hundred feet under water, became second nature and likely had much to do with his serene demeanor and accomplishments as a real property planner and confident aviator.

I beg forgiveness from those so deserving of mention, and for not having enough time to write less...