

Arizona Rotorcraft Club Holds First Fly-In



Congratulations to our friends at the AZ Rotorcraft Club ([PRA15](#)) on a successful first fly-in! President Britta Penca, Secretary Mark Rhoades and the folks at [San Manuel Airport](#) were, by all accounts, hospitable hosts the weekend of April 17-18. CFI Marion Springer came from CA and got a ride with Britta in her tandem Air Command.

Marion commented on the [Rotary Wing Forum](#), "Four of us from Chapter 1 went to the fly-in...The weather was perfect and the company was good. There were 10 gyros, one of which was the beautiful shiny gyro that used to belong to Mike Schallmann. The new owner hasn't flown it yet."



"Britta took me for a hop in her two place Air Command tandem....it was a first for me to have another female gyro pilot fly me about. I'd ride with her again! The fly-in was the first for Chapter 15 and Britta and crew did a fine job."

Mark and Britta also reportedly housed a number of guests in their home for the weekend. We wish them all success in following up next year!

Norman Surplus (right) continues his quest to be the first to fly around the world in a gyroplane. He made India in late April, now has an all-time gyro distance record, and tweets regarding the photo below, "Norman Surplus being greeted by the staff at Jamshedpur Airport, India... (Cap Karanveer Chauhan) 2."



In one of his blog posts, Norm writes, "The weather for flying has been good - apart from the daily sauna on the ground whilst getting ready! I don't recall pre-flight checks during my early flight training in

Cumbria (England) make any mention of seeking out the nearest spare baggage trolley to keep the fuel in the shade until the very last minute before departure. Photo below of an Indian maintenance crew not sure where to start on this funny little aircraft."



Follow Norm's adventures, and view his daily tracking map, via www.gyroxgoesglobal.com.

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PRA Regional Report

NW/Mtn Rep Paul Plack



On April 22, the PRA Board of Directors met at Bensen Days in Florida and, for the first time, included Regional Reps via conference call. This is the first activity for the reps, with three regions participating so far.



New PRA President Scott Lewis comes across as a hard-headed businessman balanced with a likeable personality. The board has named him business manager for [Mentone Airport](#), which is now indirectly owned by PRA. Scott made it clear during the meeting that he's serious about a less casual atmosphere about unpaid use of the airport by campers and owners of aircraft. Leases will be clearly defined and enforced. If revenue opportunities have fallen through the cracks before at Mentone, it sounds as if those cracks will now be much tighter.

Among specific decisions taken by the directors, the time-to-climb contest will not be repeated at the annual convention, due to fairness and liability concerns. Discussion included possible social and travel activities for PRA members, a source of insurance for experimental rotorcraft enthusiasts, and creating a more outgoing, welcoming atmosphere at the annual convention this summer. Following some setbacks, the new PRA website may be ready to debut around the time of Mentone.

The two-hour meeting concluded with a brief discussion of matters related specifically to chapters. On behalf of the chapters in our region, I suggested a need for a better definition of the relationship between PRA and its chapters, a clear plan for how we interact with HQ to further the sport, and some guidance on best practices for starting, sustaining and, when necessary, nursing a chapter back to health. I mentioned a desire to network with leadership of chapters which have grown or otherwise overcome adversity, and was referred to some key folks making it happen in other regions. I'll keep you posted on the fruits of those contacts.

Bensen Days Highlights



The Sunstate Wing & Rotor Club (PRA26) has hosted Bensen Days for many years, and under the leadership of Sunstate President Scott Lewis, the event is on the rebound. While official attendance counts are unknown, it often looks bigger than the PRA annual convention in Mentone. While named for gyrocopter pioneer Igor Bensen, some have joked that it should be called "Dominator Days," since the proximity to the HQ of [Rotor Flight Dynamics](#) in Wimauma means Ernie Boyette's gyroplane models easily outnumber Bensen gyroplanes (*above*).



Some regulars on the Rotary Wing Forum who flew into Orlando got their rental cars, and met for ribs at [Smokey Bones](#) at lunchtime (*above*). Clockwise starting from the left are (URA member) Jeff Jones (CA); Tim "Animal" Heilig (NC, behind Jeff); Gabor Kovacs (FL); ROTR 2009 alumnus John Rountree (CA); URA webinar host Stan Foster (IL); and PRA Chapter Coordinator and ROTR 2008 alumnus Dave Bacon (CA). Four of these six guys have some connection to URA. Let's hope word spreads about ROTR! (*Continued on page 3.*)

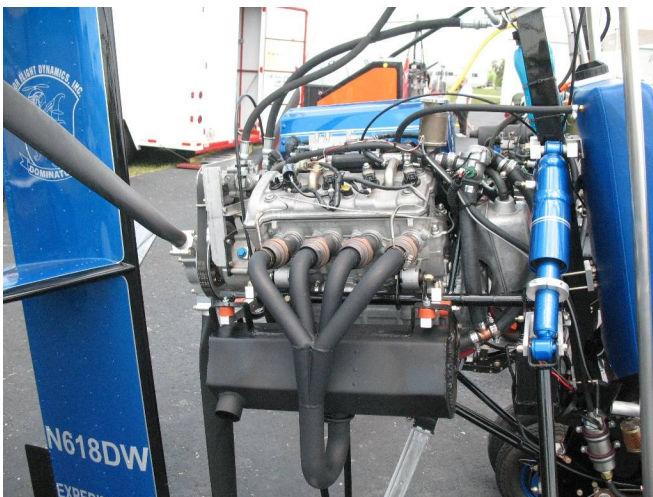


Wauchula Airport has nice facilities, including this big-top (*above*) for "chawing and jawin'."



Ron Awad, active PRA member and gyro enthusiast from the Charlotte, NC area, has been flying one of the early gyro [conversions](#) of the Yamaha

1L (120 HP) snowmobile engine. Ron has over 80 hours now without any major issues, and has carried passengers as large as 300 lbs. on his tandem Dominator.



Ernie Boyette of Rotor Flight Dynamics is experimenting with the four-cylinder version of this engine, rated at 150 HP. This clean, blue, Dominator tandem has a custom-made muffler and airbox, and reportedly does a good job at quieting the raucous sled motor, which makes max HP at 10K RPM.



Here's a rarity - a [Sport Copter Vortex](#) on the east coast. Alex Bantum's machine (*above*) is powered by a 100 HP Rotax 912, an option which comes from Sport Copter with a steel mast and welded engine mounts. Alex is based in Port St. Lucie, FL.



This Mosquito XEL ultralight helo on floats (*above*) was at Bensen Days, but we don't know the name of the owner. At 312 pounds, it's two pounds short of the FAA's Part 103 limit for float-equipped ULs.



This Butterfly Monarch (*above*) appears poised for the Egg-Drop Contest, for which Stan Foster was again the human target. Owned by Tim Verroi of SC, it carries Rotax 912 power. (*Continued on page 4.*)

Bensen Days (from page 3)

It's called the Sunstate Wing & Rotor Club because fixed-wing ultralights and PPCs are also welcome. They're confined mostly to dawn and dusk by typical Florida winds. Below, gyroplane enthusiast and videographer Tim Chick prepares for a flight with Laura Wood Pires (both of FL).



One of the highlights of this event every year is the group dinner at [Soloman's Castle](#). This tourist attraction, as eccentric as the artist who lives inside, began taking its ever-changing shape in 1972, after Howard Soloman dropped out of high school. He tells [RoadsideAmerica.com](#), "I hated school. My teachers told my parents I was borderline retarded."



Discovering a love for building, he set about creating his unique home, sided with cast-off aluminum printing plates. Most of the materials are recycled, but it's a credit to his talents that he has achieved something charming enough to command an admission fee. Most homes this odd attract condemnation notices!

Inside the home are innumerable art objects, also created from recycled materials, many featuring intricate welding, and most representing visual puns of some sort. On the tour, you notice the slowness of speech which no doubt led to the assessment of Howard's intellect once given to his parents, but his radiant and offbeat sense of humor are the lasting impression. The Bensen Days gang always winds up there for dinner, and never tires of the tour.

As the caravan of cars headed out for dinner at the castle from the Wauchula Airport, John Rountree reportedly made an unwise shortcut decision, and bounded his rental car through a ditch. When we first saw this picture, (right, top,) we feared John had been hit! He's just cleaning some excess sod out of the works. All's well that ends with a laugh!



The missing sod is visible above. We hope John bought the damage waiver!

Another funny moment came when Vance Breese (CA) got a lesson in riding a [Segway](#) scooter. It was supposed to be a secret, but someone spilled it, so Vance had to explain the incident on the Rotary Wing Forum, and said...

"Ernie (Boyette) was trying to teach me to operate the Segway and after some speed runs on the ramp suggested that I try some more vertical maneuvers. He directed me to the ditch at the edge of the apron.

"The down went well but on the up side after three pilot induced oscillations of increasing magnitude I was thrown some distance from the machine and in my opinion it tried to run me over. Dick was able to stop the machine before contact.

"I was not able to get up at first because I was paralyzed with laughter and several witnesses rushed to my aid imagining that I was injured and the laughter became infectious.

"Most of the witnesses were sworn to secrecy because we were all concerned with what (Edna) would think...I did not require repairs. The machine was undamaged. It was not a funny story. There were no pictures."



Chuck Beaty took these photos of two nice examples of the Bensen Gyrocopter, the aircraft (and designer) for which this event was named. (Above, and top of page 5.)



At the big, established fly-ins, it's not uncommon to see flying machines available to buy on the spot.



The tandem [Air Command](#) with CLT conversion above was listed at \$26K, including a set of rotorblades and the trailer. The Air Command single-place below was for sale for \$10K, also with blades, and the enclosed trailer seen behind the gyro. Just drive 'em away!



Ready-to-buy machines at a fly-in are good news and

bad news - you get to see it before you buy it, but you better know what you're looking at. Fortunately, at big fly-ins, there are plenty of unsolicited onlooker opinions on anything you'll be looking at. They're not all well-informed, but it's great to have all the input.



Bensen Days is the biggest gyro-oriented event in the US, and Sunstate President Scott Lewis says a big part of the success is activities for spouses and kids. The inflatable ride above is part of this effort.



Even the aerial view above, showing the Wauchula Airport during the event, doesn't do justice to the size of Bensen Days. This event has annual revenues in the thousands of dollars, and is still in its growth mode despite the economy. For enthusiasts in the east, the double draw of Bensen Days, and the [Sun 'n Fun](#) show at Lakeland, FL the week before, makes vacation priorities a no-brainer. If you want to dream big for ROTR, this is the target!

Thanks to the attendees whose photos and accounts, posted into public domain on the Rotary Wing Forum, made this review possible. They include Tim Chick, Gabor Kovacs, Tim O'Connor, Chuck Beaty and Vance Breese. Photo of Howard Solomon on p.4 courtesy of www.solomonscastle.org

Doug's Thoughts

URA President Doug Barker

As I was reading some posts on the forum tonight, I came across an accident thread where an accident that took the life of Alan Coates was announced. This accident happened back in 2006 so it is old news, but as I read through all the thoughts that were posted after people learned of his death, I pondered the question we all face when we choose involvement in a sport that has the potential to end our life. Alan was very involved in the rotorcraft community. He knew and understood the risks involved in his chosen sport and yet he chose to be involved anyway. We all need to be aware of the risks involved in flying rotorcraft. The risk to life can be managed and minimized but it can not be eliminated. The more we are aware of the risk factors and the more we consciously make wise choices in how we deal with them, the safer our sport will be.

While all accidental deaths should be considered tragic and it is even harder on those that are left behind to feel the loss of a loved one, there is another side to consider. Alan lived his life actively pursuing his dreams up until the day he died. As people talked about their memories of Alan it was apparent that next to his family, what Alan loved the most was flying and the gyroplane that he had built and been able to take into the sky. This love and passion for gyroplane flying was something that he shared with everyone he came in contact with. I couldn't count all the people that had memories of Alan being instrumental in helping them learn about the sport that they now loved as much as he had.

Far too many people die with their dreams still in them. While many people may look back on their life in retrospect and decide they spent way too much of their precious time in life trying to climb the corporate ladder or to get ahead financially so they could enjoy all the dreams they had inside them, few people will say I shouldn't have spent so much time with my family or I shouldn't have wasted my time pursuing my dreams in life. Most of us tend to take the conservative and practical approach to life and spend most of our life doing what we feel obligated to do. I would encourage you to dig down deep inside yourself and decide what is most important to you and what you really want to accomplish most in your life. What would be on your "bucket list"? Don't wait too late to start working on those items because none of us know how long we have here on this earth. One thing we can count on is that, before we know it, our turn here on earth will be over. The only thing we have much control over is what we do today.

I expect I will probably die an old man in my bed. But whether I die in a hospital bed in my 90s or in a tragic accident in my middle age years (hopefully doing what I love most if that is how I am meant to go), I hope that everyone around me knows what I

believed in and what was important to me. I hope my acquaintances and associates feel that I have been a positive influence and a good friend in their lives. I hope my friends and family all know how much I love them. And I hope that I will leave this life knowing that I lived my life to it's absolute fullest, that I have shared my dreams with anyone around me that was willing to listen, that I have helped and inspired others to live their lives to their best ability. Life just doesn't get better than that.

April Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 10:03am MDT by President Doug Barker at Airgyro, with six members in attendance. The March minutes were approved. Treasurer Nate Oldham was not in attendance, but provided Doug with a report showing a total of \$464.11 in all accounts. The report was approved.

Heath Lowry provided an update on the STABLE Foundation. Members gave progress reports on projects, and VP Curt Pittman offered an update on his hangar construction at Brigham City Airport.

It was decided to hold the May meeting at Curt's hangar at Brigham City. A motion to adjourn was accepted at 11:50am.

Next Meeting

URA's next meeting will be Saturday, May 8 at 10am MDT at the Brigham City Airport. This will be our last opportunity to survey the airport in person before ROTR in June. See Curt Pittman's new hangar, which will be our remote clubhouse for ROTR, and help us finalize the event map. If you come prepared to renew your membership for 2010-2011, your \$24 payment by check will conserve PayPal fees.

Directions: From I-15 take Utah exit 365, and head east. After 200 yards, turn left on Airport Road. Watch for a billboard (currently featuring Reba McEntyre) over the road; just before you reach it, turn right on 1800 N. Continue to a stop sign, and turn right on 200 W. Immediately turn left into Gate #2. Curt's hangar is a 40'-x-60', white and burgundy building just to the left of the gate as you drive in. On the south side of the hangar, as you pull in, you'll see a door with a URA logo on it. Curt asks that vehicles be parked on that side of the building, but the opposite side of the road. (South of the gate opening.)

We may need to have someone stationed at the airport gate to open it for arriving vehicles, so please plan to arrive promptly, so everyone can come inside for start of the meeting. We do not expect to be able to make this meeting available online or by phone due to limited facilities at the airport. If this changes, we'll notify members via e-mail.

Building Aircraft, Communities

URA Secretary Paul Plack

I bought a Sport Copter Vortex gyroplane kit from an estate sale a few years ago. I was on my own again after 29 years of marriage, and decided this was the perfect point in my life to build and fly a gyroplane.



In the five years since, I've lived through the collapse of the radio broadcast industry in which I used to make a good living, moved four times, including a move from Oregon to Utah, and have married Cindy, (*right*), a terrific woman I hadn't expected to meet. My circumstances and priorities have been reordered.

I recently concluded that my forlorn-looking "pile of aluminum tubes" in the garage was not destined to become a flying gyroplane anytime soon. It was time to get these valuable parts to someone who could use them. Out of the blue, I got a call from someone thousands of miles away, offering to buy the kit from me. I have now waved goodbye to the back of a rental truck, feeling a mix of relief and regret.

I still want to fly, still want a gyroplane, and could probably devise a financial scheme to make it work. But I'm not where I should be at age 56 financially, and cannot assure that Cindy would be able to carry on financially should something happen to me. If any of you have tried lately to buy life (or even accidental death and dismemberment) insurance, you've probably discovered that truthful disclosure of your intent to fly experimental rotorcraft causes the few options available to pilots to disappear.

So, my dream is again on hold for a while. If you're wondering why I'm telling you all this, it's because every one of you who dreams of flying a personal rotorcraft, but hasn't done it yet, probably shares some part of my story, whether it's financial, family priorities, or time and space to build a machine. If so, perhaps you'll also find commonality with what I'm trying to do to fill the gap until I am ready to build and fly a gyroplane. Build something else! In my case, it's an organization, and an event.

Finding the world's newest PRA chapter, and an enthusiastic and aggressive core of founders, was a very fortunate by-product of my move to Utah. I've since gotten more involved. You can, too - help build Rotors Over The Rockies.

ROTR is at a tipping point this year. Everyone who came in '08 and '09 went home raving about the great environment and friendly people. This year, we have a fantastic venue, nearby amenities, support from the city, and an unprecedented opportunity to show off our sport to newcomers.

And yet, we're not quite on-the-map enough to have attracted the resources taken for granted by the big fly-ins back east - multiple CFIs, a Designated Pilot Examiner, and support from gyro manufacturers. In order to get to the next level, we have to make this year's ROTR as big, successful, enjoyable, safe and famous as possible.



If you're not building or flying an experimental gyroplane or helicopter, build something else that will ensure a vibrant community when your turn comes. ROTR will need people willing to help arriving attendees find parking and camping spaces, answer the questions of what may be hundreds of visitors on Saturday morning, and to capture it all in photos and video to build for next year. If we maximize the potential this year, next year may be the event that a DPE or second CFI decides he can't afford to miss.

Building an event or organization cannot replace the satisfaction of building and flying a personal rotorcraft. But it certainly eases the sense of setback I feel in putting my dream on hold a couple years longer. It also is a concrete step I can take toward making flying more satisfying, affordable, safer and easier when I get there.

If you'd like to help build the support you'll need when your dream comes true, call Doug Barker now and ask for a place in this adventure, or e-mail info@utahrotorcraft.org. And build something!

Renewal Time!

Our current dues structure includes a consistent membership term which expires June 30 for all members, but there will be valuable discounts at ROTR which are available only to members who've renewed for the 2010-2011 membership year. If you take advantage of all the discounts, they add up to more than the \$24 cost of dues for the year!

You'll receive an e-mail soon with instructions on how you can do this either by mail, with a check, or online with a credit card or PayPal account. Online renewals will also feature a new option to make the renewal automatic in future years.

Gyros & Volcanos

Norman Surplus, who's currently engaged in the first circumnavigation of the globe in a gyroplane, got a little unexpected publicity from a cartoonist while UK airport were closed by that Icelandic volcano. On Monday, April 19, the Belfast Telegraph offered this whimsical solution for stranded tourists.



ROTR Update

As this newsletter is landing in your mailbox, there are roughly six weeks left before the start of Rotors Over The Rockies. The move to the new venue, while a huge improvement in our ability to offer an enjoyable time to our guests and reach newcomers, also brings with it new challenges. Many of the things we thought we had figured out at West Desert Airpark the last two years are no longer relevant. We're also adding a few things we've never tried before. These are tentative...

We're going to add awards. Categories on our tentative list include awards for the attendee who's traveled the farthest, a pilot and machine award judged by other pilots at the event, a crowd favorite chosen Saturday by attendees at the fly-in breakfast and airport open house, grand and reserve champions chosen by a URA committee, and the "Dead Dinosaur Award," a slightly politically incorrect

award for the aircraft we believe has done the most flying during the show.

These awards will be presented at a very casual closing banquet Saturday evening, with costs offset by donations. The tentative donation is \$12, or \$8 for URA members. We're also going to offer a hot breakfast free to URA members on Thursday and Friday mornings, and a \$10 per-night donation for hangar parking will also be waived for URA members.

A few things are coming off the agenda, the biggest of which is field trips, including organized group flights, and the Thursday tour of the maintenance facilities at Hill AFB. We'll see if we can make these happen next year.

ROTR Forum Lineup

The forum lineup for Rotors Over The Rockies is firming up, and days/times will be set shortly. Here are the forums and presenters we have confirmed:

Mountain Flying / Curt Pittman
Joint Ownership Options / Nate Oldham
Ultralight Gyroplanes / Doug Barker
Paths to a Gyro License / Mike Burton
Antenna Options / Paul Plack
Mosquito Helicopters / Rotors FX
Flying Helicopters / Whirlybird Helicopters
Butterfly Line of Gyros / Doug Barker

Final schedule will be released the week of May 10.

Newsletter Growth

Can you spot the one thing every newspaper and aviation magazine has, that this newsletter does not? Here's a hint. Salt Lake has two daily newspapers, the *Tribune* and the *Deseret News*. EAA publishes *Sport Aviation*. AOPA publishes *AOPA Pilot*. PRA's now part of *Powered Sport Flying*.

We have..."the newsletter." It's about time it had a name! Let's brainstorm some possibilities, within these three guidelines:

- (1) The name has to make sense to enthusiasts both in Utah and out-of-state.
- (2) The name has to "sound like home" for both gyroplane and helicopter enthusiasts.
- (3) Let's try for one-to-three words in length.

We're also working on closer ties with other chapters in the west, to allow bringing you more photos and stories about flying and building rotorcraft from elsewhere in the Northwest/Mountain Region.

This newsletter is published monthly by the Utah Rotorcraft Association, LLC, edited by Paul Plack. Submissions welcome: secretary@utahrotorcraft.org.