

The Manager's Approach



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Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports

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Where We Stand With Hangar Projects

As most of our airport tenants know, I have been working on getting hangars built at both Columbia and Pine Mountain Lake Airports for a couple of years now. At the outset, I never realized what hurdles would have to be jumped in order to get the hangars built. The full story of the difficulties I've faced would be way too long for this newsletter. Therefore, I'm going to provide as bullet points some of the issues that had to be resolved first.

- Needed to prepare a PML Master Plan
- There was no PML hangar layout
- An existing TUD waterline conflicted with proposed hangars at Columbia
- There is a lack of adequate fire flow at both airports
- New building codes are being adopted
- The previous hangar RFP required significant revision
- Need to establishing a balance between corporate and private needs
- Need to establish a policy of using private industry to develop hangars

As I write this newsletter we are in the process of relocating a TUD waterline and construction an extension to Taxiway Charlie. Once completed, this will open up the south side of Runway 11-29 for new hangars. At PML the FAA has finally replied to the submitted Airport Layout Plan, clearing the way to hangar development there. And finally, California will begin using the International Building Code as of January 1, 2008 which should relax some of the fire protection requirements for aircraft storage hangars.

It has been a long process but I think we are getting very close to getting new hangars constructed.

Using Your Debit Card at the Fuel Island

There have been several instances where pilots have come into my office complaining that the fuel pump charged their debit card \$750 for filling up their little plane. I talked to Bald Eagle Aviation about this and got the following explanation.

If you use your debit card and also select the "FILL UP" option the system automatically commits the maximum dollar value of an allowed fill-up to your card because at the outset, the pump won't limit the amount of fuel you can purchase, only the dollar value which is \$750. Once the transaction clears the bank the exact amount of the purchase will replace the \$750 initially committed amount.

A way around this is to select "GALLONS" and then put in the number of gallons you want to purchase. Say you select 20 gallons, the purchase will be limited to the dollar amount of 20 gallons and that will be electronically sent to the bank. Selecting "DOLLARS" essentially does the same thing, but I log my fuel by gallons so it is much easier to have the pump just stop at the selected gallons, making refueling less complicated.

I hope pilots find this information useful and you might pass it on to other pilots so they don't find themselves panicking over a \$750 fill-up in their Piper Cub.

Landing on Columbia Airport's Runway 11

I get the feeling that there are a number of pilots that are not aware that Runway 11 is an active runway and that it is ok to land on it. Columbia Airport's policy is that take-offs on Runway 11 are prohibited and landing are discouraged because of the potential conflict with aircraft using Runway 17-35 in the event of a need to go around. However, when the wind kicks up and is blowing right down Runway 11 it should be the runway of choice for many pilots depending on their aircraft and the condition of the runway. If you fly an aircraft with small tires and a high landing speed or if it has been raining cats and dogs for a couple of days you might choose the paved runway. But if you fly a Piper, Beech, Cessna, Grumman, Mooney, or other production plane, and the conditions right, the grass runway is usually perfectly suitable for landing.

Keep in mind that the grass is much more forgiving of sloppy landings and the added rolling friction of the grass will slow you down without even having to apply your brakes. I encourage all our pilots to make a landing on the grass runway a couple times a year just to stay comfortable with the runway. Choosing to do a take-off on the grass strip is a whole different issue which takes more planning and caution. Runway 29 is only 2,600' long, the rolling resistance is much greater, density altitude will degrade your performance and there is rising terrain off the end of Runway.

Stupid Pilot Tricks

Not All Aircraft Doors Are Equal

My aircraft is a little on the unique side and thus attracts people that want to take a closer look at the metalized Piper Cub which I refer to as the Chrome Cub. One unique feature of my aircraft is the seaplane door which opens upward instead of forward. The door is held open by an over-center linkage whose purpose is strictly to hold the

door up and out of the way. There is not spring or gas strut that holds the door open, only the simple over-center link. For over 10 years this hold-open device has worked flawlessly.

On the hottest of days, I leave the door and window open to keep the inside of the aircraft cooler. I also keep the door open at aviation events so that people can look inside my plane if they like. One hot day last month I had my Cub parked on the ramp at Columbia with the door open. When I went to my plane to fly home I noticed the door "half way" open, a position that is impossible to achieve under normal operation. Upon closer inspection I noticed that the over-center link was completely bent, apparently by someone that that tried to close the door by pulling down on it rather than flipping up the hold-open linkage. My door was stuck half way open. The only thing I could do was to get some tools and remove the bent linkage which would allow the door to close but not stay open. A couple of days later I repaired the damage.

I have no way of knowing who damaged my plane but I want to emphasize that aircraft doors are not like car doors. Each manufacturer has its own hold open device. Aircraft door hinges are subject to wear. Most aircraft owners have their own preferred way of closing their doors. Don't go closing aircraft doors unless you are fully familiar with that particular door. Otherwise, you could cause some damage that could ground that aircraft and cause unwanted expense to the owner.

The Manager's Approach is a monthly publication from the Tuolumne County Airports Director for the purpose of keeping our community informed of local aviation and airport issues. You can contact me at:

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