

# The Manager's Approach



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Columbia & Pine Mountain Lake Airports

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## *Airport Markings Change*

The last task associated with the frequency change at Pine Mountain Lake Airport was completed when the Central Valley Chapter of the 99s changed the airport markings to reflect the new CTAF of 122.9. The Airports Department provided the highway paint and rollers while the 99s laid out and painted the new numbers. I would like to extend my thanks to Terry Kirby, Pat Titus and Dianne Cole for coordinating the 99s effort.



## *Final Draft of the Reserved Space Permit Issue*

In last month's Manager's Approach I wrote about the new Reserved Space Permit that is being finalized and that will be going to the Board of Supervisors for approval in the near future. Copies of the final draft of the Permit are available for review at my office, at Bald Eagle and at the PML Airport pilot's lounge. The one requirement in the new Permit that prompts the most calls is the

requirement that the aircraft stored in the hangar must be owned by the hangar lessee. This provision was included as a measure to prevent the subleasing of the hangars by the lessee.

One of the biggest complaints I hear is that there are several people that lease hangars but don't own a plane and/or they don't fly any more. When a hangar lessee has the ability to sublease then the Airports Department cannot implement a fair and equitable hangar leasing program. Also, there is no way the Airports Department can assure that a particular lessee is not subleasing the hangar at a higher rate, thus making a profit on his hangar lease.

I have been asked what constitutes proof of aircraft ownership. Being an engineer and not a lawyer I don't speak legalese too well, so if I cannot understand the legal relationship between who is leasing a hangar and who owns the airplane inside, you can bet I'll go to County Counsel and get him to figure it out. Any relationship that is too convoluted will be suspect.

We are long over due for a clean-up of our hangar leasing policy and the abuses that have evolved over the past years must be corrected. I know this will be unpopular with some but it will be the only way the County can gain control of our hangar leasing and implement a fair leasing program.

## *Eagle Scout Project Uses Winged Approach to Gopher Problem*

Normally gophers are not too much of a problem at airports because gophers don't usually chew through asphalt. But, at

Columbia Airport our grass runway and adjacent dirt apron are prime habitat for the little rodents. As the gophers daylight their holes the dirt piles up making a bump in the runway. The piles of dirt also kill the underlying grass. In past years Columbia Airport has used gopher bait to control the gopher population. This year we are trying a new method thanks to Harrison Young of Troop 502 who has installed four owl boxes in the trees along the grass runway as a part of his Eagle Scout Project. It is our hope that four hungry barn owls will occupy the new houses and then make an evening feast of our rodent population. Literature suggests that barn owls will eat their weight in rodents every day. The beauty of this natural control method is that owls are nocturnal animals and the grass runway is not lighted. The owls will be feeding when there is no aircraft activity. If all goes well the grass runway will be gopher free this summer, thanks to Harrison's efforts.



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## *Stupid Pilot Tricks*

### *The Most Dangerous Flight*

I am in the process of completing the annual on my Cub and will I ever be happy to be back in the air. This driving to work stuff is getting to me. Although I am anxious to get back in the air, I know enough to be very

cautious during my first flight after the annual. I have told many pilots and airplane owners it is my opinion that one of the most dangerous flights you may make is the one immediately after someone has worked on your plane. Now don't get me wrong here; I'm not implying that aircraft mechanics aren't very skilled, capable and conscientious, because I believe they are. My point is that between your last flight and the next flight things on your plane were removed, replaced, readjusted, repaired, and reinstalled. In other words your plane is not the same as it was when you last flew it. I believe an aircraft should be test flown after each annual or after any significant maintenance has been performed.

I personally witnessed what I thought was a pretty stupid move when a pilot who had just had his engine completely rebuilt took his first flight over rugged mountains carrying 3 of his friends. That didn't strike me as a very appropriate test flight, especially since the entire engine and propeller had been removed and replaced.

We all want to utilize our aircraft as much as practical, but we need to temper our desire to fly somewhere with the potential dangers resulting from recent maintenance. Treat your first flight after maintenance as a test flight. Anticipate that something might go wrong. Monitor your gauges, and don't stray too far from the airport. Hopefully your test flight will be uneventful.

*Stupid Pilot Tricks is a monthly article that attempts to raise awareness of safety and courtesy issues around our airports.*

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*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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