



# MDPA News

Mount Diablo Pilots Association  
Buchanan Field, Concord, California

March 2015

[activities@mdpa.org](mailto:activities@mdpa.org)

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## Inside This Issue

February Breakfast and Safety Forum .....	1-4
February Meeting and Monthly Dinner .....	5-6
Public Notice .....	6

## MDPA Calendar Upcoming Events

### March

**7** Breakfast & Flyout  
to Watts-Woodland  
"Take instructor to  
lunch"

**20** Meeting and St.  
Patrick's Day Theme  
Dinner

### April

**4** Breakfast & Flyout  
to Boonville "Keith  
Freitas Talk"

**17** Meeting and Dinner

### May

**2** Breakfast & Flyout  
to Auburn "Mentor a  
Student Pilot"

**15** Meeting and Dinner

## MDPA BREAKFAST AND SAFETY FORUM, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2015

*By John Potter*

### **BREAKFAST**

We again had standard "Costco" chow, but since the crew mutinied last month when it came to putting out eggs-to-order, this time I put out the tabletop range on the conference table away from the confusion of the kitchen and got anyone wanting eggs DIY (to do it yourself). That really worked! A large "chatting" crowd gathered around the ranges and I only cooked my own. Russ Atkinson, Ron Lem, Kevin (SinL of Doug) and Lyman Dennis put out a splendid breakfast with home-made "grits" from the Elaine Yeary's own kitchen.

*\*Note: The club policy is to deliver leftover food from the dinners and breakfasts to a needy family. Not much was left over this time.*

Head Cooks:

7 March - Lyman Dennis  
4 April - Knute Fisher  
2 May - Johannes Verhoek

### **ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

#### MDPA President's Remarks

Bob Weiss covered the club planning for the year's events and specifically talked about the upcoming Instructor's session in March.

#### Cleanup

Now that was a great cleanup! It went fast and I didn't find any missed areas on final inspection. "It takes a village," guys and gals!

## Treasurer

Elaine reminded everyone that she is taking the 2015 dues: \$45 for members and \$25 for students

## Other

The pilots were asked about what temperature they warmed their engines up to before adding full power for take-off. What a mix of answers! (I doubt that many of them matched their POM.) This subject came up in one of my daily reviews of the Commander Owners Group web board discussions. One owner could not figure out why his engine was suffering repeated valve/head repairs----he had been starting and immediately taxied out and went to full power for take-off. (I personally get the temperature into the "green" first.)

I noted that the club Bylaws/Constitution were up on the website (thanks to Bob Torrey, at my request). In the early '90s they were written to replace the originals of 1976 when we first came to the clubhouse. It was done by Dave Evans, Bruce Arrigoni, Gary Cecchi and myself. There was a great deal of locked debate/ controversy in getting them completed - such is democracy! Someone in the audience asked why it was important - and I responded that it described what we as a club should be doing in conducting business and that we had some items to work on.

## **SAFETY FORUM**

### **The Moderator, Tom Hammitt**

Tom provided a series of stories about things that he had experienced in flying which were sometimes bizarre and on occasion dangerous. In Tom's own words (unabridged) - this was his message.

### **MAKING THE GO/NO-GO DECISION**

*by Tom Hammitt*

Probably all of us have canceled flights because of poor weather, equipment problems, illness or other reasons. Speaking for myself alone, whether or not to go has always been a visceral or "gut" decision. Instead of rationally considering a list of specific factors (such as the FAA's "IMSAFE" checklist), there just comes a point where enough is stacked against a flight that "no-go" simply feels like the wiser choice. But too many pilots have ended up in the ground by making a gut decision to go when they should have scrubbed the flight.

So can we improve our go/no-go decision making? There is no definitive roadmap, otherwise it would not be a judgment call. However, by assembling an outline of the most common factors that may be involved, we at least can apply our gut instincts to a more completely considered set of circumstances in making go/no-go decision.

This was the subject of the discussion at the February 7 MDPA safety meeting, for which I prepared the outline that follows. In considering these issues, it struck me how differently we might apply our judgment to a casual flight from the home airport than on an extended cross-country, where deciding not to go could mean a long layover in some desolate place you had only intended as a fuel stop. But it's when the urge to go is the greatest that the no-go factors perhaps should be considered most strongly - when a judicious exercise of discretion may well be the better part of our valor.



## 1. The Weather

- a. Unfamiliar parts of the country increase your personal minimums - Problem of lack of personal local knowledge is compounded by the increasing scarcity of weather briefings given by briefers who actually reside in the area.
- b. Look at forecast pessimistically - can you make it if the deterioration is faster or worse, or if the improvement does not occur? Is the weather behind you improving or deteriorating? (Example: Jessica Dubroff, the “7-yr. old pilot” from Half Moon Bay who, along with her father and flight instructor, died in a takeoff crash while attempting to stay ahead of advancing thunderstorms.)
- c. Wind, turbulence concerns



## 2. The Passengers

- a. Are they comfortable with the plan?
- b. Are they comfortable enough with flying for the plan?
- c. Are they trying to force you to go? (Example: JFK Jr.'s fatal flight to Martha's Vineyard for a wedding was intended as a daytime flight but became a night flight because of passenger delays)
- d. Potential effect of nervous/scared passengers on pilot's mental function. Do you carry sick sacks and Dramamine?
- e. Are your passengers getting along? Are you getting along with them? How do they respond to scary flights - commotion in flight or later, on the ground?

## 3. The Mission

How important is sticking to the schedule? What are the consequences of delay?

## 4. The Airplane

Pressure to go even when problems develop

- a. Excessive magneto drop, unclearable spark plugs
- b. Rough-running engine
- c. Big nick in a propeller blade
- d. Excessive oil leaks
- e. Inoperative radios, compass, or flight instruments
- f. Seat that doesn't want to stay locked in its track
- g. Aircraft's capabilities - loading, density altitude - but performance limitations can dictate a no-go decision unless you lighten the load or reschedule your departure for early or late in the day

## 5. The Pilot

### a. Preflighting the brain:

- 1) Distraction/Depression - We can't seem to focus on tasks at hand; we absentmindedly flip a switch or turn a knob without really thinking about what we're doing.
- 2) Muddled thoughts - When we've been sick or short of sleep our brain has a tendency to coast. It seems to struggle with things that we usually don't even have to think about.
- 3) Mental fatigue - Intense day? Mental fatigue is an insidious thief of your ability to think, and you don't even know it's happening until you start making obvious mistakes. The basic rule here is to understand that you can't judge your own level of fatigue. It has to be severe to be noticeable.
- 4) Emotional interplay - Emotional distress may be the biggest contributor to distraction, and no one is immune to its effects.
- 5) Apprehension - Power of apprehension - happens when forced outside of your comfort zone. Even though it's necessary to expand your personal envelope over time. Especially in unfamiliar parts of the country, legally flyable weather, but it's not flyable weather for you. In the worst case, the step next step is anxiety, next is fear, next is panic.

### b. Preflighting the Body:

- 1) Pain or fatigue
- 2) Prescription and over-the-counter medications can invalidate your medical. AOPA's Medical Certification Department has compiled a searchable database of medications that is available on AOPA Online.

Of course there are any number of other factors, and it's not realistic to use any outline as a definitive roadmap. But by considering a better articulated list of factors, hopefully we can apply our judgment in a better "informed"\* way, and make better and safer decisions.



#### **COMMENT:**

If I had applied all of Tom's criteria absolutely, I would not have gone many places. Calibrated risk is a reality of being a pilot, and has to be practiced. \*I modified the "informed" with quotes. JLP

The Take-Away for MDPA from the Safety Forums

**---We must look out for each other---create an MDPA "safety culture" ----**

## MDPA MEETING AND DINNER, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 6:30PM

*by Maureen Bell*

As you can tell, most of the group were so interested with the presentation that I didn't dare stand in front to take any photos! We enjoyed a great video on the sub-orbital space program and MJ Marggraff's work with it. It is always good to see someone who started as a student at Concord go on to bigger and better things.



MJ Marggraff is in Mission Support assisting a sub-orbital team for Virgin Galactic in upcoming space flight for civilian astronauts. She is on the list for a trip into suborbital space on which she explains, she will take along research that will help others here on Earth.

MJ is a commercial pilot, and she has earned certifications as both flight and ground instructor. Her dreams to become a pilot and venture into space took their first steps when she began her first flight lesson eleven years ago, in her forties. MJ says learning to fly and becoming an astronaut was a childhood dream. "Funny thing about dreams, they never really go away. Now I will one day be

part of a missing into sub-orbital space. My finest dream yet."

Prior to that, MJ has held management positions in high-tech and biotech and is an alumna of the University of California and Indiana University.

She volunteers for the Space Station Museum of Novato to demonstrate space and science, and promote STEM education, She is the recent winner of the 2014 New Space competition by Made in Space.

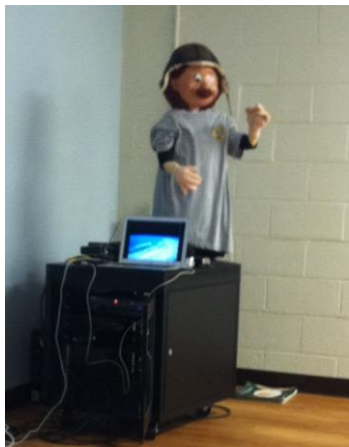
She is the author of "100 Things to Make a Difference" and "Time for a lift", based on true events when she reconnected with her dream of learning to fly at a time her family included children, 8 and 10, and she was in her 40's. While she doesn't expect all her readers will take up flying, the message is finding your passion in like is a necessity.



MJ and Maureen with Andrea Achelis, Bill Landstra and Tony Tiritelli in the background.



The Little Man welcomes everyone.



⇒  
Bob Tucknott,  
Pierre Bidou  
and Bob Belshe.

Next month get ready for a St. Patrick's Day party. Put on your green and plan to have an Irish jig with your corned beef and cabbage!



## PUBLIC NOTICE



THE PUBLIC IS INVITED TO SEE AIRCRAFT ON DISPLAY AT THE JOINT CLUBHOUSE FACILITY LOCATED AT 200 SALLY RIDE DR CONCORD FROM THE HOURS OF 8:30 AM TO 12:30 PM.

THIS OCCURS MONTHLY ON THE FIRST SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH AND IS FREE OF CHARGE.

PLEASE COME AND ENJOY THIS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO GET UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH LOCALLY OWNED AND OPERATED VINTAGE AIRCRAFT.

The Mount Diablo Pilots Association is a non-profit organization based at Buchanan Field in Concord, California (KCCR).

The purposes of the Mount Diablo Pilots' Association are:

- To promote good public relations between general aviation enthusiasts and the local community
- To encourage participation in fly-ins and other aviation activities
- To promote *safety* and educational activities for pilots
- To provide mutual resources of information on flying for members
- To furnish information and support to the Contra Costa Airport Advisory Committee and other governmental agencies concerned with aviation
- To be a proxy on aviation matters of community concern for its membership

The MDPA clubhouse is located at 200 Sally Ride Drive in Concord, California,

*do not send mail to the clubhouse address, use the USPS address instead:*

Mount Diablo Pilots Association

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[www.mdpa.org](http://www.mdpa.org)