

# Airport Advocate

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2010

VOLUNTEERS PROMOTING - PRESERVING AND PROTECTING CALIFORNIA'S AIRPORTS

# CALPILOTS



Official Publication of the



## CALIFORNIA PILOTS ASSOCIATION

### **GNOSS FIELD COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION**

by Mark Sheron

President - Gness Field Community Association

Gness Field Community Association (GFCA) was formed February 2, 2009 to fill a need at our



*Gness Field, Novato CA.*

airport, Gness Field, located in Novato. It was clear to those of us who acted to form GFCA that we needed to organize ourselves if we were going to have a voice in advocating for our airport. We decided to put Community in our name because we thought it was important to inform Marin County that their airport was an important resource and integral part of the local fabric.

Before we went ahead with our vision for GFCA, we had to know if the idea had legs. Would the men and women directly involved with the airport support our concept? The airport manager, Ken Robbins, provided us with a data base of hangar owners and renter's of tie-downs and hangars. We prepared a survey questionnaire designed to get an idea of their concerns, affiliations, preferences etc. and whether they would be supportive of an organization such as we were contemplating. The response was an overwhelming yes. That was our signal to proceed with writing By Laws and holding the first general meeting of our potential membership. Using the

Before we went ahead with our vision for GFCA, we had to know if the idea

**CALIFORNIA PILOTS ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Name..... Home Airport.....

Address..... City..... State..... Zip.....-

Home Phone..... Cell.....

E-Mail..... Aircraft..... N#.....

Membership Type: Please circle one  New  Renewal  Individual \$35  Lifetime \$500

Pilot Organization \$50  Aviation Business \$50  Business Partnership \$250

VISA  MasterCard or  Check

Card #..... Exp. Date.....

Signature..... Date.....

CALPILOTS is a 501(c)(3) organization - membership dues and donations are tax deductible.

Donations: \$\_\_\_\_\_ \*Pilot PAC: \$\_\_\_\_\_ (not tax deductible)

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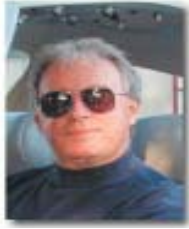
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## TRANSLATING AVIATION

ED ROSIAK - PRESIDENT  
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I have often said that the worst place for a non-aviator to be is in a room full of aviators.

That statement holds true for any situation where one is not part of the “*in-crowd*”. Take your spouse or significant other’s office party as an example. We don’t understand their *business language*, so we *noni-n-crowd types* desperately seek out other lost souls we can talk to even though it is the only thing we have in common. Same has to be true for our non-aviator friends and colleagues - don’t you think?

In my high tech career I was responsible for various very high tech groups of “technoweenies” as I used to affectionately call them. My job was to translate what the techie types wanted to do, to top management, who typically had little technical expertise, i.e., how does the technology apply to making money for the company?

A few months ago it suddenly became clear to me that as a group, we aviators need to do the same thing, helping non-aviators understand what we do, why we do it, and why it’s important to protect our airports. We need to translate it in terms they will understand.

In November I was the keynote speaker at the Watsonville Regional Airport Promotion (WRAP) dinner, which is their Political Action Committee (PAC) fund raiser. This year, four out of the six City Council members were there, the County Supervisor, and even the Mayor - *who is not known for his airport support* - was in attendance, along with several other community groups, airport neighbors and a lot of aviators too. This Watsonville group should

be proud of their efforts, as this annual fund raising dinner has become one of *the* social and political “places to be”.

When WRAP’s leader, Dan Chauvet who has penned a number of columns in this publication, advised me of the special guest list it started me thinking how best to use this opportunity to reach the public officials in attendance.

Our past presentation was designed to inspire the state’s pilots; this one had to be educational to all. As a result, CALPILOTS developed a new traveling presentation called *Airports 101*. It is aimed at non-aviators, as well as aviators, to assist in the airport promotion and educational processes. It was a success.

The challenge with *Airports 101* was to make it informative without becoming one sided, and too long. We started over with this presentation and we spent a lot of time on it. We have to advise the aviators up front that the presentation is for everyone in the room and while some of it is basic knowledge, it is that knowledge that non-aviators need to understand. As aviators, we must also understand how to educate our airport sponsor (county/city), as well as the airport’s neighbors, so everyone is at an equal level of understanding of the subject, and nothing is lost in lack of translation.

We are continuing to work on *Airports 101* and will make it available in MS Power Point *with notes*, to pilot/airport groups, in the near future. It is time for our non-aviator friends to learn what a Traffic Pattern is, and why: aircraft may fly different routes due to wind shifts, cross wind runways are important, and what an instrument approach is and how all of these and many more topics affect the airport. Fact is, the airport discussion becomes much better when everyone comprehends the language.

## ELK GROVE AIRPORT CASE HEADED TO CA SUPREME COURT

RICK RADIN - THE CONTRA COSTA TIMES

When amateur pilot and flight instructor Kevin Cordes sold his house in 2006 for three times what he paid for it, he moved into something a little more spacious: an airplane hangar. He said he would've had a near-impossible time finding a vacant hangar at any other small airport, but the Sunset Sky ranch Airport just outside Elk Grove's city limits didn't exactly have a flood of new tenants.

"Being that (the airport) is on the verge of disappearing ... it's a little bit easier to get a hangar there," said Cordes, who is now president of the Sunset Sky ranch Pilots Association.

The future of the airport, which started with a single dirt runway in the 1930s, has been uncertain since early 2006, when the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors voted not to renew its use permit, citing encroaching urban development and Elk Grove Unified School District's desire at the time to build an elementary school nearby.

The pilots at Sunset Sky ranch organized, pooled their money, and sued.

Lanny Winberry, the pilots' attorney, said in a phone interview if the county plans to ground traffic to and from the airport to make way for other development, the environmental impacts of that development must be studied.

County attorneys disagreed, and next month, the California Supreme Court will decide. In July 2008, a state appeals court sided with the pilots, saying an environmental study was required.

Last week, Cordes went before the Elk Grove



*Elk Grove Airport, Elk Grove, CA.*

City Council to ask that a letter be sent to the county requesting it place the push to close the airport on hold.

The airport is located in the area of Elk Grove's proposed Sphere of Influence expansion, and if the expansion is approved, the city would have a say in the airport's future.

Elk Grove Council Member Sophia Scherman, who was a part of the 2005 council that sent a letter to Sacramento County asking the proposed elementary school not be approved as long as the airport continues to operate, said a letter to Sacramento County now wouldn't produce results.

"It would not be a very good idea – stepping on another agency's toes," Scherman said. "We have to just wait and see what the court says."

Sacramento County Supervisor Don Nottoli said in a phone interview he would be open to discussing Elk Grove's future plans for the airport if the city expressed interest.

Danny Lang, a pilot who practices law in Oregon, owns the airport. He has promised to will the airport to Elk Grove if the city can keep it operating for 20 years after his death. Lang could not be reached for comment as of press time.

### **Disagreement remains**

For many years, the Sunset Sky ranch Airport

*Continued Page 5*



*Elk Grove continued*

didn't need a use permit from Sacramento County to operate. When it came before the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors for a permit in 1999, it was given a five-year permit instead of the customary 10-year permit. Supervisors and county staff said in 2006 that the permit was given a shorter time span so that the level of urbanization around the airport could be re-evaluated once the permit was up for renewal.

Scherman and some supervisors said it was made clear that the airport would be shut down at the end of the five-year permit, but others disagree.

Nottoli, whose district includes Elk Grove and the airport, said at a 2006 meeting that the fate of the airport had not been predetermined.

"It was my view that it was not definitive as to what the outcome would be at the end of the five years," he said at the meeting. "It left it open to question, and maybe that wasn't such a good thing ... because there's dispute about that."

Nottoli was the sole dissenting vote when the airport's permit was not renewed. He said the decision was too abrupt, and the pilots should be given more time to look into alternatives.

In an Oct. 21 phone interview, Nottoli said it has since become more difficult to make the argument that airport stands in the way of immediate development.

"I do think the reality of such is that things just aren't moving like they were in '06," he said, adding that there may be current concerns about noise from the airplanes.

He said if the county is required to perform an environmental analysis of the area, there will be an additional cost that will have to be

considered by the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors.

**Supporters cite commerce benefits**

In addition to trying to get the Elk Grove City Council behind his cause, Cordes has tried to build support for the airport by holding an open house and speaking to local high school students.

Cordes said he spoke to six different Elk Grove High School math classes about aviation and offered every student a free ride in his airplane.

Only one student from the classes called him. A second, from Monterey Trail High School, also asked for a ride.

"Maybe aviation isn't cool to these kids," Cordes said. "If I was a kid I would've jumped at it."

Ed Rosiak, president of the California Pilots Association, said this situation isn't unique to Sunset Sky ranch. Small airports all over the country are under pressure from encroaching development, he said.

"The rest of the states are watching to see what's going (to happen) here," Rosiak said in a phone interview. "What people don't get is airports aren't playgrounds – they're infrastructure."

Pilot Bob Lessman, who has been at the Sunset Sky ranch Airport for about 30 years, said the airport attracts business traffic.

"(The airport has) some pretty high-dollar airplanes flying in, hauling in architects, contractors ... and people flying in from all over," he said. "It's not just a bunch of rich guys out there with their hobby."

*To read a previous article about this airport visit our web site and search for Elk Grove.*

## WRAP DINNER A SUCCESS

BY STEVE BANKHEAD - PAJARONIAN

The Watsonville Regional Airport Promotion (WRAP) political action committee held its annual fundraiser dinner November 7th at the Green Valley Grill. WRAP chairman Dan Chauvet welcomed a full banquet room of guests including Supervisor Ellen Pirie, Watsonville Mayor Antonio Rivas, city council members Nancy Bilicich, Greg Caput, and Emilio Martinez, Mid-County Post editor Linda Fridy, Joe Pendry, Sharon Gray, Elias Alonzo, Nick Rivera, plus a host of other local residents and pilots.

Emcee Grant Wrathall introduced a series of guest speakers, beginning with Salinas city councilwoman Janet Barnes who discussed her candidacy in the Democratic primary election for the 28th Assembly District, in which she's opposing Watsonville city councilman Luis Alejo. She also shared her many years as a teacher, and strong support for community airports.

Next was Community Health Trust CEO Kathleen King and Edward Din presenting their organization's first annual humanitarian award, with this year's recipient being the Angel Flight program. This nationwide organization of volunteer pilots is one which "gives hope wings" by providing free flights for people needing medical and other needed services at distant locations. Mayor Rivas also presented a proclamation to the organization, with pilot Rayvon Williams accepting both honors for local participating pilots.

Sacramento-based aviation lobbyist Kathy Lynch provided an update on the political state of the state, offering hope for the possibility of major structural reform next year through various ballot measures. California Pilots Association president Ed Rosiak then closed the evening



*City council members Emilio Martinez, Greg Caput and Nancy Bilicich watch as volunteer pilot Rayvon Williams receives a proclamation from Mayor Antonio Rivas honoring the Angel Flight program.*

with a power point slide presentation demonstrating how airports are community assets, and how airports and local government can work together to their mutual benefit through the formation of an Airport Land Use Commission and other cooperative approaches.



*WRAP chairman Dan Chauvet (seated) with airport fundraiser speakers Ed Rosiak, Kathy Lynch and Janet Barnes.*

For more information on WRAP go to the Watsonville Pilot Association web site at <http://www.watsonvillepilots.org/>

*Gross Field Continued from Page 1*

email addresses we obtained from the responses to our survey we sent an invitation to everyone that had responded that they were open to further contact.

We had a gratifying turnout and we were off and running. We elected a Board of Directors and Officers, set up a dues structure and began signing up members. Today, about one year out, we have over 90 dues paying members.

We began with monthly general meetings and created committees to deal with Social Events, Community Relations, Airport Maintenance, Membership, Political Action, Airport Budget, and Safety/Education.

One of the ideas that came through loud and clear from the surveys was a desire for people at the airport to have a vehicle where they could meet each other and talk airplanes. So our Social Committee and our Safety/Education Committee joined forces to create a once a month Saturday morning breakfast and safety seminar. These breakfasts have been held successfully for several months now with expert chef, Matt Mitchell and safety guru, Vince Siebern presiding. We also had a terrific barbeque/kick off party this summer that was very well attended.

We saw the need to create a website to facilitate communication with the membership and to provide links to weather and other resources. GFCA member Bob Minkin, ace website designer, stepped up to the plate and created [www.grossfield.org](http://www.grossfield.org). Webperception, a Novato ISP, donated web services. Check it out.

Our Maintenance Committee has established a dialog with the Airport Manager to voice our concerns regarding such issues as cracks in the

asphalt between the hangars and on the runway and the threat of flooding. Gness field is currently protected by dilapidated levees and a pump in a similar state of disrepair.

Our Political Action Committee met with Marin County Supervisor Judy Arnold. She graciously agreed to attend a general meeting of GFCA along with Department of Public Works Manager, Farhad Mansurian. Supervisor Arnold has toured the airport and clearly understands the role that Gness Field plays in Marin County. She has shown her support by nominating GFCA Board member, Lou Franecke, to the Aviation Commission which is an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors. GFCA is active in Promoting Gness Field as an integral part of the County Disaster/Emergency Plan. We think it was a mistake not to include the many resources that an airport can provide in an emergency into the existing Plan. In addition, Supervisor Arnold wrote an article for the local newspaper, *the Novato Advance*, informing the public about the role of Gness Field in the community and the role of GFCA in particular. She is a great champion of our airport.

The Budget Committee has been working to understand the procedures by which the County funds Gness operations. We have pointed out to the County that over \$600,000 in taxes are generated by our aircraft that go to Novato schools and to the County general fund. As and Enterprise Fund, Gness Field is supposed to be self sustaining, however, should funds generated from hangar and tie-down rentals be insufficient for proper maintenance and operations, any shortfall should be made up from the General Fund.

Our Community Relations Committee is un-

*Continued Page 11*

## TULARE AIRPORT SUPPORT GROUP SUPPORTERS PARTNER WITH CITY

- to dramatically increase the safety of Tulare Municipal Airport

The Tulare Airport Support Group (Coalition of businesses, pilots and aviation enthusiasts committed to promoting Tulare Mefford Field as a community asset) is donating half the certification cost for a new weather reporting station. The group donated \$1,900 at the City Council Meeting in November 2009.

### Background

Weather related accidents account for 14% of fatal aircraft mishaps according to a 2004 Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association study. The airport does not have a current weather reporting station, however in 2008, the city received a grant from the Federal Aviation Administration to construct a new weather station that will give pilots essential information on winds, visibility and cloud ceilings at the airport. The City used grant money to construct the new weather reporting facility, which was completed in August 2009.

Due to State and Federal budget cuts there was no grant funding for certification and operation of the new weather reporting station. All weather reporting stations must be certified by the Federal Aviation Administration to verify the unit is functioning properly, before becoming operational.

Since the FAA charges for this initial certification, the newly constructed, state-of-the-art, weather station has sat dormant in "test-mode" unable to operate due to lack of funds to certify this equipment for use. The Grant only funded initial construction; however there was



*Tulare Mefford Airport*

no funding source for the initial FAA certification.

The costs to certify the weather reporting station were \$3,800 dollars. Members of the aviation community are demonstrating their commitment to the community by donating \$1,900 dollars to cover 50% of the certification costs.

Aircraft cannot fly in poor visibility, and pilots must rely on weather conditions from Visalia or Porterville to determine whether or not there is sufficient visibility to land or take-off from Tulare Airport. Given the transient nature of fog in the valley, while it may be clear in Porterville there may be dangerous fog conditions in Tulare.

In the absence of accurate weather reporting, pilots often divert away from Tulare and choose to land where there is accurate weather reporting.

Flights to Tulare Airport are important for EMS aircraft transporting critically injured or sick patients to life-saving medical facilities (Especially traffic accident victims caused as a result of the fog).

The World Ag Exposition is plagued by inclem-

*Continue page 9*



*Tulare continue from page 8*

ent weather, forcing many important attendees to land in Visalia, or Porterville.

Police departments in the community rely on the helicopter based at the Tulare Airport to search for missing children and violent suspects that are evading law enforcement (such as the recent robbery suspects that shot at officers in Tulare)

Most incidents occur at night, when fog and inclement weather would otherwise force the police helicopter to remain grounded, unable to assist officers, without accurate and reliable weather information.

As the city moves forward with plans for the Racing Sports Complex, the airport is an important piece of transportation infrastructure that must be equipped to support year round flight operations.

Members of the Tulare Aviation community are willing to take ownership and help the city promote aviation with their own money. The Tulare Airport Support Group is a loosely formed coalition of pilots, business owners and aviation enthusiasts that work cooperatively with the city to promote aviation and

the airport as a community asset.

In addition to the Tulare Airport Support Group, local businesses are donating to include;

- Valley Air Crafts
- Tulare Ag Services
- Johnston Aviation
- Tulare Mosquito Abatement District
- Earlimart Dusters
- Costa Spraying
- Blue Sky Aviation

Despite tough times in the private sector, cash-strapped Tulare aviation businesses are contributing to enhance the safety of the airport, because it is a worthwhile effort. The culture of our community is to help one another. We're not a community that relies on the city to provide for our every need. When a recession based budget shortfall became an issue, the community rallied together to fund essential projects with private funds. This is Tulare values, at its best!

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## POWER PLANT PLAN HAS BYRON AIRPORT PILOTS FUMING

BY RICK RADIN

THE CONTRA COSTA TIMES

A private pilots association that helped halt construction of a power plant in Hayward is taking aim at a similar plant proposed 2.7 miles south of Byron Airport in East Contra Costa County.

The California Pilots Association says hot plumes of ammonia released from the proposed 200-megawatt gas-fired plant could damage planes and threaten control and expose pilots and passengers to a health risk.

The county-operated airport has a sky diving school and hosts ultralights and gliders as well as propeller aircraft and corporate jets. The proposed plant, the Mariposa Energy Project, would be built in Alameda County west of Mountain House.

"There's a lack of oxygen in the plume and a number of contaminants that could affect engine operation or the pilots' ability to see," said Andy Wilson, representing the 5,000-member pilots association. "Health hazards would also come into play. That's why the Bay Area Air Quality Management District is involved."

The California Energy Commission is the chief regulator of power plant construction in the state. The Mariposa power plant is one of 31 statewide under consideration for certification, commission spokeswoman Michele Demetras said.

The pilots association joined Hayward, Alameda County and several environmental groups in opposing the 115-megawatt Eastshore Energy Center proposed about a mile and a half south of Hayward Executive

Airport.

*Editor's Note: An important point left out of this article is the fact that these Power Plants are huge polluters.*

## PILOTS CITE ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS TO BLOCK POWER PLANT

AVWEB

After previously joining arms with local residents and environmental groups to halt a similar proposal, the California Pilots Association is citing pilot-specific environmental concerns in its fight against the proposed construction of a power plant near a non-towered California airport. Speaking for some 5,000 pilots in the California Pilots Association (CALPILOTS), Andy Wilson told the Contra Costa Times that the proposed Mariposa Energy Project power plant would produce an oxygen-poor plume of contaminants and hot ammonia "that could affect engine operation or the pilot's ability to see."

The proposal would put a power plant roughly 2.7 miles south of Byron Airport, a county-operated field that sees traffic from ultralights through corporate jets, along with glider and skydiving operations. The pilots have sought the influence of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to draw attention to the "health hazards" they say would also come into play, due to the proposed 200-megawatt gas-fired plant's emissions.

The power plant is one of 31 under consideration statewide, according to the California Energy Commission. The CPA successfully worked with other groups to previously halt construction of a power plant proposed for a location about 1.5 miles south of Hayward Executive Airport.

*Gross Field Continued from Page 7*

dertaking our most ambitious project. Chuck Jessen and his team are in the planning stages for a celebration of Gness Field's fiftieth anniversary next year. On May 15, 2010 we will invite the community to a party that will include aerobatics, antique and interesting airplanes, great food, music and lots more. Mark the date on your calendar. Member Bob Spofford has created a Power Point presentation that we intend to take out to the community. It gives some history of aviation in Marin County and of Gness Field in particular. It will inform our community of the resources at Gness Field including but not limited to Civil Air Patrol, Sheriff's Department, Medical transportation, Angel Flights, and business hub.

I hope that our story can be an inspiration to those of you who have contemplated the need to get organized but were stymied by the perceived barriers that loom ahead. If we could make it happen, so can you.

For more information visit the Gness Field Web Site [www.gnessfield.org](http://www.gnessfield.org).

## Gness Field Community



### Association Officers

*First Row left to right: Ted Newman, Mark Sheron, President, Patrick Scanlon*

*Second Row: Steve Knecht, Secretary, Lou Franecke, Treasurer, Bruce Wold, Vice President. Not pictured, Matt Mitchell*

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