

# THE SLOW ROLL



CHARTERED #921  
Since DEC. 1974



**President—Frank Maskowitz**  
**Vice President—John Geyer**  
**Treasurer—Oliver Henien**  
**Secretary—Mike Peck**  
**Editor—Bob Purdy**

## JULY 2023

*The Slow Roll is published by the Sun Valley Fliers by and for its membership to all others interested in the building and flying of radio control aircraft.*



**Inside this issue:** Cover Photo showing Arthur Gambino with his P-51  
SVF CLUB ending 48 years as a charter club

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**MEETING AT FIELD JULY 1 at 8 AM**

# July 2023 SLOW ROLL PRESIDENTS LETTER

Welcome to the July 2023 Slow Roll.



Summer is here in full force, along with our record-breaking triple digit temperatures. The next meeting will be at the field on Saturday July 1<sup>st</sup> at 8 am. It will not be in the triple digits at that time of day. During the summer, we will keep all our meetings at 8am to avoid some of the heat.



I do have a request regarding locking the gate. It has to do with the chain. Some members are making the chain really tight by locking the lock on a link and not allowing any slack. That's fine but it makes our lock very difficult to open since it needs some slack to operate properly. So if you could..... just leave a little slack in the chain. Thanks for that.



Let us make this year a productive one for our club. Our goal is to increase our membership numbers so tell all your friends to come and visit. The Ramada permitting is being handled. I hope to have some concrete move forward information this month.

I always welcome comments so please feel free to call me anytime you want to chat about club related issues. You can always reach me at 602-809-4195. If I do not answer, please leave a message and I will get back with you. I can receive text messages on that number as well.

Remember, Our next meeting is this **Saturday July 1st at 8 am**. Location is our field. Join us for a Saturday meeting and win a raffle prize. The 50/50 could make you very happy \$\$\$.

You never know what might happen, and you do not want to miss it.

Have fun out there!

*Frank Moskowitz*

President



## Sun Valley Fliers BOD Meeting Minutes – June 12, 2023

### **Club Officers Present:**

- President Frank Moskowitz, Vice-President John Geyer, Treasurer Oliver Heinen, Secretary Mike Peck

### **Board Members Present:**

- Tony Quist, Jamie Edwards, Brian Rhoads, Val Roqueni, Craig Guest, and Jim Sprecker

### **Members/Guests:**

- None

### **Open:** President Frank Moskowitz

1. The Zoom internet meeting was opened at 6:01PM, there was a quorum present.

### **Secretary's Report:** Mike Peck

1. Mike asked for a motion to approve the Board of Directors meeting minutes from May 15, 2023. Moved, seconded, and unanimously passed.
2. The members were asked if they would like a recorded count in the minutes on votes when there is a motion for the Board to act on. This would not include Board member names and how the individual voted, just a count or unanimous notation. Unanimously approved.

### **Treasurer's Report:** Oliver Heinen

1. The club's treasury balance at the end of May was \$\$\$\$
2. Transfer of the Quickbooks license is still pending. The motion to approve the Treasurer's report was seconded and unanimously approved.

### **Membership Director's Report:** Tony Quist

1. We have 241 total members for 2023 with 1 new junior member that joined last month.

### **Safety Officer's Report:** Ken Rhoads

1. No report

### **Information Technology Director's Report:** Bobby Santoro

1. Nothing major is going on with the SVF website

### **Old Business:**

1. The transfer of the Quickbooks license from Dan to Oliver has been requested, however, Oliver and Frank have not been able to chase down Dan just yet.

## New Business:

1. John Geyer and Mike Peck are continuing to look for an Architect to provide services to obtain a permit from the City of Phoenix to replace the ramada. John has been in contact with Ben Gowell who works for Christ's Church of the Valley and they have a project team that does this kind of work. Ben's architect regrettably had a health issue and was hospitalized, and it is unsure when he will return to work. There are also less experienced architects that work on the project team, and Ben is exploring that avenue. John is also in contact with Robert Poe, a former SVF officer who may have an architect we can talk to. We are waiting to hear from Mr. Poe. Mike Dolan suggested we could contact Bunker Steel Co., and discuss the possibility of working with them on a complete new start for the project. We will look at this option. Charlie Beverson suggested we go back to Western States who makes the ramada kit we have to see if they have architects and installers that would help us use our existing material. Frank Moskowitz said that he could contact his son-in-law who builds custom houses in Paradise Valley, to see if the son-in-law has an architect that can help us. All suggestions will be followed up by John & Mike and they will report any progress made.

2. Bob Bayless has requested confirmation from the Board on his December 9<sup>th</sup> date for the Toy for Tots collection event. Motion made, seconded, and unanimously approved.

3. Bob Purdy requested that he be reimbursed to purchase a \$70/year Microsoft Office subscription to use in his work as newsletter editor. Motion made, seconded and unanimously approved.

4. The new battery charging station on the storage container is complete and working.

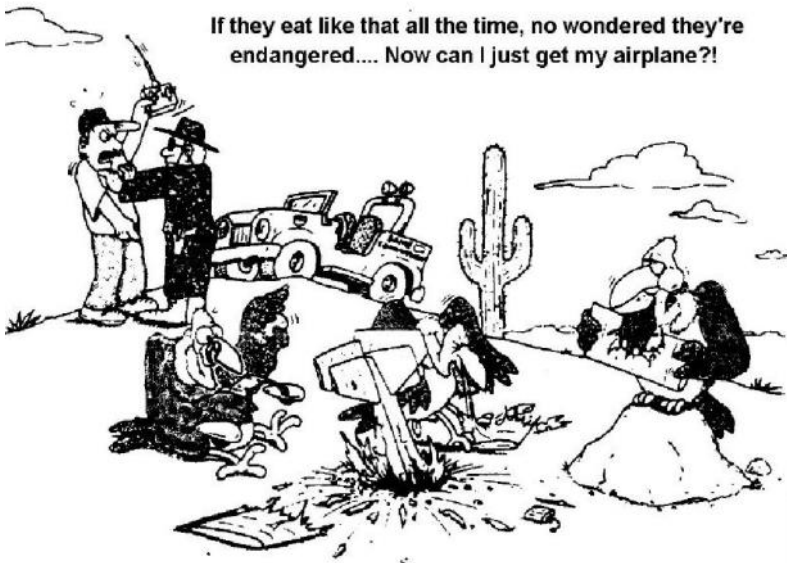
5. Brian Rhoads stated the yellow salt brining jugs are ready to use to deactivate old lipo batteries, and the old tires will be going to the landfill.

6. John Geyer stated he had a former student who was interested in updating the SVF flight training documents to reflect new items and electrics. John will have the BoD review the suggestions.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 6:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Peck  
Secretary



There was a lot of open space here so hope you don't mind if I fill it in.







## Sun Valley Fliers Club Meeting Minutes June 3, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 AM by President Frank Moskowitz at the field.

Guests: None

New Members: None present

New Solo Pilots: None

Secretary's Report: The minutes of the May 6, 2023 SVF membership meeting were moved & unanimously approved as written and published.

Treasurer's Report: Our new Treasurer, Oliver Heinen, sent his report by e-mail (as he is out-of-town) and the current balance in our treasury is \$[REDACTED]. The treasurer's report was moved & unanimously approved as presented by the club Secretary.

Membership Director's Report: Tony Quist advised that we currently have 240 members with four new members joining in the last month; 1 junior member, 1 new member, and two previous members that renewed.

Safety Officer's Report: Ken Rhoads sent his safety report by e-mail as he had family obligations and could not attend. The safety officer wants to remind everyone that summer is here, snakes may be present anywhere on or around the field, and all members are asked to be cautious in that regard. The water cannon box has been mounted to container wall, IF YOU USE IT, PLEASE SERVICE IT. Thank you.

Old Business:

- A. Ramada permitting is still in process. Mike Peck reported that we are having a very difficult time in contracting for an Architect to provide site plans & construction drawings for the new ramada. During the last month, we have been in contact with no less than 7 Architects and have diligently provided all the written, photo, and video documentation relating to our project to each one. Each of those Architects have declined to contract with us for our project. After the first three or four declined, we thought the problem may be with how much time the Architects felt they would have to spend with the City of Phoenix

Commercial Planning department. The remaining Architects we contacted were made aware that we would be happy to reimburse their time spent meeting with the Commercial Planning, however, this produced no better results. Most of the Architects we have contacted so far have been that are established in the business that club members or contractors have referred us to, but John & Mike have not given up. They will be exploring finding newly licensed Architects that may want an relatively simple project to have in their portfolio of work completed. They also have plans to meet again with FCD staff to relate how much difficulty we are having with the process of finding a willing Architect, and see if we could plead our case for a County Right-of-Way permit instead.

- B. A club member at the meeting also suggested that we try contacting Civil or Structural Engineers that may have requisite competent drafting staff that could produce our work and go to CoP Commercial Planning.
- C. Another club member suggested requesting help from the City Councilman who represents the area our field is in. This will also be given consideration.

New Business:

- A. President Frank referred to the SVF Administrative Actions/Submissions schedule which requires the Club Charter and our insurance documents be sent to the FAA Tower at Deer Valley Airport, the Flood Control District, and CoP Parks and Recreation. This has been done.
- B. President Frank also asked all members to carefully review his recent May 28<sup>th</sup> e-mail regarding field issues such as driving vehicles on the pavement south of the starting stations and dumping old batteries by the trash dumpster. Our pavement is not designed to withstand the weight of trucks or automobiles and this will lead to unnecessary future expense to the club if that pavement is damaged. Also, your club is not a recycling center for old batteries and we do not want to use club funds to get rid of this stuff. Come on folks, a little common sense and courtesy to your fellow modelers is needed here.

50/50 Winner: Nancy Sprecker won the \$26.00 and donated it back to the club just like last month. Many thanks again, Nancy.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Peck  
Secretary



## ONE EIGHTH AIR FORCE MEETING MINUTES JUNE 26, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm by Commander Brian Rhoads. Members in attendance were Michael Peck, Gene Peterson, John Geyer, Ken Rhoads, & Rick Marshall.

The Finance Officer, Gene Peterson, reported the treasury has a balance of \$[REDACTED]. It has been approved to sponsor three 'Best Of' awards for the US ScaleMasters Championships in the total amount of \$450. The Finance Officer's report was approved without exception.

The minutes of the May 22, 2023 meeting were approved as published and distributed.

### **Old Business:**

Gene Peterson announced that we have received our renewed club Charter from the AMA.

Gene had also asked the Group Adjutant to compose a thank you letter to the general manager of the Greenwood Memory Lawn Cemetery, thanking him for inviting the OEAF to provide a scale r/c model display on Memorial Day at their Cemetery. The letter further provided information on where the stipend check from Greenwood Memory Lawn could be sent.

The Commander thanked all the OEAF members that attended the Memorial Day function at the cemetery and brought models to display.

### **New Business:**

Commander Brian announced his goals for the OEAF in the coming year, and it promises to be full of opportunities for the One Eighth Air Force to excel and "show our flag".

1. Commander Brian will contact Cpt Bob Bayless soon to request making Bob's December Toys for Tots event a joint event with the One Eighth Air Force and the Sun Valley Fliers. This should be a plus for both r/c organizations as well as increasing the number of toys collected for the Toys for Tots campaign.
2. Bonnie O'Meara has agreed to hold the Warbirds and Classics event again in March of 2024 with the Sun Valley Fliers and the One Eighth Air Force. The OEAF will again be requested to be involved both in participation and helping to run the event, as will the Sun Valley Fliers. The OEAF has the two-way radios to assist in SVF having a designated contest manager and specific individuals to take care of tasks, both foreseen and unforeseen. The One Eighth should have their trailer at this event to sell polo shirts.
3. Tony Quist does not want to be the Contest Director for the next Winter Warbirds event, and Commander Brian will explore taking on that responsibility with the Sun Valley Fliers Board of Directors. That would also provide an opportunity for the OEAF members to participate, help with the work, and show up in their blue shirts.
4. Brian wants the OEAF to sponsor a trophy for the next "Best in the West" jet event. It gets the OEAF recognition and our name on the sponsor list and on their tee shirt. \$300 was recommended as a sponsorship amount. It was moved, seconded, and approved without objection.
5. We need some new OEAF polo shirts, as current inventory is out of many sizes. Brian showed the Group a polyester shirt he thought would be nice, but there was concern by some members over how hot they were and the price. The cost of each shirt would likely have to be subsidized by the OEAF treasury to make it price acceptable to members. The Item was tabled until next month.
6. We have a lot of members that do not have name tags. No one is certain which company has the logo and layout for OEAF blue name tags that go with the blue shirts. Cpt Peck will check with Nameplate Distribution to see if they have our layout. Anyone that needs a name tag should contact Commander Brian before the next meeting with their name and mailing address.



7. Commander Brian would like to see more current information on our OEAF website. There is still a question about getting the license for the Go Daddy account. Cpt Geyer will talk with Tim Cardin at the upcoming Warbirds and Classics event at Black Star. This item will be tabled until next month.

The next OEAF meeting will be at 6:30 pm on July 31,2023, at an East Valley location TBD.

The meeting adjourned at 7:52 pm.

Michael Peck  
OEAF Adjutant

## A BAPTISM BY FIRE

**THERE WERE TWO REASONS WHY PILOTS IN WILLOWS, CALIFORNIA, SPEAR-HEADED THE IDEA OF BATTLING FOREST FIRES FROM THE AIR. THEIR NAMES WERE JOE ELY AND FLOYD NOLTA**

BY TED ATLAS

### ON CALL

Pilot Ray Varney (with two unidentified loaders) readies himself for a flight in an N3N biplane. The former Navy trainers formed the core of the Mendocino Air Tanker Squad in Willows, California. **PHOTO 1**

### PIONEERS

Floyd Nolta used a Travel Air biplane to sow rice before he became a firefighter. **PHOTO 2**

The Forest Service's Joe Ely teamed with Nolta to develop ways to fight fires with airplanes.

COURTESY OF FRANK ELY

WERE IT NOT FOR THE EFFORTS OF TWO MEN WHO SETTLED IN THE TOWN OF WILLOWS, CALIFORNIA, THE AUGUST COMPLEX FIRE, THE LARGEST IN THE STATE'S HISTORY, MIGHT HAVE DEVASTATED EVEN MORE THAN THE MILLION ACRES IT RAVAGED DURING THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS FIRE SEASON OF 2020.

Those two men were Floyd "Speed" Nolta and Joe Ely, and they pioneered the use of airplanes to drop water on forest fires. They had contrasting backgrounds—Floyd from a blue-collar timbering family in Oregon and Ely an Ivy League Midwesterner—but together they provided an example of American ingenuity at work.

Nolta was already a highly regarded mechanic at 17, when he enlisted in the Army after the United States entered World War I. The Army sent him to Rockwell Field near San Diego to serve as a mechanic. (While at Rockwell, Nolta met Jimmy Doolittle, not yet a legendary aviator, and the two men became lifelong friends.) Nolta had his first airplane flight while in the Army, and he learned to fly after the war when he settled in Willows in Northern California's Sacramento Valley. There he formed the Willows Flying Service to provide crop dusting services.

In 1928, Nolta developed a way to speed rice planting by mounting a hopper on the fuselage of his Hispano-Suiza powered Travel Air biplane. A sliding valve with a threaded knob allowed him to measure precise amounts of fertilizer and seed that dropped from the hopper into a box. The wash from the propeller spread the product over a 50-foot swath. Nolta's system vastly improved rice propagation. According to Thad Baker, a modern-day certified crop advisor and rice farmer, pilots around the world still use Nolta's device.

### SMOKEWATCHERS

Floyd's brother Vance also joined the flying service. **PHOTO 3**

In addition to agricultural flying, the Willows Flying Service had contracts to provide various services to the U.S. Forest Service. It flew personnel to remote areas, airlifted supplies, conducted aerial searches for fires and dropped seed for forest fire remediation.

While Nolta was building a career at Willows, a young man 11 years his junior was pursuing an Ivy League education that placed him on an intersecting trajectory. Born in Wisconsin in 1911, Joe Ely earned an undergraduate degree at Dartmouth College and obtained his master's degree in botany from the Yale School of Forestry in 1935. He joined the Forest Service after getting his master's, and he would spend his career there in a variety of posts.

When the United States entered World War II, forest rangers were exempt from military service because the government classified them as critical for protecting forests, particularly in the event of Japanese incendiary balloon attacks. Ely, therefore, continued his forestry career. In contrast, Nolta flew as a Hollywood stunt pilot before re-enlisting in the Army Air Forces and joining the First Motion Picture Unit. He piloted aircraft for training and morale-boosting films and flew a B-25 Mitchell bomber under the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge for *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, a fictionalized account of his friend Jimmy Doolittle's 1942 bombing raid on Japan.

Frank Prentice loads retardant in 1957. **PHOTO 4**

The original MATS pilots gather for a photo. **PHOTO 5**

Prentice makes a practice run. **PHOTO 6**

## FLYING CIRCUS

Nolta and Ely both ended up in Willows after the war. Nolta continued his stunt work but returned to his flying service after recovering from serious injuries he suffered in a crash of a P-38 Lightning near Los Angeles in 1948. Ely eventually settled with his family in Willows after being promoted to Fire Control Officer in the Mendocino National Forest, one of the most active fire areas. Located in the Northern Coast Range Mountains, the forest covers 900,000 acres, has upwards of 6,000 feet in elevation change and features a mix of evergreen forest, oak woodlands and heavy chaparral woodland ecosystems. California chaparral is the densest brush in the world, consisting of trees and plants with waxy leaves and a high oil content that allows plants to survive dry summers, but also makes them highly flammable.

Those conditions led to tragedy on July 9, 1953, when the Rattlesnake Fire broke out 28 miles northwest of Willows. Fifteen young men, mostly 20-something missionaries serving as volunteer firefighters, lost their lives when they became trapped in a canyon by flames that raced toward them at 15 miles per hour. **One of the men who died that day was a Forest Service ranger. It was the worst loss of life in the history of the U.S. Forest Service until 19 firefighters perished in the Yarnell Fire in Arizona in 2013**

## PLAN OF ATTACK

Joe Ely's handwritten map indicates how he wanted the pilots to handle a fire in 1958. "Farm ships" refers to the Stearmans and N3Ns; the "twins" are Twin Beech aircraft.

The MATS pilots fought 12 fires in August 1956, their first month of operation. They spent five days in September assisting with a fire near Lake Arrowhead in the San Bernardino National Forest. Because agriculture planes did not have radios until the 1957 fire season, the tanker pilots initially had to get their directions while they were on the ground taking on retardant. Although it is not clear when they first used an observation airplane, the fire prevention officer for the forest reported that the

Agricultural flying and aerial firefighting both require flying close to the ground, but the newly minted MATS pilots found that the similarities ended there. Quite literally, they had a baptism by fire. As Prentice recalled, firefighting required "orbiting down in the hole" (maneuvering the aircraft into deep canyons) and "the marksmanship to hit the target and to not overshoot it." The pilots had to fly over mountains and through smoke while battling high winds and rapidly rising air currents. They flew as low as five feet above treetops and directly toward mountains, learning that the air flowing over ridges could force their airplanes down. Over time the pilots learned how to time each water release to hit the right spot while allowing them room to clear any ridges. An N3N weighs just over 2,000 pounds, so when an airplane released 1,200 pounds of water it leapt up, helping with clearance over any oncoming heights.

But the pilots and Ely discovered another challenge: evaporation. They realized that on hot days very little water actually hit the ground. The solution was to mix water with sodium calcium borate, producing a substance that not only made it to the surface but had a melting point twice as high as the 900 degrees ignition point of a forest fire. . In reaction, the Forest Service and other agencies established Operation Firestop, a program to find workable ideas to

fight fires. In the spring of 1955, Ely received permission from his supervisor to explore the possibility of using waterdrops as part of the program.

Dropping water from airplanes onto fires was not a new idea. It had been considered as far back as the 1920s, but none of the various methods tested after World War II had been implemented. Ely's idea was to use the agriculture pilots in Willows to do the job. According to Ely's handwritten account, "I took the air tanker proposition first to Lee Sherwood, the Airport Manager, and perhaps some others, but they were looking out the window. Anyhow Floyd (Speed) Nolta, of the Willows Flying Service caught fire real fast. All I had to do was remark that he sure had a lot of experience dropping materials out of airplanes onto farms and did he think he could do the same thing on a forest fire. He said to come back in a week."

Ely had other things on his plate a week later, so he asked a colleague to meet Floyd and Floyd's brother, Vance—also a pilot—at Nolta's private airstrip near Willows. Nolta had cut a hole in the bottom of his Boeing-Stearman Model 75 Kaydet biplane and installed a 170-gallon tank with a hinged gate, a snap and a pull. Vance flew the plane over a controlled burn for demonstration. "Vance came over low and pulled the rope and put out the fire," Ely later wrote. "The air tanker was born."

A few months later, Vance Nolta became the first pilot to make a free-fall water drop when he assisted a crew on the Mendenhall Fire in the Mendocino National Forest on August 12, 1955. And so it began.

Ely established the Mendocino Air Tanker Squad (MATS), the first aerial tanker unit in the world, in 1956. The squad of local agriculture pilots consisted of the Nolta brothers—Floyd, Vance and Dale—Ray Varney, Frank Prentice, Lee Sherwood, Harold Hendrickson, L. H. McCurley and Warren Bullock. Except for the Nolta brothers' Stearman and Lee Sherwood's Tri-Pacer monoplane, the fleet of seven planes were Naval Aircraft Factory N3N-3 biplane trainers. Sherwood flew his monoplane with a Forest Service observer onboard. Later Ely recalled of these pioneers, "The local pilots were the last of the silk scarf and leather helmet boys and they would try anything."

pilots were eventually directed by "a radio-equipped Cessna used as a bird dog." That role later became known as "Drop Coo" for Drop Coordinator. The pilots "can scramble at the crackling of a spark to their planes," said an article in the *Sacramento Bee* from October 1956. "Their biplanes resemble a World War I pursuit squadron as they wing to a target with liquid 'bomb loads.' They fly through smoke, heat and wind storms created by the blaze to drop water and chemicals from only 30 to 90 feet above flaming tree tops." Adding to the military ambiance, pilot Hendrickson's 11-year-old son, Gary, added nose art to his father's airplane, which he named *Mr. Mendocino*. The artwork depicted Smoky the Bear in a biplane's cockpit.

In 1961, pilot Frank Prentice waits as tanker No. 21 gets loaded. The pink substance on the ground is spilled retardant. **PHOTO 7**

The agricultural flying season ended in June, just as the fire season began, providing many more months of work for the MATS pilots. Pilot Frank Prentice recalled that they were paid \$60 an hour (around \$575 an hour today). Ely also had a \$4,000 budget to pay for standby time, but the pilots remained so busy earning flight pay that the standby funds remained untouched.

Word spread to state and federal forestry units that if they needed firefighting airplanes, all they had to do was call dispatcher Charlie Lafferty in Willows. Lafferty would then call the pay phone in Lee Sherwood's hanger. An unwritten law was that no one could make lengthy calls on the pay phone during the fire season.

Lila Prentice, Frank's wife of 71 years, remembers she had a crystal radio tuned to the Forest Service frequency. When she heard two watch towers report smoke in the same location, she would call the hanger to alert the pilots. Her husband would then notify pilot Harold Hendrickson in the neighboring hanger and they would be ready to go by the time dispatcher Lafferty called with the coordinates for the initial water drops.

Because the white substance stuck to brush and reflected heat, the pilots dropped it on a fire's flanks to control spread. They soon realized, though, that shortly after being dropped, the sodium calcium borate blended in with the vegetation so they could not see where they had deployed it. Borate also sterilized the soil, so it was soon phased out. The name "Borate Bombers," however, stuck.

THE PILOTS FLEW AS LOW AS FIVE FEET ABOVE THE TREETOPS AND DIRECTLY TOWARD MOUNTAINS.

## GROWING ARSENAL

Harold Hendrickson's son, Gary, joined the field in 1972 as the copilot of a Boeing B-17 aerial tanker and he later flew Grumman AF Guardians and TBM Avengers as well as Douglas DC-6s during a 40-year career. According to Gary, the Forest Service required that retardants "had to be viscous, bright colored in order to use prior drops as a reference point, still provide fireproofing up to three days after being dropped and contain fertilizer to promote re-growth." Those requirements led to compounds such as Bentonite, a clay that swelled up and stuck better, but sometimes came down in a chunk instead of a spray. By the 1960s, the firefighters were using a retardant with diammonium phosphate.

The thicker retardants' viscosity made them a challenge to mix and load quickly into airplanes. Ely found another local solution with Wim Lely of Lely's Orland Manufacturing Company, who developed a device that could mix a thousand gallons of retardant and pump it into an airplane in a matter of minutes. Lely supplied his equipment to the Forest Service for years.

The MATS pilots were soon fighting blazes all over California. Some of the biggest fires they fought in their first year were in Southern California. To find their way there they would simply follow U.S. Highway 99. Often the pilots would be gone for days with no way to contact their families except through dispatcher Lafferty, on whom they could always rely to call their wives with news from the front.

Even under such basic conditions the MATS pilots made an impact. One fire boss for the 1956 McKinley Fire in the San Bernardino National Forest wrote, "The fire was crowning in the heavy brush, but the chemical drops kept knocking the fire down so that the sector team and 50 men were able to complete their line. I do not believe this would be possible without the drops." A study done at the end of 1956 recorded that MATS assisted in 23 Forest Service fires and that aircraft were a deciding factor for controlling 14 of them and a definite factor in assisting ground crews in four more. They made no effect on another four, and were detrimental in one, when they accidentally extinguished a backfire the ground crews had set to stop a fire's spread, causing a loss of control.

Others were experimenting with aerial firefighting around the same time. Floyd Nolta's former Army Air Forces boss, Hollywood stunt pilot Paul Mantz, did some informal testing in 1953 and formal experiments as part of Operation Firestop in 1954. He conducted simulations at Camp Pendleton in Southern California. There he deployed sensors to measure dispersal, wind drift, effectiveness and other factors. Mantz did further tests for the California Division of Forestry, but his work did not become operational until 1958, five years after he first investigated it. In contrast, by bypassing bureaucracy, Joe Ely and Floyd Nolta had an operational aircraft ready in one week, and within a month they were already helping put out dangerous wildfires.

Following that first historic season of firefighting with adapted biplanes, larger aircraft began joining the fight, including warbirds such as Grumman TBM Avengers, Consolidated PBY Catalinas, Boeing B-17s, Grumman F7F Tiger-cats and other surplus military planes. When loaded with thousands of gallons of retardant, the heavier airplanes lost some maneuverability, Prentice recalled. The extreme loss of weight that came from dropping the payload did not affect the larger airplanes as much, but that also meant they did not get the same "bounce" the biplanes exploited to clear approaching ridges. TBM pilots learned to pull the airplane's nose high while continuing level flight and let the wings pull the airplane up. Sadly, Prentice recalled, that "the mountain would happen before they gained altitude and we lost a lot of them." The first aerial firefighter pilot to lose his life was Joseph Anthony, who crashed on August 19, 1958, making a retardant drop near Sequoia National Park while flying for Paul Mantz Air Services. Anthony was at the controls of a TBM Avenger that Mantz had used for his tests at Camp Pendleton. By 1973, 11 more TBMs crashed while firefighting, killing the pilots in all but one incident.

More pilots joined MATS in 1958 and some original pilots went on to sign contracts with the California Division of Forestry. Preferring lighter planes, Prentice bought an N3N from Florida and spent one winter assembling the airplane after it arrived in pieces lashed to a pickup truck. Prentice flew the N3N as his own personal air tanker until 1963. Floyd Nolta remained active in the flying service until his death in 1974. His legacy lives on through his invaluable contribution to the profession of aerial firefighting. The Forest Service Air Tanker unit continued to be based at the Willows-Glenn County Airport until 1982.

Joe Ely eventually retired from the Forest Service and passed away in 2006. His son, Frank, said that his father had been highly motivated to find better methods to fight fires after the devastating loss of life in the 1953 Rattlesnake Fire. He sought ways to reduce the severity of fires so that “men could get to them safely.”

## SURVIVORS

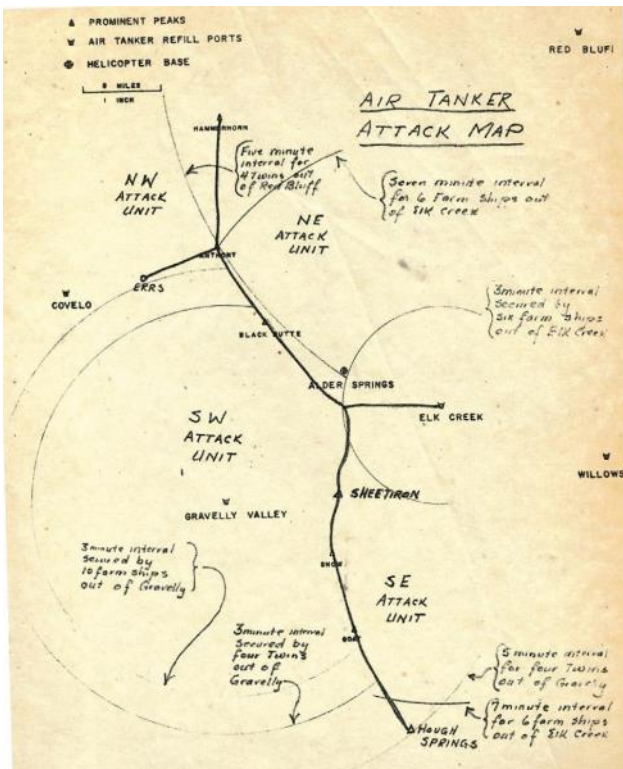
Frank Prentice stands in front of Harold Hendrickson’s N3N-3 —the last of the original air tankers—in 2006, the MATS’ 50th anniversary. **PHOTO 9**

Summing up the early days, Frank Prentice said, “Willows had the right combination of airplanes, pilots and high fire zones, as did other areas like the San Joaquin Valley, but only Willows had Joe Ely and Floyd Nolta.” Prentice was the last surviving member of the Mendocino Air Tanker Squad when he died on July 16, 2020. As if in tribute, dry lightning strikes a month later started numerous fires in the same area as the Rattlesnake Fire of 1953. The resulting August Complex Fire took nearly three months to contain. It was the largest fire in California history—and aerial firefighters helped battle it, following the lead of the scrappy pilots who once flew out of Willows.

*first became aware of this story in 1986, when his brother and sister-in-law bought a house that Floyd Nolta had owned in Willows. For further reading, Atlas recommends Fire Bomber into Hell: A Story of Survival in a Deadly Occupation by Linc Alexander. ■*







PLAN OF ATTACK

Joe Ely's handwritten map indicates how he wanted the pilots to handle a fire in 1958. "Farm ships" refers to the Stearmans and N3Ns; the "twins" are Twin Beech aircraft.





# SVF June 3, 2023 Meeting



# What's Happening



At the SVF Field

*Massive 16 Foot Rubber Band Powered Airplane*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jgwkA-hLvf4>



Sunday June 25, 2023





**M.J. IS BACK!**







**M.J. IS BACK!**







# TWICE LUCKY



FROM THE BATTLE OF FRANCE TO OPERATION MARKET GARDEN  
AND FLYING WORLD LEADERS TO AIRBORNE INFANTRY

THE STORY OF SQUADRON LEADER TREVOR SOUTHGATE

<https://www.vintagewings.ca/stories/twice-lucky>

## For Sale:

Top Flite Giant Scale P47 Razorback Thunderbolt ARF.

Powered by a Saito 3 cylinder 60cc Radial engine.

Smart Fly Optical Cutoff.

Robart Electric Retracts w/electric retractable tail wheel.

Robart metal spoked wheels.

Lithium Ion Battery for the retracts.

7 Hitec 645 mg servos. Hitec 225 mg servo for throttle.

A few spare parts for the plane along with an extra roll of flat dove gray and flat olive drab Monocote.

Flight batteries and ignition batteries are 2300 mah. A-123's.

**Asking \$2500.** Will consider selling the plane without the engine. Local only. Will not ship. Will meet a reasonable distance for pickup.

Paul Goldsmith [PT19Nut@aol.com](mailto:PT19Nut@aol.com)





# JULY 2023 SVF Birth Day Boys

Allard	Sylvain
Baker	Andrew
Fried	Rusty
Gruenstern	Robert
Kelley	Donald
Kleinhans	Spencer
Knutson	Steve
Parsons	Jeff
Pencak	Robert
putnam	robert
Stephens	Larry
Swart	Keith



Mon-Fri 9:00 AM — 8:00 PM

SAT 10:00 AM — 8:00 PM

SUN 11:00 AM — 6:00 PM

**HOBBY BENCH**  
COMPLETE HOBBY & CRAFT CENTER

8058 N. 19th Ave. 602-995-1755 Phoenix

M-F 9:30-8PM, SAT 9:30-6PM 11-5PM

4240 West Bell Rd. 602-547-1828 Glendale

M-F 9:30-9PM, SAT 9:30-6PM, SUN 11-5PM



## SPECIAL NOTICE TO PILOTS!

"Sun Valley Flyers Utilizes a 400ft ceiling for flying model aircraft allowing for only momentary breaks caused by non-sustaining maneuvers.

All pilots must utilize a spotter at all times and abide by AMA Rule 540d" (see and avoid procedures)

Any pilot willfully violating this rule is subject to loss of flight privileges.

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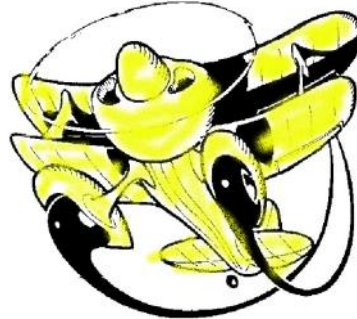


# THE SLOW ROLL



### Club Officers 2022-2023

FRANK MOSKOWITZ, President  
 John Geyer, Vice President  
 Oliver Heinen, Treasurer  
 Mike Peck, Secretary  
 Safety Officer Kenny Rhoads  
**Bobby Santoro**  
 Website Supervisor  
**Please check your  
 Membership list for  
 Phone numbers.**



### Board of Directors

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 Brian Rhoads '23-25  
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**48**



**YEARS**



**SINCE DECEMBER 1974**