

Air Mail

Volume 2 Number 4

Utah Back Country Pilots Inc.

May 2003

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Flight Plan (Upcoming Events)

June 28 – 29 Richfield, UT

Richfield Airport Fly-in.

Free dinner & breakfast! Camping on the field (bathrooms left open overnight). Golfing. Courtesy cars are available. Come out and return the support the great folks at Richfield have shown us. Contact Lee Holman (435)201-0308.

July 11, 12, 13 Smiley Creek, ID

Fourth Annual Friends of Skypark / UBCP Fly-in

Great camping with bathrooms and free hot showers on the field. Rooms at the Smiley Creek Lodge available within walking distance. Fly out to back country strips in the Idaho wilderness. One day raft trips available on the Salmon River. Dinner Saturday night at the Smiley Creek Lodge. Contact Kent Bond (801) 913-5223 or UBCP.

August (Date TBA) Lava Hot Springs, ID

Lava Hot Springs Airpark Fly-In & Star Party

Hot springs, hiking, fishing, golfing, and stargazing at night. Amateur astronomers bring your telescopes. Radio controlled aircraft flying during the day. Camp with your airplane or stay in town at the Home Hotel (208-776-5507). Watch for UBCP email updates prior to the fly-in. Contact Reed White: 877-360-2582, alta@alta-research.com.

UBCP CFI Listing

We have fielded multiple requests for referrals to certificated flight instructors within the UBCP group who are willing and able to offer flight instruction with an emphasis on back country and mountain flying operations. The following are UBCP flight instructors:

Steve Durtschi	KBTF/KSLC	(801) 292-9372
Holly Haag	KBTF/KSLC	(801) 466-3417
Matt Haag	KBTF/KSLC	(801) 466-3417
Hal Hilburn	KSGU	(435) 574-2808
Chris Tuckfield	KBTF/KSLC	(801) 576-9926
LaVar Wells	KHVE/KCNY	(435) 542-3248

If you are a flight instructor and would like to be added to the list, please contact Matt Haag to be included in the next newsletter.

From UBCP

Steve Durtschi, UBCP President

Let's be Joiners

Last summer we had the pleasure of accompanying the editor of *Northern Pilot*, Peter Diemer to dinner. Peter is a terrific guy and I learned a lot from him that night. Peter is very concerned about the future of recreational back country flying. He told me that one of his fears is that the current pilots enjoying back country aviation might be the very ones that let the landing strips slip away. Peter explained that the nature of back country pilots is people who are typically not "joiners". They like to be alone and avoid crowds. Meetings are definitely out. They would rather escape to a remote destination than join forces to forward a particular agenda. I know exactly what he means. I don't believe I'm particularly shy, but crowds give me the heebie jeebies. It's hard for me to sit in one spot for long and I feel much more comfortable meandering alone than mingling with a crowd.



Thank goodness there *are* "Joiners" out there. You may have heard that recently the superintendent of Death Valley National Park directed his staff to close a popular remote landing strip in Saline Valley, California called "Chicken Strip". Chicken Strip is one of only three landing strips in Death Valley. The other two are paved and access small communities. Word got out of the clandestine closure and the "Joiners" went to work. The superintendent was politely reminded that his boss, the Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton, promised in an open letter that that no back country landing strip would be arbitrarily closed. Calls and e-mails from Joiners flooded the tiny National Park Office. Other Joiners notified Congress. When word that the Superintendent was perusing another route – announcing that the strip was "illegal" and the Park could not afford the liability, still other Joiners researched the history of the strip and showed that it does have legal precedence. Others researched the "California Recreational Use Statute" proving that the Park has no legal liability.

At last count, the Park has received "about _ in." of e-mails and numerous letters in addition to the above referenced data that has been forwarded to the Park Headquarters. Not one responder has agreed with the Park's position to close the landing strip. The superintendent has been forced to reconsider his attack on the tiny strip. Public scoping meetings are in the planning stages and alternatives are being considered. The future of Chicken Strip is far from secure, but one thing is certain – the strip is currently open and without the Joiners it would be long-closed.

Thank goodness for the Joiners.

UBCP Dues

Speaking of joiners, a significant portion of current UBCP membership has not paid any dues since their initial check. That's our fault as much as anybody because we have not reminded you. We are trying to get a short letter out to those who owe in the next while, so when you get it, consider sending your dues. We value every member and will not drop anybody off the role – paid up or

not. But we do hope to keep color photos in the newsletter and we have the \$1,000 per year lease payment to keep Happy Canyon open.

Camp Williams

Many Utah pilots know of the neat-looking somewhat up-hill runway at Camp Williams. It does not appear to have been used in years. I had the opportunity to fly near it the other day with UBCP member Mike Looney. Mike remarked that it would be a great back country training strip as it is just “different” enough to be a challenge for a new pilot. Over the next several days, Mike kept calling until he finally spoke with Ted Thompson who is in charge of the airstrip. Mike boldly asked that we have permission to use the landing strip. *Ted said the strip is not usable.* Several years ago, they attempted to re-surface it with a cheap top coat. Now the asphalt is coming up in sheets “the size of a car hood”. Ted said the strip was dangerous and would remain closed. Thanks for checking, Mike. You don’t know until you ask.

Stupid Things

My favorite magazine columns are “I Learned About Flying from That” in *Flying Magazine* and “Never Again” in *AOPA Pilot*. I like those articles because they are the stuff that happens to real-world pilots. I try to apply every lesson.

I’ve done hundreds of stupid things; a few of ‘em in airplanes. Over the past five years or so, I’ve had the proverbial “that got my attention” (that’s how we pilots tell our kids “that scared the hell out of me”) experience three times. Interestingly enough, all three were potential or real runway incursions. Maybe those FAA yahoos know something after all and that’s why they are always harping on the subject. In my case, two real incursions were not my fault, (both involved vehicles – a golf cart and a lawn mower – on the runway), but the potential incursion would have been mine and mine alone.

I think the back country has the potential for runway incursions much more so than any busy towered airport. We stroll on the runway in the evening. We taxi around on it like we own it. Since there’s rarely anyone there, I think we often forget other airplanes use it, too. Sometimes we forget to make a radio call when we taxi for take off.

Last week we spent a day at the famous “Flying B Ranch” in Idaho at the Memorial Day Skywagon Fly-in. Since the crowds give me the you-know-what, we camped at Indian Creek about 20 minutes upstream. What a great day! We played softball and ate the delicious meals prepared by the ranch. By the time we prepared to leave. I was anxious to get back to our lonely camp. We were tired and hot. It had been a long day. Grey clouds were gathering along the Middle Fork and the winds were gusting a little. All these things distracted me from my immediate duty of getting us out of there safely.

As we untied the airplane and stowed our gear, the tractor and trailer that had been shuttling people to and from the landing strip all-day-long innocently passed us by. A couple of campers hurried over and insisted that they help push us out. I did not think it was necessary, but as blowing dust is one of my all-time pet peeves, I did not resist. We pushed the airplane all the way down the runway and around the dogleg at the end. Looking back as we rounded the dogleg, it was quite a sight: 55 airplanes parked on both sides, making two neat rows facing like soldiers with snouty saluting propellers barely off the runway.

We jumped in and started up, completed a quick run up, and “fed the big dog” as I once heard an Air Force Thunderbird pilot say. As I ruddered the airplane around the dogleg, the tail was light and the strip came into full view. There, waiting at the far end was the tractor and trailer shuttle. I had completely forgotten about him. He must have heard us start up and was waiting at the end for us to take off.

Flying back to Indian Creek, the air was really bumpy. I had been re-playing over and over the other possible outcomes of that departure and only when my head hit the ceiling from a particularly sharp jolt did I glance at the airspeed indicator and reduce the throttle

to slow to maneuvering speed. I silently vowed that never again would I take for granted that just because there is a runway ahead, it is clear and belongs to me.

The Bounce

My old friend and mentor Val used to scream in my ear, “Buckwheat, (he called *everybody* Buckwheat) – it’s not the bounce that matters. It’s what you do after! So we’ll move along.

Your Utah remote landing strips are in fine shape. Bill Meine has forwarded the paper work to get Happy Canyon on the Denver Sectional Chart. Karl is still working on Range Creek. Matt has spent a lot of time on this newsletter and it looks great. If I do say so myself, my sweet wife Cathy does a great job of keeping the roster up to date, depositing checks, and sending out stickers and the like. She makes me stop and check that darn mail box on the way out of the airport parking lot when I’d rather just get home. Laurie Tyler spends hours tracking down bounced e-mail addresses and sending out the UBCP e-mails. All are Joiners for sure and we are in their debt.

Richfield Fly-In

The Richfield airport (KRIF) is sponsoring a fly-in on Saturday and Sunday, June 28th and 29th. There will be a free dinner Saturday night, and free breakfast on Sunday morning. You can camp at the field (bathrooms will be left open) or you can take one of the airport courtesy cars into the town of Richfield for the night. There is a magnificent 1920s vintage Boeing Navy Fighter that was re-built at Richfield that will be on display. There are several nice golf courses in Richfield. Vehicles will be available to shuttle people around as needed. Last year we offered free Flight Reviews as time allowed. As they take a minimum of 2 hours each, time will be limited. UBCP members should call the UBCP Hot Line if they are interested in a Flight Review. The Richfield aviation community has supported the UBCP whole-heartedly. We encourage all UBCP members to come down and be a part of the fly-in. If you cannot spend the night, come down on Saturday for dinner and enjoy the nice evening ride back home.

Smiley Creek

I hope you’ll consider “joining” UBCP at Smiley Creek on July 11th and 12th. This is really the “Friends of Skypark” fly-in, but UBCP considers it our own, too. Smiley creek is a fine location suitable for a good cross section of airplanes. See Matt’s excellent advice about this strip in this issue. While you’re there, if you see one skinny kind of doofus-looking guy sitting down at the end in his worn out beach chair, come down and say “hi”. Just don’t stay too long. _

UBCP Position Paper

Saline Valley “Chicken Strip”

The following is the text of a paper that was drafted on April 8, 2003 and sent to the Death Valley National Park officials on behalf of the Utah Back Country Pilots:

Background

The recreational landing strip known as “Chicken Strip” is located in Saline Valley, California, and is within the boundaries of Death Valley National Park. The landing strip has been in continuous use for many years by recreational pilots and serves Saline Valley Hot Springs that are nearby. The landing strip is currently in a safe operating condition. It is a safe distance from vehicle trails or parking and as such poses no risk to patrons of the hot springs. There have, to our knowledge, been no aircraft accidents or incidents at this landing strip, which sees approximately two aircraft operations per week. Saline Valley Hot Springs patrons have not complained about airplanes using the landing strip.

The landing strip was in use prior to the area being annexed as part of the expansion of Death Valley National Park. Park officials recognized that the landing strip existed and was in current use at the time of the park expansion and have allowed it to remain in use. The intent has been to include the existence of this landing strip into the Saline Valley Management Plan, but thus far, budget constraints have not allowed this management plan to move forward. Chicken strip would be the third approved landing strip within Death Valley National Park along with Furnace Creek and Stovepipe Wells.

Within the past few weeks, The Death Valley National Park Superintendent has announced his intention to close this landing strip. The reason for this closure is unclear, but may have been influenced by military aircraft operating in the area.

The Chicken strip landing strip is within the Saline Valley Military Operations Area (MOA). MOAs cover large portions of the airspace in Utah, Nevada, and California and are areas containing military aircraft transition routes and some aircraft related training. Gunnery or ordinance delivery training are not conducted within an MOA and the airspace within the MOA is not restricted to civilian aircraft.

UBCP Position

The Chicken Strip landing strip is a valuable California state resource. The landing strip serves a portion of the public for which recreational landing strips of this type are severely limited. The proposed closure of this landing strip ignores the wishes of this group of recreationists while hundreds of tourist facilities are provided by the Park for other visitors. Further, this proposed closure violates the written recommendations and wishes of the Secretary of the Department of the Interior. A letter over the signature of Secretary Gale Norton to Idaho Senator Mike Crapo said in part:

“DEAR SENATOR CRAPO,

The U.S. Department of the Interior is committed to working with you and other members of Congress to develop a comprehensive process to ensure that state and local governments and citizens have an opportunity to participate in issues relating to backcountry airstrips located on lands managed by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Our Nation's backcountry airstrips are important to many activities that take place on our public lands. It is important to ensure that legitimate uses of backcountry airstrips are protected. It is also a priority for this Department that any proposals to alter use of federal lands must go through open and public process that includes close consultation with local communities.” (The complete text of this letter may be found in the Congressional Record, dated 7/12/01)

UBCP position on the Chicken Strip airstrip is as follows:

1. Chicken Strip is a valued resource to a significant segment of recreationists visiting Death Valley National Park, and should remain open unrestricted to the public.
2. The landing strip is recognized and mapped as such, and has existed for many years prior to its inclusion into the Park.
3. The surface disturbance of this landing strip is equivalent to less than one half of a mile of the Park's extensive backcountry road network. The Saline Valley Road alone is 85 miles long. It is one of only three landing strips within the Park's 3.3 million acres.
4. Closing this landing strip without the public process referred to by Secretary Norton in the above letter to Congress would violate the spirit of the intent of the Secretary of the Interior.
5. The landing strip is not a safety concern for either the pilots using it or persons or property in the immediate vicinity, nor does it require any expensive maintenance.
6. No complaints by the non-flying public have been registered concerning the use of this strip.
7. The Saline Valley Military Operations Area (MOA) lies above the landing strip and is traversed daily by many general aviation

aircraft enroute between Las Vegas and southern California. Chicken Strip sees perhaps two VFR operations per week which is insignificant compared to the civilian aircraft already transiting the area. The MOAs are advisory in nature for civilian VFR air traffic and were designed to allow a mix of military and civilian VFR air traffic. Although civilian traffic is encouraged to contact the controlling agency prior to entering an MOA to check for activity status, the military has no authority to directly restrict any civilian VFR aircraft movements within an MOA.

UBCP Mineral Canyon Fly In *Hiam Wanger*

“Every person, all the events of your life are there because you have drawn them there. What you choose to do with them is up to you.” -Richard Bach

I was thinking of this as I saw 23 new friends gathered around the grill to celebrate the Utah Backcountry Pilot's spring fly-in at Mineral Canyon. After two weekends of rain, snow, winds and Utah's famous springtime weather, April 11th, 12th, and 13th turned out perfect. It had been dry for five days, and Mother Nature was smiling on us with warm sun, clear blue skies and a light breeze to keep things cool. People arrived in aircraft, on foot, on bicycle, even on horseback to share their stories, experiences, and the perfect moments that come in Utah's backcountry. And of course lots and lots of food. We ate like kings.

My own experience begins that Friday – It is one of those days that are meant for flying. Blue skies, unlimited visibility and a few mare's tales on the western horizon meant that I had chosen wisely in taking the day off from work –Guilty pleasures are always the best ones. I'm in Steve and Cathy Durtschi's red and white Cessna 185, winging my way towards southern Utah's color country. Steve is giving a running commentary on the terrain while Cathy and I are glued to the windows, spotting rocks, colors and kayaks. Rock spires, fairy chimneys, cliffs, buttes and mesas are all spread underneath. It's the sort of landscape vista that belongs to the Roadrunner and Wile E. Coyote and I'm reminded again how precious this land is. South of Price, we follow the Green River south towards the airstrip. Mineral Canyon airstrip is along the banks of the Green, but by the time we reach it the river will be over one thousand feet deep below the surface plateau.

Steve flies us over the canyon rim, hugging the updraft side, as the river carves deeper and deeper into the rock. Spotting the airstrip well below us, we push over the edge of the canyon and dive in. We twist and turn down the canyon, the rocks growing taller and taller over our heads, impressing us mere mortals with how small and temporary we are compared to this majestic land. Rounding a sharp turn, the airstrip appears in front of us, filling the windshield. We touch down in the first few hundred feet, the stall horn chirping, swing the tail around into the campsite and fill the air with dust. We've arrived at our campground. The sudden quiet, after an hour in the plane, fills this space.

John Wesley Powel explored this very canyon 130 years ago on rafts, shooting rapids and portaging waterfalls trying to reach California. He described its beauty in grandiose terms. *“There is an exquisite charm in our ride today down this beautiful canyon. It gradually grows deeper with every mile of travel; The walls are symmetrically curved, and grandly arched; of a beautiful color, and reflected in the quiet waters in many places so as to almost deceive the eye, and suggest the thought, to the beholder, that he is looking into profound depths. We are all in fine spirits, feel very gay, and the badinage of the men is echoed from wall to wall. Now and then we*

whistle, or shout, or discharge a pistol, to listen to the reverberations among the cliffs."



A dogleg final landing south at Mineral Canyon

There are two other aircraft already here. After setting up our camp, we head over to meet the neighbors. Sheila and Monte Orr have flown in from their Nebraska farm in a C172 and are brimming with details of their trip. Dick and Kathy Stone, with Frosty the dog tell us they came here to celebrate their one-year anniversary. They had hoped to find some peace and quiet away from it all, just them, the canyon and the river. Only after arriving did they learn there was a fly in and there would be no solitude – sorry – instead they eagerly agreed to join us in making much merriment and revelry.

We sit under the wing of Dick, Kathy, and Frosty's C182, talking about airplanes and adventures, our homes and goals, and how we all ended up here together. We are completely unaware about the once in a lifetime event about to occur.

It starts with a snap like a rifle shot. Then there are two sharper booms, like base drums, and a momentous crash from behind as a finale. I whip around, trying to spot the fighter jock performing supersonic maneuvers overhead. The sound echoes loudly across the valley and I see a huge cloud of dust rising from the east wall of the canyon. A section of cliff wall had tumbled down, smashing itself on the valley floor far below. These dominating sandstone cliffs, that had impressed me as being steadfast and eternal, had decided on that instant to change. We stand speechless watching the dust rise – no words are appropriate. We were witnesses to the landscape evolving itself in its full and violent glory. At any other place and time and we would have missed this moment entirely. I'm feeling honored that Mother Nature chose to awe and remind us that she's always perfect, but never constant.

A group of mountain bikers arrives later on, having cycled the long White Rim trail to reach us. They leave at sunset to make camp, but only after promising to return when they could smell the steaks sizzling. We talk late that night around the fire, eating our foil packets, bread and cheese, admiring the full moon and trying to count shooting stars. It is late before I retire to my tent.

A chorus of birds awakens me. I'm lying in my sack, trying to determine if they are deliberately trying to wake me up when I hear a different sound - A radial engine. No, several radial engines. I jump out of my tent and look around for the fleet of Beavers that must be now descending into this canyon - but I'm too late. The planes are gone – I'm told later that fire bombers flew low overhead.

Steve, spotting me awake, shouts, "You're late sleepy head. Do you want to go fly?" As if that's a question. Ninety seconds later I'm standing by the plane. The air is smooth and cool as we climb

out and turn west. Steve, Kathy, and I are in our plane, Dick, Kathy, and Frosty in theirs as we head west to preview Mexican Mountain. We fly over some bikers, waving furiously beneath us and we continue towards San Rafael Reef. The reef sprouts up from the earth like a backbone, guarding the entrance to lands west. The white cliffs are tilted over 70 degrees to vertical, and I must again insist that the only way to appreciate it is from the window of a small airplane. It's why this area calls itself "The greatest Earth on show!" We spot the Black Boxes, deep narrow slot canyons with black walls and finally circle around the butte that is Mexican Mountain. The strip is on the north side and we drag the strip carefully. We circle overhead as Dick lands, and follow right behind.

I'm struck once again by the silence as we leave the aircraft. Although there are some cars parked at the trailhead, we seem to be the only people in a stark, desert world, cut off from time. It's amazing where airplanes can take you. But there's human history all over this place. We admire the airport sign, which has both the BLM and UBCP's logos side by side – a small triumph. Steve then leads us up a small trail to where ancient Indians had carved petroglyphs in the desert varnish. They completely cover two boulders, and the degree of artwork is remarkable. There's water here, a swift small stream that I can smell and hear close by. The Indians were wise to choose this place. It's breathtakingly beautiful, there's water and easily defensible. Other people came later. I'm told the story of how Butch Cassidy would escape the sheriff's posse in this exact spot. So I must settle for being the first one here today, and enjoying the moment now. Frosty also enjoys the moment by wading through the beaver ponds and getting mud over his white fur. We realize it's later than we thought, and we hurry back to the airplanes because there is cooking to do!

Arriving back at Mineral Canyon it's anything but quiet. More aircraft have arrived, the bikers are back and a few vehicles have driven in. We start the cooking fire going; thaw the steaks on hot aircraft cowlings; open up the tins of brownies; I start slicing the fresh pineapple.



Mineral Canyon Fly In, April 2003

We spend the heat of the day talking, with the warm sun on our backs there isn't much better to do. Bits of conversation blend together and show me this group is special:

"Show me the GPS moving map in your plane." "I've always wanted my own airstrip." "Yes, we painted the plane to match the flowers." "Tell me about Nepal." "How far down the runway will he take off?" "So my bike fell off the rack and was dragged for miles and all it got was this small dent." "So I ended up in Boulder and I love it!" "Which airplane should I buy that's good to learn in?"

More beautiful aircraft show up, a C206, another C182, a few more C185s. Some of these owners have restored and refurbished the planes themselves. Others have the latest gizmos that modern technology can bring to aviation. One pilot lands, taxies to the far end, turns around and departs. Guess he couldn't smell the steaks. The most dramatic arrival, however, belongs to Georgia and Gary Pluta of Price, who ride in on horseback. Bringing horses with airplanes to this desert canyon setting seems appropriate. The Wild West in all its glory. Gary's a student pilot and Georgia says she wants to take lessons. I hear her shout "Yahoo!" as a C185 takes off, and I whisper in her ear that she could become a good pilot.

Later on, we set off to explore the abandoned mine nearby. We're brave enough to go inside, kicking up dust that settles in our hair, clothes and ears. We're even brave enough to turn our flashlights off momentarily, to see how black black can be. Much later we play Frisbee and ceremoniously erect Mineral Canyon's new windsock. Several people leave as evening approaches, and we start another campfire.

Tonight it's spaghetti, some more steaks, bread, wine, cheese, and marshmallows scorched. It's been a long day; I can tell I'm sunburned. Rob Hunter pulls out his night vision scope and we say "Whoaaa!" admiring the canyon walls in the dark. We laugh watching Frosty chase flashlight beams. I'm sitting at the edge of the fire listening to the voices of my friends, and I remind myself that it's *people* that make aviation special.

After everyone else has turned in, I go for a night stroll by the river and end up walking the runway. Tomorrow will be another early morning, a beautiful flight back to Salt Lake and the hustle of real life. This weekend will end up tucked into a corner of my mind as a perfect moment, a warm memory to remind myself how rich we all are. We drew each other together to create this event. We saw a mountain change and thousand year old human history. We made some new friends and shared experiences. And the best part is that it's early spring – We have the rest of summer to do it again.

Rock Climbing at Ibx

Rob Hunter

In the past at Ibx I have been impressed with how flat and smooth the dry lakebed is. Planes going to fly-ins there typically land just south of the little island near the center of the lake. (N 38deg. 58.23min., W 113deg. 22.53min., Elevation 4,770) From this island it seems a long walk to the shores of the lake that consist of boulder and sage filled slopes. I have been impressed with the almost surreal emptiness of the area but never had much desire to camp there. Because of this limited perspective on the area I was surprised to learn that Ibx is home to a very popular rock climbing area! There is an entire guidebook dedicated to the climbing area and it would take weeks to do all the climbs there. The longer climbs are about 300 ft long and range from a relatively easy 5.7 to impossibly difficult (for me at least) 5.13.

I went there Memorial Day weekend with two climbing friends, Fred and Kre, to check it out. Flying a little circle around the lake made the two climbing areas immediately obvious. They are the two bands of pinkish white quartzite on the northwest and southeast corners of the lakebed. We decided to land next to the NW cliffs. I flew a constant airspeed circle over the area while looking at my GPS groundspeed reading to determine the wind direction. Then I took a low pass over my selected landing path while looking for obstacles. There were a few scattered low bushes in the otherwise smooth lakebed but not enough to make them hard to avoid. The area we landed in is only about 1,500 ft in diameter, making it much smaller than the rest of the lake. However, since there are no obstacles to clear and it is such a smooth hard surface it seemed like it was longer.

A few deep footprints in the lakebed revealed that, at least occasionally, the surface is not so hard.



Kre rappels down the cliff as the campsite and the airplane await our return...

We landed without incident and taxied up to the edge of the lake near the base of the cliffs. There were huge house size boulders that provided shade for our camping area and soft flat sandy spots for tents or ground cloths. The nearby rocks made nice lounging areas and tables. As the sun set behind the cliff, the temperature changed from warm to perfect. Since we arrived in the late afternoon, we explored and bouldered for a bit, lounged on the rocks, cooked dinner, and planned our climbs for the next day.



The setting sun enhances the quiet beauty of the cliffs

Relaxing in that beautiful setting while catching up with friends and eating good food will be one of my most treasured camping experiences. There were no bugs or clouds so we didn't need to set up a tent. We slept out under the stars and had a great time climbing the next day. Weather or not you are a rock climber I would recommend camping here for anyone who enjoys camping in remote areas.

Ibx dry lakebed is the site of the annual Ibx Hardpan Fly-In every May. This fly-in is sponsored by the folks out at Heber City Municipal (McDonald) Airport and largely attended by the UBCP.

Lava Hot Springs Airpark Update

Reed White



Looking southeast down 14 at Lava Hot Springs

Lava Hot Springs Airpark is located in SE Idaho, about 100 miles north of SLC. UBCP members may recall the 1998 UBCP "fly-in", which due to weather became the "drive-in" of 1998. (No, back-country pilots don't let a little weather get in the way of their fun.) This fly-in has now evolved into a rather unusual annual airport event -- a fly-in star party. Last year, 20 amateur astronomers setup telescopes Friday and Saturday nights. The event is the brainchild of airpark lot owners Tom and Jeanine Lawler. This year, we expect to add radio-controlled airplane flights during the day.

The town of Lava Hot Springs and the surrounding area caters primarily to visitors who love hot water. This town of 500 residents boasts a heated Olympic-sized pool located at one end and a hot springs soaking facility located at the other. Many of the town's inns also have hot spring soaking facilities. When the summer sun gets hot, focus shifts to the Portneuf River that flows through town. Young visitors never tire of floating the frisky river on tubes, which are easily rented in town. Other summer activities include horseback riding, wagon rides, hiking, fishing, miniature golf, and conventional golf. The golf course is a short walk east from the airport.

Since that 1998 UBCP visit, the runway remains the same: 3500x100 foot turf runway at 5268' MSL. However, pilots will note a new "LAVA" sign in 15-foot letters at the approach end of 14. The signage project was completed last year by 99's member, Carol Houk. She and her volunteers moved 10 tons of rock to make the sign.



Other changes include home site construction. Tom and Jeanine Lawler were the first residents to begin construction. They are building a striking steel-framed hangar/home at the north end. Although their generously-windowed structure will leverage some

great views, my favorite feature is the hot tub that will be cantilevered forward, above the hangar door, and facing the runway. When the building is complete, I suppose we should file a NOTAM that reads, "Do not be distracted by hot tub activity when on final for Runway 14.

Last year, I began work on the hangar/home/office. The hangar portion will be 60x70 feet. The pilot's lounge, office, and living area will total about 2200 sq-ft. To keep it cozy in winter, the walls will be made from 8" SIPs (foam-filled Structured Insulated Panels). In the last 6 months, two additional lots have been sold. On one of these, John Clark from SLC area plans to build a fly-in B&B.

If notified in advance, innkeepers in Lava are usually able to pickup fly-ins. Tom Lawler, 208-221-4740, keeps an "airport car" at the airport, which he has been known to loan to visitors. If I am on site, I am always happy to give fly-in guests a lift into town. My cell phone is 877-360-2582.

When not staying in my Airstream at the airport, I stay at the Home Hotel (208-776-5507). Rooms are clean and inexpensive. Ask for a room in the old section with a big hot-springs tub. Operator Wayne Campbell has been good about providing transportation from the airport.

For airpark information, call Reed White at 877-360-2582, or visit the web site at www.alta-research.com. For runway condition, call Tom Lawler at 208-221-4740. Lava Hot Springs Airpark, ID26, is listed in Airguide Publications' "Airport Guide."

Thinking About Smiley Creek?

Matt Haag

So you've never been there before, and you're thinking about going to the 6th annual Friends of SkyPark/UBCP Smiley Creek Fly-In? Wondering about the field and the surrounding terrain? Well you're in for a treat! Come on up and join the fun on July 11-13...



Smiley Creek Fly-In - July, 2002

Getting There

At this time of year, special attention should be paid to density altitude considerations, especially if you are flying a relatively underpowered airplane. For example, a Cessna 172 with 150 or 160 horsepower will do just fine at Smiley Creek early in the morning and relatively lightly loaded. But try carrying 4 people and camping gear, or planning to depart anytime between 9:00 am and sunset, and you will be in for a challenge. So please keep in mind the effect of density altitude... and by all means... talk to somebody who has BTDT (been there, done that)! In any case, here is a general overview of Smiley Creek:

Smiley Creek (U87) is 32.5 nautical miles northwest of the Hailey/Sun Valley (KSUN) airport. It lies at the southern end of the Salmon River drainage, bordered on the west by the stunning Sawtooth Mountains, and on the east by Galena Peak. Arrivals are usually from the southeast via Galena Pass.

When arriving in the Hailey area from the southeast and prior to entering the valley, it is highly recommended that you contact Hailey Tower (125.60) and advise them of your intentions to transit the area northwest-bound to Smiley Creek. The top of the Class D airspace is only 7800' MSL, but there is a high volume of air

transport (SkyWest and Horizon) as well as corporate and charter traffic zooming in and out of the Hailey airport. Familiarize yourself with the little towns of Picabo (peek-a-boo; as in Ms. Street), Gannett, and Bellevue; as they are commonly used VFR reporting points. If you have an ADF (HLE 220) and/or a DME (108.80), it is a good idea to have those tuned in for reference as well. The tower may ask you for your position in reference to those co-located nav aids.

The usual procedure for transiting this valley is to fly on the east side when north bound, and on the west side when south bound. Once past the airport, you can follow the highway northwest bound past Mt. Baldy, Ketchum, and Sun Valley ski area. Watch for gliders under tow in this area, and for more gliders orbiting near Baldy. The highway continues to meander in a general northwest direction and tops out over Galena Pass at about 9000' MSL. Smiley Creek is just over the pass at a distance of ~4 nautical miles.

Approach and Landing

Prior to reaching Galena Pass, it will be a great idea to start your Common Traffic Advisory Frequency transmissions. Galena Pass can be a very busy place – especially when there's a fly-in just 4 miles on the other side. The common back country frequency for CTAFs and general position reporting is 122.90; and it is no different for Smiley Creek. (Keep in mind that the air-to-air chitchat frequency is designated as 122.75; please try to keep the CTAF frequencies clear for safety reasons! 122.72 and 122.77 also work well for air-to-air as alternatives.)

The pattern altitude at Smiley Creek is 8000' MSL, and the field sits at 7160' MSL. If the pattern is full or you need to bleed some energy, just turn north and fly up the valley a-ways before turning around and entering the pattern. A standard left-hand traffic pattern entry is recommended for either runway. Wind permitting, plan to land on 14 (uphill). The runway is 4900' long and 150' wide. The surface is grass and beautifully maintained. If you are not current with your soft-field landing technique, you might consider brushing up on it a bit beforehand. In any case, this runway is very forgiving, and tends to make almost all landings look and feel like greasers. If you are used to asphalt, you will notice that your rollout will be greatly reduced by the grass. If you have one of those nose-gears, keep that yoke aft and the weight off the nose wheel – just like your private pilot instructor told you – and you will find taxiing so much easier!



Breaking camp early Sunday morning

Taxiing will require quite a bit more power than normal, especially going uphill. However, please be conscious of what is in your prop wash, and who may be camped out behind you. Making friends is easy if you shut down your engine with the pointy end of the airplane perpendicular to the parked airplanes. All your new friends will gladly run out to help you turn and push/pull your bird clear of the flight line and into a parking spot!

Departing

As mentioned previously, density altitude is not to be taken lightly this time of year. Even the pack-mules (i.e. the Ce185s carrying lotsa people and gear) will be getting an early start on Sunday morning. Also keep in mind that a wet, dew-laden runway in the morning can slow your acceleration – even going down hill on Runway 32. Use good soft field technique. Get your bird into ground effect early, accelerate, and then climb. Review your V-speeds and use them appropriately. Fly north, down the valley toward Stanley to gain altitude as far as you need before turning south toward Galena Pass.

Okay, I'll step down off my flight instructor pulpit. My wife, Holly, and I have enjoyed the Smiley Creek Fly-In every year since we moved here from Arizona. If you are a desert rat like me, the first sight of a real living grass runway like this is something to behold. Airplanes take to grass runways like our golden retriever takes to water – especially taildraggers. We enjoy this fly-in particularly because this airstrip permits a wide variety of aircraft to operate in and out. It gives those who are not as back country savvy to participate with a nice margin for error, and it gives them a taste of what back country flying is all about. We meet new people and UBCP gains a few members every year. One of my favorite things about aviation is sharing it, or some aspect of it, with others who are new to it.

So come on up to Smiley Creek this July. The scenery is stunning. The fishing is great. Some of us fly out to some of the more remote and aggressive strips for even better fishing, sightseeing, hiking, etc. Some of us just enjoy lounging, looking at airplanes, and making conversation with folks who have journeyed in from all points of the compass rose. Bring a frisbee disc, football, or a soccer ball; and don't forget marshmallows for the fire pit after supper at the Smiley Creek Lodge. Oh yeah – call Kent Bond (801-913-5223) and make a reservation for your sup – just so the kind folks at the lodge know how much grub to grill up.

If you have any questions, please call and ask me (Matt: 801-466-3417) – or any of the board members. Be safe, have fun, and look for us when you get there. (I'll be the other doofusy-looking guy lounging in the shadow of a punkin-orange ol' Cessna!)



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UBCP Web Site

The internet address for the UBCP's web site is www.UtahBackCountryPilots.org. The searchable database of Utah's back country airstrips is now fully functional. If you have corrections, additions, photos, or additional comments on the airstrips, please e-mail them to Margarite Hargrave hargrave@halcyon.com. She will add them to the database.

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Has Your Label Changed Color?

The annual membership dues of the Utah Back Country Pilots Association are \$30.00. If your membership is about to expire, your mailing label will not be white. This is your reminder to renew. Just send your check to our address and you'll retain your membership for another year.

UBCP Shirts & Hats

T-shirts are royal blue 100% cotton with a 3 inch embroidered UBCP logo, available in all sizes. The hats are royal blue, fitted baseball hats with 2 inch embroidered UBCP logos. The UBCP requests a \$15.00 donation for each shirt or hat. Please mail your order and donation to:

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