

# Air Mail

Volume 3 Number 2

Utah Back Country Pilots Inc.

Spring/Summer 2004

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## Flight Plan (Upcoming Events)

### July 9-11, 2004 BTF/UBCP Smiley Creek Fly In

7th annual Skypark Pilots Fly-In. All friends of Skypark and Utah Back Country Pilots welcome. Free camping with showers on the airstrip. Limited lodging available at the Smiley Creek lodge (208) 774-3547. Chuck wagon dinner July 10 starting at 6:30 pm. Cost approximately \$20. RSVP to Kent Bond (801) 913-5223 for dinner. Float trips and scenic horseback rides available. Call Cindy Corbitt (801) 292-9932 for more information

### October 16, 2004 Mineral Canyon Work Party

More information in the Summer Newsletter.

### October 23-24, 2004 Mineral Canyon Fly In

More information in the Summer Newsletter

## 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:

Fletcher Anderson	KTEX	(970) 728-1728
Steve Durtschi	KBTF/KSLC	(801) 292-9372
Holly Haag	KDWH	(281) 296-0525
Matt Haag	KDWH	(281) 296-0525
Jess Hall	KPUC	(435) 637-4502
Hal Hilburn	KSGU	(435) 574-2808
Larry Newby	KCNY/KPUC	(435) 637-1108
Deanna Strand	KGJT	(970) 243-4359
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 (squawk1200@earthlink.net) to be included in the next newsletter.

## UBCP PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Steve Durtschi*

Hello, Utah Back Country Pilots,

Sorry about the abbreviated newsletter. We wanted to get some information out about Smiley Creek and time was rapidly running out. Summer is in full swing and I trust you are enjoying the beautiful weather. It has been significantly cooler so far this month than it was last year and the flying weather has been great although a little breezy. We have had the opportunity to spend one weekend in Idaho so far. We camped at one of our favorite spots, Chamberlain Basin. The past several years, my wife and I have become friends with Margaret, the USFS Station Guard at Chamberlain, and it's fun to renew her acquaintance. For those of you who are familiar with Margaret, you know she is a little reclusive. She has been assigned to the Chamberlain Basin area for 18 years. We talk her into coming over for dinner and she eats my spaghetti and "special" sauce. She pretends she likes it. There is something unique and special about visiting with good friends around a fire long after the sun has gone down. I can't believe how lucky we are to have a friend like Margaret and be able to visit that beautiful country.

The Utah back country is alive and well. Your organization continues to make strides in protecting our state's remote recreational landing strips. A couple of things we are currently working on are a restroom of some kind for Mineral Canyon and we continue to monitor developments at Range Creek. We hope to eventually receive permission to rehabilitate the old runway for general public use.

We could sure use some refreshing input for future newsletters. Send us a photo or two, also. We hope you are using and enjoying the web site. We plan on the "Open Mic" section of the site becoming a dynamic and active forum for discussing all things relating to back country flying in Utah. If you have been to the back country, or are heading out, leave a message on the web site. Post some photos when you return. Tell us about the condition of the runways you visit. This will really help promote safety.

I hope you have a safe flying season. We'll look for you at Smiley Creek.

Keep it on the centerline, Steve

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## UBCP Website

*Rob Hunter*

All UBCP members should have received a mailing about the new website at [www.UtahBackCountryPilots.org](http://www.UtahBackCountryPilots.org). The letter also included information on how to access the member only sections of the website. If you are having any problems with the website feel free to contact me by either sending an email to [RobHunter@utahbackcountrypilots.org](mailto:RobHunter@utahbackcountrypilots.org) or by leaving a message on the UBCP voice mail at (801) 583-0342.

One section of the website that I think will become very useful is the "Open Mic" section which can be found under the communications tab. This section is open to everyone not just UBCP members. It is a forum where everyone can share ideas, and information and ask questions. There is a forum topic started for

each of the more popular airstrips and we can easily start others as requested. We hope that each of these forums will eventually fill with trip reports, airstrip condition reports, ideas about where to go once there, questions from people thinking about visiting etc. We know lots of you have a ton of knowledge about these places and we hope you will share some of this knowledge in the "open mic" section. Even just a brief report about the conditions during your last visit would be greatly appreciated by many. You might also consider posting if you plan on visiting an airstrip and don't mind having company. It's easy for anyone to post a message. All you have to do is make up a login name and password for yourself. You can decide to use the same password you use for the main member only sections of the website or make up something different. I decided to use my real name as my login name to make it easier for me to remember. You don't need to login to read the messages simply go the "main index" to view all the topics.

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## Back Country Flying Etiquette

*Steve Durtschi*

Back country flying is certainly unique. Flying an airplane in the mountains and operating in and out of the west's remote recreational landing strips requires a level of training well above that taught at most local flight schools. Driving the airplane around when on the ground, getting in and out of a parking area, and movements on the runway are also more challenging than the local airport. Now combine these challenges with the added dimension of camping: When camping, people are taking up temporary residence very near their parked airplanes. The responsibility of being as courteous and safe as possible takes on significant meaning.



*Camping at Smiley Creek*

### Those Annoying Airplanes

At our UBCP Board Meeting the other day, it was suggested that someone address ways that we could minimize some of the negative impacts of our airplanes when operating in the back country. I drew the short straw. As we discussed the subject, I was impressed at the suggestions that came up. There really is a lot we can do to help preserve the serenity and still operate the airplanes safely.

### The Law of Primacy

We discussed the idea that pilots must be continually evaluating their situation. They must be flexible. Unfortunately, this can run counter to the way we learned as pilots at the most fundamental level.

Every flight instructor has had the so-called "Law of Primacy" etched into his memory bank. The Law of Primacy states that when we learn a new skill or concept, the way that we first learned it will be the way we do it forever. This is important for the flight instructor because students will perform as they were originally taught – right or wrong, improper concepts or technique will be difficult to overcome at a later date. Unfortunately, the Law of Primacy also makes pilots very hesitant to change with changing conditions. This can be disastrous in the back country. In order to extend the maximum courtesy to others in the non-standard

conditions of remote landing strips, pilots must be flexible. Those rigidly locked into all of the things they learned at their home airport just because "that's the way they were taught", may run into problems in the back country. After discussing the basic need to be flexible and constantly evaluating what is going on around us and preparing for varying outcomes, we brain-stormed the following list of suggestions that we think may be beneficial in order to extend the maximum courtesy to others when in the back country:

### No Touch and Gos

A recent IAA (I hope we are all members of the Idaho Aviation Association) newsletter had a stern warning from President Bob Patrick: touch and goes are not acceptable in the back country. I know, we must train and we become competent by repeated experience, but the remote landing strip is NOT the place to become proficient at touch and goes. Do it at home. In my opinion, "stop and goes" are about as bad. It is annoying to be enjoying the very early morning in the wilderness only to have someone land, spin around and blast off in the opposite direction, and then come back and do it again. I enjoy early morning visitors; if you land, shut down for a minute and enjoy the surroundings. Even just a few minutes in between the landing and take off seem to make the noise much less objectionable. IAA Pres. Bob Patrick takes this one step further and discourages hopping around the back country just to be able to say you have landed at another strip. Again, I admit, we need to train, but I think it is a good idea to avoid training for training's sake at the more popular strips.

### No Fly Bys

This should go without saying. Maybe at Ixex Hard Pan and then only well away from everyone. Remember the FARs state that except for the purposes of take off and landing, we must remain 500 feet from vehicles, persons, or structures at all times.

### Develop a Plan

Study the airport diagram before landing and have a plan for taxi and parking. Take a good look at the lay out when circling overhead prior to landing. This spring, the intersection of the crosswind runway with the main runway at Chamberlain Basin was flooded. While both runways were useable, it was impossible to taxi from one side of the field to the other. This information was only available by noting the orange cones marking the flooded area while flying overhead prior to landing. Make your final pattern and approach to the runway only when you have a plan for getting around on the ground.

### Be Aware of the Propeller!

That whirling propeller puts a tremendous responsibility on pilots. Never forget that it is moving tons of air along with dust, rocks, sticks, and all kinds of debris. Anything or anyone 100 feet behind the prop will get a blast of junk. Since we are pointed the opposite way of the propeller, it is easy to concentrate on what we are doing and forget what the propeller is doing.

### Let it Idle

Many people start the engine and immediately leave it running at 1200 RPM. Pull it back and let it idle! You don't hear the noise inside the cabin with your headset on, but it will make a huge difference to those outside near you.

### You Don't Have to Drive It to the Parking Space

Remember the Law of Primacy? It seems like we were once taught that a mark of a really good pilot is one who can drive the airplane exactly to the parking spot. I never cease to be entertained at our airport watching the students (and instructors) practice this fine art. Here's the routine: A. pull near the tie down, B. hold one brake REALLY hard, C. increase power, D. increase power, E. apply full power, F. spin the airplane through a series of jerks and stops into the correct position, and finally, G. silently congratulate yourself on your total mastery of the craft. Never mind that you ground a flat spot in the tire, sucked 10 pounds of gravel and dust through the prop, and generally annoyed everyone within ½ mile of you. Our airplanes are

pretty easy to push and there is no reason to use lots of power and make all that noise getting it to the perfect spot.

#### **Let Someone Help You (Part 1)**

People in the vicinity of your airplane with tents and the like set up will appreciate you simply pulling near your intended parking spot and shutting down. The sooner you can get the prop stopped the better - remember it is a whirling knife blade in the immediate vicinity of others and it is making a bunch of noise. Shut down promptly and you will find lots of folks instantly wanting to help you gently push your airplane around and into the exact spot that you want it. I like to let the helpers do the pushing and stand back and direct the operation, watching the wing tips and the like.

#### **Let Someone Help You (Part 2)**

When it's time to leave, let the same people who helped you get the airplane in the spot get it out. While you can certainly usually taxi it from the tie down spot, remember that it takes a lot of power to get the airplane moving - especially in the soft back country. Push it out to the runway, well away from everything else. Your neighbors will appreciate it. A few years ago, we were leaving the "Flying B" after a day of enjoying a fun fly in. There were some tents next to my airplane but I felt that by turning the opposite way I could avoid "dusting" them when taxiing out from the tie down. As I prepared to leave, the tenants came over and wanted to push the airplane out. Again, I thought it was unnecessary, but had no objection to their help. They pushed it 500 feet down the runway! No problem. If it made me a more courteous pilot in their eyes, great.

#### **Have a Great Time**

We all contribute to each other's enjoyment in the back country. We might extend that statement to include the old phrase "some by coming, some by leaving". I think we can make everyone's visit a little more pleasurable by simple thinking ahead, considering what the propeller is doing at all times, and offering to help where appropriate. Additionally, we should remember that there are lots of different ways to do things. Some of the things we learned at our home airport may not be appropriate in the back country.



## **Caution – North Wind at Mineral Canyon**

*Dale Gardner*

It has been one of those winters and it all seemed to start with the snow right about Christmas time. The heavy snow pack on the valley floor set up the perfect conditions for the fog and haze to settle in, and as a result my flying time hit the skids. So I've been forced to reflect on the better days of the last season and perhaps evaluate any lessons learned from those adventures.

As a VFR pilot, I like to see clearly out the windscreen when I'm flying, especially when flying in the mountains. I don't want any of those big slabs of granite jumping out from behind any clouds. I tend to focus my go/no-go decision on what is happening visually outside. Last summer I met a gentleman and he had this interesting means of making a go/no-go decision. He pulled this card out of his wallet. One side was totally blue in color. There was nothing else on it, just a solid blue surface. When he needs to make the decision to fly or not he simply holds that card up toward the sky and makes a quick comparison. If they match, he flies. Now, this might be a little extreme, and I'm sure his example was shared with me as a point of humor. My point is this: Sometimes it's not what you *can* see, but rather what you *can't* see that should be considered in any go/no-go decisions.

A recent case comes to mind that I thought I would share. It was the UBCP gathering at Mineral Canyon, October 25-26. A check on the weather Saturday morning before the flight suggested no serious adverse weather conditions (in other words no rain or snow storms to contend with) with light to variable winds out of the north during the morning hours (good - I will have a tail wind and get

there faster). The flight south was pretty much as expected with wonderful blue skies and essentially no turbulence. I descended downward past Mexican mountain and passed over I-70 and visually picked up the Green River as it starts to cut its deep path into sandstone rock below. Down around 1000 - 500 ft. AGL things became a little rough. Oh well, I told myself, it should be calmer down in the canyon. I passed over the airstrip and a check of the windsock indicated winds around 10 knots from the north and maybe even gusting to 15 knots. I decided to fly a left downwind, with a landing to the north.

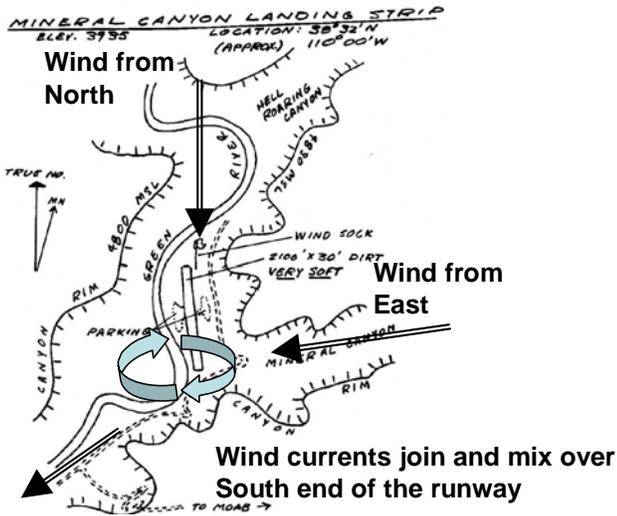
While on downwind at a point just about abeam the south end of the runway, gusty winds began rocking the plane around with enough force to get my full attention. The conditions did not improve as I continued through the base leg and on to final. There was little sink over the end of the runway, but I added power and pretty much set her down right where I thought I should have. I started to apply light braking to make the turn off for the parking area when a strong northerly gust hit. So much for braking, I was now 10-15 ft back into the air and not at much more than stall speed. I applied power to avoid stalling the airplane and then decided to apply full power and go around. More than half the runway was still ahead, and since I was already in the air, I believed the go around was the proper choice. Full power it was... and then as quickly as that big gust of wind came, it went. I began to sink toward the runway. However, because my initial touch down point was very near the approach end (and I already had full power), I had enough runway left to make a successful go around.

What made this situation a challenge was what I could *not* see and failed to interpret or anticipate ahead of time. After (a second approach and less eventful) landing and some discussion with others on the ground I learned that just after I touched down the first time a dust devil appeared and made its path directly down the runway. The gusty winds that produced that dust devil were responsible for lifting my plane into the air as well as the subsequent loss of headwind component shortly after applying full power.



*Mineral Canyon looking south...*

The cautionary point to remember is that there are actually two canyons that join at the south end of the runway at Mineral Canyon; the main Green River canyon with which the runway is essentially parallel, and Mineral Canyon that converges from the east. The wind that day was generally from the north and flowing down stream, but the orientation of the side canyon created a second wind component entering perpendicular to the main flow and mixing right over the south end of the runway. It is easy to visualize the situation if you think about how two rivers join and create swirling currents and eddies. After landing that morning, I observed several dust devils that formed and moved right down the runway. Those dusty devils were always associated with large gusts of wind that came down the canyon.



I know the conditions were a challenge that morning because at least two other airplanes made go arounds. It may be that pilots who fly into Mineral Canyon more often than I do are familiar with what the wind can do there. I hope this is true. I wanted to caution others to think about what might be going on when the wind is gusting 10-15 knots, and not just at Mineral Canyon. Many of the airstrips we fly to could have similar or even worse scenarios. When you think about it many airstrips are located in similar areas. The junction of two canyons provides a natural open space, good for maneuvering an airplane; but equally well, a space to be filled with undetectable mixing wind currents. Spring has come to Utah and I'm sure we are all ready to dust off our wings and go flying. Let's just be careful out there and maybe take a few minutes to think about what we *can't* see and how it might challenge our day.

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## Apologies for Volume 3 Number 1

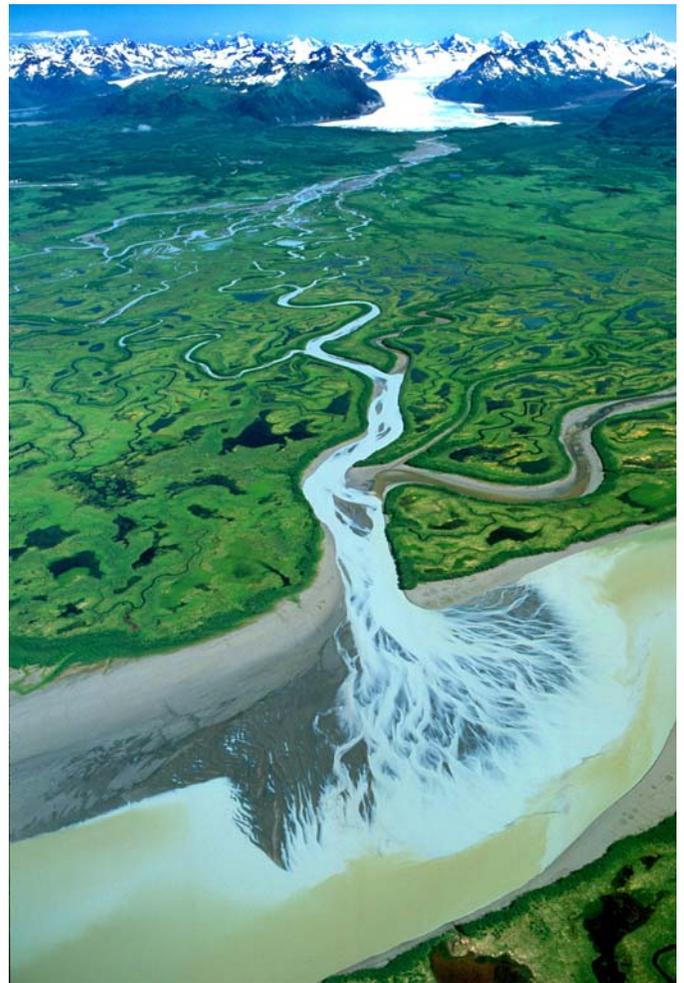
*Editor*

Due to printing & planning errors, and miscommunication with the print shop regarding the previous Air Mail, a photo of Kyle and Jill Garrett at Smiley Creek was dropped and the wonderful article on aerial photography by Jim Wark included only black and white versions of his photographs. (If I didn't feel so bad, I might think the irony was a bit humorous!) Sorry Jim, Kyle and Jill!

In an effort to correct those blunders, Kyle and Jill's picture is included in the following reprint of an informational article on Smiley Creek. Below are the color versions of Jim Wark's photographs that should have been included last time.



*Patterns & Juxtaposition at Los Alamos, NM (Jim Wark)*



*Serendipity on the Copper River Delta, AK (Jim Wark)*

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## Thinking About Smiley Creek (Again)?

*Matt Haag*

Well in the interest of timing, pertinence and general lack of material, I've been asked to modify and reprint an article on Smiley Creek from last year. If this didn't help get you motivated to fly out last year maybe it will work this time. Maybe out of sheer desire (No!... please, not again!) for me to permanently retire this humble endeavor at informational penmanship, you'll fly on up to Smiley Creek **this** time! (Refer to page 1 for the data on the fly in.) For you lawyer-types out there, keep in mind that this is informational in nature, and not intended for navigation!

### 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 northwesterly 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!



*Kyle and Jill Garrett roll out southbound at last year's fly in...*

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 a chance 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, horseback riding, and kayaking is outstanding. Some of us fly out to 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.



*Smiley Creek Fly In, 2003*

As this summer finds us without an airplane in airworthy condition (a story for another time!), I will be grounded in southeast Texas for this year's fly in. Since becoming involved with UBCP and getting to know many of you in the KBTF community, we have thoroughly enjoyed this event for the previous 4 years. Holly and I wish you all well, fly safe, and have a blast at Smiley Creek.

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UTAH BACK COUNTRY PILOTS INC.  
Skypark Airport  
1887 South Redwood Road #16  
Woods Cross, UT 84087



Air Mail to Master Pilot:

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### UBCP Web Site

The internet address for the UBCP's web site is

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

Web Hosting donated by:



### Newsletter Submissions

We would love to have more articles for the newsletter and welcome submissions. Accompanying photos are always appreciated too. If you have written something that you think would be appropriate for our newsletter please send it to Matt Hagg, our newsletter editor, at [squawk1200@earthlink.net](mailto:squawk1200@earthlink.net)

### 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:

Utah Back Country Pilots, Inc.  
1887 South Redwood Road, #16  
Woods Cross, UT 84087.

Please include quantities, sizes and return address, and \$3.00 shipping and handling per order to insure prompt delivery.

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### Donation for the Preservation of Back Country Airstrips

Please accept my donation to the Utah Back Country Pilots' for Recreational Airstrip preservation, in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_. I understand this donation to the Utah Back Country Pilots, a not for profit organization, is to be used for the preservation of back country airstrips.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_