



## Moontown Airport News

March-April 2010

*By George Myers*

### **Moontown' Bill Elliott**

Bill Elliott will be competing in the FAI WORLD GLIDING CHAMPIONSHIP in Szeged, Hungary on July 24, 2010 to Aug 8, 2010 He will be competing in the Open / 18-Meter / 15-Meter Classes. The following is reprinted from an American Soaring Society webpage:

#### **Bill Elliott:** 18-Meter Class

Bill (WE) is a 52 year old pilot and rocket scientist (really!) who hails from Huntsville, Alabama. Bill parlayed degrees in finance and engineering into a 25-year career in the defense industry. As vice-president of a small company, he leads a team of scientists and engineers that helped the U.S. Army manage and test high power laser systems for missile defense. Bill is now a Vice President for another missile defense company, People Tec, where he is growing a diverse group of engineers providing missile defense simulation, missile lethality modeling, and helicopter maintenance support.



While in college, Bill earned an airplane rating, but by 1989, he was looking for a new challenge, and the lure of motor less flight induced him to join the Huntsville Soaring Club, where he soloed in a Blanik L-13. He began soaring cross country in

the club 1-26, then bought a Duster and, a few years later, an HP-18, with which he won the Region 5 South Sports Class Championship in 1995. After this win, Bill took a 5 year hiatus from soaring to spend time with his kids. By 2001, he had moved up to a DG-300, followed by an ASW-27 in 2002. With the acquisition of the ASW-27, Bill's competition soaring career moved into high gear. The past several years has seen Bill regularly as the Region 5 North and South 15 meter champion. His 4th place finish at the 2007 15 meter nationals earned him a slot as reserve pilot for the 2008 U.S. Team. After a win in the 18 meter Nationals in 2008 followed by a 3rd place finish in 2009, Bill is now headed for Hungary to fly 18 meter in the WGC.

Bill has served in various roles on the Huntsville Soaring Club Board of Directors and was recently appointed Alabama SSA Governor after a five-year stint as SSA State Record keeper. He was a founding member of the Georgia-Tennessee-Alabama (GTA) race series, and has begun development of a Wiki-based Web site, [www.GliderPilot.org](http://www.GliderPilot.org), that he hopes will become a one-stop shop of soaring information serving the global soaring community. Bill holds many Alabama, Tennessee, and New Mexico State soaring records and recently awarded a U.S. national multiplace record in a Blanik with Rand Baldwin!

When asked what fuels his passion for competition soaring, Bill replied, "I love

the challenge that racing offers; focus, preparation, practice, and competition all come together to enhance your soaring skills like no other kind of flying can. It is amazing to race on days when, not long ago, I would not have even assembled the glider. Every time I soar, I return to the ground both amazed and in awe of what it is we soaring pilots do."

Good Luck Bill.

### ***2010 Annual Grass Field Fly-in: September 18-19, 2010***

Moontown Airport's annual fall fly-in, sponsored by Moontown Airport and supported by EAA chapter 190, is in the planning stage. The first formal planning meeting by team members will be held at the Moontown Airport Pilot's Lounge on Tuesday evening, May 11, 2010. The team has a few holes to be filled this year. If there is anyone out there who would like to help plan and conduct the fly-in, please contact George Myers, 683-7337.

### ***April Fly-In Breakfast***

There were 26 aircraft attending the April Breakfast, not as many as the 53 that attended in March, but still a good crowd for the Sun n Fun weekend. Alabama and Georgia weather was great but Tennessee had scattered rain that contributed to the lower attendance. April was the first time we used the new patio and picnic, a great asset for the warm summer and fall events.

We are into the growing season for runway and parking area grass. The southeast parking area is smooth and dry to provide additional airplane parking.



**Jerry Barnett helping with Airport Traffic Advisories during the March breakfast fly-in**



**New Patio cover and concrete deck built by EAA Chapter 190**



**Breakfast Pilots admiring a Starduster**

## ***Moontown Airport Operations***

Much has changed at Moontown Airport since Shirley and I purchased the business back in January 1990. I had been around the field since 1986, just after Buz Barton started operations. Bill Ledford, like Buz, was an Air Force Vet and was the mechanic. Along with Jane Barton, the three operated the airport along with a lot of support from many flight instructors and some volunteers to help mow the grass and other upkeep items. Tie down, fuel, and airplane rental prices were very low. Most of the airplanes were tied down in the grass.

Since 1990, the airport has grown in acreage, many hangars have been constructed, and very few airplanes are tied down outside, yet the airplane population has grown from 65 to 95 plus or minus a few. Most of the hangars are owned by individuals who pay a land lease fee and are responsible for the upkeep. We have added asphalt taxi/driveways to keep dust down and to prevent propeller damage. Grass mowing is contracted out, volunteer help from people based at the airport has waned. All of the paving was completed with additional money pro-



vided by our customers. Customer funds in the form of hangar fees and land lease pay for the services and airport upkeep.

Of course the Government has been here to help with extra and expensive regulations. We now have Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), Alabama Department

of Transportation, The State Weights and Measurements people, TSA, and of course our insurance people to keep happy. There are license fees and taxes to pay. Keeping up with those requirements is very time consuming but the effort is worth the outcome.

The result of all this growth and services are higher prices but still very competitive for the relative freedom we all have. If I were rich person, I probably would have some very expensive War Birds hangared in a private fly-in community, but since I'm not, I'm very happy for what we have at Moontown. We have changed from a mostly volunteer community to one that supports us through fees for services. Our crew now consists of six employees and staff members plus Harold McMurrans' Southeastern Aircraft Rebuilders and the land owner. When I need help, I can usually get volunteers based on the variety of expertise found among our pilots or EAA members. I hope we can keep this going for a while. Moontown is a nice place to be.

## **Moontown Pilots and Friends Support Scottsboro**

I'm a few days late with this newsletter because I wanted to report on the Scottsboro Aviation Day that was highly supported by pilots from Moontown and a few of their friends from around the area. We opened the event on Friday afternoon, April 30, by assembling eight Yaks and Nanchangs to escort the American Airlines Flagship Detroit DC-3 to the Scottsboro airport. This included a pass over the community to let the people know that the show

was on. The following morning we arrived with six Yaks and Nanchangs with yet another flight over the community and then provided formation flights throughout the day. We ended the day with a hangar party. The rain bypassed us to the north but we did have some gusty winds that made the formation flights more of a challenge.



### **Redstar flight of Yaks and Nanchangs joining with Flagship Detroit**

Formation pilots from Moontown were George Myers in Tom Bennett's CJ-6A, Gordy Seuell, Alan Cockrell, Aaron Komara, Steve Brown, Pete Van Staagan and Jerry Barnett. B.J. Kennamore, Richard Hess, and Mike Romack supported us from Muscle Shoals, Atlanta and Scottsboro respectively.



Doug McDaniel was the show announcer. Rich Hess brought an L-39 Jet from his company, International Jets in Gadsden. Gordy brought the Lionheart and his partners provided biplane rides for hire in the PT-17.

Some members of this group will support the Gurley Festival on the first weekend in May.

**The formation seemed very tight to me at times. Here I'm looking at lead but I can't help noticing the DC-3 wing tip ahead of me. (Formation Photos by Pam Halloway)**

