

Arizona Rotorcraft Club

October 2026 Newsletter

Recently I made my annual trek to the Ken Brock Freedom Fly-In. It is held at the end of September, on the El Mirage dry lake northeast of Los Angeles. It is a 3 mile by 7 mile flat hard playground perfect for flying machines to practice taxi, crow hop, take off and land.

El Mirage is where Marion Springer lived and trained many gyro students. Her three children still live on the family property. Sadly Marion's granddaughter Lonnie (daughter of Linda) passed away recently from complications with diabetes. I always looked forward to seeing her. She was a happy upbeat person like her Mom and Grandma and had loads of enthusiasm and support for the flying community. Her boyfriend Khone learned to fly a powered paraglider and they were often present at El Mirage and the Salton Sea PPG Gathering and even came to the Arizona Flying Circus. Lonnie loved seeing her friends and being part of the action. We all miss her.



Linda, Lonnie and Marion



Marion and her granddaughter Lonnie



Lonnie and her Mom Linda



(L-R) Jim, Tami, Christy, Albert, Mike, Hong, Lonnie, Khone, Carl at the Salton Sea café 2020.



Lonnie and Khone at the Salton Sea 2020

Ken Brock Freedom Fly-In 2026

A scrapbook of my photos. You could also visit the Rotary Wing Forum, PRA and Chapter 1 on Facebook.

From the unpowered gyro glider to the powerful big blue helicopter, everyone was there including fixed wings, ultralights, and powered paragliders. Men, women and children, long time members and first time visitors attended. It was a good turnout, good weather and it looked like everyone had a good time!



Some young kids hanging around with their grandfather.



The Flightline



The Classics



If you can't afford a new modern gyro, then how about an old modern gyro. Both are for sale.



Two kinds of Air Command were represented, low and high



Jerry had some good flights in his Hornet gyro.



Since a Hornet is homebuilt from plans, each one is unique. Hong likes the custom nose wheel centering spring that Jerry designed. And we are all fascinated by his hand operated pull start pre-rotator.

Newbie Brian Kopp and veteran Vance Breese sitting at the same table discussing ideas new and old.



Lots of enthusiasm this year and lots of builder's projects and parts that may show up next year as complete machines, I hope. Brian is doing his best to promote the sport to those on a budget. Lots of "barnfinds" still being found. Some are more complete than others. This one on the trailer is only the second one I have seen with a round tube frame and round mast. It has a Mac engine but knowledge and parts for those are scarce. Even the Rotax 503 and 582 are not so common anymore. But there are still lots of snowmobile engine options. Use a belt drive or check out ACE Aviation for ready made redrives.



The Grassroots Gyro Facebook group of Brian Kopp and Sam Merriman was giving gyroglider rides.



If you were ready for the next level, local CFI Dave Bacon was on hand for introductory rides and instruction.



Chapter 1 President Terry Smith did a great job keeping everything running smoothly and everyone well fed. A big thank you to all the Chapter 1 members who helped make this great event possible.



It was a beautiful day but wear a hat outside and drink LOTS of water.

The shade canopies were a welcome place to get out of the sun.



The women of El Mirage



The men of El Mirage





CFI Desmon Butts came all the way from Texas.

He represents Auto Gyro and provides training in the Houston area.

Fly-Ins are a good place to get ideas. I found it slightly awkward to press the small round brake on my Air Command with the heel of my left foot. This guy added a bar that pushes against the brake and it looks like it would make braking way easier.



It's a great event in a unique location. A flat dry lake is one of nature's wonders. Bring a flying machine, bicycle, motorcycle, one-wheel or powerchair. I encourage everyone to attend.



See you there next year, Carl