

“Iron Thermal” Eagles Flock to Minden, Nevada



An annual gathering for these “birds of a feather”

By Richard Pearl

June 17-19, 2011 was the first day of another of your standard, national glider gatherings: pilots from across the country arriving to fly, learn from each other, and party together. A standard gathering, except for the fact that there were no glider trailers, vans, or campers involved. Every one of the twenty-four gliders arrived in Minden, Nevada, under their own power for the third annual Touring Motor Glider (TMG) Fly-In. The ships came from Arizona, California, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Florida. Altogether – between pilots, friends, potential purchasers, and spectators – nearly 40 people attended what was possibly the largest assemblage of Touring Motor Gliders in the country, and perhaps the world.

Al and Susan Simmons left Plainville, Connecticut for a leisurely flight across the country in their 1995 Dimona before arriving late on the 17th. After the event, they flew to Parowan, Utah, then on to Marathon, Florida – another five-day adventure.

Roland Martin left New Garden, Pennsylvania in his Ximango on June 14, and spent the following three nights in Waterloo, Iowa; Rapid City, South Dakota, and Ogden, Utah before touch-

ing down in Minden on June 17. His return trip home (from Parowan, Utah) saw nightfall in Columbus, Ohio and then home.

Jim Lee, U.S. distributor of the new Phoenix TMG, was delivering a ship to its awaiting owner in Minden, flying with another pilot from the previous year's

gathering from South Carolina.

The three-day trip from Melbourne, Florida included overnight stops in Willbarger, Texas and Page, Arizona. Total trip: 2,183 NM; 20 hours; average (ground) speed: 111 kts.

Collin Gyenes left McMinnville, Oregon in his Fournier RF5B at 6:45



Al and Susan Simmons flew all the way across the country from Connecticut to attend the motor glider fly-in, then on to Florida. Comfortable long-distance touring is a real benefit of modern touring motor gliders.



a.m. Friday morning, and arrived in Minden at 3:30 p.m. The oldest ship at the Fly-In was carrying only 10 gallons of fuel, and required two stops along the 500-mile trip down the Sacramento Valley and then over the Sierra Nevada Mountains to MEV.

Starting points for other participants included Aloha, Oregon; Vancouver, Washington; Seattle, Washington; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, plus twelve cities in California, and four in Nevada.

Now that's touring at its finest!

Minden-Tahoe Airport (MEV) was chosen as the "home field" because of the wonderful soaring conditions, generally predictable summer weather, large physical configuration, familiarity with glider operations, and its central location for many on the West Coast. The on-site host, SoaringNV, provided invaluable support in logistics, local soaring knowledge, and instruction in fine-tuning flying techniques. The event would not be the same without SoaringNV's Laurie Hardin and her hardworking team.

The motorgliders started arriving in Minden early on Friday, June 17, and by nighttime we had used up almost all the available close-in tie-down space. Fortunately, airport manager Bobbi Thompson and her crew performed flight-line magic and got us all in. Dinner was at a local Basque restaurant where the family-style food never seems to stop arriving at your table. Saturday was devoted to introductions, a weather briefing and flying tips by Sierra Nevada Mountain glider expert Fred LaSor, and a brief mountain-flying safety presentation: MEV is at 4,900 feet

MSL and the surrounding mountains are 10,000 - 14,000 feet. Afternoon flying was a mixture of thermals and wave to 16,500 feet. Just a typical summer day in soaring paradise!

Saturday dinner was at the airport restaurant - the Taildragger - which served up grilled steak and chicken with all the fixings. Just before sitting down we participated in the Auxiliary-powered Sailplane Association's (ASA) dedication of a memorial plaque to the late Pete

Williams. Pete, the chief promoter of the auxiliary-powered sailplane movement was tragically killed in a car accident several years ago. Sixty people, including local dignitaries, paid tribute to his memory that evening.

Sunday's briefing included the day's soaring forecast - great, of course - and a discussion of TMG engines by Michael Haisten and Eric Sweeney of Auburn Airplane Works.

Pilots began dispersing Sunday through

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Pictured left to right are airport manager Bobbi Thompson; Douglas County Commissioner's Nancy McDermid and Mike Olson; and Charmaine Williams.



Tuesday, with six ships eventually heading out to Parowan, Utah to join up with the ASA's annual event. Talk about spectacular, desolate scenery en route! Roland Martin went direct in his Ximango; three of us launched Monday and went via Tonopah – touching down at the former WW II training base for fuel – then onward to Parowan for a five-hour total trip. It was nice to land (just before dinner) and again, we found camaraderie with fellow glider pilots enjoying our sport. The ASA group numbered 35 gliders on the tarmac. Powering-up on Tuesday, June 21st, Richard Pearl, Al and Susan Simmons, and Michael and Ivan Tomazin headed east for a five-hour aerial adventure to Monument Valley, Utah (past Bryce and Zion National Parks), landing in Page, Utah (Lake Mead) for fuel, then back to Parowan again just in time for the evening BBQ.

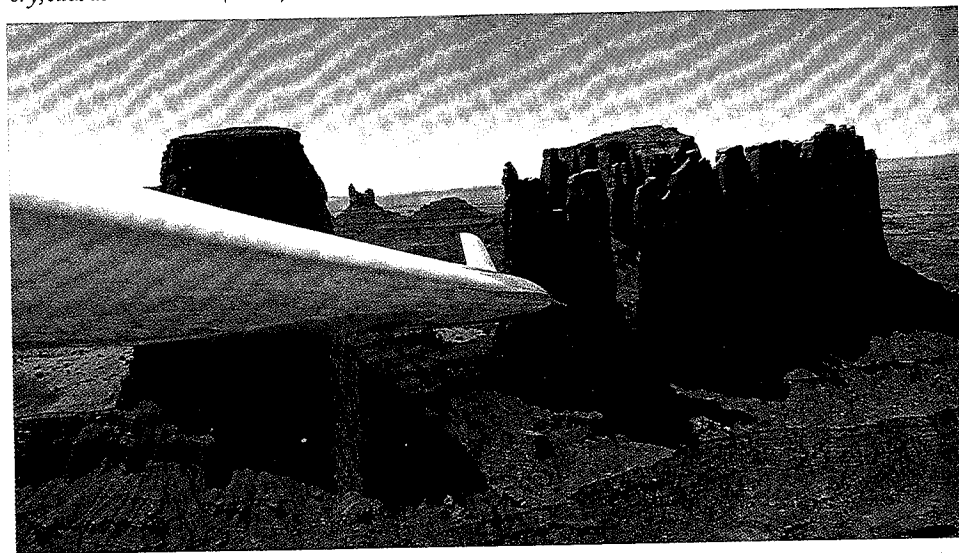
Along with the twenty-four ships that participated in the Minden event, another seven pre-registered TMG's had to cancel after signing up due to mechanical, health or business reasons. All stated their intention to attend in 2012, when the event should be even bigger and better.

Touring motor gliders are a growing segment of the glider community. Along with the self-launch capability, reasonable performance (30:1 L/D), and extended-travel ability, it's a glider in terms of medical requirements so provides another option for power pilots. The aircraft production field is now also growing in terms of variety and capabilities.

A new, consolidated Touring Motor



One of the benefits of motorglider flying is the ability to roam far and wide while under power, and still be able to take advantage of good soaring conditions when available. Attendees of the 2011 Motorglider event came from across the country to enjoy Minden, Nevada's soaring conditions as well as nearby scenery, such as Lake Tahoe (above). Other sites taken in by the participants included Monument Valley, Utah.



Glider Association (TMGA) and website has recently (January 2012) been formed to promote all TMGs, both in

the USA and around the world. There are separate sections for each TMG "model" and areas for all TMG'ers (fly-in information, common issues discussions, travel sections, general knowledge, etc.). There is no cost to join. The website is at: www.touringmotorgliders.org.

The TMGA will hold its 2012 Fly-In July 12-15, again at Minden, Nevada. See the Events section of the TMGA web site for details. All TMG pilots and those interested in TMGs are welcome. Contact Richard Pearl, moderator of the Group, for further information (pennyrich@aol.com). ✈

Richard Pearl is a CFIG with 1,500 glider hours, 500 motor glider hours, and 50 fixed wing hours. He is also president of Soar Truckee, Inc. (California) and a member of Silverado Soaring. He flies his Grob 109 whenever possible and lives in Lincoln, California.

Isn't it about time you flew Minden?

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