

History of "Little Field"

(Flying site of the Kitsap ARCS)

By Marlin Little

We have so many new members since we opened this field that we need to bring everyone up to speed regarding the tremendous cooperation we have received from the County commissioners and the Parks Department to develop this site to the extent that it is. When I joined this club in October of 1997 we had just lost the Bremerton Airport as a flying site. Members of the club had been pressing the County for a site on County property for several years without success. In spite of their tireless efforts, there appeared to be nothing in the County's land holdings that would be suitable for flying RC aircraft. A short trial of a piece of property in Olalla caused trouble with the neighbors resulting in losing that property. Without a site at which to fly and our membership near 30, the club was in danger of folding.

Then President Lorin Miller assigned me the task of Club field representative in pursuit of a place to fly. The first step was to try to get back into the Olalla site and also, to return to the Bremerton Airport. Talks with the airport manager produced a lease arrangement with them but that didn't help the weekend flyers because of the car clubs and drag racers using the closed runway. Meeting with the planning company working on the park plan for the Olalla site ended up with a recommendation that a model aircraft field be included in Olalla Park. We had proved that the noise level was acceptable. However, neither the County Parks Department nor we wanted to use the Olalla site because of the problems with the proximity of houses. That gave urgency to finding a suitable location on County land.

Commissioner Jan Angel was very sympathetic to our need and promised her support. Commissioner Endressen was also contacted with a favorable response. Commissioner Angel, along with the other two commissioners, tasked the Parks Department to work with us to find a suitable location. The Commissioners have been very supportive throughout our development, even attending open houses and air shows. After our meetings with the Parks Department Director, Cris Gears, he tasked Joseph Coppo to work with our field representative to take over the search.

After an extensive search of the County's holdings, nothing seemed to fit the bill. The County had just purchased some property from McCormick Land Company for future park use and was looking at another 1200 acres for future purchase. The Sunnyslope property was in the 1200 acres. At Joseph Coppo's invitation our representative met with the McCormick representative and Joseph at the Sunnyslope property we are now on, to discuss it's desirability. It was very cluttered and rolling land, which would need a lot of clearing and grading work to be useful to us. There were also a lot of trees in the approach paths that would have to be removed before we could fly there.

In discussion with Mr. Coppo and the McCormick representative, the McCormick land company agreed to grade the area and to remove half a dozen or so trees on the North end that were in our way, at no charge to us. With that commitment, the Parks Department entered into a lease of the property for our site with McCormick Land Company, for \$1.00/year. The McCormick people not only did a bang up job of grading, they removed the offending trees; all at zero cost to us. The McCormick people also smoothed the West pit area and provided us with fill dirt in some areas we needed it.

We convinced the Parks Department that it was their turn to put in some money developing a site because we had already spent \$5,000 dollars of club money on the Olalla site and we didn't want to do that again. They came through with quite a bit of the materials we needed to make a good site as long as we would do the work. They bought the wood for some of the tables and they also bought the container for us. They purchased the landscape cloth, staples to hold it down, and the first can of patching material for the runway surface: more than \$1,500 dollars worth. They also, purchased some grass seed for us. They paid for a company to cut the tree line on the far side back about 100 feet, all the way down to the gravel pit. I don't remember the cost to them but it wasn't cheap. We then engaged a company to remove the trees that were felled. This company took the logs to the sawmill and split the proceeds of the sale in half with us. The Parks Department let us keep that \$1,800 to use on the field. We purchased the canopy and the bleachers but we were spending the \$1,800. Compared to the Olalla site, I doubt that we have spent much of the club's money so far on this site.

And last but certainly not least, is their purchase of the 1,200 acres that includes our site. The only reason they bought the property at this time was because of our site development. They had been looking at the 1,200 acres to purchase but had a program in mind to buy it in four sections over four years. Our site was in the last block of land to be purchased. Because of the desire to purchase the parcel that includes our site now, the Commissioners came up with some creative financing to buy the whole 1200 acres a few months ago. They have no plans to develop any other part of it at this time. They will be coming up with a long-range plan to use the rest of it in the future but they are in no hurry because they don't have money for park development right now. The only reason we are able to proceed as rapidly as we have is because of the tremendous amount of lobbying work we have done behind the scenes and our club's work efforts on the site.

The Commissioners and the Parks Department are solidly behind us developing the site further if financing can be found and we do most of the work. Joseph Coppo is a real friend and gives us solid support. He's as proud of this site as we are, as he should be in view of his tremendous cooperation with us. They are looking for us to help them try to find ways to finance the various phases of our development. Anyone having connections with any company that could help us, such as a paving company or logging company,

please contact me. They are only looking at our site, though, and including any other groups into the plan would only serve to shoot us down. We also, need to be a little closed mouth about how much they have helped us already because they can't do the same for anyone else at this time because of the lack of money.