

Looking Back at 50 Years—The WORKS

This October marks a significant event for our Club, the 50th anniversary of its beginning. A small group of individuals joined together to overcome problems with the radios of the day and to obtain a flying field. I doubt that any of the charter members at that first meeting even gave thought that the to the idea that WORKS would still be around after 50 years. The Club has endured as members have come and gone bringing renewed enthusiasm and vitality to the organization. It is unfortunate that an annual history was not written to document each year's significant events. Some things are captured in past WORKSheets, but it is Bill Lehn's memory that has filled missing pieces for much of the information that follows. My thanks to Bill for taking the time to putting some of the events on paper.

The Early Beginnings

The WORKS club was formed in October 1958 at a meeting at Harold Wolfe's house in New Carlisle. The meeting was result of a number of discussions between Harold Wolfe and Jack Port of Fairborn. Jack was a pioneer in the development of radio equipment for the modeler and the R/C hobby. He needed a place to fly close to his home where he could test the radio receivers he was developing. Those present at the meeting included Harold Wolfe, Jack Port, Don Lowe, Jim Weaver, Richard Group, and Don Morgan. All of the attendees were frequent visitors to Jack Port's basement to get help with their early radio control equipment. Jack went on to develop the Controlaire line of model equipment marketed under the World Engine label. This included early single channel receivers, multi-channel reed radios, and ultimately proportional equipment.

A friend of Harold's, Mr. Zimmerman, owned a cow pasture immediately behind the Olive Branch Grange Hall and permitted the Club to use it for flying. The runway on the flying field was outlined with a single strand of electrified barbed wire. A "controller" was located on one corner along with the battery supplying the electricity to the fence. On arriving one would turn off the electrified fence and drop the barbed wire so it would not interfere with the aircraft taking off and landing. The purpose of the fence was to keep the cattle in the pasture from getting onto the runway. Occasionally someone would forget to turn the charger on, raise the wire, or the battery would run down, and the cows would visit the runway area and leave an offering. The cows seemed to be indifferent to the aircraft, with at least cow being hit by an errant model. The field was surrounded by a number of obstacles that included the field perimeter fence, large barns along two sides of the field, the Grange Hall on a third (even though it was almost out of range), and some other farm buildings beyond the barns. If one went too far in one direction the field fell off very markedly. On more than one occasion an aircraft overshooting a landing or taking off would disappear from view, hopefully making a dramatic reappearance by zooming up into view, and successfully flying on. Harold Wolfe issued club members their "field pass". The field pass was a brass harness tag with WORKS stamped on it. Harness tags were used to mark the harnesses on the farm so that

the proper harness went on the proper horse. This brass tag, about 1 1/2" in diameter was attached to the vehicle license plate under one of the mounting screws and serve as authorization to have a vehicle in the flying field area. The membership was originally limited to some 15 to 20 members as Zimmerman was concerned about having too many cars driving out onto his pasture. The Club was initially limited to ten cars in the pasture parked along the electric fence surrounding the flying area. Following the original meeting at Harold Wolfe's home, the WORKS club held its meetings at the Olive Branch Grange Hall.

The Sixties

For reasons unknown, the WORKS moved from the Zimmerman farm to the New Carlisle Sportsman Club. While the facility featured a clubhouse that the Club could use, the flying area had its shortcomings due to the proximity of trees. A new search was started and a suitable site (1963-64 time period) was located off Clyo Road. After seemingly getting approval from a member of the township zoning board, an asphalt runway and taxi strips were laid down and a small clubhouse was built. Shortly thereafter a neighbor complained to the zoning board that he did not want an "airport with airplanes" flying adjacent to his property. The Club officers attended a zoning meeting board to settle the issue. The Club might have had the issue settled in its favor, but once the board determined that no club member lived in the township, they ruled in favor of the neighbor, and the Club was forced to vacate the property.

One of the Club members, Dick Wetzel, knew Mrs. Rogers who owned a small farm on Old Soldiers Home-Miamisburg Road. Dick contacted her and she agreed to lease approximately six acres to the Club behind her house. The WORKS moved to that location in late 1964 or early 1965. Initially the club flew from a grass takeoff and landing area, adding a pea gravel runway in 1967. The pilot area was located on the east side of the runway facing west with airplanes, on occasion, flying over the road and the neighbor's houses. The pilot area was later moved to the other side of the runway, which resolved several issues with neighbors. An asphalt runway was added in 1972 that later became the long taxi strip along the pit area when a 310 by 40 foot north-south runway was added in 1985. It is believed that Mrs. Rogers was approached on a few occasions about selling a portion of the property to the Club (Zoning laws would have prevented that as we found out much later). Mrs. Rogers passed away during the 1990's, leaving the property to her son who resided in Pennsylvania. In the late 1990's, he sold the property to the gravel company. It became evident that it was just a matter of time that the WORKS would have to vacate that site and the Club began a search for potential sites. Proposals were submitted to the cities of Moraine and Franklin for the use of two promising sites. The Jefferson Township Water Authority, located on the south side of the field, voiced their objection to any excavation of the property because of possible water contamination to the zoning board. The Club was forced to vacate the field in November 2002 when it became apparent to the new owner than we were unable to purchase the entire 55 acres of farmland.

During the 1960's, Club membership grew rapidly from the initial 15 or so members to the maximum allowed of 60. An October 1962 roster listed 35 members. By May of 1964 the number had grown to 50 with new members joining at the rate of one or two members each month. By 1969, membership limitation had been eliminated.

Publication of the WORKSheet began in November 1964 with Carl Weaver serving as its first editor. With just a few brief exceptions, the newsletter has been published continuously to present day with 25 Club members serving as its editor. In 1962, Club meetings were moved to the Dimco-Gray building in downtown Dayton near the Oregon District. Beginning in November 1965 until February 1978, meetings were held at the Dayton Public Library in downtown Dayton.

During the early sixties, a group of members lobbied within the Club for a premier national contest that would attract top flyers from across the country. In principle, the proposed approach was simple. The contest would be held in Area B at WPAFB, five flights per day from four continuous lines over a three-day period. The number of prizes would be large. The first Wright Brothers Memorial contest took place in 1963 with five classes of pattern, Open and AMA pylon, scale and fun fly events. Helicopter competition was added later. The WBM contest was first held at the present location of the AF Museum, and then moved to a runway adjacent to the hangars (the runway is now part of Loop Road), and then later to the runway parallel to Airway Road (where the DAWG giant scale meet is held). Frank Noll Sr. made the Grand Champion trophy (it annually rotated from one grand champion to the next) that was a replica of the Wright Brothers airplane mounted on an large oval walnut base covered with a clear plastic dome. A smaller version of the trophy was made for each grand champion winner to keep. The first place plaque for the different events was a desk plaque (wood base with a vertical etched metal plate and pen that were made by some of the club members). Second and third place winner received a commercial made plaque. Prizes were substantial and included television sets, RC radios, engines, and airplanes. The first year's prizes exceeded \$2500. The WBM was a huge success attracting top flyers from all over the US including Phil Kraft, Ed Keck, Ed Izzo, Dave Brown and Hal deBolt. To those top flyers, one can add Club members Don Lowe and Harry Roe. The WBM remained a big event through 1978, however, the interest in Pattern flying declined significantly across the country, and the WBM was moved to the WORKS field in 1980 and continued on a much smaller scale until 1984. A rebirth of the event was attempted 1991, but lack of interest in Pattern curtailed any further WBM contests.

To hold the Wright Brothers Memorial contest required money to cover expenses and prizes. Al Greer, who joined the Club in 1962, proposed having a Flying Circus as a fund-raiser for the WBM. Based on his experience with an RC club in Pittsburgh, Al suggested that the Club charge a dollar a car, 50 cents a raffle ticket, hustle concessions and sell spectators a dollar a minute for flying time on an airplane. The initial shows were basically flying demonstrations of a variety of airplanes, flown one at a time. This format created dead time during the show. The format was changed having several airplanes in the air at a time by featuring combat, skill events, and fun fly type competition. A highlight of the show was the halftime aerobatic demonstration

performed by Mayor Harold Johnson of Moraine flying his WACO. His show concluded with a two passes dropping candy (30 lbs) for the children in the audience. The Flying Circus was initially a two-day weekend event and then became a single day event many years later. The Flying Circus was held for over 40 consecutive years and was a significant fund raising event for the Club.

The Seventies

In addition to the WBM and Flying Circus, the WORKS was performing flying demonstrations including the Dayton Air Show, static displays at malls, local area pattern contests, and fun fly events within the Club. A Pilot Proficiency Program was started in 1971 that consisted of three levels: blue, silver, and gold. Starting out with six instructors and 12 students, the number of instructors and students grew with as many as 40 students participating in the program. The PPP continued through the mid 1980's.

The first annual freeze fly was held in 1975 co-directed by Bob Belton and Bob Bremer. Three separate events were scheduled for each of the three classes, Novice, Intermediate, and Expert. Entrance fee was a minimum of two logs for the bonfire and one covered dish. Prizes were awarded based on a point system for each of the various events. Total points for all events in each class were added up with the maximum number getting first choice of the more than \$200 worth of prizes that were available. "Everyone had fun and no one froze." The freeze fly continues today although on a more subdued scale. Hot chocolate and coffee are the norm for the more adventurous members of the Club (must have something to do with getting older).

The WORKS Hornet racing program began in 1978. Low key racing of 1/2A racers as a club activity had been discussed for some time prior to the February 1978 club meeting. At that meeting the membership approved a club 1/2A-racing program using the Hornet as a "standard" aircraft. A racing schedule of five dates was established beginning in May and ending in September. The last race of the year included a hand launched glider event as well. Entry fee was \$.50 for each entrant at each club contest. A series of Hornet articles appeared in the WORKSheet including fuel cutoffs and a "pressurized" fuel system (later declared illegal). The August issue of the newsletter included the "positive fuel shutoff" which had been tested at the previous race. The July 1978 Hornet Race standing listed 30 racing airplanes.

In 1981 Ray Sorensen was in charge of the Hornet program. An average of eight racers were flying. Classes included Novice and Pre-Novice with engines limited to .049-.051. Some of the racers were frustrated with trying to tame the .049 engines. At the November meeting Bill Keller showed the first of the 0.10 size Hornets. The first race with .10 racers was held in May with only three flying, but by June the number had increased to eight. The August WORKSheet indicated that this year had been the biggest and best Hornet season ever.

"Military" racers were added in 1983. These racers were based on a number of Bob Ankney designs that were available through him. In 1985, 14 pilots participated in the races. A new "flagman" system was introduced in 1987 to increase the safety of the

races. Previously the flagmen had actually stood out on the course at the base of the pylons to call cuts.

During 1987 there were 24 participants in the races with a total of 242 entries. In 1988, 18 fliers participated increasing to more than 23 entries in 1992. There were four classes of racing: .049, Advanced, Expert, and Unlimited. Participation varied between 10 and 16 club member between 1989 and 1997. In 1993 electric racers were added to the classes. These aircraft were limited to Roar'91 motors and any design that the flier wanted to use. The class was dropped in 1995 with only four fliers registering in 1993 and five in 1994. The Hornet racing group continued to be active through the 2002 season. During this time period, Fred Frazer kept the Hornet Racer participants all in line with his able direction of the racing scene. There was also some effort made to introduce .40 racers at the end of this period.

In 1976, the Club hosted the control line and radio control portions of the AMA Nationals held at WPAFB. The following year, it hosted the World Championship RC Pattern contest at the Springfield airport. During this period, the AMA was looking for a new home for its headquarters. Several of the club members were involved with this effort, participating in meetings with Clinton County officials since the Air Base in Wilmington was being considered as a possible location. In 1979, the WORKS received an Award for Excellence for its contribution to the AMA.

In February 1978 until December 1979, Club meetings were held in the Community Room of Citizens Federal S&L on Whipp Road near Far Hills.

The Eighties

1980 began with the WORKS hosting the AMA Nationals at Clinton County Air Base in Wilmington. A group of about 15 members worked continuously for that one week period during which they helped set up the site, helped in judging the events, and running the concession stand. The profit from the concession stand became the principal of the field fund.

The origin of the Old Timers began with Bill Brucken and Si Jordan who got a group of flyers interested in pre-1941 free flight airplanes converted to RC. Bill and Si established the guidelines for this low-key contest event, which started in 1988. Since the number of "Old Timers" was somewhat limited to those who could fly during the day and also not interfere with general flying on the weekends, the Old Timers were permitted to have participants from the Dayton area to participate in the weekday contests held each Thursday. The flying season began in May and continued through October, ending with an awards dinner. A rotating trophy was awarded for the most points accumulated in the limited engine run event, and recognition to the individual who accumulated the most points for special events were held during the flying season. Each participant contributed one dollar to the kitty to cover any expenses the group might have.

A small Patten contest replaced the WBM. The contest usually involved 20 to 30 participants who judged as well as flew. Small plaques were given to first through third place at a steak dinner at the field. This contest continued through the mid 1990's.

Several Club meetings were held at Bergamo Center on East Patterson during the in 1980 until the meeting site was moved to the Miamisburg Senior Citizens Center. The October 1981 meeting was held in the Washington Township Hall and returned to Bergamo for the November meeting. In February 1982 meetings were held at the Washington Township Hall and Annex and continue there to present.

The Nineties to Present

During the 1990's, the Flying Circus, Hornet racing, Old-Timers, and Fun Flys were the major activities for the Club with some occasional static displays and flying demonstrations. The Club continued to support the Dayton Air Show until the show organizers dropped RC airplanes from the flying schedule. The Student Pilot Program for new members replaced the Pilot Proficiency Program with Wednesday evening set aside for this activity during the flying season. By 1991, the membership had grown to approximately 150 and concern was raised about the adequacy of the field to support such a large number. A north field was established at the New Carlisle Sportsman Club, but was not well used and was discontinued within the next two years.

As pointed out earlier, it was during the late 1990's through 2002 that much effort was directed at finding a new field. With encouragement from city officials, proposals were submitted for a site near adjacent to a landfill in Moraine and the water well field in Franklin. While the proposals were judged to be acceptable, some obstacles could not be overcome and the search continued. In late 2002 an initial inquiry was made to Dick Hummel about the use of the grass runway on his farm. After presenting a detailed plan to Dick, an agreement was reached, and the Club moved its assets to the field in March 2003. In short order a flying site was set up for the flying season. The site was expanded to its current size the following year with capital improvements made each year. March 2008 marks the fifth anniversary of Hummel/WORKS Field.

Some Things About Past and Current Members

Jack Port, a charter member of the club, developed the Controilaire line of radio equipment marketed under the World Engine label.

Don Lowe, a charter member of the club, competed on the national level in Pattern, developed the Phoenix series of Pattern aircraft, served as AMA District III Vice President for four years and was AMA President for nine years. Don also wrote a column in R/C Modeler magazine. He is active in giant scale and resides in Florida.

Ron Van Putte wrote a column in Model Aviation magazine on RC Sport and Aerobatics. Ron is currently the Vice President of National Society of Radio Control Aerobatics (NSRCA). He is a member of the RC club at Eglin AFB.

Jim Cline is probably known as much or more than any one person in the area about gas and glow engines. Jim developed a pressurized fuel control system and resides in the Beavercreek area.

Bill Lehn is the unofficial Club historian, is known to fly weird airplanes including the Hilda the Witch, Batman, Ironing Boards, Lawn Mowers, Racing Cars, and Snoopy's Dog House. Bill flew small aircraft with sub-miniature electronics long before it became popular.

Dale Whitford is one of the co-founders of the University of Dayton Research Institute and authored a book on the Wright Brothers entitled "Unlocking the Gateway to Flight; The Keys to the Success of the Wright Brothers".

Don Laughead, Harry Covault, Andy Martin, Bob Ackney, and Bob Bremer owned and operated RC hobby stores in the Dayton area.

Bill Brucken, an excellent RC scale modeler, built and flies a 7/8 scale WWI SE5.

Brian Bremer, an outstanding airplane and helicopter pilot, now works for Great Planes testing aircraft and helicopter products.

Frank and Jason Noll are top flyers competing at the national level. Frank is a member of the Futaba team.