

# MARCS History

**The following information is a collection of information from the series of articles written by Ozzie Johnson. Ozzie wrote the articles to document some of the club's history. I've simply cleaned them up a bit so they fit together into a single presentation. – Chris Spierings**

## In the Beginning

It appears that our present club evolved from two previous clubs. The first one goes back to the 1930's, but it fell apart in the 1940's, probably due to the war. In 1956 a second club was started but it ended in the 1960's when they lost their flying field. We know the 1930's club existed because its treasury was turned over to the 1956 club. We have some written records from the 1956 club, but none from the one that existed before that. We do know that the 1930's club was called the Madison Model Club. The 1956 club changed the name to Madison Model Airplane Club to put more emphasis on aviation.

We don't know the exact date that our club originated. We plan to interview Joe Unger in the near future. Mr. Unger now lives in Florida and he was the first president of MARCS. Carl Mohs is a friend of his and has agreed to talk to him to gather as much early history as possible.

What we do know is that many of the early members of MARCS were also members of the previous clubs. As an example, Bill Kettle for whom our field is named, was a member of those clubs that existed before MARCS.

Now let's go back to the beginning. In order to start there, I tried to find, as many people as I could that were involved in the two first clubs. As you would expect, many have passed away while others have moved out of the area. I was able to locate five persons who were involved in them. They are Carl Mohs, Nels Wareham, Carl Vogt, Jim Potter and Ray Lang.

The first two you all know, as they are still active in our club. On July first I was able to get all of these people together and record their reports of their early experiences on a cassette tape. Carl Mohs provided a meeting room for us at the Ivy Inn and treated us to lunch. It was a good time with lots of laughs, many at my expense when the #@%&# recorder gave me fits.

## Early Flying

In the 1940's and '50's where did they fly and what did they fly? I gathered information on that from these early flyers -- Carl Mohs, Nels Wareham, Ray Lange, Jim Potter and Carl Vogt.

Early flying was not done at any particular flying field. There were none. Carl remembered flying on the Mendota State Hospital grounds, but only with a very short motor run. Early flying was all free flight, as control line and radio control had not come on the scene as yet. Often they found a stretch of relatively deserted rural highway flew off it.

As you might expect, the models didn't always circle as they were supposed to. Sometimes the timers failed and the motor would run until it was out of fuel. One flyer would then hop in his car and drive while others stood on the running boards to direct the driver in the chase.

The Madison Model Flyers often used Truax Field as their flying site. Harold Evans was the weatherman at Truax in those days. It was through his efforts that Robert Skult, the airport manager, agreed to let the modelers fly there. They would fly off to one side, but sometimes a model would land on the runway. They would then wave to Mr. Evans and he would come with the pickup truck with the "FOLLOW ME" sign on the back to retrieve the model.

The old Royal Airport (where South Town Mall is today) on what was known as the Gisholt Property became a regular flying site later. That all came about after 1956. We will devote more time to that site next month.

One popular, but unusual, model at that time was called the Zipper. The Zipper was a Carl Goldberg kit that had a removable firewall. This feature made flying more affordable by allowing you to have several models, but to use only one motor and related equipment. You simply moved the firewall, motor and all from one model to another.

### **Madison Model Airplane Club**

As mentioned in a previously, the Madison Model Airplane Club operated from 1956 into the '60's. They had several meeting places, but the most frequently used was Nichols School. At the second meeting of the club it was decided that the regular meeting night would be the first Thursday of each month. It appears that tradition has existed now for over 40 years.

The first officers of the club were Norman Michie, president, Fred Lauber, vice president, Carl Vogt, treasurer and Ray Lang, secretary. Their meetings were much like ours. There was a business meeting, a discussion of current flying activities and then a show and tell.

Several winter meetings included activities in the school gymnasium. There were hand launched glider contests and also paper-covered rubber powered contests. Believe it or not, but they actually flew gas powered control line models in the gymnasium. When that started to produce oily circles on the floor, that was stopped. A few special meetings were held at the Gardener Baking Company. For a short period, the club met twice a month, the first at Nichols School and the second at the vocational school.

Many meetings involved discussions about problems with the field. The Gisholt property was often in need of attention, as the thistles were so large as to be dangerous. Circles were mowed for the control line flyers and another area was designated for free flight and radio control. Work days at the field resulted in a \$2 fine for any members who did not show up and could not come up with a legitimate excuse.

In 1959 a survey was taken to see what members were flying. The results were:

Radio Control	6	Combat Control Line	12	Speed Control Line	4
Stunt Control Line	9	Free Flight Gas	13	Towline Glider	4
Unlimited Rubber	5	Hand Launched Glider	9		

As you can see, control line flying dominated the models. Twenty-five of them were control line, in one form or another. An active control line speed flyer was Glenn Lee, who went on to national prominence in this flying activity. Glenn now writes the speed column in Model Aviation magazine.

Nels Wareham told us how he and Carl Vogt perfected a speed control for control line. They added an extra line to what was being used at the time and perfected a carburetor linkage so they could vary the speed of the plane when flying. Nels said that at a gathering of flyers he was using the new innovation, speeding up the model, then slowing it down and finally bringing it in for a nice, slow landing. People had never seen this before, prompting one observer to tell Nels that it was a nice flight, but too bad he had had motor trouble.



Radio control in the late 1950's and early 1960's was really in its infancy. I will admit that I really don't understand the complexity of those systems. Let's just say that they were very large, very delicate and often undependable. I am really glad that the fully proportional systems were developed when my son and I started in the hobby in the 1970's.



## Early Contests and Events

Contests and flying exhibitions have always been part of model aviation in Madison. Probably because model airplanes were new, these events drew more attendance from the general public in the early years than they do today. They were also novel and new enough that they drew more coverage from the local newspapers. The May 19, 1946 issue of the Capital Times promoted a contest to be held on the Truax Field runways. In some future articles, we will reprint several of these early articles from the 1940's and 50's. Carl Mohs has dug deep into his personal archives and has come up with some old newspaper clippings that are 50 or more years old and consequently are in very fragile condition. They do copy well, however, and are very readable. I'm sure you will find them interesting. They give us a real insight into our hobby as it was at that time.

In the 1940's, the Plymouth Motor Car Company sponsored model flying contests all over the country. One was held in Madison on the runways at Truax, which tells you something about the amount of full-sized airplane traffic at that time.

Some of the larger contests of the 1950's were control line events that were held at Breeze Stevens Field (right), on East Washington Ave., and included combat, stunt and speed events. Here is a brief summary of the rules that were applied to them:

- Entry fees were \$1.25 for the first event and fifty cents for each additional one.
- All registered models had to be weighed and pull tested.
- Scale judging occurred first. Those with the greatest scale score flew first.
- There were three or four flying circles. When a flyer was called on the PA system, he had to take his place in his assigned circle. If he stepped out for any reason, he was disqualified.
- If a flyer let go of his U-control handle for any reason while his plane was in motion, he was disqualified.

Prizes were provided by manufactures, some of whom are still in business today.

Contests were insured by the AMA at a cost of sixteen cents per contestant. Fifty flyers generated an insurance fee of \$8.00 and grandstand insurance cost another \$7.50. Because food was to be served, a further insurance cost of \$22.50 was incurred.

You had to be an AMA member to fly in these contests, but the contest itself had to be insured separately. AMA dues at that time were either \$2.00 or \$4.00 per year; I have conflicting information on that.

In the 1950's, flying off the frozen lakes was popular, especially for the free flyers, since there were no trees or power lines to contend with.

## Winter Flying

As promised last month, this month we'll look at a winter fun fly on Lake Mendota that took place in 1957. Following is an article and some pictures that appeared in the February 11, 1957 issue of the Capitol Times under the heading "Rain or Shine, Model Plane Club Members Hold 'Fly' Once a Month." I really feel that this is a very good article from an historical perspective, because it gives a lot of detail about the state of modeling at the time, including flying sites. Free flight and control line were the modes of choice, along with some rubber power, with radio control being in its infancy. Notice the mention of a State Radio Control Council. Herb Jacobs was the reporter who wrote this article.

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GETTING A MODEL AIRPLANE motor started is a ticklish job that draws interested spectators and comments. Here Albert Wurs, 4311 Wallace Ave., stoops to whiff the propeller of his "Super-Minimaster" as he prepares to fly it on the end of a 50-foot control wire.

Among those watching Wurs are, at the left, Bill Jernie, Route 1, Middleton, and Jim Woblic, Route 1, Verona. At the right of the circle of spectators is Norman Michie, 213 Buedner Dr., president of the Madison Model Airplane Club.

WINTER WEATHER MAKES no difference to model airplane enthusiasts. The Madison group, recently revived, gets out on the frozen lakes to fly the small planes members have assembled, and meets each month for an auction, model building, or just tossing motorless gliders for fun.

On a recent Sunday afternoon at the east end of Lake Mendota, many of the members braved biting winds to fly or watch craft which ran all the way from foot long models flown in circles on wire, to a giant with a 10-foot wing span, which had a motor with a real spark plug.

Many of the members design their own planes, tinkering up variations of standard models, or creating weird and wonderful combinations which may or may not get off the ground. One of the newest activities is experiment with radio control,

rather than free flight or circling on a wire.

One fellow has a real flying, saucer, looking like a good-sized yellow platter as it soars through the air. Norman Michie, the club president, has produced a "flying wing," covered with silk so heavily lacquered that it can fly through tree branches and come out undamaged.



Tiny motors filled with an eye dropper power most planes, but they emit a snarling roar which keeps spectators at a safe distance, more impressed by the noise than the size.

Michie, of 212 Bordner Dr., is program coordinator for the State Radio Control Council when not flying planes - or making them, which he has done since he was 9 years old. If it's an indoor meeting, or an outdoor on the weather too rough to put up a motor plane, even on a wire, Michie is likely to produce some homemade baby gliders that can be

tossed into the air and whirled away by the wind.

Other officers of the Madison Model Airplane Club are Carmen Nelson,, vice president; Carl Vogt, 4210 Dempsey Rd., treasurer, and Ray Lang, 826 W. Lakeside St., secretary. With 12 charter members the club was started in June, 1956, and has now grown to a membership of 68. Many of the members formerly belonged to the old Madison Gas Model Club, which flourished for some years after World War 11.

The group meets the first Thursday night of each month at Nichols School, and 10 days after each meeting, namely on the second Sunday, the members hold a "club fly," rain or shine, in which they try out their planes.

Ages of members range down to 9 years and up to 40. Some of the members are husband and wife teams, in which both partners are interested in flying. Michie is hoping the membership will grow, particularly in the younger segment, the group, which does the most flying. All club members must also be members of the American Academy of Model Aeronautics, which provides insurance for all contestants. All contests are held under AMA rules, and that prevents accidents, says Michie.

A current project of the club is to build about 80 scale models for the State Historical Society, which will be added to the 70 already in the Society's possession, for a display of airplane types to be held late in February or early March, showing the history of aviation.

Last summer the club held a demonstration of flying on a Sunday at the old Royal Airport near the Belt line, and followed it a week later with a contest meet. Some 1,200 spectators turned out for the events. Similar meets are planned for this summer.

In former years, flights were held at the Truax Field circus site, but club sponsors were afraid of the high tension wires nearby, from which a spark could jump as far as 18 feet to the wires controlling planes. The Royal Airport site is used by courtesy of the Gisholt Machine Co., which now owns it, and Michie declares that the new site is much safer for contestants.

"Most of the members of our club are what I would call 'sport fliers,' rather than contest fliers," Michie comments. "They are more interested in designing and flying planes for the fun of it, rather than the 'contest flier.' who designs and builds for rigid specifications of a contest, to the extent that I sometimes think it ceases to be a hobby."

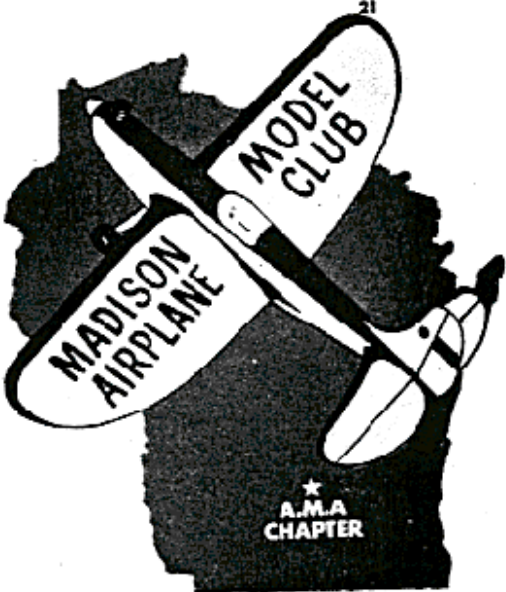
What keeps a youth or man interested in model planes? Michie says the hobby has a strong appeal to mechanically minded persons who like to try out their ideas of wings or motors. Many a youngster who started out with model planes keeps on, working into a life profession of aeronautics engineer, he points out,

At the senior end of the scale, enthusiasts tend to become designers and builders of scale models of various types of aircraft, fashioning them so skillfully that "you could put a model on a sheet of glass, and put an airplane view of a city under it, photograph the two, and you'd swear it was a real plane," Michie says. The scale models are usually made on a scale of a quarter inch to a foot, which gives a manageable size of a foot and a half to two feet.

### 1958 Air Trails Article

The 1958 issue of *Air Trails Model Annual* carried an article about how the Madison Model Airplane Club was originated and some of the problems that had to be overcome in the process. Following is a reprint of that article. Also included as a footnote to this article were copies of the constitution and the by-laws. There are two parts of these that are especially interesting and I am including them as well.

### Recipe for a Successful Model Club



**RECIPE:**

- One large dollop of that Inventiveness that only model builders possess;
- One area where modelers need support to find and keep a flying site;
- One smaller group of senior builders who have their feet on the ground;
- One appreciative public who stop when they hear the sound of motors;
- and One great desire to compete and to talk about it forever afterward.

Mix thoroughly, allow to simmer slowly, spread lightly over the entire community.

**YIELD: ONE MODEL AIRPLANE CLUB**

Beginning May 31, 1956, with a nucleus of 12 members (some new to the community; others left behind from a club defunct in '52), the Madison Model Airplane Club has had a sure and steady growth to its present healthy proportions of 75 "active" members.

Taking first things first, the small group drew up a Constitution and set of By-laws but even before these had been approved, the membership had doubled. Since then the by-laws have only been amended once - to provide that members, dues include their AMA membership fees.

By the middle of its first month of existence the club was faced with the problem of available flying sites. One by one, the smaller control line circles inside the city limits of Madison were being closed to modelers; noise complaints and safety being the main considerations. So a compromise was reached: we'd go outside the being closed to modelers; noise complaints and safety being the main considerations. So a compromise was reached: we'd go outside the city's boundaries and include room for free flight, radio control, rubber-power and gliders as well.

Through a contact in the police force, negotiations were opened with the Gisholt Machine Company, owners of a 180-acre field where the historically significant Royal Airport once lay. Several men in the firm, expressing interest in the project, were instrumental in forming a solid support for the movement. Upon issuance of a satisfactory insurance policy (paid for by the club through AMA) an agreement was written to permit the club's year-around use of the field.

Many years had passed since full-size aircraft wheels had touched the earth of the Royal Airport - a local farmer had recently reaped several crops of corn. Taking the problem in stride, the members, with the aid of borrowed and rented machines on six consecutive Saturdays, laid out two dirt control-line circles and a central free flight runway strip. They dispersed a mountain of corn cobs, resurrected the old heating plant, and then at last a blistered hand took over the controls to lift an "airplane" once more from the runway.

In the remaining months of that first summer and fall, the club prepared for a public demonstration to show just what they could do. The Dane County Highway Department loaned them temporarily 200 feet of snow fence, the American Security State Bank donated 200 gas-filled balloons and the three community hobby shops came up with over \$200 worth of prizes and spectator gifts for one grand fling on a Sunday afternoon.

The village police were called in to handle the comings and goings of 400 cars and 1,000 interested spectators that day.

And so, only 3 months after its formation, the Madison Model Airplane Club had become a feature of its community's life. Two newspapers, a radio station and three television stations cooperated with announcements (including a lost radio control model) and publicity on its activities. And with enough members on hand, the club applied as an AMA Chapter.

The design of a club decal was the basis of a winter competition, with three motors as prizes, again donated by the bobby shops. Further prizes were forthcoming to provide for a glider and rubber prefab meet to inaugurate the new gymnasium at Nichols School.

Meetings are now held the first Thursday of each month at Nichols School, programs including original and rented films, auctions, rules discussions, etc., as well as on the third Thursday at a school on, the opposite side of town for younger members learning model design and adjusting. At the Royal Airport one Sunday each month record trials are held. This sort of program, showing as it does a modeler's progress from plane to plane until he becomes contest caliber, tends to attract and appeal to the younger member and keep him interested through the sometimes disappointing early flights.

Beginning with the reelection of last year's officers and a coffee klatch provided by the Gardner Bakery, the club has shown a sudden growth, particularly among the younger set and including two more-than-welcome female members. A schedule of coming events included a control-line exhibit during the Truax Air Force Base Armed Forces Day display, and a scale model exhibit of 136 quarter inch to the foot aircraft in the State Historical Society's museum.

During the warm months, weekends at the flying site have become family affairs, and often picnic suppers take place during the week as the radio control flyers squeeze the last drop of daylight out of the day. Sunday afternoon finds a hundred cars lined up filled with goggle-eyed spectators. And best of all, there isn't a young modeler there who hasn't received some word of advice or encouragement from the their club's officers and senior members who are always on hand when needed.

Projects for the future include improving the facilities of the field so AMA sanctioned meets may be held; the planning of a large indoor meet; the construction of some club training models for all events; plus individual participation most contests in the Midwest.

Together these model builders and flyers, in less than a year, have built something they can point to with pride. As an accepted part of community life it can now expect support from many agencies and organizations which recognize the good that is being done. But without the modelers themselves, nothing would have been accomplished. So that's why we of the Madison, Wisconsin, M.A.C. know that you can do it too.

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MMAC Constitution, Article III:

Membership: 1) Any model builders living in the Madison area, after attending two consecutive meetings on probation, may be admitted into membership by a two thirds majority vote of all eligible members present. 2) Any member may be removed from membership, for just cause, after a hearing of the Executive Committee, by a two thirds majority vote of the members present.

MMAC By-laws, Article V:

All members twenty years of age and younger shall pay dues of three dollars per year to the Treasurer at the first meeting of the year, or at a rate of 25 cents a month. 2) All members twenty-one years of age and over shall pay dues of four dollars per year to the Treasurer at the first meeting of the year. SPECIAL DUES: 3) From May 31, 1956 to January 1, 1957, dues shall be two dollars and ten cents for the younger group, or at a rate of 30 cents per month, and three dollars and fifteen cents for the older group for the seven-month period. 4) Any member failing to pay his dues for six months shall be considered automatically dropped as a member. 5) The Treasurer of the club is authorized to receive contributions of specially obtained funds from any individual or institution, to be applied to the operating expenses of the Club.

## **Capital Times Article**

Article from the Capital Times of Sunday, May 19, 1946 about the Madison Gas Model Club, the original model club in Madison -- the Granddaddy of MARCS, I guess you could say. In the last couple of months we have featured old newspaper articles about the two early clubs. Have you been struck, as I have been, by the attendance reported at club events? Note that this article reports that there are only 25 club members, but people are expected from Illinois and Indiana to provide 200 entries in a sanctioned meet. Large crowds, hundreds of local spectators, also turned out to these events in the '40's and '50's, at a time when the Madison area had less than half the population that it has today. Do you get the same feeling as I that the public has become really blasé about, perhaps it's not too much to say disinterested in, model flight - and aviation in general? That is really too bad. Perhaps we should be thinking about how to reverse that

trend if our sport is to survive with enough strength to merit a place to fly in an area in which population density is increasing at such a furious pace. A recent Planning Commission forecast predicted that Dane County will grow by 100,000 people over the next 25 years. If so, we could become cheek-by-jowl neighbors with a housing addition on the other side of Femrite Road. Think about it.

## **Model Airplane Show Held Here: Expect 200 Entries**

*(Capital Times, Sunday, May 19, 1946)*

Madison's northeastern horizon will be thickly dotted with gasoline engine-powered model airplanes Sunday, July 14, when the Madison Gas Model Club holds its championship contest. which is expected to draw close to 200 model aircraft builders and fliers.

The air show will bring entries from all sections of Wisconsin, from Illinois and Indiana, and prizes and trophies will be awarded engine-powered models, as well as rubber-powered fuselage types and models flown on control lines.

Carl E. Mohs, Jr., 3525 Lake Mendota Dr. is president of the Madison Gas Model club, sponsoring the model aircraft show and meet. The club has a membership of over 25, including four fliers who are veterans of World War II. The group has applied to the Academy of Model Aeronautics, a division of the National Aeronautics Association to obtain its official recognition of the Madison meet.

Members of the local club are known as Flying Badgers a term which Wisconsin airmen inscribed indelibly in heroic chapters of aviation during World War II.

The mid-July junior air show will be held at the Truax runways, if permission to use the one-time army air corps field can be obtained by the club. If not, the club has its own trial and flight areas, two large areas north of the Truax field, off Highway 51, that are suited for the contest.

A. Russell Sanders, 409 E. Main St., who owns these tracts north of Truax, has made them available to the club for intra-club contests. One of the Sanders properties is a thirty acre field on a rise of high ground, the other a sixty acre area, forming a natural amphitheater. If either of these tracts is used for the summer model plane contest, visitors are assured ample parking space, since there is room for approximately 5,000 cars and spectators may watch the event from their automobiles.

In addition to the contest-show on July 14, the club plans to present a demonstration-meet of sea plane model aircraft on Lake Mendota on or about July 28. This will bring out the models suited for takeoffs and landings on water and it will be the first seaplane event Madison has ever witnessed.

Additional plans for the two July events will be discussed Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. at the club's meeting at the Madison YMCA.

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Mohs, who served with the naval aviation corps before being discharged and enrolling in the university medical school, is a veteran model plane builder and flier. He was among the winners at the National Model Airplane championship meet at Chicago in 1941, as was James Conlin, 739 Farwell Dr., Maple Bluff, who is secretary of the Madison Gas Model Club.

Don Weideman is vice-president, and this trio, along with other members have entries in the day long meet here on July 14. The youngest member is 14, the oldest 30, and the rolls of the miniature plane group are increasing rapidly.

This year's national meet, scheduled to be held in Chicago in the first week in July, is expected to attract 2,500 contestants.

At the model plane meet here, there will be contests in three classifications, Class A, B and C. Mohs explains that the Class A models are the smallest gasoline-powered models, having a wing spread of 36 inches. The big, Class C models, have wing spreads of 6 to 7 feet and weigh up to 3 pounds, which is heavy for these models.

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Fliers of these midget aircraft have set records for keeping their machines in the air for up to an hour, although the usual flight time is recorded in minutes. The motor is set to operate for a certain length of seconds, then shut off, and permit the plane to glide earthward. If air currents are favorable, sustained glide flight is often attained for many minutes.



Carl E. Mohs, Jr., 3525 Lake Mendota dr., president of the Madison Gas Model club, built this Class B model airplane, "Pacer," which will be among the 200 entries in the model aircraft flight contest to be held here Sunday, July 14. Mohs' ship has a 54-inch wing-spread and is powered with a gasoline motor which has a .29 cubic inch displacement. The air show of the midget-sized planes will be sponsored by the Madison Gas Model club, and prizes, trophies and awards will be given winners.

The secret, of course, is the construction of the ship, and Mohs points out that this is the element which gives the most zest to model plane building.

Members of the Madison Gas Model club are affiliated with the Academy of Model Aeronautics and sign safety pledges before being admitted to membership in the national body. Each plane is assigned numerals, and builders can name them according to their fancy.

The club has two constant directors and if the July 14 meet is recognized and

approved by the AMA, records set here will be authenticated.

The Madison Gas Model club hopes to enlist the aid of the recreation division of the school board in its contest and intra-club matches.

## MARCS Beginning

Previous columns have dealt with the very early history of model aviation in Madison. First the Madison Gas Model Club and then the Madison Model Airplane Club. As you will recall, the last club was flying at the Gisholt property, better known as the Royal Airport. That area is now the South Town Mall area.

In the late 1950's the Madison Model Airplane Club lost the use of that area as a flying field. As a result, the club fell apart. Several modelers continued to fly at ball diamonds or in farmer's fields, but without a designated field it was every man for himself.

This brings us, then, to the early history of MARCS. Our first president was Joe Unger, who now lives in Florida. Carl Mohs knew how to reach him, so he and I called him and recorded a forty five minute conversation about the early years of our club. What follows is a recap of his memories of that time.

Joe was a salesman for a company that sold class rings and other jewelry to high schools and colleges. He moved to Madison from Dearborn, Michigan in 1958. He had been flying models in Michigan, so he looked for a Madison club, but could find none. He did find a few people who were flying in some open areas on the far west side of town, however. Some of these individuals, such as Carl Mohs, Al Scidmore and a few others, are still active in MARCS. This loose arrangement of flying wherever they could get away with it continued on for several years.

In 1961, Joe thought a new club should be formed and other flyers agreed with him. Joe remembers five flyers meeting at his house in 1961 for the purpose of organizing a club. They were Joe, Carl Mohs, Glenn Lee, Carl Vogt and Bill Kettle. At the second meeting they elected officers, Joe Unger, president, Dale Sherman, vice president, Carl Vogt, treasurer and Carl Mohs, secretary. They affiliated with the AMA and from the beginning it was required that members join the AMA in order to join MARCS. As Joe recalls, there were about 12 people who joined during the first year.

They had no regular field, so they continued to fly wherever they could. For a brief time they were allowed to fly off a sod farm that was next to the Morey Airport in Middleton. When it became known that there was model flying at the airport in Lodi some of the MARCS members started to go there. It was probably inevitable that the Lodi flyers joined MARCS and the Lodi Airport became the MARCS flying field. Incidentally, as you may realize, the site we are talking about is not the present Lodi club flying field, but rather the Lodi Airport which you pass on your left as you drive from Lodi to their present field.

I went out to Lyle Stone's home recently to learn about the Lodi Airport flying site. Lyle is a long time resident of Lodi and one of the very first flyers at that site.

Lyle said the airport was about the same size as now, but there were fewer hangars. There were several planes that were simply tied down outside. It was a busy place, with many planes flying in and out when the model planes were also flying. Lyle generally flew right over the runway, but when a plane wanted to land he would turn around and fly his model over the hangers.

Joe Unger remembers flying at Lodi also. He left Madison and returned to Michigan in 1968 and Lodi was still the flying field at that time. In remembering these old days Joe said he remembered a fellow who built small-scale models and really flew the heck out of them. When I asked if that could have been Frank Baker, he replied that it certainly was. I told Joe that nothing has changed, Frank is still building small-scale models and he's still flying the heck out of them.

Lyle said that at that time most modelers were flying reed systems. I understand that with this system, you could go right or left or up or down by tapping the controls. They made a full range movement with each tap, so the time interval of the stick movement had to be short to prevent serious over-controlling. Fully proportional systems were just coming in, but were not very reliable.

As the club grew, the mix of models and full-scale planes became less desirable. Joe told me that when he left Madison the club had grown from about a dozen members to about seventy-five, so you can see that the club was outgrowing the available space at the airport. It all came to a head one day when a MARCS member flying a high powered airplane flew at full power into the side of hangar and punched a hole in it's metal side wall. There was a pilot in the building and it scared the hell out of him. So ended the official flying of MARCS at the Lodi Airport!

Fortunately, that was just about the time that the first site became available across from the Yahara Golf Course.

## **Kettle Field**

Last month I wrote about the MARCS flying days at the Lodi Airport. This column will reflect on early flying at the present Yahara site. Much of the information was gathered from Nels Wareham who was the president of our club when we moved here. Nels tells me that the original flying field was in the general area of the landfill that has now been closed and topped off. Wayne Lanphear told me that if you drive up the road onto the landfill, a portion of the old field is still intact and can be distinguished from the landfill, itself.

The MARCS field was on a small hill, but only slightly higher than the surrounding area. The entry was off Highway AB, just across from the tavern that is there today. The road was very rough, with many large rocks and bumps, which made driving over it difficult. It was a rather tricky entrance and it was somewhat dangerous. After there was a severe accident, the entrance was moved to Highways 12 and 18. The entrance was near where it is today, but you made a quick right turn, through a grove of trees, a remnant of which remains today. The road was nothing but two ruts that wound its way to the top of the hill.

There was a gradual fall away on most sides of the field, sometimes making orientation difficult. There was a line of trees to the north that gathered in many planes as they approached from that direction. Between the tree line and the field was a cornfield. It, too, captured its share of wayward planes. The cornfield was about where our present flying field is located. It was a good thing that corn was not planted as close together in those days as it is now. You could walk into the field and get down on you hands and knees and see some distance in all directions. I know, because I had to retrieve a few of my planes from there.

If there was any disadvantage to the field, it was that it was too close to the Yahara Golf Course. The highway was just two lanes and our field was on the hill on one side of it while the golf course was immediately across it, on the other. We were close enough that the golfers could hear our planes, which sometimes actually over-flew the course. Naturally, we were told never to over-fly the course, but it sometimes happened anyway. We often didn't realize just how far our planes were from us and so the golf course's airspace was violated with some regularity.

A factor that contributed to the problem was that there was no established flight line. There was no designated pit area and there were no fences to indicate where the acceptable flight area was. The flyers just lined up so that the flight line was headed into the wind. If the wind shifted, someone would yell to move. Then everyone would pick up his gear and establish a line that was consistent with the wind's direction.

As you would suspect, this was not a very safe practice and there were accidents as a result. The problem was not limited to MARCS and there were accidents all around the country because flyers were sometimes standing where there was flight activity. This is why AMA now dictates that there must be an established flight line, designated by fences. It wasn't safe, but it certainly made landing easier when you could always land into the wind.

If the wind was from the north or south, you were always taking off or landing in the direction of the golf course. Pilots often flew over it, not realizing how far out they were. As we all know, golfers do not take kindly to having their concentration interrupted. Our noise was a problem. I remember talking to a fellow who golfed at Yahara. When he found out I was a model plane flyer, he let me know that he didn't approve of our activity. I'm sure some of their complaints weren't justified, but bad things did happen now and then. I recall that a flyer with a powerful model lost control and put it straight down into the ground not twenty yards from where four golfers were putting on a green. Not all wayward planes crashed over there, but just as we might put one in the weeds today, some did find their way to the golf course.

When we moved to the Yahara site, the glider contingent flew there also, but there were no special times allocated to gliders. They just flew side by side with everyone else. The only time they had the field to themselves was on Sunday mornings. The church over on Highway AB was close enough that powered flight was not allowed at that time. If the glider pilots scheduled a meet, it meant the field was closed to powered flight. In the eyes of some, the mix of powered and glider flight was a poor arrangement so the glider pilots went out and found their own field. One that they used quite regularly was the Watts Sod Farm on Prairie Road. That sod farm no longer exists, as it was turned into the Tumble Down Golf Course, which now fronts on Mineral Point Road. They then switched to the Polo Field and other sod farms in the area, where they still fly.

In looking back at our sites, it seems to me that our moves have been very timely. We lost the Lodi site just when our club got so big that model planes and full sized ones could no longer coexist with each other. We were moved from our original Yahara location just when our presence became too bothersome to the golfers, across the road.

## **Historic Characters**

I started writing The History Corner last October. During the past nine months we have traced the history of model aviation clubs in Madison from the 1940's to the present time. This column will end the series, as we are now up to date.

I thought I would end the series by providing some information about members who have passed on, but who left their names imprinted on our club. The first will be Bill Kettle, for whom our field is named, then Ken Kindschi, whose name is attached to our scale event, and Owen Kampen, who designed many planes for Ace Manufacturing. Finally, I will talk about Scooter, a dog known to many of us, whose ashes are now permanently buried under the newly erected memorial stone and for whom the annual Scooter Award is named.

## BILL KETTLE

Bill's full name was Roger William Kettle. Bill served for four years in the Marine Corps during World War II. You will recall that he was mentioned in some of my earlier columns. He was a member of the Madison Gas Model Club, the Madison Model Airplane Club and he was, of course, a founding member of MARCS.

Bill started with control line flying and then moved on to radio control when that became more popular. Bill is primarily remembered for his dedication to helping new members learn to fly RC planes. Lyle Stone recalls Bill making the transition from control line to RC flying. When Bill had it mastered, Lyle remembers Bill telling him that he was going to dedicate himself to helping others to fly RC planes.

He did just that. He came to the flying field almost every night after work, very often with no airplane of his own. His purpose in being there was to help others. Trainer cords and buddy boxes had not come along yet, so he would get your plane in the air and then hand you the transmitter. At first, he would stand by your side, ready to take the transmitter out of your hands if you got into serious trouble. As you gained a little skill, he would still be there for you, but he would also be putting a plane in the air for another novice. He would often be standing on the flight line with two or three planes in the air flown by pilots of varying skills. He would tell you what to do and if a disaster were imminent, he would hurry to your side. Needless to say, you lost more planes as you learned to fly than you do today.

Bill gave unselfishly of his time to help others. He was always cheerful and encouraging to his students. He is remembered by many that still enjoy the hobby.

Modern Distributors, a roofing supply firm, employed Bill. He was a big man. He died unexpectedly on April 26, 1982 while on vacation. Bill was 54. This picture shows Bill at one of our float flies that was held at Warner Park. He is holding a radio controlled duck that he brought along for a few laughs.



## KEN KINDSCHI

Each year we hold a scale rally, which is named after Ken. He is remembered by older members as an individual who had a beautiful fleet of model airplanes. When I remember Ken, I think of his planes. I cannot associate Ken with a "junk" plane. He simply prided himself on owning and flying beautiful scale models.

He owned and built scale models from several manufacturers, but in his last years Byron kits were his favorites. Byron just sells fuel now, but in those days they produced a whole line of scale models. They were constructed of fiberglass and they were the state of the art at that time. At the time of his death, Ken had a quarter scale Cap 21, a half scale Beech Stagger Wing and a one third scale Christian Eagle. They were big, beautiful and admired by everyone. Ken smoked a pipe. He loved to fly and then sit back and strike up a conversation with a fellow modeler.

Ken worked for the City of Madison's Tax Department as an assessor. He retired in 1981. He died suddenly in September of 1987 while on the way home from the field. His death was a shock to all of us, but particularly to Fred Bast. Fred had been flying with him and he remembers waving to him as Ken headed home. He never made it; he was stricken as he turned off the belt line onto Whitney Way. He was 65 years old.

It is most appropriate that our scale rally bears his name.

### OWEN KAMPEN

Owen was a member who gained national prominence as a model airplane designer. He primarily designed 1/2 A models for Midwest Models and for Ace Manufacturing. A few of his designs were the Whiz Kid and Bonzo for Midwest and the Pacer, Whizard, Air Scout and others for Ace. He was one of the first to use Styrofoam wings in his designs. Both the Pacer and Whizard had styrofoam wings. The RCM catalog still carries plans for several of his designs.

Owen was an innovator. Most 1/2 models at that time had short, stubby wings. Owen used longer, narrower wings and they looked and flew great. He had at least seventeen articles published by model magazines.

Frank Baker tells me that before proportional radios were developed they used a device called an Adams Actuator. Owen designed several planes for that system. Frank remembers that he and Owen would load their cars with five or six planes and head for the field. When all of them had been crashed, it was time to go home and start repairs.

Owen Kampen was a commercial artist and he worked as an instructor at MATC. Being an artist, he always included good looks as a requirement for all of his models. He was also a portrait artist. Several of his paintings of UW faculty members are still on display at the University.

Owen was a B 24 pilot in World War II, flying in the Italian Campaign. He died at 65 years of age in 1985. His wife was presented with a Hall of Fame Award on his behalf by our club at the annual banquet in February 1986.

### SCOOTER

Scooter was a large dog who endeared himself to our members. He was black in color and weighed over 100 pounds. Scooter was a mixed breed, but primarily Labrador. He looked like a large Lab, but with somewhat longer hair. Roy Porter, a long time member of MARCS, who now lives in Florida, owned him.

Scooter went everywhere with Roy. Because Roy flew often, Scooter spent a lot of time at the field and acted as the official greeter, meeting flyers as soon as they opened their car doors. After you acknowledged him and petted him a little he would return to the spectator area and lie down. His manners were impeccable and he never had to be leashed. He never entered the pit area and always wandered off into the weeds to poop.

If you had some food, he would gladly accept a handout. Many hamburgers were bought over at McDonald's just for him. Scooter was a great dog and he was loved by all. He was twelve years old when he died in 1993. As mentioned previously, his ashes are buried under the field monument plaque.

(Editor's Note: The Scooter Award, which is given annually on a rotating basis to the MARCS nice guy of the year, is made in this dog's honor. The author of this article is a past winner of the Scooter Award.)