



The AMA History Project Presents: History of the EMERSON MODEL AIRPLANE CLUB



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Model Planes Come to Emerson Junior High School

Starting from scratch this Niles, Illinois, program grew into highly successful activity.

The Emerson Junior High is in Niles, Ill. Joseph Patrick Flint is a Shop Instructor – and AMA member. To this add some typical American seventh- and eighth-grade boys and the stage is set for a boost-model-aviation story.

It all began when Flint offered after-school help to some students who sought advice on building and flying model airplane kits they had bought. At first they came individually but, before long, Flint realized there was enough interest to start an activity as a regular part of the school program.

“School officials were favorably inclined to the idea,” he says, “just as they always are toward any worthwhile activity that enriches the total school program.” So the Emerson Model Airplane Club was formed. And it has been developing satisfactorily ever since.

In the second year, information sheets were prepared beforehand. Activity was publicized to the students, with two sessions planned each week. About a dozen boys were expected. Over 30 turned up! At the next meeting attendance jumped to 40 and Flint found himself having to turn away enthusiastic boys. Incidentally, the most popular planes proved to be the Flite Streak Jr. and the Veco Dakota.

By fall a few boys actually got into the air, but cold weather forced them indoors. Because young man’s attention span is limited, the problem was how to avoid boredom when the boys could not see their models in action. Flint tried various devices.

Indoor flying in the gym was only a limited success. Gym classes and models just don’t mix! The noise and excitement of a roaring glow plug engine was what the fellows really wanted. A circling glider was not for them. They did enjoy films – numerous, excellent 16-mm sound films, many in color, are available either on free loan or on a nominal rental basis. Sources of these films include AMA and FAA, and all of the major aircraft companies.

“All it takes,” states Flint, “is a simple request on a letterhead.”

With the coming of spring, it seemed to Flint that what the boys needed was a goal, such as a contest complete with prizes. Rules were simplified so that even the inexpert had a chance to win.

“In the space of a few weeks,” Flint recalls, “these boys, starting from not knowing how to fly at all, went to the wingover and loop stage in control-line, and nice flyaways from the school yard with the free flights.”

At the end of the year the prizes, mostly donated kits, were awarded with all of the ceremony appropriate to the occasion. “A prouder bunch of boys you never saw, as the enclosed pictures prove,” Flint reported.



*Left: Joseph Patrick Flint and students who won prizes at School meet.
Right: Display cabinet in the corridor reminded boys of contest deadline.
(Photos courtesy Model Aviation magazine, August 1964)*

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