



The AMA History Project Presents: History of the GUILDHALL FUN FLYERS R/C CLUB Since 1988



Written and submitted by RS (02/2008); Formatted and Edited by JS (02/2008), Reformatted by JS (07/2010)

Rusty Scott, Club Secretary, composed and submitted the following history.

The Guildhall Fun Flyers

It all started with two guys and a conversation at a small repair shop called Ed's Place on North Road in Guildhall Vermont. Ed Robbins and Kevin Boswell were the architects of what would become the Guildhall Fun Flyers. Kevin worked for Ed in a small foreign car repair shop in Guildhall. During a conversation one day, Ed made mention that he wanted to retire and learn how to fly Radio Control airplanes. Kevin told Ed that he had done some flying years back when he was in the Navy. He thought they should start now instead of Ed waiting to retire. This spark would soon turn to flame.

Guildhall is not a densely populated area. The thought that others would be interested in Radio Control flying was remote. I do not think their first notion was to start a club, but rather to just get an airplane in the air. They did just that.

Rod Black was a fellow who had been into model airplanes for most of his life. He loved the challenge of building an airplane from scratch and getting it to fly. Rod was a true builder in every sense a builder can be. You always knew if Rod was building something because his fingers would be full of glue. There would be telltale signs of the color he was painting his new airplane on his fingernails.

Rod's home field at this time was the same place we would have a chance meeting at when I was just learning, the Whitefield, New Hampshire airport's "old" airstrip. The old airstrip was just that, an old decaying strip of blacktop that was of no use to full-scale aircraft, but was perfect for a Radio Control flyer with no club. That would all change soon.

Harry Irving was a float flyer at heart. Harry had a lake cabin on one of the beautiful lakes in Northern Vermont known as Maidstone Lake. Harry would fly his model floatplanes at the lake, often showing off for any passerby in a speedboat that would stop to watch. He was a bit of a late afternoon local attraction on the lake. Harry loved to fly in the late afternoon when the wind would drop to nothing but a whisper.

He would also fly with a friend, Paul Leclair, at his house in Northumberland, New Hampshire. Paul had a private airstrip out back that was large enough for full-scale airplanes to land. Harry's dog, Rusty Joe, was never far behind and was his devoted wingman and pickup truck security system. You did not get near the truck cab unless Harry said it was okay.

I started playing with Radio Control powerboats in 1980. I never had an interest in airplanes. They seemed too hard to fly and I did not know anyone who did it. One day, at Maidstone Lake, I noticed an airplane with floats flying around. It was Dave Lufkin of Lancaster, New Hampshire. We drove around to investigate and after meeting Dave and talking to him for a while, I learned of Harry Irving who also flew at the lake. I was hooked. I went home, ordered an airplane, and got to work. About two weeks later, I was ready. I drove to the Whitefield airport to try out my new airplane. I read the Tower Hobbies Tutorial in their catalogue on getting started and got down to business. I had no flight time, but lots of Radio Control boat experience.

I made the mistake of putting the wing on the new *PT-20*, and after taxing back and forth on the blacktop a few times a little too fast, I got airborne. I made about six flights that day, all ending with a crash landing in the tall wheat that bordered the old airstrip. I never damaged the airplane and was pretty impressed with myself.

I had a spectator that day that I did not notice. Rod Black was watching me from his car at the far end of the field. I must have been a sight to see, taking off and crashing into the wheat to land. Rod got out of his car and introduced himself. He asked how long I had been flying and I told him about an hour. He meant how long I had been there that day; I meant how long I had ever flown an airplane in my life! Rod helped me with the finer points as later I would find he was always willing to do. Rod loved to help everybody with anything Radio Control. The club connections were starting to fall into place.

I guess had it not been for Ed and Kevin wanting to fly, Rod having flown all of his life and being very devoted to Radio Control, Harry not having a lake cabin to float fly, me not seeing Dave at the lake, and the Whitefield airport being there to present the opportunity, we would not have formed a club. This was the beginning of what has been 20 years of good times with good friends.

The first meeting that was official was held at Harry Irving's house in his basement. We had all gotten together after figuring out that we had a handful of pretty dedicated flyers. Here is what I remember being the first year's line-up in 1988:

President: Ed Robbins, Guildhall, Vermont
Vice President: Kevin Boswell, Guildhall, Vermont
Secretary/Treasurer: Harry Irving, Guildhall, Vermont
Safety Officer: Rod Black, Whitefield, New Hampshire
Membership: Rusty Scott, Lancaster, New Hampshire

The club soon established our dues at \$20, not for any particular reason other than it was a good round number. We had no expenses and no budget. We did not have any bylaws and we were really just winging it. First and foremost, we needed a clubhouse or general meeting place and a field. Ed's place was a natural fit for this and soon Ed had Kevin on a large Farmall tractor, tearing up the knoll behind his place. It was seeded and looked as smooth as blacktop. This would come to be known as Ed's International Airport.

The first year that the field was done, it seemed like the rain would never stop. I would call Ed at his shop and ask how the wind and weather was. It seemed he would always say "not good." We were so anxious to fly. Ed soon started a small hobby shop at his garage - more like a spare parts wall - and we were in heaven. Spring came and went and

the grass started to grow. Soon the mowers came out and we had a nice green strip on which to fly. The strip was not large and it proved to produce some very talented landing skills by the pilots who learned to fly there. It had a slope on one end that was very steep and a slope on the far side that was just as menacing. The left side of the field was swampland, as much of northern New England is. There was a running joke that any airplane that crashed in the swamp would be swallowed by the anacondas before you could get to it to recover it. All who flew there feared the “anaconda pit.” We had a field.

Over the years, we saw many flyers from clubs in southern New England discover our field in Northern Vermont. We had flyers from Connecticut and Southern New Hampshire that would come up each year for a long weekend in their motor homes to fly with us. Sometimes we would set up an event at the old Whitefield airport just so these guys would visit more often. They loved coming and we loved the company. I guess it was nice for them to fly in a place that had beautiful mountain scenery and very few restrictions on flying. We had world class Radio Control helicopter pilots visit, as well as some of the best Scale airplane modelers New England had to offer.

The club’s newsletter was born in 1994. *The Disoriented Times* was a name coined by club member Bill Estberg who lived in Vermont at the time. The club voted in the name and adopted it as the official newsletter name of the Guildhall Fun Flyers. Bill only wrote a few installments and the project was given to Don Sanders who has served faithfully as the editor and overseer of the publication to this very day. The newsletter was the only basic form of communication that the club used until the development of a website in December of 2001. The site was later upgraded and developed to what you see in use today by John Brooks Jr. (2007.)

The club grew quickly in the early years. I had moved out to the Midwest in the early 1990s in pursuit of my career and the club went through some radical changes. Eventually, in 1999, Ed retired, sold his home and repair business, and moved to Southern New Hampshire. We needed a new field, as Ed’s International Airport was no longer available. At the same time, the club was going to go through a change of leadership.

On October 15, 1999, the club found a new home. Don Sanders, Rod Tibbets, and Dick Mahn were there to christen it. Some members had drifted away from the club, and with the move came new challenges. Thanks to the club’s growth in the early 1990s, there were many good solid members to pick up where others had left off. There were not many active original members left. Rod Black was an asset as an original member and guys like Don Sanders, John Brooks, Jr., Rod Tibbets, and Dick Mahn all pulled together to keep the club active and alive.

The new field began to be developed a few miles down the road from the original. Everyone would most likely agree it is better than the original one at Ed’s on North Road. When the AMA asked each club to have official bylaws sent in, the club officers wrote the first bylaws the club had ever put together.

Today, in 2008, the Guildhall Fun Flyers are alive and well. Only two original members are still actively involved in the club - Harry Irving and I. Kevin Boxwell, who lives in southern New Hampshire, still belongs to the club he helped start and visits when he is able to travel north. In 2005, the club started to grow again. With a new field lease, new training program for new pilots, and an active campaign to recruit new flyers, the Guildhall Fun Flyers have grown to over 75 members. The current club president, Joe Hoey, also managed to broker a deal between the Police Activities League and our club that allowed us to involve area youth in the hobby. This union brought in funds for training aircraft, portable bathroom facilities, and site development money.

In 2007, the club started to have formal event again, the first in many years. Throughout the years, there had been club picnics and small groups of club members annually gathering for float flies on Martin Meadow Pond in Lancaster, New Hampshire. These events kept the club's core together, and although not put on in a large scale, gave the active flyers a way to come together for events. In that year, the club established the Rod Black Memorial Fun Fly to honor Rod Black, the dedicated modeler and original founding member who had recently passed away. We also started an annual Warbirds over Guildhall Scale event. Rod would have been very enthusiastic about both events and would have enjoyed flying in them.

This year (2008) will be our twentieth anniversary as a Radio Control club. It has been a lot of fun being involved and seeing the club go from the original handful of members to what it is today. I look forward to the next 20 years and seeing the next generation take the reins of this fantastic organization.

Over the years, many talented members have come, contributed their part, and gone. What I wrote here is a compilation of historical material and memory. I apologize for anything or anyone I may have left out. I thank those who have dedicated time to the Guildhall Fun Flyers over the years. Without volunteers, clubs do not or will not happen.

Submitted by Rusty Scott
2008 Club Secretary
Guildhall Fun Flyers

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