



# The AMA History Project Presents: History of the SAN GABRIEL VALLEY RADIO CONTROL LEAGUE

Founded in 1962



Written and submitted by WRF (02/2006); Formatted by JS (05/2006), Reformatted by JS (07/2010)

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*Walter R. Findlay, past-president of the League, composed and submitted the following narrative.*

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## **San Gabriel Valley Radio Control League**

In 1961, the Radio Control modelers in the San Gabriel Valley area of Southern California looked for a site to fly. Closed out of three areas, we used a farmer's field between crops for about five months [out of the] year.

Late in that year, a family friend who knew our problem called me and gave me the name and phone number of the commanding officer of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the Los Angeles area. The Corps was about to lease the flood control area behind the Whittier Narrows Dam in Los Angeles County for a recreational area. He gave me a name of who to contact in the County Parks Department.

The reception was cordial. They asked me to submit names and addresses for people I knew who would use the area. After submitting the names, they asked me to meet with them and visit the area to see if it would be feasible, as the area they proposed was between an existing shooting range and a new freeway under construction. I felt the site was suitable, but wanted to bring a few people to look over the site to make sure it would work. They wanted me to contact Keith Storey (former AMA president) who was working with them for a Control Line site. I contacted Keith, met [him] at the site and agreed that we both could fit in [the space] and make it work.

The modelers whose names I submitted agreed to a meeting about starting a club. We met at a hobby shop in Arcadia, California. The club formed and the members elected me their president. The names of a few I remember from that day are as follows:

Walter Findlay, Alhambra, CA

President

Frank Justin, Arcadia, CA

Vice President

Don Dewey, Sierra Madre, CA

Secretary and Newsletter Editor  
Chuck Wass, Covina, CA

Treasurer  
Dr. John Camp, San Marino, CA  
Jim Jensen, Glendora, CA  
John Garabidian, Monterey Park, CA

In all, there were 19 of us. Since we all lived in different cities, we chose the name San Gabriel Valley Radio Control League.

The county was great to work with. They graded a runway and built a block wall between the gun club and our new area. Within a month, we were flying.

The first year went smoothly. We had monthly meetings in a park clubhouse in Sierra Madre, California, arranged by Don Dewey. We also had a great newsletter right from the start and the club grew as we became better known.

Early 1963 brought an election of new officers. Frank Justin was the new president. Don Dewey and Chuck Wass were re-elected, but two months later, they all resigned. They were leaving the club to start a new magazine, *R/C Modeler*, which went on for many successful years. Members asked me to resume the presidency, which I did. We relocated our meeting place and the club continued with no problem.

As a club, we had some pattern contests and many fun fly events, to which we invited the "Birds" club to join us. Joe and Betty Stream and Joe Bridi were members of that club and always very competitive.

Our club became very active in Open Pylon Racing, prior to Formula One, and we used pattern-type airplanes with .61-size engines. These were very competitive, and we even had a hundred-lap race with pit stops. Racing is still part of the club, with Quickie 500 races held every so often.

In the mid-1960s, we thought we should pave the runway and install taxiways and a pit area, so we decided to hold a raffle. Phil Kraft, whose plant was less than a mile from the field, gave us a complete radio to raffle. We were able to complete the project as planned and it still survives today as it was then.

Jim Jensen, one of our original members, went into the model business producing *Ugly Stick* and *Kwik Fly* kits with much success. He was a great member of our club and was a fantastic builder.

The year 1970 saw me getting a divorce and my club activities slowed down considerably. A

year later, I took up flying and my modeling slowed down. Still, I remained active with the club and was asked to participate in the cross-country race held a number of years ago, which I did.

The club is still very active today. As a life member, I still follow their activities and talk to them when I can.

What I wrote here is as I remember it 40 years later. The history of the club from the 1970s on would be better done by others. The club, as I know it, has an outstanding record and should stand out as an example for our hobby.

Submitted by Walter Findlay, Prescott, Arizona  
February 17, 2006

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