

WINNIPEG RADIO CONTROL CLUB 1963 - 2004

HAPPY 41<sup>st</sup> ANNIVERSARY

Dennis Koroluk asked me to do an article on the club and its presidents over the years, as I'm the only founding member who is still active in the hobby. Most of the following club history was what I had written for the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1998 with an update to the present time. Remember when reading this article we were still flying at Richot Park on Hwy. 59 in 1998.

The Winnipeg Radio Control Club was formed at a meeting on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1963, by founding members Keith Humphrey, Rod McRae, Warren Barker, John Bonnett and Gerry Fingler. The WRCC was originally formed as a special interest club dedicated to radio control modeling. It was affiliated with the Model Aircraft League of Manitoba, which was mainly a control line club at the time. M.A.L.M. was founded in the 1930's.

Radio control modelers still active in the hobby who joined the WRCC in the first months were Cliff Swartz, Bill Dutka and Karoly Matusik. The club had fourteen members in the first year and the name was not adopted until later in the year. Other names suggested were Winnipeg Aero Radio Modelers (W.A.R.M.) and Winnipeg Aero Radio Pilots (W.A.R.P.).

The first official flying site was in East Kildonan where Kildonan East Collegiate is located on Concordia Avenue. The first chairman was Keith Humphrey. WRCC membership grew slowly in those early years. There were approximately 25 members by the end of 1966. Everyone was a novice at radio control flying, learning more with each flight, improving their skills as they went along and crashes were numerous.

In 1967 the club elected its first executive, Cliff Swartz as President, Keith Humphrey as Secretary-Treasurer, Gerry Fingler as Contest Director and Rod McRae on Publicity. The club had checked out areas on the floodway as possible flying sites.

Things have not changed over the years as the same executive was elected ("railroaded") in 1968. The contest schedule in 1966 included a WWI Scale Contest with 10 aircraft entered. Membership had reached 50 by that time. WRCC held their meetings at the old Free Press building in 1969. Considerable discussion was held on the purchase of land for a flying field. A motion to assess every member \$100 for a field fund was passed unanimously by the 60 members in attendance. WRCC was also incorporated in 1969. That year the Hwy. 59 flying site was first used. It was known as Seine River Park in those days. A grass runway was located on the west side of the drainage ditch.

1970 was a big year for the WRCC as well as Manitoba, as it was Manitoba's Centennial Year. The \$30 field assessment was introduced to raise funds for paved runways. This replaced the original \$100 assessment passed the previous year. Club meetings were held at the transit building on Osborne Street. The WRCC participated in a number of Centennial functions. Flying demonstrations were held at Bird's Hill Park, the Portage Air Show, LaBarriere Park, Charleswood Fair and the Centennial Air Show at St. Andrews Airport. The club had a large model display in the banquet hall at the Winnipeg Inn (now the Lombard) for the Wartime Pilots Reunion, at which among others Adolf Galland, Douglas Badar, Johnnie Johnson, were in attendance. A number of WRCC members were invited to attend one of the dinners and had the pleasure of hearing these gentlemen speak of their wartime experiences.

The WRCC paved runway system was installed on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1970. Will we make 30 years at Hwy. 59? Only time will tell.

1970 saw Cliff Swartz step down as president after serving 4 years. The membership had climbed to 85 and radio control modeling was growing very quickly. The April Show and Tell meeting attracted 62 members.

The WRCC held a Model & Trade Show in April 1972 at River East Arena in East Kildonan. We had upwards to 1000 people attend. Some notable manufacturers in attendance were Bob Elliot of E.K. Logictrol Radios, Texas, and Bud Nosen (a super scale modeler) of Bud Nosen Models, Minnesota (if you are a long time R/C'er you will remember them). The first club banquet was held at the Kildonan Canoe Club with over 100 attending.

In 1973 MAAC held their first combined National Championship in Yorkton, Sk., with many WRCC members attending and participating in these nationals.

Talks and numerous suggestions continued in 1974 on whether to purchase property for a flying field. Concerns were expressed that the club would not be at the Hwy. 59 site for any length of time. Well, 24 years have passed since those concerns were voiced. Attendance at club meetings continued to be in excess of 50 members on a regular basis.

Things changed very little in 1975, with continued concerns for the use of the Hwy. 59 site and ongoing talk of purchasing property. WRCC became a MAAC sanctioned club. The annual "Show & Tell" meeting attracted 90 members to view the latest creations of fellow modelers.

1977 and 1978 were busy years for the WRCC as members planned for and organized the 1978 Canadian Nationals. They were held July 17<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1978 at the old Netley airport, north of Winnipeg. Many members volunteered many, many hours of their time in the preparation of staging this event and without their sacrifice of time and energy it would not have been such a success. Jim Corner, who was the MAAC Zone Director at that time, was the Nationals Chairman and did a terrific job. Other members who were on the Nationals planning committee were Bob Matthews, Ian MacDougall, Gerry Fingler, Murray Elchitz, Rick Turenne, Duncan McRae, Don Hatch, Bernie Michaleski, Buddy Brownstone and Don Pemberton. As well, dozens of WRCC members volunteered their time and energy prior to and during the week of the Nationals, doing all the things required in hosting such an event.

The Scale World Championships were held in Ottawa in July 1980 and two WRCC members were on the Canadian Scale Team, Don Hatch in Stand-Off Scale (Cessna Ag-Truck) and Gerry Fingler in FAI Precision Scale -(L19 Bird Dog). Membership dues were raised for the upcoming 1981 year. The dues had remained stable for several years. In March 1981 the club hosted a day long modeling seminar covering various topics. This was very well attended by the membership.

The WRCC 1982 annual Labor-Day week-end contest attracted 28 contestants, not as many as other years which saw 40 plus modelers participating. Discussion was held on the cost of building a clubhouse at the flying field in the fall of 1982. Plans were even published in the newsletter.

In 1983 interest in quarter scale was increasing with a local IMAA chapter being formed. The Show & Tell meeting attracted 28 aircraft. Runways were resurfaced, 100' extension to the north/south runway added and boothill was paved (ask a long-time member about boothill.) We participated in the RCAF Aircrew Reunion in 1984 with a model display at the Convention Centre. The club opened the Maple Leaf Airshow in Gimli with a flying demo as well as having a static display. Membership had grown to 120 plus.

The first Scale Masters qualifying contest in Canada was hosted in July 1985. Modelers that qualified to participate in the final in Phoenix, Az. were Bill Gillespie (Edmonton), Gerry Fingler, Blaine Raymond, Don Hatch and Dave Sawatzky (Altona). All except Bill Gillespie travelled to Phoenix in October for the finals. Also, that fall the Richot Residents Appreciation Day drew 150+ spectators.

In 1986 the WRCC auction attracted 160 modelers with almost \$4,000 in sales. The first WRCC Golf Tournament & Dinner was held in August at the Transcona Golf Club and the temperature was 95F+!!! On Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>, 1987, the Polar Fly attracted over 50 spectators and 15 aircraft. Club membership was over 130 and the annual dinner and dance drew 85 people for an evening of fun and socializing.

The WRCC celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> year in June 1988 with a planned Fun Fly and Banquet. Unfortunately the banquet had to be cancelled due to lack of interest. The city increased the lease term for the Hwy. 59 flying site to a 5 year term, however rumors were already surfacing about the twinning of Hwy. 59 in 1990. Major field work was carried out in May and June of 1991. Complete resurfacing, extension and widening of north/south runway, landscaping, parking lot located closer to pit area, etc., were performed to what was the last set-up. Club members turned up in large numbers (I recall 60 to 70 members over a two day period) to complete the landscaping work.

In 1992 the annual Labour Day Contest was still being held. That year the club participated with a model display at the 402 Air Reserve Squadrons' 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Our present sun-shelter was built in the spring of 1993. To promote R/C scale modelling, Cellar Dweller held a Planes of Fame Scale Contest. Over 30 entrants turned up for a great contest. Everyone that came out with their designated model and flew it was a winner. WRCC was approached by the MAAC Zone Director to host the Canadian Nationals, but the members felt that not enough support/volunteers could be found to host another Nationals at that time. The Nationals were held in Brandon in 1994 with a number of club members helping the Brandon Club host the meet.

In September 1994 the WRCC returned to the Western Canada Aviation Museum for its monthly meetings. They had been held at the Orioles Community Club for many years. The city again renewed our lease for the Richot Park Flying Field for another 5 years, expiring December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1998 (coincidence?)

Growing concern in 1995 for the continued use of the Hwy. 59 flying site was voiced by many members. It was confirmed with the highways department that no construction would begin for at least two years. Rumors and speculation continued through 1996. Nothing could be confirmed as to when the club would have to vacate due to highway construction. The great flood of 1997 found our flying site under 4 to 5 feet of water. This was the first time ever that the field was flooded. Flying did not begin until the end of May. Club representatives met with City of Winnipeg Parks department to discuss relocation of the flying site. This meeting was very positive and several sites were considered. No further development on twinning Hwy. 59 or developing a new flying location had been received from the city.

This brought us to 1998. In the years 1998 and 1999 numerous meetings were held between the City's Property & Development Dept. and Don Hatch & Gerry Fingler, acting on behalf of the WRCC. As our lease on the Hwy. 59 site expired at the end of 1998, the Province of Manitoba, who now owned the land, extended to us a temporary use permit so we could continue flying until a new field was acquired and developed. We were able to continue with all our flying functions during 1999. Finally, we received approval in September for our present site. Now, work would really begin to develop a new field. Members discussed at length if we could put in a paved runway; the club only had about half the funds required to do the job. A few members suggested soliciting the members for donations. Len Gladstone took it upon himself to approach every member for a donation for the runway fund. This was done on a voluntary basis, no strings attached, any amount a member felt comfortable with donating, with each donation amount held in strict confidence. \$12,000 was raised from the membership. We have Len Gladstone to thank for our paved runway, without his effort we would not have had the necessary funds to do the job.

Things really started to happen in 2000. A ten year lease was signed with the City, we could still fly at Hwy. 59, but only until about July of that year. In the meantime a new runway was laid down at the new field site, work was done to level and grade around it, the soil was spread seeding was done and a parking lot prepared, etc. Many club members put in numerous hours developing our fine flying field. It was ready for the first take-offs by late summer. Work continues on improving our facility. A great sun shelter was built a couple years ago which should withstand even hurricane force winds. The pit area was expanded, more fertilizing was done and an east/west grass runway is being groomed. With the moisture we received in 2004, the grass is really filling in and looking better all the time. Don Hatch as well as Eric Bittner have put a lot of work into our field and deserve a good deal of thanks for their efforts.

The future looks good for the continued use of our present site. Plan now for the Club's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in June of 2013!!  
GOOD FLYING - GERRY FINGLER.

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