The Leading Edge

The Newsletter of The Greensboro Radio Aero Modelers #481





From The Prez....

Hello GRAMS! Once again, and much too quickly; The summer of 2025 has ended, and we are now in Autumn. And, what an incredible year it has been for the GRAMS organization! A year of many field improvements as described, in the last issue of the newsletter. We also had two; late in the year, and much overdue AMA Recognitions! Gold Leader Club And then Club of the Month.

Speaking of recognition, GRAMS owes a great debt of gratitude to Mr. Steve Vergamini for being our Newsletter Editor for the last, **15 PLUS Years!** Mr. Vergamini has done a fantastic job composing articles and gathering information and presenting us with a very informative and interesting Newsletter. So again, Grams and its membership can't thank you enough Mr. Vergamini!



At First; the request perplexed me; when Steve V. asked me to help find a replacement for him as Newsletter Editor; and he was more than very deserving of a much overdue break. However, the answer turned out to be obvious and clear. Our current Secretary, Mr. Hanson Gaugler has offered to accept the role of Newsletter Editor, and we are all, more than certain that he will do a fantastic job! Thank you for your accepting and undertaking this duty Hanson!

During the transition, Hanson and I are co-writing the newsletter and this one, the first edition with Hanson and I scribing it. The Newsletter has taken a different format and Hanson, and I hope you will find it enjoyable and informative to read! Thank you again Vergi, For 15 years of service!!!



Upcoming Events

Black Friday Fun Fly

November 28, 2025

Annual Christmas Dinner at Casa Vallarta

December 16, 2025

R/C History and Building,

A Look Back Over the Years…

Article Contributor : Steve Ort



Greetings all, when I was asked to provide a newsletter article for this newsletter, I started thinking about what the article would entail.

What I would like to provide is a bit of history first with where the RC hobby has been, most of you already know the history but some may not. Along with that some of my own personal experiences. The goal was to keep it short, not too wordy and not to boring and hopefully you will find this interesting.

I cannot really speak with regards to electrics and foamies. They are very popular these days, I understand that, I get it, it's just not my cup of tea.



When I started modeling at the age of 8 years old, of course RC was not an option. My sister bought me a Cox line control plane as a birthday gift. To say I was delighted would be an understatement. I flew several line control planes off and on over the years. Then like most school and girls took all my time. After schooling and married, two children came along, as they became a little older I took the plunge into RC. The early RC radios were very expensive for that time, so it took saving the money and time to afford even what was a cheaper radio in those days.

When I started RC in 1978 there was no such thing as electric powered planes, ARFs and not to mention foamies. If you wanted to fly you built it and used a glow engine for power.



My first RC plane was Sig Kadet powered by an O.S .35. Every day after work I would hit my small workshop, nothing more than a converted spare bedroom. After working every hour I could the Kadet was ready, two local good builders and flyers were great trainers and I spent numerous evenings and weekends at the field learning. Of course, the off time was spent doing repairs to that poor ole Kadet. Finally, being sold at a swap meet.

Forwarding some years in time some of the first gasoline engines started to appear at the flying fields, these were nothing more than converted chain saw engines but they were interesting and appeared to provide a good amount of power for their day and sounded very realistic.



Fast forward again, these days there are a wide variety of engine manufacturers with many different sizes available from single to multi cylinder.

After that the first ARF's started hitting the market, the quality of most of those wasn't very good and like today too expensive for most.

R/C History and Building,

A Look Back Over the Years… (Continued)

Article Contributor : Steve Ort



Onward to building more and more planes mostly from kits constructed of balsa and plywood. As time went on, I did dabble in a few ARF's but always returned to what I knew and enjoyed, building my own.



Then along came brushed electrics, then a big step forward for the electric flyers when brushless motors came along especially the advent of lipo battery packs,,,, then out came the electric foamies.

When I started flying, I liked to build and love to fly, now that I am getting older that has reversed, I like fly and love to build.

Due to the electric foamies and numerous higher quality ARF's of these days not many kit manufacturers or builders are left, there are a few but nothing like used to be.

As a matter of fact, I can count the number of builders in our club on one hand.



My greatest joy these days is scratch building, mainly from Ziroli plans. Nick Ziroli Senior, now retired, designed quite a large of selection of scale subjects. Due to his knowledge his designs are accurate pencil drawings and all fly extremely well. Nick Ziroli Jr now runs the business, you can check his plans along with other plan designers he has acquired.

Nick Ziroli - Giant Scale Plans

Scratch building is not the best option for a new builder. If you would like to try building your own plane I recommend starting with a kit. Balsa USA makes great kits and one of the few remaining kit manufacturers. If scale is not your interest, they have a few sport models to choose from like the Smoothie and Smoothie XL and others. If WW1 is your interest, they have many kits of various sizes to choose from.

As of this writing I have a Balsa USA Ercoupe being constructed.



Balsa USA

Should you decide to take your hobby to a different level and build a plane you can add your own choice of a color schemes, there are members of our great club that I am sure would be glad to assist you along with online forums. Personally, I really enjoy doing what I can to help someone that is building or stuck with a building issue.

Try it,,,, you will really enjoy it and it also makes a great winter past time.

See you at the field.

Steve Ort



(Special Note): GRAMS can't thank Mr. Ort enough for all he does on and off the field! He also has been our webmaster for the last 4+ Years and keeps our website looking fantastic and served as club Vice President for two years as well. Not to mention all of us he helps individually.He also CD's our annual warbird and classics event, which is always GRAMS best and largest attended event! Thanks for all you do behind the scenes Mr. Ort!



High Hopes & Low Passes

A Seniors Dive Into R/C Flying

Article Contributor : Hanson Gaugler



At 75, most folks my age are collecting stamps, knitting sweaters, or yelling at squirrels. Me?

I decided to fly radio-controlled airplanes. Why? Because it looked easy on YouTube—and because my grandson dared me.

That child is now banned from Christmas!!

I figured; how hard can it be? You stand there, move a few sticks, and the plane does all the work, right? Well, on my first attempt, the plane took off like it owed someone money, then did a somersault straight into a pine tree. The only thing flying that day was my dignity—out the window.



Let me tell you, these newfangled electric planes aren't as simple as they look. Charging the batteries is like managing a power plant. I have six identical ones, and somehow, the dead ones always end up in the plane while the fully charged ones sit on my workbench like smug little bricks. I've started labeling them, but I need a magnifying glass to read my own writing.

And don't get me started on flying in bright sunlight. With the sun in my eyes and my cataracts doing their impression of a disco ball, I've lost track of my plane mid-flight more times than I care to admit. Once, I followed what turned out to be a seagull for a solid minute before realizing it wasn't responding to the rudder.



Also, bending down to pick up a crashed plane isn't the issue—it's getting back up. I make more groaning noises than the landing gear.

Still, despite the crashes, confusion, and occasional sun-blindness, every time I see that plane lift off (even if just for a moment), I feel like a kid again—just one with sore knees and a pocket full of AA batteries.



Duane's Note:

As I'm sure you've noticed; there are no pictures of Hanson himself seen here. That's because he takes most of the photographs. And like a photographer, he doesn't take selfies. So, at the time of the writing of this newsletter, I had no photos of Hanson to share with you. If anyone has any photos of Hanson to send me, please feel free to send at your convenience!

(Special Note): Hanson has been one of our two field photographers for the last Several years. He provides us with fantastic photos of all events, even from other fields in the area. Hanson has also been a newsletter contributor for the last year and a half and is now the editor of the newsletter! He has served as our Club Secretary for the last two years and does many things behind the scenes to support the club. Can't thank Mr. Gaugler enough for all he does to support GRAMS!

The Futaba Sky Leaf MX Aircraft

Challenges, Corrections & Success !

Article Contributor : Luis Gonzales

Futaba Sky Leaf MX

The Futaba Sky Leaf is a 71” wingspan aircraft designed for F3A pattern flying. Electric powered by a 35cc equivalent motor on 10s 4500mah lithium Polymer (LIPO) batteries, and weighs 12 lbs.

This particular aircraft was reported by previous owner to be a poor flyer as delivered by Futaba. It flew with an extreme nose up attitude despite all the extra weight and batteries placed forward. Upon inspection and measurement, the problem was found.

As built, the wing had too much positive incidence (1.8°), and the horizontal stabilizer set to give 2° pitch up. This aggravates the positive wing incidence and forces the aircraft into a high nose attitude preventing any possibility of achieving normal straight and level flight.

The correction involved removing and realigning the guide pins for the wing, and setting the incidence to +0.5° . The horizontal stab was similarly realigned and set to 0°.

The aircraft has now flown several times, and demonstrates a normal attitude, with responsive balanced controls, and is a pleasure to fly. All the extra nose weight is now gone, and the lipo batteries have been moved aft. Additional flights for fine tuning are planned.





(Special Note): Mr. Gonzales does a great job at set up of an airplane. As we all say in this hobby, “If it is set up right, It WILL Fly Right” Luis has put a lot of time into all his aircraft, and they are set up very well and fly very well! Thank you, Luis, for taking the time to prepare your article and pictures for the newsletter. If you ever want to see Luis, just go to the field, he is there every day!

The Saito 5-Cylinder Cu. In Engine

Learning From Experience

Article Contributor : John Amsden



The Saito 5-cylinder 3.25 cu. In. (50 cc – essentially five .65s)

Based on my experience: although the engine is 50 ccs, I believe it to be the equivalent of a 40-cc single cylinder engine and have fitted it with a 20 x 10 Zoar prop which seems to work very well. Pushing all that metal around takes a bit of horsepower. Over the years several people have stopped by to ask questions or to look at it so here's some history.

I first bought one of these engines second hand back in the late 1990s. I don't remember what I paid for it. I originally mounted and flew it on a ¼ scale Proctor Eindecker kit (which I still have). It is a glow engine and has two glow plugs on each cylinder. Buying 10 glow plugs wasn't cheap! I had also purchased and installed two sets of igniters. I used a 4,000 Mah battery for each set to keep the glow plugs lit. The engine would generally start quickly. However, "the staying running on all five cylinders part" was not always the case. More than once - I would have all five cylinders chugging away, would taxi out and only four cylinders were firing. I could tell how many were fired by the sound. Occasionally I would get it in the air with five chuggers and then after a moment there would be only four chuggers. It would fly on four cylinders. A couple of times two cylinders flamed out and it had to be brought back down (once, too quickly – bent some metal struts) as it wouldn't fly on three cylinders. I futzed with it for several years and finally gave up and sold it.

The Saito 5-Cylinder Cu. In Engine

Learning From Experience (Continued)

Article Contributor : John Amsden









A few years later (2010 maybe?) I purchased the 72-inch Stearman that I have now in an auction. After thinking about it for a bit I just couldn't put a single or twin engine on Stearman, so I bought a brand-new Saito 3.25 (yeah, same thing) thinking that perhaps my troubles with the earlier engine were because it was old or whatever. I believe the cost was around $1900 – on sale. Guess what? I had the same issues with the new one. It would start quickly but having all five cylinders running strong was not really happening. Grrrr. I did some temperature tests on the cylinders immediately after shutting it down and, surprisingly, the temps were anywhere from 130 F to 150 F. Hmmm, no wonder! Just wasn't enough heat to keep the lower cylinders happy. I am sure that some other folks have found ways to keep this thing running well on glow fuel. But I gave up! I ran into CH Ignitions (Adrian Ciulei) at Joe Nall one year and he was offering a service of converting glow engines to gasoline. Aha! I shipped the engine down to him and a few weeks (and $550) later it was returned. He did everything that was needed: blocked off 1 glow plug hole in each cylinder, added the spark plug in the other hole, added the electronic ignition pieces and a fuel pump. Wow, what a difference. Then, and now, I just start the engine up and go flying. What a relief. Because of the original construction of the engine, it requires a 20 to 1 mix of oil and gasoline. Per Adrian's recommendation I use the red line oil (must have some gold in it – quite expensive). The engine now has many hours of operation and continues to run like a clock!!!

The existing Stearman has been a dependable bird but is showing its age. As I said, it was second hand, and I've flown it for about fifteen years. I never figured out the original manufacturer (it is a kit because the wood is stamped). Particularly the landing gear has required many modifications plus the regular bumps and bruises that its ten-thumbed pilot has inflicted on it.

So, the engine will move to a new Stearman at some point in the future as I'm building a new 77-inch Ziroli Stearman. Steve Ort was nice enough to cut all the wood for me and provide the landing gear. I'm a slow builder so it will take a while.

(Special Note): John Amsden is one of the few true builders we are fortunate enough to have at GRAMS. He is a pleasure to know and is highly supportive of all the clubs, and the hobby around the area! Thank you, John, for taking the time to add to the newsletter! If you see John at the field, asking him to show you pictures and videos of his "Babies", Ive seen them in person and they are not only beautiful, but amazing to watch in action.

The Little Bee that could

Article Contributor : Mike Martin

(AMA Rated Introductory Pilot Program Instructor / Contest Director Pending)

This is a story of determination, fear, and perseverance. This is the story of The Little Bee That Could.



About 15 years ago, I participated in an electric-only fun-fly at the Central Carolina RC Club (CCRC). It was a “Run-What-You-Brung” sort of event with all sorts of tasks to fly. You could fly anything as long as it was electric. There were helis, foamies, Zagis, and converted stuff. This was far enough back in our e-power tech history that lithium batteries were just becoming mainstream. A 1200mah 3S from Kokam or Thunder Power was a big deal! You could still buy models with brushed motors and nickel-based power plants, too.



Global Hobbies had an ARF version of the popular Clancy Aviation Lazy Bee that was about one-quarter the size of the original model called the Baby Bee. As you can see from the photo, it is pretty small. It was powered by a little 180 brushed can motor spinning a 4” prop through a gearbox. The battery was an 8-cell Nickel-Metal Hydride. Yep!! Eight, 1/3AAA cells!! It was about the size of a standard servo! This combination was adequate at best. After about 4 minutes at full power you had to throttle back to prevent a shutdown. And the combination of a metal pinion gear and that nylon in the gearbox made a distinctive, pulsating rattle as it flew.

One of the events that day was a reverse pylon race. That meant we had to turn right instead of left around the oval, 2-pylon course! Not only is this unnatural in the NASCAR-rich community of Randleman, NC, it was just really awkward to turn right! This thing only had rudder and elevator! We had to go ten laps. The fastest time wins, but if you cut a pylon, you were disqualified.



So, I loaded the battery, picked up my little Bee and transmitter, and headed for the runway. I was met with stares, laughter, and lots of comments. “Did you wash that in hot water?” “Where’s the rest of it?” “Do they sell men’s planes where you got that?” You know the drill. And these were friends!! The comments were the least of my problem. I was about to race three F-27C Strykers— you know, the brushless ones with the tiger stripes that did about 85mph out of the box, and a Flite Test-looking foamboard F-14 Tomcat pusher jet with wings that retracted. Enter Determination… and Fear!

The Little Bee that could (Continued)

Article Contributor : Mike Martin

We all lined up and launched at the drop of the starter's flag. One of the Strykers never made it to the first turn after multiple launches and dropped out. Cool. I just had to hold my own against the other two Strykers and Maverick over here…

Now, for those that have never done pylon racing, here's the deal. Pylon Racing is a Team Event! You have a Caller who tells the Pilot when to turn at each pylon. Your Caller knows this because there are Flaggers who stand in line with the pylons on each end giving them the best viewpoint of your plane in relation to the pylon. You hit the right spot, the Flagger waves the flag, the Caller yells "turn" and you bank and yank haul it to the next turn. Easy, but we didn't have ANY of that "Team" stuff.

Since cutting a pylon was grounds for disqualification, and you were on your own to make the best decision on where to turn, you tend to fly a longer course to make sure you are clear of the PVC pole on each end. I was swinging really wide! In fact, I'm flying about 1.5 times farther than I need to, and I'm at full throttle going the speed of smell!! My biggest fear is that my battery is going to die before the ten laps are up! Not only am I taking the "scenic route", I'm getting lapped nearly twice for each of my laps by these Stryker's! The Tomcat is no slouch either, and the dude is humming some Kenny Loggins song! I'm getting tickled with all the comments, the music, and the contrast in aircraft sound. My little Bee is grinding corn meal while the other three sound like the Unlimited Heat at Reno! This is where Perseverance enters the chat!

About 6 laps in, one of the Strykers and the F-14 tried to occupy the same airspace just after they turned Pylon 1. It rained foam board as I tried to dodge the debris and the spinning Stryker. Now, I'm really laughing! Not at my friend's losses, not because Goose bought it (again!!) but the fact that I am going to finish 2nd Place in the Reverse Pylon Race with this contraption I'm flying! I still had four more laps! I could tell the battery was starting to sag, too. The other Stryker had 2 more laps. Tensions were high! I'm just flying my course, which is getting bigger but slower with each lap. Just then, the remaining Stryker jockey got excited and cut inside the pylon!!! Disqualified!! I could not believe it!! The entire club roared like I was Rudy running out on the field at Notre Dame! I was laughing too hard to breathe and still had 2 more laps that I flew WAAAYYYY too big to make sure I didn't blow it. I had just enough power to make one extra pass before landing.

This was one of the best model aviation experiences ever! It was hilarious and completely unexpected. I still have this little guy. I'm thinking of upgrading it to brushless for lithium power. Or, maybe I'll just leave it Bee. ☺

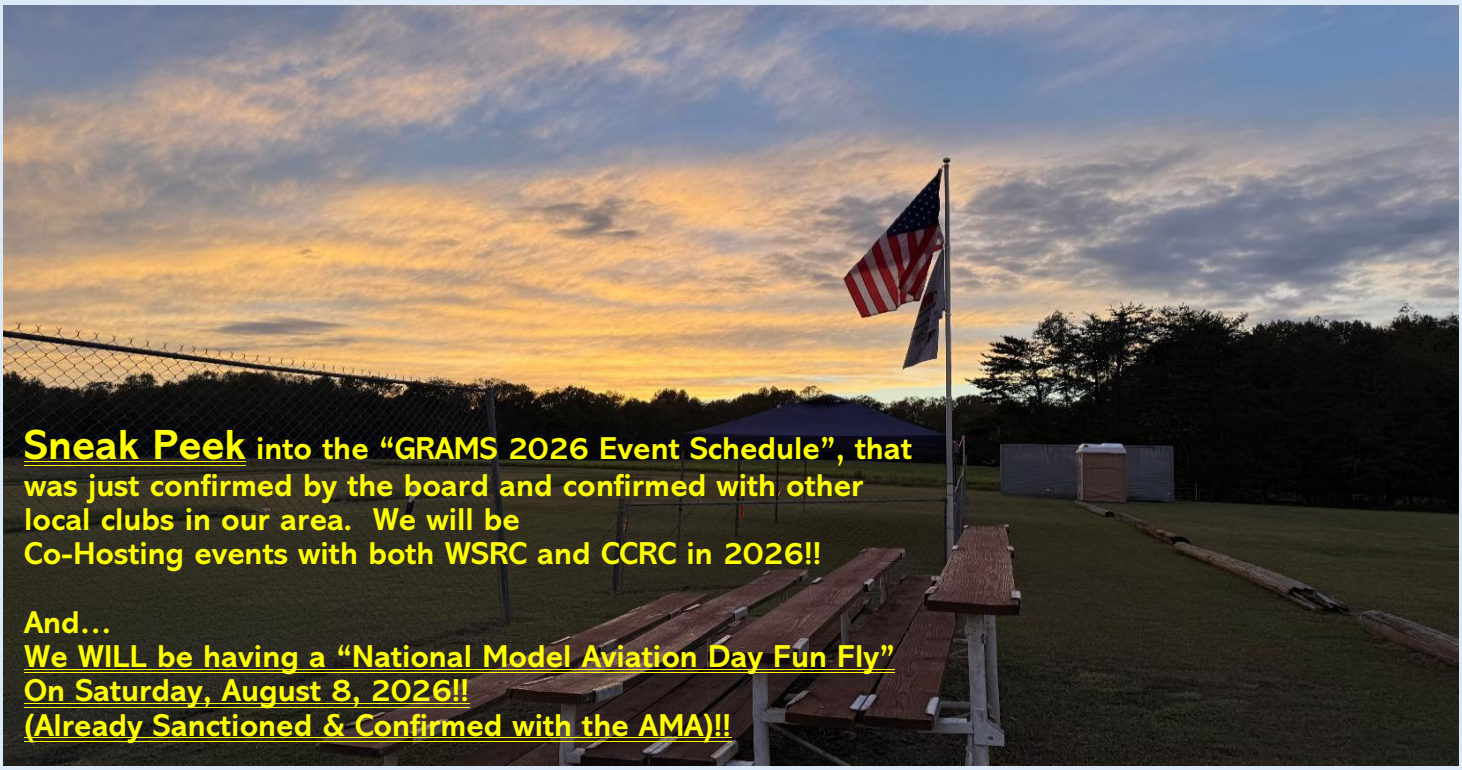
(Special Note): Mike Martin is one of our 4 Introductory Pilot Program Instructors and is working on getting his Contest Director rating with the AMA. Mike has done and seen it all at GRAMS. He taught me the beginning basics of ARF building and training on many of my first flights. We thank Mike for his contribution to this newsletter and all he does behind the scenes to support GRAMS!

Hanson and I hope you have found this Leading Edge (Newsletter) to have been an informative and entertaining to read. I sincerely thank all the contributors; Steve Ort, Hanson Gaugler, Luis Gonzales, John Amsden and Mike Martin for their contributions to this first addition and new format.

Please put on your calendars, our last two functions of the year, 1) The "Black Friday" Event on November 28, 2025. This year with an added Hot Dogs and Hamburgers available for purchase for Lunch. As always, Cold drinks and waters are always available at the field! 2) Our Christmas get together at Casa Vallarta on December 16, 2025. Located on Battleground Ave, Greensboro. See you there!!!



s president, I can honestly say that I have never felt and been so blessed as to have the fantastic membership of individuals, and great friends! Than what I have at The Greensboro Radio Aeromodelers #481. It is a true privilege to serve and fly with each of you! Stay safe and FLY, FLY, FLY!!!



Sneak Peek into the "GRAMS 2026 Event Schedule", that was just confirmed by the board and confirmed with other local clubs in our area. We will be Co-Hosting events with both WSRC and CCRC in 2026!!

And…
We WILL be having a "National Model Aviation Day Fun Fly" On Saturday, August 8, 2026!!
(Already Sanctioned & Confirmed with the AMA)!!