

EL TORBELLINO

NEWSLETTER OF SAN DIEGO ORBITEERS FREE FLIGHT CLUB



JULY 2025

Chairman's Corner – Mark Chomyn

Hope you all had a very happy 4th of July. I fired up the barbeque and cooked up some carne asada that was then shredded and made into some excellent tacos. As usual as the sun went down the neighborhood pyrotechnics began much to the dismay of the local pets. I think the folks on our street kept their furry friends inside to avoid any runaways. On a positive note, it appeared that no one set any dwellings on fire.

We held our second indoor flying session on Sunday, July 13, at the Los Coches Middle School gymnasium. Unlike our first session in June, our July session had three contest categories that were flown. Those were P-18, Phantom Flash and Penny Plane. There wasn't a still moment all morning. Planes were in the air constantly and one needed to be considerate when launching to avoid any midair collisions. All went smoothly and a good time was had by all. I flew my Double Whammy in P-18 and was only able to get 50 seconds on each flight. Nowhere near enough to place, but I had fun trying. I learned that 1.) I need to build my planes much lighter, and 2.) A 1/8- inch rubber motor, gives too fast a climb and too short a motor run. I see room for improvement and will work toward that end.



We still don't have word on our ability to fly at Taibi Field in Perris. As a backup plan we contacted the Riverside Radio Control Club (RRCC) to inquire about the possibility of staging and launching from their field to the south. The RRCC will be holding their club meeting on July 19th and the topic of our proposed use will be discussed and a decision made on our potential use. Our email request to RRCC included the path to our club website so they can get a better idea of who we are and what we do. I've got my fingers crossed for good news.

Our quest for alternative outdoor sites continues. We investigated a potential site located east of Lake Wolford in Escondido. Unfortunately, the site was on property owned and managed by Guejito Ranch and the area we were interested in was part of their cattle operations area and no public access is allowed. We'll keep trying to find a possible site but finding accessible undeveloped land in southern California isn't easy. One potential avenue for a flying site might be a local sod farm if we can find one large enough with an agreeable property owner. If anyone knows of one let us know. Until then we'll be doing our fly-overs courtesy of Google Maps in hopes of finding a suitable flying site, sod farm or otherwise.

July is a big month for model aviation with the AMA Nationals held in Muncie, Indiana. The outdoor free flight sessions will be held July 21–25. Safe traveling and best of luck to any of our club members who make the pilgrimage to the NATS. It's not unusual to see an Orbiteer listed in the roster of winners at the Nationals. Let's hope that happens in 2025.

Another big event occurring in July is the FAI F1ABCQ World Championship for Free Flight Model Aircraft. It will be held in Salonta, Romania from July 20-28. You ask, why am I mentioning a

contest in the El Torbellino that's happening halfway around the world? Because our own Mike Pykelny will be competing in Salonta as a member of the USA Free Flight Team and vying for the honor of being named the 2025 F1Q World Free Flight Champion. At our club's July 9th board meeting I got to see the plane (I didn't realize how large an F1Q plane is) Mike will fly as well as some of the USA team apparel that will be worn in competition. To protect his plane in transit Mike is using a hard cased rifle carrier in hopes of keeping TSA from inadvertently damaging his entry. A guy can't be too safe. Good luck Mike the Orbiteers will be pulling for you. That wraps it up for July.

Mark

As the saying goes, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."
From "Grassroots Promotion", Don DeLoach, NFFS Free flight Digest, March – April 2024

IN MEMORY OF TIM BATIUK - Final OOS July 16, 2025



Tim Batiuk (On Right)
Receiving 2024 Orbiteer of Year Award



Bell XFM-1 Airacuda

By Mike Jester



I always like aircraft with unconventional designs, even if they don't turn out to be successful after they are put into production. The Bell XFM-1 Airacuda was a twin pusher "bomber destroyer" that was first flown in 1937. It had a manned gun cockpit at the front of each engine nacelle that housed a 37 mm M4 cannon. The aircraft had crawlways in the wings so that the gunners could travel between the fuselage and the gun cockpits. Provisions were later made for explosively jettisoning the propellers to enable the gunners to "safely" bailout from the gun cockpits in case of an emergency. Just imagine the heat, noise, smell, and vibration that the gunners had to endure inside of those gun cockpits!



Bell XFM-1 Airacuda

The guns were operated with a fire control and aiming system. The gunners were principally in the gun cockpits to load the 110 rounds that were carried in each nacelle. This was one of the first aircraft to use an auxiliary power unit for powering the engine fuel pumps and the aircraft electrical systems. Tests flights revealed that the heavy aircraft was slower than most bombers and lacked the maneuverability necessary to dogfight. The Airacuda's meager 600-pound bomb load was practically useless. Stable flight was hard to maintain. As in many pusher designs, the engines were prone overheating on the ground as there was no prop wash over the wings to cool the engines. The cannons had a tendency to fill the gun cockpits with smoke and their muzzle velocity was too low for effective ariel combat. Despite all these shortcomings, one US Army Air Corps squadron of Airacudas was assembled and operational from 1938-1940.

This excerpt from Wikipedia about the Airacuda is amusing:

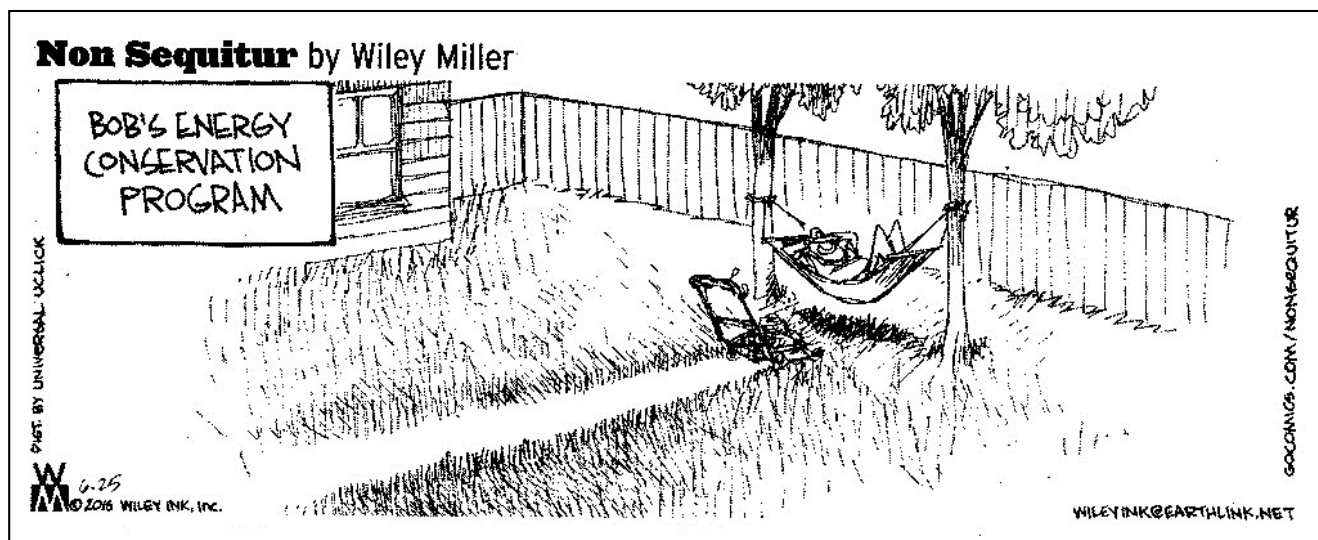
"Continuing problems gave the aircraft a reputation as "hangar queens".^[12] Near the end of the type's operational life, the aircraft were flown primarily for photo opportunities and always accompanied by a [chase plane](#) for safety. Eventually the decision was made to disperse the aircraft to various airfields to give pilots an opportunity to add the unusual aircraft to their log books."

I think the designers of the Airacuda were on the right track in perceiving that a 37 mm cannon would be advantageous in terms of downing enemy bombers. Indeed, the Germans learned this during WWII and as a result, they included four 30 mm canons on their Me 262 jet fighter to down B-17 bombers. Those four MK 108 canons in the nose of that aircraft were absolutely devastating to allied bombers. This was probably the most effective air-to-air weapon configuration before the deployment of heat seeking missiles during the Vietnam War. But that is a story for another day.

How many of you readers knew of the Airacuda before reading my article? I wonder if Bob Hodes, Rich Adams, or Mike Kelly might build a stick and tissue model of this unusual aircraft. At least the props of the model would likely not be damaged on a nose first crash!



Model of Bell XFM-1 Airacuda



P-30 Museum Project - D.Bartick



With the delivery of John Ferrer's GULLY III, the material for the P-30 Exhibit at the National Model Aviation Museum in Muncie, IN is complete. This project commenced 1 year ago when Arline and I visited the museum during the 2024 NATS. We met Michael Smith, Museum Director. During our conversation, I mentioned that the museum did not have a P-30 displayed. I went on to say that this class plane was developed by members of the San Diego Orbiteers and is the most popular AMA event worldwide to this date. This really peaked his attention. He went on to say that the museum does not have an exhibit showing the development of a class of plane from inception to becoming an AMA official competition event. He then asked if I was willing to take on the project of providing the museum sufficient material for a display showing inception of the idea to when it became an official event and beyond. I said yes. This would be a wonderful tribute to John Oldenkamp and Harry Steinmetz, developer/promoters of the P-30, along with recognition of the San Diego Orbiteers on the National stage.

When I returned from the NATS, Michael Smith and I started corresponding by email. He described his concept of the exhibit. He wanted documentation showing how the concept was first developed and how it was promoted to become an official event. His personal research unveiled that the 1st NATS to have P-30 as an official event was 1981. It was won by Bob White with his Twin-Fin design. He and I also found copious articles on the P-30. Starting back in the mid-1970's. Michael wanted historical planes, if available or replicas. We discussed unique features of the design. That led to displaying freewheeling frontends, showing various commercial propellers required by the rules. Also, we got into timing devices to control the Dethermalizer function. On and on this went. By the end of the year, I delivered 7 P-30 models. Some of them original. One specific was Bob White's Twin Fin that was used to win the very first official NATS P-30 event in 1981. Another was Don DeLoach's Polecat that he flew to a Senior National Record that still stands today. Delivered displays of freewheeling frontends and commercial propellers, displays of DT timing devices and relevant published articles. I personally built 2 airplanes and recovered 2. The other 3 were as is.

I want to thank the other contributors that provided material for the exhibit. They are:

Randy Secor, who donated Bob White's Twin Fin that won the Open event at the 1981 Nationals. This was the 1st year that P-30 was an AMA official event.

Fred Terzian, who donated Jack Brown's P30 TOO

Don DeLoach, who donated his original Polecat that he flew to a Senior National Record that still stands today.

Mike Jester, who donated Harry Steinmetz's Turkey & Freewheeling Frontends and his article on available P-30 kits.

Mike Pykelny, who donated a Badge & Button viscous DT timer, Tomy Dt timer and a Band burner electronic DT timer.

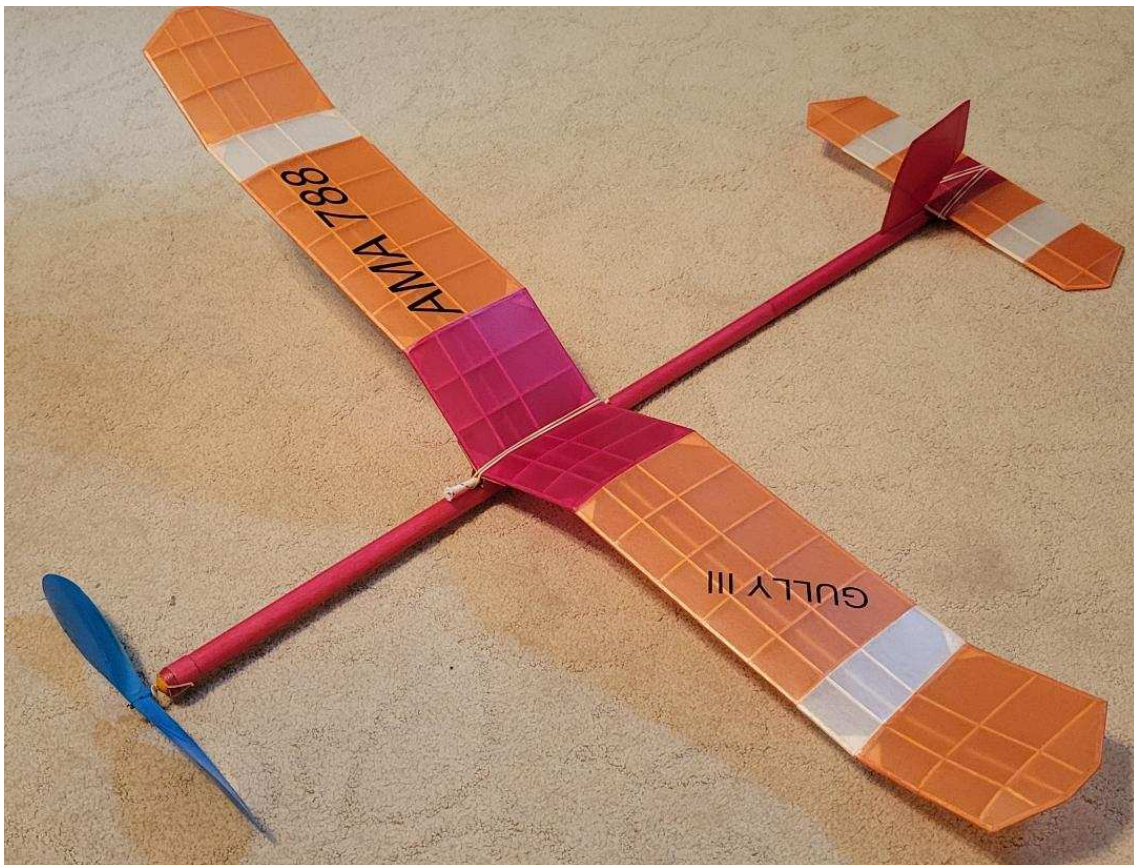
As of this article, the P-30 Exhibit is open at the museum. Michael Smith will be providing pictures. Look for them in a future ET.

Should you have an opportunity to go to the NATS or find yourself in the neighborhood, please take the opportunity to visit the National Model Aviation Museum on the campus of the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA)

Don Bartick

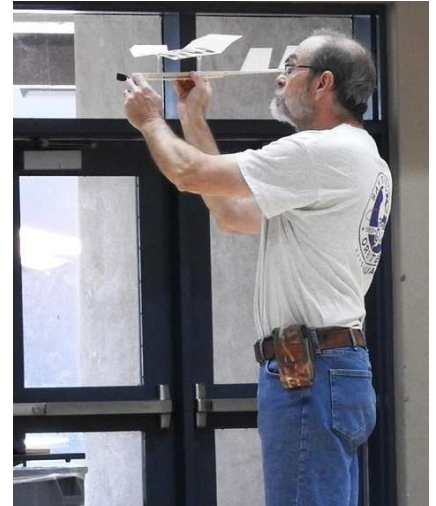
This is a replica of John Ferrer's Gully III built by Don Bartick. This is somewhat of an unorthodox design. John came up with a way to have a high aspect wing with more area by folding the wing to meet the 30" projected wing span. Hence the Gull Wing and polyhedral. The replica weighs 33 grams. With a minimum weight requirement of 40 grams for P-30, this plane will have had a Walston transmitter and ballast to bring it up to 40 grams.

It would be three years after formalizing the P-30 rules that anyone max'd out in an official event, as did the late John Ferrer at Taft, CA during the 1980 MaxMen Annual. The second "first" with the GULLY III was John's innovation of the Pop-Off Wing DT system. Using the fuse to melt through the wing hold-down rubber band, caused the wing to release. The wing being tethered to the fuselage allowed the fuselage to point straight down with the wing fluttering above. A very positive DT. The largest thermal could not capture the plane as was the case with other DT systems. John also used a very long motor. He configured 1 loop of 6mm (~.25") rubber. This allowed a 10-gram motor (maximum weight per the rules) to be 28" long. At this length, he could wind a lot of turns that equated to a very slow climb over a 1-minute period. This worked well with a minimum weight plane and fairly calm wind.





Don Bartick and Mike Jester winding Penny Planes



Walter Ainsley



Mark Chomyn



Mike Jester



Greg Hutchison



John Swain



Chang Mun Kim



John Alling with Penny Plane



Don Bartick and Mike Pykelny



W. Ainsley – PP foreground & P18 background



William Scott with Profile Scale

Come one, come all to the next Indoor event August 10th, 8am-12pm. Please respond with your intention to be at the event.

Location: Los Coches Creek Middle School 9669 Dunbar Lane, El Cajon. Right off of I-8 at the Dunbar Lane exit. About ¼ mile North of Exit.

The participation fee has been raised, out of necessity, to \$30.

We will have 2 competition events: A6 and Embryo. Aside from competition, you can fun fly what ever you bring.

Competition fee is \$3 for each event. Payout to 3 places. Best 3 flights out of 6 will be scored and cumulated.

AMA Rules

A-6.

General.

- 1.The model shall be rubber powered and covered with paper or commercially available plastic; no microfilm allowed.
 - 2.The total maximum projected wing area shall be 30 square inches. There is no restriction on the stabilizer area.
 - 3.All wing, stabilizer and rudder wood including wing posts shall be 1/16" square wood minimum, except ribs shall be 1/32" X 1/16" minimum. Posts may be rounded in the area of the mounting tubes.
 - 4.The motor stick shall be from solid wood of 6" maximum length measured from the front thrust bearing face to the front of the rear hook.
 - 5.The propeller shall be 6" maximum diameter with flat blades from balsa no thinner than 1/32".
 - 6.The minimum weight of the model shall be 1.2 grams without rubber motor.
- Note: No special materials such as boron, carbon fiber or foam are to be used.



Mike Jester A6 ready for launch

FAC Rules

EMBRYO ENDURANCE Competition

A. Design considerations:

1. Wing Area (WA) is measured off of the flat plan.
2. MONOPLANES not to exceed 50 sq. inches WA.
3. BIPLANES not to exceed 70 sq. inches of WA, with 45 sq. inches WA maximum for the larger wing.
4. Stab area not to exceed 50% of the WA.
5. Any part of any wing that sits on top of or passes (physically or projected) through the fuselage is considered wing area.
6. Fuselage volume to enclose a space 1.25 x 1.50 x 3.00 inches or larger.
7. The wing and tail must be built up and covered on both sides ("double covered") with Japanese tissue or equivalent.

B. Wing span: No limits but refer to wing area rules above.

C. Landing gear:

1. Landing gear legs must be conventional configuration.
Example: two wheels on a single landing gear leg are prohibited.
2. Wheels must be 3/4 inches or larger in diameter, and must rotate freely on their axles.

D. Launch technique: unassisted ROG from a three-point stance.

E. Bonus points: Cumulative; added just once to the total flight points.

Maximum bonus points - (9)

Points CRITERIA

- (1) - 3-dimensional exhaust pipes
- (3) - 3-dimensional wheel pants
- (5) - Open cockpit with windscreen and headrest—OR
- (5) - Full bubble canopy containing head rest and (at a minimum) a pilot's head silhouette
--- OR ---
- (5) - Raised cabin with no less than a 30-degree windshield slant, referenced from the bottom of the wing (low wing on biplanes).

F. Flight scoring: Total of three flights

G. Official flight: Official flight: 20 sec. minimum, 120 sec. MAX

H. Total Score: Flight score + bonus points.

See you there!

Don Bartick

Site Coordinator &

Contest Director

858-774-2941

John Morrill's Miss World's Fair Embryo ->



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ORBITEERS MEMBERSHIP DUES

Annual Membership - \$20

Lifetime Membership - \$250

Non-Member Newsletter Subscription - \$15

Junior Members 16 years old or younger - Free

Submit Dues to Club Treasurer:

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THE FINE PRINT THE FINE PRINT

El Torbellino is the official newsletter of the San Diego Orbiteers, an Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) Charter Club (#1113) and a California not for Profit Corporation. This newsletter is sent monthly to all paid members, selected exchange and magazine editors. Non-Members may subscribe at \$15.00 per year within the U.S.A., offshore price will be adjusted to reflect the postage required. Materials from El Torbellino may be reproduced on an unlimited basis by other publications, but proper credit is requested.

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Peck-Polymers Prairie Bird Embryo ->



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Easy Built Models – DeBut Embryo built by J.Majane

WHAT'S HAPPENING - July 2025



Flying field currently closed for environmental assessment and study.

August 10 - Monthly Indoor Flying, 8am to 12pm
Los Coches Creek Middle School, 9669 Dunbar Lane, El Cajon CA
Fun flying, plus A6 & Embryo ENDURANCE events
Participation fee \$30, and Event fee of \$3
See enclosed flyer for more details and event class rules.

