



# The AMA History Project Presents: History of the MINNEAPOLIS MODEL AERO CLUB (MMAC)

(Originally the Twin City Gas Model Club)



Since the 1930s

Compiled by DE (2014) and reformatted by JS (01/2015)

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*The following stories were published in the July - September and October - December 2014 issues of Minneapolis Modeler, newsletter of the Minneapolis Model Aero Club, compiled and written by newsletter editor Dave Edmonson.*

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## **The History of the Minneapolis Model Aero Club** (July - September 2014 issue of *Minneapolis Modeler* newsletter)

The next several issues of the *Minneapolis Modeler* will try to present the history of the club. Ray Lagermeier passed away one year ago at the age of almost 87. He might have been one of the early club members, being 13 at the time that the club was officially organized in 1939. Many of the first members were teenagers eager to build and fly model airplanes, Free Flight being the only game in town at the time. Some other members still living who joined prior to 1948 are Hugh Langevin, Bert Murphy, Bob Griffiths, and possibly Ray Frandsen. Bob Griffiths still comes to our Indoor events, and often beats us in the Bostonian event, and Hugh attends some of our anniversary parties.

Don Berggren has prompted the club to go through our archives and review the many records that still exist. So as we publish further information, we will appreciate any corrections or additions, and maybe the story of the club can at least be outlined. The information may not be totally accurate or complete, but we will try to make an honest try at it!

The club has been in continuous activity since 1939, with numerous club meetings, club contests, and club anniversaries; some anniversaries being Christmas parties with memorable exhibits and good times. The club events were recorded in the first *Minneapolis Modeler* newsletters, published starting in 1957 with Sid Jepson as acting club president. Hugh Langevin was newsletter editor for several years, passing the torch to Del Marchant. Del tried to do a pass several times, but ended up being the editor for 30 some years. Del finally had to move to Sparks, Nevada for his final pass to get out of the job!

The gift from Ray Lagermeier's family of early club trophies brings some of the history back to life. Ray entered the 1947, 1948, and 1949 Plymouth International Model Plane Contests in Detroit, Michigan. He also began to excel at the local contests.



This news article (above) was on the front page of the *Minneapolis Star* and *Minneapolis Tribune*. One of the young fellows named Malcolm Smith was one of my mentors in 1955, teaching model building classes at Mac's Hobby Shop at 63<sup>rd</sup> and Lyndale. I made about 50 trips there on my bicycle to pick up engines and things to build with my paper route money. (Photo from Ray Lagermeier collection. Possibly Ray was one of the lads looking on?)

In 1955, "Mal Smith" was a top notch competitor in the MMAC Rubber events. I can remember his large Indoor models cruising just under the rafters at the University of Minnesota field house. Mal and his fellow Rubber fliers wound *without* stooges. One guy cranked the winds into the motor, and another anchored the motor peg, hoping that the motor would not break!

Ray and Lorayne Lagermeier had 5 children, and Lorayne was a firm supporter of his model airplane competitions. She tells the story of how she and Ray were going out the door headed to the hospital to give birth, and he had a model airplane under one arm. She did her job quickly at the hospital, and Ray headed off to the contest!

Ray was active in the club until the early 1970s, and kept up his membership until at least 1998. Ray was known mostly for his power model flying, but also competed in Towline Glider and Rubber events.



Ray's wife Lorayne is in the left photo, holding one of his Towline Glider models (probably about 1949 judging from the Studebaker in the background.) Ray, in the photo on the right, is holding one of his ignition power models. It was probably a winner since the fuselage with engine and timer were donated to the club for auction. Looking at some of Ray's models, it was

apparent that he was determined to get the CG correct because there is evidence of ballast adjustment means to get it right!

The Wesley Franzine trophy was given to Ray in 1949. It was in memory of one of the club members who died early in WWII. There were 36 club members who gave their lives in WWII, as witnessed by the club banner that was most likely displayed at club meetings after the war. The trophy was awarded for the most original model at the winter, spring, and fall contests. In the fall of 1946, it was awarded to Robert Sweger for Class C Gas; winter 1947 to Bill Hammer for Class C Gas; spring 1947 to Milan Sedo for Class C Gas; fall 1947 to W. Torgeson for Class C Gas; winter 1948 to Sid Jepson for Class B Gas; winter 1949 to Ray Lagermeier for Class D Gas, and spring 1949 to Sid Jepson for Rubber event. Sid was living in Des Moines, Iowa at the time, and evidently made the trip up to Minneapolis to compete in the big Free Flight contests. Sid was living in Sioux Falls prior to coming to Minneapolis to work in 1956, and became the club president and newsletter editor.

Another trophy in Ray's collection was the Charles "Speed" Holman Memorial Trophy. "Speed" Holman was a local aviator who died racing real planes, and Holman Field is named after him. It was awarded in 1941 to Bob Champine, and continued to be awarded until 1949 when it was awarded to Ray for the winter and spring contests. Some of the other names on the trophy were: Don Berquist, Creighton Trapp, Don Shultz, Budd Butcher, Arnie Shultz, Russ Booth, Fred Ellsworth, Ray Lagermeier (1946), Charles Blumer, Bill Hammer, Milan Sedio, J. Bowden, and John Cleveland (winter 1948). It is interesting to note that the club remained active during WWII, with events being held in spite of the **big war** going on!

Many thanks to the Lagermeier family for saving some of the MMAC history!

History to be continued...

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## **Early MMAC History, 1936 thru 1950s**

**Compiled by Dave Edmonson**

(October-December 2014 issue of *Minneapolis Modeler* newsletter)

First of all, until 1995, there was little information available about our early club history. Hank Liljequist took on the task of sending out questionnaires to several of the early club members asking for assistance in the collection of early MMAC documents. Ray Lagermeier, Fred Emmert, Bert Pond, Harry Gerrish, Hugh Langevin, and John Cleveland supplied many documents to piece together the MMAC story. There are many gaps remaining in the story, and more pictures and information will be appreciated to continue to fill-in the gaps. Thanks to Don Berggren for being the custodian of the club library, and holding onto the box of goodies that Hank gathered for the club.

I was going to do a brief sketch of the MMAC for the last 50 years, but decided that there was just too much to comprehend and report in one issue, so I have elected to be more specific about the 1936 to 1960 period. There is much material in the early years, and more in the 1955 to 1960 period.

I was not aware that the club had a newsletter starting in 1939, called *SlipStream*, which was published now and then for a few years. It was not until 1959 that then-club President Sid Jepson revived the newsletter, calling it the *Minneapolis Modeler*. This has been ongoing since then.

The MMAC began as the Twin City Gas Model Club in 1936 or 1937. For some reason it was formalized in 1937 as a national club chartered under the National Aviation Association and then renamed the Minneapolis Model Aero Club (perhaps to avoid being just a club for Gas models?) Model aviation contest rules were governed by the NAA until 1936, when the Academy of Model Aeronautics was formed as a subdivision of the NAA. As the MMAC, new officers were selected, club objectives formalized, dues were collected, a club roster was printed, and membership cards were distributed. More importantly, contests were organized with the help of the local hobby shops, local newspapers (Minneapolis Star and Tribune and Pioneer Press), and the Minnesota Junior Jaycees.

Bert Pond was appointed the first MMAC President, Bert thinking the reason being he was one of the “older guys.” Bert had been in correspondence with the NAA prior to coming to Minneapolis from Indiana, and the NAA had been encouraging him to organize a club in Indiana. Bert served as MMAC President until the spring of 1940 when he took a job in Chicago. I don’t see any contest result evidence that he competed or built models, but he must have had a very high interest in it from all of the letters and organizational work that he did!

I do see a note saying that he attended the 1987 SAM champs in Texas, but I’m not certain if he was there to spectate or compete. It is a guess as to when in 1937 the club was formed, but we do have Fred Emmert’s membership card dated with an expiration date of November 1938, so the club could have been formed late in 1937 or possibly in the spring of 1937 because they had club elections in the spring of 1940. This may have been as a result of Bert leaving for Chicago in the spring, or maybe the club formed in the spring? According to John Cleveland’s history published in the MMAC March/April 2003 issue, he is definite about the club forming at the September meeting. He should know!

It is clear that the club experienced a lot of support from the community in the establishment of the early contests. Walt Billett, who had a hobby shop on 2548 Nicollet Avenue South, was a firm supporter, and helped with entry blanks, printing of programs, and occasionally putting out a newsletter called *Plane Talk*...published now and then. His son, Richard Billett, was involved in the MMAC club as one of the four directors. Walt came up with another publication about 1958 called *Let’s Go!*, the theme being “be in the know, read *Let’s Go!*” He was also part of the group that helped run contests from the start, from 1937 to 1959.

Walt was a really old guy in 1959, like 90, and still a bundle of energy. Almost yearly, he went to the Nats to award his **humongous** Walt Billett Loving Cup to some poor unsuspecting recipient, Carl Goldberg getting it in 1961 at the Willow Grove, Pennsylvania Nats held at the Naval Air Base there. That may have been the last year that it was handed out as part of the “Eight Ball” club gathering. I got an Eight Ball pin from Ray Lagermeier’s family; Ray was probably a member.

It is hard to believe that the first contest was held at Fort Snelling in 1937. The local newspapers sponsored the event and reported on it, with thousands of onlookers anxiously waiting for a model to take off and disappear over the Minnesota River. Boy, they could have really used the Walston retrieval systems in those days with no DTs!

During the first four years, they had prize lists that covered a whole page, with Nats trips given to the top placers, and \$25 cash and trophies. In 1940, the Minneapolis Star & Tribune sponsored six free trips to the Nats.

Contest sites, in the early years, were Fort Snelling, Nokomis Beach, Cedar Airport at 88<sup>th</sup> Street South and Cedar Avenue, Monticello, and St. Cloud. Cedar Airport seemed to be the most frequent site. Sometimes they flew at 82<sup>nd</sup> and Nicollet South, which was nothing but a dirt road leading to a large meadow. By the mid-1950s, they were flying contests at a field in Fridley and also at Monticello. There were probably many different fields during the interim, as flying fields suitable for “free flying” models always seemed to be a problem. Gatherings and test flying in the 1950s were in a field on the southeast quadrant of France Avenue and 66<sup>th</sup> Street, now occupied by the Southdale Medical Building. It was a rather nice field, being over half mile east to west and a mile to the south until you ran into the sandpits.

By 1947, the local MMAC - with help from the Jaycees and hobby shops - attracted the 1947 Indoor and Outdoor Nats to Minneapolis, with Indoor flying at William’s Arena, Control Line at Cedar Airport in Bloomington, and outdoor flying at Monticello. One of the lost models from that meet was returned to the club in 2008, 61 years later. The “finder” of this model was finally feeling guilty about having it in the attic of his garage yet, and was moving to a retirement home. The sad thing was that he was a modeler who flew models in circles, and just happened to pick it up and bring it home. It had an AMA number on it, which was mostly torn off, and a name tag on the bottom with an address and phone number. I tried to see if the owner might still be alive, or had relatives, but to no avail. The owner was Melvin Cordes who owned a hobby shop in north Minneapolis.

It was surprising to me to find out that we still have the following early MMAC club members with us. So far of the early MMAC club members, these are the ones still kicking: (\*\* coming to our banquet on Wednesday, January 14, 2015.)

1. Gilbert “Bert” Murphy, age 90, Washington State. (He is on one of the first club rosters, 1937 or 1938.) Note from Bert from 2014: “I’m afraid I can’t be of much help. I’m not in touch with any of the 1930s or 1940s members. I moved to Spokane, WA in 39. Returned to MN in 46 - attended the AMA Nationals at Monticello in 47 - got the bug - built a Class C Rubber model I designed in 41- flew a few Sundays around Bloomington then was inactive until running into Ray Lagermeier in 1956. The MMAC met in the Minneapolis mayor’s offices back in the 1930s and the following names come to mind: Bob Toft, Bob Champine AKA Apgar, John Cleveland, Ray Vandewalker, and Jerry Chapman.” (Information received 12-15-2014. Thanks Bert!)
2. Henry "Hank" Liljequist, age 89, Minneapolis.\*\* (He attended a few meetings and contests in the early 1940s). He formed the “Vapor Trailers” club at his hobby store, and they were also called the “Dawn Patrol” as they headed out to 82<sup>nd</sup> and Nicollet to fly at 5 in the morning. Dave and Don Zipoy were members of his club. He became an aircraft mechanic after realizing the hobby business in 1946 to 1947 at 43<sup>rd</sup> and Upton South did not pay. Hank went to some MMAC meetings in 1942 and 1943 and tells the story of Dave and Don Zipoy starting up a Dynajet in their backyard in south Minneapolis early in the morning, which brought out the police and fire departments promptly.....Don’t know what the problem was yet?

3. Raymond "Ray" Frandsen, age 88, Minneapolis. (One of the early club members, continuing to about 1967.) His first model in 1940 featured an Atom engine placed on a \$1 kit model. The guys in his neighborhood formed the "Dope Fiends" club, who had to be members of the MMAC, also. Ray went to some of the Park Board contests in Minneapolis. Les Wahlstrom was another member of the dope fiends. He gave his remaining modeling papers to Tim Johnson in 2004. Ray worked for MMAC club President Mark Jones in 1954 as foreman, and later worked with Hank Liljequist as aircraft mechanic. He mentioned that John Cleveland was one of the better builders in the club. The "Dope Fiends" sponsored a MMAC trophy.
4. Hugh Langevin, age 86, Minneapolis \*\* (He placed at the first Minneapolis contests in 1941.) Hugh was club high point winner in 1971.
5. Eldon "Harry" Gerrish, age 90, Minneapolis. \*\* (Harry is on one of the first club rosters, from 1937 or 1938, and continued to be a member through the 1940s. There are pictures of Harry below with his early models.) Harry became an architect around 1950, and did not pick back up with the hobby. His wife was instrumental in securing the Metro Dome for Indoor flying up until the demise of the stadium. I asked Harry when he is going to retire, and he said that he just can't put down his drawing pencil!
6. Robert "Bob" Griffiths, age 89, Minneapolis.\*\* (In 1940, he was listed as a contest winner in the Towline Glider event, rejoined in the 1960s, and continued on and off to the present.) Bob's local club in the 1940s was the "Thermal Sniffers". Some notables in that group were John Cleveland, Creighton Trapp, Harry Gerrish, Samson, and Wes Franzin. Bob was one of the younger guys and was thought of as "The Pest" because he asked so many questions. I don't think Bob has ever stopped asking questions! He remembers sending \$10 off to California to get his first engine, an Atwood Phantom. After getting it to run, he installed it on a model and promptly lost it in a cornfield. (Sounds like a very old problem.)
7. Budd Butcher, age 90, Colorado Springs, Colorado. (One of the early club members, he started in 1937 and continued to 1944. Budd won many of the early contests. After joining the Air Force and becoming a pilot, he flew full-size aircraft throughout his career.) Budd states, "Dave; what a surprise to hear from a model A/C buff from the "good old days." Bob Griffiths was correct, I do go way back! The thirties/early forties is the era of my Minneapolis modeling days. You ask for names of my model A/C friends; Our South Minneapolis local club consisted of the following: Richard Wood, Wes Franzin (killed-D-Day), Jim Gebhard, C Trapp, Jerry Chapman, Myself, and I'm not sure if Bob was in our club. My Dad saved newspaper clippings. I've attached a few that may be of interest to you. October 1943, was accepted into Aviation Cadet program, started basic training Feb.1944. [My model aircraft activity came to an end as I advanced to larger aircraft.]"

Other elders in our club:

8. James "Bud" Cornelius, age 91, Lakeville, MN. Bud went to first contest to watch with Russ Scheidler, and started building models in 1958. He continued for about 30 years. He was Club high point champion in 1961 - 1963, 1969 - 1970, and 1972.

9. Jack O'Leary, age 88. Jack started modeling in 1943, but did not join MMAC until 1973. He was instrumental in getting us into the Burnsville High School gym for Indoor flying.
10. Don Patterson, age 89. Don started modeling in 1935 and was an early AMA member (#1922). He joined MMAC about 1978.
11. Fred Switzer.
12. Dell Marchant, age 89, Sparks, Nevada. Dell built his first models in 1940/1941 in Omaha, Nebraska, working with dime models. He served as newsletter editor for 30-some years, which will never be surpassed. Everyone remembers swarming Dell's hobby wagon after the contests. He always had things in his truck that we needed. Up until two years ago, he was getting out for a weekly flying session... Dell remembers Corky model flying into the back of his open truck at the 1970 Nats. Corky accused him of trying to steal his model. Dell and Rod Durkee had a hobby shop for many years, selling supplies and bikes. Dell also tells the story of him and Larry Stockstad at Blaine sod farm, both needing to go over a drainage ditch to pick up models. They both stripped down to their MMAC caps, and waded across naked in the muck. Sorry, no pictures available!
13. Eugene "Corky" Wald, age 83. Corky has built models since the late 1940s, got involved with Free Flight after his tour in the Korean War, and was active in Free Flight from 1956 to 1975. Has been an RC flier since, but loves Free Flight the best when he has his daughter or granddaughter to chase for him. Corky remembers raiding Dell's cooler at one of the meets and handing out beer to everyone, with Dell thinking that "Boy, that Corky is really generous, and he even has my favorite beer!"
14. Jim Ladwig. Jim joined MMAC about 1990. He started building at age 7 and entered first contest in 1945. Some of his early models included a Cleveland *Playboy* with an O&R 23 engine, a Leon Shulman *Banshee*, and a Scientific Imperial *Towline Glider*. Most of his power models used that O&R engine, but he also had an Arden 19 engine. He has been helping with youth programs.
15. Don Messerly, age 79. Don's dad took him to a contest in 1940 at the age of 7. He still likes to build the old timers, and has a lot of fun building and flying. "If you can't have real fun, try another hobby!" More bull about Don in the next issue!

Some of the more notable early MMAC members no longer alive who stuck with the club for a long time are:

1. Malcolm "Mal" Smith
2. Ted Wlazlo
3. Tommy Thompson
4. Russ Scheidler
5. Ray Lagermeier
6. Al Muller

A few of us in-between guys, still kicking, who started attending MMAC meetings and contests in the 1950s are:

1. Dave Kruse (joined about 1954)

2. Dale Mendenhall (joined 1955)
3. Dave Edmonson (joined 1955)
4. Don Monson (joined about 1951)

A few of the guys flying in the 1950s who we miss dearly and are no longer with us are:

1. Tim Johnson (joined about 1954)
2. Darryl Monson (joined about 1951, Don's little brother)
3. Denny Sussman (joined about 1951)
5. Clyde White (joined around the early 1950s)

Ray Lagermeier, who we wrote about in the last issue of the *Modeler*, started in 1940. Thanks to Ray, we have a few perpetual trophies that confirm some of the winners and dates.



Ray Lagermeier (above) and boys at Hastings field, about 1964. At the age of 14, he first showed up at MMAC contest in June of 1940 and placed in the Rubber Cabin and Stick events. By September 1943, he flew B Gas, Towline Glider and Rubber. In the Rubber event, Ray came in 4<sup>th</sup>, Bob Griffiths in 6<sup>th</sup>, and Hugh Langevin in 8<sup>th</sup>. At the June 15, 1947 contest, Ray placed 4<sup>th</sup> in C Gas and 2nd in Towline Glider. Willard Anderson placed first in Class A Gas, and Sid Jepson placed 3<sup>rd</sup> in B Gas. Mal Smith placed first in the Rubber Stick event.

Ray qualified for the 1954 FAI power team, and flew at the championships in Long Island, NY. The USA team placed first, but does anyone know why Ray was scoreless for the first two rounds? He scored maxes on his last three flights. Ray passed away in August 2013.

### **Hobby Shops in the Twin Cities**

In 1939, the following shops were listed in the Northwest Model Air Meet program on page 24 that sold for 10 cents, complete with a winning lottery number:

1. "Billett's", 2548 Nicollet Avenue South.
2. Modelcraft Distributors, 1336 South Mississippi Blvd in St. Paul.
3. Carlson Hardware, 3117 Penn South.
4. Northern Model Aircraft Distributors, 3927 East Lake Street.
5. Capitol City Model Shop, 71 East Arch & Jackson, St. Paul.
6. Minneapolis Aero Company, 2631 Elliot So.



7. Twin City Hobby Shop, 2426 University Ave., St. Paul.
8. Berg Model Aircraft and Hobby Shop, 153 at 13<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.E., Minneapolis.
9. The Hangar” 5409 Nicollet Ave. So.

In 1960, the following shops were listed in Walt Billett’s *Let’s Go* magazine:

**ASSOCIATION of TWIN CITIES HOBBY RETAILERS**  
*A Good Place to Shop for Model Airplanes*

MINNEAPOLIS	ST. PAUL	COLUMBIA HEIGHTS
Scotty's Hobby House ..... St 1-4715 2424 Central Ave. N.E.	Woodcraft Hobby Stores ..Ca 2-0147 371 Robert St. at 5th	Jerry's Hobbies 3964 Central Ave. N.E.
Gager Handicraft ..... Fe 5-6757 1024 Nicollet	Lightfoot's Hobby Shop ...Mi 9-8860 2028 St. Clair	<b>ROBBINSDALE</b> Moeller Hobby Center 4619 41½ Ave. N.
Woodcraft Hobby Store ...Ta 7-1244 901 W. Lake St.	Cal's Hobby Shop ..... Mi 4-8998 893 N. Snelling Ave.	<b>RICHFIELD</b> Hobbycraft House ..... Un 6-7701 6238 Lyndale Ave. So.
Ring's Hobby Center ..... Pa 2-4868 3902 Cedar	Boehm's Bicycle & Hobby ..Mi 4-4990 1892 Selby Ave.	<b>HOPKINS</b> Fowler's Hob. & Crafts ..We 5-3113 7 No. 10th Ave.
Cordes Hobby Craft ..... Ja 2-7785 3116 Fremont Ave. N.	Reppa's Hobby Shop ..... Pr 1-0431 1781 E. Arlington Ave.	<b>MANKATO</b> Mankato Hobby Shop 510 S. Front Street
Billet's Hobby Shop ..... Ta 3-0337 2548 Nicollet	Highland Pt. Hob. Center ..Mi 8-6516 494 So. Snelling Ave.	<b>NEW ULM</b> Nu Hobby & Gift Shop 201 N. Minnesota
Rocket Hobby Center ...Ta 5-9261 3453 4th Ave. S.	<b>EDINA</b> Gager Handicraft ..... Wa 6-5050 160 Southdale	
Mill's Hobby Home ..... Ja 1-7977 1009 W. Broadway	Thayer & Storm ..... Wa 2-5252 3909 W. 50th St.	



*Is this a picture of Walt Billett back in the 1940s? The other guy?? Looks like they are keeping the crowds of people back.*

I made numerous trips to the Hobbycraft House in Richfield. “Mac” was the owner (last name McDonald). I first attended model building classes there in 1954, led by MMAC’s first secretary, Malcolm “Mal” Smith. In 1956, MMAC members met at Mac’s hobby shop to load up models headed to the 1956 Nats in Dallas, Texas. Walt Billett owned the trailer, and supervised the packing of the trailer. He later drove it to the Nats with several of the local boys who got to witness this 80 years old guy falling asleep at the wheel and going into the ditch without damaging the trailer!

There was also a shop on 50<sup>th</sup> Street South, just west of France Avenue, and of course, Dell Marchant and Rod Durkee, who were probably not members of the elite

association above, had a very small shop on Highway 55, west of Minneapolis. I can remember driving to their shop about 1960. In 1963, I purchased my Schwinn 10-speed from Dell, and still ride it to this day. (\$90 was a lot then). It appears that there was a hobby shop for every neighborhood in the south Minneapolis area.

Hank Liljequist started another shop at 43rd and Upton that was open from 1946 to 1947 until he figured that this was not a money making business for him.

### Fred Emmert

Fred was an early club member, and by 1940 was club treasurer. Contest entries were mailed to him. He won major local MMAC contests in 1940 and 1941, and won trips to the Nats that were held in Chicago both years, sponsored by the *Minneapolis Tribune*. I believe in the 1980s he was

very active at the SAM contests held by the Oakland Cloud Dusters, and filled his trophy cases until he died in 2006. Joining the club in 1937, he showed up in contest results in 1938, placing first in Rubber Cabin event in 1940 and 1943, and placing first in A Gas in 1941. He was also a judge for some of the park board contests. Note in all of the pictures, his MMAC cap was a major treasure! Fred's model below right is a thing of beauty!

In 1938, at the second northwest meet, Fred entered the Rubber Stick event. In 1940, he appeared with Bob Grimm in a radio interview with MMAC club members. That same year, he won the Rubber Cabin event and a free trip to the Nats. In 1941, he won the Class A Gas event at the big meet, and placed eighth in A Gas at the Nats in Chicago. In 1943, he won first place in MMAC's Rubber event.

*From Fred Terzian of the Oakland Cloud Dusters:* "Fred Emmert was a major mainstay of the Oakland Cloud Dusters for at least forty or more years. He was competitive in both Indoor and Outdoor events and flew in many different classes of Rubber and Gas in AMA and SAM Old Timer categories. He was definitely a "master builder".

He regularly attended our monthly meetings when they were still held at member's homes up and down the Bay Area peninsula, and also attended our annual OCD awards banquets. He flew Indoor at South San Francisco's "Cow Palace" when Bud Romak was able to gain access to that site for many years (1960s, 1970s, 1980s?). He also flew in the huge Hangar Number One at Moffett Field in Mountain View when it was still available. And I believe he made it up to the Kibbie Dome or similar venue in Moscow, Idaho, when he was still able to do it.

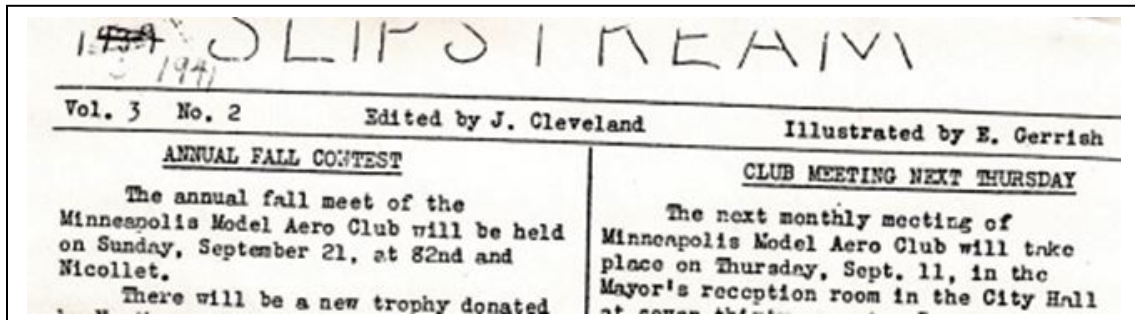
I believe he was also a member of John Pond's SAM 21 Old Timer club here in San Jose for many years. Of course, I am sure he was an early member of NFFS as well, and possibly the San Francisco Vultures (another John Pond start-up) when it was still actively involved in Free Flight activities. Some fellow club members remember that Fred told them about always doing his building projects on the kitchen table."



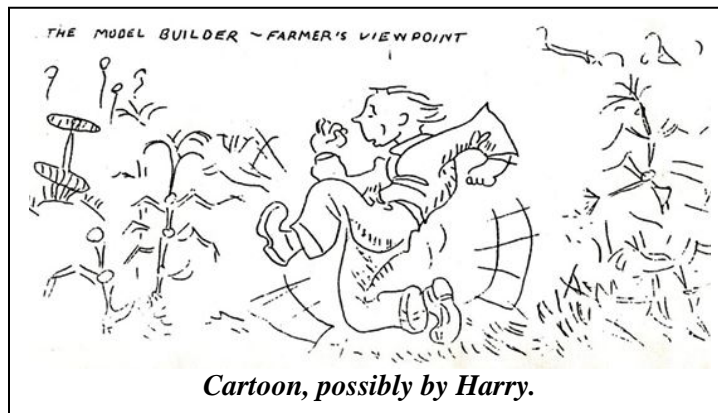
Fred Emmert's son, Steve, sent these fine photos of his father (above) and his collection of trophies. Steve will go through his father's records over a Christmas visit with his sister to see what else can be shared. Bill Vanderbeek purchased Fred's chase bike.

## Eldon "Harry" Gerrish

Notes by Jack Murphy, Salt Lake City, Utah:



This issue of the *Slipstream* (above) was probably sent out to members in early August 1941.



Nice advertisement from the Comet Kit Company appeared in 1939, 24 page contest program.



The cartoon on the previous pages is probably not appropriate anymore; more like an ambulance arriving at the cornfield to fetch one of our old club members. Remember in about 2006, watching Dick Bloomquist crawling out of the cornfield and hardly able to stand up with his C Gas model? I had to walk down a ¼ mile and carry his model back while he hobbled back to the car.

***Story about Bert Murphy, as told by son, Jack:*** “Attached are some photos from way back. Photos of Clyde White, Ray Lagermeier and one of me holding Bert’s FAI are all circa 1963-64. There is also a duplicate of one I sent you a couple of days ago of Bert, Hugh and Clyde. The one of me with my Lil’ Dip is in early 1966 (11 years old at the time). Bert holding his Blue Tail Fly(s) were taken in Tulsa in 1960. Also, me holding a very early FAI model (or AMA A Gas), I think that predates the “Kumback” Orange 1/2A. Looks pretty rustic...

“The story goes that Bert came home late one night in about 1957 only to see some model stuff poking out of the garbage can at the top of the driveway. Seems Mom just wanted to tidy up a bit and Bert hadn't done anything with his model airplanes since they'd met. Bert then and there decided he needed to get back to his hobby. Running into Ray Lagermeier and striking up a friendship had something to do with that as well.



***(Left) Bert showing his “Blue Tail Fly” design, about 1960, at FAI semi-finals in Tulsa. (Right) Bert says, “The picture is of the “Ffea,” which had a dummy engine. [It] urged me to buy a Brown Jr. {.60} engine from Walt Billett to power a Buccaneer Std, The only kit I ever made as all the rest were of my own design!” Bert, Ray Frandsen, and Ray Lagermeier were good friends, and also very good power and Rubber event fliers in the 1950 to 1960s! (Photos and article supplied by son, Jack Murphy, 2014)***

“Mom thought that if Bert was going to start taking the time to do that, he could take me along with him. In fact, I was his constant shadow when it came to all things of the sort and watched his every step in the model building process. I had a little step stool by his work bench and would always say “Let me see” and his reply was always “No sea to it, all dry land!” Maybe because I was in the way a little, he set me up with my own bench and got me going on some HLGs.

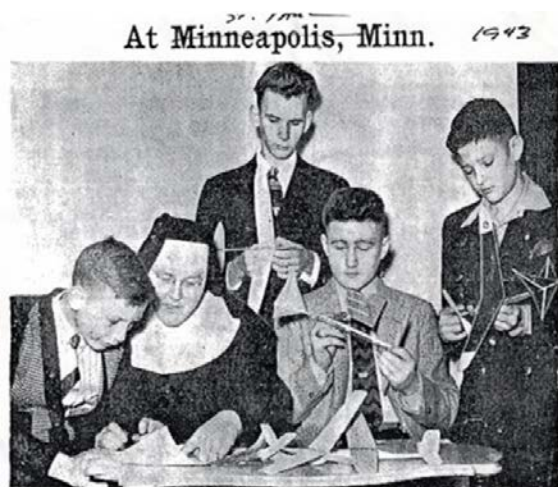
“My earliest contest memories were probably at Brown's Farm. It was probably still 1957, and Bert's little 1/2A Orange Plane (Thermal Hopper) landed in the river so off, he went to retrieve it. Being two years old and suddenly left to my own devices, it led to a little separation anxiety treated by half a bologna sandwich and a lent HLG from maybe Sid Jepson. I was only 2 years at the time, but that is what I recall. I also remember an occasional winter contest with the cars parked and flight line right on a lake somewhere. Then there was the Stanton and Monticello eras. Back then, dirt bikes and falcon trackers were not yet in vogue, so Jimmy Lagermeier and I became retrievers. We'd hike downwind and try our best to not have the airplanes get too far beyond before they dethermalized. Didn't always work out though.....

“Along the way, I built several HLGs and small Rubber jobs, and would often fly in WDGY field, about 4 doors south of our home in Bloomington. All in all, Free Flight and the Minneapolis Model Aero Club provide my fondest childhood memories. About 5 years ago, I emailed Dave Edmonson to reminisce and to give condolences upon reading in the newsletter via the internet that Herm Fessler and Denny Sussman had passed. They were both great guys and friends of my Dad's. I had not been to a model airplane contest in over 40 years, except a fun fly (my Lil' Dip) in 1971, probably at the sod farm. Dave got right back to me and encouraged me to maybe get back into Free Flight. I recalled that Hugh Langevin had given me an A2 plan years ago and dang if I didn't find them and build it. I have built over 30 airplanes since and have gotten more into electric recently than anything else.

“I am now flying FIQ, E 36, Electric A/B, and the new provisional E Nostalgia Classes. My 250 Sid Jepson Hustler really scoots with an electric out runner!! I also have a large fleet of fuel models as well, but have less time to fly 'em. I do love the smell of nitro in the morning... thanks to Dave getting in contact with Rick Pangell in Denver, and a lot of encouragement from others. I am truly once again enjoying the greatest hobby/sport there is and am maintaining a pretty full contest schedule ranging from California, Arizona, Nevada, Colorado, and the Nats in Muncie. Thanks Dave, hope to see you soon on the flight line!”

### Jack O'Leary

*Notes by Jack O'Leary:* “This photo was shot at St. Catherine's College in St. Paul, Minnesota in the winter of 1943. Sister Mary Aquinas had taken four of her aeronautics class students for a



JAMES DRUMMOND, SISTER M. AQUINAS, JACK O'LEARY, ROBERT MAAG AND JOHN LAFORGE  
WITH model planes including "Liddle Lansay Diver" held by Robert Maag

weekend in-service teacher training session. The instructor was none other than Carl Goldberg. The model that we built and flew in St. "Kate's" gym was a simple Indoor Stick design by Goldberg. Balsa was in short supply and Goldberg showed us how to make a serviceable propeller by wrapping the tag board blade shape around a dowel.

“In Sister Aquinas' Aero class, the private pilot's instruction manual served as the text. We had flying lessons at the local airport in a Piper Cub J3. Sister Aquinas was the physics, chemistry, and aeronautics teacher. Another nun taught biology at St Ambrose High School in Ironwood, Michigan, which was a small high school with approximately

140 students in grades nine through twelve. Sister Aquinas took flying lessons as a nun and had a private pilot's license, which gained her national notoriety as “The Flying Nun.”

“Magazine articles regarding her achievements appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Look*. In later years, she received her PhD and taught at Notre Dame.”

**(Writer’s Note:** Jack was living in Ironwood, Michigan in his early days, and the Sister there arranged for this trip to St. Paul in 1943, no small task during WWII. Jack is now 87, so he was 16 years old in the picture. He joined the MMAC club in 1973. Also note that Carl was there teaching the class. Carl was the designer of the Comet Sailplane and Zipper, early Pylon models that Carl was given credit for. The Sailplane and Zipper were copied and updated by Bob Hunter as supposedly the “Satellite”. **Another note from John Pond to the club:** Carl and Alva Anderson collaborated on Pylon models in 1938, but Carl took credit for the designs and Alva was a little bummed out!)



The Minneapolis Park Board put on airplane contests at local parks in the cities. (Above) This one was some place in south Minneapolis in 1941. You can see the trees in the background, and it seemed that they just needed a place clear for takeoff. One of the bigger earlier contests was held at Lake Nokomis Beach, probably where the athletic fields are now located. All of the boys in the photograph are proudly raising their models up for a launch view. The little guy to the far left is Hugh Langevin.

Hugh won the contest with help from the MMAC guys. His model was a Zipper, modified for Rubber-power. Hugh says with the wind this day of the contest, his model was the only one to climb high enough to get above the ground turbulence. You can see quite a few good size trees in the background, and they probably did not think that the models would end up landing in them.



**(Left) “When Minnesota model airplane enthusiasts competed in their first State Gas Model Meet under auspices of the St. Paul Pioneer Press and St. Paul Aviation club at Fort Snelling last Sunday, thousands of Twin Citians, gathered to watch, be impressed with the performances of the tiny airplanes, gasp at their startling resemblance in the air to full-scale passenger planes droning overhead. Well pictured is the resemblance in the picture [to the left], showing the nine-foot model of E. Shotwell taking off.” (Article: St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press, Photo Gravure Section, c. 1937)**



*(Left) “All day model plane fliers and helpers tinkered with their miniature craft, crowds stood on the sidelines, patiently waiting for the flights.”*

*(Clipping at right) The top picture is of Robert Lee at the Fort Snelling contest in 1937, with his first-place model after an 18-minute flight that took him all day to retrieve. The center picture is Robert Apgar Champine, coming in second place with 15 minutes. The bottom picture says “Disappointed was Theodore Pratchio’s of Duluth whose plane became temperamental, refused to fly.”*

*Evidently, the day was a very nice one, as Robert Lee’s flight of 18 minutes went only 3 miles over the river. Can you imagine flying Free Flight models from Fort Snelling over the Minnesota River Valley? (Probably a good site for the next 2016 FAI team selection trials! It would be a natural if the MMAC submits a proposal!!)*



### Early contests

**1937:** First Northwest meet at Fort Snelling.

**1938:** Second Northwest meet held at Cedar Airport, 88<sup>th</sup> and Cedar. Local newspapers estimated a crowd of 15,000, with traffic jams all the way up to Minnehaha Creek. Around this time, a club called the St. Paul Aeroneers wrote a letter complaining about some cheating MMAC member attending their St. Paulers “ONLY” contest, being disqualified, and his prize taken away, which caused difficulties in redistributing the prizes. “Minnesota Model Airplane Races held at the Nokomis Beach for rubberband-powered models, sponsored by the Minneapolis park board and the Junior Chamber of Commerce, celebrating ‘National Air Mail Week’.”

**1939:** First MMAC newsletter was produced, titled “Slipstream,” and edited by John Cleveland, providing club news. In 1940, Harry Gerrish became the illustrator, providing cute cartoons. The first big winter contest was held on February 25 on Lake Harriet. On August 3, a big contest at Monticello was held; 50 models were lost. Most of them were found. Some stubborn finders of models were threatened by a visit from the sheriff.

**1940:** June 16 was a pre-Nats contest. Budd Butcher won first place in C Gas and second in A Gas; Ted Wlazlo placed seventh in C Gas, and Ray Lagermeier took 5th place in the two Rubber

events. Bob Griffiths placed first in the first Towline Glider event. 50 models were reported lost; most of them were found in the coming weeks.

**1941:** “Some members of the club have been the unfortunate victims of *modelnappers*. These victims are Bud Irmiter and Loren Carlson”.

**1943:** At the Monticello contest, 12 models were lost and all but four recovered. Some of the notable contestants were: Ted Wlazlo, Budd Butcher, Ray Lagermeier, Allen Muller, Fred Emmert, Bob Griffiths, and Hugh Langevin. Talk about lack of *dethermalizers*, and maybe 10-second engine runs instead of 20 to avoid lost models. Walt Billett brought out his new PA system.

**1947:** The last known issue of the “Slipstream” contest was held on July 1. The site was not reported. Noted entries and winners at that contest were Willard “Andy” Anderson and Sid Jepson from Sioux Falls, Ray Lagermeier, Ted Wlazlo, and Malcolm (Mac or Mal or Smitty??) Smith, club president

Milan Sedio flew his .60-powered model to a convincing first place in Class C Gas. Paul Ring was Contest Director. The Billetts claim that Paul may have been responsible for the disappearance of some of Walt’s stuff after he kicked the bucket. Johnny Cleveland was also out chasing power models in 1947. *The Nats was held in Minneapolis!*

**1948:** Pan Am started sponsoring PAA Load events and providing lots of prizes!

### Claude “Bud” Irmiter



Claude “Bud” Irmiter provided many photos of his 1938 to 1942 models. Here he is holding one of my favorites, a Comet Sailplane built in 1940 and flying “RIGHT” off the board, and was the best flying model of that time for him. It was covered with silk and dope. He entered many contests in the area with it, but demolished it in July 1941 flying at the Chicago Nats. Bud was on the club roster prior to 1940, and also provided pictures of his models as early as 1937.

The editor purchased a completed Sailplane in 1955 from an airline pilot by the name of Keegan for maybe \$3, and put a McCoy .29 on it. He sailed it across the street on a test glide, a thing of beauty. It was rigged for Radio Control, but I flew it once as Free Flight. It went up nicely under power, but was tail heavy, and stalled in with the fuselage longerons busting. All of the balsa in the fuselage was extremely brittle, which still has me confused. I still have the wing for that



model. I also still have the huge box of wood purchased in 1987, a complete Sailplane kit, to build another one of these *sometime* when I retire. I have two Orwick .64s and two Super Cyke .60s to choose from for power. I still have not experienced the thrill of running an ignition engine.

### Bud Butcher

Below, Bud was a successful model airplane pilot, winning many of the MMAC contests prior to going into the Air Force in 1944. Afterwards, he devoted full energy towards full-size aircraft. At the winter contest held on January 31, 1943, on the ice at Lake Harriet, he took first place. In 1946 to 1949, he was stationed in Germany, probably the Berlin air lift. During the Korean War, he flew 142 combat missions. By 1970, he was the commander of the Iceland Defense Forces, and left the service in 1973 to become a corporate pilot until retiring in 1992. Bud lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado. On June 16, 1940, he placed first in C Gas and second in A Gas. As seen in the article below to the left, he won first place on May 9, 1943, the meet being a warmup for the big contest held on June 6, in which he came in sixth in C Gas.



Photos above were provided by Bill Geisking of Denver. The above far-right photo is of Hugh Langevin, with his key helper Clyde White, in New Mexico for the FAI team selection. One of Hugh's favorite Osprey designs is above. Hugh's Osprey was copied by Bob Isaacson and Lee Hines, and called the Buntbone. Those California guys have a thing about copying good models and calling them their own design; i.e. like the Satellite (alias Goldberg's Sailplane), and the Buntbone (alias Osprey). Next thing you know, they will be riding their motorcycles under them to create thermals!



*The little guy in the middle is Hugh Langevin, 1941.*

In the 1960s and 1970s, Hugh was considered one of the best designers and builders of beautiful strong models, and best fliers in the world. He placed fifth at the 1973 World Championships, and made the team in 1965, 1967, 1971, and 1973. He enjoyed Rubber and Glider events the most, but once built a 1/2A power model. He ended his model airplane endeavors in 1976, taking to fly fishing, but always likes to come out and spectate when possible. Hugh was MMAC club president from 1963 through 1965.

Clyde White joined the MMAC sometime in the early 1950s. He loved power models and frequently had success, but is remembered most for his "walk of sorrow" with his head

down to pick up a power model that was buried in the sod under power. He kept coming back with a new model and high hopes. He had a profound sense of humor. He was a dedicated MMAC member, serving as club president in 1980, and always coming to contests and meetings over a 40-year timespan. Clyde also served as an annual "Auctioneer Exceptional."

The editor must apologize for anyone left out of this short history of the MMAC. I have used most of the material that was collected, and there are virtually no records from 1948 to 1959, prior to the first issue of the *Minneapolis Modeler*, started by Sid Jepson. If anyone has information during this period, please submit it for future articles. I was active in the club from 1955 to 1970, and then again in 1987/88, 1992/93, and full time since 2001. So if someone can fill in the blanks for the 1970 through 2000 period, that would be great. I have some of the issues of the *Minneapolis Modeler* during that period, but there are a few holes. We are missing a list of club presidents from 1943 to 1946 and 1948 to 1959. I believe that Mark Jones was president in 1956, Mal Smith in 1957, and then Sid Jepson in 1958 and 1959. It is also a little fuzzy in the 1979 to 1981 period.

In the September/October issue of the *Minneapolis Modeler*, Bert Pond reminisces about the club. One of the more interesting stories was at a big contest. A fellow from Duluth was informed that his model was sighted at 8,000 feet by a plane approaching Wold Chamberlin. Cedric Adams, the WCCO radio announcer, told his audience to notify him if they found the model. It was found 10 miles from the flying site, and they went out and picked up the model, and it was returned to the owner.

***John Cleveland reminisces in the March/April 2003 issue concerning his Sailplane:*** "My Comet Sailplane - I built a Sailplane with an Ohlsson.60 for power. Its most memorable flight, not a contest flight, was one afternoon, about 2:00, when I launched with a 45-second motor run. The plane hooked a thermal. I was driving my dad's Chevy and the plane headed for a cloud. I chased the cloud but quit when the Chevy threw a fan belt. The car was new, no more than 50 miles on it. I stopped at a gas station and bargained for a new belt. I didn't have a cent of money on me and left my toolbox for security. When I got home, I got a phone call from a farmer who said he had been working in the field and saw the model come down at 5:15. I retrieved the plane and the toolbox. The Chevy ran better after the chase."

He also remembers Malcolm Smith - "Mal" or "Smitty" or "Mac" - holding his splintered Rubber model after the motor broke while winding. They were still using pre-War rubber, probably Pirelli or T-56, and lubing with green soap and glycerin. The motors would not hold torque once wound, so they wound and launched quickly. John purchased his first motor in 1934 after saving his money for a whole year, and purchased a Baby Cyclone. It was put on a model way too big and never got over 50 feet in the air. Later, he built a smaller model and it flew a little better.

### **A list of the club presidents**

**1937 - early 1940:** Bert Pond  
**1940 - 1941:** Frances Beaupre  
**1942:** Bob Tofte  
**1943 - 1946:** Unknown  
**1947:** Milan Sedio  
**1948 - 1954:** Unknown  
**1955? -1956:** Mark Jones

**1957:** Mal Smith  
**1958:** Maybe Bob Snyder  
**1959 - 1960:** Sid Jepson  
**1961:** Russ Scheidler  
**1962:** Rod Durkee  
**1963 - 1965:** Hugh Langevin  
**1966:** Ralph Kirk  
**1967:** Bob Walker  
**1968:** Don Monson  
**1969:** Dave Edmonson  
**1970:** John Evert  
**1971 - 1972:** Larry Stockstad  
**1973 - 1974:** Bob Hilgeman  
**1975:** Willard Anderson  
**1976:** Larry Stockstad  
**1977 - 1978:** Jack O'Leary  
**1979:** Unknown  
**1980:** Clyde White  
**1981:** Unknown  
**1982 - 1983:** Don Spehn  
**1984:** Unknown  
**1985 - 1986:** Dave Braun  
**1987 - 1989:** Don Spehn  
**1990 - 1993:** Gary Oakins  
**1994:** Don Spehn  
**1995:** Co-Presidents Don Spehn and Jack O'Leary  
**1996:** Gary Oakins  
**1997:** Tim Johnson  
**1998 - 1999:** Denny Sussman  
**2000 - 2003:** Gary Oakins  
**2004 - 2005:** Gary Fessler  
**2006 - 2014:** Gary Oakins  
**2015:** Dave Braun.

*A special thanks to Gary Oakins for serving the club for sixteen years!*

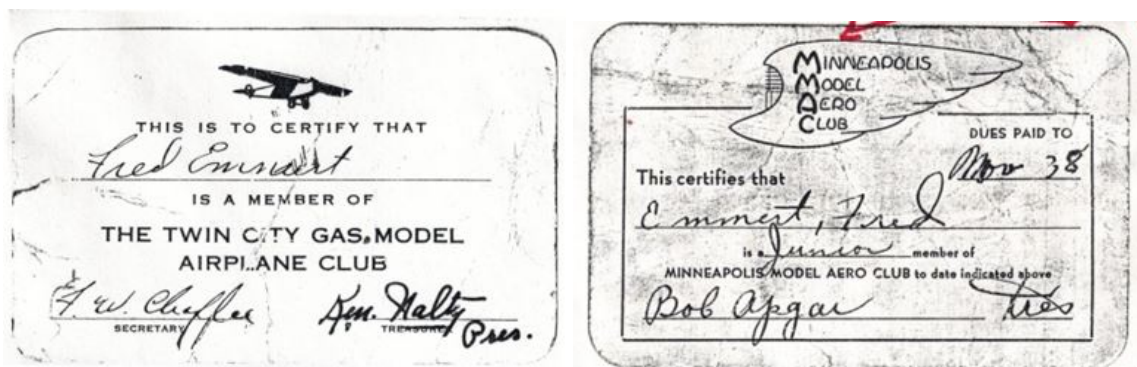


(On the previous page) These photos are from 1961, taken in Stanton field at the second MMAC FAI contest. Bert Murphy is on the left, Clyde White in the center, and Hugh Langevin is on the right. Out of towners were sent home empty handed! (Photos supplied by Jack Murphy of Utah.) To the left, Bud Cornelius serves as winding stooage for Bert Murphy. Bud started model airplanes in 1958, and by 1961 ran a string of club championships over a several-year time period. I still have thoughts of driving Bud's Ford on the way home from Sioux Falls, maybe in 1961, passing in a marginal situation with white knuckles and looking at the speedometer registering 90 with a sigh of relief from both of us....close....huh!

The Twin City Gas Model Club formed in 1936 or 1937, prior to MMAC. Gordon Shindler was President, Francis Chafee was Vice President, and Bob Raymer was Treasurer. First officers of the MMAC were Bert Pond, President, and Bob Apgar Champine, Treasurer and Vice President.



Above are early 1940 MMAC patches and AMA sticker. The bottom early MMAC patch, from the Ray Lagermeier collection, probably was produced sometime in the 1940s.



(Above) The left membership card is from the earlier Twin City Gas Model Club, and next to that is Fred Emmert's first MMAC membership card. Fred was on both the clubs' first rosters, and probably got his card in November 1937, which means the club was formed about summer to fall 1937? Note the early MMAC logo on the card on right. Fred Emmert preferred this one. Also note the November 1938 expiration date.

Thanks to Fred for supplying a vast file of early club memorabilia!



The above was a model stolen from the 1947 Nats at Monticello, and returned to MMAC in 2008. It was a very well-crafted Zipper with Ohlsson .23 (O&R), made and flown by Melvin Cordes, AMA #612, living at 3116 Fremont Avenue North in Minneapolis. Cordes owned a hobby shop at the same address in North Minneapolis until at least 1959.



(Above) “These boys make no pretty airplane models to set on the living room mantle but small planes that really fly under their own gasoline engine power. They are forming the Twin City Gas Model Club. Left to right are Gordon Schindler.... president, Francis Chafee.... secretary, and Bob Raymer... vice president. Bob made the plane in the picture, powered with a one-fifth horsepower midget gasoline engine. The tiny power plant drags the big model, with a seven-foot wing, through the air with the greatest of ease.” (1936 or early 1937 estimated date of publication.)



(Above) Pictured is early pioneer MMAC club member Robert Apgar Champine. He won the Gas event at the 1939 Nationals in Detroit, and Bob Toft won the Rubber event. The *Minneapolis Star* gave them a free trip to the Nationals after also winning the local contest. Bob Champine continued placing at local contests into 1943, flying both power and Rubber models with good results. Champine was one of the MMAC directors in 1940. In 1937, at a Fort Snelling contest, he placed second in Gas. On September 25, 1938, Bob placed first in the Rubber Stick

event and second in Gas. At the 1939 Nats in Detroit, he won first in the Gas event. In 1941, he placed seventh in B Gas. (A few of the events that results are known.)



(Above) This was taken in 1961 at the Willow Grove, Pennsylvania Nats. Carl Goldberg, on the left, is receiving the Walt Billett Loving Cup. Can you believe that this trophy was packed into a trailer every summer, along with models to head to the Nats...or bust! It was rumored that Walt fell asleep at the wheel on the way to the 1956 Nats in Dallas, and had to be pulled out of the ditch. I had models in the trailer, but luckily there was no apparent damage. We brought our models to Mac's Hobby Shop, on 63<sup>rd</sup> and Lyndale South, a few days prior for packing into the trailer. Clyde White had several large power models in the trailer also, and these were being sent for Mark Jones (club president in 1955 and 1956) to be proxy-flown. I don't know if this was legal or not. I saw Clyde's models flying beautifully on the day prior to the Nats, but Mark sent them ALL home in pieces...I never did hear Clyde's reaction.

**To view these two issues (and more!) in color and more picture detail, go to [www.freeflight.org](http://www.freeflight.org) and use the club newsletter tab to find all issues of the *Minneapolis Modeler* going back to 2006.**

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