



# The AMA History Project Presents: History of the SADDLE BUTTE R/C CLUB

AMA# 1997 Since 1984



Written by BK; reformatted and edited by JS (03/2015)

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*The following history was written by Bonnie Keeley and sent to the AMA for the History Project's club history files in February 2015. It is also posted on the club's website at <http://www.hi-lineflyer.com/hi-lineflyer/History.html>.*

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## **Saddle Butte R/C Club History Havre, Montana**

The beginnings of Saddle Butte R/C Club are intertwined with the life of many, but one stands out: honorary member Dean Gebhardt, AMA number 8012.

Dean first started flying Control Line airplanes (U-Control or "Ukies") while stationed at Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul, Illinois in 1949.

His first airplane, powered by a 1949 Olson-Rice engine, was built in the barracks there. Dean's favorite models of the time were the Big Stick and Contender models.

1950: (Havre, Montana) Dean continued his passion for flying U-Control. He began to organize the group of interested people into the Bear Paw Model Aircraft Club and joined the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA). Dean's club member number (8012) has been carried through the years as his AMA number.

In late 1958, Dean flew his first Radio Control airplane, a Breezie Jr.

Club meetings at that time met in the home of member Stan Hovee, in his basement. The flying field was an area, scraped off and packed, on top of the hill west of Havre on Highway 2, between what is now the Holiday Village Mall and Triangle Telephone Coop, in back (north) of Baltrusch Construction Shops. When that location became unusable, they used the football field ("Blue Pony Stadium") for a brief time, and then moved on to the land occupied by the baseball field north of St Paul's Lutheran Church. The ball field on Fifth Ave., across from Taco John's, was also used for U-Control for a short time.

The number of fliers was ever increasing, plus AMA requirements mandated field location and design. Some locations simply fell short of the guidelines of AMA recommendations. Raymond Tow had some pasture land in Laredo, Montana, eleven miles south of Havre on Highway 87, which was used for a while.

Dean, always the ambassador of model aviation, was often asked to visit schools and scout meetings to give demonstrations of his aircraft. He tried to help others understand the excitement of flying Ukies and Radio Control.

Club members of those days: Dean, Don Loranger, Stan Hovee, Pat Eller, Larry Davis, Fred Miller, Rusty Herman, Tommy Lumtkin, Wayne Zacheau, Dick Allison, Bill Minor, Fritz Hinrichs, Howard Tibbets, Henry Bebee, and Bill Brewer.

In 1984, Glen Mischke from Great Falls, Montana, came to Havre and assisted the guys in establishing a club. The name of the Saddle Butte R/C Club was founded. The meeting was at the Holiday Village Mall Restaurant. The club roster was started with 17 members, along with club officers.

Also in 1984, Lou Faltrino gave the flyers permission to use his farmland south of Havre. After the club started growing more and more, Lou asked us to locate elsewhere. We contacted the city of Havre after our search was exhausted for a place to fly. They leased us land east of Havre. It had a nice view of the mountains and Saddle Butte, but due to the growing residential areas around us, we were again searching for a new flying field. Again, we went back to the city for a location. At that time, we were sent out to look at the adjoining land behind the border patrol station on the Beaver Creek Highway. In 1991, we were able to lease the land.

Plans were drawn up by several club members. A clubhouse with covered meeting place was built, along with picnic tables and flight line workbenches. The land was cleared, scraped, and rolled. Landscaping included underground sprinkler systems. The Arbor Day Committee donated trees to plant along the south side of the property.

Our club is open to all AMA members. The public is welcome to come out and watch the flying, or get a chance to actually fly an airplane on a "buddy cord" with one of the flying instructors in the club.

Members of the Saddle Butte R/C Club have traveled across Montana and into Canada and Wyoming to participate in their club functions. Club members are also involved in mall shows, float flying at Beaver Creek Lake, cross county flying, the Hill County Fair, Shelby and Chinook Fairs, and the Hill County Airport's fly-in breakfasts.

In the summer of 2001, we had the excitement of one of our members learning to fly a helicopter.

NOTES:

Dean passed away June 2, 1997, leaving a legacy of a love of model airplanes and flying, with many still involved in the sport. He is still revered as "**the best!**"

Dean's wife, "Essie," has been instrumental in keeping Dean's legacy alive and strong. The history of Saddle Butte R/C Club is a major part of her life also.

We, the membership of Saddle Butte R/C Club, extend our deepest gratitude to her and the contribution of time and energy made to the history of the Saddle Butte R/C club. **Thank you, "Essie!!"**

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