



The AMA History Project Presents: History of the HORIZON CITY R/C FLYERS



Founded in 1976 AMA Club Charter #1416

Written by GCB (08/2012); Reformatted by JS (01/2013)

Guy C. Barber wrote the following, which was printed in the September 2012 issue of Model Aviation magazine. Per the HRCR website, "The Horizon City R/C Flyers Club was established by 17 members in 1976 and received AMA Charter No. 1416. Our first field was built in 1978 and located in Horizon City, Texas."

Horizon City R/C Flyers

Inevitable is defined as "unable to be avoided, evaded, or escaped." No better word exists to describe the subject that most RC clubs dread: the day that the organization loses its place to fly.

Most clubs are likely complacent, if not apathetic, concerning their tenure at the local flying site. Mine was, and out of the blue came an eviction notice giving our club 30 days to vacate the site we had been using for more than 20 years.

We were caught with our proverbial pants down. There had been ample time throughout the years to prepare for that day, but it seemed so distant that we took what we had for granted. Necessity is the mother of invention, and it is also a great means to motivate a club to get on top of the situation at hand, namely finding another suitable site from which to fly.

My club, the Horizon City R/C Flyers (HCRC), is located in what should be an easy place to find a site. We are in west Texas. Nothing surrounds Horizon City except thousands of acres of desert containing only a few mesquite trees occupied by coyotes, jack rabbits, and a few rattlesnakes.

Rarely does anything come easy. People looked at us with blank faces, while they tried to contemplate why a group of grown men would need a piece of property on which to fly toy airplanes.

In order to better present our needs and intentions, a fundamental restructuring of our RC club was necessary. The first thing we did was incorporate the club. We filed and received 501(c)(3) status. By doing this, we were considered a viable entity worthy of consideration.

Doors were thrown open and offers of new flying sites seemed to pour in. Well, maybe it didn't happen that way, but it sure is nice to dream. It took diligence on the part of the HCRC members to acquire a nearly perfect location for flying.

After several meetings with the Horizon City Improvement Association, we were granted a 20-year lease on a spread of land in the middle of the aforementioned desert for a whopping \$1 a year! Wonderful!

Not only did we acquire the land for a ridiculously low price, but if for some unforeseen reason the lease is terminated early, we will be reimbursed for all improvements made to the property

on a prorated basis.

Now that the easy part was accomplished – yes, the easy part – we only needed to come up with the money to transform the desert into a first-class flying oasis. Unless a club has some benevolent, financially well-endowed members in it, odds are that the organization needs to become tremendously creative.

The club's board of directors and several interested members took on the task of planning and putting into action what would be required to get the project off the ground. HCRC was lucky enough to have a member, Danny Sander, who owned a private flying site. Danny was kind enough to allow our club members to fly and hold events while we were without our own field.

I drew up a simple set of schematics depicting the layout of the proposed field, including a paved 400 x 33-foot runway with a ramp. A list of materials and costs was compiled, giving us an approximate dollar amount needed. The club applied for and received a \$5000 grant through the AMA's Flying Site Assistance Program.

That got the ball rolling, and through hosting a series of fundraising events including fun-flies, raffles, auctions, as well as some generous cash donations, we were able to acquire enough money to begin making improvements.

In the past 20-plus years, HCRC held events that raised money for many great charities including the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the Humane Society, the World War II Veterans Fund, and numerous other worthwhile organizations. We didn't think we needed to keep any of it for ourselves.

We held fundraisers in the interests of our club as well as other charitable establishments. By working with others, we were able to better promote and organize events that were beneficial to our cause as well as others.

One event was a fun-fly to benefit the American Rescue Dog Association (ARDA.) ARDA is a nonprofit organization, which trains and deploys rescue dogs across the country following disasters, and relies solely on donations to accomplish this. Soliciting businesses and organizations across the nation as well as local establishments yielded some amazing donations, including a great gesture from Southwest Airlines, which sent us two round-trip airline tickets, without blackout dates, good anywhere Southwest Airlines serviced.

Numerous RC manufacturers donated RTF airplanes, components, glue, kits, and much more to be auctioned off or raffled.

Because of these remarkable donations, we were able to give a sizable check to the ARDA. After hosting that fun-fly, subsequent events were attended by large numbers of AMA members eager to help us raise the needed capital for our new field.

On a warm September day, we staked out what is now our runway! Jeff McMillin, our club president, solicited a number of paving outfits for bids. Because we are an active 501(c)(3) organization and had raised money for other worthwhile organizations, we received bids that were substantially less than our original estimates.

Material costs were cut by roughly 30%; equipment and labor was reduced nearly 90%. This is not a small amount of money – we are talking thousands of dollars saved by being an active member of society!

Jobe Concrete provided the asphalt at below market price, Danny Sander Construction took care of the preparation of the field, and plenty of elbow grease was provided by many of the HCRC members.

We were able to reuse some materials from our previous site such as the gate and sheet metal awnings, saving nearly \$1,500.

When the dust finally settled, we had spent only \$24,000 on the entire project.

Without the stellar savings yielded by playing nice with others, the field would be far less spectacular. Please feel free to visit our website at the address listed in the “Sources” section.

On February 18 and 19, 2012, the club held the official opening of our new flying site. Although the winds were brisk, approximately 75 people attended and helped us celebrate the completion of our club’s new home base.

By working with others, we have managed to spread good will and establish an important bridge between our club and the community. There is nothing better than a community willing to support our hobby!

Thank you to the following people and organizations: Jobe Concrete (asphalt); Danny Sander Construction (field excavation and preparation, equipment donation); JTM Wood Works, Brian Stafford, Marty Engler, and AMA (monetary donations); Guy Barber (field design); Jeff McMillin, John Verslype, Mike Taylor, Manfred Balaster, and Luis Floriano (HCRC board members); and the entire HCRC membership (volunteers, monetary donations, and support.) Everybody else who participated in our fundraising efforts, thank you!

-Guy C. Barber

Sources:
Horizon City RC Flyers
<http://hcrflyers.com/>

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