



# The AMA History Project Presents: History of the PLYMOUTH AERO LEAGUE 1940s-1950s



Written by JS (08/2010); Reformatted by JS (04/2012)

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This month, the Museum Archives presents more information from its collection about Plymouth Motor Corporation's involvement in aeromodeling. (See April 2010 column) This article will more closely examine Plymouth's community of clubs that introduced thousands of youngsters to model aviation.

In the mid-to-late 1940s, some Plymouth dealerships were personally sponsoring or developing local modeling clubs, sending some of these members to the 1947 and 1948 Plymouth International Model Plane Contests. Seeing this trend at the Contests, Plymouth saw an opportunity to create a formalized club structure. They named this group of clubs the Plymouth Aero League (PAL).

The first official PAL clubs were established in Detroit, Cincinnati, and Chicago. Structured procedures were devised for much of the clubs' actions: how to conduct a contest, how to talk to the media, how to teach building and flying through developed tests and skill-building projects, and much more.

Each PAL club was to have a constitution, standardized to a point where only a few blanks such as location of meetings and town name were needed to be filled in. The constitution stated the purpose of the Club was "to uphold traditions of the Plymouth Aero League and to promote building and flying of model planes... to develop skills, to increase knowledge and interest... all in the traditions of American sportsmanship and character building, to the end it will create better citizens."

For approximately six months, new club potentials were separated from the rest of the club members. Called the "Squadron," they improved their aeromodeling skills on six projects, from basic cutting and construction exercises to outdoor rubber-powered model building. It was not until students passed these required training skills that they could become qualified PAL club members.

When students graduated, they were allowed to participate with the rest of the full-fledged club members, receiving advanced training with gas-powered and Control Line models. They participated in local Plymouth dealer-run contests; the club member who placed highest received a paid trip to compete at the Internats.

Students were given various rankings based on their age and training, receiving enameled pins and badges of various colors for this education. Also available to clubs were

certificates of achievement, membership cards, patches, squadron stripes, and service stars. Each club decided what they would distribute.

Plymouth intended to concentrate its modeling interests on the League when it ended the Internats in 1953, but by late 1954/early 1955, determined it would be best to transfer the League to the AMA for administration under the Plymouth name. The company would retain some supervision of decisions for the first year of management. It is not known from the information found in the Archives exactly what happened to the League, if the transfer actually occurred. From the few letters dated 1956 and 1957 from the Archives' collection, it appears the program was all but dropped by Plymouth, as changes in staff and concentration in other areas took place. Though the club lasted less than a decade, it was able to make an impression on a generation of modeling-interested youth.

The Archives would like to thank those who wrote and called with offers of photographs and other materials from the Plymouth Internats. If you have mementos related the Museum's monthly column and would like to donate, please contact the Museum.



*Circa 1954 - Cover of a PAL club member booklet. (Source: National Model Aviation Museum Archives, AMA Collection #0001)*



*Early 1950s - PAL Club membership card. (Source: National Model Aviation Museum Archives, AMA Collection #0001)*

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