



The AMA History Project Presents: History of the RADIO CONTROL MODELERS OF BALTIMORE, INC. (RCMB) Started in 1957, incorporated in 1961



Written by RCMB and MA staff (09/1981), Reformatted by JS (04/2012)

The following was written printed in the September 1981 issue of Model Aviation magazine. According to the RCMB website, accessed in 2012, their purpose is “to promote friendship among modelers and develop a better understanding of the operation of radio controlled model aircraft; pledging ourselves to always operate our models in a safe manner.” The organization welcomes “both experienced and novice modelers into the club.”

Flying Site Success Story

Gunpowder Falls State Park – Model Airport in Maryland

Cool heads, perseverance and cooperation have resulted in one of the finest model airports on the East Coast for the Radio Control Modelers of Baltimore, Inc. It all started many years ago under the guidance of the Club Executive Committee when permission was gained for the fliers to use part of the Sweet Air Section of Gunpowder Falls State Park. At that time the park covered 1,300 acres, entirely surrounded by farms, and no problems with neighbors due to noise for the occasional stray airplane.

1977 brought a different story because the neighboring farms were being sold off for housing developments. John Kirk, who was President of the Club, headed up the effort to save their flying site and an immediate search was started to find park areas where they could fly. Three possible sites were identified and operations allowed to continue. However, three years ago, some of the new residents voiced their opinions that they did not want model planes buzzing in the sky in their part of Maryland, and they sought a meeting with the park administration. At that meeting it was requested that the Club be ordered to stop flying in the park.

The Club kept their heads and arranged a meeting of their own with the community association, but nothing could be resolved or any type of agreement reached, because the two sides of the question were too far apart. The basic objections were that planes were flying beyond the park boundaries and engines were creating a “limited” noise nuisance. Following this, the community members commenced a vigorous campaign to get a resolution of the situation and their efforts produced a further meeting, this time between the association, the Club, and the park supervisors. Also present at the meeting were some officials from the Department of Natural Resources in Annapolis, MD. It should be noted that in Maryland nothing gets built or changed without the blessing of the Maryland DNR, so it was critical to the Club that these people should take time to come to observe.

It was requested that the Club demonstrate their activities to the DNR folks, so a flying demo was carried out for the park planners, and everyone went to the strip for some

active model aviation. Based on the flying, it was recommended that the strip be moved 1,000 feet closer to the center of the park, which was not a great problem for the club. The new strip was surrounded by trees, but it put the flying far enough away from the park boundaries to avoid any straying.

The Club kept their cool and went ahead and invested \$300 in a new runway, all the time impressing on the park and DNR officials that they were responsible adults, ready and willing to cooperate but very anxious to retain their flying rights.

An important aspect of the meeting was the discussion of permanent flying privileges for the Club in Sweet Air Park. Another area was identified which appeared to be highly desirable, because it was free from trees and other obstacles, reasonably level and directly in the middle of the park property, with a convenient access road running to it.

A decision was reached to have the Club move to the center park area as soon as it would be practical – and this agreement met with the approval of the parks personnel and the community association. With many years of model aviation experience behind them, and with assistance from the Academy of Model Aeronautics, the Club executives set themselves the task of designing a model airport. A Club member who is a professional surveyor laid out the field. John Kirk laid out the actual flying areas, and the Club hired a road contractor to level the area. That cost the Club another \$350, so they had seen \$650 of their funds dispersed as they made their way to a permanent home.

A Club Planning Committee was established to draw up a comprehensive set of plans that would have to be submitted to the park planners in the Department of Natural Resources. With professional care, the club was able to get these plans incorporated into the Park Master Plan – a very positive and encouraging step that reflected the manner in which the Club had conducted themselves in the negotiations.

To further consolidate their position, designated Club members took steps to discuss their plans with every possible elected official AND all of the agencies that might be involved, then or in the future. All of this groundwork by the Club paid dividends at every step because they convinced the legislative and administrative officials that they were responsible and agreeable people as far as their model aircraft activities were concerned.

Finally, in the winter of 1980, the master plan for the park was presented and explained to the community by the DNR representatives. There were immediate objections from the community based on traffic problems that they thought might develop in their more or less rural setting. The Club members carefully explained that the normal amount of flying would entail a minimum of vehicles, and at the same time got acceptance from the community that model aviation should remain in the Master plan.

The Club took the position that as a passive activity they would be an ideal tenant for the park and this was agreed upon by all present. Plans continued to develop the field; grass was planted and the strip fertilized; but the drought of summer 1980 prevented the grass from growing. In the fall of 1980 a professional landscaper was hired so that the site could be planted with grass – another \$500 from the Club treasury.

With the permanent flying field part of the overall park plan, the Club was advised to vacate the temporary field by June 1, 1981. Immediately, using the accepted flying site plan, the Club installed parking areas, spectator fencing, a transmitter impound box, and planned an Official Opening Day for May 17, 1981.

The temporary field was closed on May 10th, so after four years of hard work and cooperation, the Club was without a field for just one week. Opening Day was held on May 17, 1981, and the ribbon cutting was performed, a bottle of champagne was broken against a post; visitors included Mr. Bill Simmons- Park Manger, Mr. Don Bittinger – Park Ranger, John Kirk III (sparkplug for the project) and Jim Stevens – Club President. Geoffrey Styles represented AMA and took the photos. On June 1, 1981, the community was again presented with the Park Master Plan by the DNR and it was passed with very few comments from the community association. The Club has since received permission to construct two small shelters (10' x 20') for protection from the elements.

To summarize, this Club did the right things. 1. They kept cool under pressure. 2. They spent some club funds when they had to. 3. They did good groundwork by making contacts with everyone who could be involved. 4. They cooperated with the neighbors and the officials. 5. They didn't quit when the going got difficult. 6. The general membership supported the Club executive.

So that's it gang. Remember that it can be done because the RADIO CONTROL MODELERS OF BALTIMORE, INC. did it.

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