



# The AMA History Project Presents: History of RICE COUNTY RADIO CONTROL FLYERS



Began in the early 1970s

Written by VM; Reformatted and edited by JS (02/2015)

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*The following was written by Virlyn Molmen and  
submitted to the AMA History Project in February 2015.*

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## **The Rice County Radio Control Flyers, Inc. History AMA Club #1785**

In 1973, two radio control enthusiasts, having recently moved to Faribault, Minnesota, attempted to locate anyone interested in flying model airplanes. Finding no one, they began flying on a blacktop county road about a half mile south of town. It seemed only minutes after our flying commenced that there would be four or five people observing the activity. After a couple sessions, one or two of the spectators expressed interest in learning to fly. Then there were a couple more, and soon we had a group of eight persons taking instructions, meeting quite regularly on the county road and soon mastering flying solo.

These facilities were far from ideal, with traffic frequently utilizing “our runway” many times, causing us to abort a landing, and worse yet a “dead stick”, finally making our landing in the ditch.

A consensus of the group was that we should find some land and make a more conducive flying area. We then called a meeting, putting a notice in the local newspaper advertising the meeting. Several people attended the meeting. We began searching for a suitable and affordable site. We learned that a suitable area for a field was available. On June 15, 1981, we established our club.

After considering several suggestions for a name, we agreed on the name “Rice County Radio Control Flyers”. We rented an acre of land and set about establishing a flying field, establishing runways and a pit area, leveling, preparing for planting grass, and planting grass. In 30 days, we had a pretty good stand of grass and we began flying from a much welcomed area on which to pursue our passion. Our total membership was eight.

Within a very short time, our membership had grown to twenty members. Many of the new members had no experience flying. The two earlier-mentioned enthusiasts had an almost full time job teaching. One of the requirements of club membership was AMA membership. Our membership dues were \$25.00 for a calendar year, with special dues for those 17 and under being \$10.00.

Although many of our membership were not yet soloing, we conducted monthly fun flies, giving the non-soloing members a chance to participate by providing ground handling competition, and a good time was had by all with nearly every member participating.

We participated in several activities to showcase our club to the general public. These activities included an annual mall show; floats in festival parades; demonstration flying for festivals and community events, church groups, 4-H clubs, school groups, and Boy Scout troops, as well as addressing to local service clubs. "Try to fly" events were held regularly.

Unfortunately, after about five years, our landlord went bankrupt and lost the farm on which our field was located. The mortgage holder let us continue to use the field for about a year until the land was sold. The new owner advised us that we could continue to use the field. He then informed us that we could continue to rent the land. He presented us with a proposed rent amount, a figure that was 300% more than what we had been paying. When we informed him that we could not afford that amount, he informed us that if we could afford that "expensive" equipment, we could certainly afford his asking price. He was informed that unless we could negotiate a more reasonable rent, we would have to give up the field. He informed us that that was fine with him and we reluctantly packed up and left. Ironically, he stripped off the beautiful stand of grass that we had nurtured for some five years and sodded the yard of his new home.

We were then without a place to fly for about six months. We finally were able to locate another piece of land some seven miles from the field we left. Again, we leveled and worked up the ground in preparation for seeding grass. In about 30 days, we had a pretty nice stand of grass and began flying from our new home.

About three weeks later, we were visited by a homeowner who lived a little over one-half mile west of the field. He was furious; his face was red, saying we were flying over his house. We always respect the rights of our neighbors, never flying within a quarter of a mile of any houses or buildings, and never over people or structures, a fact that we informed him. He contended that we had been flying over his house (which we had not) and after voicing some choice words, he left. We scheduled a visit with him and his wife, to try to pacify them or establish a mutually agreeable solution. It was immediately apparent that the only thing that would make them happy would be for us to move. We informed them that that was not our intention. They eventually hired a lawyer and made it so miserable for us that we decided to remain there would be a continual battle with them. We reluctantly packed up and left this field.

We were without a flying field for a full year. After a concerted search for suitable facilities, we were fortunate enough to locate another piece of land. We negotiated a rental price and leased three acres on a five-year lease (which has now been renewed several times). Again, we leveled the ground and prepared it for seeding grass. In about 30 days, we had a good stand of grass and began flying at this site. Our membership had now increased to 35 members.

This turned out to be the best flying field we had ever had - flat, no trees, and lots of blue sky. We enjoyed five years of perfect flying conditions and our membership increased to fifty members. Then the county commissioners, in violation of our conditional-use permit, which states that there will be no structure within one half mile of the field, allowed an individual to build a house a little over two-thirds of a mile from the field. We consulted with this new neighbor who stated that he had no problem with our activity being where it was. The power company, then, strung power lines across the end of our runway to provide power for this house. This caused problems for a number of the flyers; we lost one or two because of this, and several of our members were very intimidated by the wires. To accommodate this situation, we were able to lease an additional acre of land to extend the runway, making it unnecessary to fly over the wires.

We have now been at this field for fifteen years. The landlord is a very fine fellow and the neighbors are very friendly. The best of all worlds. Of course, if you're going to fly in Minnesota, you will have to contend with corn and soybean fields, but we try to stay out of them.

Submitted by:  
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