

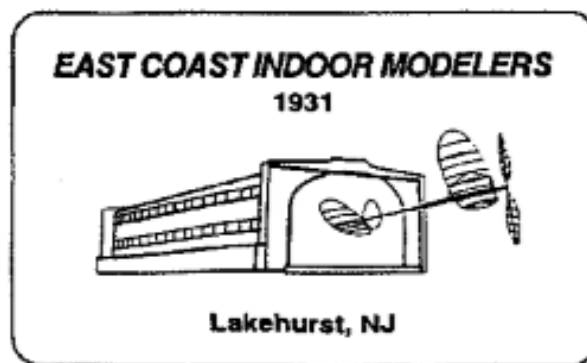


The AMA History Project Presents: History of the EAST COAST INDOOR MODELERS (ECIM)



Written by HH, Reformatted and Edited by JS (03/2020)

The following was written by Horace Hagen and submitted to the AMA History Project in January 2020.



In 1926, a small group of modelers were given permission by Commander Charles E. Rosendahl (the father of airship development in the U. S.) and base Commanding Officer E. S. Jackson, to use the newly finished Hangar 1 at Lakehurst for Indoor Free Flight (FF) aero modeling.

Merrick “Pete” Andrews (1914-1992) was one of the originators and the founder of the club. In addition to the many FF records he established here, he also helped to promote indoor modeling throughout the New Jersey and Philadelphia school systems. Weekly building sessions were held at major educational facilities and several John Wanamaker department stores. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* newspaper published model plans and competition results to help further the hobby. Hangar 1 served as a haven to these aviators, where up to 200 young flyers would gather and compete.

Between 1926 and 1930, indoor modeling was able to develop in this large space. In 1931, the first major indoor FF competition was held in Hangar 1, hosted by the Lakehurst modeling group. This event marks the formal origin of our club and the original East Coast Indoor Modelers (ECIM) club logo was developed. The club’s founding preceded the founding of our national aeromodeling organization, the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) in 1936. The AMA is the officially recognized aeromodeling section of our National Aeronautics Association (NAA). The AMA is the official US aeromodeling representative to the Federation Aeronautique International (FAI) which governs all aviation records and competitions.

Since the beginning we were always welcomed by the US Navy and had an easy time getting access to the base. All we needed was a valid driver's license, automobile registration, and proof of automobile insurance. The Navy folks always considered us as an extra pair of eyes for base security. Because the founding of our club predates the crash of the Hindenburg in 1937 and the founding of the Navy Lakehurst Historical Society in 1975, we always considered our club to be a part of Lakehurst Hangar 1 history.

Our club is a chartered member of the AMA (charter #414). To join our club you must be a member of the AMA. Anyone can join the AMA and membership is free for people under age 19. The AMA represents us on the world stage and provides us with secondary liability insurance of up to 4 million dollars. Our club is one of the oldest indoor model airplane clubs in the world.

Today's competition indoor free flight models are mainly constructed of balsa wood and carbon-fiber frames. The frames are covered with a very thin (0.5 micron) film, are powered by a wound rubber band, and weigh only a few grams. The international FAI/F1D class models require great patience in construction and are used in local, regional, national, and world championships. The FAI/F1D competition involves flight duration. The model that stays in the air the longest wins. The present duration record for FAI/F1D models in Hangar 1 is 32+ minutes. The overall duration record for the unlimited category is 61 minutes and 30 seconds, set in 1998.

Our club sponsors indoor free flight competitions several times a year including a team selection competition prior to a World Championships. National and World records have been set in Hangar 1. In 1974 the FAI/F1D Indoor World Championship were held at Lakehurst. The majority of the club's free flight modelers are serious competitors. Our senior club members have won the FAI/F1D world championships many times in the past. Our junior club members have also placed very well as individuals and teams at FAI/F1D World Championships.

In 1999 our club formed a new division called the Radio Control (R/C) Slow Flyers to allow us to fly small electric-powered indoor planes. We have very strict safety rules with regard to model size and weight. Our R/C models must weigh 10 ounces or less and are exclusively powered by small electric motors. Today, a few members fly competition models for the FAI/F3P class R/C indoor aerobatics.

After the events of September 11, 2001, base access became very strict and we lost access for a few months. When we regained access in 2002 we had to submit to a very thorough inspection of our cars. Unfortunately foreign club members no longer had access. When Lakehurst Naval Air Station became part of Joint Base - McGuire, Dix, Lakehurst (JB-MDL) in 2009, the Air Force took over base access. Access became more formal and we were required to apply for a Hangar 1 use license and submit an annual Entry Authority List (EAL). These procedures resulted in us getting photo ID badges to ease access and in turn reduced traffic jams at the main entrance. The club also had to provide proof of liability insurance coverage. More recently we had to go through annual criminal history background checks.

We have an excellent safety record and have never damaged any equipment in Hangar 1. Our models are so fragile they break apart if they hit anything other than air. We have our own trash containers that we empty on a regular basis. We have our own locked storage facilities (CAGE)

in the southwest elevator tower and storage cabinets identified with ECIM labels. We fly almost exclusively off the east end of the carrier deck. We also have our own tables and chairs that are kept on the carrier deck. We have our own web site at www.ecim.net.

Our club has 5 members that are retired military officers, including an Air Force Lt. Colonel, Air Force Major, Navy Lt., Marine Corps Captain, and Army Captain. Additionally, we have 24 military veterans. Most of our active members are retired. The ages range from 15 to 95, with an average age of 67.

Over the years, we have donated several thousand dollars to two charities: The Navy/Marine Relief fund and the Air Force Aid Society. We have also donated several thousand dollars to the Navy Lakehurst Historical Society. We have made presentations to the Sea Cadets based at Lakehurst and also to the Boy Scouts of America. The goal is to help inspire young people to enter the area of aeronautics, the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) program, and possible careers in the military. We have also made presentations at local schools. We have several junior members that are always supervised by adult members.

At the present time, our club is in the process of generating a document that we hope will make Lakehurst Hangar 1 a historical aeromodeling site for our national organization (AMA).

Lakehurst Hangar 1 is the largest facility in the country that has been available to our club for many years. Lakehurst Hangar 1 is our club's "Mecca" because of its large volume. Our models cannot be flown outdoors because they are too light and fragile. Without access to Hangar 1, our club will not be able to continue our sport. We sincerely hope that JB-MDL will continue to support our club and allow our legacy in model aeronautics to continue for future generations.

The following is a recent example of our most important activity: In 2018, ECIM member Brett Sanborn won the FAI gold medal and is the reigning individual World Champion for the F1D class. The 2018 USA F1D team (ECIM members John Kagan, Brett Sanborn, and Jake Palmer) won the FAI team gold medal. In addition, the USA junior F1D team placed third and won the FAI bronze medal. These folks are really dedicated competitors and rely very heavily on Hangar 1 for their practice and world championship team selection. They travel from all over the country just for a chance to fly in Hangar 1. Recently we have been allowed to re-invite a few club members from Canada.

See [photos] for examples of the types of planes we fly in Hangar 1.

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Brett Sanborn with his 2018 World Championship winning F1D model. The model weighs a scant 1.4 grams (about the weight of a dollar bill.)



Horace Hagen and his radio-controlled aerobatic airplane (YAK-54.) The model has a wingspan of 21 inches and a weight of 1.4 ounces.



Group picture of Free Flight FAI/F1D team trials participants Labor Day 2017.



*Group picture of the regular “ECIM Slow Flyers” on Saturday,
March 30, 2019.*

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