



# The AMA History Project Presents: History of the PIQUA FLYING INDIANS

Founded in 1945



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*Paul Moorman composed and submitted the following narrative.*

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## **Piqua Flying Indians** **A Brief History of a Post World War II Model Airplane Club** By Paul A. Moorman AMA 25202

The original Piqua Flying Indians model airplane club formed in a small town of approximately 20,000 population in Piqua, Ohio. These young men, all teenagers, were representative of the group of young men born interested in aviation fostered by the aircraft, pilots, air crewmen, and events of World War II. The famous WWII ace Don Gentile was born and raised in Piqua, Ohio. Piqua is also the home of Hartzell Propeller, a major supplier of propellers and other materials for the war effort.

Interest in model aviation was at an all time high. During this era, before television, building model airplanes was a hobby common among the youth of America, especially young men. Like video games today, it was the thing to do. Most every young man built some type of model during this era. Model airplane building in particular was an especially popular pastime.

The Piqua Flying Indians model airplane club was started in 1945. It started out as a club dedicated to building non-flying scale models. In May of 1946, the club was formally organized. A dues roster attached to this article lists the names of the original members. I believe this was from September of 1946; the charter members were Gene Bowser, Lane Myers, Lloyd Hubbard, Dick Williams, Jack Stricker, Ellis Boyd, Don Smith, and Don Hufford.

By November of 1946, the newsletter announced the new Ohlsson and the availability of the Orwick 65 gas model airplane engine. This newsletter references the competition between the model clubs of the Piqua Flying Indians and, I believe, the Tory, Ohio Sky Bugs.

The January 1947 newsletter has a directory of members, listing type of flying and equipment each member flies.

The Piqua Flying Indians club was very active, holding monthly meetings and model flying events in 1950 and 1951. Afterwards, some members of the Piqua Flying Indians continued flying, but apparently no longer as a club. For a brief period in 1950 to 1951, another model airplane club was mentioned, the Piqua Heavier Than Air Society, but was not active.

No other information was available until 1957. Piqua Flying Indians model airplane club was reformed as a U-Control club and chartered by the AMA on February 24, 1958. The club's initial membership drive signed about 35 young men as members. Gene Bowser was Senior Advisor, Vernon Ritter was President, Tony White was Secretary, and Jeff Negley served as Treasurer.

The club held classes on construction of model aircraft, starting with a hand-launched glider built from balsa wood blanks. Cutting of the wood parts, proper sanding to airfoil shape for the wing and tail parts and aerodynamic sanding of the fuselage and effective gluing techniques were taught to each member building the glider, with close supervision by the senior members of the club. After construction was complete, a model contest was held. The new members who built the gliders with the best flying times were awarded prizes. The first prize was a Cox Baby Bee .049.

The new club members moved on to a Comet full rubber-powered model as the second project, teaching the young members the art of model airplane building. This was a more complex build, as it was a balsa stick construction. This was much more difficult than the solid balsa glider, even though it was a kit airplane. Unfortunately, many new members dropped out before the completion of this project.

Those members that remained, about twenty of us, had a high interest in Control Line flying. We had a flying site at Armco field, a site given to the club by the City to use as a Control Line flying site after neighbors complained about the flying in the public parks in town.

I guess looking back, the flight by one of our members of a Dynajet-powered Speed model was probably the event that led to the request for us not to fly in the city parks.

During the winter months, the club held 1/2A Control Line races in the Piqua National Guard Armory. Originally, the line length was set at 35 feet. After a few attempted flights that ended in hitting the wall, we realized that the width of the Armory was about 37 feet. Line length was changed to 25 feet. One participant did, however, manage to make a flight on the 35-foot lines and he won that week's event. The names of the participants, equipment flown, and times are recorded on the race record.

During these years, until about 1960, the club members flew regularly at the Armco field and most of us participated in contests, flying in Combat and Stunt events, and once in a while some members would try Speed flying and the new Rat Race events.

Once again, around 1960, the Piqua Flying Indians Model Airplane Club became inactive.

Today some of the original members – Don Smith, Tony White, and Jim Henderson – are members of the AMA-chartered Upper Valley Fun Flyers Model Airplane Club, a Radio Control club in Piqua, Ohio.

