

# Model aircraft pilots take to skies at show

By Norson Fleck  
Special writer

Model aircraft enthusiasts turned North Farmington High School into a radio control air base July 15-16 when planes were demonstrated for the third annual model air show sponsored by Ribcrackers Radio Club of Livonia and the Farmington Area Jaycees.

The air show is associated with Farmington/Farmington Hills Founders Festival activities. It featured quarter-scale military aircraft, simulated air combat and a variety of model aircraft. Nearly 200 people participated both days.

"They put on a great show," said Ray Atwell of Farmington Hills. "When I was a kid, they didn't have these radio planes. That was long before power planes."

THE SHOW is presented to expose participants and viewers to all aspects of the sport. It is staged as a fund-raiser for Ribcrackers and the Jaycees, Ribcracker president Ernst Wendt said.

The planes are controlled by radio and are assigned various frequencies by the Federal Communications Commission.

"We encourage this type of hobby for younger kids, rather than something not as beneficial," Wendt said. "They get to interact with elders in a sport they both enjoy."

MILITARY AIRCRAFT such as the P-51 of World War II, the Tri-plane flown by the Red Baron, and the "Blue Angels" flyers were demonstrated.

A three-plane collision during air combat on July 15 was "no crash and burn" but did cause major damage to the models. All members of Ribcrackers are insured, Wendt said.

Aircraft entertainment peaked with demonstrations of odd-looking planes such as flying saucers, flying cars, a flying iron and the "Praying Mantis."

The flying witch "Hilda" flew in on her broomstick by creator Barry Killick, Ribcrackers member. Hilda wears orange and black socks, a black cape for wings with her broom as the ruler.

"Believe it or not, she's not my mother-in-law," Killick said. "It's awesome," said Greg Mudge, 14, of Farmington. "It's almost like a real air show."

"I like watching them do all the loops," said Teddy Winen, 10, of Royal Oak. "Yesterday, they had combat planes that collided. I thought that was neat."

RIBCRACKERS IS a non-profit organization that meets twice a month to enhance techniques in model aircraft. All members are part of a national organization called Academy of Model Aeronautics.

Amateurs are required to build their own model and buy a radio controller. The total start-up cost to fly is \$200 or \$150 for sail planes that are not radio operated, Wendt said.

ARF planes (Almost Ready to Fly planes) can be used for beginners and are essentially prebuilt planes with only the major components to assemble such as the wings.

Expensive aircraft such as pattern

planes cost as much as \$600 and are designed to fly precise maneuvers in pattern competitions by advanced flyers.

Everyone should take instruction before trying to control the model on their own, Wendt said. Ribcracker instruction is free.

AN INSTRUCTOR will first teach how to take the plane up and after several flights will teach flying techniques. The last and hardest instruction is the landing, Wendt said.

Farmington Area Jaycees provided concessions for the show. "The turn-out really exceeded our projections," Farmington Area Jaycees president John Solo said.

"I think the weather made it a nice day for this," said Bill McCarthy, Jaycees member. "Last year, it rained all day Sunday."

Swap Shop trade-and-sell booths were set up for hobbyists to swap plane parts and information. The event also included a drawing for an Eagle II model aircraft built by the Ribcracker team during the show. Building the model is designed to familiarize viewers with the process and raise aircraft interest throughout the audience.

Minors are allowed to join the Ribcrackers. A large number of retired participants are in the club, Wendt said.

"The sport has always attracted me," Wendt said. "But I was never able to do it when I was younger. I enjoy introducing it to my own kids. You don't have to be a kid to enjoy it."



DOUGLAS E. BUSALLA/staff photographer

Bob Outman of Greenville has a final word with his pilot before takeoff during the third annual model air show during the Founders Festival.

## Naming of new school postponed

Farmington school trustees will postpone naming the district's new elementary school until next month, after discussing several possible names July 10. "Challenger" and "Maple Hill" were the favorites among a list of nine offered this week, with the board leaning toward "Challenger Elementary."

This drew some groans from the audience, with resident Richard DeVries commenting: "I think the name's lousy. That's just about the worst name. It says nothing. It has no significance to the children."

The school, being built on 11 Mile east of Halsted Road, will be on a wooded lot next to the Hunt Club subdivision in Farmington Hills.

In addition to those mentioned above, other names being considered include: Maple Ridge, Birlar Hill, Sally Ride, Christa McAuliffe, Maple Woods, Maple View and Maple Dale.

The board solicited name suggestions from the community in May, then narrowed them down to their favorites.

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## Downtown newsletter coming

A downtown newsletter for shoppers will be out soon, with a logo asking you to "Find Yourself in Downtown Farmington."

The newsletter, part of a two-year promotional effort by the Downtown Development Authority, landlords and merchants, will spotlight downtown activities, profile local merchants and have regular news tidbits about the city's central business district.

"It's intended to let people know there are things going on in Farmington," said DDA director Wendy Sirip Sittsamer.

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