

Spirits History

Although the Club became an Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) chartered Club in 1965, there were a number of Spirits activities that preceded this period. When people with the same interests began to meet regularly and share interests and activities, an organization was born. At first, this group of modelers met with the McDonnell Club, which had a field supplied by their employer. These future "Spirits" members were allowed to fly with the McDonnell Club members with a permit issued by that Club. This didn't last long, as McDonnell informed them that their presence might void their insurance.

The Spirits became a Missouri not-for-profit corporation on Oct. 24, 1968.

While searching for a field of our own, we flew at various other sites. The northern area of St. Louis County had many large fields, some of which were suitable for flying R/C.

Some members participated in establishing Buder Park in South St. Louis County as an R/C flying site. In fact, it had many flying facilities – Control Line Circles; Free Flight; and the baseball diamonds at the end of the park. Today, it has paved runways for R/C flying.

AMA Charter and Club Activities

The Spirits soon decided to become an AMA Chartered Club. We have charter #396 and have re-registered every year since. As membership grew, we started to hold contests - racing with the little 'Top Dawgs' was one of the most popular. We expanded into pattern contests, scale contests, and other activities that could bring the members together such as Fun Flies.

It was about this time that the Spirits joined the GSLMA (Greater St. Louis Modeling Association). This organization meets monthly and plans activities that affect the entire area. Events can be scheduled so that they do not conflict. The Spirits also became a Missouri Not-For-Profit Corporation for the protection this offers.

Activities soon expanded with Mall Shows, Demonstrations, and Air Shows. An Annual Swap Meet has been developed jointly with the McDonnell Douglas R/C Flying Club. This Swap Meet is held early in the year (March), is very successful and typically has attendance of

over 600 modelers and interested spectators. Groups of Spirits members regularly become involved with various organizations such as the Boy Scouts or Cub Scouts and present an educational show or put on a flying demonstration/performance. Usually, several volunteers step forward to participate in these types of activities. These events have helped establish the Spirits' reputation for Service to the community.

Soon, club meetings could no longer be held at members' homes. The Club met at various places for the next few years in Community Rooms at various schools, banks and Libraries. The Spirits currently have monthly meetings at the Bridgeton Trails Branch County Library, located on McKelvey Road just south of St. Charles Rock Road.

Field History

Before finding a field, the members met at each other's homes and in the summer months, at whatever flying site we were allowed to use. Finally, in 1965, one of the members found a site on Creve Coeur Mill Road, adjacent to Creve Coeur Lake, and the rent for the five acres was within the club's means. The site was next to a well-traveled road and the north end of the field bordered Creve Coeur County Park. Exposure to the public proved very beneficial, as visitors to the park would stop and watch members flying. Many new members were recruited from these interested spectators.

In 1979, the Spirits were informed that the field we occupied was being sold for development as a golf driving range and the Club was given notice to leave. It was two years before the Spirits found another site. During that time we 'borrowed' two fields for our Warbirds Contests. The St. Peters Prop-Nuts and the East Side R/C Club graciously loaned their fields so the Spirits could keep this event going.

In 1980, one of the members learned that a site on Creve Coeur Mill road that had been used as a construction training school by the Associated General Contractors (AGC) of St. Louis was vacant. Friends of friends were contacted and finally permission was given to use the site with conditions. The major requirements were to clean off the brush and debris and keep it mowed. The site consisted of 40 acres of which 20 acres had to be brush-hogged and mowed several times before it began to look like models could take off. The purchase of a tractor with a mower and eventually our own brush hog almost wiped out the treasury, but the Spirits survived. Today

the Club owns three tractors, one purchased brand new, and several mowers.

The Club lost this flying site when a Hale Irwin Golf Driving Range was built on the property just north of the site. Thanks to the dedication of several of our members, another site was quickly developed. The new flying site was located east of Creve Coeur Lake on Morning Glory and looked like an extension of the park that abutted the west end of the field. Spectator benches, a large pavilion, gravel parking lot, fencing, trash barrels, and a picnic area added to the park-like atmosphere.

Once again, in 1999, we lost our flying site to the 9-hole expansion of Crystal Springs Quarry Golf Course and the addition of a driving range where our runway was located. A reward was offered to the member who found a new flying site. Many members searched for months, until one found a site. After months of acquiring permits and approvals, in 2000 we began development of the field, located off of Amrein Road and Greens Bottom Road in St. Charles County. This twelve-acre flying field is the best yet, with a 600-foot asphalt runway, paved pits and taxiways, a protected pilots' box, a large pavilion, spectator benches, and a portable restroom. It has a large gravel parking lot and access road. It also has designated remote areas for helicopter hovering practice and engine break-in. Development of a Control Line area is being considered.

Current Flying Activities

The Spirits have never had a closed contest. Contests are open to all current AMA members who are in good standing with the Spirits of St. Louis R/C Flying Club, Inc. Lots of contest/event activity takes place. On a yearly basis, the Spirits host a number of contests/events, including Fun Flies and racing events. Our annual Open House in September has always been a success. In 2002, the Spirits put on a very successful Air Show for a retired airline employees' reunion. We have been invited to do it again for coming reunions.

The Spirits originated the Warbirds Unlimited contest, a pylon race for W.W. II scale models in 1979. Several other Clubs in the country, with whom the Spirits have shared the original Warbirds rules, have copied and expanded the concept. The event is now enjoying wide spread popularity.

The Club offers one of the best Flight Instruction programs in the country. Qualified Flight Instructors are available almost every day of the week. Additional information can be obtained by contacting our Chief Flight Instructor. You can also contact an instructor by visiting our web site and going to the “Training Instructor Roster” link on the first page. Occasionally, we publish the list of instructors in the club newsletter. Aircraft are given a complete safety check along with construction tips for improving the aircraft. When the student completes the training, he/she receives a solo certificate and is allowed to fly on his or her own. Many former students are now instructors in this program.

Spirits Field is usually in use because the membership is so varied. Saturdays and Sundays bring out the weekend flyers, all day long. Throughout the week there are a variety of flyers - Shift workers, retirees, and students. When the weather is acceptable, there is someone flying most weekday mornings and late afternoons. Since the field runs east/west, and pilots face almost north (off by 18°) the sun is not an issue, except for an hour or so in the evening.

Other Facts

The Club still boasts many of its original members. Many of our members have more than ten years tenure. Some members compete internationally in the modeling world.

In 1989, the Club was asked to co-host the Scale Masters Finals with another Club, the St. Louis R/C Flying Association. Members of both Clubs formed a steering committee and planning was done to make this one of the best events held in the country. The committee gained permission to use nearby Arrowhead Airport as the contest site. Both Clubs cooperated to get the field mowed and cleaned up - a big job. 178 members from both Clubs were actively involved in working to make it a success.