

Palomar RC Flyers, Where Did We Come From?

Forward

Our president, Joe Buko asked me to write the history of Johnson Field. He thought that doing so would help other members appreciate and take care of what we now have. I agreed to do so (must have been a weak moment), but after thinking about it, realized that our members would be better served if they knew some of the things that lead up to Johnson Field. Why not start at the beginning?

Please realize that I have had to rely on old memories from an even older mind (and not just mine) to relate some of our early history. Having never been one to keep a journal to document my experiences (why would I want to think about certain things again), I just chalked them up as being “My tough luck” and went on.

Because of that, I have not included a lot of exact dates and realize that some of you might have a slightly different recollection of when things occurred. Some times the story will seem disjointed, but just keep reading and in a few paragraphs it will all make sense to you. Sorry about that, but that’s just the way my mind works.

Joe has been very patient with how long it has taken me to write this but our history is a long story. Many things have been left out that were only anecdotal. They would make a great story all by themselves but would make a long story even longer here and should be left for another time (by someone else hopefully).

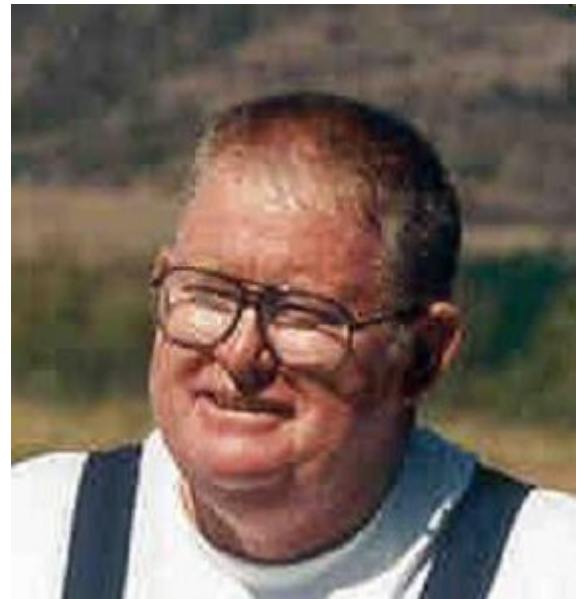
Any resemblance between this story and the actual facts are purely coincidental and some or all of the names might have been changed to protect the innocent. I have a funny feeling that spell-checker has misled me in the past so if you find any misspelled words or incorrect punctuation just keep it to yourself.

During my nine years as club president I wrote one hundred and eight President’s Columns for the newsletter, with some of them being almost as long as this is going to be and I apologize for not being able to quickly make a point.

Anyway, before you start reading you might want to first use the rest room and then pour yourself a big cup of coffee or tea, drink a soda or take a No-Doze tablet if you have to, to keep you awake as it’s going to be a long ride.

On the positive side by the time you read my name at the end of this intro you will already have read 451 words of this and you only have 9,503 to go.

Bob Lang



Our club started out in the San Marcos area around 1955, with a bunch of guys getting together to fly and enjoy each others company. They flew from property west of the old airport near Linda Vista in San Marcos. I’ll bet most of you didn’t know that San Marcos had an airport. Only remnants of it existed when I moved here in 1971. In fact, the last building standing was an old “Quonset Hut” that was used as a private hanger. Templeton Grading used it for many years as a work shed until they moved into a new building on Linda Vista. It was demolished to make room for the Fry’s Electronics store.

If you flew RC models in those days you were a genius. You had to be, to be able to figure out the schematic drawing that came with your new radio kit (Yes, I said kit) for your new rudder only, high wing trainer. There were other brands of radios back then and all were very primitive by today’s standards, but back then they were cutting edge stuff.

Today, servos move control surfaces. Back then they had rubber band escapements to do that and you only forgot to wind up that rubber band once. Engines were a long way from those we have now in both reliability and durability. But if your fuel tank lasted longer than your rubber band, your engine on that flight would miraculously run perfect and fly your airplane out of sight.

If you flew RC models in those days and could make two flights consecutively, without having to make field repairs to your models structure you had accomplished a minor miracle. Those that flew RC at that time were the pioneers of our hobby.

I wasn’t there with them, but over the last 26 years I have talked to a lot of our older members about our beginnings and their recollections are as close as I can get time-wise. Palomar RC Flyers was first

incorporated as a 501C-3 non-profit organization in October of 1968.

Our club has had many different flying sites over the years and many of our members were a force in the hobby industry. Granger and Larry Williams of Williams Brothers, John Gorham of RC helicopter fame, Mark Smith of Marks Models and Lou Proctor (remember the Antic Bipe) come to mind.

One of the earliest club fields was on the old Questhaven Road next to the power transmission lines west of where the San Marcos landfill is now. That worked out well until a member hung his plane in the wires and a hunter tried to shoot it loose but hit the wires instead of the plane. SDGE said that maybe they would be better off if we flew somewhere else.

Soon after, our club received permission from the owners of the Marron Ranch to grade a new field on their property. This site was just down the street across from the entrance to the landfill.

The Members graded about a 300-foot dirt strip across the foot of a ridge only four or five hundred feet from the road and built a small sunshade in the pit area. The four posts that held up that structure are incorporated in the awning at Johnson Field. We carried them with us to four other sites on their way to Johnson.

The runway was capped with decomposed granite and was very smooth but the small pebbles kicked up by our propellers punched holes in the undersides of mono-kote wings. At both ends of the runway the hill dropped off into the bottom of small draws and when the breeze come up in the afternoon we lost a lot of planes due to turbulence.

We started flying pylon races there in 1988 with a PVC pipe stuck in a chain-link cage for the cut judges to hide in on the middle of the runway for the west turn and a big eucalyptus tree about seven hundred feet east up on the next ridge. We stationed a member under that tree in a lawn chair, with his lunch and an air horn to signal a cut. That tree ate a lot of airplanes and the cage scarred a lot of our members. We had to stop racing when we run out of airplanes and cut judges. Actually, a lot of us thought that being in the cage during a race might have been safer than being a spectator.

One other thing that we did at that field because there were no houses anywhere in the valley was to have a night fly on New Years Eve where we could take off in one year and land in the next. This was possibly the earliest form of time travel?

During this time the club also had another field at Guajome Regional Park in Oceanside along the north side of highway 76, as in 100 feet from highway 76. It was a pretty small area with houses close by. Because of noise concerns the club limited it to a "four-stroke only"

field. Many of our members who lived close by made good use of it.

The San Luis Rey River borders the north end of the park. During the summer we would have float fly's from its bank. Lots of our members showed up for those if only to watch and enjoy the camaraderie.

We finally had to close it down when the state purchased the area where our field was located for the future widening of highway 76.

When Maxine and I joined the club in 1984 our club meetings were held in the conference room of the bank in Lake San Marcos. There was standing room only with twenty or so members in attendance. We had coffee and doughnuts for refreshments as we talked about club business and voted for "Model of the Month". If you won the raffle you got a ticket that was good for a \$3.00 discount at American Hobby in San Marcos. Second prize was \$1.50. The Williams Brothers would donate products also.

American Hobby was owned by Roy Stevens and was located on Rancho Santa Fe just south of Mission Road in the buildings next to the Jack-in-the-Box. Roy retired and sold the business to Bob and Carol Bethel. They relocated the shop into the little shopping center at San Marcos Blvd and Bent Street. Carol passed away from cancer a few years later and Bob closed the shop shortly thereafter and went to work as a salesman for a car dealer in Escondido. Bob joined Carol soon after. Bobs old Goldberg Eagle that proclaimed American Hobby on the fuselage in big red letters has occupied a spot in the rafters of my garage for many years.

Soon the club grew and we started using the old Williams Barn that was owned by the city and used as a recreation center. It was located off of Mission Road where the city hall now sits. The city decided to move the barn to Sycamore Park and refurbish it instead of demolishing it in 1993 to make room for the civic center. While they were doing this we held our meetings in an empty storefront across the parking lot from American Hobby that Bob arranged for us to use.

We flew at our Questhaven Field for about nine years until the property was sold for development in 1991. During this time a lot of members brought their old carpet for the pit area. The carpet was four inches thick in places, we latter found out, and if you weren't careful on a summer day you could fall asleep on it while you were waiting for your frequency pin. If we found one our members asleep we would all try to fly as quietly as possible so we wouldn't disturb their slumber, all the while keeping a close eye on them so they didn't get overdone, as in second degree sunburn. Soon, the smell of what then passed as sunscreen was as strong as the alcohol and nitro.

When we finally had to leave that field, we rented an old Case backhoe (to avoid heart attacks) and loaded all of the carpet into a rental truck (F-700 Ford stake bed) that our then president Bill Walker got from his work. He then drove it across the street and we paid to dump all six tons of it in the landfill. We stored our awning posts and lumber for awhile at John Olson's house who was our club secretary until we found our next field.

We put an ad in the newspaper offering a finder's fee if somebody could direct us to property where we could negotiate a lease agreement. Shortly, a guy in Ramona that said that he had a friend that would let us fly on his property contacted Bill. Bill went to meet with the owner and reported back to the board that we could establish a field in a flat valley on the east side of his property. The board then met him at the site the next weekend and signed papers and gave his friend a check for \$1,000.

The entrance to this property was located at the three-mile marker on the Old Julian Highway. The main road was in poor condition from past rains so we had to use an old truck trail around the hill to get to the field.

The next weekend we rented a Cat 12H motor grader and I started grading our new field. One of our club members, Ken Phelps, who was an airline pilot and a member of our board of directors volunteered to help and kept the fuel tank full of diesel fuel. We started Saturday morning and by Sunday night we were looking at a runway about 300 feet long and 40 feet wide, a parking lot for about thirty cars and some minor work on the entrance road. The next weekend eight or ten more of our members brought our sunshade materials from John's house up and by the end of the day sunburn was no longer a problem.

This field was a pretty long drive for a lot of our members that lived by the coast and the entrance road was a challenge. It was located in a nice quiet valley and those of us that packed a lunch and made a day out of it had a great time.

The field was not without its problems and challenges. Someone kept shooting the lock off of the gate and then using our frequency board for target practice. I had originally built three of them and the only survivor is now in use at Johnson field.

There was a big rock, (maybe big isn't a big enough word), a HUGH rock about twenty feet off the south end of the runway that vaporized a lot of airplanes on take-off if you didn't know what a rudder was for. And the big pine tree in the middle of our over-fly area would give you a crook in your neck from having to fly high all of the time. But the best part, was the landing approach between the pine trees at the other end of the runway. You sort of set up your approach above the

trees with the center of the runway and then throttled back and let your plane glide down between the trees where it would disappear for a couple of seconds or maybe a couple of hours. How long your plane disappeared was all relative to how well you judged your turn onto final. Being on final approach at our Ramona field could have meant either it was the end of your flight or the end of your airplane but those of us that flew there became better pilots and faster builders.

One day a fellow that we had thought was just a visitor showed up and watched us for awhile. One of our members went over to talk with him. It turned out that he was on vacation and just stopped by to look at his land and was kind of curious as to why we had built a model field on it. You guessed it; the owner of the adjacent property and his friend had scammed us for a thousand dollars. Remember I said he told us that "we could fly in the valley on the east-side of his property". I guess the one question we just didn't ask was did he mean inside or along side the east side of his property?

The real owner was a pretty nice guy and offered to let us stay on the property if we would pay the property taxes, but by this time we had obtained the use of the property on the east-side of I-5 across from the Del Mar Fairgrounds. At an emergency meeting of our board of directors it was decided to close our Ramona field after being there less than a year to make sure that we didn't become involved in any legal actions between the two property owners. The last time we heard from the actual owner he told us that Terry Hough (the guy that scammed us) was serving a little time in prison because as it turned out we weren't his only victims. Bill had been called to testify at his trial.

By this time, 1993, we had moved our monthly club meetings into the San Marcos Joslyn Senior Center. We used the small room on the south end of the building. Maxine volunteered to take care of the refreshments for our then president Jack Read and we again ended up with standing room only again.

The owner of the property in Del Mar, a Mr. Collins, where our new field was to be took Ken on a tour of it. All totaled it was about 700 acres most of which was planted in barley with the north end leased to a tomato grower. Mr. Collins had been an A4 Skyhawk pilot in the Viet Nam war and showed Ken a place next to the freeway that he thought would be an ideal place for our field. Ken suggested another area but in the end we had to settle for being way too close to the freeway.

The next weekend the club rented another Cat 12 and Ken and I had our new field graded by Sunday afternoon. We couldn't put our old sunshade up on this property because Mr. Collins was trying to eventually subdivide and develop it and didn't want to complicate his permit process with the city. That was OK with us as

we were already used to carrying sunscreen in our flight boxes. Those four awning posts would lie in the weeds for awhile.

Our new field had a lot of clay in the soil and the winter months caused us to lose a lot of flying time but it was a place to fly.

Soon Mr. Collins told us that we were going to have to stop flying from our new runway because the tomato grower had leased more of the property and we were right in the middle of it. But he said that he had another area that we could build a new field on. Guess where? That's right! Right where Ken had wanted to build it originally. It was a flat mesa just big enough for our needs that overlooked a small lake.

So, as before Ken and I started the next Saturday morning and by Sunday night we had 400 feet of dirt runway, a parking lot and an entrance road built. We were really starting to gel as a team building these things.

This was the first field we had where we built tables for the pit area. We also put up a safety net at the east-end of the pit area. The third frequency board was installed and by the end of the next Saturday we were flying from our new field

The one big problem with the runway was that dirt stuck anywhere your plane had exhaust oil on it. We finally got tired of the complaints from some of our members and came up with the idea of covering it with petro-mat. Our then president Jack Read found a company in LA with the best price and one of our retired members volunteered to go up during the next week to get it so we could install it the next Saturday.

We had a great turnout with about forty members showing up. We used about a bazillion 6" rain gutter spikes and washers to hold it down. One every foot along the edges of every strip and many others scattered over all of the rest of it. We spray painted a centerline and X's on the ends and had clean airplanes again.

The petro-mat solved one problem but created two more for us. The first one showed up on the first day. That was caused by some of our pilot's inability to flare on landing. Propellers slices.

We had to come up with a solution for this problem. We tried nailing down a patch but that caused problems because they seemed to always work loose. And those responsible for the damage generally didn't fix their mistake. Finally we started using Henry's roof patching mastic (the black stuff) in five-gallon buckets to glue on a patch. The problem with that was it became sticky during the heat of the day and if you stepped in it, it could follow you all the way home.

The other problem involved the ducks that populated the lake. They liked to sleep on the petro-mat

because it warmed the ground up during the day and they didn't get dirty either. The problem with the ducks was their lack of hygiene. You really had to watch where you were walking if you had to retrieve your plane from the west-end of the runway.

About 1993, the San Diego Association of Model Clubs arranged to have a mall show at the Plaza Camino Real shopping mall in Carlsbad. All of the nineteen clubs in the county were invited to be a part of it but few members from them attended. We took advantage of the opportunity and filled any unused space with our planes. Actually the show would have flopped if not for the Palomar Flyers showing up in force.

The next year the association abandoned it because of a disappointing turnout from the other clubs previously so we took it over as our own. We regularly had fifty or more planes (104 one year) displayed and nine or ten members answering questions from the shoppers. The mall shows over the next few years brought in quite a few members. Shoppers at the then North County Fair mall also saw a few of our shows thanks to Robert Peterson.

The San Diego County Airport Authority held an air fair at Palomar Airport in 1994 and they asked us to put on a short flying demonstration. This one-day show led to our clubs involvement in both the Ramona Air Fair and the Fallbrook Avocado festival.

The Ramona Air Fair started out as a way to say thanks to the local residents for supporting the Division of Forestry's firebase. It was envisioned as a walk around show with some of the local aircraft doing a few fly-bye's down the runway. The number of people that showed up overwhelmed all of the airport facilities.

I asked Maxine to attend the next years planning meetings for me as we had again been invited to be a part of the show. She reported that the city fathers would like to promote the air-fair but they had little money to do so. They asked us for a little help. We ended up having a vinyl banner made that was large enough to hang across highway 67 in the middle of town. Our members donated the money to pay for it at a couple of our club meetings. One year our members donated four or five hundred dollars to help defray the cost of fuel for some of the bigger full-scale planes that attended.

At the Ramona show we had to fly between the full-scale demonstrations. But at Fallbrook we pretty much are the show and except for a few flights in and out during the day we fly all day long.

We also flew for tens of thousands of military and civilian aviation enthusiasts at the Mira Mar Air Show. The Joint Military club at Mira Mar invited members from all of the clubs to participate in the static display. Again Palomar populated the static display and

many of our members flew during the flight demonstrations.

The Mira Mar Air Show is the second largest air show, attendance wise, in the world. Every year well over 100,000 people a day attend the Saturday and Sunday show. Fridays show is only for the military personnel and their families and civilians that work on the base. The Paris Air Show is the largest.

One year I actually opened the show on a Saturday morning as the main announcer because the model flight demonstrations were first on the program as the stands were filling up. I had to use a walky-talky and a pair of binoculars as the nerve center of the show was half way down the runway from where we flew and the main runway is about two miles long. That was an experience that I will never forget but is a story for another time.

During our stay at the Del Mar property, we started looking for a place for a second field. One of our members, Don Erbe negotiated with the Deutsche Company the use of about seven acres of their land on the north side of the San Luis Rey River adjacent to the Oceanside Airport.

This property had many loads of truck dumped dirt covering a lot of it. We rented a Cat 950 loader; a 12-G motor grader; a vibratory roller and a water truck for this field as all of the stockpiled dirt had to be processed and compacted. Larry McDougal ran the loader, Charles Lewis and George Johnson drove the water truck, Cliff Gates and Joe Whitley ran the roller and I ran the grader.

We started Saturday morning and were done Sunday afternoon. We installed pilot's fences, had a portable toilet delivered and then we were in business.

The property was located at the foot of a hill that had a water reservoir on top of it so we had a readymade access road to the field. The only problem with the property was that you had to drive to the north side of the runway past a drainage ditch and while looking for model airplanes on final, cross to the south of the runway to get to the pit area.

We were almost ready to petro-mat this field when the vandalism started. They ran completely over our portable toilet (that cost us \$520). They also chopped a hole in the door of a walk in truck box that Don Erbe had given us when he closed down his wrecking yard and cabled the door. They stole a riding lawn mower that a couple of our members (Robert Farquar and Ray Perkett) had refurbished for our future use. That was bad enough but somebody liked to spin doughnuts with a car on Friday nights on our runway.

We hadn't had the Oceanside facility very long when one of our members, I won't tell you his name, went to the Del Mar field on a Sunday in 1996 and flew

a plane that we later measured at 103 db. The problem with that was that he flew it at 6:30 am and woke up the neighbors that were located about 1,100 feet to the south of us. At that time of the morning there was no freeway noise to cover the sound of his plane. The neighbors filed a complaint with the city. This started a chain of events that eventually forced us to lose the Del Mar field as a flying site.

When we had to leave the Del Mar property we lost 180 members that lived as far away as San Diego. They didn't like the dirt runway or the long drive to Oceanside to fly.

We made good use of the Oceanside field before the property was sold. We started having a monthly fun-fly and started what we named the Palomar RC Flyer's Racing Association.

Cliff Gates and Joe Whitley were our fun fly chairmen. They would develop new event ideas during the month so our pilots were never bored. The problem with this was that because they had so much practice developing our events they had a tendency to win the contest. I caught on to this pretty quick so every time they set up for the next event I would have them move a turn pylon or add an extra maneuver just to give everyone the same chance to win. Those members who participated became better pilots' and had fun in the process.

One day while flying, I started flying laps around our portable toilet at the north end of the runway and a fire hydrant at the other end with my Sig Kadet Seniorita. About that time Charles Lewis showed up and I asked him to try a few laps. Even though he was new to the hobby he got a big smile on his face and said that doing that was a lot of fun.

At the next board meeting I told the members that we were going to start racing once a month and Dave Truax offered to help me build the turn lights. We built two wooden boxes that held three automobile head lights, relays and garden tractor batteries and assembled cables that we found in the old surplus store in Escondido. We also had to make switches for the cut judges. I think the pylon lights still exist in the storage bin at Johnson field.

We used the AMA rules for the quickie-500 races and we started a sportsman class using trainer planes as an entry class. We could only fly three planes at a time because our cables only had three wires with a shield, which we used as the common wire so we only had three switches. On a good day we could get twenty to twenty five pilots to show up from all over San Diego. We gave out brass plaques to the winners that they could be fastened to their flight boxes.

We also had a "Sportsman Class" where we used high wing trainer planes powered with the same .40

size engines used in the Q-500 class. Our sportsman class usually had the bigger turnout. It was a way to put your old trainer plane to good use after you learned to fly and had graduated to higher performance aircraft. And most of all, it was a lot of fun.

One day in 1997, I got a call from a member of the Bonsall Flyers club. He was a volunteer sheriff and had been involved in recovering a lot of stripped stolen cars from a property east of I-15. He told me that the property was too big for their club but was sure that with the sheriff's help our club could acquire the use of it. I enlisted Tom Minegar to negotiate with the owner and after a couple of telephone calls had the owners' blessings and a property use agreement on the way to us.

The property had become a public nuisance with an absentee owner over the years. There were many stripped cars and piles of trash all over the 100 acres. There was also a thriving drug lab in the creek on the east side of the property that took up a lot of the sheriffs' time. The county had stepped in to clean up the trash and the cars with a bill for about \$10,000.00 going to the owner. Our part of the deal would be to maintain a presence on the property and keep it mowed.

The first thing we had to do for the owner was to install a gate at the entrance to the property and keep it locked. He was afraid for the safety of a member that might be out there by himself and to keep people from sneaking in and dumping their trash (old habits are hard to break) so we had to agree to lock the gate behind us.

Then member, Larry McDougle, made arrangements for us to use the facilities of a scrap yard in Vista to build the gate. The two brothers that owned the yard, Jack and Joe Lee (that's Top Fuel driver, Smokin Joe Lee, for those of you that were drag racers back in the day) donated the material and the use of a welder. Larry was the welder and I was the gopher. Dave Truax also helped out. It took us two Saturdays to build it.

We decided to make it out of two different sizes of drill casing as they had a wall thickness of a half-inch. We figured that our members wouldn't be able to break it and even if it never received another coat of paint it wouldn't rust away during our lifetime. It weighs over 1,000 lbs. and is set in five cubic yards of concrete. Joe even hauled it out to the field on a Saturday morning for us.

We rented Cat D-6 so I could remove about a hundred and fifty dead orange trees where we would build our facility.

The next weekend we rented another Cat 12-G blade and I got an early start on Saturday and finished in the dark Sunday night. We didn't move any dirt; I just followed the contour of the existing ground. That left about four feet of dip in a 600' runway but it was done.

The next weekend we had a work party and put down petro-mat again.

During the time we were building the gate and grading for our runway and pit area, one of our senior members, George Johnson who was 76 years old at the time (remember our water truck driver from the Oceanside field) had been retrieving trash that the county had overlooked. He had asked me to get him a large roll-on/roll-off dumpster that he could put it in. George was an amazing man for his age. I called the trash company to find out about the bill and they said that the dumpster weighed ten tons.

At the next board meeting we named our new facility "Johnson Field" in George's honor. He took it upon himself to patrol the property when we started to have a vandal problem and he spent many nights by himself waiting and watching. That old man turned out to be one of the best friends that I ever had. It was a sad day when we learned that he had terminal prostate cancer. George lived just long enough to attend our first "Top Dawg Scale Fly-in" in 1998. His wife Elizabeth brought him to the field wrapped in a blanket. He sat next to me as I announced the event and cried as he saw how well his idea had turned out.

Jerry Topel called some of his friends in the hobby industry and we had another big pile of raffle prizes for that event. We decided to through in a RC swap meet for good measure that was well attended. Ron Peterka volunteered to be our contest director and the rest is history. We had almost 1,000 spectators and over fifty pilots that year. In a few months George was gone but his name is still on the front gate.

For a couple of years we had two flying fields as we were still using the Oceanside property. Then the owner passed away and his son sold all of his dad's properties in Southern California. Mr. Deutsche owned land at every airport in Southern California. His business at the Oceanside Airport, Deutsche Electronics, was the largest employer in Oceanside.

The new owners let us continue using the property on a month by month basis. About this time the city decided to put a bridge over the river so our neighbors to the east of us would have a second road for fire and ambulance access. Once it was completed we had to shut down the field because the road went right through our over-fly area and wrapped around the west end to the new bridge.

By this time most of our members had migrated to Johnson Field anyway so we picked up our flight stations and two of the storage containers we now have at Johnson Field along with a bunch of telephone poles SDGE donated to us and left. By this time we had become better than Bedouins at moving. We could just appear out of nowhere and unroll a new place to fly and

then later disappear as if by magic only to reappear somewhere else.

We had been at Johnson Field for awhile when George Dawe told me that he thought that we should pave the runway. I asked him if he had a plan to pay for it that didn't involve splitting the membership into groups of two or three and making withdrawals from local 7-Eleven stores. He started our new runway fund with a donation of \$10,000. The club could afford the balance of the costs and soon we were ordering equipment again.

This time we decided to eliminate that dip in the runway. We rented a Cat 613 self-loading scraper, another D-6 dozer, a vibratory roller and a water truck.

Our then vice president Mike Stevens volunteered to run the D-6 while I ran the 613. I can't remember who drove our water truck or the roller, but Sunday night 4,400 cubic yards of dirt that we removed from the over-fly area, now filled in that dip.

The next weekend we rented another Cat-12 grader and completed the finish grading for our new paving. Mike decided that the pit area needed to be paved also, but that wasn't in our budget, so he along with Harry Fletter and Larry Noble donated the extra \$1,000.00 for grading and paving. George Weir Company from Escondido put down 625 tons of asphalt during the next week and we were in business the next weekend. Altogether we spent just short of \$22,000.00 for our new runway and pit area.

Mike and I designed and built the pilot's fence over a couple of weekends in my garage and trucked it to the field where our members helped set it in concrete.

We had to stripe the centerline and X the ends of the runway. A work party was scheduled for the middle of the week. A few of our senior members showed up to help paint it but it soon became apparent that they were the only ones there. This all happened during the summer months and it was very hot out on that new blacktop.

Soon after they had started painting other members started to show up, not to help but to fly. It took our small crew most of the day to do a two hour job because every time someone would ask how long they were going to be, they just painted that much slower until all of our pilots had given up and went home. Those of you that wanted to fly that day now know why you didn't. A little teamwork always gets things done sooner.

We had purchased an old Ford tractor (like 1939 old) and a rotary mower to keep the property from reverting back to its former appearance. Jack Dedrick adopted it as his own and kept the property mowed for the owner for many years.

We couldn't figure out why the tractor had low oil pressure so we decided to take it apart and look inside. We needed to be out of the dirt to do this so we decided to use the old cow barn by the driveway. It didn't have a complete roof or doors and it was only standing by force of habit. We sealed off the main door with plywood and went to work. We blocked the tractor up with the front wheels off the ground and removed the front axle and wheels and then unbolted the engine and with the help of a couple of our members from the RC field lifted the engine out and onto the floor. We turned it upside down and took off the oil pan and then removed the rod and main caps. The bearings looked good so we put it back together after installing a new oil pump along with a new clutch and started mowing again. Later Jack decided that the oil pressure was caused by something that had to be corrected, so apart it came again with the help of Larry Hufford and Herb Hayes. This time they did the one thing that we hadn't done the first time. They used Plasti-Guage to check the bearing clearances. Turned out that the tractor had stock bearings but a .010" under crank. With those clearances you can see that there might be low oil pressure.

During our tractor rebuild in the barn Tom Minegar stopped by to see how we were doing. He said, "Bob you know this old barn has possibilities". Over the next few weeks as if by magic, the old barn started to heel itself. It was amazing. It seems that Tom had been taking a couple of days off from work every week and was secretly rebuilding the old barn. He braced up what was left of the old roof rafters, sheeted it with plywood and installed the green rolled roofing. Tom built a new front door and replaced the old walk-in door and jam with a new one from Home Depot. He christened the rebuilt structure with a new wind sock on the ridge of the roof above the front door. The doors had locks on them and we used the now new old barn for storage for many years. Actually, Tom used to make me a little nervous while he was working on that roof. I had bad dreams of the whole thing collapsing with him on it.

We had moved the pylon races and fun-fly's to Johnson Field when we first acquired the property. But we thought that with our new runway it was time to do something for the community. It was suggested that we might get involved with the San Diego Aerospace museum in their summer camp program for kids. Gary Thompson volunteered to head up our efforts and soon RC modeling and the Palomar RC Flyers became a part of their program. The museum would enroll the kids and we would host them for a day at Johnson Field that we named "Flights of Fancy". The museum even gave us part of the enrollment fee so we always broke even or made a little money. This was a popular event with our members and we never lacked manpower.

We limited the event to fifty kids when we started out. We divided them into four groups, which we rotated through four different classes. They all got to fly our trainer planes on a buddy box, built a Delta Dart rubber powered plane under the supervision of our members, used our computer flight simulators and installed a radio system in a mock-up of a trainer plane. We even treated them and their parents to lunch that we cooked for everybody.

Curtis Kitteringham organized the RC flying portion of our program every year and maintained our fleet of trainer planes. While some of our instructors were flying with the kids another group of our members would be in the pits fueling, charging batteries and doing minor maintenance on the planes for the next flight. I don't think that we ever had less than thirty-five members helping out at this event.

The highlight of the day was a contest to see whose Delta Dart could fly farthest. Gary would take the kids to the west end of the runway where they would all launch them at the same time. Many flew the entire length of the runway. The winner would receive a RC plane kit. Many of the kids returned the following year.

The club had a tradition of turning the December club meeting into a Christmas Party. Maxine made all of the spare-ribs, chicken and side dishes in her kitchen and we ordered barbecued beef and pork roasts from the then Barbecue Pit restaurant in San Marcos.

When the city had finished relocating the old barn to Walnut Park, Maxine and I decided that we would host a sit down dinner there for our members and their families. We had to limit the size of the dinner to one hundred and fifty people because of fire regulations. There were never any empty seats. We did this for nine years.

Every month during the year we held back 15% of our monthly raffle money. This we spent for our December raffle. Hobby People would donate to the raffle also. We always ended up with a pile of prizes about three tables long. There was always six to nine thousand dollars in prizes.

We drew the winners from the losing tickets of the years-previous club meetings. That helped our monthly raffles because every ticket you purchased at the monthly meetings had two chances to win. It usually took about an hour to give away all of those prizes because of the thousands of ticket stubs brought to that meeting.

Our then AMA District X Vice President Richard Hanson used to like to attend our Christmas dinners and events when he could. He made a special trip each year from his home in Scottsdale Arizona just to be there. One year after dinner he asked if he could give a little speech to our members. He usually did every

time he attended anyway but this time turned out to be special for our club.

During the nine years that I was president, it seemed to me that we should always do more to increase our clubs exposure to the general public. Doing so put Palomar RC Flyers in a favorable light with the city and county governments which might help us if we had to move again and also increase our membership. Two of those years Palomar RC Flyers was the largest club in the United States with over four hundred and twenty five members.

At our second "Top Dawg" scale fly-in the county of San Diego presented a proclamation to us praising the clubs community involvement. County supervisor Bill Horn sent his personal secretary to "Top Dawg" to make the presentation. That was one of the easiest things that I did while I was president. It only took two telephone calls during my lunch break while I was at work to make that happen.

During those years we used to schedule fifteen or more events. Those event included our participation at the Ramona and Fallbrook air shows, the mall show, helicopter fun-fly, Flights of Fancy, pylon racing every other month, fun-fly's, RC Combat and Top Dawg. We kept our members pretty busy.

Anyway, Richard went on explain to us about the AMA's Leader Club Program. It rewards clubs for community involvement and promoting model aviation. His question to me was "Did we know about it"? I told him that we had been too busy but we would get around to it.

Richard told all of us that he had given a presentation at the last AMA Executive Board meeting about our club. After hearing what we were doing in our community they moved that the Palomar RC Flyers had exceeded the requirements for the leadership program for several years and bestowed their highest award on us, the "Award of Excellence". Soon thereafter our club shirts proclaimed this on the back below the club logo.

Shortly after our new runway at Johnson Field was completed we started flying RC Combat. I asked George Dawe to be our first combat chairman. There were twenty-six pilots at our first event. Somehow our December event ended up as the last one in the country every year. That meant that any pilots that were seriously competing for the national championship had to attend. We had entrants at our December Classic from the mid-west and as far away as Hawaii. Jim and Janet Cole had taken over as contest directors by this time and did an outstanding job for a number of years. Jim arranged for the raffle prizes and ran the event and Janet kept the scoring current. Maxine always provided lunch for the pilots.

During this time many of our members started to fly helicopters. We graded a hover area outside of the west end of our pit area for training and our "Plank" pilots would make time for them to fly using the runway. Soon, it became apparent that we needed a separate area for our helicopter pilots as there were becoming too many of them and trouble was brewing at the RC field. So we decided to put up another sunshade at the south end of the property.

At this time we also decided to split the frequencies and give channels 55 through 60 to the helicopter pilots. To make this work our members approved a plan that would have the club pay for new crystals for our members that would be affected by the change. The bill for all of this was over three thousand dollars and our then member Gary Hardwick installed all of them for our members checking for compatibility with a frequency scanner. Peace returned to Johnson Field once again.

I asked Augusto Arravallo to be our first helicopter chairman. He now owns Carbon Extreme, Inc. and produces the Avant line of RC helicopters in Las Vegas, Nevada.

We decided to have a helicopter fly-in at the end of the summer. Augusto knew a lot of factory pilots around the country from attending other events so he started to make calls to their sponsors. The result was many factory pilots and a big pile of raffle prizes. We had almost 60 pilots at our first one and participation stayed at or above that for many years.

In 2003, Hirobo Helicopters marketing director, Jeff Green heard about our fun-fly and asked if we would be interested in holding the Hirobo Cup at Johnson Field. They didn't have to ask us twice.

The Hirobo Cup was a payback event for all of their customers who flew Hirobo helicopters. Our members timed the pilots and prizes were given for total flying time at the event. We had ten flight stations operating which stretched from the east-end of the RC runway to the west end and south to the helicopter area. We rented two pick-up trucks to shuttle pilots to the flight stations which our members took shifts as drivers.

The Hirobo Cup was a one-day event that required a lot of club participation and made a little money for the club. Our regular helicopter fun-fly required less help but made as much as forty five hundred dollars a year for us. Jeff said that he would like to bring the event back to Johnson Field the next year. He told us that ours was their greatest ever. But soon corporate decisions from their parent company, Model Rectifier Corporation, eliminated the Hirobo Cup event. Isn't that what your supposed to do? Save the best for last! Actually, in 2005 they restarted the Hirobo Cup

with one event in the US and one or two in other countries each year.

That was a big disappointment to us because we were already planning for the next one and had some ideas that would have made the event even better. So we refocused our energies on our helicopter fun-fly that continues to this day.

A couple of our members, Charles Mackey and Bill Netzeband, who are now AMA Hall of Fame members, were life long control-line pilots. They asked if a control-line circle could be built between the helicopter area and the power lines west of the runway. So we built another awning and graded a circle big enough for sixty-foot lines and placed petro-mat on part of it for the take-off and landing area.

Charles and Bill asked a bunch of their fellow control-line friends to try out our new venue. About a dozen of them came from all over Southern California, but nobody had informed them about our dB limits. They insisted that they couldn't fly airplanes with mufflers so we had to insist that they wouldn't fly at our field.

Charles and Bill flew with mufflers but these guys couldn't. What was that about not being able to teach old dogs new tricks? We ended up with four or five members flying control-line although infrequently. The circle became overgrown with weeds and was eventually abandoned.

Some of our helicopter pilots used to bring their RC cars to the field and run them through the parking lot and up and down the entrance road to the helicopter field. South of the helicopter field was a pretty large area that up to now was unused.

Our property owner had asked us to plant as many acres of the property as we could in winter wheat to help him out with county zoning restrictions. His goal was to eventually develop the property. He said that he would buy all of the seed and rent the equipment if we would do the work. One of our then members, Randy Mohlo, a flower grower from Escondido, made arrangements to borrow a harrow from the Vista Steam Museum that our tractor could pull to cover the seed.

We organized a work party on a Saturday with about twenty-five of our members. If you were a farmer with the right equipment it would only take you to do what took twenty-five of us to do. We couldn't come up with a seeder that could be mounted to the back of the tractor and driven by the Power take off. So we bought four or five commercial hand operated seed broadcasters and those twenty-five members placed a ton of seed over eleven acres by hand.

We needed to disc ahead of the planting so Randy hauled his disc to the field. We rented another Cat motor grader to pull it. Generally real farmers pull a

disc with a tracked tractor but I had an idea. The disking was finished early, about 2:00 PM, so I headed over to that area by the helicopter field and spent the rest of the day leveling out a place for another venue that only I knew about. The motor grader was rented on a day by day basis and I was going to see that our property owner got his monies worth, about three more hours.

The next weekend I was happy to see that my plan was working. The helicopter flyers had stumbled onto the newly cleared area and were running their RC cars there. The plan was working (self-indoctrination), but for now the idea would have to wait until the next year when the club coffers had refilled.

The Board of Directors was slowly brought up to speed through subtle hints and begging about the possibility of building a RC car track. They eventually agreed that the club had a number of members with kids that liked to play with their RC cars and that would be a good idea. Robert Wylie and Glen Pohly kept all of our members that helped with the construction organized.

We started out wanting to just make a tri-oval surrounded by a crash wall. One thing lead to another and before we knew it we had incorporated and off-road track into the infield, built a two story drivers stand with the office/race control on the east end of the lower level and a concession stand at the other end. We surrounded the whole thing with a chain link safety fence for the spectators and built tables for the pit areas. For a couple of months ours was the largest track in Southern California.

The races were computer controlled with software that counted every cars laps, calculated race position and made the race matrix. Gary Thompson volunteered to handle the smart end of the operation while I took care of driver sign-ups and the announcing.

Turned out that part of the announcer's duties was settling driver disputes, of which there were many. It's funny how a bunch of normal men, of all ages, all gravitate to the lowest common denominator while competing at RC car races. As in twelve year olds!

We advertised the opening of the track with flyers in the hobby shops and on the clubs web site. The races started out with about sixty drivers in many classes and continued to be well attended and the club made a pretty good profit.

About this time I was starting to have a problem with one of our car guys. He had joined the club because of the track and was a big help building it. The problem was that he started thinking that it was his. He wanted it his way, but he wasn't at Burger King and couldn't have it his way.

Shortly thereafter he started trying to get our other members working on the construction of the track into trouble with me by making stuff up about them.

This all came to a head one day when I confronted him with those members. This really ticked him off. I informed him that it was going to be our way or the highway for him. He decided to take the highway, but unfortunately the highway that he took lead down to the county offices by way of a telephone call.

That was the beginning of the end for the car track and the start of a lot of trouble with the county. It was also the last year for me as president as a bout with congestive heart failure had reduced my enthusiasm for the job. George Dawe became president the following year and spent most of it getting us straight with the county. The club owes George a lot of thanks for that.

Eventually, the track had to be closed because of a dubious break-in that resulted in the loss of our \$2,300 timing system. It was fun while it lasted though.

That pretty much brings us up to the present time. During the last dozen or so years a lot of our members have spent a lot of time building and maintaining Johnson Field. Over a hundred and seventy five of them actually helped during my time as president. Every one of them played an integral part in what Johnson Field grew into. Some did more than others, but all who volunteered to help contributed something to the end result. This can be said about every field the club has ever had.

Palomar RC Flyers is an organization consisting of a lot of members who are givers with very few takers. It has been one of the bright spots in a lot of our Member's lives, Maxine and I included. In our twenty-six years as a Palomar Flyer, we have watched as a couple thousand members cycled through. Not to take anything away from anyone of them, three stand out in my mind as examples for all of the rest. They were George Johnson, Joe Phelan and Herb Hayes.

These three guys all had the same enduring quality that all club presidents look for. They were always there! No matter where we were or what we were doing, other than for health issues, they were always there. They weren't club officers or board members. They weren't even committee chairmen, contest directors or instructors, but they all knew that they could get more out of the club if they put more into it.

Finally, I would like to urge all of our members to support the efforts of the board of directors when you can and tell them when you think they are wrong. They will appreciate your input, I know that I did. But I have to tell you that although I wouldn't take a million dollars for the experience of being president of the Palomar RC Flyers for as long as I was, you couldn't pay me a million to do it again. See you at the Field.

Bob Lang - 2010