



# The History and Inception of the Spring Area Radio Kontrol Society

## I. Introduction

The Spring Area Radio Kontrol Society, commonly known as SPARKS, Inc., is a well-established radio control (RC) airplane club based in the Spring, Texas area. Since its inception, SPARKS has been a hub for RC aviation enthusiasts, providing a community where members can share their passion for building and flying model aircraft. The club has a rich history, rooted in a commitment to the promotion and enjoyment of RC flying.

## II. Inception of SPARKS, Inc.

SPARKS was founded in the early 1970s by a group of RC aviation enthusiasts in the Spring area, a northern suburb of Houston, Texas. The founders shared a common passion for building and flying model airplanes and sought to create a formal organization where they could regularly meet, exchange ideas, and fly their models in a safe and supportive environment.

The club was officially chartered by the Academy of Model Aeronautics in 1986 as the Spring Area Radio Kontrol Society reflecting its commitment to being a structured and organized entity. The acronym "SPARKS" cleverly represents both the excitement of the hobby and the geographical area the club serves.

## III. Early Years and Growth

In its early years, SPARKS operated with a small but dedicated group of members. The club's first flying site was a modest open field near Tomball off Telge Road and Boudreaux Road, where members would gather to fly their aircraft and hold informal meetings. Despite its humble beginnings, SPARKS quickly became known in the local RC community for its welcoming atmosphere and the skill level of its members.

As the popularity of RC flying grew in the 1980s and 1990s, SPARKS saw an increase in membership. The club began to attract a diverse group of individuals, ranging from novice flyers to experienced builders and pilots. This growth led to the need for a more formal structure, including the establishment of a non-profit corporation in 1989, regular meetings, and official events.

## IV. Development of Facilities

One of the significant milestones in SPARKS' history was the acquisition of a dedicated flying field. Recognizing the need for a permanent and suitable location to accommodate its growing membership, the club worked tirelessly to secure land where members could fly safely and without interruption. Partnering with Harris County, the establishment of the SPARKS flying

field at A.D. Dyess Park marked a turning point in the club's history, providing a home base for its activities.

The field was gradually developed to include necessary amenities such as a shelter, restroom facilities, asphalt runway, pit areas, and safety fences. These enhancements not only improved the flying experience but also demonstrated SPARKS' commitment to maintaining high standards of safety and organization. In 2022, SPARKS added a drone racing course and opened our membership to those with a special interest in rotary-wing aircraft. In 2023 SPARKS hosted its first national drone racing event with enthusiasts coming from across the nation for a three-day event.

SPARKS is now in the planning stages to develop a recently acquired eight-acre area adjacent to the field. This space is being considered for a drone and 3D flight training area, a helicopter pad, a full-size control line circle and additional parking and shelter facilities.

## **V. Community Engagement and Events**

Throughout its history, SPARKS has been actively involved in promoting RC aviation within the local community. The club regularly hosts events such as fun flies, competitions, and open houses, where members of the public can experience the thrill of RC flying firsthand. These events have helped raise awareness of the hobby and attract new members to the club.

One of the club's signature events is its annual Vintage Fun Fly show, where SPARKS members showcase their most impressive vintage aircraft and flying skills. This event often features demonstrations of various RC aircraft, including scale models, aerobatic planes, and even ducted-fan models. The air show has become a highlight of the local RC calendar, drawing spectators and participants from across the region.

SPARKS public spirit and altruism is exhibited by its annual contributions to the Toy for Tots campaign, various no-kill animal shelters, Meals on Wheels, and other local clubs who have suffered loss of their fields or support equipment due to storms, theft, or vandalism.

## **VI. Education and Mentorship**

Education has always been a core value of SPARKS. The club offers mentorship and training programs for new members, helping them develop their flying skills and learn the intricacies of building and maintaining RC aircraft. Experienced members often volunteer their time to teach newcomers, fostering a culture of learning and camaraderie within the club. SPARKS offers introductory programs for Cub Scouts. SPARKS participates in several Airforce and Space Force Junior ROTC programs throughout the area by supporting their aviation training programs and engaging in indoor flying competitions.

SPARKS also promotes safety in RC flying, with a strong emphasis on following the guidelines set by the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA), the national organization for model aviation

in the United States. The club's commitment to safety is reflected in its structured flying sessions, safety briefings, and adherence to AMA regulations.

## **VII. Legacy and Future**

As SPARKS approaches five decades of existence, it remains a vibrant and active part of the RC aviation community. The club's legacy is built on its dedication to the hobby, its commitment to safety and education, and its role in bringing together RC enthusiasts of all ages and skill levels.

Looking to the future, SPARKS continues to evolve with the hobby, embracing new technologies such as electric-powered aircraft, drones, first-person-view flying, and advanced telemetry systems. The club is committed to staying at the forefront of RC aviation while maintaining the traditions and values that have defined it since its inception. For its commitment to excellence in 2021, SPARKS was awarded the honor of Gold Leader Club by the Academy of Model Aviation.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

The Spring Area Radio Kontrol Society, or SPARKS, Inc., has a storied history that reflects the growth and evolution of RC aviation. From its humble beginnings in the 1970s to its current status as a well-respected and established club, SPARKS has always been a place where RC enthusiasts can come together to share their passion. As the club continues to thrive with more than 100 members, it remains dedicated to promoting the joys of RC flying and supporting the next generation of aviators.