

In This Issue:

- From the President
- Club Officer Election
- Indoor Flying
- Iowa City Swap Meet
- Astro-Hog History



AMA CLUB #792

CLUB CALENDAR

Tuesday, December 16th — Christmas Meeting at 6PM at The OP on University Avenue.
No Business Meeting this month

January 17th & 18th — Newton Indoor Fun Fly (NIFF) — 9AM to 4PM at the Iowa State Fairgrounds in Des Moines

Tuesday, January 27th — Club Meeting at 7PM at The OP on University Avenue. Come early for dinner at 6PM
Planning for 2026

Saturday, January 31st — Iowa City Swap Meet — 9AM to 1PM at the National Guard Armory

Tuesday, February 24th — Club Meeting at 7PM at The OP on University Avenue. Come early for dinner at 6PM
2026 Budget

BLACK HAWK R/C PILOTS - DECEMBER 2025

From the President — The next club meeting is on Tuesday, December 16th at 6pm at **The Other Place** on University Ave in Cedar Falls. This is our annual Christmas get together with no business meeting.

Election Results—The club officers for 2026 are:
Neal Leeper—President
Dave Ramsey— Vice-President
Wil Breu—Treasurer
Justin Witt—Safety Officer
Lorne Bidwell—Field Marshall

The results from the ballot questions are on the last page of this newsletter.

Indoor Flying—The Central Iowa Aeromodelers (Ames, IA) are sponsoring the Newton Indoor Fun Fly (NIFF) in January. The event is held in the Knapp Animal Learning Center on the Iowa State Fairgrounds. It's a large space (180' x 96') with a 22' ceiling. It's the only AMA sanctioned indoor event in the area this winter.

Iowa City Swap Meet—The 23rd Annual Swap Meet will be

held in the Iowa National Guard Armory. Admission is \$6. See our webpage for more information.

The Evolution & Legacy of the Astro-Hog — The Astro-Hog stands as a pivotal model in the history of radio-controlled planes. Renowned for revolutionizing R/C aerobatics, it was the first successful low-wing, aileron-controlled aircraft in the hobby. While advancements have since surpassed it in pattern competition, the Astro-Hog remains celebrated for its stability and forgiving flight characteristics, making it a favorite among pilots seeking both performance and ease of handling.

The State of R/C Flying in the 1950s—To appreciate the impact of the Astro-Hog, we need to go back to R/C flying in 1955. At that time, radio systems typically operated on a single channel, providing only rudder control. Engines lacked throttles, meaning pilots flew until they ran out of fuel, then dead stick landed.

(Continued on page 2)

Club Meetings

The winter club meetings are at 7PM at **The Other Place** on University Ave in Cedar Falls. Come for dinner at 6PM. Guests are always welcome.



R/C Innovation thrived at legendary clubs like the Los Angeles Radio Kontrollers (LARK's). The club's members made significant advancements in the hobby. The club's membership list in the 1960s read like a "Who's Who" of model aviation.

The Smog Hog: A Precursor — In 1956 LARK member Howard Bonner designed a high-wing airplane featuring a remote throttle with two settings—idle and full speed—and fitted it with a newly developed five-channel "reed" radio system. The servos responded to push-button commands, pulsing between full deflection and neutral positions. This aircraft, capable of straight and level flight when controls were neutral, was named the "Smog Hog", so named because it flew in the smoggy Los Angeles air and tended to hog the airspace with its improved flight response and throttle control. It dominated the 1956 AMA National Aeromodeling Championships (NATS), capturing the top five positions in the multi-control category.



The Development of the Astro-Hog — Inspired by this success, Fred Dunn, another LARK member, set out to design a low-wing R/C airplane, something that had never been successfully done. His initial prototypes were modeled after the PT-19 and P-51 but lacked ailerons. Fred said, "a good design should fly in normal attitudes without ailerons." He added he planned to add them later. All test flights ended in crashes—demonstrating that aileron control was essential. Returning to the drawing board, Dunn adapted the proven Smog Hog design by repositioning the wing below the fuselage and maintaining generous dihedral for stability. The inclusion of a 5 channel radio and a new engine with a throttle enabled unprecedented aerobatic performance. This design, named the Astro-Hog in homage to its predecessor, quickly proved its worth by sweeping the top

four positions at the 1958 NATS and introducing modern aerobatic maneuvers such as rolls and inverted flight to the R/C world.

Commercial Success and Enduring Influence — The Berkeley Model Company (Est. 1933) was a major model kit manufacturer at that time. They produced kits for free flight, control line, radio control and scale display models. In 1958 they released an Astro-Hog kit, making the design accessible to R/C enthusiasts everywhere. The April issue of Model Airplane News lauded the Astro-Hog for its "out of this world maneuverability," declaring it a benchmark for multi-channel R/C aircraft.



Unfortunately, the market for wooden scale models was being replaced by plastic models. Berkeley overproduced their kits and by 1960 had saturated the market. Wholesalers were overloaded with unsold Berkeley kits. In the final years, the quality of the kits suffered from the use of poor quality balsa wood, reportedly as a cost-control measure, which further diminished the brand's reputation. Berkeley ceased production in 1961 but by then the Astro-Hog's influence had been firmly established in the hobby.

Modern Improvements and Lasting Appeal — SIG Manufacturing acquired the rights to the Berkeley kit line and introduced a modernized version of the Astro-Hog, faithfully preserving the original design while incorporating several enhancements:



- Reduced wing dihedral from 8 inches to 6 inches per panel for improved aerobatics.
- Adoption of strip ailerons instead of the traditional "barndoor" style, offering easy construction and minimal play.
- A bolt-on wing mount replaced the rubber band

system for greater security and convenience.

- The stabilizer was permanently affixed atop the fuselage sides, replacing the earlier rubber band mounting underneath.
- Standard tricycle landing gear for improved ground handling, with plans also providing an option for the original taildragger configuration.

Flight Performance — The flight characteristics that made the Astro-Hog an icon remain relevant for today's pilots. Its thick semi-symmetrical airfoil, large wing area, and light wing loading ensure both remarkable stability and excellent maneuverability. Capable of executing any aerobatic maneuver while flying slow enough for pilots to enjoy, the Astro-Hog serves equally well as a first low-wing trainer and as a fun, versatile airplane for seasoned flyers.

Kit bashing is the practice of making a new model by modifying an existing kit to make a completely new looking model. With its good flight characteristics and simple design, the Astro-Hog was a frequent source for kit bashed models.

The legend of the Astro-Hog didn't end there. In

1995 SIG released a biplane version called the Hog-Bipe, which continued the good flight characteristics of the original Astro-Hog.



Unfortunately, the Astro-Hog and Hog-Bipe have not been available from SIG for a couple of years now, but they are still shown on the SIG website. Hopefully, these kits will be available in the future and the legend of the Astro-Hog will continue.

Merry Christmas & Seasons Greetings!

That's all for now. See you at the club meeting.

Neal Leeper

President, Black Hawk R/C Pilots

How many model airplanes do you own?

MORE THAN I CAN COUNT ON ALL MY FINGERS AND TOES.

8%

OK, A LOT OF AIRPLANES. LESS THAN 20.

25%

MORE THAN A FEW, BUT LESS THAN 12.

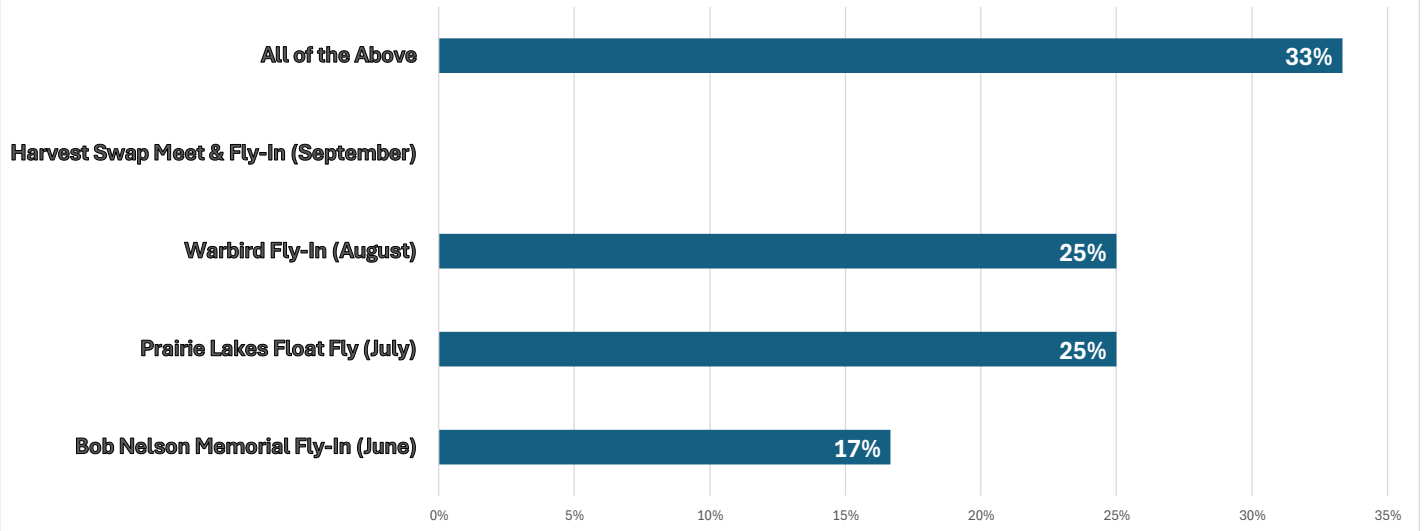
50%

NONE OF THE ABOVE. I'M NOT CONFESSING TO ANYTHING!

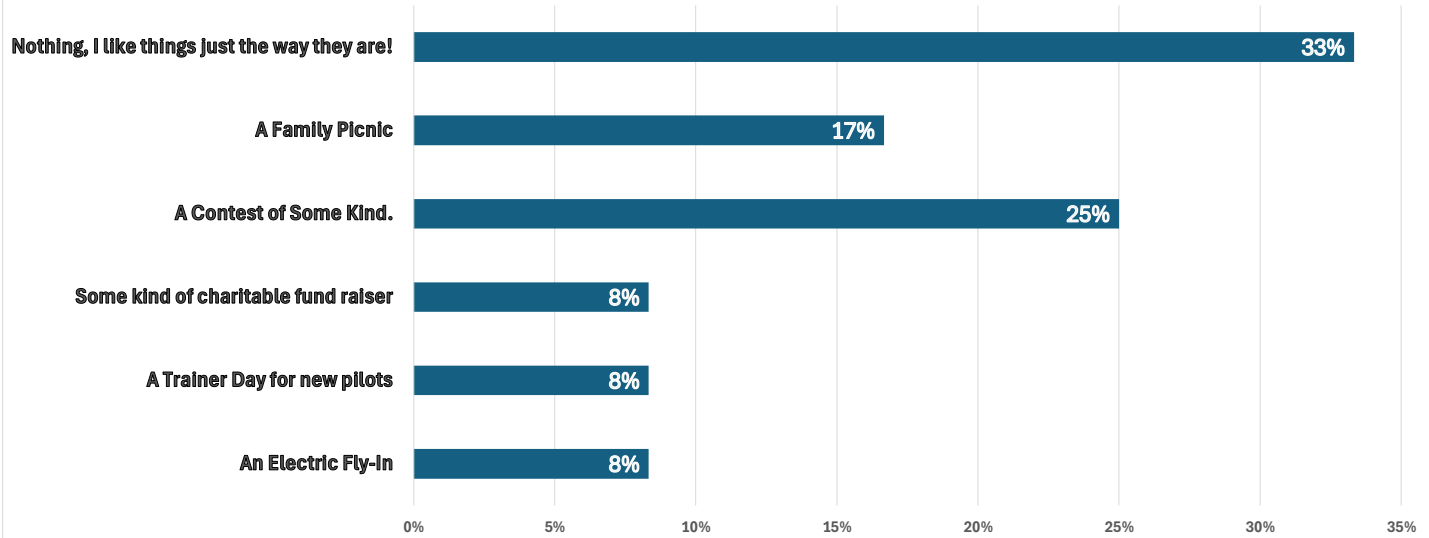
17%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%

What was your favorite event this year?



What event would you like to see added next year?



Based on the responses to the questions on the Officer Election ballot, it seems that most club members are happy with the events we've hosted for the last couple of years. If we were to add something new, it would be some kind of a contest. We'll continue this discussion in January, when we formulate our plans for 2026.