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AMA CLUB #792

CLUB CALENDAR

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

2026 Budget

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

Tuesday, April 28th — Club Meeting at 7PM at The OP on University Avenue. Come early for dinner at 6PM.

Planning for Spring Field Day

Saturday, May 2nd — Spring Field Day at 9AM at club flying field in New Hartford.

Tuesday, May 26th — Club Meeting at 7PM at club flying field in New Hartford. Come early for the cookout at 6PM.

BLACK HAWK R/C PILOTS – FEBRUARY 2026

From the President — The next club meeting is on Tuesday, February 24th at 6pm at **The Other Place** on University Ave in Cedar Falls. We will be planning the club budget and major expenses for the upcoming year.

AMA Flying Site Improvement Grant—We have applied for an AMA Flying Site Improvement Grant. If approved, the grant will cover 25% of cost to replace the two outer strips of petromat. The cost of materials (petromat and spikes) is approximately \$900. We will not know if we have been approved until May.

Petromat Overlay—We discussed overlaying the outer two strips of petromat at the January meeting. We've patched the petromat in several places, but it's deteriorating badly and needs to be replaced or overlaid. Pulling up old petromat is difficult and tears up the ground under and along the edge of the petromat. An easier approach is to overlay new petromat over the old. This doesn't disturb the foundation

under the petromat and there's no disposal. About half the cost is the petromat fabric and the remainder is the cost of spikes to hold down the petromat. The plan, weather permitting, is to do the job at the spring field day. You'll hear more about the plans in the next couple of months.

Building an Airplane—In the really early days of model aviation, R/C pilots built model airplanes from plans. The AMA still offers a "Plans Service" for those who choose to build this way. As time passed, companies started offering kits with plans, instructions, wood and sometimes additional parts like landing gear, wheels and preformed parts.

By the 1960's, many companies were making R/C airplane kits including SIG, Carl Goldberg, Great Lakes, Top Flite, Balsa USA, Midwest, Ace RC, Proctor, Dumas and many others.

My first airplane was a Dumas Hi-Low Evolution. The Hi-Low could be built 5 ways: 1) Hi wing

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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.



ED HENRY

with ailerons 2) Lo wing with ailerons 3) Low wing with plug end wing panels 4) Hi wing with plug end wing panels 5) Thermal soarer. I built the high wing version with ailerons and plug in wing panels. I flew it as 3-channel powered glider with the long wings and then removed the wing panels and plugged in the ailerons to convert it to a 4-channel trainer. It only needed a 15 size glow engine for power.

SIG was a major kit supplier offering a total of 88 R/C kits including the Astro-Hog, Hog-Bipe and several versions of the Piper J3 Cub, Kadet and Four-Star. SIG also offered control line and free flight kits.

Today, only Balsa USA and SIG offer R/C kits. Balsa USA offers several types and size kits, while SIG currently offers two kits. Based on SIG's website, it appears they plan to offer many of the kits they had before the relocation to the Chicago area.

Why build a kit? — There is nothing like flying a model that you have built from bits of balsa. Building involves assembling a fuselage and wing from balsa wood, spruce and lite plywood, then covering and equipping it. It takes patience, tools, more patience and lots of work, but you learn a lot about how model planes are constructed. Kit built airplanes are usually stronger than ARFs, which are built with minimal glue or adhesive and less reinforcement. You will also need a dedicated workspace and specialized tools for cutting, sanding, clamping and drilling. The good news is you only need buy these tools once, and you may already have some of them. Glue, covering material, pushrods, wheels and other bits and pieces will need to be purchased. (The lack of a nearby hobby shop makes this a little more difficult!) If you crash the model you will probably be able to repair it, because you have everything it took to build it in the first place.

Building a kit offers the opportunity to select different color schemes and design control. If you

want to use a pull-pull rudder, you can do it. If you want to change the servo locations, you can do it. You can change or modify anything you want to.

Building a kit also required a major time commit-

ment. Kit built airplanes require hundreds of hours to build and finish. On the other hand, what are you going to do with all your time in the winter? Traditionally in the colder parts of the country there are two seasons, flying season and building season. If you are just watching TV or chillin' this winter, maybe you should consider building a model airplane.

Should you build a model airplane? — Building a kit isn't for everyone. Beginners are better off learning to fly with an ARF. You'll get in the air much quicker with an ARF. Assembly times for ARFs range from less than an hour to up to 20 hours. Pilots who want to fly sooner, lack a workshop or prefer to focus on piloting rather than building should go with an ARF. Building a kit is for intermediate to advanced pilots looking for a specific aircraft or unique model. Kits might initially seem less costly, but my experience is that kits actually have a higher

total cost than most ARFs. ARFs have most of what you need to get into the air. Almost-Ready-to-Fly may require electronics and an engine or motor. Ready-to-Fly aircraft include a receiver, servos and a battery. Some include an inexpensive transmitter.

Bottom line is there's no right or wrong answer. Building a model airplane goes back to the origins of model aviation and creates a real sense of ownership and craftsmanship in the model. ARFs have improved greatly over the years with a wide selection of models available today. The best way is the way that works for you!

See you at the club meeting!

Neal Leeper

President, Black Hawk R/C Pilots

