

In This Issue:

- From the President
- Iowa City Swap Meet
- Flying Site Improvement
- History of NATS



AMA CLUB #792

CLUB CALENDAR

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

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

BLACK HAWK R/C PILOTS - JANUARY 2026

From the President — The next club meeting is on Tuesday, January 27th at 6pm at **The Other Place** on University Ave in Cedar Falls. We will be planning the club events for the upcoming year.

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.

AMA Flying Site Improvement Grant—Through the Flying Site Improvement Grant program, the AMA will contribute 25% of total project costs - with a minimum contribution of \$100 and a maximum contribution of \$3,000 - to clubs that are improving their flying sites and demonstrating their club's commitment to AMA's mission statement: To promote, advance, and safeguard model aviation as a hobby, sport, and educational tool.

This year we need to replace one or both of the outer petromat strips on the runway. The cost of materials (petromat and spikes) is approximately \$900. If we apply

for a grant from the AMA, about \$225 may be covered. We will discuss this at the club meeting.

Introduction to the NATS

If you have been reading the latest issues of Model Aviation magazine, you may have noticed several references to the "NATS." The NATS refers to the AMA-sponsored National Aeromodeling Championships. This event, now more than a century old, began with local club contests and has grown into the premier competition for model aviation enthusiasts nationwide.

Early Origins and Growth

The first model aviation club was established in 1907. By 1917, there were at least 25 clubs across the United States, including in states like Illinois and Nebraska, although there are no records of clubs in Iowa. These clubs organized informal competitions, which led to the creation of the first official NATS, held at the St. Louis Air Races in 1923.

At the inaugural 1923 event,

(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.

there were three contests for outdoor rubber-powered free flight; (1) hand launched, (2) take off from ground and (3) take off from water. Aircraft were restricted to a maximum wing area of 300 square inches and were constructed with dense bamboo and hardwood covered in tissue paper and dope. The competition format included preliminary elimination rounds requiring flights of 2, 3, and 4 minutes. The final round was untimed, with victory going to the model that remained airborne the longest. The winner with the longest flight time received the Mulvihill Trophy, named after Bernard Mulvihill, Vice President of the National Aeronautic Association—a predecessor to the AMA. Sixteen-year-old Edward Lange won with a flight of 4 minutes and 22.6 seconds. Today, these events are still a part of the NATS, and the winner's name is added to the Mulvihill Trophy, which is displayed at the National Model Aviation Museum in Muncie, Indiana. The current national record stands at 47 minutes and 48 seconds.

Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA)

In 1936, the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) was established with the merger of the National Aeronautic Association (NAA), the American Association of Model Aero Clubs and the Airplane Model League of America (AMLA). The AMA's mission was "to advance model aeronautics as a science and sport and to aid constructive activities employing model aircraft as one means toward general aeronautic education." The organization was also charged with supervising contest and research activities of expert model flyers and conducting the annual NATS competition. Radio control events were introduced in 1937. At that time, annual dues were \$3 (equivalent to \$69 in 2025), which did not include liability insurance or a monthly magazine.

The NATS Through the Years

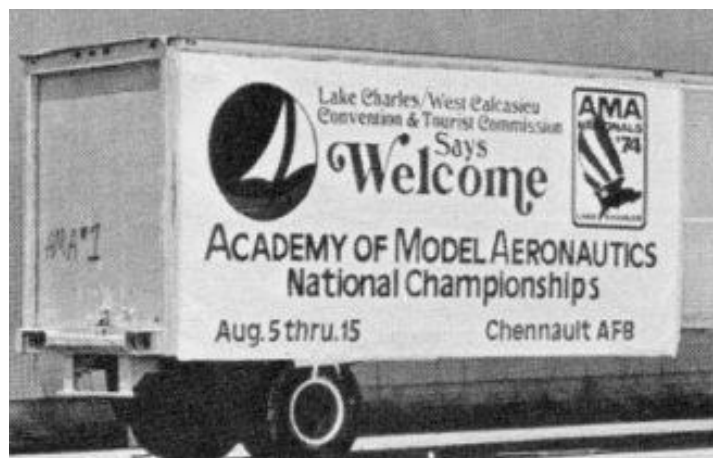
The NATS were canceled from 1942 to 1945 due to World War II. The event returned in 1946, dubbed the "Victory" NATS, with nearly 1,000 contestants and 23 events. Control Line events were introduced to the schedule that year.

From 1948 to 1972, the U.S. Navy hosted the NATS at various Naval Air Stations. Navy personnel played a key role in assisting with setup and operation, providing housing, meals and large hangar spaces for 24-hour model repairs. Indoor competitions were held in blimp hangars. Budget constraints eventually forced



the Navy to withdraw support. Nearby Navy NATS locations included NAS Olathe (Kansas) in 1948 and 1968, and NAS Glenview (Illinois) in 1954, 1958, 1962, 1966, 1970, 1971 and 1972.

In 1973, the AMA took full control of the NATS. The event rotated among 16 different cities over the next 23 years, alternating between the East Coast, West Coast, and middle America. As the number of events increased, finding suitable venues became more challenging. Some memorable NATS locations included EAA Wittman Field in Oshkosh WI; Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton OH; Lincoln Air Force Base in Lincoln NE; Hutchinson Air Force Station in Hutchinson KS; and Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul IL. The Hutchinson NATS is remembered for its exceptionally strong winds, averaging 22 MPH with higher gusts, which discouraged many coastal pilots from flying.



Modern Era

In 1996, the outdoor NATS found a permanent home at the AMA's International Aeromodeling Center (IAC) in Muncie, Indiana. Indoor events are

now held in the Mini-Dome at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee.

The NATS has grown considerably since the first event in 1923. Today, there are three main categories: Free Flight (FF), Control Line (CL), and Radio Controlled (RC). While radio-controlled events are the most popular, free flight maintains a connection to the sport’s origins.

The AMA oversees the event, sets the rules, and preserves the history of aeromodeling. The individual NATS contests are organized by AMA Special Interest Groups (SIGs). There are 14 event categories, each including multiple model competition classes.

The 2026 NATS event categories are in the table at the bottom of this page.

Prior to relocating to the IAC in Muncie, all NATS events took place within a single week; now, they are spread over four weeks each summer.

Milestones

In 2023, the NATS celebrated the centennial of the first national competition. The 100th NATS is scheduled for 2026, accounting for the hiatus during World War II. For many years, the press referred to the National Aeromodeling Championships as the “world

series” of model aviation. ABC’s Wide World of Sports featured NATS competition in a segment aired in September 1967, alongside the Little League World Series.

Funding

It is important to note that AMA membership dues do not fund the NATS. Contestants pay entry fees for each event, and prizes and trophies are often donated by sponsors. However, your dues support the IAC in Muncie, where members are welcome to visit and fly when no scheduled events are taking place.

I was privileged to attend three NATS as a spectator. It’s something everyone should have on their bucket list. If you have any questions about the NATS, just let me know.

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

Neal Leeper

President, Black Hawk R/C Pilots

AMA Special Interest Group	Event
North American Speed Society	Control Line Speed
Precision Aerobatics Model Pilots Association	Control Line Precision Aerobatics
National Control Line Racing Association	Control Line Racing
Navy Carrier Society	Control Line Navy Carrier
National Miniature Pylon Racing Association	Radio Control Pylon
Miniature Aircraft Combat Association	Control Line Combat
National Association of Scale Aeromodelers – Control Line	Control Line Scale
National Association of Scale Aeromodelers – Radio Control	Radio Control Scale
Indoor Free Flight Society	Indoor Free Flight
International Miniature Aerobatic Club	Radio Control Scale Aerobatics
League of silent flight	Radio Control Soaring
Outdoor Free Flight	Outdoor Free Flight
National Society of Radio Controlled Aerobatics	Radio Control Aerobatics
American Radio Control Competition Helicopter Society	Radio Control Helicopter