

# Humber Valley Radio Control Flyers Club History

Barry Collingwood October, 2012

## Formation of the Club

The club was started by a small group of RC enthusiasts lead by Bill Bond. Bill was the owner of Keith's Hobby Shop (long since closed), located on Yonge Street just North of Sheppard Avenue. Bill and a few of the guys that visited the Hobby Shop on a regular basis started flying RC airplanes on the water reservoir at Keele Street and Steeles Avenue. It was not long before North York posted signs on the reservoir prohibiting RC flying due to fear of fuel seeping through into the reservoir. The group started calling themselves the **Downsview RC flyers** and in 1976 secured permission from the Provincial government to use a small plot of land in the Greenbelt that ran just North of Steeles Avenue. The field was about 200 ft x 300 ft and was located approximately two hundred meters East of Keele Street in the middle of a corn field. When I joined the club in 1979, the president was Pat Knight and the Chief Flying Instructor was Eric Peckham. We had about 30 members in 1979 with Pat and myself being the only two that remain active members in the club today. There were no facilities at the original field other than a frequency board and field rules. We parked along the road and used the edge of the field as a pit area. The largest plane was a 60 size pattern ship. Although there were a few scale planes, most of the members flew either pattern type planes or trainers, the Falcon 56 being the most popular.

## Loss of the Keele Street Site

The **Downsview RC Flyers** continued flying comfortably at the Keele Street site until 1980 when Vaughn Council received a noise complaint from a resident in a new subdivision that was located North of the corn field. There was a warehouse immediately North of the field (about 500 meters) and the subdivision was on the other side of the warehouse. Field rules prohibited flying North of the warehouse and planes very seldom got anywhere near the warehouse. The only exceptions were a few "pattern" flyers that got close to the warehouse during their turnaround maneuver.

The resident that complained to the Vaughn Council happened to be a good friend of one of the Council Members, who in turn was a good friend of the Mayor. The Mayor sent out a By-law Enforcement Officer to follow-up on the noise complaint. He took readings at the field and at our posted flight boundaries as well as at the home of the individual that initiated the complaint. The club Executive were then called to a Council meeting (Pat Knight was President at the time) to hear the By-law Officer's report. The club had been working closely with the By-law Officer so we were aware of what the report was going to say. The noise created by the RC planes flying at the field boundary were well within By-law noise limits, and in fact the trucks along Keele Street were much louder than the planes when measured in the front yard of the individual that

registered the complaint. This is when we learned a crucial lesson – you cannot fight City Hall. The Mayor, a friend of the councillor, who in turn was a friend of the complainer, told the Downsview Executive at the meeting that they would have to move their site, irrespective of the By-law Officer's vindicating report. If the Club did not move, the Council would pass a new By-law prohibiting model aircraft flying anywhere in Vaughn. Incidentally, the current HVRCF Field is in the City of Vaughn. About two weeks later we also received a letter from the Province retracting permission to use the Greenbelt to fly model RC airplanes.

The Mayor assigned the By-law Officer, who, by now, was sympathetic to the Clubs' plight, to help us find a more suitable site in Vaughn. He did locate a landfill site around Keele Street and Major Mackenzie but it was still active and would not be closed for another year or two. We also felt it was too far away after having been spoiled by the location of the Keele/Steeles site. Although we kept the option open, we set up a committee to locate a new site on our own.

The club closed the field and we asked the nearby clubs if they would take our members until we could locate a new field. The Westend Flyers (the closest club) refused outright. The Nashville Flyers and the Richmond Hill Flyers were very receptive to taking us. Most of the members joined the Nashville Flyers Club that operated out of the Nashville Sod farm near Kleinberg. A few went to Richmond Hill, which shortly after lost their field to a housing development and a few went to the Mississauga Club. Eventually pretty well everyone ended up flying at the Nashville Sod farm. One of the club members, Al Walker, decided to buy his own field and the 400 Club was born. One or two of the members joined the 400 Club but most felt it was too far away. Remember that back in the early 1980s there were very few large gas powered aircraft. Actually Al Walker brought the first gas powered plane to the club in 1980 – it was a 35cc Quadra powered Cap and everyone was ecstatic over the size and the sound. There was nothing that size available in Canada and internet mail order hadn't arrived so he travelled to California to pick it up. The Downsview Club itself remained intact and the Executive continued searching for a new field. We created a handout describing the hobby and went door to door asking farmers in the area for permission to use a small portion of their fields. No luck.

### **Finding the new Field**

While wondering around in the green belt area North of the tracks and South of Highway 7, looking for anything remotely flat and accessible, I ran across the landfill site where we now fly. There were a number of suitable locations North of the tracks as well but these locations did not have access. I checked with the Vaughn land office and found that the landfill site was under the control of the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation. It had been turned over to them for maintenance and eventual park use. Because of the methane issue it could not be formally used as a park for a number of years so was fenced and locked. One of the Club Members that I worked with at Ontario Hydro, Fred Roberts, happened to personally know the Superintendent of Parks as they were working together on a project to burn refuse to generate electricity (didn't get anywhere). Fred arranged to meet with him and described our plight. The Superintendent agreed

to let us use the site and instructed the Parks Department to help us get settled in. They were quite pleased to see the site get some use. The club was renamed the **Humber Valley R/C Flyers**, I assumed the role of President and Chief Flying Instructor and we started developing the new site in 1982.

When we attempted to register the new site with MAAC, the **Westend Flyers** felt that we were too close to their site and insisted MAAC prohibit use of the site for RC aircraft. We convinced MAAC to do a series of tests and the **Westend Flyers** agreed that if the tests were successful they would withdraw their concern. The tests involved flying a trainer from the Westend field toward our site to the limit of visibility, with a transmitter at our site turned on to the same frequency as the trainer (we provided the trainer and Joe Trinidad did the flying). There was no loss of control at the limit of visibility so we then did the test in the other direction, again with no loss of control. We then did a simultaneous test with two planes on the same frequency and again no interference. After the test, which was supervised by the MAAC Zone Director, MAAC granted approval to use our new site.

During the 1981 and 1982 season we were also flying at York University on the weekends. This worked out well with the Campus Police often dropping by to watch. However, as of March 1982 there were a couple of complaints from students so the Campus Police asked us to move on.



York University Temporary Field 1981 and 1982

## Development of the new Site

The road to the top of landfill site already existed so access was not a problem. One of the Club Members, Brian Doherty, had access to heavy construction equipment, as his Family owned a major road construction company in Toronto. He had worked on the equipment during the summers while at university and his father agreed to let him borrow a heavy grader and a five tone roller. He brought in the road grader to level the site. The site was already reasonably level and had not yet begun to settle significantly. We graded two landing strips and a small parking lot, and for the first year flew off a dirt landing strip. Most of the Club, myself included, had been flying for two years with the Nashville Flyers. The Club flew off the Nashville Sod farm and we all got to know the owner of the sod farm quite well. He was a super guy and only charged the club a bottle of rye each year to use his facilities (you actually had to drive through his yard to get to the flight line which was just on the edge of his yard). He did a substantial amount of hydro seeding for the province, spraying a sticky mixture of grass seed, fertilizer and mulch around newly built overpasses and roads. We approached him to get a price for hydro seeding the field and he told us to forget about paying – he would just stop in on the way back from jobs and dump whatever was left in the tank on our field. NEXT SPRING we had a grass runway and the field as you see it today was born – the year was 1984.



HVRCF Dirt Runways in 1982

We purchased a motorized push style lawnmower and the students were required to cut the landing strips on student nights until we convinced the Parks Department to bring up a mower from the Humber Golf Course once a week to cut the grass. Brian brought in the 5 ton roller every spring and rolled the field.

Since 1984 there have been numerous improvements to the site. The initial relationship with the Parks was excellent as they were pleased to finally have a use for the landfill site. When they saw that we were putting considerable effort into the site they agreed to bring up a lawnmower weekly from the Humber Valley Golf Course (Toronto Parks also manage the municipal golf courses) to cut the grass. They also brought in picnic benches from the surrounding parks so that we could entertain visitors, put gravel on the road and parking lot, and generally were very supportive. Toward the late 1980's budgets became tight and they stopped the grass cutting and road maintenance. By this time the club was solvent again, had a membership of over 100, and could assume responsibility for the grass cutting and maintenance of the road.

The Club was fairly static throughout the 1990s with most of the field work being related to dealing with the sagging that was taking place as the landfill decomposed and depressions formed. There was one significant depression in the centre of the field that filled with water every spring and turned the field into a joint float and wheel field. We had another Club Member, Tom Johnson, who happened to be Director of Maintenance for Metro Roads and Traffic. He donated a sufficient length of weeping tile and gravel that we could run weeping tile from both the pit area and centre of the field to the edge of the embankment. I suspect the weeping tile has long since been plugged but throughout the 1990s it kept both the pond out of the centre of the field, and the pit area reasonably dry. During the late 1980s and early 1990's after having lost the original field to a noise complain, the club was very anxious to stay on the right side City Hall by showing that we were involved in the community. We held numerous mall shows, including a number at the Yorkdale and Woodbine Malls as well as the annual Hobby Show at the International Center. We held annual talks and demonstrations at a Rehabilitation centre in North York and invited the Boy Scouts and Air Cadets to the field on a regular basis.

The first *Humber Valley Flyer* was produced by Grady Jacobs in 1982. Grady and I typed the articles on an old IBM 386, and cut and pasted the articles into a newsletter using graphic art supplies to frame the margins and boxes. By 1985 I had acquired access to one of the original MAC computers at work with PageMaker software installed. The days of cut and paste were over. The first couple of issues with PageMaker were sufficiently impressive that *Model Airplane News* awarded the club two free subscriptions to junior members as first prize in their Newsletter of the Month contest.

The newsletter continued to improve throughout the 1990s. Tom Gottlieb became Editor following a disagreement between Dennis Woytas, who was producing the newsletter at the time, and the President Wally Jaremko, over the purchase of a printer. Dennis quit. Tom has

continued as Editor for the past 12 years and developed the newsletter into what it is today. A far cry from the first cut and paste version issued in 1982.

Beginning in 2000 a substantial number of improvements were made to the field. We did a major fill, grading and seeding of the North side of the field, dumping in the order of 10 dump trucks of soil to try and level the area. The intention at the time was to use the new level North side of the field to fly on while the South side of the field was leveled and filled. After completing the North end the parks no longer had a need to dump soil and the South side was never completed. In 2002 we built the lean-to under the guidance of then President Dave Plank and installed the first set of flight barriers. Over the years the barriers were improved, and the flight line moved with taxi ways to pits created. In 2005 we purchased our own powered lawnmower and a shipping container to secure it eliminating the need for a lawn cutting service which was getting expensive and was not particularly reliable. In 2009, with the savings from elimination of the cutting service, we replaced the original riding lawnmower 2005 with a new professional zero turn mower.



Field as it exists today



Building the Lean-to in 2002

The website was started in the fall of 2000 by Hiep Nguyen. Hiep set up the initial site in September of 2000 but was swamped with work and couldn't devote the time required to develop it further. I was at home recovering from open heart surgery for 6 weeks with nothing to do so I agreed to take it over and continue development of the site. I bought a few books on web design and PHP programming and started expanding the site. The site continued development between 2000 and 2005 with the creation of the member database (which includes all members back to 1999), the Forum, a Photo Gallery and the installation of the Field Condition module which shows the wind speed and direction at the site - undated hourly.

### **Past Presidents**

Bill Bond	Start - 1977
Pat Knight	1977 - 1978
Bill Watson	1979 - 1982
Barry Collingwood	1982 - 1985
Joe Trinidad	1986 - 1987
Fred Roberts	1988 - 1990
Pat Knight	1991 - 1992
Dale Preston	1993 - 1994
Jerry Pizer	1995 - 1996
Carlo Mandatori	1997 - 1998
Wally Jaremko	1999 - 2001
Tom Gottlieb	2002 - 2003
Dave Plank	2004 - 2006
Joseph Young	2007 - 2007
Mario Lopes	2008 - 2009

Pat Knight                    2010 - 2011  
Paul McMillan                2012 -

## **Do You Remember When**

The club was plagued by dirt bikers and a couple of the members (can't name them for obvious reasons) hid in the weeds and clothes-lined one of the bikers with a 2x4. They called the police and registered an assault complaint – never got anywhere and the dirt bikes disappeared.

Wondering through the trees North West of the field looking for a lost plane BJ came across a body hanging from a tree and called the police (presumed suicide).

“Lizard”, who slept in his car at the field for a year before Eric Segal took him in, lit a methane leak. When it took fire he ran back to the pit area in a panic thinking the field was going to blow up.

We purchased a new mobile construction trailer with a built-in stove for winter flying and the following spring all that was left was the metal frame. The entire trailer had been dismantled and used as wood for bonfires to keep drunken bums warm all winter. We practically recovered the cost of the trailer by turning in the empty beer bottles.

Dave Preston planted the two trees, in the pit area to provide shade. There used to be a frequency board between them made out of stainless steel donated by Dale from a Pizza Pizza oven installation job. Members hauled empty fuel bottles of water to the field every day to water the trees.

We built our own outhouse (topped with a donated SE5A) with a hole dug down into the landfill site. It got knocked over or blown down so many times that we filled the hole and hauled the frame off to the dump with the remnants of the trailer and switched to a “Johnny on the Spot”.

A special club meeting was called to vote on removal of a member for violation of the field rules. The individual had brought a helicopter motor to the field to test run it. The helicopter motor was full size, brought to the field on a flat bed. This happened shortly after the first noise complaint we had received and the club membership was incensed.

A new member brought out a trainer and while making a pass North of the field the battery fell out – you could actually see it fall. The plane continued flying (with no control of course) toward the West and out of site. The guy jumped in his car to follow it. The plane had run out of fuel and landed in a graveyard without so much as a broken prop. He loaded the plane in his car, drove back to the field, wondered down into the ravine and came back 10 minutes later with the battery. He plugged the battery back in and took off. Hope he bought a lottery ticket when he got home!

One of the members rented a video camera and we duct taped it to the top of a Senior Telemaster (back in the early 1980s video cameras were pretty big and heavy). After flying around for a while we took the camera off and went over to one of the members house to watch the video on his VHS sysemt. When we got to the end of the flight – we were in for a surprize. Whoever had rented the camera previously hadn't deleted the tape and we watched the end of a very personal encounter of the sexual kind.