



A Monthly Publication of Collins Model Aviators

June 2005

President's Corner – Dave Shema

May has been a very odd month. Tree killing frost, warm weather, windy weather, and rainy weather. Not a lot of days in there for some decent flying to happen. The May meeting did go off pretty well. We had a great turnout at the sod farm, no real meeting occurred, but lots of flying did. The May meeting had the best turnout of any meeting in recent memory. Let's hope that June obliges with sun, nice temperatures, and no wind. The June meeting will be held at the field, starting about 5:30 PM. It does take a while to drive out there.

This past Thursday (May 19th), I was invited to put on a flying demonstration in conjunction with the Anamosa Strawberry Hill Elementary School Science Fair. The weather looked threatening as I was driving to the school, but it broke and I got in a decent flight of a helicopter and my trusty old Sig Kadet LT-40. The kids enjoyed it, and there's nothing like a couple of loops, rolls, and some spins to wow the crowd. It was an enjoyable day.

Yesterday, May 21, was supposed to be the first fun fly of the year to get everyone out to have a good time at the sod farm. The weather did not cooperate. The action was to start at 2:00 PM, but by 1:00 PM, there was already a spotty drizzle at my house. By 3:00 PM, it turned into a veritable downpour and rained for quite awhile thereafter. I don't know if anyone made an effort to get to the field, but the weather radar on the web told me it wasn't advisable. I spent the afternoon straightening out the garage. Today, Sunday, was beautiful -sunny, warm, and WINDY. Horrible windy. Boo!

So much for the weather report....

Dave Shema →

Special Report: *Clubs and Leagues News*

Last Thursday, a meeting was held at the old Parson's building on Center Point road that may well change the way Collin's Clubs and Leagues are treated and viewed by the company. I believe the proposed change, if adopted and successful, will have a positive and lasting effect on the CMA and other clubs associate with Collins.

At the meeting, which lasted about an hour and fifteen minutes, representatives from each of the Collins clubs and leagues, as well as an HR representative, met to discuss the possibility of creating a board of directors that would have oversight of the various clubs and leagues that are sponsored by Rockwell.

A little background is in order before proceeding.

Prior to the fiscal year 2001, clubs and leagues sponsored by Rockwell each received some amount of operating funds from the company. In the couple of years previous to 2001, the CMA received \$500 from the company. Our \$20 membership dues were added to that pot and out of those funds, the club operated for the year. Fun fly prizes came out of that money, AMA charter and insurance fees came out of that money, the \$1 lease for the field came from that money, and the club would also use some of the money as "goodwill" for Larry Martinson, our flying site owner. We would buy him gift certificates to local restaurants periodically. In addition, in past years, the club paid for the sign at the entrance to the sod farm, purchased some of the orange cones that Larry uses at the field, and provided Larry with a wind sock or two for the top of his shop building. We also spent money on the upkeep of the two club trainer aircraft, an LT-40 and an Eagle 63. By the end of the fiscal year, any excess money had to be spent, or returned to the company. Guess which option we chose – yes, spend it. That made for some good fun fly prizes.

Then, 2001 arrived. Terrorists struck New York City, and with it, the backbone of the US financial markets and the airline industry in general. Business at Rockwell went south, and with it, jobs. One of the casualties of Sept 11, 2001, was the funding of clubs by Rockwell. For the fiscal year 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005, the club has made do with funds generated by membership fees. We generally have enough to charter the club, insure Larry Martinson, and provide him with the "goodwill" gift certificates. There was no budget for fun fly prizes or any real upkeep of the club trainers. Lean years.

At the same time, membership in the CMA was way down, due in large part to a giant rift that formed around the year 2000 with regard to allowing helicopters into the club. A large contingent of die-hard members were adamant that helicopters did not belong in the club. Things came to a head when the then Rockwel Club liaison laid down the law – if a Rockwell employee

wished to join the club and fly helicopters, the club was obliged to let them in. Essentially, a Rockwell sponsored club cannot turn away Rockwell employees. The anti-heli group took their toys and went their separate way, leaving the CMA in a very small and fragile state.

We have been working to rebuild the club. It has been difficult as until this year, the majority of our members were all new flyers, who had no flying experience. Our instructor program suffered as well. With very few people who could fly, and no funding, fun flies were out of the question. And fun flies are one exceptionally good way to build and foster membership.

Clubs, Leagues, and Chaos

When Rockwell dropped its funding of clubs and leagues in 2001, a second bit of bad news hit us. Sandy Strike, the club liaison at the Collins Recreation Center, retired. Sandy handled all club and league related business for the company, and also oversaw the club budgets. Each club could spend the money as it saw fit, however, we had to buy the items first, submit receipts as part of a company expense report, then hope the bean counters didn't deny the payment. I personally waited a couple of months waiting to be reimbursed to the tune of about \$500 charged to my credit card, waiting for the financial whizzes to get their act together.

When Sandy retired, oversight of club operations was transferred from the Rec Center, to HR. Julie Schlueter was identified as the new club contact person. Unfortunately for both Julie and the clubs, the club mess was dumped in her lap unceremoniously, and with no direction. Oversight of club operations lapsed into utter chaos. It took me nearly a year to get a reading on who could join the club.

Adrift at Sea

Being adrift as a Rockwell club had a positive side. Since we no longer relied upon the company for any funding, we no longer ran any of our monetary transactions through the company bean counters. We were also finally told that our membership could be opened up to family members. Except for the fact we had almost no operating capital, we were free to be a club, free of the bonds of the Rockwell accountants. The club began to grow. Not by leaps and bounds, but one or two members at a time.

On the Horizon – Order out of Chaos

We're now back at the Thursday, May 19th meeting attended by club and league representatives, and an HR person (none other than the club liaison, Julie Schlueter).

The purpose was to discuss the formation of a Board of Directors in charge of overseeing the operations of the Rockwell clubs and leagues.

The meeting was chaired by Dan Mussel, an engineer who happened to get the ear of Ron Kirchenbauer from HR, almost by accident, with regard to clubs and leagues.

This chance meeting between Dan and Ron led to a discussion about how the Company could foster the growth and longevity of the clubs and leagues at Rockwell, while finally acknowledging that they can be real assets to the company.

Dan was asked to put together a business plan and proposal, to be presented to Ron Kirchenbauer and the HR folk, that would build the clubs within Rockwell.

This is where the meeting comes in. Dan and Julie Schlueter presented their outline of an organization that will improve and foster communication between the clubs and Rockwell Management.

The formation of a Board of Directors is being proposed. The structure is as follows:

A President, elected from within the Club and League membership.

A Vice President, always a member of the Rockwell HR department.

A Secretary and a Treasurer, elected from the club and league membership.

In addition, the Board would have at least one member from each Club or League withing Rockwell.

The board will meet four times a year (quarterly). A January meeting will be held as the budget meeting, and other business will be discussed at that time.

An April meeting will be held to solicit and review capital requests from each of the clubs. The capital requests will be due no later than June.

A July meeting will be held in which general business will be discussed. Election of board officers will occur at this meeting.

(The length of term of office is yet to be determined, as with four meetings, a yearly term is seen to be too short, but two years maybe too long...this has to be ironed out).

An October meeting will be held at which the newly elected officers will be installed. Disbursements of funds to clubs and leagues will happen at this meeting as well.

Why now a board?

Organized, functional, and useful clubs and leagues are now viewed by the company as an asset that can be used to attract and retain talented and motivated employees, the company can track volunteer hours

(which gets the company brownie points), and the company would have some additional “perks” to offer employees.

Club activities can be more easily promoted and made visible internally, so employees are aware of what is going on.

Improve the communication between management and the clubs (and vice versa).

The various clubs within Rockwell might begin to support each other in their efforts.

Common items used by different clubs might be better shared (or purchased).

The board would be an advocate for the clubs to management.

The board can supply oversight to club spending to insure that the funds are spent for appropriate activities.

The board can provide an accurate accounting of spending to management.

The board can insure that all clubs operate using proper business conduct.

What about the Clubs?

Possibly two different “classes” of clubs.

1. Clubs that don't ask for company funding.
 - A. Get no \$\$\$ from the company
 - B. Can do their “own thing”
 - C. Have access to club website for their own website
 - D. Can ask for, and receive support for special activities sponsored by the club
 - E. Activities included in a monthly company newsletter.
2. Clubs that do ask for company funding.
 - A. Get annual funding from the company, based on a budget request to the board.
 - B. The company could match club dues.
 - C. All of the perks of the clubs listed above.

Clubs and leagues would remain autonomous and determine their own direction.

The company would take over funding of the www.collinsclubs.com website. This site is currently funded on a yearly basis by the Woodworkers Guild. We are allowed to use it due to their benevolence. The company would relieve the Woodworkers of the financial burden of the renting the server space.

The clubs would still be responsible for the content of their websites.

If a club needed to acquire a “big ticket item” (example was a piano for the Chorus), the club could pony up a percentage of the total cost of the item, and ask the company to either provide a match, or the balance of the money required to acquire the item.

It is possible that the clubs could have a common area to use for their purposes. Not only as a meeting place, but as a place to store any tools or other assets the clubs may own. (Maybe CMA would finally have a locker or something to store its tools and stuff that is accessible by the members).

The company may come up with ID badges that would allow members (retired and active) access to company facilities without the hassle currently required to do so.

Club membership may be opened up to a wider range of people, possibly even to the extent of allowing non-Rockwell people to be members. Clubs would now be family friendly. The dues structure may be different for “outside” members, however.

Clubs would now be responsible for their own money. Each October, clubs would be given a check that would represent their budget request for the year. The club can handle the money as it sees fit, open a bank account, whatever. There would be no need to submit receipts to the company for reimbursement. Once a year, the company would perform a high-level audit of the club's books – not going down to the penny, but to insure “appropriateness” of the club's expenditures. The appropriate word was defined as to make sure that the clubs weren't using the money to buy “beer” or similar items that the company would consider inappropriate.

The company is going to start publicizing its clubs and leagues at all new employee orientation meetings. New hires will be made aware of our existence, and given information as to points of contact. They are going to promote the clubs as part of the company “perks” for employees.

Baby Steps first...

Dan Mussel and Julie Schlueter have been tasked with putting together a business case and proposal to be reviewed by HR ASAP. Part of the presentation is an initial club's budget request for the coming year. This would allow HR to include this number in their AOP rollup for 2006.

There are tons of details to be worked out. Exactly what the board will and won't do, what the company will and won't do, what the final structure will look like, how it will operate.

The consensus of those attending the May 19th meeting was that this sounded like a positive move, and that it should be pursued and developed.

The long-term plan is to have the board structure up and in place within the year. Fine tuning will obviously take place as required. The next step would be to expand the idea and operation to all domestic RC operations within two years. The final step would be to expand the idea and operation to RC and all of its international operations within three years.

This is a major undertaking, and Dan Mussel should be commended for sticking his neck out to get the ball rolling.

I've tried to publish the highlights of the meeting to give you all an idea of what the plan is for clubs and Rockwell. There are a lot of unanswered questions, probably even yet-to-be-asked questions.

The bottom line is that funding for sponsored clubs appears to be coming back very soon and there will be an ordered structure within the company to elevate clubs from their current obscurity to a level of having an acknowledged and legitimate standing within the company.

I have been asked to provide Dan and Julie with a headcount of current membership, as well as to provide them with a proposed budget amount for the coming year. I've also volunteered to be the club representative to future meetings of the board planning sessions so that I can keep you all up to date on happenings, as well as advocate for the CMA.

Time will tell how things will work out. Keep your fingers crossed that things work out well for the future of the CMA. I'll keep you posted.

Dave Shema →

Club Immediate needs:

We need to buy a new set of batteries (transmitter and receiver) for the club trainer and its radio that are currently in Jamie Johnson's possession. We also need to pick up either a new crankcase for the Supertiger 45 that's mounted on it, or just pop for a whole new motor. I would suggest a new ST 45 would be the wiser choice. If there are no objections, I will get this stuff in and submit the receipts to Tom Gorman for payment. I'll get the items to Jamie Johnson in the meantime. I'll be ordering the stuff from Tower Hobbies this week.

Club Future Needs:

This is an idea that was suggested by one of our newer members. If it does nothing more than spark some good discussion, it has served its purpose.

Looking at the formation of a board to give Rockwell Clubs a level of legitimacy and recognition, could we somehow pull off the following idea?

We currently lease our flying site from Larry Martinson for a dollar per year. As such, we are at the mercy of Larry's continued benevolence, the patience of his neighbors (which may be getting shorter, at least with regard to the people who own the property directly to the South of Larry's property), and other factors beyond our control.

Our field has no real defined structure – runway, pits, flight line, frequency board...etc. We operate our site within the confines of the published AMA safety code, and therefore, we believe that we and Larry are covered by the AMA insurance.

A question was raised about how the company would view our operations with regard to liability and our current setup. My response was that they could do one of two things...discontinue their sponsorship of CMA, or acknowledge the risks and help us improve our lot in life.

In my response to Dan and Julie with regard to a club member headcount and proposed 2006 budget, I added information that each of our members is required to be an AMA member as well, and this requirement was specifically there because of the existence of the \$2.5 million liability insurance provided to AMA members and our site owner. I pointed out that this was, for the majority of us, an additional \$58 per year personal expenditure. I also pointed out that we currently lease our flying site for \$1/year from a very generous person, and that is an arrangement that could come to an abrupt end, at any time due to factors beyond our control.

With that background in mind, here is the idea that was offered to me late last week.

Approach the company explaining the tenuous flying site situation with regard not only to our continued use of borrowed land from year-to-year, but with regard to safety and liability issues that might be posed to the company by our activity. Ask Rockwell to assist us (CMA) in locating, negotiating for, and improving a permanent flying site. It was suggested that the company looking for some positive PR and image building press, in conjunction with the city of Cedar Rapids (also looking for the same positive PR and press) might be very willing to help develop a state of the art flying site for our use. The expertise of the AMA flying site committee might come in handy, as well.

OK, so there's the genie, it's out of the bottle. I can already hear many arguments, mostly negative, that this topic will generate. I've already discussed many of those points with the originator of the idea. But, hey, maybe it's possible, who knows.

Dave Shema →

One last item. Is anyone getting tired of only seeing MY name as contributor to the newsletter? If so, submit something for publication. It can be news, "how-to's", humor, opinion, pictures of your favorite aircraft, shots of flying activity at the field — you name it. If it's hobby related and you believe it should be in print...send it to me. I'd LOVE to have something to print besides my opinion and comments here.

Dave Shema →

Don't forget the June meeting. June 2nd, about 5:30 PM at the field, weather permitting. If the weather is bad, head for the Main Plant Cafeteria and be there by 5:00 PM.

Check the Club Calendar for the date of the June fun fly and keep your fingers crossed for good weather this time!

I'm still working on getting some good airborne video from one of my helicopters. If and when that happens, I'll post some screen shots on the club website, and even put up a link to the video.