

MEMPHIS PROP BUSTERS

Model Airplane Club since 1968 in Memphis, TN, Collierville, TN and
Arlington, TN

AMA Charter number 1347

Facebook address-- <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2231961286989566>

Web site ----- <https://www.memphispropbusters.com/>

First years as a control line club

Audubon Park . 4145 Southern Av

Audubon Park, established in 1953

Audubon Park in Memphis, TN had a designated area for model airplane flying from the 1950s and Control-Line model airplanes were flown since the completion of the park. Radio Controlled model airplanes in the 1950s were very scarce due to price and reliability. In the 1960s it was common to see 25-30 control line pilots and many spectators in this public park on weekends.

The Memphis Prop Busters model airplane club began with a meeting at the home of 15-year-old Lester Goldsmith in late 1967 with a group of pilots who were flying at the site in Audubon Park. Since site procurement or maintenance was never required by park users or the club, the idea was to enhance the enjoyment with flying events, occasional parties, and interesting events/films at meetings. Many were already members of the Academy of Model Aeronautics so chartering the club and getting everyone to join the AMA was relatively easy.

The club was very active, and the members were able to fly much of the year at Audubon Park, thanks to generally good weather.

Early the official club shirt was orange with the Memphis Prop Busters logo in dark blue. Reference is made to club shirts in the April 1971 newsletter. The

earliest picture of a shirt found is worn by Ed Price in a picture dated July 1971 at the AMA Nationals. Another is the picture with Leigh Bailey at Audubon Park in July 1974.

Many fun fly events were held from May-October each year at Audubon Park. From 1970-1976 the club hosted 1 AMA sanctioned AA contest per year at Mckellar Park, another public park with an area built by the city of Memphis for control line model airplanes which included a paved circle for precision aerobatics (stunt), a paved, fenced circle for speed, and grass area for general flying. Dennis McGraw remembers that his father Bill McGraw told him that he worked with Memphis Mayor Henry Loeb in the early 1960s to get this flying area built into Mckellar Park.

From the beginning as a C/L club and on into R/C a good number of members have participated in local, regional, and national fun- flies and contests.

The club always welcomed and encouraged spectators in these public parks to join and fly. Monthly meetings were held at the Poplar-White Station public library in a regularly reserved meeting room.

Transition to a Radio Control club and Field on Frank Rd in Collierville, TN.

By the mid-1970s radio control systems and airplanes were becoming very affordable, attractive, and readily available. Many members were now flying C/L and R/C. By the late 1970s so many were flying R/C and each person was going his own way to other open areas or other club R/C fields. In 1976 throngs of people began coming to the park on weekends and overran the C/L area. The city of Memphis took out the road to the area to reduce the crowding. Radio Controlled airplanes as a hobby was growing faster than clubs and sites in the area!

20 year-old club member Barry Stein was the leading force in re-forming the club into a Radio Control club, and after looking for sites in the summer of 1980, found an excellent flying site in nearby Collierville, TN. when members of the small Collierville R/C Club agreed to allow the small group of Memphis Prop Busters to share their field.

Brian Pate and Benny Hurdle were residents of the town of Collierville, TN who had begun flying radio/controlled models in the mid-1970s and they obtained permission to use this landfill on Frank Road ½ mile west of Byhalia Road and formed the Collierville R/C Club.

The Memphis Prop Busters soon was the dominant club and absorbed, by their permission, the Collierville R/C Club.

A very nice clubhouse was built in 1985 replacing the original small one of the Collierville R/C Club. Some of the building of that clubhouse is documented by Milton Dickey on his available DVD “1985 in Review’. In the video can be seen a truck of Gates Lumber Co, owned by club member George Buzard. He and his company provided much of the materials for the clubhouse. Parts of this clubhouse were moved to the Winchester/FHI site, and again to the Bragg field site!

The club enjoyed many activities and large member numbers, over 100 members a year for many years. Also located on the landfill site was a very suitable lake which was used frequently for ‘float-flying’. Much of this can be seen in the 1985-1989 videos on DVD assembled by Milton Dickey and Brian Pate.

An enthusiastic pilot Buddy Hord of The Memphis R/C Club had the idea for the Memphis Model Market, which was a well-publicized swap meet along with a ‘Model Builder’s Banquet’ which united all clubs in the area. An association was formed with representatives from, first 4 clubs, and later 5. The MPB was a member and enjoyed all the activities.

In May of 1987 the club was invited to fly model airplanes at the dedication of the WWII Memphis Belle B-17 at Mud Island in Memphis. Articles can be found in the Commercial Appeal newspaper leading up to May 17 as well as pictures and videos by club members. Milton Dickey of the Memphis Prop Busters flew his large-scale Laser airplane with a small (for the time) VCR camera and has footage of the event at Mud Island, the Mississippi river, and Memphis skyline.

Loss of Frank Road field, move to Forest Hill Irene/Winchester Road

In late 1991 flying site privileges were withdrawn by the City of Collierville due to complaints from the continually increasing numbers of homeowners in the formerly rural, open, surrounding areas and finally, a model airplane from the field crashed into a residence. This doomed the site for the already-imperiled club.

It is astonishing how quickly the club member numbers drop when a field is lost, but those who stayed on procured a site at Winchester Road and Forest-Hill Irene Road, an area in southeast Memphis which was rural at the time. Randy Cohn and a core of dedicated modelers found this site, moved parts of the clubhouse from the Frank Rd site and flew there from late 1991 until 1996.

Loss of Forest Hill Irene/Winchester Rd site, move to Airline/Ingelwood Rd

The area was growing, Winchester Road had considerable traffic now, and flying radio-controlled aircraft this close to traffic was becoming questionable. Then the owners sold the property. The members were again looking for another field.

Recovering from the previous move in 1992 to over 100 at the Winchester/Forest Hill Irene site Chris Baker remembers that club membership dropped to 24 as this field was lost and the search was on. Chris Baker, Ken Earl, Ross Earl, Henry McQuirter, Doug McQuirter, Mike Smith (Gator), Tom Carruthers, Troy Cole, and Charles Holden were part of the group who searched for a new flying site. Ken Earl was the president during the move to Bragg Field. He was instrumental in organizing the move and supervising all activities associated with establishing the site. Without Ken's leadership and foresight, the MPB might not have had the quality field enjoyed today and it has enjoyed a long run at the Bragg Field site.

Chris has in his Piper J-3 Cub aircraft logbook a flight in December 1994 with Tom Carruthers on an aerial search. In September 1995 another entry is with Ken Earl saying "viewing the new property"....at the Bragg Field location. Mr. Bragg had been located, the lease signed, and preparation was under way.

The site at 3945 Inglewood (Airline Road in 1995) in Arlington, TN was obtained in 1995, flying began in 1996 and remains the site today. Once again, parts of the clubhouse and lawn mower shed were moved to this site.

Chris Baker was treasurer and has an entry in Jan 1997 of a proposed budget for further improving the field. Much has been done in the areas of field maintenance and amenities over the years, including a weather-tight clubhouse. The club continues to be well organized, well managed and had 105 members in 2023.

Here are further details from the website: “The facilities aren’t just about flying. We provide an array of amenities on site. Pilots and spectators have access to chairs, tables, dedicated work stands, start-up benches, sanitary facilities, trash disposal, and potable water. A highlight of our facility is the series of concrete-covered pavilions stretching across the field, each fitted with workbenches and electrical outlets.”

Please access the website link in this story for a great overview of the club and flying site as it is today. See the charities the club has had events for in recent years, as well as other events planned throughout the year.

Access the Facebook site to see what is occurring all the time!

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[DVD with year-long club flying from 1985-1989 by Milton Dickey.....
medickey@comcast.net](#)

[Access this picture album and follow in order:](#)

https://photos.google.com/u/3/share/AF1QipMh5T5UwzIbVCZh3RvgvKwBZ6lpW1Z_JJlwHmMDxuAN3u02gKwhW2gOcmFm-TynyQ?key=amxGT0g1TEUzRW5IWk45VUQtWG96aFE1bGVDMlpR

Nr 1-Newspaper article from 1968 having reference to chartered club

- Nr 2-AMA License of club member Rick Finney showing 'chartered club'
- Nr 3-picture of a typical weekend day at Audubon Park in 1969
- Nr 4-Picture at Audubon Park of a group of club members Feb 20. 1971
- Nr 5-picture of Ed Price wearing an MPB shirt at the AMA national in Jul 1971.
Herman Rieben also pictured
- Nr 6-Club correspondence with the AMA October 1971
- Nr 7-Picture at Audubon Park at MPB fun fly with member Leigh Bailey wearing
MPB logo shirt-July 1974
- Nr 8-AMA magazine listing of chartered clubs 1976. MPB is listed
- Nr 9-AMA magazine listing of chartered clubs 1976. MPB is listed
- Nr 10-Contest at Frank Road site just as the MPB began flying there in August
1980
- Nr 11-Contest at Frank Road site in August 1980 Barry Stein shown
- Nr 12-Club decal and patch circa 1981
- Nr 13-Gene Patzsch and Lester Goldsmith at the Frank Rd field in 1981
- Nr 14-Leaflet showing local club coalition in 1984
- Nr 15-Newspaper article announcing participation in Memphis Belle
dedication-May 1987
- Nr 16-Picture of group of modelers on Mud Island-May 1987
- Nr 17-Article in the Collierville newspaper showing incident that led to the
loss of the Frank Road field.
- Nr 18 and Nr 19-Pictures of current MPB logo
- Club newsletters December 1970-January 1972 (November is missing)
- 3 Pictures showing locations of MPB flying fields since 1968
- Nr 31 and nr 32-50-year award from the AMA

