



## America's Most Famous Model Plane Club

The Chicago Aeronuts' Story by Pres. Art Christensen

■ The old cliché, "starting way back in . . .", certainly holds true for the Chicago Aeronuts, as this group was formed in 1935 by such prominent names in the modeling field as Carl Goldberg, Gerald Ritz, "Pappy" Matulis and Frank Nekimken. Since that time, the club has remained active in competition in both indoor and outdoor free flight events. The club is the oldest in the middle west and probably the most active. The present membership numbers 25 but for such occasions as the annual banquet, we are able to arouse the interest of about 50 people. Of the original group, Ritz, Goldberg and Elic Nekimken are still active members. However, many of the present contest flyers joined the club in the late 30's and early forties.

In order to restrict the roster at that time to those who were really interested in becoming expert modelers, the requirements for membership were quite rigid. Qualifying flight times were established and if a prospective member showed perseverance without inherent talent, he was tutored until such qualifying time was met. In some cases this took much instruction but during this period the student gained valuable experience. The requirements for membership have been relaxed somewhat because of lack of flying space and in addition we now carry some members who are content to do some arm-chair flying. These are the old-timers who have a wealth of know-how and feel that running through corn fields, across prairies and down airport runways is a young man's sport!

Before the war, 29 National indoor endurance records were held by this club. Indoor builders including Milton Hugellet, Carl Goldberg, Wallace Simmers, Dick Obarski and Pappy Matulis helped in accumulating this score. Milt Hugellet was probably one of the best indoor modelers in the world. His winning the National Championship at the age of 16 was quite an accomplishment, as in those days the selection was not restricted to age groups. Hugellet excelled

in indoor cabin, stick and hand-launched glider.

Many of the younger modelers will be surprised to learn that Carl Goldberg was an indoor modeler first, and a gas modeler second. He won national events in indoor events prior to building the Valkyrie, Zipper and Cumulus free flight models. At the present time, Carl owns his own model company and is included in the active flying membership. (Although he hasn't posted his qualifying time so far this year.)

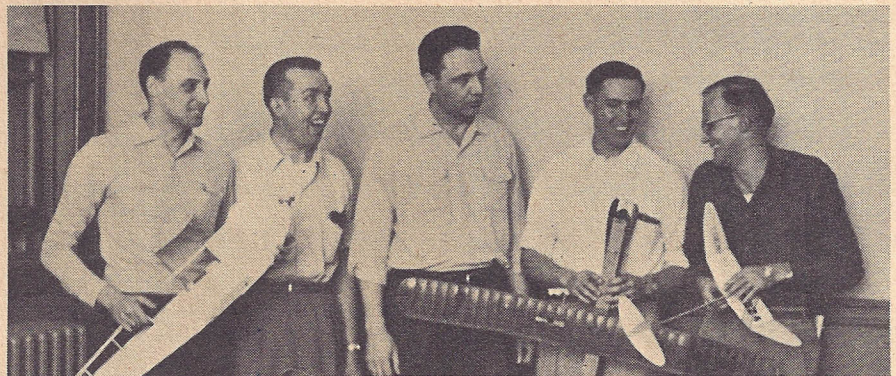
Gerald Ritz is one of our most active builders who were in the original group. He flies Wakefield, Nordic and FAI gas with marked success. Gerry owns a furniture factory, but nevertheless always finds time to fly in the Nats, King Orange and attend the FAI events in Europe.

Our meetings are held on the first Friday of the month at Austin Town hall, Lake and Central Avenues in Chicago. The sessions start with a review of members who have qualified

and then their times are posted on a large display. The more ambitious try to post qualifying times in as many events as possible. This helps promote inter-club competition and those who are slow in making their "time" are in for some good natured ribbing. This is followed by the usual business meeting under which fall such items as sponsoring the annual Mid-west free flight meet, the problems of securing a suitable flying site (both indoors and outdoors), voting in new members and all those problems relative to running a club.

The officers hold special meetings on the average of once a month to try and eliminate some of the not-so-interesting topics so more time may be devoted to talks on design and building. The fellows chosen to give these lectures come very well prepared and are willing to divulge any special techniques which may help another builder.

A typical example of this is the instruction program that has been carried on during the past three months. Bob De Batty's been lecturing on design and building indoor models and the results have been gratifying. Through Governor Stratton (Illinois) we have been allowed to use a National Guard Armory with a 75 foot ceiling. This is the site of a regular Saturday flying session. The younger and less experienced indoor modelers have progressed tremendously. In addition to these weekly get-togethers, concerns such as Midwest Model, Trost Distributors and National Hobbies sponsor a monthly contest. Trophies are awarded and some of the contestants



Other well known 'Nuts include (from left): Norm Diechman, well-known scale free-flight modeler; Pete Sotich, Nuts secretary; Bob De Batty, 1st in indoor stick at '58 Nats; Charles Sotich, 1st in Wakefield at '58 Nats; and Ted DeCook, first in outdoor glider (by a very wide margin) at the famous, well-run Glenview Nationals.