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ROCHESTER

Democrat and Chronicle

May 28, 2008

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ANNETTE LEH STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Greg Kesel of Greece pulls his Extra 260 radio-controlled airplane from the runway after a flight at Northhampton Park Model Flying Field.

Flights of fancy soar over Greece when Radio Control Club meets

Radio Control Club of Rochester flies planes twice monthly

BENNETT J. LOUDON • STAFF WRITER • MAY 27, 2008

GREECE — Ever since he saw one for the first time in a Sears catalog 30 years ago, Matt Kirsch has been fascinated by remote-control model airplanes.

But it wasn't until he got his first "real job" about 11 years ago that he was able to indulge his interest.

Kirsch, 30, who works in the information technology field, now has about 20 remote-control planes and is the president of the 100-member Radio Control Club of Rochester.

During the cold-weather months, the group meets in the basement of Our Mother of Sorrows Church, 5000 Mt. Read Blvd. But from May 28 until September, members gather on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month at Hasman airfield on West Ridge Road, one mile west of Route 259 behind Abe's Restaurant, 5232 W. Ridge Road.

The group also gets together at 4 p.m. every Tuesday at Northampton Park in Sweden where they offer novices an opportunity to try the hobby. "We will train people who bring their own aircraft and want to learn," said Kirsch, who lives in Spencerport.

But novices don't even need their own plane the first time. The club has planes they will let people use to try their hand at flying, but after that, they ask visitors to bring their own.

Just watching can be fun, too. The planes flown by the 100-or-so club members are electric, gasoline-powered or methanol-powered.

Ready-to-go electric plane packages are available for as little as \$150, Kirsch said. Gas-powered setups can cost \$500.

Joining the club costs \$55, but it comes with an opportunity to learn from members with hundreds of years of combined experience.

The group's biggest annual event is the Ray Edmunds Memorial Air Show at Northampton Park on June 28 and 29.

"It's what we call a fun fly, where people just come to gather and show off their airplanes and show off their flying," said Kirsch.

Craig Donaldson, a 66-year-old retiree from Greece, started flying model planes as a boy. Now he has 15 planes and he's still learning.

"It's not easy. I'm trying to learn how to do 3-D flying, which takes a lot of practice. It's basically doing stunts that you couldn't do in a full-scale plane," said Donaldson, a club member.

Jerry Merz, 83, of Irondequoit, was a gunner in the Pacific during World War II.

"For me, the thing is, when you crash, you don't get killed. And I've crashed quite a few," said Merz.

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Scott Miller of Brockport revs the engine of his P47 Thunderbird radio-controlled airplane before takeoff at Northampton Park in Sweden. The Radio Control Club of Rochester meets twice a month to fly planes together. Miller's plane is a replica of a World War II fighter. (ANNETTE LEIN staff photographer)



Trevor Ewell looks over the electrically powered RQ-1 Predator radio-controlled airplane owned by Pat Lavigne, right. Ewell has been flying planes for 43 years. Lavigne is new to the hobby. (ANNETTE LEIN staff photographer)



Bill Stauber's Stearman biplane flies over Northampton Park. (ANNETTE LEIN staff photographer)

ABOUT THE CLUB

What: Radio Control Club of Rochester.

To watch or join: Second and fourth Wednesday of each month. From May 28 until September at Hasman airfield behind Abe's Restaurant, 5232 W. Ridge Road; from October through May at Our Mother of Sorrows Church basement, 5000 Mt. Read Blvd.; 4 p.m. every Tuesday at Northampton Park in Sweden.

Details: www.RCCR1957.com