

1978 Nationals

This year it was at Chennault Field in Lake Charles, Louisiana. The weather was hot and humid but there was plenty of time and space/**Don McGovern** and **Larry Kruse**



Wallace Johnson's D-Gas machine goes screaming off. He took 2nd in Open with a score of 1572 seconds. **Beneath:** William Burks' entry, C-Gas, being nicely cared for while he rumages through the old flight box.



The 52nd running of the Nationals now takes its place in the history books. It all started somewhere back around 1923, and with the exception of a few war years when there was no time left for such pleasurable endeavors, the A.M.A. sponsored Nationals has become something of a tradition for the competitive modelers. The years 1948 through 1972 saw the Nationals hosted by the United States Navy aboard various Naval Air Stations, starting at Olathe, Kansas, in '48 and '49, then to Hensley N.A.S. in Dallas, Texas for 1950 and '51, after which the big meet grew steadily in stature and size, rotating about the United States to Willow Grove N.A.S. in Philadelphia, to Glenview N.A.S. in Chicago, then Los Alimitos N.A.S. near Los Angeles. The Nats then returned again to Dallas and repeated the cycle until in its final years with the Navy it settled down at Glenview N.A.S. once more. After 25 years a slightly worn out U.S. Navy decided it was time to cast us adrift. The phasing down of air bases, budget cuts and manpower shortages were a bit too much and we were once again on our own. The Nationals went to Oshkosh the next year, tied to the end of the E.A.A. convention, but corn and crops decreed another Free-Flight site. 1974 saw the big meet move to Chennault Field outside of Lake Charles, Louisiana in the deep Southland. A hot and humid climate! There was lots of land, plenty of motels, a fine indoor site, sunshine, food, clouds, thermals. Also some snakes, alligators and rain, but we can't be too fussy, can we? It all worked and worked well. This writer flew a search pattern in a Cessna looking for a downed aircraft and the terrain adjacent to the Chennault Field site is kind of bounded by some evil looking waterways. Still, Chennault offers more land than most Free-Flight sites. Some dense brush and other problems were cited by modelers in discussing a possible return to Louisiana for the '75 Nats, but the local Chamber of Commerce and powers that be were very reasonable and vowed the site would be improved in time for the forthcoming meet. It was. And after a Nationals in Springfield, Ohio in 1976, and California in '77, the A.M.A. again chose the Lake Charles site as the best possible choice available for the 1978 meet. Visibly, the field was much improved. What had been a barely cleared camping site that first year is now a fine golf course with resident alligator in the pond. Some of the brush now sports a few grazing cattle, and chasing terrain is generally better. We won't say perfect, but definitely better. There is room. The big Nationals is all but swallowed up in the enormity of the place, there were affordable accommodations at the University, and a wealth of motels as Lake Charles is something of a tourist attraction in itself. Enough restaurants and a thermal generating sun.

Now about the sun. The sun fries your head and brains to a crisp and golden brown. To keep you from drying out it comes complete with excessive humidity. 90 to 100% humidity, with 90 to 100 degree temperatures. Enough to make you think about going home to work. Huge clouds billow in from the nearby Gulf of Mexico and if one is smart one takes it a little easy in this kind of torrid climate. At the day's end a dip in the motel swimming pool will put the world back in focus for you and then it's business as usual with the gab fests with fellow modelers through the evenings.

As large as the site might be, it still does

not support the entire meet. As there are in the order of 60 events, a wide variety of special needs must be considered. The Indoor events require a vast domed arena, and a half hour drive provided just that, the newly built Burton Coliseum, quite magnificent for the purpose as described elsewhere in our coverage. And R/C Soaring, long flights on a 984 foot winch line. Best to go to the L.A.R.K.S.' club field for this, a beautifully manicured model flying site a few miles out via the Interstate. Here the gliders could tickle the clouds without hogging frequencies. Choppers too flew here another day. It worked well and modelers enroute from one site to another had time for a lunch or an air-conditioned respite, sorely needed as a rule. While there were occasional passing showers toward the very beginning of the week, the meet, in general was blessed by remarkably fine and almost windless weather. Those of us who have attended a great many meets can certainly remember a few less endowed with such fortune.

It all came off on schedule. You can thank the L.A.R.K.S. club for much of the organization, three hundred odd officials and volunteers who tried to make it happen, the A.M.A. Washington contingent who handles the backbreaking work load, and most certainly John and Lillian Worth who arrived early, and lingered around for days afterward making sure the site was left as clean as God made it, in apple pie order. It's one of the reasons Lake Charles keeps inviting us back, and invitations to fly snarling airplanes are hard to come by elsewhere!

Field facilities moved from the original hangar used in 1974 to a complex of buildings just walking distance down the road, about adjacent to the Controline Combat site. A.M.A. Headquarters had its office space for the myriad details of the week at this location and contestants kits were provided at another window. Just across the road bathroom facilities, a hobby shop in operation, scale aircraft of all types well displayed on a gymnasium floor. Gone was the chicken wire approach which detracted so much from the viewing of the aircraft at past meets. Models seemed well protected, out of reach, yet visible to all. After scale judging the models were claimed and next seen again on the field during the week as scale events were flown off in their scheduled time slots.

Nearer the weekend, the local young fry were on hand, deeply engrossed in the A.M.A.'s Delta Dart program, sponsored by the Academy of Model Aeronautics in association with the Lake Charles Jaycee and Jayne Club members. We can all become so engrossed in our own flight activities that we forget how important it is to encourage a new nucleus of young modelers. So often all a kid needs is a real hint of soaring flight, his own handiwork reaching for the rafters. It was so for this writer, a paper glider around the Christmas tree turned me on. I was about 5.

Nationals officials and volunteers numbered in the hundreds. A party for all Saturday night at the Burton Coliseum complex, where the Indoor events had been held. Food and laughter in abundance, with only one day left and the promise of more fine weather for that, all the harried event directors and the Nationals staff officials could start to relax. A resounding "thank you" is in order for all the timers and judges and folks who stand behind the scene tabulating the

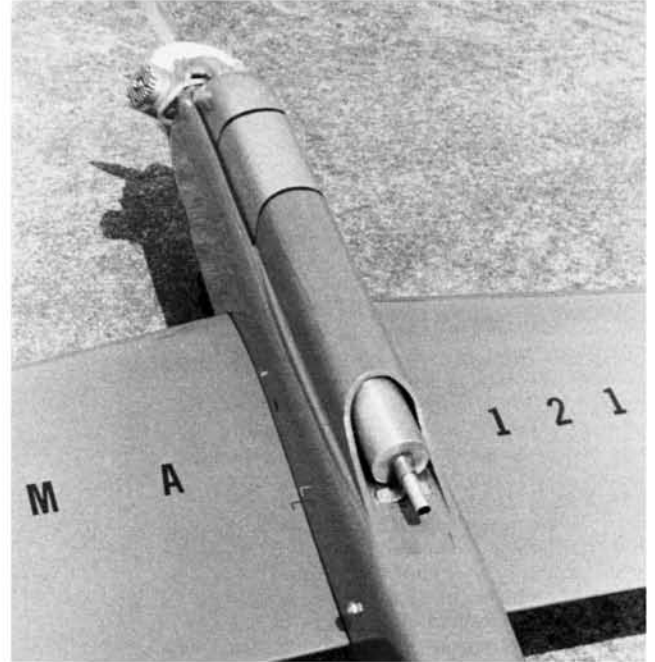


Enough to bend the mind. This F-15 is to be kitted soon by World Engines. Duane Johnson designed it, Jim Gerwitz the builder. Two .40 engines driving ducted fans. Rhom Air retracts, comes in at 13 lbs. **Center photo:** On the winch, winner Overall and Unlimited. Jim Fitch of Tullahoma, Tennessee. A Sailaire by Craft-Air. **At bottom:** Twin screws motivate Dave Platt's beautiful Duellist II, his R/C Pattern entry.





The North American F-82G. An unlikely marriage of a pair of Mustang's on a common wing. Art Johnson's R/C Scale. It flew well. 91" span, 18 lbs. Kraft receiver, Heathkit transmitter, Rhom Air retracts, Hydra-Lock. Postwar era.



Indoor plumbing. Dan Kowallek's Pattern ship, tuned pipe is inside fuselage. **Center shot:** Republic P-47 Thunderbolt by Tom Czikk. OS Max .60, Perry Pump, Rhom Air retracts with Hydra-Lock. Flaps, bombs and a belly tank. Awesome! **Left:** Bob Violett's Skyhawk ducted fan. K&B .40.



results year after year for together they all make the big meet work. If you've never made the annual trek to the Nats you might want to mark it on your calendar for next year. It's usually scheduled around the very end of July through the first week in August. Modelers plan their vacations around it and that way you get to meet old friends year after year. The first meet was sort of a less complex affair, just 23 contestants in 1923. It has grown in stature to encompass some 60 events and entrees hover around the 1,000 mark. Add to that other family members, and you've got a major undertaking. If you want to join in and become popular in one motion just show up at the Nats desk and volunteer some of your spare moments to help. It's how it all keeps going.

We hope our selection of pictures printed here will capture something of the feeling of the meet. You've really got to be there to see it all. There is simply not enough room within our pages to cover all aspects. Ships climb with a whine and seek to outperform

all others, but win or lose, just being there is the real experience.

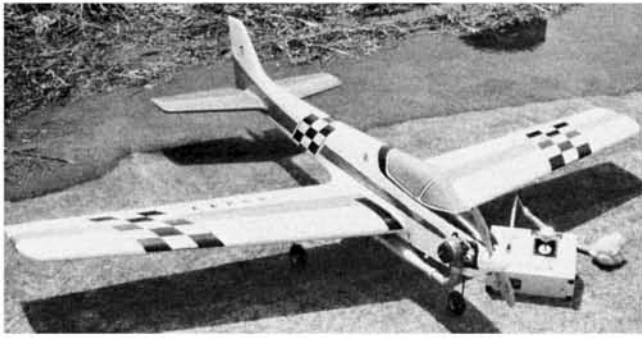
The weatherman forecast intermittent thundershowers for the first two days of the '78 Nats — and that was for the *inside* of Burton Coliseum, site of the 1978 indoor events. Height and humidity seemed to be the chief attributes of the building, standing a few miles south of Lake Charles proper, looking for all the world like the top half of a beer keg sticking out of the Louisiana soil.

By all physical standards of indoor sites, Burton Coliseum was an excellent choice for the gossamer wing events. A bit over one hundred seven feet to the top of its dome, the rodeo arena's interior is clear of any hanging obstacles, save one centrally located scoreboard. The Coliseum walls are circular in shape and while the dirt floor of the arena is oblong due to the seating, the building has so little drift that once a plane entered a centered glide path, it ordinarily landed within the confines of the arena.

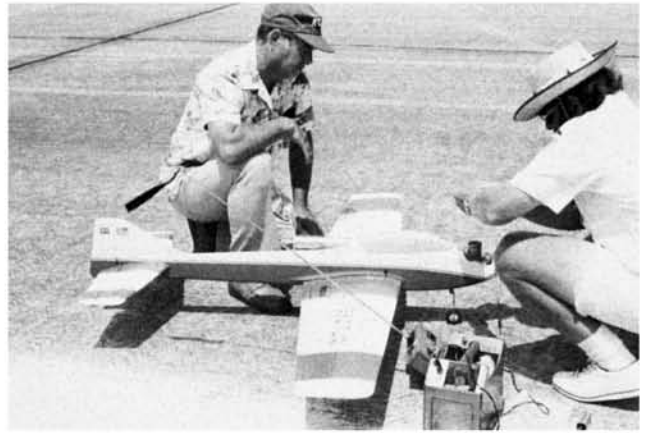
From a meteorological stance, however,

those who were there would testify that it was a bit less than perfect. With the humidity outside the building staying at or above 90% and the exterior temperature ranging from 92° to 97°, inside the Coliseum was miserable. Simply strolling slowly about on the dirt floor caused profuse sweating, and those involved in the heat (no pun intended) of competition, found carefully rolled motor tubes turned to mush after absorbing two or three hours of Burton atmosphere. Wing posts needing adjustment became spaghetti from moisture on the fingers of the adjuster, and entire airplanes rolled up in neat microfilm balls when central support structures weakened by moisture gave way.

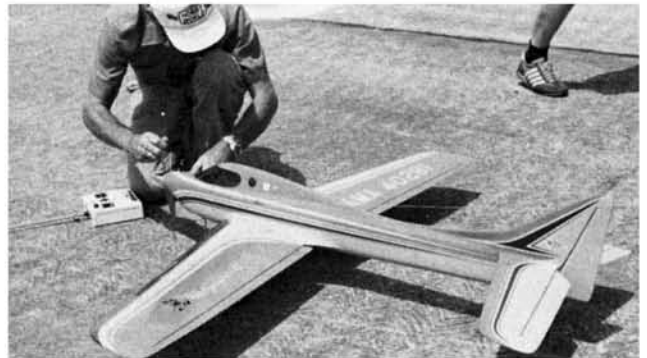
The first day of competition saw most of the super-delicate stuff being flown. In Junior Indoor Stick, David Lindley turned a creditable 11:50.6 for first, topping both the Juniors and the Seniors. His performance, in fact, would have placed him eighth in Open competition. Clarence Mather won Open



Sky Night 6, R/C Pattern. Paul Clements model, Rossi .60 with a tuned pipe. A Zinger prop, 11-7. Rhom Air retracts, Pro-Line system. A wooden fuselage. **Photo right:** Out on the starting line. Robert Redmon, 3rd in Expert Pattern.



3 Perfection. Bill Thomas' aircraft. Fox Hawk. OPS pipe, Goldberg retracts. Sonic actuators, EK Logictrol radio. Tuned pipe faired within the fuselage. **Center right:** Joe Whelan cranks his machine to life. Tense moment for flyer. **Right:** A modified Compensator by Ed Hartley of Knoxville. Rhom Air retracts.



with a time of 26:16.4.

Paper Stick was a repeat for David with Bob Boyer winning Senior and Stan Chilton beating Dan Domina by a little over 14 seconds in Open. Chilton flew a design utilizing the Jim Richmond idea of locating the motor on the side of the stick, rather than on the bottom.

Cabin had three Juniors, Mike Clem, Bryan Fullmer, and Carl Linstrum put up creditable flights. Carl flew a modified Easy B or Pennyplane (I wasn't sure which) that he and Ol' Dad Dave (VTO) modified right there on the spot, oblivious to heat, humidity, and kibitzer's advice. Joe Kubina won Senior and Dan Domina needed just one flight to top all other Open contestants at 16:35.0.

The Dan Domina show continued in FAI Stick as Domina bested Clarence Mather, Cezar Banks, Dan Belieff, and a host of others with a time of 52:56.0. It was rumored on the arena floor that Domina was only flying his third (some said fourth) best airplane, so FLYING MODELS

it may be that the up-coming World Championships could feature his name rather prominently, if all goes well.

The second day of indoor featured HLG during the first part of the day, followed by the scale events, and Easy B and Pennyplane later on.

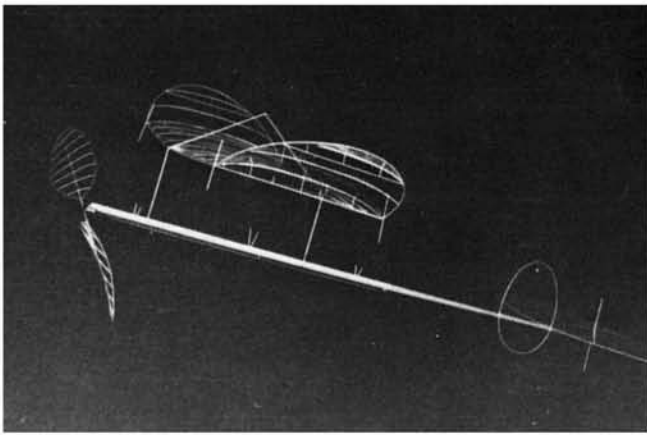
Indoor HLG saw some quality flyers on hand, and although Wittman, Blanchard, Hines and company were not present, Stan Stoy, Rudy Kluber, Dan Domina, Dick Mathis, Chuck Markos, and Paul Shailor were.

In a nutshell, Paul Shailor won the closely contested Open category, followed by Dale Segle and Stan Stoy, but the stories in HLG were elsewhere.

One of the stories is of two real comers, Junior Dave Turgeon and Senior Bob Boyer. Both are blessed with golden arms and could stick it to almost any Open competitor at any time. David is a little guy, but he can "flang" 'em with people twice his size and three times his age. Bob, on the other hand,

is already a good-sized lad, and will shortly be in the "super-arm" category, if he's not there already. As a footnote to Indoor, Bob also won first in Senior outdoor HLG and the Tulsa Glue Dobbbers high time trophy in the process, besting everybody.

The other story in HLG is of a non-performance by a non-performer. It goes this way. During designated "practice" flying times in HLG a person can see a whole flock of gliders go up at any time. While watching these practice flights, it soon became evident that one glider out of the whole mess was consistently going higher and staying up longer than any of the others. When several of us put a clock on it, the plane was staying up for two to three seconds longer than any time currently being posted by Paul Shailor, who was leading the event. After timing two flights of 67 seconds and another of 69 seconds, it finally became too much for me and I went down on the arena floor to corner the erstwhile performer. It turned out he was Bernie Boehm from South



Just a boy and his airplane. Carl Goldberg is the only modeler who has made every Nationals. Originated the pop-up stab D/T. Left: An FAI Stick heading for the upper atmosphere. Only two or three models hung up.



Bill Stroman placed 4th with his Taube, an FM construction design. The model is very stable in flight, a frail antique from days gone by. AMA Gas Scale. **Center above:** The 150' Sallaire that won for Jim Fitch. A splendid machine. **Left:** Melvin Duval makes ready his beautiful Unlimited.



Bend, Indiana, and he wasn't entered in the event. It seems he doesn't fly HLG very much and really didn't care about flying in competition. He was there as a mechanic helping a friend of his. I congratulated him on an outstanding non-performance and walked away mumbling to myself. Makes you wonder, doesn't it?

Scale was the third act of the Dan Domina show as his ultra-light Piper put on a ceiling scraping performance high above the circling ships of Don Shull, Charlie Sotich, Clarence Mather, and Doc Martin, who finished in that order. Of note in scale, again, was the spontaneous applause of the audience as each ship completed a successful flight. Doc Martin's Weymann-Lepere WE-L10 was particularly nice in its silver micro-lite covering as it reflected the Coliseum lights that came not from overhead, but from the walls of the structure. Don Isaacks and Nick Decarlis won Junior and Senior, respectively, with realistic flights. Peanut Scale was not the Lacey derby it

used to be. In fact, only one Lacey was entered, and that by a Senior. The Fikes still abounded, but the highest placing Fike was third in Open. Clarence Mather won Open with a Davis and several bipes and low wing ships were seen as contestants tried to take advantage of weighted flight points in Peanut.

Pennyplane and Easy B were flown simultaneously with scale, but at the other end of the Coliseum. No one seemed to mind, though, and no one complained of collisions that seemed imminent, but never occurred. Both Easy B and Pennyplane seem to be the areas where experimentation and innovation are taking place.

Noteworthy in Pennyplane is the experimentation going on with wing chord, numbers of wings, incidence angles, and covering surfaces. Numerous bipes and even one triplane was entered. Black surfaces, white surfaces, silver surfaces, clear surfaces all had their proponents as the search for the ultimate continues.

Easy B appears to be far from its original intent or title, since it's fallen into the hands of the experts, but that's apparently the nature of progress in all indoor events. Probably the most interesting development in Easy B was the use of winglets by Stan Chilton. The performance of his ship was significantly better than any of his competitors. Whether the performance differential can be attributed to winglets or not, they certainly bear investigation in any event where the wing span is restricted.

While the overall number of entries in Indoor was down from the Riverside Nats, the quality of performance was maintained at a high level. Considering the adversity posed by the heat and humidity, it is not remarkable that new national records stayed away in droves. In total, though, the indoor portion of the '78 Nats was a success in the minds of those who participated and those who watched, and I'm sure, if given the opportunity, Indoor flyers would return to Burton Coliseum another year.