



# The Pinnacle

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The Official Journal of the 495th R/C Squadron  
Tewksbury, MA

**AMA Gold Leader Club, Charter #340**



**On the Cover: Work Party 4/24/21**

Photo Credit: Calvin Hsieh

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### 495 R/C Squadron, Inc.

**Next Zoom Meeting .....** Wednesday, Feb 2, 2022, 7:30 P.M.

Next Events ..... TBA via email

Club web site ..... <http://www.495thsquadron.org>

Club Facebook ..... <https://www.facebook.com/495th-RC-Squadron-240759615414>

### 495 R/C Squadron, Inc. - Club Officers:

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## From the Editor

Newsletter is for everyone. If you have great ideas, stories and photos to share, please do email me @ [sales@advancednotebook.com](mailto:sales@advancednotebook.com)

Thanks for all the positive feedbacks of last month's newsletter. I will try to maintain this monthly publication with all your supports. Do share with me your ideas, story and picture that will make my job much easier.

Our secretary Bob Merino has a great story to share. It's the journey how he got into this hobby in the first place. He also manages to dig out few old pictures to go with it. You will see Part A in this month and Part B will follow.

Trying to find out more material that I can use for the newsletter, I spent some time checking our website. I notice that our club has a great and well-organized photo collection dated all the way back to 2005. I joined club in 2014 so I definitely missed those fun time. **"Blast from the past"** where I select some good pictures from those days. Check it out those old faces and great time we once had.

Calvin Hsieh  
495<sup>th</sup> Newsletter Editor



(Tamiya TT02 1/10 kit with Volkswagen Scirocco GT-R Body)



## Welcome our 2021 New Members !

Paul Morton	Lawrence	MA	Daniel Bekai	Medford	MA
Mike Onesty	Dunstable	MA	Alex Bernardo	Andover	MA
Luis a. Rodriguez	Lawrence	MA	Angelo Caterino	Tewksbury	MA
Benjamin Sena	Malden	MA	Rich Jr Celeste	Tyngsboro	MA
Adam Shih	Brookline	MA	Richard Celeste	Billerica	MA
Alex Shih	Brookline	MA	Chylinski	Haverhill	MA
Lucy Shih	Brookline	MA	Bryan Cousins	N. Billerica	MA
Mickey Shih	Brookline	MA	Roberto Chuica	Lawrence	MA
James Smeltzer	S. Lawrence	MA	George Congiano	North Reading	MA
Rita Smeltzer	S. Lawrence	MA	Matt Crane	Cambridge	MA
William Smeltzer	Lawrence	MA	Danila, Lukas	Cambridge	MA
Israel Sousa	Lowell	MA	Mark Della Croce	Haverhill	MA
John Sorota	Lowell	MA	Anthony Difizio	Tewksbury	MA
Ronnie Stein	Lowell	MA	Brian Duchak	N Reading	MA
Mark Stira	Wilmington	MA	Joe Faso	Reading	MA
Elizabeth Thompson	Arlington	MA	Mike Fitzpatrick	N. Reading	MA
Greg Thompson	Arlington	MA	Amy Flaherty	Tewksbury	MA
Ryan Tirabassi	Tewksbury	MA	Arthur Flaherty	Tewksbury	MA
Dinh Truong	Pelham	NH	John Glezellis	Stoneham	MA
John Tsai,	Chelmsford	MA	Andrew Heafitz	Cambridge	MA
Benjamin Ux	Londonderry	NH	David Kloss	Andover	MA
Chelsea Ux	Londonderry	NH	Dino Lancione	Andover	MA
Julia Ux	Londonderry	NH	Chick Langone	Tewksbury	MA
Zachary Ux	Londonderry	NH	John Lefavour	Chelmsford	MA
Jose David Valdez	Beverly	MA	Mike Legere	Lowell	MA
Il-Do Yoo	Andover	MA	Michael Mitrano	Wilmington	MA
Xingguang Zhu	Andover	MA	Patricio Montesquieu	Lawrence	MA
Gregg Moore	Andover	MA			

# View From The Left Seat™

By

John Morley, President, The 495<sup>th</sup> R/C Squadron, Inc.

I hope you all enjoyed the 1<sup>st</sup> issue of the 495<sup>th</sup> R/C Squadron newsletter, the *Pinnacle*, after its recent return to publication! Our new newsletter editor, Calvin Hsieh, did an outstanding job on the 1<sup>st</sup> issue – I've had a tremendous amount of positive feedback from the club! - and we all look forward to many more great issues in the future! As I've said before, it's not always an easy job to put together a club newsletter on a regular basis, so if you have any stories, content, or other materials you'd like to share with the club, by all means please get in touch with Calvin!

A longtime member of the club recently passed off to me a number of old AMA *Model Aviation* magazines. While thumbing thru these old issues, a couple of photos popped out at me, so I thought I share these 'blasts from the past' with the membership! The first photo is of longtime member and good friend Ed Vrablik, and his two sons, Scott and Kevin. They are apparently showing off a newly built plane at a club meeting! I almost didn't recognize Ed as he was sporting a beard and mustache back then! The second photo is of former members Stu Lord and Paul Penny participating in a club auction. I've been a member of the 495<sup>th</sup> R/C Squadron for 20 years, and these two men are unfamiliar to me, so they haven't been active in a long time! Can anyone provide some additional information about these former members? Oh, and in case anyone is wondering, these photos came from the May 1986 issue of *Model Aviation*! Phew! For those that are counting, that is 36 years ago!!



Ed Vrablik, President of 495 R/C Squadron and his two sons—Scott, 17 (Left) and Kevin, 19. Kevin did the excellent MonoKote covering on the airplane.



Stu Lord and Paul Penny, auctioneers at 495th R/C Squadron Club auction.

With the January 2022 meeting, we returned to in person club meetings at the Tewksbury Congregational Church. This first 'post pandemic' meeting was attended by approximately 20 members, and featured a *Pizza Party* with cheese and pepperoni pizza, chips, soda and cookies for dessert! We consumed 8 large pizzas, 3 large bags of chips, and 4 large bottles of Coke! A good time was had by all, and no one left hungry! Unfortunately, our return to in person meetings coincided with an uptick in Covid-19 cases caused by the Omicron variant, which I think somewhat limited attendance. Although this new Covid variant appears to be quite mild, and the trend in new cases appears to be going down, we will return to a Zoom meeting format for February before once again returning to a 'normal' meeting format in March. At the March meeting, we plan to host the annual Italian Banquet and Awards Night, so stay tuned for more information in the coming weeks!

So far, our membership renewals for 2022 are off to a great start! Well more than ½ of the membership has already renewed for the new year, and new renewals are being received daily! Last year we hit a 'high water mark' of 150+ members, and we expect to reach at least that number again this year!

While this time of year is generally too cold and snowy for flying and driving, the spring season is really just around the corner! For the upcoming year, the club is already planning a number of field improvement projects for the benefit of the members! First and foremost is the permanent installation of a 'portable' restroom (porta-potty) at the field! Believe it or not, this restroom has been on order since May 2021, and due to supply chain issues is not scheduled for delivery until sometime in February! Early in the season we will be performing a number of guardrail post replacements to help secure the field. In addition, we plan to increase the number of pedestrian entries thru the guardrail for the convenience of the members. Other projects include rolling of the runway, replacement of the picnic tables, construction of new 'work benches', grading and replacing the crushed stone in the parking area, and the installation of solar panels on the shed to provide better security lighting, and – power budget allowing – member battery charging stations! All of these projects are going to require significant manpower to complete, so we are counting on everyone to pitch in to help!

In closing, I want to remind all members that you **must** renew your club membership by Jan. 1<sup>st</sup>. We plan to host several renewal events at the field in February to facilitate the continuation of the renewal process. Early renewals dramatically reduce the work load of the club secretary and treasurer, so stay tuned for the dates/times of the upcoming renewal events. As always, renewals can also be sent to the club post office box.

John Morley  
President, The 495<sup>th</sup> R/C Squadron, Inc.

Nov. 28th, 2021



# Membership Renewal Event

Sunday, 12/19/21



**Serving boiled hot dogs  
and hot chocolate !**



# Of Dreams and Crickets

**Robert Merlino**

It was the fall of 1970. The place was Filetto, a little town in the Abruzzo region of Italy, near the Adriatic coast, where I grew up. One night I was watching a Disney movie with my younger brother and sister when a scene in the movie caught my eye. It was a very brief scene, unnoticed by anyone else, but one that would have profound implications for me. The scene: a boy flying a radio control airplane. At the time, I knew that such a thing was possible and that such a thing existed but I had never actually seen it in any way, shape or form. My guess is that R/C flying at that time and place was a wildly exotic activity, known only to a privileged few in some big cities, way beyond the realm of mere commoners in rural little towns.

Being already a consummate gadgeteer, the idea of an airplane controlled by radio, seemed most remarkable. Imagine a model airplane frame capable of actually flying...with miniature radio electronics ... and a miniature engine. To even lay eyes on just one of these things would have been a dream, but all put together, seemed beyond magical. The mysterious complexity of such wondrous system became so intriguing that I soon found myself thinking about it all the time. Yes indeed... I had officially been bitten by the R/C bug. I just didn't know it yet.

Of course, reality was never far behind. At 12 years old, at that place and time, with exactly zero resources at my disposal, I knew full well this would be only a dream. The odds of me gaining access to a remote control toy airplane were exactly the same as if I had wished to own Air Force One, along with its full entourage. But dreaming was easy and very affordable. In the weeks and months that followed, I spent countless hours thinking about all things R/C. This even earned me several reprimands at school... "I seemed distracted" as I was told many a times. Indeed the lessons of the day could not possibly compete with daydreams of R/C... how would I build one... what kind of wood... and the engine... and the radio... how would I learn to fly it... how difficult would it be to fly it...so many questions, with no one to answer. If I could only watch that movie once again, I would give anything! Netflix?... No, no Netflix on demand back then... just the TV... with a strange looking antenna on the roof.



**Bob with his trainer airplane Kadet Mark II , in Cape Ann Model Club in Ipswich, MA where he learned to fly (1986)**

But as with any unfulfilled dream, it began to fade away as time went on. Eventually the dream itself became just a distant memory. Three years later my family emigrated to the US and we settled in Medford. With a busy new life of school and work, R/C never crossed my mind again for many years to come.

Fast forward to 1985. On a nice summer day, I was riding my 10-speed Columbia on the bike path along the Mystic river in Medford when I heard it: a faint, strange, high-pitched sound coming from quite a distance on the other side of the river. I stopped, looked back and witnessed some sort of R/C airplane circling at low altitude for a few seconds, then veer sharply to the left and crash to the ground. Such unexpected sight warranted investigating.

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By the time I pedaled my way around to the other side of the river and located the area, there was no one there... the person flying had already collected his broken airplane and driven away. I had no idea who he was or where he came from. I started pedaling my way home and kept thinking about the stunning oddity of what I had just witnessed. An R/C airplane... flying in the least likely of places, along the river, near houses and buildings. I had been riding that route for years, never seen that before. At home that evening... R/C airplane...R/C airplane...you know... I used to think about this stuff long ago... this used to be a dream back in Abruzzo, many years ago. The more I thought about it, the more I began to retrieve the memories of that dream. Before long all the excitement and the intrigue of the dream of R/C back in Abruzzo was suddenly reawakened. Then, later that evening, a most remarkable epiphany... I have job... I have a job... I have a job!! To this day I still remember the thrill and excitement of that evening, when I suddenly realized I now had my own resources necessary to tackle the once seemingly unattainable hobby of R/C. I can do this now... there is absolutely nothing to stop me! The possibilities were so intriguing I did not sleep one wink that night. The next day, it was time for action, with no time to waste. By hook or by crook there would be an R/C project starting before the weekend!

Of course, looking back, it would have been wise to slow down and do some research first. Perhaps try to locate a local flying club, talk to someone in the hobby, go to the field and watch, study what to build, all the good advice we usually give to newcomers. But no, no, no... there would be no time for any of that. I was on a mission, a quest for the long lost dream of R/C!!

And so, with no one else to provide advice and influence, my decisions were swift and unanimous. The first order of business, of course, was to decide what to build. An airplane would have been logical, but that was the time when newfangled R/C helicopters were starting to come on to the scene. Besides, where would I be able to fly an airplane in Medford?

It just so happened that a week earlier, while at the Eric Fuchs hobby shop in the Burlington Mall, I did notice an R/C heli hanging from the ceiling, but I paid no attention to it at the time. With renewed curiosity, a trip back to the mall was in order. The heli: a Cricket, manufactured by Ghoram Model Products (GMP). The Cricket was touted as a "perfect beginner helicopter, easy to build and easy to fly". It said so... right there on the box. Surely the box would not be misleading... of course not. That's it!! That's my first R/C project, wrap it up, as I plunked down my first paycheck to the cause of R/C.



**Bob setting up the plane, Cape Ann Model Club (1986)**

At home, construction began within the hour. As it turned out, the part about "easy to build" was true, sure enough the Cricket was pretty easy to build, it posed no challenge from a build perspective. On the other hand, the part about "easy to fly"...ahhh... yeah... well... we'll talk more about that later...easy to fly???

Very soon it was time to buy the engine and radio. I needed to find a real R/C hobby shop. A search on the Yellow Pages revealed the closest one to be Tony's Hobby Shop in Revere. The internet?... no, no internet in those days. A phone call with Tony confirmed the required 0.28 sized engine to be in stock.

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My Capri and I were on the way faster than I could hang up the phone. While en route, I had grand visions of a sprawling hobby shop with an intriguing store front in the city of Revere. Instead, as I arrived at the destination, there was no evidence of any store, only a two-story house in a residential neighborhood. A brief consultation with my Rand McNally road maps confirmed that I was at the right address. GPS? ...no, no GPS in those days. As I sat in the car trying to figure out what's going on, I noticed a small hand-written Hobby Shop sign, pointing towards the back of the house. Sure enough, in the back I was greeted by another sign "Hobby Shop Open", and in smaller print "Come on in, watch your head". As I stepped down a few stairs, through the basement bulkhead and opened the door, I could hardly believe my eyes. A well lit room full of wall-to-wall R/C stuff! Several people were discussing their latest adventures at the flying field. Airplane kits stacked from the floor to the ceiling, and fuel and starters and an entire wall full of any conceivable hardware implement. A small showcase full of engines with unfamiliar names such as Enya, and SuperTigre and O.S. something and look here... a real, live FG6 radio kit from a small Japanese company, if I recall, Futaba was the name, Wow!! In the corner, atop a stack of fuel cases, a complete ready-to-fly helicopter! I was like a hungry kid who had walked into a pastry shop for the first time. I had to pinch myself, I was in heaven.

I could hardly contain my excitement. Indeed I had found a real R/C hobby shop and, most important, I was in the presence of R/C experts. For the first time ever, I knew I had access to knowledgeable people who could answer my ever growing list of R/C questions. Whooo hooo!! I had arrived!

As I ogled the miniature engine marvels in the showcase, my first encounter with Tony:

- **Tony:** yes, what can I do for you?
- **Me:** I'm the guy that called about the engine
- **Tony:** oh yeah, what're you going to put the engine on?
- **Me:** a helicopter
- **Tony:** a helicopter...a **heli-copter**?? What do you fly now?
- **Me:** well, nothing, I'm just getting started

I soon learned Tony had a way with words of encouragement.

-**Tony:** you're kidding... you're just getting started and you want to fly a helicopter? Kid, helicopters are the most difficult thing to fly. You should start with a plane!

My excitement was already deflating . This is not at all how I envisioned my first conversation with an R/C expert to go.

- Tony:** what helicopter you got?
- Me:** a GMP Cricket
- Tony:** a Cricket? ...another piece of s\*\*t, just like my Schluter HeliBoy over there, only worse

And so it continued, from this low point the conversation went straight downhill. Not what I wanted to hear. All kinds of thoughts started going through my head, I'm just getting started and I'm already doing everything wrong! I'm building the wrong ship? This is a disaster. By now I was so depressed I didn't even want to buy anything. I almost managed to make it out of the store with a tiny shred of excitement still left in me, when Tony dealt the final blow "forget about that heli kid, do yourself a favor and get an airplane".

I was crushed. Tony had killed me. All the built-up excitement, eviscerated on my very first encounter with an R/C expert. After a week of moping around, I began to pull myself together and regroup. I already had too much



Cricket Bob is currently restoring. Not the one in the story, but it is an original Cricket, just like the original



invested in the Cricket, for better or for worse, the Cricket project would continue as planned. With renewed determination, I went back to Tony's Hobby Shop and purchased the engine. I had two choices: an OS and a SuperTigre. Never heard of either one, both looked good, but on the SuperTigre box it said "Made In Italy". Well well... obviously this had to be the better engine, and so the Cricket had an engine.

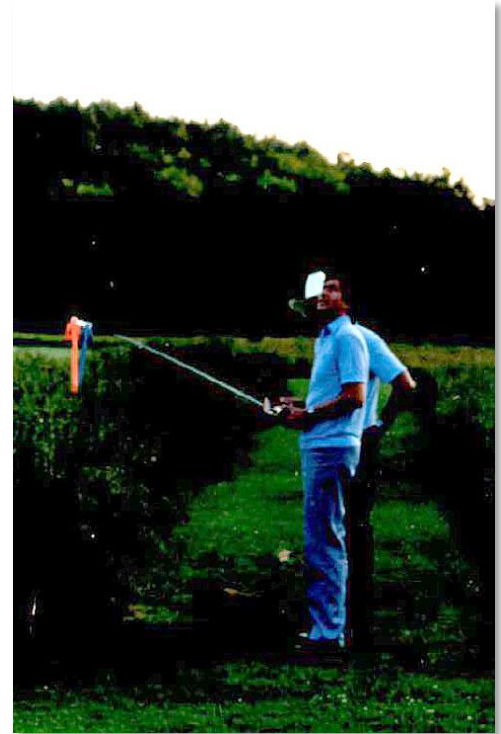
With the construction of the Cricket now progressing at a quick pace, it was evident I would soon master the build of my first R/C project, even without any assistance. No surprises here, my gadgeteering knowhow and hands on skills had paid off. As I was working on the final setup, the Cricket was looking better and better, but now the reality of the flying aspect of this project was starting to set in. Up to now I was too busy to worry about minor details like flying an actual R/C helicopter, but now there was no escaping that reality. The daunting challenge of successfully flying this machine was staring right at me and looming larger and larger the more I thought about it.

The box said "Easy to fly"... easy to fly? Well, let's see... considering that I had zero experience flying anything R/C... and considering that I had never setup a nitro engine... and considering that the Cricket seemed pretty heavy for its size (over 4 lb dry)... and the little 0.28 seemed pretty small... and considering that the Cricket had a fixed pitch rotor head, which meant it had to rely entirely on the engine performance and acceleration to maintain altitude... and considering that the Cricket had no tail gyro, which meant I would probably use up half of my brain power just to keep the tail under control... and considering that I had zero training at working the cyclic with my right hand stick, while simultaneously working the throttle and rudder with my left hand stick... and considering that this meant controlling all four channels independently, simultaneously and continuously the minute Cricket left the ground... there was a lot to consider!!

I may not have known anything about flying a helicopter, by my engineering judgment was sound. Having considered all considerations, I knew full well that if I tried to fly the Cricket directly, its lifespan would have been considerably less than ten seconds.

I had to find a way to get some flight training under my belt before even thinking of attempting to fly the Cricket. The question was how. Heli simulator... no, no heli simulator back in 1985... or any kind of simulator that I knew of. After some more thinking, I came up with a two-step solution, both of which involved holding the Cricket safely captive, but with varying degrees of limited freedom. Step 1 was accomplished quickly with a trip to Somerville Lumber. This involved tying the Cricket down to a simple wooden square frame, using four strings at each corner with a some slack at each string. This allowed me to more or less safely spool up the heli, adjust blade tracking, do some engine run-in and tuning and even watch Cricket lift off the ground an inch or two.

**(To be continue.... )**



**Bob with instructor Walter (and his trusted sidekick), Cape Ann Model Club (1986)**



# **Blast from the Past (2005)**

Opening Day, Scale show, Heli fun fly, Picnic









# RC Car 101

## Set Up Suspension and Shocks

### Typical aspects to look in the suspension System:

- Camber
- Caster
- **Ride Height**
- Shock Angle
- Toe-in/Out

**Ride Height:** Your car's ride height may not be the be-all and end-all of adjustments, but its importance to the adjustments you make couldn't be more crucial. Because the chassis is the foundation of your car, nearly every suspension adjustment is affected by its height and pitch. Regardless of whether your car is on-road, oval, or off-road, knowing how to set ride height is simple enough to do and can result in more effective tuning. Simply adjusting the amount of spring tension in the shocks will allow the vehicle to raise or lower to the perfect amount of ride height to optimize your suspension for most terrains.



- **Performing the “Drop Test”**

To accurately measure the amount of ride height you have, you'll need a solid, flat and level surface, and have all items installed in your RC (wheels/tires, body, battery, etc) as if you were running it. You'll want to raise the vehicle up 4-6" and drop it squarely on the flat surface. This will give you the perfect amount of “suspension sag” for the measurement. Measurements should be taken at the front and the rear of the vehicle (since rear shocks and front shocks can have different spring rates/weight bias).

- **The 30% Rule**

A general rule of thumb is you want your vehicle sitting at least 30% into the suspension travel of your shocks (**Droop**). This allows for not only bump absorption, but also the reverse – void absorption. Think pot holes while driving your real vehicle.

- **Start Tuning**

The most common way to change your ride height:

- Turn your spring collars** (or add spring clips for non-threaded shocks) so that the springs on your shocks help to raise the vehicle up. This has the least affect on handling and it limits the variables, but there are other ways.
- Change out your vehicle's springs.** Obviously the stiffer the spring, the more resistant they are to compression, resulting in higher ride height.
- Change the shock mounting location.** This changes the leverage on the shocks and how the car sits at rest.

Ride Height changes the speed of how the car reacts while changing directions. It will be really noticeable in chicanes, or S-turns, where changing directions is crucial. Our club track features many turns so trying out different height settings will be something we all can consider to do.



## Club Calendar

### Monthly Zoom Club Meetings

Every 1st Wednesday – Zoom or  
Congregational Church

### Club Events

2022 Events to be announced, stay  
tuned!

## R/C Suppliers:

### ABC RC & Hobby

11 Rockingham Rd, Windham, NH

(603) 458-6481

<https://www.horizonhobby.com>

All Around

<http://hobbyking.com>

All Around

<https://rcexcitement.com>

Cars

<https://twistedhobbys.com>

Profile Foamies

<https://innov8tivedesigns.com>

Great Motors

<https://fpvlab.com/>

FPV Equipment

<http://www.crashtesthobby.com>

Toughest Planes

<https://www.towerhobbies.com>

All Around

<http://www.amazon.com>

Extra All Around

## Handy Links:

Renew Your AMA Membership Online

<https://www.modelaircraft.org/joinrenew.aspx>

495th Membership Application

[http://www.495thsquadron.org/PDF\\_Files/Membership\\_Application.pdf](http://www.495thsquadron.org/PDF_Files/Membership_Application.pdf)

Online Groups

<http://www.rcgroups.com/forums/index.php>

<http://www.helifreak.com>

<http://www.wattflyer.com/forums>

<http://www.rcuniverse.com>

Local R/C Groups

<http://www.mcrcf.org>

Billerica, Mass

<http://www.burlington-rc.com>

Burlington, Mass

<http://www.nhflyingtigers.com/>

Derry, NH

<http://www.snhbcc.org>

Hudson, NH

<http://www.snhflyingeagles.org>

Merrimack, NH

R/C Related Podcast

<http://allthingsthatfly.com/>

Excellent electric power help

<http://rctodayshow.com/>

Mixed group with great advice