

Peterborough Radio Control Club

I think it was 1965 when I first joined the PRCC. I was told that the Club started in 1958, so it was well established when I joined. The earliest Club list I can find is for 1966. There were a grand total of 10 members; Bill Castell (field officer), Jim Jamieson, Paul Jones (sec-treas.) Paul Poitevin, Alex McLeod, Jack Reid, Ted Sharp, Bill Robinson, Bob Stevens (president), Paul Whiteman and Jack Parsons.

I don't remember the name of the first plane that I built, but among the first were a Falcon Junior, a Falcon 56, a Schoolmaster and a DeBolt Champ. The Falcon Junior was powered by a Cox .049, and the Falcon 56 with a Cox .09. The Falcons and the Schoolmaster, were basically free flight airplanes. I could adjust direction occasionally with my single channel radio. The transmitter had an on/off switch and a momentary push button. When I pushed the button, the receiver would actuate a single on/off relay. On my first planes, the controls were rudder only or rudder and elevator. Later I added a third control, which



Ted Sharp with damaged plane and a Fairy Barracuda

would give a choice of full throttle or idle. The escapement was the method of control. This was a device that was powered by a rubber band, which connected to a small crank handle at the tail end of the fuselage. When the transmitter button was pushed and held, the escapement wheel would rotate to the first stop. This would give full right rudder. Let up on the push button and the escapement would rotate back to neutral. Push, let up and push again quickly and the escapement would stop in the second position. This gave full left rudder. The third position gave up elevator. To get this control, you pushed the button three times and held it down.

The rubber band would be given two or three hundred winds. At the beginning of the flight, you had to be quick to get left or up. The time between pushes was fast. As the turns in the rubber band were used up, the escapement would rotate much slower. The planes were built to fly in gentle left turns. To fly "straight", the plane would fly gently left for a moment or so, then momentarily interrupted with a full right control and this sequence would be repeated. A wide right turn would require a sequence of right pulses.



unknown with DeBolt Champ

As I mentioned, it was important to remember that the timing of the push button signals changed as the windings were used up during the flight. One day I went out alone to fly at our field on the old Skyborough airport off Chemong Road. I had been flying for a while and was letting the plane make a low wide

left circle, which would go near the parking area. As my eyes followed the plane, I was surprised to see another car had arrived. It was right in the path of my airplane and I did not know if I had enough height to clear it. Right control would put me in the big tree. I pushed the button three times and held it for up. In my panic I pushed too fast. At the beginning of the flight the plane would have gone up. This late in the flight, the escapement was rotating slower and instead of getting the third position, the escapement had only rotated to position two. The plane went *left !#\$%&*!*, and of course down. I paid for the repairs to the car. It wasn't too long after this event that I got my first radio with servos.

One of the advantages of the escapement planes was that if a radio failed the plane continued to fly in gentle left circles until the fuel ran out. It did not go into a sudden dive and crash as some of my modern planes have done. One of the disadvantages of these early planes was that when the radio failed they continued to fly.



Castell's Falcon 56 after "hard landing"

The batteries I used for the single channel were the standard carbon zinc, non-rechargeable type. Us cheapies would try to get the last bit of power out of the batteries before replacing them. Not a good idea. My Cox .09 was running well when I hand launched my Falcon 56 that summer day. It climbed in lazy left circles over the field. I guess it

was about 500 feet up when the wind began to straighten out the flight and I decided to give it right rudder to bring it back to the field. No response!!!! The plane flew on South towards the city. We jumped in the car, drove out to Chemong Road and headed South. No sign of the Falcon. Sadly we went back to the field, collected the rest of our gear and went home. My wife met me at the door to tell me someone had phoned about my plane. A man had been sitting on his porch, downtown on Bethune Street. He saw a model plane make a perfect landing in the middle of the street. He watched for a while, and when no one came along, he went out to the plane. He saw my name and phone number on the plane and had called home before I got there.

Bill Castell MAAC 4494L



Lower right standing unknown, nearer starting plane, unknown. At the rear starting his CF-IKR in Alex McLeod. Paul Poitevin at the right