

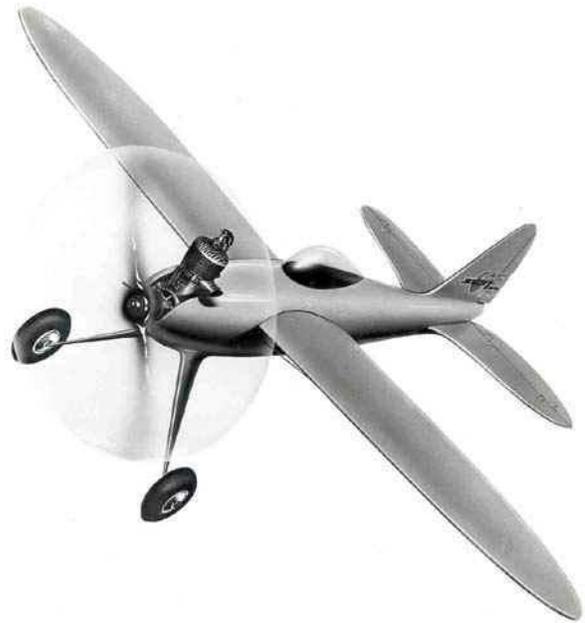
The History of Control Line Flying in Canada

by *Chris Brownhill*

For those not familiar with the history of model aviation, Control Line models first made their appearance in the U.S. in the early 1940's.

Their popularity grew very quickly as little space was required to fly a U-control airplane, and no long retrieves were necessary to repossess the model after a long flight. Also the idea of being able to actually control the model in a manner similar to a full size airplane was an exciting concept for many, and it was not long before experimentation with acrobatic and speed models was developing the contest events that are now so familiar.

The Famous Jim Walker developed and patented the basic two-wire control system that we still use today. Although several other systems were tried in order to circumvent Walker's patent, the only other successful innovator was Victor Stanzel who invented his well-known mono line system. (This control method is still being employed with modern speed models because the single line generates significantly less drag than two lines, even if it is larger!)



Jim Walker's Fireball was the plane that started the Control-Line craze!

The T.Eaton Co. of department store fame, sponsored some notable model airplane contests that were held at Downsview (near Toronto in those days) in the early 1950's. These contests featured both Control Line and Free-Flight events, and successful participants were then sent to compete in the large and prestigious Plymouths contest, that were held in various cities in the United States.

The famous "Tiger Town" contests held at Mount Hope Airport, near Hamilton, in the mid 1950's to the early 1960's also attracted large numbers of Control Line flyers in their day. The most popular events at this time were Rat Race, Combat, Stunt and Flying Scale.

Control Line was now a force to be reckoned with and even Free-Flight's popularity seemed due to be eclipsed as the number of Ukie flyers grew steadily every year!

Some of the Clubs offering Control Line activity during this era were the Vancouver Gas Model Club, the Brantford Cloudsters and the now famous (but defunct) Toronto clubs - namely the Toronto Gas Hoppers and the Sputterflies.

In the fall of 1957 the "upstart" Balsa Beavers arrived upon the scene in Toronto, but some envious of the "Beavers" quick rise to prominence, sarcastically referred to them as the "Balsa Butchers"!

Undaunted by the jibes of other Ukie groups, the Balsa Beavers soon made a name for themselves by organizing the Toronto and District Championships, which were usually held in Downsview in the early days, and the infamous Rat Race Marathon (100 miles - 1400 laps). For the record, the Rat Race Marathon attracted postal entries from all across the country, with these local versions of the great torture test being run in such unlikely places as Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary and Vancouver. The results of all these events were tabulated by the BBMFC Bulletin Editor, John Easton, and the winning club had their name inscribed with much pomp and circumstance, on the famous Rat Race Marathon Trophy.

Control Line still carries on today in spite of the advent of digital proportional radio control. We have probably much better engines at our disposal, and the engineering of models and materials has improved greatly since the early days, but still in my view, the period lasting from the early 1950's to the late 1960's was truly Control Line's golden age!