



BREAKING UP THE WINTERTIME BLUES.

by Dennis McFarlane

If you live in the Midwest it goes without saying that our winters can be brutal. In fact, it's often said the reason people who live in the Midwest are so productive is because in the winter there's nothing else to do but shovel snow so a person can get to work, thereby at least getting out of the house for a few hours every day.

For pilots of radio control aircraft, one of the great ways to break cabin fever and the winter blues is to attend E-Fest, held annually on the campus of the University of Illinois, located in Champaign, Illinois. This was E-Fest's tenth consecutive year, and as always, the armory building was packed with pilots, spectators and vendors.

One of the things that makes E-Fest so successful is that the coordinators are always willing to adapt the schedule to the changing industry and interests of the attending pilots. A few years ago, of all the activities that take place, scale and helicopters were the two hot events. As the popularity of multi-rotors, especially when flying with FPV, has taken over, and with the exploding popularity of FPV, an entire block of time was set aside to allow FPV quads freedom of the building. Micro helis can still fly, but they are pretty much regulated to a corner.

A very few years ago, scale was probably the most demanding event to enter. The rules limited the wingspan and weight to certain specifications, and to cram everything needed into such a small package was, at the time, challenging. Today, a customer can find a micro scale warbird, including single and multi-engine offerings, along with a multitude of civilian and aerobatic aircraft, simply by selecting a model from your inventory. The replacement to scale competition is proving to be an extremely popular return of fixed wing, profile 3D flight (What goes around comes



around) and the associated No Bull Challenge, a play on full-scale aviation's Red Bull Challenge.

Although competitive events are mentioned, the vast majority of the time is dedicated to open flying. The arena is divided into sections so that, as an example, micro warbirds don't tangle with aforementioned quads or 3D platforms. There is always going to be incidental contact at an event as large and as popular as E-Fest, but by separating the types of aircraft, entanglements are held to a minimum. That is, of course, unless a person enters Saturday evening's open combat; then full contact is expected.

I've always suggested dealers should take a break from their daily grind and attend E-Fest. It's an opportunity to speak with the distributors of these products, plus it's a great way to see the hot items, be it multi-rotor or fixed wing, and what is being left at home. If, as a dealer, you can't afford a day or two away, at least recommend the event to a few of your customers. You might even need to step up and suggest



Hobbico's John Stokes was available to answer any questions a modeler might have regarding quads and radio control systems. Several bored pilots group together and carpool. This way you'll make a few sales, as everyone who attends brings at least a couple of airplanes, or quads, along with plenty of extra batteries needed to keep their machines in the air. A simple suggestion can result in multiple sales and therefore money in the cash register, something that always makes every dealer smile.

Although attendance seemed to taper off for a few years, the numbers were back for 2016. If you can't take a break for the whole weekend, E-Fest is always a great way to spend a Saturday and to see your customers put products they purchase to use and all the smiles on the faces of the younger generation—they are the future of our hobby. **HM**



RAM's Ralph Warner is now offering a full array of lighting and sound systems aimed directly at the electric modeler.



AMA President Dave Brown can still manage a smile even after being bombarded with FAA registration questions.



Don Anderson and Cindy McFarlane took full advantage of their time at E-Fest to rekindle their long standing friendship.



The hobby is always cycling, and this is quite evident by the popular return of profile aircraft designed to fly 3D.



Robart's Linda Crooks and Dan Wenzel had plenty of foam-safe adhesives available so the aircraft could keep flying.



As evidenced by this four engine constellation, it was great to see that modelers are experimenting and building again.



Mid-air contact is inevitable at E-Fest, but the airplanes are inexpensive and can be glued back together again in minutes.

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