

Radio Controlled airplane is flying across the U.S.

Kerrville | Hobbies: Group brings national model airplane project to Kerrville Sunday

A group of model airplane enthusiasts are flying a battery powered Radio Controlled airplane, designated as a parkflyer, in all 48 contiguous United States, and Kerrville is next on the list of places for the plane to visit.

A parkflyer is a small RC plane typically flown in a field such as a local park or soccer field. The name they have given this adventure is Wings Across America 2008 — or WAA-08 for short.

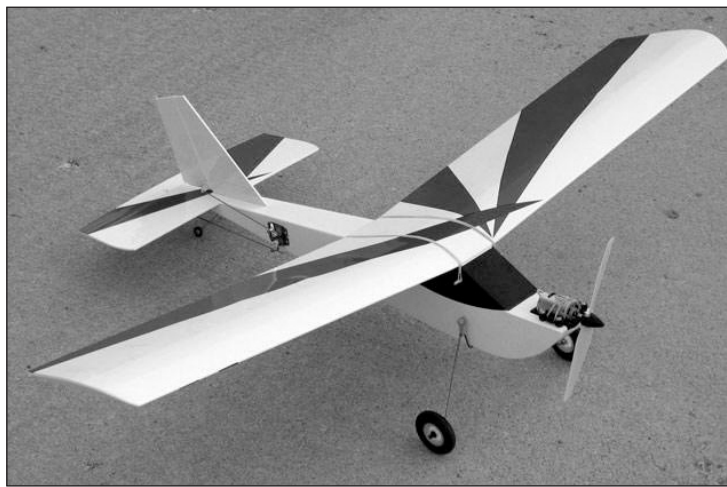
Jim Myers of Kerrville will be pilot number 124 in WAA-08.

What sets this project apart from all the others ever attempted, or completed, is that the participants will hand deliver the plane from pilot to pilot. The plane will never be shipped by mailed to its next destination. This method will be creating a “chain” of pilots who personally fly, then hand off the model to the next pilot, all across the continental United States.

In the end, the model airplane will have flown in all 48 states and cover a distance of more than 14,000 miles along the way. It will end its journey at home field about two years after it made its maiden flight in eastern Virginia.

Currently, more than 365 pilots have registered to take part in this history-making project, as well as 219 AMA Chartered clubs hosting the adventure.

WAA-08 is the brainchild of Frank Geisler of Gloucester, Va. Frank is an avid RC pilot who also enjoys discussing flying with



Courtesy photo

This parkflyer is a SQuiRT, which stands for Simple, Quiet Robust Trainer. It has a 38-inch wingspan.

people all across the U.S. using the RC Forums on the Internet. When Frank discussed this project with some of his online friends, it was received with such enthusiasm that the project was born of this energy. All that was needed were hundreds of RC pilots across the U.S. in every state willing to fly the plane at their home field, then drive to the next pilot, thus forming a nationwide network of pilots who would fly across America.

That's when Myers became involved. He contacted fellow Kerrville RC pilot Charles Robinson and asked to participate in the project. There are about 40 pilots in the Kerrville RC Flyers radio control club.

The plane will be flown by several

pilots, a photo of himself and the plane will be taken, and the plane then will be driven to a participating pilot in Round Rock.

The plane is expected to be flown at the club's field on Sunday at approximately 8 a.m.

The equipment used for WAA-08 has been donated by the participating pilots. Fortunately, one of the pilots owns Stevens AeroModels in Colorado Springs, Colo. Bill Stevens donated a plane called a SQuiRT, which stands for Simple, Quiet Robust Trainer. This tough little 38-inch wingspan parkflyer is easy to fly and should take the abuse that more than 365 pilots can dish out. Stevens also talked his Horizon Hobby sales representative into donating their newest high-tech radio system to go

along with the plane, the Spektrum DX6i radio. A battery charger was donated by Common Sense RC and the batteries from Apogee. To ensure the plane survived the 14,000 mile journey in the backs of cars and pickup trucks, Steve Griffin of Victor, Idaho, designed and built a custom travel box for the plane and support equipment.

The SQuiRT has been traveling across the country for 13 months and has been flown in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Hampshire, Vermont, New Jersey, New York, Louisiana and Texas.

“The RC community has really embraced the idea of flying this plane across America. I have had the privilege to speak with several wonderful people participating in this adventure,” said Myers. “I have never been in a hobby that has so many people willing to help one another. The sense of camaraderie demonstrated by the pilots in this project has been outstanding, and I am humbled by it all but yet proud to be a participant. The RC community is always looking at ways to promote the hobby and introduce the fun, excitement, and learning opportunities this hobby has to offer to young adults. What better way is there then to fly a model airplane around the USA?”

The public is invited to come out and watch Sunday's flight, which will take place in a field next to the soccer fields off Loop 534. Signs will be posted.