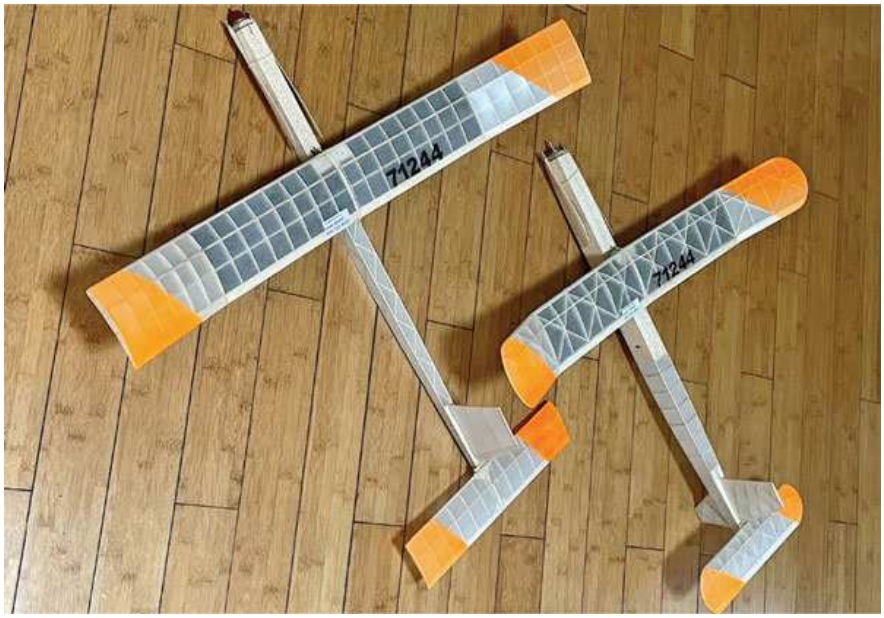
EL TORBELLINO

NEWSLETTER OF SAN DIEGO ORBITEERS FREE FLIGHT CLUB

January 2026

Vintage Coupe Event
By Mike Jester

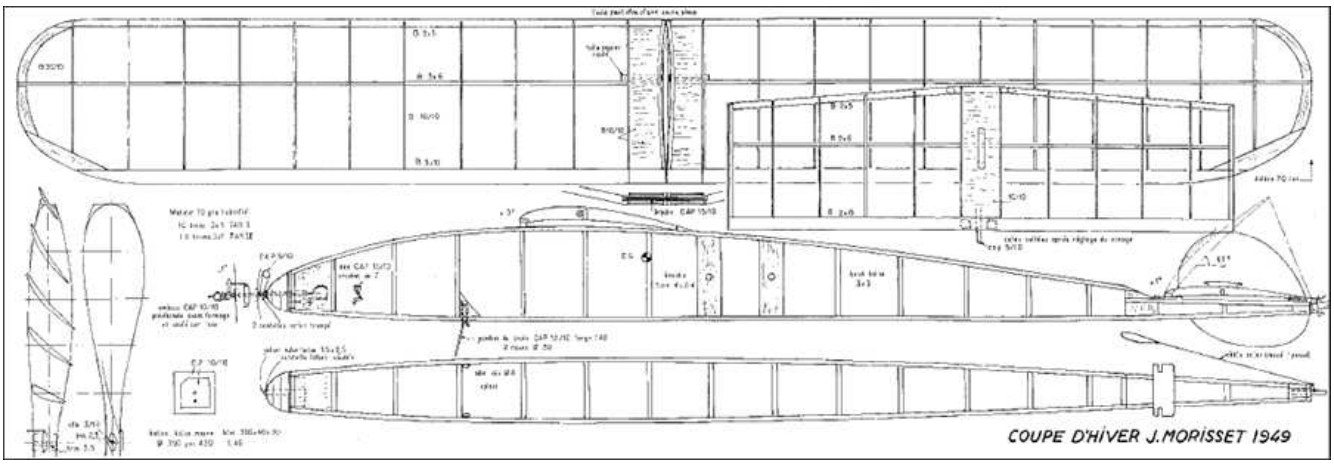
The Coupe d'Hiver event originated in France in 1938. This event later became known as the F1G event under the FAI international rules. The F1G rules are simple. They require a free flight model with an air frame that weighs a minimum of 70 grams and a rubber motor that weighs a maximum of 10 grams. The ROG and minimum fuselage cross-section requirements were eliminated long ago. Coupes typically have a wing area of approximately 180 square inches or more and a folding prop, both of which are designed to maximize the glide. Coupe designs have evolved over the years. They range from what are called vintage coupes to modern high-tech coupes. The latter are typically manufactured in eastern European countries. They make extensive use of carbon fiber composite material and utilize plastic film covering for the wing and tail feathers. High-tech coupes incorporate variable incidence tail (VIT), auto-rudder, and wing wiggler auto-functions actuated by onboard mechanical or electronic timers at very specific times throughout the flight. High-tech coupes have precision engineered Montreal stop prop assemblies, delayed prop release, and very thin under cambered wings. The cost and complexity of high-tech coupes led to the recent introduction of a Vintage Coupe event for models designed before 1970. The object of this new event is to reintroduce simpler and cheaper self-built, low-tech stick and tissue F1G models. These are often referred to as "locked down" coupes since they lack auto-functions. To qualify for the Vintage Coupe event the model must be built per the published plan. A very good Vintage Coupe model is the My Coupe designed by Bill Vanderbeek which won at the AMA Nats from 1967 - 1969 and in 1971 Nats. The plan for this coupe is available from NFFS for $10 plus shipping costs. I'm tempted to build a My Coupe.



My Coupe by Bill Vanderbeek (left) and Hat Band coupe by John O'Donnell (right)
(Picture from article by Louis Joyner in the AMA's Model Aviation Magazine)



2025 Generation High-tech F1G Model with Six Panel Wing and Electronic Timer



The Little-Known Ramrod Story

From my perspective… *by Lee Hines*

This is the story of the first known drawing of one of the greatest free flight designs of all time, Ron St. Jean's famous *Ramrod*.

I have told this story to many of our free flight friends, but never wrote it out until now.
Recently I called Ron, who recalled and verified this tale, when asked about *Ramrod* background.
To set the historical perspective, I moved to California in 1953 from Omaha, NE. A raw neophyte, I was trying my hand at free flight building and flying with some 1/2A kits, gliders and rubber jobs. I entered some contests with limited success, but kept trying to get help from many-especially Sal Taibi, Hal Cover, F.L. Swaney, Dick Petersen and others.

The 1954 San Valeers Annual was held on November 6 & 7 at El Mirage Dry Lake. It was a big contest and as I took it all in I saw the most unusual and exciting airplane of my short life. It had a big Kiwi-shaped stab, 5-panel wing with TIP PLATES (!), a K&B .35 with 10 degrees of DOWNTHRUST (!), VTO pegs and was covered in purple silk with 'RAMROD' in big letters on the wing!

The flier started the engine, VTO'd it from those pegs and as I watched it rocket up in awe, I said "I want one of those and I want it NOW!" I quickly went up to the man to introduce myself and ask for plans, etc. That was how I met Ron, who had come from Wyoming a few years prior to work for Lockheed. He said he had designed and built this model some months before (which I believe was the first *Ramrod* ever), but no drawing existed yet, just rough notes and bench markings!

I begged him for a drawing, since the 1955 NATS were seven months away and I wanted to build a *Ramrod* fleet. He said OK, he would make the drawing and we exchanged phone numbers and addresses and went back to flying. In the course of events at the SV Annual I won the Senior Sweepstakes prize, which I traded for a Torp to power my future *Ramrod*. Ron unfortunately lost his 750 *Ramrod* that night during night flying when the light went out on the model.

Well, I went home and cleared off my workbench, anxious to start my first *Ramrod*, which I knew would be the plane of my dreams! December passed, then January and I called Ron to inquire abut status. He said he was very busy at Lockheed and I think, forgot about the *Ramrod* drawing but he would do it and send it soon.

February came an went, I am getting as impatient as any 16-year-old could, so I called Ron again, pleading for the drawing. He is a very nice man, getting bombarded by a request for a drawing while having little extra time to do so, which I, a callow youth, of course cannot fathom why it is not done yet!?
Things must have been very busy for him at this time, because April went and May came with still no drawing! I AM PANICKED! And he could tell when I called, probably by my squeaking high pitched voice begging him!

Well, about the time of my birthday in early June, there came an envelope from Ron. Boy was I relieved. In it was an 8.5 x 11 brown line copy for the Ramrod 750, which I still have to this day. I immediately drew full size plans and built one by July 6th with only five degrees of down thrust ('That should be enough' thought I) which meant I had to ROG it initially. The extra five degree was added later on, so then I too could VTO launch it.

Still, it trimmed out easily, after my cautious first flights with the prop on backwards. Then I turned the prop around…. which produced barrel rolls to the left! Not crashing allowed me to get it right in seven more flights and I was in heaven, as it was by far the best performer I ever had. In fact, that test day Merrill

Combs, a fellow club member, saw it fly and was impressed as well. He asked to borrow the plans and the next week he had his flying too.

So, we went to the '55 Los Alamitos NATS with the first and second *Ramrods* anyone had made, aside from Ron St. Jean himself. I cannot recall what Ron or Merrill did at the NATS, but I was fortunate to take second place in Class B and fifth in Class C Senior, with my 750 *Ramrod*, the first built from the first ever Ramrod drawing.

After returning home I drew plans scaled from that first Ramrod drawing, building various sizes with equal success to my 750. In fact, several of our group found that the 250 size from MAN plans gave them trouble which I never had on my versions. On investigation, as I recall, the stab and tail moment were bigger on the MAN version, not to scale from the 750, as were my models. So, my suggestion is to those who want to build a *Ramrod*, in the future use the 750 drawing as your basis design and construction. It should give you more flying ability and pleasure-mine sure did!
Lee R. Hines
12 Sept, 2003.

Addendum to the Ramrod Story

by Clint Brooks

Information taken from a logbook kept by Lee throughout the time he built and flew the Ramrod design.
From the period of July 1955 through February 1957 Lee designed and flew versions of the *Ramrod* 750, 600, 425, 350 and 250. All of these iterations appeared to come shortly after finishing the 1955 NATS and no doubt fueled by his intense enthusiasm for the success of his first 750 *Ramrod*.

He kept records on what appears all the contest and practice flights he made with each of these models, noting trim changes, problems and solutions he had during these sessions. It's too much to capture for this document but suffice to say I doubt there is anything like this in the world for how to raise and fly a *Ramrod* model if someone wants to dig into the minutia of 'how it went' back in the day.

Lee kept track of his average flight times as he put in flights on each *Ramrod* he made. Here is what he recorded for various versions:

"Average Flight Time for Ramrod 750 B-C FF"

After 25 official flights:	4:44.5 minutes / 284.5 seconds
After 30 official flights:	4:48.8 minutes / 288.8 seconds
After 46 official flights:	5:14.4 minutes / 314.4 seconds
After 97 official flights:	4:56.7 minutes / 296.7 seconds

"Average Flight Time for Ramrod 600 A-B FF"

After 27 official flights:	4:09.4 minutes / 249.4 seconds
After 31 official flights:	4:38.4 minutes / 278.4 seconds
After 38 official flights:	4:32.2 minutes / 272.8 seconds
After 41 official flights:	4:29.3 minutes / 269.3 seconds
After 47 official flights:	4:29.4 minutes / 269.4 seconds

No average time record on the 425 Ramrod-model eventually destroyed by D/T under power in late 1957.

No average time record for the 350 version Ramrod. Model started life powered by a POGO .085 engine then upgraded to a new Torp .09 Greenhead after the Pogo proved inadequate for power. Model eventually lost during the 1957 NATS at Willow Grove PA.

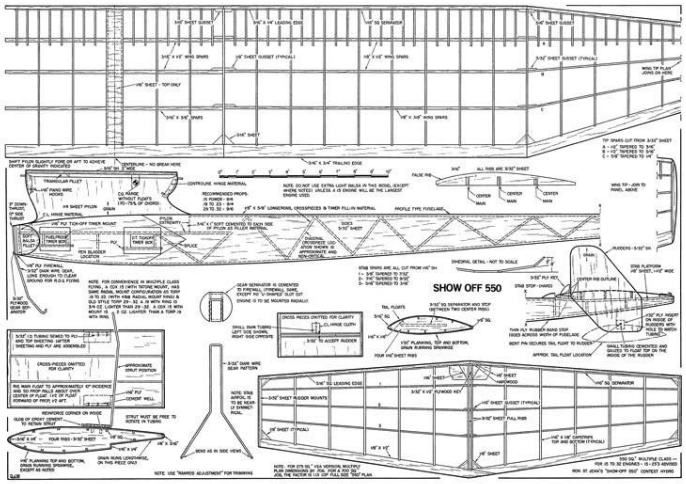
"Average Flight Time for Ramrod 250" (three built and flown) Cox Thermal Hopper .049 power
Average (overall) official flight time: 5:17.1 minutes / 317.1 seconds (I believe this is for model No. 1)
Model No. 1 eventually lost OOS in Feb 1956.

Model No. 2 flew in the 1956 Dallas NATS and eventually had a final hard crash and end of record keeping in February 1957.

Model No. 3 has no contest records and ended up in a tall tree and lost during one of the many practice sessions performed with it, in February 1957. This ends the record on *Ramrods* for Lee and it must have been around this time his interests shifted to glider events and even more historic efforts in that branch of aeromodeling.

Lee set up several of his 1/2A ships for ROW and appeared to interchange floats for various contests to compete in ROW.

I did not realize the depth of background Lee has on the *Ramrod* design until I told him I was going to do an eNos version of the 250. As we often carpool to Perris for FF practice and local contests I eventually got all the fragments of the story from him during the commute time. There is a tremendous amount of SoCal free flight history woven in these stories and it's a shame it can't all be captured-there were many notable designers and fliers who emanated from these parts-no doubt living in a weather friendly area helped foster this community in the 40's and on. Living in the twilight of this Golden Age I am honored to have this history presented to me -it's like having my own little window on the past, even though I was not even a year old when this story starts. Researching and designing the eNos version of the *Ramrod* brings forth more than lines and numbers-it keeps the past in the current day and a way to re-discover the wonder this model offers to anyone who wants to construct and fly it.

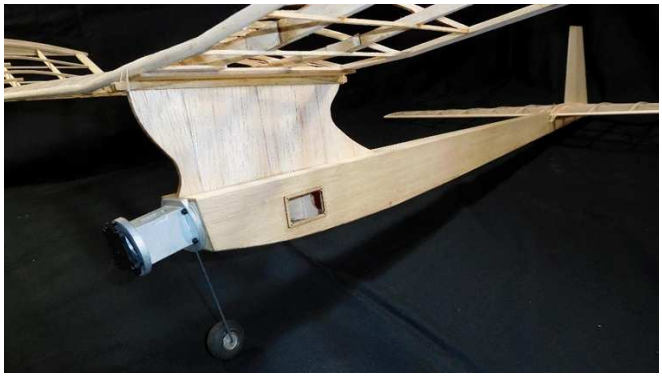




Lee Hines



C.Brooks
← Electric
Version →



February 2026
Outdoor Contest

February 28 and March 1
7 a.m. Set up
8 a.m. Pilots meeting
11:30 a.m. Last flight

Saturday 8 a.m. Pilot's meeting

Saturday's Mass Launches
WW 1: Sponsored by Dave Loafhouse
8:30 a.m. WWI Mass Launch Photo
8:35 a.m. WWI Mass Launch

WW II:
9:30 a.m. WWII Mass Launch Photo
9:35 a.m. WWII Mass Launch

Sunday 8 a.m Pilot's meeting

Sundays Mass Launches
Greve/Thompson Sponsored by Bob Hodes
8:30 a.m. Greve/Thompson Mass Launch Photo
8:35 a.m. Greve/Thompson Mass Launch

Sky Bunny Sponsored by William Scott
9:30 a.m. Sky Bunny Mass Launch Photo
9:35 a.m. Sky Bunny Mass Launch

Fly Either Day*

1. FAC Rubber Scale **Sponsored by Anonymous**
2. Embryo Endurance (ROG) **Sponsored by William Scott**
3. Golden Aged Combined
4. Old Time Rubber Stick and Fuselag (hand launched)
5. FAC 2Bit +1 and Jimmy Allen combined (ROG)
6. Phantom Flash (ROG)
7. Jet Catapult

*All flights must be made on the same day.

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Submit Dues to Club Treasurer:
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Clint Brooks 5

By Selina Alipour Tabrizi



WHO PUT THE POP IN POPSICLE?

How a young boy's carelessness created a treat with worldwide appeal

Even as the weather turns cold, many of us still find joy in a frozen treat, from a fancy baked Alaska or affogato to a simple bowl of ice cream, a tall milkshake, or a popsicle.

While the origins of frozen desserts are unclear, they likely trace their roots back to the Ancient Persians, who used ice houses to produce and store faloodeh (frozen rice noodles with rose and lime syrup) and sorbets. First-century Roman cookbooks included recipes for sweet desserts sprinkled with snow. Marco Polo is (probably falsely) credited with introducing frozen desserts to Italy after his travels in China, and Thomas Jefferson popularized ice cream in the United States — his handwritten vanilla ice cream recipe from the 1780s was one of the earliest in the nation.

But one story in frozen dessert history stands out. And it doesn't center on a U.S. president or a Silk Road explorer, but on an 11-year-old boy from San Francisco.

On a winter day in 1905, 11-year-old Frank Epperson combined soda powder and water to make a sugary drink, but he accidentally left his cup on the porch with the stirring stick inside. Temperatures dropped overnight, and the next morning, Epperson found his cup where he had left it, the drink inside frozen solid. He ran the cup under hot water, pulled the hardened drink out by the stir stick, and tasted a new frozen dessert. He named it the *Epsicle* — combining *Epperson* and *icicle* — but unlike the circumstances of its invention, the product didn't turn into a national success overnight.

The Popsicle Corporation declared itself "Depression Proof."

Epperson continued making Epsicles for his friends and, later, his children — who began calling the treat *Pop's Sicle* or *Popsicle*, the name the brand keeps to this day — for many years. In 1923, he decided to expand his market to Neptune Beach — then known as the "West Coast Coney Island" — where it became a beloved treat, selling as many as 8,000 in one day.

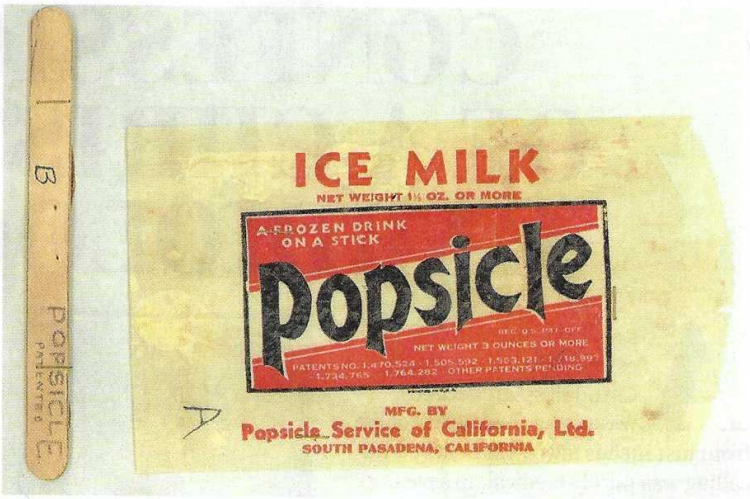
Epperson applied for a patent on June 11, 1924, describing the Popsicle as a "frozen confection of attractive appearance, which can be conveniently consumed without contamination by contact with the hand and without the need for a plate, spoon, fork or other implement."

Epperson's request was approved two months later, and he immediately sold all of the rights to the invention that had defined much of his life to the Joe Lowe Co., which later started a subsidiary called Popsicle Industries. It wasn't greed but necessity that spurred the sale, and Epperson later regretted the loss. "I was flat and had to liquidate all my assets," he said in an NPR interview. "I haven't been the same since." The frozen dessert brand, however, continued without him.

A few years later, the Great Depression weighed heavily on the American

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

public. As the stock market crashed and employment declined, struggling families had to strike the ten-cent popsicles from their shopping lists. In response, the Popsicle Corporation devised the first two-stick popsicles so that two children could enjoy a snack for the price of one. According to a 1931 advertisement, "People who could not afford dimes, quarters and halves for ice cream gladly bought Popsicles at a nickel each for children, family and friends." The two-stick popsicle became a huge success, doubling the company's sales in a year. The Popsicle Corporation later declared itself "Depression Proof."



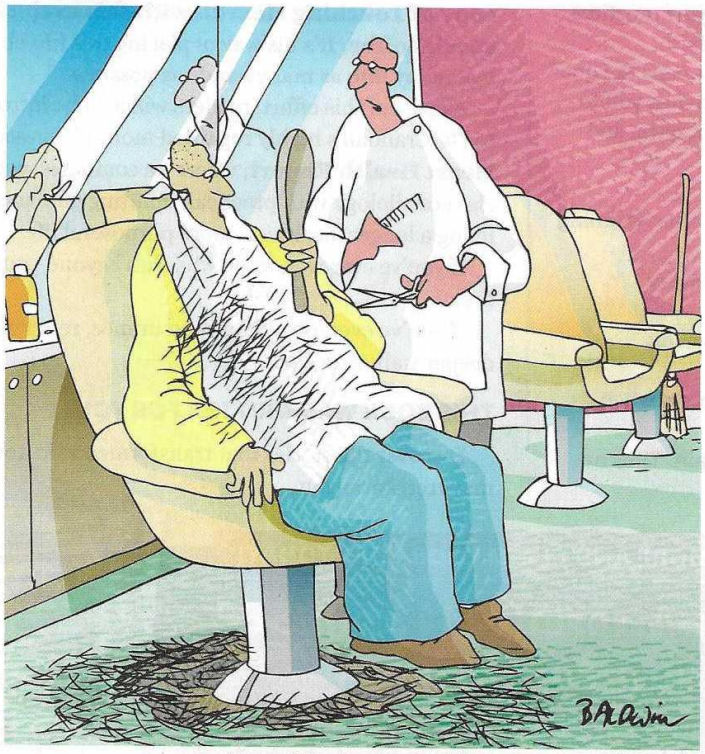
Lactose intolerant: Popsicle's introduction of an ice milk product in 1931 set off a lawsuit by Good Humor.

But not everything was as sweet as the dessert itself for the Popsicle brand. The Popsicle Corporation had a rival in the company Good Humor — a brand known for its chocolate-coated ice cream bars and the first ice cream trucks. A series of court cases over patent violations ensued. The initial conflict ended with a compromise: The Popsicle Corporation would sell iced treats containing no milk, and Good Humor would sell products containing milk. However, when dairy prices dropped in 1932, Popsicle ignored the agreement and decided to tap into the ice cream market, coming out with a "Milk Popsicle" — which included 4.48 percent butter fat — and claiming the product wasn't ice cream but sherbet.

Good Humor filed a lawsuit immediately. Both sides fought to define *sherbet*. Good Humor strictly defined it as "flavored water ice," but Popsicle rebutted, claiming that most state regulators did not categorize the Milk Popsicle as ice cream, but with terms such as *imitation ice cream*, *frozen custard*, *milk sherbet*, and *ice milk*. The judge ruled in Good Humor's favor, and both companies signed their new court-approved agreement in 1933.

Ironically, over the next six decades, Unilever — one of the largest global consumer goods companies — would buy the rights to both Good Humor and Popsicle, ending the cold war between the two companies.

If you remember buying a cold treat from a neighborhood ice cream truck on a hot summer day, eating a Firecracker during a Fourth of July party, or splitting a two-stick pop with a friend, you're one of millions with nostalgic memories of Popsicles. It continues to be one of the most popular frozen dessert brands, and for that, we have an 11-year-old Frank Epperson to thank.



"Does it look even *now*?"

Selina Alipour Tabrizi was the Post*'s 2025 summer intern. She is the Arts & Entertainment Editor for her school's newspaper,* Sword and Shield, *and regularly contributes to the* Los Angeles Times High School Insider.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING -

Flying schedule for 2026 is in process; look for the outdoor schedule announcement.

Next Indoor is scheduled February 8th for 4 hours-8am to noon. The cost to participate is $30 minimum. Additional contributions are welcomed. Competition events are free. Events will be A-6 and Catapult Glider. Of course, bring whatever you have to fun fly.

Scale Staffel Contest, February 28 and March 1, See enclosed flyer for all the details.