

Team Pittsburgh

The History Of Pittsburgh Space Command



By Art Nestor, NAR# 29623

Part 2

FOREWORD

It was fairly easy for me to write part one of our club's history. Part two was a little more difficult and I'm sure part three will be even harder. You see, in the beginning it was purely a personal experience for me. But as time went on the PSC experience became that of many people. So consider this article only a framework for our history and not the last word. What would round out this series nicely would be the added perspectives of other PSC members such as the recollections of Mike Hardobey's in Team Pittsburgh #100. Perhaps for issue #200 we'll reprint my history of PSC but with Mike's comments and those of other contributors edited in. This isn't just my history but yours also. So where are your contributions?

In researching material for this article, I came across some little known and largely forgotten information that surprised even me. I have tried hard to make sure it is accurate. But it will cause me to revise part 1 ever so slightly. The fact is that several PSC members did meet each other before our historic first launch on June 1st, 1986. I rediscovered this information after coming across personal correspondence and a copy of Tripoli Blitz Volume 1 # 1, January 1986. Our web site version of part 1 has already been corrected.

THE HISTORY OF PITTSBURGH SPACE

COMMAND

Part Two By Art Nestor

With the formation of PSC, one of my personal rocketry goals was accomplished - to return a Pittsburgh NAR Section to active status. But that doesn't mean that in the time immediately prior to our formation there was no organized rocketry activity in the Pittsburgh area. Quite the opposite, it was alive and well. It was just not the National Association of Rocketry. The Tripoli Rocketry Society up until May 5th, 1986 claimed to be the only rocketry group in the tri-state area. At the time of PSC's formation, A. J. Reed was President, Francis Graham was Secretary, Bill Kust was Treasurer and Mike Kalmar was a member. This group, later called Tripoli Pittsburgh, was the first prefecture of the Tripoli Rocketry Association. Tom Blazanin was Tripoli Rocketry Association Administrator. All five later became PSC members. Here's a real twist. Tripoli launched at Z field before PSC! Incredible as it may sound to PSC old timers, it's true. I was there. Tom Blazanin and I somehow came in contact with each other. He came up and scouted out my home (Z) field and asked if I minded if Tripoli flew there. Tripoli's earliest known launch at Z field was June 30, 1985! The Tripoli Blitz Volume 1 # 1 provides coverage of the later November 30, 1985 launch. Tom was a go-getter. Z-1, the first real high power Z field launch, was held on May 10th 1986, five days after our charter was granted, three weeks before PSC's first launch!

Club years of existence technically run from charter to charter and not on a calendar year basis. For example, May 1986 to May 1987 to May 1988 etc. So John Sarosi, even though you joined on March 27, 1987 I consider you a first year member. To the best of my knowledge and records, these members joined during year two: #20 Drew Gray, #21 Becky Nestor, #22 A.J. Reed, #23 Connie Klepacz, #24 Cassie Klepacz, #25 Stan Klepacz jr., #26 Matt Klepacz, #27 Steve Sabram, #28 Michael Hardobey, #29 Jeff Rusinko, #30 Jaya Bajpayee, #31 Dick Hart, #32 Candace Nestor and #33 Jim Imes. I know this sounds a little tedious and Biblical but bear with me because I'm near the point where I lose track and it may be of interest to senior members.

Former NAR President Pat Miller and Claud Greenlee had assisted me in the formation of PSC. In May 1987 Pat did one more thing for the formation of PSC that had long reaching consequences affecting us even to this day. He sent me the names of two teenage NAR members in Brookville. One of them was Drew Gray. Drew joined PSC on May 20, 1987. He's a very likeable guy with lots of enthusiasm and then had an interest in competition. Drew also later became vice President and the second editor of Team Pittsburgh handling issues 18 and 19. What Drew is probably most remembered for though, is the generous hospitality of his parents in hosting the annual BROOKVILLE BASH. The Gray's rural home was set literally in the middle of a great launch field. Every August starting in 1988 we had a wonderful picnic and launch. Rockets, hot dogs, hamburgers and fresh sweet corn in a country setting! It was fantastic. The BASH was discontinued when Drew graduated high school. Our annual ROCKETS & RELAXATION event was then substituted to continue the BASH tradition.

On July 12, 1987, PSC held it's first regional meet and first sanctioned competition. It was called Pittsburgh Space Camp '87. Tom Blazanin drove up from Pittsburgh, dropped off the launch equipment and then promptly left for a family reunion! This was Drew's first PSC launch. Herb Desind from Silver Springs, Maryland came and flew numerous Cineroc flights. Two events were held. They were 1/2A boost glider duration and D eggloft Duration. A & B Division were combined. Up until now, Tom Blazanin had initiated and handled casual competition events, which club members greatly enjoyed. I handled our first sanctioned competition with help from Connie Klepacz and Peg. After Space Camp, Drew, Mike Hardobey and Rod formed a competition committee so that competition could be held on a regular basis. This took a load off my shoulders. PSC T-shirts, golf shirts and tank tops were first offered for sale at Space Camp '87. When we selected our club colors we also decided to create club shirts. The SR-71 Blackbird that I used in Team Pittsburgh was voted to be used on our shirts.

Mike Hardobey joined PSC on July 17, 1987 and made many contributions to the club. Mike's family, like Drew's, was very supportive. His father, Chuck, offered to have the newsletter printed up where he worked thus saving the club an expense. This was a big deal back then because money was pretty tight. The newsletter took on a more professional look. It was printed on gray paper with red and black ink. Club colors! Mike's mother helped out from time to time with competi-

tion paperwork. In the first two years, PSC would occasionally hold a single meeting indoors during the winter or add an indoor meeting beside the monthly launch. Usually these meetings were held at the Carnegie Library in Lawrenceville very close to Mike's home. Mike would bring a case of pop to the meeting for us.

Tom Blazanin had become nationally known in the rocketry community, as he transformed an obscure science turned rocket club into Tripoli Rocketry Association. In our second year he was elected Section Advisor probably making him the first Tripoli member to also hold a NAR position. Tom provided a lot of leadership to PSC. He loaned Tripoli Pittsburgh's launch rack and controller to us for each PSC meet. When Tripoli upgraded their launch system he donated that launch rack equipment to us. Because of him, then current PSC members witnessed the emergence of the high power community. All PSC members were offered low Tripoli membership numbers. Because of Tom, several PSC members went to the last Large and Dangerous Rocket Ships launch (LDRS 5) held in Medina, Ohio and he also got Mort and me a tour of LOC/Precision that day. Tom encouraged activities that made each launch fun. One competition event was the V-2 bombardment of London. A sort of warped spot landing event. He never had a holier than thou hi power attitude that was somewhat more common at that time but had a down to earth love for all rocketry.

Launch fields were a problem then as they are now. But in 1987 things really started to get out of hand. Z field was my home field. My employer leased the property across the road from Z field and the plant supervisor there was interested in rockets. I didn't work at this plant but I began to fly there. After a time, I crossed the road to the better Z field following my rule of thumb: fly anywhere until you're asked to leave. It was made known early on in the club that we would fly anyone's home field but since no one had one Z field became our club field. Anyhow, Tom Blazanin had asked if he could host Tripoli and high power launches on Z field. I had no problem with that. On September 26 & 27, 1987 Tripoli Pittsburgh hosted Z-4. Tom had obtained property owner permission and site insurance. It was an incredible and well run hi power meet. But the neighbors complained when rockets drifted onto their property and called out the Jackson Township police to shut it down. One neighbor became particularly belligerent and words were exchanged. One flyer reported a LOC Magnum rocket that drifted into this neighbor's yard was axed to pieces by a woman while her husband stood guard with a shotgun. That was bad enough but then the

worst happened. At about 2:30 P.M. Sunday, Ron Schultz's recovery system failed to deploy and his eight foot long LOC Ultimate Max propelled by seven motors plowed into Hartman's Golf Course over a mile away. The Jackson Township police returned and shut down Z-4. It was late in the afternoon. For a full account and photos, see the Volume 2 no. 6, December 1987 issue of The Tripolitan. You'll even see me in one photo!

Later I learned that because of this incident, the Jackson Township supervisors were considering a complete ban on all rocketry activity. I decided to attend the October 1987 Planning Commission meeting for damage control to save Z field. I took the time to explain the difference between Tripoli's high power rocketry and our club's model rocket activities. The commissioners showed a lot of interest and asked questions. I assured them that large rockets would not be flown there again and that it would be unreasonable to ban model rockets. When asked why they should believe me, I replied that I was a local resident they could reach at anytime and that several on the board knew my parents or me. The entire matter was then set aside for additional input until two planners could attend our April launch to see for themselves. Delores Washington and Hank Watson did attend our April launch and the matter was subsequently dropped. But high power never returned to Z field and it was the beginning of the end for our beautiful flying field. My appearance at the meeting was covered in the December 9th edition of The News Weekly, Volume 5 no. 28.

Z-1 May 10, 1986

Z-2 Oct. 11, 1986

Z-3 May 16, 1987

Z-4 Sept. 26-27, 1987

1988 through 1991, Team Pittsburgh went through numerous physical and editorial changes. Gray paper issues were #'s 15 through 30. After the 17th issue I passed Team Pittsburgh off to Drew Gray for #18 and #19. I again edited issues #20 through #22. Then Mike Hardobey edited #'s 24 through 30.

CLUB OFFICERS

	1986-87	1987-88	1888-89	1989-90
President	Art Nestor	Art Nestor	Art Nestor	Mort Binstock
Vice President	Mort Binstock	Mort Binstock	Mort Binstock	Mort Binstock
Section Advisor	Art Nestor	Tom Blazanin	Dick Hart	Dick Hart
Treasurer	-	-	Peg Nestor	Art Nestor

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