



Dallas Area Rocket Society ("DARS")

DARS Officers for 2008

By James Gartrell



Member - National Association of Rocketry ("NAR").

Special points of interest:

- Motor vendor Bob Korman gives us some insights into two of our relatively new vendors, Madcow Rocketry and Mercury Engineering, Page 2.
- Tired of the delay in the resolution of the court battle with the BATFE? Think it's time for a change in tactics? Your editor has a suggestion. Check it out! Page 3.
- DARS members participated in another fantastic Outreach event. Page 4.
- Want to find the latest info coming from the vendors? Check it out on Page 6.
- Hobbytown news and a reminder about what 2008 has to offer! Did You Know, Page 7.

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Current officers, above, outgoing officers, below. Yep, Doug Sams abdicated his throne to our new NAR Advisor, Sam Barone. Current officers are, left to right from back to front: Don Magness, President; Sam Barone, NAR Advisor; Royce Frankum, Vice President; Terri Magness, Secretary; and Cheri Sapp (yep, it's official! She and Tim Sapp tied the knot.), Treasurer. Photos by James Gartrell.

Well, we are ready to start another year! There weren't a lot of challenges for the positions this year, as usual. Somehow, someone got Sam Barone to accept the nomination for NAR Advisor and Doug Sams quickly declined his nomination for another year allowing Sam to take over his position un-opposed. Amazing how that happens. Except for the Presidency, the other incumbents were not challenged and get another year of rewarding service to club members. Yay!

Jack Sprague was nominated for President and he agreed to accept. Now the final vote wasn't even close, but with only about a third of members voting at the meeting, it shows how important it is for you to come to the December meeting.

Your vote might have made a difference, as either Don or Jack is quite capable of leading our club. Regardless, though, the club has spoken and it's time to get behind your officers and help them make DARS a better club in 2008! Be sure to thank them the next time you see them.



The Mid-Power Pads

By Bob Korman

What do Madcow Rocketry and Mercury Engineering have in common? Both are relatively new rocket kit makers, and both have contributed kits to DARS for contest prizes. More importantly, each has a unique angle to their kits that makes them clearly different than the other 29mm kits on the market.

I recently built an Honest John from Madcow www.MadcowRocketry.com. Madcow offers a large number of rockets (they have 3 Honest Johns!) from 1.9 inch to 4 inch diameters, including a number of scale models such as the Bomarc, Little John and Jayhawk. While most have 29mm motor mounts, the 4 inch rockets and a few others have 38mm mounts. Madcow's angle is pretty simple – everything you need is included, just add glue! Madcow includes a thin Kevlar strap for part of the shock cord and includes a nomex blanket with each rocket. No upgrading necessary. The kits may appear to be more expensive than other, less complete kits – but that is for you to decide. My Honest John was an easy build with great fit on all the parts. Built light, it still weighs a couple ounces more than the manufacturer's indicated weight.

I also recently built the RDR I from Mercury www.Mercury-Rockets.com.



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With fewer rockets in their lineup than Madcow, Mercury offers several kits with 24mm and 29mm motor mounts and promises to offer one for 18mm motors soon. Mercury's angle is also clear – large, lightweight rockets that can easily and safely be flown on economical engines. The RDR I is a good example of that focus. It is a 4" kit with a 29mm mount, and yet weighs only 16 ounces. By comparison, I have a Binder Design Thug that is almost identical in size but weighs 37 ounces (with a little nose weight). The lighter weight Mercury RDR flies great on a Roadrunner F45 in the small Frisco field; whereas, I won't fly the Thug on anything less than a G80. Mercury also offers the kit as the RDR II to fly on a cluster of D12s or E9s. Lightness requires light components, and while the parts in the kit are all fine, I did

beef up the surface mount contest balsa fins by glue-sticking copy paper on each side. Would I fly this on a G80? No way, but the manufacturer tells me that he has done so with no problems, and no fin reinforcement! This was also an easy build, but I use a chute smaller than the 28" one included.

Inexplicably, both kit makers recommend using epoxy (they must own a nitrile glove manufacturer), but you can easily use wood glue, as I did. Both kits included decals, which I almost never apply, and scale purists will notice I also did not apply the "spin motor facades" on the Honest John. To each his own!

You can catch them both in flight at upcoming DARS launches (I have flown the RDR I on an F45; weather has kept the Honest John grounded). Until then, take a look at the makers' websites and become familiar with these two relatively new players.



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Wrangling with the ATF

By James Gartrell

You know I don't even fly high power rocket motors (the BATFE seems to consider that to be any motor with more than 62.5 grams of propellant), but following the events of the past several years regarding the BATFE's adamant insistence on regulating them has finally gotten inside my craw! Patiently, I have waited for our hobby representatives to quell this ridiculous foray of the Federal government. However, I have now come to the conclusion that it is a useless effort. The principal effort seems to be focused on slowly working through the legal process of dealing with an institution that has no interest in the relatively small number of people flying high power rocket motors. Basically, we don't have any clout! Excellent arguments (1,640 of them) were put forth by our hobby representatives for exempting high power rocket motors from the long arm of the BATFE, but those arguments are turned upside down, misconstrued or ignored. What shall we do?

Well, it seems there is really only one option. We, as a hobby, must band together and write the President of the United States, and I mean as a deluge of communications from each and every hobbyist. When I say each and every hobbyist, I don't just mean the flyers, but retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, suppliers to those industries and all of their respective employees. I'm guessing we could probably get at least 20,000 pieces of mail sent on one day to the President. Even 5,000 would make a pretty dramatic statement. We should do this once a month until our hobby receives relief. We have the organization to pull something like that off. Assuming we could do that, what should we say?

Let's look at some of what we've said before and how the bureaucrats reacted. These are taken from the Final Order in Docket No. ATF 6F; AG Order No. 2829-2006 Federal Register: August 11, 2006 (Volume 71, Number 155)

[Rules and Regulations]

[Page 46079-46101], wherein replies and responses to the BATFE's NOPRM, were used as justification for the Final Order which "is intended to provide rocketry

hobbyists with guidance to enable them to enjoy their hobby in compliance with the safety and security requirements of the law and regulations." I found another interesting comment in Section IV of the Final Order, which very reasonably states: "The carefully-framed exemption embodied in this rule is maintained with a view to maximizing ATF's performance of its statutory responsibilities within the limits of available resources, without compromising public safety. If all hobbyists and retailers who receive or distribute rocket motors containing no more than 62.5 grams of explosive were required to obtain permits and licenses, ATF resources would be stretched beyond their limits to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements and effective administration of the existing Federal explosives laws." Now, everyone in our hobby knows that two G's can very easily replace one H, or four G's to substitute for an I, and with some degree of success even eight G's could be used to replace a J motor. So, the effect of regulating motor propellants up to J motors makes no sense. Anyway, back to what we said and what the BATFE said, upon which this Final Order was based.

We stated: "the proposed arbitrary 62.5g limit would not stop somebody from having 1000 motors each containing 62.5 g for a total of 62.5 kg (137.5 pounds!) of APCP. " and "...no permit is required for owning and storing up to 50 pounds of black powder..." and "The proposed limit of 62.5 grams is without substantiation."

The Department's response: Regarding the black powder, "...to balance the need to prevent the misuse of explosives with the need for persons to have access to explosives for lawful purposes without undue regulation.", and regarding the 62.5 gram limit, "The Department has considered the comments and disagrees with the arguments suggesting the exemption from regulation should be higher than 62.5 grams. In conclusion, the exemption of rocket motors containing 62.5 grams or less of propellant is consistent with ATF's congressional mandate to reduce the hazard arising from misuse and unsafe storage of explosive materials while not unduly or

unnecessarily restricting or burdening law-abiding citizens in their lawful use of explosives."

Well, that all makes perfect sense!

We said: "[T]he selection of 62.5 grams of APCP as the upper limit of what is permitted for unrestricted access * * * does not even come close to satisfying the needs of rocket hobbyists * * * the large majority of high-power rocket flyers would have their needs served if an exemption were granted to allow them to acquire and use rocket motors that contained up to 2,800 grams [6.17 pounds] of APCP without the need for a permit.

The Department's response: "By regulating motors with more than 62.5 grams of propellant, terrorists, felons, and other prohibited persons will be prevented from gaining access to large motors that could pose an increased threat and that could be more readily adapted for terrorist or other criminal purposes. APCP can be used to make a very effective pipe bomb or other improvised explosive device that could be used for criminal or terrorist purposes. Furthermore, motors containing more than 62.5 grams of propellant can be used to power rockets capable of carrying large warheads containing either explosives or other noxious substances. Rockets powered by motors containing more than 62.5 grams of propellant can be directed at targets from a great distance, avoiding detection and apprehension of persons who would use them for criminal or terrorist purposes."

We know the Department's responses are pure hogwash. I expect even our Boy Scouts know it would be impossible for us to carry any large warheads in our high power rockets. They have no basis for fact and the intent of the regulations is easily overcome by clustering the allowed rocket motors. Now, instead of buying one I motor, we buy four G motors. Oh, that's lots safer! Oh yeah, we'll have to start making those pipe bombs with our 50 pounds of black powder rather than using our 80+ I motors, too. Well, now you know what's happening. Let's do something about it!!

Outreach—2007 Ponca Rocket Day

By James Gartrell

The day after our December 1, 2007 club meeting, Scott Cook, Dave Schultz, Jack and Suzy Sprague, and myself met out at the Tarrant County Junior College in Richland Hills for the 2007 Ponca Rocket Day. This is an annual event sponsored by the Wichita Nation Indian Guides that has been a routine event for them for the past 20 or so years. DARS was invited out by Cole Clayton, the Ponca chief, to give demonstration flights of some larger rockets. They had found us on a poster in a Hobby-Town store. Their group was flying mainly Estes Wizards, but Cole and a few others had brought some of their bigger rockets, too. Cole's Estes Mean Machine was probably one of the most memorable rocket flights that day, but more about that later.

I arrived about 10am and Jack and Suzy were already there. Surveying the field it appeared that with the rather strong wind blowing and its direction, our best bet for flying was to set up across from the parking lot by the water tower. That meant a walk of more than a hundred yards for the participants, but it was the best place

from which to launch. That gave us most of the length of the field for recovery. It wasn't a small field, but with the wind blowing the way it was, keeping the rockets in the field of recovery wasn't going to be easy. Randy Smith, one of the co-chiefs arrived shortly afterwards and we finally convinced him to move the intended launch area from the edge of the parking lot. Luckily, there was a place to pull in by the water tower from which we could haul everything out to the launch site. Dave and Scott showed up while we were still setting everything up.

Dave brought one of his big rockets out, which was one of the highlights for the participants. Scott brought his Big Daddy and a few other rockets and I brought some Hawks Hobby rockets out, the Super Sprite, Trident and Javelin. Jack had several rockets out for display and flew his martini glass, a saucer and some of his Bertha's.

Unfortunately, with the wind blowing at 15-20 mph and the size of the field, there wasn't much opportunity for launching the larger rockets. Scott

launched his Big Daddy a couple of times and I finally got up the nerve to fly the Super Trident once. That was about it for our larger rockets. Heck, though, Cole Clayton and some of the other folks with the Guides were doing fine with the rockets they brought out. Besides the Mean Machine, Cole had brought an Astro-Vision, the new Estes video camera rocket, and others had brought a Blue Ninja, the Eggscalibur, a Big Daddy and a couple others. Cole's Mean Machine was the highlight, though.

Cole's first attempt with the Mean Machine resulted in a burnout on the launch pad, but it managed to break the 3/16" launch lug off during its attempted flight. Cole returned with some large straws taped to the tube and Jack put it on a 1/4" launch rod. That did the trick, and Cole got two beautiful flights with it. The first landed across the street in some apartments. It was fun, but best of all was the really cool rockets built by the youth... uh, probably with a little help from Dad or Mom. Fantastic!!

Hope we're invited next year, too!

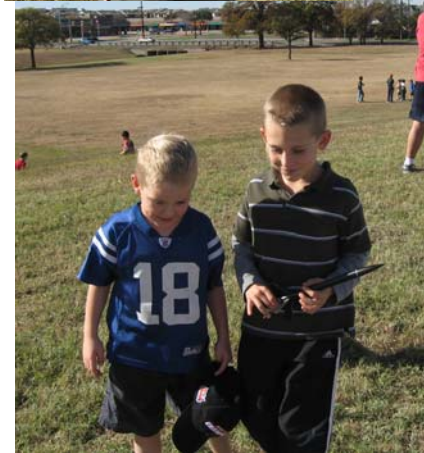
Bottom left—Jack Sprague discusses model rocketry with the folks as they gather around his rockets at the DARS tent. Photo by James Gartrell.

Bottom right—Dave Schultz shows the folks what a "really big" motor looks like and how it works, as Suzy provides support. Photo by James Gartrell.



Photos from the 2007 Ponca Rocket Day

By James Gartrell



Breaking Vendor News!

By James Gartrell

EMRR announced the winners of the 2007 EMRR Challenge contest. The winner received a \$300 shopping spree at BRS Hobbies. Runner-up received a \$150 shopping spree from Quest. Third place was pretty super too; a Giant Leap Talon 2 donated by Tim Thomas. Nine other participants reaching the minimum point level also receive an EMRR 2008 Calendar, no small prize. I won the 2007 calendar in last year's event. It looks fantastic hanging in the rocket room, as the photos provide lots of inspiration! Watch for the upcoming 2008 EMRR Challenge contest. These are great!

Due to popular demand, Madcow is now shipping rail buttons with all of their 4" kits. These are provided at no extra cost to you. Great!! Beating Hawks Hobby to the punch, they also released a 29mm 2.6" diameter BOMARC.

Semroc has released their Retro Repro of the 1966 Piester parachute duration design, the Starfire. Also, they have a new line of zany, but cool rockets, the Groonies, a slightly larger version of the old Estes Goonybirds!

FlisKits recently announced three new kits, the Rose-A-Roc, a long-favored competition-designed helicopter rocket, the Teeny Triskelion, a 4" tall micro-sized version of his Triskelion, and the MudWasp, a really cool-looking micro model. Also, they have announced a full line of balsa nose blocks, ranging in sizes from BT-5 to BT-70.

I don't know if it's new or not, but it's the first time I've noticed that BRS Hobbies has free shipping for orders over \$75.00. That's a big savings on your internet orders, plus orders less than that ship for a low flat rate of \$4.95. Check 'em out!

As if to top them, JonRocket indicates free shipping for orders over \$40.00! Wow! Orders less than that graduate from \$2.95 to \$4.95 flat rates. The winners of the 2007 Mercury Madness Give-Away have also been announced. The winner, Lee Hamer, received five really nice rockets from Mercury Engineering, plus a lot more!

Excelsior Rocketry has received permission to reproduce decals for the Launch Pad kits. Their first offering is for the Nike Ajax and Pershing kits. If those old kits needs to be refurbished, here's your opportunity to get some new decals for them!



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DID YOU KNOW?
 You can host a birthday party at Hobbytown USA! This sounds really cool. What a neat way to celebrate. Lots of alternatives: build and decorate a plastic model, build a small robot kit, etc, but my favorite is the build and blast rocket party! Check out their website for more details.
 Year 2008 marks the 50th anniversary for the NAR. There's sure to be some great happenings during the year, starting with NARCON, then NSL and finally NARAM 50! Make plans now. You don't want to miss these!!

President	Don Magness
Vice President	Royce Frankum
Treasurer	Cheri Sapp
Secretary	Terri Magness
NAR Senior Advisor	Sam Barone

DARS

The Dallas Area Rocket Society is a non-profit chartered section of the National Association of Rocketry ("NAR"). Its purpose is to promote the hobby of consumer rocketry in the Dallas/Ft. Worth metropolitan area.

Membership in DARS is open to all interested persons. Membership in NAR is encouraged, but not required. Annual dues are \$10.00 for individuals and \$15.00 for families. The entire family, including children, are welcomed to the meetings. Go to the website and fill out and send an application to join or renew your membership.

The club normally meets on the first Saturday of each month at 1:00 p.m.

Meetings are held in Plano, TX at:

Plano Late Night Bingo
 1805 Ave K (18th and K St.)
 Plano, TX 75074

Exit off Hwy 75 to East Plano Parkway (just north of George Bush Turnpike—Hwy 190) and go east, turn left on K St., and turn right into the shopping center just north of 18th St.



Stay connected! All of us will reach greater heights with your attendance at the club meetings.

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