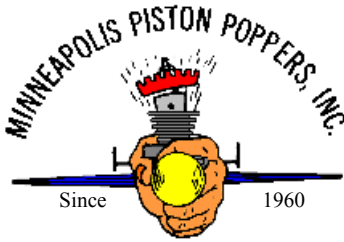


# Prop



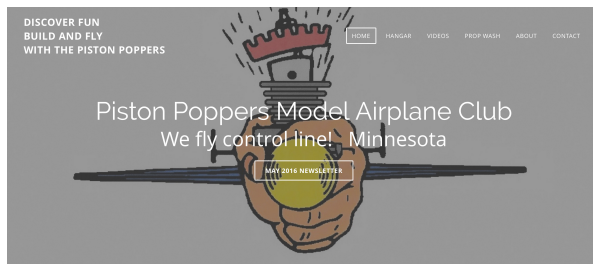
# Wash

**Prop Wash is a publication of the Piston Poppers Inc., an AMA U-control club**

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Any articles for the newsletter are greatly appreciated and will be published as soon as possible.

October 2023



<http://www.pistonpoppers.com>

## September Meeting :

**Old Business:** The grass at the airport has not been in good shape this summer, mostly drought related. Some people have been out flying at the school field lately. Most have been out there around 9 to 11 in the mornings. There was no September picnic. Bob Cheney had surgery recently on his knee and is healing now. *I hope you heal quickly, and get back on your feet soon Bob.*

**New Business:** At the next meeting in October, nominations for Club Officer will be accepted and voting at the Nov/

Dec meeting. John Christensen told us about the MAC fee we pay to use our airport field. It's approximately \$200 per year. *That's something I hadn't heard about before today.* We talked briefly about the January 1<sup>st</sup> fun fly. It probably will be an indoor food get together at the EAA hangar.

**Show and Tell:** Don brought in some foam core wings, drawings for a twin engine plane and some bellcranks he made. Tom brought one his planes made with donated wings, and a fuselage he made, powered by an OS FP-20.

Jim Gevay

*I'm adding this previous article that I crafted to fill the newsletter a bit*

## **A Perspective on Control Line Pitting**

Unlike R/C flying where the pilot gets to taxi the airplane out to the runway, in control line flying we rely on an assist to get the airplane from the pits to the flying circle. That person is the Pitter. Or Pit-Man. Or Pit-Person. Or Bob, Tom or John.

In the circle control line pilots fly alone. Just us and the airplane. No one within 70 or so feet from us as we rotate in the center of the flying circle as the airplane cuts a hopefully majestic pattern at the end of the lines separating us from humanity.

Physically and mentally. We are connected through the lines and handle to the airplane. Feeling the power, pull, effects of the wind, our vision blinded at times as the full strength of the sun blinds us in a maneuver. The flight begins as the Flyer having gone through all the pre-flight procedures.....

The flight ends as the engine quits having burned the fuel we rationed out and the airplane glides in for a smooth landing and roll-out. The Pitter hopes that the airplane touches down on the side of the circle closest to the pits. Otherwise a longer trudge is required to go and grab the airplane on the far side of the circle. In some cases the Pitter is maybe older and is a bit of a

slower walker, as is the case for many a control liner. There is the choice of dropping the handle for the Pitter to grab and then the Flyer goes out to the edge of the flying circle to carry the airplane back to the pits. This is sometimes the most efficient way to handle this as the next Flyer in queue awaits their airtime eagerly. Often when only a group of 3 or 4 are flying, the Pitter and Flyer carry the airplane to the pits and the Flyer then grabs the handle or airplane of the Pitter and assists them to the flying circle for their flight. But when many club members are present to fly, everyone is jockeying for their chance to put their airplane and their flying skills into the open sky. Testing themselves and the airplane. It is never *not* intense.

Sometime there is a moment when the Flyer that just landed and the Pitter who runs out to help them back to the pits have to take the lines and airplane over or under the next Flyer up and their Pitter as they head out to the flying circle. This can be an interesting bit of choreography.

The Pitter can help the Flyer out by making sure their line clips are straight and not kinked where they meet at the airplane wing and the 60' of stranded stainless steel going out to the flying handle. The Pitter can alert the Flyer of this. Sometimes a word of confidence is spoken by the Pitter to the Flyer. Sometimes it is best to just remain quiet but depends on how well the

Pitter knows the Flyer and their pre-flight attitude. Often there is some stimulating engine and tank talk. Some Flyers have a process they go through on the start procedure simulating the actions one would take competing at a Stunt Contest. Muscle memory is a powerful tool. Take heed.

When the airplane is started, the Pitter holds the airplane steady as the Flyer may need to reach near a sharp propeller spinning at 88,000 RPM to adjust their needle valve and check engine RPM. The Pitter will want to hold the airplane steady and sure during these actions. Some Flyers move their Flight Box during this time and some don't move their Flight Box. It is the responsibility of the Pitter to then move the Flight Box out of the landing zone if the Flyer did not move it far enough away. Also the Pitter checks for glow plug battery or battery cord and clip if left at the launch spot.

When the Flyer is satisfied all is set on the engine settings they head to the circle to grab the handle. Some walk. Some jog. Some grab their flying lines and walk out the twists on the way to the handle. The Pitter patiently holds the running airplane as it blows prop wash and castor oil over him and then watches until the signal to launch the airplane is given by the Flyer. It is usually an arm wave or a chopping side point in the direction the airplane is pointed. Every Flyer has their own style. When that signal is given the

Pitter just releases the airplane without pushing it or trying to make it go. Pushing or shoving the airplane often leads to a nose-over and broken propeller or misguided roll out of the airplane. Just a simple release of the airplane with a hands-up action and the airplane rolls out and takes off. Then Pitter gets up and moves out of the flight path in a no nonsense fashion. He will have 4 to 7 seconds to do this.

Once the airplane is in the air and seems to have a good engine run, the Pitter is free to go and work on their airplane, untangle their own flying lines from their previous flight or in some cases just watch the flight in progress. Watching is good as it helps one to learn to be a better flyer. Or watch the flight of a Novice Flyer and offer them encouragement and advice.

Another point is that some Flyers have beautiful and artistic airplanes built with silkspan covering and artistic paint jobs. Often these are Competitive Stunt Flyers. It is a good practice to ask the Flyer how best to handle their work-of-art airplane if you are going to be the one to carry it out to the circle or retrieve it after the flight ends and the airplane has landed. Nothing worse than poking a thumb through the silkspan on someones airplane wing or scratching their airplane's paint job up while holding it for launch.

Most of this info does apply to Electric control line airplanes but there are a

few other things to consider. It is best to check with the Flyer and check their process of shutting off the airplane's battery after the flight. Sometimes it makes sense for the Pitter to go directly to the Flyer's handle after landing and let the Flyer go to their airplane and turn off or disengage the battery. Also the Pitter should still wait for the Flyer to give the launch signal before releasing the airplane. Electric airplanes need to rev-up to speed for a good take-off.

If new to control line flying, get used to looking down and stepping over the flying lines laid out in the pits. We all make the mistake of walking on and tangling our feet in someones flying lines. It takes doing it a few times to really get this habit ingrained to be aware of them laying there. Nothing worse than the dance of the tangled lines and then the profuse apologies given after. Humbling.

There are times we control line flyers pit for ourselves when we go out and fly alone and use the assist of a Stooage. A Stooage is a device that holds the airplane when running and usually has a line that runs out to the middle of the circle and runs behind and parallel to the flying lines going out to the handle in the center of the flying circle. The Flyer reaches down and pulls the line attached to the Stooage thus releasing the airplane. Upon landing the solo flyer has to get his airplane back to the Stooage for the next launch. There are

several ways to handle this. You can just drag the flying lines through the grass or across the tarmac but you then risk kinking you expensive flying lines. Most of my solo flying has been at grass circles so I found it best to have a large 12" nail or spike to stick into the grass through my handle opening or handle safety thong and then walk out to the airplane and pick up the airplane and step back to tighten the flying lines and keep them out of the grass to prevent them for kinking or getting caught on weeds and such. Then I just walk the airplane back to the launch area near the Stooage. Sometimes I just need to pull the airplane a short distance to the Stooage after going out to the handle and removing the large spike that is holding the handle in place. Other times the airplane is out past the Stooage so after I re-set the airplane on the Stooage I would need to go pull the handle back to tighten the flying lines. A good practice is to put that same spike through the handle safety thong as you start your airplane. This can help if your Stooage releases accidentally or even if your foot catches the line running from the Stooage to the circle. That way the airplane has a good chance of not taking to the air as the safety thong is at the *down control* end of the handle and will hopefully give down input and the airplane will nose over. So yes, sometimes we end up being our own Pitter.

The practice of Pitting in control line flying is an endeavor we must all learn to do if we engage in control line flying. It is an under-appreciated but necessary part of our hobby/sport. We do so much of the process in this hobby in solitude. Such as building, painting, covering, assembling, maintaining, repairing, engine maintenance, battery upkeep, charging, storage charging, cleaning, storing, loading and unloading and flying in the circle alone. It is nice to have that short human connection with the Pitter. Having a bit of a tete-a-tete and some interaction with a fellow Flyer before hustling out to the center flying circle and taking to the sky and focusing completely on the flight for the next 5 to 7 minutes. Becoming one with the airplane and the Stunt Pattern. Or sometimes just trying to survive the flight and not crash.

Reveling in the debrief after the flight with the Pitter can most certainly help improve your flying and pattern skills. And the Pitter's flying skills will benefit as well as to watch another a club member fly and take note of what they do in their flight can transfer over to helping you improve your own flight. We can all help each other be better flyers.

Oh the joy of loading an intact airplane back into your vehicle for the drive home, reliving a day of triumphant control line flying. Connection. The Quest for Perfection. And just good fun

being outdoors and enjoying an activity I'm fairly sure we all did when we were young. One of the closest things to time-travel back to youth for me. But the intensity and fun is even more profound at this age. Plus my Fun-Funding is way better at this age!  
Sean Emery



**MEETING NOTICE:**  
**Last Thursday of the Month**



