



## Antique planes are models of nostalgia

By Lindajoy Fenley

Of the IJ staff

Nostalgia fads keep everything from old cars to 1950s rock 'n' roll in vogue.

For San Francisco Police Sgt. Ron Keil, the romance of the past lives on when he flies models of antique planes in fields near Indian Valley Colleges, Olive Ridge Tennis Club, St. Vincent's School for Boys and the Two Rock Coast Guard Station.

Although Keil has never piloted a real plane, he said his models are "kind of a nostalgia thing."

He has about 50 model planes parked in the garage of his Novato home. All of them, whether powered by gas-oil engines or wound-up rubber bands, are based on pre-1941 designs.

Keil isn't alone in his admiration of the old planes. He is a past president of the Marin-Sonoma branch of the Society of Antique Modelers, a group with about three dozen members. The society started in Sacramento about 20 years ago and now has branches all over the world.

The planes have wingspans ranging from two feet to 15 feet.

Most are radio controlled "so we don't have to run after them," Keil said. Although there are teen-agers in the club, many members are in their 60s and 70s.

Even with radio control, model planes sometimes catch a thermal current and soar out of range.

Just a couple weeks ago, one of Keil's planes caught an updraft and flew out of sight in 12 minutes. "The last I saw it," he said, "it was 2,000 or 3,000 feet up, bumping on a cloud."

Keil says that when "the thermal gods" claim one of his planes — they've done it five times in the past two years — he prays "that it lands in some kid's backyard and he has a great time with it."

But he also harbors the hope that someone might return the wandering aircraft, so he puts his name and address on them. Models can be relatively inexpensive — the last one he lost cost \$35 to build — but they can also cost as much as \$500.

Power for the models can be rubber bands, carbon dioxide, gasoline or glow plug engines.

Keil, 47, has built model planes since he was a teen-ager. "It's a relaxing hobby," he said.

Keil said the antique models he and other club members fly are easier to handle than the large models flown by modern model plane enthusiasts.

The Marin Radio Control Club, for example, has a regular landing strip behind the dump in North Marin, he said.

IJ photo/Marian Little

**John Droboschoff tunes up his Lonzo Record Breaker**

He belongs to Society of Antique Modelers, which flies planes at fields in Marin