

# RINGMASTER FLY-A-THON

## WORLD'S LARGEST CONTROL LINE EVENT!!



Group of Ringmasters to be flown at Hobby Hideaway, 2008.



by John Cralley ~ [jccrall@ilstu.edu](mailto:jccrall@ilstu.edu)

Once again on October 3 and 4, 2015 control line fliers will be able to participate in the 8th Annual Worldwide Ringmaster Fly-A-Thon. Since this event was first conceived eight years ago by Mr. Joey Mathison from Las Vegas, Nevada, the Ringmaster Fly-A-Thon has grown into the largest control line fun fly in the World.

The rules are simple:

- 1) You fly some variety of a control line *Sterling Ringmaster* or a variation of the *Sterling Ringmaster*.
- 2) You record the number of flights and any other data you wish and report via email to:  
[2015flyathon@ringmasterflyathon.com](mailto:2015flyathon@ringmasterflyathon.com)
- 3) All reports must be submitted by 12:00 noon Eastern Daylight Time (USA) Tuesday, October 6, 2015.

- 4) If you have someone new to control line flying solo on a *Ringmaster*, you can count that first flight as two flights!!

### *A Bit of Fly-A-Thon History*

In 2008 Joey Mathison suggested that a weekend in the fall be designated for a "Ringmaster Fly-A-Thon". The event would allow any variety of the *Ringmaster* derived from the *Sterling S-1 Ringmaster* to be flown. The flights could take place anywhere in the world and the number of flights at each location would be submitted for tabulation to a central site by email. The Brotherhood of the Ring forum founders, Dee Rice and David Gresens, agreed that this was a good idea and the Worldwide Ringmaster Fly-A-Thon was born. Richard Grogan from Houston, TX, one of the



Brotherhood Administrators, was instrumental in creating the rules and the organizing the event. He set up an email address and collected the reports, which he tabulated on a spreadsheet and posted on the Brotherhood website.

That year the first weekend in October was selected for the Fly-A-Thon and a total of **255** flights were recorded. It was decided that the Fly-A-Thon should be an annual event.

Since then the Annual Worldwide Ringmaster Fly-A-Thon has been held every year on the first weekend of October. The growth in popularity has been spectacular!

In 2009 The Ringmaster Fly-A-Thon recorded **288** flights.

The largest number of flights was made by the Las Vegas group that Joey Mathison and Larry Marx organized. Australia, Canada, France and Brazil contributed flights to the Fly-A-Thon. The same Brazilian group that had also visited the US to fly at the Brodak Fly-In joined in the Annual Fly-A-Thon and put up a number of flights.

In 2010 with the help of participants from other countries and an especially enthusiastic group of fliers in Alameda, California, that put up **428** flights, the 2010 Ringmaster Worldwide Fly-A-Thon increased in flight numbers and participation. We recorded a record **887** Ringmaster flights!! Randy Bush explained how that California group set their high mark at the Bill Osborne Flying Field. The Alameda Aer-O-Nuts club practiced with four new *Ringmasters* built by Jim Persson. They tested the *Ringmasters* to get the right sized tanks to run for eight laps. They used a pit crew for a racing style refuel, start and launch for successive flights.



Some of a California Group that made 428 Ringmaster flights during 2010 Fly-A-Thon.



l to r: Pat King, Jim Swearingen, John Cralley. Group at Hobby Hideaway, 2009.

It appeared that this event was a good way to promote control line modeling and I was asked to try to recruit more fliers from around the world for the 2010 Fly-A-Thon. I found that the *Ringmaster*, which is so familiar to US and Canadian modelers, was little known in other parts of the world. I was pleased with the help of Italian modeler Gabriele Marci to recruit an enthusiastic group of Italian control line modelers to join the event. Several control line clubs that were having contests over the Fly-A-Thon weekend also recorded *Ringmaster* flights and 10th Annual Hi Johnson Memorial Stunt & Carrier contest organizers kindly set aside a special circle for the Fly-A-Thon fliers.

**WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN!**  
 Through our bi-monthly publication, **The MECA SWAP SHEET** and **BULLETIN** you will be able to contact people with similar interests who will be able to help you to:

- Learn Engine Values
- Find Rare Pieces
- Locate Services and Parts
- Buy, Sell, Trade
- Learn History
- Find out about "Collecto-gether" and events

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 mitecars@gmail.com  
[www.modelenginecollectors.org](http://www.modelenginecollectors.org)



above: **Joey Mathison** holds **Larry Marx's Ringmaster 1000** flown at Las Vegas, 2010.



left: **Italian fliers** and their **Ringmaster**, 2010.

below: **Jack Humphreys** flies a **Ringmaster** in **Toronto, Canada**, 2010.



In 2011 encouraged by the increased interest in the Fly-A-Thon, we set what others considered an impossible goal of having **1500** flights for the 2011 Fly-A-Thon.

Meanwhile, our Italian friend Gabriele Marci drew up a set of *Ringmaster S-1* plans (the model that Matt Kania designed back in 1950). The *S-1* kits that Sterling and Estes companies sold did not have an actual set of plans but rather a construction guide sheet. These plans Gabriele freely donated as public domain plans that anyone could copy and use to build an *S-1 Ringmaster*. The plans however are in Italian and with metric measurements. While his plans were fine for most of the world builders, they were not as useful for the US modelers. Also Gabriele's plans were true to the original *Ringmaster* and did not include things like a wing tip weight box and adjustable leadouts. Pat King kindly revised the plans to include modern modifications and to have the dimensions in Imperial units. I have posted files for both Gabriele's and Pat's revisions on a number of control line web sites. Pat King also has generously released the plans for his 1/2A *Baby Ringmaster* and his 1/2A slab winged *Beginner's Ringmaster* for distribution as PDF files. Anyone who wants a copy of the plan files for these models can just email me [jccrall@frontier.com](mailto:jccrall@frontier.com) and I will send you a PDF copy of the file (s).

In 2011 we were joined by several additional countries including the UK and South Africa and with their help, along with an enthusiastic response from many US and Canadian modelers, we went over the **1500** flight goal by recording **1505** *Ringmaster* flights worldwide!!!



**Rick Bollinger** in one of his **38** flights at **Burlington, Iowa**, 2011.





*above left: Keith Renecke with a Ringmaster he flew in South Africa, 2011.  
 above: Group that flew at the Burlington Model Airplane Club's field, 2011.  
 bottom left: Dee Rice puts up one of his 71 flights on this 71st birthday!!!, 2011.  
 below: Akihiro Danjo's Ringmaster and Japan's fliers for the 2013 event.*



The goal for 2012 was set by Richard Grogan, organizer and tabulator for the Fly-a-Thon, at **2000 Ringmaster** flights. I can tell you that the Monday and Tuesday morning after the Fly-A-Thon weekend, the members of the Brotherhood of the Ring, sponsors of the event, were eagerly anticipating the email reports from those of you who participated. That goal of **2000** flights was missed with a total of **1689** flights tallied. Once again the figure of **2000** flights was set for the 2013 Fly-A-Thon. New for 2012 was a group from Korea and also a Club from Tasmania, Australia put up a number of flights.

The final tabulation for the 2013 Worldwide Ringmaster Fly-A-Thon went over the top with **2334** flights recorded. An eager group of Australian fliers put up **430** and vowed to do better the next year! New fliers from the Netherlands and Japan joined in the fun!

The goal for 2014 was set at 2500 flights. Once again control line modelers from around the World turned out to participate in the Annual Worldwide Ringmaster Fly-A-Thon! New countries represented for 2014 were Germany, Argentina and Slovakia! That goal




*Slovakian new pilot  
flying an electric  
powered 900 (mm)  
Ringmaster, 2014.*

of **2500** Ringmaster flights was broken with **476** pilots recording **2714** flights!!

The Fly-A-Thon is a celebration of control line modeling and flying! The event can be used to promote our sport while having a great time. Just think you can be flying along with close to **500** other control line modelers in the biggest control line Fun-Fly in the World. All it takes is to have a *Ringmaster* and to go out and fly it on the first weekend of October. The 8th Annual Worldwide Ringmaster Fly-A-Thon promises to be even bigger and better than ever. A goal of **3000** flights has been set and our hope is to exceed the record **476** pilots that participated last year. Just think if every pilot put up ten flights we would have nearly **5000** flights!!

Please join us and fliers around the World for the 8th Fly-A-Thon and help promote control line modeling!!

Summary of the Results: **2008 - 255 flights, 2009 - 288 flights, 2010 - 887 flights, 2011 - 1505 flights, 2012 - 1689 flights, 2013 - 2334 flights, 2014 - 2714 flights, and 2015 - ????** flights!!! 

*Informational Flyer for the 2015  
8th Annual Worldwide Ringmaster Fly-A-Thon  
is shown on the next page.*

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# Ringmaster Fly-A-Thon 2015



**The Brotherhood of the Ring is sponsoring its 8th Annual Fly-A-Thon event:  
October 3rd & 4th, 2015**

*Matt Kania's beloved Ringmaster control line model has been built and flown by more modelers than any other control line model airplane!*

**This is not a contest!** No registration is required. There are no entry fees or prizes! This Fly-A-Thon is to *honor* the most popular CL model ever!! Be part of something big and help make history by having more worldwide Ringmaster flights in a single weekend than last year's record of 2714 flights!

A record 456 different pilots participated!!

**This event is open to *all* participants *worldwide*!**

On October 3rd & 4th, we challenge you to fly any one or more of the many varieties of Ringmasters, old or new, and report your flights to: [2015flyathon@ringmasterflyathon.com](mailto:2015flyathon@ringmasterflyathon.com)

**Deadline for reporting is 12:00 noon Eastern time (USA) Tuesday October 6th**

**Location: *Wherever you are!***

Any Ringmaster from 1/2A to Giant and all variants in between can be flown.

Please report, how many total Ringmaster flights were made, how many different pilots flew, how many different Ringmasters flew and the location of these flights. Please feel free to include *lots of details* of your event as we plan to chronicle the Fly-A-Thon for future publication in Control Line World.

If you get a new pilot to solo on a Ringmaster, that first flight will count as 2 flights!

***Let's keep the spirit of C/L alive!***

**Ok everyone! Just dig that old dusty Ringmaster from your attic and *go fly it!***

*The results will be compiled and published by the **Brotherhood of the Ring.***

All questions should be directed to the primary contact: [FFlyathon2014@yahoo.com](mailto:FFlyathon2014@yahoo.com)