Woodland/Davis Aeromodelers

Dec Newsletter 2025

PREZ SEZ

Somehow it's December and another year has flown by. It's been a very busy year at WDA and I thought I would highlight a few things:

Swap Meet: Our swap meet was the first event of the year and was a good way to get out of hibernation and move some stuff around. Donated items that the club sells have been a notable part of our budget and allow for improvements at the field.

Events: Chili and Chilly kicked things off on January 1, The jet event returned, Pylon Races, Wings of Victory, and the Pattern Event were all well attended. WDA hosted the first annual NASA West Scale Classic in October and with the West Scale Classic roving to other western area clubs, we will be revisiting the name of our old 49'er Qualifier to host the ongoing 49'er Scale Classic AMA scale contest in 2026.

Meetings: Warm weather meetings at the field with program such as Pattern flying how-to, Sailplane winch launching, Scale contest how-to, etc.

Finance: Our finances are strong, and careful budgeting has kept the club's expenses in balance with revenues generated from member dues, events, and donations.

Improvements: Parking lot and pits received major investments this year to rebuild the pit area grading and with all new fabric. The RC car area has been started, with more work to come. The water system

The WDA General meeting is scheduled for MONDAY Dec. 8th at Round Table Pizza in Woodland. Board Meeting @ 6pm, 7pm General membership meeting.
wdarc.org

was put into full service this year and we kept the RC runway areas and control line circles green and mowed all year. Infrastructure in place to add electrical capacity to the south shade area at the RC pit.

Outreach: We hosted the Toys 4 Tots/Open House this year in November and welcomed guests and members for fun and flying. WDA supported the UC Davis COSMOS science summer program at the field as well as Aeronautical Engineering test flights. Our trainer program provided introductory flights to prospective new members thanks to Keith Young and Harry King, two of our flight instructors.

Organization: Our by-laws and club rules were all updated this year and published.

Plans for 2026???
Well, that depends in part on elections next week, and most if not all of the current board positions have committed to returning in 2026 if that is the will of the membership. From my perspective, I have thrown my hat into the ring again, and would continue to push on four areas.

1) Field: Continue to make investments of time and dollars to make this the premiere flying site in northern California.
2) Events: Continue a similar schedule of events, that balances events with club members general use of the field.
3) Outreach: Continue to elevate our presence in the community through Open House, support of UCD, Toys 4 Tots, Youth Membership support, and beyond. Continue on trend to increase membership again in 2026.
4) Fun: Focus on engaging all of our members during the course of the year with meetings, activities and events that highlight the range of RC and CL activity. A focus on supporting new members and beginners, overall camaraderie and positive energy. WDA should be a place where modelers of all skill levels, experience and interest have a say and a place to enjoy the hobby and can appreciate the aspects that other members are participating in.

That's about all for now. Hoping this tule fog will burn off one day and we will see the sun again. In the meantime, go build something!

Jeff

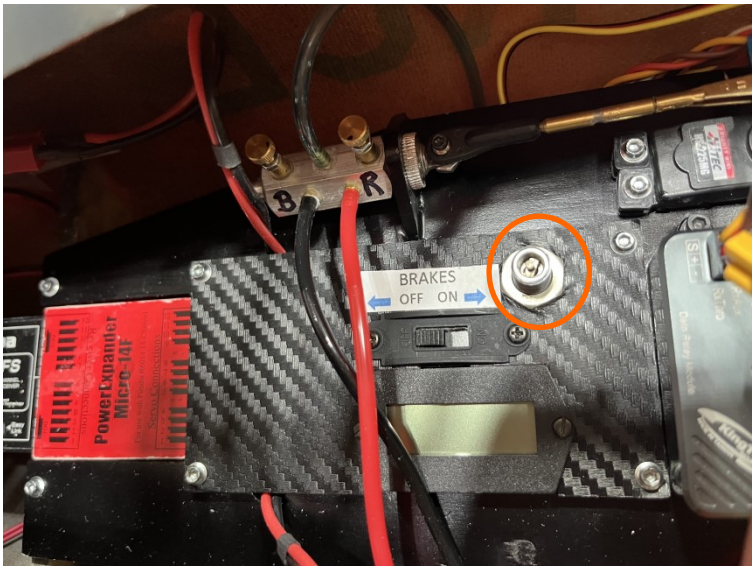
The QF-104A was a special modified version of the (Y)F-104A Starfighter which could be flown remotely controlled. The control was done by F-104 pilots on the ground during start and landing and inside another aircraft during in flight operations. The conversion of the (Y)F-104A to QF-104A was approved on 19 February 1960 by the USAF. Testing of the QF was conducted during the period of 9 January 1961 to 16 October 1961. The reason for converting the (Y)F-104A was the need for high altitude, high mach targets for the development of ground-to-air (BOMARC) and air-to-air (AIM7 - AIM9 - GAR2B - MB1 - AIM4) missiles.
The first unmanned mission was flown on 17 October 1961 being probably QF-104A "55-2957". There are conflicting numbers on the total QF-104A's manufactured. Lockheed says 24.
Most QF-104 missions were flown at Eglin AFB, Florida. However, some were flown at Holloman AFB in New Mexico and a small number at Point Magu NAS, California (US NAVY). The "drone branch" had a Commander and roughly 12 to 15 operations pilots. T-33's were used to control the QF-104A from launch to the firing range and then to return the QF back to the landing airfield area. A typical mission required 8 pilots from launch to recovery. Five of these were flying and three of them were doing ground jobs, i.e. launching the drone - controlling the QF on the range - and then landing it after the mission.

Modeler's Corner

Well, I was sincerely hoping to provide a FIRST FLIGHTS report on the QF-104, but the RC Gods weren't on my side… First, the weather. Lots of FOG. Problem is, it often doesn't clear until after noon, at which point the sun is low and in the southwest, beaming into a pilot's face. As the day wears on, the sun occupies more and more of the southwest sky so a landing approach from the south becomes a challenge in perception. Flying in the northern quadrants of our air space is a work-around, but when considering the speed of most jets and the pilot work load inherent with a maiden flight, afternoon flying just didn't seem like a wise choice.

I finally decided that Saturday November 29th would be the day. The weather predictors prognosticated no fog, but cloudy skies and cold temps… I could deal with that. Once at the field, visibility was NOT ideal, with a ceiling of under 400 feet. Again, for many aircraft, no big deal, but for a fast jet with the silhouette of a dart, not confidence inspiring.

Before any of my "pit crew" had arrived, I fueled up and taxi-tested the Starfighter, adjusting nosewheel steering for a straight shot down the runway. It seemed everything was a GO.



"Issues" began to arise (and not unexpectedly) when further testing ensued. First, filling the retract air tank… this had been a problem since day one and I was well-aware of it. The screw-on type air pump valve has always been notoriously poor at preventing compressed air from escaping during removal. I have battled this all along, even on other models, but this F-104 carries a VERY SMALL air tank, such that even a small amount of air loss while unscrewing the fill valve can result in too little pressure for reliable gear operation. This problem reared its ugly head again when testing the gear… there was enough pressure to retract them, but the right gear leg was hanging up on the spring-loaded gear door when coming back

down, lacking sufficient air pressure to fully extend. The work-around is to unscrew the air filler at lightening speed to avoid air loss! This is always hit or miss and far less than ideal.

The second (and insurmountable) problem presenting itself (again) but PROMINENTLY this time, was the receiver not Linking with the transmitter. I am using an older Futaba 6014FS in combination with a Smart Fly Micro 14F power expander. Some of you may be asking, *"Rich, IF you knew this problem existed, WHY did you even attempt a first flight before fixing it?"* Great question… and I will give you my lame excuse…

While intermittently I had experienced a DELAY in Transmitter to Receiver linkage, NEVER did I experience a condition where, after power up, the receiver UN-LINKED from the transmitter! And all I can say is THANKFULLY this happened ON THE GROUND!

Yes, in the shop over several months I did experience odd, intermittent delays, after power up, the receiver not immediately responding to control inputs from the transmitter… sometimes 5 seconds, sometimes 10, and often NO delay. And once control was established, there were no further issues (until perhaps the next time I powered off and then back on).

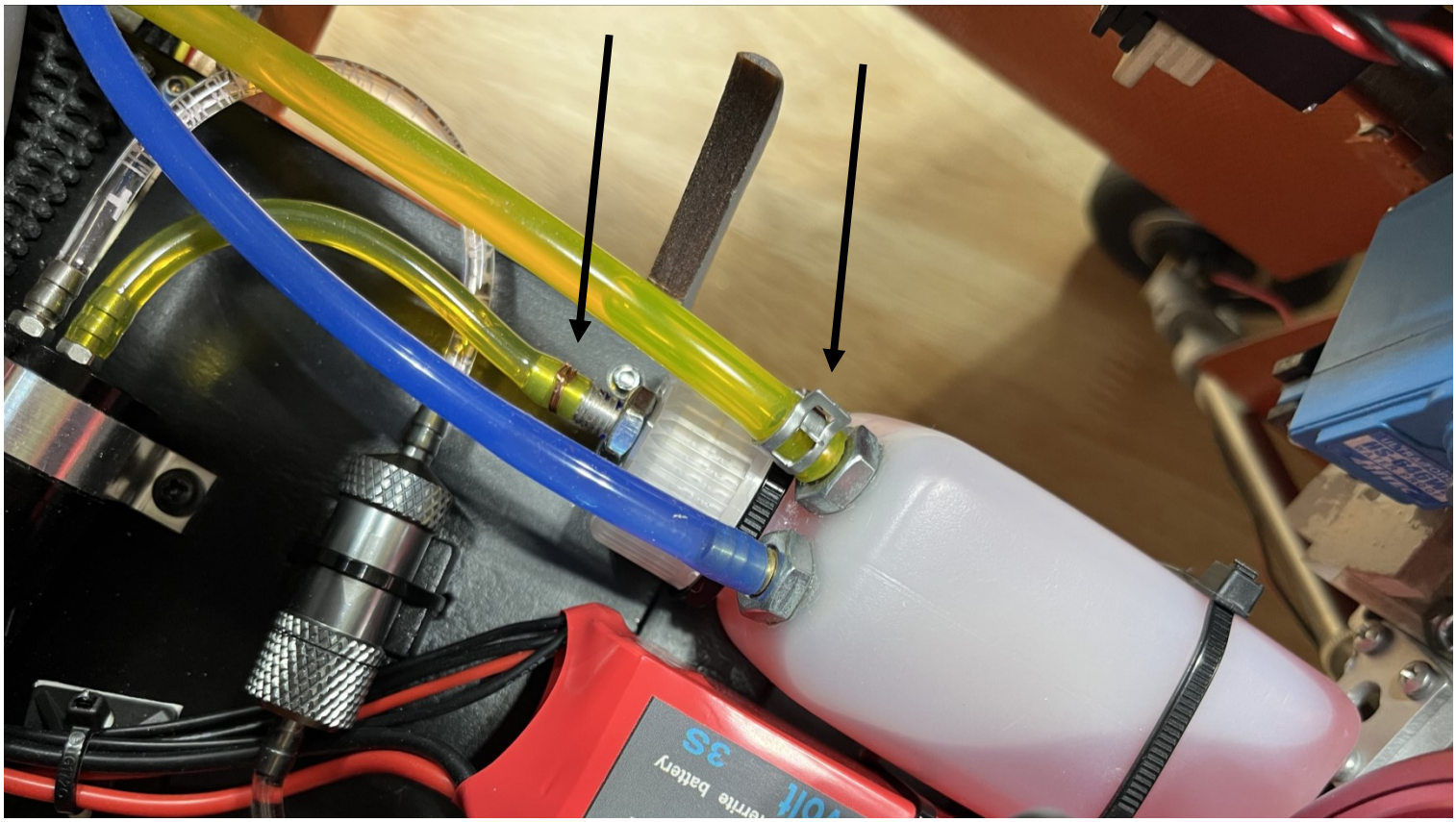
I did reach out to Robert Richie of Smart Fly, asking if there was any possibility the delay was being caused by the Micro 14F and he said "Not likely."

For this install, I was also using 12 channels of the 14 ch. Receiver. I had never used that many outputs and thought perhaps that was a possible cause for the delays (lame rationalizations…)

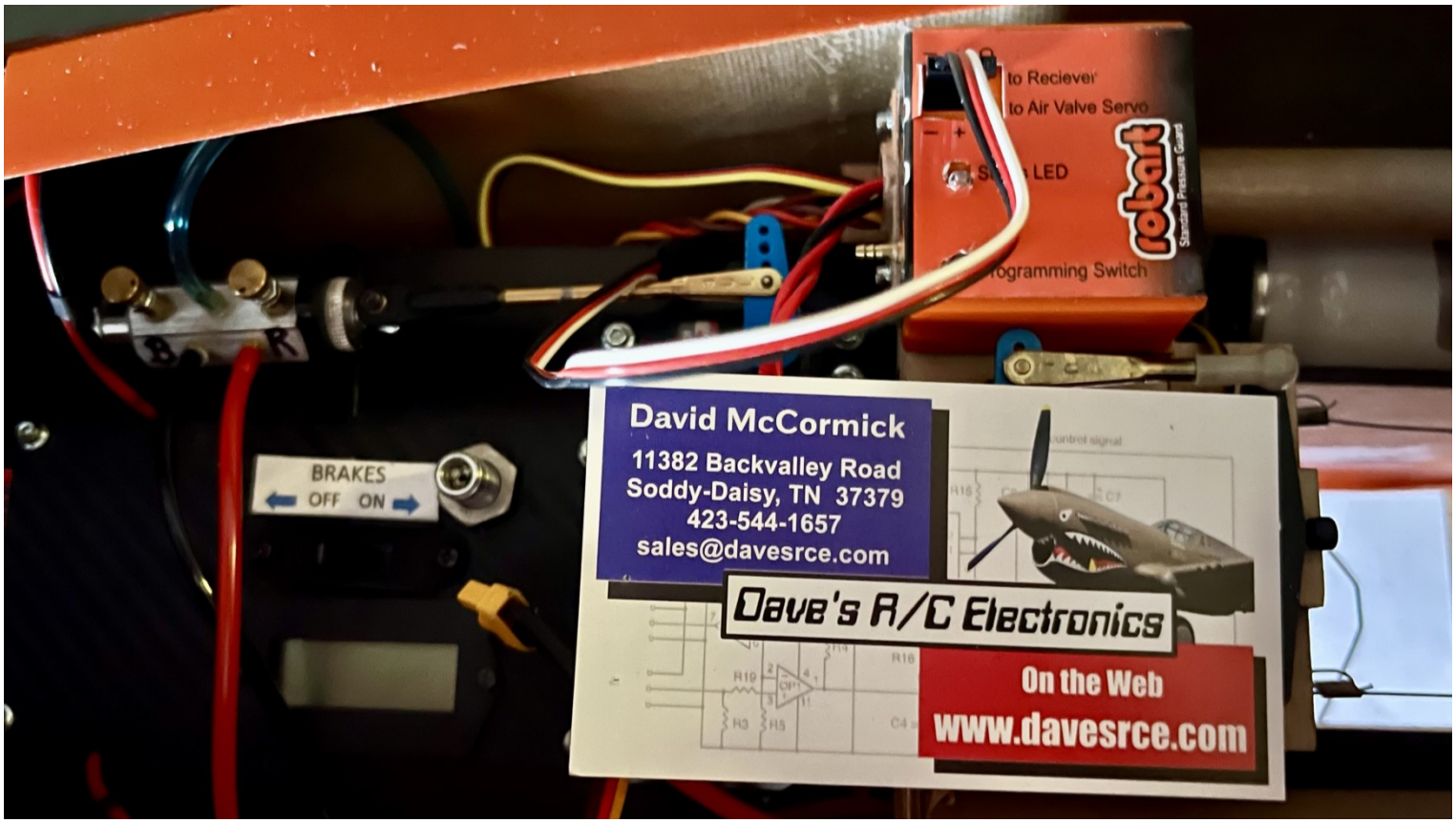
Well, on MAIDEN day, while testing the retracts, the receiver not only delayed, but UNLINKED. This was evident by the **Green** link light on the receiver going from solidly ON, to blinking. NO WAY I would attempt to fly any RC aircraft exhibiting such a condition, so I knew at that point the Starfighter was grounded until further work could be performed.

A couple other items of concern were brought to my attention by the peanut gallery, er, uh, PIT CREW…

Safety wiring the UAT output; This was not so much to retain the fuel line on the output barb, BUT to improve the seal such that NO AIR could enter the line. I have since added the safety wire as well as a fuel line retainer to the UAT input coming from the main fuel tank -



One other suggestion which I heeded… the addition of a retract Fail Safe device which will lower the gear should system air pressure drop unexpectedly. I already had on hand the Robart which, as it turns out, is



manufactured and now serviced by Dave's RC Electronics. I had the pleasure of dealing with Dave and he offers excellent customer service on his fine products.

DISCLAIMER: Neither Smart Fly nor Dave's RC is 'donating' to support my RC addiction. My comments are unsolicited, and based solely on my own experiences with them.

The Robart Fail Safe is connected to the aircraft's on-board air retract supply and comes with instructions on setting up "set points" to trigger the retract servo to extend the gear.

Back to the problem of FILLING the air tank with minimum to no loss when disconnecting… I was informed that Bob Violett Models used to sell a One-Way air filler valve. Also, that HobbyKing also sells a One-Way air valve. ANY one-way solution would be better than the existing screw-on LEAKY connector!

I may yet add another air tank merely as "head room" to carry additional on-board air.

A replacement receiver is absolutely in order and on the way!

We demand a lot from our RC gear and it isn't unreasonable to experience the occasional failure.. Something that has been exceedingly rare during the 20 years I have been flying FUTABA.

After a few tweaks, I hope to be setting speed and altitude records with my Starfighter ;-) ...weather permitting.

Until next month, I hope you find something under the tree to BUILD! Btw: Balsa USA is discounting their kits 10% through December 31st.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Rich Geertson

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⇒ **OPEN**

Next Club Meeting: Monday Dec. 8th at Round Table Pizza in Woodland

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