

## Interview with Some Pirates

By Steve Humphrey NAR 17888

[While currently not members of NARHAMS, John Yost and George Beever are well known to the NARHAMsters—perhaps best known under the team name “Over Forty Victims of Fate” (or if you go back far enough, “Flirtin’ With Disaster”). They’re the ones sometimes seen wearing pirate gear and exclaiming “Arrrrr”. I’ve always wanted to know the story behind the pirate gig, so I thought I’d ask.]

Hey guys, what’s with the pirate talk?

**George:** Beats the heck out of me how it started. Just seems like John and I have been doing that shtick forever. John and I are actually very different kinds of people, despite rumor that we are joined at the hip. The one big thing that we have in common, however, is a need to be silly.

About ‘97 or ‘98 John and I were still competing as “Flirtin’ With Disaster”. We had just been totally trounced at RAMTEC—really embarrassed. We were literally walking off the field at the end of the meet, and we were discussing the future of the team. We did kick around just bagging the whole thing, but we decided an overhaul might be what was needed. It was there that John came up with that pirate bit, you know, being ruthless and giving no quarter and all that. I kid you not. Within a couple of weeks I suggested “Over Forty Victims of Fate” for the name. It comes from an old Jimmy Buffett tune named “A Pirate Looks At Forty”. He wrote it about one of his early-70’s Key West cronies who was, shall we say, colorful—a drug smuggling, roguish, piratical type of guy. Only problem was, it was the 20th century, not the 18th. The line goes,

“Yes, I am a pirate two hundred years too late.

The cannons don’t thunder there’s nothin’ to plunder

## Calendar of Events for 2005

Apr 16-17- 9 am - 4 pm ECRM-32 regional meet  
Apr 24- 12 - 4 pm Rockville Consortium of Sciences Rockville, MD  
May 1- 1 - 2 pm Goddard Public Launch  
May 7- 5 - 10 pm Monthly meeting, NARAM models (Chris Kidwell)  
May 14- 10 am - 10 pm OPOSSUM-9 open meet/ night launch  
May 21- 8 am - 5 pm TARC Flyoffs Great Meadow, VA  
May 28-30- Balticon-39 Baltimore, MD  
Jun 4- 5 - 10 pm Monthly meeting, fiberglass tubing (Mark Petrovich)  
Jun 5- 1 - 2 pm Goddard Public Launch  
Jun 11- 10 am - 4 pm Sport launch, cluster/staging theme  
Jul 2- 5 - 10 pm Monthly meeting, open building session, focus on staging  
Jul 3- 1 - 2 pm Goddard Public Launch  
Jul 9- 10 am - 4 pm Sport launch, airborne trooper spot landing, special prize for 40 troopers deployed  
Jul 10- 12 - 4 pm Goddard building session, open to public, tie in to Goddard Contest

Jul 17- 10 am - 4 pm Goddard contest  
Jul 30 - Aug 5 24/7 NARAM-47 OH  
Aug 6- 5 - 10 pm Monthly meeting, pirates discussion (Alan Williams)  
Aug 7- 1 - 2 pm Goddard Public Launch  
Aug 13- 10 am - 4 pm Sport launch, pirate theme  
Sep 3- 5 - 10 pm Monthly meeting, elections, night launch discussion (John McCoy)  
Sep 4- 1 - 2 pm Goddard Public Launch  
Sep 10- 10 am - 10 pm Record trial, FAI S6A (A SD), night launch  
Sep 25- 12 - 4 pm AIAA Picnic Launch  
Oct 1- 5 - 10 pm Monthly meeting, leftover parts scratch building (Jim Miers)  
Oct 2- 1 - 2 pm Goddard Public Launch  
Oct 8- 10 am - 4 pm Sport launch, Oktoberfest theme, microbrew launch  
Nov 5- 5 - 10 pm Monthly meeting, glider building session (Robert Edmonds)  
Nov 6- 1 - 2 pm Goddard Public Launch  
Nov 12- 10 am - 4 pm OPOSSUM-10  
Dec 3- 5 - 10 pm Monthly meeting, holiday party  
Dec 4- 1 - 2 pm Goddard Public Launch  
Dec 10- 10 am - 4 pm Sport launch



Sport launches are held at Middletown Park from 10am-4pm, waiver up to 3.3 lbs and “G” motors not exceeding 62.5 grams of propellant. All flights “E” power and above are restricted to 5 degrees from vertical and between the hours of noon and four PM. Call ahead to confirm launch and waiver availability.

Business meetings are held at the College Park Airport Annex Building. Meetings begin at 5pm with building sessions or presentations and last until 10:00pm or so.

Questions? Call Club President Jennifer Ash-Poole at 410-674-6262 or visit NARHAMS online at <http://www.narhams.org>

I'm an over forty victim of fate  
Arriving too late, arriving too  
late."

**John:** So it seems natural to me to talk like a pirate at meets. Especially after I found a cool pirate flag at Ocean City! Kind of set the mood.

*Do you celebrate Talk Like a Pirate Day, September 19?*

**John:** I didn't even know about the celebration until a fellow NARHAMster told me about it. Thanks Jen! Seems like a great idea to me.

**George:** Actually, I think I first heard about it from you, Steve!

*Where do you live these days and where are you from originally?*

**George:** My wife, kids and I live in Ephrata, PA, which is in northeastern Lancaster County. I was born and raised just outside of Baltimore, MD, where two of my sisters still live. I went to college in Philly, and wound up working for my brother-in-law who had opened a small business here. Even though this area is a great place to live, work and raise kids, "Bawlmer, Merlyn" is still home.

**John:** I live in Mt. Joy, PA. It's on the west end of Lancaster County. I'm originally from Lebanon, PA, which is about 25 miles north of where I live now. I moved here after meeting my wife, Debbie whose birthday is also September 19.

*Hmmm, I don't think we should explore that coincidence. So what kind of work do you do?*

**George:** As little as possible. Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen—I'll be in this room all week, thank you. I am a police officer. Have been for almost 22 years. Well, I used to be a real cop. Started in patrol as a "road dog", got promoted to Corporal and ran a shift, then became a detective. Man, I loved that job! I was totally prepared to live out my career as a criminal investigator when about 11 years ago the

chief had himself a full-blown mid-life crisis and quit the job. And so guess who got the booby prize? Yup. Me. Like I said, I used to be a real cop. Now I'm the chief. I drive a desk.

**John:** Currently I'm between jobs but I worked for a telecommunications company. Prior to that, I was a field service technician repairing various electronic equipment.

*When did you start flying rockets?*

**George:** October 1968.

**John:** Started flying rockets at about 13 years of age. Which would be around 1963. Then stopped for a while, became a BAR and joined the NAR sometime before 1980.

*How did you get started?*

**George:** Well, like a lot of us who grew up through the 60's the space program fascinated me. And, like many of us, I wanted to make my own rocket. I experimented with various liquid fuel combinations—I'd read that the German V-2 used alcohol as a fuel, so some of that went in ... and then there was something about some sort of acid, so in went the lemon juice ... then a little of this and some more of that, and I had invented ... the margarita! Thank God I never got into the match-head thing, but a buddy of mine did have a cool formula for flash powder. Anyway, when I got into the 7th grade, a friend of mine who was just as nuts about space and rockets told me one day about a friend of his (yes, the typical friend of a friend bit) who had been to a local hobby shop the previous weekend, and told him about these little cardboard tube rockets that flew on "gunpowder" motors. Even though I knew the friend of the friend was an out-an-out wing nut and anything he got into usually had "Trouble" written all over it, I was intrigued. We decided to ride our bikes over there on Saturday to see for ourselves. Now, this hobby shop was the prototypical 1960's hobby shop, and the old boy who ran the place

knew airplanes and trains, but he did his best to help us. For \$2, we each bought an Estes Astron Scout kit, a blue tube of 1/2A6-2s, an 1/8" X 36" piece of music wire, and a 1968 Estes catalog. Man, we were set!

We had off from school the following Tuesday, October 17—not that the date sticks in my mind or anything—for one of those teacher conferences. We both packed all our stuff up and headed to the school. I had used a nail to make a 1/8" hole in a piece of wood for a launch pad; and, in accordance with the safety code that was drummed into us in all of the paperwork that came with the motors, I had scrounged up some wire and a battery somewhere ... Ground Support Equipment, if you will. We decided my buddy Steve would go first, so we hooked everything up, stood back and I connected the wires to the battery ... nothing. Tried again. Still nothing. And again ... and again. You know, wonder if the fact that the battery was one of those old round 1.5-volt jobs had anything to do with it? We were contemplating defeat, ready to admit that maybe this rocket business was beyond us, when we both remembered the guy at the hobby shop saying something about fuse ... hmmm ... so, another 1/2 hour bike ride to the store, and we scored on some prime Jetex, man, and we were gold! Another 1/2 hour bike ride back to the Cape, er, the school, and this time, I would go first. Yup, we joined the "Light It And Run" crowd. I am sure you can remember your first rocket flight, right? The flight was much faster than I thought—it jerked our heads up ... and then we smelled that wonderful aroma! From that day on, I was hooked!

**John:** Like a lot of modelers my age, I responded to an Estes ad in a comic book.

*Have you been in the hobby continuously since then?*

**George:** Uh, no. I devoured that '68

catalog and anything else I could get my hands on that even remotely smelled of model rocketry. And on the Second Day, I spread the word of Vern Estes throughout my neighborhood, and it was good. I grew up in a typical Baltimore row-house area, so there were scads of kids my age. By the summer/fall of 1969 there were about 12 of us who were building and flying rockets. We weren't an official club or anything, but looking back if we'd had real parental supervision that might have happened. In any event however, by about 1972 I was a junior in High School, and my attentions had turned toward "other" things. I kept up with things as best I could, but I didn't fly again until the late 70's. I've been back "full time" since about 1979.

*What got you into the hobby again?*

**John:** I'm not sure if I got back into the hobby to go to the 1980 Internats [World Space-Modeling Championships] or if I joined just before. Either way, the very first contest that I attended was the 1980 Internats as a member of the range crew. I was hooked on competition ever since.

**George:** I really got back into it in the late 80's when John and I met up and formed what became SPAAR [NAR Section #503].

*What kind of rockets did you fly as a youth?*

**John:** I flew mostly Estes and some Centuri kits as a kid. I tried my hand at building a few models from plans but am not sure if they ever flew. One I remember in particular was a 2-stage model that looked like a shark.

**George:** Estes kits and some scratch builds using Estes parts. We'd pool our resources and put one or two big orders in to Estes each year, or go to the hobby shop. Mail order just seemed cooler, though. I did receive one MRI kit as a gift around 1969. It was the Zenith II, which has resurfaced again

under the Quest name. Centuri was known, but not available in our local hobby shop.

*What kind now—MR, LMR, HPR?*

**George:** I've done a bit of all of the above, and I did actually have a very low Tripoli number, #606. I even "confirmed" as they called it then back in 1992, at an HPR launch in Culpepper, VA. I've shied away from it the last 10 years or so, due to the uncertainty surrounding HPR, the cost, and the infighting. Don't get me wrong; I like HPR, but in view of those things and time concerns, something had to give. I started competing in 1988 and was hooked. I was ready to bail on it in 1992, however, when John and I teamed up to form "Flirtin' With Disaster". My first love, however, is sport model rocketry, especially sport scale.

**John:** Though I'm certified level 1, I mostly fly model rockets.

*What other hobbies or activities keep you busy?*

**George:** Are there any? Just kidding. As a husband and father of three, ages 15, 12, and 5 (yes, I said 5!), I have plenty of activities. However, I am a homebrewer [of beer] and a fulltime Parrot Head [fan of Jimmy Buffett]. I'm also a Baltimore Ravens season-ticket holder.

**John:** My other hobbies are hiking, geocaching and collecting diecast miniatures like knights and Lord of the Ring figures ... which leads me to make an aside here: I have always been fascinated by tales of knighthood and chivalry and swords, etc. I have long considered myself a 13th century man in the 20th (and now the 21st) century. Many people may think this odd but also like many of my generation, I dreamed of becoming an astronaut. The correlation is when scientists were planning and researching how to make spacesuits, they studied suits of armor. When I found that tidbit while doing

research I didn't feel so torn between the hobbies.

*Are you a member of an NAR Section?*

**George:** Yes, SPAAR, Section 503.

**John:** You bet! Along with George, I'm a founding member of SPAAR. George gets the real credit though. It was his idea. He called me out of the blue on a Saturday morning way back when.

*Is there anything about NAR or the hobby in general you would like to see changed?*

**George:** Obviously, the threat of governmental over-regulation that I wish would go away. Finding good flying sites is also an issue.

**John:** I'm pretty easy going about most things so I can't think of anything that really bugs me that we aren't addressing already (lighten up BATFE). I'm a little disappointed that the magazine seems to be mostly about HPR lately but I know that's what is being submitted for publishing. I also realize it's exciting to read about. I just wish there were more really decent fields to fly locally to do both HPR & MR.

*What do you like best about model rocketry?*

**George:** Easy—the people!

**John:** What I like best about model rocketry and competition is the camaraderie. That's what really got me hooked. I began in this hobby by meeting and flying and learning with such wonderful people as Ken Brown, Janet Rose, Charlie Sykos, Ed Pearson and Terry Lee, to name just a few. I still associate with others that make this hobby a real pleasure to be involved with but I hesitate mentioning names for fear their heads would swell. 