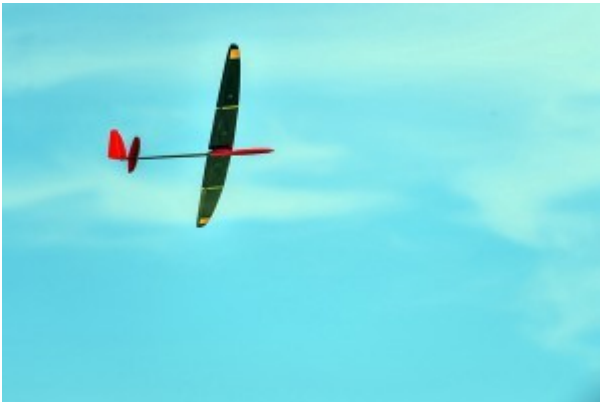


# Flying High In Syosset



The Long Island Silent Flyers have been flying remote-controlled model gliders throughout the Syosset skyline since the club's inception in the 1970s. However, people who have lived there their entire lives might not even be aware they exist—that's something life-long local resident Ed Anderson can certainly attest to.

"I had always been interested in flying model airplanes as a child, but never got into it. Then I ran into a friend 12 years ago who introduced me to the club, and I've been a member ever since," he said. "The funny thing is that the club's been here over 40 years...I grew up in Syosset, went to school in Syosset across the street from where they fly, I still live in Syosset now, but I never knew anything about the club because we're the Silent Flyers. You don't hear them."



The Long Island Silent Flyers deal primarily in two types of hobbyist aircraft; winch-launched, which essentially utilizes a motorized pulley set-up to launch the plane into the air, and ones that have a small electric motor that is only used for lift-off. What the two have in common is once they're up in the sky, you're at the mercy of your piloting skills and the air currents to stay airborne. There's no motors involved when it comes to actually flying them, according to club president and Garden City resident Bob Anderson.

“The planes are radio-controlled, but it’s just the flaps. You can do everything that you’d find on a regular motorized plane, but without the throttle...you can roll, pitch and yaw, but not climb,” he said. “You’re just gliding and, as a result, constantly falling. So, what we’re looking for is warm, rising air—thermals—and if we catch one, we circle in that thermal and gain altitude.”

But these planes are not merely toys. It takes skills, instinct and a keen eye to keep these things up in the sky. A 10 minute flight is considered good by club standards. Ed’s current record is an hour and a half, which represents aeronautic abilities built up over years of practice.

“It’s like fishing. You’re looking for something you can’t see,” he said. “Like fishing, the skill is not seeing the fish, it’s knowing where they hang out. So, think of the glider as the bob on a fishing line... we’re watching that glider, doing as little as possible to bother it, and while it’s flying along you’ll notice the wing lift. Immediately go into a circle, and if that’s a thermal, up you go. We’re more flying the air than the plane...it’s like hunting for lift.”



The club meets monthly at the Syosset Library—meetings are open to the public if anyone is interested in attending—and caters to an extremely varied age group. Among their ranks they count members as young as 10 and as mature as 80. The gliders are typically constructed of balsa wood, Kevlar or other lightweight materials. Ed notes that he usually flies planes with wingspans of 30 or more inches in width, but with an overall weight of just four pounds or less.

The LI Silent Flyers regularly fly their gliders at a large, specifically-designated field in Stillwell Woods Park in Syosset, and free lessons are available to anyone who wishes to try their hand at gliding. The club even loans planes to use, and suggests makes and models to purchase if a participant wishes to indulge in their own glider.

“Gliders are extremely easy to fly, but hard to master...much easier to fly than powered planes,” Ed Anderson said. “Frequently, we’ll put little kids on the controls...I gave a lesson to a 7 year-old once, and I had him up in the air within an hour.”

Members of the club all have their reasons for joining, but while they may vary, one thing binds them all—a lifetime love of flying. Such is the case with club president Bob Anderson.

“My dad worked for American Airlines when I was a little kid, and I just loved building and flying motorized model planes,” he said. “I became a private pilot when I grew up, and one day I was at the

Cradle of Aviation Museum in Garden City and they had a model airplane event there, and I just happened to meet Ed, and he got me interested in it. I came down to the field, tried it out, and really enjoyed it.”

Club treasurer Mike Lavelle of Farmingdale has been a member of the Long Island Silent Flyers for 10 years, and said he discovered the club when a family member first asked his help with a school project. He’s been an avid fan of gliding ever since.

“My father got me into flying model planes when I was 9 years-old, and when got older I got into motorized planes,” he said. “About 10 years ago my nephew was building a glider, and he asked me to teach him to fly it...I knew nothing about gliders, so I looked online and found out about this club. I ended up joining, and I’ve been here ever since. It’s a great social club that’s very welcoming and fun for people of all ages.”

If you’re interested in learning more about the Long Island Silent Flyers, visit their website at [www.longislandsilentflyers.org](http://www.longislandsilentflyers.org).