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Blake Gartrell, left, and John Dyer in front of the Udvar-Hazy museum. Photo by James Gartrell.

number of historic model rockets. The list of fantastic planes and rockets on display is enormous, but I think the highlights were the [SR-71 Blackbird](#), the [Space Shuttle](#), the [Enola Gay](#), the model rocket display and an [SST Concorde](#). Still, there were a number of other notables, including one of the

early Goddard rockets, a Saturn motor, the spaceship model used in the making of [Close Encounters of the Third Kind](#), and well, the list just goes on and on. It was an amazing day! Blake said it was the highlight of the trip for him. It was a pretty special day for me, too.

Thursday was back to sport flying. I was surprised how little time I had spent flying. Blake had only flown one model, his L1 attempt. I think he was more interested in hanging out with his friends. Come to think of it, that's pretty much what I was doing—hanging out with friends rather than flying rockets. Really, that's what a NARAM is all about, even if you're competing in the contests. Sure you have to stay focused if you're competing, but it wouldn't be near as much fun if your friends weren't there too to share your successes and to lend a shoulder when your rockets don't perform as expected. Anyway, I decided that I was going to fly some rockets on Thursday as I wanted to take pictures of the Scale competition rockets on Friday. I started out the morning flying my Squirrel Works [Vulture](#). It's a very cool rocket. While



Mark Bundick and his paper V2. Photo by James Gartrell.

I was at the field, Mark Bundick was flying a paper model of a V2. It was great to see him out flying rockets and having fun. I expect it isn't something he had a whole lot of time to do while fulfilling his NAR President functions. Maybe now he'll be able to spend more time flying! Back at the tent I was prepping my Hawks Hobby [Super Javelin](#) to fly when John Sicker, who was tented on my right, stopped by to chat. We were talking about all of the old motors that were auctioned. John had won the bid on

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John and yours truly holding up the nose of the Space Shuttle. Whew! It's not only huge, it's pretty heavy, too! Photo by Blake Gartrell.



John Sicker showing off his old F50-5 black powder motor. Wow! Check out the size of that thing. Photo by James Gartrell.

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several of the old motors. He showed me one of the old black powder F50 motors that he was still hanging onto. It wasn't one he had gotten at the auction either, just one of several he would pull out now and then to fly on special occasions. That was a very cool motor! It was just the right kind of motivation for flying the Javelin. No, it didn't fly on the F-motor. Instead I settled flying it on an Estes D motor. The wind was blowing toward the trees and I didn't want it drifting too far on me. I was in for a real treat with my next flight.

I was putting my Red River Rocketry [P-Chuter Xtreme](#) on the pad when Chris Taylor asked if I would fly mine in tandem with his—actually about a half second behind his. He had a rocket with a video camera attached to it (imagine that!) and wanted to see if he could capture my rocket flying underneath his. Oh yeah! It didn't take long to make that decision. The rockets took off perfectly, with mine running right up behind his. Unfortunately, the large tubular fins on his rocket flattened out under thrust and the rocket started spinning. All it caught was the smoke trail of my rocket as it was hidden behind the fins on his rocket. Shucks! That would have been awesome. I ended my day at the field flying a drag race with Loretta Hawkins. We were flying our [Super Sprites](#). The two rockets are the most evenly matched rockets I have seen. They fly

almost in tandem, with one just leading the other but flying on the same line. This time, I won! Yay! The folks around the launch pad were really impressed and the rockets received several compliments. It was a nice finish for the day.



On Friday, I started the day taking pictures of the scale flights. Awesome! There were several really fantastic models. I got a great picture of Chan Stevens with his winning Soyuz rocket. It really is an exceptional model and it flew perfectly. I also got a picture of Chris Kidwell with his [Saturn 1B](#). Wow! It looked great, too. Unfortunately, the motor catoed on takeoff and blew the whole bottom out of the model. Ouch!! I know that hurt! There were several Saturn 1Bs entered in the competition. I heard one of them actually staged for mission points, too. Sadly, I missed that flight. After watching a few more models I decided to fly a couple more rockets.



I had brought my Squirrel Works [Metropolitan Police Call Box](#) and decided to fly it on an Aerotech E-15. Yep, it's supposed to fly on an Estes D12-3, but I wanted to stretch the envelope a little. Wow!! The flight was awesome. The exhaust plume was as long as the rocket and it zoomed straight up, transitioning to a tight spiral about halfway up. That was cool looking! It recovered in great shape, too, but there were some interesting dynamics going on during

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**Bottom left**—Chris Taylor takes a photo of his VidRoc while my P-Chuter Xtreme awaits.

**Above middle**—Super Sprites flying in formation. Way cool!

**Top right**—Chan Stevens with his winning Soyuz rocket.

**Chris Kidwell and his awesome S1B, pre-misery.**

**Photos by James Gartrell.**

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the flight. Somehow, the hooks holding the booster to the upper section came loose. So, at ejection the booster separated from the rocket and sort of glide-tumbled back to Earth while the upper section returned normally under chute. It's hard to tell from the photograph, but as the rocket



My Squirrel Works Metropolitan Police Call Box on an E-15. Photo by James Gartrell.

took off from the pad I noted that the fins seemed to be compressing very tightly against the body. I think the combined pressure of the extreme boost and drag compressed the rocket together popping the hooks out. Regardless, it was an awesome flight! Later, after prepping my Red River Rocketry [Payload-R](#) I headed back to the sport range. Lucky me! I met up with Mr.Essence's Model Rocketry Reviews ("EMRR"), Nick Esselman. Actually, I met up with Nick and another of the backbones of EMRR, Dick Stafford. Nick was flying the relatively new [Inflight Sonic Shark](#) and Dick was flying a vintage Estes [HelioCopter](#) and a scratch built Disney Tomorrowland TWA [Moonliner](#) rocket. I was standing next to Dick when they launched his

[HelioCopter](#), and what happened next was amazing. The motor kicked out and the rocket was coming in ballistic, swooping in fast and headed right for Dick. We were watching it closely trying to determine if we needed to dodge it or not, but just as it passed between he and I, Dick reached out and grabbed it right out of mid-air! I couldn't believe it! It was one of the most awesome sights I have ever seen. I think he was really surprised to catch it, as the whole motion was sort of very nonchalant. Plus, he didn't even compress the tube as he caught it! Needless to say, that really wowed the folks at the sport range, and while this one probably won't appear anywhere in the NARAM-50 record books, it is one event I'll always remember. It was great meeting Nick and Dick finally.

I ended the afternoon of flying with the Hawkins as they launched their [Super Bomarc](#) and [Extreme Mars Snooper](#). Both flights were awesome! It was a fantastic way to end the week of flying. We still had the evening dinner and awards ceremony to attend, though. Still, it was sort of sad, finally taking down the EZ-Up for the return. I gazed over the field



Above—My Red River Rocketry [Payload-R](#) ready for flight, with Dick Stafford's Estes [HelioCopter](#) and Nick Esselman's [Inflight Sonic Shark](#) in the background.

Below—L to R, Nick and Dick posing with their rockets.

Photos by James Gartrell.

one last time, just to soak it all in before returning to the hotel. I had some great memories there. Dinner was great and the awards ceremony was very cool. The trophies were simply awesome and there were some

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very proud and deserving winners. It was very well done and was a lot of fun. I am proud that Blake and I were able to be a part of this historic event. I told Blake to promise me that he would come back for the 100th anniversary and fly a rocket for me. He said he would.

We still had one last event, though. Carl McLawhorn had agreed to let some of us come by on our way back to Texas and visit their place in North Carolina so we could see how Semroc works. We arrived there just before John Dyer and Chas Russell. I know Carl and Sheryl and their family were tired after the long week, so allowing us to come by and visit the facilities was a significant sacrifice on their part. Having never made it to Penrose to visit the Estes facilities, though, I didn't want to pass up the chance to visit the "new Estes" facilities. Yeah, I know Semroc is not associated with Estes, but their actions so remind me of the "true" Estes tradition. Both Carl and Sheryl have that same warmth and compassion for their fellow rocketeers. It's not easily defined. It's something magical and has to come from the heart. The previous weekend I was wandering around wearing my Estes logoed hat, so Carl gave me one of their hats to wear. Vern was standing right there. I told Carl that my money might belong to him but my heart would always belong to the Estes. Vern and Carl both knowingly smiled. Carl and Sheryl are merely continuing the Estes family tradition. Perhaps it comes from a drive to be the best that they can be. I know both families have that. During the tour, it was easy to catch the excitement that Carl and Sheryl both exuded as they showed us around their facilities. Two hours went by as if they were minutes. Finally, Bruce came down and reminded us of how long we had been there. It was time to go. Our journey

was coming to an end. All that was left was the long drive back to Texas. All the way back, though, Blake and I recounted all the wonderful times we had. It was special. We were both thankful we were able to attend such an historic event. A big THANKS to all involved.

Following are various random photos I took during the event. Visit the NAR website for [contest results](#) and Chris Taylor's [NARAM Live](#) site for more pics. Congratulations to all of the winners!! Enjoy!





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*Dallas Area Rocket Society*  
(“DARS”)

James Gartrell  
1006 Canton Rd.  
Cleburne, TX 76033



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