

MODEL ROCKETRY

In the early 1960's model rocketry was becoming popular. It was found that you could take a cardboard tube and add a balsam nose cone and some fins, then put in a solid fuel engine and touch it off and watch it sail out of sight. Well, watching a rocket you spent many hours and then having it fly out of sight, never to be seen again, gives you a weird feeling, and this caused model rocketry to go to the bottom of the list of active sports and hobbies.

Now model rocketry has changed, companies like Estes Industries have made model rocketry more enjoyable. They build factory-built engines, that save many lives - many rocketeers have been killed making homemade engines. They also supply parachutes and other recovery systems so your beautiful bird doesn't wind up in a heap of rubble. They also make kits for the beginner and the advanced rocketeer and they offer a wide supply of parts so you can design and build your own bird.

I've flown rockets for four years and I have seen six of my birds fly out of sight, land in trees, get carried miles away by the wind, come bee-lining in for a crash that would spread pieces all over Richmond, and one special one I had that got smashed before it even got off the ground.

But four years of hit and miss has finally stopped, I think I have the hang of it. My brother Bob and I have each been flying rockets now and we have had many successful flights.

Model rocketry is now one of the most popular and safest hobbies in the country. I hope you become a rocketeer if you're not one already so you can get that feeling you get when your big bird comes floating down to a safe landing. It makes you feel good to see something you build with your own hands work. Remember: the sky is the limit.

By John Andre