



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of HANK CLARK



Written by HC (06/1982); Transcribed and Reformatted by JS (01/2012)

Hank Clark wrote the following biography, published in the June 1982 issue of *Model Aviation* magazine.

Hank Take a Bow

Art by Hank Clark. You see it on those magnificent model cutaways every month in *Model Aviation*. We thought you might like to know the man behind the pen a little better, so we asked him to tell a little about himself. As you might expect, he's as fascinating as his drawings.

“HANK! How do you *do* it?” Those are the words when I show up at any AMA meet, since they're talking about my model cutaway art each month in *MA*. All I can say is – it's my thing. How do I know how? It's a gift. Talent? You might more correctly say it's the result of 50 years of development.

You should see how childish my early cartoons looked, compared to my current flying hero, Chuck Wood – and that's 30 years under development! An artist is never satisfied with his finished (?) job, and I just wish I had more time to do it better. That's art-wise.

But model-wise, I simply tack up a print of the *DeMarco* or *Clukey* full-size plan, pencil rough outlines for proportions (by eye), strike a reference line, and let all lines flow up or down, in or out from that line. So, bulkheads and ribs all begin falling near where they *may* really be, later. If something hides an important feature, I cut it away (thus, it's a cutaway!). On and on until the pencil sketch looks 50% good, then I transfer it to ink board and begin ruling ink lines – another special skill. Even then I gotta “white out” a heckuva lot of ink, ask Herb (*MA's art director, Herb Silbermann*), add Zipatone (another skill), then Leroy the lettering (another skill). The Cub logo is for real, as it portrays what happens for real each month.

You also hafta know airplanes, to sketch freehand any plane that comes to mind. I shot them all, printing zillions of pix for mail fans around the world from 1930 on to 1950. My son has that negative file now (3,600 of 'em and is selling prints!). You need an eye for shape and detail, then you hafta be a heckuv an artist, know perspective (not isometrics) – then x-ray vision helps to know what comes out where.

It helps to be a mechanic, taking four cars apart in my youth (right down to the bearings!). It's likely that all RC-types are good mechs, but not artists, or good artists and poor mechs, or good artists and good mechs but lousy draftsmen! You've got to get it all together!

I did aircraft structure for Grumman in WWII (*F6F, TBF, F7F, F8F*, then did Al Lewis homebuilt cutaways for *Air Trails*), all kinds of inks for *Aircraft of the World*, carrying on Doug Rolfe's work.

But it's the model builders I admire. At Rockland RC Club, they "ooh" and "aah" at Hank Clark *MA* art, my paintings, etc., then delve into AMA biz, building, flying, organizing, electronics – it all leaves my head spinning!

I have yet to build an RC model! The Rockland club has some great pros, business men, engineers, their hands full of the technical world, yet they can leave that and dive into a detailed model, set up elaborate controls by radio, then go out and joust with a zillion radio waves in the air (and oftentimes have to cope with the wrath and liabilities of nearby habitation!) Like Bill Winter says, "Heaven help the greenhorn!" Guys like Bob DeGrosa, Don Srull, etc., craft out one beauty after another, and I feel privileged to be greeted by guys like these and hear "Gosh, man, how do you *do* those drawings?"

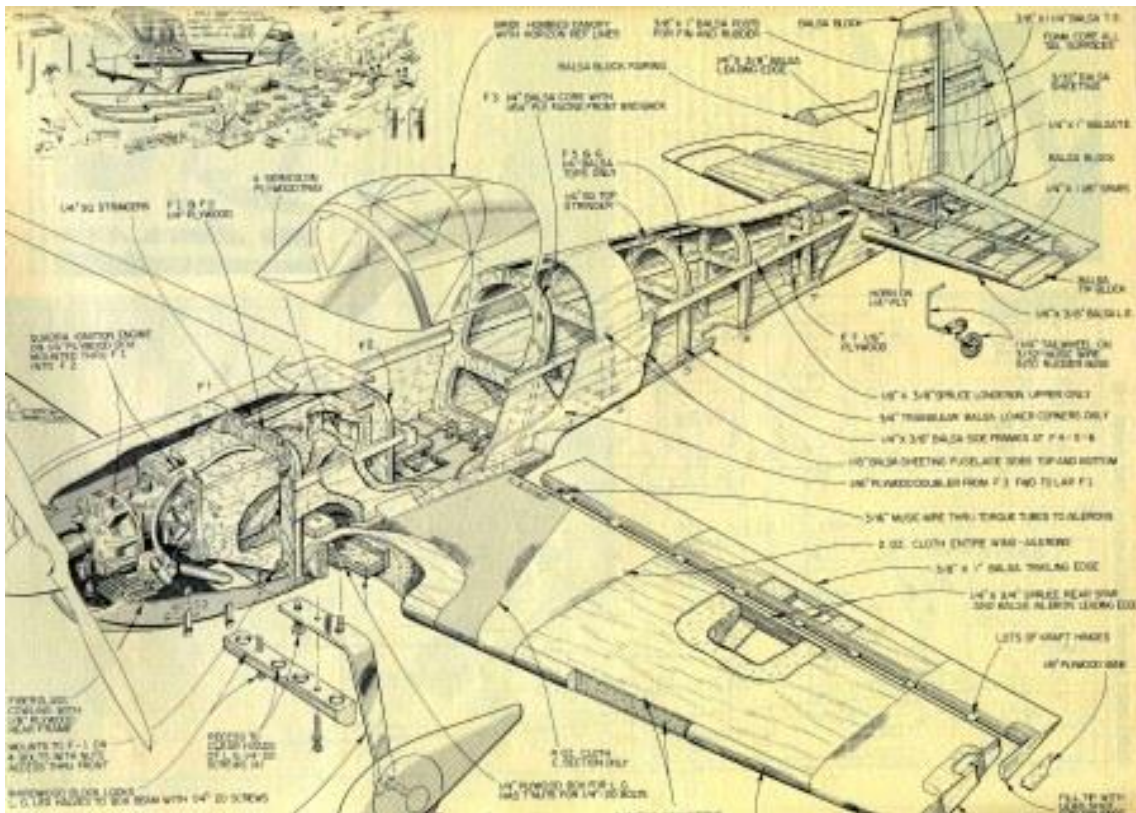
Bill Winter picked me to do work for *MA*, and I've been in awe since- especially at AMA HQ, where the *MA* editorial offices are located. How do they get all they do in those monthly pages with such spartan facilities?

My own models are many - but all Scale for display only, mostly plastics. Why don't I build an RC model? Don't ask! I'd passionately love to start the layout of a 1/4-scale Curtiss *Falcon O-1*, the first military plane I ever photographs at Mitchell Field in 1932. Like life, I love it! But... hear this. At 67, I have projects lined up till they're way above my head! Since V - J Day, after Grumman, I went free-lance, then designed 12 and hand-built eight boats, rebuilt two houses, and scratch-built the lake house; recovered the *Cub*. Enough work, even then, for three men.

But now, in 1982, you wouldn't believe it (I don't.) Before I go North, now, I have to paint my Jersey home, finish the roof shingles, pour some cement slabs, replace some plumbing, do my syndicated workshop art for the *New York News*, do the *MA* cutaways, other art, paintings, lots of 35mm darkroom work for my family, visit seven grandchildren, do this write-up for *MA* (they asked me to say a few words), fly a *Super Cub* to stay current, skate with my new rollers, get tools ready to take to the lake this weekend where we just spread three truckloads of fill for raised lawn.

For summer, the whole routine I just rattled off begins all over again at the lake, in addition to which I get the house in working order, repair the plumbing hurt by winter, get three boats out from under, repair the dock from some winter damage, help my son fix and license the famous "Art By" *Cub*, start building a surf sailer (windsurfer), paint a canoe I built last year, repair and add to the cement block foundation not finished last year, add a back sun porch, paint the house with family on visits (*help!*), water ski, skin dive, sail sunfish, row a shell, and work more on the *Cub* with hope of flying it. (I see now that the lake house also needs new roof shingling after 20 years!) Then there's... and... oh, what were we saying about building a Radio Control model?

(Editor's note: this article would have been longer, but author Hank Clark was found by his wife at his typewriter, staring vacantly out the window. He has not been revived yet, so his wife sent in the unfinished manuscript.)



CAP-21 article drawing from the June 1982 issue of Model Aviation magazine.

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