The AMA History Project Presents:
Autobiography of TED E. STRADER

January 19, 1928 - October 31, 2015
Started modeling in 1936
AMA #11551

Written & Submitted by TES (04/2000); Transcribed & Edited by SS (09/2002), Reformatted by JS (02/2010), Updated by JS (05/2016)

Career:

- Involved with the Vintage Radio Control Society
- First sold a model design to *Flying Models* magazine in 1955; it was his South Wind model
- Had many Radio Control and some Free Flight designs published in *Flying Models*, *Radio Control Modeler* and *Model Airplane News* magazines

My introduction to modeling began when my dad brought home a copy of *Model Airplane News* magazine he had seen in a local drugstore. I was eight and already bitten by the flying bug after my first flight in a New Standard biplane, which landed on my grandfather's farm during a Goodwill Flyers barnstorming visit. Later, while my dad and I were recuperating from a bout of typhoid fever, he decided to show me how to build a model airplane.

During our convalescence, dad cut some strips of pine, designed and built a model and covered it with typewriter paper. At this time, we had no options; our little town way up north on the Canadian border didn't have anything resembling a hobby shop. He even carved the propeller and cut strips from an inner tube for the rubber band motor. I would give anything to have that plane today. I'd be satisfied to have the propeller! For a long time I didn't know what happened to it until I came across a picture of dad's younger brother – not much older than I – posing with the model!

Sometime later, while in town, I spotted some finished models in the window of a hardware store. A young, local craftsman had built some Comet kits and had them on display. I was mesmerized and, from that time on, thoroughly hooked. The space occupied by model kits in that store was little more than five feet square, but to an enraptured youngster, it was nirvana.

At the time, Comet was producing three rubber-powered kits in my price range; 16-inch wingspan models cost a dime, 25-inch wingspan sizes cost a quarter and the big ones, 48-inches, were a dollar. I remember finally saving for a four-foot Curtis Robin. Nothing else would be considered – after all Douglas Corrigan had recently (July 18, 1938) made his much publicized "wrong way" flight across the Atlantic to Dublin, Ireland in a Curtis Robin. He became every red-blooded, head-in-the-clouds kid's hero. All that remained was scraping up 10-cents to buy a tube of cement.

Shortly thereafter, a local five and dime store added some small, rubber kits bearing the names of Joe Ott and Fred Megow. Eventually I went through just about their entire inventory. I don't remember any of them actually flying except a Monocoupe, which caught a gust of wind and

flew over the roof of the three-story house next door. However, building them was the real fun for me and it is still that way today. Designing such creations would have to wait for a few years until I finished my studies in aeronautical design and theory of flight.

A memorable milestone occurred when Christmas 1940 produced my first gas engine – a Brown Model E (Brownie) – and an honest-to-goodness, designed-for-engine gassie billed, "Dictator, Ruler of the skies." The name, I am certain, was prompted by the fact that Adolf Hitler was rattling sabers in Europe at the same time.

After a long and arduous learning curve, I finally mastered starting the Brownie in our cellar, much to the dismay of my mother. By this time, I was reasonably adept at construction and the Dictator took shape with a few additions like shock absorbing and independent landing gears. My folks must have heard my prayers because they directed Santa to deliver the version that included a set of M&M air wheels. To a 12-year-old, it is hard to imagine life getting better than that!

I used to test glide the model on the road in front of our house. Actually I would hold on to the rudder, run a little bit, give the model a gentle shove and watch it rise to an altitude of four or five feet then gently glide to a landing. I continued to do this until one day a less than gentle breeze from out of nowhere lifted the model up high enough to come into contact with the power line, slicing my prized model into two unequal parts. The engine and wheels came through unscathed.

In the ensuing years, I managed to work my way through a series of Free Flight and U-Control models from Sterling, Berkeley and Scientific, to name only a few. The names included some of the best known in the business by some of the best designers we are all familiar with. As time went on, I was fortunate enough to get to know many of them.

During the period immediately following World War II, I, like so many, had become fascinated with the idea of Radio Control. And, if you've ever tried running after an errant Free Flight while on snowshoes, the advantages of Radio Control become apparent!

With the end of World War II, material was slowly becoming available again, albeit war surplus. The prospect of not having to chase a model on snowshoes was looking better all the time.

My first attempt at building the electronics involved a kit, which, I hasten to add, does not mean guaranteed success. I tend to be somewhat electronically challenged. But, that has never deterred me. With the system finished and hooked up to an escapement device, which until recently had been the coil from our door buzzer, I proceeded to lay out my handiwork on the long veranda of our house. With everything hooked up and turned on, much to my surprise, it worked. Time to sell the snowshoes! However, the moment I stepped off the veranda all bets were off. I knew absolutely nothing about ground plains or counterpoises and even less about what to look for to troubleshoot. Success in this department was to come later, after much midnight oil burning. Maybe I should hang on to the snowshoes!

Whether we know it or choose to admit it, we are all influenced by others in similar fields. I remember being fascinated by a picture of a shoulder wing model called Electron, designed by Norman Rosenstock. The first model I designed and built looked a lot like it, though I had never

seen the article or the plans. The picture was enough to get the juices flowing. I learned later that my model was somewhat larger. Enough so that my three-year-old could ride the fuselage around his grandmother's attic! I never flew this model, as I still hadn't been successful in either building or acquiring any successful equipment. That was about to change. Enter Ed Lorenz's two gas tuber.

If I were asked to list Radio Control contributions in the order of their importance, this would have to be close to number one, at least on my list. Teamed up with my slightly reworked DE Aerotrol transmitter and later with Howard McEntee's Mac II transmitter, I finally began to see success with my Radio Control designs, the first being South Wind.

Powered by a McCoy .049 diesel engine, the South Wind – a rather routine looking model using a pulse servo designed by a couple of my Miami friends, Bob Quick and Sam Allen – I was able to finally make consistent flights without having to call on other modelers to help me pick up the mess I had just made or organize a search party. The South Winds have been put out to pasture. However, I still have the McCoy diesels and several of the actuators in a display I occasionally bring to trade shows and the Vintage RC Society (VRCS) gatherings.

Flying Models magazine bought the South Wind design for publication back in 1955, which began a long and pleasant association. I have also been associated with *RC Modeler* and *Model Airplane News* magazines, resulting in many wonderful contacts with other similarly addicted model enthusiasts.

My other addiction, which takes me away from the modeling scene from time to time, is my love of flying full-scale planes, specifically my twin-engine motor glider. However, modeling has always had a tight grip on my affection and will to the end. I told someone once that the reason I liked the hobby was that it gave me an opportunity to make my own toys. There have been rewards in other ways.

A professor sitting in my office at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, paused while we were working out the mechanics of a brochure my office was doing for his department of rotorcraft technology (university parlance for saying they developed the data on helicopter design). As I waited for the other shoe to drop – so to speak – he asked if I was into Radio Control model airplanes. When I said yes, he went on to ask if I had published a certain design. I said yes and he proceeded to tell me he had built it as a young man and it was his success with it that spurred him to become interested in aeronautics. I was at once flattered but somewhat dismayed that this university professor was young enough to build this design and now be seated at my desk as the Director of a Center for Excellence. I knew I was getting long of tooth!

I've always been glad my dad knew how to build model airplanes. I wish I had thought to ask him who taught him. Another of life's missed opportunities.

Radio Control Publications

FM – Flying Models magazine
MAN – Model Airplane News magazine
RCM – Radio Control Models magazine

Date	Name	Magazine	Data
Dec. 1955	Southwind	*FM*	40-inch single
Feb. 1958	P-51 Mustang	*FM*	50-inch multi
March 1958	Westwind	*MAN*	38-inch single
May 1958	Duet Bipe	*FM*	Single
Jan. 1960	Miss L	*FM*	44-inch single
March 1960	Profile P-51	*FM*	25-1/2-inch single
Sept. 1960	Ryan ST	*MAN*	66-inch multi
Jan. 1961	Whirlwind	*FM*	Multi
June/July 1961	Easy One	*FM*	Single
Aug./Sept.	Nomad	*FM*	48-inch single
Oct./Nov. 1961	Strutz Aircrate	*FM*	Multi
June/July 1962	Shiner	*FM*	Single
Aug./Sept. 1963	Chicken Hawk	*FM*	34/25 single
Oct./Nov. 1963	Gypsy	*FM*	60-inch single
Dec./Jan. 1964	Go-Wind	*FM*	50-inch multi
April/May 1965	Scorpion	*CM*	56-inch multi
Aug. 1964	Gulliver	*RCM*	48-inch single
Dec./Jan. 1966	Mister E	*FM*	50-inch multi
Nov. 1966	Miss Keeto	*FM*	56-inch multi
April 1967	Strutz Echo	*FM*	46/33-inch multi
Aug. 1968	Cirrus	*FM*	72-inch single
May 1973	Javalaero	*RCM*	48-inch single
March 1977	Corky II	*RCM*	42-inch multi
April 1998	Strutz Courier	*RCM*	42/38-inch multi

Free Flight Publications

FM – Flying Models magazine
MAN – Model Airplane News magazine

Date	Name	Magazine	Data
Sept. 1956	Diamond Slim	*FM*	Rubber
Dec. 1956	Snoopy Bipe	*MAN*	Free Flight gas
Nov. 1957	Profile Silvaire	*MAN*	Free Flight gas
July 1958	Li'l Nordnick	*FM*	Glider
Sept. 1958	Tarrier	*FM*	Free Flight gas
Sept. 1959	Spook	*FM*	Free Flight gas
Dec. 1959	Joy Stick	*FM*	Free Flight gas
July 1973	Whippet	*FM*	Rubber

(signed) Ted Strader
April 18, 2000

Circa 1957: Ted with his Duet bipe single channel OK .149. (Photo courtesy of Ted Strader.)

Ted resisting the urge to buy another plane. (Photo courtesy of Ted Strader.)

1961: Ted with his Strutz Aircrate on three-channel (Photo courtesy of Ted

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