



# The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of WILLIAM (BILL) BOSS

Modeler since the mid to late 1930s      Born August 8, 1926  
AMA #19701



Written & Submitted by WB (03/2001); Transcribed by NR (4/2001); Edited & Reformatted by SS (10/2002), Reformatted by JS (03/2010)

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## **Career:**

- 1961: Heavily involved in the formation of an organization called the Association of Model Airplane Clubs of Greater New York
- 1980 and 1983: Placed first with his scratch built DeHavilland Mosquito bomber Nationals (Nats)
- 1980: Received the United States Air Force Award for Best Military Scale at the Nats
- 1983: Placed sixth in the Sport Scale event with the P-40 at the Nats
- 1969-1972: Served as AMA District II vice president
- 1972-1991: Served as District II associate vice president
- Wrote columns for American Modeler magazine from 1970 - 1974, Model Aviation magazine from 1982 to present (2001); did guest columns for Model Airplane News magazine
- Participated in establishing the Control Line Scale Flight Judging Guide

## **Honors:**

- 1967: AMA Distinguished Service award
  - March 30, 1963: Honorary Membership in the Garden State Circle Burners Model Airplane Club of New Jersey
  - 1973: AMA Distinguished Service award
  - 1978: AMA Meritorious Service award
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I started in modeling in mid- to late-1930s by carving solid model airplanes. My first Free Flight model was the Ryan ST. I'm not sure now whether it was a Sterling or Cleveland kit. Most of my early model building and flying was done on summer school vacations, which I spent at my Grandmother Boss's home in Springfield Gardens, New York. The family lived in Brooklyn at the time and Springfield Gardens was like going to the country way back then.

Later experience with Free Flight rubber-powered models was in the 1940s when I began to draw my own plans on brown paper bags from the grocery store and bought 1/8-inch balsa sticks and sheets, glue and paper for covering. Flights were made in a hilly undeveloped area near the trolley car barns in Ridgewood, New York. We considered ourselves very good when we got flights to last a minute or so. I finally made a Free Flight gas model from a kit that had about a 48-inch wingspan and as I recall it was called the Playboy. The model was powered with an OK engine, the size of which escapes me at this time. Had mild success flying the model.

That was my last venture with modeling for perhaps the next 10 years. I served in the U.S. Navy from 1944 to 1946 at a Harbor Entrance Control Post (HECP) in Portland, Maine, as a Radioman

for about a year. When the war with Germany ended and the German submarines surrendered, the HECP was closed and I was transferred to the West Coast and assigned aboard the U.S.S. Change, AM 159, an auxiliary minesweeper. I was part of the Black Gang and attained the rank of third class electrician before being discharged in 1946.

After U.S. Navy service, I worked for Charles Pfizer Company as an electrician and attended Pratt Institute where I majored in electrical engineering, power, and industrial electronics. Left Pfizer in 1953 for employment at American Telephone and Telegraph, from which I retired in 1984 after over 31 years of service.

Started back in modeling about 1954 with the building of Sterling P-51 Stunt model equipped with a Fox 35 engine. For the next few years model flying was enjoyed with several other modelers who met on weekends and flew Control Line models at vacant lots or just about any space found big enough to form a flying circle.

In 1958, this group of Control Line modelers joined to form what we called the Blue Ghost Model Airplane Club. Its members lived in the Ozone Park and Laurelton areas of Queens New York. This was my first club experience and I assumed the position of secretary.

One of the clubs main objectives (and one of my first club tasks) was to get permission from the New York Port authority for the use of a baseball field (when not in use for baseball) as a place to fly our Control Line models on a somewhat permanent basis. The task was successful and the club had a flying site as long as we cut grass, etc. It was also at this time (1959) that I applied for and was granted Contest Director/Leader Member status in the Academy of Model Aeronautics.

It should be noted that aside from early attempts at Free Flight that most all of my modeling activities have been dedicated to building and flying Control Line models. As you will see later in this writing I did sport flying, flew in the Navy Carrier but my greatest efforts has been in connection with Control Line scale modeling.

## Local Competition

I kept with sport flying until the fall of 1959 when I entered my first contest at Rich's Hobbytown in New Jersey. The contest was called Rich's Tri-A-Rama and featured racing cars, racing boats and model airplanes. I won my first trophy, which was for third place in an event called "Beauty" with a P-51 made from a Jetco kit.

The competition at Rich's Hobbytown was the start of a competitive period for me that lasted until 1990. In that 31 years of active competition I won or placed in meets and earned over 180 awards in the Control Line scale and Navy carrier events. I participated in many local or regional type meets in the states of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Some of the more significant awards won are as follows: New York Mirror Meets in 1960 and 1961, which were held at Floyd Bennett NAS, Brooklyn, New York. I flew in the flying scale event and placed first in 1960 and second in 1961. I flew the Jetco P-51 in both meets.

## National Competition

Prior to competing in national competition two great modeling friends, Pete Bianchini and Warren Truppner and I, and our wives formed what we called the New York Scale Team. There was no formality to the team, no dues, and no official meetings. However, we did have shirts and jackets made that boasted an imprint of the New York skyline and the words “New York Scale Team.” Pete (now deceased), Warren and I traveled to many local and national competitions for over 20 years. We not only helped each other at contests but competed against each other as well.

My first Nationals (Nats) competition was at Willow Grove Naval Air Station, Pennsylvania, in 1965 flying a scratch built six-foot wingspan model of the PT-19. I placed second in what was then called the flying scale event.

At the 1976 Nats at Columbus-Dayton-Springfield, Ohio, I placed third in the sport scale flying a Curtis P-40. I placed first in Navy Carrier I and second in Navy Carrier II flying Grumman Guardians of my own design.

At the 1980 Nats in Wilmington, Ohio, I placed first in precision scale flying a scratch built DeHavilland Mosquito bomber. I also had the honor of receiving the United States Air Force Award for the Best Military Scale model entered in the scale events. I placed third in Navy Carrier II with own design Grumman Guardian.

At the 1983 Nationals in Westover Air Force Base, Massachusetts, I placed first in precision scale with the Mosquito Bomber and sixth in the Sport Scale event with the P-40.

At the 1985 Nationals in Westover Air Force Base, Massachusetts, I placed second in the precision scale event with Mosquito Bomber.

It should be noted that the Mosquito Bomber is featured in the Academy of Model Aeronautics’ “Marvelous Miniatures” video presentation. The video was taken at my home in New Hyde Park, New York, and at the Flushing Meadow Park model-flying site in Queens, New York.

## Organization/Administration

In 1961 was heavily involved in the formation of an organization called the Association of Model Airplane Clubs of Greater New York (AMACGNY). The organization had membership of a dozen or more Control Line clubs from the five boroughs of New York at its inception. The aims of the organization were to promote Control Line flying, and to obtain Control Line flying sites in as many of the five boroughs as possible. The sites were to be obtained through negotiation with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation and be open to the public for use of Control Line flying.

The AMACGNY was incorporated as a non-profit organization under New York state law on January 29, 1962 through the help of a fellow modeler named William O’Conner Esq. I served in

the capacity of secretary and/or president of the organization for more than 20 years. While the organization is no longer functional, the work of the organization remains today in the form of the Control Line flying sites it procured.

The organization was successful in obtaining two circle-flying sites (one each) in the boroughs of the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan, and two sites in the borough of Queens. One of the sites in Queens was an existing site in Forest Park, which was updated with a macadam circle. The other was a new four-circle site (two grass and two macadam) in Flushing Meadow Park. The site in Flushing Meadow Park was enclosed in a circular eight-foot chain link fence. This site was dedicated in 1966 following the second New York City World's Fair. The AMACGNY held 21 AAA contests between 1961 and 1982, 18 of which were held at the Flushing Meadow Park site. The two sites in Queens remain in operation today for the public's use and for contests run by local stunt clubs. I served as contest director and scale judge at 14 of the 21 AAA contests run by the AMACGNY.

### **AMA District II Vice President**

I served as the AMA District II Vice President from 1969 to 1972 and for that service was awarded the AMA's Meritorious Service Award. During my term as District II vice president I took on the project of putting together two documents that aided the district vice presidents and contest coordinators. These documents were prompted by the lack of direction, instruction, or guidelines within the AMA for the duties of the district vice presidents and contest coordinators at that time.

On February 10, 1971, I submitted a letter to then AMA President John Worth transmitting the first copy of what has become the handbook for district vice presidents. On March 31, 1972, the first official officers' guideline book was issued to the AMA executive council.

On October 10, 1972, the first compilation of the contest coordinators handbook was submitted to AMA headquarters for publication. The handbook was the result of a coordinated effort between Warren Truppner, District II contest coordinator at the time and me as District II vice president in an effort to provide all contest coordinators with some rules and guidelines by which contest sanctions were to be issued. After some experience and feedback from contest coordinators the procedures were rewritten

After serving as District II vice president, I served as District II associate vice president from 1972 to 1991.

### **Contest Board Service**

I served on the AMA scale advisory committee from 1965 to 1968.

I served as AMA District II Control Line contest board member from 1978 to 1991.

### **1974 AerOlympics**

In 1974, I had the privilege of serving as the contest director for the Control Line scale portion of the July 1974 AerOlympics (World Championships) held at Lakehurst Naval Air Station, New Jersey. The AerOlympics was a great experience and a fine opportunity to see and meet some of the best scale modelers from other parts of the world. This was the first time the AMA hosted the World Championships that included Radio Control (RC) and Control Line scale, indoor, pylon racing and thermal soaring international classes.

The United States individual competitors and teams did well for themselves in all events. The U. S. dominated in pylon racing, thermal soaring and indoor. Of special interest to me were the Control Line and RC scale teams. The RC team consisting of Bob Wischer, John Roth and Ralph Jackson placed first, second and third, taking the team championship. The Control Line team consisting of Mike Gretz, Bill Harney and Mike Stott placed fourth, seventh and ninth, and placed second in the team standings. It was a great accomplishment by all our AMA competitors.

Of particular interest to me as a Control Line scale modeler was that both Mike Gretz and Mike Stott flew their models with multi-channel electronic systems to operate and perform the operational features of their models. While these systems were used successfully in 1974 at the AerOlympics it wasn't until the 1990s that a real effort was made to promote the use of electronics in our Control Line scale models and other Control Line categories.

## Model Aviation Days in New York

In 1977, I was presented AMA's Distinguished Service Award for the organization and presentation of Model Aviation Day at Rockefeller Center, New York City from 1975 to 1979. These were days when RC and Control Line clubs were brought together to put model aviation on display for residents and tourists in Manhattan providing them with a firsthand look at some of the best that model aviation had to offer. As I recall we had more than 100 models on display. I was responsible for coordination of all Control Line club activities, and acted as liaison with the RC clubs that participated in the displays. The display of models was two city blocks long. A mayoral proclamation was presented declaring the days as Model Aviation Days in New York City.

## Model Design

I designed and drew model plans for a 40 size and a 60 size Grumman Guardian that I flew successfully in local as well as national competitions. I sold former kits and plans for both of these designs.

## Publications/Author

**American Aircraft Modeler magazine** – I was author of a Scale/Sport Flying column in American Aircraft Modeler from 1970 to 1974. During this time, I covered the national competitions of 1970, 1971 and 1972 with photos and text.

**Model Airplane News magazine** – I was guest writer several times for their Round and Round Column; wrote about AMA administration in 1972. Could not recall issue.

“Up, Up, In the Air” was the name of a show at the Kodak Photo Gallery and Information Center in New York City November 20, 1972. I was involved in the organization and coordination of the various clubs and organizations that provided the model aircraft that went on display. The Association of Model Airplane Clubs of Greater New York, the Long Island Association of Model Airplane Clubs, Pennsylvania RC Society, the AMA, the National Association of Rocketry and the U.S. Chapter of International Plastic Modelers Society all provided models and data for the show.

The show included some full-scale aviation in the form of Cole Palen’s 1909 Bleriot and Jim Bede’s BD-5 Experimental plane. An article and photos about the show appeared in the June 1973 issue of Model Airplane News magazine.

I designed and drew model plans of the Hawker Seafury used in the Navy Carrier event. An article and plans were published in a 1975 issue of Model Airplane News magazine. Plan number is FSP 05761. Last cost quoted for the plans by MAN was \$12.50.

**Model Aviation magazine** – Started as a Model Aviation columnist for Control Line scale in 1982 and still writing the column as of this writing in the year 2001. To date I have written 213 columns, which include coverage of the Control Line scale events at the Nats in 1982, 1983 and 1985.

Wrote a major article on the model aviation Fly-In program run in the New York City public schools. The article covered a model Fly-In held at Floyd Bennett N.A.S., Brooklyn, New York, and included the Aerospace Program at August Martin High School in Queens. This article appeared in the March 1992 issue of Model Aviation.

## Miscellaneous Items

Over my many years of modeling and involvement with Control Line scale modeling, I have been the author of several rules changes proposals for the Control Line scale events.

One of the major rules change projects that I worked on was the establishment of the standardized sport scale worksheets to be used for static and flight judging of the Control Line sport scale event. I was one of five committee members; the others were Gerry Deneau, Mike Welshans, Bill Rammage, and Charlie Bauer. The project was started in 1989. A proposal sent to the Scale Board in 1990 was approved and the new scoring sheets were published for the first time in AMA’s 1992–1993 Competition Regulations. Gerry Deneau did the computer work in generating the score sheets, while I did the coordination of the data, comments, etc., among the committee members.

Another of the major rules change projects in which I participated was the establishment of the Control Line Scale Flight Judging Guide. I was a member of the seven-man committee made up

of members belonging to The National Association of Scale Aeromodelers (NASA). The project took place during 1994 and when completed was presented to the AMA Scale Board for processing. The project was accepted and became part of the current set of competition regulations.

While speaking of the NASA organization, it should be noted that I was involved in the groundwork for the establishment of the NASA organization and I am the holder of the number four membership card.

I had the privilege of making presentations on Control Line scale modeling to various clubs in the New York City/New Jersey area. The presentations generally covered the scale competition regulations with emphasis on interpretation and how to apply them during contest judging. Presentations also covered the need and importance of proper documentation for the model being entered in competition.

## Honorary Memberships

On March 30, 1963, I was presented with honorary membership in the Garden State Circle Burners Model Airplane Club of New Jersey.

In July of 1967, I was presented with honorary membership in the Der Luftmeisters Model Airplane Club, Bronx, New York.

*(signed) William Boss  
March 7, 2001*



***1980: Bill with his Mosquito Bomber. He placed within the top three places in the Precision Scale event at three Nats competitions. He is holding an award from the United States Air Force for the Best Military Scale Model at the 1980 Nats in Wilmington, Ohio.***



***Unknown date: Bill making a presentation to club members of the Garden State Circle Burners in New Jersey. Topic: the static judging of the FAI Control Line scale event.***

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