



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of DENNIS CROOKS



Written by JS (12/2012); Transcribed by JS (12/2012)

The following was published in the January 2013 issue of Model Aviation magazine, written by Jay Smith, MA's Editor-in-Chief.

I Am the AMA Dennis Crooks, Scale Competitor

JS: How did you get involved with model aviation?

DC: As long as I can remember, I have been fascinated by flying. I grew up on a farm in west-central Indiana when sonic booms were normal. The Terre Haute National Guard occasionally flew *F-86s* over the farm and every time I heard one, I'd stop – even during a meal – and run outside to watch.

I got a BS degree in Aerospace Technology and during my time in college, I bought a Cox CL *P-51* and spent hours figuring out how to fly it. Success was determined by running out of fuel before crashing. As much fun as this was, I was drawn to RC, and bought my first RC model in 1974: a Pilot *177* ARF and a Futaba six-channel radio. While I learned how to fly this ARF, I built a Jensen *Das Ugly Stick*.

JS: How has model aviation impacted your life and/or career?

DC: Model aviation has been an integral part of my life. It would be impossible to imagine life without it. Linda and I have done things that we could not have dreamed about otherwise. We have flown for National Geographic at the Nats in Lake Charles, Louisiana. We flew an *F-14* multiple times at NAS Miramar. We were guests at Beale AFB where we flew the *SR-71* model and gave a presentation to the *SR-71* pilots. We have flown for the Speed Channel and the Discovery Channel.

I'm part owner of Robart Mfg. and am heavily involved in an ARF project, which has led to international travel. Model aviation is the dominant force in my life.

JS: Which disciplines of modeling do you currently participate in?

DC: Scale modeling has always been my staple, whether it's sport flying or competition, but I occasionally dabble in helicopters.

JS: What are your other hobbies?

DC: Everything else is a distant second to modeling, but I enjoy archery, target shooting, and hunting. I play guitar in our church gospel group and Linda and I try to get away on the Harley.

JS: Who (or what) has influenced you most?

DC: As to not step on any toes, I'll do this alphabetically. Linda, my wife, is at the top of the list. Without her support, none of this would have happened.

Bill Mikesell encouraged me to check out the One Eighth Air Force in Phoenix. Without Bob Underwood, I would not have survived my first Scale contest. Bob Walker at Robart took me seriously when I wanted to build a folding wing TBM, and taught me most of what I know about machining. Kent Walters was (is) an icon in Scale modeling and – probably unknown to him – challenged me to succeed in Scale modeling.

JS: What advice would you give to someone wanting to get started in Scale competition?

DC: Things have changed since I started. Now there is Fun Scale beginner and expert along with Expert class. The advantage to the Fun Scale category is that the beginning competitor shouldn't be intimidated by more accomplished competitors.

Other than the usual advice to be comfortable flying the model, I recommend that a new competitor practice getting ready for the flight: checking batteries, fueling, checking air pressure (if needed), and practice starting the model while being timed. The intent is not to see how fast you can start the model; it's just to add a little tension to an otherwise normal task. The whole tone of the flight can be destroyed if the wheels fall off during the starting process and the competitor loses composure.

Get accustomed to flying on command as opposed to when you want to.

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