



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of LEN SHERMAN

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Written by L.S. (n.d); Transcribed, edited and updated by JS (12/2006, 07/2007, 08/2007), Reformatted by JS (01/2010)

Len Sherman wrote the following autobiography.

Autobiography of Len Sherman

Flying off the Handle and Other Reminiscences

It was still dark when the old windup alarm clock rattled away under the pillow on the chair beside the bed. The pillow was supposed to keep it from waking the rest of the house. I kept asking myself why I, a mere teenager, should want to get up to a cold, dark house at this hour on a Saturday morning in July. Nevertheless, I vacated that nice warm bed, dressed, and tiptoed downstairs. I ate a bowl of cold cereal as quickly as possible so that I could be on my way. Then I went back upstairs where the night before I neatly laid out all the gear required to go flying: an S-4 gas model, two #6 booster batteries taped together, a gas-oil mixture in a pint whiskey bottle and a bread-sized toolbox. These I carried down the stairs and out the front door to where I parked my bicycle. I strapped the boosters to the handlebars with heavy rubber bands and I stuck the fuel bottle in my pocket. Then, mounting the bike with the toolbox and handlebar in my right hand and the model in my left, I began the three-mile trip to the local airport. It was now light enough to see, even though the sun was not up yet.

I did not see an airplane until 1932. The first one I saw was a bright yellow and blue Army biplane that was probably based at the Vancouver Barracks Field in Vancouver, Washington. It was absolutely fascinating to watch it buzzing overhead. I heard of airplanes before, but never saw one actually fly. You can well imagine what an exciting event this was for an eight-year-old. I was determined to find out more about the strange machines that could fly through the air without any visible support. How were they able to do that?

Not long after that, I was given a cardboard box with a full color picture of a Kinner airplane on it. Inside this box were wood sticks and blocks, tissue paper, a big sheet of paper with all kind of lines drawn on it and a funny little lead tube containing something, which I later found out to be a very pungent stuff called cement. Of course, I did not know what all these things were for, so I began reading everything on the plans and the box. There were some instructions, but they took time to understand and I wanted to start building. Even with help from my dad, I struggled cutting the sticks to the right length and gluing them in place on the plan. Cutting out the ribs with a razor blade was not an easy task, but I did it. However, I could not figure out how to bring all the stringers together at the tail post. I built the wing and the tail surfaces, though. It was not until a couple of years later, and a few somewhat-successful dime kit models, that I came across

the Kinner framework, saw the simple solution, and completed the model. It never flew, but was still my pride and joy, as it was my first model airplane.

From then on, it was just a matter of building as many dime models as I could afford, painting them with heavy, colored dope. They usually did not fly very well, were destined to be shot to pieces with a BB gun, and then burned the way the stories depicted them in the pulp magazines of the day. To get these magazines, I always went to the drug store at the end of the month to buy *Battle Aces*, *Sky Fighter* and the like, that had their covers torn off. The druggist sold them for a nickel apiece. I guess that he turned in the covers of the unsold copies each month for credit. These magazines were the epitome of the romantic air battles of the First World War. The heroes always won in their Spads, Sopwith Camels, and Neuports. What a false impression of what war was really like! The experiences in World War II in the eighth Air Force proved to be far different.

My first really successful model was either a Flying Aces *Moth* or one that looked very much like it. In my eyes, it was a truly beautiful model and how exciting it was when it actually flew for several seconds. I flew it and flew it until the rubber motor broke. Then, after making repairs, I had to wait until my dad made a trip to Portland so I could get another motor. Whenever he went to Portland, I would go along and make a visit to the Meier and Frank department store where there was a toy section that had a skimpy supply of model airplane kits and materials. While I was there, I made a very important discovery. There were copies of *Model Airplane News (MAN)* on display. I had to have a copy. I barely had enough money to buy one and the needed rubber. What treasures I took home with me that day! I think that I devoured every word and picture in that magazine and vowed that I would subscribe as soon as I could scrape up the cash.

After reading Charles H. Grant, I concluded that a bigger wing for my *Moth* would give better performance. A four-inch-larger wingspan did not give a much-improved performance, but then again, it did not degrade it either. This period taught me much about lubricating and winding rubber motors, a subject that I still am interested in today. Of course, reading *MAN* was a key to most of my learning about model airplanes.

The first article I read whenever a new *MAN* came out was the column on stability by C. H. Grant. He was my guide to designing most of my future model designs. I never really understood the reasoning behind his Center of Lateral Area (CLA) theory, but that did not stop me from designing several successful gas-powered models. I just ignored it. When I was in college pursuing a Masters degree in Aeronautical Engineering many years later, I realized that Grant's CLA theories were nothing more than a somewhat amateurish effort to size a fin for good lateral stability.

The next major event in my modeling life was the acquisition of my first model airplane engine. It was a GHQ in kit form. The cost was \$4.95 postpaid. I could never get it to run in spite of the uncounted hours of cranking, with only a few pops as a reward. However, it was a good investment because it was probably the most instructive learning tool one could ever imagine. I learned all about the principles of two-cycle engine construction and operation from that blasted

thing. (I wish I still had it so that I could put a decent piston in it; I am sure I could get it to run now).

In the summer time, I picked strawberries to earn money to support my habit. The going pay rate at that time was three-fourths of a cent a box. It took a lot of boxes and sore tired knees to earn enough money to buy a used Elf "Corncob" engine from the local airport operator. What a joy that little engine was--it actually ran when it was fueled and the prop was flipped. In the latest issue of *MAN*, there was a model designed specifically for the Elf. It was named the *S4*, designed by Malcolm Abzug. This was my very first gas model. The balsa I ordered from Frank Zaic's Jasco Model Supply in New York was color-coded. It was of the highest quality and always came by mail in a prism-shaped box. The covering was the lightest fabric that the local JC Penney store had. I also invested in a pair of real pneumatic M&M air wheels. It was the most beautiful model that I had ever seen.

About that same time, a friend of mine, Duane Danielson, got a Baby Cyclone, and was building a Scientific *Commodore* to put it in. Duane lived about a mile out of town and soon the two of us were devoting a great deal of time biking back and forth, learning from each other's mistakes how to construct our models. Neither of us knew much about the construction and flying of gas-powered models and the exchange of ideas was very enlightening. One must realize that in 1938, there was not a model shop in every town and a person had to use whatever materials were available. There were no local experts to counsel us in the art of keeping the weight down. Both of our models were the first gas jobs we ever built. As it turned out, both of us had used JC Penney crinoline for covering with lots of dope. Therefore, the models were both very heavy. It was fortunate in a way that both models were so heavy that no provision was available for limiting the engine run or flight times. We did not even know that a model could fly away in a thermal in those days. Once the models were finished, glide tests completed, and the art of starting and running the engines was mastered, we were ready to risk the models in the air. All we needed now was a place to fly. What better place than the local airport where there was practically no air traffic? After negotiating a little with Swede Ralston, the local operator who sold me the Elf engine, we were allowed to use the field provided we shut down our operation whenever we heard the sound of an airplane.

Two local flyers used the Hillsboro airport, one with a Les Long three-passenger parasol and Swede with his Taylor *Cub*. After World War II, Swede became a noted stunt flier with Tony LaVier's air show team. Les, who lived in nearby Cornelius, is probably best remembered for his *Wimpy* and *Longster*. The *Wimpy* is a single-place low-wing monoplane with landing gear that had no shock absorbing ability whatsoever. It had a reputation much like the British Wellington bomber of World War II - four or five landings for every takeoff because it porpoised down the field whenever it landed. Occasionally, a third airplane, a biplane of unknown origin, flew from there.

The air had a chill in it that I could feel through my T-shirt as I pedaled along on the tarred road. The sun was just peeking up over the far hills as I pulled in to the gravel entrance of the field. I could see that Duane was already set up out on the grass of one of the two runways. I unloaded all of my stuff and got ready to do some serious flying.

The normal flying procedure was to fill up the gas tank and let the model take off from the ground. Duane's Baby Cyclone had the standard metal mount with integral tank. My Elf did not come with a tank, so I made one using a Sterno cube can, mounted vertically above the windshield. This was necessary as the Elf carburetor was of the float type, which required the fuel to be gravity-fed. Ultimately, we were able to get the models trimmed enough, through trial and error and with attendant repairs, so that they flew in fairly tight circles at relatively low altitudes.

As noted before, we were allowed to fly from the grass strip as long as we shut down at the first sound of an airplane engine. We had to do this only once when the owner of the biplane came out at about 5:00 am, fired up his airplane, and quickly took off. The biplane proceeded to buzz the strip, gained a little altitude and then did a sequence of three or four flop-over loops, each one finishing a little closer to the ground. After landing, the pilot staggered over to see how we liked the show. All we could say was "Wow! That last one was sure close to the ground!" It was apparent that he had been on a bender all night and figured a little fresh air might be just the ticket. We never saw him or his airplane again after that and often wondered what happened to him.

Duane got his Commodore to fly in such tight circles that it would have put to shame a U-Control, if there had been such a thing at that time. Of course, U-Control was first introduced a couple of years later, as I learned on one of my occasional trips to visit Jimmy Walker's American Junior model airplane factory in Portland. Jimmy saw me several times before, as he frequently came out to our flying field near Hillsboro and was always willing to spend a little time with a kid to explain his latest brainstorm. The innovative things he came up with were astonishing. After World War II, whenever he came out to the field, all the kids would gather around his car. He opened up the back of the stationwagon and proceeded to shoot several of his folding wing gliders into the air, and at the same time passed out the rubber/stick launchers to the kids. The rest of the day, the air was filled with gliders.

Another interesting stop I made occasionally in Portland was Dan Calkin's basement machine shop, where he made Elf engines. He always had two or three of them running on a test bed. There was a manifold that carried the exhaust gasses up a large duct that went through the outside wall. He said he always ran every engine he built before shipping it off to a customer. I saw one of the first twin-cylinder engines he made running on that test stand.

Later, I was lucky enough to win one of his new Elf singles at a Portland Gashopper contest with a flight of 16 minutes and 9 seconds. That was a win by my *Buzz Buss*, a Class A Bantam-powered model I designed in 1941. I still have most of the original model. The part that I do not



Len and his Buzz Buss.

have is the tail assembly. The last time I saw it, it was up in a tall fir tree near the McMinnville airport where my dad shot it off to get the model down. I also have a new one (if you can call a 1982 version new.) Both of these had several wins to their credit.

We did not have engine timers or dethermalizers for those first gas models, so the mode of operation was to fill up the tanks and let the models take off. Both of us adjusted our models so they would circle tightly without climbing very much. As we usually flew early in the morning, there was little wind so there was very little chasing involved in spite of the motor runs of several minutes. Looking back on those days makes me realize what a great time we had then. Later in life, entering into competition was a different challenge but not nearly as much fun in retrospect. Even seeing my own designs win in competition did not give the thrill comparable to watching those first creations fly successfully.

It was during early 1940 when Duane and I got the brilliant idea of starting a model shop. We each invested a dollar and a half to buy letterhead stationery. We named our new business Model Hobbies, with my house as the place of business. Then I went down to my dad's office, where I typed a half-dozen letters to various engine manufacturers and model suppliers, asking for a list of discount prices. It was much to our surprise and delight that we received responses from all of them. The thirty-five to fifty percent discounts from advertised prices astounded us. We had organized a local club with about two dozen members so we offered them a ten-percent discount for any orders, cash in advance. Our first orders totaled over fifty dollars, and so we were in business. Our chief model supplier was Modelcraft, run by Barney Snyder. He always was very prompt in delivering and had excellent balsa and other model goods. By the time we were drafted into the army, we had built up the business into enough profit that all of our modeling activity was essentially free.

In addition, early in 1940, Henry Struck came out with his *Kovel-Grant-Struck* model (*KGS*.) That model was an inspiration to me and I started designing a long string of Class A models using his silk-covered pylon idea. A Husky 19 powered the first one, which looked very much like a small version of the *KGS*. A NACA 6409 was the airfoil of choice in those days and was used, of course. It even had a cowling very much like a *KGS*. This one was a real comer; it would consistently do nearly two minutes Rise-Off-Ground (ROG) on a 20-second motor run. (We had been using Austin pneumatic timers by then.) Around this time, the Class A record was barely over one minute. However, my airplane never made it to a contest. The day before a big contest at the old Portland airport, I was doing some last minute testing out at our field. When I started the engine, there was woof inside the cowling, and of course, not having a fire extinguisher, the model was instantly a bunch of charred remains. That engine never ran very well after that. Apparently, the heat had distorted the cylinder even though it was undetectable. Ever since that incident, I have used an exhaust extension on all of my cowled engines. In later years, I also carried a can of beer in my field box. When a warm can of beer is shaken and opened, it makes a fine fire extinguisher.

In addition, a little later during that period I saw Jim Walker's very first U-Control on one of my visits to his shop. When I got home, it seemed possible that one of my old Class A gas jobs with a shoulder-high wing could be converted to a U-Control. After this conversion, off to the high school football field a couple of us went. I used fishing line (not monofilament) about 25 or 30

feet long. With me holding the down line in the left hand and the up line in the right hand, we got the thing in the air. It was a little dicey with lots of roller coaster motion before I could smooth it out a little. This was fun. It was not until the next trip to Portland that I found out that Jim used a handle between the ends of the lines and flew with one hand. The die had already been cast, though, as I learned to fly using both hands. It was so thoroughly ingrained in me that when I put a handle between the lines, I put my thumb toward the down line! Even to this day, if I were to fly a U-Control, I would fly it the same way.

Things were going just great for the model airplane community. There were active clubs in four or more cities in Oregon, and more than that in Washington. Every weekend during the summer months there was at least one contest in the Northwest. Then disaster occurred at Pearl Harbor. World War II began for the United States and all organized model flying stopped. When the model aircraft identification program started, the manual training teacher in school asked me to help oversee construction of these models because of my experience with model airplanes. These models were used in pilot and civil defense training to teach the unwashed [how to recognize enemy aircraft.]

After I graduated from high school, I spent the summer as a stake artist (surveyor's helper) on a construction job to extend and pave the runways at our local airport. Ultimately, I advanced to operating an instrument, running lines, and setting grades. This was good experience. I was able to take course exemption tests later in college when I was getting a bachelor's degree in engineering. This was a great job for a teenager because whenever there was a lull in the work, the heavy equipment operators taught me how to operate cats and graders. Also during this period, I applied for an NAA/AMA sponsored scholarship, which I subsequently won. I was able to attend school for about 5 months before being drafted.

It was in early 1943 when I was drafted into the US Army Air Force, as it was known in those days. After basic training and an attempt to make me a radio operator, I was shipped overseas to England, joining the Eighth Air Force. I spent about two years at various sites as an engineer in an engineering modification and testing squadron. The lead engineers for this group were several civilians (Feather Merchants) from Lockheed. While at Langford Lodge, I came across an old balsa life raft in a hangar. Of course, this suggested all sorts of things. A couple of us stripped off the painted canvas and salvaged some fairly good balsa. The base was amply supplied with woodworking as well as machine tools, including band saws. One of these was put to good use and soon there was a fine supply of sheet balsa available. Before long, there were bunches of hand-launched gliders flying around the field.

At the end of the war, our outfit spent five months in London at the Air Research Defense Center where we examined and catalogued captured *Luftwaffes* and German-industry classified data and equipment. Our group had a half-dozen *C-47s* operating out of Biggin Hill, bringing in all of the plans, documents, photos, and technical data captured as our troops overran Germany. One of the many items was a large amount of wind tunnel test data on wing design and the effects of sweep angle on high-speed flight. Boeing and other aircraft manufacturers later used this data in designing airplanes such as the B-47. For a while, I worked in the rocket- and jet-propelled weapon section. There were a great many designs on their drawing board that were astounding in their concept. I had a German translator help me decipher the written text. All of the important

information gathered was boxed and sent to Wright Field for further evaluation. When this was all done, our squadron followed to Wright Field where we were disbanded and most of us were given 45 days leave. This was just five days before Christmas 1945.

With leave papers and train vouchers in hand, it was off to the train station to head for home. The train trip from Dayton to Chicago was uneventful except for an emergency stop somewhere in Indiana when someone tried to beat the train to the crossing. In Chicago, I found out there was no space available on any of the three trains for Portland for the next 24 hours. I camped out on one of the benches in Union Station so I could check once in awhile for any cancellations. I still remember the dreamlike atmosphere, half-asleep on a bench listening to the sound of "I'll Be Home for Christmas" played on the station pipe organ. The next day I was able to get a sleeper and arrived in Portland the day before Christmas. What a homecoming after three years away! I returned to Wright Field 45 days later and was discharged within a few days. It cost me a bottle of whiskey to get a sergeant to process the discharge papers at Patterson Field just before the base was permanently closed down. Otherwise, I would have been shipped off to Ft. Lewis to be discharged at a later date.

I applied for admission to the University of Washington but was told that enrollment was full for the year. My next application was to Stanford. Yes, I could be accepted, but needed to get high school credit for trigonometry and solid geometry, which was not taught at Hillsboro High School when I attended. However, I had taught myself those subjects. I enrolled in a University of Oregon extension class to pick up the necessary formal credits. Again, I tried to enroll at Stanford but by then the classes were full. Fall of 1947 would be the earliest possible date to enroll. This left quite a bit of time during which I worked as a farm hand and any other job available. There were very few jobs available right after the war so I had a lot of time to build model airplanes and go to the various contests common in those days.

Off to Stanford I finally went. After my first year, I spent the summer flying models at every contest I could find in the northwest. The Chrysler Company was sponsoring the Plymouth Internationals that year, and there were qualification contests in Oregon that I entered. In the finals, I won Class A Gas, Wakefield, and Class C Speed, with second places in Open Rubber and Rubber Stick. This won me a sponsorship of the local Chrysler dealer with an expense paid trip to the 1948 Plymouth Internationals in Detroit.

At Detroit, winning was a lot tougher than at home. The very first flight for my rubber stick model resulted in a flight of over 17 minutes. Man, this was easy! I figured I had it made. So instead of putting in two more flights, I flew the rubber cabin job. This was good, too. The flight lasted a little over 14 minutes. By the time that model was retrieved, and time was taken out for lunch, it was getting fairly late in the afternoon. The remaining flights for the two rubber models were dull with nothing much over two minutes. When the results were posted that evening, it was obvious that I had been too greedy trying to win both events. Neither model placed in the top three. In Class A Speed, a dismal 7th place was all that I could muster. Overall, it was a great learning experience that I will never forget.

When tuition at Stanford became too much to be covered by the GI Bill, I transferred to the University of Washington where I graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Aeronautical

Engineering. After more time pounding the books, I received a Master's degree in Aeronautical Engineering. In college after that summer of 1948, there was not much time to devote to modeling as I was attending the university during summers as well as the normal three quarters. A fellow modeler and I were able to get down to the baseball field only occasionally to fly one of my control liners. However, that was it for about four more years.

After getting a Master's degree, I started a 30-year career at Boeing in the Structural Dynamics and Flutter staff. I had married Marion Kyle in my sophomore year in college and it was time to start raising a family and establishing a permanent home. We found a place on a lake about 10 miles southeast of Renton that had a very crude cabin. The next couple of years were spent having two children, a girl and a boy (Ginger and Dave,) and fixing up the place so that it was livable.

I think it was about 1956 when the FCC opened up the Citizens Band frequencies. I applied for a license and started building a Lorenz receiver. This was a two-gas tube receiver using XFG1 and RK61 tubes that lit up to a beautiful purple color whenever a signal was received. My wife had given me an Anderson Baby Spitfire for a present previously. All that I needed was a suitable model. Naturally, it had to be a flying boat because my flying field was only as far as the dock in front of my house.

The answer was a modified Berkeley flying boat of about 45-inch wingspan. With those tube radios, 45-volt B batteries and 6-volt A batteries were required. This made a considerable load for that small a plane and engine. The transmitter had similar battery requirements. It was very bulky and needed a nine-foot whip antenna in order to get a workable range. After all the tuning was done and everything was working satisfactorily, the operational procedure was to set the transmitter near the shore of the dock so that the model would not hit the antenna when it was hand launched.

Needless to say, the model did not have enough power to take off from the water and thus had to be hand-launched. As there was a large tree to the left of the dock, the escapement was triggered so that the next pulse would give a right turn. This was to compensate for the built-in left turn at neutral (in case the radio signal failed.) In those days, only left, right, and neutral were possible. With all the radio equipment operating, the Baby Spitfire was started and peaked for max power. Then down the dock, I ran and heaved the model into the air, and then made a mad dash back to the transmitter to grab the push button on a long cord attached to the transmitter. Pushing the button just barely kept the model from turning back into the tree. Most flights were successful with landings usually out in the lake where retrieval was necessary by means of a rowboat. These flights, which terrified the ducks and puzzled the occasional fisherman, developed into those with more and more sophisticated radios and models.

As my son grew into a teenager, in addition to his Free Flight activities, he became an accomplished aerial combatant with his Morane *Saulnier* against my *SE5*, and later his 1/2 A Sopwith Triplane against my 1/2 A *Fokker Dr I*. After eventually tiring of flying 1/2 A pylon racers, I took up with a bunch of SAM 8 old geezers and went back to free flying again. In addition, I did some writing for the National Free Flight Symposia and construction articles for

Flying Models magazine. I also did some designing of *P-30* and *Coupe* models with some success.

Sometimes success was not easy to come by. I was flying in a *P-30* contest with one of my old reliable *LS-8* variations. Jack Shafer, an eagle-eyed friend from Albany, Oregon was my timer. We got to the field early so we could get set up and case the area. After all the usual preparations, I wound up to about 2000 turns and launched into what I thought was a good thermal. It was good all right, and the model easily maxed with it dethermalizing way up high. As usual, I stayed at the launch site until the model was on the ground. Actually, I did not see it hit the ground as it had gone down behind a few trees. Taking what I thought was a good line; I went toddling off to retrieve it. Jack stayed there to return my time card. I wandered around beyond the trees for a half-hour or so with no success. I guess Jack thought I was lost, too, as he soon showed up. And, would you believe it, he walked right up to it and picked it up. So much for my great article "Chasing and Retrieving" in the 1997 *NFFS Symposium*.

When we got back, I changed motors as usual and wound up again. By this time, it was nearly 11:30 am and time was a-wasting. I launched, and after the model climbed about 50 feet, chaos reared its ugly head with the model gyrating violently. My first thought was that a dust devil had hit it. But then it started down, whirling all the way. When I went over to retrieve it, there was a guy yanking its nose and trying his best to bust the fuselage while trying to unwind towline from around the propeller. I said, "What the hell are you doing?" He replied that he was trying to get his towline free. I grabbed my jackknife and immediately cut the monofilament away. He was mad that my model had hit his towline and that I had cut it. I was mad that he was stupid enough to tow right in front of the flight line. The damage to the nose was extensive and beyond any field repair. However, I did have my original *LS-8* as a backup, so not all was lost, only my temper. Therefore, I assembled it and proceeded to launch again. This time I hit a real boomer. It went up like the express elevator in the Empire State Building, but the wind had come up and the drift was bad. It maxed with no trouble, but the chase was long. Great! Two maxes! When I got back to the flight line, it was after 12:30 pm, so it was time to recharge the stomach. We scarfed down a couple of hot dogs and something to drink and then back to business.

The winding and launch were pretty much routine. However, this time the model hit a boomer like I have never seen before. It made the boomer for the second flight look like a severe downdraft. With the combination of wind and thermal, the model would have been out of sight in two minutes if Jack had not been using binoculars. He said it dethermalized shortly after two minutes and started its usual tumbling. However, it was not coming down. He tracked it for another three and a half minutes before it started down, right into a large cornfield. He lost track of it when it got as far down as some distant power line towers. He turned in the card and off we went with little hope of finding it in that tall corn. After plowing through that cornfield for what seemed hours, I said, "Let's give it up." We were a couple of hot, sweaty, pooped puppies when we got back. A couple of cold beers helped some, but both of us were discouraged that we would not get a chance at the fly-offs.

I was just packing up at about twenty minutes until five when here came a guy holding a very familiar red, white, and blue airplane. It seems that he was chasing his gas model about a mile beyond a second cornfield that was beyond the one that Jack and I were in, and lo and behold,

there was my model sitting in the middle of a farm road. Jack the ever optimist, says, "Come on, we have time for a fly-off flight." I said, "I am just too tired." He said, "I'll chase it."

Ok, here we went trying to beat the clock. I loaded a new motor and started winding. Not paying an awful lot of attention, I glanced down at the counter and saw that it stopped working at about 700 turns. The counter cam broke off sometime before and I did not know when, so there was no knowing how many turns were on that motor. I was winding blind, using only the torque meter as a guide and there was no time to start over again as the contest closed at 5:00 pm. Well, this was a bonus over losing the model on the third flight, so what the heck, I launched with about five minutes to go and hoped for the best. However, as it turned out, it was not good enough, landing about five seconds short. All those trials and tribulations were worth fifth place. That was not bad considering that there were 65 entrants in *P-30* that day. However, it still was not as good as it could have been. The date was August of 1998 and the meet was at the National Championships in Muncie, Indiana.

The model that was damaged in Muncie was repaired and went on to win a few other contests, notably the 2000 Northwest Free Flight Championships in Albany, Oregon. It won first place against the 2000 *P-30* National Champion Thurman Bowls (who won second place) and the 2000 National Cup Rubber Champion John Kamla (who won third place.)

I became involved in politics in 1997 and served one four-year term as National Free Flight Society Vice President for the Western District. After one term, I decided that enough was enough and retired undefeated. This is really my second retirement, the first being from Boeing in 1982.

Modeling has always been such a fascinating and rewarding hobby over the years that it would leave a tremendous void if I were unable to participate. The camaraderie is the very best and the physical exercise in the fresh air cannot be beaten. However, for me, the competition no longer has the importance it once did. Just watching these creatures fly is enough reward.

-Len

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AMA History Project
National Model Aviation Museum
5151 E. Memorial Dr.
Muncie IN 47302
(765) 287-1256, ext. 511
historyproject@modelaircraft.org

