The AMA History Project Presents:
Biography of JAMES (JIM) L. SIMPSON

August 28, 1936 - July 21, 2001 Started modeling in 1941
Lifetime Member - AMA #L61

Transcribed & Edited by SS (02/2003), Reformatted by JS (02/2010)

Career:

- Earned eight Air Medals and the Distinguished Flying Cross while serving in the U.S. Air Force in the early 1960s
- His first model design, the Long Midget, was published in 1966; it won the first Formula One national championship
- Published nine other designs as well as regular columns on racing, soaring and generalization
- Began building custom Radio Control aircraft for others in 1962
- Worked full-time in the Radio Control industry after leaving the U.S. Air Force
- Established North American Model Enterprises
- Chartered five new AMA clubs and was an active member in 10 other clubs
- Became an AMA leader member and contest director in 1964 and served as associate vice president in his AMA district
- Originated the National Falcon Tournament
- Owned White Eagle Aviation where he designed, developed and evaluated Radio Control aircraft
- Taught model aviation at a private school in Albuquerque, New Mexico

Honors:

- 2000: AMA History Program Associate Historian Biographer's Award [At the time, the AMA History Project was called the AMA History Program.]

Jim Simpson was born and raised in New Mexico. He began modeling at the age of five and progressed through solid models, hand-launched gliders, Free Flight and U-Control. He saw his first Radio Control model in 1950 but it took four years to get one of these and three more years to achieve repeatable successful flights.

After high school, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, trained as an aircraft mechanic and was a crew chief on B-36 and B-52 aircraft. He was commissioned in 1961 as a second lieutenant and trained as an electronic warfare officer.

He flew 215 combat missions in Southeast Asia where he earned eight Air Medals and the Distinguished Flying Cross. Following that, he spent one year in a Wing Headquarters Staff and finished his Air Force career as a major in the Electronic Systems Test and Evaluation section of Strategic Air Command Headquarters, Omaha, Nebraska.

Radio Control continued to be a significant interest in Jim's life. He stayed with single-channel radios until he needed better aileron control. Multi-channel with relays, then with reeds and finally proportional control followed in that order.

In 1966, the hobby became an avocation with the publication of his first model design – a racer known as the Long Midget, which won the first Formula One national championships. Nine more designs and regular columns on racing, soaring, and generalization followed.

Jim began building custom Radio Control aircraft for others in 1962 and continued to do so ever since. He used earnings from his modeling activities to buy and fly three full-sized Cessna aircraft and earned a commercial pilot's license with them.

Jim also served as a manufacturer's field representative for F&M Electronics, Royal Electronics, and EK Products while enjoying Radio Control so it was only natural that he entered the Radio Control industry full-time after retiring from active duty with the U.S. Air Force. He spent two years as manager of sales and new product development at EK Products, then moved on to establish North American Model Enterprises and manufacture a line of ready-to-cover balsa over foam core Radio Control aircraft.

In 1979, Jim took advantage of a unique opportunity and joined the board of directors as a loan officer in his local bank. During the next nine years in this capacity, he also served as president of the local PTA and was twice president of the Chamber of Commerce. Upon leaving the bank, he formed a financial consulting firm and advised banks and businesses until returning to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he retired again and spent all his time designing, developing, building, flying, evaluating and writing about Radio Control aircraft.

Jim married the lovely and gracious Karen A. Smith on September 1, 1956, and they had three children – Janet, Alan, and James. To date there are seven grandchildren (four boys and three girls).

He has a degree in history and political science from the University of Nebraska. His civilian equivalent of military training is electronic engineer. He also attended the University of Texas at Arlington where he pursued a master's degree in business administration. He also holds a bank management diploma from the American Institute of Banking.

Jim is a life member of the Academy of Model Aeronautics. His amateur radio call sign is WAOUUJ. He also belongs to the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) and the International Miniature Aircraft Association (IMAA). His League of Silent Flight member number is 129.

Jim has chartered five new AMA clubs and has been an active member of 10 others. He was president of six of those and an officer in all of them. He has been a leader member and contest director since 1964 in the Academy of Model Aeronautics and served as an associate vice president as well.

He was executive vice president of the East Coast Soaring Society and as such was instrumental in coordinating and organizing Radio Control soaring from provisional to official AMA national

events. He also served as chairman of the first Radio Control soaring selection committee and the team selected with this process won the first World Radio Control Soaring Championships.

Jim originated the National Falcon Tournament, which was a process allowing four instructors to teach 33 people to fly Radio Control then hold an annual two day event where experts and novices were teamed to maximize fun. From this experience, he helped originate the national fun-fly format as well.

He was also a district director of the National Miniature Pylon Racing Association for five years and was the soaring event director at the AMA National Championships in Lake Charles, Louisiana. He was a team member in the Radio Control cross-country race to benefit muscular dystrophy and part owner and managing director of the Southwest Modelers Show in Dallas, Texas.

Jim presently owns White Eagle Aviation and is engaged in design, development, and evaluation of Radio Control aircraft used primarily as sport or competition vehicles. Other uses include atmospheric research, target drones, and classified military operations. He also does kit reviews and flight test evaluations for magazines and manufacturers.

In addition to all the above he is presently teaching classes at Sandia Prep (a private school in Albuquerque). The course title is “The Joy of Soaring” and the students are ages 10 to 16. During the course, his students each build and fly a Radio Control sailplane. He is very proud of his students and says this is the best thing he has ever done in his field of endeavor.

The following e-mail was sent out by Dr. Sandy Frank, vice president of District VIII, on September 19, 2001, about Jim’s death. It was written on September 11, 2001 by Peter Young, retired colonel of the U.S. Air Force who worked in the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

James Simpson of Rio Rancho, New Mexico, one of model aviation’s great leaders and advocates, passed away on July 21, 2001, due to complications following quadruple bypass heart surgery.

Early in Jim’s life, he developed a strong love for model airplanes and he built thousands of them over the years. He has always had a strong talent for organizing and managing model aviation events and was a key leader during the formative years of the National Miniature Pylon Racing Association as well as the League of Silent Flight and organized the first FAI soaring (F3B) team selections in the early 1970s. Jim has been a contributing editor for Model Airplane News, Model Aviation and Radio Control Modeler magazines. He served as an AMA associate vice president for District VIII for many years and in this capacity served the members of this region by supporting and advising clubs in Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and anywhere else, he traveled.

Jim Simpson was born in Rehoboth, New Mexico, on August 28, 1936, and joined the United States Air Force at age 17. He was trained as a crew chief on Strategic Air Command B-36s and

B-52s, and after commissioning in December 1961, he received further training as a navigator and electronics warfare officer. He served in the Vietnam War flying 207 combat missions and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and four Air Medals for meritorious service.

For the past six years, Jim has taught a model aviation class for the Sandia Prep summer school program in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In this program, he has taught over 200 students, siblings, parents and grandparents how to build, cover, and fly a Radio Control sailplane of his own design, the Sun Rider. He founded his own business for manufacturing model aircraft and completed several UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) for the Sandia National Laboratory as well as the U.S. government.

Jim has been a faithful member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since 1962. He is survived by his wife of 45 years, Karen Smith Simpson; his daughter Janet Smith and husband Joe and their children Katherine and Benjamin, all of Hurst, Texas; and two sons, Alan Simpson and wife Michelle and their children Ashley, Jacob, Amy, Joseph and Samuel, all of Concord, California; and James and his wife Brooke and their expected child, living in Saint George, Utah.

Jim's family has asked that any desired donations should be given to the AMA Youth Scholarship program. His total life personified service and caring and he has truly blessed all those fortunate enough to have known him. Model aviation has lost a great spokesperson and leader. He will truly be missed.

Peter Young
Colonel, U.S. Air Force (Ret.)
Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics MIT
Cambridge, Massachusetts

The following letter was written on September 10, 2001 by Jim's wife, Karen, to AMA Historian Norm Rosenstock.

Dear Mr. Rosenstock,

Thank you for your letter asking for Jim's biography. I feel honored that you asked. You know he wrote so many for his friends who died but when he passed away no one did the same for him that I know of. Kind of sad, isn't it? Maybe I should have done it myself but it just didn't seem appropriate.

Jim was writing a book and each chapter was entitled, "Me and ____.' The chapter I have enclosed is quite long but it has some wonderful insight into this remarkable man. He loved models of any kind, airplanes of any size. I cannot tell you how many hundred out-of-the-way airports we visited over the years. The first full-scale plane we bought was when we were both learning to fly. We had 16 hours flying between us – I had nine and he had seven. What an experience this was.

Jim championed youth in modeling. He never turned down a boy or girl who wanted to fly one of his planes or wanted him to teach them to fly. The kids from the summer program where he taught "The Joy of Soaring" are still calling here to ask about him. There was just no way for me to contact all of them when Jim died.

The biography award arrived just a few days before this year's summer school ended and he had it hanging on the wall beside his desk. Thank you for honoring him with this fine award.

I am enclosing copies of some pictures for your use. There is no need to return them. Again, thank you for your kind letter and for wanting to include Jim in your AMA History Archives.

Sincerely,

Karen Simpson,
Rio Rancho, NM 87124

Jim wrote the following about himself in 2000.

Me and Model Airplanes

By Jim Simpson

Preface

This will be a chapter in my autobiography. Many who know me well would say it would be the whole book. I cannot defend that. I do not think there is such a thing as reincarnation, but if there is, I would have been a famous aviator in the prior life! On the other hand, I once told a fellow fifth grader that I came to this world from some other world. I would have had to fly – and that would explain my interest in flying saucers but that's another story for another time.

The Early Years

I was born in 1936 and aviation was still at a zenith being post-Charles Lindbergh and pre-TV. By the time we entered World War II, I was already smitten with all things flying and especially fond of model planes. I ate lots of breakfast cereal (just to get the little sheet of wood printed with different planes). These had to be cut out, balanced and would glide (sort of). Close after that came the typical wartime model kits such as Joe Ott kits with ott-o-formers (cardboard) and pine stringers. These were covered with paper and painted with banana oil – really! Harlan Gibson and I built these in his parents' travel trailer and, yes, they had these that long ago!

My first U-Control kit was a Consolidated Hell Razor, which I had no business having and which I never got to the flying stage. The next was a Zing with O&R .23 ignition engine – unlimited cranking begat minimal flight time. My flying buddy at this point was Harold West who flew the Zing very well.

The first honest-to-goodness successful flying model plane was called a Yankee (I think). It was pre-painted (like Firebabies) and needed only assembly. Power was a Herkimer OK CO2 motor and flights were typically from one end zone to the other on a nearby football field. What a thrill!

All the foregoing occurred in northern New Mexico but when I finished the sixth grade, we moved to El Paso and an honest-to-goodness hobby shop was only a three-cent bus ride away. What a place. The owner was a man named Fred Lind. His wife was named Judy and their son was Donald. They had to be the most patient people on this earth. I'm sure I and about eight others my age drove them nuts with questions and "lemme see" this or that.

Our older heroes were the high school kids who flew mostly U-Control stunt and real old guys like H.H. Hackenberg who was the master at Free Flight. From their encouragement, I had considerable success with a DeBolt Infantwagon flown with a K&B 020 Infant and later with a Spitfire .045. It did get way up about four or five feet above ground and occasionally got all the way around the circle. Free Flight was a whole other matter. For reasons beyond my understanding, my Free Flight models did pretty well except when it counted. I don't remember ever winning a single trophy with either Free Flight or U-Control.

About the time I started high school some of the older guys took a bunch of us kids (I remember Mervill Darnell and Noble Kirkpatrick from that time) out to the Free Flight site (now Sunrise Shopping Center), which was way far out in the country. A couple of hours after we started flying, a man named Christopher (owner of the other hobby shop) drove onto the field in his Cadillac, got into his wheelchair and unloaded a Cleveland model of the Luscombe Silvair Sedan and a radio control transmitter which looked about the size of a bushel box.

After considerable time setting up and checking all this stuff he started the engine and when released, the plane took off and flew in a perfectly straight line – down past the radio tower, where it did a 180-degree turn and came back past us – then a long way further. Another 180-degree turn brought it back toward us and it landed on the field not far from where it departed. Wow! From that moment on, all I could think of was Radio Control models.

Our family moved back to northern New Mexico where I met fellow modeler, Wayne Beavers. Together we built and flew many, many models and all the while, I drove him nuts talking about the marvelous radio plane I had seen. Our U-Control models were mostly Firebabies but when I was a high school junior, I had the first of many Veco Papoose stunt planes. Once I was flying it and my friend was kneeling beside me in the circle when suddenly the engine quit; the plane was upside down about six feet high. As it descended, I panicked and jerked full up and the plane hit nose first then flopped over on the landing gear. I tapped his shoulder and said that was how to land when inverted (as though I did it often) without breaking the propeller!

We both enjoyed flying Midwest Sniffers as well and went to the only Free Flight contest in that part of the state in the three years of our high school. Neither of us won a thing.

We did win a Monogram Speedee-built contest once. I got a 15-minute ride in a brand new Cessna 195 as first prize (along with a very modern looking trophy). Sometime after that, we made a deal with the local druggist, Jennings Doak, where we polished his Cessna 170 and he took us up. Like going to heaven for us.

Early Military Life and Modeling

In 1953, I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and my modeling activity took a back seat to an intense training program. Following the training there came numerous Temporary Duty Yonders (TDYs) to exciting places like Greenland, Alaska, Puerto Rico, Guam, Japan, etc. Most of these trips were just one or two weeks but the Guam trip was six months and modeling there was an investment in sanity. I chose to lump all Guam modeling together and it is covered in detail a couple of pages further along in this story.

I finally managed to save enough money to buy my first Radio Control model after six months back to my home base at Roswell, New Mexico. Remember the Berkley Cub and Aerotrol radio system and the K&B Green Head .19? I followed all the directions that came with all these (with one notable exception) but it was still in the bones when I carried my new bride, Karen Allene Smith Simpson, into our recently rented apartment. Some months later, I went to the local flying field (bare ground) way out in the desert. As I assembled my plane, I thought the prescribed number of rubber bands (between the wing panels) across the cabin roof was just too few, so I doubled them. The takeoff was a gentle curve and it took two complete circles (about 100 yards in diameter) to reach 100 feet of altitude. My first radio command caused the yaw that caused the cabin roof to collapse and down came my baby, wings broke and all!

Second plane was a Sterling Tri Pacer with the same engine. First flight was on the same field and the takeoff was a wide sweeping left turn, which I countered with a radio command that straightened the flight path. Then it headed straight for the left door of my brand new Ford. Fortunately, the landing gear caught the top of a small bush and the plane pancaked onto the ground mere inches from the car and slid under the place where running boards used to be. I could see the other flyers coming some miles away, so I quickly jacked up the car, retrieved the plane and was rather nonchalant as I greeted their arrival on the field. Les Stadler and Alan Christensen were two of them.

Not long thereafter a man named Frank DaHarb moved to Roswell and opened a well-stocked hobby shop. One day a fellow flyer (James Fuller) came in to buy “an all new set-up.’ He told us his wife threw a fit and yanked his plane off the refrigerator, threw it on the floor and stomped it flat. When I saw him again some years later, he had an “all new wife,” as well!

Tom Piper was another modeler who hung out there with us. He was/is a terrific modeler and, not too many years ago, was photographed on the dry lakebed in Las Vegas with his latest creation. Small world – for modelers, that is. Two other guys I remember from then were Bob Morse (Berkley Bootstraps) and Bill Berry (Rudderbug). These guys convinced me they had never built models before but the results reflected differently; they did such a good job that those designs are among my favorites.

My third Radio Control plane was really my first successful effort. It was a Trixter Beam covered with several ladies silk scarves (each of a different color). I knocked the main gear off on the first landing (it was rudder only and nose heavy) so I adjusted the balance and continued to fly it without the landing gear. It didn't make any difference and when I tired of it I sold it to another and so on it went – teaching several others the joy of flight as well.

My favorite plane from this period was the DeBolt Champ of which I had several. By this time, I was flying with cascaded compound escapements and having a ball. I once flew combat with another DeBolt plane (cub) that was flown with a TTPW system. We used about 15 feet of string and 25 feet of crepe paper but found this to severely disable their flying characteristics. Somewhere I have a series of photos of my plane doing a loop and, as it fell through the top, it wrapped the string around the leading edge. The next favorite plane of that time was the Midwest Esquire. My first attempt at designing my own plane was a failure.

We experienced much trouble with the Kenhi Buzzard design. All were flown with rudder control only and to do tricks required speed, which we got by holding rudder as the plane spiraled down then hitting opposite rudder to stop the spiral and see what we got. For instance, one turn got an Immelman, one and a half got a loop, and so forth. But, more than two turns got a tuck under followed by a power dive all the way down to mother earth. After the third crash, we sort of figured it was the speed over the lifting stabilizer causing the wing to stay negative (or something like that).

Most impressive flight was with a scale Cessna 170, which was heavy and therefore launched by a man sitting astride the headlight on a 1930-something Plymouth that was accelerated past the lift off speed.

The Walker Air Force Base Whirlwinds Model Club

Let me take a moment to tell you about the club. Walker Air Force Base (AFB) Whirlwinds was the official name. Ragtag ruffians would do just as well. Our leader was M/Sergeant “Doc” Savage (Radio Control). Others included S/Sgt Davis (U-Control and Free Flight), A/1C Larry Engles (Radio Control and Free Flight), A/1C Ed Turner (Free Flight), a civilian named Keith McGinity (U-Control), a couple of others whose names I cannot remember and, finally, myself. My wife Karen used liquid embroidery to put the name and emblem (a whirlwind with a plane in it) on the backs of white shirts, which we wore when we went hunting hardware in Doc’s Volkswagon Microbus. We all went together so the ones not flying could pit for the flyers, but more importantly so we could keep the card game going. The Microbus was arranged with driver and “shotgun” seats up front. There was a table with bench seats (for four people) right behind the driver. The fifth guy in the never-ending card game sat on a padded beer cooler at the open end of the table. Models and eats were stuffed everywhere else. In this manner, a trip to Albuquerque (normally five hours) or El Paso (four hours) seemed only about an hour. The Albuquerque trip was for a U-Control meet where Davis and McGinity kept us hopping but we won way more than our share of trophies and stuff. Likewise, those two really hustled when we flew Radio Control in El Paso and won all the first places!

Once, between contests and looking for new adventures, Doc talked us all into building a pile of balsa hand-launched gliders by promising to teach us how to fly them. We jumped in the Microbus and headed downtown to get materials. The first stop was the lumberyard where we got a handful of free wooden yardsticks. Then we went to the hobby shop where we got all the 1/8 by three-inch and 3/16 by four-inch balsa sheet for wings plus a lot of 1/16 sheet for tails. Then it was back to my place where we sanded the ads off the yardsticks and carved them into fuselages, etc. By afternoon, we were off to the flying field where Doc taught us to warm up by

swinging three baseball bats. Some of us were left-handed so he taught us to trim either way and soon we were slinging those little wooden planes every direction.

Larry's seemed to fly best and as it floated along in a perfect circle about six feet above ground, we saw the nose bobble and Doc said, "Uh-oh.' When asked what the matter was he told us it was a goner and, sure enough, it was 12 feet high the next time by. Too soon, it was a mere speck in the sky. Doc tapped my shoulder, and when I turned he pointed to Larry's cheek where sure enough a single tear coursed downward. Larry said the sun was too bright but got teased anyway.

Modeling While Moving for the Air Force

About this time, I got an appointment to Officer Candidate School (OCS) in San Antonio, Texas, so I sold all my model stuff and did no modeling until the last week of OCS when I built two rubber-powered Free Flights (one of which was the Rascal). Following six months of schooling and a trip home for Christmas, I went to navigator training in Waco, Texas. We had more money than we could spend, so my modeling career really took a big leap forward. A Mighty Mambo with eight-channel radio and other sized Mambos with single-channel kept me going, but one of my favorites became the Freedom 15 followed by a Pronto with DeBolt Rebel wing that was my best "touch and go" plane. I used a SN escapement on the OS 15 throttle and a Babcock compound on the rudder. Thus, from takeoff, a tap on the button got mid speed and I flew the standard left hand rectangle pattern to line up on final approach then tap for low speed and after touchdown, tap for mid range and do it all over again and again.

My Waco flying buddies included Blake Ingram, Dave Youngblood (father of Curtis, the world renowned Radio Control helicopter pilot), C.W. Horton, Red Walters (hobby shop owner), Max Blose, Connie Hamilton, Jim Benefield and Lee Moore (who would later come to Albuquerque a couple of times each year – which gave us time to reminisce and appreciate our friendship together).

About this time, the Orion came into my life and, as I was a field representative with F&M Electronics, I was flying it with the latest relay-less radios. Also, I discovered the Goldberg Falcon and, with a Max 15 and cascaded Bonner varicomps, I had rudder, elevator, and throttle. What a life!

My next Air Force assignment was to electronic warfare officer training in northern California, and my flying sites included the Lincoln airport, UC-Davis runway, EBRC field, Sacto Army Depot and Turlock. By this time, I was flying almost exclusively multi-channel radios and pattern flying was the main effort.

One afternoon while flying at our local club field with Wendell Bonner (no relation to Howard) I accidentally got my DeBolt Viscount into a flat spin. I had never seen this before and spent way too long marveling at it so when I thought it time to stop it was already too late (not that I had any idea how to stop it). My plane crashed in a field over on the far side of one of those humongous California ditches. I ran over to the near bank and climbed to the top where I could see my plane. What I saw was unbelievable, so I turned and yelled, "Come here- quick" to Wendell. He trotted over where I was and asked what I was yelling about. I said, "Look at my

plane" and after so doing he said, "My goodness, the engine is still running" (or something like that)! Corn had been raised there but had been harvested so only stalk stubs remained and my plane landed on one of these such that it protruded up through the wing between ribs. I had to go quite a way to a bridge to cross and return to retrieve it, so when I got back I had to kill the engine before I could pick it up. There was no other damage so I could have flown it again. Some knowledgeable full-scale pilots in my unit explained all about the flat spin so soon enough I was doing them at will while no one else would even try one. That's how I discovered that a TF Taurus would not come out of it. At least none that I saw (including the two I crashed trying to figure out why) ever recovered.

Flying with Stan Powell, Hershel Foster, Cliff Love, Bud Crane, Jim Stevens, and other East Bay Radio Controlers on the Lincoln airport was always lots of fun. I really loved the looks of my Perigees (then current world champion designed by Tom Brett) but those planes would snap roll in the blink of an eye when trying to flare. About the third time I did that my plane had not even finished skidding along the concrete inverted (with the fin broken) when I raised my newest transmitter high above my head to heave it onto the wreckage. My wife, who is a good deal shorter than me, jumped in front of me guarding like a defensive basketball player to prevent more damage. Thanks to her perseverance I eventually learned to control (almost) my rage toward my stupidity. Actually, all that was necessary to repair the plane was two pieces of celastic (elephant hide), one on either side of the highly swept vertical fin. I never got around to painting it because it happened many more times.

Occasionally we were joined by the Travis AFB contingent, which included Ernie Meridith, Jim Malek, Jerry Wickline, and Dave Carmichael. One fine flying day there seemed to be several planes in the standard traffic pattern and always at least two were red and white with black trim so it was not unusual that Jerry (or was it Dave?) accidentally began watching the wrong plane and was still not aware until after his plane crashed that he had done so!

I was elected president of the Mather AFB Glo-bugs club. It was composed of modelers from all disciplines so I felt it necessary to build and fly Free Flight and U-Control models along with my Radio Control planes. We were allowed to fly on the backside of the base. In the fall/winter, the rainy season caused the grass to be long and green, but it dried up in the summer and became a fire hazard. Personally, I was glad for the grass because my U-Control Veco Papoose powered with a green-headed K&B 19 made me so dizzy I had to just dump it in the grass before the end of a flight.

The long grass was also easy on my A-2 Jetco Jetstream towline glider, which too soon found a thermal and disappeared, because I didn't have my name and address on it. I finally got smart about putting my name and address on planes and have lost no more since – to date (2000)!

Also, in the Air Force were the twins Reid and Roger Simpson. Folks always thought I was one or the other of them until they saw us together. They are long tall slender drinks of water and I'm often confused with a grape physique wise. Roger insisted I go to a Capitol City Condors Free Flight contest with my Goldberg ½-A Viking Free Flight plane, which I had perfectly trimmed for a five-second engine run and 20-second DT because I flew it at the high school athletic field. At the contest, he had me set the engine timer for 20 seconds and the DT for three minutes and we both marveled as it climbed vertically in a slow roll mode. When the engine cut it continued

up into a perfect stall, then did a max point tail slide flipping out into a perfectly straight down vertical dive from which it did not recover. After it concluded its earth-piercing attempt, Roger turned to me and said, “Well, you sure built it true!’ Yeah, but it was not repairable! Go Radio Control.

During that year, I saw Jerry Nelson beat Doc Brooke at Davis and was co-contest director (CD) of the West Coast Radio Control Championships at Turlock. Flying on the West Coast allowed me to meet many of my heroes and appreciate their proficiency and characters. People like Tom Mahon, Dale Root, Phil Kraft, Doug Spreng, Bob Doell, Jerry Pullen, Daryl Usher, Joe Martin, Joe Murphy and all those red-shirted LARKS who often congregated behind the judges and applauded their fellow club members’ performance as well as making flowery comments on the quality of their maneuvers. There I saw the prototypes of several proportional radios and had to decline an offer from my friends Cliff Weirick and Howard Bonner to fly their prototype proportional because I was already in line to get the F&M proportional as soon as I could get back to New Mexico. I think they thought I was nuts.

While at Castle AFB, I met Joe Gross and we got better acquainted while flying at Turlock in the evenings. Turlock was a one square mile concrete runway with a single small building in the middle. There was a tall TV antenna on the building with several kinks in it from Radio Control planes. Joe and I joked about flying in the light of car headlamps but I didn’t (I think he did)! We have since become best buddies and don’t miss opportunities to visit and fly together.

On my way to my new duty station in El Paso, I dropped my buddy Joe Gross’ Orbit proportional off with Zel Ritchie in Los Angeles and dropped into F&M to get my new radio and meet Ted White. Back in El Paso, Jack Albrecht became my greatest help in mastering the proportional and Ted hollering, “Quit banging the sticks” smoothed out the wrinkles.

Modeling in El Paso

I became the president of the El Paso Radio Controllers and in one calendar year, I kept track of two things. I burned 78 gallons of fuel in my Lee-Veco 45s and there were only nine days in the year that weather was too bad to fly!

Ted White came to visit with me in El Paso one weekend and, naturally, it was our main purpose to fly as much as possible. The next morning, we headed for the flying field and, naturally, raced to the field in order to be the first one into the air. I arrived first and was unloading my stuff when he came tearing into the parking area. To make up for being behind, he jammed his foot down on the emergency brake then opened the door and stepped out while the car was still sliding, thereby being even with the tailgate when it stopped. He was a blur as he assembled his Stormer and while I was out on the runway about to start my engine, he started his and took off from the parking lot!

I quit my process and walked toward him intending to razz him while he flew, but before I could start he let out a long string of real cusswords (as only he can) so I said, “What's the matter? What's wrong?’ He had no aileron control and had to make turns with the rudder only (difficult with a flattop Stormer). As he flew by us, we could see the aileron servo pigtail dangling in the

slipstream. In his rush, he neglected to plug it in. Very soon thereafter, his rudder servo failed with the rudder stuck just a bit off center.

Not one to quit, he quickly figured out he could play the throttle and torque would turn it opposite the stuck rudder position. We both had to laugh when before he could get the plane lined up on final approach the rubber bands holding one side of the landing gear gave way and the main gear was hanging by one side only. He tried looping to sling it loose and once free, he then landed on the nose wheel and horizontal stabilizer!

Ted is such a good flyer that we purposely chose events for our fun-flys that would put him at the greatest disadvantage (like having to run a long way) because he suffered much from gout. It didn't matter; he won anyway.

Pylon Racing

At this point in time old friend Jerry Nelson and company invented pylon racing (forerunner of Formula One) and I quickly merged efforts in the racing direction but kept pattern on the back burner. Since I was deeply involved in building models for others, I took another swipe at designing my own. After all, while in California I began developing my own pattern design so a racer would be way easier and it was. Soon, I was building them six at a time and they were going as far away as Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, and California. At the Nationals (Nats) that year, Cliff Weirick borrowed one that I had built for Maurice Woods (of Oklahoma City) and they won the provisional event in Willow Grove. Don Dewey called me and arranged to publish my design in the RC Modeler Annual and that began a 13-year period of me writing columns and publishing designs in RC Modeler magazine.

Proportional

Jimmie Pecot and Guy Oliver (along with Jack) were the first guys flying proportional in the club. Others who soon joined the new revolution included Jack Parker who along with Ralph Gordon made the very best Stormers ever there was. Dick Moorhead, who was famous for flying a U-Control version of the B-36, owned the hobby shop. One of my favorite characters there was Army S/Sgt Burton whose job was to ride in an Army version of a single-engine light plane and sweep the firing range before a shoot. Ron knew where lots of R Cats and R Kitties (Radio Control drones) crash sites were so he asked the other hobby dealer if one could be rebuilt into a Radio Control trainer. He was told no, so when I found out about this I said it sure could be done and was prepared to do whatever necessary to make it happen. It was easy.

We went over to his home and he showed me salvaged wing and tail parts in perfect condition. The metal fuselage, huge old time Babcock radio and Fox 59 had to be discarded. Ron had drawn a fuselage on the garage floor (shades of Steve Whitman) and I said it looked about right and to go ahead and build it and put a new Super Tiger 60 on it. I provided the radio and it was our project. He had it ready to fly in short order so he brought it to me one afternoon for radio installation and checkout. The plan was to fly the following afternoon. I couldn't wait because it looked so good. The next morning I took it to the field where a range check and engine adjustment preceded a hands-off perfect takeoff. The plane was so easy to fly (partly because it

was so big); I just wished it was available in kit form. When Ron called that afternoon, I told him I had tried it but it crashed and broke into little bitty pieces (grin). He was crestfallen so after I kidded for a bit longer I 'fessed up and agreed to meet him the next morning (Saturday).

The other hobby dealer was there along with several cronies and lots of normal people. Never one to shy away from showing off, I made a big deal about Ron's maiden flight and talked him through preflight, engine start and walked beside him as he taxied it (fearfully) to the downwind corner of the field where he turned it into the wind and throttled back to idle. I assured him it would take off and fly without need for control, so when ready just push the left stick forward and don't touch anything else (back then most of us flew with neck straps because the transmitters were heavy and buddy boxes were still far in the future)! He was thrilled and amazed but not as much as me because he soloed in about three more flights and there was no holding him back. Within three months, he was competitive in our club fun-flys.

Full-sized Aviation

The Air Force refused to process further applications for pilot training so I bought a Cessna 175 and got the oldest instructor pilot in our unit to teach me (and my wife) to fly it. That sure gave a new meaning to the term going flying because I occasionally put a model in the Cessna and went off to Albuquerque or Hobbs to fly in contests or fun-flys.

Another modeler there named Lucky Gibson also owned a full-size plane (Piper Tri-pacer) and was fond of razzing me and my 172. Being the sneaky snake I am, I bet him I would be the first to arrive in Albuquerque the next time both of us went, which was soon thereafter. He had failed to notice the slight bump on the front of my engine cowl, which covered the gearbox and allowed it to swing a bigger propeller giving more thrust and about 25 mph more speed. He did know that Tri-pacers like his were slightly faster than Cessna 172s, however!

We taxied out from our hangers at El Paso International and I let him go first (hee hee!) so he took off toward town and flew around the south end of Mt. Franklin (another mistake) whereas I elected to go thru the gap northwestward. After that we followed the Rio Grande (to avoid the White Sands restricted area) destined for Coronado Airport in North Albuquerque. I landed first and was parked, tied down and sitting at the restaurant counter telling the waitress about our race when he called for landing info. I touched my index finger to my lips before she could answer so she did not tell him I was already there. After he got the info, he started cackling about being so far ahead of the 172 and the folks inside with me were giggling pretty good. When he swaggered in and saw me, all I said was, "Gimme the $20.' He sputtered like a six running on four-cylinders, but did pay up. He still seemed to not get it as I explained his errors so I recommended he quit betting. Life was just way too good.

I guess the Air Force agreed so they closed the base and sent me off to the Air University in Montgomery, Alabama where I met (and learned to tolerate – tee hee!) the likes of Al Strickland, Ely Marez, Bud Caddell, Herb Davis, Big John Elliott, Jim Kirkland, Ron Chidgey, et al. These guys taught me a whole new level of fun in just a matter of months and are lifetime friends.

While there, I was flying a Stormer (favorite), a Kwik Fli and a Denight special. School kept me too busy to practice for contest work, which I was never serious about. But just flying with this

bunch was almost more fun than one can stand. One time I talked Strickland into helping me shoot a movie from the Stormer. I had a wind up camera, which we figured (after a few drinks) would fit between the main gear. So the plan was to wind up the camera, start the engine, lock the camera to the on position, and let it go. Al would use his movie camera to show what the plane was doing and my camera would show how it looked from the plane. Then we would cut and splice the exposed film into an award-winning masterpiece. We had to wait a week for development only to discover that since my camera was crosswise between the gear, so the resulting pictures were crosswise on the screen. Sigh. Oh well, maybe another time. I owe Al Strickland thanks for getting me an AMA CD license, which has been a great source of pleasure to me (and I hope to others) over these many years.

One time we decided to go pay the Florida guys a visit so we loaded up and went to aux field number four on Eglin AFB to fly. It was fun watching Chidgey and Kirtland flying DeBolt bi-planes and taking turns pulling a crepe paper streamer while the other one made combat passes. I guess I didn't tell you these guys were all flying Orbit radios and had installed an Obit logo (black and white) sticker on my all orange with very little black and white trim Stormer. As it happened, my plane ran out of gas on a T&G so I walked down to get it and as I passed the spectators on the way back, one saw the sticker and my F&M transmitter and asked in a loud voice if one really worked with the other. While in listening range of the Orbit guys I replied, “They don’t. I used to fly orbit but ditched it for the F&M” (tee hee!). Well, that’s what field representatives do, you know!

Military Service in Guam

After this school, my next assignment was to Ellsworth AFB. To get there we drove back to El Paso from where I flew our plane as my wife and the family drove on to Rapid City, South Dakota. In a matter of few days, I was on my way back to California for B-52D model familiarization, then back to kiss my wife good-bye and on to the tropical paradise of Guam where I joined my new unit, which was already embroiled in the SEA combat zone.

This was my umpteenth time to return to Guam so I’m going to cover the whole of that experience at once. My first time there was as a two- stripe aircraft mechanic on B-36s, which were the all-time world’s sorriest airplane. They were so bad the Russians did not bother to even try to copy them! My supervisor there was also a modeler so we spent all our off-duty time building and flying models. Each payday we would go across the island to the Navy base hobby shop and spend nearly all our money on model stuff. Since OS Engines were $5 each and a B-36 kit was $16 we bought lots of stuff.

Sometimes other GIs would hang around and watch us and once we found a modeler among them so we gave him a kit to build. He did a beautiful job on it and I was the lucky one who got to test fly it. This model was a high wing U-Control Cub-looking monoplane and, as usual, we launched downwind, so a half circle later this nifty little plane did a 90-degree right turn and flew right over my head to the end of the lines where it did another like turn and repeated the process until it ran out of gas. It is a good thing I am left handed because the fellow who built the plane set it up like a Free Flight with no outboard wing weight, no offset thrust, and no offset rudder!

My supervisor there once flew a brand new Super Dooper Zilch with a .60 on 72-foot lines right outside the huge 1,000-man dormitory where we were quartered. He had been drinking whiskey straight from the bottle and was really in no shape to be flying. The plane was fast and his judgment was slow, so soon enough he wandered just enough so that the next flyby terminated in the side of a large, empty, metal garbage can. Whooee, you never heard such racket. The air police and fire department both arrived looking for the crash site.

Guam became my home away from home during most of the two years I was stationed in El Paso because we flew B-52B models and pulled nuclear weapons alert there. The routine was nine days in Guam then 12 days at home and occasionally 23 days in Guam about every third time around. During all that time, I built lots of planes and sold most of them to defray the cost of our Cessna 175. One of my favorite planes there was a Midwest Hustler Delta (XD-7) of which I had several. My favorite model experience from Guam was when I had an opportunity to take my model (a Sultan designed by Jerry Nelson) to Japan on R&R (rest and relaxation) and demonstrate the F&M proportional radio system. I sure got some strange looks from others on the C-97 (same as Boeing Stratoliner) flight to Japan but the entourage of Japanese in Mercedes limos that whisked me away left my flight mates speechless. First stop was a cocktail/dinner party after which my plane was remanded into the care of its own mechanic.

The next day began with a visit to a flying field where the Japanese announcer speaking rapid Japanese eventually called my name and I tried to excuse myself from the surrounding group to go fly. They assured me it was not necessary and pointed to my mechanic who was taxiing my plane up to where I was. After the flight I had only to hand him the transmitter and he and the plane disappeared until I was required to fly it again. Lunch was at a nice restaurant then another flying session followed (or a visit to a model manufacturing facility). Then a fancy dinner and repeat the same for several days. The mechanic cleaned and waxed my plane after each flight and when I got back to Guam, it was as slick as Monokote, which was still in the future.

This experience was the first of many that convinced me that U.S. modelers are regarded simply as overgrown boys with expensive toys whereas in other parts of the world modelers are revered as some super combination of athlete, engineer, astronaut, and all around nice guy. I met a really nice guy (Tom Dejardenette) who was stationed there and enjoyed flying with him. He demonstrated why it is not a good idea to fly Radio Control in a densely populated country real well. Before his first flight was over there were kids running from all directions and landing was very risky.

In Guam, we often flew off the runways over on the abandoned northwest field but also flew off the “plug” as well. It was a paved U-Control circle, which was down in a depression thus looking like the plug. Newly arrived personnel were told that pulling the plug would allow the island to sink! One day when our flight crew was wandering around in the BX bored out of our minds I discovered the then new Kodak M-14 movie cameras and immediately bought one. My crewmates knew I also had a pretty nice Yashica but were still aghast when I told them I intended to strap it on my plane and shoot aerial movies! “But what if it crashes?” they asked. I had a hard time explaining that the $40 cost was insignificant – after all, each servo cost more than the stupid camera! I ran a 50-foot strip of film through the projector to determine the amount of time available then figured a takeoff, 360-degree turn, climb to altitude, spin, loop and roll followed by an approach and landing would use all the time. Our navigator used his

stopwatch to time the flight and, as I rolled out after landing, he shouted, “51 seconds.’ Good grief, I still had over a minute and half to go! I have nearly worn that film out showing it to all who are willing to watch.

My flying was popular with the troops there and one day while flying off the plug a large bird happened by. I immediately gave chase and about 100 GIs watching from barracks balconies cheered and hooted as I chased the bird back downwind a good long way, but when I turned around to come back the crowd roared, because the bird also turned around and appeared to be chasing the plane. We repeated the process twice more before the bird gave up and went way around the site. Because we were on alert there, our commander wondered if our response to the klaxon might be impaired by this activity. To test the possibility, I took off from the tennis court parking lot and when my aircraft commander gave the signal I was to land immediately, throw the plane in the back of our crew vehicle (a four-door crew cab pickup) and we would high tail it to the B-52 while timing the entire event. I took off and headed the plane toward our sleeping quarters about a half-mile away. When I was about as far away as I could get our boss gave the signal and I headed straight back in a long diving flight into a 180-degree turn to final where I ricocheted off the top of a palm tree and plopped down next to the truck. Needless to say, the question of response never surfaced again.

Being involved in combat meant no alert so when not flying (or training) we were pretty much free to do as we pleased which for me meant building more models and lots of flying them – often from the runways at Northwest Field. One day I lost all control and my plane crashed in the honest-to-goodness jungle. Since there were several flyers there, we split up, and into the jungle we went. I was creeping along what appeared to be an animal trail, unable to see the sun and fighting claustrophobia when I saw a wild hog lying across the path. I made hand motions to my partner who was amazed at the size (at least a 400 pounder) and we detoured. I needed to see the sun real bad so charged forward into a clearing and as I relaxed I became aware of a network of huge spider webs – know what makes large spider webs?

I vacated the clearing and headed back the way we came, perfectly willing to sacrifice my plane to the jungle just to be free of it. On the way out my transmitter antenna clipped a hornets’ nest and they swarmed on me (as much as they could on my mach one body!). I only got one bite and it was on the little finger of my left hand but the pain immediately traveled up my arm and I just knew I was going to die. From dealing with rattlesnakes (buzz worms), I knew it was best to be calm, but continued my panicked flight out of the jungle then collapsed on the runway and waited for the others to catch up. A trip to the hospital, some pills and ointment and I would live. The guys I was flying with were not about to leave the plane out there and a week later they found it by using an aero club Cessna to spot it from above – thanks again, guys!

One day I heard a Radio Control plane being flown off the plug and high-tailed it over there to see who it was. A young two-striper was flying a Sterling P-63 pretty well. He told me it was his first plane and I was amazed. After all, I reckoned it was necessary to wreck lots of planes before learning to master fundamental flight and here was the first of what became many exceptions. Turned out this fellow was none other than the son of George Meyers (designer of the Little Toot bi-plane). Well, no wonder he was a good flyer.

Other flyers I met there included Johnnie Johnson, Mike Wylechenko and "Leroy" King now of Alabama notoriety. A co-pilot from the other bomb wing (22nd out of March AFB, California) named John Stare soon became a lifelong friend as well. He once told me about flying on the compass rose at March and someone flew a Radio Control plane through the fabric-covered rudder on the 15th Air Force Commanding Generals personal KC-97. Lucky for them he just took it in stride.

Another now lifetime friend from there was/is Jim Duckworth. His sense of humor is unparalleled and his flying prowess is beyond that! He taught me about rat racing. We would take our planes down to the plug and when ready, take off together with the aim of seeing who could pass over the plug the most times in a given period of time. The only stipulation was it could only be one way (and the same way each time) but getting back to do it again could be anyway we wished, i.e., loop, pylon turn, whatever. He proved it didn't make any difference what kind of plane each had because in 10 passes neither could pass the other! And, oh, did I mention the plug was only 150-feet in diameter? I have often since conducted such racing around the two near pylons (100-foot) on a Formula One course with the same result. Honestly, an F-1 cannot lap a trainer; try it.

Entry into Model Aviation Magazines

Along with flying combat missions from Guam (and later, Okinawa and, eventually, Thailand) my modeling took off in several different directions. I was really getting into designing and needed a female girl type model for a cover shot in the magazine. At the beginning of Sunday School class, visitors were invited to stand and introduce themselves. From behind, I heard the melodious female voice of a Pan Am stewardess introduce herself and immediately after class, I persuaded her to pose with my XF-226 for the photo you see on page 28 of the November 1968 issue of RC Modeler magazine. An interesting aside to this story was my flight-testing to determine the aft most limit for the center of gravity. I added a bit of ballast to the tail after each touchdown then put the plane into a spin after each takeoff – until it would not recover – and spun into the ground. How's that for accurate testing? The location of the center of gravity had become important to me because in another design plan and article I went to great length to preach the importance of it on a delta wing then inadvertently omitted its location on the plan!

During this time period, I was also writing articles and columns in RC Modeler. In a story about the Chigger bi-plane, I mentioned my buddy Joe Gross flying the C-141 and called it the world's largest plane (at the time). Much mail followed and all of it convinced me of my error. Apparently, it was, at best, only 11th largest – and, yes, I still make mistakes like that.

A Fond Memory from Thailand

One of my fondest model memories occurred in Thailand. We were in Bangkok for R&R and my aircrew commander, John Banta, and I both had Chigger bi-planes (which we often flew off baseball fields) with us. I had the name (which I got from a letter in Model Airplane News magazine) of a local modeler who invited anyone to come fly with him. I called him from the hotel desk and he told me he would send a car and to wait in front which we did. Soon enough a Mercedes limo arrived, the driver loaded our model box in the trunk and we were off on a long

drive out in the country where we eventually arrived at his flying site. It was a paved roadway in the middle of a very large grassy field. Yonyuth Napasab introduced himself and his mechanic, a graduate aeronautical engineer who built some of his planes for him. We happily flew our planes and about mid afternoon, he asked us what we would like to drink. With two Mercedes limos there, we took a chance and asked for Pepsi. He said something to the engineer who whistled in the direction of a far away water buffalo herd. Presently there came a 10-year-old boy astride an enormous water buffalo, some words were exchanged, the boy and buffalo disappeared down the road then eventually reappeared with Pepsis for all of us. In Thailand Pepsis are served in plastic bags, with ice and a straw around which the bag is gathered and secured with a rubber band. Altogether very clever.

As nightfall arrived he explained that we would be his guests at dinner and we loaded the planes and engineer in one limo then got in the other and drove to his home where we freshened up then off to the restaurant where we joined a dozen others at a very large table and enjoyed a terrific meal of Thai food. Our dinner companions turned out to be cabinet level ministers in the Thai government and only when we got back to our hotel and were able to ask did we discover that our host and his father were the Thai equivalent of Dr. Jonas Salk!

Model Designing for the Government

We had not been home long when one night very late one of my B-52 crewmates (a radar-navigator named Dick Hinton) came to my home with a friend of his whom was a professor in the school of atmospheric sciences at the university. They had been out drinking and the professor was lamenting the fact that they could not get the Marine pilots on detached duty to fly light planes into thunderstorms so they could burn silver iodide flares at 5,000 degrees – the idea being to dissipate thunderstorm energy and lessen crop damage from hail. This was no surprise to me because when I was a B-36 crew chief our unit lost a plane because the pilot elected to fly through instead of around a towering cumulus thunderstorm. The B-36 parts were scattered over a five-mile area of the Texas panhandle.

Dick told the professor I could make a model do that so they came to see if that was really so. Both were comically inebriated, but I assured them I could. The professor excused himself many times and left after asking if he could come back in the morning and discuss details. At 7 a.m. the next day he was back, cleanly dressed and sober but very excited. I told him my plan for doing that and when he left, he was excitedly talking about funding and saving time. Since I was on active duty and their project was government funded, I designed the plane, then had a local civilian build it and then volunteered to do the flight-testing, etc.

The plane was a constant chord twin boom affair with fore and aft engines (Merco .61 tractor and .49 pusher) on a centerline pod. The equipment bay was designed to hold three flares each being 1.5-inches diameter and 18-inches long. They were to be ignited on release (one at a time) and trailed on nylon cords such that as one was about to burn out it would melt the cord and the casing would fall free.

Flight-testing began with proof of concept requiring a 30-minute flight demonstration. The plane was so light without payload that it was inherently stable and boring to fly. After about 10 minutes of racetrack patterns with seven scientists watching, I asked the instigator if he would

like a turn at the controls. Before the flight ended, all seven had a turn. By this time, the idea of flying into the thunderstorm (and possibly losing the plane) was dwindling probably because they were beginning to realize that scheme would be like trying to hear a mosquito passing gas in a tornado. It sure was not a cost issue as the plane cost a mere $700. No matter, the mission change was more exciting. Up to that point, weathermen launched balloons, which had from four to six detecting/recording instruments aboard. These were used to measure such things as temperature, barometric pressure, etc., but did so in a vertical plane only. These guys wondered if we could dismantle the package and distribute the elements around the airframe then fly around the base of the fast moving thunderstorms cutting the atmosphere horizontally, so to speak.

When we got that done, they wanted to be able to track the plane with a Nike Acquisition Radar, which the U.S. Army gave to the school when the missiles were deactivated. They fretted because the model was too small to be seen. When told of this I laughed then assured them I could make it look like a B-52 if they wanted. Their skepticism melted when we took the plane out on the prairie next day and held it up while standing in a jeep because the voice on the radio from the radar site said it looked just like a B-52. I couldn't convince them that the small narrow strips if creased aluminum foil I taped on the wingtips and rudders were responsible.

What made them (us) famous was discovering the phenomena of the horizontal tornado, which hung out back of a fast moving thunderstorm and was otherwise invisible because it had no debris in it. We were flying the plane around the perimeter just below cloud base and suddenly it resembled a single sheet of paper in a whirlwind. When asked how I did that I denied doing it. Soon enough it resumed normal flight and we were directed to go back into that area again where the same thing happened. Apparently, their counterparts at Boulder, Colorado, were flying multi-element kites near thunderstorms in an attempt to visualize air currents so the interchange resulted in verification of our finding. I was not surprised to find an item in the flying safety-briefing book not long thereafter that restricted U.S. Air Force aircraft from flying within 10 NM of thunderstorms.

Competition

Our combat tours were six months in length with six to nine months between so when I was back in the States I was able to go to contests in South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, New Mexico, and Arizona. This really meant making lots of longtime good friends more than anything else. From Montana, there were Simon Dreese and Speed Leckie. From Wyoming Bill Carpenter (now C&H Ignition). In South Dakota there were Lowell Hamilton, Clark Besancon, Denny McKnight and especially Gary Baughman (Free Flight) who was as frustrated as was I because we were always needed so much by SAC that we couldn’t get the time necessary to participate in the U.S. Air Force Nats (which was a tunnel to the real Nats).

We went to Billings, Montana, for a contest that was lots of fun in itself, but that evening we were invited to the home of one of the modelers for a cookout. His house was way up on the bluff overlooking the town and surrounding area so the drive was uphill and toward the hill. Once parked, we got out of the car and trudged up his driveway and into the empty two-car garage where we greeted others and grabbed a soda. Only then did we turn around and take in the magnificent view. From high up where we were it felt like we could see half way around the

world! More over we discovered why Montana auto license plates bore the words, “Big Sky Country.’ It truly was. That was 33 years ago but I still get calls from modelers I met at that event!

The whole lot of us (many wives included) were in Denver, Colorado, for a big contest that included pattern, scale, and racing events so we were all very busy participating but still had more fun socializing between flights. As the day progressed, we noted awesome thunderstorms building all around the area. By mid-afternoon, it became a matter of concern because the storm clouds were not only dark and ominous looking, they also blocked out so much light we quit flying early and left the area with headlights on. I was flying with new F&M servos, which employed inductive feedback instead of the usual resistive (pots) in the servo loop. The inductors were thin iron compound rods moving in and out of a fixed hollow core wire coil. The rod was fragile and caused a crash when broken. The inductors were also sensitive to temperature and humidity so the net result was me crashing everything I flew and in a fit of rage, I changed allegiance and hooked up with Sid Gates and Royal Products radio systems that were made there in Denver.

Radio Control Sailplanes

It was about this time I got really interested in Radio Control sailplanes. Out in the bay area Scott Christensen and cohorts invented the League of Silent Flight (LSF). I heard about it from Gerald (knobby knees) Nelson (aka Jerry), so I became member #129. I started with two European sailplanes both scale and both very difficult to fly. They went with me to South Dakota but didn’t return. Next came another scale job (Fliteglas Phoebus), but it flew pretty well. A good flying buddy, Jim Mages, whom I first met in California, also had an interest in sailplanes but neither of us had been where they were flown so had no idea how to do it. We read about the West Coast guys slope soaring so we went over by the municipal airport and stood at the high end of a very gently sloping long grassy very small valley from where we heaved the sailplanes. Then we would walk about 1/4 to 1/2 mile to pick them up, walk back, and do it again. It would be many years before I learned what slope soaring really is! We both enjoyed flying everything with wings be it models or full-size planes. Unfortunately, for me he elected to leave active duty while there and went back to Minneapolis to fly for Northwest.

Another good flying friend there was Dick Duncan. We had a great time trying to impress each other and going off to contests as well. We once planned to go to a contest over on the other end of the state so we loaded our models in my Cessna Skyhawk and took off about an hour before dawn to fly IFR (I Follow Roads) along the interstate. We got about 15 minutes along the way before the road disappeared. Now, we were really IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) and I began the best possible action in such case – a 180-degree turn – but did a lousy job of it. Fortunately, we dropped out of the cloud layer with the interstate in sight and followed it back to the air base where we unloaded our models and called it a day.

As sometimes happens, Dick went on to get his pilot’s license and a few years later we set off to the winter Nationals in his rented plane. Better results this time and when we arrived at Marana Airpark it seemed so natural to simply taxi to a position in the line of light planes parked next to the model plane pit area and unload into it. Many modelers fly to meets in the west because it is

so far to go but more so because the only difference is the size of plane. When not flying models we constantly talked of flying the “real” ones!

Nats Memories

The winter Nats occurred over Thanksgiving weekend in Tucson and I have many fond memories of flying there. Being in the Air Force, I had been to both Alaska and Greenland but never in my life have I been as cold as I was one afternoon at the winter Nats. What Texans would call a “blue norther” (frontal passage) caught us out on the endless concrete ramp in short sleeve shirts so the clothes we really needed were hundreds of miles away. It was so cold I had to keep my can of Freon in my armpit to get enough pressure to operate my models; retracts were just two cycles per flight.

As a proponent of Monokote, I managed a lot of fun by entering a pylon racer that was 10 ounces below minimum weight. The judges were making a fuss about it and asking who owned the plane. Cliff Weirick and I were talking when this happened and I assured the judges that the foam-covered padlock I had in my pocket would be aboard on every flight. Cliffie assured me he would demand a weigh-off immediately after any race I flew in (Tee! Hee!). I saved him a lot of trouble by crashing early. I also entered a Top Flite P-39 in scale and it was completely covered in Monokote. We overheard two judges who were leaving the static judging area. One asked the other what he had given the Monokoted airplane. The other denied there was such entered so they both returned and scrutinized my plane while arguing the point – think I didn't enjoy that?

Arrival in Fort Worth, Texas

Too soon, the Royal radio company went the way of all American radio systems but I had been transferred to Fort Worth so naturally hooked up with Gerry Krause (all around good guy) and the K of EK Products. This association with EK lasted eight years and the last two were in full time employment after my retirement from active duty in the Air Force.

My arrival in Fort Worth was like going to heaven. Having left the northern clime with its long cold winters and blizzards, I was now on the best stateside duty station in the Air Force. As soon as possible, I hightailed it downtown to visit Ed Alexander's hobby shop. As a sixth grader, I had ordered balsa and other building supplies from him so it was a pleasant reunion. From there I immediately joined the famous Fort Worth Thunderbirds model club and in a year became president of the club. What an honor. What wonderful people. What a truly great time – never to be forgotten.

In the interest of brevity, I will not be able to tell all I want about these guys and that place but I hope you enjoy and catch the feel as it was. Such characters as Charlie Powell (also heck of a bluegrass player), Bill Slater, father and son team of Gayle and Steve Helms, my co-author of the Generalizations Effecting Models column, Jim Bonar, Roger the Happy Hippie, Ed Rankin of racing fame, Doc Pierce, Dan Carey, Don Yocky, Roy Klett (of Klett plastics and best machinist I've ever known), Bernie Haire, Doc Barrett, Gary Clay, Clay Price, Monte Moncrief and many, many others whose names I cannot recall until after this is published when I will then wonder how in this world I could ever have forgotten them!

Chuck Cunningham was a Thunderbird and the most spirited discussion I ever enjoyed at a club meeting was with him about the size of quarter midget racing engines. I opted for 19s but he won out with 15s – still I had another lifelong friend. Without a doubt the character of the Thunderbirds was embodied in one Helmer Johnson who along with his wife Jane and, to some degree, their boys kept things going against all odds. Helmer hung out at Ed's and pawed through every new kit as soon as it was on the shelf. Once done, he left a business card in the box and claimed it was pre-cooned by him – meaning it had been inspected in detail just as raccoons do their food before eating it!

Out in the next town west of Fort Worth was a place known to us as Joe's barn. Joe would trade anything either way. Thus, he had acquired over many years and enormous quantity of aircraft built, flown and in various other states, which filled the barn. I mean there were just narrow pathways through the piles of planes. Best of all, Joe allowed us to rent them. If you were temporarily out of something to fly (or just wanted to try something different), you simply went out to Joe's and rented one.

Our flying site was on the shore of Benbrook Lake and maintained by the corps of engineers. It was complete with paved runway, three access taxiways, pit area and sun shelters. There was even the obligatory tree at the north end, which was an intermittently activated balsa magnet. You just didn't want your plane in the area when it came on. I was teaching one of my fellow officers to fly and we had agreed to meet at the field. I was a little late but had to stop before being properly parked to finish laughing. My friend David was way up in the tree throwing rags at the prop of his still running engine that was on the front of his plane and had been captured by and was held tight by the "balsa magnet.' The engine finally ran out of gas and quit so we were then able to extract it and I could go finish parking my car.

The Thunderbirds Model Airplane Club

While president of the Thunderbirds I met Bill Curtis who was in the Dallas club and together we cooked up a colossal hoax. He had a complete set of aerial photos of the old Greater Southwest Airport (hub of the vast American Airlines complex), which was soon to be abandoned for the nearly completed Dallas/Fort Worth airport. Our story was that the cities were willing to dedicate the old airport to a joint commission of our clubs if we really wanted it. We first attended a regular meeting of the Dallas club and briefed the plan where we would have access to golf carts for flight line transportation and the terminal building for kids' indoor playgrounds, a mother's lounge area and complete with dining and bar facilities.

We even borrowed an American Airlines idea – seems they were going to have a world class sports complex including a golf course on one corner of the new airport property and participants would be served any imaginable beverage by off-duty stewardesses in short shorts and white blouses on golf carts. Our flight lines would be included in this service! Without admitting otherwise, we next attended a Thunderbirds meeting and did the same (Tee hee hee!). Then to continue the hoax, I wrote it up and sent the article complete with pictures to RC Modeler magazine. I was later told it had been laid out and scheduled for publication before someone caught on and canned it.

Our club socials were more fun than the law allows – mostly because of the characters who attended. For instance, not long after Bill and I started the airport hoax we had a Christmas party and Chuck Cunningham's wife had heard bits and pieces about the airport thing and wanted me to tell her it was not possible. I couldn't do that. One of my flying buddies accuses me of lying when the truth will do. So, it was just a natural challenge for me to convince her that it really was true (which I did in fairly short order) knowing it would take Chuck quite a while to convince her otherwise!

At that same party, there were several couples at my table and all were drinking beer except me. After they got going pretty good I took a turn at being the gofer ("go fer" more drinks) and I got all the cans out of a tub of iced water except one; it I got from the warm reserve stock. I shook the bejabbers out of it then dipped it in the ice water just enough to disguise the warmth and when I got back to the table I gave it to my vice president, George Gause-Ware. He immediately popped the top and experienced firsthand the wonders of a real geyser! Beer spewed everywhere and the look of surprise on his face was priceless. After the laughter died down, I went and got another cold one and handed it to him. He wouldn't take it and insisted I open it, which I did without consequence. A couple of rounds later I did the same trick again, but allowed one of the others to see me shaking the beer (but he had not noticed it was a warm one). So, next round he volunteered to be gofer and I noticed he picked my soda pop out of the ice water and shook it plenty good then handed it to me first when he got back. Not only did I know it was shook, I also knew cold ones don't fizz, so I nonchalantly popped the top and sipped the contents. His look of disappointment was great, but surpassed when I got him back two rounds later with another warm one.

The Thunderbirds was a large club and had a variety of interests loosely divided into four nearly equal groups titled: pattern, racing, scale and fun flyers. One of my favorite agenda items was requiring reports from each of these divisions at each monthly meeting. Happily, these reports generated a bit of competition for the groups to do better and more over for the reports to become more colorful. They began to report on how many awards were available then how many the group had won. One memorable meeting it seemed like the T-Birds were going to win ALL the available awards until the last group to report disclosed that they had not fared well enough. When asked why this was so the reporter (Helmer Johnson) replied, "Crummy meet," and forever thereafter, that became the number one excuse of choice for anything amiss at any contest.

A Move to Nebraska

I was surprised with a sudden transfer to SAC Headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska. I sold a 30-acre farm I had bought with the silly idea that I would retire to it and try growing Radio Control models when I wasn't flying them! Also, I rented out our beautiful home and we settled into government housing near Offutt AFB. The usual search for new flying buddies and another club started slow and was not very fruitful. There was a very large club in Omaha (Omahawks) but, with few exceptions, it was not too friendly. There was a well-stocked hobby shop there but the owner was not easy to deal with.

The Missouri River divided the metro mess and the eastern half was Council Bluffs, Iowa. The hobby dealer (Bud Kilnoski) there soon became one of my all time very best friends – even to

this very day. There were two clubs there. One was exclusive and formed of the flyers who were previously in the other club. Thus, the other club (Council Bluffs Cobras) was a loose association of 33 modelers almost all of whom could not fly Radio Control.

About the same time as I arrived on that scene there also came three other Air Force officers (Dean Koger, Leo Prescott and Joe Gross) with extensive flying experience. One rainy Saturday morning we were standing around the hobby shop talking about the club's problem. I suggested we would be better served if we could get all of them to fly the same plane/engine combo. All four of us favored the Goldberg Falcon 56 with .19 size engines so we invented what would become the National Falcon Tournament.

This event started in the winter with a building contest. There was a prize for the one that looked most like the picture on the box. All the planes were displayed in a motel conference room and each entrant submitted his list of 10 best. From these compiled lists, the winners were chosen. There was also a prize for the lightest plane.

The next event had to wait for better weather. The objective was to see who could stay airborne the longest on only one ounce of fuel. The pilots could have as much help as needed. From these flights we then divided the participants into groups of four and drew one event (from a total of 10), which then was flown by each pilot with his teammates helping as necessary. Thus, all the entrants learned to fly well with a minimum workload on the four of us. Moreover, the club enjoyed the entire experience so much we voted to do it again and again for five years!

The event became so popular that I invited the sponsors, (RC Modeler magazine, EK, Carl Goldberg and TF Monokote) to be guests of honor. Many years previous, I had met and spent a great deal of time with Carl Goldberg so was very pleased when he and his wife Beth agreed to come take a look.

My wife picked them up at the airport and brought them straight to the flying field. As she drove along the access road around the end of the runway, they had a perfect view of 79 Falcons lined up wingtip-to-wingtip ready to be judged in the beauty event by the other contestants. Carl was soon walking up and down along the line nearly speechless in amazement.

Gerry Krause was also there and enjoying the event big time. I could tell he was itching to fly so during the noon break I got him to fly my Falcon, which had four little modifications. First, the engine was mounted as far forward as possible and the nose was faired into the two-inch spinner. The wing leading edge was lowered about 3/8-inch and had full span ailerons cut out of the trailing edge stock. Finally, the rudder chord was increased a half inch and lengthened to reach the bottom of the fuselage. With it set up like that, Gerry was able to fly the then current AMA pattern just like the big boys! Carl was then truly speechless.

The best part of the Falcon Tournaments was the great number of women and kids who learned to fly and the fact that every entrant got lots of prizes. Most of all was the lasting benefit to hundreds of modelers who had Bud Kilnoski help them learn to fly and become their friend as well.

Besides Falcons, I was getting more and more involved with flying sailplanes. They are so clean and quiet, smooth and graceful, slender and beautiful. The first really good flying sailplanes were German kits (Cirrus and later the Cumulus) but there also came an American kit called the Olympic 99. It was built of balsa and covered with iron-on film and we proved over and over that anybody could fly one.

Formation of the Mid America Soaring Society

There were soon many glider guiders in the area so we formed the Mid America Soaring Society (MASS) and held monthly contests for years to come. We used three of the most gorgeous flying sites you could imagine. Two were sod farms and the third was Dodge Park in downtown Omaha. It was ringed with very old oak trees that were huge. It was here that I saw a most unbelievable sight. A local flyer (whose name I've never divulged) brought the first electric winch I'd seen (outside of the SOAR Nats) to the park along with his most beautiful Cirrus sailplane.

He carefully set it all up and when all ready for the first launch he uttered the four most fatal words in aviation, "Hey, guys, watch this" and stomped on the pedal. The Cirrus went heavenward like it had been shot out of a cannon. We were truly mesmerized, but soon startled by the flyers yelling and cussing! I turned to see him on his knees yanking wires out of the winch box like a fiend! Meanwhile the Cirrus arced over and followed the winch line right to the turnaround – BAMMM! Glider parts flew everywhere then the winch motor began to slow and the line whined as it tensed. Then it broke – POW! It sounded exactly like a gunshot when the line broke (thankfully near the winch). Our friend finally got the power disconnected. Turned out he had used a self-latching relay in the control circuit. It was years before the second winch appeared in our group.

Then came a long and pleasant association with Lee Renaud and Airtronics sailplanes that began with the Olympic 99 and continued through the Grand Esprit and Aquila. The Olympic 99 was what my friend Mark Smith called a "bent wing balloon.' It had a polyhedral wing and Mark was flying his own design called, Windfree, that had long tapered wings and v dihedral.

One of the events at the SOAR Nats in Chicago was for speed. It required the flyer to launch and fly two laps between two pylons (that is up and back, then up and back again). Mark assured me I had no chance in that event but since he flew before me, I had the opportunity to watch him make a mistake. He made all his turns downwind thinking it would keep his speed up in the turns. He also did not correct for drift. When my turn came, I simply flew with a crab angle to keep the distance flown as short as possible and made my turns upwind. That required only about 90-degrees of heading change instead of nearly 270-degrees like Mark was making. Well, guess what? I had the faster time! I promised him I would never let him forget it and that's one reason the story is here.

Military Retirement and the Start of a New Career

My assignment to SAC headquarters was on directed duty so near the end of my tour I was faced with a major decision – retire from active duty or continue my Air Force career. Some of us

decided to take in the Toledo Modelers Show over the first weekend of April and while there, I let it be known that I was eligible to retire and might consider a job in the industry. My companions numbered the offers between 17 and 25 but three were really interesting and one of the three was a full-time position with EK. Since it was in the area where we liked the weather, people, etc., I accepted it and we made the transition from military to civilian in about a minute (seemed like)!

While at EK, my position was manager of sales and new product development. You cannot imagine the fun involved in work like this. New friends, travel to trade shows and important events, guest speaker at clubs near and far; just no end of adventure. Occasionally, the service center would have several radio repairs, which needed to be test-flown (Tee! Hehe!). I was sometimes invited to go help. So, one day we were up at the North Lakes Park on the model airport flying these systems. What that amounted to was hooking the receiver into one of our test planes, which was an old tired Radio Control sport plane (like an Ugly Stik for example), then taking off (out of the pits or off a picnic table) and climbing to altitude. Then we would collapse the transmitter antenna and check all controls to be sure it was well. We would then dive to land and do it all over again with another receiver.

This activity caught the eye of a passing airline pilot on his way to work at the nearby Dallas/Fort Worth airport. He drove into the otherwise empty parking lot and stood near the post and cable barrier between him and the pits. I invited him to step over and ask questions if he liked. We chatted a few minutes and he watched a couple of flights then got up the nerve to ask me what I did for a living. “This,” was my reply. He said, “No, I mean what’s your regular job?” It took me a while to convince him that I was being paid (rather well, too) as we spoke. He soon excused himself and I’m sure that as he drove on to the airport he was thinking maybe he didn’t have the best job in the world.

Lessons from Carl Goldberg

Carl Goldberg taught me some great lessons for life. One of them was how to apply the learning principle. From Air Force communication skills classes I had long ago learned that you cannot learn when you’re talking, but Carl illustrated this best when we were walking through the pit area at a Radio Control Nats event. He constantly asked questions and more importantly, listened to the answers. Even when he was forced to answer others, the answer usually ended in another question.

An even greater lesson was shown to my oldest son, Alan, and I when we were at one of the SOAR Nats in Chicago. While at the National Falcon Tournament, Carl made me promise to let him know if I was ever in Chicago so he could reciprocate kindness. I did. So, per arrangement, he came out to the field one afternoon and spent some time with us then insisted on taking Alan and me to dinner that evening. He said there would be one other couple there. You cannot imagine my surprise to find the other couple was none other than Sid and Carrie Axelrod. Carl’s company and Sid’s company (Top Flite Models) were head-to-head competitors in the model business!

The dinner progressed quite nicely and it was obvious that the ladies (Beth and Carrie) were longtime good friends just as were Carl and Sid. Some years later I found out they both had

worked at Comet models together. Their genuine concern for each other's health and for many, many others in the hobby revealed a compassionate clique among the industry leaders. It later became apparent to me that certain leader wannabes were not included and further that I didn't want to be like those on the "outside" – so to speak.

Sailplane Modeling Continues

While at one of the many SOAR Nats I discovered the Legionnaire and met Cecil Hega. I bought one of his kits and began flying it every chance I got after we arrived back in Texas. He and his son Bill were flying with several of us on the Tarrant County Junior College (TCJC) south campus and I was on a long final approach to land my Legionnaire when I hooked a thermal and started back up. Cecil asked if I needed a cross-country and I said yes, so he reached in my pocket and fished out my car keys. He pitched them to Bill, Bill backed my IH Travel-all over to us, and they helped me up onto the lowered tailgate. Then Bill drove off with Cecil holding the vehicle and me together. We went the required distance on city streets. Occasionally trees obscured my view of the plane, but it was a piece of cake with their help.

At this time in my life, I was fully engrossed in Radio Control sailplanes, but not exclusively. I bet I've made a thousand friends from flying sailplanes with them. Some who stand out in my mind as I write this include Jack Hamilton, Don Chancey, Bill Maserang, Charlie Cross, LeMon Payne, Duane Baade, Denny Darnell, Julian Tamez, both Texas and California Tom Williams, Larry Fogel and all the F3B team selection participants as well as all the Louisiana Nats soaring event entrants.

The National Soaring Society and World Championships

Somehow, I had become the executive vice president of the National Soaring Society sometime before and one of our many tasks was to select a soaring team for the upcoming world championships. Our plan was to have the selection committee chairman become the team manager, but there were still no volunteers. So, I assumed the job and developed the process wherein over 700 pilots flew in 27 quarter finals all over the U.S. Those achieving 80% or more of the winner's score were invited to the nearest of six semi-finals placed such that no one had more than 700 miles to get there.

From these events, we chose the top 36 flyers and invited them to Denver for the finals. Also there were the three men representing the United States at the Aerolympics two years previous. Being the sneaky person I am, I passed out a three-page questionnaire at the pilots' briefing. In the middle of the second page, I asked the question, "Who would you like as team manager if you win a place?'

After three days of flying over Labor Day weekend, we had winners. All elected Dan Pruss as team manager. We also sent Dave Thornberg as first alternate. These five guys went to Pretoria South Africa and won the world championships.

FAI Meetings

The next year, Dan Pruss (our soaring representative to the FAI meetings in Paris) was unable to go so he asked me to attend in his stead and I was most happy to do. The plan was for the U.S. delegation to meet in New York and continue the trip together. I met Dr. Laird Jackson in New York, and, although he was the U-Control delegate, we had modeling in common and became instant friends.

The official meeting was a three-day affair, but it was far more economical to AMA for us to stay a week. Doc and I had a ball doing Paris. He had a Michelin tour guide we followed backwards in order to avoid tour groups. One morning at breakfast the helicopter guy and his wife were reviewing a book entitled How to See Paris on $10 a Day. Doc and I did some quick figuring and discovered we were averaging about $100 a day and neither of us were drinkers!

Meeting with modelers from all over the world to deliberate rules and event schedules was a once in a lifetime experience. I have an entirely different view of our hobby as a result of that experience.

Dan had asked me to assure him that if I couldn't go I would not offer Bob Elliott (the E of EK Products) the chance to go in my stead. Instead, I was to let Dan know and he would appoint someone else. Bob had a very abrasive personality and Dan wanted no international incident in the world soaring community. When I returned, he made it clear that I was fired.

Formation of North American Model Enterprises

The next day Gerry Krause and I began forging a company known as North American Model Enterprises (NAME) and began the manufacture of Ready to Cover (RTC) models. There were 27 products in the line including most of the most popular pattern and racing planes of the day. Our plan was to have sister companies – the other being Logictrol of Mexico – with Gerry and I owning 52% of NAME and 48% of Logictrol of Mexico. Mike Medrano of Matamoros, Mexico, was the other owner.

Gerry and I did the design, testing and marketing while Mike oversaw the production. Unfortunately (or maybe not) Mike decided to cut us out of the deal and I went to work in the banking business while Gerry continued his operation with the Neo-Life Company.

While doing new product development work at EK I met an Army sergeant from Fort Lewis, Washington, who was actively involved in developing target drones for their use in gunnery practice. They were using a plane sold by our competitor (Kraft Systems Inc.) and known as the Wingmaster, but were having radio problems and had found our radios to work where others wouldn't. They were even more delighted to find we could make them on special military frequencies.

As this business progressed, we eventually redesigned the planes such that the only thing they had in common with the original planes was the flying wing planform. We had a pair of them for research and development that we flew often until the bugs were all worked out. Later, the company we formed after I left EK was invited to bid on supplying them for the U.S. Army, the South Korean Air Force, the Israeli Air Force (as recon drones) and we even supplied several to the Northrop Corporation for their research programs.

Cross-country Flying

In 1976, Bob and Doris Rich were working for Carl Goldberg Models and had hatched up the idea of a cross-country flight from Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, across the southern United States to Oceanside, California. They had quite an entourage with them as they went and, of course, we met them when they got to Fort Worth, Texas. At that time, they were already talking about the idea of having a cross-country relay race and two years later, it became a reality.

By that time the Southwest Modelers Show was up and running so we (the directors) elected to enter a team for our leg of the race. Overall, the race was between four teams over the original route, then extended back to Las Vegas as the muscular dystrophy campaign was to be the recipient of the funds raised (over $20,000, I think).

The race was flown in segments so our assignment was to fly from Shreveport, Louisiana, out past Fort Worth, Texas, over a two-day period. Since there were four teams in our segment, one of the others was sponsored by NASA in Houston and was comprised of other modeling friends. They were really teasing us about who was going to win, etc., so the fun started long before the race.

We assembled in Dallas the day before the race and drove the course (backward) making notes about hazards, possible landing sites, etc., as we went. Naturally, we took a break en route to stop at the lake house belonging to Mike Clark's in-laws just to watch the NFL Cowboy game then continued on to Shreveport for dinner, a night's rest, and the next day's race.

During the pilots' briefing, we learned our team was behind one hour whereas the NASA team was leading when they arrived there. We started our planes on signal and were soon airborne heading west, but it wasn't long before we passed one of the other teams stomping around in a swamp looking for their plane. We honked and waved as we passed, feeling encouraged by it all.

By and by, we passed another team who was refueling over on the frontage road, which we did likewise when the time came. Bill Glancy was doing most of the flying from a semi-prone position on a mattress thrown over a wooden bench in the back of an open pickup bed. We were supposed to be awed by the rig NASA was using. It was a contour chair with interphone connections in the back of a pickup bed that had fancy Plexiglas, wind fairings, inter-vehicle radio communications, etc. Didn't work and by the time we arrived at the first overnight stop we had passed the other team and were now in the lead. Actually, it was a race right down to the landing, but since we were restricted to the 55 mph speed limit, our pre-planning and cunning got us there first.

The next day's race was essentially just across the metro mess but navigating freeways, over and underpasses and all other obstacles was a real challenge. By the end of the second day, our team was comfortably ahead of the pack, again due to planning, but this time it was also with a good measure of luck thrown in as well. Chuck Holden, Joe Sullivan and my wife rounded out the team and were monumental help in keeping it all sorted out and going in the right direction.

Contest Directing the Nationals Soaring Event

The next year I was asked to be the CD (seedy!) of the soaring event at Louisiana Nats. My local contact, and soon fast friend, was John Embry who was of immense help in getting everything worked out. During the planning meeting it was apparent that none of the possible sites chosen close to the main event were practical, so we wound up having the soaring events at a little country airport quite a way from the base.

These events were to be held over a span of several days, so getting volunteer help to run the event would likely be a big problem. To solve it I recruited teenage sons of fellow modelers (my own as well) and we were off and running. We had a lot of fun just watching those kids hit the pool when we got back to the motel we had chosen as headquarters. It was a nice time and we even had a huge banquet the night after it was all over to hand out the awards and enjoy some old-fashioned country visiting.

At another Louisiana Nats, my youngest son, James, went along and entered, intending to win. I had been on his case to practice more, but he was busy with lots of other things. During one of the early rounds, he asked Gwen McClure to time his flight for him and off they went to the launch lines. I was sure proud of him and talked about that with others sharing our shade tent. Too soon, I saw he and Gwen walking slowly back toward us and I knew something was wrong. I asked where his plane was. Near tears but trying to be brave, he said he didn't know, and then explained that after a real good launch they started across the launch lines walking toward the landing area some distance away. He said that when he looked down to avoid stepping on a line he lost sight of his plane and could not pick out which one it was because there were so many up in the same thermal. You cannot imagine how sorry for him, I was. I looked up at the thermal and noting the direction, knew his plane would drift over the swamp and there would be no way to recover it. I consoled him as best I could, knowing it would not be enough. Sad memory, indeed.

This was the time big gasoline engines were coming into our hobby and having lived close to the airport where Duane Cole kept his modified Taylorcraft made it natural for me to model it in quarter scale. Eight days before the Toledo show in 1979, I started design and construction of the prototype. These were 16-hour days during which my average daily consumption of junk food reached an all time high and I believe it literally wore out my pancreas because I got diabetes during the drive to the show. I was drinking gallons of water and stopping to let it out hourly. Also, my vision got blurry and as time passed awful physical problems followed.

A Move to Sanger, Texas

My entry into the banking field meant a move to Sanger, Texas (40 miles north), which was very easily done. We bought a new home there then sold our old one to our daughter and moved one vanload of stuff a day for a month. Since we had beds in both homes, it was no problem. In a week, I had located some local modelers and was soon flying with more new friends.

Harold Hardy, one of the best modelers, lived on a private estate four miles west of town where each person had one or more four-acre lots – most with hangers attached or close. There was a

78-acre lake on the place and two parallel grass runways. One was 3,100-feet long and the other was 1,300-inches, just for models. Several flyers lived there so naturally I bought a place there and enjoyed the most relaxed flying of my life. Often in the evening after dinner, we would fly Gentle Lady sailplanes in the dead air and get six to eight minute flights without benefit of thermals.

One of my best memories of that time was one day while I was flying my newly acquired quarter scale Cub. I caught the attention of none other than Dave Hoover of Coors Micro-jet (BD-5) fame. He wandered across the main runway to where we were flying on the short one and started asking questions about my Cub. I was flattered by the attention because I often watched him fly his full-sized Cub with envy. As I prepared it for another flight I explained all about the OS twin engine, etc., and asked if his Cub was this easy to start after I had flipped on the on-board ignition and carefully pulled the prop through until I felt the bump, then one flip and it was running. He was amazed with the sound of the four-stroke twin as I taxied out and remarked at how "real" it looked. After a scale like takeoff, I flew a wide 360-degree turn and came right over our heads, continuing upwind a good distance.

I then asked if his would do this and did a near perfect stall turn. He was impressed. On the way back I said, "How about this?" and dived to gain speed, then pulled it up and through a Cub type loop. Another "Wow!" followed. Now mind you, this is from an American Airlines Senior Captain who owned a half dozen planes and was a jet air show pilot!

After the next turn around I did a credible aileron roll, got another positive rave then turned and rolled inverted for another return, which he explained was probably not possible due to the oil pickup system in his Cub. He applauded my landing and thanked us for the show, then excused himself saying he needed to get ready to go to work. However, when he got back to his hanger he rolled his Cub out and took off heading away from Dallas/Fort Worth airport so we guessed he was going out to try rolling his Cub.

Pretty soon he was back and since I knew where he would enter the landing pattern (we all did it the same way) I flew my Cub over there then flew the same landing pattern with my model. I guessed the turn points pretty good and both planes came down the final approach side by side. Since I had just taken off and had fuel to burn I made a 45-degree turn over the approach end of the little runway and was amazed to see Dave follow in the big one. As both planes came right over our heads, we could see mine was just about quarter-size and assumed they were at the same altitude. Dave re-entered the pattern, landed and taxied into his hanger. A few minutes later, he fired up his twin Beech and blasted off heading right straight at Dallas/Fort Worth airport – what a way to get to work and what work!

All together, we lived in Sanger for 10 years. My business and social lives were far busier than my modeling life, not only because of the foregoing but also because I was doing a great deal of flying again. Not long after I went to work at the bank, I entered a limited partnership with three others and we bought a straight tail Cessna 182. It had belonged to Jack Parker, a very good friend with whom I had flown models since 1964. He kept it in immaculate condition and had recently had it repainted so it was "like new" even though it was really over 20 years old. Sixteen years previous, I had sold my Cessna Skyhawk with the idea of upgrading to a 182 so buying this plane was a good thing for me. Even though there were four partners in it, we never had a

scheduling conflict. The great advantages to this particular model were tall landing gear so I did not bump my forehead on the wing trailing edge and it was fastest of all model 182s.

More Competitions

One of the first places we went in it was the annual SIG Manufacturing contest in Montezuma, Iowa. This event was run by SIG employees and was for modelers with SIG products. I had built one of the then brand new Kadet SRs and modified it extensively by adding ailerons, flaps and spoilers to the wings. I also incorporated every feature I had ever heard of any airplane doing such as, bomb release, tow release, three different interchangeable camera mounts, smoke system, etc. This plane was built to bolt together so it was easy to dismantle it and stow it in the back seat of the Skylane. Ground transportation at destination was simply no problem because the event took place on the SIG airport. We landed, taxied in to the parking area, and unloaded and assembled the model.

I was so proud of the whole event (especially the model that flew so very well). Claude McCullough refused to come look at my plane and I was told later that he didn't like people messing up his designs. Well, in my opinion, he did accomplish his goal of a darn good trainer, which has been borne out in a super long product cycle. The way I (and thousands of others) used it also makes it the superior utility plane of all time. As such, it is the second most popular design I've made for others. Only the Gentle Lady surpasses it as I've built way over 100 of them. I am currently still flying a Kadet SR although much simpler (only additions are ailerons and flaps) but still capable of rolling circles.

Another modeling accomplishment during the Sanger era was the development of two fine scale models. The first was of an ultralight version of the N-3 PUP. I discovered the prototype at a really neat little airport only about 10 miles from the bank where I worked. I was surprised to find the man in charge was none other than Bob Counts, retired from working at General Dynamics and former Fort Worth Thunderbird member! After watching his demo flight, I thought the plane was just a big model and borrowed a set of blueprints from him. My model was a quarter scale version and plans were published in the January 1987 issue of Model Airplane News magazine.

Later that year we took it in the Skylane to Byron's for their expo. The very first person I saw when we landed was a friend who was the crew chief on the P-51 named Gunfighter which was parked close by. One of my partners in the Skylane (Wally Cochran) was amazed at how many people there knew me (and me, them). I was most pleased to find another modeler there who was flying an N-3.

Not long after that trip to Iowa, three of us four partners elected to fly to Brownsville and take in the Confederate Air Force (CAF) air show. We took turns flying down there, and, as it happened, I flew the leg into touchdown and taxied over to Southmost Aviation. The fellow who flagged us in and helped park the plane was none other than owner Ken Douglas (another modeler and longtime friend). You cannot imagine Wally's surprise and he said to Chuck Stevens, "Everywhere we go, the first people we see all know him.' Of course, I was proud. In my mind friend is the highest title one can have and I truly believe I will see every last one of them in the hereafter.

We had invites to a special cocktail party where we met and rubbed elbows with the movers and shakers of the CAF and their celebrities including Tennessee Ernie Ford (narrator), Hoot Gibson (astronaut), and Chuck Yeager (test pilot/author) among many others. It was a perfect weekend.

The other plane that I developed in the Sanger era was the Swick version of a clipped wing Taylorcraft. Again, it was a plane I discovered at an airport just north of Dallas. An airline pilot named Jim Swick figured out how to modify the original Taylorcraft into a very credible acrobatic aircraft. After that, his son Mike turned the process into a business and made many of them. He started with a bare bones framework and enlarged the rudder, adjusted the stabilizer incidence and melded a Pitts style nose bowl onto it complete with the 180 horsepower engine (original T-crafts came with 65 horsepower engines). The wings were dismantled and only the ribs used in the new one, which spanned a mere 27-feet where the original was 36-feet.

The result was a true “kick butt” flyer, which won regularly in competition and excelled at air shows. Again, my model was quarter-scale and emulated the prototype especially in flight. I didn’t get around to publishing the plans in Model Airplane News magazine until June 1995 because I was busy building more of them for others. I'm always pleased to get phone calls (from all over) from other modelers who are building that design. I even have pictures of many of them.

The Gatorbait – a Radio Control Airboat

Bud Cooley, one of my customers at the bank, discovered that I was a modeler and called one evening to see if he could come over and talk models. His idea was to build a Radio Control airboat so I helped him with materials to get it done and later did the plans and an article. The result of his labor was called Gatorbait and his wife painted an alligator on each side of it. When time came to go run it, we went to the flying field in Denton where one end of the runway was the very edge of the adjoining lake. We cleared our frequency with the flyers and ambled down to the water’s edge where we readied the airboat for the event. Now mind you this rig was 18-inches wide and 48-inches long and powered with a Quadra swinging an 18-inch prop behind which were twin rudders 12-inches high.

When we got it running, I pushed it into the lake and away it went with Bud at the controls. He drove it around in a circle, then through the cattails where a green mist marked its passage and then headed straight toward us. I was about to remind Bud that there was no reverse but before I could he drove it across the narrow sandy beach and way up the runway where a 180-degree turn resulted in a return to the water surface. At this point in time, I realized it was not a boat but rather a low flying aircraft and subsequently published the plans and article in Model Airplane News magazine.

Changing Times

The old proverb about all good things coming to an end was working on me. As vice president and cashier of the bank I was able to buy every single share of stock sold during the many years I worked there. It was a small bank but was growing nicely. Then a very bad man in the Penn

Square bank in Oklahoma perpetrated fraud on a major scale and was not caught by the bank examiners before the bank failed and nearly took down Continental Illinois and about 50 other banks between them in corresponding relationships. You may be sure that crew of examiners got in major hot water over their ineptitude.

Unfortunately for me, that crew came to our bank and summarily closed it. You may not know this but banks are privately owned businesses yet subject to federal scrutiny and regulation like you wouldn't believe. In the name of financial stability, these examiners decided they would leave no bank of less than $50 million in business. We were at $20 million, so one morning I came to work and watched the examiners close and lock the doors and, just like that, all my stock bought at $10 per share became instantly worthless. I started a consulting business and looked for an opportunity to get back into the model business.

I answered an ad in a model magazine and after a short interview was hired by the Fox Manufacturing business in Fort Smith, Arkansas. We ran three garage sales, donated our book and record collections, and moved what was left into storage and us into a real nice apartment in Fort Smith. Three days after I went to work my wife missed a 4-inch step on the sidewalk and broke her leg. To make matters worse, I set about doing what I thought Duke wanted me to do, but it soon became apparent that it was not what Betty wanted so we decided it would be a good idea to play like I just hadn't come there. We still had to stay in Fort Smith for my wife's medical care and for the lease to expire, so I built models for others and we enjoyed some travel and sightseeing.

One design I built a lot of while there was the Kadet SR so I built another for myself. I flew it with an OS 40 FSR and it was hot in Fort Smith. I often took it with me when we visited Albuquerque and one day while flying it at Maloof Airpark I was asked what engine I was using. The answer was not believed, so when I flew I really put on the best air show I could. But I noticed later that my engine was being thoroughly scrutinized by the local flyers. I honestly noticed very little difference in flight characteristics and although there was over a 4,000-foot difference in altitude, the needle valve did not need to be reset at either place.

A Return to New Mexico

We decided to move back to New Mexico (home) to help take care of our parents. As it happened, we bought our home from one of my wife's relatives who, with her husband, wished to move closer to the Veterans' Affairs Hospital across the city. He was also a modeler and she did ceramics, so a big plus was the finished garage in which I immediately arranged my workshop. Halloween 2000 was the 10th anniversary of our return.

Present Day (2000) Modeling Activities

One word to describe my modeling activity would surely be crazy! For example, today (December 26, 2000) it has been snowing since yesterday and will continue for at least another day we're told. It is 26-degrees and, as usual, I'm willing to drop whatever I'm doing to go flying whenever asked. My old buddy, Jim Malek (crazy fighter pilot), came over dressed in a one piece, day-glow orange, insulated hunting suit, insisting we go flying! So, we did. He had a 55-

inch wingspan version of the N-3 powered by a speed 400 electric motor so we hopped into his new Ford Supervan and drove over to the park where we dazzled the sledders while flying in a snowstorm.

He handed me the transmitter and hand-launched the plane. It wasn't long until the snow on my glasses made it difficult to see the plane so I passed the transmitter to him and wiped them off in time to watch his landing approach. I was surprised when he did not cut the power as he passed us less than six feet away and below two feet in altitude. He started a go around but had only managed 20-degrees of turn before the electronic speed control cut the motor and he was forced to land going away. The snow caused it to flip over on its back and we both had a big laugh and good-natured ribbing as we returned to the house for hot chocolate and pie.

My income tax returns list my occupation as technical writer and I have three books well underway in addition to writing numerous articles and kit reviews for the model magazines. When asked what I do by non-modelers I say I think up a design, build a test model, and fly it. If I like it and others express an interest, I then draw plans, build another, take pictures of the process, write a construction manual, and send it off to be published. That's about all I've done for the past 10 years, and I suppose it's all I'll do for the rest of my life.

Sometimes, when asked what I do, I just say, "Nothing I don't want to!' Mostly, flying models is what I'm all about.

AMA Leadership

Several years ago, George Aldrich was elected as an AMA vice president for District VIII and he asked me to be an associate vice president for New Mexico and part of Texas. I told him he was one of only about three people who could get me to do that and accepted. I've made it a point to visit every AMA club in my area and also many who are not affiliated, as well. Sure makes lots of modeling friends!

Here in the Albuquerque area where I live, there are 12 different modeling groups and 27 flying sites that I am aware. I have to say it that way because many years ago, while president of the El Paso club I discovered a group flying Radio Control a long, long way from our club field. I introduced myself to them and was told that they knew who I was and that I was welcome to come fly with them anytime. They asked that I not tell the others in our club, because they were not welcome!

Strange, isn't it? If there were millions of us I'd come closer to understanding that, but since we are so few in number it just beats me why we are not always happy to meet other modelers and share all we can.

Another thing that is common but baffling is the business of clubs splitting over trivial matters. I first became aware of this in Sacramento, California, where the Aero Aces split over the club's logo design (an Ace of Spades with wings on it). Since then, I've seen such silly things happen at least 15 more times! Can you see why I regard any modeler as a friend regardless of his affiliation (or lack thereof)?

As long as I'm at it, I might also mention the penchant of most Radio Control modelers to be "cheapskates.' The owner of the newest (and closest) hobby shop put it best when he complained about modelers whom he had never seen before coming into his shop and asking for a discount. His point was that the same modeler would not go into the stores on either side of him (K-Mart and Raley's) and do likewise, so why do they (we) do such a thing? Or worse, expect local dealers to keep stock on-hand and provide service but sell at the same price as mail order discounters. What's wrong with this picture?

National Laboratory Work

I live between two national laboratories so naturally get caught up in some capacity with some pretty strange operations involving model planes. Here are some examples. A couple of friends took me to lunch one day and interrogated me on the idea of using a Kadet SR to do photo reconnaissance. Next thing you know they were building 150% versions, which had been cleverly re-engineered to do the job.

Another time I was approached by the other lab to provide a plane to haul an air-sampling machine. As it happened, I had a giant Telemaster which I thought would do the job just fine so entered into a contract to provide same (against my better judgment based on previous bad experiences with government projects). The problems are changes in process and not paying expenses incurred or on time. True to form, this project was no different. The original concept called for a five-pound payload. But when the lab people first appeared with the payload it weighed 21 pounds and was several times larger than originally specified. This required a much larger engine and the additional power and payload were responsible for the airframe failure just a few flights into the testing phase. I am still owed for the additional expenses incurred and hold no hope of ever being able to collect.

Another friend, Taylor Collins, has an ongoing airborne photo plane operation to oversee artifacts in national monuments. I get to help with development from time to time and enjoy doing so immensely. Once while testing airborne TV my job was watching the monitor as the plane passed overhead. The picture was good enough to allow me to look for rattlesnakes.

I built a glider launcher to allow me to piggyback a Spirit 100 sailplane on a Kadet SR and flew it in special events The mother plane has an 83-inch wingspan and much more wing area so what do you think happens when this rig reaches altitude and I hit the release button? When asked, most say the glider will zoom and some say they both just fly on. Actually, the mother plane drops like a bomb because together the whole rig is like an enormous bi-plane and flies very slow. When separated, the mother plane is way below stall speed and drops like a rock but the sailplane is at minimum cruise speed so it flies on without change of altitude or airspeed. As the mother plane drops, the nose lowers and soon enough it regains flying speed and levels off at a lower altitude.

Building for Others and Lessons Learned

I still build lots of planes for others and enjoy the wide variety. When I lived in Texas, I flew with the son of a favorite couple I met as their banker. He once offered to trade a huge Quadra-

powered Fly Baby for some stuff I had, so I agreed. I spent a couple of days cleaning up the Fly Baby then he called and wanted to back out of the deal. I said OK but was a little put out, as he made no offer to offset the time and effort I put into his plane. After that, I secretly vowed never to do business with him again.

Some years after I moved back to New Mexico I got a call from him and he told me he heard from a mutual friend that I built for others and wanted me to build a Lazy Ace bi-plane for him. The little voice in my head was saying no, but I remembered his folks fondly, so I agreed to do it. As always, my price quote was for labor plus materials, which he agreed to. I did a very good job on it and shipped it to him.

He told me he had left a very good paying job with a major company and bought a Radio Shack store where he lived then put in a hobby shop with it. He was displeased with the cost of materials so I asked him what would make him happy. Now, mind you, this was nearly a four-figure deal, and when he was through answering my question, I sent him the leftover Monokote, two partial cans of spray paint and a check for $19.80!

A short time later, he called to ask me to build another plane for him. I told him I was not too familiar with the design but if he would give me a week I would find plans, have a look, and give him a firm price.

Of course, I never bothered to look, as I knew what I would charge normal customers – $1,000. A week later, when he called back, I made a little small talk and when he anxiously asked for the price, I couldn't just say no, so I told him it would be $5,000. He thanked me and said something about getting back to me – funny thing, though, I have yet to hear back. You ever see one of those signs in an auto repair shop that lists labor rate like $10 an hour or $50 an hour if you want to help?

Kit Reviews

Another thing I started doing a lot of (again) was kit reviews. I originally started doing these just a few months after Don Dewey started RC Modeler magazine. Matter of fact, as a result of phone conversations about them I submitted the first draft of what became the standard sidebar format for kit reviews. I have always enjoyed doing these and have also always followed the manufacturer's instructions reasoning that is the way they want it done and is the way a new guy would do it.

As a result, I get a little exasperated to read comments like "catering to the big advertisers" or worse "here's an honest kit review" and what follows is nothing more than kit bashing. For example, I once reviewed a jet looking sport scale plane by the biggest kit manufacturer. My article was published first in Model Airplane News magazine. Right behind it, another modeler reviewed the same kit for a different magazine and emphasized his was an honest review. I noted the finished weight of his model was nearly two pounds heavier than mine and he "dissed" the flight characteristics. Well, with that small wing area it was no wonder there was that difference. What really got me, though, was his statement early in the text that he replaced the provided firewall with his own made of ¼-inch aircraft-grade plywood. That was totally unnecessary, as the firewall was simply a non-load bearing former. After that, it just got worse. Occasionally my

friends rib me (good-naturedly) about a kit review or about whether a certain comment I make while building or flying will be in the article.

Model Aviation Education

About the best thing that has happened to my modeling, life began innocently enough sometime around 1996. A friend of mine was asked to run a program for Radio Control at a private school here in Albuquerque. It was originally designed to have the students, aged 9 to 14, assemble, and fly slope soaring gliders. For this, they would be bused to a local slope each day. The original principal was unable to direct this, as was my friend who suggested to them that it was something I might do.

School officials contacted me and we had a couple of meetings before I was approved. I pointed out to them that the program as designed wouldn't meet their objectives because it depended on substantial winds in the morning and typically winds did not rise until the afternoon and were mostly variable thermal activity. I changed the program format to have the kids build and fly House of Balsa two by six sailplanes and fly on the soccer field. That first year was definitely a learning experience for me. I learned the plane was way too difficult to build and was way too fragile for beginners and was difficult to fly.

After the dust settled and we had time to think about it, I decided to modify a plane I had built on a dare for use the next year. The school officials were so pleased with the summer program that they asked us to continue it during the regular school year so we had an opportunity to test the new design by having a different set of kids build and fly it. All went very well so we asked the kids to name the plane and they chose Sunrider.

I made 50 kits in my shop before the next summer sessions started and the things that made the plane so much better were sheet tail surfaces, constant chord wing, mostly hardwood ahead of the balance point and much "Murphy proofing" of the construction.

My main help came from a friend who was battling an alcohol problem and sometimes his dad. We invited all club flyers and shop owners to come visit and since they were impressed and/or amazed we asked them to come help. Some did for a day or two but none were able to give six hours a day for six weeks each summer, so we selected certain students and began training them as instructors, and it worked!

To enable us to fly on a standard soccer field we had to cut 50 feet of line off the upstarts we were using to launch the planes to flight altitude (200 to 300 feet). First flights were ridiculously short, but it wasn't long before the first five-minute flight then another. As soon as the kids saw that it could be done, they were doing it pretty regularly. After the first year we had a group of flyers with planes needing another course for the following year, thus the advanced program came into being.

From then to now (2001) the program has remained the same. It is two sessions of three weeks each. There are four courses offered. The first two hours of each day is the beginners' course. In it the student gets a Sunrider kit, a four-channel radio system with two servos and NiCads, two

rolls of covering and a two-meter upstart, plus all the help needed to build, cover and fly solo. The cost of the beginners' course is $370.

The second two hours of each day are for the advanced classes and require the student to have a serviceable two-meter Radio Control sailplane and be solo qualified. In this course, the kids learn aerobatics and contest procedures along with advanced techniques including maintenance and repair. Cost of this class is $170.

The third course is for instructors and candidates may or may not be enrolled in either of the other courses. In it, we teach kids to teach kids. Our current instructor corps is four 12-year-olds (some with three years experience) and the chief flight instructor just turned 13. 2000 was his fifth year in the program.

The fourth course is offered occasionally as demands dictate. In it the students are bused to the local glider port and there take ground school and actually fly full-size sailplanes. Their instructors are amazed at the depth of knowledge our students possess when they arrive. To date 187 kids have completed the courses. Since the summer school is open for everyone, public school students outnumber the others.

The Hiss 'n Boink Contest

About the same time, I got involved with the foregoing program, another Albuquerque Soaring Association (ASA) member, Vic Plath, and I decided the club needed an entry-level event to go with all the other events being held, so we developed what is now known as the Hiss 'n Boink contest. The idea is an opportunity to learn to catch thermals and land properly. Hiss is the sound a sailplane makes as it slides smoothly through the grass being landed properly. Boink is the sound of all other landings.

I worried (needlessly) about grading the landings but felt I could bully the entrants if necessary (just like big John Nielsen used to do at the SOAR Nats years ago). As it turned out, the other pilots who weren't flying volunteered their opinions on each landing score by loudly shouting "boink" when necessary.

These landings were to be made along a 50-foot tape. If the glider's nose came to rest on the tape, 100 points were awarded and the score was downgraded one point for each inch away. Launches were with a pair of high starts made from one standard high start that was halved.

The event was normally held on an enlarged practice football field. Usually we hooked one high start on each end-zone goalpost, so no matter which way the wind blew a proper launch could be made. We started each contest by having pilots vote on the duration goal but most picked two minutes, so we soon settled on four minutes because it required finding some lift each flight. There were only two classes (Gentle Lady and all other two meter) for a long while, but, as electrics became increasingly popular, we added a class for them and allowed entrants to choose attempting three four-minute flights with no charge between and motor run limited to one minute then fly for four more. The other choice was a single flight with unlimited motor run and 12-minute maximum flight time. In either case, the same landing scheme was used. Last year we

combined classes into all two-meter (RE only) gliders or two-meter RES sailplanes and we kept the electric class, although it needed a revision because the 12-minute target was too easy to do.

I would like you to know that with only one exception, the kids from Sandia Prep have placed in the top three places of the monthly Hiss 'n Boink every time they've entered. They are shy and very busy but do occasionally find the opportunity to enter. On the other hand, I have been a merit badge counselor in the Boy Scouts of America program for over 30 years and can count on one hand the number of Scouts who have successfully completed the Aviation Merit Badge. Many times, I have heard it referred to the most difficult of them all. Hmmm.

Competition Between Clubs

Another event that was more fun than the law allowed was an annual affair between the ASA and the Arizona group. It was held on neutral ground (half way between Albuquerque and Phoenix) in the Round Valley (Springerville, Arizona), 16 miles west of the state line. It has been going on for some 30 years but seems to be losing interest.

The idea was to spend one-day slope soaring on Green's peak (11,000-feet with good road all the way to the top) and the other in a flat land thermal contest at the local airport. There was a bet involving a bronzed turkey foot and the loser was to buy the watermelon the following year. One year my old flying buddy (OFB) Taylor Collins won the thermal event with a Gentle Lady carrying one pound of ballast and in so doing beat about a dozen really fine "glass slippers."

When the bouncers (EPP planes) got popular, eight plane furballs were pretty common. The slope activity was widely varied and planes were way large and very small as well as almost everything you could imagine. A couple of times Rick Palmer showed up with a spud gun and many took target practice (all misses) before finally a bouncer was hit at the slope and a mighty cheer erupted from the rest of us.

Memorable Modelers in General

There are a lot of people I have known over the years who I wish to remember. Many happy moments with them will have to be omitted for room constraints so I will name some names and a single incident to remember them by (and of course, I will forget a few, but that is why I'm writing this now before I forget any more).

Sandy Frank (son of old friend Murry) is the District VIII AMA vice president who replaced George Aldrich and it is my pleasure to serve with him as an associate vice president.

Ed Couch is the guy who bought out Joe's barn (from Weatherford) and moved it to a little town north of Fort Worth. It had a Radio Control field adjacent and was what I would call a perfect set-up. Unfortunately, Eddie closed it and opened a hobby shop in the mid-cities area, then closed that and now is known as an indoor Radio Control guru.

Randy Randolph is one of my all time favorite people and a person I would most like to be like. He is so mellow and humble and not only a great modeler but also a great writer. I love flying planes he designed and am proud to have him as a hero.

Duane Brown was the Kraft repair guy in Dallas when I met him and we occasionally crossed paths in modeldom, but became close when I left EK and started flying Kraft radios. Our most memorable experience would have to be running the racing events at a Lincoln, Nebraska Nats. We drove up from Dallas in a most leisurely fashion and occasionally stopped on a frontage road just to fly a Quickee 500 with cut down wing and an OS 25 for power. At the Nats, Duane was the contest director and I was expediter.

I tried to keep the flyers loose and laughing to ease the natural tension but it was nevertheless a very tiring task. One afternoon when we got back to the dorms and were just relaxing, a loud profane conversation emanated from the parking lot and could still be heard as the two participants rode the elevator up to the twelfth floor and came down the hall, past our room (with the door open) and into their room, the door of which they naturally left open. After about 30 minutes, the yelling and cussing would subside to conversational levels, so I told Duane I was going to go stir them up as they were friends of mine and I delighted in twisting their tails. They (Ted White and Dan Parsons) were upset with the scale event director (Dick Carson of Spokane), and, lucky for him, their bark was worse than their bite or he'd be dead. All I had to do was mention his name and that would set off the yelling and cussing again. Once I told them I thought he was a good contest director, and the next time I told them, he said he really liked them both (Tee hee hee!).

Mike Clark (former Dallas Cowboy kicker) and Chuck Holden were bank officers at Oak Cliff Bank in Dallas and dang nice guys when I first met them while I was still working at EK. We soon became fast and lifelong friends and I helped teach them to fly Radio Control. Not long thereafter, we founded the Southwest Modelers Show and took on a few partners: Bill Glancy, Joe Sullivan and an engineer whose last name I cannot remember. We worked really long and hard to make it a premier show and the very year we were set to pass the breakeven point, the HIAA show came to Dallas. For the one and only time in their history, they opened it to the public, sold tickets below our cost, and effectively put us out of business.

Riley Wooten was one of the many people I knew from afar but had never met until George Aldrich and I went to Lubbock to smooth feathers after Gene Hempel and the AMA headquarters mob mismanaged it so badly. While there, we spent a lot of time with Riley, and the next morning we dropped George at the airport then spent the entire morning visiting only to discover we had a great deal in common. Riley is a great man and I'm grateful just to know him.

When I went to Omaha, the first modelers I met were Rick Stansbury, Sam Cosentino, and Tom Runge. Rick and Sam are related. Rick has a heart as big as a bushel basket and enthusiasm to match. Sam has the finest modelers' shop I've ever been in – no kidding. It's huge with counters all the way around, cabinets and cupboards to match and free standing building tables; all white with overhead fluorescent lighting so there are no shadows anywhere. No wonder he's such a good modeler. Even better, he has a great personality to go with all that.

Tom Runge (son of Paul, who established Ace RC) was also a member of the Omahawks (as were Rick and Sam) and over the years has become a most pleasant business contact as well. I first did business with the Sig Manufacturing Company in 1962 and for many years talked with the principles on the phone but did not really get to know them until flying with and later going to trade shows with them. Glen (aka Pancho) was killed while flying a Pitts Special at an air show so I never got to know him personally but came to admire his abilities greatly when told that he built most of the machinery at the plant and when shown various planes he built. Hazel, his widow, is another matter. She is awesome in intellect and ability (business and craftsmanship) but best of all a very caring person who loves every aspect of aviation. I've always felt a kinship with her way above ordinary. Maxey Hester is also a fine craftsman and essential part of the Sig team.

Through my association with the Council Bluffs Cobras RC Club (who I teasingly refer to as the ground loving snakes), I met a slew of outstanding people and wish to mention several of them here. Marv Wilken is a master modeler and all around good guy who made things happen at contests, club meetings and everywhere else we got involved with modeling.

Lyn Fehr was another character fun to be around. He did a lot of work on/with Cleveland Plans but I will always remember his work camera, because we walked around IN it. No fooling. I think the lens to film length was 33 feet. We used it to enlarge a plan from 40-inch span to 120-inch span, for example.

Will Dammann was a civilian working in the same office with me at SAC Headquarters so we became fast friends quickly. It didn’t take me long to realize his genius and I’ve often thought, and sometimes said, his mind was better because it had not been contaminated by college attendance. He had a lab at work and I was fascinated watching him work with electronics in the radar bands. Some evenings we spent time together in his basement at home and I’ve seen him think up a circuit then tack it together with a soldering iron, so that it looked like a giant mobile, then power it up and make it work. He would then design circuit boards and build them better than you could buy! He has since built an engine that runs on garbage and emits water vapor!

Roy Hogan was another master modeler who became lifelong friend and has since retired to Arizona. Roy built some of the very best models I've ever had the pleasure to own and fly

Dean Koger and Leo Prescott were the two others (besides Joe Gross and me) involved in the conception of the National Falcon Tournament. Dean was an engineer in the Air Force space program and a dang fine pattern pilot. Leo was a pilot who also flew pattern and semi-scale. Leo had a brother who was in aero engineering at college when I met him and who went on to design and manufacture the Prescott Pusher full-scale aircraft.

Charlie Legg was also in the Cobras and is well known around speed circles in U-Control having won many Nats events. Charlie is a world-class machinist and made his own engines. Later, he made his own helicopter. When I got into them, I got him to assemble and trim (for flight) my Kavan Jet Ranger, which I learned to fly on and which never gave a moments trouble. Charlie also flew an Olympic 99 sailplane with a .049 glow engine to get it up to altitude. Jim Porter (later employed by Sig) and Terry Edmunds used to come across the state of Iowa just to fly gliders with us in Omaha and Council Bluffs.

Max Hansen brought friends and came to Falcon events from South Dakota and is another character I won't forget. At a social he and a mutual friend Mike Disser, a U.S. Army captain/green beret, got drunk and Max (fearing only himself) gave me a wad of money early on and made me promise not to give it back to him later that night. He tried but I didn't and the next morning when I did give it back to him, he seemed genuinely grateful.

One year we took 10 16-year-old kids to the SOAR Nats in Chicago. Clark Wade, one of these kids, won the F-1 Nats some years later and Doug Ferguson, another one, won Nats pattern years later. My two oldest children were part of this group. My daughter, Janet, flew very well and was counted among the Women in National Gliding Society (WINGS). My son, Alan, was a great glider flyer as well as a participant in the previously mentioned National Falcon Tournament.

Memorable Modelers from the SOAR Nationals

The SOAR Nats was a huge glider event for all who attended but for most it was also a great socializing event as well. During those years I got to know and spend some time with such notables as Carl Goldberg, Sid Axelrod, Walt Good, Don Clark, KK and Gwen McClure, Jeff Troy, Rod Smith, Ron Stanfield and many, many others from all over the United States.

Memorable Modelers from the National Miniature Pylon Racing Association

The National Miniature Pylon Racing Association (NMPRA) was another happening that had a terrific social aspect to it. As a result of my participation in its formative years I came to know John Brodbeck, Bobby Toms, Bob Smith, Terry Prather, Tommy Prothro, Gil Horstman, Roger Hornsby, Loren Tregallas, Sam Fly, Gary Clay, Monte Moncrief, Ed Rankin and about 50 others.

Memorable Modelers from Business Dealings

There are a lot of people with whom I have had some business dealings but have met only briefly (if at all). I would like to get to know them better and even get to fly models with them. These include Randy McGee and Bill Knost of Oklahoma, Chuck Anderson, Dave Falkenhagen, Tom Cimato, Joe Demarco, Bill Deans, Hal DeBolt, Cliff Swartz, and Cal Woolitz. The following are people I know and/or do business with but have yet to meet in person or would like to meet again: Bill Evans, John Gross, Don McGovern, Doc Mathews, Kirt Massey, Bob Sealy, Jim Pearson, Larry Renger, LeRoy Satterlee, Ralph White, Winston Marshall, Ralph Warner, Bill Bennett, Tom Atwood, Debra Sharpe, Wil Byers, Chris Cannelli and Frank Fanelli.

From writing articles and columns in the model press, as well as attending trade shows, I have met lots of folks I would like to know better. This is because (with about a half dozen notable exceptions) all the people I've met and gotten to know in this business are truly great people and, in most cases, are way above average. Some of these would include Jim Sunday, Bill Northrop, John Worth, Don Lowe, Dave Brown, Jim Odino, Bill Salkowsky, Bob Dunham, Wally McCallister, Bob Boucher, Jay Brandon, George Steiner, Art Schroeder, Norm Stedman, Rex O'Conner, Bob Sliff, John Greenshields, Paul Bender, Don Anderson, Ray Hayes, Joe Zingali, Dick Kidd, Peter Waters, Dick Kennison, Rick Lederman, Skip Miller, Bob McDaniel, Jim

Miller, Joe Wagner, Randy Henderson and many, many others – most of whom I am not thinking about just now but who will pop back into my mind after this is published!

Special Friends

Very special friends include Bill Thomas of Tulsa, Oklahoma, who was a longtime faithful flyer of EK radio equipment and great fun to be with at a pattern contest. Once, at Rough River, Kentucky, Bill, Joe Gross, and I were there for a Masters pattern contest. I assumed the role of team manager and presumed to coach both Bill and Joe. There were lots of laughs and much good-natured ribbing, but fortunately, for the both of them no permanent damage resulted (Tee hee hee!).

Another in this category was Frank Garcher (now deceased) of Midwest Products fame. There is no accounting for why we were such good friends, we just were. I loved to share good ideas with him and he called me about once a month for years and years, mostly to compare notes on personal health (we both have diabetes and weight was a mutual enemy). He flew to all parts of the globe on business and, when passing close to where we lived, he would arrange to lay over and stay the night with us or, if time constrained, meet at the airport. I do miss that.

Frank Hoover was another special friend whom I met in the late 1950s and stayed in contact with to the day I spoke at his funeral. Frank was very intelligent, innovative, and daring in the radio model field. It was my honor to know him.

Joe Keevil (retired from the U.S. Air Force), owner of Modesto Hobby and Crafts, was inspirational in getting me to go to OCS, which boosted my career immensely. In turn, I encouraged him to get into the hobby business where he survived in spite of me!

Hal J. Wood of Sacramento, California, is another special friend. He called me shortly after plans for a quarter-scale 1946 Taylorcraft BC-12D, designed by me, appeared in Model Aviation magazine. He told me of his intent to build it as accurately to scale as possible and since he sounded like a highly experienced modeler, I encouraged him to do exactly that. Sometime later, I discovered he had never built or flown a Radio Control model when he told me of the guff he was getting at the hobby shop. Soon after that, he mailed me a video of his plane – it was beautiful. I encouraged him to take it to the hobby shop so his detractors could see it. He did and called me as soon as he got home – so excited he was hard to understand. Seems the local hotshot was so impressed he arranged to be the team pilot and when finished they flew it in many contests around the northern California area winning every contest entered! Hal kept me abreast of the progress from initial building through the flying events with videos he called “As the Taylorcraft Turns,” complete with narration. Wouldn’t everybody like to have a flying buddy like that?

Harold and Donna Hardy and their two sons lived on the place known as the bar VK estates – the country airport/home sites previously mentioned. Harold flew 747 size airplanes for American Airlines occasionally and private planes and models the rest of the time. His hangar, which was adjacent to his very nice home on eight-acres, had three Cessnas and one son’s (Jim) homebuilt. His basement had many models belonging to him and both sons. The three of them and I had a

lot of fun flying both full size and models. Unfortunately, Harold was killed at that place while flying a first time passenger in a Piper Cub he was part owner of.

Friends Made Through AMA Business

AMA business has been a great opportunity to make friends all over the southwestern United States. Some of them are people I wish were neighbors so we could spend more time flying together. Among them would be people like Chick Frierson, Ernie Harwood, Gil Merriman, Jim Maddox, Tom Morgan, Carl Moore, Gary Kyle, Glen Nesbitt, Jack Ostrum, Eddie Paquette, Ed Belcher, Bill Buttram, Pat Doan, Alan Granat, Ed Hull, Chuck Andraka, Stan and Helen Johnson, Frank Green, Pat Tritle, Joel C. de Baca, Darrell Yonkers, Ken Williams, Chuck Wood, Rick Lee, Bill Melton, Greg Jorgensen, Don Fry, Tom Hill, Andy Wells and flyers all over the state of New Mexico and west Texas.

Friends Made Through the Albuquerque Soaring Association

I have been a member of the Albuquerque Soaring Association (ASA) for many years and, as a result, have flown and socialized with a very fine bunch of people including Dave Thornberg, Steve Work, Charlie Vergo, Terry Tombaugh, Jack Lyall, Richard Shagam, Clint Lashway, Charlie Zaffery, Bill Wilson, Bruce Twining, Jason Springer, Tom Scott, Phil Renaud, John and Karen Ihlein, Phil Gibert, Richard Dick, Ted Guy, Dick Moore, Buzz Averill, Taylor Collins and many, many others.

Memorable Student Modelers

Last but not least, here are some stories about some big characters in little bodies. As I write this five years of summer school programs have passed into history. These programs are sponsored by Sandia Prep School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and go on during the month of June plus first half of July each summer.

We were always short of flight instructors, so in the early years I drafted a teenager named Toby Herrera who had learned to fly with adults in the ASA. Toby would much rather show off his flying skills than teach, but while flying for fun one Saturday morning I helped Jason Everett destroy his almost-ready-to-fly (ARF) glider by center punching the equipment barn door. Jason was crestfallen and dejected so I called Toby over, introduced them, and sent them up to the classroom to get one of the Sunrider trainers, which Toby was to use to teach Jason to fly one on one. Less than three hours later Jason was flying it solo and catching it at the end of each flight “because, that's how Toby was doing it!’

Another of my favorite instructor stories involves a very precocious little redhead with a “tail” named Erik Hauswald. He had gotten to be a very good pilot both at hooking thermals and landing on the spot, but longed for his parents (both doctors) to come see him fly. By and by, one day, close to the end of the school session, his mother drove into the parking lot. Upon seeing her, he immediately asked me if he could take her up on the buddy box. Of course, I said yes, knowing he had never done it before but also knowing he was pretty sharp and would know how.

He briefed his mom on how the controls worked and what the flight would be like then talked a classmate into letting him use the recently retrieved up start and to launch his plane for them. I was oh-so-very-proud of them and when the very successful flight was over, he asked his mom if she wanted to do it again. She looked at me quizzically and I just nodded so she said, “Sure.’ He quickly replied, “Well, go get the chute.’ She looked at him, thinking, “Why you insolent pup,” but before she could say anything, he continued as though uninterrupted, “That’s the way it works, Mom. If you want to fly you gotta go get the chute, yourself.’ She did. And they did. And we all went home very happy.

One of the members of the very first class was a little wisp of a guy named Alexander Zannes. He was really sharp but really too young to be in the class. He came back each year thereafter, and I liked his parents from the very first day I met them. Several visits later, they wandered into the room and referred to themselves as “trust fund hippies,” which endeared them to me forever!

We encourage the moms to come fly the trainers so they can get a feel for what their kids are doing, but we strongly recommend that the kids NOT let dads fly their planes because dads think, “If he can, I certainly can,” but they can't. Alexander’s dad, Tom, learned that the hard way. But doted on his son, so he did the next best thing and got his own plane then expected Alex to teach him to fly it. Ha! Ever try to teach your spouse to drive?

During the third year, I was late getting down to the flying field from the classroom, and as I approached, I could hear Alex ordering everyone around. I was very amused, but it occurred to me that he would make a good instructor, so the other instructors and I set about teaching him how to teach. By the end of year four, he was the new chief flight instructor and, along with four other 12-year-olds, now formed the core of flight instructors.

Another example of the “Don't let dad fly” situation is the father/son combo of Peter and Peyton Parnegg. Peter (the dad) wrecked Peyton’s gas job so Peyton demanded that Dad get his own – which he did. It is a Sig Kadet Senior and, after two years, is nearly ready to test fly. They are a great team and Peyton was also in the first year’s class along with his grandfather, Hannes, so they sat side-by-side and built their gliders together!

I miss Javier Pijoan whose family moved to Colorado last year. Javier (pronounced Haw-vie) was a good builder but a superb flyer and soon advanced to flying electric-powered gliders very well. His grandfather was my doctor when I was in high school.

Ryan McDaniel is another student with a story (as though any of them didn’t). When he was learning to fly, he had a bad habit of holding the stick too tight thus not feeling the neutral, which caused his plane to drop off into a death spiral every flight. I was unable to assess the problem or help him stop that, so one day when my friend Taylor Collins was visiting, I asked him to help Ryan. Taylor soon got likewise exasperated and on about the third flight was heard saying, “If you don’t stop that I’m going to knock your head off and kick it around the field like a soccer ball.’ Would that cure you? It did for Ryan, who is now one of the better flyers and an instructor as well. And, I must also say, that expression is now an inside joke and often heard on our flying field.

Two very dear students are the brothers, Danny and Sammy Orasco. Danny is older and was also in one of the first classes. Sammy was way too young to qualify for our class but would hang out with his brother every chance he got. They really love each other, so we just sort of included Sammy in all we were doing. He was so happy when he was finally old enough to be in the class and really build his very own plane. Danny got his driver's license last year and I sure do miss him, although he comes by occasionally to say hi.

Evan Scott was the littlest student we had and came to class everyday soaking wet. About the third day of this, I asked why and was told it was because he had swimming classes before he came to school. What he lacked in size he more than made up with confidence. He quickly caught on to the flying game and just got better and better. The first year that flying full-size sailplanes was offered, Evan Scott enrolled and was bussed out to the local gliderport for flying lessons. The instructors there were amazed at his knowledge of aircraft functions, weather, especially thermal flying and all else that goes with flying. To enable him to see over the sides of the sailplane they had to round up all the seat cushions they could find for him to sit on. He made up for the inconvenience with his flying ability, and, to this day, his instructors out there talk about him to all who will listen.

Memorable True Modelers

Now, I want to mention a couple of guys who are representative of what modeling is all about. Let's start with Irv Lenz whom I first met in 1964 – the dawn of the age of proportional radio systems. Irv is an old Navy pilot who worked at Sandia Corporation for a long, long time and is now retired. He lives to fly planes and loves to go fast and turn left – another term for racing. Irv is a lot like my buddy Joe Gross in that they do what they do for the sheer love of doing it. Both will go to great lengths just to fly and are just as happy to be last as to win. Neither is zeroed in on just one thing, however. Irv (aka Irvo the servo) also flies giant-scale planes and Joe also flies gliders. I very much appreciate their attitudes and enthusiasm and feel it a real pleasure just to know them.

The other guy I want to talk about is Dan Parsons. I met Dan at the same time I met Irvo and we all benefited from the experience of flying prototype F&M radios. Dan was also in the Navy (submariner) and worked at Sandia Corporation until retirement. Dan used to fly pattern planes (as did Irvo and I) but evolved to scale quickly, especially World War II heavy iron fighter planes. Dan is a living legend with his twin engine DeHavilland Hornet, which he has flown all over the United States. Dan is even better known for his outstanding photography. Especially his pictures of scale models in flight; many of which have graced the covers of our model magazines.

Dan also has another dimension in modeling. Some time back he was introduced to electric-powered models by Gary Kyle (retired from the U.S. Air Force). Gary has the unique ability to be able to get more flying out of a model than was thought possible. Gary, flying models of World War II Navy fighters, really got Dan interested, because the performance was and is unbelievable. Now, Dan flies these kinds of planes and sounds like a zealous missionary when he talks about his e-planes!

Dick Roberts has been around Albuquerque for way longer than I have and is a dyed in the wool modeler but somehow our paths just never crossed until just a few years ago. Dick was big time into Radio Control boats at the time but did come to the "Friday lunch bunch" where we first met. He talked about flying with the old timers back in single-channel days, and, as time passed, we came to be pretty good friends. I've built a couple of planes for him and we've gone flying together occasionally with electric planes, mostly, but there is another facet to him as well. Dick is a world-class fisherman and has fished all over the world, even inside the Arctic Circle. He doesn't particularly like to eat them (I do), so he mostly catches then releases them. I've seen pictures of him with 70 to 80 pound trout (the biggest I've ever caught was less than five pounds). I've had the great honor of fishing with Dick a couple of times and only wish it had been lots more. But, beyond all this, there is the fact that Dick is just a lot of fun to be with, which accentuates the joy of modeling.

Another good friend is Pete Young. I think of Pete as the Steve Canyon of the missile force. Like Steve, Pete was a colonel in the U.S. Air Force when we first met. He is very deceptive to look at, because he appears much younger than he really is and he is intense. He thinks at warp speed and comprehends the technical aspects of complicated mechanisms as easily as I look at pictures. Pete has a terrific sense of humor and a writing style to match. Both of us do kit reviews and appreciate every opportunity to see the newest, latest, best of what there is in the model world. His last military assignment was back to MIT from which he had graduated as an aeronautical engineer long ago. While there, he elected to retire from active duty and assumed a position in the faculty. He is a mover and shaker in the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) programs for college student teams and has access to all frontiers of flying. Since I hunger for knowledge of all things flying, I literally hang on every word out of his mouth and would love to know all he knows. Now, set all that aside for a moment and let me tell you about Pete the modeler. He likes anything that flies but probably likes sailplanes best (as do I). In the short while he was stationed here we had some fun times flying such oddities as the Sig TriStar and Lazy Bees as well as a variety of sailplanes. See why I feel so fortunate to have such a person as a friend?

Old Flying Buddies

OFB is an acronym for "old flying buddy.' I have had an OFB everywhere I've been in this life. Currently my OFB is a web-footed swamp stomper from Louisiana who has lived in New Mexico so long his gills are gone. He is known in these parts as Ted Guy, but I can't be sure that is not an alias. There is a biblical scripture that applies especially to Ted – John 8:44 "…because there is no truth in him.' Or as a mutual friend says, "He'd tell a lie when the truth would do.' All this is to illustrate the sheer orneriness of my OFB. He delights in getting me to believe something he made up or is otherwise not really so. And, he accomplishes it about two or three times out of 100. What goes along with this is a quick wit. He can reply with a witty expression faster than most people can talk. In other words, he keeps me laughing, and laughing is good for both of us. Oh, by the way, did I mention that we fly together most often and that he is a superb pilot? He (like me) likes all kinds of planes except jets and monsters. Both of us have many electrics and, I'll guess, they are what we fly the most. But, we also both have Radio Controls as well and fly them when the mood strikes. Since he works nights and has his off days during the week we go flying during the week while school is in session so we have free rein of the parks and miss the weekend crowds.

We also both like to eat and often fly until lunchtime then go eat followed by home for a nap. Ah, such a life.

In Conclusion

Just in case it didn't come through really clear, I need to tell you that this chapter (and me in general) is all about friends who just happen to be modelers and not vice-versa. To my way of thinking, friends are the most important because they go with us when we die, as also goes what we've learned. Models (like money) stay here. Do you see what I mean?

In keeping with a long-standing tradition of saving the very best for last, I have barely mentioned my very best friend, modeling pal, etc. – my wife Karen. I would probably have been a modeler even if I had not met and married her, but there is no way it would have been so enjoyable. She has never begrudged the time and money like many do. She has helped hold, go get, bring, run with, launch, support and all else, that comprises total support. She is a great scorekeeper and official (with whom no one ever argues!). Her knowledge of planes – Radio Control and otherwise – is legendary. She learned to fly our Cessnas and other flyers cannot fool her about flying. She once built a very nice Speedee-built P-51 Mustang. She even edits all my writing. For me, the best part of her modeling activity is having her by my side on the way too and from all the events we're involved in and listening to what I have to say. Any wonder why I value her opinion and judgment so much?

Thanks, Sweetie, for everything....

(signed) Jim Simpson, 2000

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