



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of STEPHEN CALHOUN (CAL) SMITH 1915 – 1964



Transcribed & Edited by SS (03/2003), Updated by JS (12/2006), Reformatted by JS (02/2010)

Career:

- Editor of Flying Models magazine from 1947 to 1948
- Did dozens of color cover paintings for American Modeler magazine in the late 1950s and early 1960s
- Had design articles published in numerous modeling magazines
- Won the first Nationals carrier deck event in 1950 flying his AD-2 Skyraider
- In 1952 designed one of the first Control Line team racers

Honors:

- 1982: Model Aviation Hall of Fame
 - 2000: Kits and Plans Antiquitous (KAPA) Hall of Fame
 - 2006: Vintage RC Society (VRCS) Hall of Fame
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The following information on Cal Smith was written by Dick Sarpolus in 1998.

Master modeler S. Calhoun (Cal) Smith was simply one of the very best modelers ever in this hobby. He was an accomplished designer, builder, and flyer of all model aircraft types – Free Flight, Control Line, and Radio Control. He would design an aircraft, build and fly it, ink the plans for magazine publication, write the accompanying construction article and take and process the photographs to illustrate the article.

And as a true artist his color painting of aircraft, both full-scale and models, appeared on dozens of magazine covers. As a former World War II Air Force pilot, his experience and knowledge of aircraft was evident in his paintings and in his model aircraft designs.

For a while, Smith was the editor of Flying Models magazine, back in 1947 to 1948. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, he did dozens of color cover paintings for American Modeler magazine and his design articles appeared regularly in that and other magazines.

Smith would occasionally team with other model builders to co-develop an article project with them; some of his best team efforts were with Frank Lashek for Control Line scale models. They did an F-86 Sabre and F9F Panther, both DynaJet powered and a 4-engine B-14 – three impressive aircraft. The team also turned out several RC boat projects.

Cal was frequently in the forefront of new types of modeling; he and his AD-2 Skyraider won the very first Control Line carrier deck event held at the Nationals in Dallas, Texas, in 1950. His Ole Slippery Control Line team racer design in 1952 was one of the first Control Line team racer aircraft. He did a mini bi-plane Control Line model in 1949, the Smith Special, using the then

new glow plug K&B Infant .02 engine for power. Smith's Frisky Pete Control Line aerobatic design in 1952 is recognized as a really good flying machine by today's Old-Timer stunt enthusiasts.

Smith's other Control Line designs include the Little Toot, Little Toni, T-6, F-82 Twin Mustang, Pip Squeak, Midge, Skidoo, Nieuport 28, bi-plane conversions for Jim Walker's famous Fireball and Firebaby and off-water floats for Control Line flying.

Cal Smith was, of course, an early RC flyer struggling along with other modelers using the heavy tube-type and limited control escapement radio equipment available at the time. Working with the limitations of that radio gear, Cal designed sport aircraft such as the RC Roamer, Wonderwings bi-plane, Droop Snoot and Jersey Lightnin'.

Some of his best RC efforts were his scale projects, which showed modelers that scale aircraft flying could be done by radio control. He did a number of scale classics, including his Monocoupe, Aeronca Champ, Wittman Tailwind, Fokker D-8, Sopwith Pup, and Nieuport. They may not have been as impressive as today's scale projects, but looking back we see that he built and flew these scale aircraft with primitive radio equipment – and enabled other modelers to do the same.

With his active flying, you always knew that a Cal Smith design would be a good performer. I've discussed with flying friends of his from that time how much he would have enjoyed working with the great equipment and technology of today. We can only imagine what creative and interesting aircraft projects he would have come up with.

Cal Smith's Model Aircraft Design/Article Listing

RC Scale

Nieuport biplane, 1954

Monocoupe

Aeronca Champ, 1956

Wittman Tailwind, 1964

Fokker D-8

Sopwith Pup

RC Sport

RC Roamer, 1952

Wonderwings, biplane

Droop Snoot, 1957

Jersey Lightnin'

Free Flight

Blunderbus

Lumberbus, 1952

Sandow, 1952

Control Line
AD-2 Skyraider, 1950
F-86 Sabre, DynaJet
B-24
Beech D-18
Little Toot
Little Toni
Old Slippery team racer, 1952
F9F Panther, DynaJet
Smith Special
F-82 Twin Mustang, 1951
Frisky Pete, 1952
Pip Squeak, 1952
Midge, 1952
Skidoo, 1952
Nieuport, 1952
Fireball and Firebaby, biplane conversions, 1952

RC Boats
Maverick, gold cup hydro
Nautilus, submarine
Bunker Boat
Missile Ship
Great Lakes Freighter
Evarts, destroyer
PT-810
Lil Nipper

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