
Autobiography of ROBERT A. BENJAMIN

Modeler since 1949

Birth Date: August 1, 1944

AMA Number: 54547

Written and Submitted by RB

Transcribed and Edited by SS (6/02)

Career

- During the late 1960s, started teaching a group of Welfare-dependent children about aeromodeling and has continued to teach aeromodeling
 - Published over 50 airplane paintings published in magazines, including some on covers
 - One of his original paintings hangs in the San Diego Aerospace Museum
 - First original design was published in *Flying Models* magazine in 1983; had a dozen other designs published since then
 - Published over 60 articles and column installments
 - Work has appeared in magazines such as *Model Aviation*, *Model Builder*, *Flying Models*, *Model Airplane News*, *Scale RC Modeler*, *High Flight*, *Radio Control Modeler*, and *S&E Modeler*
 - Became an promoter of electric-powered models after learning to fly them in 1988; has given electric-powered demonstrations internationally
 - First modeler to qualify for and fly in the U.S. Scale Masters championships using electric power
 - First modeler to participate in the U.S. World Championship Team program using electric power
 - First alternate to the 1998 F4C team
 - In 1999, first to compete at Top Gun with an electric model
 - Demonstrated the practicality of electric power to many kit manufacturers
 - As a partner of Model Video Productions, wrote and directed a series of instructional video programs for modelers interested in electric flight
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Sometimes it seems to me that I was born between two eras of aeromodeling. As a classic war baby, born during 1944 while my father was on duty in the Pacific as a B-29 flight engineer, I missed the entire pre-war “golden age” of Free Flight. I was too young to be part of that grand scramble right after the war when new engines were appearing one after another and Control Line flying was coming of age and then all at once the glow plug turned it all upside down. At about the time I was ready to start school, my father more or less by chance brought home one of those old StromBecker solid models of, guess what, a B-29. When I became much more enthusiastic than he had expected, a few more solid models and then a rubber job, a Comet *Firefly*, got built, mostly by him as I “helped.” He didn’t stay interested, but I did. By the time I was a fourth grade kid in 1954, I was old enough for my first “gas engine,” a Cox *Space Bug, Jr.* that I put on the front of a Jim Walker *Firebaby*.

I flew the poor *Firebaby* and several other ½-A Control Line jobs to exhaustion in various schoolyards and in the process eventually discovered that one other boy in my sixth grade class built airplanes. Together we goaded each other through graduation from ½-A’s to a series of profiles like the *PDQ Clown* and the *Ringmaster*, tired used McCoy and Cub .19’s and eventually nice new Fox and Johnson .35’s, and learned to fly Control Line stunt fairly well. In between figuring out how to fly inverted and do a good job of building a Nobler, we put our old .049’s into some home brew Free Flights and learned a lot about climbing trees in the local woods and how to get models out of cow pastures without getting chased too much by the bulls.

By the time, we got into high school my friend began to drift away from active modeling. I made a serious attempt to start a real model airplane club in high school, but even with the help of a sympathetic but non-modeling-building chemistry teacher, it never got off the ground and for a while, it seemed that I was all by myself with my love of model airplanes.

During my first two years of college, there was not much time for model building. During that time, my family had moved from the Boston area to northern New Jersey, and when I came home for the summer at the end of my sophomore year, it was to a strange place with no modeling connections. A few days after getting home, I was outside early in the evening and heard what could only be a small model engine in the distance. Jumping into my car and following the sound, I discovered a neighbor half a mile away flying a single channel ½-A Radio Controlled (RC) airplane from the pasture adjoining his backyard. That was the beginning of my return to active modeling as well as my introduction to RC flying. Within a week I had gathered up and sold off a lot of my old Control Line stuff and was well into construction of a *Schoolmaster* equipped with C&S single channel gear and a Bonner escapement.

For the rest of that summer, and whenever my academic schedule permitted during the next few years, I built and flew a wide variety of small RC airplanes. It was here that I got the experience that put me in that “in between” status. Although these years were the end of the era of reed radios and the first really practical proportional sets were beginning to appear, my student status forced me to do modeling on a very limited budget, and I ended up with an exotic collection of second and third hand equipment and a stubborn ability to make most of it work. Although I was not old enough to have been flying RC during the real pioneer era, in working my way through compound escapements, pulse proportional with homebuilt actuators and, finally, multi reed radios before I was able to buy a “real” proportional radio (a “black box” Orbit) in 1968, I had the opportunity to re-live the recent history of RC modeling. Having been too young for the “old days,” I now found myself on hand as an accomplished modeler while the modern age of reliable proportional RC systems dawned, and I soon found the opportunity to begin sharing my experience and enthusiasm.

While I was living in Boston during the late 1960s, working days and going to night school classes at Boston University, prior to going back to college full-time and then beginning my first teaching job, I found a group of welfare-dependent kids in a settlement house and offered them a class in model building. One of these boys “saw the light” and became a good friend and protégé. In the end, he became an active RC modeler, in the process learning from me and other adult modeling friends the relationship between our work ethic and a rewarding life. That experience gave me an insight into the value of sharing my love of aeromodeling, and I have never been able to turn away from it.

In 1969, I returned to full-time studies at my alma mater, Bowdoin College, and during a program of practice teaching in the Brunswick (Maine) Junior High School, I started a model building class. Two of the kids from that first class are now, years later, still active modelers in the Brunswick community and are friends I continue to visit via e-mail from my present home a continent away.

Immediately following my graduation from Bowdoin College, I found myself back in northern New Jersey and, almost by chance, wandered into a local RC club whose members included Art Schroeder, then editor of *Model Airplane News* magazine. Art also happened to be the assistant superintendent of schools in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, and before I knew it, I had my first professional position teaching math to middle school kids in Glen Ridge. Needless to say, within the first few weeks of school I had begun the first of many model airplane classes and after-school and weekend clubs that introduced kids to Control Line and simple Free Flight building and flying. Within a few years, I was back in Brunswick, where I really wanted to be, teaching junior high school math and building models with a widening circle of kids, including some of those first students who were now in high school and flying RC with the local club.

In 1973, I made a major change and moved to the Pacific Northwest where I soon met Teryl Reynolds, the lady who would soon become my wife and enthusiastic supporter of my model building and other creative efforts. Ending up in Olympia, Washington, I had to accept that bad timing and perhaps fate had conspired to prevent me from getting back into my chosen profession as a classroom teacher, and I spent many years working in the commercial printing business. During these years I continued building and flying RC models while also fulfilling an old ambition by completing the requirements for my private pilot's license and shortly thereafter buying and restoring a 1946 Cessna 140 classic two-seat airplane.

In those days, I was in fact just another experienced modeler, building more or less typical RC airplanes and sharing my interest with anyone who wanted to learn about them. However, things were about to change. Not long after moving to the Northwest, I began to take seriously a long-dormant interest in art, and eventually began working actively as an artist specializing in aviation subjects. Beginning with a partnership with Bill Northrop at *Model Builder* magazine in 1983, this activity resulted in the creation of over 50 airplane paintings that would be published on the covers of *Model Builder* and *Model Aviation* magazines, as well as the full-scale magazine, *Aviation*. In addition to this model airplane magazine series, in 1992 I completed a set of nine paintings for the AMA for use in a capital campaign intended to help fund completion of the first stage of the then-new Muncie, Indiana facility. Much of my other aviation art has been reproduced as limited edition collector prints, with many originals in private collections all over the country and one original in the San Diego Aerospace Museum.

During this same time, it became clear to me that building "just another model" for weekend at the RC field was not enough of a challenge. At the same time that I began seeking out vintage ignition engines to put into a succession of Society of Antique Modelers-type Old-Timer Free Flight and RC assist models with which I had pretty good success in local competition, I began not only designing my own RC airplanes, but also developing them to the point of being suitable for publication as construction feature articles. In 1983, I published my first original design, a 1/2-A Control Line aerobatic job that had been developed for use with a group of Civil Air Patrol Cadets, in *Flying Models* and, not long after that, a diesel-powered RC design, the *Bobcat*, appeared as a construction feature in *Model Builder*. Since that time, I have published a dozen original designs in various magazines, as well as a wide selection of product reviews. To date I have over 60 published articles and column installments to my credit, with many more in work.

My work so far has appeared in *Model Aviation*, *Model Builder*, *Flying Models*, *Model Airplane News*, *Scale RC Modeler*, *High Flight*, *Radio Control Modeler*, and *S&E Modeler*.

The big change in my aeromodeling career came in 1988 when I accepted the challenge of learning to use electric power to the exclusion of other means of flying my models. Having watched other Seattle-area modelers flying electric-powered models for a few years, I decided to try the new technology myself and built an *Astro Challenger* sailplane as the subject of a product review for *Model Builder*. It did not take long for me to realize that most modelers, including a lot of the ones who were already “doing” electric, were failing to recognize the full potential of electric flight. This was the beginning of my ongoing effort to popularize the idea that electric power was not “about” flying a particular class of lightweight glider-like models, but rather an exciting new means of flying *all* kind of model airplanes, and a technical breakthrough that offers to solve many of the problems that have traditionally plagued aeromodeling. These are not limited to that classic enemy of modelers, engine noise, but also include structures and radios, the ability to turn large propellers for scale models, and power plant reliability, among others.

Almost simultaneously with my accepting the challenge of using electric power in models initially designed for glow engines, beginning in 1990 I began to participate actively in RC scale competition. In that year, I became the first modeler ever to qualify for and fly in the U.S. Scale Masters championships using electric power. Since that time, I have continued to compete actively in the Scale Masters program using electric power exclusively. During that time, I also became the first modeler, to my knowledge, to participate in the U.S. World Championship Team program using electric power, earning the position of first alternate to the 1998 F4C team with my Astro 90-powered ¼ scale 1941 Taylorcraft, and in 1999, I became the first modeler to compete at Top Gun using electric power. As this material is being written, I am preparing to depart for Top Gun 2000, again to compete with an electric-powered scale airplane.

During the last several years, I have actively demonstrated electric-powered airplanes at every opportunity, having traveled, often at my own expense, to demonstrate the practicality of electric power to kit manufacturers all across the country including Major Hobby, Dave Platt, Stream, Ace RC, Horizon Hobby Distributors, Great Planes/Dynaflite, Sig, and Midwest. This has resulted in the appearance of gas-to-electric conversion magazine articles featuring several popular kits, as well as the introduction of my *TigerKitten* design as an Ace RC kit and more recently as a Laser-Pak kit via *S&E Modeler* magazine. In 1994, I had the opportunity to represent Model Electronics Corp. by flying their products in front of a crowd of over 40,000 spectators at the prestigious, invitation-only RC Aeronautic Pageant in Ota, Japan, as one of only four non-Japanese pilots on the program. Sometime during this period, my friends began calling me “Preacher Bob” in recognition of my enthusiasm for sharing the excitement of electric flight with anyone who showed an interest.

During the past several years, I have been writing a regular column on scale aeromodeling using electric power for *S&E Modeler* magazine and have begun a similar column for *High Flight*. Recently I agreed to begin writing a series of articles for the German aeromodeling magazine, *Aufwind*, presenting to that readership an American modeler’s impressions of the growth and

potential of electric flight. During the same period of time, as a partner in Model Video Productions, a small independent production company, I have written and directed a series of instructional video programs for modelers interested in electric flight, as well as a series of programs for the AMA that include a feature presentation of the *Celebration of Eagles* and the recent *All Because of Model Airplanes*.

Recently I have sold a few of my no-longer-active scale models to collectors, and it is interesting to note that two of them have each brought a price higher than what I paid for my full-scale Cessna 140 in 1976. Who knows what will happen next? We have only just begun to explore the possibilities offered by electric power for model airplanes. I, for one, can see no limit to the progression of ever more challenging electric-powered scale airplanes that will take life on my building table. As this biography is being completed, I am well along with the writing of a full-length book, a memoir intended for a general readership that includes a significant amount of material on the challenge and rewards of building and flying model airplanes and the way they have contributed to and enriched my life. Perhaps the best is yet to come.

(signed) Robert A. Benjamin

The following information is taken from an application for Robert to be inducted into the Model Aviation Hall of Fame. Randy D. Smithhisler submitted the application on March 28, 1995. It was updated with the Hall of Fame application Smithhisler submitted for Robert in January 2001.

Competition

- 1990 – U.S. Scalemasters qualifier, Farragut State Park, Idaho
- 1990 – U.S. Scalemasters qualifier, Whidbey Island, Washington (third place); first time that an electric-powered model had qualified for a championship
- 1991 – U.S. Scalemasters qualifier, Whidbey Island, Washington (fifth place)
- 1991 – Marymoor RC Scale Rally, Remond, Washington (first place)
- 1992 – Marymoor RC Scale Rally, Remond, Washington (first place)
- 1994 – Northwest Scale Championship, Bremerton, Washington (first place, expert)
- 1996 – U.S. Scalemasters qualifier, Hubbard, Oregon (qualified for championship in expert class)
- 1996 – U.S. Scalemasters qualifier, Hubbard, Oregon (second place in team scale); first time that an electric-powered model had placed at a Scalemasters event in team scale
- 1997 – U.S. FAI team scale qualifier, Muncie, Indiana (first alternate); first time that an electric powered model had competed at an FAI qualifier
- 1997 – AMA Nationals, expert class, scale RC; first time that a “complex” electric-powered model had competed at the Nationals (flaps/retracts, World War II fighter)
- 1997 – U.S. Scalemasters qualifier, Hubbard, Oregon (qualified for championship in expert class)
- 1997 – U.S. Scalemasters Championship, Irving, Texas (special recognition award for electric power)
- 1998 – Marymoor RC Scale Rally, Redmond, Washington (first place, pilot’s choice)
- 1998 – Farragut Scale Rally, Farragut State Park, Idaho (first place, best civilian)

- 1998 – U.S. Scalemasters qualifier, Hubbard, Oregon (qualified for championship in expert class)
- 1998 – U.S. Scalemasters Championship, Columbus, Ohio
- 1999 – Farragut Scale Rally, Farragut State Park, Idaho (first place, best civilian)
- 1999 – U.S. Scalemasters qualifier, LaGrande, Oregon (second place in expert class)
- 1999 – U.S. Scalemasters Championship, Tucson, Arizona (12th place in expert class)
- 1999 – Top Gun Invitational, Palm Beach, Florida; the first time that an electric-powered model had been invited and competed at this event.
- 2000 – U.S. Scalemasters qualifier, Hubbard, Oregon
- 2000 – U.S. Scalemasters qualifier, LaGrande, Oregon
- 2000 – Canadian Electric Nationals (MAAC), British Columbia, Canada (first place in expert scale)
- 2000 – Top Gun Invitational, Palm Beach, Florida (fifth place in designer scale); first time that an electric-powered model had placed at a Top Gun event)
- 2000 – U.S. Scalemasters Championship, Dayton, Ohio
- 2001 – Top Gun Invitational, Palm Beach, Florida
- 1982 through 2000 – Northwest Model Expo, Puyallup, Washington (approximately 32 trophies for static model contests)
- 1986 through 2000 – Puget Sound Electric Model Flyers events, Seattle, Washington (12 first place trophies)

Designer – Published design/construction articles as follows:

- Model Builder* magazine, January 1985: *Bobcat MK 1*, Sport RC
- Flying Models* magazine, March 1985: *Tigerkitten*, Sport/Trainer Control Line
- Model Builder* magazine, January 1987: *Big Apprentice*, RC Trainer
- Model Builder* magazine, February 1988: *Bobcat MK 2*, RC Sport Aerobatic
- Model Builder* magazine, January 1989: *Daydream*, RC Sport Scale Bi-Plane
- Model Builder* magazine, July 1989: *Tigercat MK 2*, RC Sport Aerobatic
- Model Builder* magazine, February 1990: *Astro Porterfield Float Conversion*, Electric
- Model Aviation* magazine, September 1991: *Tigerkitten E*, Electric High Performance Aerobatic
- Modellistica* magazine (Italy), November 1992: *Tigerkitten E* Reprint
- Model Aviation* magazine, January 1993: *Tigercat E*, High Performance Electric Aerobatic
- Model Builder* magazine, December 1993: *Schneider Sport Electric*, Electric Floatplane
- Model Aviation* magazine, January 1995: *Pussycat Trainer*, Electric Basic Trainer
- www.rcmodel.com, January 2000: Bob has revised his *Tigerkitten* plans and re-released them in a CAD format on his new Web site. He has also created CAD drawings and plans of his Top Gun Taylorcraft, which are for sale on this same site.

Designs Kitted

- *Bobcat MK 2* by Ikon NW, 1998
- *Schneider Sport Electric* by Stream, Inc. – this kit is based on Robert’s design in *Model Builder* in December 1993.

- *Tigerkitten* by Ace RC, 1997

Experimenter, Etc.

Bob has worked with Great Planes, Midwest, Ace RC, Stream Inc., Dynaflyte, Major Hobbies, Model Electronics and Sig Manufacturing to prototype the conversion of glow-powered kits to electric.

Bob has also worked personally with Frank Garcher on the electric conversion of his *Starduster* and the electric conversion of the Great Planes (giant size) *Fly Baby*.

Bob has worked with AstroFlight Inc. to prototype and test many items, including the first 90-size electric motor (installed in an Ace RC *Big Bingo*).

Bob's multi-year experimentation with propellers led to the introduction of Master Airscrew's Electric Series propellers.

Writer/Editor/Publisher

Bob published the following articles in addition to the ones previously listed:

Model Builder magazine, August 1985: "TF Elder," Kit Review

Model Builder magazine, August 1987: "Surviving Your First RC Flight, Part One"

Model Builder magazine, September 1987: "Surviving Your First RC Flight, Part Two"

Model Builder magazine, May 1987: "Trimming for Flight, Part One"

Model Builder magazine, June 1987: "Trimming for Flight, Part Two"

Model Builder magazine, February 1989: "Astro Challenger," Kit Review (electric)

Model Builder magazine, October 1989: "Astro Porterfield," Kit Review (electric)

Model Builder magazine, November 1989: "Astro Model 112 Charger," Product Review

Model Aviation magazine, November 1989: "RC Scale at the Nationals," Event Report

Scale RC Modeler magazine, January 1991: "Electric Porterfield at the Scale Masters"

Model Aviation magazine, April 1991: "Porterfield Collegiate at the Scale Masters"

Model Builder magazine, October 1992: "Celebration of Silent Flight," Event Report (electric)

Model Builder magazine, March 1993: "Astro 90 Prototype Report," Technical (electric)

Model Aviation magazine, April 1993: "Schneider Cup Re-Enactment," Event Report

Model Builder magazine, October 1993: "Celebration of Silent Flight," Event Report (electric)

Model Builder magazine, December 1993: "Astro Model 112PK Charger," Review (electric)

Model Aviation magazine, April 1994: "Modeling in the Classroom – A Different Approach"

Model Builder magazine, February 1995: "Dynaflyte Spitfire Electric Conversion"

Sailplane and Electric Modeler magazine, beginning with the spring 1997 issue: regular columnist

Sailplane and Electric Modeler magazine, January 2000: "Proctor Camel Conversion" (gas to electric)

Sailplane and Electric Modeler magazine, April 1998: "Scale Competition with Electric Power"

Sailplane and Electric Modeler magazine, August 1998: “Midwest *Starduster* Conversion” (gas to electric)

Sailplane and Electric Modeler magazine, issue unknown: “Great Planes *P-51* Conversion” (gas to electric)

RC Modeler magazine, November 1996: “Model Tech *P-51*” (electric conversion)

Model Airplane News magazine, November 1997: “Aerotech *Bearcat* Conversion”

High Flight, spring 1999: “Electric Power for Large Scale Models – Part One”

High Flight, fall 1999: “Electric Power for Large Scale Models – Part Two”

High Flight, winter 1999: “Great Planes/Dynaflite – Fly Baby Conversion”

Model Airplane News magazine, January 2001: “Electric Power for Scale Models”

Aufwind (German), pending publication: “Flying the Electric-Powered Taylorcraft at Top Gun”

Aufwind (German), pending publication: “AstroFlight Micro 010 Motor Review”

Bob’s artwork can be found in the following magazine issues:

Model Aviation: August 1991, March 1992, April 1993, July 1993, April 1994, and May 1995

Model Builder: October 1982, January 1983, February 1983, April 1983, June 1983, July 1983,

September 1983, November 1983, April 1984, June 1984, September 1984, November 1984,

January 1985, May 1985, August 1985, October 1985, December 1985, February 1986, April

1986, October 1986, November 1986, January 1987, March 1987, May 1987, August 1987,

October 1987, December 1987, February 1988, April 1988, June 1988, September 1988,

November 1988, February 1989, May 1989, August 1989, November 1989 and July 1992

SAM Speaks (the newsletter for the Society of Antique Modelers): January 2, 1989 and May 6, 1989

(At the time of this submission, Bob had over 45 published cover paintings.)

In addition, Bob has created advertising and/or box label art for the following: AMA, Dave Abbe Development, Davis Diesel Development, MRC/Altech, Model Electronics Corporation, the Schneider Cup Re-Enactment and W.E. Technical (Bill Effinger). His work also appears as the cover of Henry Haffke’s book on the Granville Brothers’ *Gee Bees* (VIP Publishers).

Industry

In addition to working with the above-named manufacturers to develop and promote electric conversions of glow-powered airplane kits, Bob has been involved since the late 1980s in demonstrating and promoting electric flight using Astro Flight products. In 1994, he began an association with Model Electronics Corporation, who has retained his services as a consultant and demonstrator. In November 1994, as a representative of MEC, he demonstrated high performance electric flight at the prestigious, invitational Annual RC Aeronautic Pageant in Ota, Japan, and during his visit to that country, did product demonstration flights for a number of Japanese model industry representatives.

In 1994, in cooperation with two partners, Bob founded Model Video Productions, a company specializing in production of quality video programs for aeromodelers with an emphasis on electric flight. Sample copies of the most recent three releases have been donated to the AMA in care of Jay Mealy. At the time of this submission, Model Video Productions has just concluded an agreement with Radio Control Modeler, Inc. to promote and distribute electric flight videos worldwide.

As a partner of Model Video Productions, Bob helped conceive, write, and direct the AMA-sponsored video programs *Celebration of Eagles* and *AMA Nationals 1996*.

Bob also wrote and directed the AMA video *Model Flying Fields in State Parks*.

Bob conceived, wrote, and directed the AMA signature public relations video *All Because of Model Airplanes*.

He has also created a series of three video programs: *Getting Started in Electric Flight*, volumes one, two, and three. These are currently (as of 2001) being marketed through *Sailplane and Electric Modeler* magazine and via the Internet.

In 2000, Bob created and launched a new Web site called *Bob Benjamin's Flightimages*. This site is devoted to scale aeromodeling using electric power. It includes a commercial plans service and a regular monthly column.

Leader

Helped establish Bath/Brunswick RC Sport Modeler (Maine), 1969.

Founder of the Puget Sound Silent Flyers (Olympia, Washington), 1994.

Safety officer and instructor with Puget Sound ROCS (Yelm, Washington), years not known.

Held various positions with the Puget Sound Silent Flyers (1994 to present).

Additional Background

Since the late 1960s, Bob has worked regularly with young people in a series of school-based aeromodeling educational programs, both while a teacher in New Jersey and in Maine and in cooperation with his first-grade teacher wife in Washington state. During the late 1970s, he served for several years as the aerospace education officer of the Olympia Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, in which he combined his resources as a licensed pilot and full-scale aircraft owner with aeromodeling kits.

The following is a letter that Randy Smithhisler later sent to Mary Lou Vojslavek at the AMA. It details his personal association with Robert.

Randy Smithhisler
1703 105th Ave. Ct. E.
Puyallup, WA 98372

*Mary Lou Vojslavek
Academy of Model Aeronautics
5151 E. Memorial Drive
Muncie, IN 47302*

Dear Mary:

First, I would like to thank you for submitting my candidate, Bob Benjamin, for the 1996 Hall of Fame award. I believe that this type of recognition is very important to our hobby and to the Academy of Model Aeronautics.

Secondly, I would like to include the following information to my initial application that I sent this past summer.

I first met Bob in 1989 at the Seattle Boeing Hawks Electric Fly-In. I knew from this first meeting that Bob was extremely dedicated to promoting the hobby and to helping others in any way that he could. Since that initial meeting, my respect and admiration for Bob and his contributions to the entire hobby has only grown. Throughout the Pacific Northwest, it is a well-known fact that Bob rarely gets a chance to fly his own outstanding models at fly-ins because he is so busy helping others. I believe that this type of selfless dedication to serving others is one thing that sets Bob apart.

I also believe that one of Bob's greatest modeling achievements was to qualify and compete at the Scale Master's Contest in 1990 with an electric-powered model. No other modeler before or after Bob has been able to achieve this. He is truly a pioneer in this field and is still leading the way.

One of Bob's current projects is the production of a training video for beginning modelers who do not have access to an instructor. He has also been the driving force in gaining a new flying site for our local club, the Puget Sound Silent Flyers. Without his hard work and long hours on this project, we may not have been able to continue as a club.

Again, I would like to thank you and all of the academy staff for your time and effort in evaluating Bob for this prestigious award. I feel very strongly that he would make an outstanding addition to this elite group.

Sincerely,

Randy Smithhisler

The following is a list of "firsts" that Robert accomplished Randy Smithhisler compiled the list and submitted it later to be added to Robert's Model Aviation Hall of Fame application.

Bob's Milestone "Firsts:"

1. Bob was the first modeler to qualify and compete in the Scale Masters Finals using an electric-powered model.
2. He was the first person to prototype and test the first electric motor intended for use with quarter-scale and larger models (*Astroflight 90*).
3. His design of the new Master Airscrew Electric Series wooden propeller is the first and only one of its kind. It was specifically designed for use with electric geared motors.
4. Bob is the first modeler to establish an on-going videotape series on electric-powered models. This series is currently (in 1995) being expanded to cover training and other facets of all modeling. It is currently (in 1995) being distributed and publicized by *Radio Control Modeler* magazine.
5. Bob was a co-founder and organizer of the first electric-powered model workshop at the Seattle Museum of Flight in 1995. This workshop was a two-day event in which almost 500 people attended.
6. Bob was the first modeler to win a major Northwest AMA #512 scale competition using an electric-powered model. This was the 1994 Northwest Scale Championships at Bremerton, Washington. Bob used a highly modified Dynaflite *Spitfire* powered by an Astroflight 60 motor.
7. Bob was also the first modeler to help prototype, test and design a high performance electric-powered floatplane. This model, the Schneider *Sport Electric*, is now being kitted by Stream, Inc.

Addendum

Submitted by Bob on July 15, 2003

Bob was the first modeler to compete at Top Gun using electric power (1999) and also the first to finish "in the money" (fifth in designer scale, 2000) using electric power.

He was also the first in the world history of RC scale aeromodeling to compete in the FAI World Championships (F4C) using electric power as a member of Team USA in July 2002.

He was the first modeler ever to compete using electric power in the "Big Three" – Top Gun, Scale Masters and the FAI World Championships – using electric power. In his last active season of competition (2001 to 2002) finished in the top 10 at the AMA Nationals (two events – designer scale and FAI), the U.S. Scale Masters and Top Gun, as well as represented the United States at the 2002 World Championships.

Bob is currently working on a series of book length memoirs for the general market, which will include generous references to his lifelong interest in aeromodeling. The first of these, [A Gift of Tears](#), is currently in the hands of a professional literary agent.

The following biography was published in the January 2007 issue of Model Aviation magazine.

“Sometimes it seems to me that I was born between two eras of aeromodeling,” wrote Bob Benjamin, “I was too young to be part of that grand scramble right after the war when new engines were appearing one after another and Control Line (CL) flying was coming of age, and then all at once the glow plug turned it all upside down.”

Bob’s father ignited his interest in aeromodeling when he brought home a StromBecker solid model of a B-29. After a few more solid models, a rubber aircraft, and a Comet *Firefly*, Bob’s father lost interest but Bob was hooked. He experimented with CL and some he made Free Flight (FF) models until he reached college. The first two years kept him too busy for modeling, but a trip to his family’s new home in northern New Jersey gave him the chance to meet a new neighbor – one flying a single-channel ½A Radio Control (RC) airplane!

Bob sold off his CL equipment, and built and flew a variety of small RC aircraft. It was the end of the era of reed radios and the beginning of proportional radio systems. Bob worked his way through various systems and was finally able to afford a “real” proportional radio. “Having been too young for the ‘old days,’ I now found myself on hand as an accomplished modeler while the modern age of reliable proportional RC systems dawned,” he wrote.

In the late 1960s, Bob was working days and going to college nights, but found time to offer an aeromodeling class to a group of welfare-dependent children. One of the boys got involved and eventually became an accomplished modeler and a lifelong friend. “That experience gave me an insight into the value of sharing my love of aeromodeling,” Bob wrote, “and I have never been able to turn away from it.”

Bob graduated from Bowdoin College, obtained a teaching job, and began organizing airplane classes and clubs in the school. In 1973, he left the area, moved to the Pacific Northwest, and got a job in commercial printing.

A long-dormant art talent led him to specialize in aviation subjects and brought him into a partnership with Bill Northrop at *Model Builder* magazine. His creation of more than 50 paintings appeared on the covers of *Model Builder*, *Model Aviation* and the magazine devoted to full-scale aircraft, *Aviation*.

Bob began designing RC aircraft and developing them into suitable construction articles. His more than 60 articles and columns have appeared in *Model Aviation*, *Model Builder*, *Flying Models*, *Model Airplane News*, *Scale RC Modeler*, *High Flight*, *Radio Control Modeler*, and *S&E Modeler*.

In 1988, Bob began using electric power to the exclusion of all else. “This was the beginning of my ongoing effort to popularize the idea that electric power was not ‘about’ flying a particular

class of lightweight glider-like models, but rather an exciting new means of flying all kind of model airplanes,” he wrote.

In 1990, Bob took up RC Scale competition and became the first to qualify for and fly in the U.S. Scale Masters championships using electric power. Another first was to participate in the U.S. World Championships Team program using electric power, earning the position of first alternate to the 1998 F4C team. The following year, he became the first modeler to compete at Top Gun using electric power. In July of 2002 as a member of Team USA, Bob became the first to compete in the FAI World Championships (F4C) using electric power.

Recognizing his enthusiasm for electric power, Bob’s friends began calling him “Preacher Bob.” He began demonstrating electric power to kit manufacturers at every opportunity. He had ongoing RC Electric Scale columns in *S&E Modeler*, *High Flight*, and the German publication *Aufwind*, exploring the potential of electric flight.

Bob is a partner in Model Video Productions, where he wrote and directed a number of instructional videos for modelers interested in electrics. He was also responsible for a series of videos for AMA including a feature presentation for the *Celebration of Eagles* and *All Because of Model Airplanes* films.

Bob and his wife, Teryl, an elementary school teacher, live in Olympia, Washington.