
Autobiography of JOSEPH W. FOSTER

Modeler since the late 1920s Birth Date: September 4, 1926 AMA Number: 1818

Transcribed & Edited by SS (2/03)

Career:

- Successful in local contests around Springfield, Ohio
- Served in the U.S. Air Force from 1945 to 1946
- Invited to become a member of the Oakland (California) Cloud Dusters in 1949
- Between 1949 and 1953 was on two Wakefield teams, becoming the world champion in 1953
- Was Grand National Champion at the 1952 Nationals
- Successfully flew Radio Control formula 1 pylon racers from 1957 to 1975
- Worked as director of manufacturing for Advanced Products Operations, Link Division of Singer Co.

Honors:

- 1986 – National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame
- 1991 – AMA Hall of Fame

The National Free Flight Society (NFFS) supplied this information that was written about Joe Foster after his induction into the NFFS Hall of Fame in 1986.

There must have been a time in my early youth when I was not hooked on model airplanes but I can't remember it. I recall when I was 7- or 8-years-old in Freeport, Long Island the weekly trauma was caused by having to decide how to spend my dime allowance. Was it to be for a 10-cent Comet kit or at the local movie house? Except when Flash Gordon was playing the Comet kit usually won out.

Like so many others, my dad got me started flying models. It was on my eighth birthday that he built for me a beautiful, silk covered, rubber-powered model. We flew it together many, many times before wearing it out.

For Christmas the following year I was given a Zipper. With this great kit came the promise that when I successfully completed assembly I would receive an engine to power it. Almost a year later it was finished and with Dad's help we installed a Syncro Ace Special engine. Sadly, we were never able to get it running properly, and except for a few powered glides, it never flew.

Not so many years later I flew modified Zippers powered by Forster 29s and Ohlsson 23s quite successfully in local contests around Springfield, Ohio, where my family was residing. It's my opinion that the Zipper designed by Carl Goldberg is one of the truly great Free Flights of all times and Comet put out a very fine kit.

Then came the war years. On December 7, 1941, I was at a contest in Greenville, Ohio, when we heard that Pearl Harbor was bombed. Contest activity and my modeling waned during this period. I spent a short time in the Air Force from 1945 to 1946 and after discharge went to college.

It was in my second year at Purdue University that the family moved to San Jose, California, and I transferred to San Jose State University. About that time the modeling itch returned. I met Joe Bilgri and he re-introduced me to contest flying, not only gas but rubber-power, glider and indoor. I'm sure that it was the friendly competition between us at the local flying field almost every Sunday, which honed my skills and competitive nature. Joe Bilgri is almost like an older brother to me – well, slightly older.

In 1949 I was invited to become a member of the Oakland Cloud Dusters. In those days you had to be sponsored by a member and have proven skills as a modeler and contest flyer. I prize my association with such fine competitors as Joe Bilgri, Hank Cole, Manny Andrade, Bud Romak, Steve Geraghty, Carl Rambo, George Xenakis, Bob Meuser and many more great Dusters past and present.

My most prolific years in Free Flight competition were 1949 through 1953. During that period I was on two Wakefield teams, finishing 29th in Finland in 1951 and becoming world champion in England in 1953.

In 1952 I married my wife, Ann. We honeymooned at the Los Angeles Nationals where I became the Grand National Champion. In 1954 I made a half-hearted and unsuccessful attempt for a place on the Wakefield team, but after reaching all my goals in Free Flight I felt burned out and needed a change. The change of pace for me was Radio Control and from 1957 to 1975 I had success flying formula 1 pylon racers and some pattern.

In 1976 my son Joe Jr. became interested in Free Flight and helping him rekindled my interest. Joey was very successful as a junior competitor but high school, sports, girls and now college has sidelined his modeling.

I view my induction into the Free Flight Hall of Fame as a high point in modeling.

I am presently (1986) employed by Advanced Products Operations, Link Division of Singer Co. as director of manufacturing and presently resides San Jose, California.

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