
Autobiography of GILBERT MORRIS

Modeler since 1930

Birth Date: August 8, 1925

AMA Number: 94509

Written & Submitted by GM (9/03)

Transcribed & Edited by SS (9/03)

Career:

- Designed his own models from age 13 on
- Placed in 1941 Nationals
- Some of his most notable designs include Kerswap Toothpics, ABC Toothpics, Matchsticks, Twigs, TwoTimer and Pop-Up
- Has set five national records
- Received five National Free Flight Society (NFFS) Model of the Year awards
- Has won four McNeill Cups
- Was the 1997 America's Cup Winner
- Member of the 1994/1995 and 2002/2003 United States F1C teams
- Has written numerous articles, including five that were published in NFFS Symposium Reports and five in national publications
- Has served as president of his local club and directed local contests in 2001 and 2002
- Has served on the FAI Free Flight team selection committee since 1996 and was chairman in 1999 and 2000

My uncle taught me to whittle at the age of five, then 1930. Airplanes in all their forms were the rage and immediately I was attracted to 5- and 10-cent solid models. I was a poor student at school, but quickly became a good one when enticed by my father with a solid model kit for each grade of A or B. Then, in 1933, my aunt gave me a rubber model kit for my birthday. The kit had a plan and a bunch of sticks – no block of balsa as I expected. In time I realized that you had to glue the sticks together according to the plan and then fly it. I was amazed and hooked on flying models for good.

Soon I was designing my own rubber models, which I flew for fun and at the annual Boy Scout Arama at the fairgrounds. From the start I strived for endurance, not scale effect.

About 1938, then age 13, I started working part-time at Hall's Hardware, which was the headquarters for model supplies in town. I bought a Scientific Eaglet and a Brat engine a year later; and from that time on all my models were engine powered. After the Eaglet, I designed all of my models. It was cheaper and I could select my own wood. I attended many contests in Ohio and the 1941 Nationals (Nats) in Chicago. I flew class A, B and C, but focused mainly on class A. Most notable of my early designs was Kerswap, which I designed in the fall of 1941. I built three that winter and lost all three out-of-sight (OOS) during the 1942 contest season.

I graduated from high school in 1943 and immediately went off to college and soon into the Army Air Corps Cadet program. After World War II, I graduated from Ohio State University in 1949 with BSME and BSEE degrees. I married Irene and I had five children. I worked as an engineer and engineering manager over the years. I was out of modeling from 1943 to 1973. In 1973 I taught my children modeling and the hobby rubbed off onto me and soon I was active again in the sport. I built a couple of commercial gas models and then got back into designing

my own. Some of the more notable ones are Toothpicks, ABC Toothpicks, Matchsticks, Twigs, TwoTimer and, most recently, Pop-Up.

I have enjoyed all aspects of free flight, but most satisfying has been the discovery of new design concepts that prove to be state-of-the-art through contest flying.

Accomplishments Over the Years

Won third place in Class A, Junior Division, 1941 Nationals

Set five national records: 1978, 1980, 1982 and two in 1985

Central Ohio Free Flight Club (COFFC) special award for achievement in 1981

Five National Free Flight Society (NFFS) Model of the Year awards:

- 1980 – Toothpicks design
- 1985 – ABC Toothpicks design
- 1990 – Matchsticks design
- 1995 – TwoTimer F1C flapper design
- 1996 – F1C team recognition (first place in the World Championships in 1995)

Four McNeill Cup awards for winning first place in the F1C Nats in 1982, 1993, 1997 and 1999

Three merit awards from the Central Indiana Aeromodelers (CIA) in 1990, 1994 and 1995

Six first place Power Model Award for Year from CIA in 1992, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1999 and 2000

America's Cup Winner in F1C in 1997

Member of two U.S. F1C teams: 1994/1995 and 2002/2003

- Won individual F1C bronze medal, World Championships, Domsod, Hungary, 1995
- Won team F1C gold medal, World Championships, Domsod, Hungary, 1995
- Won team F1C gold medal, World Championships, Kunszentmiklos, Hungary, 2003

I have written numerous articles over the years. Five appeared in the NFFS Symposium Reports:

- 1981 – “Some Thoughts on Designing and Trimming”
- 1984 – “Getting a Handle on CG (Center of Gravity)”
- 1996 – “A Flapped Wing F1C”
- 2000 – “All Strings No Levers VIT”
- 2001 – “Solutions to an Erratic Vertical Climb”

Related construction Articles:

- **Toothpicks**, by G. Morris, *Model Aviation*, June 1979
- **A-B-C Toothpicks**, by G. Morris, *Model Aviation*, July 1981

- **Kerswap 1/2A Texaco Old Timer**, by Bob Isaacks, *Model Builder*, Nov. 1985
- **Kerswap**, by Bob Aberle, *Flying Models*, Nov. 1986
- **Kerswap .020 Replica Old Timer**, by Dick Lyons, *Model Builder*, July 1992
- **Twigs**, by G. Morris, NFFS 1992 Book on Power Models
- **TwoTimer**, by G. Morris, NFFS 1992 Book on Power Models
- **Pop-Up**, by G. Morris, NFFS Digest, Sept. 2002

I have served as president of our COFFC and as contest director (CD) for contests in 2001 and 2002. I was chairman of NFFS's Ten Models of Year selection committee in 1985.

I have served on the FAI Free Flight team selection committee since 1996 and as chairman in 1999 and 2000.

*(signed) Gilbert Morris
September 15, 2003*

More information on Gilbert Morris, including various articles he has written and copies of photographs, can be found in his file in the National Model Aviation Museum Archives. See the AMA librarian for assistance.

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