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# Autobiography of ROBERT L. PALMER

Lifespan: January 22, 1918 - February 1, 2005

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Robert L. Palmer was an accomplished model builder and wind tunnel expert for Lockheed Aircraft Company. He worked in the Lockheed Skunkworks, working on the *P-38* through the *P-80*, then the *SR-71* and the *F-117 Stealth Fighter*.

Bob was known for the first practical use of flaps on Control Line aerobatic models. He was world renowned for his pioneering designs with light wing loadings and – for their day – comparatively small power plants, culminating in his *Thunderbird* design, which is regarded as one of the better flying aircraft from the Classic Era.

Bob lost the fingers of his right hand early in his career as a machinist in 1949. Most of his accomplishments in aeromodeling and his career with Lockheed were accomplished after that time.

Bob was the National Open Stunt Champion in 1955 and 1959, and was the National Stunt Champion in 1955. He was a member of the United States Control Line Aerobatic team at the 1960 Control Line World Championships in Hungary, placing third individually and assuring the United States team a first place.

Always willing to share his ideas and designs, Bob published many how-to articles including “Stunt for 1954” in *Model Airplane News* and “Straighten Out and Fly Stunt” in *Flying Models*. He designed Radio Control and Control Line models that were produced by several kit manufacturers spanning decades and supplied the motion picture industry with models used in the production of movies.

Bob was the guest of aeromodeling clubs around the world and had a model park named after him in Switzerland.

Born in Boise, Idaho on January 22, 1918, Bob lived in California for many years. In his retirement, he moved to Montana for a short period, and then moved to Tucson, Arizona to live with his flying friends and good friends of many years, Bill and Elaine Heyworth.

Bob had a keen eye, a sharp wit, and a wonderful memory right up to the end. He was scratch building a *Smoothie* until the last two weeks of his life. Bob passed away quietly in his sleep on the evening of February 1, 2005. Private services were held in Tucson on February 5, 2005.