
Autobiography of RAYMOND (RICK) L. RICHARDSON

Modeler since 1936

Birth Date: April 1, 1930

AMA Number: 7945

Written & Submitted by RLR (5/03)

Transcribed & Edited by SS (6/03)

Career:

- Joined the British Air Training Corp in 1943
- Started working for the Aero Canada Company on the CF-1090 and Avro Arrow in 1957
- In 1961 went to work for Lockheed as a test engineer
- Got into Radio Controlled flying in the early 1957
- By the mid-1980s was an AMA contest director and Leader Member
- Taught modeling to many children between 1970 and 1990
- Currently (2003) lives in western North Carolina and flies giant scale, large-scale sailplanes and Old-Timers, both gas and electric

My first memories of aeroplanes are being carried on my uncle's shoulders to see the supermarine seaplanes at Calshot Spit on the Southampton water. Yes, I was born in England and as the children stories say – a long, long time ago.

This same uncle recognized my interest in aeroplanes and so he bought me a fretwork kit. We built a wooden aeroplane from boxwood with a rotating propeller and a pivot through the fuselage. The aeroplane was mounted on a pole in the garden and I watched the propeller rotating in the wind for hours on end.

Along came the war years. We lived in Sussex where I watched the Battle of Britain in the sky above us. At night we heard German bombers droning overhead and we could see the red glow in the sky as London burned. This was a thrilling time for a young boy who was described by his mother as “aeroplane mad.”

On Saturday mornings I would walk across the fields to buy solid model kits by Cloudcraft and Skylead. This was about three miles each way and quite often anti-aircraft gunfire could be seen in the sky. Yes, I was scared, but I was going to get my model kit – Germans or not. My mother never realized this was happening.

In 1943 I joined the Air Training Corp as a cadet where I learned to fly Kirby Cadet Gliders. I stayed on to help with the gliding school activities and, as time progressed, I became a Royal Air Force home command civilian gliding instructor. Also, at this time I left school and was apprenticed to Airspeed LTD. Now I had a little money in my pocket and a few flying model kits became available. None of them flew very well and were short lived.

Then I met Colonel Bowden who was flying his petrol models on the airfield where we had the gliding school. He advised me to buy a Sunnanvind glider, which I built and, presto, my first successful flying model! This was followed by a Frog 45 with a Frog 100 petrol engine. After hours of flicking the propeller and severely cut and bruised fingers I decided the engine would never start and sold the whole mess. The next purchase was a Mills 1.3 diesel. Now I had an engine that would run. It ran beautifully clamped to the kitchen table. I filled the house with

diesel exhaust fumes; ether and oil were all over the table. Once more I had to endure the wrath of my parents.

Night school and gliding occupied the next few years until 1957 when I married and immigrated to Canada to work for the Avro Canada Company on the CF-100 and Avro Arrow. In Toronto I met a great modeler named CEL Tate who had a shop called TeePee Models. I bought a Sterling Mighty Mambo, Enya .09 and a Babcock Magic Carpet radio kit with a Bonner escapement.

In 1961 we moved to Marietta, Georgia, to work for Lockheed as a test engineer and it was here that I met some great modelers such as Mickey Walker, Dick Konkle, George Perryman, Frank Stewart, Jim Hannah, Len Purdy and others.

It was with this group that I finally mastered the skill of Radio Controlled (RC) models.

I went from a Controllaire in a Livewire Trainer to a DeBolt Sonic Cruiser with a Bramco, multi-channel relay radio. Under Jim Hannah's close (very) supervision I become a competent flyer. Equipment I used included Orbit relayless, Bonner Digi, proportional Orbit, EK, Kraft, Airtronics, Futaba and now Junior. I built at least one model per year – Sultans, Taurus, Kwik Fli, Spitfires, Mustangs, Caps, Spacewalkers, Jungmeister, Tiger Moth and others. Engines from the 1930s to the present. I have so many, what am I going to do with them now?

In the mid-1980s I became interested in sailing boats and joined the AMYA. I served as director for my region and rules and regulations. At the same time my main flying model interest was in sailplanes. I acted as contest director on several occasions and about the same time period I became a Leader Member of the AMA. Working long hours as a test engineer for Rocketdyne on the space shuttle main engine meant limited time for hobbies, so the sailing boats were placed on the shelf.

Between 1970 and 1990 I helped many children build and fly Control Line models and AMA Cubs.

In 1994 I retired and moved to western North Carolina. The local turf farm owner allows me to fly from the fields. I fly giant scale, large-scale sailplanes and Old-Timers, both gas and electric. My greatest enjoyment is aero-towing large-scale gliders.



Rick helping Scouts build small model airplanes at the Methodist church hall in Shidell on February 14, 1976.

Age is now making life a little more difficult. I cannot see to extreme heights or work on my knees to assemble models and cranking large engines causes tennis elbow. (Woe is me!)

I suppose it is time to build smaller models so that I can work off a table, make an inventory of my treasures (some people will call it junk) and act my age, whatever that is!

1993 is the first year since 1957 that I did not build a model aeroplane. I built a Victorian steam yacht in mahogany with a steam plant for power and joined the Scale Ship Modelers' Association.

As soon as the weather clears it is out to the turf farm to fly my 1/3-scale Spacewalker powered by a Saito 300.

Life goes on.

*(signed) Raymond (Rick) L. Richardson
May 2003*

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