
Biography of Col. Robert E. Thacker, Ret.

Began modeling in 1926

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Career:

- Began modeling at age eight, influenced by a next door neighbor
- Made money in grade school building balsa gliders
- 1930: Competed in Junior Birdman of America competition
- 1975, 1976: Flew in National Scale Glider Championships
- Placed in Gas Scale and Glider in national competition
- Experimented with early solar-powered air vehicles for Lockheed Aircraft
- Has provided for the following publications: *Flying Models*, *RCM*, *R/C Scale* and *Model Builder*
- Graduate of the Air Force Test Pilot Academy at Edwards Air Force Base, California
- Currently designing and building remote control drones for the aircraft industry

Colonel Robert Thacker is a lifetime modeler, having built models since the age of eight. He got his start through his next door neighbor. That neighbor's father ordered by mail a "real airplane that would fly." This plane was a twin pusher, and the Colonel had to have one. He has not looked back since.

In 1929, Colonel Thacker began constructing a *Spirit of St. Louis*; perhaps one of the most reproduced models of that year, just two years after Lindbergh's historic trans-Atlantic flight. Colonel Thacker joined a modeling club in 1932 in El Centro, California. He was with this club for a few years.

In competition, the Colonel first entered a contest in 1930. This was the Junior Birdman of America contest, sponsored by Hearst Newspapers. He competed with a hand-launched single-pusher rubber glider. The Colonel does not recall the results of that contest but that it was held in Los Angeles.

In Nationals, Colonel Thacker competed in 1975 and 1976 in the National Scale Glider Championships. He did place in Gas Scale and Glider in those contests, though it is not certain what those scores were.

Air Force Career:

Colonel Thacker has experimented with airplanes, both model and full-scale, all of his life. In 1945, Colonel Thacker ran an accelerated service test of the *P-80*, the first combat ready jet. As a member of the U.S. Air Force, he was also called on to pilot the solar powered 32-foot aircraft which was designed by Lockheed Aircraft around 1972. He was a member of the Air Force from 1939 until 1970. He holds the distinction of being one of the only officers to fly two combat tours, one in Europe and one in Japan, during the Second World War.

Colonel Thacker served in World War II, flying *B-17s*, in Korea, flying *B-29s*, and in Vietnam flying classified high-altitude missions. He is a graduate of the Air Force Test Pilot Academy at Edwards Air Force Base in California.

Honors that Colonel Thacker has received include two Silver Stars, ten air medals, the French Croix de Guerre with Palm, and three Distinguished Flying Crosses, one of which was for his flight of the Betty Jo, named for his wife. Colonel Thacker flew the *P-82* from Honolulu to New York in 1947. This was the longest non-stop fighter flight carrying the maximum weight for takeoff of a fighter and set the speed record between Hawaii and New York.

Model Airplane Designs:

- Designed the *Bowlus Baby Albatross*, feature in the September 1975 issue of *Model Builder*
- Designed the Giant Ducted Fan *BD-10*, featured in the February 1994 issue of *Flying Models*