
Autobiography of FRANK TIANO

Modeler since 1951
Written & Submitted by FT (11/99)

Birth Date: November 9, 1944
Transcribed by NR (9/00)

AMA Number: TOP-GUN

Edited by SS (2002)

Career:

- AMA contest director for 12 years
 - Owned Hobby Super Store in West Palm Beach, Florida for 22 years
 - AMA industry leader
 - District V assistant vice president
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He was born in upstate New York, a little city named Kingston, on November 9, 1944. By the time Frank Tiano was 2-years-old, his parents recognized the interest he had in any type of airplane. Christmas and birthday toys, more often than not, were something of the aeronautical variety, whether it be coloring books, small gliders, metal push toys or plastic display models.

Hand launched gliders and simple rubber powered models consumed his early years until about 1951 when Aurora brought out the first plastic display kit, a Curtis P-40. By the time Frank was nine, he had a special workshop room where he made U-control models and as many plastic models as he could talk his father into buying.

Frank stayed in modeling until the age of 15 when girls became more attractive. Other than a few Control Line stunt ships, working and dating consumed most of his time. Modeling took a back seat again, this time to professional drag racing in the years 1964 until 1968.

In 1972, Frank joined the Saugerties, New York model club and bought his first Radio Controlled (RC) kit and radio. A Midwest Champ and a Royal single stick radio started him on his way. The Champ proved to be an excellent trainer, Frank soloed after only a couple of hours of training from Al Goodwin, a local friend and experienced RC pilot. A VK Cherokee came next and, once that airplane was mastered, a whole new aspect of modeling opened up.

Frank started building simple scale models and by 1976 was a frequent contestant in the many scale contests held up and down the East Coast. He was a prolific builder and quickly built a stable of all sorts of model aircraft. Everything from Formula One racers to World War I bi-planes could be found in his shop.

About 1976 Frank started writing for Flying Models magazine. It started out with an occasional kit review every couple of months, but grew to an article a month in that magazine as well as contributing articles in other magazines as well. He has had things published in Radio Control Modeler (RCM), Model Airplane News (MAN), Flying Models, Model Aviation and Scale RC Modeler.

He wrote for many years and built a lot of friendships along the way. Two of his favorite friends were Bob Walker of Robert Manufacturing and Don Dombrowski of House of Balsa. In 1979, these three men formed a company called Sticky Group International and introduced a product called ZAP, a form of super glue for the modeling industry. That business still thrives today and

supports many modeling events nation wide.

In 1989, Frank started a scale competition that he hoped would bring worldwide attention to aero modeling. His goal was show that flying model airplanes was not the equivalent of attaching a couple of strings to a model and twirling it round and round until the pilot fell over from dizziness! The event would be called Top Gun; it would be an invitational event with a lot of industry support and, hopefully, would feature some of the finest builders and pilots in the world. It did exactly that. Top Gun has been a success, the only scale event in the world with a cash purse. It has done much to make the general public aware of how exciting and fun modeling can be. Because of the popularity of Top Gun, Frank was able to start another event, Florida Jets, and this has become the largest, non competitive, jet together in the world for spectators.

To show his appreciation for all the support his company and events has received in the past, Frank's company has often donated cash and prizes to many AMA-sanctioned events throughout the U.S.A. He has been instrumental in developing the AMA prize program at their annual trade show and has featured their presence at both Top Gun and Florida Jets. He has done 18 television shows where his segment, "In the Shop," has shown everything from how to build an ARF trainer to constructing and flying a Maverick ducted fan jet.

At Top Gun, he promotes one of the largest AMA Delta Dart programs in the country, allowing several dozen children to build and then fly their Darts in front of 10,000 spectators at the noontime break.

Like many men who earn their living from the hobby industry, Frank doesn't seem to have as much time for modeling as he has had in the past. However, he still finds time to compete in three or four scale contests per year. And he still builds. Presently, he has a monthly column, "Sporty Scale." in RC Report magazine and is a contributor to Model Airplane News magazine as well. He thinks it is important to keep active and abreast of what is going on, both in the field and at the field.

Currently, he is helping to formulate a set of procedures that will keep turbine-powered aircraft safe and exciting at the same time. He will be 56 in November 2000. He is in good health and good spirits. And, he's willing to help anybody that needs a helping hand in any sort of modeling activity.

Frank Tiano (11/99)

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