
Autobiography of OSCAR WEINGART

Modeler since 1941

Birth Date: October 22, 1933

AMA Number: 3932

Written & Submitted by OW (11/02)

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Career:

- Started building 10-cent model airplane kits as a young boy
- Flew Free Flight and early U-Control models by the time he was 12-years-old
- Joined the Brooklyn Sky-Scrapers Club at age 13
- Began competing in the late 1940s and early 1950s
- Flew in the first Navy Carrier event held in his area; placed second competing in junior
- Was very successful at the 1952 Long Island Plymouth Dealers meet; won a trip to the Sixth Annual International Model Airplane Contest held in Detroit, Michigan, where he won the Perpetual Trophy for Outstanding Sportsmanship
- Also competed in Rise-off-Water (ROW) events, starting his love for float-flying
- His 1/7-scale Grumman Widgeon Radio Controlled (RC) Amphibian (the first RC scale model of this aircraft) won first place in flying scale and second place in seaplanes at the Northeast Hydro Radioplane Championships
- Recently placed in all three Schneider Cup races held by the Lake Elsinore, California club and one at Lake Shuswap in British Columbia
- A member of the winning team in several endurance events put on by the Corona, California club
- His new quarter scale Widgeon won Pilot's Choice at the 2000 Lake Havasu float-fly event
- Developed a realistic machine gun for military scale models
- In 1953, designed and built a fiberglass reinforced plastic U-Control airplane
- President of the Riverside RC Club for two years and vice president for three years; also writes a column for the club's monthly newsletter
- Organizes his club's annual two day float-fly and has since it started in 1997
- First published article appeared in the September 1968 issue of Flying Models magazine; it was a construction article on his Grumman Widgeon
- His work has also appeared in American Aircraft Modeler magazine, Radio Control Modeler magazine and the RC Online Internet magazine
- Developed a model airplane construction course for the adult education department of Riverside City College
- Has presented numerous lectures on float flying

The Beginning

When I was a young boy, during the late 1930s and early 1940s, we lived in Brooklyn, New York. My parents would occasionally buy me a 10-cent model airplane kit. These kits, produced by Continental and others, were sold in neighborhood candy stores. They were simplified scale models of various World War I, World War II and civilian airplanes that we would now call peanut scale. The kits included plans, tissue for covering, balsa sticks and sheets, a balsa propeller, a nose bearing, a prop hook, a rubber band motor, wooden wheels and even a vial of glue. My mother would give me her pincushion and some wax paper; my dad would contribute some razor blades; and I was ready to roll! I realize now what a boon these kits

were for my parents. They kept me out of trouble, occupied and quiet, for a week or more, for a lousy 10 cents!

It was a long time before I actually completed one of these 10-cent kits, and they didn't fly very well. Perhaps if my dad was a bit more interested or involved, they would have flown better, but what I really needed was a modeler as a mentor. I feel that these 10-cent kits, like the later Cox U-Control plastic models, probably turned off more potential modelers than they inspired. There were high spots, however. I once built a larger, 25-cent kit of a P-40 that actually would take off and fly around in a circle and sort of land. This was a thrill, but it was still not real modeling.

My breakthrough occurred when I started to go to a real hobby shop that was quite a walking distance away from my home. I splurged on an expensive (75-cent) kit for a contest-type rubber-powered model. I don't remember the manufacturer, but it was a flying model, not a scale model at all. It was much larger than the 10-cent models and had a polyhedral wing and a multi-strand rubber motor. Still without mentoring, I carefully followed the complete building, balancing, adjusting and flying instructions on the plan. The first step in flying was to do a test glide. Per the instructions, I threw the plane gently, wings level and straight ahead. It glided all the way across the street! It seemed to hardly lose any altitude! It looked like it would never come down! That was it. I was hooked! This was the first time that I ever saw a real model really fly.

When World War II was over, I was 11-years-old. Balsa for models and metals for engines started to become available, and the moribund model airplane industry started to take off. (Pardon the pun!) I got the infamous GHQ engine and the notorious Thor engine. The first really good engine I got was the Hurricane 29. I believe that it was made in Canada. I then got an Ohlsson 23 and a Bantam 19. It was a real education, learning to hook up the ignition systems and to start these primitive engines. I started to fly Free Flight and the early U-Control models. I realize now what an education these early modeling experiences were. At 12 years of age, I could read blueprints and I understood basic aerodynamics, the theory and operation of simple internal combustion engines, basic meteorology, strength of materials and electric (and soon electronic) circuits and theory. I could design and build a light, strong structure. Most importantly, I learned the patience and perseverance to carry out a relatively complex, long-term project to completion. I could work through the steps of design, consultation and planning; acquisition of materials and construction; testing and modification, to reach successful operation and competition.

When I was about 13, we moved to a different neighborhood, and I met a bunch of older guys who really knew the ropes about model airplanes. These included Richard Rosenberg, Charley Yuster, Murray Feigenbaum, Stan Silverman, Eddy Mahler and older returned war veterans like Norm Rosenstock and Phil Greenberg. All of us wound up in the Brooklyn Sky-Scrapers club. The Sky-Scrapers were a hot, competitive group of modelers of all ages and all the many ethnic groups to be found in Brooklyn. Notables like Sal Taibi, Leon Schulman and Jerry Stoloff, belonged to the Sky-Scrapers. This was heady stuff for a 13-year-old, starry-eyed wannabe competition modeler!

Competition

At the time that I really started to compete, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, we were blessed with a plethora of model airplane contests. Every summer, the New York Daily Mirror Newspaper sponsored a huge, two-day meet at the Grumman Aircraft field at Bethpage, Long Island. The Plymouth Automobile Dealers in each county sponsored local meets which were complete contests, but also resulted in the highest scorers being sent to the big Plymouth Corporation International meet in Detroit. Local clubs and even the U S Navy sponsored contests as well. In the summer almost every weekend our gang would pile into the cars of the older guys like Norm Rosenstock and go to contests throughout the New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania areas. We would test fly after arriving on Saturday, check into a fleabag hotel, and then compete in the contest on Sunday. We had a great time and won a lot of prizes. I joined AMA back then, over 50 years ago!

I flew in the first Navy Carrier event to be held in our area, at the Mirror meet, and took second place. I was still a junior, and the first place winner was a professional modeler. I designed and built a big Grumman Bearcat, with flaps and a tail hook which came down when full up was applied to the elevators. I designed and installed a brass butterfly valve in the Super Cyclone 60's intake, which was operated by a big relay triggered by the electric U-Reely U-Control handle through insulated control lines. This early remote throttle control really worked!

In 1952, Eddy Mahler and I cleaned up at the local Long Island Plymouth Dealers meet. We were both sponsored, all expenses paid, to the Sixth Annual International Model Airplane Contest. (Eddy had a car and I shared the gas cost.) This weeklong event was sponsored by the Plymouth Motors Corporation in August 1952 at Detroit, Michigan. Contestants were housed in the Fort Shelby Hotel in Detroit. We flew Free Flight and U-Control Team Racing. Neither of us placed, but I won the Perpetual Trophy for Outstanding Sportsmanship!

During the Team Racing event, I naively started my engine as soon as the two-minute starting period commenced. The more streetwise racers waited until the two minutes were almost up. By then, my engine was overheating. We took off, and my plane would hardly stay in the air! Meanwhile, the rest of the four planes were about to lap mine, and my plane was so high that I was sure that our control lines would cross, causing everyone to crash. To prevent this, I deliberately dove my model into the ground and then threw my control handle and lines clear. A high official of the meet witnessed this incident and nominated me for the Sportsmanship Trophy. I got to sit at the head table at the final awards dinner. Seated next to me was Mr. K.T. Keller, Chairman and CEO of Chrysler Corporation! One didn't actually get the huge Perpetual Trophy, but your name was inscribed on it for that year. I did get \$100 savings bond and a smaller replica of the Perpetual Trophy. This massive "smaller" trophy is almost three feet high and is the biggest trophy that I ever won! I still have it after 50 years.

I built one of the earliest radio control systems offered commercially by Control Research as a kit. It used a superhetrodyne receiver with an RK-61 tube and a relay to operate a rubber band escapement that cranked the rudder from neutral to left or right. Both transmitter and receiver

used A and B batteries. At a local meet, I launched my original Radio Controlled (RC) model at a waiting TV photographer, who ducked and got some good footage as the model flew over his head. I was promised that this shot would be seen on the Monday evening news. I alerted all friends and relatives to watch. That weekend, the Korean War started! It goes without saying that there was more important news than a model airplane meet for the TV news to cover.

During these early competitions, one event that I competed in was Free Flight Rise-off-Water (ROW). There would be a big water tank, similar to an above ground swimming pool, for taking off the water. Most models were conventional pylon Free Flights fitted with a big front float and two tiny floats on the stab. I believe that to qualify you first had to show that your model would float on the water for a few minutes without sinking. For an ROW official flight, you would gently drop the model with the engine screaming onto the water where it would immediately leap into the air like a bat out of hell having only been on the water a second or two. This started my life-long addiction to float-flying.

In 1968, my original 1/7-scale Grumman Widgeon RC Amphibian, the first ever RC scale model of this aircraft, won first place in flying scale and second place in seaplanes (flying boats) at the Northeast Hydro Radioplane Championships at Brimfield, Massachusetts. Brimfield was the big annual RC seaplane meet of its day, similar to today's London Bridge Classic at Lake Havasu City, Arizona. My Widgeon had been designed and built by me expressly to win this particular event.

Lately, I have flown sport much more than competition. I like the relaxed, laid-back atmosphere at the west coast fun-flys and float flys. However, I have kept a small competitive effort going. I placed in all three Schneider Cup races held by the Lake Elsinore, California club and also in one at Lake Shuswap in British Columbia this past summer. I also was on the winning team in several endurance events held at Baker, California, by the Corona, California club. My new quarter scale Widgeon won Pilot's Choice at the year 2000 Lake Havasu float-fly event.

Experiments and Innovation

I mentioned above the early experiment with remote throttle control for the slow flying and landing requirement of Navy Carrier. I also touched on my original 1967 scale model of the Grumman Widgeon. An innovation on this model was the use of molded fiberglass, in its infancy at the time, for the two identical engine nacelles. This model also sported an early type of foam wing.

In addition, I developed a realistic machine gun for military scale models. I took the mechanism out of a toy hand-cranked Tommy gun and hooked it up to an electric motor with a remote controlled switch. A perforated roll of caps was fed through the mechanism by a motor-driven sprocket. The caps were exploded by a timed, cam-operated hammer. The result was a very satisfying loud machine gun noise with lots of nifty smoke. I tried to interest the Williams brothers in manufacturing and marketing this invention, as it seemed a perfect accessory for their line of scale plastic dummy machine guns. Unfortunately, we couldn't reach an agreement.

While working in my first job in 1953, at a plant developing the then new idea of fiberglass boats, I designed and built a fiberglass reinforced plastic U-Control airplane. I showed it to a firm that made consumer items of this material, but nothing came of it.

While not very original, I enjoyed experimenting with RC glider towing by RC airplane. I used a Senior Telemaster with OS FS 120 power to tow a 100-inch wingspan glider to altitude. Both glider and tug were fitted with remote controlled releases for the towline. The glider had no wheels, so I built a take off dolly similar to those we used in U-Control speed. This experiment was quite successful, and we established a club record of over one hour duration after tow release.

Leadership

Since 1998 I have served as president of the Riverside Radio Control Club for two years, and as vice-president for three years. I also contribute a monthly column, "Oscar's Observations," to our newsletter. I organized our annual two-day float-fly now in its fifth year.

While on an RV trip about five years ago, I visited the Miami, Florida area, where most of my friends from the Brooklyn Sky-Scrapers have retired. I organized a reunion dinner at a restaurant where about eight couples attended. These included Norm Rosenstock, Jerry Stoloff, Richard Rosenberg, Murray Feigenbaum, Charly Yuster, Stan Silverman and myself, with spouses. I really enjoyed seeing these folks after more than 30 years.

Contest Leadership

While not an official AMA Contest Director, I still was the instigator, prime mover, spark plug and all-around honcho that pushed through our first annual float-fly at Lake Perris State Park and I have run it for five years now. We do have an official contest director as well, and I enlisted the aid of an experienced float fly contest director to help in the first few events. I did the negotiations with the state park bureaucrats, got some of our lazy members off their backsides to work at the meet, begged the vendors and hobby shops for raffle prizes, did the paperwork and even enlisted the aid of my wife for running the registration desk.

I also helped coordinate the negotiations that resulted in the first Southern California IMAC event of the year being held at our field annually.

Publishing Experience

My first published article appeared in the September 1968 issue of Flying Models magazine. It was a construction article on my Grumman Widgeon. I drew the plans, wrote the text and took the photos. This model also appeared on the cover American Aircraft Modeler magazine and on the frontispiece of Radio Control Modeler magazine.

I contributed about 10 articles on float flying to the RC Online Internet magazine. Club newsletter articles, mentioned above, have been contributed for about eight years now.

Hobby Industry Involvement

I mentioned above my abortive attempts with the machine gun and the fiberglass airplane. Several years ago I learned, via the Internet, of a man in the Seattle area who was building a fiberglass quarter scale Grumman Widgeon. I became friendly with Al Franklin and borrowed his molds to make a copy. My Widgeon was to be the classic one with the inverted Ranger engines, so I had a new nacelle mold made, because Al's nacelles were of the Super-Widgeon flat four type. I introduced Al to Chip Mull of F&M, and they made a deal with Bill Price of G&P to manufacture and market the quarter scale Widgeon. I built the first production flight test prototype powered by two JAG conversion Ryobi 31cc gas engines. This was the model that won the Pilot's Choice award at Lake Havasu in 2000.

Education Involvement

I developed a one quarter long course in model airplane construction for the adult education department of Riverside City College. I presented a lecture on float flying at an annual trade show in Long Beach, California. I also have given numerous presentations at our club meetings on float flying, direct servo control and other subjects.

One summer, while I was in college about 1953, I got a job as model airplane counselor at Camp Alpine near Liberty, New York, in the Catskill Mountains. I selected and ordered the kits and supplies, ranging from Rise-off-Grounds (ROGs) for the younger kids to Jetex-powered planes for the older ones. For two months, I taught about a hundred girls and boys of all age groups to build and fly their models. We had a very nice model shop, with cubbies for each camper's model stuff, and each bunk had an hour per week of instruction. At the end of the summer on the weekend when parents traditionally visit we held a contest where everyone flew their completed models and I gave a demonstration of U-Control stunt flying.

*(signed) Oscar Weingart
November 12, 2002*

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