
Autobiography of CLIFF HIATT

Birth date: July 9, 1957

Started modeling in 1964

Written by CH (c. 2003)

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My adventure in this hobby began when I was seven years old with a 1/2A-sized Control Line trainer and help from my father. My father flew Control Line when he was a teenager and “primitive” Radio Control when he was in the U.S. Air Force in the 1950s. In 1968, my father built the Radio Control Model Classic digital proportional system from scratch as a school project for the University of Florida. In 1970, at age 13, I also built one of these same systems from scratch. My first Radio Control airplane was a very crooked Top Flite *Schoolmaster!* My father and I were both founding members of the Flying Gators Model Airplane Club in Gainesville, Florida.

I began my career in competition flying in 1974 with Class A Pattern at the Rebel Rally Contest, held at Navy Air Station Cecil Field in Jacksonville, Florida. It was like a mini-Nats with Control Line, Free Flight, and Radio Control events at the same site on a spring weekend. I attended the 1974 U.S. Nats in Lake Charles, Louisiana and won Best Senior in Class A Pattern. For a 15-year-old to be on the same field with the Pattern greats of the era was a thrill, and to get a trophy was quite exciting! Over the ensuing years, I became very involved in competition Pattern flying, winning the U.S. Nats in my class in 1978 and 1979, and placing sixth at the 1981 F3A team trials.

In 1982, after becoming a little bored with Pattern, I tried my hand at Radio Control helicopters. This proved to be a major change in my life. In 1983, a small aerospace company in Orlando, Florida hired me to be the pilot for a remotely piloted helicopter drone project. I had a connection through a Pattern-flying friend, also my lawyer, who was a duck-hunting friend of the project manager! Since that time, my career in the aerospace industry has continued to develop into my current position as Senior Engineer at Lockheed Martin Missiles and Fire Control in Orlando, Florida.

My competition career also flourished since I began flying helicopters. In 1984, I won the U.S. Nats in AMA Expert and F3C, and in 1985 was a member of the first U.S. F3C team, placing sixth at the first F3C World Championships held in London, Ontario in Canada. In 1988 and 1990, I again won the U.S. Nats in F3C and was the 1989 U.S. Team Manager at the World Championships in Tidewater, Virginia. I finally made the team again as a pilot for the 1995 F3C World Championships held in Kasaoka, Japan. This was a dream come true for me, not only to return to the country where I was born, but also to be a member of the winning team and winning the individual title. Winning the World Championships as a “hobbyist” was quite a thrill. To this day, I still do not believe it!

I have also been involved in the Leader Member aspect of the hobby. In 1986, I was a founding

officer of the Orlando Radio Control Helicopter Society. Our club is still active and has had the distinction of hosting the Tangerine Radio Control Helicopter Contest several times. I am a current Contest Director/Leader Member with the AMA and a past President for the International Radio Control Helicopter Association (IRCHA), the helicopter Significant Interest Group (SIG) recognized by the AMA.

The best part is that my thirteen-year-old son has become an accomplished fixed-wing modeler and wants to try helicopters next!