



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of HENRY A. HAFFKE

August 30, 1927 - October 12, 2017
Modeler since the early 1930s AMA #GEEBEE



Written by HH (06/1987), (02/2010), AMA Staff (01/2011); Transcribed & Edited by SS (12/2002), Updated by JS (05/2010, 10/2017)

Career:

- Built display models for local stores as a youngster
- After his first airplane ride at age 15, took flying lessons and soloed for the first time right after he turned 16
- Joined the Navy after high school and started building engine-powered models; won many prizes competing with these models after being discharged from the Navy
- Designed his own Radio Control racers
- Built and successfully competed with a *Gee Bee Model Y Senior Sportster*
- Built and flew many *Gee Bee* models built by the information provided by Robert Granville; won numerous contests with these models
- His 1/4-scale *Gee Bee Model Y* won numerous contests as well as many best of show awards
- Received the top static score at the 1985 Nationals with his *Gee Bee Model Y*
- Researched and wrote the story of the *Gee Bees* and the men who built them

The following two narratives were written by Henry Haffke and submitted to the AMA History Project (at the time called the AMA History Program) in February of 2010.

Henry A. Haffke, Aviation Historian

Author, "Gee Bee" and "The Real Story of the Granville Brothers
and their Marvelous Airplanes"

AMA 10940 (1940s)

AMA 32323 (1950s-1970s)

AMA Gee Bee (one of the first use of letters as AMA number)

Has written historical articles for all Model Aviation magazines in the U.S., as well as for magazines in England, Germany and Australia

Member:

- New Hampshire Aviation Historical Society
- Connecticut Aviation Historical Society
- American Aviation Historical Society
- Experimental Aircraft Association
- International Miniature Aircraft Association
- Academy of Model Aeronautics
- Professional Race Pilots Association

- United States Air Racing Association

Designer, builder, and pilot of scale model race planes and other types and winner of many top awards for model designs, building, and flying.

Henry was born in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1927. As a young boy, he lived in Chicopee Falls less than a mile from the Springfield Airport (a corner of which was in Chicopee Falls.) His father would take Henry and a brother to watch the airplanes fly on many evening. This was cheap entertainment when they couldn't afford the 10 cents it cost to see a movie.

Henry developed an early interest in aviation, which grew heavily over the years. He started building model airplanes when he was six or seven years old, and built many of the Comet and Guillow's 10-cent kits of the day. They weren't very pretty and certainly didn't fly at all, but by the time he was 15, his modeling skills had improved considerable. The store he bought his models from offered him free models to build for display in the store window, advertising the kits that they sold. He was also having better luck with his models flyability.

Summer months were spent living with his grandparents in Orange, Massachusetts. At age 15, he rode his bicycle over to the Orange Airport and paid \$5 to get a ride in a Taylorcraft. He soloed just a few days after his 16th birthday. He also flew another Taylorcraft, an Aeronca *Champ*, and a Piper *Cruiser*.

He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in May of 1945 and after boot training at Sampson, New York, he was assigned to the Norman Naval Air Technical Training Center's aviation ordnance school in Norman, Oklahoma. After graduating, he was assigned to the teacher training school in Jacksonville, Florida. He went on to teach in both the A and B schools there. He trained students in ordnance equipment used on all naval aircraft, both single-engine and multi-engine types during the WWII era.

He also taught the operation of all bomb and ordnance handling vehicles and related equipment in use at the time, which included everything from the well known Jeep and Dodge bomb truck to the Caterpillar bulldozers, many of which were equipped with bomb-handling cherry pickers. He taught the loading of bombs, torpedoes, rockets and ammunition for .30 and .50 caliber machine guns and 20 mm cannons on all current Naval aircraft, including the *F4F*, *F6F*, *SBD*, *TBF*, *PBY*, *P2V*, and *PB4Y2*. He was a qualified air crewman and aerial gunner, but his flying was limited to crewmember flights on *SB2C Helldivers*, *PBY5A Catalinas* and *R-4D*-type aircraft.

When his superiors realized that he had a pilot's license, Henry was checked out in the operation of the big aircraft engines and did weekly engine run-ups on *F-4U*, *F-6F*, *SB2C*, *TBF*, and other aircraft used for training in the ordnance school.

He made a few flights in a Piper *J-3* on wheels at night, and on floats at a flying school in Jacksonville. He was involved with moving the ordnance school from Jacksonville to Naval Air Technical Training Command (NATTC) in Memphis, Tennessee during his final year in the naval service.

During his service, he became involved in flying engine-powered Free Flight and Control Line scale models. After his discharge from the service, he became heavily involved in Control Line scale model flying. His main modeling interest was in the race planes of the golden era. As there were no kits for these models available to him, he started designing his own. His first Control Line scale design was a model he had built several of from the Comet 10-cent kits, Art Chester's *Jeep*. His second design was of Roscoe Turner's *Pessco Special Racer*. This model was unique in that it was built to scale with proper fabric and wood covered surfaces, as they were on the real aircraft, a practice that was not common back in those days. This Turner *Racer* was a winner of many contests and he still has it today.

Henry flew a lot of Free Flight models when he lived in Delaware. He had a big cornfield across the street for him, which was a great flying site (between corn growing seasons.) He flew many successful models of both high performance and scale Free Flight designs. He flew a couple of Comet *Clippers* (Goldberg designed,) as well as several others from magazine plans. He designed a Corbin *Ace* that flew well. They would get nearly two-minute flights after a pretty take off, and in calm air would land nicely near their take off points. He also scaled up a Tom Nallen rubber Focke-Wulf *Stosser* double size to fly with a .049 engine. It flew much like his Corbin *Ace*. Having to hunt for these models after landing in high rushes and other scruffy areas when wind affected their flight patterns, he wished he could steer them around to avoid this. This led him to become interested in Radio Control models.

He bought a used Lorenz two-tube receiver and transmitter. This was installed in a *Trixter Beam*, which was a more or less successful model. Radios in those days had to be tuned and adjusted just right to operate by a licensed radio operator. Henry did not have this and had to depend on the help of a friend who could do this tuning for him each time he flew.

Next, he bought a Citizenship single-channel outfit and installed it in a Junior *Falcon*. He flew it for hundreds of flights, incurring the normal problems of the day - having the radio quit during a flight. It usually ended up in a tree somewhere.

On one occasion, he was flying after the engine quit and a sudden storm came into the area. It blew the model away, which was quite high in the sky. He watched it until it was nearly out of sight and very low. He spent a couple of hours searching fields in the area without any luck, but he had to get to work. He worked mid-afternoon to midnight, and when he came home for his supper break, he found someone had called and put his model in his yard. (We always had our names, addresses, and phone numbers displayed on our model in those unreliable days). This model, which was found several miles from where Henry had searched, was intact. It still exists today.

Henry's next models were scale subjects including a Corbin *Ace* from magazine plans and a self-designed Citabria. His wife bought him a used EK Logictrol 4-channel outfit for Christmas one year and this became his chance to build that dreamed-about beautiful scale model he had wanted for so long. He built one of his favorite aircraft, a Ryan *ST* from *Model Airplane News* plans and got involved in Radio Control scale meets. He changed the Ryan *ST* to a *PT 20A* with a Kinner engine and flew it for several seasons with good results. He then designed another of his favorites to make use of the Menasco cowl that was left over from his conversion of the Ryan.

This model was of Art Chester's *Jeep* and became a frequent winner in scale meets. Around this time, Sport Scale became an event.

Next, he designed another of his favorite race planes, a super-scale rendition of the Howard *Ike*. This was flown for several years and was a frequent winner. He later designed a *Citabria Pro*, which was also a frequent winner.

Henry then got the urge to build a model of one of the *Gee Bee* aircraft that were built so close to his childhood home in Springfield. The aircraft he did was the two-place open cockpit *Model Y* that was relatively unknown and had very little information available about it. He found a three-view and one very small picture. He scaled the model up from the three-view, and as he built the model, he searched for other material to document it. He located two photos from the National Air and Space Museum and they suggested he contact a Connecticut historical society where he located two more photos.

Henry lived in New Jersey at this time and his family still lived in the Springfield area. Whenever he visited his family, he spent countless hours hunting for information and visiting at the airports in the area to talk to people who gave him little bits of information, but nothing substantial. Then he got his big break when he received one of his monthly issues of *Sport Aviation* (an EAA member benefit.) In it appeared an article on *Gee Bees*, written by Bob Granville, one of the famous five brothers who had designed and built the airplane in Springfield in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Bob's address appeared at the end of the article, so Henry rushed off a hasty letter, telling him of his project and asking if he could help with any pictures of the *Model Y*. Bob answered the letter and enclosed a couple of photographs of the *Model Y*. They were a big help. Bob told Henry that he was reluctant to loan photos and things to people who requested them. He told of loaning many things to people who never returned them. Henry had the photos copied and immediately returned the originals.

Bob put Henry in touch with his younger brother, Ed, and told Henry it was a shame that he hadn't known his older brother, Tom. Tom had lived in the same neighborhood that Henry lived in his youth. A short time later, Henry met Tom's daughter, and she showed Henry where she had lived. As it turned out, Henry had delivered papers to that house, so Tom Granville was one of his paper route customers at the time. However, Henry was not aware of the Granvilles and their activities at the Springfield Airport.

Bob sent Henry more photos, some of his *Model D Sportster*, as Henry had told him that was the next model he was interested in building. With the photos, Henry was able to do an excellent rendition of the *Model D Sportster*. The photos also showed that his *Model Y* was not very accurate. It showed that the three-views Henry worked from were not very good. The postal system swapped their letters rapidly and after a couple of months, Henry had gathered more information on the *Model Y* and *Model D Sportsters* than possibly anyone had ever obtained.

Bob told Henry that he was able to get copy negatives made of any photo loaned from him, and would immediately send the originals back. They became very good friends and Bob wanted to see his *Gee Bee* models fly. He had never seen a Radio Control model fly.

A few months later, Henry learned of a new scale model meet that would be held at the Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome in New York for models of golden era aircraft. Bob had told Henry he would like to attend a contest where he would be flying his *Gee Bee* models and had wanted to see the Aerodrome. This was brought up at a South Jersey Radio Control Society meeting. Henry asked his club if it would be interested in sponsoring an invitation to have one of the famous Granville brothers attend this special golden era meet as a guest of the club. The club felt that it would be a very special occasion to have one of the big names of that period attend the contest as their guest, and as they had a surplus of money in their treasury, Henry was authorized to invite Mr. Granville as the club's guest to attend this first meet for models of that era.

Bob didn't think that the club should do this, but would make every effort to attend the meet if he could make it. Bob and his wife were able to attend, and were driven from their home in Northern Maine by their son, Robert Jr., and his wife and son. Henry and Rob, as he liked to be called, met face to face for the first time at the Aerodrome on Saturday morning. They both felt like old friends, and they both had a great time over the weekend. Henry had Rob act as his caller for his flights and Rob really enjoyed seeing Henry's *Gee Bee Model Y and Model D Sportsters* fly. He told Henry they looked like the real things in the air.

Henry treated Rob and his family to diner on Saturday night that was enjoyed by eight or ten of Henry's best modeling friends at the meet. A local restaurant had set up a separate dining room for the group and a never to be forgotten evening was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

During the two-day meet, Rob met many of the model builders and several of the pilots of the antique aircraft that fly every week at Rhinebeck. Cole Phalen, who operated the Aerodrome at this time, really enjoyed meeting one of the Granville brothers at his establishment. Rob really enjoyed the model competitions, which included Sport Scale, AMA Scale, time trials, and barnstorming events. He also greatly enjoyed the air show each day featuring the many full-scale vintage aircraft that flew each weekend at Rhinebeck. After the model contests on Sunday, the awards were presented to the winners and Henry's *Gee Bee* models had won top placements in three of the four events. Rob beamed with pride as Henry's *Gee Bees* were awarded the prizes.

After the awards were finished, they loaded their cars for the trip home and then took a seat for the air show. They all greatly enjoyed seeing antique airplanes fly, something that rarely happens elsewhere than Rhinebeck. You don't see many air shows anywhere else in the world that feature vintage aircraft flying on the original rotary engines of WWI, but you do at the Rhinebeck Aerodrome.

After the air show, they headed to the parking lot. Along the way, Rob met a few modelers he had not met before and talked about what great fun it all was. He told Henry, "This has been the most wonderful weekend of my life." This made Henry feel very good, as he felt he had rekindled Rob's interest in what he and his brothers had done back in the early thirties. Rob was been a dairy farmer and had been completely away from aviation for the past 35 years.

Rob and Henry continued their correspondence and Henry learned more and more, including much unknown information concerning the *Gee Bee* aircraft. Henry read everything he could find about the *Gee Bees* and in doing so, found many conflicting accounts of incidents involving

various *Gee Bees*. He questioned Rob and Ed Granville about these situations and learned from them that neither version of the accounts were correct. They told him what really happened. This situation went on and on for a considerable amount of time as Henry continued to read more and more writings in old magazines of *Gee Bee* stories. Everything he read contained false information as authors tried to make their accounts as sensational as the aircraft they wrote about. Authors read another's account, would add his thoughts to the original, and thus created a terrible reputation for the *Gee Bee* aircraft.

Henry read many accounts of how terrible they were and that no one could handle them. He also read several times that all the pilots who flew them were killed. As he learned correct information about incidents involving *Gee Bee* aircraft from Rob and Ed, he realized that all of the written accounts of the airplane stories were filled with untrue statements regarding these colorful aircraft. It suddenly dawned on him that a terrible injustice had been done to the Granville family and the great aircraft they had created. It was at this point that he decided that something had to be done to correct this unfortunate wrongdoing. The true story of the Granvilles and their airplanes had to be told. In thinking about how this could be done, he realized that if he didn't do it himself, it might never get done.

The following March, Henry was invited to a surprise 45th wedding anniversary party for Rob and his wife in Cornville, Maine. He was able to make the long trip from Southern New Jersey with a friend and most were surprised that he would travel that far in the dead of winter to attend the event. Henry was able to meet many other members of the Granville family and many of Rob and Eva's special friends. Ed Granville had passed away recently but Henry got to know Ed's widow. She was a Chicopee girl and had been a schoolmate of Henry's cousin.

During his visit, he talked to Rob about his thoughts of writing a book to tell the real story of the Granvilles and their airplanes, also mentioning that he would tell of all the earlier *Gee Bees* that no one knew about. He asked Rob if he would help him do this. Rob told him that he would be very glad to do this for him. Another thing that came up in their talks was that nothing had ever been written about their youth, growing up on a farm, and their education. Henry felt that something about their youth might help explain how they were able to do what they did in just a few years, designing and building at the time the fastest airplanes in the world.

Henry made up an outline of what he wanted to talk about in the book. He gave Rob an outline of what he wanted to know about their youth, including their chores and spare time activities, and other things as they grew up. The only things Henry had ever read about in their youth were occasional statements by authors that none of them ever went beyond the third grade.

This was very untrue, as all five of the brothers and their two sisters graduated from Nickerson grade school, which was an eight-grade (one room) school. At the time, this was all the education available to them. Two years later, a two-year high school was built in Madison, and Rob returned to school, as did Mark and Ed. Rob finished the two years, but both Mark and Ed left during their first year to go to work. Both of the Granville sisters, Pearl and Gladys, finished the two years and then continued on when the third and fourth years were added to the school. They both went on to graduate from college and became schoolteachers.

Henry felt that there had to be something in their growing up that would explain how these young men could leave their little town farm and just a few years later, create the world record-breaking *Gee Bee* racers they built in 1931 and 1932. Henry had made a list of things he wanted to know about their growing up for Rob, and when he got the written account of their childhood on the farm, he found his answer to the question. With their ingenuity, they came up with all kinds of mechanical devices to make their farm work easier and as it turns out, they were mechanical geniuses.

A few months after the anniversary party, Rob was invited to a special event at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington. He broke up the long trip by visiting Henry in New Jersey, spending a few days there. At the anniversary party, Rob had put Henry and his friend up in his home and Henry returned the favor by putting Rob and his family up at his home. Rob and his family attended the Rhinebeck meet again with Henry for its second year, and everyone had a super time again as they had previously.

Shortly after this, the Springfield Science Museum held a weekend event dedicating a new Granville display where Henry got to meet several other Granville family members he had not met before. Also in attendance were Bob Hall and Pete Miller, as well as several of the original Granville factory workers. Hall and Miller were the two chief engineers during the Granville Company years. Maude Tait [famous *Gee Bee* pilot] was also in attendance, as well as a couple of other pilots who flew *Gee Bees*. It was great to have all of these historical people together again.

A week later, Henry received a call from Rob's son telling him that Rob had passed away earlier in the day. Henry, living in New Jersey, picked up two friends from Springfield who had known Rob and Eva, and attended the funeral. On the way to Maine, going through New Hampshire, they picked up Ed Granville's widow. Henry acted as pallbearer during the funeral and promised Eva and her children that he would finish their plans to write the book on the *Gee Bees*.

Rob had put Henry in touch with various owners and other pilots who had flown *Gee Bee* aircraft, as well as a few other air race personalities who had witnessed *Gee Bee* incidents. Henry spent the next 15 years continuing his research to write the book until he had the answers to every question he had in his outline. He knew his positive writing about the *Gee Bee* would not be accepted by the aviation minded and he made sure that he could back up every account of each happening written about in the book, with at least a second account by an unrelated source. The book was finished and published in 1989. [*Gee Bee: The Real Story of the Granville Brothers and their Marvelous Airplanes*]

Shortly thereafter, there was a ring at Henry's motel door. Two men appeared and introduced themselves as Steve Wolf and Delmar Benjamin. Henry knew Steve Wolf through previous correspondence, but had never met him. He had never heard of Delmar Benjamin. These two men talked to Henry about wanting to build a replica *Gee Bee R-2* to fly in air shows. They knew he had more information on this aircraft than anyone else did in the world. They were very interested in finding out how this aircraft really flew. They were both model airplane builders and flyers, and understood the relationship between flying a model and the real full-scale aircraft and had many questions about Henry's flying of his 1/4-scale *Gee Bee R-1*. They were ecstatic

when Henry told them how well it flew knife-edge. They had both envisioned that the replica would do this well.

Henry gave them all the technical information he had with photos, as well as a set of his ¼-scale plans of the aircraft. Then Henry told them of his friendship with Howell “Pete” Miller, who was the chief engineer and co-designer of the original *Gee Bee R-1* and *R-2*. Steve and Delmar had no idea that Pete Miller was still alive. Henry put them in touch with Pete and they went on to his home, about two hours away, and spent the next day with him. They returned to Steve’s shop in Oregon and started building the *Gee Bee* a month later on January 1, test flying the aircraft three days before Christmas.

Delmar and the *Gee Bee R-2* replica were the sensation of the big air shows over the next several years. The combination of Delmar flying this aircraft and the publication of Henry’s book did what Henry never thought his book could do. For the most part, the two of them have pretty much turned the *Gee Bee* reputation around.

The motel business that Henry owned in Vermont put a deep dent in his involvement with flying model airplanes. He did find time to design and build new models, but flying time became very scarce. As he grew older, he began to be concerned over what he should do with his ¼ scale *Gee Bee* models. Two museums wanted them, but Henry wanted to make sure they would end up with the most important historical location honoring the Granville brothers as possible.

He was aware of the young New Hampshire Aviation Historical Society (NHAHS). He had talked to members of the Society at various EAA functions he attended. The representatives he talked to did not impress him very favorably. The NHAHS has a logo that depicts a biplane on floats. This aircraft, fittingly, is 3086, the first *Gee Bee*. At any function Henry talked to NHAHS representatives, he was concerned over the fact that none of them knew what the airplane on their logo was. This bothered him seriously.

Henry had been invited as one of the guest speaker at the 2003 100th Anniversary Celebration of Flight at Daniel Webster College. NHAHS had a booth at the event, and at this booth, he talked to the Archivist of the Society. This was a woman who really knew historical facts and they had an extended talk. Henry showed her historic photos and other materials and models in his car which he usually used to assist his talks. The longer they conversed, the more Henry became extremely impressed with her.

She related the Society’s plans for a new museum dedicated to New Hampshire’s Aviation History. Henry decided that this is where his models of *Gee Bee* aircraft really belonged. He offered to donate these models and all of his historical research materials, including hundreds of photos, correspondence with Granville family members, pilots and owners of *Gee Bee* aircraft, including Jimmy Doolittle, Jim Haizlip, Mary Hazlip, Maude Tait, Bill Sweet, and others who were involved with *Gee Bee* airplane.

Two months later Henry sold his motel. Society members picked up Henry’s materials to store in their facility until he could relocate and work on the models to put them in top shape for display.

After relocating to Malta, New York, Henry has been picking up and working on the models and at this time has returned 1/4-scale models of the 1931 *Gee Bee Model Z*, winner of the 1931 Thompson Trophy Race, the 1932 *Gee Bee R-1* in which Jimmy Doolittle set a new World's Speed Record and then won the Thompson Trophy Race. His most recent refurbish was the 1930 *Gee Bee Model D Sportster*, which won many races (although it was not an aircraft designed for racing) at Cleveland. This model was returned to the Society in September.

Henry is currently working on the 1/4-scale *Gee Bee Model Y Senior Sportster* that, although not built as a race plane, won more races and more money than any of the *Gee Bees* designed specifically for racing. He expects to finish this model before year's end and he has one more model that he has promised to the NHAHS. This final model is of the *Gee Bee* biplane 3086, the society's logo airplane, is equipped with floats and Henry will build and install a set of floats on the model before he delivers it to the museum. This writing is being done in late 2009 so everything should be finished sometime in 2010.

Henry is still designing and building models and doing a little flying when time permits. He is currently working on helping five other museums with *Gee Bee* projects they have underway.

Henry met a group of local modelers who were flying Radio Control models in the local Speedway parking lot. A couple of them were pretty good pilots but none of them really knew what they were doing and had bad habits. Henry helped them out by getting them to take better care of their models and helped them with their flying skills. He taught them to do several common maneuvers, including figure eights and procedure turns used in model meets.

He told them of the AMA and suggested that they form a club, pointing out the advantages of such a movement. He got the best pilots to join the AMA and led them into getting a club charter established. He had them attend a couple of AMA meets in the Albany area where they saw the AMA at work and saw some real flying. This led to the forming of the new AMA club in 2008 called SCRAM or Saratoga County Aero Modelers. Henry had given the group a list of several potential club names and this is the one they chose from his list.

Just a couple of weeks ago (as this is being written) the club experienced a historic event. Ron Spooner of California paid a visit to Henry during a trip east and wanted to see one of Henry's *Gee Bee* models fly. Ron is a former Navy pilot and the son of Pearl Granville. Curtis Smith, the club's safety officer and best pilot, made a flight with Henry's *Gee Bee Model Y Senior Sportster* during a very short break in the weather (heavy rain and high winds.)

Just as Ron was approaching the Saratoga Springs area on I-87, he called Henry to get directions to Henry's home. Henry had just noticed a bright spot to the east and the heavy rain had stopped. He directed Ron to the flying field just off I-87 in Malta and then called Curtiss and had him go to the field. Henry had everything in his car overnight and he headed to the field. He hadn't finished getting everything out of his car when Curtiss showed up and immediately thereafter, Ron and his wife arrived. The *Gee Bee* was quickly filled with gas and the sky had brightened even more with the sun now poking through. Curtiss started the engine and taxied the *Gee Bee* into position for takeoff.

A few pictures were taken and then he took off and flew a very nice flight making continuing low passes close to us that Ron really enjoyed. Curtis's 10-minute buzzer went off and he lined up and made a very nice landing. We wanted to make another flight but the sky darkened and we decided not to press our luck and got things back into the car. Henry headed back to his home just one mile from the field with Ron following, and before he got back to his house, the rain and wind returned and lasted the rest of the day. It was quite an interesting event as Curtis got to fly one of Henry's *Gee Bee* models for a member of the Granville family at the new club's flying site in spite of a horrendous bad weather day.

The Beginning

My first models were made of hard wood, built with the help of dad using kits with powdered glue you had to mix, around 1933. Then dad bought me 10-cent Comet and Guillow's rubber-powered model kits that I built. They were pretty bad and certainly didn't fly well. I lived in Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts (near Springfield airport) where we spent many evenings at the airport. That was cheap entertainment when you couldn't afford the dime it cost for a movie. An early love of airplanes was started.

Summer months were spent at my grandparents' home in Orange, Massachusetts, where I continued to build Comet dime kits. Over a number of years, the models improved in both quality and flying. By the time, I got into the junior high school years; I was building models for the local store in Orange where I bought my models. They gave me them to build for their window, showing new models they had for sale. I was able to keep the models when they were through with them.

I built many of the aircraft spotter models in a wood working class, made for the war aircraft spotters guides. My instructor gave me all of the complex models to do (such as Japanese seaplane-types and similar that had extra struts, wings, etc.) I also spent time as an aircraft spotter and could identify any aircraft I saw. I knew how it was powered, its wingspan, weight, top speed, etc. We were not required to know this, but I knew all military aircraft of any nation this well.

I was the youngest spotter in our city; I was 12 or 14 at the time. My junior year at Orange High School, we had a new aviation science class taught by the school principal. He didn't know what he was teaching; he worked from a textbook for the class. I helped him understand the material he was teaching, such as lift, drag, and other aviation principles. I took my very first ride in an airplane during this year and the pilot told me I should learn to fly with my interest in airplanes. I took lessons in the 1940 Taylorcraft BL-50. I had my first ride in and soloed in it just a few days after my 16th birthday.

I enlisted in the Navy in April of 1945, and after boot camp was assigned to the Aviation Ordnance School in Norman, Oklahoma. After graduation, I was transferred to the NATTC Jacksonville, Florida Teachers Training School and then became an instructor in the Aviation Ordnance School where I taught classes on ordnance equipment on all current naval aircraft, including F6F, F4U, SB2C, TBF, PBY, P2V, and PB4Y2 aircraft. I became an aerial gunner and aircrew member, but flying was mostly as an air crewman in SB2C, PBY5A, and R4D type aircraft.

During my time in the Navy, I became involved with engine-powered models. I learned to fly Control Line with the help of a friend and his “goat” [a Free Flight airplane converted to Control Line.] I built a few scale Control Line models. I also flew a few Free Flight models, including a Goldberg *Zipper* powered with a CO² engine that flew very nice.

Competitions

After discharge from the Navy in 1948, I built Control Line Scale models and my main interest was in the Golden Era race planes and aerobatic models. I started designing my own. I was a very good artist so it wasn't any trouble working from three-views of the model I wanted to build.

My first was a Control Line model of Art Chester's *Jeep* powered by an Arden .19. It crashed on its first flight. It was repaired and did fly well after I got better at flying. I built a model of an airplane that was hopping passengers in Agawam. It was a Fairchild 24 from a kit. In 1950, I entered my first meet at the Connecticut State Championships. I flew the Fairchild and took second place. Then I built a Pitts *Special* from a Berkeley kit with an Arden .19 that I finished like Betty Skelton's *Little Stinker*. I flew that in the 1952 Connecticut State Championships getting third place.

Then I designed a model of Roscoe Turner's Laird *Pesco Special* racer. It featured a complete cockpit, with Turner in his blue uniform and a dummy Wasp engine hiding the .35 engine in the cowl. It also had exact covering with wood-covered forward sections, fabric aft fuselage, and rudder and elevator tail surfaces as on the real one. This kind of true scale reproduction on a model was not common in those days. It was flown in the 1954 Connecticut State Championships, getting second place behind the national Control Line scale champion. This was repeated in the 1955 Connecticut State Championships with the same results, and later in the year flown in the Yankee Championships in Massachusetts with the same results. I also flew this model in 1956 and 1957 with good results and still have the model today. Then I built a Colonial Skimmer from a kit and then a self-designed Control Line Stunt model of the Cosmic Wind *Little Toni* that won best in show in its first event in 1963.

The next several years, I continued flying Control Line models and also built many Free Flight models, but never competed with them. I flew many scale and contest-type models from kits, magazine plans, and original designs with much success. Chasing Free Flight models and hunting for them when wind affected their flights led me to wish I could steer them from trouble.

In 1962, I got a Lorenz two-tube receiver, mounted it in a Lew Andrews Trixter Beam with escapement, and found a friend who had a radio license that could adjust the tuning for me each time I flew it. I was still flying many Control Line and Free Flight models. In 1963, I bought a new UR receiver and transmitter and built a Goldberg *Junior Falcon* with a Cox .09 that I flew hundreds of times. In 1963, I obtained a three-function reed outfit, which I installed in a Sterling *Mambo Special*. That was a new experience.

In 1969, my wife bought me a used Logictrol four-channel radio from one of my club members. It enabled me to build that long dreamed about nice scale model. I built a Ryan *PT 20* from an

old magazine plan that I modified by reducing the dihedral and installing scale ailerons. I became interested in contest flying and flew it in meets from 1971 to 1974 with decent results. I also designed an Art Chester *Jeep* in 1971 and flew it in my first Radio Control meet at the East Coast Championships, winning the fourth place trophy.

Over the next several years, I competed in many contests in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia, flying AMA Scale, Pattern, Sport Scale, Giant Scale, and Team Scale most every weekend during the contest season with excellent results.

First Nationals, Dayton, 1976. Flew a self-designed *Gee Bee Model Y Senior Sportster* powered with a K&B .40, finishing 11th out of over 90 entrants.

1983 Nationals. Westover Chicopee. Flew three self-designed Gee Bee models.

- FIA Scale, 1/4-scale *Gee Bee Model D Senior Sportster*, came in sixth place.
- Sport Scale, 1/4-scale *Gee Bee Model X Super Sportster*, came in fifteenth place.
- Giant Scale, 1/4-scale *Gee Bee Model Y Senior Sportster*, came in eleventh place.

1985 National, Westover Chicopee.

- Giant Scale, 1/4-scale *Gee Bee R-1 Super Sportster* (five years old, shop-worn). Was 26th in static out of 56 entries, seventh in flight scores, eleventh overall.
- Sport Scale 1/5-scale *Gee Bee Model Y Senior Sportster* was first in static with 97 (highest mark ever given in scale at Nats at the time.) Model crashed shortly after first take off due to radio interference.

Experiments

I worked in product development for Coverite from 1978 to 1990. I did much research and testing of all coverings on the US market, developing improved and new coverings for Coverite. I discovered the directions for proper handling of covering were wrong. During testing, I discovered that all coverings had thermal activated adhesives that were very close in activating temperatures (all within 7 or 8 degrees.) Some companies advertised high heat, others low heat, and other ridiculous advertising statements. In those days, everyone believed hot was good and hotter was better. In my experimenting with temperatures, I realized that the ideal heat to apply a covering product was just above the activating temperature of its adhesive. As Coverite's products had an activating temperature of 215 degrees, I found an iron temperature of around 25 to 35 degrees worked best. At this temperature, the material would adhere to the model in just a few seconds after lifting the iron.

With an iron set at 350 or 400 degrees (this was very common), a modeler had to compensate for this mistake by holding the material in position until the heat dissipated enough to let the adhesive do what you wanted it to do (adhere the covering to the model). The high heat made the material shrink unless you were holding it tightly enough to overcome this. I was very good at covering and there were any others, too. We developed an ability to hold the material in place until it cooled enough to stick where we wanted it.

Later on, I did free covering demonstrations for any club within a three-hour drive from Coverite. During these demonstrations, I frequently talked to big clubs in the northeast (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania) that had very experienced modelers who wrote for magazines. They immediately realized how right I was when I explained the heat situation in covering and wondered why they had not thought of this before. Also in doing covering demonstrations at trade shows, I always did demonstrations covering actual models (others used a small wing panel to do demos) and interested modelers could come back to my next demonstration and see a different section of a model being covered.

Other things I developed for Coverite appear on another page of material.

Leadership

I belonged to this club from the early 1960s, originally called the Misguided Missiles Radio Control Club in Bridgeton, New Jersey, which was probably appropriate because of the equipment we used at the time. Later, when equipment became much more reliable, we changed the name to South Jersey Radio Control Society.

I belonged for many years, serving as President and Vice President many times. I helped run annual events at our club field and helped a neighboring club with their events. We had interclub meets annually and ran contests for different categories such as Scale Pattern, Gliders, Old Time Free Flight, Racing, and Sport events. When we bought a motel in Vermont in 1990, we moved and said goodbye to the club.

After moving to my present location (Malta, New York), I got local modelers to join AMA and led them through forming a club (letting them do the work), the Saratoga County Radio Aero Modelers. I am serving as vice president. In my many years of flying, I have been awarded with several lifetime honorary memberships in Radio Control clubs in Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and one in Canada.

I served as contest director for a special Sort-A-Scale Fun Fly meet sponsored by Coverite for flying one of Coverite's three Sort-A-Scale trainer kit models in a two-day fun fly event. \$2000 in Coverite products were awarded to winners of the various events with everyone getting prizes. A big turnout with modelers from five states flew in the various fun-filled events. Held in October of 1989 or 1990, the meet was at Buckley field in Pennsylvania. I have also acted as a judge in Scale events at a couple of meets I attended.

Henry A. Haffke Designs Kitted and Products Developed

| | | |
|---------------|---|-------------------|
| Aero Classics | <i>Gee Bee Senior Sportster Model Y</i> | .40 Radio Control |
| Coverite | <i>Gee Bee Sportster Model D</i> (all variants) | .40 Radio Control |
| Coverite | <i>Gee Bee Sportster Model E</i> (all variants) | .40 Radio Control |
| Coverite | <i>Chester Jeep</i> | .40 Radio Control |
| Coverite | <i>Black Baron Special</i> (trainer) | .40 Radio Control |
| Coverite | <i>Fokker</i> (trainer) | .40 Radio Control |
| Coverite | <i>Peashooter</i> (Low wing trainer) | .40 Radio Control |
| Manzano Laser | 1/4-scale <i>Gee Bee Model E</i> (available soon) | Electric |

**Products Developed for Coverite
(Sold by Tower Hobbies)**

Black Baron film
Micafilm
21st Century fabric
Black Baron trim sheets
Black Baron ½" alphabet and number sheets
Black Baron pin stripes
Black Baron sealing iron
Black Baron replacement show for iron
Black Baron thermometer
Balsarite for film

Henry A. Haffke Designs as Construction Articles

| Model | Date | Publication |
|---|------------------------|---|
| <i>Chester Jeep</i> | January 1975 | <i>Radio Control Sportsman</i> , also England and Germany |
| <i>P-51 Miss America</i> (kit bash) | November 1975 | <i>Radio Control Sportsman</i> |
| <i>Gee Bee Model Y</i> (both aircraft) | March 1976 | <i>Model Aviation</i> |
| <i>Citabria Pro</i> | June 1977 | <i>Radio Control Sportsman</i> , also England |
| <i>Howard Ike</i> | 1977 | <i>Model Airplane News</i> |
| <i>Gee Bee Model D</i> | 1977 | <i>Flying Models</i> , also England |
| <i>Gee Bee R-1/R-2 Long Tail Racer</i> | February 1978 | <i>Flying Models</i> |
| ¼-scale <i>Gee Bee Model Y</i> | May/June 1980 | <i>Model Aviation</i> |
| ¼-scale <i>Gee Bee Model D</i> | June/July 1981 | <i>Flying Models</i> |
| ¼-scale <i>Gee Bee Model E</i> | 1981 | <i>Scale Radio Control Modeler</i> |
| ¼-scale <i>Gee Bee R-1 or R-2</i> | February/March 1983 | <i>Model Aviation</i> |
| <i>Gee Bee Zeta</i> | July 1983 | <i>RC Modeler</i> |
| ¼-scale <i>Gee Bee Model Z</i> | September/October 1984 | <i>Model Aviation</i> |
| 1/5-scale <i>Time Flies</i> (Great Britain) | July/August 1985 | <i>Model Airplane News</i> |
| <i>Peashooter</i> (trainer) | August 1987 | <i>Model Airplane News</i> |
| <i>Foney Fokker</i> (trainer) | 1987 | <i>RC Modeler</i> |
| Ken Flaglor's <i>Gee Bee Model Y</i> | March/April 1988 | <i>Model Aviation</i> |
| SAS <i>Gee Bee Long Tail Racer</i> | December 1994 | <i>Model Airplane News</i> |
| <i>Giant Peashooter</i> | September 1995 | <i>Model Airplane News</i> |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| SAS <i>Gee Bee Model Y</i> | August 1998 | <i>Model Airplane News</i> |
| <i>Cloud Dancer</i> (sailplane) | September 1999 | <i>Flying Models</i> |
| Ryan <i>ST - PT-20A</i> | November 1999 | <i>Model Airplane News</i> |
| 1/4-scale CWTI <i>Bunting</i> | February 2002 | <i>Model Airplane News</i> |
| <i>Gee Bee Model A</i> biplane | June 2004 | <i>Model Airplane News</i> |
| 1940 Taylorcraft <i>BL-50</i> | February 2008 | <i>Model Airplane News</i> |
| 1/3-scale Howard <i>Ike</i> | 2009 | <i>Model Airplane News</i> |

Other Henry A. Haffke Designs
(Not created as articles, plans available for most)

| Year | Model | Engine Displacement | Type |
|------|---|---------------------|--|
| 1949 | <i>Chester Jeep</i> | .19 | Control Line |
| 1954 | <i>Profile Twin Mustang F-82</i> | .35 | Control Line |
| 1954 | Turner's <i>Pesco Special Racer</i> | .35 | Control Line |
| 1956 | <i>Corbin Ace</i> | .049 | Free Flight |
| 1956 | <i>Corbin Ace</i> | .020 | Free Flight |
| 1958 | <i>Cessna Bird Dog</i> | .049 | Free Flight |
| 1958 | Falk Rivets | .049 | Control Line |
| 1958 | <i>PBY-5A</i> | .020 | Control Line |
| 1958 | F. W. Stosser | .049 | Free Flight |
| 1958 | <i>Citabria</i> | .09 | 3-Channel Radio Control |
| 1958 | <i>Corbin Ace</i> | .049 | Radio Control |
| 1960 | <i>Porterfield</i> | .049 | Free Flight |
| 1961 | <i>Cessna Bird Dog</i> | .065 | Free Flight |
| 1962 | <i>Little Toni</i> (Cosmic Wind) | .35 | Control Line Stunt |
| 1966 | <i>Ballerina</i> (Cosmic Wind) | .049 | Control Line |
| 1967 | Falk Rivets | .19 | Control Line |
| 1974 | <i>P-51C Miss America</i> (kit bash)*** | .51 | Radio Control TF kit |
| 1974 | Bucker <i>Jungmeister</i> - kit based from Andrews Aeromaster kit | | Kit bashed from Andrews Aeromaster kit |
| 1974 | 1/4-scale World War Racers (all variants) | .91 | Radio Control |
| 1975 | 1/4 scale <i>Gee Bee R-1/R-2</i> (long tail racer) | .91 | Radio Control |
| 1976 | 1/4 scale <i>Gee Bee Zeta</i> | .91 | Radio Control |
| 1977 | 1/3 scale <i>Gee Bee R-1/R-2</i> (long tail racer) | | Radio Control Quadra |

***I was contacted by Sid Axelrod who requested my patterns and released a supplemental kit so others could make a *D model* from the Top Flite *P-51 C* kit. I also wrote an article with plans for *Radio Control Sportsman* with minute details of this aircraft in November of 1975. Included were all markings and cockpit details, as well as detailed landing gear with markings, etc. This model won two major events in Philadelphia's Wanamaker's Concourse d 'Elegance event and later won the best finished Radio Control award at the big two-week long Aerocrafts '74 event in the civic center's museum, featuring all kinds of models shipped in from all over the county. In this same event, my Free Flight *Porterfield* won best Free Flight Scale and my Colonial *Skimmer* won best seaplane.

Henry A. Haffke Models on Magazine Covers
(Models have appeared on fifteen model magazine covers as follows)

| Date | Magazine | Model |
|-------------------|----------------------------|---|
| February 1979 | <i>Flying Models</i> | <i>Gee Bee R-1/R-2 Long Tail Racer</i> |
| May 1980 | <i>Model Aviation</i> | 1/4-scale <i>Gee Bee Model Y</i> with Karen |
| June 1981 | <i>Flying Models</i> | 1/4-scale <i>Gee Bee Model D</i> with Henry |
| April 1982 | <i>RC Modeler</i> | Radio Control <i>Buzzard Bombshell</i> with Miss. Semish |
| 1982 (Nats issue) | <i>Model Aviation</i> | 1/4-scale <i>Model Y</i> with Ray (son) |
| February 1983 | <i>Model Aviation</i> | 1/4-scale <i>Gee Bee R-1</i> with Karen |
| September 1984 | <i>Model Aviation</i> | 1/4-scale <i>Gee Bee Model Z</i> with Karen |
| March 1988 | <i>Model Aviation</i> | 1/5-scale <i>Gee Bee Model Y</i> with Judy |
| March 1992 | <i>Model Aviation</i> | Artist Benjamin used 1/4-scale <i>Gee Bee Model Y</i> in painting |
| August 1996 | <i>Model Aviation</i> | SAS <i>Gee Bee R-1/R-2</i> with Henry |
| October 1996 | <i>Model Builder</i> | <i>Gee Bee Model D, Y, and biplane</i> |
| November 1996 | <i>Flying Models</i> | <i>Gee Bee R-2</i> |
| August 1998 | <i>Model Airplane News</i> | SAS <i>Gee Bee Y</i> with Henry |
| September 1998 | <i>Model Airplane News</i> | <i>Ryan PT-20A</i> |
| November 1999 | <i>Model Airplane News</i> | <i>Ryan ST</i> |

The following biography was written by AMA staff in the January 2011 issue of Model Aviation magazine.

Henry Haffke

Henry Haffke is the author of the book *Gee Bee, The Real Story of the Granville Brothers and Their Marvelous Airplanes*.

Henry was born in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1927. He developed an early interest in aviation, which grew over the years. He started building model airplanes when he was six or seven years old, and built many of the Comet and Guillow's ten-cent kits of the day.

By the time he was 15, his modeling skills had improved considerably. He rode his bicycle to the nearby Orange Airport and paid \$5 to get a ride in a Taylorcraft. Henry soloed just a few days after his 16th birthday. He also flew another Taylorcraft, an Aeronca Champ, and a Piper Cruiser.

Henry enlisted in the Navy in 1945 and was assigned to the Norman Naval Air Technical Training Center's aviation ordnance school in Norman, Oklahoma. After graduating, he was assigned to the teacher training school in Jacksonville, Florida, training students in ordnance equipment used on naval aircraft used during the World War II era.

When his superiors realized that he had a pilot's license, Henry was checked out in the operation of the big aircraft engines and did weekly engine run-ups on F-4U, F-6F, SB2C, TBF, and other aircraft used for training in the ordnance school.

During his service, Henry became involved in flying engine-powered FF and CL Scale models. After his discharge from the service, he became heavily involved in CL Scale modeling, mainly in the racing aircraft of the Golden Era.

Because there were no kits for these models available to him, he started designing his own. One of his designs was Roscoe Turner's Presco Special Raver. It was built to scale with proper fabric- and wood-covered surfaces, as on the full-scale aircraft, a practice that was no common back in those days. This Turner Racer won many contests and he still has it today.

Becoming interested in RC, Henry bought a used Lorenz two-tube receiver and transmitter and installed it in a Trixter Beam. Radios in those days had to be tuned and adjusted just right to operate by a licensed radio operator. Henry had to depend on the help of a friend who could do this tuning for him each time he flew.

A number of RC models followed including a Corbin Ace he built from magazine plans, a self-designed Citabria, and scale Ryan ST. He got involved in RC scale meets and changed the Ryan ST to a PT 20A with a Kinner engine and flew it for several seasons with good results.

Henry decided to build a model of one of the Gee Bee aircraft. He chose the two-place open cockpit Model Y that was relatively unknown and very little information about it was

available. He found a three-view and one small picture, scaled the model up from the three-view, and as he built the model, he searched for other material to document it. He located two photos from the National Air and Space Museum and they suggested he contact a Connecticut historical society where he located two more photos.

He got a break when he received one of his monthly issues of EAA's *Sport Aviation*, which contained an article on Gee Bees, written by Bob Granville, one of the five brothers who had designed and built the airplane in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Bob's address appeared at the end of the article, so Henry sent him a letter telling him of his project and asking if he could help with any pictures of the Model Y. Bob answered the letter and enclosed a couple of photographs of the airplane.

Henry wanted his next model to be the Model D Sportster. By then he and Bob had become friends and Bob supplied him with more photos. Bob wanted to see Henry's models fly. Henry learned of a scale model meet that would be held at the Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome in New York for models of Golden Era aircraft. Henry's club, the South Jersey Radio Control Society, invited Bob to attend as a guest of the club.

Bob and his wife were able to attend, and were driven from their home in northern Maine by their son, Rob, and his wife and son. The friendship deepened and Henry was able to learn much of the story behind the Granville brothers and the Gee Bee.

Many conflicting counts of incidents involving various Gee Bee existed, containing false information as authors tried to make their accounts as sensational as the aircraft they wrote about. Henry realized what a terrible injustice had been done to the aircraft and the Granville brothers.

He decided that the true story of the Granvilles and their airplanes had to be told. Henry made up an outline of what he wanted to cover in the book. He gave Rob an outline of it and Rob and other Granville family members helped fill in the blanks.

Henry spent 15 years researching the story and eventually finished the book and published it in 1989.

Steve Wolf and Delmar Benjamin contacted Henry about wanting to build a replica Gee Bee *R-2* to fly in air shows. They knew he had more information on this aircraft than anyone else in the world and wanted to find out how this aircraft really flew. Henry gave them all the technical information he had with photos, as well as a set of his 1/4-scale plans of the aircraft.

The pair returned to Oregon and started building the Gee Bee on January 1, test flying the aircraft three days before Christmas. Delmar and the Gee Bee *R-2* replica were the sensation of the big air shows over the next several years. The combination of Delmar flying this aircraft and the publication of Henry's book have pretty much turned the Gee Bee reputation around.

After selling his hotel business and relocating, Henry again started working on models, notably a 1/4-scale model of the 1931 Gee Bee Model Z, winner of the 1931 Thompson Trophy Race, and

the 1932 Gee Bee *R-1* in which Jimmy Doolittle set a World's Speed Record and then won the Thompson Trophy Race.

Henry helped several museums with Gee Bee projects he had underway. He also met a group of local modelers and helped them learn to fly better. He enticed several of them to join AMA and begin attending AMA sponsored meets. Eventually this led to forming a new AMA club in 2008 called SCRAM, or Saratoga County Aero Modelers.

Henry developed a number of projects for Coverite including Black Baron film and other in the Black Baron line of accessories. He has had many construction articles published in magazines such as *Radio Control Sportsman*, *Model Airplane News*, *Flying Models*, *MA*, and *RC Modeler*, with covers appearing in *MA*, *Flying Models*, *Model Builder*, *Model Airplane News*, and *RC Modeler*.

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