



# The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of GERRY YARRISH

Born March 14, 1957    Began modeling in the 1960s  
AMA #5663



Written by GY (04/2007); Formatted and edited by JS (10/2007), Reformatted by JS (02/2010)

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*Gerry Yarrish wrote the following autobiography in April of 2007.*

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1957: Born (and raised) in New Milford, Connecticut

1975: Graduate Henry Abbott Technical High School, Danbury, Connecticut, Machine, Tool & Die, and Mechanical Drafting

1978: Graduate, Commercial Trades Institute, Mechanical & Industrial Drafting

1975-1979: U.S. Air Force (USAF), Aircraft Design & Structural Repair Specialist, Air Crew member, KC-135A Stratotankers, assigned to the 305<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing at Grissom Air Force Base, 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, Strategic Air Command

## **Radio Control History In the Beginning**

I started building and flying model airplanes (scale plastic and balsa wood) when I was 7 or 8 years old. At the time, my father was a hardcore Free Flight modeler and was getting involved with early Radio Control radios, including the Bonner Digimite, Orbit 3+1 and a few Heathkits systems.

At an early age, my family and I visited relatives in Germany and my father bought me a Free Flight glider called the *Jolly*. This was 1965, and the kit was from Graupner. I learned stick and tissue construction, as well as how to finish with tissue and dope, with this model. My dad and I also built many rubber-powered Comet and Sterling kits.

In the mid-to-late 1960s, I built and flew many U-Control models, several converted from old Free Flight models with 1/2A engines. I first flew Radio Control in 1968 at age 11 with my dad's *Rudderbug*. It was powered by a U-Control Fox .19 (venture-equipped) and controlled with a PCS digital proportional (Brown Box) system.

I helped my dad with a homebuilt Blue Max transmitter from World Engines. I do not remember the timeframe, but we also built several 1/2A-powered Goldberg *Junior Falcons* during this time.

I soloed in Radio Control in 1970 and joined the local Fairfield League of Yankee Radio Controllers (FLYRC) club as a junior member. (I am still an active club member.) My first full-house Radio Control model I built and flew was in 1971, an Andrews *H-Ray* trainer equipped with a MRC F-710 digital proportion radio with linear output servos. It had an Enya .29 engine

and its wings were covered with a new material called Monokote. The tail and fuselage were covered with silk span and doped.

The "Scale bug" bit me in 1972, building and flying a Hazel Sig Clipped Wing *Cub* from a Sig Manufacturing kit. An Enya .29 powered it.

My next Scale model was a Top Flite *P-51 Mustang* I built in 1974 and converted to a D-model with the Top Flite conversion kit. The model was finished with Hobby Pox paint. I learned that brushing this stuff on made a model very heavy. The model made one underpowered flight with a K&B Torpedo .40.

While serving in the USAF, I got serious about aerobatics between 1975 and 1976. I built my first "hot" airplane, a "flat wing" *Lil' Stik* from a Midwest kit. It was controlled by a Kraft 1972 Signature Series singlestick transmitter and powered by a K&B .40 with a mini Tatone exhaust pipe.

In 1977, I built a short-lived Radio Control fixed-pitch rotor helicopter called the Du-Bro *Shark*. It was very short lived!

In the winter of 1978, I started an on-base Radio Control airplane club, called "The RC Aces," for enlisted and commissioned Radio Control modelers. When I left in 1979, there were about 20 members.

My first Pattern ship built was in 1978, a Bridi *Super Kaos* that I equipped with Goldberg retracts. For power, I used Kraft radio gear and an HP .61 engine.

When I got back home for the service in 1979, my first scratch-built Scale project was a .60-size Stearman *PT-17* biplane. This was from *Flying Models* plan CF-313, designed by Nick Zirolì. I entered the model at the local WRAM show and was lucky enough to meet Nick in person for the first time as he was setting up his Giant Scale Grumman *F8F Bearcat*.

In the mid to late 1980s, I built several Scale models and won a few local Static Scale contests and some flying competitions. I flew in many Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome Jamboree Mission events.

### **Publishing Experience**

On September 10, 1990, I was hired as an Associate Editor by Air Age Publishing in Wilton, Connecticut and started working on both *Model Airplane News (MAN)* and its sister publication, *Radio Control Boat Modelers*. They basically hired me for my knowledge and experience in Radio Control and I worked closely with the exiting *Editor-in-Chief*, Rich Uravitch, and newly hired *Editor* Tom Atwood.

I edited articles and learned a lot from several well-known magazine contributors, such as past *Editor* Art Schroeder, Hal "Pappy" deBolt, Andy Lennon, Joe Wagner, Randy Randolph, Jim Newman, Nick Zirolì Sr., John Sullivan, Mike Billinton, Dave Robelen, and George Leu. As a

writer for *MAN*, my first article “Fighting Aircraft of Desert Storm—Tools of the Trade” was published in the May 1991 issue. This was quickly followed by my first product review “Setting up Your Model with the Ace MicroPro 8000” in the November 1991 issue.

During this time, I also wrote many model boat articles and was promoted to Editor of *RC Boat Modeler*. I wrote over 50 other boat-related pieces until I started working exclusively for *MAN*. My first “Field & Bench” product review was on the Balsa USA 1/3-Scale Piper *Cub* kit that I converted to a Piper *L-4 Grasshopper*. This was in the January 1993 issue.

I wrote a book for beginners, *Getting Started with Radio Control Model Airplanes*, in June of 1996. In the March 1998 issue of *MAN*, I started my Giant Scale column “Thinking Big.” I was promoted to Senior Technical Editor in December 1999 and have to this day continued to work in this capacity with *MAN* Executive Editor Debra Cleghorn.

I started a small but very rewarding newsletter from home (not connected to *MAN*) for all types and sizes of Radio Control *Warbird* models in April or May of 1999. In 2001, I developed it into an email-only electronic publication, and in the past, had as many as 500 subscribers. The readership fluctuates, but I still have a rather loyal readership of my PDF-based rantings.

To date (April 15, 2007,) not including editorials, I have written more than 400 Radio Control model-related articles, including product reports and guides, radio evaluations, event coverage, columns, airplane flight tests and Radio Control personality interviews.

### **AMA model club involvement**

- Since 1970: Member of the Fairfield League of Yankee Radio Controllers (FLYRC) club
- Since 1999: Member of the Central Connecticut Radio Control Club, Farmington, Connecticut
- 2001: Passed my AMA Contest Director test
- Contest Director for all the Central Connecticut Radio Control Club "Big Biplane Bash" events. (2007 will be our 6th year)



***1967: One of my first models, with much help from my father, Edward C. Yarrish, a Sterling rubber-powered Spad XIII with 24-inch wingspan.***



*1970: A Guillow's Junkers JU-87B Stuka dive-bomber, converted to U-control, sheeted with balsa and finished with AeroGloss and Sig dope. It had a Fox .09 engine and 3¼-inch wingspan.*



*1971: I am holding an Andrews H-Ray with an Enya .29 engine, full-house control, and a MRC F-710 digital proportional radio, 27.045 MHz.*



*1972: Me with my Sig Manufacturing Clipped Wing Cub with a Monokote finish and Enya .29 engine.*



*1973: At a local flying field in Danbury, Connecticut with a Cox 1/2A-powered Junior Falcon, one of several my dad and I built. We were racing them (sort of) around two pylon poles. My friend and caller, Geoffrey Hickson, is on the right. Notice the gliders in the background. We shared our powered flying field with the silent guys; one end of the runway was a steep hill that was a perfect for slope gliding.*





*1974: At the WRAM show, my entry in Sport Scale was this Top Flite P-51 Mustang, powered by K&B .40 and finished with brushed-on HobbyPoxy epoxy paint.*



*Mid-1980s (the era of big hair and sideburns): Me with my 2-meter, 2-channel House of Balsa 2 Plus 2 glider, later converted to electric power with a 05 Astro motor and "AA" NiCad cells.*



*October 1999: Me with my Giant Scale Planes GS-300 Staudacher powered by a 60cc 3W gas engine and equipped with a JR 10SX radio for control. This was my favorite plane for a long time.*



*2007: Me at the WRAM Show*

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