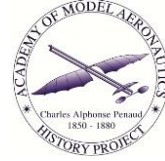




The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of LOUIS (LOU) GOLDBERG



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A Legendary Life: Man's encounters with legendary modelers shaped his life

Written by Rachelle Haughn

In the late 1930s, when the boy was roughly eight years old, a man with a trim physique knocked on his door and asked if he could watch a program on the family's television. The man appeared to be in his early 20s.

As a black and white image lit up the 7-inch fish-eye screen, the boy was amazed when he realized that the man on the television was the same one who was standing in his living room. The man on TV was flying something called a model airplane, and it was named the Guff.

"That was my first one-on-one encounter" with Dr. Walter "Walt" Good, said Louis "Lou" Goldberg, who is now 84 years old.

As it turned out, that would not be Lou's only encounter with Walt, and Lou would go on to meet, learn from, and become friends with other aeromodeling legends, including Maynard Hill and Donald "Don" Clark.

Some modelers have met these famous early pilots, but never had the chance to personally get to know them. Not only did Lou know these men, he learned from them and they helped shape his life.



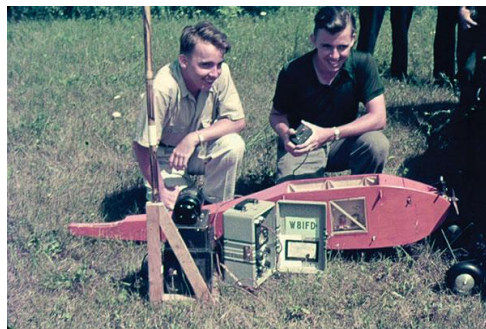
Lou Goldberg earned his private pilot's license at age 19 and made his first solo flight in this Piper J-3 Cub. Lou Goldberg photo.

Among those aeromodelers, the one who had the most influence on Lou was definitely Walt, or Dr. Good, as Lou called him. After their initial encounter, Lou wanted to learn more about model aircraft. He often went to the flying site of the District of Columbia Radio Control Club (DCRC), located in Silver Spring, Maryland, to watch Walt fly. Today, the club's flying site is called Walt Good Field.

One of the aircrafts that Walt often flew at the field was a radio-controlled Big Guff. It was one of the first successfully flown RC airplanes and it placed first at the 1938 Radio Control Nats. Walt and his twin brother, Bill, built several versions of the aircraft, including one for Free Flight. A replica of the Big Guff currently hangs in the AMA National Model Aviation Museum in Muncie, Indiana.

Lou said that when Walt flew, he was always calm. He remembers standing next to Walt as he piloted the Big Guff. "He never really got as ecstatic as I was," about seeing it fly. Although Lou was fascinated by Walt's aircraft, he wasn't given the chance to fly one of them. "No one ever flew Dr. Good's airplanes," Lou added.

Walt had an unconventional method for testing his aircraft. "Dr. Good used to take his designs and put them on the roof of his car to check the rudder function and elevator," Lou said with a chuckle. He added that Walt would drive around his neighborhood, steering his car with his right hand, and his left hand was out the window, holding onto whatever airplane he was testing.



Twin brothers, Walt and Bill Good, demonstrate their first successfully flown RC airplane, the Big Guff. Lou remembers watching Walt fly the aircraft at the DCRC flying site. Photo courtesy of the National Model Aviation Museum.

Lou and Walt lived a half mile apart, and the two quickly became friends. Lou's parents worked seven days a week as caterers, so Lou often visited Walt to pass the time. "I used to watch Dr. Good build his airplanes in the closet of his very small master bedroom using balsa wood and straight pins," Lou said. Those models included the Big Guff and the Rudder Bug. The 6-foot Rudder Bug took first place at the 1949 Radio Control Nats and eventually became one of Walt's most popular designs.

Lou remembers seeing something in Walt's home that still amazes him. It was a 6-inch scale version of a P-51 Mustang that Walt had hand carved. Inside of the model was an electric motor with a working propeller. "He had it on a stand, flipped a switch, and the propeller would spin." Lou believes he's one of only a handful of people who ever saw that tiny model. When Lou wasn't at Walt's house or at school, he was at the DCRC's field. That's where he met Don Clark.

"He was always smoking a cigar. If anybody exceeded Dr. Good in quality, it was Don," he said of the DCRC organization's first president.

Don later collaborated with Walt to develop the Thermic Sniffler, which was a rate-of-climb sensor used for RC Sailplanes. The pair also developed the Royal Rudder Bug aircraft in 1953. Don, an AMA National Model Aviation Hall of Fame inductee, passed away in 1996.

With tips from Don, Walt, and Maynard, Lou taught himself how to fly at the DCRC field. He admired the trio. "It was an amazing group [of modelers]. It was literally love for one another and great respect.



This replica of the Big Guff, designed by Walt and Bill Good, can be seen at the National Model Aviation Museum in Muncie IN. National Model Aviation Museum photo.

"Dr. Good was the finest man that you would want to be around. He was never in a hurry and always gave me answers," Lou stated. "I talked to him about balance and squareness of flight." Walt also taught Lou that "the stabilizer tends to want to fly in a horizontal position."

Lou also learned a thing or two from Maynard Hill. "[He] was so high above my education level, so the best thing I could do was to be quiet and learn."

One day, after landing his full-scale Champion Citabria at a cow pasture called Butts Farm, near Damascus, Maryland, which he did several times a week, Lou encountered Maynard. The farm was owned by R. Beecher Butts, an aviation enthusiast.

That day, Maynard asked Lou to help him test a GPS system on one of his airplanes. He had him call out numbers as they appeared on a screen. "I never knew why I was calling numbers." Lou later discovered the answer.



Lou Goldberg has built several airplanes in his years of aeromodeling, including this Bf-109 and P-51 Mustang. Photo provided by Lou Goldberg.

Maynard had an airplane called the Spirit of Butts Farm. On August 11, 2003, that airplane (also referred to as Transatlantic Model (TAM-5), made history by being the first RC model aircraft to cross the Atlantic Ocean. It was launched from Newfoundland and landed in Ireland, flying a distance of 1,882 miles. The aircraft is also on display in the National Model Aviation Museum. After that historic flight, Lou received a certificate of appreciation from Maynard for donating funds to help with travel expenses incurred through the project.

Years later, Lou had his final encounter with Maynard. With his hair thinner, and using a walker to help him shuffle through the crowd of people at his Maryland home, Lou found Maynard to still be the intelligent, light-hearted man whom he remembered. Several members of the DCRC club attended that party at Maynard's secluded home. Lou said he had heard that Maynard had a nice workshop in which he built models, but no one was allowed inside to see if that was true. Maynard passed away on June 7, 2011.

While reflecting on his memories of Maynard, Lou said, "He was extremely quick in his answers and always correct. He was a joker. He supposedly sang, but I never witnessed it."

Unlike Maynard, many people have heard Lou sing. He sang the national anthem several times at sporting events and performed at parties catered by his parents. As he grew up, he sang at night clubs, on television shows, and performed for members of the military through the USO.

Through his singing jobs, he met some famous people, including Terry Moore, who was rumored to have dated aviation tycoon Howard Hughes, and Bess Myerson, who was crowned Miss America in 1945.

Lou said he once also met Tony Bennett in the early stages of Tony's career, and tried to meet Frank Sinatra, but was stopped and tossed out of the hotel by Frank's security team.



The late Maynard Hill (L) was one of Lou's mentors at DCRC in Maryland. This photo was taken in 2002 at Cape Spear, Newfoundland, as Maynard waited to launch the TAM-5. Also pictured is Nelson Sherren. Photo by Leroy Leslie Hamilton.

He shared the story of how he met Tony. "I was age 18 or 19 and I was in Atlantic City. I wanted to get discovered so bad that I put a tuxedo on and went to Steel Pier. I went to the ballroom and American Bandstand was there.

"Because I had a tux on, I went backstage and a young kid was smoking a cigarette and said, 'I hope they like me,' and it was Tony Bennett.

"I went out on the stage where the orchestra was, and I said I wanted to sing. They played [the song] and I sang," he said laughing. Lou said he was once offered a record contract, but it never panned out.

Music wasn't Lou's only passion. His love of model aviation stayed with him throughout his life. At one time, it prompted him to open his own business called Mr. Louis Communications and Hobbies. He sold Len Purdy airplanes and repaired televisions. Lou said he once repaired Walt's television and Walt gave him a model airplane as payment.

Lou has had 27 jobs throughout his lifetime. One was working with Walt at Johns Hopkins University in the physics department as a technician. He remembers when Walt gave him some life-changing advice. One day at work, Lou's mentor called him into his office. Lou said he felt like he was a kid being called into the principal's office. "I thought, 'what did I do?'" He said, "Lou, you've got a lot of irons in the fire. You've got to find a niche in life."

Lou took that advice to heart. "The problem was, it took me forever to find my niche," he said with a laugh.

After holding several positions, including working as a furniture salesman, a private pilot, and serving in the Naval Air Forces, he eventually got a job as an insurance salesman for Prudential.

He worked there for nearly 20 years until he retired. Today, he focuses on sharing his love of Jesus with others.



*This aircraft, called **The Spirit of Butts Farm** or TAM-5, hangs in the National Model Aviation Museum. Photo by the author.*

Unlike Lou, Walt always seemed to know what he wanted to do in life. While working at Johns Hopkins University in the Applied Physics Laboratory, Walt helped develop “guided missiles for U.S. Fleet defense of the radio proximity (VT) fuse during World War II,” according to his AMA History Project biography.

He later worked on fire control systems for Navy ship gun directors, and analog computers that simulated missile dynamics and controls. From 1973 to 1974, he headed the Johns Hopkins Applied Physical Laboratory in Heidelberg, Germany.

Walt received several honors and awards throughout his lifetime for his work. These included the Naval Ordnance Development Award, the Office of Scientific Research and Development Certificate of Merit, and a War and Navy Departments Certificate of Appreciation.

In addition to these honors, he was recognized for his efforts for the AMA and aeromodeling. He was named an AMA Fellow in 1953, inducted into the AMA Model Aviation Hall of Fame in 1969, and inducted into the Society of Antique Modelers Hall of Fame in 1989. Walt served as AMA president from 1958 to 1960 and was one of the first donors of aircraft to the National Model Aviation Museum when it was founded in 1978.



Lou received this certificate of appreciation from Maynard Hill for helping fund Maynard's travel expenses that were incurred while making the first transatlantic flight of a model aircraft. Photo courtesy of Lou Goldberg.

Many consider Walt an aeromodeling legend. He was a pioneer of RC flight, and well known for his unique, award-winning Big Guff. These are facts about Walt that can easily be found through a quick search of the Internet or by reading his lengthy autobiography on the AMA website. Reading about Walt isn't the same as actually knowing him. The amazing and groundbreaking achievements that he is known for don't describe who he was as a person.

Lou feels blessed to have personally known Walt. "I really loved Dr. Good to the point that I cherished him. He was the most honest, kind man," Lou said of his late friend.

These days, Lou's full-scale Citabria remains grounded and he doesn't often take his models to the field. His sight is diminishing, and he's had some health problems in the last few years, but failing health and dimming eyes cannot erase the great memories that he has.

Although they may interrupt his sleep several times each night like a quick flash of a movie scene, these memories remain crisp and clear.

—Rachelle Haughn
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Sources:

Walt Good video

[The Pioneers, AMA video by Jay Gerber, featuring Walt and Bill Good]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jduj1wkGFT0>

AMA History Project

www.modelaircraft.org/museum/history.aspx

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