



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of WARREN “PETE” MACZURA

December 8, 1924 – 2000
Modeler since 1950s



Written & Submitted by MM (09/2006), Edited by JS (09/2006), Reformatted by JS (10/2009), Updated by JS (10/2019)

Career and Honors:

- Member, Tri-City Sky Steelers and Greater St. Louis Scale Model Club
- 1950s: Placed twelve times in various contests, taking home 11 trophies, including a Grand Champion trophy in Springfield, Illinois Also won three “best finish” plaques
- 1960s: Placed at various contests, including:
 - First place, Scale, Valley Park, MO, sponsored by South St. Louis Yellow Jackets flying club
 - First place, Scale, Palestine, IL, sponsored by Palestine Chamber of Commerce
 - First place, Scale, Grand Marais State Park, East St. Louis
 - First place, model building contest with his son, Roger, sponsored by Tri-City Sky Steelers (Pete won Senior Division, Roger won Junior Division)
 - First place, Scale, Kansas City, MO
 - First place, Scale, Parks College, East St. Louis, sponsored by St. Louis section of the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences and McDonnell Aircraft Corporation
 - Second place, Scale, Springfield, IL
 - Third place, Scale, sponsored by the Hothead Club
- 1966: Pete’s *Gulfhawk 4* won first place in Control Line Open Class Scale at National Championships in Chicago. The airplane also won first place in Scale in England that year, believed to be the first entry by the United States in the first non-official world Scale competition at any of the World Championships.

Margaret MacZura submitted the following biography of her husband in September of 2006.

Warren “Pete” MacZura

“ALL SYSTEMS GO 1st Place World Championships. Congratulations Bob.” My husband, Warren “Pete” MacZura, received this telegram from Bob Gialdini, who flew the *Gulfhawk 4* in Scale competition in the first World Control Line Championships in August of 1966, held in Swinderby, England. He was in competition with thirty other countries. The plane had also won first place in Scale at the Glenview Naval Air Station near Chicago in July of that year.



*Warren “Pete” MacZura
with his Pete, a scale
model airplane*

Like most modelers, Pete's interest in flying model airplanes started in childhood. However, World War II started and soon after there was no time for hobbies. After his discharge from the Navy (he was an aviation electricians' mate), we settled down like so many others in the late 1940s. He began his hobby again, building a rubber band-powered *J3 Cub* stick, covering it with silk, and then a handcrafted glider, the *Blackbird*, from plans in a modeling magazine. By that time, our three sons had learned to enjoy building and flying. Pete built the boys a 1/2A trainer and, due to limited space in our backyard, taught them to fly in just a ten-foot radius.

They learned of a local model airplane club, the Tri-City Sky Steelers, in our hometown of Granite City. Because of our location in a small steel town, across the river from St. Louis, we attended many contests in Missouri and Illinois, and even a few in Indiana and a national contest in Texas.

Pete never held office in the club, although the club held many meetings in members' homes. He was a very quiet man and I often wondered how he got the courage to go out on the field and fly in front of spectators. Teaching the boys *how* to build was not his way. They had to learn as best they could by trail and error; *read* the instructions!!

He was a multi-talented man, could repair a broken-down washer, maintain our car, plant trees and flowers, and had the patience of Job when it came to his models. The first plane he built was a *Quest* (by Sterling?), then the Navy *Corsair*, the *Pete*, and finally, the *Gulfhawk 4*, which took him almost three years to complete. He built his own drafting board and then drew up his own plans of the model. The original, a converted Grumman *F8F* flown by Major Al Williams, had a short life span, destroyed by fire two years after its first flight. Pete also built and flew planes for Rat Race and Speed.

Soon, our console television was loaded with trophies from father and sons. Pete truly admired the suggestions from his friend and mentor, Howard Ogden, a master of scale building who drew up the magazine plans for the *Gulfhawk 4*, which *Annual American Modeler* featured in 1968.

Sometimes on Friday evenings, Pete would come home from work tired (very tired). He was an oiler and operating engineer for the Local 520 in Granite City. He would find a map fastened to the gate, a few clothes packed along with food, and a note as to how long the trip would take with each of us taking turns driving. There had to be an area where we could camp and swim on Saturday, make it to the contest on Sunday and still get back home on Sunday evening for a good night's sleep. Our daughter and I would be the cooks and "gofers" for the family. We packed our four kids and the boy down the street, our eldest son's friend, Terry McCormick, and off we went for two days of family fun and relaxation.

I can remember one trip to Kansas City, Missouri as if it was yesterday, my husband trying to sleep with three kids in the back seat, our eldest son and his friend, and me *driving* in heavy rain to get there! God had to be with me and I still shudder at the responsibility I had as the driver!!

The cars of the 1950s must have been *big* to hold all the planes, food, and clothes for seven of us. (I do not remember a McDonald's then.)

Many contests were held at Buder Park in St. Louis and the Spirit of St. Louis Airport. We made trips as far away as Kokomo, IN and Indianapolis, as well as a three-day trip to Texas. The lasting friendships that were made and the fun times we had with other modeling families are too many to recall now, but will stay in our hearts as long as we live!

Quite a few of the Tri-City Sky Steelers have been taken from us, including Howard Ogden and my husband Pete, who we lost in 2000.

Gulfhawk 4 Retrospect



*Gulfhawk 4, designed by Warren
"Pete" MacZura*

*Wingspan: 35 ½" Weight: 4 ¾ lbs.
Scale: 1:12 Engine: K&B .35*

This colorful model is a converted *F8F-1 Bearcat*, painted in the brilliant orange, blue, and white of the Gulf Oil Company. The full-scale original was flown by Major Al Williams from 1948 to 1950, when the "plane was completely destroyed by fire in a landing accident at New Bern, North Carolina."

The *F8F-1 Bearcat* was "stripped of its battle dress such as rockets, brackets, guns, and radar equipment, making it 1,000 pounds lighter than its Navy counterpart."

A highly glossed surface is evidenced in reflections on the photograph. The one-inch to one-foot scale model features operating cowl-flaps, an expendable belly-tank, a sliding canopy, shock-absorbing landing gear, and tail wheel, wing tip, and taillights, throttle cut-off and functioning flaps actuated by a "down" position from the handle.

The model is constructed mainly of wood, silk-covered, finished with modeling dope, and hand-rubbed to a high gloss. *Air Trails* plans for the *F8F-1 Bearcat* were used for the basic construction, the only difference being that the *F8F-1*'s vertical stabilizer and rudder are a foot shorter. Detailed work was done from Nye Plans and information was obtained directly from the Gulf Oil Company for accuracy.

Roger Warren MacZura and his Father

Roger Warren MacZura, at two years old, went shopping with his grandfather and purchased a ten-cent plastic model. When his father started the hobby again, by then Roger was a teen-ager. Roger went on to win Junior Scale model contests. Then he, like his father, went into the Navy and became a flight engineer on the *P-3 Orion*.

After the war ended, he went to school and obtained his A&P and pilot's licenses. He is now a DC 8 captain, flying airfreight.

How is that for a hobby!?!

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