



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of EUGENE EVERSON

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Started modeling in the 1920s



Written by EE (n.d); Transcribed and edited by SS (06/2002), Edited by JS (08/2007)

Eugene Everson wrote the following autobiography.

Autobiography of Eugene Everson: Designer and Builder in Sport Flying Model Airplanes

In the late 1920s, I was just another youthful “Lindy” (as in Charles A. Lindberg) like many other boys dreaming about flying airplanes.

Carving solid models was my entry into the world of model airplanes. The third attempt was a real success, and how proud I was of my creation until disaster struck. My cousin, who was younger than I was, came to visit one day. Why he decided to destroy my model I will never know, but boy did I get even! I wrestled him to the floor and shoved model airplane glue up his nostrils. You have never heard such screaming in all your life. I was grounded, as they say today. That was almost the end of my modeling.

Several years later, I was visiting another cousin who lived next to a very large field. Low and behold, there were several fellows in their early twenties flying rubber-powered models. I was hooked.

They informed me that a model shop existed in the YMCA. I was a member of the Y, but never took note of activities other than swimming. Flying and building model airplanes took over from there, both indoor and outdoor. Did we know, or have any idea, how to trim a model? Not really. The older fellows went off to college and took their knowledge with them!

My father owned several gas stations along with his automobile business. The station sold Skelly gas. You guessed it – Jimmy Allen! Did I get the kits free? No! I had some success with them but was limited to hand winding.

When the internal combustion model engine appeared on the scene, things really took off in a big way. In town, the local magazine store was the first to carry model paraphernalia; then the sporting goods store got into the act.

The effect of the depression in the thirties still lingered. To purchase a model engine was only a dream. I had a magazine and paper route, but without the help of my mother, the purchase of a Brown Junior engine was out of sight. To make it short, my father was busy making ends meet with a family of six. However, he introduced me to what is known today as little league baseball.

Someone from the church informed my mother that a young fellow in his mid-twenties, named Virgil Christiansen, had knowledge of model airplanes. The two of us had some success with a TD *Coupe* and a Curtiss *Robin*. At this time, seven local modelers, including myself, formed a club known as the Circle Seven in Fort Dodge, Iowa. Our club letterhead gave us a discount on model airplane parts.

The next project was a Brown powered eight-foot *Ehling*. The model was underpowered, but I took first place with it in Junior class. How could this happen, you may ask? Well, it was like this: holding onto the wingtip (legal in those days), I ran with the model, launching it into the wind from the top of a long, sloping hill. With thermal activity present, the model just hung there while I jumped up and down for joy. The *Zipper* fellows just frowned. This was my only real success in contest flying before the war clouds appeared over Europe. My first-place prize was a custom Ohlsson 60 engine. Eventually, I mounted the engine in a *Sailplane* and put several flights on it before going into the Army Air Corps.

While in the service, I read all the information on model designs that I could get my hands on. From a rough drawing I made in the 1940s, I evolved the high altitude Free Flight model. Most model designers of the late-thirties and early-forties worked with curved lines and elliptical shapes. I chose straight lines with a “forward” look. The first prototype had a square fuselage cross-section, later changed to an oval- or egg-shape. It was originally powered with a Brown Junior engine and had a built-up balsa cowling. In 1955, I used the balsa cowling as a plug to make a fiberglass mold. The model incorporated a triangle socket landing gear mount, which was an easy way to remove the gear if it bent. By removing the bolt, which held the plywood triangle piece, the gear fell free.

In the 1970s and 1980s, I built two models from these plans, one Radio Control and one Free Flight. Both had fuselage skins pre-bent over a male mold. With the skins still on the mold, they were covered with one layer of 1.5 oz. Fiberglass cloth and epoxy resin. This produced a lightweight skin, true in contour and very tough. The windshields were also pre-bent on a male mold. High altitude now comes under the Society of Antique Modelers’ Free Flight special event rules and “Old Ruler.”

After World War II, I settled down in the Pacific Northwest. There I met several fellows interested in Free Flight. We flew models at the flats east of Everett, Washington. I came to know about the Really Great SAM 8 through a fellow worker at Boeing Company. He invited me down to Hart’s Lake Prairie. The rest is history.

In Radio Control, I never got into pattern competition. It was always fun flying for me. I designed and built many models, which I categorize as “novelty.” Utilizing high-tech material, such as fiberglass and other composites, I constructed models that were more durable. These included a *Kaos*, with a fiberglass fuselage and military markings, a biplane called the *Hot Spark*, a twin boom military pusher fighter called the *Cobra* and a seaplane called *The Mermaid*. All of my antique and old-timer (OT) Free Flight models have custom fiberglass cowlings. These models and the Radio Control ones have been shown at the Northwest Model Expo.

Construction of the Really Great SAM 8 backdrop panels for the Expo was a gratifying project. Everyone enjoys the cumulus clouds and blue sky. The club frequency carousel was somewhat of a challenge however.

For over twenty-five years now, I have enjoyed a great sport and wonderful friends with the Really Great SAM 8.

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AMA History Project

National Model Aviation Museum

5151 E. Memorial Dr.

Muncie IN 47302

(765) 287-1256, ext. 511

historyproject@modelaircraft.org

