



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of KIT GERHART

Born August 15, 1946 Started modeling in 1957/1958

AMA #224



Information Supplied by KG (03/2003); Written & Edited by SS (03/2003), Reformatted by JS (08/2009)

Career:

- Placed sixth in Class A Free Flight Gas at an AMA Nats
- Has served as a pitman for various Control Line combat competitors nationally and internationally
- Placed first in the Jetex Free Flight event at the 1965 King Orange Internationals
- Designed a Control Line racing plane in the late 1960s that was successful and is now part of the collection of the AMA's National Model Aviation Museum
- Has served as president of three modeling clubs
- An AMA Leader Member and sanctioned contest director
- Served as contest coordinator for the AMA's District VI for two years in the early 1980s
- Has judged both Radio Control and Control Line scale at the AMA Nationals
- Wrote about Control Line combat for Model Aviation magazine in the late 1970s

The following biography is based upon a phone interview between Kit Gerhart and Stacey Shannon for the AMA History Project (at the time called the AMA History Program.). The interview was conducted on March 19, 2003.

The Beginning

Kit began modeling at the age of 12 after he saw an advertisement for a model airplane contest that was to take place in the parking lot of the Chrysler factory in his hometown of Kokomo, Indiana. After watching the contest, Kit realized it was something he was interested in and so bought his first model – a simple Scientific Bonanza 049 Control Line kit. He built that first model mainly on his own with perhaps some minimal help from his father. Kit said it was easy enough to build because the model had a one-piece wing and a fuselage that was formed from one block of wood.

Kit was successful in flying his first model. He learned even more about modeling each time he broke the model while flying and put it back together. Within a year after building that model, Kit joined the Kokomo Aero Team and became thoroughly involved with Control Line flying.

Competition

Shortly after joined the Kokomo Aero Team, Kit entered his first contest in rat racing. The club held a contest each month during the summer and it was one such contest that first got Kit started in competition around age 13 or 14.

For the first year of his competing, Kit flew a Guillow's rat racer and was pretty successful in the local club contests. By the early 1960s, the Nationals were calling to Kit. In 1962, he entered his first Nationals flying combat Control Line, but didn't do very well. While he was in the Navy

from the mid-1960s to 1971, Kit missed the Nationals, but from 1972 until the mid-1980s, he attended every year. He entered with either Control Line or Free Flight models and wasn't always very successful. At one Nats, though, he did place sixth in Class A Free Flight Gas.

Kit remained involved with the Nationals as a pitman when he himself didn't actually enter. As a pitman for combat Control Line competition, some of Kit's duties included starting and adjusting the engines, watching the airplanes, readying the secondary plane and retrieving the primary plane after crashes.

As a pitman, Kit has been in FAI or international competition. He was on the pit crew for Howard Rush in 1984 when Howard placed fifth in F2D combat. He was again on Howard's pit crew in 1990. Kit has extended his services to others as well, including a modeler from Finland and one from New Zealand.

For Kit the most memorable part of his recent competition involvement has been team selection when he worked on the pit crew to help make the U.S. international team. Personally, he fondly remembers competing in the King Orange International while in college in 1965. He and four or five of his classmates from Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana, drove down to southern Florida to compete. All of them placed well, but Kit was exceptional. He flew a Free Flight model at the King Orange of his own design for the rocket or Jetex event. Kit placed first in the event.

Design

Aside from the model Kit designed and used in the 1965 King Orange competition, he also designed and built a Control Line racing plane in the late 1960s. The model was designed specifically for a racing event promoted by the Kokomo Aero Team. The club developed the rules for the race and similar rules were then used throughout Indiana and Ohio.

The model Kit designed for the race was successful and is now part of collection of the AMA's National Model Aviation Museum. The model was simply called Sport Racer, after the type of event it was flown in. A three-view of the model was published in Model Airplane News magazine.

Leadership

Kit has been involved with three main modeling clubs since he first joined the Kokomo Aero Team. He has served as president of the Kokomo Aero Team, the Purdue Aeromodelers (while he was attending Purdue University in the late 1960s to early 1970s), and the Kokomo Blue Angels, a Radio Control club that Kit has recently gotten involved with in Kokomo. He also served as secretary/treasurer of the Kokomo Aero Team and the Kokomo Blue Angels. Kit also served as newsletter editor for the Blue Angles for two years.

Within the AMA, Kit has been a Leader Member for quite a few years and is an AMA-sanctioned contest director. He served as contest coordinator for the AMA's District VI for two years back in the early 1980s as well.

As a contest director, Kit has directed many local and regional contests. He directed two contests at Purdue University while a student and then moved on to direct Radio Control and small, fun-fly contests in Kokomo.

Kit has served at the AMA Nationals by judging scale models. Three times he has judged Radio Control scale and once judged Control Line scale. He also wrote the combat Control Line column and covered the combat Control Line events at the AMA Nationals for Model Aviation magazine in the late 1970s.

Finally, Kit has helped promote model aviation through working with the Kokomo Blue Angels to have mall shows. He has both displayed airplanes in the show and made arrangements with the mall.

Getting Personal

Kit graduated in 1973 with a bachelor's degree from Purdue University. He had gone to school to be a teacher, but after teaching for one year found he lacked the ability to discipline as he needed to. He returned to Purdue and received a master's degree in 1977. He worked as an engineering technician at Delphi Automotive in Kokomo, which used to be part of General Motors, and recently (as of 2003) retired. Kit now spends his winters in Davenport, Florida, and returns to Kokomo for the warmer months.

Currently (2003), Kit's model aviation interest has led him into another area. For the last eight years, he has been involved with helping high school students compete with Radio Control robots. The goal of the competition is to get students excited about something technological. Kit has worked with Kokomo High School and has also started working with a group in Florida. He has helped the students be successful in competition and enjoys the work.

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