



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of ROBERT "HOOT" GIBSON



Written by AMA Staff (12/2009, 2011); Formatted by JS (04/2010, 02/2011)

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**Watch Robert "Hoot" Gibson talk about flying model airplanes at the AMA Expo at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVZ8VXmVTb0>**



***“When it comes to ultimate challenges in flight, Robert Hoot Gibson has gone where few have, commanding and piloting the space shuttle five times. This member of the Astronaut Hall of Fame is also an AMA member, flying model planes at an early age. Gibson is especially interested in the youngest generation, and after showing slides of connecting the shuttle with the Russian space station Mir, he spent time with the youngsters in the Education area of the Expo, helping them build balsa models to test fly.”***

***– Published on YouTube by the AMA on March 23, 2010.***

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*The following biography is an excerpt from the article “AMA Expo Features Aviation Pioneers Bitten by the Flying Bug as Youth,” published in the December 2009 issue of Model Aviation magazine, written by AMA staff.*

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When it comes to rockets, not many people have more firsthand experience than Robert “Hoot” Gibson. He is a five-time space shuttle pilot, a retired captain and naval aviator in the US Navy, and a retired NASA astronaut.

Hoot entered active duty with the Navy in 1969 and saw duty aboard the USS Coral Sea and USS Enterprise, flying combat missions in Southeast Asia in the F-4 jet. He graduated from the Navy Fighter Weapons School, also known as “TOPGUN,” and has flown more than 111 types of aircraft.

Selected by NASA in January 1978, Hoot became an astronaut in August 1979 and flew five

missions: STS-41-B in 1984, STS-61-C in 1986, STS-27 in 1988, STS-47 in 1992, and STS-71 in 1995. One of those included a successful night landing at Edwards Air Force Base in California.

He also participated in the investigation of the Space Shuttle Challenger accident, and he helped redesign and recertify the solid rocket boosters.

Hoot has another claim to fame; in 2008, he was a contestant on the television show “Are You Smarter Than a 5<sup>th</sup> Grader?” He became the first contestant to make it to the \$1 million question without using any of his “cheats.” Hoot answered incorrectly, but all of his prize money (\$25,000) went to the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation.

When it comes to fifth-graders and kids of all ages, Hoot has advice for families everywhere.

“I encourage all parents to get in there with your kids, spread some glue, make the parts, put it together, and go out and fly airplanes,” he said. “It’s a community thing, a family thing that’s educational, fun and keeps your brains spinning trying to make things go faster, fly better.”

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*The following biography is an excerpt is from the AMA’s website.  
(<http://www.modelaircraft.org/news/HootGibson.aspx>)*

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## AMA Ambassador Robert "Hoot" Gibson

Naval aviator, airline pilot, world record holder, five time NASA space shuttle pilot and commander and AMA lifetime member...

In this volunteer role, Hoot will represent the AMA in marketing, media, appearances, fundraising and education to promote model flying as a fun, educational activity for the family and everyone of all ages.



Hoot’s exposure to aviation started at an early age. Both his parents were pilots. In 1943, Hoot’s mother, then a college student, purchased a J-2 Taylor Cub with two girlfriends. His father was a test pilot for the Civil Aeronautics Administration. Hoot’s exposure to model building and flying started early too. As a long time AMA member, Hoot competed in Nats and flying competition. While he was a Navy test pilot, Hoot build and flew the F-16A he is holding. It was one early turbine powered jets, which he flew at the scale Nats. Today, Hoot enjoys flying the electric-powered jets. Just like his growing list more than 120 full-scale aircraft that he has piloted, Hoot’s collection of flying models is increasing too. At the AMA Expo 2010, he brought home numerous models

including a F-14, 3-D aerobatic plane and a VFO vertical flying object modeled after one of his favorite aircraft, the Convair XFY-1 Pogo. Hoot scratch-build a scale Pogo that he hopes to convert to electric power. You can see a picture of it by clicking [here](#).

Hoot is married to Dr. Rhea Seddon who is also an astronaut having been selected in the first group of astronauts to include women. She flew on three Space Shuttle flights as mission specialist and payload commander. The Gibson's have four children.

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