



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of ROBERT L. (BOB) HATSCHEK

June 12, 1925 – October 13, 2012

Started modeling in 1936

AMA #647



Written & Submitted by BH (01/1996), AMA staff (12/2012); Updated by BH (07/2002); Transcribed by NR (12/1999); Edited by SS (2002), Updated by JS (09/2008), (01/2009), (07/2009), (12/2010), (12/2012)

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## Career:

- Has held US national record in Unlimited Rubber (now called Mulvihill)
- 1959: Flew Wakefield on US Team (with Joe Bilgri, Herb Kothe) at the World Championships in France. Won silver medal individually, team won gold
- Flew Nordic Glider in various non-world championship meets in Australia, Austria, England, France, and Sweden
- Nationals (Nats)/USOC firsts: Wakefield 1953; Mulvihill 1957 & 1958; P-30 1992; Dawn Unlimited 1995
- 1995: Won America's Cup for FIG (Coupe d' Hiver)
- Published many articles in all major model magazines
- Wrote regular columns in various magazines

## Honors:

- 1971: AMA Fellow
  - 1986: National Free Flight Society (NFFS) Hall of Fame
  - 1987: Model Aviation Hall of Fame
  - 1986: NFFS Model of the Year, Special Award for Hatschek Type 3 Towhook
  - 1990: NFFS Model of the Year, Liberty II Coupe d' Hiver
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## Name & AMA No.

- Bob Hatschek, AMA 647, Competition Free Flighter

## Quotes

- "I've never gone more than 12,000 miles to attend a model meet." (Literally true)
- When asked if he flies "those remote control models," Bob replies, "No. The ones I fly are much more advanced. They're fully automatic."

## Address & Phone

- 316 Grosvenor St., Douglaston, NY 11363; (718) 224-3908; hatschek@verizon.net

## Age

- 84-years-old as of June 2009

### **Years modeling**

- 73 years building (interrupted only by World War II)

### **Living or Deceased**

- Still alive and kicking

### **From Beginning**

- Started 1936: (See “23 Years of Madness” from *Model Airplane News* and “Bob Hatschek, AMA 647” from NFFS 1986 *Symposium*.) First engine (1938) was a secondhand Brat. First gas model was a Megow *Cadet*. Combo was unsuccessful because builder (then 13-years-old) wired model with single-strand bell wire (vibrated apart) and did not understand inertial force (battery box retained by single rubber band went through three bulkheads when model stalled in). Went back to original design rubber jobs for about a year. Second gas model (first success) was half-size Taibi *Powerhouse* (from *MAN*) powered by Ohlsson 19. The next several were original design models with Ohlsson 19.

### **First Meet**

- 1938: Flushing Airport, sponsor was Flushing Model Airplane Club. Flew HLG only, placed third.

### **National Competition**

- First one was 1941 Nats (Chicago, my bankroll was \$35). Most recent was 2001 USOC/Nats (Muncie, Indiana).
- Will attend 2002 Nats
- Nats/USOC firsts: Wakefield 1953; Mulvihill 1957 and 1958; P-30 1992; Dawn Unlimited 1995
- Canadian Nats: First, Open Rubber 1990
- Nats/USOC seconds: Moffett 1992 and 1993; Dawn Unlimited 1993; Coupe d’ Hiver 1989, 1992, 1995 and 1996 (margin in 1989 and 1995 was one second)
- Have held U.S. National record in Unlimited Rubber (now called Mulvihill).
- Won 1995 America’s Cup for F1G (Coupe d’ Hiver)

### **International Competition**

- 1954: World Champs, Long Island. Proxy flew Wakefield for Alf Leung (NZL); placed 17th.

- 1959: World Champs, France. Flew Wakefield on U.S. Team (with Joe Bilgri and Herb Kothe); won silver medal individually and team won gold.
- Have also flown Nordic Glider in various Open International meets in Australia, Austria, England, France, and Sweden. Reported for *Flying Models* magazine on World Championships in Austria (1973) and Bulgaria (1975).

### **Published Model Designs**

- *Jubilee* (B Free Flight) in *Model Craftsman*, Dec. 1949
- *Hustler* (A Speed) in *Flying Models*, circa 1950
- *Hellion* (A Speed) in *Flying Models*, 1950 or 1951
- *SpitBall* ½ A Free Flight in *Zaic Yearbook* 1951-52
- 1953: Nats-winning Wakefield in *Zaic Yearbook* 1955-56
- 1952-1954 *Minimum Wake* in *Zaic Yearbook* 1955-56
- 1954-1955: Wakefield in *Zaic Yearbook* 1955-56
- *Cub Scout Special* (sheet balsa Rise Off Ground) in *Air Trails Annual* (?)
- 1957 and 1958: Mulvihill Winner in *Model Airplane News*, Jan. 1958
- *Skyscraper Wakefield* in *Model Airplane News*, Dec. 1959
- *Hi-Hat II* (Indoor HLG) in *Zaic Yearbook* 1959-61
- *Skyscraper Junior* (Jr. Mulvihill) in *Flying Models*, Jan. 1967, co-author was Eric Hatschek
- *Circulator* (A 1 towline) in *Model Aviation*, Nov. 1985
- *Icarus Mini-Mulvihill* in *Fly off Newsletter*, Summer 1988
- *Liberty II Coupe d' Hiver* in *Fly off Newsletter*, Fall 1989 and in 23rd *NFFS Symposium* in 1990
- *BABU Moffett* in *Fly off Newsletter*, Fall 1993
- *Goblin P-30* (Nats winner) in *Fly off Newsletter*, Fall 1994

### **Published How-To Articles**

- How to Cooperate with Pirelli in *Model Airplane News*, June 1961
- Standardized Prop Blocks in *Air Trails Annual* (?)
- The Fancy Towhooks in *Flying Models*, Jan. 1974
- Ten Years at the Hook Works, 14th *NFFS Symposium*, 1981
- *The HIBORKS Hub* in *Fly off Newsletter*, Summer 1988
- High Aspect Props, 1991 in *Fly off Newsletter*, Spring 1991, and Vol. Libre (?)
- Block Hinges for Rubber Jobs in *Fly off Newsletter*, Fall 1992
- Music Wire Calls the Tune in *Model Aviation*, Nov. 1994
- How to Build a Successful Newsletter in *Model Aviation*, Jan. 1996
- *The Liberty Propeller* in 32nd *NFFS Symposium*, 1999

### **Miscellaneous Published Articles**

- Midgets are Fun! (re. 099 U-Controls) in *Model Airplane News*, Feb. 1949

- 23 Years of Madness in *Model Airplane News*, Jan. 1960
- *Soviet Dragonfly* (re Russian Wakefield) in *Model Airplane News*, Feb. 1960
- Free Flight (free verse) in Air Trails Annual 1963 (?) and 19th *NFFS Symposium*, 1986
- 1973 Free Flight World Championship Report in *Flying Models*, Dec. 1973
- 1975 Free Flight World Championship Report in *Flying Models*, Dec. 1975

### **Regular Columns**

- 25 Years Ago in MAN in *Model Airplane News*, several years
- No String Attached in *American Modeler* (to 1963)
- Where the Action is: Gadgets and Equipment in *American Aircraft Modeler* around 1972

### **Experimenter**

- Starting in 1986, did considerable development work on rubber model props. Developed high-aspect props for *Coupe d' Hiver* (24-inch diameter by 30 inch pitch), *HIBORKS hub* (simplified, light weight, reverse-Montreal strop) and Block Hinges (Blinges), adjustable in pitch and fold position.
- Invented “rotating plate” type circle-towhook (see *Flying Models*, Jan. 1974) and may have been the first American to fly circle tow (in 1971). Developed “Hatschek Type 3” towhook. Made and sold more than 1,300 of these in 27 different countries.

### **Club Officer**

- Member of Flushing Model Airplane Club, 1938-40; Prop Spinners Club, 1941-54 and Brooklyn Skyscrapers, 1955 to present.
- Held various offices in Prop Spinners and Skyscrapers, including editor of *Fly Off*, the Skyscrapers quarterly newsletter.

### **AMA Officer**

- Leader member and contest director since late 1940s
- In 1949, was one of the organizers of the International Competition Committee, which evolved into Free Flight Team Selection Committee of the AMA. Retiring from this committee in 1994, Bob was a member of it for more than 40 years, which may be a record for continuous AMA service.
- Elected to the contest board from District II for several years. Also, chairman of contest board. It was Hatschek’s idea to divide the contest board into three separate boards for better administration of Free Flight, Control Line, and Radio Controlled disciplines.
- Represented District II on nominating committee around 1958 and nominated John Worth for president of AMA. Worth was elected.
- Elected secretary-treasurer of AMA (position now called executive vice-president). As such, signed contract hiring John Worth as Executive Director.

- As a contest director, directed many Free Flight contests over the years, including many Free Flight team-selection meets
- Assisted in running 1976 Indoor World Championships (Lakehurst, NJ)
- Assisted in running the 1979 Outdoor World Championships (Taft, CA)

### **Previous Honors**

- Named AMA Fellow, 1971
- Elected to NFFS Hall of Fame, 1986
- Elected to Model Aviation Hall of Fame, around 1986
- NFFS Model of the Year, Special Award for Hatschek Type 3 Towhook, 1986
- NFFS Model of the Year, *Liberty II Coupe d' Hiver*, 1990

### **Best Idea**

- Creation of the FAI F1J class (international ½ A) was Bob's concept. He first wrote a rules proposal, then convinced the Skyscrapers to back it (which they did enthusiastically). The proposal then went to the AMA, which approved, and subsequently to the Free Flight Technical subcommittee of the CIAM (the FAI's model aviation group). The FFTC modified some of Bob's original rules, and the new class was adopted worldwide.

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*The following is an article that was written by Bob Hatschek and published in Model Airplane News in January 1960.*

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*“Many hobbyists have built model aircraft longer than “Uncle Bob” has but few have gotten more kicks from it.”*

### **Twenty-three years of madness**

By Bob Hatschek

The realization suddenly comes to me – with something of a shock – that I have now been avidly at this hobby of ours for 23 years. I don't feel like an “old-timer.” But I guess the calendar is catching up with me. Could this be why my fellow Sky Scrapers are calling me Uncle Bob?

One thing about this realization is that it has brought on a rash or reminiscences and recalled many laughs. But, most of all, it raises a question: Why have I kept at this mania so long? And why am I still at it with as much enthusiasm, or even more, than I had 20 years ago?

The reason simply stated: It's been fun!! I've learned to use my hands and my head. I've been thrilled by the wonderful spark of competition. And I've had the privilege of meeting the grandest assemblage of true sportsmen from all over the nation and the world!

I don't feel I'm an outstanding modeler I've just been at it for a long time. I've never been National Champ; don't hold any national records and it was more than two decades after I first heard of the Wakefield Cup that I first won the honor of competing for it for the U.S.A. A great many younger modelers can display far more impressive trophy collections than mine. But after 20 years of contest flying, I'm still not quitting. Let's reminisce, year by year.

**1936** - The whole thing started when I met a fellow named Billy Smith. He built solid models – the 1936 equivalent of today's plastic jobs. So my first one was a 10-cents Megow kit of a Fokker D-7 with an 8-inch span.

I built a whole slew of 6- and 8-inch solids of World War I fighters – Albatross, Pfalz D-12, Spad, Sopwith, Camel, etc. – and decorated my room by stringing wires across the ceiling and hanging the models in dogfight attitudes. Cotton and red dope were smoke and flame on some.

Boy, this was great! I was 11.

**1937** - Continued the solids with a line of Thompson Trophy winners, the Folkerts Special, Gee Bee, Laird Super Solution and others.

Then the flying bug bit me and I made my first built-up model, a 15-inch span Nieuport biplane. I remember picking that particular one because it had the biggest wingspread of all the dime kits in the candy store. This model never got past our living room, where it was flown to destruction. I just couldn't wait until the next day to fly it outside.

**1938** - First heard about model magazines when my older sister bought me a MAN subscription for Christmas in 1937. This really opened up my eyes to the far horizons. I was stunned and delighted by all the new things I read about. I was most amazed by the fact that contest times reported in MAN were recorded in minutes and seconds. Imagine a model airplane staying up that long!

I was even more impressed with the brilliant thought of tilting the propeller shaft downward to control the climb of a model. I could see that this so-called “down thrust” would have cured the problem I was having with a 16-inch span ROG type stick job I had built, a copy of a larger ship I had seen flying beautifully in the nearby lot, except that there was no double hearing on my model.

Next, I started copying the gas jobs in MAN, converting to rubber power, of course. Some even flew.

**1939** - Met some fellows who knew what they were doing and learned plenty from them. The late Charlie Pfoertner really got me off in the right direction. That summer I entered and placed in my first contest, a hand launched glider event at Flushing (New York) Airport. I was third out of five or six contestants, a real triumph!

Late that year I built my first gassie: A Megow Cadet with a Brat engine. Span was about 54

inches; engine displacement was .156 cubic inch. The fact that it was unsuccessful was entirely my own fault – I had wired it with single-strand bell wire that quickly vibrated apart inside. Went back to rubber jobs and had my first real thermal flight with a 29-cent Burd Korda.

**1940** – Won my first trophy with my first successful gas job, a Taibi Powerhouse from MAN, scaled to half size and powered by an Ohlsson 19 instead of the Forster 99 Taibi used. The prize was first in the Wonder Bread Model Airplane Exposition at the New York World's Fair. Category was Class A Gas, junior – and it wasn't for flying. But later on the ship proved to be a swell flier, for me anyway, and I really learned how to handle a gas job.

After that, I built a bunch of originals. All flew, sort of – but it wasn't until the fifth one (my seventh gas job) that they really began to approach contest performance.

**1941** - Went to the Nationals in Chicago with three other fellows. My share of the expenses came to \$35 – including gas, oil, flats, meals and a room in the Hotel Sherman. What an experience! Entered four events and was now a 16-year-old Senior. That was when Senior competition was the roughest and graduating into Open made things easier.

My events were Class A and Class C Gas – both Free Flight, of course – and outdoor stick and cabin. Had two beautiful flights out-of-sight in stick and A gas. Test flights, natch. Actually recorded no official flights for reasons (or excuses) too numerous to mention.

Late in the year, I joined the Prop Spinners Club.

**1942** - Really went off on a contest rip with the Prop Spinners. I flew so much that the whole year has blurred in my memory. But I learned plenty. And I even managed to win some prizes.

**1943** - Competition really churned this year. The old-timers were off to war. Flight limits were introduced. Engines, balsa, and other supplies were unobtainable. I left for the Army.

**1944** - Built one hand-launched glider. Reason was that I found about a quarter of a tube of German model airplane cement and I couldn't let it go to waste. Wood was from a Dutch cigar box about 1/8th inch thick. I had to sand this down to about 1/64 for the tail. Busted the ship and had no glue left to repair it.

**1945** - War ended and I started dreaming up what I would build when I got out. Walking down a street in Basel, Switzerland, one evening on a weeklong furlough and struck up a conversation with a Swiss fellow of about my own age. He spoke pretty good English and my German was fair at the time. We had a great chat until we discovered we were both modelers.

We just couldn't talk any more because we didn't know each other's technical language and there was nothing else we could talk about. His name was Otto Amrein and I spent nearly the whole night in his workshop. Still have two beautiful left-handed diesel propellers he gave me.

**1946** - Home at last. Started building a whole fleet of “super” ships. All were really streamlined.

Completely cowled engines, folding props, spinners, ignition-timer operated retracting landing gears, etc. Fancy, too – pin striping between colors, one even had an aluminum-tubing grille in front of the engine. They all flew – but none well.

Enrolled at Ohio University in the fall. Was going to be really serious about my studies, so I took no engines or supplies. Got a room in a tourist cabin, in which I lived for two years, and settled down to a monastic life. One afternoon during my first week there, I heard a model engine making laps. My feet hit the floor – I was in the sack at the time –and I tracked it down before the engine quit.

I discovered that I lived across the road from the local Control Line circle. I brought back two engines after Christmas Vacation.

**1947** - Built my first ukie, a PDQ powered by an old Atwood Phantom prewar, displacement.27 cu. in. Ship flew well for one of my new pals, Darrel of Tom of Athens, Ohio, but pilot error wrecked it the first time I took over. I repaired it and found ukie was fun too.

Went to the Minneapolis Nats this year. This time I got in some official flights. I also had the worst crackup of the meet, a photo of which was published in the MAN report.

**1948** - Got really interested in speed flying. Flew A, B and C speed all over Ohio and West Virginia. Won a few, too. My flying buddies were Stan Jenkinson of the Springfield Strato Hawks, John Billey of Niles, Ohio, and Bob Tweed of Steubenville Sky Hawks, all engineering students at Ohio U.

At home that summer I built a quickie Free Flight for my Mite .099 Diesel. It looked so awkward that I neatly lettered “The Ugly Duck” across the wing. Entered the monstrosity in three meets and took three firsts. That ended my rash of “super” ships!

**1949** - Had one of my biggest competition thrills. Was last man up in B speed at a western Ohio meet. Highest speeds up to the time I flew were 118.00, 117.75 and 117.50 Mph. Ship did 117.50 and I lost the toss for third prize. But I sure was close. That was the thrill!!

My first 1/2A engine, too. Great!

**1950** - Actually graduated from Ohio U. and even got a steady job. But that didn't stop me!

Since my old pal Warren Fletcher had been high American, placing third, in the 1949 Wakefield meet at Cranfield, England, and since I had always liked rubber jobs, I made my first serious attempt at getting on the Wakefield Team. I missed.

**1951** - The Prop Spinners Club went off on a small indoor rip by having meets for 30 square inch sticks at the regular meetings. Built my first indoor jobs and did as much as seven minutes with a baby ROG under a 20-foot ceiling. But it was more fun to try and beat three minutes in an 8-foot high living room. It can be done – even by me, occasionally. Besides, my two sons (oh, yes, I had



found time to get married, too) really got a kick out of watching – even if I wouldn't let them breathe.

And I didn't make the Wakefield Team.

**1952** - Built my first Radio Control model. Really different and lots of fun, but the time it takes!

Third time I didn't make the Wakefield Team.

**1953** - A big year! Didn't make the Wakefield Team again, but I qualified for the Semi-Final. And then I was lucky enough to win Open Wakefield at the Willow Grove Nats – while the country's top Wakefield fliers were in Europe. The trophy I won was donated by MAN.

**1954** - Finally flew in the Wakefield Finals as a proxy for Alfred Leong of New Zealand. We took 17th with 736 seconds while Alan King of Australia won with 900. Met a lot of wonderful fellows from all over the world. Kyutatsik Myoshi of Japan offered to send me split bamboo Andy Bobkowski who had just moved to Guatemala, offered to send me hand picked balsa logs if I needed them – he didn't have a power saw at the time. Arne Blomgren offered to send Swedish steel wire and high-grade 1/32 inch plywood.

Funniest thing that happened to me was during an evening test flying session. I was helping Anders Haakanson (Sweden) start up a diesel in a ship he was proxy flying for a fellow Swede (at that time, anyway, he didn't know too much about running diesels). Neither of us spoke the other's language, so Blomgren was interpreting. Anders was holding the ship and operating the compression screw; I was flipping and turning the needle valve and that particular diesel needed fast action! I think the three of us made more noise than the engine – and certainly, everyone on the field was roaring with laughter – but we got it started!

**1955** - Didn't make the Wakefield Team for the sixth time in a row. Also bought a house – which slowed things down in the model airplane department ... for a while.

**1956** - Joined the Brooklyn Sky Scrapers – and found out why they call themselves “The Most Active Club in the East.” What a whirl! Got interested in Nordic gliders – hadn't built a towliner in 10 years – and even qualified for the Semi-Finals. But I didn't make either the Nordic or the Wakefield Team.

Also got involved, along with the oldest of my three sons, in Cub Scouting. Gave a talk to the boys (Pack 196, Queens, N.Y.) and showed them some models. They went wild when I flew a baby ROG at the meeting. I had designed and built a small, all- balsa rubber job aimed at their age level with built-in down thrust – and rashly offered to make kits for the boys if they wanted me to. I figured materials would cost about 15-cents and that was my price.

Did they want them! I made seven dozen kits! And the kids really built them. My number two son, then seven, built one that out flew mine – was my face red.

**1957** - At the Willow Grove Nats everybody out goofed me in Unlimited Rubber and I won the Mulvihill Trophy, the oldest, most beautiful hunk of metal in the modeling game. It's the only trophy my wife ever let me put on the mantel – the others are in the dining room – and it carries the names of fellows who were real heroes to me 20 years ago. But I still couldn't make the Wakefield Team or the Nordic Team.

**1958** - Lightning *does* strike twice in same spot – even if the spot has moved from Willow Grove to Glenview. My one tremendous thrill of 1958 was when I stayed lucky long enough to win the Mulvihill Trophy again. And the Oakland Cloud Dusters, Bilgri, Foster, Andrade, and Cole are sure that I stuck pins in effigies of their models.

**1959** - The season isn't over yet, as this is being written, but I've already had my full share of thrills and fun. Biggest of all – ever – was that I finally made the Wakefield Team. And I got the greatest pair of teammates a modeler could ask for – Joe Bilgri and Herb Kothe.

But far surpassing the thrill of making the team was flying over to France and competing with 60 of the best rubber fliers from all over the world – meeting a few old friends from the 1954 meet in the U.S.A. – and meeting all these great competitors. I'd like to name them there isn't space for all and I wouldn't leave out a single one.

Each minute was a new thrill. And each round. And when the five rounds were over, there were still seven of us with perfect scores: two Canadians, a Czech, a Pole, a Russian, a Swede, and me! The fly off – with seven models in the air at once. Tension. Suspense. Enough to keep me at it for the next 23 years.

The thrill of coming in second among competitors like those lifted me so high I didn't need Pan American to get home. I could have floated all the way on my nice pink cloud!

But the biggest thing of all is that this hobby of yours and mine has been able to provide these thrills year in and year out – each on topping the one before. What's it going to be next year? And the year after?

You can bet I'm not quitting until I find out.

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*The following article was published in the 19<sup>th</sup> annual NFFS Symposium, 1986*

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### **Bob Hatschek - AMA - 647**

“Probably the most significant day of my life,” says Bob Hatschek “was the day in late summer 1936 when I met Billy Smith. Billy was an older kid - he was 12, I was 11, and lived up the street and who built solid scale models as a hobby. I already loved airplanes, and Billy's models impressed me very much. It didn't take much more for Billy to persuade me to buy a kit (a 10-cent Megow Fokker D-VII with an 8-inch wingspan) and start building. I haven't slopped yet.”

In the half century since then Bob has learned that you can also make model airplanes that fly,

ones that fly round and round on wires, and even ones that can be controlled remotely, but his major devotion has always been Free Flight.

“After all,” Bob points out, “Free Flight models are the most advanced ones possible - they're *fully automatic*.”

Further, Bob characterizes model aviation primarily as a *sport*, not merely as a hobby. In his view, the highest levels of any sport are in competition, and the pinnacle of competition is international. Although Bob only made the U.S. team one time – in 1959 he won a Silver Medal in Wakefield at Brienne le Chateau, France, and led his U.S. teammates Joe Bilgri and Herb Kothe to a Gold in the team event – he has attended a total of nine Free Flight World Championships in such capacities as proxy flyer, U.S. team supporter and contest official.

Perhaps even more rewarding than the challenges of Free Flight competition are the friendships Bob has made among modelers from all parts of the world. “Free Flighters are true sportsmen,” he states, “quite probably because there really isn't any financial payoff. You do it because you love it, not to get rich. And this seems to be more or less true no matter where in the world you do it.

“At the same time, competitive Free Flight is not child's play. It's tough, and it's demanding. That's probably the reason why more people aren't involved in Free Flight. But those who are attracted to Free Flight possess a number of common traits and characteristics that bind them together in a worldwide fraternity...literally a brotherhood that transcends the differences that keep other humans apart.

“I don't care what *language* he's speaking,” Bob explains, “when his model glides into down air, I know what he's *saying!*”

Bob also views the international classes as the forefront of Free Flight development. He cites circle-tow in Fl A, delayed prop starts in Fl B, auto tail surfaces in Fl C and variable-diameter props in Fl D to illustrate. “Recreating antique model airplanes is a great hobby, if that's what turns you on,” he says, “but I prefer to be closer to the leading edge of model aviation technology. I used to build old timers, but I quit on January 2, 1942.”

All of which should be enough to justify the significance of Bob's meeting Billy Smith 50 years ago, but it goes even beyond the generation of a lifetime avocation. It was his interest in model aviation, the creation of a flying machine from drawing board to building board to contest field that first sparked Bob's interest in engineering. Bob earned his BSME with honors at Ohio University in 1950 on the G.I. Bill, supplementing his government living allowance by writing an occasional article for one of the model magazines.

Thus, Bob also owes his vocation to model aviation as well as his avocation. In 1984, Bob took early retirement as senior editor of American Machinist magazine after a 34-year career in technical publications. “For most of that time, and especially the 20 years at American Machinist,

my hobby was making things, and my job was writing about how industry was making things. How could it be better?"

Bob entered his first contest in 1939, and won third in hand-launch glider. Since that time, he has competed in virtually all Free Flight classes as well as Control Line speed, indoor and even RC in the early 1950s. For the past 15 years, Bob has concentrated primarily on Nordic A/2 gliders and has qualified for the U.S. Team Selection Finals every time since 1972.

A former record holder in unlimited rubber, Bob twice won the Mulvihill trophy (1957 and 1958). He also won the Wakefield event at the 1953 U.S. Nats.

Most widely known in international circles, Bob's Nordic glider box has logged more than 100,000 miles of travel. He has attended nine world championships in a variety of capacities such as team member, proxy flyer, team supporter, meet official, and reporter for various model magazines.

Bob has completed a new model box to transport 10 Free Dlights: 2- 1/2As. - 2 P-30s. - 2- Coupe d' Hivers, - 2- A-1 gliders, and 2- A-2 gliders. Box dimensions? Only 11-1/2" X 12-1/2" X 37".

As a sideline, Hatschek produces circle-towhooks, of which he has delivered more than 1,000 to modelers in 24 different countries.

Over the years, Bob has been a prolific author and columnist on model aviation subjects. A partial list of his articles include: Jubilee, a class B free flight, *Model Craftsman* magazine, 1946; Hustler, a class A Control Line speed model, *Flying Models*, circa 1948; Hellion, a class A speed model, *Flying Models*, circa 1950; Mulvihill Winner, unlimited rubber, *Model Airplane News*, 1957; Sky Scraper Wakefield, Wakefield rubber, *Model Airplane News*, 1959; 'How to Cooperate with Pirelli,' article on rubber, *Model Airplane News*, circa 1962; Free Flight, free verse, *Air Trails Annual*, 1963; Skyscraper Junior beginner's unlimited rubber (with Eric Hatschek), *Flying Models*, circa 1965; Free Flight World Championships at Wiener Neustadt, Austria, *Flying Models*, 1973; The Fancy Towhooks, 7-page article on circle tow, *Flying Models*, 1974; Free Flight World Championships at Plovdiv, Bulgaria, *Flying Models*, 1975; Ten Years at the Hook Works, circle-tow developments, *NFFS Symposium*, 1980; Circulator, A/1 circle-tow glider, *Model Aviation*, 1985.

Bob also was a regular columnist for *American Aircraft Modeler*, for which he wrote the monthly columns "No Strings Attached" and "Free Flight Gadgets & Equipment."

Bob has been an active member of the Brooklyn Sky Scrapers since 1955. Bob lives with his wife, Lucy, in Douglaston, Long Island, NY 11363.

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*The following is a poem on Free Flight written by Bob Hatschek.*

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## Free Flight

What's Free Flight? A thrill, a challenge, a puzzle.

Its other guys like you, the world around, striving for the same graceful beauty of flight. It's comradeship across all human barriers. It's bull sessions through the wee hours.

It's fierce competition ... with the highest of sportsmanship.

It's a battle against nature ... her perversity ... her law of gravity.

"Free as a bird," describes God's most unchained creation. Man's is a model airplane soaring birdlike in a thermal. You created it. Vicariously you soar with it ... with its freedom.

Free Flight is the mist of the dawning's calm as you test. It's the noonday sun as your model thrusts for the heavens. It's the cool drink after a dusty chase.

It's the piercing scream of a peaking engine ... the silence of the glide.

It's sunburn and poison ivy and weariness to the marrow ... made worthwhile.

It's skill in your fingers. It's knowledge learned for the knowledge alone.

It's perfection sought ... never attainable. A goal everlasting.

Free Flight is all of these, yet much more! I tell you this, and you may believe. But, you cannot know ... unless you know.



**1985: Bob with Circulator A/1  
circle-tow glider**



*July 2002: Bob at the AMA Free Flight Nationals in Muncie, Indiana. This photo was taken by then-AMA Assistant Historian, Stacey Shannon.*



*2002: Bob with his geared P-30 at the Free Flight Nationals. He describes this plane as “highly unique and innovative.” This photo was taken by Bob’s fellow Skyscraper, Alan Abriss.*



*2002: Bob with the same P-30 at the Free Flight Nationals. He didn’t place at the Nationals in 2002, but in 2001, he placed seventh in the fly off when his plane maxed out. This photo was also taken by Alan Abriss.*

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*The following was written by AMA staff, published in the January 2013 issue of Model Aviation magazine.*

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### **Former FF Champion Passes Away**

Apparently, the ninth time was the charm for FF modeler Robert “Bob” L. Hatschek. Bob, who began building his first models at age 11, refused to give up on his dream of qualifying for the US Wakefield World Championship team. In 1959, that dream finally came true.

Bob and his teammates, Joe Bilgri and Herb Kothe, won a team gold medal at the World Championships in France, and Bob walked away with an individual silver medal. Before he passed away, Bob wrote about his experience for his AMA biography.

“Each minute was a new thrill. And each round. And when the five rounds were over, there

were still seven of us with perfect scores: two Canadians, a Czech, a Pole, a Russian, a Swede, and me! The fly off – with seven models in the air at once. Tension. Suspense. Enough to keep me at it for the next 23 years.

The thrill of coming in second among competitors like those lifted me so high I didn't need Pan American to get home. I could have floated all the way on my nice pink cloud!"

Throughout his life, Bob tried to rekindle that thrill by competing in numerous events. He broke a national record in Unlimited Rubber, won the America's Cup for F1G, and his name was etched in multiple trophies.

Later in life, his achievements and contributions to FF were recognized with honors including being named an AMA Fellow in 1971, induction into the National Free Flight Society (NFFS) Hall of Fame in 1986 and the Model Aviation Hall of Fame in 1987, and winning the NFFS Model of the Year in 1986 and 1990. Bob, a New York resident, passed away October 13, 2012, at the age of 87.

He was a columnist for *Model Airplane News (MAN)*, *American Modeler*, and *American Aircraft Modeler*. Several articles and airplane designs were published in *MAN*, *MA*, *Flying Models*, *Air Trails*, and other magazines. Bob's love for competition led him to become an AMA CD and Leader Member. He also served as secretary-treasurer (now executive vice president) of AMA.

He helped organize the International Competition Committee in 1949, which evolved into the FF Team Selection Committee, serving until 1994. Bob also was elected to the District II Contest Board and served as chairman.

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