



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of GEORGE (TOM) McCLAIN

Born October 2, 1952 Started modeling in 1962

AMA #11510



Information submitted by TM (03/2003); Written & Edited by SS (03/2003), Reformatted by JS (10/2009)

Career:

- Graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy and was commissioned an officer in the U.S. Air Force; flew *F-4* fighter aircraft for 17 years
- Worked with two engineers from General Dynamics to modify his Novi Arrow pattern ship in February 1989 to prove an air-to-air missile could be launched aft from an aircraft safely and effectively
- Served as an AMA District IV associate vice president
- Taught a Delta Dart class for military families at Osan Air Base in Korea in 1981
- 1991: Taught a young astronaut course for home-school families in Apple Valley, California
- His article on the Top Flite Gold Edition Corsair was published in the October 1992 issue of *Scale Radio Control Modeler* magazine
- Has a commercial pilot's license and is a certified flight instructor
- 2002: Retired from the U.S. Air Force after 26 years of service
- September 2002: Directed the Walt Musciano Commemorative
- Has served as secretary and treasurer of the Northern Virginia Control Line Club; is currently (2003) club newsletter editor

The Beginning

Tom McClain started building models at age 10 and hasn't stopped since. His first model was a Comet D-8 Fokker built from a kit. Tom built the model alone by following the instructions. His biggest problem came when it was ready to fly. He didn't quite understand center of gravity, surface alignment, or motor preparation. He most enjoyed the sense of accomplishment he got when the model was finished.

Tom's modeling has progressed from plastic model kits and Comet ready-to-fly rubber-powered model airplanes through Radio Control aerobatics to Control Line stunt today. In 1973, he joined his first club, the U.S. Air Force Academy Model Engineering Club, where he remained a member for two and a half years.

Competition

Tom's first competition was the Amarillo Radio Control Pattern contest in 1974 at age 21. He competed with a Midwest Sweet Stik model in pattern and did not place.

Experimenting

In February 1989, Tom along with two engineers from General Dynamics, modified his Novi Arrow pattern ship to do a sub-scale demonstration. Their goal was to prove that an air-to-air

missile could be launched aft from an aircraft safely and effectively. The demonstration was a complete success and over nine trials were conducted using Estes model rocket materials.

Leadership

Tom has been involved in his local club, the Northern Virginia Control Line club, through serving as its secretary and treasurer. He currently (in 2003) is the newsletter editor for the club. Within the AMA, Tom serves as a District IV associate vice president.

He has also been involved with contest directing. In September 2002, he directed the Walt Musciano Commemorative.

Publications

Scale RC Modeler magazine published Tom's article on the Top Flite Gold Edition Corsair in October 1992. The article covered the quality, ease of construction and flying quality of the Gold Edition Corsair.

Education Involvement

In 1981, Tom taught an introductory Delta Dart program at Osan Air Base in Korea for American military families. Ten years later, he taught a Young Astronaut course to home-school families in Apple Valley, California. The course covered the space program, astronomy, model rocketry and model aviation.

Tom himself received a bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1975, a master's in business administration from Golden Gate University in 1985, a master's in national security studies from Naval War College in 1998 and a commercial pilot's license, multi-engine, instrument-rated from the FAA. Tom is a certified flight instructor and has logged 3,000 total flight hours. In the military, Tom flew the F-4 Phantom and OV-10A Bronco.

*(signed) Tom McClain
March 2003*

This PDF is property of the Academy of Model Aeronautics. Permission must be granted by the AMA History Project for any reprint or duplication for public use.

AMA History Project
National Model Aviation Museum
5151 E. Memorial Dr.
Muncie IN 47302
(765) 287-1256, ext. 511
historyproject@modelaircraft.org

