



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of ED W. MITCHELL

Born November 14, 1926

Started modeling in 1945



Written by EWM (c. 2003); Transcribed and edited by JS (11/2007), Reformatted by JS (10/2009)

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It was a clear October in 1945. The war was over, I was home on a thirty-day leave, and I was going to learn how to fly full-scale aircraft. Buddy Martin, my instructor, and I took off to the north from a grass strip near Winchester, Tennessee. I climbed to altitude and leveled off. I checked the area for other airplanes and put the Piper *Cub* into a spin as instructed, and brought it out of the spin on 2 ½ turns.

Next, as we were flying along, Buddy chopped the throttle and told me to set it down. Flying over open farmland, I quickly spotted an open field that looked like a pasture. I circled the field, made my approach into the wind, and as I was coming in over a fence, Buddy quickly pushed the throttle forward and told me to “take her back to the field.” I climbed to altitude, flew the short distance to the landing strip, entered the pattern, and came in from the south, making a good (sweaty palm) landing. I taxied up to the parking area where my instructor hopped out and asked me to “take her around the field.” I taxied down to the end of the runway, swung around into the wind, took a deep breath, and pushed the stick and throttle forward.

As the airplane picked up speed, the tail came up. I eased the stick back carefully to keep the tail up, using the rudder peddles to go strait down the runway. Reaching flying speed quickly, I eased the stick back, and off the runway she flew. I climbed to altitude and cranked in the proper trim for easy flying. I circled the field, came in for a landing, and taxied up to the parking area where my instructor was waiting. After congratulations and losing my shirttail, I received my learners permit and logbook. I was now a pilot and no one was going to get in my way. I loved the freedom of flying!

Since I was a full-scale pilot, and finding that flying full-scale airplanes was getting too expensive, I decided to try my hand at Radio Control modeling, having read all about them in modeling magazines. In 1980, I built my first model, a Sig *Kadet MkII*. With no one to help me, I managed to built it and cover it with red Monokote and white trim. My engine was an HB .40 PDP and my radio was an Airtronics. It looked great and I could not wait for my first flight. I went out to the local airport near Camden, Tennessee and asked the manager for permission to fly my model. I was sent to the north end of the runway at the turn around, a good place, as there was plenty of room to park and set up off the runway. I put on my wing, fueled up, and cranked the HB engine, which was running just great. After taxing around for a while to get used to the ground handling, I stopped the airplane near the middle of the runway, ready for take-off. I had never flown a model airplane nor had ever seen a model fly. All I knew was what I had read, and since I was a full-scale pilot, it never entered my mind that the model would be any different. I

advanced the throttle; the *Kadet* took off and quickly did two loops before I knew what was going on. I quickly realized that a small stick movement translated into a very large maneuver. I got it straightened out, but it was getting too far away, so I made a left turn back towards the runway and completely lost it! The *Kadet* re-kitting itself in a pasture about 300 years from where I was standing.

After building a new *Kadet*, I looked for instruction and soloed. I have enjoyed building and flying continually since 1980, when I joined the AMA and Rocket City Radio Controllers, and enjoyed Radio Control more than any other sport. Over the years, I have built 21 kits, 14 scratch-built from plans, and one Almost-Ready-to-Fly (ARF). I served as an instructor until I lost fifty percent of my vision in one eye and had to give up a very pleasurable experience. I take great pride in my workmanship and always go out of my way to show newcomers how to build a good, straight, and well-covered airplane.

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