



---

# The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of GILBERT (GIL) C. MORRIS

Born August 8, 1925      Started modeling in 1930

AMA #94509



---

Written & Submitted by GM (09/2003), Updates submitted by GM (01/2011); Transcribed & Edited by SS (09/2003), Reformatted by JS (10/2009), Updated by JS (01/2011)

---

## Career:

- Designed his own models from age 13 on
- 1941: Placed in Nationals
- Some of his most notable designs include Kerswap Toothpicks, ABC Toothpicks, Matchsticks, Twigs, Two Timer, Pop-Up, and Folder/Flapper
- Set five national records
- Received six National Free Flight Society (NFFS) Model of the Year awards
- Won four McNeill Cups
- Wrote numerous articles, including seven that were published in NFFS Symposium Reports and seven in national and international publications
- 1994/1995, 2002/2003, 2008/2009: Member of the United States F1C teams
- 1995: Coordinated wind tunnel tests at University of Illinois with NFFS
- 1996-2010: Served on the FAI Free Flight team selection committee
- 1999-2000: Served as chairman of the FAI Free Flight team selection committee
- 1997: Was the America's Cup Winner
- 2001-2002: Served as president of his local club and directed local contests
- 2005: Inducted into the Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) Hall of Fame
- 2007: Inducted into the National Free Flight Society (NFFS) Hall of Fame

---

My uncle taught me to whittle at the age of five, then 1930. Airplanes in all their forms were the rage and immediately I was attracted to 5- and 10-cent solid models. I was a poor student at school, but quickly became a good one when enticed by my father with a solid model kit for each grade of A or B. Then, in 1933, my aunt gave me a rubber model kit for my birthday. The kit had a plan and a bunch of sticks – no block of balsa as I expected. In time, I realized that you had to glue the sticks together according to the plan and then fly it. I was amazed and hooked on flying models for good.

Soon I was designing my own rubber models, which I flew for fun and at the annual Boy Scout Arama at the fairgrounds. From the start, I strived for endurance, not scale effect.

About 1938, then age 13, I started working part-time at Hall's Hardware, which was the headquarters for model supplies in town. I bought a Scientific Eaglet and a Brat engine a year later; and from that time on all my models were engine powered. After the Eaglet, I designed all of my models. It was cheaper and I could select my own wood. I attended many contests in Ohio and the 1941 Nationals (Nats) in Chicago. I flew class A, B and C, but focused mainly on class A. Most notable of my early designs was Kerswap, which I designed in the fall of 1941. I built three that winter and lost all three out-of-sight (OOS) during the 1942 contest season.

I graduated from high school in 1943 and immediately went off to college and soon into the Army Air Corps Cadet program. After World War II, I graduated from Ohio State University in 1949 with BSME and BSEE degrees. I married Irene and I had five children. I worked as an

engineer and engineering manager over the years. I was out of modeling from 1943 to 1973. In 1973, I taught my children modeling and the hobby rubbed off onto me and soon I was active again in the sport. I built a couple of commercial gas models and then got back into designing my own. Some of the more notable ones are Toothpicks, ABC Toothpicks, Matchsticks, Twigs, Two Timer and, most recently, Pop-Up and F1C Folder/Flapper.

I have enjoyed all aspects of free flight, but most satisfying has been the discovery of new design concepts that prove to be state-of-the-art through contest flying.

## **Accomplishments Over the Years**

Won third place in Class A, Junior Division, 1941 Nationals

Set five national records: 1978, 1980, 1982 and two in 1985

Central Ohio Free Flight Club (COFFC) special award for achievement in 1981

Six National Free Flight Society (NFFS) Model of the Year awards:

- 1980: Toothpicks design
- 1985: ABC Toothpicks design
- 1990: Matchsticks design
- 1995: Two Timer F1C flapper design
- 1996: F1C team recognition (first place in the World Championships in 1995)
- 2009: F1C Folder/Flapper design

Four McNeill Cup awards for winning first place in the F1C Nats in 1982, 1993, 1997 and 1999

Three merit awards from the Central Indiana Aeromodelers (CIA) in 1990, 1994 and 1995

Six first place Power Model Awards for Year from CIA in 1992, 1993, 1994, 1997, 1999 and 2000

America's Cup Winner in F1C in 1997

Member of three U.S. F1C teams: 1994/1995, 2002/2003, and 2008/2009

- Won individual F1C bronze medal, World Championships, Domsod, Hungary, 1995
- Won team F1C gold medal, World Championships, Domsod, Hungary, 1995
- Won team F1C gold medal, World Championships, Kunszentmiklos, Hungary, 2003
- World Championships, Krbavsko polje, Croatia, 2009

I have written numerous articles over the years. Seven appeared in the NFFS Symposium Reports:

- 1981: "Some Thoughts on Designing and Trimming"
- 1984: "Getting a Handle on CG (Center of Gravity)"
- 1996: "A Flapped Wing F1C"
- 2000: "All Strings No Levers VIT"
- 2001: "Solutions to an Erratic Vertical Climb"
- 2006: "F1C Static Thrust Tests"
- 2010: "Features of Folder/Flapper Wing in F1C Designs"

Related construction Articles:

- **Toothpicks**, by G. Morris, *Model Aviation*, June 1979
- **A-B-C Toothpicks**, by G. Morris, *Model Aviation*, July 1981
- **Kerswap 1/2A Texaco Old Timer**, by Bob Isaacks, *Model Builder*, Nov. 1985
- **Kerswap**, by Bob Aberle, *Flying Models*, Nov. 1986
- **Kerswap .020 Replica Old Timer**, by Dick Lyons, *Model Builder*, July 1992
- **Twigs**, by G. Morris, *NFFS 1992 Book on Power Models*
- **Two Timer**, by G. Morris, *NFFS 1992 Book on Power Models*
- **Pop-Up**, by G. Morris, *NFFS Digest*, Sept. 2002
- **F1C Flapper**, by G. Morris, *FF Quarterly*, Oct 2004
- **Interview with E. Verbitsky**, by G. Morris, *FF Quarterly*, July 2005

I have served as president of our COFFC and as contest director (CD) for contests in 2001 and 2002. I was chair of NFFS's Ten Models of Year selection committee in 1985.

I coordinated wind tunnel tests at the University of Illinois on airfoils A18 (Randy Archer), MA409 (Michael Achterberg), and GM15 (Gil Morris) for NFFS that are recorded in "Summary of Low-Speed Airfoil Data, Vol. 1," *Soar Tech Publications*, 1995

I was inducted into the SAM Hall of Fame in 2005 and the NFFS Hall of Fame in 2007.

I have served on the FAI Free Flight team selection committee 1996 -2010 and as chair in 1999 and 2000.

*(signed) Gilbert Morris*  
*September 15, 2003*  
*-Updated by GM*  
*January 2011*

---

**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

