



# The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of RICHARD H. (DICK) PHILLIPS



Modeler since the 1930s

Birth Date: April 1, 1927

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Written & Submitted by DP (11/1999), Transcribed & Edited by SS (08/2002), Updated by JS (06/2008), Reformatted by JS (01/2010)

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## Career:

- Founding member of IMAA
- Member of AMA, MAAC, QSAA and IMAA
- Helped found the Prince George Aeromodelers Club in Prince George, British Columbia
- Instrumental in introducing the Quadra engine to modelers in 1977 through an article in *Radio Control Modeler (RCM)* magazine
- His innovations made giant scale models safer and easier to fly
- Wrote numerous articles and a book (“Building Big is Beautiful”) about building large models
- In the 1970s produced and distributed a newsletter about the development of the Quadra engine and larger models
- Wrote a column for *RCM* magazine called “Big is Beautiful”
- Later wrote a column for *Model Airplane News* magazine called “Giant Steps” until he retired from regular column writing in 1986
- Served as a scale judge at the Canadian Nationals
- Partnered with Col. (Ret.) John A. deVries to found ViP Publishers, Inc.; have published various books on both modeling and full-sized planes, including his own book
- Owned and operated a combined toy store and hobby shop in Prince George, British Columbia during the late 1970s
- Served as a zone director for MAAC
- Elected to IMAA’s board of directors and served as its second president until health problems forced him to resign

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Dick Phillips has been involved with modeling for over 55 years and is now 72-years-old (1999). Dick has been a member of a number of organizations over the years, but presently is not active in modeling. He was a founding member of IMAA, has been a member of AMA, MAAC, QSAA, and IMAA, and was involved in founding a model club in Prince George, British Columbia, the Prince George Aeromodelers.

Dick began building stick and tissue rubber-powered models in the 1930s and had his first ride in an airplane in 1937. He was bitten by the airplane bug and has been interested in airplanes and aviation ever since.

Dick’s interest has ranged the full gamut from the original stick and tissue models through Free Flight, Control Line, and Radio Control and eventually got into giant scale. He was instrumental in introducing the original Quadra engine to modelers in an article in the May 1977 issue of *RC*

*Modeler* magazine (*RCM*). That issue of *RCM* was handed out at the Toledo show that year and created a surge of interest in the Quadra engine. At the time, the largest engine readily available was the Fox .78, which lacked the power to safely fly some of the large models being experimented with at that time. The arrival of the Quadra engine changed the complexion of modeling and the interest in large models has increased in the intervening years.

At that time, Dick had been in contact with Ron Shettler, the distributor of the Quadra engine, which was little known at the time. The May 1977 article in *RCM* set off a reaction that resulted in worldwide distribution of the engine and an amazing growth in the building and flying of large models. Subsequently a number of other large displacement gas and glow fuel engines arrived on the market leading to even greater growth in the building and flying of larger models. Many of the major meets and contests now devote at least a part of their schedule to the larger model and many of our current champions are devotees of these “giants.”

Dick’s association with and use of the Quadra engine and his resulting writing on the subject of large models has made significant contributions to the art of building and flying large models. He pioneered and adapted a number of materials and developed many innovative procedures, which made the safety and fly-ability of the larger model better than it had been. His articles and a subsequent book have assisted many builders of large models to produce both better and safer models and to reduce the cost of the larger model.

He began producing and distributing a newsletter in the late 1970s covering development of the Quadra engine and larger models. This eventually led to a regular column in *RCM* entitled, “Big is Beautiful,” a column which continues to this day. Subsequently to leaving *RCM*, Dick began writing the “Giant Steps” column for *Model Airplane News* magazine (*MAN*) until retiring from writing regular columns in 1986.

Dick has acted as a scale judge in the Canadian Nationals at Edmonton, Alberta some years ago and has been interested in scale modeling for many years. He says, “If it’s supposed to be an airplane, it ought to look like one.”

Dick, in partnership with Col. (Ret.) John A. deVries, founded ViP Publishers, Inc. based in Colorado Springs, Colorado. His interest in modeling continues. ViP has published a series of three volumes entitled “ViP’s Directory of Large Scale Plans.” Each volume covers 50 plans available for those who wish to build from plans. They are also published Dick’s book, “Building Big is Beautiful,” which details the many materials and methods he has developed over the years. ViP also published a book by Dario Brisighella, “From the Firewall Forward,” which details many aspects of the Quadra engines and re-working them for use as model power plants. ViP also published a small book detailing computer programs for model builders and an autobiography of AMA’s historian, Norman Rosenstock.

ViP’s publishing efforts have also included books on a number of full-scale airplanes, among them the *P-82 Twin Mustang*, the *P-61 Black Widow*, the Granville Brothers *Gee Bee* airplanes, including the racers and in 1996 published a volume covering the *Hawk 75/P-36* airplanes.

Dick is currently involved with computers and uses a desktop publishing computer to produce the masters from which ViP's book are printed. In his working life, Dick was a customer support manager for a computer firm until retirement and has owned and used computers since well before the introduction of the IBM personal computer in the early 1980s.

During the late 1970s, Dick owned and operated a combination toy store and hobby shop in Prince George, British Columbia, and was very active in the local club having been a founder of the club prior to taking over the hobby shop. He also served as a zone director of MAAC for a time.

Dick was active over the many years of column writing and attended many of both IMAA's and QSAA's meets. He was elected to the board of directors of IMAA and served as the second president of IMAA, but was unable to serve a full term due to medical problems.

Dick presently lives in Coquitlam, British Columbia, a suburb of Vancouver where he grew up with wife, Elvin. They have no children and Dick no longer has the space to build, or the eyesight to fly models. He does say, however, that he would not trade the knowledge he gained, nor the hundreds of good friends worldwide he made during the years of active modeling and writing.

*(signed) Dick Phillips  
November 10, 1999*

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