



# The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of HANK POHLMANN

**Modeler, Designer, Aviation Enthusiast**

Born March 4, 1932      Started modeling in 1948

AMA #1969



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## Career:

- Contest director and leader member
  - Very involved in flying field development
  - Designer at SIG Manufacturing Company, Inc.
  - Engineered six kits for production for SIG
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It was 1944. I was age 12, in 7<sup>th</sup> grade in Frank L. Smart Jr. High, on the school grounds. It was Wayne Kroeger and Bob Olds flying Wayne's U-line Speed Zing spark/ignition set up. The bug had a hold on me! My first engine was an O&R ignition on a Carl Goldberg model, followed by a stunt plane and then team racers and scale models.

I remember my first contest held at Hayes Elementary School Ground – three and four circles with events on Saturday and Sunday. In those days, the AMA supplied and allowed only ribbons for placing, no prizes or money. Flying U-line lasted until 1951.

Enlisted in the U.S. Navy in April 1951. Served under Admiral William “Bull” Halsey, Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, Far East, Japan, Korea, Western Pacific aboard the USS Yancey – AKA 93. Married Marilyn Ragan in January 1952. Our first son, Steve was born on August 30, 1954 and the second son, Gary, was born on September 18, 1956. Honorable Discharge as a Machinist Mate First Class (E6) Main Engine Propulsion Engineering Group in March 1955. High school classmates John Kroeger and Darryl Thoem served in the U.S. Army during this same time frame.

After Korea, we started an U-line club during the summer of 1955. I rejoined the AMA and became the contest director/leader member for our club, the Davenport Prop Busters. The club grew into a large group of over 50 to 60 members, many of them going on the weekend Contest Circuit. As many as 10 to 15 members were on the road to places like Iowa, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Minnesota, Illinois, and Missouri.

John, a few others, and I took our families on many of these trips. By this time, my two sons, Steve and Gary, were old enough to travel. At some parks and flying sites facilities were good, swimming, playgrounds for the kids, etc., others at times were quite primitive.

I switched to Radio Control 1960 or 1961. Ron Norgard and I were laid back under a tree at an U-line Contest, Chicago's Kickapoo Woods Park. As two Taurus Radio Control models buzzed overhead side by side, I said, "That's for me."

My first Radio Control was a Tauri trainer, high wing with an Orbit 7-14 radio and a .45 engine. I concentrated on pattern and scale contests eventual moving into Formula One with a Carl Goldberg Shoestring. By this time, the Davenport Radio Control Society was flying at Scott County Park field. The park director was a 1950 high school classmate and thus a communication link was formed; flying field development became a major part of my involvement.

My friend Jim Duda became interested in Radio Control and we formed J&H, Racing. Formula One was great. The flying discipline of pattern contest flying is a good platform to solid racing of high performance models. Jim and I raced for about eight years. While at the Nationals (Nats) in 1970 Glenview NAS flying pattern and Formula One, Jim and I spotted this full-size red, white, and blue P-51 Reno Racer #11 Miss America, owned and flown by Howie Keefe. I left a note in the Racer's cockpit. A letter from Howard put me in touch with his partner H.S. "Pete" Hoyt for photos and from those I built a Radio Control Miss America. After sending Howard photos of the finished model, he sent me an invitation to Reno. Went to the races that following September. After working on Miss A for two days, the crew and Howie asked me to join them as a crewmember.

At that time, Charles Beck and Ralph Thombly were our back up pilots. Charlie was half owner/driver of P-51 Race #7 Candy Man, full owner/driver for T-6 Race #2. Ralph owned and raced several Birds including T-6 Race #41. These gentlemen, including Howie Keefe and Pete Hoyt, served as combat aircraft "drivers" during World War II.

I remember one year as only six crewmembers ran between three birds, two P-51s and one T-6, trying to maintain all three. Howie in #11, Charlie in #7 and #2, with Ralph our back up pilot - that was one L-O-N-G week! Have you ever seen a dog trying to handle five fire hydrants at once?!

My modeling opened two doors for me, first as a pit crewmember, Big Time Full Size Reno Air Racing, and second into a full time job with SIG Manufacturing Company for 10 years, from 1973 to 1983. A pilot certificate and flying full-size aircraft became a reality in 1973, buying a Cessna 150 in 1974 and a trade up to a Cessna 172 in 1976. Cross-country flying with Pete Hoyt as my mentor resulted in achievement of my instrument rating in February 1982. My Reno racing activity has lasted over 30 years for Howie, Charlie and Ralph and Jim Good Race 77, T-6 from 1970 to 2001. All but three years have been completed using Pete Hoyt's Cessna 310 and for the last 11 years my Cessna 172 Skyhawk, three trips by commercial. These trips over, through and around the Rocky Mountains are truly the best. My wife, Marilyn, has made the Reno run three times, son Gary twice and son Steve once.

As of 1996, Miss America P-51 Mustang is one of the most enduring of the unlimited class

racers and is currently owned/raced by Champion Air Group.

As a designer at SIG Manufacturing Company, Inc., I engineered for production six kits, which were the Mustang 450 Pylon/Formula One Racer, the KIWI, a Sport/Pattern, the Bonanza, Cessna 150, Cessna 172 all Sport Scale and the P-51 Mustang, also Sport Scale. I moved back to Davenport, Iowa in 1983 being called back to the Rock Island Arsenal, retired from R.I.A. on July 8, 1995.

During the 1970s to 2002, our local Radio Control club has grown to over 120 AMA members and two AMA approved flying sites. I did the engineering for both sites at the Scott County Park, Iowa. The model airplane hobby has been very rewarding, most of all my many friends all across this great country.

*(signed) Henry "Hank" Pohlmann  
June 1996; Updated August 2002*

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