



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of BUD ROMAK

Born July 27, 1928 Started modeling in 1938
AMA #27032



Written & Submitted by JC and BR (12/1999, 2002); Transcribed & Edited by SS (08/2002), Updated by JS (10/2008), Reformatted by JS (01/2010)

Career:

- 1941-1942: Set two world records in the Rise-Off-Water category
- 1959: First place at the Nationals in Class C gas
- 1966: First held a position on an indoor team
- 1976: Indoor World Champion at Cardington, England
- 1987: First place at the World Cup contest
- 1997: Society of Antique Modelers Power Champion
- Has sent care packages of balsa and other indoor modeling materials to Hungarian and Romanian indoor teams since 1966 when he first realized their lack of access to such supplies
- Participated as a team member in the Indoor World Championship contests in 1966, 1972, 1976 and 1984; participated as a team manager in 1968, 1982, 1986, 1992, 1994, 1996 and 1998

Honors:

- 1990: National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame
- 1993: Model Aviation Hall of Fame
- 2000: Society of Antique Modelers Hall of Fame

The following profile of Bud ran in the SAM 27 Antique Flyer, Summer 2002, Issue 228. Bud submitted it as his biography in September 2002. John Carlson wrote the article.

Bud Romak enjoys life, which accounts for the seemingly perpetual smile on his face. A major source of his enjoyment is the building and flying of model airplanes. Modeling came naturally and he is good at it. Bud's passion is Free Flight, which he and many others consider the purest form of modeling. The challenge of building and trimming a model to satisfactorily fly freely in a desired manner is what motivates these free fliers. Bud said he tried Radio Control, but it did not "turn him on." (Wait until the legs give out!)

Bud was born in Oakland, California, in 1928. When Bud was about 10, his Uncle Eli, who was active with the Junior Birdmen and an excellent builder, got him started in the hobby and taught him how to build models. It was at the start of junior high school that Bud began to build hand-launched gliders, rubber models, and gas jobs. His idols at that time were Carl Goldberg, fellow SAM 27-er Stu Bennett, Manny Andrade, Don Foote and many of the Oakland Cloud Dusters (OCD).

Bud remembers how he was always looking in from the outside and admiring the models and fliers of the OCD. He could not join the club at that time because of the high qualifications they

required. Finally, in 1958, 18 years later, they accepted Bud's five bucks and he became a proud member.

After high school, Bud went into the Army and served three years with the 82nd Airborne. Upon completion of his service, he attended Heald College and earned a degree in civil engineering. About this time, he married his boyhood sweetheart, Patricia, and subsequently produced four sons and six grandchildren. Bud and Pat recently celebrated their 52nd anniversary.

Bud worked in the U.S. Steel Engineering Department for a year after finishing school, but at his father's urging, joined the family business, the Romak Iron Works in Oakland, later relocated to Benicia. After many years with the Iron Works, industry advancements required that many of the operations be computerized. Bud was not interested in computers, so decided to retire, sell his share in the business to his sons, and concentrate on modeling.

In 1961, Bud started serious indoor competition with Joe Bilgri as a mentor. In 1966, he was on the U.S. indoor team with Joe Bilgri and Frank Cumming, competing at the World Championships in Hungary. After the World Championships ended, he gave his models and model boxes to the Hungarian and Romanian teams and still sends them care packages of balsa and indoor supplies.

He was Indoor World Champion in 1976, U.S. F1D team member in 1966, 1972, 1976, and 1984. He served as team manager eight times between 1968 and 2000. The 1998 championships were held at the famous underground Romanian salt mines in Slanic. Bud wrote a fascinating article about them that appeared in the June 1999 issue of AMA's Model Aviation magazine.

Other noteworthy accomplishments include 1941 world record holder in Rise-off-Water (ROW) rubber C fuselage, 1942 ROW class C gas (Foot Westerner, Bud's favorite model) and 1997 SAM Champs Free Flight Power Champion. In recognition of his many accomplishments, Bud has been elected to the SAM, National Free Flight Society (NFFS), and Model Aviation Halls of Fame.

Club memberships include SAM (SAM Chapter 27, per Bud: "The best SAM chapter"), OCD, Southern California Ignition Flyers (SCIF), Southern California Aircraft Modelers and Pilot Society (SCAMPS), Detroit Balsa Bugs, NFFS and the AMA.

Bud's other diversions include sports car racing for a number of years and full-scale flying, earning his private pilot's license in a J4 Cub followed by time in a Cessna; however, these always took a back seat to building and flying models.

Bud is possibly the most prolific model builder of all time. In his 50 plus years in the hobby, his total output is in the high hundreds. Currently he builds from 30 to 40 models a year. Hardly a day goes by when he does not have a model in progress and is thinking about the next one. On trips to Muncie, Indiana, to compete in the AMA Nationals, he and Bill Vanderbeek take turns driving the motor home and building models on the way; each has a goal of having two ready for covering by arrival time.

What happens to old models? “They crash, get lost, are given away, tossed or burned,” Bud said.

When asked if he had any words of wisdom for others, Bud’s reply was, “Do what comes naturally and what you enjoy. Persevere and the reward is yours.”

SAM 27 is fortunate to have such a distinguished modeler as a member.

Bud highlighted the following personal achievements:

- World’s record in 1941 – Rise-off-Water (ROW) rubber C fuselage
- World’s record in 1942 – ROW class C gas (Foote’s Westerner)
- First place at the 1959 Nationals (Nats) – Class C gas
- FID 1976 World Champion – Cardington, England
- First place at 1987 World Cup Contest – 14-Rounder, Taft Wakefield
- First place four times – Taft, Free Flight Champs, Unlimited Rubber
- 1997 SAM Power Champion
- Flying with and helping fellow modelers
- Receiving the NFFS Hall of Fame Award
- Receiving the Model Aviation Hall of Fame Award

He now devotes the entire time to building and flying SAM Old-Timer models. Such fun and enjoyment!

(signed) Bud Romak
December 13, 1999
(Updated September 2002)

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