



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of KEVIN SHERMAN

Born July 3, 1965

Started modeling around 1970

AMA #42217



Written & Submitted by KS (02/2006); Edited and Formatted by JS (03/2006), Reformatted by JS (01/2010)

The following is an autobiography by Kevin Sherman, submitted January of 2006.

My first recollection of airplanes was the full-scale airplanes at our local airport in Corona, California. Each Sunday, while my older twin brother and sister accompanied my mother to church, my dad (Gary Sherman) and I went to the airport to watch flying. This ritual started when I was about 2 years old. Airplanes instantly fascinated me and I can remember demanding that we go every week.

My dad also introduced me to modeling. He tried to model as a child in the 1940-50's, but had no one to help him. He tried on his own to build his first model at age nine, when he received an airplane kit for his birthday. He attempted many others, but was never able to finish any of them and gave up. After many years passed, he started his own family and decided to give modeling another try. He and my older brother, Don, built a towline glider when I was four. That was the first time I saw a model airplane. I thought it was the greatest thing I had ever seen. We took it to a school and it actually flew. I knew I had to have one and that experience turned into a lifetime passion for me.

My first attempt at a model was at five years old. I built a small rubber model, but do not remember what it was. It was probably some type of commercial rubber ship as it was a small cabin type with wheels. Two things about that [airplane] really stand out: 1) its covering was blue and black checkerboard tissue, and 2) it flew.

My dad, brother, and I flew Free Flight during the 1970s. We had very limited success in those days because we had such a limited understanding of trimming Free Flight. We spent many weekends at Elsinore, California flying a few but crashing more. Looking back, part of the problem was the models we were selecting. They were way too advanced for us to be attempting. At age 7, I built a Starduster 350 and crashed it. I built an Orbiteer and crashed it. Maybe I was not cut out for this Free Flight thing after all. During the 1980s, my Dad traveled a lot for work and I switched my interest to Radio Control.

A friend from school, Pat Schreffler, flew Radio Control and I started flying with him. At first, I flew a few basic power models. Then I was swept up by interest in Thermal Duration sailplanes. By the time I was 14, I joined a local club called the Inland Soaring Society. We had monthly contests, and within a year, I regularly placed in the top three. When I was 15, I won the club championship in the Open division and at 16 won the club championship in the Expert division. I flew a modified Sailaire, a 150-inch wingspan sailplane. That year, our club also had a team competing in the "SC-Squared" contests, a series of competitions in which all of the Southern

California clubs participated. Our club competed in it before but never did well. This year, three of us flew the vaunted Sailaire and were a serious threat. We won the club championship. A fellow club member won the individual title. Our four team members all placed in the top ten. We were competing against the very best, including Larry Jolly. After CD-ing [directing] a club contest that left a bad taste in my mouth, I quit Radio Control sailplanes and flying all together for many years.

During my days in college, I decided to get back into modeling. After what had been an eight-year lay-off, I went out with my old Sailaire and won a local contest. That was my last Radio Control contest. I also bought and built a Byron F-15 ducted fan and several other Radio Control power planes that I flew just for fun, including a pattern airplane and a couple of pylon racers.

A little later, my dad began to build Free Flight again. I told him if he would finish and fly the Korda Wakefield he was building, then I would build a Free Flight model, too. I graduated and worked at that time as an editor of a hobby publication called Autograph Collector. My extra time was limited and the position was stressful. After five years at the magazine, I fell ill with Crohn's disease and had to quit my job at Autograph Collector. I was sick for months, unable to leave the house. I had been sick with this before, but this time I never really was able to get rid of the symptoms. During this time, my dad finished the Korda. With the help of his fellow SCAMPS (Southern California Antique Model Plane Society) club member, Hal Cover, he took it out and flew it at Lucerne Dry Lake in California. It flew great. This really opened the door to the most fun I have had in all the modeling I have done. Honoring my word, I built a Flying Cloud rubber model and flew it, too. Initially, I was unable to fly much because of my illness. That changed more as my symptoms became more predictable and I learned more about my disease.

Soon, I joined my dad's club, the SCAMPS. We both started attending regular (me, as my health would permit) flying sessions in Perris, California with a group of SCAMPS led by my personal flying hero, Sal Taibi. Sal was a larger than life figure to me, and I was honored just to meet him. Now I am blessed to call him a good friend. With help from Sal and all the Perris regulars, it did not take long before I started to get a grasp on this Free Flight thing. I flew everything from old-timer Free Flight to modern. I flew the modern stuff to hone my skills, and applied them to my real interest, old-timer. There was something quite challenging about getting the most out of old technology, and that peaked my interest. Sal was always there to lend a hand, and within a year, I was to the point where I could enter contests. I thought I would not compete in Free Flight after my negative experience in Radio Control gliders, but this was a different animal and these were my kind of guys. The cutthroat, win at any cost attitude I experienced in Thermal Duration was nobody's agenda in the old-timer Free Flight contests. Here, guys helped each other, and the camaraderie was second to none. I enjoyed the social aspect as much as the flying and competing. I made many good friends because of model flying.

I competed in my first Free Flight contest in 1995. By 1997, I was a contender for wins and really enjoyed it. My first real good contest was at Lucerne Dry Lake. Between my dad and I, we won six of the seven events. We had arrived. More than winning, it was just neat to see my models

flying well.

Really, that is what drives me. I compete against myself and my standards. I am always trying to eek out the potential of each model and am rarely satisfied. That is the challenge that keeps my interest. Free Flight is one of those things that we can never master.

In 1997, I competed in my first Society of Antique Modelers Championships (SAM Champs) at Henderson, Nevada. My dad and I flew an eclectic selection of events, not really focusing on anything. I did well in Large Rubber Stick, made the three five-minute maxes for the fly-off, made the 6-minute and finally dropped the 7-minute attempt. I got second to Carl Redlin, an outstanding flyer. I figured I did well considering there were about fifty contestants flying the event.

In 2001, I really worked hard to get ready for the SAM Champs, which were again held in Henderson, Nevada. I built models to enter all the events to compete for the SAM (Free Flight) Power Championship. There were so many great flyers, but I figured the greatest competition would come from perennial winner, Larry Davidson, who won the Championships many times over. He won the AMA Championship and the Nostalgia Championship, too. He is *good*. I had my models trimmed out well, and felt I was as prepared as I could possibly be. After flying the eight Championship events in four days of competition, I won the Championship by one point over Larry Davidson. On the way to the win, I took first place with my Goldberg Sailplane, powered with a McCoy 60, in C Pylon. I also placed first with my Goldberg Clipper, powered with a Super Cyclone, in the 30-Second Antique event. I placed well in several other events.

I flew in the SAM Champs over the next few years at the AMA headquarters in Muncie and in Oklahoma. I flew in several rubber and power events, winning some and placing well in many others. When I knew [the SAM Champs] were going to be in Henderson, Nevada in 2005, I again geared up to make a run at the Power Championship. I was ready, but when the competition was to start on Monday, I was ill with my Crohn's disease. There was no way I would be able to fly. Luckily, for me, the weather was a blow out and postponed the events for that day. On Tuesday, I was able to make it to the field, and despite being sick all week, was able to compete for the rest of contest. Would you believe it? After all the events were flown, I again narrowly beat my good friend Larry Davidson by one point. To have my name mentioned in the same sentence with Larry was an honor, and here I was toe to toe with him in a big contest. He won the Championship a couple of times in the years between my wins in 2001 and 2005, and I am sure he has the most Championships of anyone in SAM. Before he started his assault on the Free Flight record books, he tallied three Championships in Radio Control SAM events. My SAM Championships in 2001 and 2005 are the highlights of my competition modeling, at least so far!

I am now working on preparing to compete for the Rubber Championship in SAM for 2007 when it will again be out here on the west coast. I cannot wait.

I have become quite involved with my club, the SCAMPS. I am the Vice President and have been the newsletter editor since April 2003. We have a neat club with over 100 members, the

largest old-timer club in existence. I started a contest with my fellow club member Hal Wightman to honor our most prestigious member, Sal Taibi, and will soon be hosting our 2nd Annual Taibi Contest at our Perris, California field.

I developed my skills at home as a machinist. We have a machine shop set up. With help of my friend Walt Huhn (current owner of Super Cyclone Engines), I learned a lot. As of now, I have machined about forty-five engines and repaired and reworked about five hundred [engines] for my fellow fliers and me.

I have been lucky. I get to share my favorite hobby and past time with my dad. In fact, I have been able to share it with my entire family, as they have been there in support at both SAM Champs I won. I am a blessed person, with so many friends and such a wonderful family. I owe so much to our wonderful hobby.

Personal Accomplishments:

1988 - Licensed pilot, private pilot

1989 – SCCA (Sports Car Club of America) racing license; raced a sports car

1989 – Joined business fraternity Alpha Kappa

1990 - Graduated from CSUSB (California State University, San Bernardino) with a BA in Business/Marketing

1990 - California General Contractor's license

2001 – Won SAM (Society of Antique Modelers) Power Championship

2003 – Won Concourse De Elegance at SAM Champs

2005 – Won SAM Power Championship

You can find digital photographs of Kevin Sherman's models at <http://www.81x.com/ffkevin/OurModels>



2005: My dad and I with our Chet Lanzo Bombers at SAM Champs in Henderson, Nevada.



2005: [left to right] Don, Kevin, Gary and Kay Sherman at SAM Champs. I am holding a Goldberg Sailplane, my Dad is holding an Alert.



A couple of my Radio Control Models, a Byron F-16 and F-15. The F-16 had a Rossi 1.05. The F-15 had two OS 91s.



The Goldberg Zipper I used to win the Concourse De Elegance. I also won the Grand Champion with this. A McCoy 29 powered it.



A McCoy 60 I machined and converted to ignition.

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

