



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of EDWARD E. SHIPE

August 5, 1926 to November 10, 1996
Started modeling in 1936 AMA #7328



Written & Submitted by ES (06/1996); Transcribed by NR (03/1997); Edited by SS (2002), Reformatted by JS (01/2010)

Career:

- 1954: became a Contest Director for AMA
 - Set up the Bay Area Speed Flyers as a WAM club
 - Set up and started NMPRA Newsletter
 - Set a Rocket Free Flight record at the 1959 Nationals (Nats)
 - NMPRA Newsletter Editor
 - NMPRA President
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Background

Born in 1926, in Salina, Kansas. Started building models at about 10-years-old – the usual Megow and Comet models sold at the dime stores for a dime. Got my first engine in 1939. I think it was a Baby Brownie. I know it cost \$7.50 and it took all summer for me to earn enough money to pay for it

Entered my first out of town contest in Kansas the summer of 1942. Flew a Playboy Senior and my own design speed job, both powered by the same Ohlsson 60. My first flight on Saturday with the Playboy was a good one – somewhere over 10 minutes (unlimited flights in those days). The only problem was that it came down in a cornfield. Didn't find it until just before dark but was able to get the engine switched to the speed job. Got second place behind Johnny Casburn on Sunday. John was flying a Cyclone powered Buzz that he manufactured and passed down the first place to me – said he was a professional.

Moved to California in 1953. At that time you had to belong to a Western Associated Modelers' (WAM) club if you wanted to fly Control Line. Free Flight was AMA, so I joined the Oakland Cloud Dusters, considered one of the best clubs in the country. They also were a WAM club so it covered both categories. Glen Spickler was also a member of the Cloud at that time. Set up the Bay Area Speed Flyers as a WAM club.

This was a non-meeting, no dues club made up of speed flyers that didn't see the need of club meetings. The only thing you had to do was pay the WAM dues to be a member. The speed Flyers of Southern California and Arizona would call me if they were planning to participate in a WAM contest and I would put them on our WAM. Needless to say we were the WAM Club Speed Champions for several years in a row.

Starting in 1954, I became a contest director for AMA. I usually ran several contests for the

Oakland Cloud Dusters, a couple of Outdoor Free Flight Contests, at least 1 indoor Free Flight and a few record trials. I would direct a Control Line contest for the Newark Modelers and run a couple of AMA Speed Record Trials. In 1957, I was made an administrative leader on AMA. In 1956, in addition to the usual lineup of contests, I ran the Western Indoor Championships. Guess they figured that by this time I knew a little about rules and how to run contest. Oh yes, Claude McCullough signed the certificate.

I considered myself an above average Control Line speed flyer; however, the only trophy won at the Nats was a fifth in Half-A Speed. I was on the Club Championship Team at the 1958 Nats at Glenview. I scored over 90 points in the three speed events I flew and made points in five Free Flight events. I also set a Rocket Free Flight at the 1959 Nats – I think it stood for four or five years before someone finally beat it. I did participate in all but the Texas Nats between 1957 and 1964 and occasional got in the top 10. It wasn't unusual for me to trophy in Western Regionals and it was unusual for me not to trophy at local meets.

NMPRA

In 1965, I was sort of burned out on speed; I had worked pretty hard in 1964 to make the USA Speed Team – missed by about a half mile an hour resulting in sixth place and only three made the team. I made the mistake of buying Radio Controlled (RC) equipment as a change of pace. This led to meeting of Jerry Nelson and getting involved in starting Goodyear Pylon Racing. Jerry, Joe Martin, and Bud Crane were trying to get the event started and Jerry seemed to have connections all over the country. I didn't know anything about RC, but I did know engines, how to run contests and how to write rules so that they can be enforced. I learned how to look for loopholes from the Oakland Cloud Dusters and guys like Frank Ehling. I tried to get the maximum engine set at .35, the combat size, but Jerry wanted to make it .40 because of the Fox. His reasoning was that the Fox wasn't any more powerful than the racing .29's I told him there would be racing .40's on the market in two years. My main contribution during this period was cleaning up the rules by getting rid of the shoulds, abouts, and ought-a-bes. By the time we got to the organizational meeting in the fall, we pretty well had things cleaned up. I don't know how it happened, but somehow I wound up as vice president.

I figured that a vice president ought to do something besides have a title, so I got permission to write and distribute a newsletter. This started out simply as ANMPRA Newsletter with two pages typed at 12cpi. By 1967, it had gotten to six pages and Sam Crawford had made up a formal Masthead with the name changed to "NMPRA News Release." The reason for this was so that publications could include any comments in their columns. Bill Northrop was then editor of the Radio Control News section of Model Airplane News and would occasionally tap into the contents for copy. In 1968, I would occasionally supply information that he could use. In the August 1968 issue, he printed a short item by me about safety.

We were having a pretty good battle with Doc Brooks, Maynard Hill and others on slowing down Goodyear because it was dangerous. A summary of the piece was – follow the rules and you have a safe event. Don't follow the rules and someone is going to get hurt. Bill used "Goodyear

Report” as the title for these special reports and later used “RC Pylon Patter” for longer articles. The May 1969 issue started “Pylon Pit Patter” as a regular column and my name was added to the list of contributing editors. The column was turned over to Cliff Weirick after the June 1971 issue.

I guess that my high profile position as NMPRA newsletter editor, NMPRA president, Nationals executive committee member and Model Airplane News columnist as well as having the support of the NMPRA members and officers made it possible for me to be highly influential in the growth on NMPRA and Pylon Racing. I am proud that I was there at the time it was all getting started.

Ed Shipe

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