



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of CLAIR SIEVERLING

Born February 19, 1934

Started modeling in 1943

AMA #15654



Written & Submitted by CS (08/2005); Transcribed & Edited by JS (08/2005), Reformatted by JS (02/2010)

Career:

- Built first model airplane in about 1943
- Bought first ignition engine in 1947
- Flew in first contest in 1948
- Designed first U/C models in 1948-1949
- After-duty job teaching model building while serving with the U.S. Army in Japan, 1955-1956. Flew in contests while stationed in Japan.
- While attending college at the University of Arizona, and later, designed and published a number of U/Control designs and articles, 1957-1965
- Forty or more wins in U/C Stunt and Navy Carrier competitions, 1957-1964
- Placed 5th in U/C Stunt, 1960 Nationals at Dallas NAS
- Placed 4th in U/C Stunt, 1963 Nationals at Los Alamitos NAS
- Club President, Tucson Cholla Choppers, 1958-1959
- Incorporator, Founding Director, and Treasurer of Arizona Model Pilots Society, Inc., a.k.a. AMPS
- Chairman of finance committee to raise funds to install asphalt runway for AMPS
- Editor of the *Prop Nut*, monthly newsletter of the AMPS, 1984-1987
- Radio Control modeler 1976 to present (2005)
- Radio Control pattern, 33 wins from Novice to Masters Class, 1981-1992
- Licensed CPA until retirement in 1990, and served as Treasurer, Board Member, President, and CEO of various manufacturing corporations.
- Selected to test the K&B 1.5 side exhaust glow engine for the factory.

The above and following information was written by Clair Sieverling, submitted July 2005.

“I was born and raised on a wheat farm in western Kansas. By the early 1940s, every boy was very aware of WWII and all of the various fighter airplanes of the times. I built a Walt Wittman kit of the Japanese Zero, using my dad’s used razor blades to cut the small parts out. I didn’t know the wings were to be built over the plans so I ended up with a “stretched-wing” Zero, but it had a great glide ratio! I recall trying to build a P-38 from a Joe Ott kit with flimsy card stock formers and splintering pine strips. Then things got worse and kits of any type became unavailable due to the war.

Following the war, model aviation boomed, mainly in U-Control. With some financial help from an older brother, I bought a K&B 29 (on ignition, of course), and promptly tore it up trying to fly a heavy “trainer.” While it was at the factory for repair, I bought a K&B 24 and repeated the process. I gave up the trainer and put the repaired 29 in a Goldberg “Zing,” a sleek little airplane

known to be too fast for raw beginners. But I cranked it up out in the cow pasture and soloed. A second flight was cut short by immediate attention from our bull, who did not appreciate the noise at all. I scooted under the barbed-wire fence, pulling the airplane behind me. The bull's intense dislike for the airplane was matched by my feelings about him, but Dad refused to select him for the annual steer butchering for meat.

In the seventh grade, we moved into town and flying sites were much better without any livestock intervention. Glow engines were becoming very workable and I designed my own aerobatic airplane, the "Hot Dawg," followed by another simple sport design. Thinking back, both of these were probably publishable had I been more competent in mechanical drawing, photography, and writing.

High school, with cars, sports, girls, and a part-time job, shut the modeling down. I became enamored with a fellow classmate, Ruth, whom I had met in the first grade but had gotten much more beautiful as a high school junior. I went with that girl for three years and then married her as soon as I finished basic training, and 51 years later, we are still together.

The U.S. Army decided they needed a boy about my size in Japan, so my feet first touched soil there on New Year's Day, 1955. I soon found that the small base (which was on a WWII Japanese Zero fighter base about fifty miles north of Tokyo) had a post craft shop with a small store stocking model airplane engines and supplies, as well as a complete darkroom. I took up photography and started model building once again. Eventually, I was hired to an after-duty job teaching model building and photography, which paid more than my pay as an infantryman! I soon had a number of soldiers building and learning to fly U/C, and two of us went to various military contests on various bases on the main island. As I recall I won some and sure got out of carrying that M-1 rifle around so much!

When I finished my three years service, Ruth and I moved to Tucson for her health and I enrolled in the University of Arizona. I soon found that one can't study all the time, so I bought a Ringmaster and Fox 29 and soon met a lot of local fliers at the excellent city park we were allowed to use. Since funds were scarce for a college student on the GI Bill, I started designing my own airplanes, which I could do cheaper than buying a kit. The El Conquistador was a local hit and a number of them were built by the locals, so I decided to submit it for publication and, much to my surprise, it was accepted and published. Thus started a period of design and publication, which helped pay for my college tuition. U/Control designs and articles published are as follows:

El Conquistador	Design, <i>American Modeler</i> , March 1958
Crusader	Design, <i>Flying Models</i> , October 1959 issue
"Want to Fly Stunt?"	Article, <i>Model Airplane News</i> , November 1960
Sun Devil	Design, <i>Flying Models</i> , April-May 1961
Phoenician	Design, <i>Model Airplane News</i> , November 1961 (I flew the Phoenician to fifth place in the 1960 Nationals and I still get letters from modelers who are building and flying one)
Douglas A-26	Design, <i>Model Airplane News</i> , July 1962
"Objective Stunt Judging"	Article, <i>Model Airplane News</i> , March 1964

Martin Mauler	Design, Carrier model, <i>Model Airplane News</i> , April 1964
Reader's response to Stunt Judging article	Letter, <i>Model Airplane News</i> , Oct 1964, p. 46
Mustang Stunter	Design, <i>Model Airplane News</i> , February 1965

Dick Kidd of RCM magazine asked to be put on the mailing list of the AMPS *Prop Nut* when I was editor, and published several selections from the newsletter, such as "The History of Balsa Wood and Model Aviation" in the "From the Shop" section of the March 1986 issue. Model Aviation also printed humorous items or poems, but I have not saved the issues and do not know the exact dates or what the items were.

I was invited to attend the 1960 Nats in Dallas with some of my U/C friends from Tucson, so I took the Phoenician along "just to see what a Nats is all about." I was amazed to find that I placed fifth in a very close event...according to my faded old notes, Jim Silhavy won with 417.3 points, Bill Davis was second with 410.1, and third, fourth, and my fifth all had 401 with only decimal points separating us...two tied with 401.3 and I had 401.1. If only I had even waxed the finish a little bit I might have moved up!

I went to the 1963 Nats a little smarter, but bad luck lost my Mustang Stunter, so I flew a Gialdini Olympic to fourth place. I was gratified and humbled to win over such notables as Riley Wooten and Bob Palmer, great competitors both.

After leaving the hobby for about fourteen years due to career pressures, etc, I happened onto an old friend flying Radio Control out in the desert and was amazed at the proportional radios that had been developed since I was in the hobby. I was hooked on Radio Control and built a Cox-powered glider to learn on. Four years later, I broke my promise to myself and entered a pattern contest "just to see if I can do it." Hooked again, I worked my way through the classes from Novice to Masters and count some thirty-three pattern trophies on my shop wall. I hung up my spurs when the event went to the turnaround style and currently fly aerobatic semi-scale planes and WWII war birds.

While flying pattern, I coached some eight or ten fellow members who were interested in the event, and a number of them developed into contest winners with wins in Advanced Class.

I was involved in obtaining a use permit for an Radio Control site in a county flood plain and as a CPA was involved in incorporating the club, qualifying it as a non-profit corporation with the IRS, and served as a director and treasurer for the initial years. After two years, the County requested a formal petition from us to back up our request for a long-term permit so that we would feel secure in asphaltting the runway. I prepared the petition and we were given a ten-year use permit. I then served as the finance chair to develop and sell to the members the plan to raise the funds for a 600 x 75 foot runway of asphalt, which was done in October of 1985. Our field has been recognized in the national modeling press as one of the finest Radio Control fields in the country. Our club has grown from the initial 43 modelers who met in the desert in June of 1983 to a membership that averages 250-300 annually.

I was honored to be used by K&B Manufacturing to test a prototype of their new 1.5 side exhaust glow engine, one of two in the country. The company was sold before it ever went into production.

I have been blessed with a very accepting wife, and modeling has been a big part of my life. I learned many things in modeling that were of help in my career in dealing with manufacturing-type people. I appreciate the AMA and I am honored to be able to share some of the modeling events of my life with its members.

Clair Sieverling [signed]
AMA 15654



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