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# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of RICH URAVITCH



Written by AMA Staff (Summer 2009); Reformatted by JS (08/2010)

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## **Park Pilot Interviews Rich Uravitch, Acclaimed designer of models and many full-scale aircraft**

Rich Uravitch is an accomplished aircraft engineer and a model airplane designer who has made miracles happen in several aspects of aviation. His experience with full-size aircraft manufacturer Fairchild Republic can be seen in military aircraft, including the *A-10 Thunderbolt II*, affectionately called the *Warthog*, and the *T-46 NGT (Next Generation Trainer)*, which met the impossible requirements of the U.S. military, as well as the harsh demands of combat and training environments.

Rich's somewhat less stressful modeling career encompasses a broad range of aviation subjects, from small electric models to the giant scale, world class models he has flown at the Top Gun Invitational scale competition in Florida. At the [www.richuravitch.com](http://www.richuravitch.com) Web site, viewers can enjoy a wealth of modeling topics that this multitalented modeler and aircraft designer has tackled.

When you're ready to try your hand at building a model from the ground up, you would do well to consider one of the Rich Uravitch projects from his affiliate site, [www.hobbyhangar.com](http://www.hobbyhangar.com). A correctly built Hobby Hangar model will look as close as functionally possible to the real thing, and fly like a gem because it's been designed by a miracle worker.

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**Park Pilot:** Hey Rich, we're honored to have you here for a visit. It always intrigues us to speak with you about the diversity of aircraft subjects you explore. Can you tell us about your favorite projects?

**Rich Uravitch:** Thanks, Mike. It's a pleasure being here. It's difficult to nail down a favorite, but the challenging models are a bit easier to call up. I recently completed a large, electric-powered scale model, a 9-foot, 53-pound *OV-10 Bronco*. It's clearly not a park flyer unless your park is Kennedy International Airport, but it flies very easily and I really enjoy it. The huge advances in motors, batteries, and ESCs make projects like this achievable.

**Park Pilot:** Most of your models are scale subjects, although not all of them are heavy-metal Warbirds. What kind of civilian models have you enjoyed building and designing?

**Rich Uravitch:** I've done a number of civilian models, including a Van's *RV-7*, a *DR-107 One Design, Midget Mustang*, and three *Cessnas*. The trio was an *L-19 Bird Dog*, a *195*, and *Sky*

King's legendary *310 Songbird*. I like them all for different reasons, but the Songbird almost always accompanies me to the flying field. It's a fun flying, electric twin that I designed for small field operation.

**Park Pilot:** We know that you were a military aviator. What's it like flying the real thing compared to the same design in an RC model? Have you built many models of the actual aircraft you've flown?

**Rich Uravitch:** I've never really been able to make a direct connection between the two activities. Outside of understanding what results different control input will produce, and general flight dynamics, I've never found the full-scale flying experience to have much of an impact or influence on model flying. We all probably know commercial pilots or military aviators with bazillions of flying hours who still have difficulty getting their RC models up and down successfully. The one airplane that does come to mind is the *T-6 Texan*. I built four of them from the Zirolì design, and competed with them at the U.S. Scale Masters and Top Fun. Why four? I guess I wasn't very good at landing the model.

**Park Pilot:** Scale modeling is as much a travel through time as it is about really cool aircraft. Do you have any tips for park pilots who might be new to scale models?

**Rich Uravitch:** A lot of the newcomers to RC arrive by way of the park flyer-class model. The providers of product into this segment of RC have made a huge selection of models available, some outstanding, some not so good. Be careful in your selection, especially if it involves scale-type models, which are generally a bit more difficult to fly than non-scale trainers. There are some great looking, molded-foam ARF models out there today, and they represent a quick and easy way to get into RC flying. If you find yourself being bitten by the bug, take it to the next level; try building your model from a kit where you actually assemble, paint and finish your creation, then go out and fly it. Building represents an equally enjoyable and rewarding segment of the hobby, and it's worth exploring.

**Park Pilot:** There are so many details to consider on a scale model, from rivets and brake hoses to the seat belts and instrument panel. What are the most important details that help scale builders pull off an impressive replica?

**Rich Uravitch:** In my view, it isn't a singular area or component that puts a scale model over the top, but a combination of elements. When combined successfully, they bring the model out of the model category and into the miniature replica class. All of the details you mention are easily accomplished; all it takes is some imagination, a reference source, and a supply of material. When glue dots look like button head rivets, electrical wire like brake lines and shoe laces like seat belts, you're on your way to becoming a scale builder.

**Park Pilot:** We know that the Top Gun Invitational is a very prestigious scale modeling event. Can you tell us more about it, and what it means to be honored there?

**Rich Uravitch:** Top Gun was started by my friend of many years, Frank Tiano. The event recently celebrated its 21<sup>st</sup> year in existence. Over the years, its format has been revised to accommodate the ever-changing face of scale RC modeling, but at its core, the original charter

remains. You don't get there by qualifying at a regional event; you get there by peer recognition, demonstrated performance, and ultimately, invitation. It is a hotly contested competition with mere fractions of points separating competitors. Winning or even placing at Top Gun represents a commitment to aeromodeling no different from other serious pursuits. It requires multiple skills in building and flying, and the perseverance to see a project through to completion despite many potential setbacks. The rewards? Just ask David Hayes who repeated his 2008 win by becoming Mr. Top Gun 2009.

**Park Pilot:** Besides the [www.richuravitch.com](http://www.richuravitch.com) Web site, where else can our readers see your work?

**Rich Uravitch:** Some of my designs are kitted by Hobby Hangar, others have been produced in kit form by House of Balsa, Lanier R/C, and others in the industry. I occasionally have a new design published as a construction article in some of the RC magazines. These articles usually take the modeler through the entire process, from preparing the parts to assembly, finishing, and flying. I enjoy designing in CAD, and it really doesn't take much more than a three-view drawing to whet my appetite. That's why I have more projects started than completed. I'm not complaining though; I love the challenge.

**Park Pilot:** Do you have a favorite size model or model subject?

**Rich Uravitch:** Not really. I used to focus on .25-size models, and did an *AT-6* and *P-51* that eventually became House of Balsa kits. I stayed with that size of model and did the *OV-10 Bronco*, *BN Defender 4000*, and Grumman *Skyrocket* to give twins a try. My monster *Bronco* is the largest model I've done so far. EDF models have recaptured my interest in jets. I've done an *S-3 Viking* and have a *Su-25* and *D.H. Vampire* in the works.

**Park Pilot:** Thank you so much for giving us your insight into the fun yet complex world of scale modeling, and thank you for the many contributions you've made to that end. It's been great speaking with you.

**Rich Uravitch:** You're very welcome. It is encouraging to see so many young people picking up on the exciting world of RC. It would be even greater to see some of them get more involved in the modeling end of the hobby, bridging the gap between modeler and flier. Thanks again.

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