



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of DAVE VILLWOCK



Written by JS (05/2012); Reformatted by JS (05/2012, 09/2015)

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*The following biography was written by Jay Smith, MA Editor, in the May 2012 issue of Model Aviation magazine, page 172.*

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## **I Am the AMA Dave Villwock** Unlimited Hydroplane boat racer

*JS: How did you get involved with model aviation?*

**DV:** Model aviation taught me patience, discipline, and that I needed to earn money to pay for my toys. It also taught me how having very intelligent people around you is always a good thing.

One of my mentors once told me “you don’t have to be the smartest guy in the world, but it helps to have his or her number.” I remember reading articles about the Space Shuttle Model Lifting Body Program in the third grade, some really smart guys telling us about it in a way that we could understand.

I don’t know how many times these articles helped me overcome problems in the wind tunnel designing Unlimited Hydroplanes. It was model airplanes that got me involved in professional racing through Mr. Bill Bennett and Circus Circus, Inc.

*JS: What disciplines of modeling do you currently participate in?*

**DV:** I fly Scale, IMAC [International Miniature Aerobatic Club], and Pattern events

*JS: What are your other hobbies?*

**DV:** I enjoy skiing, golfing, recreational boating, and hiking.

*JS: Who (or what) has influenced you most?*

**DV:** My Uncle Al got me started in modeling and race boats. Bill Bennett was a great friend and mentor. Donny Weitz and Chip and Merle Hyde helped in models in many ways. I could not have been as successful in national competitions without them.

*JS: How did you get started racing Unlimited Hydros?*

**DV:** I received a call from Bill Bennett one evening asking me to get involved in Unlimited Hydroplane Racing. I told him thank you for the offer, but I said unlimited boat racing is an over

expected and underfunded endeavor. He said he understood my point, but then asked if I would do him one favor.

After about 30 seconds of silence, I figured out that I needed to say yes to whatever he wanted, so I met with Bill in his office one Saturday morning to discuss his proposition. I told him what I thought he should do. He then said he understood I was a modeler and asked me to come fly with him and a guy by the name of Donny Weitz who worked for him at his private airstrip at his ranch.

We flew some great models built by many-time TOC competitor, Donny Weitz, until late in the afternoon. When Mr. Bennett was leaving the ranch, he drove by in his car, rolled down the window, and said that he kind of liked me and hoped that I would reconsider working for him.

While riding in his private jet back to Seattle, I thought to myself that I would be a coward if I didn't work up a complete three-year budget to try and win him his first championship. So I called him the next day. He said "I have been trying to get someone to put a budget together for two years." He also said to include in the budget whatever I needed to work for him full time.

I took a couple of weeks to think about what it would take to get his team from one broken boat, one boat that was competitive, and a bunch of broken engines and gear boxes to winning a championship against the top teams like Miss Budweiser and Winston Eagle.

Two years later, we won the first championship for Miss Circus Circus in 1990.

I worked for Mr. Bennett in Las Vegas for a few more years before returning to racing Unlimited Hydroplanes.

*-Jay Smith  
MA Editor*

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