



# The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of OSCAR WEINGART

Born: October 22, 1933

Started modeling in 1941

AMA #3932



Written & Submitted by OW (11/2002), Updated by OW (12/2009); Transcribed & Edited by SS (11/2002), Reformatted and Updated by JS (01/2010)

## Career:

- Started building 10-cent model airplane kits as a young boy
- 1945: Flew Free Flight and early U-Control models by the time he was 12-years-old
- 1946: Joined the Brooklyn Sky-Scrapers Club at age 13
- Late 1940s-early 1950s: Began competing
- Flew in the first Navy Carrier event held in his area; placed second competing in junior
- 1952: Was very successful at the Long Island Plymouth dealers meet; won a trip to the Sixth Annual International Model Plane Contest held in Detroit, Michigan, where he won the Perpetual Trophy for Outstanding Sportsmanship
- Also competed in Rise-off-Water (ROW) events, starting his love for float-flying
- 1953: Designed and built a fiberglass reinforced plastic U-Control airplane
- 1958: Participated in the Southern Area Command Model Airplane Contest in Kaiserslautern, Germany
- September 1968: First published article appeared in *Flying Models* magazine; it was a construction article on his Grumman *Widgeon*
- 1969: Received Private Pilots License; later received Commercial Pilots License, Instrument, Multi-Engine, and Instructor ratings.
- His 1/7-scale Grumman *Widgeon* Radio Control amphibian (the first Radio Control Scale model of this aircraft) won first place in Flying Scale and second place in Seaplanes at the Northeast Hydro Radioplane Championships
- Recently placed in all three Schneider Cup races held by the Lake Elsinore, California club and one at Lake Shuswap in British Columbia
- A member of the winning team in several endurance events put on by the Corona, California club
- 2000: His new quarter-scale *Widgeon* won Pilot's Choice at the Lake Havasu float-fly event
- Developed a realistic machine gun for military scale models
- President of the Riverside RC Club for two years and vice president for three years; also writes a column for the club's monthly newsletter and serves as webmaster
- Secretary of Brooklyn Sky-Scrapers for a year
- Organizes his club's annual two day float-fly and has since it started in 1997
- His work has also appeared in *American Aircraft Modeler*, *Radio Control Modeler* and the *RC Online* magazine
- Developed a model airplane construction course for the adult education department of Riverside City College
- Has presented numerous lectures on float-flying
- Holds five U.S. Patents
- Has presented and/or published over 20 technical papers and articles in technical journals and at engineering society conferences

- 2006-2008: His *Ercoupe* placed in many events, article about *Ercoupe* on Floats published in April 2007 issue of *Model Aviation* magazine
  - Serves as volunteer docent at March Field Air Museum
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## The Beginning

When I was a young boy, in the late 1930s and early 1940s, we lived in Brooklyn, New York. My parents occasionally bought me a 10-cent model airplane kit. These kits, produced by Continental and others, were sold in neighborhood candy stores. They were simplified scale models of various World War I, World War II, and civilian airplanes that we would now call peanut scale. The kits included plans, tissue for covering, balsa sticks, and sheets, a balsa propeller, a nose bearing, a prop hook, a rubber band motor, wooden wheels, and even a vial of glue. My mother would give me her pincushion and some wax paper; my Dad would contribute some razor blades; and I was ready to roll! I realize now what a boon these kits were for my parents. They kept me out of trouble, occupied and quiet, for a week or more for a lousy 10 cents!

It was a long time before I actually completed one of those 10-cent kits, and they didn't fly very well. Perhaps if my Dad was a bit more interested or involved, they would have flown better, but what I really needed was a modeler as a mentor. I feel that these 10-cent kits, like the later Cox U-Control plastic models, probably turned off more potential modelers than they inspired. There were high spots, however. I once built a larger, 25-cent *P-40* that actually took off, flew around in a circle, and sort of landed. This was a thrill, but it was still not real modeling.

My breakthrough occurred when I started to go to a real hobby shop that was quite a walking distance away from my home. I splurged on an expensive (75-cent) kit for a contest-type rubber-powered model. I don't remember the manufacturer, but it was a flying model, not a scale model at all. It was much larger than the 10-cent models and had a polyhedral wing and a multi-strand rubber motor. Still without mentoring, I carefully followed the complete building, balancing, adjusting, and flying instructions on the plan. The first step in flying was to do a test glide. Per the instructions, I threw the plane gently, wings level and straight ahead. It glided all the way across the street! It seemed to hardly lose any altitude! It looked like it would never come down! That was it. I was hooked! This was the first time that I ever saw a real model really fly.

When World War II was over, I was 11 years old. Balsa for models and metals for engines started to become available, and the moribund model airplane industry started to take off. (Pardon the pun!) I got the infamous GHQ engine and the notorious Thor engine. The first really good engine I got was the Hurricane 29. I believe that it was made in Canada. I then got an Ohlsson 23 and a Bantam 19. It was a real education, learning to hook up the ignition systems and to start these primitive engines. I started to fly Free Flight and the early U-Control models. I realize now what an education these early modeling experiences were. At 12 years of age, I could read blueprints and understand basic aerodynamics, the theory and operation of simple internal combustion engines, basic meteorology, strength of materials and electric (and

soon electronic) circuits and theory. I could design and build a light, strong structure. Most importantly, I learned the patience and perseverance to carry out a relatively complex, long-term project to completion. I could work through the steps of design, consultation, and planning; acquisition of materials and construction; testing and modification, to reach successful operation and competition.

When I was about 13, we moved to a different neighborhood, and I met a bunch of older guys who really knew the ropes about model airplanes. These included Richard Rosenberg, Charley Yuster, Murray Feigenbaum, Stan Silverman, Eddy Mahler, and older returned war veterans like Norm Rosenstock and Phil Greenberg. All of us wound up in the Brooklyn Sky-Scrapers club. The Sky-Scrapers were a hot, competitive group of modelers of all ages and all the many ethnic groups to be found in Brooklyn. Notables like Sal Taibi, Leon Schulman, and Jerry Stoloff belonged to the Sky-Scrapers. This was heady stuff for a 13 year old, starry-eyed wannabe competition modeler!

## Competition

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, when I really started to compete, we were blessed with a plethora of model airplane contests. Every summer, the *New York Daily Mirror* newspaper sponsored a huge, annual two-day meet at the Grumman Aircraft field at Bethpage, Long Island. The Plymouth automobile dealers in each county sponsored local meets that were complete contests, but also resulted in the highest scorers being sent to the big Plymouth International Model Plane Contest in Detroit. Local clubs and even the U.S. Navy sponsored contests as well. In the summer, almost every weekend our gang would pile into the cars of the older guys like Norm Rosenstock and go to contests throughout the New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania areas. We would test fly after arriving on Saturday, check into a fleabag hotel, and then compete in the contest on Sunday. We had a great time and won many prizes. I joined AMA back then, over 50 years ago!

I flew in the first Navy Carrier event to be held in our area, at the Mirror meet, and took second place. I was still a junior, and the first place winner was a professional modeler. I designed and built a big Grumman *Bearcat*, with flaps and a tail hook, which came down when full up was applied to the elevators. I designed and installed a brass butterfly valve in the Super Cyclone 60's intake, which was operated by a big relay triggered by the electric U-Reely U-Control handle through insulated control lines. This early remote throttle control really worked!

In 1952, Eddy Mahler and I cleaned up at the local Long Island Plymouth dealers meet. We were both sponsored, all expenses paid, to the Sixth Annual International Model Plane Contest. (Eddy had a car and I shared the gas cost.) The Plymouth Motors Corporation sponsored this weeklong event, in August of 1952 in Detroit, Michigan. Contestants were housed in the Fort Shelby Hotel in Detroit. We flew Free Flight and U-Control Team Racing. Neither of us placed, but I won the Perpetual Trophy for Outstanding Sportsmanship!

During the Team Racing event, I naively started my engine as soon as the 2-minute starting period commenced. The more streetwise racers waited until the 2 minutes were almost up. By then, my engine was overheating. We took off, and my airplane would hardly stay in the air!

Meanwhile, the rest of the four planes were about to lap mine, and my plane was so high that I was sure that our control lines would cross, causing everyone to crash. To prevent this, I deliberately dove my model into the ground and then threw my control handle and lines clear. A high official of the meet witnessed this incident and nominated me for the Sportsmanship Trophy. I got to sit at the head table at the final awards dinner. Seated next to me was Mr. K.T. Keller, Chairman and CEO of Chrysler Corporation! One didn't actually get the huge Perpetual Trophy, but your name was inscribed on it for that year. I did get a \$100 savings bond and a smaller replica of the Perpetual Trophy. This massive "smaller" trophy is almost 3 feet high and is the biggest trophy that I ever won! I still have it, after 50 years.

I built one of the earliest Radio Control systems offered commercially by Control Research as a kit. It used a superhetrodyne receiver with an RK-61 tube and a relay to operate a rubber-band escapement that cranked the rudder from neutral to left or right. Both transmitter and receiver used "A" and "B" batteries. At a local meet, I launched my original Radio Control model at a waiting TV photographer, who ducked and got some good footage as the model flew over his head. I was promised that this shot would be seen on the Monday evening news. I alerted all friends and relatives to watch. That weekend, the Korean War started! It goes without saying that there was more important news than a model airplane meet for the TV news to cover.

During these early competitions, one event that I competed in was Free Flight Rise-Off-Water (ROW.) There would be a big water tank, similar to an above ground swimming pool, for taking off the water. Most models were conventional Pylon Free Flights, fitted with a big front float and two tiny floats on the stab. I believe that to qualify you first had to show that your model would float on the water for a few minutes without sinking. For an ROW official flight, you would gently drop the model, engine screaming, onto the water, where it would immediately leap into the air like a bat out of hell, having only been on the water a second or two. This started my life-long addiction to float flying.

While serving in the U.S. Army in 1958 near Stuttgart, Germany, I placed in a local contest, which resulted in my being sent to the Southern Area Command Model Airplane Contest in Kaiserslautern, Germany.

In 1968, my original 1/7-scale Grumman *Widgeon* Radio Control amphibian, the first ever Radio Control scale model of this aircraft, won first place in Flying Scale and second place in Seaplanes (flying boats) at the Northeast Hydro Radioplane Championships at Brimfield, Massachusetts. Brimfield was the big annual Radio Control seaplane meet of its day, similar to today's London Bridge Classic at Lake Havasu City, Arizona. My *Widgeon* had been designed and built by me expressly to win this particular event, and my construction article was published in the April 1968 issue of *Flying Models* magazine.

Lately, I have flown sport much more than competition. I like the relaxed, laid-back atmosphere at the west coast fun-flies and float-flies. However, I have kept a small competitive effort going. I placed in all three Schneider Cup races held by the Lake Elsinore, California club and also in one at Lake Shuswap in British Columbia. I also was on the winning team in several endurance events held at Baker, California by the Corona, California club. My new

quarter-scale *Widgeon* won Pilot's Choice at the year 2000 Lake Havasu float-fly event. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGmo8Q5ooNA> for the second flight off water, at Lake Perris in Southern California. This spectacular model, painted in 1941 U.S. Coast Guard Colors, also flew at Lake Shuswap in British Columbia.

I own a Kavan Mk II 2-cylinder, four-cycle FK-50. This beautiful 3 cubic inch engine has an oil pump and oil sump in the crankcase with a dipstick. It is a scale model of a two-cylinder light plane engine of the 1930s. Most engine collectors display this engine on the included stand, but I wanted to fly mine. When Hobby People brought out their 1/3-scale Piper *Cub* ARF (actually about 30%, with an 11 ft. wingspan), it looked like the perfect plane for the Kavan. I had a lot of fun flying this plane on floats, both in the U.S. and in Canada. Then Balsa USA brought out their kit for a 1/3-scale *Ercoupe*. Again, the *Ercoupe* looked like a fine application for the Kavan. It had almost the same weight and wing area as the *Cub*. Unfortunately, the muffler of the Kavan interfered with its nose wheel mounting structure, so I wound up using a Zenoah G-45. The G-45, also used in the Balsa USA prototype, was a bit light on power for float flying, so I changed it to a G-62. (See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ir8QXESmOZY> for the second test flight on floats, with the G-45, at Lake Shuswap in British Columbia). The *Ercoupe* won Best in Scale at Lake Shuswap in 2006, and my article on the *Ercoupe* on floats was published in the April 2007 issue of *Model Aviation* magazine.

I was flying the *Ercoupe* on wheels at our Riverside RC Club field in Perris when Carl Lindou, President of the Corona RC Club and a Scale Master's competition flyer, approached me. Even though I had not built it for that purpose, Carl persuaded me to enter the *Ercoupe* in Scale Masters competition. In the first qualifier meet I entered, I quickly learned that the airplane could get a decent static score, but I was never going to be able to fly it with the precision required for a winning flight score. I therefore asked Carl to be my pilot for the Team Scale event. We also flew the *Ercoupe* in several scale fly-in events. It looks like Carl was correct.

The *Ercoupe* garnered a number of prizes before its untimely demise at the 2008 Scale Masters Championships in Sarasota, Florida:

| Date           | Event                         | Sponsor                               | Category               | Award       |
|----------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| September 2006 | Float-Fly                     | Shuswap Lake Aero Modelers            | Best Scale Seaplane    | 1st Place   |
| June 2007      | Scale Fun-Fly                 | Scale Squadron of Southern California | Best Civilian Plane    | 2nd Place   |
| August 2007    | Scale Masters Qualifier       | San Fernando Valley Flyers            | Pilot's Choice         | 1st Place   |
| August 2007    | Scale Masters Qualifier       | San Fernando Valley Flyers            | Team Scale             | 1st Place   |
| September 2007 | Scale Fun-Fly                 | Gilman Springs Flyers                 | Best Civilian Aircraft | 1st Place   |
| October 2007   | Scale Masters (Championships) | Hemet Model Masters                   | Team Scale             | **4th Place |
| April 2008     | Scale Masters Qualifier       | Hemet Model masters                   | Team Scale             | 1st Place   |

|             |                         |                                       |               |           |
|-------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| June 2008   | Scale Fun-Fly           | Scale Squadron of Southern California | Best Civilian | 1st Place |
| August 2008 | Scale Masters Qualifier | San Fernando Valley Flyers            | Team Scale    | 2nd Place |

\*The Championships Team Scale final score for 2nd, 3rd and 4th places differed by 0.6 points on a total of 187 points

## **Experiments and Innovation**

I mentioned above the early experiment with remote throttle control for the slow flying and landing requirement of Navy Carrier. I also touched on my original 1967 scale model of the Grumman *Widgeon*. An innovation on this model was the use of molded fiberglass, in its infancy at the time, for the two identical engine nacelles. This model also sported an early type of foam wing.

In addition, I developed a realistic machine gun accessory for military scale models. I took the mechanism out of a toy hand-cranked Tommy gun and hooked it up to an electric motor with a remote controlled switch. A perforated roll of caps was fed through the mechanism by a motor-driven sprocket. A timed, cam-operated hammer exploded the caps. The result was a very satisfying loud machine gun noise with lots of nifty smoke. I tried to interest the Williams brothers in manufacturing and marketing this invention, as it seemed a perfect accessory for their line of scale plastic dummy machine guns. Unfortunately, we could not reach an agreement.

While working in my first job in 1953, at a plant developing the then new idea of fiberglass boats, I designed and built a fiberglass reinforced plastic U-Control airplane. I showed it to a firm that made consumer items of this material, but nothing came of it.

While not very original, I enjoyed experimenting with Radio Control glider towing by Radio Control airplane. I used a *Senior Telemaster* with OS FS 120 power to tow a 100-inch wingspan glider to altitude. Both glider and tug were fitted with remote controlled releases for the towline. The glider had no wheels, so I built a takeoff dolly similar to those we used in U-Control Speed. This experiment was quite successful, and we established a club record of over one hour duration after tow release.

For my quarter-scale Grumman *Widgeon*, I developed a method of programming my Futaba 9VAP transmitter to provide differential throttle for tight turns during water taxiing. (The *Widgeon* has no water rudder). The two-engine throttle servos are linked to the rudder servo such that right rudder causes the left engine to speed up, and vice versa. Futaba and Airtronics had told me that this couldn't be done.

My original 1/7-scale Grumman *Widgeon* was the first ever Radio Control scale model of that aircraft, and my 1/3-scale *Ercoupe* on floats was (and still may be) the only float-equipped version of that Balsa USA kit.

## **Leadership**

I served as secretary of the Brooklyn Sky-Scrapers for a year, president of the Riverside Radio Control Club for two years and vice-president for three years. I also contribute a monthly column, "Oscar's Observations," to our newsletter. I organized our annual, two-day float-fly that ran for nine years. I also created our club web site and I have been webmaster for about 3 years. This web site has had over 10 thousand hits during that time.

While on an RV trip about five years ago, I visited the Miami, Florida area, where most of my friends from the Brooklyn Sky-Scrapers have retired. I organized a reunion dinner at a restaurant where about eight couples attended. These included Norm Rosenstock, Jerry Stoloff, Richard Rosenberg, Murray Feigenbaum, Charley Yuster, Stan Silverman, and me with spouses. I really enjoyed seeing these folks after more than 30 years.

## **Contest Leadership**

While not an official AMA Contest Director, I still was the instigator, prime mover, spark plug, and all-around honcho that pushed through our first annual float-fly at Lake Perris State Park and I ran it for nine years. We do have an official Contest Director as well, and I enlisted the aid of an experienced float-fly contest director, Woody Sims, to help in the first few events. I did the negotiations with the State Park bureaucrats, got some of our lazy members off their backsides to work at the meet, begged the vendors and hobby shops for raffle prizes, did the paperwork, and even enlisted the aid of my wife for running the registration desk. As far as I know, this was the first ever float-fly at any California State Park.

I also helped coordinate the negotiations that resulted in the first Southern California IMAC event of the year being held at our field annually.

## **Publishing Experience**

My first published article appeared in the September 1968 issue of *Flying Models* magazine. It was a construction article on my Grumman *Widgeon*. I drew the plans, wrote the text, and took the photos. This model also appeared on the cover of the August 1969 issue of *American Aircraft Modeler* and on the frontispiece of the April 1969 issue of *Radio Control Modeler*.

I contributed about ten articles on float flying to the *RC Online* magazine. Club newsletter articles, mentioned above, have been contributed for about 15 years now.

I mentioned above my 6-page article in the April 2007 issue of *Model Aviation* magazine about the *Ercoupe* on floats. Also in 2007, I created the Riverside Radio Club Web Site ([www.riversidercclub.org](http://www.riversidercclub.org)) and have been webmaster since then.

## **Hobby Industry Involvement**

I mentioned above my fruitless attempts with the machine gun and the fiberglass airplane. Several years ago, I learned via the Internet of a man in the Seattle area who was building a

fiberglass quarter-scale Grumman *Widgeon*. I became friendly with Al Franklin and borrowed his molds to make a copy. My *Widgeon* was to be the classic one with the inverted Ranger engines, so I had a new nacelle mold made by Stan's Fiber Tech, because Al's nacelles were of the *Super-Widgeon* flat four type. I introduced Al to Chip Mull of F&M Enterprises, and they made a deal with Stan for the prototypes and Bill Price of G&P Sales to manufacture and market the quarter-scale *Widgeon*. I built the first production flight test prototype, powered by two JAG conversion Ryobi 31cc gas engines. This was the model that won the Pilot's Choice award at Lake Havasu in 2000. The story of my quarter-scale *Widgeon* may be seen at the JAG website at <http://jagengines.com/oscart.htm>

For *Sea Commander* floats, I designed and built the mounting strut arrangement for their scale 60-inch fiberglass floats on the 1/3-scale *Ercoupe* using their standard streamlined strut stock. This three-point truss-type mounting structure was based on the EDO design for the full-scale *Ercoupe*. I provided *Sea Commander* with sketches and photos of my strut design and written fabrication and installation instructions for inclusion in their *Ercoupe* float kits.

## **Educational Involvement**

I developed a one-quarter-long course in model airplane construction for the adult education department of Riverside City College. I presented a lecture on float flying at an annual trade show in Long Beach, California. I also have given numerous presentations at our club meetings on float-flying, direct servo control and other subjects.

One summer while I was in college (around 1953), I got a job as model airplane counselor at Camp Alpine near Liberty, New York in the Catskill Mountains. I selected and ordered the kits and supplies, ranging from ROGs for the younger kids to Jetex-powered planes for the older ones. For two months, I taught about a hundred girls and boys of all age groups to build and fly models. We had a very nice model shop with cubbies for each camper's model stuff, and each bunk had an hour per week of instruction. At the end of the summer, on the weekend when parents traditionally visit, we held a contest where everyone flew their completed models and I gave a demonstration of U-Control Stunt flying.

## **Public Service**

For over two years, I have worked as a volunteer docent at the March Field Air Museum. My knowledge of military aviation, which grew out of my modeling activities, has been very helpful in my work in writing label copy for new displays in this fine museum, situated on the March Air Reserve Base in Riverside, California. It has 77 classic warbirds on display.

Exhibits that I wrote the label copy for include:

- "To the Stars" - An exhibit of artifacts from the Russian Space Program
- "He Gave Us Hope" - About Bob Hope and the USO

I also helped prepare written material for the museum's accreditation efforts, and for our proposal to acquire a deactivated NASA Space Shuttle Orbiter when the program ends in 2010.



I am building a quarter-scale model of the *PT-6A* (military version of the 1930s Fleet *Model 2* biplane trainer) which is prominently displayed inside the museum entrance. This is the oldest plane on display, which is known to have been actually stationed at March Field in 1930.

### **Full-Scale Flight Experience**

In 1969, I was working in Sunnyvale, California and decided to fulfill a lifelong goal, to become a private pilot. I joined a local flying club, based at Reid-Hillview Airport in San Jose, and got my private license. I then learned that I was eligible for professional flight training under the GI Bill. I proceeded to earn my Instrument rating, Commercial Pilot License, Multi-Engine Rating and Instructor Rating. My training was completed in Riverside, California, where I had meanwhile been transferred.

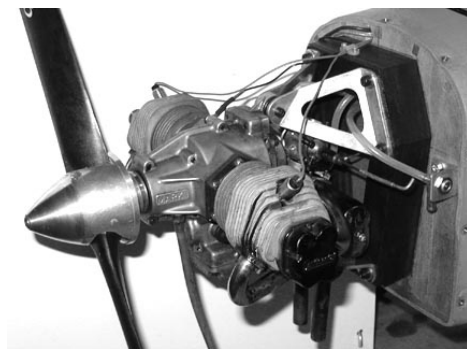
In Riverside, I met two friends who were interested in flying, so I offered to train them free if they would pay the trainer aircraft rental fees. They both succeeded in obtaining their private tickets. A few months later, at a party, they both approached me and suggested that we chip in together and buy a plane. "What a great idea," I said. Of course, this was my plan all along! I researched flying club and aircraft owner partnerships, along with potential types of aircraft, and wrote a charter for our partnership. We found a fourth partner and bought a beautiful 1968 Cessna *172I, N46130*. I stayed in this partnership for 18 years until I retired in 1994. I had over 1000 hours in my logbook by then.

### **Aerospace Industry Experience**

In my close to 40-year career as a Materials and Process Engineer, I worked for a number of aerospace firms, including Fairchild Guided Missiles, Boeing, Aerojet-General, United Technologies, Structural Composites Industries and Rohr Industries. I did major advanced research and development projects for customers that included the Air Force Materials Laboratory, NASA, General Electric, Kaman, and the Departments of Energy and Transportation. I hold five United States patents and have presented and/or published over twenty technical papers and articles in technical journals and at engineering society conferences.



*Oscar with his 11-foot wingspan Piper Cub ARF, powered by a Kavan FK50 engine, at a float fly on Lake Cachuma near Santa Barbara, California, sponsored by the Santa Barbara RC Club.*



*A detail of the Kavan FK50 installation in Oscar's 11-foot wingspan Piper Cub ARF*



*The airframe of Oscar's Balsa USA 1/3-scale Ercoupe*



*Oscar's Ercoupe on Sea Commander floats at Lake Havasu, Arizona for the London Bridge Classic Float Fly, sponsored by the Desert Hawks RC Club. The airplane is painted per the full-scale N87405. Note the scale float strut arrangement.*



*One of the two experimental Ercoupes equipped with EDO floats, showing the strut arrangement.*



*A view of the 1/3-scale Ercoupe cockpit, showing the scale pilot and instrument panel, with scale sliding windows*



*Full-scale Ercoupe N87405 with owner*



*Oscar's original 1/7-scale Grumman Widgeon at Lake Elsinore, California*



*Oscar's quarter-scale Grumman Widgeon at Lake Shuswap, British Columbia, repainted with the civilian colors of a Widgeon based at Chino, California.*



*Oscar's quarter-scale Widgeon in flight at Lake Casitas, California*



*Oscar's quarter-scale Widgeon in flight in its original Coast Guard colors, at Lake Havasu, California where it won Pilot's Choice.*



*The full-scale civilian Grumman Widgeon based at Chino, California.*

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