



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of DALE WILLOUGHBY

May 14, 1917 - March 28, 2003 Began modeling in 1927

AMA #436



Written and submitted by DW (05/2001); Transcribed by NR (11/2001); Edited and formatted by SS (04/2002), Reformatted by JS (02/2010)

Career:

- 1962: Started Willoughby Enterprises
 - 1964: Established Model Plan Service
 - Set two world's records for speed (sailplane)
 - Recommended for AMA Hall of Fame by Norse FAI F3B-33 Aero Klub, Kingdom of Norway
 - Wrote the rules which were adopted by CAM Paris for both FAI F3B Class 33 (Speed) and 34 (Distance in a Closed Circuit)
 - Wrote "Channel Chatter" column for Flying Models magazine for two and a half years
 - 1975: Started Model Helicopters
 - 1979: Founded Scale Model Research
 - Classed as a pioneer in model aviation by providing best Radio Control sailplanes, glider and helicopter kits to American modelers
 - Named the "Father of Slope Soaring in America" by RC Modeler magazine
 - Was first U.S. firm to market Dieter Schuler's Huey Cobra helicopter kit
 - Wrote Modern Fiberglass Techniques for Grid Leaks magazine (Ace RC)
 - Charter member League of Silent Flight - LSF 015
 - Founding Sponsor, International Model Aircraft Association (IMAA) FS-14
 - Organizer of Harbor Slope Soaring Society, Orange County, California
 - Charter member National Radio Control Helicopter Association (NRCHA)
 - Contest Director, Maynard Hill's World Record Radio Control Gilder altitude mark FAI F3B
 - Contest Director, Lloyd Wheeler's World Record Helicopter Speed FAI F3C
 - Given Meritorious Service Award and trophy by AMA for organizing the FAI F3C League of Silent Flight (LSF)
 - Contributor to the model media, including RC Modeler, Model Aviation, Grid Leaks, American Modeler and Model Airplane News
 - Editor and Publisher, ZEPHYR magazine (his own) for one year
 - Owned and operated Willoughby Hobbies in Benson, Arizona
 - 1997: Chosen as retired Confederate soldier "Preferred Extra" in movie, "Buffalo Soldiers," filmed in Benson, Arizona
 - Wrote "Green Souls in New Zealand," a historical fictional novel detailing U.S. Marines' misadventures in preparations for retaking Guadalcanal from the Japanese Imperial Army in 1941
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Brief Resume of Dale Willoughby,

Captain U.S. Marine Corps, Retired

January 1, 2002

Born: Dixon, South Dakota on May 14, 1917; named Raymond Dale Willoughby.

Moved to Michigan after World War I to Greenville, Lake Odessa, Kalamazoo. My father, Raymond Craig Willoughby, worked for Michigan Bell. Attended elementary and junior high schools in Michigan. Migrated to California during the Great Depression in 1931. My father designed and built one of the first motor homes on a Dodge truck chassis with canvas bunks, kerosene heating and cooking, icebox and a fold-down table with cafeteria-style benches. With my two sisters and an older brother, we picked plums, pears, corn, cotton, and killed and dressed chickens and turkeys for gas money arriving at Aunt Cora's home in East Los Angeles in November 1931.

Attended Garfield High School through 10th grade, dropped out for two years. Enrolled in Civilian Conservation Corps for six months, then worked in down town in Los Angeles, 1934-35 first delivering auto parts and accessories, then pick-up and delivery for a dental laboratory in the Wilshire district of Los Angeles.

In 1936 re-enrolled in Whittier Union High School (Pat Nixon taught there), graduating in 1938. In 1937, I joined AMA for one year, which was then under the leadership of Russ Nicholls and was affiliated with the National Aeronautical Association, Washington, D.C. Our club was the Whittier Eagles and met in the rear of the hardware store.

In June 1938 enlisted in U.S. Marine Corps, sent to Peiping, China for duty in the Marine Forces, North China for two years. Promoted to corporal (QM duty). Transferred to Bremerton, Washington, September 1941, married in January 1942. Established the Supply Section of Marine Barracks, Naval Radio Station, Bainbridge Island, Washington. As a Master Sergeant B-7, transferred to Hawaii, where I was promoted to Warrant Officer. When the Atomic bomb ended World War II was sent to Japan as occupation troops. During time in Hawaii, outfitted 1st Provisional Marine Brigade and 22nd Marine Regiment for invasion of Guam.

Became a civilian in September 1946 (RIF) discharged at MCSupDepot, Barstow, California. Rejoined the Marine Corps in March 1947 as Quartermaster Sergeant, NCOiC Supply Section, Marine Detachment, NAS, Los Alamitos, California. Commissioned a second lieutenant in 1952, sent to MCAS, EL Toro, California as Assistant Supply Officer, MAG 36 (Helicopter Group), was sent to Japan and then Korea as SupO, MACS-3 (Radar Squadron near K-3, 1st MAW).

Transferred to MCAS, New River, North Carolina, while there promoted to captain 33 months after commissioning. Transferred to Portsmouth, Virginia in 1954 as supply officer Marine-Barracks and Accountable Officer for all the Marine Detachments aboard the Atlantic Fleet, also utilities and ground maintenance officer (9-hole golf course) and Officer of the Day. Two years later transferred to Sukeran, Okinawa as SupO, VM0-2, then back to Iwakuni, Japan

as Supply Trouble Shooter for MACS-4 in 1959, while at Iwakunl, Japan, after hours taught English Conversation to white-collar workers of National Cash Register, Hiroshima and to KOA Oil Company, Otake, Japan. Some KOA Oil white-collar workers wanted their children to also learn English so on Saturday afternoons I held English classes for 14 or more teenagers plus civilian employees of MCAS, Iwakuni. They received a 10% pay increase if they passed an English Proficiency Test.

In 1960, returned to MCAS El Toro and then sent on Operation: Bluelight to Japan, Philippines, Taiwan with South East Asia Treaty Organizations as Chief Marine Liaison Supply Officer for the 25 U.S. Naval ships participating.

In April 1962, returned to El Toro, California and retired as a captain on May 1, 1962 after 24 years service in the Marines.

Worked in a shutter factory in Costa Mesa, drove school bus for a private contractor, worked for the State of California in Department of Labor for paying the unemployed and then with Farm Labor recruiting help for farms in Orange County.

Started Willoughby Enterprises in 1962, sold more than 250,000 frequency flags to the model industry to visually identify radio frequencies of transmitters used for control of model aircraft, boats, cars and sailplanes, etc. This system is still in use today.

Started Willoughby's Model Shop in Tustin (1965) bought out Babcock Electronics in Costa Mesa and produced Radio Control cars (Mustangs). Sold Willoughby Enterprises' stock of imported a domestic sailplanes and glider kits in 1969 to Windspiel Models for \$7,500. Then established Model Plan Service in 1964, marketing the plans published in Flying Models magazine through 1970. The magazine changed ownership and began selling the plans themselves. I sold the many of the Mylar of model designs I had obtained from Switzerland (Franz Meier's scale plans, etc.)

Set two world's records for speed, one in 1967 (47 mph) and again in 1969, flying a 12-foot KA-6 sailplane. One-way speed run of 101 mph recorded by the Norse Aero Klub of Norway, which is now on file at Federation Aeronautique Internationale, Paris, France with 86.06 mph for the two way average. I am the only American to set two world's records in FAI F3B Class 33.

Recommended for AMA Hall of Fame by Norse Aero Klub, Kingdom of Norway.

Incidentally, I wrote the rules, which were adopted by CIAM Paris for both FAI F3B Class 33 (speed) and 34 (distance in a closed circuit). Later, wrote the rules and course layout for FAI speed in a closed circuit F3A 53 and 54; F3B 55; F3C 56; F3E 64, 70, 76 and 82. These rules are now used worldwide to establish world's records in Radio Control aviation.

Wrote "Channel Chatter" column for Flying Models magazine for two and a half years, then published the ZEPHYR Magazine covering events and technical data for model sailplaners for

seven issues.

Started Model Helicopters in 1975 and sold out in 1979 to S/C Modeler, Elgin, Illinois for \$22,500 after my wife of 36 years of a good marriage went to Heaven in 1978.

Founded Scale Model Research in 1979, and traveled to Japan, Korea, Alaska and throughout European Aircraft Museums and airports photographing in detail ancient/modern aircraft. These were sold in FotoPaaks containing 12 to 55 different views. Each Paak concentrated on a different aircraft, sailplane, helicopter, or engine, which provided scale documentation and details to model builders, manufacturers and photo collectors. In addition, I sold thousands of scale drawings from American and Japanese model magazines for the scale buff.

In 1983 I sold Scale Model Research (36,000 negatives) to Bob Banka for \$17,500 and migrated to Guam in 1985.

Started Willoughby Hobbies in Guam in an apartment and then opened a shop on Route Eight, Barrigada. Gross sales were \$19,000 for 1985, \$35,000 for 1986, \$65,000 for 1987, and \$100,649 for 1988. Closed shop to purchase a custom-made motor home in Texas. Flew to the factory to take delivery of the Foretravel Grand Villa 3400. Then drove to North Carolina where I met an old friend whose husband had died five years earlier. Just about got married, but had some unfinished model business on Guam so returned in September 1989.

Started working for the Guam Tribune, first as a contributor, then went full-time as real estate/construction, military and business editor.

A change in management (several in two years) so I resigned on May 18 and again on September 15, 1990, ending my tenure with the Guam Tribune as their Investigative Reporter.

Filed and was granted change of name to Dale Willoughby by Superior Court, Territory of Guam Order 262-88. Flew to Reno for the Air Races. Then returned to Travis Air Force Base where I parked the motor home and flew to England as an observer for the Viking Cup competition involving many British and European speed glider fans.

Returned to Guam on U.S. Air Force space available in time for bi-annual legislative elections. I was the campaign manager for Fe Valencia Ovalles (ex Passport Officer). Had she been elected to the legislature, I was promised the post as her Chief of Staff.

While there collected the \$1,000 Income Tax rebate. Then flew to and spent Thanksgiving in Christ Church, New Zealand. Returned to Guam to witness Hurricane Russ' destruction during the Christmas holidays. There I lost many of my treasured possessions in a trunk locker.

In January 1991, was admitted to the Naval Regional Medical Center, Guam for scalp surgery and released after 25 days involving three minor operations. Flew to Hawaii, leaving behind my 1989 Toyota cargo van full of hobby merchandise and kitchen utensils.

Spent 45 days at Tripler Army Medical Center undergoing major surgery repairing the damaged vertebrae in my neck, caused by a fall from a stone fence sty in the Peak's District of Northern England in October 1990.

Returned to Travis Air Force Base where my Foretravel 3400 was parked and drove to Moffat, Colorado. Purchased a second 1.2-acre lot with electricity, sewer, water and telephone available for \$6,000, registered as a voter and purchased the pastor's Honda Passport moped.

Returned to Guam in June 1961 to ship my Toyota van to San Pedro on the President Lincoln V-84. Shipped all hobby merchandise remaining (after big double weekend sale behind the Guam Tribune) to Christ Church where Models and Hobbies sold it and deposited the money into the Bank of New Zealand. When I picked up my van at San Pedro in July, I met Junko Shikl, freight cashier at APL, whom I knew at Itaoi, Japan in 1952-53.

Spent \$700 for a tow bar, wiring and ball and towed the Toyota van back to Colorado.

Just about finished a historical fiction novel entitled "Kind Eyes in New Zealand" and have mailed one copy to The Press, Christ Church, New Zealand for possible publication and one copy to Harris Publications in New York.

Still looking for a book publisher. Both rejected my manuscript.

Also working intermittently on four Radio Control sailplanes all exceeding a wingspan of 10 feet. Fishing in private lake at KV Estates. The last rainbow trout I caught had to be cut in half in order to fit in the microwave oven. Deer and antelope graze nearby in the summer time, and giant Jackrabbits and cottontail rabbits are seen daily. Prairie dogs and gophers dig holes in my front yard, and share that space with cottontail rabbits. A pair of Horned Larks feed on birdseed thrown out for them. The record-setting cold last winter froze most of my flower bulbs; only few from the 400 planted have shown signs of life so far. Now have model-building shop erected to design and build models of some of the airplanes I have flown in. The first to be a Cessna Model 321, designed as a forward air controlled for the U.S. Marine Corps Aviation and designated OE-2. I flew and looped in one over the North Carolina's Great Dismal Swamp.

Classed as a pioneer in model aviation by providing best Radio Control sailplanes, glider, and helicopter kits to American modelers.

Once named the "Father of Slope Soaring in America" by authoritative RC Modeler magazine.

Was first U.S. firm to market Dieter Schuller's Huey Cobra helicopter kit, the only true Radio Control helicopter in the United States.

Wrote "Modern Fiberglass Techniques" for Grid Leaks magazine (Ace RC), detailing methods and procedures, which hundreds of modelers and manufacturers are using today for producing

Radio Control aircraft, boats, and sailplanes.

Charter member League of Silent Flight - LSF 015 now level four. Academy of Model Aeronautics Leader Member for last 32 years (in 2002); now Industrial Class because of merchandising successes – AMA 436.

Founding sponsor, International Model Aircraft Association (IMAA) FS-14.

Organizer of Harbor Slope Soaring Society in Orange County, California.

Charter member National Radio Control Helicopter Association NRCHA 15.

Contest director at Maynard Hill's World Record Radio Control Gilder altitude mark FA FEB Class 26 prepared the dossier and certified the onboard barometer.

Contest director at Lloyd Wheeler's World Record Helicopter Speed FAI F3C Class 5C; supervised the course layout and prepared the dossier.

Given Meritorious Service Award and trophy by AMA for organizing the League of Silent Flight (LSF) along with Scott Christiansen, Lee Gray and two others.

Contributor to the model media, including RC Modeler, Model Aviation, Grid Leaks, American Modeler and Model Airplane News.

Edited “Channel Chatter Column” for Flying Models magazine for two and a half years.

Editor and publisher, ZEPHYR magazine (my own) one year.

Other Accomplishments

As a cowboy (age 12) herded 80 head of cattle from the Rosebud Indian Reservation to Winner, South Dakota with my brother and father.

Made a parachute jump on my 60th birthday.

Climbed Mt Fujiyama, Japan's highest mountain, 1953.

Toured Israel and dipped my finger in the Dead Sea in Israel, the lowest point in the world below sea level, 1975. (1,312 ft).

Earned a Private Pilot's License in 1947 through the G.I. Bill.

Coached the Marine touch football team to first place, Sixth Naval District, Virginia area.

Flew full size Sailplanes in Japan, at Braunschweig Technical Kolleg (Germany), over the Black Forest in Germany; flew over Ajaccio, Island of Corsica where Napoleon was born; and at Elmira New York and Pearblossom, California.

Flew in "Man o' War" P-51 Mustang for my 69th birthday at Planes of Fame, Chino Airport.

Flew in Dream Dragon, a hot air balloon at Deland, Florida for my 72nd birthday.

In July 1990, took hang gliding lessons at Jockey Ridge near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, and made a perfect stand-up landing on the fourth flight.

Explored the bottom of Apra Harbor, Guam in a submarine on January 1, 1988.

Competed in a hot air balloon race at Deland, Florida on 72nd birthday, 1989.

Took third place, Senior Division, Plumeria 1988 race on Guam and fifth place in Turkey Trot 1990 at Christ Church, New Zealand.

Consultant for Top Flight Models and showed a commercial model factory how to cover their 1/10th scale model of the Douglas DC-10 for wind tunnel tests to determine the feasibility of placing the third Jet on the fin and rudder. Later received a sticker "I am proud of the DC-10" and a check for my services.

In 1975 contracted with Lockheed Missile and Space Company to build a 1/3-scale model of their proposed Flying Fish. The concept was to "Zero Launch" this 15-foot jet-powered aircraft from the deck of a destroyer under construction at Passagula, Texas for the Shah of Iran.

The target would be over the horizon and the Fish would be guided by a TV camera in the nose and controlled by radio aboard the destroyer. Once within range the Fish would discharge its "high powered torpedo" presumably toward a battleship or cruiser carrying a red star, then do a speedy 180-degree turn back to the launching vessel, which, after the launch was in full speed in the opposite direction. The recovery was to be made by raising a balloon on a cable. The wings were swept at an angle and had a Lockheed patented catch on each tip. The crew of the destroyer would guide the Flying Fish and snare it by contact with the cable. When the Shah of Iran was deposed the project was shelved by Lockheed.

The second military contract was with the U.S. Army Material Command. I built and finished a Schluter Huey Cobra model helicopter with a Kraft radio ready to fly. Then the electronic technician opened the Kraft receiver and at 25 different locations on the printed circuit board soldered a wire. The bundle of wires terminated at a female shorting plug installed in the gun turret. Then the male plug was wired to a box containing 25 switches continuing on to a telephone. The computer was given the "foot print" of the Kraft receiver. For demonstration of this concept (since the U.S. Army had more than 700 and not enough qualified technicians) the helicopter was started, the male plug inserted into the nose and a switch was flicked. The

computer would then provide a printout: "There is a malfunction of the Kraft receiver at the junction of T-5, R-10, C-15, i.e., transistor #5, resistor #10 and capacitor #15." The principle of this diagnostic capability gained the company a multi-million dollar deal with the Army and was supposed to be incorporated thereafter into all electronic equipment manufactured after adoption by the U.S. Army. For a lead-in to the training film, I was requested to fly the Huey Cobra. The modified receiver (very unreliable) was replaced with a mint condition Kraft receiver and the model helicopter was flown for an U.S. Army training film – payment \$140 per day.

In May 1992, flew around the world on my 75th birthday. The route, May 4, 1992 - Norfolk, Virginia, Detroit, Japan, Guam, Korea, Bangkok, Bombay, Paris, New York, Detroit and back to Norfolk on May 14 – three and a half days airborne, 85 hours.

From Paris to John F. Kennedy Airport in New York flew on Air France's Speedbird-Concorde, fulfilling a lifelong dream to fly faster than the speed of sound (1,625 mph) and to fly around the world. At 8:05 a.m. New York time on Mach 2 at 60,000 feet altitude, popped the cork, was served a five course French cuisine dinner, marking my 75th birthday. At that point in time, I had spent one trillion, seven hundred seventeen billion, two hundred thousand (1,717,200,000) seconds on this earth!

World Traveler: Have been in all 50 states but one: North Dakota. Have visited the following foreign countries and islands: American Samoa, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Corsica and Crete Islands, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, France, East and West Germany, Greece, Guam Island, Hong Kong and Kowloon, Island of Rhodes and Patmos, Israel, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Kwajalein Atoll, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Midway Island, Monaco, the Netherlands, Newfoundland, New Zealand, Okinawa, Malta, Monaco, Saipan and Tinian (NMI), Norway, Palau, Philippines, Puerto Rico, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Taiwan, Turkey, Vietnam, Virgin Islands, Wake Island, Wales and Yap Island. My favorites: New Zealand and Switzerland.

Dale Willoughby (05/2001)

Addendum

During the five years of operating Willoughby Hobbies from 1995 to 2000, lost more hobby merchandise from shoplifting than was sold. Local police were informed and the culprit named. The culprit went to Benson High School at the time and the police told him not to do it again. One plastic car was found in my trashcan in the rear of my shop; it was smashed

World Hobbies then took all the remaining hobby merchandise on consignment at 50% of retail prices and in 10 months deposited almost \$9,000 into a local bank into my account. The building was sold and the funds used to pay for a 2000 Toyota 4Runner.

Moved to Oregon, purchased and eight by 12 foot model shop placed on the banks of the South Umpqua River, which was then painted and filled with choice model gliders, radios and Cessna Model 321 electric-powered foam modes, etc.

Plan “A” is to sell all hobby merchandise in 2002 and devote my time and efforts to writing in my time left since I celebrated my 85th birthday on May 14, 2002.

(signed) Dale Willoughby (5/15/2002)

The following article about Capt. Willoughby ran with a photograph in his local Oregon newspaper on April 15, 2002.

Globetrotting Marine now caption of the RV Park

By Jeff Willis

He’s a walking historical novel – a U.S. Marine since 1939 who has traveled and turned post-retirement hobbies into second careers.

Retired Capt. Dale Willoughby, formerly of Benson, Arizona, is a friendly but feisty 85-year-old.

He may be slowing down a bit after nearly two years at River Bend RV Park in Winston, Oregon, but he’s a man who has done everything from guarding a U.S. ambassador in 1939 war-torn China to consulting on airborne weapons for the Shah of Iran.

“What I do, I do to please myself,” he said. “But, if other people enjoy it too – all the better.”

The things that please Willoughby today include living year-round in his RV and talking with neighbors and friends about world travels. He’s writing a wartime historical novel and works on his favorite remote-controlled aircraft models.

But most of all, he is enjoying gardening in the riverside space next to his recreational vehicle and portable shop.

“It’s the best real estate in the place. When I’m done with it, it’ll be better than when I got it,” Willoughby said as he watched geese come in for a graceful South Umpqua River landing and then showed off jasmine, wildflowers, strawberries and a patch of patriotic red, white and blue pansies that he planted.

A widower since the death of his wife, Alberta Mae Reid, in 1979, he remains independent while getting occasional visits from two daughters who live in California with four grown grandchildren.

“Some people tell me I ought to get married,” he said. “I just say, ‘What for? I’ve got everything I need.’”

On his way through life, Willoughby made a difference for Rowdy Smith, owner of Glide Boar Works, who convinced him to sell the house and store in Arizona and come to visit Oregon.

“I got started working with my hands by building model planes with Capt. Willoughby when I was 12-years-old in Los Alamitos (California),” Smith said. “He was a model airplane club leader. We’d make cars, boats, airplanes and he’d help us. He’s a patriotic Marine and he influenced our whole town and all the kids. His work is known all over the world.”

In the Marine Corps, Willoughby made his way through the ranks to supply officer and then retired in 1962 after serving in China, Japan, Korea, Hawaii, Virginia, and California.

He said his pension has given him the freedom to try whatever he loves to do.

He founded a model aircraft business and opened stores in California and on the island of Guam. He published a modeler’s magazine and created an aircraft research business from scratch with 36,000 aircraft photographs coveted by scale-model creators.

His expertise in matters aeronautical helped him land work in research and development for the U.S. Army, Lockheed Corp. and Douglas Aircraft Co.

“I’ve flown around the world, dipped my finger in the Dead Sea, took hang gliding lessons at Kitty Hawk (North Carolina), and flew on the Concorde on my 75th birthday from Paris to New York in 3.4 hours,” he said, as he described detours taken just for the fun of it.

He is also proud of his role as an extra in the 1997 Hollywood movie “Buffalo Soldiers,” starring Danny Glover. Willoughby played the role of a retired Confederate soldier.

Mary Reed, who rents the space next to Willoughby, has nothing but compliments for the veteran, although she says he got cross once over being awakened by her early morning routines.

“He’s a good neighbor and he’s always busy, unless he’s sleeping,” she said with a wry smile. “And he’s always got a story to tell.”

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