



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of BETH PASZKIEWICZ



Written by RH (2018); reformatted by JS (2018)

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Rachelle Haughn interviews **Beth Paszkiewicz**

If you asked Beth Paszkiewicz whether you should join an AMA club, her answer would likely be an enthusiastic yes. Having been through two floods with both of her clubs and endured the loss of her husband, she has witnessed first-hand how an AMA club can come together in the difficult times and how its members can rally around each other. In the years that she has been a club member, her role has shifted from simply being the "club cook" to flying with the best of them. She currently is the secretary of the Signal Chasers RC Club.

Rachelle Haughn: Who taught you how to fly and what do you fly?

Beth Paszkiewicz: Bob Gill, a deacon at the Concordia Lutheran Church in Kirkwood, Missouri, taught my husband and me how to fly. The church allows pilots to fly indoors on Wednesday mornings.

Bob makes small airplanes and teaches others how to make small, lightweight planes. Bob invited us to his home and showed Ed, my husband, how he [was] able to fly in his own backyard.

Bob used some pink foam to cut out a fuselage, wings, tail, rudder, etc. He used balsa wood strips to strengthen the parts then he cut the ailerons and elevator, formed tiny clevises, and installed them. Bob bent some bigger wire and formed the landing gear. He installed a tiny motor.

He had us hooked when he took us into his yard and flew it around, under trees, and landed it at our feet. He handed the controller to Ed. Bob showed us how to use the sticks and Ed was in the air.

During the next several cold winter mornings, we went to the church's gym and flew patterns.

When warm weather came, Bob took us to Buder Park and let us fly his big glider. He taught us what thermals are and how to circle into them.

I fly the one Bob made, a Sport Cub S, UMX Radian glider, my Apprentice, and a Carbon Z Cub. I also fly some small Blade helis.

RH: How long have you been flying?

BP: I retired after 27 years at United Van Lines in 2007. That gave me more stick time. Ed got me my own radio and I started with the UMX Radian!

The guys at the field were a huge support team.

RH: What do you like about flying model aircraft?

BP: I love flying. It is kinda like riding a bicycle. Your mind doesn't forget and when you place that plane on the runway into the wind, your mind and fingers go on automatic. There isn't anything like it.

RH: Which clubs are you a member of, and how long have you been a member?

BP: I joined St. Louis Aeropilots in 2010 (I think). I got my AMA [membership] and I added the E-flite Apprentice to my collection. Buder Park is a St. Louis County Park and is where the club flies. The Aeropilots have a pavilion and a runway of 400 feet. There is also a Control Line [CL] section to the west of our area. Buder Park is in a flood plain of the Meramac River.

In 2012 we joined Signal Chasers RC Club in Pacific, Missouri. The club rents 5 acres of flood plain land from a farmer. I love the peace and quiet. It also is close to the Meramac River.

RH: How has your role in these clubs changed since your husband passed away in October 2017?

BP: My first job at the field was somewhat pack rat (ha, ha) and/or gopher. I had to earn my wings and respect. I'm the only woman in the Signal Chasers club. Other members bring their wives to the field on nice days.

The guys are a big support for me. I have always felt welcome. My guys are more like family now. All keep in touch and offer to help if I need [it]. I am grateful for each and every one. I know my guys will be there for me.

Life is good. I miss my husband dearly, but know he is in a better place. He no longer has to suffer.

RH: Please tell me about the flood in 2015. What caused it and what was the damage?

BP: Both Buder Park and the Signal Chasers [flying site] were completely underwater. This area of Missouri got heavy rain for 10 days straight and the rivers that run into the Meramac added to

the volume of water. The water rose high and fast! And when the water receded, it went down hard and fast.

St. Louis County Parks Service did most of the cleanup at Buder Park, but the sand and mud were there for a long time. Aeropilots and the CL pilots had several work days of shoveling the mess away and hauling clean water to wash the landing strips, benches, and picnic tables. It was a long time before the fields were flyable.

Tables and benches were washed away from the pavilion - some damaged beyond repair. Pilot stands were broken from the force of the water. The windsock was torn to shreds. It has just been replaced with a beautiful big AMA windsock.

The Signal Chasers didn't fare as lucky. Our pavilion was destroyed. Pieces were scattered into the farmer's fields. Support beams were pulled completely out of the ground. The only thing left standing was the porta-potty!

This flood happened the day after Christmas 2015. The weather was cold. Most of our members are older and not in any condition to help. The wood burning stove was broken. Chairs and pilot stands were destroyed, and some washed away. The runway was washed out.

Our club president wrote to AMA and we were blessed with some [Club Disaster Relief Program; modelaircraft.org/membership/clubs/drelief.aspx] funds [in the spring of 2016] to help with the rebuild. Many members donated additional funds to the flood relief effort.

Our guys who could, worked. Things started to look better.

Then in the spring of 2017, another flood hit both fields again - again completely covering the fields. When we could get into our field at Pacific, the new building was leaning to the southeast. On the bright side, no one was injured. Things can be replaced. Runways can be graded. Spirits can soar again.

We are a great club and we will survive! I am 76 years young, and I can and will cook for these guys. Together we mend each other's toils and losses.

RH: What do you like about belonging to aeromodeling clubs?

BP: Everything!

RH: What are your other hobbies?

BP: I belong to the Gateway Harmonica Club. Ed and I both were members. He was a great harmonica player.

I have a Labrador/pit bull dog. She keeps me on my toes. I own 49cc scooters and a trailer to haul them anywhere I want to go. I enjoy target shooting and have my "right to carry."

I get together with ladies I worked with once a month. My daughter and four grandchildren keep me busy too. I am blessed.

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