



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of GEORGE BUCIC, JR.

Modeler, Rubber, Scale, Radio Control

Born September 2, 1926

Began modeling in 1936

AMA#L227



Written & Submitted by GB (09/1996); Updated (07/2002); Transcribed by NR (11/1996); Edited by SS (07/2002); Reformatted by JS (07/2012)

Career:

- Built pine wood identification airplanes in high school for the Air Forces
 - Contest director in many Indoor and Radio Control contests
 - Design consultant for many leading manufacturers
 - President of the Woodland Aeromodelers starting in 1977
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My interest in model aviation began in 1936, at the age of 10. These were the Depression years; my mother and father owned a small candy and notion store in the Pilsen section of Chicago. My mother and I usually went to the wholesale house twice a week to buy merchandise and it was during one of those visits when the owner gave me a 10-cent Comet rubber powered airplane kit to build. Three days later, the model was finished and ready to fly. My mother; however, had another idea. She said, "Let's hang it up in the store so that other youngsters will see it and also buy kits to build." I was hooked. During that year, I had built approximately six airplanes, which were hung in the store. Soon we were selling two to three dozen kits per week of not only 10-cent kits, but also 25- and 50-cent kits.

As Jimmy Walker came along with his line of American Junior gliders, I would take some to the park across the street from the store and fly them. Many would be lost in thermals and children who had assembled around me would ask their parents for a dime and buy one or several kits from my mother's store. They, in turn, learned how to adjust and lose them in thermal.

In late 1937, at age 11, my mother encouraged me to go to the Comet factory, which was some six miles away on 29th and LaSalle Streets. She believed that if she could come to America at 14 with her brother, I could talk my way to Comet with the streetcar conductors. I met Carl Goldberg and he delivered the first order to the store the next day and met many of the children who I had been teaching to build. This meeting blossomed into a life-long friendship, which later resulted in my working at Comet. I still continue to work with youngsters today in building and flying models.

I joined the Academy of Model Aeronautics in 1939 and flew in the Nationals at Pulaski Road and Keeler Avenue. I didn't win anything, but I had fun and I went home tired and happy. The airplane that I had designed was not good enough, but that experience encouraged me to build better models. The AMA sponsored many indoor contests at the Madison Rockwell Armory in

which I participated and won trophies in hand launch glider and Class A indoor rubber competition. I was fortunate during those years to make the acquaintance of others in the hobby, including Wally Simmers, Frank Garcher, Len Danber, Tom Mortell, Tom Anderson, Charley Bauer, Otto Curth Pete, and Charley Sotich.

The 1940s were the World War II years; I built pine wood identification airplanes in high school for the Air Forces Preflight Training Program. Many of these airplanes are hung in the Dayton Air Museum and the Smithsonian. I received a commendation along with 70 other high school students for building the airplanes for the war effort. In January 1942, I won third place in the Chicago Times newspaper's Wings for Youth Contest for building a scale model of the Piper Cub J-3. Actually, I had won more than the \$5 award; I had won the friendship of Maunce Roddy, aviation editor of the Chicago Times newspaper who sponsored the Times Air Cadets and many flying and scale contests at the Chicago Stadium, Amphitheater and Coliseum. Maurice Roddy gave me an opportunity to working at the hobby shows when they would have scale contests. It was at one of the shows that I met Jimmy Walker who invented U-Control. Jimmy had just designed his A-J Fireball.

My model building was briefly interrupted in 1945 and 1946 for military service in the Air Force. Upon my return home in August of 1946, I entered college but still kept one eye on model competitions. I set a world's speed record of 212 M.P.H. at a Jet C02 model car contest in February 1947 at the Coliseum, shortly before it was wrecked. With brief interruptions in the hobby from 1947 through 1952, I married my wonderful wife Margaret received my Bachelor of Science degree while working as a mechanical engineer to buy our home and support our young family. As our son, George, and daughter, Cathy, began to grow, I took them to indoor contests where they competed as Juniors and soon won trophies. As Radio Control modeling began to become popular in the 1950s, we built Digitrio radios and fly such models as the Sterling Super Piper Cub, the Top Flite Taurus and many other aircraft of the era.

I am still an active member of the Chicago Aeronauts and the Woodland Aeromodelers. I have acted as Contest Director in many indoor and Radio Control contests sponsored by Woodland. Occasionally I was asked by leading manufacturers to give design input. I would probably never have become a mechanical engineer if it were not for model aviation. You might say that it opened the door for not only me, but also our son who is a computer engineer with Brown and Root in Houston, Texas. Model building opened many doors for me during my working career and, in turn, I opened the door at AMA headquarters this year and became a Life Member L-227.

At the age of 70, I have only one thought that continues to bother me. Where did all of the good years go?

Addendum

Bob Vojslavek was a great friend of mine and I was proud to be part of the reorganization of Woodland Aeromodelers and served as president in 1977. Since my tenure as president of Woodland, I have maintained my membership in the organization and become a life member of

the Academy of Model Aeronautics with license number L227. I am now 75-years-old in the year of 2002. My model activities are not as extensive as they were in my young years, but I continue to give indoor building and flying demonstrations with the Delta Dart for the Boy Scouts and model enthusiasts of all ages.

(signed) George Bucic, Jr.
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