



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of JERRY STOLOFF

December 21, 1920 – May 6, 2007

Started modeling in 1928

AMA #1277



Written & Submitted by MP and TS; Transcribed & Edited by SS (08/2002), updated by JS (08/2001), Reformatted by JS (02/2010)

Career:

- Charter member of the Tambe Model Airplane Club at age 15
- Charter member of the Brooklyn Skyscrapers Model Club
- Designed numerous Free Flight and Radio Control model planes; many were published in magazines and some were kitted
- Designs include Spirit, Houdini, Diamond Demon, Yehudi, Invader, Spearhead Junior, Spearhead Senior, Yogi, Swami and Bulldozer
- Currently flies with the Condor Radio Control Club at his home in Tamarac, Florida

Honors:

- 1991: Society of Antique Modelers Hall of Fame
- 2007: Model Aviation Hall of Fame

Jerry Stoloff and His Skyscrapers

By Mike Parker and Ted Smales

I became interested in Jerry Stoloff's power designs [writes Mike] after receiving the Eagle kit plan of his Spearhead Junior from Gordon Godding. This out-of-the-rut, half-cabin, half-pylon model really appealed to me and I made one as a home for a newly acquired Doonside Mills 0.75. It proved to be a good reliable flyer and got Ted Smales interested in Jerry's work, leading to the appearance of a Yogi and a Swami on our flying field.

From Ted's research through his Model Airplane News magazine collection, it became clear that Jerry Stoloff had been a very significant figure during that period (1935 to 1945), which saw the rapid development of powered model aircraft. Therefore, we decided to find out more about the man and his models. Discussions with Keith Harris and David Baker turned up some useful material and David provided a current address for Jerry, who kindly responded to my letter with enough archive material to make this article possible.

The Man

Jerry Stoloff was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1920 and began modeling when he was eight. After hand-launched gliders and rubber models, he started building power models at age 14. He became a charter member of the Tambe Model Airplane Club at age 15 and is also a charter member of the famous Brooklyn Skyscrapers Club. The latter brought together such luminaries as Sal Taibi, Leon Schulman, Scotty Murray, and Norman Rosenstock. It became a veritable

hothouse for the development of power models in particular. Jerry more than held his own in this illustrious company and his very successful design appeared in Model Airplane News magazine and attracted the attention of kit manufacturers. In the 1950s, Jerry moved into the Radio Control field and produced further successful designs, including the Spirit and Houdini, which are beyond the scope of this article. In recent years, Jerry has concentrated on Radio Control versions of his early Free Flight designs and he is still an active flyer with the Condor Radio Control Club at his home in Florida.

In 1990, he became friendly with a new member, James Lobb, who shared his enthusiasm for Old-Timer flying. Because of their association, Lobb wrote to Jim Adarns, U.S. Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) president, nominating his friend for the SAM Hall of Fame, noting that, "Jerry had been carrying the banner by himself for quite a few years and seemed to welcome my arrival in Florida. We get together regularly at the field. Jerry is still a very active flyer of the models he designed many years ago and his craftsmanship has only improved with time." Jerry Stoloff was inducted into the SAM Hall of Fame in 1991.

The Models

We have selected some of his best-known models to illustrate the output of this distinguished designer.

Diamond Demon, 1937

This is perhaps the best-known Stoloff design here in the U.K., since the plan has been available through the Ben Buckle service for some time. Curiously, though, the design is tentatively credited to Leon Schulman on this version. No such confusion in the States, however, as this 1937 Air Trails magazine report shows:

"CREEDMORE, L.I. – What is expected to be a new NAA record for class B model airplanes was established here March 19, when Sal Taibi, 19, of Brooklyn, New York, flew a Bay Ridge Diamond Demon to first place in the small motor event at a contest sponsored by the Metropolitan Model Airplane Council. The Diamond Demon averaged three minutes and six seconds on three flights, and on the third and final flight, it flew out of sight after eight minutes and 12 seconds on a 20-second motor. The record has been forwarded to the National Aeronautic Association for certification. Jerry Stoloff designed the Diamond Demon, powered by an Ohlsson 23, and the meet was the first in which the plane had been entered. It has a span of 48 inches and weighs 22 ounces complete, ready to fly. Primarily designed for a contest ship, the Demon is unlike most ships of its type, having received much comment because of the simplicity of construction."

The Diamond Demon has many constructional features, which were to become Stoloff trademarks. He was one of the first to use crutch type construction, which incorporated a neat method of integrating the engine bearers. Formers are built up from strip, as is the stabilizer, prior to sanding to shape. These features kept his models light and reduced building time. The latter was important as Jerry notes that Free Flight models were lost quite frequently in the days before the regular use of DTs.

The design was kitted by Bay Ridge Company and sold for the pricey sum of \$1.50. The design included in the National Model Aviation Museum Archive file on Jerry is a later edition, since it included the legend “manufactured by Consolidated Model Engineering Co. Bronx, New York.”

Yehudi, 1939

The plan for this most interesting design has not been available until comparatively recently. The one included in the National Model Aviation Museum Archive file on Jerry, was taken from a copy of the original plan provided by Jerry himself. Model Airplane News magazine originally bought the rights to the design but never published it. The similarities to Sal Taibi’s 1941 Pacer are striking, but not surprising. According to Jerry’s recollections reported by Bill Darkow in a 1992 Flying Models magazine article: “We all lived within a few blocks and were constantly borrowing things and exchanging ideas. We even spent some time in each other’s kitchens. If I got hungry for Italian food, I would drop in on Sal. If he felt like trying some Jewish cooking, he’d come over to see me.”

The most noteworthy difference between the two models is, of course, that the Yehudi has a stabilizer the “right” way up. The Yehudi incorporates all the structural features, which had appeared in Diamond Demon, but now much thought was being given to aerodynamic criteria. The idea of the negligible nose moment was intended “to pivot the airplane below the center of drag so that it achieved a nose-up attitude in the climb.”

Invader, 1940

This is a small pylon model design specifically for the Atom engine, which had just come on to the market. Kitted by the Continental Model Airplane Company, it has a diamond fuselage and a Ritz-type wing together with an unusual anhedral stabilizer.

Spearhead Junior and Senior, 1942

This design is unusual in that the small (44-inch) version came first. Jerry relates, “I approached Eagle Model Airplane Company with my Spearhead Junior, which was very successful in competition. They, in turn, purchased the plans for the model and asked if I would design a larger version, which I did.”

The layout of this model led to it being classified as a disguised pylon type here in the U.K. Pioneering vintage flyer, Jack Law, fell foul of this ruling when he Spearhead Senior was disqualified after winning the Morley Cabin Duration competition some years ago! Jack’s experiences with the design clearly illustrate the dilemma facing builders of these early American gas models – should they be flown in the original manner with the appropriate petrol engine or be fitted with a smaller diesel to make a nice sport model? Jack notes: “I originally intended to fit a Cameron 19 glow converted spark ignition, but ended up with an Indian Mills 1.3, which was just right for sport flying – the plans show a Vivell 35 installed.”

Not being into petrol engines, I opted for Jack's approach with my Spearhead Junior and fitted it with a Doonside Mills 0.75. It flies quite happily, if rather more sedately than Jerry's original with this motor and has, I suspect, a rather better glide than the heavier gas-engine version. It certainly needs the cheapo-based DT, which is fitted. It has recently been re-engined with an Nfi ED Bee.

Yogi, 1943

This is surely one of the most unusual competition models ever designed with its high-mounted pusher engine and twin fins. Jerry recalls that it originally had a tricycle undercarriage and a single fin. The Yogi was extremely successful and was published in Model Airplane News magazine's October 1944 issue. It was also kitted by Eagle.

Swami, 1944

The Swami is another very distinctive Stoloff design, characterized by the gull wing and twin fins. The plan appeared in July 1944 and shows all the typical Stoloff constructional features. It is perhaps my personal favorite of Jerry's designs, but I have not gotten around to building one, yet. Ted, however, has built both of the above and here are his comments on them:

"A year or so ago I bought a friend's collection of about 20 years of Model Airplane News magazines. Out of all the plans they contained I found the unusual appearance of both the Yogi and Swami absolutely irresistible, so I scaled up the plans and built them.

"The Yogi I powered with a Frog 1.49 Vibramafic. It needed quite a lot of weight in the nose to compensate for the missing ignition components, so does not benefit from the usual advantage of fitting a diesel. Trimming initially was rather hairy until I found I had not built the right incidence into the mount. Once corrected it became very docile and is now flying quite happily with only a PAW 80. From launch, it flies straight and level for about 20 yards, then goes into its climb. Apparently, the original did just the same, although with an Ohlsson 23 it must have gone rather faster!

"Swami I built for the Mills MKIL and it is one of those rare models that flew straight off the board with no trimming. It seems to have no vice and can fly either right or left with no discernible ill effects. Climb is surprisingly fast in wide circles and the glide, like the Yogi, is good enough to warrant fitting a DT. Both models, of course, have a distinctive character – on the ground or in the air, they just can't be mistaken for anything else!"

Bulldozer, 1945

This selection of Jerry Stoloff's power designs ends more or less where we came in with a straightforward rugged cabin model. Published in Model Airplane News magazine's May 1945 issue, Bulldozer was primarily designed for beginners in the gas model field. It has many features in common with the Diamond Demon and is obviously an ideal design for its intended purpose. It is enjoying a renaissance in the form of a larger Radio Control version being flown by Jerry's club mates in Florida.

Acknowledgments

To David Baker, Keith Harris, Thomas Ogden and Peter Spence for providing material, information and encouragement. Keith Harris also provided valuable assistance with the plan reproduction facilities.

To Jerry Stoloff for providing much of the information and archive material necessary for the production of this article. I hope that his reward will be to know that vintage flyers all around the world will continue to enjoy building and flying his unique designs.

References

- Article taken from SAM 35 Yearbook, Number 10
- Jerry Stoloff
- R.S. Knight
- Mike Parker

(signed) Mike Parker and Ted Smales

Jerry submitted the following comments on his designs in September 2002.

Comments on Looks, Weight and Ease of Construction

Jerry says he has always liked to have models that looked good. This is why most of his designs do not have the “pylon look” that was so prevalent during the 1930s and early 1940s. The Diamond Demon was designed with simplicity uppermost in his mind. Jerry believes he was one of the first model designers to utilize the crutch type construction. The crutch fuselage method of building made it possible to keep the design light and reduced the building time without strength suffering.

As to model weight, Jerry has three rules for modelers:

1. Keep it light.
2. Do not build it heavy.
3. Make sure it does not weigh too much!

Jerry felt that building time was important because Free Flight models were lost quite frequently, as many modelers did not use dethermalizers.

The Yehudi – 1939

The Yehudi was designed for both Class A and B with a simple change of the engine. Another design criterion was to create a model with no nose moment so that a much tighter turn would be obtained in the glide and thus have a model that would stay in thermals longer and be visible for a greater length of time. The no nose moment of the Yehudi kept the C.G. well back and the low thrust line tended to pivot the airplane below the center of drag so that the airplane achieved a

nose-up attitude in the climb. The Yehudi was sold to Model Airplane News magazine (Mr. McLaren was the editor at the time), but the design was never published.

The Yehudi was very similar to Sal Taibi's Pacer design.

The Spearhead Designs

The Spearhead designs (Senior and Junior) were sized for Classes A, B, and small C engines. They were also crutch-type fuselage models with cabin-like pylons and slightly longer nose moments. Jerry won many events with both of these designs, which prompted Eagle Model Aircraft Company to buy the designs and kit both of the Spearhead models.

The Yogi Design

This is one of Jerry's more unusual designs. The Yogi incorporated several unusual features, such as pusher rather than tractor pull for engine orientation and twin rudders out on the end of the horizontal stabilizer, which kept them free of the propeller stream and minimized the tendency for the plane to loop during high angles of attack. The Yogi was powered by a Bantam in Class A events. The Yogi was purchased by Model Airplane News magazine and Eagle Model Company often referred to it as one of the top winners and one of the most innovative designs of its time. The Yogi is a very stable design and one that is easy to trim for flight.

One of those little known facts regarding the Yogi is that it originally had tricycle gear and a single rudder and stabilizer. The last version was the best performing of the two.

The Invader Design

The Invader model was designed especially for the new Atom Engine that had just come into the market. Jerry designed the model for Continental Model Airplane Company. The Invader was basically a pylon model with a diamond fuselage high-life airfoil (Ritz-Skyscraper) with a cathedral stabilizer, which gave the model added stability in the glide. Again, a single wheel was used to keep the model weight and drag at a minimum.

Jerry's Background, Publications and Kits

Jerry Stoloff was born in Brooklyn, New York, on December 21, 1920. He has been active in modeling since he was 8-years-old. He has built hand-launched gliders, rubber-powered Free Flight and started building gas-powered models at the age of 14. Jerry is a charter member of the Brooklyn Skyscrapers as well as a charter member of the Tambe Model Airplane Club at age 15. He spent much of his early flying days competing and flying with other notable members of the Brooklyn Skyscrapers, i.e., Sal Taibi, Leon Shulman, Scotty Murray and Norm Rosenstock, to name a few.

Jerry designed a number of Free Flight models that were published and/or kitted:

1937: Jerry designed the Diamond Demon Class A model, which was kitted by Bay Ridge Model Company and sold for \$1.50. Sal Taibi built the design and set an AMA record with it.

1938: Presto Liner U-Control plastic fuselage

1939: Designed the Yehudi, which he sold to Model Airplane News magazine

1940: Designed the Invader, which was sold to Continental Model Company. Jerry flew his with an Atom Engine.

1941: Invader, Continental Model Airplane Company, Free Flight

1942: Designed the Spearhead Senior and Junior, which were kitted by Eagle Model Airplane Company.

1942: Designed the Doodlebug, which was published in Flying Aces magazine and was a tailless rubber-powered model.

1943: Designed the Yogi, which he sold to Eagle Model Company.

1944: Swami, Model Airplane News magazine, Free Flight

1945: Bulldozer, Model Airplane News magazine, Free Flight

1945: Floats, Model Airplane News magazine, Free Flight used on Yehudi

1958: Spirit, Consolidated Model Airplane Company, Radio Control

1959: Houdini, Model Airplane News magazine, Radio Control



*Jerry's red wing Diamond Demon
and orange wing Yehudi*



August 1992: Jerry Stoloff



Jerry's orange wing Yogi



Jerry's Swami



Jerry's Yehudi



The framework for Jerry's Spearhead Junior



Jerry's high wing Spearhead Junior and mid-wing Swami



Jerry's Spearhead Senior

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