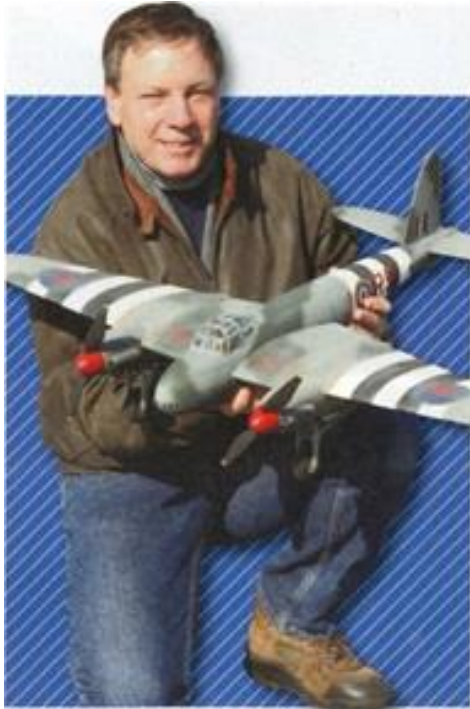


Written by RH (2020), transcribed and reformatted by JS (03/2020)

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Rob Caso with his 37-inch deHavilland D.H. 98 Mosquito which features flaps and retracts. Photo by Tom Droege.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TREE LINE: Rachelle Haughn interviews Rob Caso

If this is not your first issue of Park Pilot, chances are that you've read Rob Caso's name. His "Scale" column dives into a side of modeling that new pilots might not have explored: building. He fell in love with scale models as a boy and has been building them ever since. Rob stepped away from his workbench for a few minutes to share some insights about his hobby.

Rachelle Haughn: *How did you get started building scale models and what was the first one that you built?*

Rob Caso: I read all of the hardcover World War II aircraft books of the day when I was a kid. *Great American Fighter Pilots of WWII* and *The Flying Tigers* were two of them. I still have the books, with "1965" penciled in them - I was 9!

So, that did it for me - I just had to build models of the airplanes! I remember doing many plastic models and still do them today, sometimes as a reference for my more serious RC scale subjects.

The one I remember [building first] was a CL (Control Line) Hellcat powered by an .049 glow engine when I was about 9 to 10. It was a kit, having pre-formed balsa fuselage halves that you glued together with Ambroid. I remember also painting it with blue dope. My dad, who was a CL modeler and later flew RC, helped me with it and flew it for me the first time.

RH: *What do you enjoy about building scale aircraft?*

RC: The history and attempting to replicate realism. But it's really more than that - it's the challenge, the problem-solving, the need to innovate, and the fact that you have to become [an]

expert in so many things to be a successful scale modeler.

So, ultimately, it's the learning and skill-building experience that keeps me coming back. The problem for me is that there are too many airplanes that I like. Mark Frankel [a fellow scale modeler] says that scale modeling is the pinnacle of the hobby, and I agree with him.

***RH:** What's the most detailed aircraft that you've built?*

RC: My Hansa-Brandenburg W.12 is the most detailed model that I have recently done, although there have been others. It took about a year on and off to design, build, and detail.

I think the biggest problem for me is knowing when to stop. Not every model can be - or has to be - a "masterpiece." But my overall goal is to make an RC flying scale model as accurate and as detailed as a good plastic model, and as realistic as an in-service, full-scale example. I never get there, but I keep trying!

***RH:** Why do you like writing for Park Pilot?*

RC: I have been engaged in this hobby uninterrupted for almost 55 years. I like "giving back" to the other modelers who perhaps don't have as much experience. I also try to show that what I do oftentimes is not really that hard. I also feel that the "hands-on" experience is enhanced by the great technology that we have today - electric motors, laser cutting, 3D printing, and CAD design for example. The hands-on skills and the technology complement each other, and it's never been a better time to be a scale modeler. Everyone should build at least one scale model.

***RH:** Do you build anything besides scale model airplanes?*

RC: I still do plastic models quite a bit and these include tanks and motorcycles – not just airplanes. While technically not "building" per se, I have been known to restore old Ducati and BMW motorcycles, as well as old Porsche 911s, including paint. I have found that the skills needed for modeling and restoration are mostly interchangeable. Success is in getting the details right.

***RH:** Have you ever won a scale model aircraft competition?*

RC: I have [placed] well at WRAM [Westchester Radio AeroModelers; recently known as AMA East] shows. I took second in Designer Scale [at the Toledo Show: R/C Model Expo] in Toledo, Ohio, a few years ago, and have a couple of awards for some of my plastic models. I've been invited to Top Gun [an RC Scale contest in Lakeland, Florida], but I don't have the model for it.

***RH:** After you have finished a model, what does it feel like to maiden it?*

RC: I rarely maiden a new scale model. The few times that I have done it were terrifying! My preference is to find a person who can successfully land "a streamlined crowbar" and ask him to fly the thing the first time - guys like Jim Noel, Dan Landis, and Billy Jameson.

Amazingly, most of my models fly pretty well. The biggest surprises of all were my two Bulldog racers which, at first glance, look like crashes waiting for a place to happen. Both of them flew beautifully, and I'm working on another one now in a larger scale. But I think I enjoy my scale models the most when somebody else is flying them!

RH: Have any of your aircraft designs been published?

RC: Just about all of the scale RC models I have made are my own design. I have had a number of them published in *Flying Models*, *Fly RC*, *RC Modeler*, *Model Airplane News*, and *RCM&E*, a British magazine. My Avro Avian was published in *RCM&E* in late 2019.

RH: What do you hope to build some day?

RC: My standard response to this question is, "I'll never live long enough to build all of the airplanes that I want to build!" Since the Fieseler Storch is my favorite, I want to make one with a scale framework using stainless tube, similar to Paolo Severin's model, but in 1/6-scale. Ditto for a large Lysander.

RH: What's the most common question that people ask you about your models?

RC: The big one is "Is that a kit?" Others include "Where did you get the pilot?" and "Does that thing really fly?" And perhaps the most infamous, "Why didn't you make it bigger?" The answers are "No, but I could make you one;" "I made everything but the head;" "Yes;" and "This one fits in my pickup."

RH: What's your day job?

RC: My wife and I have a small leadership-development consulting firm, but I used to be a public company chief financial officer in the biotech and pharmaceutical industries. People ask me if I am a certified public accountant. I answer "Yes, and I couldn't pass again"

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