



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of ROBERT DUNHAM



Written by AMA Staff (01/2001); Edited by JS (12/2005)

The following biography, written by the AMA History Project (at the time called the AMA History Program) staff, was published in the February 2000 issue of Model Aviation magazine. Edward received the 1999 Hall of Fame award post-mortem.

Robert Dunham

Robert Dunham died in 1995 and was survived by his wife and teenage children. His aeromodeling activity covered fifty years.

He was a charter member of the South Gate Skylarks Model Airplane Club, organized in 1947. Then he was active in flying Control Line, both Stunt and Speed.

In the early 1950s, Bob founded the radio control company known as Orbit RC Inc. The company headquarters and manufacturing operations were in Downey, California. The first Orbit products were single-channel systems using electro-mechanical escapements provided by his good friend, Howard Bonner.

Orbit equipment became a major supplier of equipment in 1955 when they produced one of the first 10-channel systems utilizing a reed bank in the receiver. With this system, it was possible to provide five separate control functions.

Orbit equipment continued to become more popular throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Gradually, however, the introduction of imported systems resulted in a decline for the company. Bob moved to Lake Havasu City, AZ and continued to produce components for other manufacturers.

Bob was a major competitor in contests, taking him all over the world. One highly publicized event occurred when he, along with Dr. Ralph Brooke and others, flew RC models from the deck of a Navy aircraft carrier. This resulted in valuable exposure for the hobby/sport and helped extend the rapport developed between AMA and the Navy.

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