



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of ROBERT (BOB) GIALDINI

Born December 18, 1932      Modeler since 1939  
AMA #L3120



Written & Submitted by CH (12/1999); Transcribed by NH (12/1999); Edited by SS (2002), Updated by JS (12/2007), Reformatted by JS (01/2010)

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## Career:

- 1960-1987: Guest speaker-promoting modeling at Rotary, Kiwanis and Optimists Clubs
- 1960-1965: Adviser to the Waukesha Optimist Club (Wisconsin) youth, teaching model building and flying
- Conducted model building seminars over the past 15 years in Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Minneapolis, Peoria, Illinois, Detroit and Cedar Rapids, Michigan
- Accrued 48 first-place trophies in stunt and several wins and laces in combat at more than 60 local, regional, national and international meets over a period of 11 years

## Honors:

- 1996: Precision Aerobatics Model Pilot Association Hall of Fame
- 2000: Model Aviation Hall of Fame
- AMA Life Member

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*The following was printed in the February 2001 issue of Model Aviation magazine, after Bob's induction into the Model Aviation Hall of Fame.*

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Robert Gialdini, 67, has spent more than a half-century in aeromodeling. His primary area of interest originally was in Control Line Precision Aerobatics.

Since the late 1950s, he has been a competitor, designer, and official, both nationally and internationally. He served as an FAI World Championship judge in 1966, 1976, and 1992. At these events, Gialdini worked diligently at being an ambassador of good will while working with officials from around the world.

As a competitor, he won the open event and the Walker Cup at the 1963 and 1965 National Aeromodeling Championships (Nats). In other Nats, he finished third, fourth, fifth, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>.

He was recognized for his natty appearance in the center of the circle, dressed totally in pristine white clothes and shoes. Upon his induction (1996) into the Precision Aerobatics Model Pilot's Association (PAMPA) Hall of Fame, he was said to have pioneered the "Processional Look" at the Nats.

In addition to many Nats wins, Gialdini also placed third at the FAI F2B World Championships, 1964 in Budapest, Hungary, leading the United States to a team victory.

As a designer, he has had a variety of plans published. These include the *Olympic MKVI* in 1963 and the *Stingray* in 1965 (Control Line). He also product reviewed the *Atlanta .60* in 1985 (Radio Control).

He pioneered the use of mufflers long before they were required, having won the 1965 F2B event at the Nats with a muffler-equipped model. It was fitted to another model of his design, the *Eclipse*.

Throughout a long period, he worked at promoting sound reduction programs. Two of Gialdini's models, including the *Eclipse*, are currently in AMA's National Model Aviation Museum.

He served as president of the Devil Creek Flyers, Inc. from 1991-1998. On several occasions, he served as a Contest Director for local meets, and in 1963, he managed the F2B Team Selection event.

In recent years, Gialdini has worked diligently at establishing a stronger bond between the AMA and the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA). This led to his developing a proposal to host an FAI Control Line World Championship at the Oshkosh home of EAA.

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*The following biography was taken from a Model Aviation Hall of Fame application submitted by Charles K. Holtzapple on March 21, 1988.*

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#### Hall of Fame nomination of Mr. Robert Gialdini

Board of Past Presidents:

I should like to have the committee consider the following information in its review of the previously submitted nominations of Mr. Robert Gialdini for the Academy's Hall of Fame:

I. As we all know, noise control has become a paramount issue among participants in our industry. Regarding the same, I wish to share an excerpt from a letter to Mr. Howard Crispin, District IV VP and author of "Sound and Model Aeronautics," from Bob Gialdini (Nov. 11, 1988):

"In 1963, I was working as a consultant to one of our largest chains of hobby stores in Wisconsin, while flying Control Line aerobatics, looking for new products, teem-racing their quality as well as their marketability... I ordered a selection (of British mufflers) to fit various sized engines to do research as to their worth...

"At that time, I was flying a large Control Line model of my own design called the *Eclipse* (Note: This model is presently on display at the AMA Museum. [CKH]), powered with a Veco .45, and decided to fit one of these mufflers to the model. The year was 1965 and the Nationals were held at the N.A.S. Willow Grove, PA. I took first place in open stunt as well as the Walker trophy with this model with a muffler, the first one used at Nationals, to my knowledge.

“Very shortly after the Nationals, the AMA sent a couple of individuals to Milwaukee to personally see and measure the (sound) levels produced by the .45 Veco as well as a .35 size I had then installed in my 1963 Nationals winner...”

Bob was a pioneer in addressing the then prospective and now prominent problem of noise control. What happened between 1965 and 1989? Bob's gospel apparently fell upon deaf ears in 1965; 20-plus years hence his message has become clear, unfortunately at the expense of a multitude of flyers who have lost their sites because of noise.

After a moderate sabbatical from the hobby, Bob returned, flying Radio Controlled (RC) primarily, but continuing his research in this very important area of concern. (Bob tackles the noise control problem in detail in a soon-to-be-published *Flying Models* article.)

II. Since its inception, the EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association) has been an organization of National focus. Thousands visit the air spectacle in Oshkosh annually, many of whom share fervid interest in aviation in general.

Bob has recently assisted greatly in orchestrating and coordinating a bond between the EAA and model aviation, in conjunction with the AMA. Carl Swickley (curator of the EAA museum), Paul Poberezny (founder of the EAA), and Ken Poberezny (EAA member and Christen Eagles pilot) can attest to Bob's service and diligent work in establishing a mutual bond between the EAA and model aviation. This, I believe, is a most relevant avenue to approach aircraft enthusiasts, add a touch of aeromodeling flavor, and ultimately invite new folks into the Academy.

### **Designer/Experimenter**

Bob Gialdini authored a landmark stunt article in the 1963 *American Modeler Annual* entitled, “Olympic Mk. VI.” The editor of the publication stated this of Bob's discourse: “Take our word for it: this is absolutely the most provocative and illuminating report ever to appear in print on the subject of C/Line Aerobatics.”

### **Writer/Editor/Publisher (Magazine articles)**

Bob has written for publication the following articles:

- 1) 1963: *Olympic Mk. VI (American Modeler Annual)*
- 2) 1964: *Sting Ray (American Modeler)*
- 3) 1965: *Rayette (American Modeler)*
- 4) 1986: *Atlanta 60 (Flying Models)*

### **Collateral information regarding Bob Gialdini's service and activity**

(Items #1 through #5 appear on reverse side of nomination form under “Supporting Remarks.”)

- 6) Cited in a letter from John Worth and the Academy in 1963 “...for the outstanding stunt demonstration staged at the National Model Airplane Championships...”

- 7) Conferred upon and awarded “by reason of demonstrated leadership in model aeronautics” the grade of Contest Director/Leader by the Academy in March 1965.
- 8) Conferred upon and awarded membership in the grade of Control Line Judge/Contest Director by the Academy in February 1976.
- 9) Recipient of the PAMPA (Precision Aerobatics Model Pilots Association) Service Award at Dayton, Ohio in 1977.
- 10) Featured in numerous newspaper articles in the Greater Milwaukee area for his service, dedication, and accomplishments in model aeronautics.
- 11) Replaced active competition with local contest judging (1967 through 1972).
- 12) Served as judge of F2B Precision Aerobatics at the World Championships in England in 1966.
- 13) Served as head judge of Precision Aerobatics at the AMA Nationals in Lake Charles, Louisiana (1974).
- 14) Served as head Judge of Precision Aerobatics at the AMA Nationals in Lake Charles, Louisiana (1975).
- 15) Served as judge for the F2B Team Selections in Dayton, Ohio (1975).
- 16) Served as Judge of F2B Precision Aerobatics at the World Championships in Utrecht, Holland (1976).
- 17) Served as head judge of Precision Aerobatics at the AMA Nationals in Dayton, Ohio (1976).
- 18) Has consistently ventured far beyond the call of duty to provide inspiration, consultation, and generosity on behalf of model aeronautics, for its propagation and ultimate perpetuation.

### **Point of View**

As the nominator of Mr. Robert Gialdini for the [Model Aviation] Hall of Fame, I should like to render some personal sentiments.

I have always known Bob, or so it seems. However, recently I have come to know him personally. He really is not the god-like, monolithic figure whom I pictured as a teenager, but rather a very down-to-earth, wholesome individual whose devotion to the Academy and its principles is unsurpassed. He is a gentleman and a friend to each and all, conscientious and dedicated in every concern.

Bob has humbly expressed to me his appreciation to the Academy for all that it has done for him. He has always been an inspiration and an excellent representative of modeling, and the information presented herein is, I believe, evidence of Bob's incredible worth and interminable desire to serve the Academy as a payback, in a manner of speaking.

I should like to commend to the attention of the committee three very significant items:

First, please be aware that the editors of Sports Illustrated magazine chose to publish a profile on Bob Gialdini and Control Line aerobatics. In this four-page review labeled “Pilot with Feet on the Ground,” by Hal Higdon (September 21, 1964, pp. E13, E14, E17, and E18), the author conveys to millions of readers the nature of precision aerobatics – as an international sport. The

article also illuminates the domestic side of Bob and introduces to the readers the governing body of modeling, the Academy of Model Aeronautics, as well. In essence, author Higdon characterizes model aviation impressively, due much to Bob's representation and friendly persuasion.

Secondly, I must relate a most honorable gesture by Bob at the 1960 Dallas Nationals. It was during this event that Bob exemplified the fine character of modelers in general as he informed the judges of an unnoticed error in his flight performance. Consequently, the subsequent re-evaluation of his flight performance deducted significant points from his pattern score, dropping him from first to tenth place. For his noble revelation Bob was awarded the June Pearce Sportsmanship Award, which he venerates above all of his many honors.

Finally, I elect to focus upon our Academy's museum, which proudly displays Bob's famous Eclipse and Sting Ray competition models. An intangible part of Bob is harbored within these two creations – indeed, priceless treasures that radiate an aura of Precision Aerobatics' own Wisconsin Patriarch.

Leader Member, Contest Director, Control line Judge, RC Judge, AMA Life Member, Author, Designer, Class Competitor, Sportsman and Gentleman...distinctions modestly possessed by Mr. Robert Gialdini...recognitions which all of us in model aviation would be proud to proclaim. We are fortunate to have had Bob among us for these countless years. He has truly left his mark through his incredible devotion toward modeling. I am genuinely honored and privileged to present this nomination, and I extend the sincere appreciation of Bob's vast contingent of admirers to the Academy and to the Hall of Fame committee for its consideration.

## **Competitor**

Bob Gialdini has been an active competitor for the best part of five decades, beginning in 1939 at age seven and continuing to the present. A listing of significant contests is enumerated below:

- 1) 1939 - Free Flight; Dayton, Ohio.
- 2) 1958 - Control Line aerobatics; Chicago, Illinois; AMA Nationals; fourth place.
- 3) 1960 - Control Line aerobatics; Dallas, Texas; AMA Nationals; tenth place.
- 4) 1961 - Control Line aerobatics; Willow Grove, Pennsylvania; AMA Nationals; third place.
- 5) 1963 - Control Line aerobatics; Los Alamitos, California; AMA Nationals; first place and recipient of the Walker Cup trophy.
- 6) 1964 - Control Line aerobatics; Budapest, Hungary; World Championships; third place.
- 7) 1965 - Control Line aerobatics; Willow Grove, Pennsylvania; AMA Nationals; first place and recipient of the Walker Cup trophy for a second term.
- 8) 1966 - Control Line scale; Swinderby Field, England; World Championships; first place flying (by proxy) Warren McZura's 1966 Scale Nationals-winning Bearcat in the first non-official world scale competition.
- 9) 1965 - Control Line aerobatics; Dayton, Ohio; World Championship Team Selection Finals; fourth place.

- 10) 1973 - Control Line aerobatics; Oshkosh, Wisconsin; AMA Nationals; tenth place.
- 11) 1973 - Control Line aerobatics; St. Louis, Missouri; World Championship Team Selection Finals; fifth place.

In addition to the events listed above, Bob has participated in microfilm Free Flight fun fly competition (1947 - 1952) and FAI power Free Flight at Bong Air Force Base in Wisconsin. In addition, Bob won the Free Flight Winter Jamboree in Breen Bay, Wisconsin four consecutive years (1961 - 1965).

In multi-event local contests, Bob participated in rat racing and combat, where he accumulated 16 trophies (1959 - 1966).

Most recently, Bob has been involved with RC model aircraft. Since 1983, he has finished in either first or second place flying in the Sportsman category of RC Pattern competition locally (Devil Creek Flyers, Waukesha, Wisconsin).

### **Designs used by others**

Among his noteworthy creations, Bob's Olympic series has garnered him the most favorable notoriety as an outstanding stunt design.

Dick Snyder, of Dallastown, Pennsylvania, built and competitively flew a Gialdini Olympic through eight contest seasons. He successfully piloted his Olympic to three first-place finishes, seven second, and third-place positions in various Eastern U.S. contests. (Of Dick's many competitive stunt ships, his Olympic was his very best, in his own words, and he has carefully preserved it for posterity's sake.)

Claus Maikis, a perennial F2B pilot for West Germany and popular author and designer, recalls the popularity of Gialdini's Olympic on the European scene: "The Olympic was built in innumerable variations (by me, too). The most famous version over here was Billon's Olympus which on his side has influenced the French scene until today."

I, too, have been influenced by Gialdini designs. Although an Olympic has not yet been a part of my repertoire of stunt ships, I have constructed a downsized version of Bob's Sting Ray. Flown in competition during the 1984 season, this ship has earned for me three first-place and one second-place trophy in Advanced Precision Aerobatics.

Finally, I wish to suggest to the committee that the AMA will be remiss, should my nominee, Bob Gialdini, not be inducted after this, his fourth consecutive nomination. Bob most definitely fits the bill in "...the field of development...club life, contest organization and so on..." ("Hall of Fame - A Singular Honor," Model Aviation. April 1989, p. 109). The "...and so on..." in Bob's case, is extensive and reflects such intangibles as his heart and soul, his love and dedication to model aviation and to the Academy over many, many years.

Gentlemen, please carefully review the previous nomination forms submitted by Mr. Bob Hunt and myself, along with last year's and this year's addenda, and induct this candidate on his meritorious tenure in model aviation.

Respectfully submitted,  
Charles K. Holtzapple  
AMA 20838  
F28 Team Selection Committee

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