



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of RON BUSCH



Written by Balsa USA staff (05/2009), transcribed & reformatted by KE and JS (10/2011)

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Aeromodeling Loses and Industry Pioneer—Ron Busch

The RC model airplane community has lost one of its greats. Ron Busch—founder and owner of Balsa USA—passed away quietly on Thursday January 22, 2009, after a short illness.

Some years ago, Ron transferred Balsa USA's day-to-day operations to Ronae Busch, his daughter, and Mark Endeby, a longtime friend and shop foreman, but his presence will be sorely missed nonetheless.

Although Ron did his best to avoid the limelight, his trailblazing efforts in the development of what we know today as "Giant Scale" modeling was invaluable to our hobby. In a time when a 60-size model was considered big and most RC models were powered with .20- or .40-size engines, Ron insisted on the development of what were, at the time, outrageously large 1/4- and even 1/3-scale models!

Following is a timeline of Ron Busch's successful history in aeromodeling.

- Joy Products, 1946: Ron started this company, making hand-launch gliders and other small models, including a small helicopter.
- Joy Products, 1950: Production changes to include manufacturing of gaskets, small stamped metal parts, and 1/2A CL kits.
- Joy Products, 1969: Productions of non-model-related products falters; Ron concentrates on producing both CL and FF 1/2A models.
- Joy Products, early 1970s: Ron moves the company to its present location, stops producing non-model-related products, starts cutting sheet and balsa stick wood for hobby shops and model builders, and expands model productions to include RC models. He enters Precision Scale with his Curtiss JN-4 Jenny and then introduces the Swizzle Stick, which is soon followed by the Excalibur, Moonraker, and Smoothie.
- Joy Products, 1973: Ron introduces Giant Scale modeling with the 1/4-scale Piper J-3 Cub. He also brings out the original Phaeton biplane.
- Joy Products. 1975: Walt Moucha is hired and designs the 1/3-scale Sopwith Pup that is released in 1976.
- Joy Products/Balsa USA, mid-1970s: Ron starts a sister company to Joy Products—Balsa USA—as a mail-order hobby shop. He buys the rights to Laddie Mikulasko's Northstar, Enforcer, and the Force One. He also introduces the Taube and the Bristol M-1.

- Balsa USA, late 1970s: Ron absorbs Joy Products into Balsa USA and expands the building. Ron continues his Giant Scale efforts with the Aeronca C-3, the Piper L-4 (the military version of the Piper Club), and the 1/3-scale Morane A-1.
- Balsa USA, early 1980s: Ron expands the building again; updates some of his older kits, which results in the Phaeton II; and brings out a line of gliders. He continues Giant Scale with models such as the Der Jager and the 1/3-scale Fly Baby biplane.
- Balsa USA, mid-1980s: Ron offers the Piper J-3 Cub in 1/3-scale, followed by the 1/3-scale PA-18 Super Cub. He also introduces a line of sport models to include the EZ-200 (biplane version), Thunderbug 40, and Stingray 40.
- Balsa USA, late 1980s: Ron introduces more Giant Scale models, including a 1/3-scale, low-wing Fly Baby with true-to-scale folding wings.
- Balsa USA, early 1990s: Ron expands the building once more and introduces the 1/3-scale Stearman PT-17 as well as larger versions of many of his most popular kits, such as the Taube, the Phaeton, the Stingray, and the Thunderbug.
- Balsa USA, mid-1990s: Ron updates all of the company's kits with photo-illustrated instruction books.
- Balsa USA, mid-1990s: Ron revives WW I model aviation with the introduction of the Eindecker 90.
- Balsa USA, 2000: Ron hires Dave Lewis as designer.
- Balsa USA, mid-2000s: The company's daily operations are transferred to Ronae Busch (Ron's daughter) and Mark Enderby (shop foreman). Balsa USA continues with its line of 1/4-scale WW I models, reintroduces the Monrane A-1, and brings out several new 1/3-scale WW I models.
- Balsa USA, late 2000s: Balsa USA introduces a 1/6-scale line of popular WW I kits.

Following are the release dates of Balsa USA's designs.

- Eindecker 90: October 1999
- 1/4-scale Sopwith Pup: June 2000
- 1/4-scale Fokker Dr.I: March 2001
- 1/4-scale Nieuport 28: October 2001
- 1/4-scale Nieuport 17: February 2002
- 1/4-scale S.E.5a: March 2003
- 1/4-scale Fokker D. VII: February 2004
- 1/3-scale Ercoupe: September 2004
- 1/4-scale Nieuport 11: February 2005
- 1/4- and 1/3-scale Guns: April 2005
- 1/3-scale Morane A-1: January 2006*
- 1/3-scale Fokker D.VII: February 2006
- 1/3-scale Nieuport 17: March 2007
- 1/6-scale Sopwith Pup: September 2007
- 1/6-scale Nieuport 17: March 2008

*Rerelease

Although Ron is no longer with us, his presence will play a part in every decision that is made on behalf of Balsa USA. The company will continue to run and operate in the same way it has for the last 40 years.

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