



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of JOHN DELAGRANGE

Born June 27, 1932 Started modeling in 1942
AMA #61204



Written & Submitted by JD (04/1998); Transcribed by NR (07/2001); Edited & Reformatted by SS (10/2002)

Career:

- Designed and built a Control Line speed model that he believes was the first speed Control Line model to be flown in a park in Seoul, Korea
- His Air Force friend took the model to Japan and flew it to second place in the Far East Command contest at Tachikawa
- Started Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) Chapter 100, The Second Chance Squadron in 1988
- Served as president and newsletter editor of SAM 100 from 1988 to 1998

Honors:

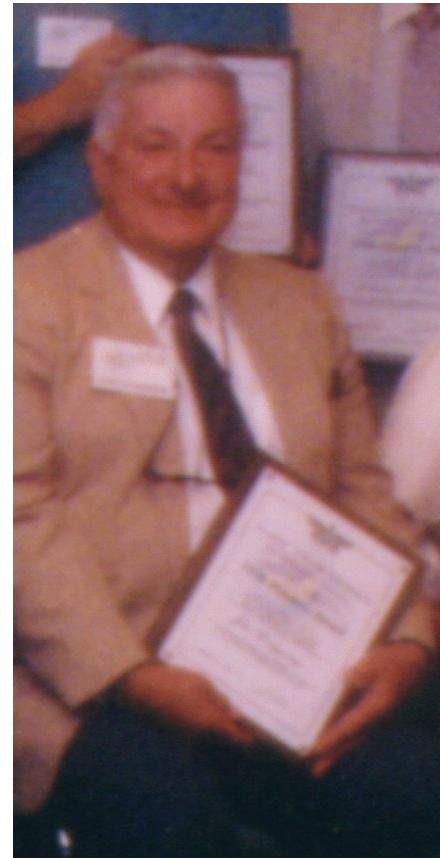
- 1998: AMA Pioneers Award
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I was born June 27, 1932. At age six, I was fascinated with airplanes and I loved to draw them – an early discipline that was to have an impact on my life's work as a graphic designer of packaging and displays.

I built my first model airplanes from scrap wood that my father, a patternmaker, brought home from the shop. They were of solid construction at first and then progressed into stick and tissue. My father taught me to use his home workshop tools, band saw, circular saw, lathe, and drill press when I was only 12-years-old. I can still hear him telling me, "A sharp tool is a safe tool."

During the war years my father saw to it that I always had a model kit or a block of balsa (mighty scarce at that time) to build. The wonderful National Model Aviation Museum hobby shop display brings back memories of my father and me on his payday, going to get another model kit or materials to build another model. I turned out models at a prolific rate and my school homework suffered as a result.

From 1941 through 1948, I had built and flown scores of model aircraft – rubber Free Flight, scale, Control Line, stunt, speed and a few cars and boats (tether). Model building came to an abrupt halt when I discovered girls.



I married Catherine Marie Betts in 1952. The Korean conflict changed my immediate plans as I went off to the Army in March of 1952, trained as an aerial photo interpreter, went to Korea, and was stationed at Kimpo air base. After the cease-fire was signed in the summer of 1953, I had time on my hands to build models again. My wife sent my McCoy 60 (white case). I promptly designed and built a Control Line speed model that I believe was the first speed Control Line model to be flown in a park in Seoul, Korea! My Air Force buddy took my model to Japan and flew it to second place in the Far East Command contest at Tachikawa.

I returned home in February of 1954. No time for model airplanes from 1954 until 1973. Katie gave me six wonderful children, five girls and a boy. I decided it was time to introduce my son to model airplane building and flying. As you might guess, he wasn't too interested but I got the bug once again. I joined AMA, National Free Flight Society (NFFS), and Society of Antique Modelers (SAM). I went to my first SAM Champs in 1987 at Seguin Texas. I started SAM Chapter 100, The Second Chance Squadron, in 1988. I served as president and newsletter editor from 1988 to 1998.

To me, the most rewarding part of modeling is celebrating and recognizing the pioneers of our hobby. I believe that holding special contests and gatherings such as this [the AMA's Celebration of Eagles held in 1998] to pay tribute to these men is a fitting and proper thing to do. Hall of Famers were such a positive influence on me when I was a young man, I feel that I owe much of my success in life to these pioneers, and to my father, who put the tools in my hands and gave me his love.

*Respectfully submitted:
John C, Delagrange
April 14, 1998*

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