



# The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of TERRY EDMONDS

Born January 14, 1945 Started modeling in 1957  
AMA #9438



Written & Submitted by TE (02/2003); Transcribed & Edited by SS (02/2003)

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## Career:

- Won first place at numerous Nationals (Nats), including in senior ½-A gas at his first Nats in 1962
  - Received his private pilot license at age 20
  - Flew mainly competition pattern and competition soaring throughout the 1960s and 1970s; eventually began to concentrate more on Radio Control soaring
  - Designed various models including the Callisto, the Europa and the IO; the plans were published in Model Aviation magazine throughout the 1980s
  - Culpepper Models kitted his Callisto and IO
  - Won the first ever Lee Renaud Memorial Award for top overall soaring score at the 1985 Nats
  - Became the United States' CIAM Radio Control soaring representative in 1989
  - Served as chairman of the United States' FAI Radio Control soaring team selection committee from 1997 to 1999
  - Member of the CIAM soaring sub-committee since 1990
  - Has written articles for various magazines including Model Aviation, Radio Control Technique (Japan), CIAM Flyer, Scale Slope & FAI and Radio Control Soaring Digest
  - Member of the Iowa City Aerohawks from 1957 to 1984; served in most club offices
  - Helped organize the Eastern Iowa Soaring Society in 1983; served as newsletter editor for the first few years and was a member of the club team that won the Dan Pruss Sailplane Team Award at the 1997 Nats
  - Has directed numerous Radio Control sailplane contest and hosts an annual contest at his own flying field called the Misty Meadows Soaring Classic
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For as long as I can remember, I have been totally fascinated with things that fly in the atmosphere. I say I began modeling at age 12 in 1957 by purchasing my first gas-powered plastic ½-A Control Line model. Actually, I flew balsa gliders long before that. My parents were not thrilled with my wanting to buy the expensive "toy" airplane. The deal was I had to earn the money by working at 25-cents per hour to do this. That took awhile but I persevered and after going through the usual learning curve of running an engine and flying, I succeeded. Of course, that was just the beginning and I wanted to do a lot more with modeling. My parents quickly realized this was not just a passing fancy with me and began supporting my efforts.

I lived in rural Iowa, which afforded me ample flying sites, but I was somewhat isolated from other modelers. I remember watching full-size aircraft flying overhead and daydreaming about one of them having some sort of trouble and making an emergency landing in my field. Ironically after growing up and moving away from this area someone built a private airport literally next to the property we lived on. Anyway, I began to get some interaction with the Iowa City Aerohawks model airplane club in a nearby city that had some other kids my age. This was great and as a teenager, I became a prolific builder of Control Line and Free Flight models and

later Radio Control. My club friends would even come to my home to fly sometimes because I had the room to fly Free Flight and Radio Control.

I began flying local fun type Control Line and Free Flight contests. I had a good time doing this because of the friendly competitions with the other kids and being able to learn from the more experienced modelers.

In 1962 the Nationals (Nats) was scheduled to be at the Glenview Illinois Naval Air Station and I wanted to go to see the big event I had read and heard so much about. At first, I only wanted to go as a spectator but one of the elders in the model club, Ken Kenyon, encouraged me to enter. I thought this to be a crazy idea; how could a kid like me be competitive in the world's largest contest? After thinking about this for a while I decided this would be a good learning opportunity and proceeded to enter two Free Flight events, 1/2-A gas and towline glider. The days I was to fly turned out to be very windy and everyone was having trouble loosing Free Flight models. In flying the 1/2-A gas event I lost my model on the last flight in a residential area. I was discouraged by this happening, but was having a great time otherwise. The next day was much better with the posting of the results of the previous day indicating I had won first place in senior 1/2-A gas! It was almost unbelievable and to really make my day the Navy contacted me with the news some kind person had found my model and returned it to the air station. By the way, the model was a kit Starduster powered with a Holland Hornet engine.

I still had to fly the towline event and the winds continued. On an early flight, the towline got tangled in the dethermalizing timer. I could not get the towline to release and was forced to release the model with the towline attached. Naturally, the model entered a thermal but would not dethermalize because of the towline jamming the timer. My helper and I chased the model for miles but lost it. I was sure it was a goner.

In those days, the trophy presentations were done by the Navy at the end of the contest. My parents decided to come to Glenview for the awards. When they showed up, they had a big surprise for me with my lost towline glider in the back of the car. It had landed on someone's roof about 20 miles from the air station and the homeowner had called my parents.

The 1962 Nats was an important event in my life because it made me realize I could be a competitive modeler. It was the beginning of many Nats that I would compete in encompassing Free Flight, Control Line and Radio Control. By the next year, I was old enough to be somewhat independent and a buddy and I drove to the 1963 Nats in Dallas. I flew in Free Flight again and also placed. In later years I traveled to many Nats locations, including Louisiana, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Kansas, Washington state, Nevada and, of course, Muncie, Indiana. I attend Nats to this day but I miss the old style where you could see all of the events in one place and especially the Navy hosted events that were grand.

In my mid-teen years, I was fascinated with what was being done in Radio Control. I wanted to get involved but costs were a barrier. So in researching what would be the cheapest way I could get into Radio Control, I purchased a kit for a single-channel hard tube transmitter and receiver. I now had to learn a new skill in electronics but this was good too. I did manage to build this radio and make it work, but it was not very reliable. At this time, new transistor technology was appearing on the market and I scraped up enough money to buy a transistor receiver to go with the radio I already had. This combination was my first successful radio system. A little later on multi-channel reed radios were available but the costs were very high and out of my reach.

Determined to get up to speed in Radio Control, I embarked on a project of scratch building my own reed receiver combined with a reed transmitter kit on the market. I thought this feasible because of a large avionics manufacturer being nearby with a surplus parts store and my brother-in-law working for them as an electronics tech. I actually was successful with this endeavor and flew this radio for several years including competition.

The experimentation I did with the radio control systems turned out to be a significant event in my life. It was the beginning of my career in electrical engineering. Today I am the general manager for the television broadcast department at the University of Iowa. I can truly say modeling was the spark for my professional success.

At age 20 I decided it time I try full-size flying. I took flying lessons and quickly got my private license. I bought an old Luscome airplane and flew that for a while but eventually tabled full-size flying while starting a family.

In the late 1960s my modeling was mostly power Radio Control with Control Line and Free Flight going by the wayside. My main interest was in local club activities and Radio Control pattern competition. For a while, I operated a basement hobby and Radio Control repair shop for the local guys. In 1968, I built my first Radio Control sailplane – a Kurwi European kit – as soaring was beginning to appear as an upcoming event for Radio Control. Soaring caught my attention as being a combination of my first love of Free Flight and Radio Control.

During the remaining 1960s and early 1970s my focus was mostly on flying competition pattern and competition soaring but I was dabbling in all facets of Radio Control like scale, helicopters and even sailboats. It was also at this time I began experimenting with my own aircraft designs. In 1971, I placed fourth in a Nats pattern event with a model of my own design. I am proud of that placing because pattern is a difficult event to do well in at top levels. However, it was shortly after this I decided it was detrimental to try to be competitive in two entirely different disciplines and I would be better to concentrate on one. It was increasing clear soaring was the event for me and I turned my attention to it.

In the remaining 1970s I built and flew many of the contemporary Radio Control soaring kits and designs. I was doing well and winning many contests but I was convinced designs could be a lot better. At the time, most designs were of the rudder, elevator and spoiler types or what we later referred to as “gas bags.” Having flown pattern and scale previously, I knew control could be a lot better by using true roll control with ailerons. Additionally the designs could be improved on in terms of aerodynamic cleanliness. So with these two points in mind I set about designing a new series of sailplanes even though I had no formal education in aerodynamic engineering.

My first design was Callisto. It was radically different from most other sailplanes of the day. In test flying it was obvious I was onto something. I started flying it on the mid-western contest circuit and winning most of the time. Just about everywhere I went competitors were asking for plans, which I began to sell. The model was so successful I decided to publish a construction article. It was a feature article and on the cover of the October 1982 issue of Model Aviation.

My next design attempt was an F3B model called Europa. The Europa was competitive in smaller F3B contests but never was so in top-level competitions. Nevertheless, it had some nice features so I published a construction article and cover photo in the July 1985 issue of Model Aviation.

With my good success of the Callisto it seemed a two-meter version was in order. So I began work on the IO. The IO is basically a clipped winged Callisto. At this point in time composite construction was coming in vogue so I redesigned the structure with composites. The IO has very responsive handling characteristics similar to modern molded glass designs. I later published a construction article and cover photo on the IO in the September 1987 issue of Model Aviation.

In the mid 1980s, a couple of fiberglass manufactures began producing fuselages for my designs. Bob Sealy began to produce fuselages for the Callisto and IO with Viking Models doing the same and also for my Europa. This made the designs easier to scratch build for those trying to do so. In the late 1980s, a kit manufacture, Culpepper Models, approached me about rights to kit the Callisto and IO. I gave permission so kits were now available.

For the better part of a decade in the 1980s, the Callisto and IO were my main stay competition fleet. I sometimes was faced with flying against my own designs since I had published them and there were kits available. I tried not to get beat that way much but it did happen. I flew the models in several Nats. My crowning competition achievement was at the 1985 Nats when I placed first in unlimited sailplane with a Callisto, second in two-meter sailplane with an IO and third in standard class sailplane with a Callisto. This combination won the first ever Lee Renaud Memorial Award for top overall soaring score. The Lee Renaud trophy resides in the AMA museum with my name first on the placard.

Since the early days of my flying Radio Control sailplanes I was working on the League of Silent Flight soaring accomplishment program. I completed my level five in 1985 being the 41<sup>st</sup> person to do so.

During the remaining 1980s and early 1990s I continued to fly the rotating Nats with my Callisto and IO and Radio Control scale soaring with a 1/4<sup>th</sup> scale ASW-20. I placed pretty well in those years and continued to fly the ASW-20 in the Nats event to the time of this writing in 2003.

I got the urge to fly full-size again after being given rides in sailplanes by a local Radio Controller Charlie Fox and by Herk Stokley at the 1988 Nats Radio Control soaring site. I joined a local full-size soaring club and very shortly got my private pilot glider rating.

In 1989, I got a call from John Worth asking if I would be interested in being the United States' CIAM Radio Control soaring representative. It took me all of two minutes to accept and was appointed to the post. I continue to serve in this capacity to the time of this writing in 2003. Before this time, I had flown in several of the USA F3B team selection programs and was the District VII United States' FAI Radio Control Soaring Team Selection committee member. I also served as the chair of the United States' FAI Radio Control soaring team selection committee for three years between 1997 and 1999. I participate in most of the United States' Radio Control soaring team selection finals either as a contestant or as jury chair. To date I have not made it to be on a FAI soaring team but came close in the 1997 F3J finals only missing a team slot by two places.

Being the U.S. CIAM soaring rep prompted me to be also appointed to the CIAM soaring sub-committee in 1990 to which I still serve. Being on this sub-committee for such a long time has involved me in much of the FAI Radio Control soaring rules we use today. At the time I began there was only one official soaring event F3B (multi task thermal soaring gliders) and one

provisional event F3F (slope racing). Since then we have added one new official event F3J (thermal duration gliders) and three new provisional events F3H (soaring cross-country racing), F3I (aero-tow soaring models) and F3K (hand-launched Radio Control gliders). I have done some of the writing of rules sections especially F3H and F3K. Today in FAI Radio Control soaring we have two world championship events, F3B and F3J, in alternating years so there is a Radio Control soaring FAI worlds every year.

In the early 1990s, my original designs were becoming dated as technology advanced. My designs had served me well for many years but it was time to move on so I began flying the newer European molded models to remain competitive.

Over the years, I have written a number of articles and pieces for the model press. The major articles were:

### **Model Aviation magazine**

- “Callisto 82” construction feature and cover, October 1982
- “Custom Radio Control Sailplane Field Box,” June 1983
- “Europa” construction feature and cover, July 1985
- “IO” construction feature and cover, September 1987
- “F3B Technicalities” coverage of 1989 Paris F3B World Championships, June 1990
- “Nats Radio Control Soaring” Nats coverage, November 1990
- “Nats Radio Control Soaring” Nats coverage, November 1991
- “Nats Radio Control Soaring” Nats coverage November 1992

### **Radio Control Technique (Japan)**

- “F3H Cross Country Soaring,” January 1993

### **CIAM Flyer**

- “F3H Cross Country Soaring,” March 1993

### **Scale Slope & FAI**

- “1995 CIAM Soaring Report,” first issue

### **Radio Control Soaring Digest**

- “Mayan Soaring Match” coverage of Guatemala international contest, June 1995

My club activity has been with two clubs, the Iowa City Aerohawks and the Eastern Iowa Soaring Society. I was a member of the Aerohawks from about 1957 to 1984. During that time, I served in most offices at one time or another. I, along with Chuck Beaumont, negotiated for the permanent city owned Aerohawks flying field still in use today. The Aerohawks has grown from group of kids and a few adults to a current membership of 70.

In 1983 area, Radio Control sailplane activity had grown to the point we decided to form a sailplane club. The activity was spread out a ways so we decided to make it a regional club and

call it the Eastern Iowa Soaring Society (EISS). The primary organizers of EISS were Jim Porter and I. I was the EISS newsletter editor for the first few years to get the fledgling club coordinated. EISS is alive and well today. One of the more notable club accomplishments was winning the Nats Dan Pruss Sailplane Team Award in 1997 with EISS team members Mike Fox, Jim Frickey and me.

Over the years, I have directed numerous Radio Control sailplane contests for both the Aerohawks and EISS. In recent years I live where I have a privately owned flying site and host an annual contest named "Misty Meadows Soaring Classic." I also host other fun fly and meeting events for sailplane and electric models.

I continue to expand into full-size soaring. I now have owned three sailplanes: Schweizer 1-35C, PIK-20E and currently a DG-400. The PIK-20E and DG-400 are both self-launch retractable engine sailplanes. I find the two sports of Radio Control soaring and full-size soaring complement each other in that I learn things from one that helps me with the other, but they do compete for my time.

*(signed) Terry Edmonds  
February 2003*

Terry's first place wins at the Nats include the following:

- 1962 – Senior ½-A gas Free Flight
- 1985 – Radio Control unlimited sailplane
- 1990 – Radio Control sport scale saiplane
- 1990 – F3B Radio Control sailplane
- 1991 – Radio Control sport scale sailplane
- 1992 – Radio Control sport scale sailplane
- 1995 – Radio Control sport scale sailplane
- 1996 – Radio Control sport scale sailplane
- 1999 – Radio Control sport scale sailplane
- 2000 – Radio Control sport scale sailplane

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