



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of GAIL JACOBSON

Born June 28, 1924 Started modeling at age 10



Written by GJ (c. 2003); Transcribed and edited by JS (11/2007), Reformatted by JS (09/2009)

The following is autobiography was published in Who's Who in AMA, 2003, District V.

Making a resume of my modeling experiences sounds easy enough, but remembering back 65 or 70 years is not!

At about age 10, I learned to make a model airplane, power it with a rubber band, wing up the propeller, and throw it. My dad took me to a Jimmy Allen contest; I took my airplane. Although I had never flown it, I made a stab at it, and of course, crashed!

When we were living in Des Moines, Iowa, Charles Lindbergh visited there in his airplane, the Spirit of St. Louis. We went out to see him and, being in my pre-teen years, I was suitably impressed! In addition, around that time, my dad worked for an auto parts company. For advertising, the company brought into town an autogyro. My dad took me to see it and we went for a ride in it. This further inspired me in my model building.

I continued my model building in a shed behind the house until interrupted by World War II. At 18, I joined the Army Air Corps, and my experience with the real models was detailed in *Model Aviation* magazine in the May 2002 issue on page 122.

After the war, I rejoined the US Air Force and was busy first as an instructor at Randolph Field in San Antonio, Texas from 1948 to 1950. Then they sent me to Craig Air Force Base in Selma, Alabama. I was the Operations Officer from 1950 to 1954, and was responsible for one hundred instructors, three hundred students, and 100 airplanes (*AT-6s*). I had two assistants; one was responsible for contact courses, the other for instruments courses. Civilian pilots were to teach Air Force cadets at several civilian locations.

I was transferred to Lake Charles, Louisiana, where I did some Control Line flying. It was there that Col. H. S. Williams interested me in the amateur radio hobby. I obtained an Amateur Radio License/General License. You guessed it – that provided the basis for remote control model airplane flying!

I became acquainted with a dentist who could build transmitters. I obtained one of his transmitters and placed it in my car trunk so I could use the car battery. I flew my models by remote control using servos for the first time.

My next base was Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha, where I flew my airplanes in the pasture behind my house. There were no restrictions there! Then I moved on to the Pentagon. It was there

that I was introduced to, and joined, two Radio Control model airplane clubs. We flew at Andrews Air Force Base and I started to learn AMA Aerobatics and Racing. Helicopters occasionally interrupted our flying, taking off to accompany the presidential airplane when it landed.

I retired in 1970 and moved to Atlanta, Georgia. We discovered in our research of the area that winds were low, which would be an advantage for model flying. It was here that I briefly flew helicopter models; I think I was the only one in Atlanta to do so at the time. Col. Hurst Bowers, when he started the AMA's National Model Aviation Museum, asked for one of my Formula 1 models to place on display to represent the racers.

Then I got into racing in earnest. I started with Lanier Aerobatics Almost-Ready-to-Fly (ARF) and Racing models, also flying Quarter Midget., F-1, 422, 428, and Q40 events throughout the country. I won first place in Quarter Midget events twice at the Nats and placed in many more events. During that time, airplanes got faster and more safety restrictions were imposed, with the workers finally being moved to the side of the field during a race.

I have been on the Racing Contest Board (District V) for more than twenty years. I am an AMA Leader and a Contest Director. I have been the President of the Atlanta Radio Control Club three times and held many other officer duties.

This PDF is property of the Academy of Model Aeronautics. Permission must be granted by the AMA History Project for any reprint or duplication for public use.

AMA History Project
National Model Aviation Museum
5151 E. Memorial Dr.
Muncie IN 47302
(765) 287-1256, ext. 511
historyproject@modelaircraft.org

