



# The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of THEODORE (TED) KATSANIS



Born July 17, 1925      Started modeling in the early 1940s

Written by TK (n.d); Formatted & Edited by JS (08/2007), Reformatted by JS (09/2009)

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*The following is an autobiography by Ted Katsanis.*

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Ted was raised in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania (near Philadelphia) during the depression. In Junior High School, Ted had a very good math teacher, Mr. Joachen, who was very encouraging in math. With this encouragement, and by reading a few good books, Ted became interested in algebra and geometry. It was always fun to solve interesting math problems. He also enrolled in Chef Club, and learned basic cooking in junior high.

Ted has a good friend from grade school, John Ellison. They used to walk together to or from junior high school frequently. They used to practice Jujitsu on the way home from school. Since it was about a mile away, Ted would frequently use roller skates to go to school.

During the summers, Ted liked to go to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia to spend the day. They had all kinds of physics and chemistry experiments that could be worked by push-button.

By high school, Ted became interested in model airplanes, built some small ten-cent models, and gradually built some bigger models. Gimbel's department store in Philadelphia had a room where indoor models could be flown. ROG (rise-off-ground) models and microfilm models were flown there. Ted made and flew a little ROG model. He also built a Korda *Wakefield* model, but did not have much luck flying it. Finally, he got a Brown Jr. gas engine and built a five-foot model called *Simplex*. The *Simplex* made one flight. This got him interested in aviation and aeronautics. During the last summer before graduation, he studied drafting at night school with the NYA (National Youth Administration), a government-sponsored program that paid students a small amount while being trained.

After graduation from high school, Ted was subject to the draft for World War II. It was not easy to get a job because of this, so Ted got a job as a messenger for the *Philadelphia Record* newspaper. It was a night shift job. After being classified 4-F because of sinus problems, it was possible for him to get a better job. His first job after this was with Budd as a shot welder on a stainless steel airplane. Eventually, this contract was cancelled and Ted was laid off. At that time, he found out about a drafting job at Cramp Shipyard.

He landed this job and worked for about two years as a draftsman. The drawings were all done in India ink on cloth vellum. Ted worked with other draftsmen and engineers, who encouraged him to get further education. Therefore, he applied to Parks Air College near St. Louis, Missouri, which had ads in all the model airplane magazines. However, since he had not taken math or physics in high school, it was necessary to make this up. This was done by passing examinations in geometry and algebra, and by taking a night school course in high school physics. Ted had very limited funds available, but his parents helped by letting him live at home rent-free. This enabled him to save almost one hundred-percent of his earnings. One of his main recreations was ice-skating, but Ted got a job scraping the ice and monitoring the other skaters, so instead of

paying to ice skate, Ted was paid fifty cents a scrape. By March of 1946, Ted had saved enough to start at Parks.

March 1946 marked the start of a big adventure for Ted. He packed up enough of his belongings to live in a dormitory at Parks. Parks was wonderful. Everything was about airplanes. Most of the students were World War II veterans, and some were bomber and fighter pilots and mechanics. Most of the students had experience of some sort with airplanes. There were airplanes to fly there, mostly Stearman and Ercoupe.

The dorm was a few hundred feet from the hanger, and the classrooms and shops were just a little farther. Classes started with algebra and physics, and went on to statics, dynamics, strength of materials, stress analysis, aerodynamics, etc. There were also shop courses, with work on airplanes. The shop courses included wood shop, metal shop, welding, dopes and fabrics, and engines.

Besides the classes, there was a requirement to get a pilot's and a mechanic's license. There was only a written test for the mechanic's license, after taking all the class work. Included in the tuition was enough flying time to get a pilot's license for the Ercoupe, which had simplified controls. Ted soloed in the Ercoupe, but since there were not enough Ercoupes, Parks offered to waive the pilot's license and instead take the equivalent time (fewer hours) in a Stearman. The Stearman was a much bigger and acrobatic airplane, a biplane. Ted got enough time in the Stearman to solo, but not enough for a pilot's license.

With a degree in hand, it was time to find a job. After several applications, Boeing made an offer with a paid flight to Seattle. Ted accepted the offer and flew to Seattle in September of 1948. He knew a couple of graduates from Parks and found a boarding house near them on Capital Hill in Seattle, and began working at Boeing.

Skiing was available near Seattle, so Ted bought a pair of army surplus skis and refinished them with varnish. A local ski shop had a bus going to Steven's pass over Thanksgiving weekend, so he signed up and went. Boy was there a lot of snow. They had 84 inches already. It was all rope tows, but it was lots of fun. In fact, Ted decided he needed a car, so he bought a 1938 Oldsmobile, and went the next week by car. In fact, he went every week for the winter. He had a ski rack and filled the car with skiers each week to help pay for the car.

Ted did not stay long in the boarding house and finally moved in with several other men in a large rental house off Genesee Street, not far from Seward Park. They hired a housekeeper to cook meals and clean house. They had a few engineers from Boeing come and go, but they had the same Norwegian housekeeper (Astrid) for a couple of years.

Around the third year of skiing, Ted became interested in the National Ski Patrol and joined at Steven's pass. This was a good experience, learning first aid and helping with some excellent ski patrollers. The most outstanding ski patrollers Ted worked with were Jim and Lou Whittaker. Jim Whittaker later became famous as the first American to climb Mt. Everest. Ted had many adventures skiing, but the most exciting was when a group of about 20 from the Steven's Pass Ski Patrol organized a climb of Mt. St. Helens on skis. They drove down the day before, and Ted was in a car driven by Willie, with Jim Whittaker and Joe Carter. They started early in the morning. It was a fairly long climb on skis. About half of the climbers made it to the top, and

Ted was the last one to do so. Then they skied down. Of course, it was quick skiing down, and they spread out over the mountain.

It was much different in appearance coming down, and it was easy to become disoriented. However, they pretty much made our way back to where they started. Then, when almost down, Willie fell and broke his leg. It was a spiral fracture. With experienced ski patrol officers, they arranged a temporary splint on Willie's leg, and using his skis as a make shift toboggan, they got him safely down the mountain. Joe Carter had not shown up, but they felt that it was important to get Willie to a hospital in Seattle, so Ted and Jim left without Joe. Every thing was fine with Willie, but the next morning there were headlines in the newspaper that read "Joe Carter missing on Mt. St. Helens." Quite a number of people spent the next week searching for Joe. They found his tracks in the snow, but all that was found were his skis where he had removed them to travel on foot. Of course, that left no way to track him after he left the snow. It was later found out that he was diabetic, which no one knew. Joe Carter was never found.

Around this time, Ted got interested in folk dancing. There were dances with the Mountaineers, and Skandia Club, as well as after skiing anywhere where you stayed overnight. Ted took a few lessons and dated a few girls. One night in January of 1952, at a lesson with Chet Little, Ted spotted an attractive girl across the room, and asked her to be his partner for the next dance. Her name was Pauline Hackett. He asked for a date to go to a dance and they went to a dance in the University district. It was at this dance that Pauline fell for Ted. It was crowded, so Pauline's feet became entangled and she fell. By May, Pauline and Ted went to Wenatchee for the Apple Blossom Festival with their friends, Al Alleman and Vivien McNally. On the way back, they stopped at Ohme Gardens. Al and Vivien did not hit it off so well, but Pauline and Ted did, and they became engaged.

Around this time, Ted was getting disillusioned with Boeing. After all the effort to go to Parks, the work he did at Boeing was never beyond anything he could have done without his graduating from Parks. In addition, working on the XB-52 bomber was not very satisfying. Therefore, when Ted had an opportunity in early 1952 to work with Berger Engineering Works designing logging machinery, he took the job.

By the spring of 1952, Ted moved up to Capitol Hill with Mrs. Sarah Rosenthal. Ted's good friend, Cal Theiss, also moved in with Mrs. Rosenthal. Ted went to Wesley Club at University Methodist Church. Wesley Club had weekend outings in the region, such as climbing Mt. Si or going up to Vancouver, but by the summer Ted was pretty busy getting ready for his wedding (September 27, 1952.) Ted and Pauline bought a house in West Seattle just before they got married. They got married at West Seattle Presbyterian Church. Ted and Pauline had a wonderful honeymoon at Yosemite National Park.

Their first child was Linda Leanne, born on September 6, 1953. By 1955, the little house in West Seattle was getting a little crowded, so they found a slightly larger new home off Renton Avenue, just north of Skyway. They signed up for a new house and sold their house in West Seattle. The new house was supposed to be ready by May, but it was not. Their second child was Kimberly Diane, born on June 27, 1955. They had to move out and rent a house until the new house was ready. It was not ready until October. What a hassle.

The next spring, there was a lawn to put in and all kinds of things to finish up. Their third child was Jason Reid, born on September 5, 1959. With only two bedrooms, Ted finished a bedroom

in the daylight basement for the girls and Jason got the upstairs bedroom. It was about this time that Ted's friend, Theron Crews, from Parks Air College, became a jet fighter pilot. Ted and family visited Theron once at Moses Lake, Washington. However, it was only a short time before Theron discovered he had colon cancer and passed away.

Ted had a lot of varied engineering experience at Berger. He helped design all kinds of logging machinery, including yarders and portable steel spar trees. He also designed a hoist for the tainter gates at Rocky Reach dam, and a trash rack scraper for the intake of the electric power plant at Snoqualmie Falls. The job with Berger was good, but Ted really liked math, which he pursued as a hobby. Finally, in 1960, Ted decided to try to get a Masters degree in math. By 1962, he had completed his Masters of Arts in mathematics at the University of Washington.

At this time, Berger laid off Ted since he would be leaving soon anyway. He found a temporary job at Robbins & Associates working on the design of the tunnel-boring machine for the Paris Metro in France. By January of 1963, Ted got an offer from NASA at Lewis Research Center in Cleveland, Ohio. Ted accepted this job and in April moved to Cleveland with his family.

Lewis Research Center was a wonderful place to work. The work was interesting and fun. They had a graduate program, allowing Ted to go to Case Institute of Technology to get a Ph. D. in mathematics in numerical analysis. This training fit in perfectly with his work in flow analysis in turbomachinery. The people Ted worked with were all outstanding experts in their fields. It was not long before he started writing NASA Technical Reports and presenting them at technical meetings around the country. By 1967, Ted had completed all his coursework and thesis. He received his Doctorate degree in June of 1967.

Ted also became interested in model airplanes again. He encouraged Jason to build a small indoor model to fly in an airplane meet sponsored by one of the Cleveland newspapers. Ted and Jason both built and flew model airplanes. They continued to build models, but Ted was more serious about it. They went to some outdoor model airplane contests, where Ted saw some wonderful towline gliders with a very high aspect ratio wing. He built a 1/2 A *Starduster* and a *Talon* towline glider. The *Starduster* flew all right, but Ted could not run fast enough to tow the *Talon* glider. Finally, he found out that the kit was far heavier than the original *Talon*. He then built some other gliders with more success. In addition, Jason built a *Stratos* towline glider. Both he and Jason had a lot of fun and placed in some of the local contests. Ted also joined the local free flight club, the North Ohio Free Flight Association (NOFFA).

Ted expanded into other models, and built *Michelle* (Wakefield), *Boomer Bus* (Henry Struck's beautiful gull-winged pod and boom gas model), *Miniceptor* (.020 Interceptor replica), and many others. He accumulated many trophies in the Cleveland area. His most notable wins were the High Point trophy in Pike, New York in 1984, and first place in Class C Radio Control Ignition at the SAM Champs in 1978 and 1980. Ted joined SAM 39, the local Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) chapter.



In July of 1985, Ted was eligible for retirement. He loved his work, but both Ted and Pauline liked Seattle for the mountains and the friendliness of the people. Therefore, it was decided he would retire in August of 1985. Then it was the big move again. The house was put up for sale, and all unneeded items were disposed of. Some items were shipped ahead, and everything was packed.

With the help of Joe Elgin, Ted packed all his models in cardboard boxes, and all else was either packed by the movers or sold. Then the big trip began, with stops to visit children, friends, and relatives along the way. It was a six-week trip and they arrived in Seattle in November. They quickly found a small apartment to rent until they could find a house to buy, but then a snowstorm hit. Ted bought a snow shovel, and thought he was back in Cleveland, shoveling a foot of snow from the driveway. However, it soon all melted and the search for a house began again. They went out daily looking for a suitable home. Finally, by the end of the year, a house was found in Bellevue. Ted and Pauline moved into their house in March 1986.

One of the first things Ted did after the move to Seattle was to look into the local Free Flight model airplane clubs. Ted joined the Strat-O-Bats and SAM 8. Ted attended the annual SAM 8 meeting in December of 1985. This meeting was held in Tacoma at Ray Chalker's business office. There were many contests, at Harts Lake Prairie and near Albany, Oregon. Ted went to many of these contests. He went to the Memorial Free Flight contest in 1988 in Taft, California. He also went to the SAM Champs in Jean, Nevada in 1991 and the AMA Nats held in the Tri-city area of Washington.

Around 1988, Ted volunteered to put out a SAM 8 newsletter. It had been published sporadically previously, but with a computer, it was not too hard to put out a bare bones newsletter. Ted did this up to early 1998, except for a short time that Bill Darkow did the newsletter. At this time, Bob Harper volunteered to publish the SAM 8 newsletter.

Ted also flies a little Radio Control, both old-timer models, and sailplanes. Besides the model airplane activities, he hikes and skis regularly, as well as folk dances with Pauline about once a week. The couple celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with a party for friends and family. All in all, his plate is full, and he is thankful for an active and healthy retirement.

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