



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of ALBIN (AL) R. SIGNORINO

Born June 22, 1935 Started modeling in 1946



Written by AMA staff (12/1971); Transcribed by JS (11/2009)

The following biography is from the AMA News section of the December 1971 issue of American Aircraft Modeler.

Al Signorino

Albin R. Signorino started airplane modeling when he was 11 years old. Twenty-five years later, at age 36, Al is serving in the very responsible position of District VI Vice President for the Academy of Model Aeronautics. Strangely, he is far better known for one singular modeling accomplishment. Al is the designer, builder, and flyer of perhaps the most unique model airplane of all times, Snoopy's Flying Doghouse.

The Signorino home is in the beautiful rolling hills of Maryland Heights, in the northwest part of Greater St. Louis, Missouri. Here, Al and his wife, Phyllis, are raising Kim, age 11, and Butch, age 13. McDonnell-Douglas Aircraft of St. Louis is Signorino's employer. In serving this important aircraft company as a technical writer, Al's basic responsibilities are the writing of procedures for checkout of electronic equipment.

Al was born on June 22, 1935, in Wick Haven, Pennsylvania, about 30 miles south of Pittsburgh. His first 18 years were spent in Pennsylvania with his education extending through high school, two years of college, and an Associate Degree in Electronics at DeVry Tech. Most of his life has been involved in some manner with aviation, with four years having been served in the United States Air Force. He was an instructor in Airborne Electronics at Scott Air Force Base.

In addition to Al's present responsible position as an AMA Vice President, he has been a Radio Control Contest Director from 1966 to the present, and Radio Control Contest Coordinator for District VI. He is a member of the McDonnell Radio Control Club and the Greater St. Louis Modeling Association. He is editor of the McDonnell Club's newsletter, the Carrier Wave.

To point up Signorino's complete fascination in aviation, he has recently obtained his private license to fly full-scale aircraft, and is working now for his commercial license. He is a member of the Spirit of St. Louis Experimental Aircraft Association, Chapter 32.

Al is certainly best known for being the "father" of the radio-controlled "Snoopy's Flying Doghouse." This almost unbelievable (until you see it fly!) reproduction of the flying doghouse of the popular comic strip character, Snoopy, opens up an entirely new facet of promotion and "image" for model aviation. Through the "Snoopy and the Red Baron" skit flown by Al and his fantastic model plane, children and adults alike relate to Snoopy's wonderful nostalgic World War I fantasies. Then they suddenly realize that this is being done with a model airplane. This

demonstration is a public relations man's dream, and is a terrific tool in the establishing of a favorable and exciting image for model aviation. Modeling owes a debt of gratitude to Al Signorino for this contribution.

For those of a technical mind, Snoopy's Doghouse, Signorino's version, is shaped exactly like a doghouse, and Snoopy sits on its roof, as its pilot is flying regalia. It is powered with an Enya 60 gas engine, guided by a Controlaire radio, and is supported in the air by a wing (actually the floor of the doghouse shaped in an airfoil, 27 by 28 inches) of about 756 square inches area.

As further tribute to Al's designing genius, it must be mentioned that the Doghouse flew successfully "right off the drawing board," being flown in a model air show at Rhinebeck, New York for its sixth flight. The Doghouse being flown at present is actually model number "4 ½," with only one major design change having been made since the original. Snoopy now has about 175 flights of the Doghouse in his logbook with only six crashes on the first three models, and only one on the present excellent version. That one was caused by battery failure.

The "Snoopy and the Red Baron" skit is flown somewhere almost every weekend, weather permitting. Sometimes two air shows are flown in different locations on one weekend. In Snoopy's logbook are about 50 air shows in twelve states and Canada in three years. Some of the finest demonstrations have been made at AMA's National Model Airplane Championships. A salute to Al and Snoopy, and "curse you Red Baron!"

Signorino has one more unusual side to his aeronautical interests. He is collecting "antique" radio control equipment. His collection of about three dozen "old-timer" Radio Control rigs is at present just stored in boxes, Al feeling that it is not yet complete enough for public display. Al would be very pleased to hear from anyone having equipment along this line that might add to this unusual collection.

Looking at this dignified, quiet, dark-headed young man, and the thoughtful way that he conducts himself in AMA Executive Council meetings, one would never dream that he is the "flying instructor" for the swashbuckling Snoopy and his famous Doghouse.

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