



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of BERT C. STRIEGLER

Born May 21, 1931 Began modeling in 1938
AMA #947



Written & Submitted by BCS (01/2003); Transcribed & Edited by SS (01/2003), Reformatted by JS (02/2010)

Career:

- One of the first members of the Brady (Texas) Gas Model Association when it formed in early 1941
- Entered his first contest in 1946 flying Free Flight
- Served four years in the U.S. Air Force
- Competed successfully in Free Flight and towline gliders
- Competed in many Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) events
- By 1990 had 31 trophies from AMA and SAM meets
- Built many of his own model engines, including the unique Bulldogs
- A founder of the Houston Radio Control Club in the 1950s; obtained two flying sites for the club
- Served for three years as president and two years as newsletter editor for the Houston Radio Control Club, which changed its name to the Fort Bend Radio Control Club
- The founder of the Houston Area Model Council Inc. (HAMCI)
- An honorary life member of the Fort Bend Radio Control Club and the Johnson Spacecraft Center Radio Control Club
- Became a contest director in 1970 and directed many contests in the Houston area
- Contest director for the soaring events at the 1978 Nationals
- Published many magazine articles and plans
- Kitted his Ebenezer with a friend in 1956 and sold about 400 kits
- His Ebenezer design is very popular throughout England; they hold a yearly Ebenezer Festival
- His Gulf Coaster was kitted by the American Balsa Corporation from 1976 to 1980
- Started Striegler's Radio Control Supply in 1971, then later became Dunham's U.S. distributor of replica engines
- Became a U.S. distributor for Magnum four-stroke engines
- Worked with local Cub Scouts on the Delta Dart program for five or six years ending in 1999

The Beginning (1931 to 1945)

I was born in the little central Texas town of Brady on May 21, 1931. My father, Cecil Striegler, was a complete aviation enthusiast and I am sure that he looked upon me as either a hindrance or a potential flying buddy. He had a garage full of aviation magazines and a wealth of information on World War I aviators. After all, 1931 was just a short 13 years after that great war ended and only 10 years before our next great war started.

By the time I was nearly 7-years-old, the question about being a hindrance or flying buddy was settled and I started work on becoming my father's flying buddy when he bought me a 10-cent Comet Spad kit at the five and dime store. That was the first model I ever built and I suspect it was pretty horrible in spite of dad's help since he insisted that I do most of it myself. We never could get it to fly under rubber power but it would glide a little, so I climbed up the fire escape to the second floor of my grade school (no, it was not forbidden to do that) and bravely launched it into the wind. It actually glided a small distance, then slowly started into a spiral dive and was demolished. Never mind the crash – I was hooked.

Based on that "success," I started buying every five- or 10-cent kit I could find and can remember such brands as Peerless, Burd, Comet, and Megow among others. None of them flew very well, but I really did not care – I was having fun and each new airplane was exciting! In 1940, my dad bought me a Megow Korda kit and I recall that it cost a whole dollar. It was the depth of the Great Depression and one dollar was pretty extravagant. We built it together, but I found that easier than the little things I had been building. It probably looked horrible, too, but the thing actually flew. I thought it was the best flying thing I had ever seen, but all my flights were in a small schoolyard so my flights were pretty short. The schoolyard is still there and now when I look at it, I simply cannot imagine how you could fly a Korda in that small space. We also built a Berkeley Flying Cloud and did a better job of it. It flew out of the schoolyard two flights in a row.

Now my father got more interested (my fault?) and he bought an engine in 1940 – our first. It was a Brownie 29, the least expensive small engine we could find in San Antonio. Mother had a fit, but we had our engine! We had a lot of trouble getting it to run, but there were several other enthusiasts in Brady now who helped us – Leicester Moore, James Baker, Paul Holliday, and Buddy Samuelson. With six of us working on it, we finally got it to run. We spent more time cranking than flying, but we put it into a Buccaneer B Special. I nearly wore it out hand gliding it, but the day it made its first powered flight was nearly its last. It flew completely across downtown Brady and landed in a pasture. A local rancher found it the next day and returned it to dad – our lucky day! The pneumatic timer was still stuck wide open.

Early in 1941, the group decided to form a club, which they named The Brady Gas Model Association. We had one or two meetings and decided to start a library with the purchase of a book by Bill Winter titled, "The Model Aircraft Handbook." I still have this book, but it was the only thing we ever got for the library. Many years later Bill Winter and I became good friends.

My next model was a Modelcraft Miss Tiny for the Brownie. By then I was getting a little better at building and this one turned out pretty good. On its first and only flight, I did not get the engine adjusted correctly and when I launched the plane, it slowly climbed up to about 10 feet and headed across the highway that bordered the airport. It hit a large billboard that advertised Wrigley chewing gum featuring the two Miss Wrigley Twins. The poor little Miss Tiny hit one of the Miss Wrigley twins right in her smiling teeth! Miss Wrigley survived, but Miss Tiny was mortally injured.

Shortly after that disaster, I awakened on a beautiful Sunday morning with thoughts of more airplane adventures, but I had to go on a church picnic. Before I got home, Pearl Harbor had

been attacked and virtually all of the able-bodied men in Brady were down at the courthouse square to see if they could join the military. My world was suddenly turned upside down. My father was down at the courthouse and so were all my older friends.

Dad had to go to San Antonio for a physical but was declared 4F. While he was there, he bought a brand new 1940 model Forster 29 as he suspected model engines might become hard to get. He didn't like the Brownie and neither did I, so I sold the Brownie to Leicester for \$5. Many years later in the 1980s, Leicester lay terminally ill in the hospital; I visited my old friend and he told me he still had that Brownie and wanted me to go to his shop and see if I could find it for my collection. With his wife's help, I did find the engine. When I showed it to Leicester, he said, "Listen, nothing in this world is free, so give me my \$5 back and it is yours!" Yes, he was just kidding, but in just three days, he was gone. I cleaned up the Brownie, installed a modern set of batteries on the ignition system and it started right up. The Brownie was OK all along, but we did not know how to operate it. I still have my very first model engine.

The Forster went into a Stanzel Shark, our first adventure with Control Line. We were able to fly it, but just barely. That Forster was a jewel of an engine and it started and ran reliably, but it was just not big enough for the Shark. I removed it and built a Megow Ranger, which we lost on about its third flight! That little ship flew like a rocket. I actually built most of the Ranger myself, but Dad helped me cover it and test fly it. I was crushed but I was also without an engine. It was just as well, because we were quickly unable to get batteries and all of my mentors were gone except for my father. Dad went on to become a civilian flight instructor and ended up a major in the Civil Air Patrol toward the end of the war. I kept on building models, but now it was mostly identification solid models for the Army. Times had changed and things would never be quite the same.

The Post War Years (1945 to Date – 2003)

Ohlsson and Rice was about the first company to introduce their new engines after the war, and in 1945, I promptly ordered an O&R 60 Special. That engine was big, and it intimidated a little feller like me, but it was so easy to operate that I soon lost my fear of the thing. We put it into the Shark that was still languishing in the old garage after having been retired in 1941. I soon discovered that we had gone from one extreme to the other – from marginally underpowered to WOW! I flew it the first time, and I had real trouble keeping up with it. That thing went really fast and I was hardly an accomplished Control Line flyer, but I got it down in one piece and then fell down because I was too dizzy to stand up! I flew the Shark many times in the next few months, but it finally died a natural death due to oil soakage of its innards. We gave it a Viking funeral.

I built my next airplane, a Bill Winter design called the Vagabond, which became and still remains one of my all-time favorite models. The Ohlsson 60 was a natural for it, and it flew extremely well with a beautiful, floating glide. I was a much better builder by then, and the Vagabond looked really nice in Berryloid red with white trim. This airplane led me into my first competition and what a start I got!

Competitions

In mid 1946, some of the guys from Brady, Abilene, and San Angelo decided to have a small Free Flight contest at Curtis Field in Brady, Texas. Dad encouraged me to enter with my Vagabond. Nerves got the best of me and I made a lot of mistakes. First, I could not get the O&R to run because I flooded it and it was an inverted engine installation. Then I ran my flight batteries down and could not figure out why the engine would run a few seconds and then quit. It looked like I was not even going to get in a flight, but then Eldon Wilson from San Angelo came over and asked if he could help me. Eldon was a fierce competitor and was expected to win the contest that day, but he kindly helped me sort the thing out. After supplying some fresh fuel to me, changing my prop to one of his that he thought would be better and putting fresh flight batteries in my ship, he got it running just fine. I put in my three flights for the day and when all the dust cleared, the Vagabond was the winner! Eldon is still building models, still lives in San Angelo and still laughs with me about that day. He said he could not believe that a Vagabond flown by a snot-nosed kid could beat his Sailplane. The simple truth was that he beat himself, but we forged a friendship then and there that has flowered over all these years. Sportsmanship and friendship are what model flying should really be all about and I learned that lesson from Eldon Wilson. Winning is not nearly so important. Helping a kid is a lot more important than winning.

I graduated from high school in 1948 and went on to Parks Air College in Cahokia, Illinois, where I planned to major in aeronautical engineering. I quickly ran out of money and had to relocate to the University of Texas in Austin. In my second semester, I took a bigger jump by volunteering into the U.S. Air Force (USAF) at the beginning of the Korean War and soon found myself in the Air Weather Service. For the next four years, I did a lot of model building out of a footlocker and even managed to build a few while I was in Saudi Arabia.

I never really became a fierce competitor, but I did become a frequent participant and designed a number of successful competition models. My interests were mainly in Free Flight, both powered and gliders. I also flew in Control Line speed events up to the mid 1950s. Since those times, I have mainly flown Radio Control models. My main interest was and is the development of better aircraft, fuels and lubricants and engines. I still like to tinker and experiment as you can see from the attached list of my various published articles. I did, however, compete successfully in both Free Flight and towline gliders. In later years, I competed in many Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) events flying mostly antique or LER ignition powered old-timers. By the time I retired from my job in 1990, I had collected 31 trophies for wins in various AMA and SAM meets but I did not keep a record of where or when these contests were held. I also placed in two Control Line speed events back in the early 1950s, but technology and costs soon forced me out of this arena. Oddly, I have been to several Nationals, but never entered in any of the events and simply preferred to be a spectator. I did fly in several South Western regional contests and competed in towline glider events. While I rarely came home empty handed, competition was never really my main interest.

Experiments

Many years of experience as the manager of technical services for Conoco Inc. gave me a good background in fuel ingredients and I used this knowledge to do a lot of work in the area of model engine fuels and lubricants. My group consisted of 31 engineers scattered all over the United States. We were charged with the oversight of all product development and product quality control, and these tasks put me in contact with the major suppliers of base stocks, additives, exotic synthetic lube stocks and other materials that were potentially useful to modelers. Some of the glow fuels that I designed are still being marketed successfully today.

I built many of my own model engines, including two unique engines of my own design that I call the Bulldogs. These incorporate a new method of compression adjustment that does not use a contra piston. The smaller of the two is a pure diesel, while the larger one, a 2.5 cc engine, has a glow plug but can be run as a diesel with the glow plug in place or can be run as a glow engine with variable compression capability while operating.

I have designed and tested a number of unusual model aircraft designs, always looking for areas where conventional aircraft could be improved. Several of these designs have been published and can be found on my list of publications. I have a particular interest in flying wings, canards, and tandem wing designs. I am now up to the fifth generation of a design that is based on the prewar French Delanne fighter. The fifth generation design is a 40-powered Radio Control aircraft that incorporates all I have learned along the way. All have been Radio Control models and all of the first four generations were successful, demonstrating many of the flight characteristics that were claimed by Maurice Delanne back in the 1930s for the full-size examples.

Leadership

I have always tried to contribute to the success of model aviation and to the future of the AMA in my 50 plus years of membership. I was one of the founders of the Houston Radio Control club back in the 1950s and obtained two flying fields for this group. I served three years as president and two years as the newsletter editor of that club, which has now grown and changed its name to the Fort Bend Radio Control Club, a Gold-Star Club with a first class, magnificent flying field near Richmond, Texas, in Fort Bend county. I am pleased to be an honorary life member of that club.

I was also the founder of the Houston Area Model Council Inc. (HAMCI), a group made up of many clubs in the Houston area that manages Scobee Field Model Airpark in Houston. Rollie McGinnis, Carl White, and I started the campaign to get a large flying facility built in Houston. I ended up serving on both the Harris County and the City of Houston Parks boards for nearly 17 years until we eventually got permission and support for building a facility in Addicks, on the western outskirts of Houston. We had to deal with the U.S. Corps of Engineers who owned the land, the EPA and various other groups to clear the way to build the complex in the Addicks reservoir area, which was unfortunately thought to be the home of the infamous Houstonosis Buffalosis – better known as the Houston Toad – an endangered species. Thankfully, it was ultimately determined that the toad had moved west and could now be found in the Winnie area. Nonetheless, we had to prepare a complete environmental impact study for EPA's approval. We

also commissioned the design of the field to incorporate professional artists' renditions, engineered drawings, construction details, and estimates – all seemingly endless. But we persevered and the field was ultimately built at a cost of just over \$2 million. It has safety fences, parking facilities, a large canopy with power for chargers, permanent transmitter impound facilities, a first class public restroom facility along with a room for food preparation and contest operations, a large paved runway for Radio Control surrounded by ample grassy areas, a paved concrete circle for Control Line speed and two grass circles for combat and stunt. Scobee Field was dedicated in 1986 and is named in honor of Dick Scobee who perished in the tragic destruction of the Challenger shuttle. Houston now has a world-class flying site for Radio Control and Control Line flyers.

I was also given honorary life membership in the Johnson Spacecraft Center Radio Control Club as a means of thanking me for all the efforts I had put into running all of their contests for many years. My job with Conoco had put me in contact with many of their people since I was part of a group who supplied virtually all of the special high molecular weight kerosene for the main engines of the giant Saturn 5 Moon rockets. There I met people like Owen Morris and John Kiker, who were both top-notch engineers of the Apollo project. I was surprised at how many of the NASA people were modelers, but I guess I should not have been. It is interesting, though, that the first man to step on the moon was a model flyer and he was put into Earth orbit with the help of another modeler who supplied the booster fuel, and he rode in the Apollo which was engineered with the help of several other modelers. The next time someone asks why you play with these "toys," tell them about the moon flights – that is why. I met some really fine people in that group, all friends to this day.

I have never held an AMA office and have never been asked to serve on a committee.

Contest Leadership

I was conferred the membership grade of contest director in 1970. Since that time, I have directed contests in the Houston area for nearly all of the area clubs. I did not keep a record of all the meets that I directed, but the information is probably available from the AMA Headquarters. Just a guess would be 40 or 50 contests in the 20 years I was in Houston.

Two events that I directed were particularly memorable. The first was the record attempt by Lars Giertz where he set a new world endurance record of over 15 hours with a large aircraft powered by a Webra 2.5 cc diesel. I don't remember the dates, but I think it was in the 1970s, perhaps 1973. The flight was made at the NASA complex in Clear Lake and he flew through the night with the help of large movie lights and lots of coffee. The first attempt ended after only about an hour, so we started all over again and the second attempt was successful. I supplied the radio equipment for the flight.

The other memorable event was when I served as contest director for the soaring events at the Lake Charles (Louisiana) Nationals in 1978. I enlisted nearly 50 volunteers from the Houston Radio Control Club and the Manned Spacecraft Club of NASA to work the event and it all came off without a single problem. I still have a letter from Stan Pfof, president of the National Soaring Society, thanking us for the work we all put into running the meet, and he ended it up by

saying “Personally, I have never attended a more professionally run and efficient tournament than you had at the Nats. Thank you personally for a job well done,” signed by Stan Pfost on August 24, 1978. That sort of thank-you repays all the effort that we put into running a first-class contest.

Since I retired in 1990 and moved out to a ranch in central Texas, I have not directed any sanctioned contests. About the only flying I can manage out here is Radio Control sport flying. This is pretty rough country and we can no longer use the airport in Brady, so there is no suitable site for either larger Radio Control models or Free Flight activities.

Publishing Experience

I have published a number of magazine plans and articles, which are listed below:

A = Aeromodeller magazine

RCM&E = Radio Control Models and Electronics magazine

MAN = Model Airplane News magazine

AAM = American Aircraft Modeler magazine

MB = Model Builder magazine

FM = Flying Models magazine

MA = Model Aviation magazine

Date	Title	Mag.	Description
April 1958	Ebenezer	A	Small sheet balsa Free Flight for beginners. According to Ron Moulton, this little simple model has taught more British lads to build and fly successful model airplanes than any other model.
May 1958	Roaring 20	A	Sport Free Flight biplane for Mills .75
Feb. 1964	Ebenezer Triplane	A	Sheet Fokker triplane Free Flight. Another follow-on sheet balsa Free Flight to the Ebenezer formula that was very popular.
March 1964	Pumpkin Seed	RCM&E	20-inch biplane for Radio Control, rudder only. Now listed by the Vintage RC Society (VRCS) as a vintage Radio Control model Very small and a very good flyer
Aug. 1964	Ebenezer Flying Boat	A	Sheet Free Flight flying boat; another sheet balsa Free Flight in the Ebenezer tradition
Feb. 1969	Sperry Messenger	MAN	Radio Control scale for 60 engines. This plan is still in print and has been a good seller for MAN; it was a great flyer.
March 1971	Flying a Good Boost Glider	AAM	Article about me by Estes Co I flew this boost glider on Radio Control at the national rocket meet on its first public appearance.
Nov. 1971	Druine Turbulent	MAN	Radio Control scale for 60 engines
Feb. 1975	Gulf Coaster	MAN	Radio Control 100-inch contest glider. This glider

			went on to win the Nationals in 1978 as flown by Jack Lipscomb and was later kitted. It was a consistent contest winner and was built in both 100-inch and 12-foot sizes.
Sept. 1977	Boomer	MB	100-inch contest glider and full cover picture. This was a unique twin-boom competitive glider. The full cover shot was made with me in a kit Bugatti car that I built for my wife for our 25 th anniversary 27 years ago.
1980	Gulf Coaster	Spanish FLAPS mag.	Reprint
Sept. 1981	Delanne D-200	RCM&E	Tandem wing Radio Control for 20 engines. A very successful experimental tandem wing, number two in the developmental series Great flyer!
Sept. 1983		RCM	Article for Clarence Lee on castor oil
March 1984	Grog	RCM&E	Giant Rise-off-Ground (ROG) Radio Control for 90 engines, plus cover feature. This was a very large model with an eight-foot span and 17-inch chord. Looked like a small ROG!
Sept. 1988	Boryosko	FM	Reduced-size Radio Control flying wing for 049s. This was very successful and a great flyer. I still fly it!
July 1989	Ebenezer	MA	Reprinted by Ed Whitten
Oct. 1989	Ebenezer	MA	Article and pictures by Ed Whitten
Vol. 64, #763	Ebenezer RC	A	Enlarged for Radio Control, 1 cc engines

Other Publications

Date	Book	Authors	Description
1959 to 1961	Frank Zaic Yearbook	Frank Zaic	Quack – a Free Flight high performance Canard for 020 engines
1987	Golden Jubilee of Aeromodeller	Vic Smeed	Ebenezer
1988	Favorites of the 1950s	Vic Smeed	Ebenezer and Roaring 20
2000	Motor Boys Model Engine Plan Book	Nine other Motor Boys and myself	I am one of the 10 Motor Boys who wrote this book. We donated it, camera ready, to the AMA with the provision that all profits from the sale of the book would go to the youth fund. Order a copy now!
June/July 1994	Strictly IC	Roger Schroeder and myself	Deezil Replica – plans and construction article on building your own Deezil that runs!

June/July 1997	Strictly IC		VC Head for Drones – how to make your own variable compression head for a Drone diesel, plans and article.
Dec. 2002	Engine Collectors Journal	Myself	The Sage of the Ebay Dyno – how I found and restored a rare Dyno diesel that is a valuable collectors’ engine.

Hobby Industry Involvement

I made a decision to kit the little Ebenezer sheet balsa Free Flight back in 1956. A good friend, Ace Lanford, came aboard as a partner. We made up fancy boxes, printed nice plans, and used only contest grade wood. All parts were pre-cut. We sold about 400 finished kits before figuring out that we were making about a nickel an hour for our time, so we shut it down. A few orders continued trickling in for the next two years, but enough was enough.

The little Ebenezer is the most rudimentary model I ever designed and built, but it has done more to define my modeling life than anything else that ever happened. The Ebenezer has become a legend in England where it has an almost cult-like status. It was really a concept, not just a model designed a particular way. I defined it as a simple sheet balsa Free Flight, engine no larger than .049, capable of ROG flights, flat plate wings, profile fuselage. It was intended to resemble any full size aircraft, not just the design I came up with. The concept has achieved a life all its own since it was designed in 1954 and first published back in 1958 in Aeromodeller magazine when Ron Moulton was still the editor. Each year now, there is an Ebenezer Festival in England, usually at the Old Warden Aerodrome. This features static judging followed by a mass launch. Winners are determined by the uniqueness of the design, workmanship, and flying ability. Duration is not the target – these things glide about like the space shuttle! For the past several years, simultaneous mass launches have been held in England, Australia, and the U.S. Some of the variations of the concept are truly ingenious, but the best part is everyone has a real fun day.

Ron Moulton gave the Ebenezer a supreme compliment when he said that more British lads had learned to fly with Ebenezers than with any other model, and he further added that it was the most popular single plan ever published by the magazine. He went on to say that the meaning of the word Ebenezer would be forever changed in the English language. It all goes to prove that many times, the simplest things are the best. I have made two trips to Old Warden as an honored guest – all because of this little beginners’ airplane. The whole thing has been a wonderful experience. Many of my British friends call me Mr. Ebenezer!

Another commercial venture was the kitting of the Gulf Coaster 100-inch Radio Control glider. This was a very successful design that had outstanding handling characteristics and that won many contests, including first place at the 1975 Nationals in unlimited class, flown by Jack Lipscomb from Houston. It was easy to fly, easy to build and very rugged. American Balsa Corporation bought the rights and kitted the Coaster from about 1976 to 1980 and sold hundreds of these kits. It has been described as a pioneering glider in the high performance Radio Control arena and I was very proud of the design. The airplane had no vicious traits and would withstand the most violent launches imaginable. Some friends built an enlarged 12-foot span version that

was a truly magnificent flyer, but the 12-footer was never published as we figured very few people were brave enough to build one.

By 1980, glider design had progressed beyond this level of performance, but a well-built Gulf Coaster is still a highly competitive glider under most conditions. It was one of my favorite models. Someday I will do an updated version just for the fun of it.

In 1971, I started a sideline business called Striegler's Radio Control Supply. A good friend, Ralph Copenhaver, joined me as a partner. We sold and provided factory service for Cannon and Royal radios and serviced all other brands of radios. We were dealers for World Engines and also sold and serviced their equipment. This was a very successful venture, but it was really hard work since we both had full time jobs. If I do say so, we had a good reputation for reasonable, quality radio service and we had a very loyal customer base. That business, like everything else, changed over time and we finally dropped out of radio service.

I then joined in with Allan Holmes of Wigan, England, the maker of Dunham replica engines. I convinced him to do a replica of the Orwick 64 and supplied him with an original engine to use for patterning his version. Allan went on to produce the Orwicks in both 64 and 73 sizes and later produced the 29 and 32 versions. All were SAM approved. He also produced an Elfin 2.5 diesel that turned the SAM events inside out, as it qualified under the ignition engine run rules and was very powerful. I was Dunham's U.S. distributor and was able to sell about 1,200 of his engines over here in the 1980s. The Orwicks, the Elfin and the Valkyrie diesel were all SAM approved and won many SAM contests. I won 13 SAM contests with a single Orwick 64, which I still have, and Jim Reynolds won the class B event at the SAM Nats with one of our Orwick 29s. Allan moved his engineering company on to bigger and better things and that was the end of this venture.

Following that venture into engine sales, I became a U.S. distributor for the big Magnum four-stroke engines and was able to sell a good number of these over here. It was a good, strong, well-made engine, but was soon passed by in performance by the more modern OS and Saito engines. I shall always have a warm spot near my heart for the Magnum as it was a very reliable engine and I never experienced any problems with them.

This effectively marked the end of my commercial ventures in the hobby industry, but it was fun while it lasted!

Educational Involvement

After I retired and moved home to the Brady, Texas area I was asked to help with a group of Cub Scouts. Naturally, I suggested we use the Delta Dart program and this venture went on for five or six years, effectively ending in 1999 when a new Cub Master took over who did not have any interest in model airplanes. Each year we had a building session to prepare the Darts with a lot of adult supervision then we held a big contest inside one of the hangars at Curtis Field. We usually had up to 25 kids involved and every one of them got their flights in at each contest we held. I set up a table where I went over each airplane and helped them repair any building errors that they might have made and I helped each of the flyers to get the most out of their planes.

Each year, I bought one of the big 80 plane parts packs and donated them to the Cubs. The whole program was a lot of fun. One year the Cubs built what has to be the biggest Delta Dart ever constructed and entered it in the big July 4th parade in Brady. Instead of throwing candy to the kids who were spectators, we handed out Delta Dart packages and at the end of the parade the cubs each launched their own Darts into the crowd for the kids to get. They won the best float award, hands down! Sadly, this program is no longer used, but there are at least four model builders in Brady that got their start in the program. Model Aviation magazine did a nice article about the giant Delta Dart and the parade.

Statement

It is easy to just consider model airplanes as a fun thing, but I have a much deeper feeling than that for the hobby. I literally owe my career with Conoco to my model building knowledge. Here is the brief story of how that happened:

After I got out of the USAF in 1955, I immediately enrolled at Trinity University in San Antonio to finish my interrupted college education. That took about one and a half years, and when I graduated, I hit the streets with another two and a half million veterans who were also out there looking for a job. Times were hard and jobs were scarce. My wife, Beverly, worked at Southwest Research Institute for an engineer named Bob Best, a super guy who had once worked for Conoco, and Bob arranged an interview for me with Frank Seuss, who was the manager of Technical Services for Conoco in Houston.

I borrowed \$8 from a friend for gas and drove to Houston to meet with Mr. Seuss. He was disappointed that I did not have an engineering degree and he told me they could not hire me for that reason. Needless to say, I was nearly in tears. Then he asked me if I knew anything about engines. I told him I did then he asked me to describe how a two-cycle engine worked. Well, I started right in on him, and after about 15 minutes, he stopped me and said, "Boy, where in the world did you learn so much about two cycle engines? You know 10 times as much about them as anyone I have ever talked to!" I told Frank about my years of modeling experience and how I worked on these engines all the time. Two days later, I got a call from him saying that I had the job.

Frank Seuss was a very perceptive man – he hired people who convinced him that they really wanted to have the job, and he later told me that my knowledge of engines was the clincher. Less than two months later, Frank Seuss and his good friend, Charles Kettering, the CEO of GM, took me to lunch. Frank had been the chief engineer of the Stutz Motor Car Company, and Charles Kettering was the most famous automotive engineer in the world with over 2,200 patents in his name.

Thirty-three years later when I retired, I had the same job as the man who had hired me, and I have to give the credit to model building. The first thing I ever asked a fellow on an interview is "What do you do as a hobby?" That was a lesson I learned from Frank Seuss. Modeling is a technical hobby with a steady learning experience that never really ceases. I had some really good teachers and I have been very fortunate.

*(signed) Bert Striegler
January 2003*



Engine installation in the Grog, a giant Rise-off-Ground model



1952: Bert's Jetex Delta build in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia while he was there in the Air Force. The plane flew well and he left it in Saudi Arabia.



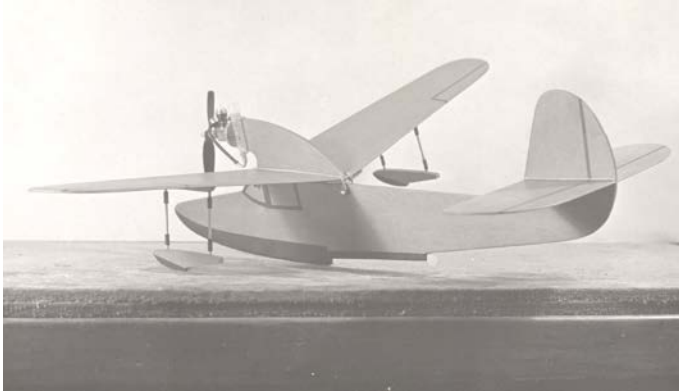
The tow reel that Bert built for Norman Ingersoll to compete in the world meet in Yugoslavia.



Bert's Boujoshia flying wing as it was published in Flying Models magazine. Pisey Cheng, one of Bert's adopted Cambodian refugees, is holding the model.



1992: Bert's prototype of the Delanne Dragon Fly



The Ebenezer Flying Boat



The Roaring 20



The Ebenezer Tri-plane



The Ebenezer Radio Control airplane



From left to right: two standard Gulf Coasters and two 12-inch Coasters. The photo was taken in Houston.



August 1954: The only picture of the flight of the very first Ebenezer. It was taken in San Antonio, Texas.



c. 1949: The Pacemaker 60 with an Ohlsson .29, Speed ships.



Give-away kits at the Cub Scout contest.



Brady Cub Scouts Delta Dart contest at Curtis Field



Bert's parade float featuring the world's largest Delta Dart



The Delta Dart on the float up close



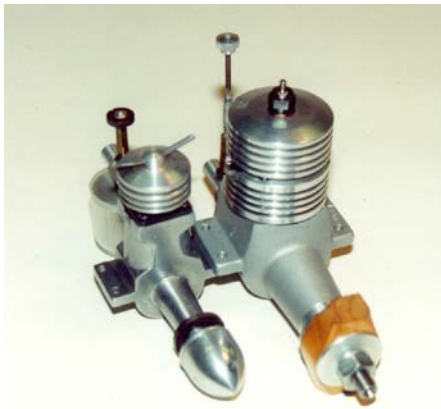
Bert's homebuilt Elf Corncob



Bert's homebuilt Trojan Junior engine.



Selection of engines that Bert built. From left: Sparey SCC, M&M 29, Rutch Nova 4 cc, Bulldog Mills, Bulldog 2.5 cc, Deezil replica.



Bert's two Bulldog engines. The one on the right is 2.5 cc, all-original. The one on the left uses Indian Mills parts



c. 1950s: The three diesel conversions Bert built. From left: Spacehopper, Fox 07 and Pee Wee

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

