



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of DALE ARVIN

Born August 31, 1943 Started modeling in the early 1950s
AMA #4135



Written/Submitted by DA (02/2012); Edited & formatted by JS (02/2012)

The following was written and submitted to the History Project by Dale Arvin in February of 2012.

Biography of Dale P. Arvin

I have had an interest in aviation from a very early age. As a youth I constructed airplanes from about anything I could find.

At the age of 14, one of my school classmates brought a ½ A Control Line airplane to school for physics class to demonstrate flight. As soon as I saw that plane fly, I was hooked. My first airplane was a Jim Walker *Fire Baby* with a Cox .049 and a Top Flite guaranteed-unbreakable Nylon prop (on the first flight I broke the prop).

I did not live near anyone that flew Control Line so I had to teach myself to fly. I went through a lot of wings, tails, and fuses before I made my first complete flight. I did not have any one to help me so I used one of my mother's old wooden ironing boards with a brick propping up one end and a stooge on the other to launch the plane.

I went through a series of Scientific planes, then on to the *Junior Flight Streak* and the *Flight Streak*. After I learned to fly, I taught several kids to fly. By the time I left my hometown at age 17 to go to college, we had a dozen or so flyers.

I first joined the AMA in 1958. I think I was a member for only one year at that time. I still have my membership card.

In 1961, I moved to Louisville, Kentucky to attend college. I continued to build Control Line models in my boarding house room while in college. I shopped for supplies at A&J Hobby shop in New Albany, Indiana, where I met Jim Correll.

Jim was an avid builder and flyer and we became good friends. After a short time we resurrected the defunct Sky Liners Control Line Club. This club has been in continuous operation since that time.

During my Control Line days, I went from ½A to .45-size engines and from 20-foot lines to 70-foot lines. I built and flew Sport, Combat, Rat Race, Stunt and Scale planes. One of my most prized model aircraft trophies is one that I won in 1967 for second place in a 1000-lap Rat Race. My wife was my pit man. (She also flew Control Line.)

I built planes like the *Pegasus*, *Trident*, Ambroid's *Stuka Stunt*, a *Vulcan Bomber* delta wing,

VooDoo, *WowWee* ½ A delta wing, Beech *Staggerwing*, *Spitfire* and an *XB47D*, which I blew up from a *Model Airplane News* magazine plan.

I married my beautiful bride in 1965 and we spent our first year of married life in Allentown, Pennsylvania where I was on temporary assignment. One weekend, we drove to Philadelphia to sightsee. On the way back, we saw signs to the AMA Nationals at Willow Grove Naval Air Station. We stopped by just in time to see the closing air show. There I saw my first RC airplane. It was a red biplane doing loops, rolls, inverted low passes, etc. The seed was now planted. Someday, when I could afford it, I was going to have an RC plane.

In 1966 we moved into our first home in Jeffersonville, Indiana. My wife worked in a hospital on weekends. One day, she told me that each Saturday morning when she left for work the man living across the street had his garage door open and it appeared he was building a model airplane.

The next Saturday morning I walked across the street and introduced myself to Jesse Wolford. Jesse was building a very large RC sailplane. It was going to have in it an Orbit single-stick radio. He did not know how to fly RC yet. I tried to interest Jesse in my hobby of Control Line, but he got dizzy after a few rounds.

In about 1967, Jesse and I went to a model airplane display at a local mall. The club putting on the show was also putting on a flying exhibition at the back of the mall. The man flying the plane was flying a 60-size Pattern plane upside down thru a 12-inch diameter or so paper-covered hoop. Jesse and I were amazed. I was now hooked on RC.

It turned out that the guy doing the flying was a fellow Marine in my Marine Corp reserve unit. He was very helpful in giving us advice on how to get started.

I started selling all of my Control Line equipment to be able to afford my first RC plane, which was a *Sky Squire* with a Merco .49 and an MRC four-channel radio of 72.240 MHz. My second plane was an *Aristicat* designed by my good friend Bud Atkinson.

My friend from the Marine Corp lived in Louisville, several miles from me. He took me up for my first flight but due to his work schedule and the distance between us, I was only able to get with him that one time.

I decided to teach myself to fly with the help of my friend Jesse. We started trying to teach each other to fly at a local school parking lot. We flew over a large soy bean field. We spent a lot of time in that field trying to find our downed planes. After several months of crashing, rebuilding, and crashing again, we managed to make a few successful flights. The first time I returned home with my plane intact and took it out of the car, my kids said, "What happened, Daddy, didn't you get to fly?"

In those days, Jesse and I thought we had to fly every day no matter what the weather was like. We flew in all kinds of weather - drizzle, wind, snow - it didn't matter, we tried to fly.

After word got around about Jesse and me flying, we learned that we had another neighbor, Joe Ballou, who lived just a few doors from Jesse. Joe had been flying for several years, having started out on single-channel escapements and spark ignition engines. Joe flew Mode 1 after making the change from reed radios. A little later, we were joined by Les Burdsel and Ronnie Howard. (Ronnie and I flew Control Line together in the early 1960s)

The five of us flew on a regular basis and often one of us would mention starting a club. One Saturday I took a notepad with me to our flying session and recorded everyone's address and phone number. I then called each one about what day would be convenient to meet to start a club.

The five of us met for the first time in the garage/workshop of my home and started the Southern Indiana R/C Modelers (SIR/CM) in 1969. I was elected President. Jesse was the VP and Ronnie the Secretary/Treasurer.

We all joined the AMA in 1969 and we chartered our club with AMA, I believe in 1970.

Shortly after we started the club I began the club's first newsletter, *News Bits*. I wrote and published this newsletter for many years.

In the 1990s, we started our first website and I maintained the site for a few years while being the club president.

In 1970, we were approached by Doug Early, then a member of the Louisville R/C Club, about forming a joint venture with the River City R/C Flyers to put on a large model airplane contest at the Rough River Dam State Resort Park in Falls of Rough, Kentucky.

Doug had been asked by the Kentucky Parks Department to put on a contest to promote the park during the off season. At the first meeting of the Kentucky/Indiana R/C Association, Jesse and I volunteered for our club to handle the RC Scale portion of the contest since he and I both had an interest in scale building and flying.

The first Mint Julep Meet was held in May of 1971. We had over 120 flyers for Pattern, Pylon Racing and Scale. The contest took forever to fly off, so the next year we moved the Pylon Racing to a date in the fall.

We continued the Pattern and Scale on the May date for a few years. However, the Pattern contestants grew and the Scale contestants diminished. Then, in about 1976, I asked to move the Scale portion to a date in April. The request was granted and thus began the SIR/CM Mint Julep Scale Meet, which I am proud to have been associated with for the past many years as either the Contest Director or Co-Contest Director.

During the many years of the "Mint," as it is lovingly referred to, the Club has been made an Ambassador of the Kentucky State Parks Department and has earned an award of Outstanding Achievement from the AMA.

In connection with my work with the Mint Julep, I have been made a Kentucky Colonel and an Ambassador of the Kentucky State Parks Department. I have received an Outstanding Achievement award from the AMA and I have received two awards from the SIR/CM for the effort I put in promoting and running the Mint Julep.

In 2007, John Guenther and I received a special award of appreciation from the contestants of the Mint Julep for our work with the contest.

In the early years of the SIR/CM, we were constantly looking for flying sites. I had the pleasure of meeting with many local groups, including city and county governments, to request help in getting a good flying site. It turned out however that most of our flying sites were on private property.

In 1977, I built a new home in the country on two acres of land. Because of our difficulty finding good flying fields, my backyard served often as the club's flying field, especially in the winter when snow was on the ground. In the summer, the local Sky Liners Control Line club flew in my back yard on Thursday evenings.

Because of my work with the Mint, I was asked in the 1970s to be the event director for RC Scale at the AMA Nats in Lincoln, Nebraska. I ended up doing two in Lincoln, two in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and one in Ohio. I also served on the site selection committee for the Nats in Lawrenceville, Illinois.

I have been a member of National Association of Scale Aeromodelers (NASA) for many years and have served as VP for NASA presidents John Guenther, Stan Alexander, and Ed Terry.

In the 1990s when NASA took over as the SIG for RC Scale I became the RC Scale Event Director for another several years and after that the Co-Event Director for several more years.

In 1983, my wife and I started a hobby shop in our garage called Arvin's Hobby Centre. At the side of the house we had an RC car track and in the back of the house we had a flying field.

In 1985, we moved the hobby shop to Clarksville, Indiana, and in 1989 we moved it to a 14,000 square-foot building in New Albany, Indiana. There we had a 2400 square-foot carpeted RC car track where we held races on Friday and Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons. We also held special races on Halloween and New Year's Eve. The hobby shop gave me the opportunity to introduce many new people to the thrill of model aviation.

I am also currently a member of the Ohio River View R/C Flyers and the VP of that club. In the mid-1980s, I had the pleasure of being a judge at the first U.S. Scale Masters Championships at Mile Square Park in Southern California.

Since then, I have been the CD for two U.S. Scale Masters Championships in Louisville, Kentucky and Rosewood, Indiana, and did the initial planning for one in Radcliff, Kentucky.

In 1984, I was recruited by Dan Santich to write a Scale column for *Model Airplane News*

magazine. I wrote the Scale News column for about one year. I also have written several articles about the Mint Julep, which have been published in *R/C Sportsman* magazine.

I am currently still a member of the SIR/CM, where I am the only charter member to have been a member continuously since the club's start. I am pleased to have been the president of the club off and on for over 18 years, and a member of the BOD most of the club's 42 years.

I am still an active flyer, contest director, and RC Scale competitor. My son Jeremy and I compete in Fun Scale and Team Scale.

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

