



# The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of FRED REESE

Born October 24, 1939 Started modeling in 1949

AMA #62541



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Written & Submitted by FR (11/1999); Transcribed by NR (11/1999); Edited by SS (2002), Updated by JS (10/2008), Reformatted by JS (01/2010)

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## Career:

- 1976 - : Contributing editor/monthly column in Radio Control Modeler (RCM)
- Produced 54 designs published in most model magazines
- Produced 38 designs that were kitted by, ACE RC, House of Balsa, Golden Age Models, Allied Models, Michigan Hobby Hanger and Norm Models
- Published articles in RCM and Model Aviation magazines

## Honors:

- 2000: AMA Fellow
  - 2001: Model Aviation Hall of Fame
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I was born on October 24, 1939 to my parents, Fred Clement Reese and Naldera Lewis Reese in Glendale, California. My father was a pharmacist and my mother stayed at home to raise my sister and me.

I have one sister, Marilyn Reese Tuohy that lives with her family In Tacoma, Washington. Gwen, my wife, has a twin sister, Judy, an older sister, Marilyn, and a brother, David. Gwen and I have no children.

I began building models in grammar school in Glendale, California. In third grade, a classmate brought his father's Super Zilch to school to share with the class. I had never seen a model like that and became stricken for life. I bought wood and built from scratch, without plans, my first airplane, a full size, non-flying, Super Zilch. I covered it with silk span and painted it green and white. From the local hobby shop, I continued to buy more wood. I built many other models, mostly built from magazine plans that I scaled up. From those magazines, I found my heroes, Cal Smith, Walt Musciano, Keith Storey, Frank Ehling, Roy Clough Jr., Henry Struck, Paul Plecan, Doug Rolfe, Don McGovern, Walt Good, and Bill Winter. Times were lean during those years for my family. If I wanted something, I knew that the only way to get it was to build it myself. My mother was encouraging and I became inventive. My mother's greatest gift to me was her telling me, "There is nothing you can't do." She told me this many times and I believed her.

I built many models in Glendale, most of which never flew, but I was undaunted. I loved the Monogram Speedee Built series and built some of them over and over. They didn't fly far, but they did fly. My first engine was an Andersen Baby Spitfire .045. I ran it a lot but only had one successful flight with it in Glendale. It was a Free Flight from magazine plans, I don't remember the name, but I can still see the flight. I let it go from our front yard where it proceeded to circle a large palm tree. The airplane never got much higher than the tree and circled tightly, never drifting, until the engine quit. It then glided to a landing in the middle of the street. I don't

remember another successful flight with that model.

When I was 10, we moved to Manhattan Beach, California. My father had bought a drug store in Hermosa Beach and we began a new life. I started a new school in the middle of the seventh grade. Life at the beach was very different. There were lots of kids around and there was plenty to do. I built my first successful Control Line model at that apartment. It was called a Simple Flyman by Aubrey "Red" Kochman from an Air Trails magazine. My Baby Spitfire engine powered the Simple Flyman. For



Christmas that year, I received a Jim Walker U-Reely control system. The lines wound up inside the case with a little crank handle on the side. The lines were released by pushing a metal lever with your thumb. With the engine running, the airplane was held in one hand and the U-Reely in the other. The airplane was launched and the line release was pressed. The little Simple Flyman would pull out the lines and would fly until the engine quit. The lines were then quickly cranked back into the handle and the plane would stop. I flew this little model after school in our front yard many times.

In 1951, I met my first modeling friend, Don Harris. We are still friends today and we fly together twice a week. Don was the first other kid I had met that actually built models. My other friends just sort of watched me, and mostly hoped to see a good crash. What fun we had. On Saturdays, we would each buy a new Jim Walker Firebaby and by the end of the weekend, we each needed a new one. I remember a new Firebaby, ready to fly, cost \$2.50 back then. We also built U-Control kits. We each built a Berkeley Little Stinker, Pitts Special biplane. Don's had an OR .23 and mine had a McCoy .19. We flew them for a long time, before they finally just fell apart and could not be repaired any more. I remember building a light, original design, stunt model for my McCoy, the wings covered with yellow silk and the fuselage was painted red. On the first flight, it came off the lines, but continued flying straight and level until it hit the top edge of a retaining wall. It was the most spectacular crash ever; it just exploded up the hill. There was nothing left. On another day, while flying a profile stunter, a nearby kite came down low as the wind dropped. My circling model's lines picked up the kite string. With each circle, there was one more wrap of string around the control lines. With each circle, the controls got a little stiffer. Gradually I was no longer able to hold the model level and it began to climb a little going into the wind and then descend downwind. The oscillation progressed into a final wing over and then went straight into the ground.

Don and I also built boats. The one I remember was a little .049 Cub powered Berkeley Cabin Cruiser. This was before Radio Controlled (RC) models, so the boats were free running and trimmed to run in circles. We would ride our bicycles out to the lake with our boats under our arms.

While in high school, Don and I each built our first RC systems, again from a Berkeley kit. The Aerotrol system was a transmitter with a push button, a single tube receiver and rubber band powered escapement to turn the rudder. The transmitter had little range. The receiver would use up the batteries just getting it tuned for flight. The escapement would unwind like a rubber model from the engine vibration, but we tried, and the homemade radio did sort of work. I remember building a Comet 54" Taylorcraft for the radio. A Cub .09 powered it. The radio receiver was suspended in the cockpit by four tiny rubber bands from my orthodontist. The only flight attempt was a rapid climb, followed by an abrupt stall and vertical descent to the ground. I can picture in my mind the receiver straining backward as the model accelerated downward and then being slingshot out through the windshield on impact.

I do not remember building any more models in high school after the Taylorcraft. Don moved away, I got my first car, discovered girls and that was that. I originally planned to go to dental school after high school. However, by my senior year, I changed my mind and decided to go to pharmacy school instead and stay in the family business.

I attended El Camino College for two years and then went to the University of Southern California (USC) for pharmacy school. My dad had gone to USC also and he was very happy with my decision. Across the street from the pharmacy school was the fine arts department. The pharmacy curriculum had us take one outside elective class, so I signed up for a pottery class. I loved it and spent every spare minute across the street, throwing pots. I continued making pottery for several years after college.

In 1958, during my first year at USC, I met my wife, Gwen Wehrle, in a sociology class. We got married when she graduated in 1961 and we have been happy together ever since. I graduated from pharmacy school in 1964, and worked in a large drug store for a year, before going to work for my father. After a year or so, my father retired and I bought the store.

Gwen and I bought a new house at the beach in 1968. As owner of the local drug store, I got involved in civic activities. I joined the Rotary Club and the Chamber of Commerce. I played a little golf, as that was my dad's hobby.

In 1968, I received a call from Don Harris. I had not seen him for years, nor did I know where he was. Don was excited and told me that there were new RC systems that really worked and I should check it out. Don did not live nearby, so I went about it my way. My way was the hard way. I found a hobby shop, only an hour away, so I went to see what was new. Understand, I still had that old Berkeley Aerotrol unit, and was thinking that being older and wiser I could now make it work.

I visited Colby Evetts hobby shop in Santa Monica. It was a small shop, but it was filled with all the good stuff. Models hung from the ceiling and there were all the new radio systems in the counters. We talked for a while, then he said, "I'm going flying, do you want to go with me?" We drove out to the Sepulveda Basin RC flying site and I got my first RC lesson. The airplane was a DeBolt Jenny, black and white, covered with doped nylon and it was controlled by a new digital

system. I held the box and moved the sticks, while Colby shouted, “right, right, left” at me. I had no idea what I was doing, and never felt I was in control of anything, let alone that airplane. I try to remember that experience when I instruct a new student.

The flames were fanned and brought back to life. I bought a Controilaire Mule single channel system with an escapement. Did I buy a kit? Of course not. Instead, I scratch built a little low wing monoplane for that old OK Cub .09. The wings were polystyrene Styrofoam, sanded to airfoil shape, and covered with silk span and white glue. Amazingly, the airplane could have flown if it had not been for me pushing the button on the transmitter. Still determined, I scratch built a Fokker Triplane with foam wings and the old Cub. It was less successful than the first. By this time, I was really frustrated with the escapement, so I bought the pulse add on to the Mule transmitter and bought a Rand galloping ghost actuator that would give proportional rudder control. With galloping ghost, the rudder oscillated right and left as the transmitter pulsed on and off. By moving the lever on the transmitter the pulse would be more on or more off, causing the rudder to dwell to one side or the other, turning the model. For the new system, I bought a Mini Mambo kit, still for the .09. From this airplane, I got one complete RC flight. By this time, I had joined a local RC club. It was the Northrop RC Flyers from the Northrop plant in nearby Hawthorne, California. They were a great bunch of guys, but none of them understood galloping ghosts and none would help me learn to fly. I had to do it on my own.

I scratch built a Piper Cherokee from the Mini Mambo wing, built a Goldberg 1/2A Skylane. I did my first roll with a scratch built, V tall Bonanza with the galloping ghost system. There were successes and failures. I bought a new CS galloping ghost system with a Rand Dual Pack that had a separate actuator for rudder and elevator. On the first flight, the radio went out of range and I watched the model circle slowly up and out of sight towards Hawthorne. I never saw it again.

I bought a slightly used Kraft Gold Medal digital proportional system and everything changed. I built a Jess Krelser Skyhawk from RCM plans. I covered it with silk and dope and painted it white with dark blue and light blue trim, just like a Skyhawk at Torrance airport. I really learned to fly with the Skyhawk. I had hundreds of flights and I used it to teach several other new club members to fly. Eventually, I gave the Skyhawk away. For 15 years, I followed the Skyhawk from new owner to new owner and many rebuilds. It was a marvelous aircraft.

After the Skyhawk, I built many new airplanes in the next couple of years. Some were kits and others scratch-built from my designs. I flew several Lanier Citrons, just to have a pattern like model for everyday flying. I had seen in RCM, Chuck Cunningham's Rivets, a new class of racer for .15 engines. They were called quarter midgets. In 1970, I designed and built a .15-powered Cassutt Special quarter midget racer and submitted the design to RCM for publication. That was my first published design.

I was also flying rubber-powered peanut scale models. I entered many of the Flightmaster scale meets in both peanut and RC. In 1971, I won the Northrop flying wing contest in rubber with a Stringless Wonder by Bill Hannan. I was one of the proxy flyers at the Model Builder proxy postal peanut meets for two years. In 1972, one of the models I flew won the event.

I bought an Ace RC pulse system and built several little .020 rudder only models. These were great. Often I would run to the field on my lunch break and get in a couple of flights. From these models, I designed the Littlest Stick that was published in RCM and kitted by Ace RC. It was the smallest RC model kit on the market and was kitted from 1973 until 1997. The Northrop club had among its members, Bob and Roland Boucher and Don Dombrowski. Don had just bought the California Model Company and all the tooling and equipment. Don wanted to develop some new kits and asked me if I would help.

Together we designed the House of Balsa Shoestring quarter midget racer. The quarter midget racing had caught on in our club and in several other Southern California clubs. It had also caught on in Ohio, and a racing group had formed. They were proposing new quarter midget racing rules different from those published in RCM. The Southern California clubs banded together and members from each of the clubs formed QMRC, Quarter Midget Racing Club. Don Dombrowski and I were two of the founding members and on the board of directors of the club. We were dedicated to unify and set official rules for the new racing class. We also set up a racing circuit among the clubs and raced every month.

I published another racer in the new Model Builder magazine and Bill Northrop asked me to write a racing column in the new magazine. It was the perfect forum for QMRC.

The House of Balsa Shoestrings were racing well in the club. I built a new racer for 1972, using the Shoestring kit as a basis. The new racer was the El Bandito. With John Elliott calling for me, I won the 1972, QNMC club championship with the El Bandito. With John calling for me, I was in the zone. I can still see the last race with Tom Christopher, 10 laps – wing tip to wing tip – and winning the race in the last turn before the flag. It was the perfect end to the season.

I published five new designs in 1972, four in RCM, and one in Model Builder. The magazines charged the designer of a construction article if they had to redraw the drawings for publication. In 1972, the charge was \$100. My pencil drawings were good, but they still had to be inked for publication in RCM. Another Northrop club member was Gus Morfis. Gus told me how to draw with ink on Mylar. My brother in law gave me a set of rapidograph pens. I bought the templates and the lettering guides and other items needed to draw in ink. By my third published design, I was submitting finished ink drawings on Mylar to the magazines. When I needed help, I would refer to drawings by Dick Kidd to see how Dick did it.

I began working for my father in our drugstore when I was 13, and continued to work there after school and summers through high school and college. By 1972, I had worked in the family drug store for 20 years, so I sold it. There were parts of pharmacy that I liked, but the rest, to me was high-pressure boredom. I had to make a change in my life. Gwen and I had traveled to Europe the year before and we loved it. The travel bug had bitten. We decided to sell the drugstore, our house, and cars and buy a motor home to see the United States. It took several months to get it all done, but in November 1972, we drove away in our new 25' Revcon motor home. The Revcon had a 6' x 6' roof box for my airplanes and a plywood table to build on.

We spent Christmas with lifelong friends in Salt Lake. The day after Christmas, it snowed 25 inches and it got cold. As soon as the roads cleared, we headed east across Wyoming and then south through Colorado. There was snow on the ground all the way to El Paso, Texas, and we did not stop until we got there.

As we drove from town to town in Texas, I found the hobby shops and flying fields. Very often, we would spend nights in the motor home at the fields, and then drive on in the morning. Since I had published a few articles and had a racing column, I was recognized and many times Gwen and I were taken to homes to visit. We always stayed in our motor home and usually left the next day. As we traveled, we met many of the other modelers that we would read about in the magazines. We spent several days in Victoria, Texas, with Brad Shephard and his wife. We met Dave Robelen in Newport News and Fulton Hungerford in Florida.

We crossed Texas, saw Mardi Gras in Louisiana, Alabama, and spent a month in Florida. It was heaven. We went to Disney World and I went flying and fishing almost daily. My second passion in life is fishing. Back in Hermosa Beach as a kid if I wasn't flying, I was fishing. We went as far as the keys and took a cruise to the Bahamas. We then turned north and headed up the East Coast. We spent a week in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and met some very nice people camping there. A few days later, we had engine trouble and I caused a fire that nearly burned up the motor home. Fortunately, I was able to put the fire out, but our house on wheels was in really bad shape. We stopped at the next motel to stay and figure out what to do next. We were devastated. That evening there was a knock on our door. The people we had met in Myrtle Beach recognized our motor home at the motel and stopped to see us. The next day they took us to their house, where we stayed for the next two weeks while we repaired and cleaned the motor home. People are great.

With the repairs made, we headed north and traveled eventually to Quebec before turning west again. We spent 10 days in Washington, D.C., at the Smithsonian's and even saw a day of the Watergate hearings. I flew in a quarter midget race at the LIDS field on Long Island. I finished second and turned fast time.

We traveled to Montreal and then south through Ohio where I met the other quarter midget-racing group. We headed south to Kentucky for the quarter midget nationals at Rough River State Park. I built a new racer for the nationals, again based on the House of Balsa Shoestring wing. The new racer flew well, but I never did figure out the new K&B .15 engine and did not do very well at the meet. Art Schroeder of Model Airplane News was there and asked if he could publish the new Déjà Vu racer. I drew the plans on the dining table in the motor home and took the pictures on picnic benches in the campground.

After Kentucky and Tennessee, we headed west and back to California. The trip took 13 months total. Our insurance repaired the motor home back to new condition at the Revcon factory in Orange County, California. After 13 months, though, we were ready to stop for a while. We bought a tiny old duplex in Hermosa Beach and set about to remodel. We gutted the upstairs unit

and made it all new. My brother-in-law, Gwen's twin sister's husband, helped us with the remodel. Ken was a journeyman carpenter. After the remodel, Ken and I went to work together doing carpentry. During the remodel, Gwen and I lived in the motor home in front of the house.

We took one more trip for four months up through the Pacific Northwest, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming before selling the motor home.

In 1976, Don Dombrowski asked me to come to work for him at House of Balsa to do some new models. I jumped at the chance. The chemistry between Don, John Elliott, Art Linasche, another Douglas engineer and me was good. It was intense and it was fun. We pushed each other to make the new kits exceptional. It took us six months to get the first kit, the 4/2A, schoolyard scale, P-51 to market. It took three months to produce the second kit. After that, we had a new kit produced and ready for sale every 45 days. A Chipmunk, P-39, Bonanza, P-47, FW-190, and a 1/2A Pietenpol followed the Me-109. I did the design, plans, tooling and plastic and die tooling and the instruction books for each of the kits. The House of Balsa kits were the first kits to have a hundred photos or more instruction book showing every single step to complete the model. After the Pietenpol, I did most of the design and tooling for the new .40 size P-51. The intensity had taken its toll and I went back to carpentry with my brother in law, Ken.

Ken and I were both frustrated with carpentry. We liked the work, but the income was not consistent. We began to think about different things.

In the winter of 1977, Ken and I drove to Jackson Hole, Wyoming to look at business opportunities. We found a KOA campground for sale on 70 acres, five miles from town on the main highway to Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks. We bought it. In the meantime, Gwen and Ken's wife, Judy, were teaching school in Hermosa Beach. Ken and I went to the campground in April of 1978 to get ready for the summer season.

Gwen and Judy finished the teaching year and came up to Wyoming in June. Our house at the campground was an unfinished two-story building. The downstairs was intended to be a restaurant and was mostly finished, but the upstairs, our house, was still open studs. I got a bathroom working downstairs and began to work on the upstairs after working all day on the campground. Meanwhile, Ken and I stayed in a room off the indoor pool. The pool was open to the townspeople during the winter. When Judy and Gwen arrived from the beach, it kind of hit the fan. Judy and Ken stayed in the pool building while Gwen and I moved into the restaurant. We had a toilet and sink in the bathroom and we bathed in the restaurant kitchen triple sink. It was an adventure. Needless to say, there was a push to get the upstairs finished, which I did. By the time the summer tourists came, we were all upstairs. It was a perfect house for two couples, with two bedrooms and a bath at each end of the house, with the kitchen and living room in the middle.

That first summer was pandemonium. The campground was very busy. Everything there was new to us. We had 200 campsites, a store, and the indoor pool with an employee dorm upstairs. We also had a general store and gas station, horseback riding concession and a fur trader. We also

had another four-bedroom apartment at the far end of the property that was rented. The campground itself had been badly damaged during the winter. The manager had let people camp during the winter, use the pool restroom, and shower facilities. They had brought in a front loader to clear the snow so cars could get in and out. The loader and the cars really tore up the grass and road. The water system had four wells and above ground plastic pipes to a 5,000 gallon holding tank at the top of the hill. There were separate septic systems for each facility. The work never ended. A day off during the summer was only working eight hours. A normal day was 7 a.m. to 2 a.m.

I did manage to find time to go fishing. My parents came to visit and I hired a fishing guide to take Dad and me down the river. We had a great day and that fishing guide became my best friend. Bruce was single and loved to fish. He was on the river every day, but when he had a day off, he went fishing. We went fishing. I learned to fly fish, tie flies, and catch fish. I loved it there, but I was the only one. Actually, Gwen liked Wyoming, but not the business.

We had the campground for nine years. We had tried to sell it for the last eight years. We only spent one winter there. No one would stay for another. We experienced two weeks of 60 degrees below zero. All of the plumbing froze and broke. With the power off, we could get the living room up to 30 degrees above. The ceiling of the house was still not insulated. We just did not get that far during that first summer. I worked with a plumber for 14 hours to repair the plumbing that was frozen. Two days later the other half of the house plumbing froze and broke. I bought a torch and fixed it myself the second time. In the same way I learned to be a plumber, I also learned to be an electrician. I did the maintenance on the laundry washers and dryers and pool equipment.

Thinking back to the Jess Kreiser Skyhawk, I designed a new Skyhawk for Model Aviation magazine. I built the model during that first winter. The morning I took the cover picture for the magazine, it was 30 degrees below zero, but the sky was brilliant blue and the Tetons were all white. A couple of months later when it warmed up enough to fly, I had our resident electrician watch for traffic while I flew from the highway in front of our house. There was only an occasional car and I had flown there before. The first take off and flight were uneventful and when it was time to land, I asked Gary if the road was clear. He said it was and I swung the model around onto final. But then I hesitated. "Gary, are you sure the road is clear?" I asked. Again, he said it was, and I began to let the model down. Now I was sure I heard a car, pulled up, and added power. Whoosh, the car went by. "Gary," I shouted, "you said the road was clear." He replied, "Your lane was clear." True story. I waited to get to a real flying site to fly it again.

The next eight years we would go to Jackson in the spring to work the summer. In the winters, Judy and Ken went back to Hermosa Beach. Gwen and I went to Penn Valley, California to stay with her mom. Gwen's mother, Mabel, had built a house on nine acres in the country. It was to be a retreat for the family and would have some kind of crop in order to have some tax advantages. The family bought a tractor and during the winters, I cleared the acreage to plant. Judy continued to teach school during the winters. Gwen and I would return to Jackson in April or May. Ken and Judy would come up in June.



The following years in Jackson were not nearly so hectic. Business fell off as gas prices and interest rates soared. We usually just made enough money to pay the mortgage, take care of our expenses during the summer, and maybe have a little extra for the winter.

Finally, in 1985 we sold the property to Bill Kerr of Kerr McGee of Oklahoma City. Bill wanted the property to build an art museum. If you visit Jackson Hole today, you can visit the museum. The view is spectacular just the same as we had out of our front window for nine years.

While in Penn Valley, during the winters, I would design and build models. I flew during the winters with the Sierra Foothill RC Flyers in Grass Valley, California. They are a great group and I am flying with them again now. It is a small world, as my old friend Don Harris lived in nearby Lake of the Pines and is a member of the club. I designed and published 15 new designs during the Jackson Hole period including two RC outboard boats. I did the boats on request from Dick Kidd at RCM. I had some model boat experience at House of Balsa plus I built a full size speedboat while in college.

We sold the Jackson property in 1985, but since the property was to be cleared, and the sale price was very low. Bill Kerr allowed us to operate the campground the last summer and sell every thing we could. This worked because oil prices had dropped and Bill would not be able to start construction on the museum for at least another year. We had a giant auction of everything that could be moved. We packed up what was left and moved back to Penn Valley.

After the sale in 1985, Gwen and I bought a five-acre lot in Penn Valley, just down the street from her mom. I designed a house, as this had always been one of my goals. During that winter, we got the plans approved and started construction. There were a lot of delays, but I did get the foundation, floor, and electrical hook up completed. When we came back from the final summer in Jackson, we were ready to build the house. With the exceptions of the foundation and finishing the sheet rock, I built the entire house by myself in the following year. The 1,600 sq. ft. house looked like a little farmhouse with a western porch, but it was special. I studied solar and super efficient houses while in Jackson. The house had 11-inch thick walls and a vented roof and attic system. One cord of wood would heat it during the winter and the inside never got above 85 degrees, even in 100 degree summer days.

As soon as the house was finished, I started Golden Age Models. As part of the whole modeling dream, I had always hoped to have my own model company to sell my kits. I had a very strong interest in the aircraft of the 1920s and 1930s. One of my favorites was the 1929 Travel Air Mystery Ship. The Travel Air won the Thompson trophy in 1929 beating the fastest military pursuits of the time and instantly changed military aircraft design. Don Harris showed me how to make fiberglass molds and lay up fiberglass parts. In 1988, I had a 70", 115-scale Travel Air Mystery Ship kit for sale. The fuselage, cowl, and wheel pants were epoxy glass. The wing and tail were built up balsa. It was a nice kit that made a spectacular model. After the Travel Air, I made a kit of my Super Chipmunk from the RCM plan of 1986. The kit had an epoxy glass fuselage and foam core wing. The next kit was the Ryan STA in 1/4 scale. This was a much

bigger project than it appeared. It took all of the next year to complete the prototype, tooling, plans, and instructions. It was a great kit, but unfortunately my 1/4 page, black and white ad came out in the same issue as Byron's full-page color ad for his Ryan STA. I sold a few, but not enough to stay in business. I sold Golden Age Models and went back to work.

Near the end of Golden Age Models, I designed a new airplane that was designed from the beginning to be mass-produced. It was big, light and had pleasing lines. I called it the Cloud Dancer. At first, the six-pound prototype with its 72" span and 850 sq. in. of wing area was powered with a Fox .45. I soon changed to an OS 61 four cycle. I flew this model for the next three years, logging hundreds of flights. It was a delight to fly. I tried to sell it to every company I could talk to, but nothing happened. I went ahead and submitted the Cloud Dancer and it was published in RCM in 1993.

I worked for a year in a local hardware store before deciding to sell the Penn Valley home and move closer to Sacramento and better job opportunities. During the wait for the new house in Rocklin to be finished, we again lived with Gwen's mother in Nevada City, California.

For a short time, I had nothing to do while we waited. I called Tom Runge at Ace RC. We had talked many times before. Tom is a good friend. I knew that Ace RC had hundreds of their tapered mini foam wings in storage. The mold produced a pair of constant chord wings and a pair of tapered wing panels. Ace RC sold more of the straight wings and had a surplus of the tapers. I asked Tom if I could design some airplanes to use up those tapered wings. He said, "Sure." The first airplane I did was the Pocket Rocket, a little two-channel model for the Cox .020. I also did the die design tooling and the plan for the Pocket Rocket. With the design and tooling done, Ace was able to produce the kit quickly and inexpensively. With some of the money from the Pocket Rocket, I was able to buy a computer. A good friend helped me learn AutoCAD. The Pocket Rocket was the last ink drawing I did.

Between 1984 and 1987, I designed for RCM three little Ace RC foam winged models called the Simple Citabria, Simple Cub, and Simple Duster. These were simple little two channel models for .049 engines. I called them my simple series. Once in the new house with a new computer, I talked to Tom. "How about a Simple P-51 and Me-109 using the tapered wings?" I asked. Tom liked the idea. The P-51 and 109 were followed by an Extra and a Cap, and were followed by a Beech Staggerwing and an Ultimate biplane. Since then we have added an AT-6, Corsair, Cub, and a speed 400 electric model. The series was very successful. People did not just buy one. They bought several and they changed them into other aircraft. They were raced, flown in combat and flown everywhere.

During this process, I shipped Tom the Cloud Dancer, with engine, ready to fly. Finally, a year or so later he flew it. On the first flight, the wing came off. I was in shock, but Tom rebuilt it and finally, two years later, flew the Cloud Dancer. He liked it. He wanted to kit it, but he wished it were a .40 size. Now with the computer I drew the new .40 size Cloud Dancer, built the prototype, took the pictures for the instruction book, and wrote the text. I did the die design directly from the computer drawings. All of the parts fit. I also made the plug for the plastic

canopy. Within just a few short months, the Cloud Dancer was on the market. In the meantime, I was working in another hardware store and hating it a lot. After the second time I injured my back lifting sacks of concrete, I quit for good.

Gwen was working at a local plant nursery. The royalty checks were just starting from the simple series when we decided to move to Las Vegas. In the 1960s, Gwen's mother moved to Las Vegas and bought apartment units. So did her father. After her father's death, his units were held in trust and managed by the bank. In 1993, the bank gave the management back to Gwen, her 2 sisters and her brother. Gwen and I decided to go to Las Vegas to take over the management of the combined apartment units. Mabel had managers for her apartments for years.

Managing the apartments turned out to be good for us. Gwen handled the rentals and the business while I did the maintenance. Actually, we both did the maintenance. We cleaned and painted and we got them rented. The money was good and we stayed in Las Vegas for five years.

Las Vegas has great modeling facilities. There are two improved flying sites maintained by the county that were built by Bill Bennett while he was at Circus Circus. The Silver Bowl field is the Tournament of Champions site. That is where we flew every weekend. There are two large clubs in Las Vegas as well as QSAA and the Dust Devils, a Free Flight, and Control Line club. There are also glider and a helicopter groups. There are also several large dry lakes where they fly.

I joined Las Vegas RC. It is as active as any club could be. They host between 20 and 30 events every year. The core group loves to race and has six club quickie races for season points. They also host 2 AMA 428 quickie races and a 422 Quarter 40 race. I flew in the club quickie races, placing fourth the last two seasons I was there. As a contest director (CD), I directed many of the AMA races. I also was CD for the IMAC Nationals held there one year. I was president of the club for a year and active every year.

While in Las Vegas, I did the plans, tooling and instruction book for the original Cloud Dancer for Ace RC. It was nice to be working with Tom Runge. I became his R&D department. We worked smoothly together and the kits went into production. I built and published the Sea Dancer in RCM and got the Sea Dancer into production at Ace.

When Ace RC was sold the second time, things changed. The new owner was Thunder Tiger of Taiwan. Aling Lai is the owner of Thunder Tiger. I flew to Higginsville, Missouri, to meet with Aling after the sale. We had a nice meeting and he asked me for five new designs a year. At that time, the three new simple series airplanes were complete and ready for production. The Cloud Dancer 120 just needed the instruction book. Aling asked me for an ARF quickie 500 and 2 ARF fun fly models. I did the design work on all three aircraft and built prototypes for flight-testing and the trade shows. I also finished the instruction book for the Cloud Dancer 120. After two years, only the Fun Tigers and the new Simple Series models have been produced. At present, I have five new designs in concept ready to proceed when they are needed.

I have stayed in contact with Don Dombowski through the years and we remain good friends.

Don asked me to develop a little 1/2A profile fun fly for him. The Schoolyard Profile Scale P-51 was the result. Based on the success of the P-51, I followed with an Extra 300 and a Sukhol that are now in production.

After five years of dealing with tenants and apartments, Gwen and I decided to return to the Grass Valley/Nevada City area. Gwen's mother has a nice Victorian house in Nevada City and we wanted to be nearby. We bought a new house in a developing suburb in Grass Valley. It was the best compromise of floor plan and shop area of the houses we looked at. For the first six months back, we stayed in the Nevada City house while ours was being built.

I had hoped that the Thunder Tiger deal would produce enough income, but it did not. I knew I would have to do something to supplement our income. I started Fred Reese Models. I did not want to compete with Thunder Tiger or cause any friction there. I decided to produce for my first kit, the Golden Oldie, a vintage looking biplane that I published in 1983. It had been one of RCM's best selling plans and it was nothing like anything Thunder Tiger had. I also showed a Thunder Tiger engine on the plan.

In preparation for the new company, while still in Las Vegas, I began to upgrade my computer and buy new equipment. I bought a new digital camera, a high-resolution color printer, and the necessary software to produce good pictures.

I built the second prototype Golden Oldie on a two by four sheet of plywood next to my computer in the house in Nevada City. I took the pictures on a four by eight sheet of white melamine on the floor. With the new camera and software, the pictures were the best I had ever done for an instruction book. With the new printer, I was able to print my own instruction books. I had the new kits in the box just before we moved into the new house. I knew I would be too busy for a while to do more modeling work. The shop was unfinished and so was the back yard. Of course, I got the shop finished first and now I am working on the yard.

I have just finished my second kit, the Sea Dancer 120. The Sea Dancer instruction book is in full color. It is ready to ship and I have received my first orders. I have three new designs in the drawing stage for my next kits.

I am not finished. There are so many airplanes and so little time. Last month I had my 60th birthday.

## **Designer/Experimenter**

Below is a list of construction articles of original designs for RC, Free Flight and Control Line aircraft and boats that were published in magazines. (54 total)

Magazine abbreviations:

RCM = Radio Controlled Model

MAN = Model Airplane News

MB = Model Builder

MA = Model Aviation

FM = Flying Models

<b>Date</b>	<b>Magazine</b>	<b>Model Name</b>	<b>Model Type</b>
June 1971	RCM	Cassutt Special	.15 RC pylon racer
Jan. 1972	RCM	Sopwith Triplane	.15 RC sport scale
March 1972	RCM	Little Mulligan	½ A RC sport
March 1972	MB	Miss Cosmic Wind	.15 RC pylon racer
June 1972	RCM	Shoestring	.15 RC pylon racer
Dec. 1972	RCM	Quickie	.15 RC sport
1973	RCM	Littlest Stick	.010 RC sport
July 1973	RCM	El Bandito	.15 RC pylon racer
Aug. 1973	MB	Baby Dart	Free Flight rubber
Oct. 1974	MAN	Dej' a Vu	.15 RC pylon racer
Nov. 1974	RCM	Grasshopper	.15 RC sport
Nov. 1974	MB	Cessna 150	½ A RC scale
Feb. 1975	RCM	Hafadussin	½ A RC sport
Feb. 1975	RCM	NRC racer	½ A RC sport
Aug. 1975	RCM	BD-6	.20 RC scale/trainer
Sept. 1975	MAN	BD-5	½ A RC scale
June 1976	RCM	P-51	½ A RC scale
1977	MA	Baby Cub	Free Flight rubber
July 1977	RCM	Schoolyard Special	½ A RC sport
1978	MA	P-26 Peashooter	½ A Control Line
1978	MA	Ki-27 Nate	½ A Control Line
Feb. 1978	RCM	Double Trouble	.40 RC sport biplane
July 1979	MA	Cessna 172 Skyhawk	.40 RC scale; cover photo
Jan. 1980	RCM	Hopper	.20 RC sport biplane with floats
Jan. 1981	RCM	RV-3	.15 RC scale
May 1981	RCM	Doppeldecker	.10 RC sport biplane; cover photo
July 1982	RCM	Waco AGC-8	.15 RC scale biplane
April 1983	MA	J-3 Cub on floats	.10 RC scale; cover photo
Oct. 1983	RCM	Golden Oldie	.40 RC sport biplane; cover photo
Nov. 1983	RCM	Golden Oldie Floats	Twin floats for .40 RC
May 1984	RCM	Schiada 20 SS	.21 RC scale outboard boat
Nov. 1984	RCM	Simple Citabria	½ A RC scale
June 1985	RCM	Ski Vee 40	.40-.60 RC outboard boat; cover photo
June 1985	MA	Buttercup	.020 RC sport
June 1985	FM	Fast Freddy	.40 RC sport
Aug. 1985	RCM	Simple Cub	½ A RC scale; cover photo
Sept. 1985	MA	Miles Atwood Special	.21 RC scale; cover photo
Feb. 1986	RCM	Super Chipmunk	.60-1.20 RC scale; cover photo
April 1986	RCM	RCM Air Car Trainer	.40 RC Car Trainer

July 1986	RCM	Stingray	/21 RC outboard boat
Oct. 1986	MA	Swallow	.40 FS RC sport; cover photo
Feb. 1987	RCM	Simple Duster	½ A RC scale
April 1987	MA	Midget Mustang	.40 RC scale; cover photo
Nov. 1992	RCM	Pocket Rocket	.020 RC sport
May 1993	MA	Gilmore Special	½ A Control Line trainer
May 1993	MA	Sierra	Free Flight rubber
June 1993	RCM	Cloud Dancer	.60 RC sport; cover photo
Nov. 1993	RCM	Simple CAP	½ A RC scale
May 1994	RCM	Simple T-Craft 25	.25 RC scale
Aug. 1995	RCM	Cloud Dancer 40	.40 RC sport
Jan. 1996	RCM	Cloud Dancer 120	1.20 RC sport
May 1996	RCM	Sea Dancer	.60 RC Seaplane
March 1999	MA	Cloud Kitten	.020 Free Flight
April 1999	RCM	Golden Oldie 20	.20 RC sport biplane; cover photo
Nov. 1999	RCM	Cloud Kitten 15	.15 RC sport

### Original Designs Kitted (38 Total)

Year	Model Name	Model Type	Manufacturer
1972	Shoestring	QM racer	House of Balsa
1973	Littlest Stick	.010 sport	Ace RC
1973	Quickie	.15 sport	Michigan Hobby Hanger
1973	Little Mulligan	.049 sport	Norm Bell Models
1975	BD-6	.20 trainer	Allied Models
1976	P-51	½ A scale	House of Balsa
1977	Me-109	½ A scale	House of Balsa
1977	Chipmunk	½ A scale	House of Balsa
1977	P-39	½ A scale	House of Balsa
1977	Bonanza	½ A scale	House of Balsa
1977	P-47	½ A scale	House of Balsa
1977	½ A Pete	½ A scale	House of Balsa
1978	P-51	.40 scale	House of Balsa
1987	Travel Air Mystery	1/5 scale RC	Golden Age Models
1988	Super Chipmunk	1/6 scale RC	Golden Age Models
1989	Ryan STA	¼ scale RC	Golden Age Models
1992	Pocket Rocket	.020 sport RC	Ace RC
1994	Simple P-51	½ A scale RC	Ace RC
1994	Simple Me-109	½ A scale RC	Ace RC
1994	Simple Cap 21	½ A scale RC	Ace RC
1994	Simple	.10 scale RC	Ace RC

	Staggerwing		
1995	Simple Ultimate	.15 scale RC	Ace RC
1995	Cloud Dancer	.40 sport RC	Ace RC
1996	Cloud Dancer 60	.60 sport RC	Ace RC
1996	Sea Dancer	.60 RC seaplane	Ace RC
1996	Simple T-6	½ A scale RC	Ace RC
1996	Staudacher	.40 scale RC	Ace RC
1998	Extra 200	.40 Fun Fly RC ARF	Thunder Tiger
1998	G-200	.40 Fun Fly RC ARF	Thunder Tiger
1998	P-51	½ A Profile scale RC	House of Balsa
1998	Extra 300	½ A Profile scale RC	House of Balsa
1998	Sukhoi	½ A Profile scale RC	Fred Reese Models
1999	Golden Oldie	.40 Vintage RC Biplane	Fred Reese Models
1999	Sea Dancer 120	1.20 RC seaplane	Fred Reese Models
1999	Simple 400	Speed 400 electric RC	Ace RC
1999	Simple Corsair	½ A scale RC	Ace RC
1999	Simple Cub	½ A scale RC	Ace RC

## **Writer/Editor/Publisher**

### **Articles**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Magazine</b>
1976	Airfoils and how they affect your model	RCM
May 1993	Where are the kids? A solution	MA

### **Columnist**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Type of Column</b>	<b>Magazine</b>
1972	Pylon/4	Monthly Column	MB
1975-76	Racing at Random	Monthly Column	RCM

### **Editor**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Job</b>
1976 – Present	Contributing Editor to RCM

## **Industry**

1975 – 76	In house designer for House of Balsa, 10101 Yuca Road, Adelanto, CA 92301, 619-246-6462. Designed and tooled nine RC kits.
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1986 – 88	Owner of Golden Age Models in Penn Valley, California. Produced three large-scale RC kits.
1992 – present	Designer for Ace RC, Higginsville, Missouri. Designed and tooled 15 RC kits.
1997 – present	Designer for Thunder Tiger ARF kits. Two kits released in 1998.
1998 – present	Designer for House of Balsa. Three ½ A profile RC kits for 1998-99.

### **Leader**

1971	One of the organizing members of QMRC (Quarter Midget Racing Club) or Orange County, California. Club was instrumental in making Quarter Midget RC racing an official event.
1989	President of Sierra Foothill RC Flyers, Grass Valley, California.
1989	AMA Leader member and contest director.
1994	Vice president and Control Line director of Dust Devils, Las Vegas, Nevada.
1995	Vice president and Control Line director of Dust Devils, Las Vegas, Nevada.
1996	President of Las Vegas Radio Control Club, Las Vegas, Nevada.

### **Contest Director**

1972 – 1998	Many (20 plus) local sanctioned and unsanctioned pylon races, fun flies, small steps, electric fly in and RC events.
1996	IMAC Nationals, sanctioned, held in Las Vegas, Nevada.
1995 – 1998	Four sanctioned, regional, QM40 and Q500 pylon races in Las Vegas.
1995	Dust Devils 80 mph slow combat, sanctioned Control Line event.
1995 – 1998	Co-director of Las Vegas area clubs, Toys for Tots, annual events. Clubs involved: LVRC, Propnuts, QSAA and Dust Devils.

### **Competitor**

1972 – present	Many quarter midget (.15) ½ A, Q-500, Formula I and other pylon races.
1974	First place, rubber Northrop Flying Wing Contest
1974	First place as proxy flyer in Model Builder Proxy Postal Peanut contest
1972	Southern California, quarter midget champion
1997	Fourth place LVRC seasonal points for Sportsman Q-500, Las Vegas. Six races.
1997	First places, two local Dust Devils, rubber-powered contests.
1998	Fourth place LVRC seasonal points for Sportsman Q-500, Las Vegas. Six races for the season.

### **Impact**

The impact on modeling by Fred Reese for the last 28 years has been on model designs – both



kitted and published. Construction articles for 55 original designs of, RC, Control Line and Free Flight aircraft, RC boats and 1 air car have been published in the various US model aviation magazines. Thirty-eight designs have been manufactured into model airplane kits and several more are scheduled for production

*(signed) Fred Reese  
November 10, 1999*

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