



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of GEORGE ALBERT REICH



January 18, 1921 - June 19, 2008 Modeler starting in 1929
AMA #874

Written & Submitted by GR (03/1999); Updated (07/2002); Transcribed by NR (06/1999); Edited by SS (07/2002); updated by JS (06/2008), Reformatted by JS (01/2010)

Career:

- Started modeling at the age of nine
- At age 16, competed and won “commercial” rubber meet
- 1969: Represented the U.S. in Wakefield in Austria for the fourth time
- Published articles on Wakefield modeling
- Holds records in: Rise Off Ground (R.O.G.) Fuselage, Gas Model R.O.G. Class C, Stick Model Class D, Wakefield rubber and again with Wakefield rubber, breaking his own record

Honors:

- 1941: Awarded AMA Scientific Membership
 - 1964: Awarded by Cleveland Balsa Butchers club, Championship Cert
 - 1964: AMA Fellow
 - 1983: National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame
 - 1998: AMA Pioneer award
 - 2000: Model Aviation Hall of Fame
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The following was written by George Reich.

My model airplane career began when I was about 9-years-old when my older brother, Bob, and I built two World War I Cleveland Model kits that we won for delivering Cleveland newspapers. We soon became so interested and involved in models that we opened a model supply shop in our parents’ basement as a way to defray our model expenses and also to help other kids get started in the hobby.

My very early years of model building were spent building scale models, microfilm and U--control models. However, after building and flying twin pushers, single pushers and single tractors, my interest turned mainly to the wonders of Free Flight.

The well-known Cleveland Balsa Butchers model club came into being in 1937, and I was elected as the first treasurer. After World War II, the club became the Cleveland Society of Model Aeronautics and I served several years as the secretary. The CBB/CSMA has had the distinction of having its members represent the U.S. in World Championships no less than 10 times! In an effort to promote Wakefield modeling, the CSMA designed and distributed plans for a simple straightforward Wakefield model suitable for the novice, called the *O-High-O*. The plans were published in the English magazine *Aero Modeler*, in April of 1959.

Another model club I was active in (as vice resident) was the AERL-ers Model Club of Cleveland. Its members were employees of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), Aircraft Engine Research Laboratory. The club sponsored outdoor Free Flight events for rubber and gas engine powered models.

In 1948, I married Doris Korda, sister of Dick Korda, the 1939 Wakefield champion. The next few years were spent building a house for our family, which in time numbered four children. I soon returned to model activities and earned a place on the U.S. Wakefield team for the first time in 1953 with a return-gear design.

The skills I developed in model building proved to be extremely helpful during my employment at NASA as an experimental metal model maker. I am now retired after 37 years of fulfilling and rewarding work at NASA. I was involved in many aircraft and space projects, one being the fabrication of flight hardware for the first low-thrust, .006 pound, mercury ion engine. This technology will probably be the propulsion source for future interplanetary missions. The director of NASA (NACA at the time) Cleveland laboratory, Edward R. Sharp, named me as a member of the technical committee to write the rules and regulations for the first annual National Model Plane Exhibit in 1948. I then served several years as chair of the judge's committee. This Cleveland event was sponsored by the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with NASA, and ran for many years with entries topping 500.

A list of my most noteworthy model events follows. Without a doubt, winning the coveted and most famous trophy in model aviation, the Wakefield Cup in 1961, was the highlight of my model career.

1937: At age 16, I entered my first national contest – the Scripps Howard Junior National Races in Akron, Ohio, winning the Senior Commercial Rubber Event with a time of 13 minutes, 2.5 seconds.

1939: At the 12th National Model Airplane Championships held in Detroit, Michigan, I established a national record of 22.51 minutes in the Senior Outdoor Cabin Event. This earned me a berth on the American team to compete in the Moffett International Competition, and was the runner-up in the finals. The plans were published in *Air Trails*, April 1940, and called the *Double Feature*, and is an approved design for Old-Timer events.

My first original designed gas model, called the Cloud Hopper, was built and flown in 1939, and has been approved for flying in Old-Timer events.

1941: The plans for a Class C gas model called the *Albatross* were published in *Air Trails* magazine, April 1941. In September 1944, this model established a national record of 11 minutes, 51.4 seconds (average) in Akron, Ohio. This is an approved design for Old-Timer events.

1946: At the Nationals in Wichita, Kansas, I placed first in the Outdoor Rubber Cabin Event to win the Berkeley Trophy. In the Stick Model Class D, I established a new national record of 8

minutes, 38.6 seconds (average). Plans for these two models were published in Bill Winter's Plan Book. As a club team member, along with Chester Lanzo and Dick Korda, representing the Cleveland Balsa Butchers, we won the perpetual Fred W. Megow Club Trophy for the best club team.

1948: A new Wakefield design, the 1948 *Wakefield*, was published in *Flying Models*, April 1948.

1953: As a member of the U.S. Wakefield Team flying at the World Championships in Cranfield, England, I placed fourth – missing a first place tie by just one second. The U.S. Team (Joe Foster, George Reich, Cliff Montplaiser) had the best total team time to win the Alphonse Penaud Cup.

1954: The World Championships were held in the United States on Long Island, New York, where I proxy flew John Upton's New Zealand Wakefield entry to fourth place.

1957: An article about Wakefield hints called “Wake Up to Wakefield” was written and published in *Flying Models*, January 1957.

1958: As a U.S. Wakefield Team member in the 1958 World Championships at Cranfield, England, I finished in 28th place. There were 149 individual contestants representing 24 countries. The plans of the model I flew were published in 1959-61 *Frank Zaic Yearbook*.

1960: A refined version of my 1958 Wakefield, called the *Max Maker*, established a new national record of 20 minutes, 59 seconds on September 25, 1960.

1961: The plans for the *Max Maker* were published in *Model Airplane News*, April 1961. As a U.S. Wakefield team member, I later flew the *Max Maker* to first place at the world Championships held in Leutkirch, Germany in September 1961, to win the prestigious Wakefield Cup.

1962: An article was written for *Model Airplane News* magazine, May 1962, called “Prop-Portunity.” It dealt with the propeller and power details that were used on the 1961 Wakefield winner the *Max Maker*.

1965: A 1965 Wakefield design was published in 1964-65 *Frank Zaic Yearbook*.

1969: For the fourth time I had the honor to represent the U.S. as a Wakefield team member. The 1969 World Championships were to be held in Austria, however, due to an elbow injury I had to relinquish my place to first alternate Frank Parmenter.

Honors and Awards:

- Awarded a Scientific membership in the Academy of Model Aeronautics in 1941.

- Awarded a Club Championship Certificate from the Cleveland Balsa Butchers model club for gas-powered model planes in 1942.
- The 1961 Wakefield winner, the Max Maker, was named one of the top 10 models in the 1962 Model Airplane News magazine annual edition.
- Awarded a Fellowship in the Academy of Model Aeronautics in 1964.
- Inducted into the National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame in 1983.
- Included in the U.S. Library of Congress's *Model Aviation Pioneers Project*, a book and a file dealing with the history of model aviation written by Ron Wilkinson.
- Nominated for the Model Aviation Hall of Fame and awarded a Pioneer Award in 1998.
- Inducted into the Model Aviation Hall of Fame on October 29, 2000.

List of National Records

R.O.G. Fuselage, Senior Class C – average duration: 8 minutes, 35.5 seconds; established July 1939 in Detroit, Michigan.

Gas Model, R.O.G., Class C – average duration: 11 minutes, 51.4 seconds; established September 24, 1944 in Akron, Ohio.

Stick Model, Hand-Launched, Class D – average duration: 8 minutes, 38.6 seconds; established in 1946 in Wichita, Kansas.

Wakefield Rubber-Powered Models – flight duration: 14 minutes, 45 seconds; established June 6, 1954.



Wakefield Rubber-Powered Models – flight duration: 20 minutes, 59 seconds; established September 25, 1960 in Cleveland, Ohio.

(signed) George Albert Reich
(Born January 18, 1921)

Left: Dick Korda, 1939 Wakefield Champion; Right: George Reich, 1961 Wakefield; Champion Photo was taken in September of 1998. Both of the winning models are housed at the National Model Aviation Museum in Muncie, Indiana.

The following is an article than ran in Model Aviation magazine in October of 1961.

Free Flight World Championships

By Keith K. Hoover

The FAI World Championships in Free Flight events can only be described as tremendous. Jointly sponsored by the AMA and the German Aero Club, they were held in Bavaria at a town called Leutkirch (German pronunciation Loitkirk, Sotich pronunciation Lootkirtsch), so small that most people in Germany have not heard of it.

Transportation for United States team members and officials was arranged by NAA, but as they departed on separate days, they arrived at the contest by various means. Herb Klothe, team manager, had purchased a Volkswagen and came on the scene with sunroof thrown open; others rented a small station wagon. A great addition to the U. S. contingent was Roger Simpson, top-notch FAI power man currently in service on European duty; he placed himself and his station wagon completely at the team's disposal and was a great help at all times.

About half the group had a memorable trip to the contest site by buses; the first broke down late at night in open countryside, giving the group thoughts of test flying on the spot the following morning! At 2 a.m., a tow truck got the group to the next city, a bed for sleeping and a second bus. Bad fortune wrought havoc with the good plan of hiring the bus for the team; the model box of Charles Sheldon of California had not arrived in Frankfurt with him. After delaying departure a day, the team and bus went on, leaving Sheldon in Frankfurt with the hope that his models (four in that box) would be found. Chuck remained in remarkable good humor in experiencing this misfortune; meanwhile, he and others in the group discovered a shop at the Rhein-Main Air Force Base for service hobby enthusiasts replete with power tools. There followed a wild dash by cab into the city of Frankfurt to reach a hobby shop before closing time. The task of selecting materials in a foreign language was not easy, even with interpretation (the first silk doped on the model's wings had to be removed and replaced by paper and U.S. dope). Many of the spars were pine and construction began with team members cutting parts and Sheldon working without benefit of plans. This project made the U. S. team sleepest on the field, but the rush job (3 days) was absolutely necessary, as Chuck's model box never did arrive despite cables and telegrams to the States and intervening airfields. How fortunate that Chuck's engine, and timers were packed in his suitcase!

In contrast with the transportation problems, the weather all over Germany turned fair the week of the contest. When the bus arrived in Leutkirch, team members already there were tanned and full of information on weather and test fields. By an odd coincidence, the U. S. bus and one carrying the Russian team arrived at the airfield simultaneously. Greetings were warm and non-political; however, the Russians were reminding everyone of their scientific achievement by handing out badges and picture postcards commemorating Gagarin's orbital flight. The mayor of Leutkirch received a model of a Russian *Sputnik*, which mounted a clock!

In such a European setting, it would have been impossible to have forgotten the international situation; both spectators and officials, as well as many of the contestants, saw the contest results

in East-West terms, matching models and flying standards, particularly of our team and of the Russians. Both U. S. and Russian teams merited, and received the respect of all those attending the contest; the real difference in response of others came in the warm and personal regard shown Americans, as against the reserve and distance kept from the Russians. In all, the U. S. contingent totaled 13 – AMA president Pete Sotich, former AMA technical director Carl Wheeley, and your author as translator in addition to the teams and team manager Herb Kothe.

The mechanics of running the meet achieved the high standard necessary for a world championship without military-type rigidity. An esteemed international jury, M. Meier (Germany), Henry Nicholls (Great Britain), and R. Beck (Hungary) brought the full weight of FAI approval and support. Herr Jacobsen, modeling specialist of the German Aero Club, ably arranged the overall organization; Berthold Petersen, chair of the aeromodeling commission of the German Aero Club and AMA proxy Pete Sotich, handled direction of the meet jointly; Willi Grass ably carried out field direction in a fair and impartial manner.

The most important role of language was not forgotten – German, English and French were the official languages, and half-dozen translators were on hand to keep things running smoothly. Particularly delightful was Fraulein Karin Hartwig, as signed as personal interpreter to Pete Sotich and his co-director; this elicited from Pete one of the broadest smiles of the whole contest – with good reason. Processing was most efficient with specialty constructed measuring devices and scales and a new German photographic technique which permitted calculation of projected area at a convenient time, long after the modelers had returned to their test flying or socializing. The partying provided was out of this world; the Leutkirch Burgermeister (mayor) entertained all the officials and team managers, giving each a cowbell from the area; Saturday evening was celebrated with a band from the community, folk dancing in the traditional Bavarian costume, a magician and dancing for all – all topping off a dinner of roast young chicken with the appropriate trimmings, including excellent wines. The celebration banquet, which closed the whole event, is a story in itself! In the planning of this great international event however, the cultural and scenic aspects of Bavarian life were not ignored; these extras made this year's World Championships particularly outstanding. All of the extras were announced, and then faithfully reported in copies of the special mimeographed newsheet “Max,” under the editorship of well-known German modeler Werner Thies.

Following several good days of test flying in the flawless weather, the Nordic contest began on Friday, September 1. Maxes were not all that easy. All members of the U. S. team felt their models were more appropriate for the air back home, but they worked hard on their towing in the strange air. Leonard Lortz's models were admired for their excellent design; Jim Daley's technique and field “know-how” ranked among the best; Betty Bell's all-out effort not only with her own models, but in her helpfulness to others on the team brought her respect of all. The team place (fifth) and two individuals placing within the first 10 (Daley, 8th and Lortz, 9th) combined with Ritz's win in 1959 have written a definite end to the time when U.S. glider performance was inferior to that of the Europeans.

At the end of the fourth round, when both Lortz and the Russian Averijanov had perfect scores, it

looked as if an exciting repeat performance of the U. S.-Russian fly-off of 1959 was in the offing. Instead, well known Soave of Italy and Kalen of Sweden (competing in his fifth straight Nordic world Champs) and a skilled youngster from Holland, Vant't Rood, participated in the fly-off. None of the four achieved 210 seconds; Averijanov was the winner with 171 after a release as soon as his model was overhead. The young winner flew a model almost identical to that of the master, Sokolov, and was both trained and coached by him.

Following the, arrival of Chuck Sheldon, his quickly built model was finished and flight-tested the morning of the power contest. Chuck was the third man of the team of very typical Free Flight gas fliers. Dub McCormick of Texas, whose model's wings were decorated with tremendous decals of cowboys, was a jolly good fellow with all at the contest. Mike Poorman of Baltimore (a third place winner in 1/2A at this year's Nats) is a skilled down-to-earth flier whose choice is the high thrust line model; he achieves a fine power pattern. The entire team used glow engines – Cox, Torp 15 R, and Super Tiger – but the difference this year was that those from other countries had the same and even the good fuels. It was a black day for the U.S., despite the quality of our models and engines.

Each of the men had a bad round (a flight of less than 1-1/2 minutes), and after a spiral crash in the last round, Sheldon prepared to fly again with the help of all team members; though he got the model away for a good flight, it was to no avail. Before the launch, the final round ended and the time did not count. The well-known names were on hand: co-champion of 1960, Shappard, whose models were beautifully proxy flown by Pete Buskell of England placed fourth; other 1960 winners (Pimenoff Hagel Guerra) placed far down the line. Frigyes of Hungary flew well into second place to add to the laurels of his win in 1958.

It was a newcomer, Fritz Schneeberger of Switzerland, who survived the downdraft to score the only perfect total of the (Jay, thus becoming 1961 Power champion. This young Swiss firefighter was most friendly during our interview (in German, one of the three Swiss languages) and readily expressed his debt to others in his club, particularly Thomann (who now lives in Sweden) who taught him much about theory. A modeler since 1944, Schneeberger has flown in the power class since 1956; his first model was the Comet designed by the 1961 Swiss team manager, Arnold Degen.

The winning model is a design by Osmo Niemi of Finland, chosen at first for a Hydro contest in Switzerland. The main factor in choice of the Cox motor was its lightweight in the earlier Olympic version. The new Tee Dee 15, however, gave Schneeberger's model the performance, which put it in this year's winners' circle. Schneeberger was, incidentally, fifth at the Swiss Nats, where he qualified for the team trials, which he later won. The only changes the champ intends to make for next year include replacing the Cox Olympic in his reserve model with a Tee Dee (Schneeberger told me he has heard that an improved Tee Dee will soon be available) and getting some fuel with a higher nitrometliane content. A nice note as Schneeberger was hoisted to the shoulders of his teammates in the traditional FAI victory gesture was that other contestants spontaneously took a rope and fended off the spectators to prevent harm to the champion and his model.

This year's U. S. Wakefield team was outstanding in skill and experience. It had to be, for the standard of flying in the rubber-powered event was the highest of the championships. Both Carl Perkins of the central region and Jim Patterson of California had been members of the U. S. power team which competed at Cranfield in 1958. Their models were quite modern in design and performed very well. In view of his many years of experience, a number of observers predicted an individual win for George Reich, Wakefield specialist, who is cool at all times and a tremendous competitor. His victory in this event was one of real ability, as his fly-off performance was clearly superior to that of Kosinski (Poland) and Alinari (Italy).

During the day, the Yugoslavs sustained a perfect team score for the first three rounds; following damage to his model, their highest, veteran Emil Fresl, missed the fly-off by 26 seconds. The Polish team, flying consistently, earned a team victory; Zurad of their group is well known on the international scene for his Wakefields and design sketches in various publications. Worst luck of the day was had by our own Jim Patterson, whose model once was in such a terrific downdraft that it actually descended during part of the motor run with the nose up in a climbing attitude. Without this ill fortune, Pat would also have been in the fly-off; his other rounds were all maxes.

Followers of international competition know well the name of George Reich. His artisanship has been evident at many regional and national contests, and his toughest luck came in 1953, when a timing difficulty kept him from the fly-off in the Wakefield world championships held that year at Cranfield, England. It is typical of George that he did not enter a complaint at that time; his sportsmanship is of the highest order. When in Leutkirch, following his fifth maximum, George found a wing lip damaged by a well-meaning official; he was much less upset than the German, calming the man's apologies as he quietly repaired the wing and checked the tip incidence on his model box.

George's fly-off flight (made, incidentally, without a test hop) showed him to have a clear 50- to 75-foot altitude advantage on his nearest competitor all the way, as the models drifted across the field. The entire U. S. team rushed in a station wagon to pick up our winner and returned to the U. S. model boxes with George atop the car receiving the cheers of spectators. This was the most original victory parade since Lindner was first lifted to the shoulders of his teammates following his becoming Nordic world charter, in the 1954 finals in Denmark.

Overall comments summed up the championships: "One for the East, one for the Neutrals, one for the West." Particularly the Germans seemed delighted that on the last day the U. S. had evened the score. Rather on the sidelines at the World Championships were tired flying wing events. Neuhauser's power winner was of greatest interest because of the complexity of its gadgetry, but our tailless friends remain a very small minority of Free Flight air modelers. At the celebration banquet, awards of the cups and trophies were combined with friendly exchanges of all sorts of things. Betty Bell brought back three team-race diesels from near-champ Frigyes of Hungary (price, one Tee Dee 15) and modelers from all countries exchanged pins and decals for those of other lands. A wonderful memory was the sight of Pete Sotich, buried in a mass of modelers passing out dozens of decals in a show of good will. Though applause was great for all

the winning teams and individuals, George Reich will not soon forget that, as he made his way forward to the stage, the entire group began also to stamp its feet in recognition of his great skill and achievement. Thus, at the close of the most successful World Free Flight Championships of all time, two Americans, our AMA president and our new Wakefield champion were the heroes of the hour.

Small wonder that we all grinned as we took a sip of champagne from that time-honored Wakefield Cup. American modelers and the AMA can be proud of our showing this year!

Rubber (Wakefield)

1. George Reich-United States
 2. J. Kosinski-Poland
 3. A. Alinari-italy
- (J. Patterson 21st, C.Perkins 25th-for USA.)
Team Champion: Poland (USA third)

Power

1. F. Schneeberger-Switzerland
 2. E. Frigyes-Hvngary
 3. J. Cerny-Czechoslovakia
- (W. D. McCormick 30th, G. Poorman 34th, Charles Sheldon 54th for USA.)
Team Champion: Hungary

Nordic

1. A. Averijanov-Russia
 2. P. Soove-lialy
 3. G. Kalen-Sweden
- (J. Daley 8th, L. Lortz 9th, Mrs. E. Bell, A2nd- for USA.)
Team Champion: Holland

The following are two letters pertaining to George Reich.

*City of Cleveland
Anthony J. Celebrezze, Mayor
September 20, 1961*

*Mr. George Reich
NASA Lewis Research Center
Cleveland, Ohio*

Dear Mr. Reich:

It is a pleasure, on behalf of the people of Cleveland and personally, to congratulate you upon your notable achievement in winning the International Wakefield Cup in model flying competition.

You have made a significant contribution to Cleveland's international reputation as a city with a tradition of excellence in many fields of endeavor.

We are proud of your accomplishment and wish you continuing success, not only as World Champion Model Flyer, but also as a skilled technician at work on our nation's space projects.

*Sincerely,
Anthony J. Celebrezze*

*Mark McElroy
Attorney General of Ohio
September 15, 1961*

*Mr. George Reich
5891 West 217th Street
Parkview, Ohio*

Dear Mr. Reich:

May I offer congratulations upon your winning the world championship Wakefield Cup recently in Germany.

*Your feat brought honors to the city of Cleveland, the State of Ohio and the U.S.
Kindest personal regards.*

*Sincerely,
Mark McElroy*



“Although he couldn't bring the Wakefield Cup home (it's in Washington), George has among his mementos a silver plate signed by Chancellor Adenauer, two medals and two certificates.” (Orbit newsletter, NASA Lewis Research Center, Vol. XIX, No 27, Cleveland, Ohio, September 22, 1961, p.3)



1946: George Reich and his second-place stick model class D at the National Championships in Wichita, Kansas



September 1998: George Reich with the Wakefield Trophy

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