



The AMA History Project Presents:  
**Autobiography of ROBERT (BOB) W. RICH**  
**Modeler, Carl Goldberg's Field Representative,**  
**Contest Director, Cross Country record setter,**  
**Writer**



July 24, 1923 - October 1999

Started modeling in 1931

AMA #L-120

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**Career:**

- Created many model airplane clubs, here and abroad
- Employed by Carl Goldberg as a field representative for his company
- Bob and Doris Rich flew the model Liberty Bell (Sr. Falcon) cross-country from, Kitty Hawk, North Carolina to Oceanside, California in 29 days
- For the AMA Bob set up, planned, organized and contest directed two cross-country races for a lot of other modelers
- While working for C.G. updating many of the older kits, he designed a new kit like his Curtiss P6-E
- Published numerous articles for Model Aviation, Radio Control Modeler and Model Retailer
- Designed the Cessna O-1E/L-19 kitted by Jack Stafford Models
- AMA leader Member

**Honors:**

- 1976: AMA Distinguished Service Award to Bob and Doris Rich
  - 1976: The Award of Merit by the Aeronautics Division of the Hobby Industry of America
  - 2000: Model Aviation Hall of Fame
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Born Robert W. Rich on July 24, 1923 in Colorado Springs, Colorado, I started to get interested in model airplanes in 1931 while living in Independence, Missouri. My father bought a model airplane magazine for me after I begged for it. It was seeing the model airplane on the cover that made me want it so bad. I read the magazine from cover to cover several times and I was hooked.

I started building solid balsa models, simple rubber models and then graduated to gas models from plans in the model magazines. My first attempt at a powered model was with an Imp carbide motor in 1934. It was not successful as it was very underpowered and not a very good engine from the start.

After moving to California in 1936, I was able to get a Bunch Mighty Midget motor and had many successful planes including a Megow Commander and a Comet Zipper. After being able to get more engines, I was able to build the Super Buccaneer, Megow Ranger, Scientific Coronet, Earl Stahls Fokker DR 1, and many others including many Control Line models.

I was introduced to Gregg Toben, an electrical engineer with IBM, who was experimenting with Radio Control (RC). I helped him build a Super Buccaneer with proportional rudder control and a two-position throttle. This was in 1939 and was very successful, giving many demonstrations at the model field at Rosecrans and Western in Los Angeles. Greggs' radios were also used by Irwin Ohlsson in his RC Pacemaker. I was a member of the Gas Model Airplane Association of southern California.

In September 1942, I enlisted in the US Coast Guard. While stationed on Kwajalein Atoll in 1944, during World War II, I had model supplies sent to me from a hobby shop in Los Angeles. It was reported they were the only model airplanes in the South Pacific area during WWII. As our island was very small, it was practical to build Control Line models only. Any type of Free Flight would be long gone in the surrounding ocean, as our island was about 100 yards wide by 300 yards long.

After WWII, I joined the US Air Force in 1948. While stationed in Hawaii I was sent to Germany on the Berlin Airlift in July 1948 so that stopped any model activity. After my return to Hawaii in 1949, I flew some Control Line and rubber models.

After returning to the U.S., while stationed in Sacramento, California from 1951 to 1953, I entered several of the Air Force regional contests winning several firsts and seconds in Free Flight at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base (AFB) at Tucson, Arizona and Albuquerque AFB, New Mexico.

The workload in the Air Weather Squadron on Guam precluded any serious modeling while stationed there from 1953 to 1955.

While stationed at Etain Air Base, Verdun France in 1956 I started a model airplane club that would include both Americans and the French nationals to improve the relations with the local people. It was a great success and several contests were held that included both the French and Americans. Two contests were held that included American service personnel from Germany, France and the local French modelers. I was the director for all of these contests.

In 1957, I was transferred to Laon Air Base in France and I started another club for the French and Americans; it was also a success. I was president of each of these clubs for one year.

Upon my return to the U.S. in 1959, I got interested in RC again, starting with single channel tube receivers and pulse control, then on to the compound escapements.

After transferring to Alaska in 1966, I had a Galloping Ghost system, and was finally able to afford a proportional radio system. In Alaska, I was a member of the Alaskan Radio Control Society and helped to build the model flying field on Elmendorf AFB.

While stationed at Forbes AFB, at Topeka, Kansas I took first place in RC scale in the Air Force

World Wide Championships held at Scott AFB in 1970.

Upon my retirement from the USAF in 1971, I applied for a job as a traveling field representative with Carl Goldberg Models. My duties as field representative included visiting hobby shops, flying fields, and club meetings to answer questions, try to solve problems and show new products. I also visited schools and gave talks on model airplanes and the advantages of the hobby. This was not a part of my job but I was very happy to do it because of my love for the hobby. During the travels as field representative, I visited all 48 continental states and, as all modelers do, I think, I looked for flying sites everywhere, and thinking about flying in the wide-open spaces.

While in Roseville, California, I entered the Red Barons Great Race. A 30-mile cross-country event that was great fun. After flying in this race, I got to thinking that if you could fly for 30 miles cross-country why not fly a real distance, like all the way across the United States. In our travels we had been across the states seven times using different routes so we knew the country fairly well and picked out the best route and the best time of year to make the trip.

In 1975, I approached Carl Goldberg about making the trip and getting the time off from work. He thought about it for a long time and after a lot of questions and more hesitation, he thought it might be feasible and he would support it in any way he could.

We traveled to Lake Charles, Louisiana for the Nationals to see John Worth and present the plan to him and the AMA for their approval and assistance. After lengthy talks, they agreed to sanction the trip and help in any way they could. I gave the AMA a list of things that we could use on the trip and when the Nationals were over, we went back to Chicago to start work on getting everything together,

My wife, Doris, and I made four airplanes in 30 days. I chose Senior Falcons for the trip because they were easy to build, easy to maintain and would carry a 32 ounce fuel tank with no trouble.

Mr. Goldberg had the idea that an event like this should include other members of the industry because of the publicity and the exposure that the trip would generate. Many of the model manufacturers donated products or money to help cover expenses and helped to make the trip a success.



*This photo was taken at a landing in Montgomery, Alabama.*

The airplane, named the Liberty Bell in honor of the American Bicentennial, took off from Kitty Hawk, North Carolina the morning of October 1st into a cloudy and rainy sky. There was a hurricane in the area, but luckily, we missed the worst of it.

The Liberty Bell team consisted of five people and two vehicles – Bob Rich, pilot; Doris Rich, pilot and driver of the pilot truck pulling a 33-foot trailer. Bob Sutalski the statistician, Ed Sweeney drove the lead vehicle and Lee Taylor acting as the

AMA representative verifying the flight also in the lead vehicle.

Larry Bolich, the AMA's public relations man, had arranged with the state of North Carolina to make this cross-country flight a bi-centennial event. As a "BE" we were to be met by the bi-centennial committees in each of the major cities when we arrived. We had to tell the bi-centennial representatives the date and time we would arrive in each of the cities, up to two weeks ahead of time and this created a problem as the representatives did not come out on weekends.

Our first major stop was Raleigh, North Carolina where we were met by the North Carolina Secretary of State. We were met by mayors, city officials, civic groups and a lot of well-wishers and modelers as we stopped in each of the cities across the United States.

Paul Harvey, the nationally known radio newscaster and commentator kept a running account of our progress across the country on his daily radio program.

The cross-country trip encountered several problems, but none that were not overcome by teamwork and a lot of luck. Two of the Senior Falcons were used to complete the trip and both were in flyable condition at the final landing in Oceanside, California on October 29, 1975.

The final flight of the Liberty Bell was made at the California State Museum of Science and Industry in Los Angeles. There was a welcoming ceremony with members of the hobby industry, civic leaders, bi-centennial committee members and the most important person, at least to us, General Jimmy Doolittle. He was very interested in the plane and asked a lot of questions.

The Liberty Bell that completed most of the trip is now in the model airplane section of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. The other plane that flew a part of the trip is in the AMA museum with the parchment "scroll" that was signed by the bi-centennial representatives in each of the states.

Early in 1979, the AMA contacted us about setting up a cross-country event for the AMA that would include a lot of flyers. The main purpose was to get a lot of exposure for the AMA and for model aviation. It would be a new event and give a lot of modelers this new experience. I decided on a cross-country relay race that would include teams that would fly two-day legs. This could get a lot of people involved and the flyers would be flying mostly in their own area and not taking too much time off from work.

Setting the rules, the route and getting the teams together took about three months. I chose the same route that was picked for the Liberty Bell flight as the route was good and freeway most of the way. An extra leg was added to get another set of teams involved and end the race at the Circus Circus Hotel in Las Vegas.

Larry Bolich arranged with the Muscular Dystrophy Association to make the trip as a fundraiser for the Association. It was named "Flying for Jerry's Kids" and was a successful fundraiser for

Muscular Dystrophy.

The “race” took off from the Washington, D.C. area in October and finished in Las Vegas at the Circus Circus hotel with a reception and awards ceremonies.

About a year and a half after the cross-country race, the AMA again contacted us about setting up another cross-country event. As setting up an event like this takes a lot of time and work, we were a little hesitant about doing it again, but were finally persuaded to do it. It was decided to make this event a rally-type race instead of a real race to eliminate some of the problems encountered during the race. This rally was done for Easter Seals and raised money for this worthy cause.

The rally took place in October 1981 following the same route as the earlier race; it was a big success, also.

My wife, Doris, and I were the contest directors for these two cross-country events.

While working for Carl Goldberg I helped in the design of several of the new kits and the updating of the older kits. I also developed new accessories on my own time that were included in the company’s inventory. The company also kitted one of my designs, a Curtis P6-E.

In 1982, I had to quit traveling full time for the Goldberg Company due to my wife's illness, but was able to continue on a part time basis. I am still working for the Goldberg Company on a part time basis testing new products, working at the trade shows and also visiting various clubs and club meetings giving demonstrations.

As a member of the Las Vegas RC Club, I was a club officer. I was a member of the small group that met with the Chief Ranger of the Lake Mead National Recreation Area to get approval for a flying site in the recreation area. Approval was also obtained for an area to fly floatplanes on the lake. For the past five years, I have been the volunteer ranger at the model flying field at Lake Mead as having a volunteer ranger was a requirement for the approval of the flying field. It is the only flying field on a national park or national recreation area in the US.

I have written modeling articles in several model industry magazines including Model Aviation, Radio Control Modeler, and Model Retailer. I have had six of my model designs published in Radio Control Modeler magazine including May 1981, August 1991, October 1993, April 1995, and September 1995. The model in the April 1995 issue is a Cessna O-1E/L-19 and is kitted by Jack Stafford Models.

After the death of my wife, Doris, in 1986 I worked part time in a local hobby shop to help pass the time. The work lasted for five years, until it took too much time away from the building bench.

My wife Doris and I were awarded the AMA Distinguished Service Award in 1976 and the

Award of Merit by the Aeronautics Division of the Hobby Industry of America.

I am a Life Member of the Academy of Model Aeronautics (No. L-120) and still an active RC flyer every weekend, weather permitting. Most of my time is spent helping new modelers with their problems and teaching new modelers to fly their models.

*(signed) Bob Rich 6/97*

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**AMA History Project**  
National Model Aviation Museum  
5151 E. Memorial Dr.  
Muncie IN 47302  
(765) 287-1256, ext. 511  
historyproject@modelaircraft.org

