



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of WALTER L. (WALT) SCHRODER



Written, edited and formatted by NR (10/2007), transcribed and reformatted by JS (10/2011)

---

## Career:

- 1927-1929: Drove race cars. He held a dirt track record
- 1930s: District manager with the Singer Sewing Company
- 1940s: During WWII, was a machine shop partner with Ben Shereshaw. Formed in 1940, Ben was in charge of engineering and Walt ran the shop. The most well-known of their products was the Bantam engine (.19 displacement.)
- 1944-1945: Consultant for Megow.
- 1947-1948: Helped form and operate the Eagle Model Aircraft Company. An offshoot of Eagle was the manufacturing of the Mite diesel engine. Walt was in charge of its operation.
- 1950-1959: Worked as a sales engineer for Aero Therm, a company that designed and manufactured aircraft seats. Walt designed ejection seats for the X-1, X-2, and X-3, and the seats for the Beech T-34. The T-34 seats were also fitted to the Polaris atomic submarine as crash dive seats.
- August 1960-January 1, 1979: Became editor of *Model Airplane News (MAN)* in August of 1960. He eventually became president and publisher of *MAN*. He retired after 19 years on January 1, 1979
- Co-created the annual Tournament of Champions, held in Las Vegas, for five years.
- Held a patent for a Control Line control system
- Head over 120 of his designs either published or kitted.

## Honors:

- 1964: AMA Fellow
- 1975: Model Aviation Hall of Fame inductee
- 1978: National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame inductee
- AMA Leader Member
- Flying 8-Ball Club distinguished award recipient
- Walt Billet Trophy

---

*This biography was most difficult to create as Walt never left the AMA History Project his own biography. So it became the task of the biographer to use research to try to reconstruct the subject's history.*

*Some of the material was garnered from an old RCM magazine clipping and some from personal experience, having known Walt for many years. I worked for Walt for over a year during the manufacturing of the Mite diesel engine. I did all of their engine testing.*

*-Norm Rosenstock-L1670  
AMA Historian*

---

Walt's colorful career would not be complete without mentioning an early activity.

From 1927 to 1929, he drove race cars. At one time he held a dirt track record. He was driving the first race car ever fitted with an aluminum body and was powered by a Liberty 12-cylinder aircraft engine. His racing came to an abrupt halt at a major race when he performed a slow roll and totally destroyed the car. The accident was recorded in its entirety by a Pathe News cameraman.

A clue to Walt's ability to get things done goes back to the Depression years of the early 1930s when he was selling Electrolux vacuum cleaners on a door-to-door basis. His very first house call resulted in a sale and that time period netted the highest monthly income that he has ever earned. His success with Electrolux led to a district manager position with the Singer Sewing Company. In this endeavor, the larger corporate regulations seemed to squelch his individual initiative which prompted Walt's departure so he could be his own man.

During WWII, with Ben Shereshaw, he created a machine shop partnership. It was formed in 1940. Ben was in charge of engineering and Walt ran the shop. The most well-known of their products was the Bantam engine (.19 displacement) which rivaled the Ohlsson .19 and .23 in popularity. During that partnership it seems that Ben had a bookkeeper who attracted Walt's perceptive eyes. In short order she became, as he describes her, his Team Manager – she is the gracious Susan Schroder.

As for his own modeling background, he has had over 120 of his own designs published and/or kitted. Walt is no stranger to the model industry; for several years he was a consultant to Megow. From 1947 to 1948, he helped form and operate the Eagle Model Aircraft Company. Eagle was [what I believe to be] the first model company to use four-color advertising and the first to offer prefabricated kits (ARFs.) Unfortunately, the world wasn't quite ready for such advances and Eagle wasn't too successful.

In 1947, Walt was in the engine manufacturing business. This business was an off-shoot of Eagle, and housed in the Eagle factory premises. The production of these diesels was an early development of the model engine business. The only other American manufactured diesel was Leon Shulman's Drone diesel. The end of the diesels came about with the advent of the glow plug engine, putting Mite (and Drone) out of business.

A little known facet of Walt's tremendous talent is in the field of engineering. From 1950 to 1959, he worked as a sales engineer for Aero Therm, a company that designed and manufactured aircraft seats. An aircraft seat is not considered a glamorous product, but the requirements of passenger comfort and load capacity versus the critical weight factors add up to one huge challenge. Walt designed ejection seats for the X-1, X-2, and X-3, and the seats for the Beech T-34. The T-34 seats were also fitted to the Polaris atomic submarine as crash dive seats.

He did, however, have the chore of designing one glamorous aircraft seat. President Eisenhower presented a Douglas DC-6 as a gift to Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, which required a plush custom interior. Walt's job was to design a throne seat to locate the monarch's head at least 17 inches above anyone in his presence. Simple arithmetic could handle the dimensions but Ibn Saud

weighed in excess of 300 pounds and the throne must meet a 9G load capability while remaining within strict weight limitations.

In August of 1960, Walt Schroder became the editor of *Model Airplane News*. During his distinguished association with *MAN*, he has been the recipient of numerous modeling honors, including the Model Aviation Hall of Fame inductee, AMA Fellow, AMA Leader Member designation, Flying 8-Ball Club distinguished service member, and winner of the Walt Billet Trophy. Abroad, he has received awards from modeling organizations in Australia, Germany, India, Rhodesia, Sweden, and Switzerland.

His appearance at numerous modeling activities has been visible proof of his personal interest in what was happening and who was doing it, a difficult task considering the demands of publishing a monthly magazine.

While Walt Schroder's busy life was consumed with things like being the model editor of *Air Trails*, he managed to design and hold a patent for Flight Controller (a control line control system), freelance tech manual write, ghost-write political speeches, and so on and so forth... it would fill a book. The stories he could tell about his world travels on behalf of *MAN* are unreal. His experiences with five years of involvement with the Tournament of Champions are fascinating.

Schroder, the renowned, respected individual in the magazine publishing business retired from his position as president and publisher of *Model Airplane News* effective January 1, 1979.

---

**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.  
The views expressed in this biography are not necessarily those of the AMA.**

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

