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# The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of LARRY SCARINZI

April 14, 1933-August 5, 2023 Modeler since the early 1940s  
AMA #9099



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Written & Submitted by LS; Transcribed & Edited by SS (08/2002), Reformatted by JS (01/2010); Updated by JS (08/2023)

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## Career:

- First club was the Tri County Sky Rovers of Summit, New Jersey
- By 1949, was winning either first or second places at contests
- Flew in many meets in the early to mid-1950s with Harold “Red” Reinhardt
- Won second and third places behind Reinhardt at some of the New York Mirror Meets
- 1950s: often flew two Control Line airplanes at once and can still do so
- 1954: Placed third behind Reinhardt and Jerry Wagner at Mirror Model Flying Fair
- 1955: Graduated from Newark College of Engineering and got his first engineering job at Lockheed Aircraft in Burbank, California
- Entered the Air Force in the fall of 1955 and went to Langley Air Force Base in Virginia; started an off-base model flying club called the Piston Poppers MAC and an on-base club; also in charge of all Air Force base modeling activities
- Flew Free Flight with the NACA Brainbusters Club at Langley
- Worked with the Tactical Air Command by building models to perfect low altitude bombing; flew the model around the country at various bases
- Won third place at the Air Force Worldwide Championship at Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina with his own Gay Devil
- Late 1950s: Set a Control Line non-refueling endurance record at a contest at Fentress Air Field
- Wrote design articles for Model Airplane News magazine, Flying Models magazine and Air Trails magazine starting while he was in the Air Force
- Had two models made into kits and worked with Ben Shereshaw on glow plugs and other airplane designs
- Directed numerous contests
- Wrote the UMAC News and served as a goodwill ambassador between his local clubs
- Flew in many demonstrations as well as contests
- Late 1950s-Early 1960s: Began working on new products with Duke Fox; together they developed a reliable 120 plus mph combat airplane and Fox .36X combat engine along with other products
- Developed the Super Satan model with Carl Goldberg
- 1969: Did Fox Engine repair for contestants at the Nats for Fox Manufacturing Company
- Mid-1960s: Made and sold home-brewed fuel; he also sold reworked engines, which quickly turned into a mail order business
- Early 1970: Started Whippany Cycle and Hobby Shop
- After taking a break from modeling in the 1970s and 1980s, returned to it in the early 1990s, picking up where he left off

## Honors:

- Inducted into Precision Aerobatics Model Pilots Association (PAMPA) Hall of Fame

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*Larry Scarinzi wrote the following autobiography and modeler Charles A. Mackey edited it for him.*

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My start in modeling was the early 1940s. My dad was in the service (World War II) and my mother worked. I was 8-years-old.

My first models were 10-cent rubber kits purchased from the local five and dime store. Kits were by Guillow's, Joe Ott, etc. I remember Guillows' models with pressed paper (cardboard?) formers, pine strips and other non-balsa parts.

My first gas model was an early Johnny Casburn, Miss Behave, powered by a Forster .29 on ignition. I still have the model – it's in very good shape.

Still remember the old ignition days with a fondness. I remember an incident in the attic (third floor) when a friend started an O.K. 60 clamped to a barstool. It caught fire, my friend threw it out the window, and it bounced off the wall of another house, leaving an oval-shaped wall of flame. Fortunately, the fire went out by itself.

First club was the Tri County Sky Rovers of Summit, New Jersey. This was after the war and it went strong from approximately 1944 to 1950. Recollections were of Memorial Field in Summit covered with ignition engines, Brown Jrs, powered by Jim Walker's Fireball. Malcolm Bleeker had a Melcraft 29 in one. I remember the funny looking engine with the funnel-shaped intake pointed forward from the front of the crankcase. Bantam .19s became available a year later.

During the very early flying days, modelers did a lot of "finger exercising" – flipped props a lot. When somebody got one to run, the guys would stand up and cheer. They learned fast and soon all were flying.

Ernie Babcock was a member of the club. I believe he had nearly all of the speed records at this time. From memory, his Jughaid .60 speed job did 100 to 110 with either a Hornet or White McCoy .60 (racecar engine). He said the two were a toss-up for most speed. Red Head McCoys weren't out, yet.

Class B was dominated by Forster .29 and Delong 30s – again a toss-up – then Bantam .19 in class A. I remember his class A record around 72 miles per hour (mph) with a Bantam .19. Time frame was 1945.

Back to myself. In early Control Line stunt meets in our area, stunts were dives, climbs, wingovers, touch and go, etc., with points given for speed.

I had a Bantam .19 with ignition in a rebuilt Fireball – landing gear reinforced making touch and goes a gift.

Speed was timed on the second flight. I asked the judge, "Can you whip?" His answer was, "Gee, I guess so, nothing in our rules against it." Result was that on 35-foot solid .010 lines, I

whipped the Fireball up to a speed of 74 mph. On landing everyone was cheering because I just broke Ernie's A speed record – of course, it wasn't official.

Started flying in real contests around 1948 and won nothing of any importance until 1949 when I won first or second just about anywhere I went. Things just began to click.

Most influential contest flyer of my modeling lifetime was Harold "Red" Reinhardt. We teamed up around 1949 or 1950 and flew in many meets together through the mid-1950s. Red was very talented in everything he did, whether it was installing an Oldsmobile Rocket 88 engine in his 1950 Ford 6 coupe or a new model design or later any machine tool work. I remember a flying wing Red came up with – a "V" shape ala Northrop, with an early Fox .35 pushing. He made the reverse shaft, extension, etc., needed for reverse rotation. Launching this was an experience. I remember the Fox .35 pointed toward my stomach and the mental thought that it would hit me – but wait, the wind (prop wash) was blowing on my shirt so it should fly away from me. It flew, but not a great success.

Red won the New York Mirror Meet more times than I can remember. I think it was five or six times. Best I got was second place once or twice and one-third place that I remember as exciting when Red won with his stunt wing and Jerry Wagner was second in 1954.

Before this time, flying two at once gave points and added points for each loop performed while flying two at once. It was around 1948 that Red flew two Atwood .60 jobs. (Red's ship was called the Orange Crate.) He did 15 or 20 loops with each before his solid lines tightened and they both hit the asphalt. He won.

I flew two airplanes at once many times back then. I could do consecutive loops with both planes, but struggled with imperfect horizontal eights and inverted flight. Yes, I can still do it. Last time I flew two at once was November 1996 at the Garden State Circle Burners Field.

It was 1951 at Teterboro Airport that Red and I had entered both stunt and combat. Combat was still in its early development days. Red flew a Fox .35 in his El Diablo while I flew a square-bodied Fox .35 home design. Lines crossed, resulting in my being hit in the face (glancing blow). This hospitalized me for seven to eight days about one month before leaving for Detroit, Michigan, for the Plymouth Internationals.

Red and I traveled to any area meets that we could get to. There were many meets during that timeframe. We generally placed first or second back then with Red being first most of the time. I have many second place trophies because of Red.

An exciting one for both of us was the 1954 Mirror Model Flying Fair. The stunt pattern was more involved and longer than the AMA pattern. Most of what you did upright you had to do inverted as well. Ever heard of bolo wingovers? Involves eight loops during a wingover – or double vertical eights – tsk, tsk. It took two flights to complete the pattern.

It was close between Red and Jerry Wagner of Connecticut for first and second. I placed third. The deciding maneuver was a spot landing and it was quite windy. The designated spot was my

own wooden control reel (an Ernie Babcock reel), which I placed dead downwind over a white cloth for visibility. Red's black Stuntwing powered by old reliable Fox .35 cut while passing directly over the reel at four-foot altitude. Red's immediate reaction was full up for a vertical climb to 60 degrees or so, then quick down control for, you guessed it, a vertical dive into the center of my reel with his two-inch needle nose spinner nailing the reel within a half inch of the center (I still have the reel). The model bounced up vertically, turned to a flat horizontal position and Red, using the Jigilation method (super quick up and down control) over the center of the reel or designated spot. There was no measuring needed – it was directly on center. That cinched first for Red. Jerry was second and I was third and very satisfied. Red's model was a Fox .35-powered model named the Stuntwing and was published in Model Airplane News magazine in March 1955. To this day, I believe this is the only flying wing to ever win a major stunt contest. This design was the inspiration for some of my subsequent and very successful combat designs as the Greased Lightning, Werewolf, and Junior Streak.

In 1955 I graduated from Newark College of Engineering, married "Ginger" the next day (she's still with me) and proceeded to drive my 1950 Chevy station wagon (fully loaded with all our earthly belongings) to Burbank, California, to start my first engineering job at Lockheed Aircraft.

This was "Heaven" back in the 1950s. We lived at 1155 Victory Boulevard, up the street from Tony and Addie's Hobby Shop (Tony and Addie Mae Naccarato). We're still the best of friends. Flew Free Flight at Sepulveda Basin in the morning then went to U-Control at Griffith Park around lunchtime. There was lots of activity with consistently great weather every day. I could stay up all night and still feel great the next day.

I entered the Air Force in the fall of 1955 and was assigned to Langley Air Force Base, Hampton, Virginia, as a second lieutenant (ROTC at college). This was another experience. Did a lot of model flying here.

I started the Piston Poppers M.A.C. of Hampton, Virginia, an off-base model airplane club. I also organized an on-base group for Air Force personnel. Our flying site was next to the NACA (now NASA) Test Hangar, both on the cement apron and adjoining grass area. Participation grew to the point where weekends were very active and crowded. Flyers came from on-base, off-base, and also Army personnel from Fort Eustice. I flew Free Flight with the NACA Brainbusters on another section of Langley. This is where I met and became friends with some very prominent modelers including Woody Blanchard, Frank Parmenter, and Bob Champine. I might add that Bob Champine was also an extraordinary test pilot for NACA and was the fourth man to break the speed of sound during the Bell X Program of the late 1940s.

My fulltime duty during my last year in service was flying model airplanes – heaven again.

During one of our Control Line flying sessions at Langley, I was approached by a Tactical Air Command officer exploring the feasibility of an Air Force bombing event. After some discussion, I was relieved from all Air Force duties to work full-time on this event. This entailed building a model to simulate "Toss Bombing" used in T.A.C.'s Low Altitude Bombing System (LABS). This was performed with a Johnson .35-powered Veco Mustang rigged to release a bomb when full "Up" control was applied at the appropriate time during the inside loop portion

of a horizontal eight. The bomb was thereby “tossed” toward a target. Imagine having your own B-26 to fly around to different bases and Nationals to demonstrate this event. I would fly in the Air Force Worldwide Championships at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina. Lou McFarland won stunt with a Ruffy that year with my good friend and flying buddy, Leroy Ducharme, placing second with his Lieutenant design. I placed third with my own Gay Devil – all three Fox .35-powered.

While at Langley there was a Control Line non-refueling endurance contest held at Fentress Air Field. I hastily built a Fox .29-powered airplane – the Tanker – that was published in *Flying Models* magazine in June 1958. This employed a tank with a float valve to maintain constant fuel head. (Parts from a Ford carburetor.) After some problems, the model took off just four minutes before the deadline and set an endurance record (around one and a half hours) that held for a good number of years. (The judges sure loved us for taking off so late.)

It was during my service time that I began to write design articles on model airplanes for the three model airplane magazines – *Model Airplane News*, *Flying Models*, and *Air Trails*. Some early designs published were the Greased Lightning, Gay Devil, Lil Dynamite, etc. *[A list of published articles is available upon request from the AMA History project.]*

After leaving the Air Force in late 1957, I returned to North Jersey and went back to work in the engineering field. I flew at Rich’s Hobbytown, Parsippany, New Jersey, and at Union – the Union Model Airplane Club. Union was my (and Red Reinhardt’s) home club and flying field in all of the 1950s before service and again after 1957.

I continued to have model designs published – had two models made into kits, worked with Ben Shershaw on glow plugs and other airplane designs. *(A list of published designs is available upon request from the AMA History Project.)*

I did a lot at Union. We had a great group. I directed a lot of contest events, designed a lot of unofficial club contests, such as limbo, pick up the brick/glider, carry the fuel endurance and weight lifting. Also wrote the UMAC news (unpaid circulation of 169). At that time, I was a goodwill ambassador between clubs, worked with area clubs – Union, Berkley Blade Busters, Livingston M.A.C., Roxbury, Rich’s Flyateers and the Garden State Circle Burners. I did design and coordinated three- or four-way club contests with these groups that worked out fine. We also did a lot of exhibition flying. A real crowd pleaser was flying a larger, slower airplane with a very long streamer attached while five or six combat models would try to cut small pieces of the streamer off. An ideal slow plane for this task was a Tanker Endurance ship. We would put 15 to 30 minutes worth of fuel in it and fly with six combat flyers in the same circle. The demise of the Tanker came during a demonstration where, after the streamer was gone, the slow Tanker was to fly through a flaming barrier. This was easy but also fatal to the airplane as one of my buddies kicked a toolbox out just beyond the barrier. The Tanker went through the barrier, hit the toolbox, and finished itself off.

Another big hit was destruction contests held every fall to get rid of battle-weary models. I remember 18 flyers in the center at once. These events didn’t last very long. Good thing all flyers had a sense of humor.

Just got re-acquainted with an old-time union M.A.C. flyer, Kenny Wills, who is making a comeback after being out of modeling for 15 years. Kenny brought to my attention a happening at an early 1960s Garden State Circle Burners Snowbird Meet. There was about one and a half feet of snow on the field. The combat circle had a path shoveled to the center. During the day, the sun came out and melted some snow, turning the center circle into slush and mud.

Kenny and several other “Fighting UMAC’ers,” as we jokingly called ourselves, were assisting me in getting my Fox .36X-powered combat model into the air. After some fast and furious combat, my opponent slipped in the slush and landed on his back. In the process, he let go of his handle, which I caught with my left hand as it was flying by. Now I was flying both combat models. With my left hand around the two lines at the handle of his model, the best I could do was a shallow dive into the snow. Lots of whopping and yelling came from the UMAC camp. Rules decision – would I have gotten credit for streamer cuts while flying both airplanes – tsk, tsk. If only we could remember all of these comical incidents – better yet – write them down before they are forgotten forever.

It was in the late 1950s and 1960s that I became associated with Duke Fox, both as a friend and in developing new products. If I had to pick the most satisfying time, it was in the development of the Fox .36X combat engine. This began around 1959 and ran through most of the 1960s. In the early 1960s, there were a lot of phone calls, correspondence, and decisions made on this engine. A lot of parts were broken. Pistons, wrist pins and a lot of crankshafts were the most vulnerable. Duke marketed Blast fuel – a 50% nitro mix, which was a great contributor to broken shafts, engines, etc.

Another factor in development of this engine was the simultaneous quest for a reliable 120 plus mph combat airplane. My Blitz design (published in Model Airplane News in July 1964) was used as a test bed for these early engines. It survived many blown engines, shaft runs due to shedding prop blades, etc., to evolve into a reliable over 120 mph combat model when powered by a Blast-fueled Fox .36X. The Blitz article mentioned above goes into detail on the evolution of this airplane engine project. A fast combat design has always been a first love.

Another very satisfying combat project was the Super Satan – another Fox .36X-powered hi-performance design that would fly at over 125 mph reliably. This design was in conjunction with Carl Goldberg, for whom I have the highest respect. He was a great guy and I treasure my memories of working with him on model projects.

I did Fox Engine repair work for contestants at the 1962 Nationals in Chicago for Fox Manufacturing. Back to Duke Fox. Another satisfying project was the Fox .59-powered Blue Angel, published in Flying Models magazine in the February-March 1965 issue. This came about after a long phone conversation (one of many) with Duke at the end of June 1964 on his desire for a good Fox .59 stunt design. Ideas centered on a toned down Fox .59 that would utilize the lightweight and hi-torque available from this large engine not commonly used at that time. I ran tests on the .59 changing head spacing and intake restrictors to get the desired running characteristics. The Blue Angel was finished in three weeks time. I recruited Barry Simonds to drive with me to Dallas, Texas (in my 1953 Pontiac) before the end of July 1964. It was a happy

trip. Barry won first in senior stunt after a tie-breaking flight and the Fox .59-powered Blue Angel got third in open stunt. The Blue Angel had only one test flight on it before leaving New Jersey for the Dallas Nationals. Barry's airplane had only three flights. It was common for me to fly brand new airplanes in competition. The Blue Angel article gives more details on this.

In 1964, I went to work at Bendix in Teterboro, New Jersey. I was there for four years. I loved the job, but layoff seemed imminent. This was a good reason (excuse) to intensify my side interests of selling hobby supplies, fuels, reworked engines, and specialty items.

Bargain priced home-brewed fuels included Go Fuel, 7-1/2 % nitro stunt, colored green, 25% nitro was colored red and named Red Hot Stuff, 50% nitro Panther Piss colored yellow was a flop and subsequently replaced with more successful White Lightning – 50% nitro and clear in color. Peppermint oil and perfume was used occasionally so we would claim the sweetest fuel available.

I also sold reworked engines. This activity spread and became a mail order business quickly as these engines began winning a lot of contests, particularly my favorite, the LS-tuned Fox .36X with Diamond Intake – a “Terrifying Combat Weapon” as my promotional material referred to it. The LS lightning streak became my trademark and was used on all fuel labels, newsletters, promotional material, and correspondence. These engines have had an impressive number of contest wins in local, regional, and national events. (*A partial listing is available upon request from the AMA History Project.*)

It was early 1970, after being laid off twice from engineering jobs, that I started Whippany Cycle and Hobby Shop. This was an easy decision. Not knowing what would work best, I had bicycles and model airplane supplies in the store. I had worked with my father in his bike shop, so I had experience in that area. The model retail business was an outgrowth of my automobile trunk and mail order operation.

It was in the early 1970s that the bicycle boom got started. (Time when adults got into cycling in large numbers.) The bike business grew fast. Shortly thereafter, the model business was dropped in favor of the more profitable bicycle business. Even though model airplanes were always my first love, I owed it to myself and my family to earn a living.

During the 1970s and 1980s, I did virtually no model airplane work, but did continue to pay my AMA dues (contest director) and keep in contact with a few modelers, such as John Miske, father of Old-Timer stunt.

I also made it a yearly ritual to meet Duke Fox in late February while attending the White Plains, New York Hobby and Trade Show. We (Ginger and I) would make a weekend of it, renting a room near Duke, going to dinner, seeing the Trade Show and just comparing notes. This went on up to the time of Duke's passing away. I guess I was a “workaholic.”

It was around 1991 that Ed Nelson, an area bike dealer, brought in a copy of the February/March 1965 issue of Flying Models magazine with my Blue Angel stunt article in it. I read the article while Ed stood there and it was evident to me that the writer (myself in this case) really enjoyed

airplanes. My comment to friend Ed was, “You know, sometimes we forget what having fun is really like.”

The bike business was still going strong, but this was the start of another turning point in my life. Add to this constantly receiving Tulsa Glue Dobbers Newsletter with mysterious notes like “Come on back” written on them (the writer was later identified as De Hill, Tulsa, Oklahoma). The final turn came when John Miske finally convinced me to go to the Chicopee Nationals in 1992.

Coming home from work late on the Sunday night before Chicopee, I was tired, but decided to go. My cellar and airplanes (air armada), although moldy and dusty, were pretty much intact. All of my Super Satans used latex pacifier tanks, so I chose a Fox .36X BB-powered Voodoo with metal crankcase pressure tank to take along. Planning one day at the Nationals primarily to witness Old-Timer stunt, I had so much fun renewing old friendships and meeting new ones that I stayed all week. I was especially happy to meet “Big Art” Adamisin, his wife, Betty, and sons.

Betty was extremely knowledgeable of all I missed in U-Control stunt over the past 20 years. She was enthusiastic and happy to fill me in on what I missed along with introducing me to anyone I didn't know. She knew everybody. Betty said, “Retire – you're having fun.”

Coming back to Old-Timer stunt is like stepping back into modeling just as I left it 20 years ago. Thanks to long-time friend, John Miske, father of Old-Timer stunt, for starting this event. Guess I'm a living antique – tsk, tsk.

Later that week, I finally got around to flying the Voodoo I brought with me. With Andy Lee (of New York) launching, it was released full bore and I went into an outside loop within and quarter of a lap. My knees shook a bit and in my excitement, I said to myself, “I'm flying just like I used to 30 years ago.” A point I'm bring out is that if you flew a lot back then, you don't forget how. Oh, yes, that outside loop was pure instinct – a reaction – I did not pre-plan that in my mind. Now my interests were definitely back to model airplanes.

This was a definite reminder of the fun I had with model airplanes and was the beginning of a change in outlook on my life. I felt that I had worked long enough and hard enough so it signaled a return to more model airplanes and fun in general.

Since then I have attended the last six Vintage Stunt meet in Tucson, Arizona. I drove to the last five, spending about two months on the road and between 7,000 and 9,000 miles of driving. I would zigzag, stopping to visit and fly with friends around the country. A typical trip would include leaving New Jersey, traveling to the Fox Factory in Fort Smith, Arkansas, then to Tulsa, Oklahoma, to attend their engine “Collecto” and visit De Hill who has done so much for modeling in his area and at Tucson and the VSC meets as well. Then back to Fort Smith and from there on to Tucson (early March) for the Top Gun Combat Meet and VSC Meet. The return trip would include another stop at Fox Manufacturing in Fort Smith, then on to see and fly with Lester Goldsmith and friends at Action Hobby in Memphis. Then on to Nashville, Tennessee, to visit and fly with the combat guys, the “Rich and Famous” combat team including Mack Henry, David Owen, Larry Skelly, and others. From there to the Radio Control (RC) Trade Show in



Toledo, Ohio (early April). After this a stop at Brodak Manufacturing in Carmichaels, Pennsylvania, where I could fly in John Brodak's backyard and tour the most complete Control Line manufacturer and distributor in the country.

Special thanks have to go to De Hill and Mike Keville for their efforts in running the Vintage Stunt Championships at Tucson. It has grown to a very large and friendly get-together of lots of us old timers where you can meet many legendary modelers and just have fun. Special thanks also have to go to John Brodak of Brodak Manufacturing for his tireless efforts in both promoting Control Line modeling and putting his money on the line to give us the most complete line of Control Line supplies in the U.S.

These people have contributed to my own fun with model airplanes in my retirement years. Since my return to "Fun with Model Airplanes," I have driven to a number of national meets, combat meets, and one Society of Antique Modelers' (SAM) Championship. My own flying is primarily aimed at fun and includes Old-Timer stunt, sport, and combat models – the faster, the better. I have been filling in on what I've missed during my time spent earning a living, particularly on combat engines and airplanes. Yes, they did learn something in the past 20 years or so.

The bicycle retail business was finally sold to two older employees on October 28, 1996. This allows me more time for important activities like model airplanes. Maybe I can become a modeler's goodwill ambassador and travel a lot, making friends and having fun.

### **Model Industry Involvement**

Had two model designs made into kits – both by Consolidated Models (Art Hasselbach) – Cranbury, New Jersey. One was the Giant Killer combat, Fox .35 combat, or similar engine around 1960. The second was a full stunt model named #570 when it was introduced around 1962. It was also published in Model Airplane News magazine in December 1963 under the name of U Name It. A Name the Plane Contest was sponsored by Art Hasselbach and the name ultimately ended up as Trident.

I worked with Ben Sheresaw in the early to mid-1960s on glow plug testing of OK Fireball Plugs. In the same time era, I worked with Ben on three airplane designs around OK Cub Engines to develop some really good flying plastic pre-fabs to be sold with engines by OK – Herkimer, Old Forge, New York. Best flying one was a Tipsey Nipper. Prototypes were successful, but they were never produced commercially.

The Super Satan combat – a really hot job by Carl Goldberg and me – was quite a success. This was a 125 plus mph combat ship, .36X-powered. Duke's .36X was used in most models, but tests were run with other engines. The intent was for Goldberg Models to produce this as a kit; however, plans were changed. The Super Satan was published in Model Airplane News magazine in September 1967. It was also used for a cover shot. This airplane was very successful and well known by most combat flyers. Henry Nelson, Nelson Engines, made me feel good when he told me that he built one back in the 1960s. My inevitable question was, "Did it do what my article said?" His answer was, "Yes, over 120 mph with a stock Fox .36X and K&B Super Sonic Speed Fuel.) Many others have had similar successes.

During the later 1950s, 1960s and part of 1970, I worked with Duke Fox (Fox Manufacturing) developing and testing his products. Of particular satisfaction was the Fox .36X combat engine during the mid-1960s. We sure went through a lot of these. Fox Blast fuel (50% nitro) was the favorite for this engine. A reliable 120 mph plus combat engine evolved. See my Blitz combat article, Model Airplane News magazine, July 1964 for more details.

*(signed) Larry Scarinzi*

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