



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of WILLIAM (BILL) F. NETZEBAND



January 3, 1927- April 25, 2010 Started modeling in 1934
AMA #WILDBILL

Written & Submitted by WFN (04/1997), RH (09/2011); Transcribed by NR (09/2000); Edited & Formatted by SS (12/2002), Reformatted by JS (11/2009), updated by JS (05/2010, 10/2010)

Career:

- 1934: Started model airplane building the day after his seventh birthday
- 1951: Became an official card-carrying Contest Director (number 749)
- 1948 - 1949, 1954 - 1955 and 1957: Entered and flew in the Nationals (Nats)
- Ran and judged meets in Missouri, Illinois, Oklahoma, New York and California over 21 years
- Got involved with many club newsletters
- Involved with starting the J.O.P.L.I.N. model airplane club and the Double Cola Group
- July 1961-1965: Wrote a column, "Control Line Capers," for *American Modeler* magazine
- September 1968: Wrote a column, "Round and Round," in *Model Airplane News* magazine
- Published 13 designs in various magazines
- Worked for the Testors Manufacturing Company as model designer as well as in quality control

Honors:

- 1998: Model Aviation Hall of Fame
- 1999: Kits and Plans Antiquitous (KAPA) Hall of Fame

The following autobiography was written and submitted to the AMA History Project (at the time called the AMA History Program) by Bill Netzeband in 1997.

Prologue: The happy times from 1934 to 1943

Bill started model airplane building the day after his seventh birthday in 1934. Actually, he started model airplane damage repairs based on the dictum that if the solid model Lockheed Sirius his dad and uncle had built for him was broken, Bill would fix it! It did. He did. There followed those fecund times learning construction techniques by trial and error. Early solid models ended up with two left wings, two rights, and so on. Bill was hooked and managed to have an active construction project going at all times, except for several weeks in basic training (1945) and a few weeks on ships going to and coming home from the Philippine Islands. He even managed to balance girls, cars, band and orchestra, photography and general foolishness with the construction of toy airplanes. Some of his magazine collection features articles about World War airplanes with no number designator.

These were the wonderful days when kids could hurt themselves with anything their little hands could manipulate. It was the best way to learn, “if it hurts, don't do it.” Of course, even though we had industrial strength blasting caps to play with, our parents took great pains to warn us about things that could really hurt. Double and single-edged razor blades taught their own cutting edge lessons. Shucks, we didn't even know we were having fun sniffing glue and nitrate dope in closed rooms during the winter, which, of course was building time in Joplin, Missouri. Aviation was in full bloom and even schoolteachers allowed air-minded boy children the benefit of doubt when they were caught sketching airplanes or gazing at the clouds. Bill was able to get around book reports by building models of “The House with Seven Gables” and submarines instead of “20,000 Leagues Under the Sea.” He went through elementary matriculation cheerfully and was probably passed each year because the teachers knew he could do better work.

Bill constructed hundreds of models. Great heaps of solid models were assembled at varying levels of excellence – several gas Free Flights, lots of rubber power and volumes of gliders of the tow, chuck, catapult, and rocket type. Flying sites were where he was! Out on the street corner under the streetlight flanging gliders was a favorite sport. Street corner flying was also spiced up by tree climbing. This helped when larger, gas-powered machines flew far enough to find a tree. One rocket glider project would have made the safety column. Apparently, the home mixed black powder got damp and when tamped into the generous brass tube chamber it burned all at once. Luckily, the fuse was long enough to get the glider to a decent altitude before the power was initiated with a bang. Two small wing tips fluttered down, actually exceeding Bill's previous best time for gliders. Large quantities of perhaps Japanese tissue were consumed in exotic parachute projects, much to the embarrassment of the family's dignified Persian cat. Many planes met their honorable fate by fireworks. The Scientific Parachute plane was accidentally de-skinned by a mismatch between the trap door release timer and a short fuse. Luckily, its WW stick-n-fabric construction survived for further flights. Kid stuff in its most pleasant form.

Even when he entered contests, it was for the purpose of participating with the boys, win-lose-or-draw. He led a group of Boy Scouts in building a Wright Brothers' wind tunnel complete with electric fan and an Akron Fighter floating in the middle with a complete set of flight controls operated through strings into the nose. Competitions were a completely different recreation from today's solemn high tech (pressure) activities. We miss those days!

The intervening years included service at the end of World War II, college, marriage, three boy children, 19 different jobs in several parts of the country, coming to the present day, retired and living with a card-carrying grandmother in Southern California. The details of this somewhat hectic era are covered by the following interview, which was published in amended form in the Tulsa Glue Dobbers club newsletter. It also satisfies the majority of the questions requested by the biographical guidelines.

DeHill's Interview with Wild Bill Netzeband: Infamous Control Line Author, Designer, Researcher, Raconteur, and Interesting Dinner Companion

During June 1991

1. When and where did you start flying Control Line?

My first ever take-off, sometime during 1944, was in Joplin, Missouri. I powered a Berkeley *Thunderbolt* kit with my precious Ohlsson 23 engine. I had 10 years building experience at the time, so the model was nice and straight. The results were not. I made, perhaps, 10 more take-offs – no landings – before reporting to the U.S.A.A.C. My first landing [was in] 1946 in the Philippine Islands with a Stanzel *Tiger Shark* modified with a two-line control system, while mired up to my ankles in mud and unable to back up after the engine quit. The *Shark* took care of itself!! The airplane was built by Benny Donoghue, of Texas; painted with olive green GI paint, powered by my Ohlsson 60 Special, fueled with leaded gas from the motor pool and castor oil from the dispensary. If the guys whose batteries we used read this, we are in a lot of trouble! Benny had flown Control Line as a civilian, and contributed the control system and flight instruction.

When I returned to the U.S. in 1947, the first plane I built was – you guessed it – with the same engine. I still have the engine in a drawer somewhere. I also joined the AMA to get to fly in contest with my friends.

2. What A, AA, AAA and AAAA contests did you enter?

From 1947 through 1960, we hit every meet we could in the Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma area including the 1948 and 1949 Nationals (Nats) at Olathe, Kansas. I was going to school in Rolla (Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy) and working summers in Joplin. Apparently, my assignment was to make the winners look good. I used up 13 airplanes of varying capability before achieving controlled inverted flight. Oddly, I also recall pleasant sensations of accomplishment during those innocent days.

Up through the late 1960s we flew in a lot of contests throughout the Midwest, Buffalo, and California. During that halcyon period, we did well locally in stunt, combat, rat, and carrier. Gave up combat in 1962 at Wichita when I became unable to hit anything but the ground. Carrier was the last official event I flew at one of the CAL meets. If we were to estimate 10 meets per year, it would add up to more than a few.

3. Did you ever enter the Nats?

Yup. Actually, De, I won a prize at a Nats – first in open Navy carrier [in] 1954. I aced the troops out with a 45 (deg) delta (looked like a *Sea Dart*), Fox 35 with electric butterfly intake throttle. Pumped out 60 mph high and stooped around at 19 mph low. I entered some other Nats with less than auspicious results. We didn't always have the option of travel at that time of year. To actually answer the question, I entered and flew in the 1948, 1949, 1954, 1955, and 1957 Nats. It was more fun to hit the event with a camera and a blank pad of paper to report the wild goings on in Control Line. My opinion [is] the Nats are an event; they should be attended at least once, but never taken seriously. Don't write at me guys – that's just my opinion.

4. Did you ever run an event at the Nats?

Not only once, but three times. I was very vocal in condemning the stunt scheduling and scoring at the 1957 Nats after we found that the second circle judges were scoring so low that none of their scores determined a final placing. (Every one flew on circle one and then flew on circle two – the judges never moved). I was asked to volunteer to set up and run the 1958 event using a system pretty much like the present one (top 10 from two circles into finals, etc.). John McDonald assisted me, and we ran one of the most controversial stunt events in history. (This is a story in its own right – ask me about it later).

I assisted Bud Tenney in running stunt at the 1962 Nats. Hayes Hoff and I ran the carrier event at the 1967 Nats. Those were a cake-walk compared to the 1958 stunt event.

5. What contests did you act as contest director (location and approximate dates)?

I became an official card carrying contest direct (CD) in 1951 – number 749 – in order to help out the Kirkwood Thermaleers group. I was the lonesome Control Line guy in a world class Flea Fright club. They held a meet a month, as well as A and AA types. I contest directed, threw hand-launched gliders and generally milled around being helpful.

I carried on the CD/judge/event director/contestant activity until 1972 when I finally realized that I didn't have the stomach to be a volunteer official. My stomach problem was caused by the dichotomy of fairly administering those rules I couldn't agree with or get changed by due process. This was later exacerbated by the unreasonable seriousness of the contestants. Up through, perhaps, 1956, contest activity was a get together – a picnic. Sometime after that, the prizes seemed to get in the way of good fellowship (sportsmanship?). This bothered me more than I realized on a contest-to-contest basis.

I ran and judged meets in Missouri, Illinois, Oklahoma, New York, and California during those 21 years. I was observed at a Tulsa Glue Dobbbers meet, walking around, mumbling, "It's only a hobby. It's only a hobby." This seems to sum up my officiating career. I may have officiated at more than 200 meets!

6. What clubs have you been a member?

The raw list and approximate dates follow (in chronological order):

Club	Dates
The Joplin Missouri Model Airplane Club	1947 – present
MSM Hammer Throwers	1947 – 1951
Kirkwood Thermaleers	1951 – 1957
Double Cola Club	1953 – 1958
Joplin Model Airplane Club	1958 – 1960
Tulsa Glue Dobbbers	1960 – 1963
Unnamed club in Lancaster, New York	1963 – 1963

Valley Circle Burners	1963 – present
Southern California Control Line Association	1963 – 1974
San Diego Orbiteers	1983 – 1986

As you all are aware, a local bureaucracy responds positively only to voter pressure. It was always necessary to have an active modeling group, and even better when one or more members had influence in the local political scene. This is the way it has to be. It may seem to be an endless chore (it is!), but without it we have zippo!

7. Were you a club officer in any of them?

Oh, yes. They never let me be treasurer, but I managed to hold down all of the other offices in each of them. I was even president of the Tulsa Glue Dobbers for a year. The most prestigious post was president of the Southern California Control Line Association (SCCA), where I also had the privilege of writing and distributing the monthly newsletter. This was printed on a hectograph system. Luckily, my family was willing to address them and lick the stamps.

De, as you are aware, being an officer in a club is a thankless, but challenging job. Every now and then, someone gives you a pat on the back (down quite low). However, when there are no individuals willing to serve, the club hits the skids. Please make certain that everyone in the Tulsa Glue Dobbers understands this!

Now that I have all of these years of experience (making mistakes), I see that my ambivalence to leadership activities is my innate requirement to deal only from a position of being right. Politics requires a comfort for dealing from a partially empty deck.

8. Did you write any newsletters in these clubs? What were the newsletters' names?

Wherever the club had a newsletter, I got involved with it, generally as a rabble-rouser.

The SCCA involved maybe 10 Control Line clubs spread over the area, and we really needed more activity coverage than the monthly club representatives meeting could provide. I can't document how long I wrote the SCCA newsletter – maybe three years. We were also a representative to the larger group of modelers wrestling the city for space in the Sepulveda Flood Control Basin. Now that was interesting stuff.

9. What clubs did you start?

I guess I was in at the beginning of the Joplin model airplane club and the Double Cola Group. The rest were already established when I wandered into town. Starting a club from scratch is a tough racket. Reviving a club that is dormant is probably more work.

10. I know you wrote columns for two modeling magazines. Could you give me the names

and dates that you wrote for them?

Luckily, I have these records. “Control Line Capers” started in the July 1961 *American Modeler* magazine. It came about rather simply. As I was preparing to pull out of the BOQ parking lot at the 1960 Nats, the late Al Lewis (editor of *American Modeler*) stuck his head through the car window (it was open) and asked if I would be interested in writing a special interest column about Control Line. I said yes. Al started publishing regular special interest columns for Control Line, Free Flight, and Radio Control (RC) with the July issue. It caught on readily, and the other magazines had to leap on the bandwagon. I ran CLC for 32 issues before running out of gas in 1965. We influenced rules, did tech and product review stuff, provided a modeler's forum, and helped establish some new events in the AMA list. This also enhanced my publishing of research material in special areas.

I took over “Round and Round” in *Model Airplane News* magazine in the September 1968 issue after Pete Soule burned out. I produced 32 issues before I ran out of gas, again. I imposed a fairly high level of quality on my stuff and the instant I couldn't deliver at that level, I quit. I found, early in the game, that anything published in a model magazine is “the gospel,” no matter how defective the data may actually be. With this firmly in mind, one becomes very critical of his outpourings. I believe I did a good job. In order to keep accurate information in play, I sometimes elected to become the devil’s advocate and caught considerable flak. At least, when the sources were considered, it wasn't fatal.

11. Could you give me the names and approximate dates of the airplane construction articles you have published?

Certainly. Please note that there are 13 of them!

Topic	Publication	Date
Scared Kitten	Frank Zaic Yearbook	1951
Half Fast Combat	Model Airplane News	April 1955
Fierce Arrow	Model Airplane News	August 1957
Hot Cinders (Rat)	American Modeler	December 1958
Simple Simone	Air Trails Annual	January 1959
Jerkline Special	American Modeler	June 1960
Guardian (Carrier)	American Modeler	Sometime in 1963
Equalizer (Combat)	American Modeler	May 1961
Guardian	American Modeler Annual	January 1965
P.A.T. (1/2-A TR.)	Model Airplane News	October 1966
Splinter (Combat)	American Modelers	April 1967
Fierce Arrow 400	Model Airplane News	May 1968
Dingus (Profile CAR)	American Modeler	February 1969
Cat’s Paw (Mouse)	Model Airplane News	May 1978

Each of them pushed the state of the art forward. Not all of them are remembered. Unfortunately,

when you spend too much time out in front of the herd, you are in a position to be trampled.

12. What aircraft designs of yours were kitted? By whom and when?

The *Half Fast* was kitted in a revised version as the *Half Fast III* by Midwest Models in 1955. It sold approximately 5,000 units. They also kitted my *Lil Half Fast*, 1/2-A size with the same results. The *Equalizer* was kitted by Pioneer Models, Inc. during 1962 and 1963. I will expand this during question 17. OK?

13. Who won contests using your designs? (The ones you can remember.)

Thanks for the parentheses. I really can't remember all of the names. Of course, the most famous win was by Miss Shirley Austin at the 1954 Nats in senior combat. She made the *Half Fast* important enough for Bill Winter to publish it in *Model Airplane News* magazine. After that, I was able to get published whenever I had something to offer. I suspect the *Half Fast II* and *III* won for more people than any of the rest. I didn't hear about most of them, and I didn't keep good records. It was a real kick to read that one of my designs beat out one of my other designs at the Nostalgia Combat meet: (*Equalizer* over the *Half Fast*).

Frankly, since I can't remember them all, I'd better leave this one empty.

14. Did you ever have any articles published that weren't part of your columns? What were they?

De, I'm going to make you run through the article list I gave you. You already know that I had a lot of fun writing from 1955 through 1978. The four part how-to-stunt group in 1957 *Model Airplane News* magazine was revolutionary, but is now an embarrassment. I published numbers without having the right mathematics and came to some erroneous conclusions. I probably contributed to the stunt gang's buying into the flap myth. Even worse, I didn't put all of the flap aerodynamic math together until 1976. By then it was too late to turn the herd.

I had fun with stuff like "Twas the Night Before" and "Why I Build Models." There were pure research articles such as glow plug, muffler, and both electronic audio tachometer(s). The Nats reports for Al Lewis were a lot of work, but a lot of fun. The late Cal Smith said, "Where can you go with an empty pad of paper and a camera, and have so much fun?" He nailed the essence of Nats reporting. This was also still in the 1950's!

I also spent many hours running engines, on the bench and in the air where it counts. I have the hearing aids to prove this. I tried to get aero math data in useful form via the Control Line aero articles (three each) in *American Modeler* magazine (1966 and 1967), but they didn't catch on.

15. I know that you have done a lot of research in (and on) aerodynamics. What areas were these in?

My desire to become an aero engineer after World War II was frustrated by the G.I. Bill v. Parks

Air College. I went to Rolla and became an electrical engineer, instead. I need to know how things work, so engineering was a good choice. I started digging into the Control Line mode of flight in 1948 and found nothing to explain flight on a hemispherical surface, tied to the gravity axis by an inextensible restraint.

The second problem was a lack of good coefficients data (lift, drag, moments, etc.) in the Reynolds number range for Control Line. It was easy to find standard aero stuff, but I finally realized that it wasn't correct for mode and for our size. So, I had to write the equations of motion in the Control Line flight path at a time when my math skills had degenerated from disuse. I had some pivotal help from real aerodynamicists like Pete Soule, but was handicapped by the mass of calculations needed to define performance. Remember, we had only the slide rule and the mechanical calculator as tools. I designed nomograph for repetitive calculations, but they are like salted peanuts – once you use one, you can't stop.

In 1964, I got a great book on airplane aerodynamics by Dommasch, Sherby, and Connolly. They taught by writing equations in coefficient form, and I was finally able to adapt their equations to the funny things that happen to a Control Line plane.

I finally defined level flight at any elevation based on prop horsepower, drag, and calculated data. All of the important loads finally fell into place. The loop/square maneuvers were reduced to numbers, at any point on the circle. I isolated the effects of wind in level flight. I wasn't able to add wind to the maneuvering equations – too complex and too variable. Along about here, Texas Instruments produced the TI 59 programmable calculator. I was able to decrease the calculation time and open the doors to more complex equations. The airplane was now broken down into the bare necessities that define stability, controls movement data, and reaction to controls input. The control system has likewise been reduced to numbers. While I was thrashing around, I wasted considerable time adapting the propeller performance equations to model size numbers. They now serve to completely define any Control Line airplane's capabilities!

As the math was developed, I spent a large amount of time to test the data with real models. I had a gang of friends who cooperated in testing calculated data in the air under controlled conditions. My thanks go to Bob Baron, John Barr, Ron Duly, Jon Jo, Dale Kirn, Roger Theobald, and Roger Wildman (alphabetical order, right?). I made these guys do repetitive (dull) maneuvers and level laps in front of movie cameras, still cameras, tape recorders, tachometers and other homemade instrument systems. We ultimately refined the model parameters into real numbers. It took more than two decades to develop a reliable picture of the Control Line airplane. It also became painfully clear that none of the stars in the competition stunt arena wanted to have someone tell them how to design their equipment! Worse yet, do not prove they are in error!

At the present time, I have programmed the equations into a PC and have increased the complexity. What would have taken several days to compute can now be done in eight hours. The trouble is no one really wants it.

16. You worked (and still do) for Testors for a number of years. Could you recount the most interesting items that you worked on? Which ones are you most proud? Which was

the most challenging?

My getting into Testors is interesting (I hope). They bought the WEN MAC Company in 1968 and integrated Duromatic into it. They contacted Tony Naccarato (T&A Hobbies) for a group to demonstrate the existing line of ready-to-fly (RTF) products at the more than 50 Kmart stores in California. Tony recommended John Barr and me, and we put together a show team using our kids. This was successful for Testors. John and I then took on the job of designing them a trainer as their first new item. In early 1969, my daily job was deteriorating, so I boldly told Testors they needed me on staff. To my surprise and delight, they agreed. I was hired, temporarily, as quality control manager and to finish the trainer development. I was temporarily the chief design engineer through 1982. The engine powered product line succumbed to the electronic toys invasion and Testors reluctantly closed out the CAL operation. In 1990, they asked me to help design a die cast model car line, and I am back with them again.

Unfortunately, Testors and the RTF plane – in the mind of the serious Control Line flyer – is the enemy. There is a “macho” problem if Control Line becomes too easy to master. Cox got away with it, because they supplied the TD engines and the *PT-19* to the competitors. I understand the modeler's attitude, but I grew out of it. Worse yet, I found that Wild Bill had become persona non-grata, based on his new professional status. You will notice that around 1972, Wild Bill disappeared. I was still very active in research, design and building, but not in publishing. I also pulled out of the contest circuit. I could rationalize that it was a bum rap, but I didn't have the interest to fight the trend. I think we all lost something.

For an incurable model builder, working at Testors was a kick. Where else can you pick up brand new engine and deliberately destroy it on the run-in bench? As far as model parts were concerned, once production started, you had to kick parts out of your way as you walked through the plant. Where else can you whiz out in the street, throw a hand-launched glider, and still be paid?

On the hardnosed side, initial concept and the design phase are deadly serious, because pennies really count in this business. My Control Line aero research became proprietary information and enabled us to stay well ahead of the competition. I was able to accurately predict performance and strength on the drawing board, so that the molded product was almost ready after the first mold tests. I was able to single-handedly keep quite a few designers on the ropes, at the “other place.” They made the mistake of forgetting what they did well and started to react to what we were doing. At the peak of both our productions, Testors produced about 1/3 of the total engine powered product in the world. The total Control Line fans were some 1.5 million units per year! That's a heap of itty-bitty parts.

The most interesting challenge was *Fly-Em*. The marketing requirements were to fly 1/32 accurately scaled and detailed World War II fighters on 10 to 15 foot lines, using a muffled engine. The engine starting and adjusting system was to be idiot proof and the airplane stability and controls must assure “operational success.” The price was to be less than \$10 (1971 dollars) in a bubble package including complete instructions, flying lines, handle, fuel and filling system and glow plug battery. The product was to be a one-stop purchase; leading directly to successful

flight (this was revolutionary at the time).

We created a new engine, fuel control system, a new battery and connection system, advanced airplane construction, product packaging, controls system, materials – in short the works. I found a way to control thrust by propeller, rather than engine design. This allowed us to use one engine and the custom scale-like prop came from the airplane parts mold. The assembly was accomplished on a moving belt with each part either snapping in place or being trapped by the next part. One screw was driven to complete the plane. The prop still required a nut to keep it in place. It is true – we didn't get the engine debugged before the development time ran out, but the concept requirements were eventually met 100%. We wrote new instructions in plain language and refined the engine until it would start with 98% reliability if four key steps were correctly performed. The airplane was configured to be dead scale, to fly in the groove at the speed required by wing loading, not too fast for a human pilot (pivot). The speed was adjusted by the engine/prop combo. The controls were designed to allow the fledgling pilot to save the plane, but not to get into trouble. Finally, the construction and materials allowed it to be run into the ground or a fuel can and to be flown again without replacing broken parts!

The first *Fly-Em* group was the *P-51D*, the *P-40E*, the *ZERO Mk III*, and the *Bf-109-G*. We added the Sopwith *Camel* and the *Albatross D-V* and, finally, the Spitfire *Mk-IX*. The best RTF was the *Cosmic Wind Trainer*, scaled to a 16-inch wingspan. This odd scale (1:14.1875) was dictated by the desired box size.

The rest of the time, I engineered the Dick McCoy-designed series 21 engines for production, designed free running cars, ATVs, tethered engine powered cars, dragsters, etc. We did a mod of the *WEN MAC Hovercraft* and turned their Fan Jet into a spaceship. The *BD-5* was a real learning experience requiring a pusher engine and special aerodynamics. We designed a five-piece push car toy line to sell for around a buck. We designed two complete Flea Fright glider sets using sheet foam and either injection molded plastic or sheet foam fuselages. The sets each included a small hand-launched, a larger hand-launched, a catapult type and a rubber powered unit. We also designed a molded sheet foam one-piece glider, mass-produced on an egg crate-forming machine. Toward the end, I was assisting the plastic kit designers to create kit and assembled toy cars and trucks, using the same basic parts for both.

When the crunch came in 1981, Testors tried moving to San Diego and using the Mexican assembly facilities. It was too late. At least I ended up in the best climate in the U.S. and have managed to keep working. Could be worse and has been.

NOTE: As of February 29, 1996, Wild Bill is retired from the workforce.

17. Could you please give me the name of the model manufacturing company that you operated, the kits you manufactured, and the dates of operation?

Jim Butler and I started trying to produce the *Simple Simone* trainer in 1959 while I was in Joplin, and he was in Tulsa. After I moved to Tulsa, we got more serious, eventually becoming Pioneer Manufacturing Company. We bought and built machinery to produce the *Equalizer*

combat ship in Jim's garage. It was an excellent kit and got good notices. The sales were enough to keep us busy, but not enough for either of us to quit work.

Our study revealed we needed 20 kits to get both of us into the business. Jim had contact with some Tulsa oil money, and we put together a deal to buy the airplane kit business and equipment from Duke Fox. You remember that he bought the Berkeley assets and moved them to Fort Smith. To make a long story shorter, we had most of the paper in place and then the negotiations broke down. So, when I left town in 1963 to keep working, we sold the assets to Hayes Hoff. It was a real close call all around.

The following was published in the September 2011 issue of Model Aviation magazine, page 11. It was written by Rachele Haughn, MA staff.

Wild Bill Netzeband

What began as a hobby for a seven-year-old boy blossomed into a lifelong passion for a man whose antics in Combat circles earned him the nickname of “Wild Bill.”

Aeromodeling author, designer, contest director, and club creator William F. Netzeband died a little more than a year ago in California. But, his voice and visions were not silenced by his April 25, 2010 death. He leaves in his legacy countless magazine articles and club newsletters, and an award bearing his name.

Bill was born January 3, 1927, and began aeromodeling the day after his seventh birthday. He quickly learned how to repair models after the Lockheed Sirius his father and uncle built for him broke. He became hooked on the sport, and always had an ongoing construction project.

His love for aeromodeling continued and he decided to test his piloting skills by participating in the 1948, 1949, 1954, 1955, and 1957 Nats. He won the Open Navy Carrier event in 1954. Bill became a Contest Director in 1951 and operated and judged meets in Missouri, Illinois, Oklahoma, New York, and California for 21 years.

He built and competed with more than 100 models. Some of the models he built included gas Free Flight, rubber-power, and four types of gliders. Thirteen of his airplane designs were published in various model aviation magazines. Among his creations was a Wright brothers' wind tunnel, which he helped a group of Boy Scouts build.

Bill was a member of several model aviation clubs and was instrumental in starting the J.O.P.L.I.N. and Double Cola Group clubs. He also wrote numerous model aviation columns for *Model Airplane News* and *American Modeler* magazines.

He served in World War II, and was a husband, father of three, and a college graduate. He held several jobs, including working as a model designer for Testor's Modeling Company.

His wife, Joan, presented the Wild Bill Netzeband Annual Memorial Award to its first recipient at the annual Knights of the Round Circle (KOTRC) Christmas dinner in December of 2010. The award is given to anyone living in the Los Angeles area who has “demonstrated a continued effort to improve the sport/hobby of Control Line fling and improve the KOTRC.” The award recipient does not need to be a KOTRC member, but it is preferred.

Bill was a life member of the KOTRC. He was awarded this distinction because of his lifetime service to model aviation and Control Line Aerobatics. He also was named to the Model Aviation Hall of Fame, the Precision Aerobatics Model Pilot Association (PAMPA) Hall of Fame, and the Kits and Plans Antiquitous (KAPA) Hall of Fame.

Nominations for the Wild Bill Netzeband Annual Memorial Award are due by October 15. The winner will be named at the KOTRC’S December Christmas dinner. Nominations can be sent to Knights of the Round Circle, PO Box 6115, Anaheim, CA, 92806.

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