



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of DAN B. SANTICH

Born July 28, 1935 Began modeling in 1947
AMA #24739



Transcribed & Edited by SS (03/2003), Reformatted by JS (01/2010)

Career:

- 1952-1972: While in the U.S. Air Force, earned a place on the Air Force modeling team each time he participated
- 1968: Had his first designed published, the Radio Control pattern model *Rapier*, in *Radio Control Modeler* magazine; went on to have numerous plans published in various magazines
- 1969: Hosted the first Japanese-American Invitational Model Championship at Tachikawa Air Base in Japan while he was stationed there
- 1974-1976+: Worked as chief designer for Top Flite Models, then went on to do freelance work for other companies such as Andrews Model Aircraft and Fox Manufacturing
- 1984: Took over as editor of *Model Airplane News* magazine
- 1980s: Developed the highly successful series called *The Hots*, which was produced by Midwest Models
- 1990: Started his own company and produced kits including *The Ultra Hots*.
- Participated in the first unlimited scale racing events held in California and Nevada
- Has one of the few U.S. trademarks on a model airplane design, *The Hots*

In January 2003, Art Sabin nominated Dan B. Santich for the Model Aviation Hall of Fame. Art submitted this biography with the Hall of Fame application.

Dan B. Santich is a name that has appeared in virtually thousands of model publications, not only in the United States but also in countries around the world. His designs and articles have inspired hundreds of thousands of modelers from all walks of life and in all geographic locations.

Dan began his career in modeling as a youngster in Grants Pass, Oregon, when his father introduced him to the legendary modeler Jim Walker. So impressed with Walker's ability and creativity, Dan told his best friend that one day he, too, would become famous. Dan was 12-years-old at the time. In the meantime, he and his friend, Steve Martin, flew and crashed just about everything they could build, from Free Flights to Control Line.

In 1952, Dan joined the Air Force and during basic training, he had the chance to attend the California Model Championships as a spectator where he met two more legends, Bob Palmer and John Tatone. Seeing the beauty of Palmer's designs (the *Smoothie* and Mars Control Line stunters) and Tatone's scale beauty (*A Topsy Nipper*) made Dan appreciate well-designed models as well as models that performed equally as well.

The Air Force was always supportive of modeling activities and each year sponsored a 10-man team to represent the Air Force in national competition. Area competition was held around the world and the best modelers were sent to Lackland Air Force Base for the Air Force-wide championships. To make the Air Force team, a modeler had to accumulate points by placing in the top three spots in Free Flight and Control Line events. Radio Control was but one event and only garnered three points, so Dan devoted himself to mastering not only it, but all the other events as well. This provided him with a vast knowledge of all aspects of the hobby. He made the Air Force team every time he participated.

In 1968, Dan had his first design published, a Radio Control Pattern model named *the Rapier*, which appeared in *Radio Control Modeler* magazine. In 1969, he was assigned to Tachikawa Air Base in Japan and had another Radio Control Pattern design published in *Model Aviation* magazine named the *Cardinal*. While in Japan, Dan hosted the first Japanese-American Invitational Model Championships during open house at Tachikawa Air Base, acting as contest director. His ability to inspire youngsters through modeling was apparent and he received a special award for his efforts.

In 1972, Dan retired from the Air Force and worked as an aerospace engineer with Martin-Marietta in developing the *X-21A* lifting body aircraft as well as components for Sky Lab and the space shuttle.

In 1974, Top Flite Models hired him as chief designer. With Top Flite, Dan was able to redesign many of the outdated models as well as upgrade the manufacturing techniques being used. His first design for Top Flite was the *P-47 Thunderbolt*, which Dan went on to win second place at the 1975 Nationals in the first scheduled event for sport scale, losing out to Dave Platt by one-half point. Dan's other designs at Top Flite were the *F-4U Corsair* and the *F8F Bearcat*.

In 1976, Dan left Top Flite and moved to North Carolina. Later that year, *Radio Control Modeler* magazine published his design called the *Magnum 40*.

Between 1977 and 1983, Dan worked on a contract basis for companies such as Andrews Model Aircraft and Fox Manufacturing. Also during this time, he designed and had published several Radio Control models such as the quarter-scale *P-26A*, which he competed with at the U.S. Scalemasters and the Corben Super Ace, stories about both of which were published in *Model Airplane News* magazine. Dan also covered for the media several events during this period including the Nats, U.S. Scalemasters, and the QSAA.

In 1984, Dan took over as editor of *Model Airplane News* magazine. Not only did he contribute his skills as a well-rounded modeler to thousands of modelers around the world, he continued his design efforts and developed *The Hots* series. Midwest Models was so impressed with *The Hots* design that they contracted with Dan to produce kits of it. It sold out on the first run and continued as a top seller for many years. Also during his time as editor, Dan wrote hundreds of articles on all aspects of the modeling scene.

In 1987, he moved to North Carolina and continued his design efforts with the quarter-scale *Cobra*, *Knight Twister*, and *Big Hots*. In 1990, Dan started his own company and produced kits

of his design including *The Ultra Hots*, a quarter-scale model. He also participated in the first unlimited scale racing events held in California and Nevada.

His interest in giant scale led him to design the largest design ever published, the half-scale version of the Formula I racer *Miss San Bernardino*, which appeared in *Model Airplane News* magazine. Not stuck in giant scale, Dan later designed *The Hot Hots*, which came out in the January 2002 issue of *Radio Control Modeler* magazine and is now (2003) being kitted by Morris Hobbies. Dan also has one of the few U.S. trademarks on a model airplane design, *The Hots*.

Throughout his entire modeling career, he has been a willing helper, teacher, advocate and sponsor of all forms of modeling activities with a down-to-earth attitude that enriches all of those who have come in contact with him, and he is more than qualified to become a member of the Model Aviation Hall of Fame.

To read some of the editorials that Dan wrote from Model Airplane News magazine, please see his file in the National Model Aviation Museum Archives.

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