



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of JOHN J. TUDOR, SR.

March 23, 1919 - March 21, 2004

AMA #1949



Written by JT, submitted by TS (05/2004); Edited by JF (06/2004), Reformatted by JS (02/2010)

The following was from John's unfinished autobiography provided by Terri Stuke.

I was born March 23, 1919 in Sanborn, Indiana. My lifelong passion for aviation and model airplanes began early in my life. On a Sunday afternoon when I was age 6 Dad drove us to a meadow on State Road 9 south of town (Marion, Indiana) where I got my first look at an airplane on the ground. There were three airplanes and they were taking people for rides. I later recognized this operation as "barnstorming" and identified the airplanes as World War I Curtiss JN-4's (Jennies they were affectionately called).

From that moment on, I looked for airplanes flying over Marion, often jumping up and running outside to turn my gaze to the sky at the sound of an aircraft engine (I still do). An early mail and passenger route flew the beautiful Lockheed Air Express over Marion. It would appear in the northwest sky and proceed southeastward on its Chicago to Cincinnati air route. I also remember a monoplane flying low over our house dropping Baby Ruth candy bars by little parachutes. We really scrambled for these delicacies! Another time, probably around the Fourth of July, an airplane came over with brilliant fireworks attached to it. What a show! And no doubt, a dangerous stunt also.

Many of my memories during this period of my life revolve around Aviation. From the first time, I saw the picture of the CR-1 in Grandmother Crane's encyclopedia I was hooked on airplanes. I read many of the Tom Swift books because of Tom's interest in inventing new flying machines. Also the newspapers regularly published exciting news surrounding the race to fly the oceans and around the world.

I became increasingly aware of all this exciting activity and began to read of the accomplishments of these airmen who were real heroes in my eyes. Not only fixed wing aircraft but the great dirigibles were beginning to fly the Atlantic and to explore the Polar Regions. When I was eight years of age, Charles Lindbergh and the "Spirit of St. Louis" succeeded in crossing the Atlantic and it was then that model airplanes entered my life. Dad purchased a model airplane kit (Ideal Models) for me. It was a complete kit with precut wood strips and die cut aluminum ribs. It was too much of a project for me at my age; therefore, the airplane was never finished.

However, it did ignite a spark in me to pursue model building. A young man by the name of Harold Dennison had organized a model airplane building class sponsored by the American Model League of America, a program offered by the American Boy magazine. The first model in

a series sponsored by the League was the Baby R.O.G. (Rise off ground) of 12-inch wingspan. The construction classes were held at the YMCA and I built my first successful model airplane under Harold's guidance. Harold provided a kit in a shoebox to build this model (all for about .35 cents) and I soon had my first model flying in the YMCA gym.

Harold's models were things of beauty, a testament to his fine craftsmanship. He used nothing but the lightest of balsa, Japanese tissue and hand carved propellers, but his models set many local and regional records for indoor endurance flying. From that beginning, I went on to building many of the models. I was hooked and toured every store in town looking for models. Model aircraft were for me. They gave me pleasure and allowed me to use my creative abilities. The Marion hardware carried model airplanes only during the Christmas season and the Observer Co. stocked some Japanese made models of wire and silk with hardwood propellers. However, most of the supplies plan and kits were only available by mail order.

Many companies were offering new kits that were more complete than the shoebox ROG I started with. Wannamaker Department store introduced an advanced design ROG with preprinted tissue and already formed wire fittings. I progressed to the larger indoor Tractor model and started carving my own propellers since machine cut "props" were not readily available.

Bert Pond, who later invented the pre-carved propeller machine, owned the closest real model shop that was about 32 miles away in Peru, Indiana. I understand that Bert's original machine is still producing machine cut propellers!

Bert also had a mail order service and I ordered my first supplies from him. The original catalog showed a complete line of materials and supplies including balsa, tissue, bamboo paper, banana oil (predecessor of nitrate dope), piano wire, and other materials, including a few kits. Bert ran this shop for many years and now, in the year 2000, still reproduces plans for most of the known designs from the 20's, 30's, 40's, and later.

As a substitute for store bought cement, I dissolved Kodak film negatives, which were celluloid, in acetone to make my own cement. I added thinned Rit dye to be used for "doping" the tissue in color. However, most models of this era were of a natural white color.

We were allowed to fly in the 5000 capacity Marion Coliseum, a stadium with a basketball floor, stage, and indoor track. It was a great place for our league to fly indoor models.

When I was approximately 10, my Grandparents, Granddad, and Momma Tudor moved to Hollygrove Plantation in Louisiana. I spent several summer vacations there and took some modeling materials with me. We were thrilled with the appearance of the biplane crop dusters that arrived to spray the cotton fields for the infestation of the Boll Weevil. The ungainly looking machines were Huff-Deland biplanes owned and operated by the Delta Corporation (later to become Delta Airlines). These flying machines and their low-level passes thrilled me over the cotton fields spewing out the powdered insecticide onto the cotton plants. Dusting was generally done in the early morning hours when it was calm and the dew was still on the plants. The airplanes flew only a few feet above the plants, pulling up at the end of the field in a chandelle

and then returning to the deck in the other direction. Watching this was as much fun as watching an air show!

In the years 1932-1940 I built the popular designs (Clodhoppers, Zippers, etc.) as well as a number of my own design. During this period, I became acquainted with some of the greats, Bob and Jim Cahill, Vernon Boehle, Carl Goldberg and others, who gave me tips and much valuable advice that furthered my skills and abilities in the field of Model Aviation. I especially valued my friendship with Carl who visited me in Oak Ridge, TN and for whom I later did some design work.

The years 1941 through 1945, I spent as a flight instructor and ground school instructor. Not much modeling occurred during the war years.

Information compiled *from Pilot Log Books and Certificates of John J. Tudor— provided by Terri*

03/23/38: Flying Piper *Cub*

10/27/39: Flying Aeronca *Chief*

11/18/39: First Solo Flight

04/25/40: CAA Flight Course (Civil Aeronautics Assoc)

04/28/40: Student Pilot, Municipal Airport, Cadillac Michigan

05/30/40: First Solo Flight

08/07/40: Passed test for private pilot

08/27/40: Pilot Certificate Issued, Aeronca *T*

09/07/40: Flying Aeronca *Chief*

09/28/40: Carrying passengers

08/14/41: Flying Aeronca *T*

02/17/42: Solo practice eights and spots, etc – some for pleasure, Cadillac Michigan

05/11/42: Search for lost child

06/04/42: Okayed for Commercial Pilot Certificate

06/15/42: Passed Commercial Flight Test

12/01/42: Temporary Airman's Certificate– Aerial Navigation, Radio, Meteorology, Ground Instructor

12/16/42: Ground Instructor, Cadillac Michigan, in partnership with Walter H. Nelson, Inland Lakes Flying Service, joint ownership - Aeronca *65TAF, NC36940*

07/01/43: PVT, Army or Service – ACER, AC Enlisted Reserve, Arcadia, Fl, Flight Instructor

01/01/44: CAP 1943 Carlstrom Field, Florida - Army Air Force 53rd Flying Training Detachment Southeast Training Center - (Stearman, Class S.E. land, Type –conventional, US Army, Make - continental, HP 220)

01/21/44: Flight Instructor, Army Primary Flying School, 53rd AAFFTD, Carlstrom Field, Fl., Class 44-D

01/03/44: Test Flight: *Vultee BT 13-A*, Pratt & Whitney Eng., HP 450

05/00/44: Co-Pilot: Beech, TE land, conventional, US Army, 2 Lycomings, and HP 590

05/00/44: Flight Instructor: Arcadia, Florida

09/05/44: Flying Aeronca NC36554, continental engine, HP 65, Knoxville to Indiana, to Michigan, some local, Ohio

09/13/44: Flying WACO NC31766, Knoxville, TN to Adele GA, to Arcadia, FL
 10/16/44: Released from Carlstom due to surplus of instructors
 12/02/44: Flying Aeronca NC31477, Lycoming eng. Hp 65, TL from Marion Indiana to local, Piper NC36697, continental engine Hp 75, J-5, Marion to local, and Piper NC35357 Lycoming engine Hp 65, J-3, Bloomington
 2/03/44: Flying Porterfield NC34847, Continental eng. Hp 65, Marion to local, then Culver NC41615, Continental engine Hp 75, Cadet, Marion to Local
 02/02/45: Flying Aeronca NC36554, Continental engine Hp 65, KY to local, then Piper Bloomington to local, then Aeronca NC36554 KY to local, then Piper NC38437 Kentucky to local
 04/15/45: New Job for Bill Cook, Knoxville, Tennessee, flying Luscombe, Morristown, Knox to local
 05/01/45: Flying in Knoxville, Tennessee area
 03/11/46: Written exam for instrument rating for Pilot
 10/15/46: Flying for Bill Cook
 04/01/47: Ground Instructor Aircraft Certification (grade torn off)
 1947: Private Pilot Examiner and Student Pilot Examiner licenses
 03/15/49: Employed by Department of Energy Union Carbide, Oak Ridge, Tennessee
 04/01/48: FCC -Federal Communication Commission, Licensed Restricted Telephone (radio license)
 05/01/51: Oak Ridge Fire Dept, Aux unit
 05/01/53: Civil Defense – Course of Instruction in Auxiliary Fire
 08/01/56: CAP –Mar 58, and probably later, 1957 CAP, First Lt. Command Pilot, Commander Cadet Squadron.
 06/27/58: Flight Instructor Certificate issued by USA Dept of Commerce
 03/15/59: Temporary Airman's Certificate Commercial Pilot
 04/04/59 – 12/03/61: Commercial Pilot and Instructor, Oak Ridge Airport
 1981: Retired 32 years, Union Carbide, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, awards and credits for patents in Engineering Design
 1983: Moved to Florida where remained active in model aviation until returned to Knoxville, Tennessee in 2001

Post-Final Flight:

Date of Death: March 21, 2004, ashes scattered over the Russian River, Anchorage, Alaska, by Pilot Sky A. Tudor, son of John J. Tudor, Sr.

JJT Models - Designed, Built, Tested, Published (and Crashed?):

- *MistAir Turbo Prop Bostonian, Flying Models*, December 1988. Packet contains airplane, *Flying Models*, submission and acceptance correspondence, preliminary sketches, typed manuscript, original pencil drawings, signed drawings, numerous copies, color and B&W photos and negatives w/ letter of instruction from editor.
- *TravelAire 2000, Flying Models*, January 1985. Packet contains airplane, *Flying Models*, submission and acceptance correspondence, miscellaneous preliminary drawings, original pencil drawings, 3-view and copies, typed manuscript, signed plans submitted for publication, B&W and color photos/slides, and postal insurance

- receipt. “Old Elephant Ear” painting by JJT (represented on magazine cover) is in possession of Sky A. Tudor of Anchorage, Alaska.
- *NegaBipe Negative Stagger* biplane, *Flying Models*, March 1983. Packet contains *Flying Models*, rough draft, correspondence relative to submission, final draft, letter of acceptance, original pencil drawings and blueprints, correspondence from Carsten, and color and B&W photos/negatives.
 - *HiLo Duo*, *Model Airplane News*, August 1963. Fate of airplanes unknown.
 - *Ridge Hawk*, *Flying Models*, August-September 1963. Became a Carsten plan, fate of airplane unknown.
 - *Ridge Hopper*, *Flying Models Magazine* Oct.-Nov. 1962. Became a Carsten plan, fate of airplane unknown.

JJT Models - Designs and Drawings:

- Voisin *Canard 1912* Hydroplane, 1988. Packet contains: two airplanes, correspondence relative to construction details and feedback, preliminary sketches and drawings, certification that drawing is acceptable for AMA competition, a roll of original pencil drawings and copies, including Grandpa Tudor’s store seal on one, a score sheet from MIAMI #4 meet 06/15/89 with score of 105.2, and numerous color and B&W photos
- Curtiss *Hawk Racer*, rubber scale 13in span, designed in 1986, Issue 1, *Max Fax*, February 1988. Original pencil drawings and copies
- *De-Havilland D.H. 2*, peanut-scale CO2 or rubber, 07/20/85. Original pencil drawings and numerous copies
- *Seversky P-35*, 1937 – 1947. Original 1937 and 1947 drawings, numerous copies
- *2 Meter*, early 1980s, many competitions. Rolled drawings only
- *P-30 Never Go 100*, 04/19/91, based on Canard *P-30* by A. Pailleron. Original pencil drawings only.
- *Westland Wagtail*, 1978. Pencil drawings.
- *A1 Glider*. Packet includes miscellaneous preliminary drawings and cardboard patterns.
- *Skylark Kit G2*, Twin Engine, 1973 Flying Model Design contracted for Carl Goldberg. Packet contains letters from Carl with proposal for design services for kit plan and JJT’s counter proposal, including financial arrangements.
- *Bellanca Columbia*, 36” coconut-scale. Packet contains copy of photos of John and airplanes in *Model Builder* February 1988 issue, score sheet, miscellaneous drawings, B&W photos of airplane flying in McDill AFB hangar, and correspondence, JJT and David Linstrum.

JJT Technical Designs:

- 1976 *Airfoil*. “Wings and Things, A Study of Airfoils and their Behavior.” Packet includes original specs, and rough draft.
- 1996 *Beam Scale*. Design for building a Scale model for weighing balsa or models and model parts, published in Flying Aces Club Newsletter, August 1996. Packet includes original pencil drawing and one copy, a copy of magazine article, and a beam scale. (?)

JJT Hobby Industry Involvement:

1963 -1966: Home based business, R/C Distributor, Aerotronics, Sampey, etc.

1973: Flying Model Design contracting – Skylark twin-engine design for Carl Goldberg, Kit G21.

A Few Contest Results:

05/28/40: Winner, Class “A” Gas Model, Grant Co Modelers, presented by F E Lerch Marion Indiana, hand-lettered trophy

1949: Trophy, “First Stunt,” Crossville, Tennessee

1950s: Annual KMAC Model Meet, Trophy, second-place, Rubber Senior

1953: Top Flite JigTime Contest, first place, Senior 1953

1955: Knoxville State Meet, first place

1957: Nordic Eliminations, Roane Co. Airport, Contest Director, five flights, total score 492.5, second place

1958: Wakefield FAI Power Eliminations, Roane County Airport, Contest Director, 5 flights, third place, 665 points total

06/05/82: Soaring Society of East Tennessee (SSET) First place in 2-meter, flying *Frisky*, Contest Director

1982: SSET 1982 Annual Summer Meet Plaque, 2-meter Soaring, first place; Plaque, 2-meter soaring first place; Plaque, 2-meter Soaring, third place

10/83: SSET Award of appreciation for years of founding and guiding club and serving as chief officer

11/04/87: King Orange Entry, OT Rubber Stick, Flying Aces Club (FAC) P-Nut, OT Rubber Scale (Howard), FAC Jumbo Rubber Scale

05/23-24/87: King Orange Entry, 27th Annual Free Flight Rebel Rally, Jacksonville, Florida, .020 Replica OT Pylon, P-30 (S/O), Old Time Cabin, FAC Peanut Scale, FAC WWII Combat, FAC Rubber Scale

1987: Florida State Free Flight, Scores: OT Rubber Stick, 207 pts, second place; P-30, first place, 340 pts; Mulvihill, third place, 287 pts; Gas, second place, 125 pts

1990s: AMA District 5 Free Flight Championships, first place, FAC Rubber Scale; first place, FAC Jumbo; first place, FAC Golden Age; first place, FAC Peanut; first place, FAC Power Scale; first place, WWII Mass Transit

1990s: AMA District 5 Free Flight Championships, second place, FAC Peanut; second place, FAC Jumbo; third place, Dawn P-30; first place, FAC OT Rubber; third place, FAC Golden Age; third place, FAC Rubber

07/07-08/90: first place, .020 Replicas; first place, FAC Rubber; first place, ¼A Nostalgia; first place, Peanut

07/20- 21/91: first place, Golden Age; first place, P-30; second place, Peanut; second place, OT Rubber; first place, Peanut

07/04-05/92: first place, Peanut; first place, Golden Age; first place, Rubber; third place, Unlimited Rubber

1993: 39th King Orange, first place FAC WWII Mass Launch; second place, FAC Golden Age; second place, FAC Jumbo Rubber; third place, Peanut

07/03-04/93: Florida State Free Flight Championships, Palm Bay, Florida, first place, FAC Peanut; first place, FAC Rubber; first place, FAC Golden Age; third place, .020 Replica

12/29-31/95: 42nd King Orange, second place, FAC OT Gas; second place, FAC Peanut

A Few Model Airplanes and Scores:

Bellanca *Columbia*, 36" Coconut. Scores: detail construction - 25 of 30, Color and Markings - 19 of 20, Workmanship - 11 of 12 ½. Total: Columbia 36" Coconut and Peanut Piper Vagabond photos of John and airplanes in Model Builder Feb 1988 pgs 48-49
Corbin *Super-Ace*, 1987. Scores: detail construction - 28 of 30, Color and Markings - 19 of 20, Workmanship - 11 of 12 ½. Total: 58 plus 5 bonus points.
Dayton-Wright *Racer*. Scores: 62 ½ of 62 ½

JJT Miscellaneous Contracting and Design:

1947: 'Bootees' contract - Draw suitable designs for patent applications for inventors of a Bootee Blocker to be utilized in shaping and drying infants' bootees. (Success of invention unknown, royalties received, if any, unknown)
1976: Patent Application Design - Fluidized Bed Combustion in a closed-cycle gas-turbine system, to provide electricity, steam, and hot water to urban housing-development complexes
1981: Design for Central Baptist Church, Oak Ridge, Tennessee
1981 Designed and Built Model of New Church
1982: Design Consultant for Remotec, Oak Ridge, Tennessee (12/15/82: End Cell Slave Assembly; 01/27/83: Remote Manipulators Robot; 03/16/83: Transporters)

Organizations, Societies and Associations:

Member of numerous organizations, instrumental in organizing new clubs, including:

- SSET (Soaring Society of East Tennessee): a founding member and designer of club logo in the 1980s
- FAC (Flying Aces Club): charter member #25, received Blue Max Citation
- NFFS (National Free Flight Society): Contest Director numerous years
- AMA (Academy of Model Aeronautics): Lifetime Member number 1949
- AMOB (AeroModelers of Brevard): very active in and served as Contest Director in numerous events near Melbourne, Florida, where John lived after retirement.

John was an Amateur Radio Operator, and enjoyed drawing and painting and played the clarinet in the church orchestra.

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