



The AMA History Project Presents: History of DU-BRO



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Jay Smith wrote the following, published in the About Us section of Model Aviation magazine, July 2009 issue.

About Us: Du-Bro Celebrates 50 Years

It is probably safe to assume that most modelers are not only familiar with the Du-Bro name, but also use the company's products. Just a listing of all the items it sells would easily fill this space; there are nearly 1,200. To build that kind of inventory takes time. In Du-Bro's case, it has taken 50 years of ideas and innovations.

Dewey Broberg started the company in 1959 with a single product. The goal was to provide aeromodelers something they needed and to back it up with dedication and focus on customer service. The business quickly took off, and Dewey found himself transitioning from running a side business to a full-time company.

It didn't take long for Du-Bro to outgrow the rented storage room. Dewey bought a 5,000-square-foot facility that he moved the company into in the early 1960s.

As the facility expanded, so did Du-Bro's product line. Dewey not only continued producing airplane-related parts and accessories, but he also added Slot Cars. Some of the Slot Car products he introduced included both clear and painted Lexan car bodies and different types of car chassis.

An even bigger expansion took place in 1967, when Du-Bro moved into a 20,000-square-foot facility. Then in the 1970s, the company introduced its helicopter line after David Gray, a designer for Du-Bro, made the historic flight with an RC helicopter.

The Whirlybird was popular, but the helicopter line was dropped in the late 1970s because of both product liability concerns and sales. In the 1970s, Du-Bro also released an ARF of sorts; it had a foam wing, plastic sheeting, and a vacuum-formed fuselage, and it sold for approximately \$40.

In 1982, Dewey decided to start a Du-Bro fishing division, which stemmed from the family's love of the activity. The Pro Series took off, and it continues to be a strong segment of the company.

In 1993, Dewey's love of the Florida Keys, with its fishing and warm weather, prompted his decision to retire. His children—Jim, Gayle, and Kathy—having already worked in the business, made a seamless transition to running Du-Bro.

The company introduced its archery division in 1997. This part of the business was born out of Jim's enjoyment of archery and bow hunting. It started with the need for a spin checker that was

filled by simply modifying the company's popular pinpoint propeller balancer. The archery line, as did the fishing line, continued to grow as Du-Bro found ways to fulfill sportsmen's needs.

In 2002, Du-Bro pioneered "Inside R/C": a national television series on The Outdoor Channel. Hosted by Krista Gibson, the company looked at the show as a way to give back to the pastime that it had been so much a part of and a way to bring all the hobby had to offer to mainstream viewers.

The show gave as many as 26,000,000 homes each week a firsthand look at different areas of the model hobby industry. It ran until 2006, when Du-Bro decided to cease production.

This company prides itself not only on being family owned, but also on producing almost everything it sells at its own facility. That includes injection molding, rotational foam molding, screw machining, thread rolling, drilling, tapping, tooling, punch pressing, assembling, vacuum-forming, packaging, advertising, marketing, and TV production.

In the beginning, Dewey had to build machinery to construct the products he envisioned, because none existed at that time. Later, Du-Bro saw the benefits of having everything done at its facility.

The most important advantage is the level of quality control the company has over its products, and it can develop, test, and modify products quickly. This system also provides the flexibility to tailor production runs to match market requirements.

When interviewing Jim Broberg and Brian Bychowski, head of marketing and advertising, for this article, I had the opportunity to share stories about my Du-Bro product experience from my beginnings in the hobby in the 1970s until now. I can't remember the first item I made use of, but I know which ones I use most often now.

I was eager to find out what Du-Bro's best-selling product is. The answer might not surprise you; it's the E/Z Connector, which is used to join pushrods and cables. I have purchased probably 40 sets for my aircraft through the years.

With such a large number of offerings, you might wonder where Du-Bro gets its product ideas. Staff members cull new concepts from several sources, including modelers, the company's research-and-development department, and improvements they see possible to make on current offerings.

Although the hobby segment is the largest part of the business, Du-Bro's goods are used in several industries and in products that are outside that realm. It supplies items used by NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), in musical instruments, in movies, in TV, and in the military.

Du-Bro's half century of commerce is a big testament to the vision of Dewey Broberg, his family, and the employees. Transitioning from a person selling one product from a storeroom to a corporation that employs 40 people and sells 1,200 products that are made in its 40,000-square-foot facility is quite an achievement.

Happy anniversary, Du-Bro!

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Watch Dewey Broberg, Jr.'s son, Jim Broberg, give Model Aviation Editor-in-Chief Jay Smith a tour of the DU-BRO factory in Wauconda, IL on the AMA's YouTube channel (posted Apr 19, 2017) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4KIg6HKVC-A>.

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