

Sunday, April 13, 2008

MY INTERESTS IN AIRPLANES

As always in these introductions on my website, they are to help introduce you to me so you can better appreciate and evaluate what I have to say on STS and other topics on this website.

I guess it all started by building many **stick and paper model airplanes** when I was very young, like many in my generation. It was a hobby at that time that was very popular. My bedroom ceiling was covered with numerous such models safely hanging in various positions. Of course, today, many of these models are not available, since plastic snap and glue together models are more popular.

Later in life, I was able to advance to carbon dioxide powered model airplanes, besides the traditional "rubber band" powered models. I never made it to gas powered and electric models, although I was on my way building some of them. "Peanut" scale was very popular and practical and it was great fun with limited resources. A partially built "chain saw" size gas powered Sopwith Camel still hangs from the ceiling of our basement. So you can see, I was serious. Career plans and interests changed and I just never was able to get back to this hobby, although I have attended many flying events.

One eventual "dream plan" project was to build a gas powered flying Curtiss "Jenny" and I even still have I believe in our attic some detailed plans from the Smithsonian on the "Jenny." As you can see from my list of books in another area of my web site, I have quite a collection of books involved with Curtiss and the "Jennys."

A **substantial collection of model airplane building items** will have to be disposed of like the 6 Kaypro computers and many other items we have accumulated in 37 + years of marriage and very active lifestyles, as we continue to downsize in our retirement years.

An obscure local source in the Reading, PA area for balsa wood was discovered and I bought all I could afford and thought I would need back in the 1980's. Cutting ,with special devices, your own balsa and other specialty woods, for what you specifically need, can be a great advantage in building such flyable and sturdy but light model airplanes.

Obviously, new developments in glues, carbon, Kevlar & boron fibers, besides new building techniques and devices, along with electric power advances, have revolutionized the hobby. But many have moved on to other interests, so the hobby is not like that in the past.

Today, in our inexpensive and readily available commodity oriented society [“immediate gratification”?], flying model airplanes and even helicopters, can be bought for less than \$50 that are electric powered. You can fly them in your yard and some even in your house, so why try to build your own with all that needs to be invested, especially **your time**?

When I was a Cub Scout, we all had a chance to get an individual ride in a 2 seat plane that I think was a version of a Piper Cub – sit side by side – color gray and black? I have a picture in my scrapbook that I will have to dig out. **It was a thrill beyond words!** Thank you for all those who arranged it. There was a small airport in South Troy, NY that we flew out of, like so many such tiny airports of that era. I believe it has long been gone, but the field may still be there.

Naturally, in my professional career, I had to fly to many locations in the USA. I am not interested in traveling any more, since one time I counted up the number of the 50 states I had visited and it was over half. Only outside of the country travel experiences were to Canada numerous times when growing up and in professional activities.

Obviously, commercial jet travel was involved and I must say, although with some apprehension, especially on take off and landing as many are aware of, it is an incredible experience in so many way.

I even had to fly **“first class”** for a company on an emergency basis – I was the only one available to go at the last minute. I certainly was out of my element with all the perks!

Of course, today with the economy and terrorism concerns, things have changed a great deal in air travel.

As I traveled so much during my professional career, I tried to plan visits to areas of my interest during any “downtime” that was available. Obviously, airplanes are a great interest to me and visits to many museums were made.

The Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton, PA area is very active in interests in airplanes and automobiles, as noted in other areas of my web site. So there are many opportunities to continue to experience these interests locally. It should be noted that Pennsylvania certainly was a very important area in the early days of the beginning of airmail, barnstorming, airplane history, etc.

In addition, as part of our “downsizing,” I put some of my books on the WW I era airplanes on the “paperbackswap” website referenced in other areas of my web site. Immediately, they were almost all taken! I had no idea that they would still be that popular. One person took almost a dozen! So some of my collection has already “found a good home!” More will be put on this site as I have time to do it. If you are

interested, please let me know and I will add you to my email list for “early notification” so you can have a better chance of getting what you want. Naturally, if there is enough interest, eBay could also be explored like with the disposal of our 6 Kaypro computers.