



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of BOB SMITH



Written by CS (2016); Reformatted by JS (04/2019)

The following was submitted by Charlee Smith for Bob Smith's nomination for the AMA Model Aviation Hall of Fame. Bob Smith was inducted into the AMA Model Aviation Hall of Fame in 2016.

Bob was taught to fly R/C by the owner of his local hobby shop, Larry Leonard. He won his first trophy with a 3rd place finish in B Pattern with a Kwik-Fly at age 15. His first pylon racer was a Bob Francis Ballerina with which he had a 3rd place finish in the 1969 Las Vegas Formula 1 meet, the same year he won Senior Pattern at the AMA Nats. There were tales of complaints around this time about the young whippersnappers entering the sport.

Bob's skill as a pilot caught the attention of Phil Kraft and John Brodbeck, who took him under their wings.

Brian Richmond said this about Bob's flying, "Bob Smith taught us all what flying a race course should look like. The terms "on a rail" and "flying on a wire" were invented to describe his flying skills."

In 1970, Bob teamed up with his best friend and caller Jeff Bertken to form BS Associates. With his Clarence Lee Custom K&B-40 powered laminar winged Minnow, he won the 1970 AMA Formula 1 Nats. At the age of 17, Bob was the youngest competitor to win the Nats. At the same meet, Bob's Formula II Miss B.S., built by his brother Chuck, had a qualification time that was beaten by only one other racer, a Formula 1 flown by his mentor Larry Leonard. The Miss B.S. went on to dominate the FAI class. The story is still told about how Bob won his heat at an FAI meet in Sunnyvale, CA, walked back to the pits, and watched other pilots finish the race. Bob won a total of three national Formula 1 championships. Along with Chuck, he developed and produced the Miss DARA Formula 1 racer and was very active in helping develop with the California NMPRA the culture of safety that is so important to the sport today. Bob served as President for the NMPRA and helped develop the national scoring system still used today.

In 1971, P.B. Products (later named Bob Smith R/C Aircraft) was started to produce radio control airplane kits. With a U.S. Patent for a wing molding process mixed with Bob's skills in fiberglass craftsmanship, he produced the first ever all fiberglass airplane, the T2-A. He was ahead of his time designing the "almost ready to fly" Seabreeze. After 12 years of manufacturing fiberglass kits, Bob came up with the idea of marketing custom labeled adhesives in the Hobby Industry. Starting with just 20 dealers and 3 types of epoxies, Bob Smith Industries (BSI) now manufactures a full line of epoxy and cyanoacrylate (CA) adhesives for hobby and industrial use, with over 1800 dealers worldwide. His company is now a leader in producing the adhesives used by many industries and hobbyists.

Bob earned a trophy at the 2003 F3D Championships in the Czech Republic, where he set a new European record of 59.9 seconds. Taking his experience in producing and flying R/C aircraft, Bob worked with several aerospace companies developing the early versions of the UAVs that dominate today's world.

Note: Bob was inducted into the National Miniature Pylon Racing Association (NMPRA) Hall of Fame in 2015.

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AMA History Project
National Model Aviation Museum
5151 E. Memorial Dr.
Muncie IN 47302
(765) 287-1256, ext. 511
historyproject@modelaircraft.org

