



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of ROBERT (BOB) PRESTON WHITE



Formatted by JS (07/2007), Reformatted by JS (02/2010)

The following is from the January 2007 issue of Model Aviation magazine.

Robert “Bob” White was a longtime Rubber power Free Flight aeromodeler in the national and international venues. He accomplished much in the field in design, competition, and organization.

He was honored in 2005 with the prestigious FAI/CIAM Penaud Aeromodeling Diploma. Only one other American has received this honor: Frank Zaic. Bob was a seven-time member of the US Wakefield (F1B) World Championships team, representing 18 years of international competition.

The recipient of the Trebod Wakefield Trophy, Bob is the only American to have been so honored. Bob was so determined to win this trophy that he designed and flew an impressive 21 variations of his Twin-Fin Wakefield model. Numbers 8 and 21 were named National Free Flight Society’s (NFFS) Symposium Model of the Year.

Wakefield is not Bob’s only area of accomplishment. He still holds the Mulvihill Unlimited Category I AMA record of 88 minutes and 24 seconds. At one time, he held AMA records in Wakefield, Coupe, P-30, Unlimited Category I and II, and Rise-off-water (ROW.)

Bob was born in Pasadena, California. He built a gas-powered Pacific Ace in 1939 and flew it in the Rose Bowl parking lot in his first Free Flight contest. The highlight of the contest was meeting George Honda. The following year Bob built his first Wakefield in the style of another friend, Roy Marquard.

Bob was a weather observer at Fort Bliss in the Army, and afterward he married and spent the next few years in New Mexico, working for the US Weather Bureau. When Bob returned to California, he attended the 1963 Nats at Alameda and his feeling for Free Flight returned. At first, he built gas-powered aircraft, then Wakefield, Unlimited Stick, and Coupe models.

Vic Cunyngnam mentored Bob, teaching him how to compete in Free Flight, and in 1968 competed in the Free Flight Team Trials. He made the US team in 1971, and he and another new friend, Futo Takagy, went to Sweden where Bob took third place in the Wakefield World Championships.

This was only the beginning for Bob. It was not until 1987 that he finally reached the goal he made for himself 17 years previously. This was the year he became the Wakefield World Champion!

In 1988, Bob was inducted into the NFFS Hall of Fame. In addition to his Wakefield designs, Bob's FIG model, his *P-30*, and Unlimited were nominated by NFFS as one of the Ten Best Models of the Year. His designs for competition rubber-powered Free Flight models have been published often.

Bob continued to fly in contests in later years. At the Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) Championships in Las Vegas in 2005, Bob won the Nostalgia Wakefield and Small Stick events and placed third in three other events. He attended another Free Flight contest in November of that year, and passed away the evening of his return home.

Bob was a co-founder of the Southern California Aeromodeling Team (SCAT) and served as the Rubber Power Competition Chairman for SCAT Free Flight contests for 40 years.

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