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Model Aviation

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Highlights of My R/C Flying Experience

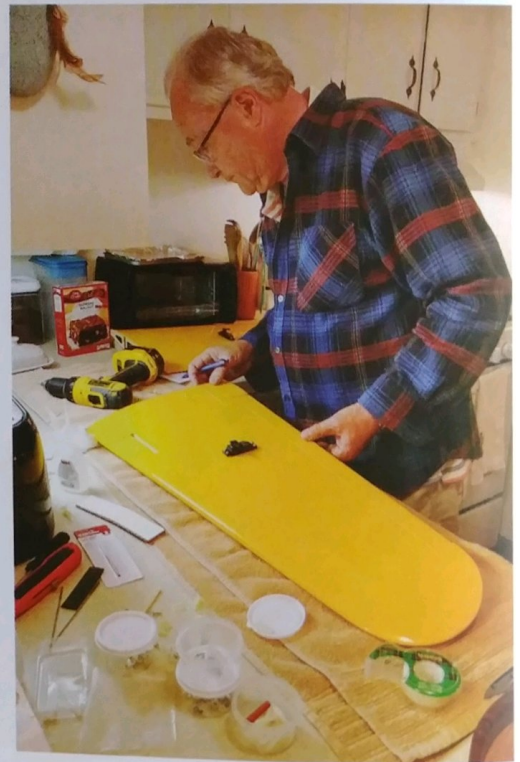
By Jim Cogle



I saw a plane in the air that seemed to be in trouble. Suddenly, it did a steep dive, crossed low over the road and disappeared. I decided to go look for what I was expecting to be a crashed plane, however when I got over the knoll and looked around there was no plane; there were only a few vehicles and a bunch of guys down in a field. When another plane took off from their midst, I realized that the plane I saw was an R/C model. I stayed and watched for a bit and then accepted their offer of flight instruction and membership in the Fredericton Model Aviation Club.

From childhood I was fascinated with airplanes, so this seemed like a perfect fit. But, for several reasons, it didn't turn out well. After crashing two planes in succession, I quit... for 15 years.

Then in 2014, the year I turned 65, I was forced to retire. With nothing to do, I was lost. I tried golf, pickleball, tennis, and fishing... none of them did it for me. Still fascinated by flight and under orders to "find a hobby", I bought a little Styrofoam Champ and a flight simulator. On my TV and in a local ballpark I began to teach myself how to fly again. Soon I could take off and land quite well. Then on August 30th, disaster struck. A big gust of wind blew my little plane away and I didn't see it again for two years.



Ultimately, what really got me flying again was Grey Goose vodka. A friend invited me down to try his favorite drink, which he said was as good as my Jim Beam Extra-Aged. After a few drops of the Goose, I almost agreed with him. Somehow, we got talking about airplanes and my flying experiences and he mentioned that his co-worker's husband, Dan Pospolita, flew model planes.

He said, "I'll try to get you in touch with him."

Dan and I connected and since then he and other members of FMAC, have been coaching me - well trying at least. They have generously shared their insights and provided much needed help.

On July 1st, 2015, I soloed with a new RTF Apprentice. Wow! What a thrill - never should have bothered with the Champ. I circled the field several times and came in for a reasonably good landing. It would have been better if I had listened to my instructor and not slowed down so much.

Dan warned me to 'keep the speed' and warned that bad things would happen. I Wish I had listened. On a grey, November day I got out too far, down too low and flew too slow. Down it went. Fortunately, with a new fuselage and a few other parts it flew again and has since been passed on to another new member.

My next plane was a Pulse 15E. But alas it too crashed due to a tip stall from flying too slow on my final leg. One minute it was in the air, the next it was on the ground in pieces. Dan had warned me several times. I had already had a couple of tip stalls and miraculously survived them. We repaired the Pulse, but I soon stalled it again, this time it was beyond repair.

Dan was disgusted with me and expressed his disapproval forcefully. It worked wonders - that was just what I needed. Since that day four years ago, I have only had one tip stall on the final leg, and it resulted in no damage due to the softening effect of tall marsh grass. This is not to say, of course, that I have not had other crashes due to stupidity. I have had some spectacular ones. The worst being my new Great Planes PT-19 this year. But we won't talk about that one.

As of this writing, I have now owned 13 planes, including four war birds, and still have nine of them ... albeit a few are a bit dog eared from various mishaps and repairs. Good instruction has paid off!

So how should one handle older recruits like myself? Tell them upfront that R/C flying is a process that requires patience and perseverance. Explain that it will cost about \$1,000.00 for a flight simulator, a good plane, batteries, a radio, a charger and a few accessories. Admonish them to stick with high quality items, provide good instruction, and since older folks tend to slow down, caution them about flying too slow.

With proper guidance retirees can become reasonably good pilots, so go forth and haul the old guys in - this is a great hobby. My wife agrees wholeheartedly! ✈

