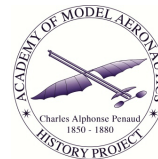




The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of LEE FOSTER CAMPBELL

July 2, 1946 – June 8, 2025



Written by LFC (11/2007); Edited by JS (11/2007); Reformatted by JS (12/2012); Updated by JS (2026)

The following is an autobiography written by Lee Campbell in 2007.

Lee Foster Campbell's Model Airplane Biography

Born: July 2, 1946 in Rochester, Pennsylvania

Parents: Robert Lyle and Mary Elizabeth Campbell

Wife: Kenetta Rae Campbell (b. 1946)

Sister: Lynne Campbell (b. 1948)

Daughters: Ranay Baffy (b. 1967), Tara Grinspun (b. 1971), Allison Campbell (b. 1978)

Five grandchildren, one great-grandson

Education: Two years music education, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan

Career: Kmart Corporation, 1966-1980; Adobe Home Center, 1980-1988; Campbell's Custom Kits, 1980-Present

The first picture I saw of a model airplane was in the Children's Pictorial Encyclopedia, published by Wise and Company in 1950. The picture was of Chet Lanzo with his *Puss Moth* at the 1948 Nationals. The first model I saw was in 1953. My father built a Dime Scale high-wing model. With the help of my father, I built my first model airplane in 1954, a Comet *Phantom Fury*. I continued building and flying Comet and Monogram kits, Testors *Go Hi* gliders, North Pacific *Sleek Streaks*, and more for many years.

I built my first successful stick and tissue model in 1961, a Comet *Sparky*. There was a usable flying field across the street from my home in Akron, Ohio. All of the houses had been torn down to build I-76. I spent the rest of the summer and fall building two to three models per week. By the time my family moved to the Dearborn, Michigan area, my models were climbing and gliding well.

At high school, I met Russell Wells Junior and Mark McFarlane. Mark became my flying partner and joined me in contests until his untimely death in 1967. Russell Wells Junior introduced me to his dad, Russell Sr., who became a friend and mentor.

In 1962, I met Henry Breevort, who along with Russell Wells Sr., formed the Dearborn Heights Balsa Busters. The club met at the community center every Friday night for two years. All of the members were under 18 years of age and each meeting was a three-hour building session.

Mark and I attended the 1962 Michigan State Meet in order to learn as much as possible in preparation for competing. We began competing the next year. Success would not follow until 1964. Both of us made our first maxes in Grand Ledge, Michigan in May of 1964. Several weeks later, I won Senior 1/2A and Mark won Junior/Senior Mulvihill at the Michigan State Meet. In 1968, I met Edmund "Ned" Smith. The two of us traveled together to my first Nationals in 1969 and 1970. My first Nationals success came in 1971 in Glenview, where I placed second in

Open Outdoor Hand Launched Glider. In 1973, I won Jetex at the Oshkosh Nationals with three maxes. In 1976, I set a 1/2A Gas National record, flying a 1/2A *Viking*.

I won and placed in numerous contests over the years, most of the success occurring while flying the smaller classes: 1/2A, 1/4A, and 1/2A Nostalgia, Hand Launched Glider, P-30, A-1 Glider, .020 Replica, and Jetex. I have had small drawings of the *Sleepy Dwarf Glider* and *Hot Dog* 1/4A gas model published in Dave Linstrum's VTO column in *Model Airplane News*. The *Thermal Piglet* was published full size in the *NFFS Digest* in Early 1980. I contributed small snippets of information to many Free Flight columns over the years.

In 1972, I teamed with the late Scott Crozier to form the Cleveland Free Flight Society. The Society continues today as one of the most active Scale clubs in the United States. For the club's first year, I edited its newsletter, which is now known as *Crosswinds*.

With the aid of John Grega, I became a Contest Director in 1973. I directed contests for 31 years, equating to forty contests, including the 1988 King Orange Internationals Meet. Most recently, I was the Scale Director at the 2007 Nationals.

Over the years, I have been an officer in many clubs. Positions held include President of the Lansing Flying Aces, Central Indiana Aeromodelers, Northern Ohio Free Flight Association, and the Florida Modelers Association. Other offices were held in a number of clubs. I have been a member of the Academy of Model Aeronautics continuously since 1963. My member number is 7535.

I have also been a member of the following clubs:

1962-1964: Dearborn Heights Balsa Busters
1970-1971: Cloudbusters Model Airplane Club
1971-1975: Northern Ohio Free Flight Association
1972-2007: Cleveland Free Flight Society (life member since 1975)
1974-1975: Lake Erie Gas Model Club
1976-1977: Lansing Flying Aces
1978-1980: Whirlwinds of Southwestern Michigan
1980-1994: Florida Modelers Association
1994-1995: Detroit Balsa Bugs
1995-1998: Tri-City Flyers
1995-1998: Alamo Escadrille FAC Club
1998-2007: Central Indiana Aeromodelers

I was responsible for helping get the Nostalgia Gas Movement underway. These efforts enabled the nostalgia events to be included in the King Orange Internationals Meet and many other Florida contests. I was also the first to produce new nostalgia gas model kits: 1/2A *Spacer*, AB *Spacer*, and 1/2A *Zeek*.

Kit manufacturing began in 1974 with the production of a few *Thermal Piglet* kits. Campbell's Custom Kits was formed in 1980. The initial plan was to produce a few kits in order to pay for traveling to contests. After a few years, the business took on a life of its own and continued to grow. I have have been working full time with Campbell's Custom Kits since 1990. The most popular kits in the line over the years have been the assorted *Piglet* gliders (about 7500

produced) and the *Souper 30* (about 3800 produced.)

I work about 60 hours per week, including time spent on eBay. I plan to never retire!

Lee Campbell designs kitted:

Thermal Piglet (HLG)

Tiny Piglet (HLG)

Middle Piglet (HLG)

Cata-Piglet (Catapult glider)

Souper 30 (P-30 rubber model)

Souper Coupe (F1G Coupe)

Jesse James (F1H towline glider)

Major contest wins:

Second Place, Hand Launched Glider, 1971 Nationals

Meet High Point Champion, Western New York Free Flight Society, 1971

Meet High Point Champion, Western New York Free Flight Society, 1972

First Place, Open Jetex, 1973 Nationals

Fourth Place, 1/2A Gas, 1976 Nationals

National Record, 1/2A Gas, 1976 (1/2A Viking)

Meet High Point Champion, King Orange Internationals, 1984

Meet High Point Champion, King Orange Internationals, 1985

Meet High Point Champion, King Orange Internationals, 1986

First Place, F1H Glider, FMA Silent Meet, November 1989 (straight tow, 7 maxes)

Meet High Time Award, Dallas Cloud Climbers, F1J, 1995

Third Place, Americas Cup, F1J, 1997

I still compete on a regular basis. My flying is not as good as it once was, but I still have the occasional good day. I enjoy flying straight tow gliders, small class power models, and rubber models of all sorts. I love to build! In addition to model airplanes, I enjoy model railroading and spending time with my wife, Kenetta, and toy poodle, Angel.

Lee Foster Campbell, November 12, 2007

Campbell's Custom Kits, 1831 Fletcher Street, Anderson, IN 46016

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