

REPAINTING THE ZEBRA...

Tobe Kallner looks back at a model life and how aeromodelling has crossed back and forwards across the generations.

Perception of time raises a number of intriguing puzzles as it changes with aging and challenges our preconceived ideas and expectations... so where is all the time going? There are occasions I compare time to a roll of toilet paper where "The closer it gets to the end, the faster it goes!"

Many things/events stills feels like yesterday but I quickly realize that I'm not talking about yesterday, last week/month/year, or even recent years, but 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 decades ago, and when I listen to my Dad we can add 2 or 3 more decades to it.

Some years ago when joining an online forum (www.rcmf.co.uk), I took the

time to stop a few minutes, collect my thoughts and get down some information about me, the hobby and the person that has guided me all my life through this amazing experience. I'm sure that most of us, if we give it the time, have similar stories to tell about a father or a friend that went that little extra to allow us to be where we are today.

Tobe Kallner with his classic 1960 Phil Kraft Kwik Fly aerobatic model.





This was Tobe's first RC model in 1968 with pulse proportional Single Channel.

This hobby, as everything else out there, changes with time and evolves, reaching today the highest levels and standards, and embracing the newest technologies in equipment. Flying model airplanes is more accessible than ever not least as all necessary equipment is readily available to buy and only the size of the wallet puts limits.

Evolution and/or revolution always comes with a price tag - camaraderie and mentorship is not a requirement anymore to succeed; building skills are not necessary to get to the flying field and fly the most gorgeous model. Actually not even a flying field is required anymore as we can, in the comfort of our living room, fly and practice RC utilising one of those fancy flight simulators.

Like many of us not that young anymore but still kids in our mind, we don't always belong to this new group of just a model-flyer as we were brought up in the belief that we build what we fly and we fly what we build! Neither one is right or wrong just two different approaches to the fantastic word of model-flying.

To mention some more of my background, I'm born Swedish but grew up to the age of 18 in Italy and returned to my motherland just for studies and mandatory military service before going back to be a citizen of the world, moving around from country to new country. At every new place the first thing I would look up is the local hobby shop as the model-flying community and the model-flying field has been for me (and remains) the entry ticket to be a member of and be accepted by the local society. Thus I never feel alone despite often being thousands of

miles away from loved and beloved.

I'm trained as an engineer but I must say that model-flying and not university gave me the ability to bring an idea and/or a vision to life and to see it become reality. Like drawing on a piece of paper the outline of a new model and see it grow up from a pile of balsa wood to become a new member of my fleet, my work now is to develop new medical implants from at first a brainstorm meeting, and then through a try and error process to a fully functional prototype - it's not unusual for it to be full of model products and controlled via an Arduino board (an open-source hardware board for building digital devices that can sense and control physical devices).

What I'm trying to say is, that many of us with or without formal training, working in all kinds of fields and with tons of passion, hide in our work shop creating innovative, unique and not least amazing things - even ourselves are not fully aware of the complexity of our achievements. Combining aerodynamics and mechatronics to make something that actually flies and performs in accordance with our expectations offers us pleasure and gratifications not always fully appreciated or given the right value by strangers.

It's this gift given to me by the model-flying community of ingenuity, curiosity, diversification and combination of different sciences, and not least the capacity to bridge over social and age boundaries as everyone is equal at the flying field, has given me the means to be where I'm today but also whom I'm as a person.

Here is a precis of what I wrote when joining the RCMF forum, not realising that in a 'blink of an eye' it would be years ago.

Stripes on a Zebra...

My Dad is in his early 80's and blessed to be still going strong - he is the one who introduced me to this amazing hobby and he did it quite early as I can't remember a time without model airplanes. To what I have been told I 'terrorized' his shop from the day I started walking!

Most of the time in my youth I had to inherit his old stuff for my project but as I turned 7 I got my own first radio, an Ace Pulse Commander Single Channel and from that day in May '68 I have been flying radio controlled airplanes. That transmitter case is now home for Phil Green's 2.4GHz Digimac 1+1 emulator and used in connection with an Adam actuator.

Today I can say that there are no kind of models I haven't built and flown from the smallest indoor to 40% size IMAC (Scale Aerobatics), powered with all kinds of propulsion. Radio wise I have flown GG (Galloping Ghost), Reed and proportional... but never escapement until now. I sure knew what escapements were as there are many in my nostalgia box from my Dad who has been flying RC since 1949. The reason I'm flying escapement now lies in that Phil Green convinced me to get one of his SC (Single Channel) emulators on top of other goodies I wanted from him. With the electronics quickly completed, a Guided Mite was built for the purpose of learning to fly escapement SC.

Due of my lack of knowledge in the matter I went to see my parents, and for this occasion Dad was the more interesting to see. He looked carefully at what I had with me, shaking his head telling me that today there are more reliable equipment like modern servos and 2.4 GHz than that old piece of %&#, but it sure was fun to fly on those occasions it worked properly! At this point I had to open the lid - somebody quickly changed opinion and with a big smile on his face we were heading to the flying field missing Moms Five o'clock tea and later almost missing dinner due to our late arrival back home.*

I flew first the Mite and was quite satisfied of my achievement, until Dad said he wanted to try; during my flight Dad lectured me to such extent that I almost asked him to... but I realised that his comment were always ahead of the situation. There is no way that my Dad had flown escapement for the last 50 years thus I was wondering how he would manage - sure Dad still builds and fly model airplane but most of his planes are of the more gentle kind giving time to think! I hand over the transmitter to Dad and after a couple of pushes on the button he gives me the sign to launch the plane...

What happens then made me astonished as the 'Old Man' flew that little plane around smooth as silk with loops and rolls giggling like a Kid. More flights followed both in Sequential and Compound mode as he was telling me all the secrets of SC - it's like riding a bicycle once learned never forgotten!

As we were heading home I realised that my Dad was keeping an eye, or better both eyes, on the box where I carried 'My Stuff', while he was calling up one of his best flying buddies on his cell-phone. After ending the call he basically confiscated my radio with the SC emulator and ordered a second one for his buddy - no objection from my side would have changed his mind but he agreed that I could keep the Mite if I would take out the electronics as there are plenty of better planes to fly by escapement!

As they say it's as hard to wipe out the stripes on a zebra as also to teach an old dog new tricks!

I would like to show my appreciation to my Dad for the gift he gave to me in this hobby and that he is also giving to my youngest son. My teenage son regularly calls grandpa and asks to be picked up so they can build together, go flying, and visit swap meets!

Past, Present and Future



A selection of the small models (IC and electric powered) that Tobe flies today.

Enough said about the past, and time to mention a little about the future and what this technology evolution is bringing to us; what doors have been reopened, what can we do again with modern reliability. The weakest link for years has been the radio link between the model flier and his airplane, not the means of control like servos and/or actuator. Today's mechatronics allows us to reproduce with reliability any sort of control where the only limitation is the pilot's skill. I would dare to say that the last barriers were broken with the successful reproduction of GG - Galloping Ghost and Adams actuators. More to come about this in a separate article.

Time Wise of Prior Experiences

I have kept my Old Man in the loop as

test pilot Number One not least, as he reminds me almost every day, to not escape the future by hiding in the past. Dad at his age of 84 still builds and flies regularly, embracing with no fears and a lot of curiosity all the new technologies, but I see this SC and Galloping Ghost revival is returning him to his origin and creating this extra confidence at an age where the brain is up to speed but the body not always follows the commands. Well established habits and capacities in the past, although not utilised for decades are coming back and reinforced giving that 'aha' sensation - I know this and it belongs to me.

My Dad and I have always been companions in crime and not least because model-flying/building has kept us close despite from time to time being thousands of miles apart. Thanks to new

technologies it has become easier to share our achievement and ideas.

Every time I talk with him on the phone he starts with "I'm building this or flying that" and to be honest it's the same way I start our conversations too, in a kind of competition of whom is the most bad-a** model builder - a father and son competition.

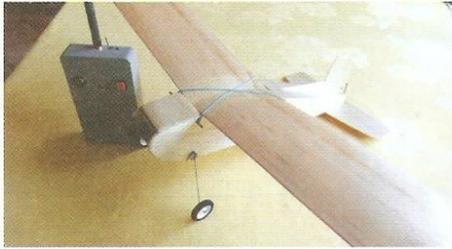
We are at the moment working together to finalise one of my new designs born from my acquisition of a laser cutter and a new learning process - a series of small profile planes which uses the equipment from many RTF BnF (Ready To Fly, Bind and Fly) models that once they've encountered the ground are write-offs, despite good electronics and motors. One of the goals is to show how rewarding it is to see something built with your own hands not only fly but



Tobe's father Per was the key influence on him becoming an aeromodeller.



Tobe and Per are fans of older designs such as the Super 60 (a Junior 60 development, see elsewhere in this issue.) They're building a half-size version although I'm not sure if this is a Boddington Senior reduction!



The mighty 'Guided Mite' used a SC escapement together modern 2.4 GHz electronics.



New project uses laser cutter to produce simple light profile model pieces to fly with Micro RC components.

fly well despite its simplicity. The major inspiration to this is has been Dad's junk box/good to have stuff! You don't throw away something that you might need or have use for later.

Personally I'm back to my roots with small and simple models that with new and lighter equipment fly better than ever but challenge me in almost any aspect of model building and flying. You might call it vintage RC but I can assure you they are as innovative today as they were decades ago. Smaller models requires a lot more attention to details and delicacy than a larger one. Sadly it's getting more and more difficult to get buildings supplies like first choice balsa, and fuel for the old diesels or high nitro fuel for the screaming Coxes - and yes the snap in my fingers can still start the smallest Cox engines without the 'cheat' spring.

I expect with this new line of SC and multi channels Galloping Ghost to fly even more retro equipment without forgetting from time to time fly a nice pattern ship like a Kwik Fly or a Kaos. Mmm... and I fly helicopters.

The past shapes and form the future as passion and dedication brings dreams to life, new technology and tools allows use to reproduce in our workshop whatever our fantasy comes up with. The future has never been brighter for us modellers at any level, as we can't beat evolution it's clearly better to join it and ride on this wave. ●



Tobe's father Per Kallner and youngest son David Kallner share a love of aeromodelling and work together on new projects.

Dad, "A happy camper in his world!"