

R/C Soaring

By Mike Stump



PHOTO: SUE STUMP

Nats buddies Alden Shipp (L) with *Paragon* and Mike Stump (R) with *Hobie Hawk* prepare for a round of Nostalgia competition at the 1996 Nats at the AMA site in Muncie, Ind.

It's always taken me a while to adjust to new names and styles as columnists have changed. Those who have followed R/C Soaring in this and other magazines have had to adjust to the retirement of a number of long time soaring columnists in recent years. Now with Herk moving on in his life, you the reader are faced with another change. Herk has assured me that he's not leaving soaring, and the beloved *Soartech* series will continue through his efforts as long as Prof. Michael Selig's wind-tunnel projects continue.

The baton here at *FM* has been handed now to another R/C addict; that's me, Mike Stump. My name probably may be familiar to many of you from my tenure as President of the League of Silent Flight (the ul-

timated self-help organization for R/C Soaring addicts) from 1991-95. I was also director of the Soaring National Championships since 1992 (LSF version 1992-4). I have been involved full-time—which means likely at the addiction stage or beyond—in R/C Soaring since 1981. All but the first couple years have been as an avid competition pilot as well.

You may be wondering

With a change of faces will come new subjects and styles. From my keyboard, expect to see a variety of subjects and ideas. I'll explore points of view about where our hobby (sailplanes in particular) is headed and take time occasionally to remember where we have come from. Through my tenure as LSF President and Nats manager, I have come to know, and develop a bad taste for the politics that are required in being involved with keeping large organizations communicating. I will share my ideas, and invite readers to share their personal thoughts on the issues with you.

Through these first few months at the helm of this soaring column, most everything contained will come from information and thoughts that I have in hand. In addition I'll talk about my feelings on soaring matters that may affect some of us. I invite readers to share your thoughts with others here, and I will endeavor to bring them to this column's readers. From equipment to contest formats to the "zen" of Soaring, there is a lot to share.

My address, both traditional and e-mail, will be at the end of this column so feel free to let fly (all puns intended). Same goes for those of you who may not agree with what is written here. Post your points of view and I'll do my best to share all opinions.

Mentoring

Few of us are self-taught model pilots. I was one, who like some of us, attempted such. Before I finally found a local model club to give me guidance I was already "1.5" models into the learning curve. It has been said that it takes "2.5-3" models to graduate past the entry level stage of flying, some more, some less. The unfortunate part of getting started is that it takes a while to graduate to the point where you bring the model home in one piece almost every day. Far too many potential pilots give up or lose interest somewhere between models 1 and 2.5. In many cases, it can be from the lack of help that frustration or disinterest begins to develop. On the flip side, those that get help, both at the entry level and as they progress in skill tend to experience a higher enjoyment level and maintain a longer (hopefully, lifetime) interest in the hobby.

I think I may have been a good example of this course as after I joined my first club, the Cadillac Area Modelers Society (C.A.M.S.), the direction I got from my early helpers and mentors, combined with a little stick time, saw a much more rapid improvement of my skills than when I was learning solo.

Another factor that was a big part of early improvement was the presence of other beginners in my club at the same time. We all flew together, encouraging and cheering each other through our successes, and helping while often chiding each other for errors and mistakes.

Our first contests for LSF Level I and II were held at the club field on club nights or weekends. The club fostered our needs as hungry beginners and has been paid off with continued membership twenty years later. Soaring gives us lots of time to be alone with our thoughts and dreams, but being a part of an organization that helped you get off on the right foot in the hobby can give a lot of pleasure later on.

While president of the League of Silent Flight it became apparent to me that as we progress in this hobby, our interests often narrow in this age of increasing specialization. With many of us, being an active participant in our prime focus within our activity takes almost all our available hobby time allotment.

But it's still very important, I think, that as we ourselves move ahead in skill or focus that we take the time to remember where we came from. We all started as beginners at one time or another, and in my opinion one of the best ways a modeler can repay this hobby for all the enjoyment is to help someone new to get a good start. Over a lifetime, if each of us could get one new person started every year or two, one heck of a legacy could be developed.

Be a "Model Mentor" and see if maybe it doesn't do something for you too. Whether you are primarily a club-field sport flyer or an active contest pilot, take the time to guide someone new to sailplanes through their first flying experiences! It can bring back great memories



PHOTO: SUE STUMP

Mike Stump presents Bob Kidd (R) with the Spirit of Soaring Award at the '96 Nats banquet. This award is presented to the individual who most exemplifies the enjoyment and spirit of the sport.

and feelings of your early flying days.

There's a lot of fun to be had in helping others to develop skills. Try to keep this in mind the next time someone new at your club field starts asking questions about flying.

America's teams

Until now, the U.S. soaring community was represented in the Soaring World Championships by the F3B Team only. With the final acceptance of F3J as another discipline of Thermal Soaring at the World Championship level, 1997 becomes the first selection cycle for a team to represent the U.S. in F3J. By the time you read this the bidding process for clubs to host the Selection Finals will be over. There is still time for hosting an event at the regional or club level that Team aspirants can use to qualify for the Finals contest.

I'll publish location and date for the Team Selection event as soon as the F3B committee releases this information. The Finals will likely be held between the end of the Nats and Labor Day (late summer). The suggested format for the Finals is for a 3-day event using as many qualifying rounds as possible before cutting the qualifiers down to the top 10-15 pilots for the fly-off rounds.

F3J has had decent entry from the beginning as a Nats event (we started F3J at the Nats in '92) and it has continued to grow. Entry has been as high as the low forties on a couple of occasions. The neat thing at the Nats is that F3J seems to be enjoyed every bit as much as the other events. And with a few exceptions, most of the pilots that flew F3J at the '92 Nats (many had their first experience at this event) are still participating and enjoying F3J.

The downside to this discussion is that aside from the Nats, not many F3J events are promoted or flown in the U.S. To attend the Team Selection Finals an aspiring pilot needs to have competed in at least one event while registered as a Team aspirant and to have also purchased an FAI Stamp (available through AMA's competition department).

I recently received an e-mail from Soaring FAI Committee Chairman Bob Edson, followed by subsequent e-mails and phone discussion with the new Committee Chairman Terry Edmonds regarding the status of the Team Selection Program for F3J. Soaring Committee Chairman Bob, and now Terry, head a group with one representative from each AMA district who make decisions by majority vote in regards to team selection policies, qualifying criteria, and site selection for Team Selection Finals Events.

One of the pieces I received from Bob outlined the possible qualifying criteria for entry to the F3J Team Selection Finals.

Team selection certification forms, like the FAI stamp are available through the competition department at AMA. Notice that the minimum percentage and raw score are not known at this time. Those minimums were still being discussed as of this writing. Keep in mind that these qualifying standards are still proposals. With this being the first cycle year it is entirely possible that these proposed standards may be modified or ignored while the committee sees where the U.S. is headed in F3J participation.

It is hoped that clubs around the country will step forward and sponsor F3J contests through the spring and summer. There is already an event scheduled for May 3-4 in the Washington, D.C. area that will be hosted

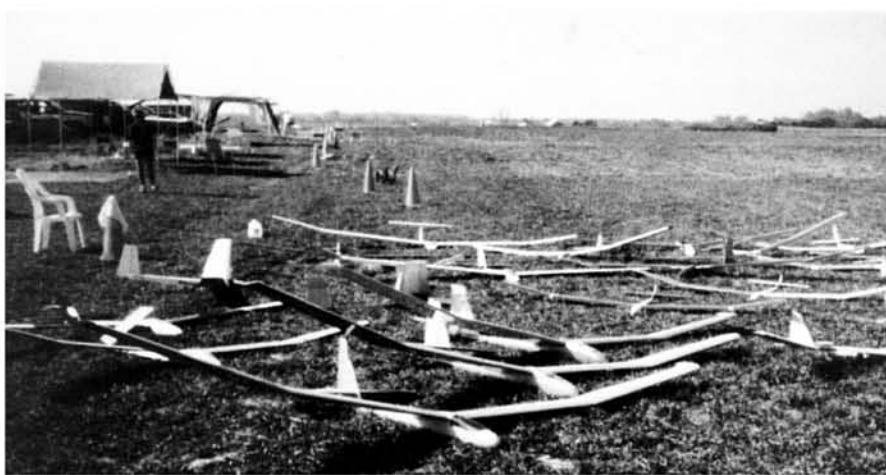


PHOTO: MIKE STUMP

The gaggle of planes entered at the '96 Nats Nostalgia event. Foreground shows three *Sailaires*. Other notable designs such as *Grand Esprit*, *Paragon*, and *Aquila* were present as well as others. The '96 event was won by Don Harris, flying a *Gulf Coaster*.

by CASA. I also just read of the possibility of a two-day event being held in central Tennessee in May. The great thing is that events are being planned in different regions of the country. If we can increase the number of pilots who may have a chance to participate and qualify for the Team Selection process a couple of good things will develop. The number of people exposed to F3J will double or triple this summer. Down the road, if some of these new contests help the qualification process stick around, we may finally have some annual F3J events around the country. Aside from the Nats F3J, the Madison, Wisc. group is the only soaring club I know of to host F3J events on at least a yearly basis. Another great possibility is seeing a Team Selection Finals for F3J with entry of 50 plus pilots!


In most F3B finals anything over 25 is a decent number of entries. This kind of participation expected should exceed those of F3B as it should be in an event more like our traditional thermal soaring in many ways. The chance exists for some new faces to represent our country in soaring, although it would be unwise to count out any of the soaring pilots that have already built their U.S. Team credentials flying F3B. The bottom line with these programs is that as the number of participants increases, the quality of skills and event knowledge will increase as well. Those participating will appreciate these and develop knowledge of tactics and strategy that can only be found through the experience of competition.

Through all the excitement surrounding this first ever opportunity for F3J, we can't forget that this summer we are sending a complete team plus a defending World Champion to the 1997 F3B World Championships. This group of gentlemen deserve our support. The Team, I'm sure, will be making collectable T-shirts and other miscellaneous items available to the Soaring Community to help finance their finals trip. The money generated through this program and AMA's financial support to the team and pilots is very basic. It's not enough to keep a team alive and in existence when they get where they are going (Turkey as part of the World Air Games). At this spring's trade shows and events, make sure you take the opportunity to help the F3B Team to continue its recent success.

Other competition notes

By the time you read this, Nats entry packets will have been mailed to previous entrants and many will have already been received for the 1997 Sailplane Nats co-sponsored by LSF and AMA. If you have an interest in attending, contact the AMA Competition Department, 5151 E. Memorial Dr., Muncie, IN 47302; e-mail to tmckee@modelaircraft.org (Theresa McKee in competitions department) for entry forms.

Sailplane events are: F3J—Sat. July 26; Hand Launch—Sun. July 27; 2-Meter—Mon. and Tues. July 28 and 29; Unlimited—Wed. and Thurs. July 30 and 31; and Nostalgia and Scale—Fri. Aug. 1. All events except scale are flown man-on-man. This year's schedule is shorter by a couple days from previous Soaring Nats, which precluded some compromises in what events were and were not chosen for '97. If the Soaring community wishes a full slate of events yearly, scheduling adjustments will need to be made in the future.

If you need to contact me, here are all the pertinent numbers: Mike Stump, 607 Washington St., Cadillac, MI 49601; e-mail to Stumper@michweb.net. 

F3J Team Selection Finals Qualifying Criteria

1. Must be a current AMA member and have an FAI Stamp.
2. Must have flown in at least one "sanctioned" F3J contest having a minimum entry of five pilots.
3. A contestant may qualify by either:
A. Achieving a score greater than a minimum percent of the winner in an AMA sanctioned F3J contest with a minimum of five contestants and five rounds flown.
B. Score a minimum number of points (raw score) in five flights flown on the same day during an AMA sanctioned absolute attempt.
4. Contestant must pay a fee of \$20.00 to the Team Selection Program prior to any qualifying attempt.



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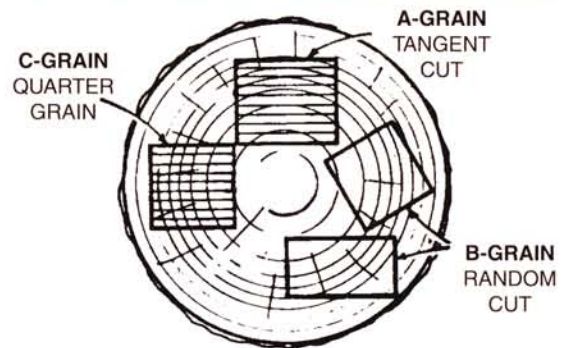
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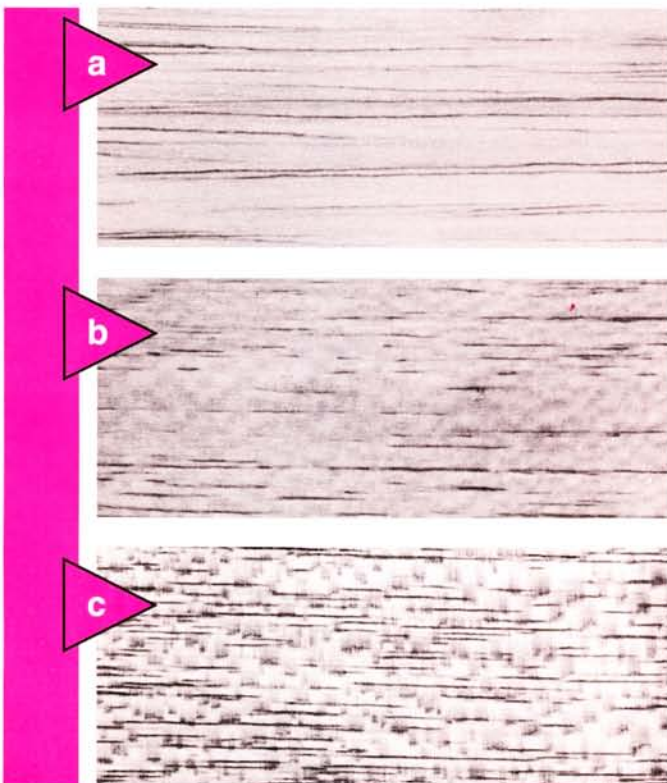
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In selecting balsa sheets for use in your model, it is important to consider the way the grain runs through the sheet as well as the weight of the sheet. The grain direction actually controls the rigidity or flexibility of a balsa sheet more than the density does. For example, if the sheet is cut from the log so that the tree's annular rings run across the thickness of the sheet (A-grain, tangent cut), then the sheet will be fairly flexible edge to edge. In fact, after soaking in water some tangent cut sheets can be completely rolled into a tube shape without splitting. If on the other hand the sheet is cut with the annular rings running through the thickness of the sheet (C-grain, quarter grain), the sheet will be very rigid edge to edge and cannot be bent without splitting. When the grain direction is less clearly defined (B-grain, random cut), the sheet will have intermediate properties between A and C grain. Naturally, B-grain is the most common and is suitable for most jobs. The point to bear in mind is that whenever you come across pure A-grain or C-grain sheets, learn where to use them to take best advantage of their special characteristics. The following chart illustrates the 3 basic grain types for sheet balsa and lists the most appropriate uses for each.

LEARN HOW TO IDENTIFY ALL THREE GRAIN TYPES



CROSS-SECTION OF BALSA LOG



A-GRAIN sheet balsa has long fibers that show up as long grain lines. It is very flexible across the sheet and bends around curves easily. Also warps easily. Sometimes called "tangent cut".

DO: Use for sheet covering rounded fuselages and wing leading edges, planking fuselages, forming tubes, strong flexible spars, HL glider fuselages.

DON'T: Use for sheet balsa wings or tail surfaces, flat fuselage sides, ribs, or formers.

B-GRAIN sheet balsa has some of the qualities of both type A and type C. Grain lines are shorter than type A, and it feels stiffer across the sheet. It is a general purpose sheet and can be used for many jobs. Sometimes called "random cut".

DO: Use for flat fuselage sides, trailing edges, wing ribs, formers, planking gradual curves, wing leading edge sheeting.

DON'T: Use where type A or type C will do a significantly better job.

C-GRAIN sheet balsa has a beautiful mottled appearance. It is very stiff across the sheet and splits easily. But when used properly, it helps to build the lightest strongest models. Most warp resistant type. Sometimes called "quarter grain".

DO: Use for sheet balsa wings and tails, flat fuselage sides, wing ribs, formers, trailing edges. Best type for HL glider wings and tails.

DON'T: Use for curved planking, rounded fuselages, round tubes, HL glider fuselage, or wing spars.

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