

## Our Member Spotlight for October 2011 - Mike Brewer



Mike's appreciation for aircraft was a natural extension of his early experiences. He was born to a career U. S. Air Force father and an English mother. During his childhood, Mike resided in England and France, relocating to the United States at age 12. At that time his French was fluent (although since lost over time). But, Mike can still entertain with his British dialects.

In the late 1950s at Vandenberg, California Air Force Base, Mike began experimenting with U-control model airplanes. Future moves to the Mountain Home, Idaho Air Force Base and Clark Air Force Base in the Philippine Islands included his precious model airplanes.

Mike and Joy married in 1969, and she experienced firsthand the passion of a model airplane builder—a dining table covered with balsa wood and the home scented by “dope.” After their move to Astoria, Oregon in 1977, one of the conditions that Joy insisted on was a private area that would accommodate Mike's airplane construction!

In the late 1970s Mike was fortunate to find a local radio club (LOCO—Lower Columbia Radio Flyers) that welcomed him and provided mentorship in developing Mike's skills as a radio control flyer. Some readers might remember Randy Hansen and his Agwagon airplane? Randy instructed Mike as he gained the skills needed to successfully fly radio control models.

During a family vacation in northern Idaho in the late 1980s Mike attended, as a spectator, his first USSMA qualifier competition. In 1990 Mike returned to Farragut, Idaho as a competitor. He campaigned a Proctor Nieuport 27; also entering it in Washington State's Whidbey Island USSMA contest later in the summer, where he qualified for his first National Championships. Throughout Mike's experience with USSMA, Earl Aune and Dick Hansen provided him with honest feedback, guidance and encouragement. Thanks in large measure to their efforts, Mike's competition scores steadily improved.

The 1994 USSMA Championships in Los Angeles, California was secretly scouted by a Lucas Productions staff person, who observed the World War I era models in flight and followed up by producing a demo-video of Oregon's Mike, Dick Hansen, and Randy Hansen and Texan, Eddy Newman's, choreographed flights. The film eventually resulted in a contract with Lucas Productions and an Indiana Jones television movie. Ben Burtt, who directed the filming, previously received a Special Achievement Academy Award for the creation of the “alien, creature and robot voices” in 1977's Episode IV Star Wars movie. Mr. Burtt autographed the Nieuport 27's model pilot, (which was almost ejected from the aircraft during filming but miraculously “survived”). It now safely resides in the well-grounded home of Mike's daughter.

Following the 1995 USSMA Championships, Mike and Randy Hansen were invited to participate in Top Gun. Mike flew an Aeronca LC, affectionately nicknamed “Petunia,” that was documented previously during a return journey from USSMA's 1994 Championships, held at the National Museum of the Air Force in Dayton, Ohio. Mike and Randy shared a three-week, 6,500 mile-plus round trip (and they're still friends!). Fortunately, Randy trophied at the event, but sadly, his motel room was burglarized and Randy lost his video camera and its irreplaceable film.

In the last decade, Mike's preference developed for building models of full-size airplanes that are located in the Pacific Northwest. This has allowed him to personally and carefully document the aircraft and meet with the

owners or pilots. Both of his most recent USSMA models, a Stinson Reliant Gull Wing Model AT-19/V-77 and an Ercoupe 415D, hailed from Tillamook, Oregon. The Stinson was privately owned and operated by the late Larry Stoffel. The Tillamook Air Museum currently owns the Ercoupe and has generously made it and staff's expertise available to Mike. When these models are retired, arrangements are in place to loan them to the museum for display.

What does Mike best enjoy about USSMA? Mike's emphatic and immediate response: "The PEOPLE! What other sport could you find where the competitors give that kind of support, help and encouragement to their challengers? USSMA represents the true meaning of sportsmanship."

In addition to USSMA, Mike's memberships include The Northwest Scale Aero-Modelers (NWSAM), Grace Episcopal Church, the Lower Columbia River Maritime Museum, Clatsop County Historical Society, the Dodge Brothers' Club, the Astoria Trolley Association, Astoria Meet and Greet Association, and his local flying club, "LOCO."

Mike's 42-plus year marriage with Joy has produced two married children and ten grandchildren, ranging in age from 22 to nine; all of whom live within an hour's drive of Mike. His youngest grandchild, and his namesake, shares Mike's passion for aircraft. In a few more years we might expect to see Mikey competing alongside his grandfather. When not flying or building model airplanes, Mike enjoys volunteering as a motorman for Astoria's trolley, taking regional trips on his Honda Aspencade motorcycle with his son and daughter-in-law (both motorcycle enthusiasts), serving as an official greeter for cruise ships that dock in Astoria as well as entering parades to share his 1926 Dodge Brothers sedan. Mike takes pleasure in his 1880's historic home and cruising among the Caribbean Islands during the Pacific Northwest's wet, cold winter months. Mike and his beloved Aire-dale, Rudy, treasure their long, evening walks.

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Prepared by Joy Brewer

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