

Barry Baxter Controlline History

I saw my first controlliner at my cousin's house when I was about 12. It was Ringmaster and I think it was powered by a McCoy. I never did see it fly. The owner was my cousin's uncle who went on to become an American Airline Captain and retired from there. I thought the Ringmaster was pretty neat, but never really pursued it with any great interest. The one that got my attention was a combat contest between Yaks and Mustangs in Bear Stadium in Denver between a double header. I didn't know if it was the Sterling team or not. Now my curiosity was whetted. In 1958, I saw a Nobler hanging in the hobby shop for sale for \$20.00. A lot of money to me, but I knew the engine, a Fox Combat Special, was worth that. I bought it. It had to spend about a month under my bed as I was going off to a CAP camp at Malmstrom AFB in Great Falls, Montana. After I got back home a friend of mine, Gene Corson, the chap in the picture with me on my website, (The plane is on the ground behind us), and I went to the flying field, a parking lot for a softball field that wasn't too bad, but need mowing. We spent the next three weekends up there trying to start it, to my flipping finger's major discomfort. But finally, since I did understand that we were flooding it, decided to start it with the plane upside down. It started right up and we flipped it over, set the needle valve, and I ran out to the U-Reely which had about 75' of line rolled out. Being the FNG how did I know? Anyway, not particularly relevant to the proceedings, Gene released the plane and it had just lifted off when an unmowed weed caught the lines. The Nobler did a nice wingover over the weeks and crashed. I pulled the engine out of the plane and gave it to Gene and he did repair it to the level was it is the aforementioned picture.

Undeterred, I went down to the Hobby shop and bought a T-Square kit as I had seen one flying at the field and thought it looked like a formidable combat machine. Combat was where my interest was anyway. I built it in short order and returned to the battle field the next weekend. There were other people there this time so we found out a few things like how long the lines were supposed to be, etc. I flew it a few time the first and other than a shaky vertical takeoff after the hand launch, the day went pretty well. I had no problems with loop and wingovers, but the outside loops were giving me fits as the plane would start tuck under and I'd panic and give full up. It would smack the ground at some high rate of speed and a downward attitude. I'd fix it and take it back with somewhat of the same results. One of the flights, I saw something fly off the plane and thought it was one of the polka dots. It felt a bit sluggish, but was about of fuel. When the engine quit it just kinda fell out of the sky. The top planking and covering blew off! Repaired again to the point that it looked like the picture, our big contest was the next weekend. I entered the contest and was matched up with a guy named Brown from Denver, who was the eventual winner. We launched together and I did a reasonably decent job of keeping away from his Quicker, until my nemesis got me, the outside loop. I pancaked the plane and ripped the whole belly out of the T-Square which you can't see in the picture. I felt it was a relatively successful finish to my first contest. I stripped it of its hard parts and trashed it. At least I was hooked. I spent the next couple of years building most of the Combat kits available on the market and became a pretty good combat pilot.

I flew some pretty good stuff, including the likes of Flite Streaks, Galaxies, Reactors, Quickers, Whatizits, Omegas, Orbit Aces, Renegades, Half Fasts, Combat Cats and Combat Streaks, etal. These were all pretty good flyers, but some of them like the Orbit Ace fell off the list because they were a PITA to build, typical junky Berkeley kit, or just too expensive. A \$5.00 combat kit was a half a day's work gross or more after taxes, and I wasn't working full time. I liked the \$3-\$4.00 range, the T-

Squares, Streaks, and Combat Cats the best, until I started designing some stuff I thought was better, like the Melamij, Xterminator and Slite Freak. I did design some stuff that really didn't cut it, too. Then there were a lot of mediocre to poor machines, like the Dumas Diamond, Typical constant stalling diamond airfoil, AA Combateer, Count Clipper, too heavy, Darwing Jr, too heavy, Midwest Hornet, Flew pretty well until it stalled and snap rolled, same with the Hi Johnson EEgad. I didn't mention the Voodoo, because I didn't particularly like it. Frankly I liked the Quicker better. And the planes that I designed before the Voodoo was available, I surely felt they were better.

I joined the Dirt Benders MAC, in 1958. They had a great group and were the ones responsible for the flying sites. We got run off the ball field a few times from one old lady bitching, and the city gave us a site at the edge of town down it a big hole that was about ten feet deep and big enough for two circles. But it wasn't until late '59 when we got into it. Our annual State Championship contest got run out of the ball field in '59 and We had to go to the fairgrounds and fly on the pavement. I had a lousy time there and didn't fare well.

Bill Judge was the designer of the "Woody" MAN 6/58 and a rat racer called the "Pied Piper". Frankly, I thought tthe "Woody" was a pig. It had a very sharp leading edge and would be pressed to do a 45 degree loop. But he built some pretty good Torps and the Woody was fast, but nowhere near his claim of 112 mph. He didn't fly himself but had a guy, Don Ackerman, fly for him. He did win some contests with the airplane. At any rate, Bill and I got into a bit of a tustle over what was more important, maneuverability or speed. He as on the speed's side, I, the maneuverability. I never saw Don too much but Bill did agree to come out one Sunday in '59 to prove his point. I was flying Streaks in those days and still hadn't really figured out how to go fast and had a 10-6 prop on it. I had figured out how to maneuver, though. So, Don took off and was outrunning me severely as the Flite Streak was probably doing about 75. He kept coming down after me and I was flying high enough to cut an outside loop to get him off my tail. I finally went up high where he could turn with me but I could dive on him and fially got him. It was great fun and I guess I proved my point. I never saw Don after that. I think he got transferred out of town by the USPS. At any rate the whole episode really improved my confidence about the direction I was going with my combat flying, and I still used the tactics I learned there for many years. Bill was actually a good friend. He was the projectionist at one of the local movie theaters and he'd let Gene and I come up to the booth and watch the movies. He built the first Nobler that I bought, and later I bought a stunt model called a "Sleekster" that he had built. He could turn out a nice looking model, His Woodies were always class acts in appearance. It looked very much like a bubble cockpit Spitfire. He had modified the tail feathers a bit to complete the resemblance. I did build a few stutters back then. I built another Nobler, a Ruffy and a Thunderbird. The Nobler did itself in on a wingover, The first time I pulled up into one, the engine quit and I maneuvered under the plane to stop its precipitous dive. I caught it and it knocked my down doing it! Couple of weeks later I tried it again. I pulled up into the wingover, the engine quit, I maneuvered myself into the catching position. .and the engine started! I got my arms down as it went by. Well, That was the end of that one. I was flying the Ruffy and it was doing quite well, then the Fox Stunt seized. I landed it with no problems, but looking at the plane the whole nose was twisted off! The engine through the rod threw the case. I guess it stopped very quickly! I don't recall the T-birds demise. I was never meant to be a stunt pilot anyway. Just reminds me of close order drill and line dancing. .Booorring. I did win a couple of stunt contests though!

I flew Combat Streaks in contests starting in 1959 and later in the year I designed the Melamij which won every contest it was entered in through 1960. I wasn't always the winner, but a couple of friends were flying them and picking up where I left off. I won the 1960 Wyoming State Championship beating the guy who whipped me in 1958.

By '61 the club members were losing interest and the activity was really slowing down

I went to college in Tulsa in Fall of 1961, joined the Glue Dobbers where I met Bill Netzeband and did a lot of sport flying there, but when I got back to Wyoming I got into kart racing, then motorcycle racing. My modeling kinda took a hit there.

Living in Wyoming always made me feel out of touch with the real combat world out there, or anything else. You go to Wyoming and you have definitely stepped back a year or two especially back before the internet. The mags were usually 6 months to a year behind the real world and that was our only connection to the outside.

I joined the Navy in 1963, and flew some controlline when I was in A-School in Memphis. Then I was transferred to Pensacola and started flying there a bit and was flying the same stuff I had been flying in Wyoming. I entered a contest in Pensacola in 1965 after flying at the base for a few months with some guys there who were pretty new at controlline. At the contest, I was flying my Xterminators, with the 1961 roller bearing combat specials against them with their current engines and Sneekers, Spectrums, Super Twisters, etc. I didn't last very long.

I started racing slot cars. Our club in Florida including held the National lap record on several occasions (Including me) the tracks that everyone in the country used. I took my cars to Wyoming when I was on leave and my cars were a year and a half ahead of what they were running in Wyoming. I took a second and a half off their best time, and we're talking about 6 second laps, so the percentage was amazing, I was about 20% faster than they were.

The Dirt Benders had kinda just faded away

And I was racing motorcycles on weekends around the SE US states, so the model flying was out. I quit the slot cars in '67 and went to Nam in '68. At the end of '68 I picked up the bike racing again. I got out of the Navy in '69, still bike racing. I had moved to Tulsa when I got out of the Nay. I still had my Cheney Triumph and the Bultaco I had been running for a couple of year. I healed a broken leg in '70, after crashing a CZa and picked up models again in '71 flying RC with the Glue Dobbers. I flew with them for a year or so between motorcycle races, and threw in an occasional controlliner. Then I moved to Wichita for a year to work for Bede Aircraft and got a private pilot's license. I moved back to Tulsa and started my flying career getting my Commercial license, A&P, Instructor's ticket, helicopter license and anything else could drum up. I started racing karts again there culminating in the Missouri state championship. I then moved to Indianapolis for a couple of years, flying Traffic and News reporters there and racing sailboats. I won the season Championship in Hobic Cats 16s in '78. Then it was off to Texas for a short time.

Then I moved to Orange County, CA and back into the AeroSpace biz. I started out racing bikes in CA again, but got back into R/C too. I built several models Including a Deweyville Special, 84" wingspan parasol with an Enya 1.25 four stroke in it. I was puttering around the sky happily when some hotrod clown ran right up its exhaust pipe rather wiping out everything. I told myself, " Self, if you're going to

get run into you might as well get back into combat.” I took one of my 1/2 sized half A ships , about 80 sq.in. combatters out to the field. A guy named Lopez came up to me and laughed at it. He then started tutoring me about real 1/2 A combat and fixed me up with some SlySirs. This was about 1982. I started flying with the Flying Tigers MAC most weekends,

I was still competing in some desert races and endures so I didn't make it to all the weekend meets. I didn't care much for the foamies as I could build a wood 1/2A combater that was much lighter than the foam ones and were far superior to the foamies. So I went with the wood and flew a lot of practice flights and just messing around for awhile. Then the '84 Reno Nats came up, so I built some Sickles 3s designed by Steve Fauble for the contest. These were designed for FAI, but I figured they were big enough to make a decent fast combater. I stiffened up the center section mainly, I had some warmed over Mk4s and the planes were excellent. My first match was against Marvin Denny and we were duking it out quite nicely when my engine stuck. I had gotten some hotter fuel with synthetic in it just for the contest! Wrong!! Well, at least Duke Fox rebuilt it for me! and the warmed over parts hadn't been damaged. The next match ended poorly, I crashed, but, I'm back!

I went up to Wyoming in '86 on the way to the Lincoln Nats and Gene and I went over to Marshal Earnshaw's house. He had been the president of the old Dirt Benders Club. He was digging out some old controlline stuff in his basement to show us what he still had. He pulled out a flying wing and said it was an Omega. He handed it to me and I told him it wasn't an Omega, It was a prototype Melamij. The first two had different wingtips than the final version. He gave it to me and I took it home and made some good drawings of it. We had a CAD program where I worked so I started doing other planes that never had any full sized drawings available from kits or articles. Thus it became hobby for me to dispense with these plans.

We held monthly contests at the Flying Tigers MAC that was sponsored by Northrop. I ended up being the guy who essentially put them together and once or twice a year we'd have a combat contest. We played with different formats and got down to Foxdoos. But some guys didn't like Foxes and some didn't like Voodoos, so I finally just put the 80 MPH speed limit on it with a few airplane sizes and engine size stipulations. But basically it was “Run what you Brung”. Louis Lopez and I used to have arguments over who was first with this event. I don't think it was ever resolved, but I did petition the AMA to make it a rule book event. It lost by one vote.

I designed and published several models, The Bird of Prey combat, The KISS, a sport trainer, a Semi scale 1/2A Stuka Stunt, a P-82 Twin Mustang profile, and the Phoenix, a combat wing aimed at the Speed Limit stuff, and the Bird of Prey. It was a very capable Fast Combat machine. In the '88 Money Nats, I scored 6 kills in 8 matches then politics entered the scene and I was DQed. I didn't fly much combat after that.

I was burnt out with combat and quit flying it in about 1991. Oh, and I quit racing motorcycles in 1985, although I did attend several track day events up until 2001. I won my class in the last race I rode in, the 1985 Viewfinders Grand Prix. I flew a few more Vintage Stunt Championships in Tucson until 1995. I haven't flown much since then. Vertigo has kinda shut that off.

I did contribute several OT Combat models that I still had around to Bob Mears Collection



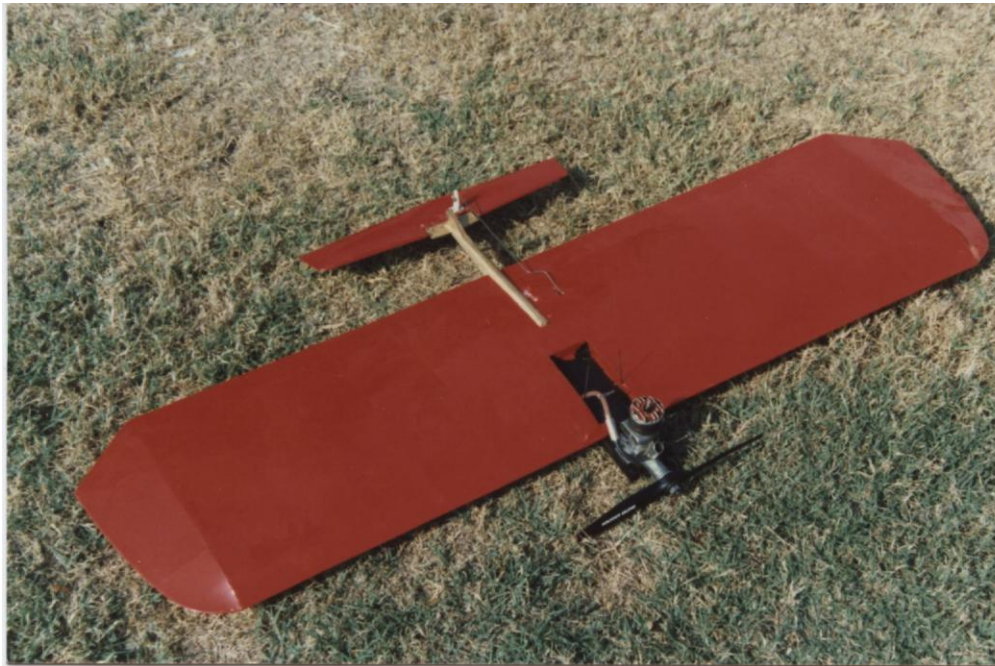
Gene Corson (L) and Myself at my first combat contest in 1958 with my first successful model, a T-square that I learned to fly with, using the term loosely. It was 3 weeks old and on its dying day. The bottom of it is nonexistent. It hit the ground after I changed my mind about doing an outside loop. But it was hanging in there until I screwed it up! The Nobler on the ground was actually my first model, but it lasted through one wingover caught on a bush.



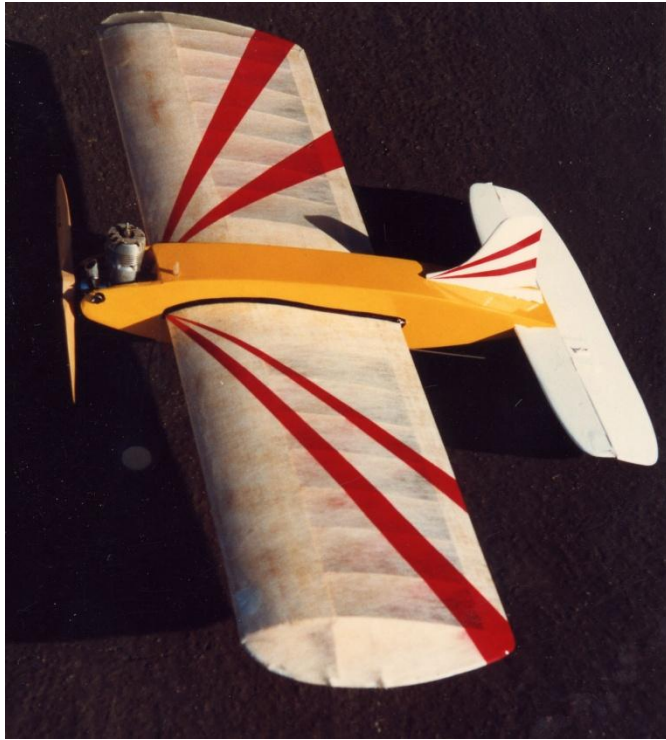
A Fleetwon, a plans built version of the T-Square. Flies quite nicely



A Hi Johnson Blurr. Flies very much like a Midwest Hornet, pretty decently until it decides to do a snap roll and crash



Just a very good flying bit of kit bashing, Omega, Combat Cat. Put 'em all together and they come quite well



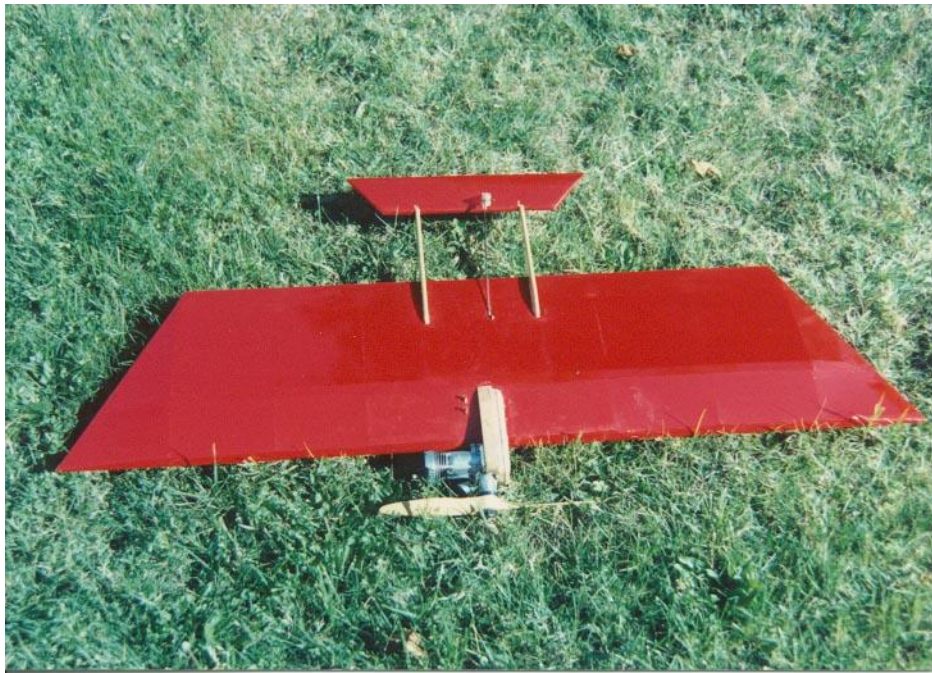
Bill Netzband's public offering, the Scared Kitten. 1950. Fortunately he got a lot better over the years. The Jerkline Spl and Equalizer used essentially the same wings and flew much better, not to mention a couple of Half Fast's in the mix.



Guillow's Galaxy. To me, second only to the Flite Streak . Awesome flyer



Testor's Flite Streak,
Designed by George Aldrich.
One of the best flying kits
ever! Great airplane for
Combat, Stunt or anything
else. The CG goes on the
SPAR!



Exterminator, Dan Patton's diamond
airfoil kit from 1963. It was OK for a
diamond airfoil.



Veco Renegade. A good flyer, I used them occasionally. 1959



Wild Bill Netzeband's Midwest Half Fast. Awesome flyer, but a bit of a PITA to build. They podiomed at the Nats for many years.



A Guillow's Reactor, an excellent airplane, one of my favorites, just too expensive a kit for combat. \$5.95 in the '50s



A Charlie Mackie Luck. A much better flying airplane than I expected! I was impressed. 1962



A couple of Riley's designs, my favorites, the Quicker and Whatizit, and my Xterminator II in the back



My 1984 Nats ship, a Sickie 3 by Steve Fauble, an FAI design that I beefed up for Fast. Great airplane that fell to the prey of brutal management.