



by walt mitchell

KINDA' RYANISH, KINDA' FLY-BABYISH, KINDA'

LOW WING BABY ACEISH -----THE SOUTHERN BELLE

It was a typical Georgia dusk. The last slanting rays of the sun filtered through the magnolia trees, casting a filigree of shadow across my youthful profile as I sat on the rear veranda of our plantation. Skeeters were humming in the honeysuckle vine, and back in his cabin, I could hear Uncle Tom pattering happily with the used Enya .60 I had given him as a reward for distributing anti-bussing literature among his people. Near the cabin door, dear little Eva was playing mumbly-peg, using an X-Acto with a No. 26 blade. A light wind ruffled an old Lester Maddox for President poster and everywhere peace and contentment reigned in the land of cotton. I was feeling right mellow, and could scarce refrain from humming a few bars of "Way Down Home" in the key of G.

Taking another pull at my cold, very dry, double Mint Julep, I reflected on my considerable success as a model aircraft designer . . . in particular, my most recent effort, THE SOUTHERN GENTLEMEN (RCM February 1970). The Gent had gained me the grudging admiration of the entire Atlanta R/C Club, not to mention world acclaim. Letters of praise had come from the 4-corners of the globe.

I was particularly flattered by a letter from an RCM reader in a small Latin American banana republic. He wanted me to join his *junta* as designer of an all balsa air force which would be used to overthrow the resident dictator. A TREMENDOUS challenge! However, in trying to get clearance through Washington, I was informed that, since the Bay of Pigs, it is considered un-American to intervene in other than Asian wars. "Besides," the Secretary of State said stiffly, "remember that dictators have to make a living too."

But nonetheless I knew I had reached a certain pinnacle. Sure, there were still those in the Atlanta R/C Club who, jealous of my growing international reputation, enjoyed making a great THING of diving beneath their cars when I entered the landing pattern. But a poet is always without honor in his own land. Their cutting remarks about buying me my own field as a safety measure would probably injure a lesser man, but me? . . . hah!

If I ever did take offense at their threats, their jibes, think how sorry they would be! Suppose I left . . . why even crusty moss-backs like D.C. May

would pity heaven with their bootless cries for their own lost Leonardo, their own lost Wright brother. But it is written: "Ars longae, vita Brevis." I have my work.

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I replenished my cup and allowed my thoughts to turn inward. Was I really happy with my success? No, certainly not. What genius is ever content? I thought CANDIDLY about the Southern Gent. Was it not a bit dumpy, a bit trainerish looking? Did it project the image of the real ME, the Rhett Butler of a man that I really am? And the answer was "NO." I needed something sportier, more dashing . . . something that would fly like the Southern Gent, but with a bit more *elan* more *pate de foie gras*, as

the French say.

As the evening shadows lengthened, it slowly dawned (or rather, eveninged) on me: why not design a sporty fuselage that would accept the wing and tail section of the Gent, thus producing a jazzy new airplane and saving one hell of a lot of work? Sensing immediately the hand of inspiration upon my shoulder, I sank into a deep study, juggling empannage and decolletage factors, Reynolds numbers, thrust lines, derrieres and other arcane aeronautical subjects about in my facile mind as if the whole exercise was mere child's play.

As I considered sporty fuselages, I recalled a sleek, highbreasted number I had known at the University . . . she of the flaxen hair and pouting, bee-stung

**SOUTHERN BELLE** embraced by David, aged 9. Dave's a modeler, too. Plantation in background.





Blue MonoKote with black and white trim. Hire coolie to cut out checkers for you.

*" . . . . A flagon of M-J's, and all things considered in an infinite series of considerabilities."*

lips. Fortunately, I recognized the danger of such an aberration in thought and quickly put things back into perspective with a cold shower.

Now I was able to throw the full weight of my concentration on the subject and soon everything fell into place. I HAD IT! I knew I had it when my wife came out on the veranda, took one look and muttered, "Gawd, he's had it." A World War II fighter pilot (Mustangs, Lightnings), she really is quite knowledgeable about such matters. And soon I was happily ensconced at the drawing board, the Muse close by me in the form of yet another flagon of M-J's, with beaded bubbles winking at the brim. I was off on a heavy modeling trip and SOUTHERN BELLE was being born.

I am sorry to say that at just such an historic moment, my wife waxed wroth and returned petulantly to the TV. If I could digress for a moment from the purely technical aspects of this article, I would suggest that OCCASIONALLY wroth should take turns and wax my wife. It seems only

fair, and might improve her disposition . . . but back to the Southern Belle.

A modeler familiar with the Southern Gent will recognize the wing and tail sections as old friends . . . no change from the Gent. If you have a Gent fairly intact, you can simply slice off the tail and Devcon it on to Belle's rear end. The wing is easily modified to accept the landing gear, as shown on the plans. The servo access in the Gent wing is on the bottom, so this is covered with a balsa "air scoop" and the connector wire is run through a hole in the top. If you are building the wing from scratch, you can make the access on the top. Be sure and reinforce the wing ribs with 3/32" ply to take landing shock.

The plans are supposed to be self-explanatory, else Dewey wouldn't have published them; there is nothing unusual involved, so you shouldn't have any trouble.

Begin fuselage construction by building two 1/4" sq. frames along the dark outline on the plan. Note that the

1/4" sheet wing saddles are built as part of the frame. Measure cross braces on top view, and join fuselage sides. Add formers F-1 through F-9, stringers and 1/4" sheet doublers toward front. Doublers make wing saddle 1/2" wide, except where tapering at rear of saddle. Stringers sit on top of F-6 through F-8; no notches.

After fuselage is complete, cut away tail plug as indicated on plan, and replace with laminated 1/4" ply and balsa which serves as support and bearing for tail wheel. Note that the two bottom stringers are flush with cross brace at rear of wing and that they rise to give rounded profile at the juncture of the tail plug. This is achieved by jockeying bottom cross braces.

An easy-do fiberglass cowl is made by shaping a foam block, covering with about 1/16" of glass cloth and resin, then finishing with Hobbypoxy "stuff" and auto primer. Sand smooth, gouge out the foam and paint. It helps to soap or wax the foam before fiberglassing to act as a release agent. Fiberglass sticks to anything except something you want it to stick to. Sterling's PT-17 spun aluminum cowl or an aluminum sauce pan may also be used to simulate a radial engine.

The prototype Southern Belle is finished in blue Super MonoKote and trimmed with black and white regular MonoKote. With all equipment installed, she weighs six pounds even, and balances at about one-third of the wing chord.

Belle flies every bit as good as the Southern Gent, is more responsive to ailerons and sticks to the deck better on landings. She is also easier to take off, having much less tendency to ground loop than most tail-draggers. A tendency of the prototype to tuck a wing downward when rudder only was given during straight and level flight was corrected by going to zero-zero relationship between wing and stab.

According to D.C. May, the Atlanta Club's venerable one-eyed chief pilot, Belle flies "good." D.C. has never been known to say anything nice about anything except once he did say Racquel Welch was "pretty well engineered." I think his "good" can be considered a compliment, when you consider all things in an infinite series of considerabilities.

Anyhow, so build. And let Fearless Leader Dewey know if you approve.

Peace.

Walt.

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