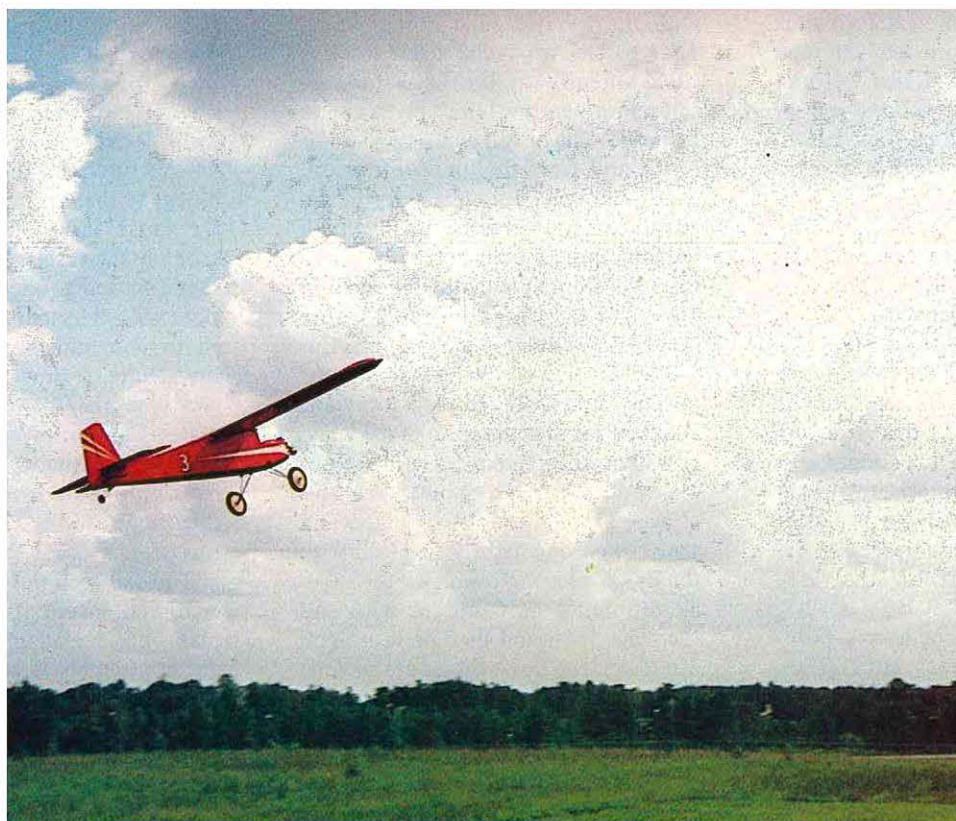


SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN



BY WALT MITCHELL

Photos by **BILL BELL**

A man makes a mistake, by God, he ought to stand up and admit it. Ought to stand up real tall and say, "By all that's holy in Funk & Wagnall's, I was **WRONG!**" This story is about the time I was wrong.

When I first joined the Atlanta R/C Club, I terrorized the runways. Strong in my belief of the ultimate victory of single channel over the gray flannel conformity of multi-proportional, I confess that I caused much dissatisfaction among other members as I shut down all frequencies while adjusting my superregen B-17 with eleven cascaded escapements. Although I felt they were simply envious, sometimes their pettish cries carried the curdle of insult; yet I ignored them and tinkered endlessly with my intricate contraption.

*An investment in
learning
to fly R/C
the Southern Gentleman is a
Curtiss Robin-like, Travelaire-like
Straightwing Stinson-like, easy-to-build trainer*

"WE WANT TO FLY, YOU NINNY!" they bleated, "GET OFF THE RUNWAY AND OFF THE AIR!"

"Let them eat figs," I thought. "My dues are paid." So I tinkered while they fumed and passed the time consuming many a bottle of the nut-brown ale with beaded bubbles winking at the brim.

One electric night a group of figures came to my house draped in sheets. Now in the deep South, when people come to your house in sheets, you got trouble. BIG trouble. Glancing quickly through the French doors, I saw what I took to be a Taurus stuck tailfirst into my lawn ablaze. Terror clawed at my throat as I suddenly realized that I was confronted with the dreaded RKK . . . the Secret Nation . . . the Radio Kontrol Klan. I sunk to my knees as the GRAND KLEEGLE addressed me.

"Fren," he intoned, "We-all wants you-all to git yo self a proposhunal rig. We don' want you-all coming' roun' owah feel wifout wun. An' we wants you-all to git a reesonubul airyplane to fly hit in."

Now a true Southern boy respects the wishes of the GRAND KLEEGLE just as though they were commands. So, as the hooded figures slanted away into the autumn mists, I hastily broke open the can of money I had been saving against a vasectomy for my wife. Straightway I took it to my local friendly hobby shop and made the buy.

Fortunately I had a reasonable airyplane under construction at that very time . . . a Stearman PT 17 which could easily be converted from Galloping Ghost (with interacting ailerons and pilot's eyeballs) to proportional.

I deftly installed the new goodies and went to the airfield in a mood of quiet confidence. My bright yellow Stearman sparkled in the October sun.

But still the members were not happy. They shook their heads and made 'tsk, tsk' sounds like Joe Palooka. After a bit, one of them approached and said, in a voice that was hauntingly familiar, "Fren, thet ain't no reesonabul airyplane. You-all hain't got the reflexes to fly thet thar airyplane. You-all gonna crash."

Well, I was polite to him, of course. But that was rich! Criticizing my reflexes. Me, the big man who moves like a cat. I, whose athletic supporter, Old Number 34, is retired to a place of honor in the University of Georgia Hall of Fame. Reflexes, schmefflexes! I fired up the engine. Its tiny thunder cracked across the field. Up, up, and awham!

I dumped it.

Sullen, but undaunted, I repaired to my laboratories where I prepared in quick succession a Waco E (RCM Ltd. 1968) a J-3 Cub, a Focke Wulf 190 (RCM Nov. 1969) and a Brown Racer, Miss Los Angeles. All flew well while piloted by experienced R/C'ers like D. C. May, Neal Kilby and Bob Roberts.

With me on the box, however, each of my pretty birds was an accident looking for somewhere to happen and they have all gone to model valhalla.

My dear mother used to say, "Walter, Jr., he has got a head like an iron ingot." But gradually, by

osmosis, the message began to penetrate: I needed a light, forgiving, flyable airplane to learn on. Something like an UGLY STIK. But really, anyone who has been to the University couldn't be associated with anything so crass as an UGLY STIK. Beauty is truth, truth is beauty; an Ugly Stik is truth, but beauty it ain't.

So here's where the SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN comes in. Here's a Curtiss Robin-like, Travelaire-like, Straightwing Stinson-like, easy-to-build model airplane. Since completing the GENT, I have gotten

in 53 flights and at this point I am just about to dig which thumb is up, which is left and which digit concerns the engine. I can even land it, although I have no witnesses, as the cowardly members of the Atlanta Club insist on getting beneath their cars when I make my approach.

Since the basic purpose of this article (other than to make money for Dewey . . . and he needs it, you don't know how tough it is in the publishing business — he doesn't even have a color TV on his yacht, poor lamb) is to help scale nuts learn to fly, we will

assume modeling expertise and hope the plans will be self explanatory.

The wing on the prototype was purposely not keyed to a constant position. I have found that changing its position causes the pilot to learn to react to different sets of variables. This is invaluable experience when you crank up that Bristol Beaufighter with the 30,000 man-hours behind it.

I have also experimented with bending the LG to different positions to change ground handling characteristics, for the same reason. Having someone scramble the trim levers is

also good. And the best in-flight experience is dog-fighting with some other novice with an expendable airplane.

Properly aligned and trimmed, the SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN will fly hands off, like an old time free flight. The best configuration I have found is an Enya .60 up front (though a .45 does nicely) and the light-weight PATTERNMASTER radio gear offered by Champion Electronics of Chamblee, Ga. The Champion goodies may well be the best stuff on the market today . . . and it's important

to have GOOD RADIO GEAR. With limited skill, you can't afford to be sabotaged electronically.

The SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN will be a fun airplane for you and well worth the building. It's an investment in learning to fly R/C, which has got to be one of the most difficult sports to master . . . even for old Number 34.

Write me c/o R/C Modeler Magazine and let me know how you make out. ●

