

Nampa Model Aviators

Allen L. Dougal

When my oldest brother returned from Japan after WWII his greatest desire was to learn to fly. He used his GI Bill and became a pilot. In the years following he continued to fly in and out of the back country of Idaho and many trips to neighboring states. After accruing over 27,000 hours he turned his attentions to building experimental aircraft. Needless to say, flying has always been a familiar subject in my life growing up in Idaho.

In 1964, I was offered an opportunity to apply for flight training with the Idaho Air National Guard to fly the newly acquired F-102 Delta Daggers. The eye test at Mountain Home Air Base eliminated any such future for me. The closest I got to flying a jet came during this application period when my friend who flew for the Idaho Air National Guard took me up in a T-33 trainer and let me play with the controls for a few minutes. As Jack Read would say, "Don't try anything unless you are at least at a two mistake altitude." Well, we were flying at 35,000 feet so I guess we qualified for that.

I have always been attracted to the performance ability of U.S. fighter aircraft. As a small boy in Boise, Idaho, I remember seeing P-51 Mustangs flying out of Gowen Field and hearing the unique sound of their engines as they flew around the valley.

While living in the Anchorage area of Alaska, I would enjoy the performances of the F-15s as they flew out of Elmendorf Air Force Base. There were many times that I stopped and watched them on take offs and landings. Another added bonus came when a pilot who had flown as a member of the Thunderbirds was assigned to Elmendorf. On Friday afternoons, weather permitting, he would do a one man air show of maneuvers over Elmendorf in his F-15. There was always a twinge of regret that I never became a fighter pilot.

When I moved back to Idaho from Alaska, I had the desire to fly radio controlled airplanes as a hobby. Since my interest always lay in fighters I thought the perfect plane for me would be the P-51 Mustang. I had never flown any model airplanes before, but I thought I could learn the process.

I purchased a 77" wingspan P-51 that was almost ready to fly. All I had to do was attach the elevator, flaps, and ailerons, put in the electronics and engine and I would be ready to fly. I decided that a Saito 200i would be the best choice for an engine. I found a new one on-line and installed it. I really wanted a four bladed propeller to add to the appearance of the plane. When I went to the store and asked for a four bladed propeller in about an 18" to 20" size, I was asked what plane and engine I had. When I said, "I have a P-51 Mustang."



The next question was, “Have you flown model airplanes before?”

“No, this is my first airplane.”

I’m sure that my inexperience was obvious to the fellow in the store. “You might want to start out with a plane that is not so difficult to fly.”

I had no idea what he was referring too, but I didn’t let his opinion dissuade me. I had a basic understanding of flying and knew what parts on the airplane controlled the flight. All I had to do was get some experience with the controls of the radio and I would be okay.

One day, a couple of years ago, I finished a game of golf at Ridge Crest and saw some model airplanes flying at the Nampa Model Aviators field. I drove over to the field and watched as two fellows were flying the airplanes. I was interested in getting acquainted with them and possibly joining their flying club. After they had both flown their planes a couple of times, one of the men acknowledged my presence and greeted me. I asked them about their club and what requirements there were in becoming a member.

“Have you ever flown before?” was his question.

“No, I’m brand new to the sport.”

“Do you have an airplane?”

“Yes, I have just built a P-51 Mustang.”

That must have been the information he needed to know that I was an accident about to happen. He told me I would need a sponsor before I could join the flying club. I concluded that the club was made up of some prima donnas that were a little on the egotistical side who looked down their noses at someone like me who wanted to learn to fly.

A couple of years went by and my airplane experience consisted of hanging the P-51 Mustang in my shop and enjoying the thoughts of someday flying it. On a few occasions I started the engine and taxied it up and down the street in front of the house. It was then that I had my first miss-hap. I couldn’t resist pushing the throttle up a little to see how the plane reacted to more speed. I lost control as I tried to steer it down the road. It ran off the road into my stone fountain and broke the prop and folded up one of the retractable landing gears.

It was while I was in the process of trying to replace the landing gear that a fellow stopped by and offered to paint my house. We agreed on a price and the work began. During the course of painting my house, John saw me playing with my airplane and told me about Ed Mason who was heavily involved in model airplanes. John had painted his house previously. He called Ed on the phone and introduced me to him. When I talked to Ed about getting involved in learning to fly, he asked me, “Do you have an airplane?”

“Yes, I built and P-51 Mustang.”

“Have you flown it yet?”

“No, I don’t know how to fly radio controlled planes. I’ve never flown one.”

“You’re just like a guy who wants to be an Olympic runner before he knows how to walk. Bring you airplane and meet me at the field and we will see what you have.”

When I met Ed at the field he introduced me to Jack Read who had the exact same Mustang that I had. They told me to get the plane out of my truck so they could look it over. Jack could see immediately that my landing gear was in need of repair. He introduced me to Rex Sperry who could make the part I needed out of aluminum. Jack took me over to his house and we began to go over my plane carefully to make sure all controls were set properly. Jack could tell that I didn’t know anything about setting up the flight controls as to the throws of the ailerons, flaps, rudder, and elevator. He told me to leave the plane with him for a day or two, so that he would have time to get familiar with my radio and be able to make the adjustments that I needed.

Jack called Larry Bresson and the two of them spent several hours making sure that my plane was flyable. Rex furnished two aluminum parts to replace the plastic ones in the retracts. I realized that these fellows were not the snobby, egotistical guys that I thought the club consisted of. They were just the opposite—friendly, helpful and willing to share their experience with anyone who has an interest in flying model airplanes.

Jack located an Eagle 2 trainer that was for sale at the hobby store and became my flight instructor. With the use of a buddy box radio I was learning how to fly. I was able to solo a few weeks ago and, when the weather allows it, I enjoy taking my trainer to the field to continue my learning process. The learning process also consists of learning how to repair broken parts when I make a not-so-soft landing. After



the fifth crash and several replacement parts and lots of super glue I'm starting to get the appreciation for the looks I got when I told people that I had a P-51 Mustang, but I had never flown a plane before.

Now that I've started to "walk" I hope by this time next year I'll be able to run, and in a couple more years I'll be able to actually fly my P-51 Mustang. I want to say, "Thanks." to all the members of the club who have made me feel welcome and helped me progress to the level that I can fly my Eagle 2 trainer and repair it. I look forward to my future in the Nampa Model Aviators Club.