

Snap Roll Survival School

By: Ron Landram

Just the other day I was sitting at the field watching one of our new members solo flying his Eagle trainer. Allen made a perfect take-off flew the airplane around the field, making both a left hand and right hand turns and his flight even included some loops. He then executed a perfect approach and a landing that would rate a score of 10.

Allen had just graduated from the Nampa Model Aviators unofficial “need some help?” flight school and he was on his way.....with by the way..... the same airplane he started learning with. He had been taught to fly by members of the club, primarily Jack Read and he was doing great.

My thoughts drifted back to my youth, in particular when I was a young 3 stripe sergeant stationed in Bitburg Germany. I used to sit in the evenings and page through my prized issues of Model Airplane News dreaming of having and flying an RC airplane. Problem was that with a salary of less than \$750.00 a month it was tough enough just keeping up with the family bills and putting food on the table. Then one day my new issue arrived and inside was a full page ad from a company in New York called *America's Hobby Center*. The ad boasted of getting a radio, airplane and engine for \$150.00. I was hooked and after a couple of months of saving I ordered it. In those days of course, there was no internet, so it was snail mail from Germany to New York and even longer getting the package in my hands.

Then the magic day arrived and I tore open the boxes. The airplane was a kit from *Sterling Models* called a Mini Mambo, the engine a *Cox .049*, and the radio was from *Ace Electronics* and was called a single channel pulse rudder. It was the original low dollar hauler but I didn't care, I was going to be flying my own RC airplane and I was ready.

It took me about a week to build the plane, another couple of nights trying to figure how the radio worked and then it was ready. Seemed simple enough to me....if I wanted to turn right push the stick right and the same for left. There was no one to teach me and no one to tell me that when the airplane was pointed at me right was left and vice versa.

So off to the nearest German cow pasture. Hands shaking I started the little engine, tested the flapping tail. Oh by the way, did I mention that a pulse rudder is a system where the rudder wags back and forth like a puppy's tail and when you push the stick right or left it wags more that direction. There is no elevator, and no throttle. What there is....is a lotta hope and a little prayer.

Motor running, tail wagging I tossed it into the breeze. At first all went well, it started out climbing away from me. I pushed the stick to the left and it started going left....great. About a second later it was still turning, only problem was it was in a steep left hand dive and pointing at me. So I pushed the stick the opposite way it was turning...this of course, made the turn tighter and the dive steeper. At this point I fear turned to panic and the turn

and dive turned into what to this day was the best inverted snap roll I have ever performed! A nose dive into the ground followed, wood and paper going everywhere and my dreams of being the next Carl Goldberg had ended real quickly.

I wasn't ready to give up, however, and to my surprise the local Base Exchange had no less than three Mini Mambos on the shelf so I bought two of them. Mambo number 2 lasted almost one minute and I was getting better. Then came Mambo number 3. For some strange reason it flew and flew and flew and this one lasted me almost all summer. Later I graduated to a four channel AM radio and better airplanes, with elevators and even throttles. Forty years about a hundred airplanes later and I can fly pretty much without issue, I still break em once in a while but that is considered "part of the hobby".

My thoughts came back to watching Allen. How great it would have been then if I had someone like Larry Bresson, Ed Mason or Jack Read to teach me, at least to remind me to push the stick to the low wing when the plane is headed towards me, I didn't but I think I wouldn't have traded that first inverted snap roll for the world.