

COMET'S CURTISS ROBIN

OLD TIMER Model of the Month

Designed by: Joe Konefes

Drawn by: Al Patterson

Text by: Bill Northrop

• The April 1937 issue of M.A.N. carried a full page ad by Comet Model Airplane Supply Co., announcing its first gas model kit, a 6-foot span Curtiss Robin. It was to be the forerunner of many famous gas model kits produced by Comet; including Carl Goldberg's Clipper, Zipper, Mercury, and Sailplane.

Though you wouldn't know it from the ads, the plans did credit Joe Konefes, co-designer with Charles H. Grant of the famous KG, as designer of the Robin.

The model had enough gingerbread features to drive a gadget-nut out of his gourd; detachable wings and tail assembly (now wasn't that

unusual?), adjustable rudder and elevator setting, adjustable motor skid to accommodate various engines, variable engine thrust, real airplane type shock-absorbing landing gear and tail wheel, removable cowl and hatches for easy accessibility to motor, battery, and wing springs.

Contents of the Comet Robin kit read like a Lou Proctor Antic; all ribs accurately die-cut to shape (this was in the age of printwood), landing gear wires bent to exact shape; ignition switch; booster clips, machine screws, nuts, washers; springs for holding wing, landing gear and tail wheel in place; printed aluminum cowl sheet and firewall; special hooks and wire fittings all bent to shape; cement, 1/2 pint of covering liquid(!); 1/2 pints of red and yellow dope; three sheets of bamboo paper; two large plan sheets; get this ... a pair of 3-1/2

inch airwheels; rubber-tired tail wheel; streamlined struts; shaped leading and trailing edges; many large printed balsa sheets; special bass blocks all shaped, grooved, and slotted; and a birch prop blank, outlined, drilled and tapered, ready to carve.

The price for all of the above. . . ? Would you believe \$6.50? And if you happened to already own a pair of airwheels, you could buy the kit, less wheels, for \$4.95 . . . Move the decimal one digit to the right, and you still couldn't meet today's prices!

The Comet Robin holds a special place in the heart of MB's editor, because he shared the thrill of helping with the first trial flights of his modeling buddy's Robin, "way back then." We were the only modelers in the small university town of Newark, Delaware who were involved in gas models at that time, and Jack's Robin was completed prior to our Scientific kit of Bassett's "Miss Philadelphia." Neither of us had seen a gas model in flight, and the Robin's first test hop came at the end of many exciting hand-glides down the 7th fairway of the local golf club.

With our hearts in our throats, we turned the Robin loose on its first hop, the engine set at about half-throttle. Actually, it was another hand launch, and the ship then proceeded to complete two large circles at about twenty feet of altitude, and as soon as the engine cut, it settled into a smooth and realistic landing. With Jack in close pursuit, we ran to the model, shut off the ignition, and picked up the Robin at the leading edge of the wing. The nose swung up and the hot Gwinn Aero branded our left forearm with a mark that is still faintly visible.

Even without the branding, we'll never forget the excitement of that first gas model flight.

The plans presented herein were traced from the original kit plans, however, many of the small "how-to" sketches have been omitted. Ron Martelet, who sent us the cover photo, taken by John Harast, also loaned us the original kit plans.

Ron's Robin was recently recovered. It now weighs 5-1/2 lbs., has an old Veco 35 for power, and a Kraft 3-channel radio for control.

The model is quite accurate in outline, the main departure being the landing gear. It would not be difficult to modify the gear to scale configuration, but then, it would only be a scale Curtiss Robin . . . not a Comet Curtiss Robin! ●

Speaks.

Newsletters are quite numerous. Among those are the SCAMP Hot Leads, SCIF Flight Plug, SAM 21 Newsletter, SAM 7 Yankee, and several other smaller ones. When one organizes a SAM Chapter, the first thing to be done is to arrange for an exchange of newsletters. What the other fellow is doing is always of great interest. The brand new club paper by SAM 49, "Arcing Point", is a case in mind, as its publication is full of ideas for different types of fun events.

Incidentally, if you, as the newcomer, have several other fellows along with you who want to form a more or less informal club or chapter, write to Everett Woodman, 389 Floral Lane, Saddle Brook, NJ 07662, for an official SAM Chapter number.

Of course, you will be required to list who is in your club to support your application.

MOTOR OF THE MONTH

As mentioned previously, this column features a monthly old-time engine review primarily to show what the old engines looked like, and in addition, to supply motor mounting information to help plan your next old-timer project.

The September 1946 issue of Model Airplane News featured a full page in the front section announcing that Torpedo was back. This was the Torpedo twin stack as manufactured by Miniature Motors, Inc., of 8400 Higuera St., Culver City, California.

(However, if you went back a few
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Carl Goldberg still has the original "Whizzer" control line model (Surprised that Russ Barrera hasn't acquired it for his museum!).