

## **Nomination of Clifford Albert Telford, AMA #658, and Nancy Telford for AMA Hall of Fame**

**The young modeling enthusiast.** Cliff began his lifelong relationship with aircraft modeling around the age of 9, building rubber powered balsa models. In 1947 at age 14 he built his first powered control-line trainer model and the following year he built his own-design stunt model and won his first trophy in Club Jr stunt class at a local contest in Atlanta, GA, getting the attention of some fellow modelers in local clubs. In April of 1949, he and four others had built some Go-Devil kit stunt planes with K&B 29 engines and put on a CL-combat show with 10 minutes of streamer-cutting in between baseball games at a local baseball park. In July of that year, the Georgia Plymouth automobile dealers sponsored a two-day model airplane contest featuring all types of events, including CL stunt, CL speed and CL combat. Cliff placed first in Jr Stunt, first in Jr A speed and first in Jr B speed which was good enough to qualify him for a sponsorship to attend the Plymouth International model airplane meet to be held in Detroit, MI in August of 1949. That year he won twelve trophies in eight contests including two in Ohio after the family relocated to Cincinnati. After a year of what he called "the jinx" he finally won a big event when he placed first in B speed at the 1951 Internationals in Detroit, MI sponsored by Plymouth Motor Corp. In 1952 with a new fleet of airplanes, he won a few classes but struggled the first half of the year until he teamed up with Tichener and won 7 first place trophies at two contests in Kentucky in the second half of the year. In 1953, he attended nine contests including the Nationals in Philadelphia and the 7<sup>th</sup> Internationals in Detroit, winning three first place trophies, four second place trophies and two third place trophies all in CL speed events.

**Duty calls.** In the summer of 1953, Cliff also had to go off to US Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps camp for four weeks, and spent the first half of 1954 finishing his degree at University of Cincinnati, followed that up with getting married to Nancy on August 14, 1954 and entering US Air Force primary flight training at Marianna, FL. He then went to jet training school in Del Rio, TX, followed by B-47 training at Walker Air Force Base in Roswell, NM and remained on assignment there on active duty through 1958. With lots of flight hours in jets, he has several offers from various airlines and an option to transition to B-52 duty in the USAF, but he chose to leave the service and hire on with Eastern Airlines. After a brief airline training assignment in Atlanta, GA, he was assigned to Washington, DC and relocated to Falls Church, VA, where he also resumed his modeling hobby. At a few local CL speed contests, he and Nancy became fast friends with Robert S. "Bob" Violett and his wife Patty. Bob was in the US Navy at the time but when he was home from deployments he would compete in local CL speed contests. Cliff finally achieved one of his long sought-after goals when he set a new world record in C speed of 167 mph sometime in the early 1960's. Bob had learned about radio-controlled modeling from fellow Navy pilots that had taken up that form of model aviation and had learned to fly R/C. Bob completed his tour in the Navy around 1963 and also joined Eastern Airlines in Washington, DC and from that point onward, the Telford-Violett team was forged to take on Bob's quest to dominate the newly forming event of R/C pylon racing.

**The T-V Team.** While Bob honed his flying skills competing in various R/C events, Cliff was also learning to fly R/C but spent a lot of his time applying his knowledge of reworking CL speed engines to gain as much advantage over the competition as possible with the best performing R/C racing engines. As fully proportional radio control capability and reliable servo actuators came about, combined with the

attraction of full scale Goodyear air races and the sleek Formula I class airplanes that were gaining in popularity, the natural birth of the radio-controlled Formula I pylon racing event occurred, with many veteran CL speed competitors plying their knowledge in this new venue. It was not long before Bob fell in love with the Miss Cosmic Wind Formula I airplane and made his own model of it for R/C Formula I racing, and later, Formula II racing as well with an upsized version. By 1969, the team was starting to win some contests, when talk of an international event for FAI pylon racing started taking place. Bob built a P-51 model named Miss Bardahl and Cliff equipped it with the best .40 engine he could come up with and they headed over to England to compete in an R/C pylon event there in 1970. They did not win but they learned a lot about running on alcohol fuel. Around this time, the FAI established a set of rules for the FAI R/C pylon racing class and an event was planned for an International contest to be held in 1971 in Doylestown, PA. For this event, Bob built a new version of his P-51 racer and named it Miss T-V and Cliff equipped it with the best engine he could come up with. Together, the T-V team emerged victorious and were the first winners of the newly established Sopwith Cup perennial trophy, provided by Sir Thomas Sopwith. The FAI made some rules changes following the contest, eliminating the requirement that the aircraft had to be a "semi-scale" replica of a real aircraft, in favor of a more enforceable and less subjective set of rules based on dimensions (similar to NASCAR racecar rules today). This allowed some modeling creativity and many unusual designs showed up the following year for the 1972 FAI International R/C Pylon event in Cranfield, England. For this event, Bob designed a new model called the BobCAT (Bob for Bob Violett and CAT for Clifford A. Telford), which featured a high aspect ratio wing, a sleek fuselage, an anhedral empennage resembling that from an F-4, two wheels placed together in a centerline pod for low drag and a pair of music wire "cat's whiskers" off the nose to keep the propeller from striking the ground. The drag reduction compared to the previous year's best models was significant, and the T-V team again emerged victorious, taking home the Sopwith Cup for the second time. The FAI again reviewed the rules in the fall of that year, but they could not achieve agreement on revisions in time to hold an event in 1973. They finally came out with a revised set of rules and the third FAI International R/C Pylon event was planned to be held in Lakehurst, NJ in 1974. During the lull in 1973, Bob had agreed with a magazine to publish the plans for the BobCAT thinking that the rules would likely change to outlaw some of its features, so he was expecting to have to design a new model for 1974 – but to the T-V team's surprise as well as that of many other international competitors, only minor changes were made and the airplane was still competitive. Many competitors showed up with replicas or variations of the BobCAT, but the T-V team was one step ahead, in the development of a different engine that was now made legal by the rules change – the rear intake, rear exhaust K&B .40. The engine had debuted earlier due to demand by the R/C model boat racing community and Cliff had modified many of them to run better for boat racers, meanwhile the engine was also making its debut in the US Formula I class of R/C pylon racing those same years, so Cliff had lots of experience with it already. The secret weapon for 1974 was a new version of the BobCAT that had a built-in megaphone-style half-pipe that significantly boosted the power of this engine running on alcohol. It took more effort to carefully prepare propellers to match the engine but once that learning curve was conquered after several weekends of testing, the T-V team was ready for Lakehurst. Once again, the T-V team reigned supreme and took home the Sopwith Cup for the third and last time. After the contest, the T-V team decided to retire from FAI R/C Pylon racing and concentrate on US Formula I

pylon racing. Bob embarked on an effort to develop R/C ducted fan technology for the R/C Scale events to enable realistic jet model flight and by 1980 he had given up racing in favor of R/C jets for good.

**Giving back.** By the mid 1970's, Cliff, along with wife Nancy as his dedicated sidekick, was routinely serving as Contest Director for many local R/C pylon contests and helping out as R/C Pylon Event Director or Co-CD many times at the US Nationals. Cliff also served on behalf of the AMA as US pylon liaison to the FAI R/C committee meetings and enjoyed competing in R/C pylon racing himself. Cliff was part of a team of competitors that brought AMA rulebook event number 428 for R/C pylon "Quickie 500" class into being, after several years of debating whether this would help or hurt the other R/C pylon rulebook events. While most areas of the country were already racing some form of "Quickie 500" events using the Sport-Pylon event rules that allowed for local tailoring of the rules, the creation of the Quickie 500 rulebook event served to standardize these rules on a national level which then brought Quickie 500 racing to the US Nationals, where it remains popular today. He served as AMA Contest Board member for R/C pylon for many years, served as AMA Contest Board Chairman for R/C Combat for several years when it first was established as an AMA rulebook event and served until his death in 2005 as one of the voting members of the AMA Scholarship committee – a duty that he very much enjoyed and took quite seriously. Cliff also became entrenched in the growth of the National Miniature Pylon Racing Association (NMPRA) special interest group, serving as District Vice President for many years both in Maryland and later in Florida.

**Paying it forward.** After Cliff's death in 2005, many of his fellow competitors and friends supported the creation of the Cliff Telford Scholarship Fund for the AMA, which continues today to take in donations and allow the AMA to grant scholarship awards to deserving young modelers. When his wife Nancy passed in 2016, the group rallied to change the name to the Clifford and Nancy Telford Scholarship Fund. As their descendent and fellow modeler, I intend to ensure that the fund continues to take in at least \$10,000 per year, so that their legacy can live on forever through the achievements of young modelers that receive these much needed scholarship grants.

Respectfully submitted,

Drew Telford, AMA Life Member #L1195



Cliff Telford and Bob Violett with CL Speed models.



Cliff Telford with first CL trainer – 1947, age 14.



Cliff Telford at Indianapolis 1953, 1<sup>st</sup> in C-D speed.



Cliff Telford, Bob Violett with BobCAT – 1972.



Bob Violett, Cliff Telford, FAI, F1 – 1971



C. Telford, B. Violett, FAI – 1974



Nancy Telford scoring Q500 race – 2003



Nancy & Cliff Telford, Patty & Bob Violet – T-V Team