

Caught in the Searchlight: Bill “Chops” Hervoy



In this feature in Flypaper, each month, we highlight a club member on a rotating basis. While we see each other at the field or at meetings, we may not know a lot about the other members, their personal background and their history in RC flying. Searchlight should help us get to know one another better.



“Chops” Hervoy was born on March 29, 1925 in North Chicago and so will soon be celebrating his 91st birthday. Bill has lived in the area his entire life save for a stint in England during WWII. At age 12 he began working in his father’s business, Hervoy Builders, on weekends. He left Waukegan Township High School at age 15 to work for the business full time. It was his employment as a carpenter that laid the groundwork for his building of both radio control and full scale aircraft. Indeed, to most LCRCC members, Chops is legendary for his building skills building and is always generous with his time repairing model aircraft club members.

One of the first topics in the interview was how he got the nickname “Chops.” With a characteristic smile, Bill explained that his mother had been Croatian and didn’t speak English all that well. When she called him in for lunch one day while playing baseball with his friends, “Willie” became “Vee-Lee” and one of his young friends said “Hey Veal Chops, your mom is calling you for lunch.” He has been known as “Chops” ever since.

Chops and three brothers saw service during WWII, Chops in the army and other brothers being in the Marines, the Army Air Corp with his fourth brother serving in the Marines during the Korean War. Coming from the building trade, Bill was assigned to the Army Engineers. He spent two and a half years in England working in a supply depot sending supplies to the front line. After the invasion of France, he and his fellows

supervised German POW's working in the depot. He particularly mentioned a 17 year old POW for whom he was responsible. After the war, he returned to working in the family business.

At age 11, Bill's first venture into building model aircraft was to build a free-flight Aeronca with a 36" wingspan with money earned from his paper route. Some years later, he built a Sterling kit u-control Corsair. With a shrug of his shoulders, he says that he flew it three times before he wiped it out.

His interest in RC flying took a back seat to full scale flying when he started taking lessons in a J3 Cub at Waukegan Airport. After earning his Private Pilot Certificate, he bought a Cessna 140 for \$2600 in 1968 which he used mostly for local flying, until...



a tornado hit Waukegan Airport. Undaunted, Chops did most of the repair himself.

Bill also decided to build his own full scale airplane and chose a French design, the *Piel Emeraude*, a two seat single engine designed by Claude Piel. Not surprisingly for a carpenter's choice, the *Emeraude* uses wood construction with a laminated box spar. Working off and on and interrupted by his marriage, it took Chops eleven years to finish the plane. In the process, he fabricated his own canopy and windshield, managing to cajole a plastic sign company to allow him to use their oversize ovens to form the windshield. It has a 26 foot wingspan, and an empty weight of 938 pounds. Bill flew the plane for a number of years and with some pride, says it is still flown by its latest owner. Under construction:



And the finished plane:

On the RC front, after the loss of his u-control Corsair, Bill did not return to flying model aircraft until radios began to be used for flying. Bill didn't know anything about radios, but **Jim "Paw-Paw" Emmons**, the uncle of **Dick Hultz**, took Bill under his wing. Bill credits Jim Emmons with teaching him to fly RC planes. Bill says that he had a Branco CG radio, adding that he always had top brand radios.

Initially, Bill was flying at a field at 10th and Green Bay Road with a group of about ten other RC fliers. The group had not formed a club, they just got together and flew constantly. The field at 10th and Green Bay was rough ground and so all the flights were and-launched and all landings were power off. Chops said that after they got better fields, they began having roll on ground (ROG) take-offs, which at the time was considered an impressive feat. It was not until 1986 that he became a member of LCLRCC.

Bill says that he scratch built all of his planes. When the writer asked to see some of them, Bill led the way to the second of the four levels of his house, where he maintains his workshop, one enough to arouse no small envy, but then what would one expect from someone who spent his entire working life as a carpenter and builder. Going down one further level, reveals an equally enviable hangar of RC planes.



Chops and his wife Ruth with his Fleet biplane



Aeromaster, Chops modified for an OS 91



A Sky-ote biplane



A biplane which an LCRCC member cracked up

One of Bill's most intricate builds was a Dehaviland DH2. This WWI model boasts cables controlling the control surfaces and other features true to the full scale aircraft. It is a beautifully constructed plane.



But when asked about his favorite plane, he named his "Hoop-La" and explained that it got its name when he was working on the build and his wife Ruth asked what all the hoop-la was about. Bill says that the Hoop-La was his favorite plane to fly and he actually has two that he built. It has an open fuselage made of metal unlike most of his wood builds.

