

Pilot Profile: Andy Mudrick

by Russell Knetzger

As with so many of our World War II veterans, Andy Mudrick has melded together a solid high school education, with superior technical military service training, and parlayed that into a long career of 30 years with a premier Milwaukee area industrial firm, Ladish Company, in Cudahy.

After 24 years of retirement from Ladish at age 60, Andy is now pioneering yet another chapter in his life by learning to fly radio control model aircraft at our field, filling the void left upon the death of his wife, Shirley, a year ago. He and Shirley met in high school, and were married for 61 years. Andy is undertaking the model aircraft challenge along with his good friend of decades, Earl Evans. They met working together in amateur theatre, evenings and weekends. Both are attempting to solo over the age of 80, Andy being 82 and Earl 85.

Andy was born in Neenah, Wisconsin. At age 7 his mother and step-father moved to the Milwaukee area, after some time in Waubesa. At age 2, Andy's natural father had died. Andy attended Milwaukee's original "Boy's Technical High School," with a heavy emphasis on chemistry. In 1945 Andy joined the United States Navy, and received intense training in all manner of electronics, even to the point that Basic Training at Great Lakes near Waukegan, Illinois, was shortened to 4-1/2 weeks, to speed entry into tech school. There, in 10-hour days of classes, Andy learned the maintenance and servicing of all US Navy communications gear, plus radar and sonar. His service lasted through 1946.



Utilizing that electronics training, Andy worked first for RCA Service, then in 1948 was able to be part of WTMJ TV coming on the air for the first time. Shirley had their first child, son Roy, in 1947, followed by daughters Robin in 1954 and Jill in 1956, and finally Timothy in 1958. Tim died of colon cancer while in his late 40's. Roy, like his father, also retired early (age 58 for Roy), 3 years ago from American Airlines. He was an airline captain of Boeing 777s, on the Dallas to Tokyo route. He has since answered a Call into the religious ministry. From these 4 children, Andy has 7 grandchildren.

As Andy and wife Shirley grew their family, Andy was open to employment in the good pay of heavy



Above: Andy Mudrick at the field with his trainer, a Nexstar, powered by an OS.46 engine, and controlled by Futaba radios, one for himself, and one for his instructor. The oxygen line is a full time companion, the result of long time cigarette smoking, combined with dusty forge shop air at work.

industry. A friend at Ladish invited Andy to apply there, but cautioned "stay out of the Forge Shop." Andy got hired into the metallurgy shop, but later, substituting for an ill forge shop supervisor, got hooked on the sheer giantism and diversity of work there, and never left it until retirement. He worked with various alloys of steel, Monel metal (copper + nickel), and exotic metals such as titanium; heating, hammering, machining or seamless ring rolling them into small and large critical parts for jet airplane engines, space rockets, submarines, and nuclear propulsion plants. As hot ingots, some exceeded 20,000 tons in weight.



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