

# Pilot Profile: John Sellman

by Russell Knetzger

John is one of our newest members, attending his first meeting in September, 2010. Retired since 2003, he lives near S. 84<sup>th</sup> and Layton Avenue, which takes him past Greenfield News & Hobby. On a visit there he was surprised to see the great variety of model aircraft available. He had tried control line as a teenager, but without instruction, that ended in a crash. In visiting our field, while willing to start out with a liquid fuel glow plug engine, he noticed how effortlessly the electric motor pilots begin each flight. As with many other recent entrants into radio control model aviation, John has chosen electric propulsion as his starting point.

Now 64, John began life in Manistique, Michigan, on the northern shore of Lake Michigan. It is 30 miles NE of the Green Bay as it enters the lake off the tip of Door County. John's father was a commercial fisherman. Summers John went with his father as far south as Kenosha, WI to find fish.

Graduating from Manistique High School in 1965, after trying some college at Northern Michigan University at Marquette, he volunteered for the US Army draft in 1967 (Viet Nam era). After Ft. Campbell, KY and Ft. Dix, NJ, John served to 1969 in Korea. His unit guarded missile sites and ammunition depots.

**U.S. Army  
Infantry  
1967-1969**



7<sup>th</sup> Division  
Pin



32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry  
Regimental Crest



**Above:** John's Cessna-like trainer, all foam electric motor from "hobbyzone", with Spektrum radio.



**Above:** John Sellman holding his planned trainer for flight instruction at the Milwaukee County R/C Flying field on Oakwood Road in Franklin. It is entirely electric powered. His cap insignia is from his Army unit.

John's life after the Army took many turns. While mustering out of the Army from Ft. Carson, CO, his mother died at only age 42. John went into construction as a laborer in south Michigan (Lansing), advancing to road building machinery operator. He helped build I-75 north through central Michigan.

John earned "Able Bodied Seaman" status working a freighter in 1974 on all the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway. He then finished his degree in History at Eastern University in Ypsilanti. After work at a plant that concentrates iron ore to 75% purity, John was accepted at Thomas Cooley Law School in Lansing. Earning 45 credits, he decided against the law field. Then began a career with the **Bechtel Corp.** in its nuclear power plant division that lasted him the rest of his working life to age 57. Bechtel has a world-wide scope. They build much of Saudi Arabia's largest infrastructure projects.

John willingly retired to Milwaukee, hometown of his wife Shirley, and her daughter Shannon, because. as a 12 year old, John traveled down to his aunt on Vliet Street to attend the winning '57-'58 Braves baseball team during any extended home stand at County Stadium.

**RAMS HORN**, Nov. 2010, Russell Knetzger, Editor  
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