

Pilot Profile: John Spindler

by Russell Knetzger

As with so many boys growing up during World War II, which ran from 1941-1945, Jack Spindler, 67, was attracted to building models of fighter planes. The one that Jack remembers best is a stick and tissue model of a Curtiss P-40 Warhawk. That was in Highland, Illinois, a down-state town of 4,000 just 30 miles from St. Louis, Missouri. That part of Illinois was, and remains, very agricultural. Jack's father lived in the city, but his work consisted of professionally managing surrounding crop farms, sometimes as many as 25 at once. Other than crop planting and harvest times, farm managing included carpentry repairs of buildings. Weekends Jack went along and developed his hammer and saw skills.

Those two childhood activities— aeromodeling and farm building care, occupy Jack's time presently, as he finishes his 6th year of retirement from his law practice. The modeling is with our club in Franklin, the same community in which he now lives, and the carpentry is with *Habitat for Humanity*, the building by volunteers of basic new homes for the poor.



Summer, 2006 Jack's Habitat volunteering took him and wife Kathy all the way to Europe, to Csurgó, Hungary, 100 mi. SE of Budapest. This mixture of interests explains why Jack seldom turns down an invitation to be part of the work parties at our field.

Jack's career as an attorney-at-law in Milwaukee can be traced to his mother's growing up in DePere near Green Bay, Wis., during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Thankful to have a job with Western Union, she accepted a transfer to Highland, IL and there met and married Jack's father. When it came time for college, with his father having died in Jack's junior high school year, Jack's mom promoted Marquette University in downtown Milwaukee, to be near her relatives in Green Bay. From a bachelor's degree in history and political science, it was a natural transition for Jack to go on to the Marquette School of Law.

After law school Jack wanted to gain trial experience, and found that opportunity for 7 years in the District Attorney's Office under Hugh O'Connell, and then under Michael McCann, just now retiring.



Above: John Spindler in his workshop with his kit-built Extra 300, 72" span, Saito 120 4-Cyle powered.

Because of a small hobby shop that survived a few years on Wisconsin Avenue near the Marquette campus, Jack graduated to Veco engine powered u-control in 1967. His models included a "Ringmaster" and a "Chief Papoose." A heart attack in 1984 brought him back to aeromodeling, first with some plastic models, then with a foray into radio control.

Ken Packer in 1985 led Jack to the MARKS Club and their use of the sod farms near Waterford. In 1989 Jack gave the Milwaukee County R/C Field on Oakwood Road a try. But the transition to the restricted approaches caused by the woods, and the smaller runway space, compared to a sod field where you can land anywhere, was challenging.

While flying at the sod farms was easy, it also was lonely. Often a pilot finds himself the only one there. So Jack gradually adjusted to the County site and with his retirement from law practice in 2000 shifted all of his flying activity there.

The closeness of the County field in Franklin to the main builtup part of Greater Milwaukee was another attraction because Jack was living in Greendale, a village carved out of northern Franklin township. Besides his law practice, Jack served Greendale as its Municipal Judge from 1976 to 1990, where Jack and Kathy reared their three children.

As with most modelers who enjoy the building part of the hobby, Jack feels nostalgia as the sport is being taken over by ready-built planes dominating the market. His photo above with the self-crafted Extra 300, compared to an ARF (Almost Ready to Fly) version hanging in the shop, epitomizes the dilemma. Invest hundreds of hours building a kit, or spend less time and money for an ARF?

RAMS Horn, January, 2007, Bill Stilley, Editor
Rainbow Aero Modelers Society, Franklin, Wisconsin