

Pilot Profile:

Charles Christoffersen

by Russell Knetzger

Why would a longtime City of Racine native, aware of the fine Racine RC Club in north Mt. Pleasant, travel miles past to hook up with our club in Franklin? The answer is our subject's other hobbies – motorcycle riding and motor bicycle restoring. Living in NE Racine near Lake Michigan, Charles Christoffersen found the 4 mile distance to the Racine club too short for a good ride. The 8 miles straight up STH 32 into Oak Creek, and then 8 miles more along quiet Oakwood Road to our site, was just right. After visiting our field for several years, he decided in 2010 to give our club a try.

Charles was in RC aero modeling in 1970-71 with a Kraft single stick radio, and an Enya.45 engine on a Skylane trainer, which flew well. But model boats, marriage, children and job diverted Charles away from model airplanes. He and wife Barbara, now married 46 years, adopted from Korea daughters Tracy and Janey, born in 1973 and 1975.

The US. Navy had given Charles his first occupational direction at age 17 by assigning him in 1959 to the Seabees. They are the Navy's construction arm. Charles saw duty in Okinawa, Guam, and stateside at Camp Pendelton, California. Tempted to "re-up", he instead began a 10 year stint at Racine Hydraulics, and later at another Racine firm, Twin Disc, makers of large transmissions and big clutches. In 1973 he began 27 years, to retirement in 2000, with the City of Racine Water Dept.

U.S. Navy
Seabees
1959-1962

Racine Hydraulics
Twin Disc, Racine
City of Racine, Water Utility



Above: A 1951 Whizzer 3 hsp motor bicycle made in Pontiac, MI. Restored "ground-up" (early 1980s) by Charles Christoffersen, including detailed paint job.



Above: Charles and his electric motor "Apprentice" by E-Flite, a 3 lb., all-foam, 55 inch wing span trainer.

In addition to restoring Whizzers, Charles has restored Schwinn's and less well known bicycles. He credits his basic interest in restoration and modeling from watching his father, Clifford, doing his bench work as a watchmaker. That attention to detail led Charles into trying a wide range of static and active models, including plastic cars, control line flying, and model boats on the Racine County Zoo lagoon. Like free flight models, pond boats were released without means of control from the shore. Charles still owns several restored Schwinn bicycles, and a collection of plastic model cars.

Currently Charles credits George Andritsis, lead RC Salesman at Greenfield News & Hobby, as his principal mentor in guiding Charles back into RC aviation via electric power, modern radio systems, and the E-Flite model series.

At our field Charles has consulted Phil Schumacher as club official guide to electric powered flight, and pilots Duane Gagnon and Darrell Hossalla.

RAMS HORN, February, 2011, Russell Knetzger, Editor
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