

Pilot Profile: Kent Struwe

by Russell Knetzger

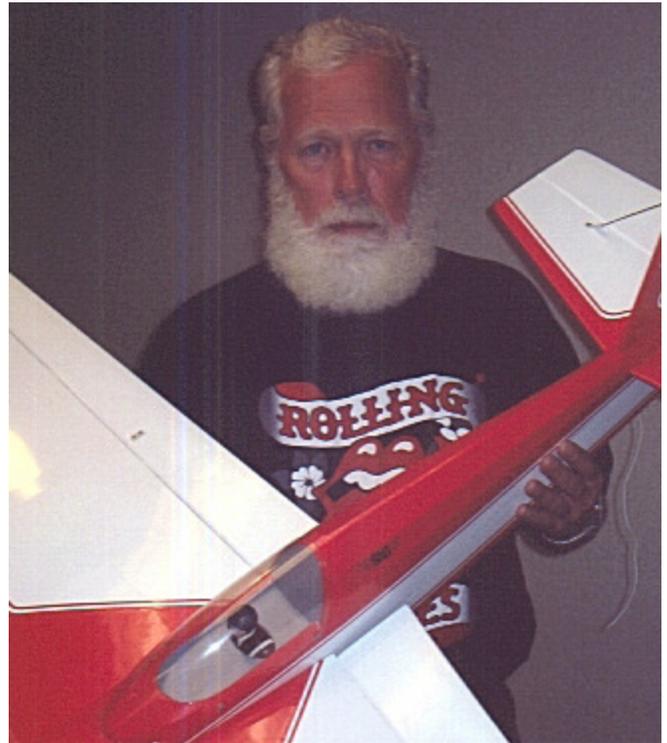
Most farm boys migrate to the city, but Kent Struwe, who grew up in Franklin when it was just past the edge of the city, migrated southwest with dad Earl and mom Marsha, into farm land for the rest of his childhood. Kent now lives and works in that same rural area. He works crushing cars at *Al's Auto* in the Town of Raymond near the Franklin border where the landfills are located. Kent's backyard in the Town of Norway abuts sod farms. Kent and his father did a little part-time sod farming themselves, renting a nearby plot of land to tend and harvest evenings and weekends. That was before Earl died at age 56 in 1976. Kent is now 64.

Kent is following his father in more than just becoming a rural person. After a 1962 graduation from Union Grove High School farther south in Racine County, Kent by 1964 was working at the giant Allis-Chalmers factories in West Allis as an overhead crane operator. His father worked not far away at Unit Crane & Shovel on Burnham Street in West Milwaukee. The father made cranes; the son operated cranes. For Kent's US Army service in 2 years of the Vietnam war, Kent was trained into a combat engineers job. In England he operated big rubber tired forklifts and loaders, not unlike what he uses now to crush autos. His duty involved storing munitions in the mines of the English Midlands.

From Allis-Chalmers in 1970 Kent moved to Nordberg Mfg. on Chase & Oklahoma Avenues, operating still larger cranes, some with 100 ton lifting capacity. Until 1982 Nordberg made huge marine and stationary engines, some with 29 inch diameter pistons, V16s-V20s, running as slow as 260 rpms. After Nordberg's demise, Kent since 1982 has been with Al's, crushing 75,000 cars for scrap steel.



Above: Kent, wife Audrey, and daughters JoAnn (left) and Cindy, with 2/3rds of Kent's collection of restored farm and garden tractors. Kent & Audrey also share a love of guns, target shooting together at ranges.



Above: Kent Struwe with his "Somethin' EXTRA" ARF by venerable Sig Mfg. of Montezuma, Iowa, with a 51 inch fully symmetrical wing span, 670 sq.in. of area, and weighing just under 6 lbs., including its OS.50SX engine.

Kent's interest in farm and garden tractor's grew out of being able, as a rural 16 year old with access to his father's tools and knowledge, to putter around on a 1950 Oldsmobile coupe. That formed the later basis for restoring farm tractors. Kent's current collection is almost 20. He buys carefully, avoiding any requiring complete engine or transmission rebuilding. Among the John Deere lawn and garden tractors are two where Kent has fashioned a 2nd mower tandem to the first, so one pass cuts a double width.

All this collecting and restoring is possible because Kent's property contains several out buildings: a 42'x63' pole barn, two 12'x20' work shops (one just for his 12 aircraft models). In these spaces he also has 3 Harley Davidson motor cycles, and his latest, a British Triumph, that Audrey favors.

Aero modeling began with the usual u-control during his youth, but R/C control was spread over many years, finally soloing 5 years ago at our field. Kent is known to bring over his personal weed wacker and trims the grass around our entrance rocks.

RAMS HORN, October, 2008, Russell Knetzger, Editor
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