

My Love of Helicopters Part VI

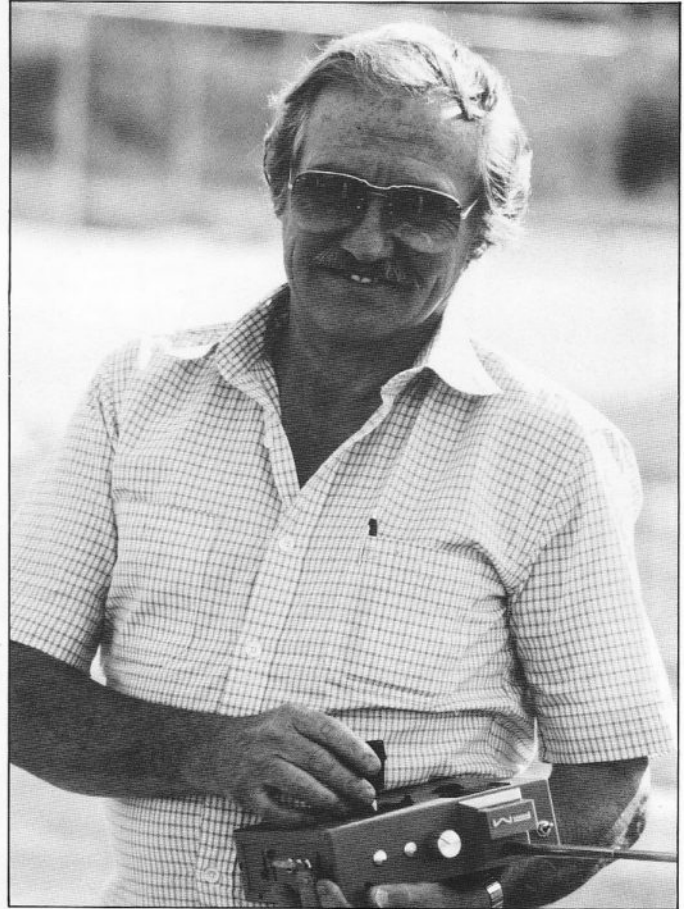
by Walt Schoonard

My real love of helicopters and this unique business of helicopters has kept me so busy travelling around the world that I missed writing my column in *R/C Helicopters* not to mention my column in the United States magazine *Model Airplane News*. They have hired a new writer to do the helicopter column, and I wish him the very best. However, the uproar from my esteemed readers of this fine magazine cannot be overlooked so I am back.

My travels have taken me to Japan, China, England, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Austria and Sweden. I have met some really wonderful people who are involved in this fascinating radio-control model industry. All of them are dedicated to producing the very best model products that money can buy. There are many new products under development that are going to set this sport ahead by leaps and bounds. These include fantastic new and innovative helicopter radios, special engines (both two-stroke and four-stroke) designed to meet the demanding needs of the modern helicopter flier. Rotor blades with wash-out and some without – made from new materials, some epoxy-glass, and more importantly – carbon fibres. These blades are all exactly alike and are so perfectly moulded that only tracking foil is needed to bring them to balance. Blade balancers that are so sensitive that they are affected by air from air-conditioning or by a human hair strand. Gyros, you think you've seen gyros? Well, my friends, you "ain't seen nothing yet". Multi-bladed rotor heads that can go from two-bladed to three-four-five or you name it – fully articulating, separately dampened with adjustable dampening. Using blades that are so small that you would think that they were from a .25 size helicopter. These heads are getting smaller and lighter and more flyable for the average flier to handle. Are they aerobatic? you bet your sweet life they are! Cheap – they are not, but considering the development and production costs, they are quite inexpensive. When can you get them? By the time that you read this column, some will be available and others will be available by June or July this year. Fuselages are getting lighter and more detailed and less expensive, too. I saw highly detailed, perfectly rendered scale fuselages for .60 sized machines that weighed only 600 grams. They are being produced in epoxy glass, polyester glass, carbon-fibre, plastic, and Kevlar. Schlüter Modelbau has come up with a true to life scale BK-117 that required a special mould to produce. This problem alone would have stumped most mould producers – but not Dieter Schlüter.

In most cases, I have found that these fuselage developers are very honourable and are not copying the products of others. They feel that it is better to live and let live. You can readily see how it can cost many thousands of dollars to develop a plug, then a mould, and finally a fuselage – only to have someone pull a mould off your product and produce copies at one-hundredth the cost. I am sorry to say that this is being done in some circles. Even further – these people have the guts to charge practically the same as the developers.

Last September, I had the opportunity to attend the Schlüter Cup in West Germany. We were in Germany nearly three weeks, and it rained almost all of the time. Not to be bothered by the rain, the Schlüter Cup was started in the rain and two days later it ended in the rain! It did not seem to deter the flying at all because the contestants came prepared to fly in such foul weather with parkas, headgear, boots, and transmitter covers. The pilots' briefing was held in the rain and no one complained! I got to meet and to chat with some of Europe's best pilots and innovators. There



seems to be a great deal of private helicopter development going on, and each one was anxious to show me his latest. These 'show and tell' sessions were fantastic, to say the least. I am not a great cameraman so did not take too many pictures – but our esteemed editor, Colin Cameron-Tough, did – and his pictures, as always, came out just great.

There were more than eighty-five brave contestants who came and flew in that nasty weather both days of the Schlüter Cup. A very good friend of mine from England, Len Mount, stayed in a tent for about five days and was thoroughly soaked – but not his great enthusiasm for this great sport. He stood in the pouring rain and proudly took apart and showed me his 'L.M. Ranger'. What a great guy he is!

Dieter Schlüter lets everyone fly at his meet at no cost and also furnished a wonderful banquet fit for a king – plus he also awarded over \$5,000.00 worth of prizes – all free! He also provided trophies for all of the competitive events that were flown. He does this with all goodwill and is completely non-biased. Anyone with any make of helicopter is welcome to participate. (Other manufacturers take note – Editor.)

I was especially privileged to see Ewald Heim (the five-time European champion) and Francis DeProft (the #2 European champion helicopter pilot) flying at the Schlüter Cup. Mr. Heim and Mr. DeProft are only a couple of points apart consistently – and they are good friends. One of the most apparent factors in European helicopter flying is the lack of quarelling and back-biting. To the man, once they find out that you fly helicopters, you are in as a new friend.

This is great, and hopefully, it will spread to the United States.

We will have a great opportunity to show our friendliness at the up-coming World Helicopter Championships in Canada, and I understand that many of the world contestants will stay over and fly in the US Nationals a week later. Let me say to all "You are most welcome. Come and have a ball!"

Not once in all of my travelling, has anyone asked, "What make of helicopter do you fly?" Helicopters are like cars, some like one make of car and others like a different type. Here in the USA, some circles would have you believe that if you are not flying a certain make of helicopter, you ought to stop the world and get off and go to "you know where." I gave this some careful thought and investigated the "you know where" place and guess what – I found that they were already there!

Helicopters do not win contests, pilots do, and they aren't given half enough credit for doing so. Most of these top-notch pilots could fly any helicopter and win with a little practice. Some of them are so good that they could even fly a broom – and some do!

This world is a big place, and there is room for anyone and everyone. If you are bored with pursuing your interest, try helping someone enjoy this great sport of helicopter flying, you will love it!

With all of this modern equipment that we have now, it is much easier to learn to fly helicopters. Many new people are getting into this sport all over the world. Some – just for the sheer pleasure of it, and others to compete. As an example: My eldest son, Ted, watched me struggle with these contraptions for years – and even when I got involved in the business, he showed no real interest. Now he is

deeply involved in this business and designs helicopters ('Questar' for one), and as you have seen in the previous issue of this magazine, he built an 'Airwolf' model helicopter. He has been flying about two years and is currently winning trophies. In fact, he has won a trophy or two in almost each event that he has entered.

Take Cliff Hiatt, the reigning 1984 US FAI Nationals Expert Champion and International. Cliff had been flying pattern planes for years and had gotten bored with them. He took up the sport of helicopters about two and one-half years ago. Now he is on the USA World Team.

Speaking of accomplishments, no one has ever done what Cliff has done by winning first in FAI and Expert, both at the same meet. Now he has repeated this feat again at the Tangerine Internationals 1984 in Orlando, Florida. Cliff is a great guy, a great pilot, and great sport!

In all corners of the globe, people are learning to fly helicopters and many are then helping others to learn. Yes, it takes dedication and self-discipline and a goal. Here in the United States, we say, "You must burn a lot of fuel!"

My youngest son, Tim, who is involved in our business – we could not do without him – learned to fly on a Schlüter Heli-Boy and Kraft single-stick radio without breaking a single part. Only after he learned to fly and got daring, did he manage to hit his own car and some bushes in our yard. He flies nose in and does tank full after tank full of autorotations. He also has won many trophies and on several occasions, he has beat all comers in Expert at Schlüter Cup meets.

Later I will tell you about some other young people who have gone a long way with helicopters in a very short time.

I love helicopters!!