

Clarke E. Sheppard



Clarke Sheppard, MAAC # 31173 in 2010 with the last museum model. It is a 1/24th scale Harvard Mark II which resides at Moncton International alongside a 1/24th Avro Anson. Both are scratch built.

Clarke E. Sheppard was born in Toronto in 1923, his first model was a breakfast cereal mail-in with two box-tops plus 10 cents for a model of a rubber-powered Vought Corsair biplane in 1934. From that point on, he built models from plans that he got in 'Air Trails' and 'Flying Aces' magazines. In 1936, he taught classes of 9 year olds how to build rubber jobs at the Broadview YMCA.

Clarke and several of his friends joined the "Canadian Gas Model Club" around 1940-41, which at the time was run by the Hocking family in the west end of Toronto.

Sometime in early 1942, six (or more) of them split off and formed the "Toronto Gas Model Club". Among them were Les Robinson, Len Thifault, and Harold Speaker. Most of the building materials came from Speaker's Hobbies on Danforth Avenue.

His first gas job was a free-flight 'Simplex' in 1941. Then he was smitten with the 'Playboy'. Around this time, he read an article about an American named Victor Stanzel who had devised a control line system for model aircraft, so Clarke designed his own rigging and scratch-built a solid balsa B-25 Mitchell. It was powered by two Forster .29's. I am still looking for that photo.

In August 1942, he built the "Brooklyn Dodger" powered with a Forster .29, and took it to his first contest, the T. Eaton Model Airplane Contest in Mount Hope. He took first place in "B" Free Flight. He had to leave before the flying was finished that day, to catch a bus to get to the train that took him home. Someone was supposed to pick up his trophy for him, but he unfortunately never received it. In October 1942, he enlisted in the RCAF.

The P-47 Thunderbolt was built in 1945 at the base he was stationed at, and although he did some work on the model, he gives full credit to Ralph Bolitsky of Guelph.

Clarke taught me (Norm Sheppard) to build ROG's in 1962, when I was 8 years old. Until very recently, he scratch-built models for the Don McLure Aviation Museum at Moncton International Airport in New Brunswick. He also built a 1/10th Mosquito for the Bob Stuart Museum in Oshawa, Ontario. In his later modelling years, I helped him with exterior finishing and markings on his museum aircraft.

Norm Sheppard
Sackville NB



Clarke's scratch-built B-25 Mitchell control line model with twin Forster .29's was all carved from solid balsa! It had a 30 inch wingspan, approximately. Picture taken in Toronto in 1942. You can make out the twin switches atop the fuselage for the ignition.



Clarke launches his free flight Playboy powered by an Ohlsson .23 in the summer of 1941. Les Robinson looks on. This shot was taken on the farm on O'Connor Drive where they flew on weekends.



A joint build between Clarke and Ralph Bolitsky of Guelph. Picture was taken at RCAF Debert, Nova Scotia in June of 1945. It has a hand carved wood prop. Clarke carved nearly all of his props himself. Note the control wires hanging from the port wing.



Debert NS 1945 after the Thunderbolt had a hard landing.



An original design by Clarke Sheppard in Toronto in 1948. U-control all scratch built.



A friend of Clarke's, Dave Foxcroft starts up a U-control biplane in the late 1940's.



Built by Dave Foxcroft of Leaside, Ontario in the late 1940's.



Clarke and Wilson White in Goderich, Ontario in 1946 with Clarke's Forster .29 powered Megow Commander.