

IN THE HANGAR WITH...

...Steve "Doc" Satlow

From city boy to gentleman farmer, doctor to OWLS president, Doc Satlow has had some interesting life experiences. In this issue, I will let Steve tell his story.

Brooklyn ... the early years

I always built models. I flew u-control models in NYC when I was a kid ó Wingmasters with K&B or Fox .35 engines. The first time I flew an FA, I kept crashing. So one day I took my little FA with an .049 on a nylon line to an open lot in Brooklyn. It went around me about 15 times, and I fell down dizzy. My friends and I were cheering each other because I actually flew. It was a big victory.

The bigger planes flew farther out, and you didn't get so dizzy. But the engines were hard to start. So when it came Oct/Nov, we would actually heat up the heads of the engine ó put it near a fire and get them warm ó then start flipping them. They didn't start easily like today. We didn't have electric starters.

For the bigger planes, we used a handle called a Jim Walker U-Reely, a black thing with wire lines coming out, and all you'd control was the elevator. And there was a good pull on those planes, pretty powerful.

We used to fly at the Brooklyn Terminal Markets where they brought in all the produce. We'd take off on a road which was paved and the other half of the circle was dirt. So we'd fly a circle, half over the road and half over the dirt and try to land on the road. Well, big trucks with produce would be coming through. One of us, not me, was flying and hit a box truck over the cab putting a hole in it and the plane fluttered down and crashed. The driver was so pissed, he got out and stomped the plane.

The reel had a safety clip, a little pin that keeps the line from going out, and another friend of mine forgot to close the safety pin. So every time the plane went around, the circle was getting bigger and bigger by a foot. Another guy was there starting his plane, and my friend brought his plane in low and hit the guy right in the ass. (*laughs*) And the guy flew through the air a few feet, like a bullet hit him, and he's going, "My ass, my ass." And my friend Louie's going, "My plane, my plane." ó í funny story.

Then another one, a Black Nobler, which is a very famous stunt plane, caught on fire in the air, and it was burning. So my friend Ronnie just kept flying. He didn't try to land it. He just watched it flying and burning. (*laughs*)

So you remember these events. That's how I got started with u-control models. Then I went out of the hobby for a while, got too busy.



Black Nobler



The Long Island Flying Eagles

I was about 45 or 47, something like that, when I started getting into RC and joined an RC club ó the Long Island Flying Eagles. I've never been a good flyer. The guys used to say, "Hey, Doc, if you operate like you fly, don't come near me."

The instructors there were very strict. Before you flew, they would inspect your plane ó the servo throws and wing warp and would not let you fly until you corrected everything. These guys were sticklers to every rule and checked your plane, if you were a beginner, and told you to go home to make the corrections. And, the next week they'd tell you to go home again. Of course, if they could fix it at the field, they would help you. And when everything was right, they would fly it.

We didn't have buddy boxes ó it was like over the shoulder, kind of. They would take it off and say, "Stand over my right shoulder." Then tell you to fly a left hand pattern, keep the altitude, and make a gentle turn, just working the ailerons at a constant throttle on a trainer type plane. Once you did that, they would go to the next step.

My son learned in four weeks. He was 13. It took me about two or three months. We were flying a 3-ch at the time, and one night, my son and I went to the field by ourselves. We took the plane off and both landed that night. We were high-fiving it excited that we actually soloed by ourselves. Of course, we kind of plopped the plane down. It wasn't a beautiful landing.

The OWLS

I was president for 6 yrs. It was good, but I got tired of it. I'm not very organized; as a doctor you always had the nurses and secretaries doing the dirty work. It was easy. In the OR the nurses are organizing everything.

I like the camaraderie at the field. It has always been a low key club compared to the other ones. Up until last year I was also a member of the Ocala club, but I've only flown there a few times. My son was in there because his best friend was there.

I had one electric sailplane a two-meter Omega, a V-tail, which I flew for a while, but my eyesight at a distance is not great so I gave that up. I used to have to call out to Bill Robinson, "What's it doing? I can't see it." So it wasn't for me. I would fly it more like

an aerobatic plane, keeping it close, rolling it, doing loops. It flew very well. But I gave up on sailplanes just not my forte.

R/C is my main hobby. I enjoy putting them together, seeing them fly. I used to build kits, but now the ARFs are taking over ó cheaper than you can build it and better than what you can do almost.

Like anything else you need stick-to-it-tive-ness and don't get discouraged by crashing. If you're really self-interested you'll perpetuate the hobby. It has to come from within you.

I tried to teach my grandsons, but they didn't maintain any interest. You have to be self-motivated because it takes a while to learn, not something you'll learn in three sessions.

There're things to learn from guys who have been doing it. Just like surgery ó you'll learn from other surgeons who have been at it longer than you, in spite of your training. Some are more talented than others, that's a given, but you gotta keep doing it to be good at it.

Peace Corps at a Leprosarium

I graduated from Brooklyn College, called the City University of NY. I was pre-med. Got drafted to go to Vietnam. It was 1965. So I joined the Peace Corps ó not so much for altruistic reasons but to escape Vietnam. My language ability was nil, but I was always good in math and science.

They sent me to Jamaica West Indies to teach at the Jamaica School of Agriculture, which was a British school of agriculture, and did not use me for the first 3 months because all the professors were from Britain or the West Indies and they looked at a 22 year-old American ó "What the hell does he know?" And I didn't know anything about agriculture, I'm from the city, so to mark my time I ran some beehives and took care of the cows (At least I learned how to do that).

One of the Peace Corps guys, who was part American Indian, was in charge of building 60 self-help houses in the sugar cane area in Jamaica. So I use to go 3-4 days a week to help mix cement and lay blocks to keep myself busy.

Finally, one day some nuns from a leprosarium, a hospital for leprosy, called for some farm help at the school. Two other Peace Corps workers who really knew about farming went to offer advice to the nuns, and I tagged along.

It was raining. They had about a hundred acres and 200 patients with leprosy and other things, and the head nun was a doctor about 70 years-old. She went out in the rain with galoshes on and was going on about, "I want tomatoes here, sweet potatoes there, rice." We're going to use all the food because we can't sell it in the town. They couldn't sell it due to the stigma of leprosy.

She so impressed me that day that the next day I rode my bicycle five miles back to meet her. She was coming out of the motherhouse and recognized me. Her name was Sister Mary Magdalena and was French from the Island of Martinique. She was half black and, even though she was a nun, you could tell she was a very pretty woman. She spent ten hours with me that day and taught me all about leprosy. I had told her I was a

pre-med student. It was pouring. It was the rainy season. I started going there regularly and talking to her, and she put me to work. They were building a fence, so I was out with them mixing cement and helping with the fence.

Eventually it came to the point that I told the Peace Corps director, "You're sending me home or she can use me full time." So I ended up at the leprosarium, and she gave me her office to live in. It was a little one room doctor's office, and I lived in that one room for nine years. Two and a half years in the Peace Corps and she got me into the University of West Indies, a British medical school part of the University of London. She knew all the professors and was very popular. She also became the Godmother of my son.

The University didn't routinely take Americans. They took 100 students a year in the medical part from all the West Indies Islands. So I got into there because of her, and I went through medical school there ó did my internship and residency in the University hospital where I was trained, and then they sent me to Canada to the University of Ottawa for three years of orthopedic training.

The professor of orthopedics at the University of the West Indies was like my second father, British. His name was Sir John Golding ó knighted by Queen Elizabeth. A great surgeon, great guy, he became my mentor and influenced me to do orthopedics. I was very mechanical anyway. I did my chief year at Stony Brook University on Long Island and then went into private practice with five other doctors for 19 years ó a very busy practice.

I lived in the leper colony from 1965-74. So I know a lot about it if you get leprosy, I can treat you. (*laughs*)

I owe a lot to that order of sisters, the Marist Sisters. They were very good to me. I learned how to work a farm about the size of mine now. Actually the patients worked it, and I oversaw the operation. A lot of the sisters didn't want a young American there, but Sister Mary was the head doctor. She influenced me: I didn't want to go to medical school, she kept pushing me. "Once you get to the hospital, you'll like the clinical work. You won't like the basic sciences, but you have to do that." She kept me going.

At one point while at the leprosarium, I had built a u-control plane and was flying it ó and crashed it, as usual, into a tree. But watching me crash was a man that delivered vegetables to the compound for the lepers in an old pickup truck with his two sons on the tailgate. The boys were fascinated by the u-control plane. That man became my best buddy for life.

Doc's Farm & Cattle

