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S-P-A-C-E-D O-U-T ...Modelling Space!!

by Stuart Lodge

Genesis.. The United States' G. Harry Stine was pretty special. A professional rocket scientist, working at the White Sands missile range after the Second World War, Stine had a vision of a spare-time activity based on what was to become known as the Space Race. In 1958, Vernon Estes founded Estes Industries and put the vision into the hands of model rocket enthusiasts.



Harry was unique, having a vision that the activity should be shared with the rest of the World. In 1962, Harry Stine presented the Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI) with details of what was internationally to become known as Space Modelling and at the same time drafted out some conceptual rules for competitions. 1964 enabled the Commission International d'Aeromodelisme (CIAM) of FAI, ratify these proposals and Space Modelling took its place alongside F1-Free Flight, F2-Control Line and F3-Radio Control Aero Models, as a recognised Airsport.

From here, the Sport – for that is surely what FAI Space Modelling is – began to grow into Europe and beyond. Dubnický Maj - the first FAI Space Modelling contest - was held over the weekend of 28-29 May 1966, at Dubnica-nad-Vahom, in the former Czechoslovakia and featured some of the classic disciplines, which have stood the test of time, to the present day. Similar events developed around Europe and soon the inevitable happened..

..1972 saw Vrsac, near Belgrade, in the old Yugoslavia, host the 1st World Space Modelling Championships (WSMC) and the activity came of age. The now traditional biennial cycle of WSMC events had begun and soon a European Space Modelling Championships came together to fill the gap between successive WSMCs. The popular World Cup series was kickstarted in 1993, formalising the international events that had taken place throughout each summer. But what is Space Modelling all about?!?

How High? ..How Long? ..How Good?!? The generics of Altitude, Duration and Scale form the basis of all Space Modelling competitions and most owe their origin to Harry Stine's original concepts. All Performance rocket classes – S1-Altitude, S3-Parachute Duration, S5-Scale Altitude, S6-Streamer Duration and



S9-Gyrocopter Duration have evolved into simple 500mm long x 40mm diameter lightweight projectiles. All are flown on restricted Specific Impulse, normally 2.5 Newton second (Ns) propellants – except S1, which is normally flown on 5Ns...often two-staged for maximum efficiency. The Duration events resemble F1-Free Flight competitions, flown over a series of rounds, with a Maximum Time set for each flight, with Fly-offs, as necessary. Glider classes include S4-Boost Glider and S8E/RC Rocket Glider Precision Landing – the former a free flight event for small gliders, once more flown over a series of rounds.

A fly-off round is used to smelt the metal! Juniors fly smaller airframes under lower specific impulses in Major Championships, but slug it out with the Seniors with 'big' models at World Cups. Possibly more than in any other discipline within CIAM, Space Modellers employ their missiles as sporting equipment, like Field Athletes using a discus or javelin, on their way to the podium!

S5-Scale Altitude and S7-Scale mean what they say and say what they mean. S5-Scale Altitude and S1-Altitude are high performance events – airframes of tightly restricted dimensions, boosted on limited impulse and the altitude measured by trackers on the ground.

The difference is that S5 is for scale models, judged for accuracy/craftsmanship before flight, with the score arrived at by adding the static score onto the achieved altitude in metres...simple: S1 simpler still...how high did it go?!?

S7-Scale is an elite event, with models of the World's most famous rockets being statically judged and then being flown, just like the Real Thing, with special effects like multi-staging, discarding boosters, satellite launching and the like. Magic!

Revelations and Evolution..

And evolve Space Modelling must, although the burgeoning numbers taking part illustrate an activity in rude good health, with a mean age that seems to be falling as the years go by. Traditional continents – Europe



Asia, with the inaugural Asian Space Modelling Championships being hosted in Kazakhstan, in 2007. Africa seems soon to join the roster.

The former Communist Bloc took competitive Space Modelling to its heart from the outset and the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the redrawing of national borders all over the former Eastern Europe posed challenges to the obsession. However, Srdjan Pelagic, legendary Space Models sub-Committee Chair, ensured that Space Modelling evolved to grow even stronger and more widely. World Cups – S4-Boost Glider, S6-Streamer Duration, S7-Scale, S8E/P-RC Rocket Glider Precision Landing & S9-Gyrocopter Duration - boast bigger entries year-on-year with literally 100s of competitors on each roster.

We lost the iconic Harry Stine at the turn of the Millennium, but he left us with a timeless legacy. The foregoing might give the impression that contest FAI Space Modelling is the be all and end all. It is not, but in no other way could the activity have developed so keenly, or spread so widely. As with any other facet of life, motivation to win medals sharpens the tools and improves the breed. Space Modelling has become a truly 21st Century Sport, that will get bigger and better. SACL 23 12 2007



The latter is a Blue Riband class, larger high tech soarers, boosted on 40Ns propellants to 300m, with the object to score exactly 360 seconds, nailing a target line at that precise duration, with penalties for inaccuracy. Once more flown over several rounds, with the flyers in groups of five, scoring according to their precision.

