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Corey J Beitler's

"Distelfink Airlines"

An Online Aviation Newsletter

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Red Arrows 60th Diamond Season Commemorative Magazine

The colorful Granville Brothers Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster is one of the models in the John Jenkins Designs "The Speedbirds Collection" product line of air racing and world speed record aircraft. With Lowell Bayles at the controls, the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster won the 1931 Thompson Trophy Race, the main racing event at the 1931 National Air Races held in Cleveland, Ohio.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

John Jenkins Gee Bee Z, Laird Super Solution, 1996 Stamp Set, MB-339 Model

Greetings Everyone:

Welcome to the October edition of "Distelfink Airlines". It is the fall season in Pennsylvania and the Northeast & Mid-Atlantic regions of the United States. With changing seasons comes weather changes, and several airshows and aviation events I planned to attend recently were either rained out or the weather was too questionable to make the long drives to attend them. Fortunately, there are some aviation events coming up this month which hopefully will provide some newsletter content going into 2025.

For a little change of pace for this edition of the newsletter, the featured content is one of the model airplanes in my collection. The colorful John Jenkins Designs 1/30 scale model of the Granville Brothers Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster takes center stage as the featured content. The Gee Bee Model Z won the Thompson Trophy Race, the feature event of the National Air Races, in 1931. Later that year, the Gee Bee Model Z crashed in spectacular fashion while it was being flown by Lowell Bayles in an attempt to break the world speed record for landplanes. Bayles was killed in the crash, which helped advance the reputation that the Gee Bee aircraft were difficult to fly for anyone but the most experienced pilots. Some of you may remember seeing a replica of the Gee Bee Model Z flying in the opening scenes of the 1991 Disney film, "The Rocketeer". The Gee Bee Model Z is one of the famous air racing aircraft of the 1930s, and John Jenkins Designs did an excellent job recreating it in miniature form. The feature about the Gee Bee Model Z model includes a brief history of the airplane and a review of the model itself. If you enjoy 1930s air racing aircraft, this model is a definite must-have for your model airplane collection.

An air racer that was a rival to the Gee Bee Model Z in the 1931 National Air Races, the Laird Super Solution biplane, is featured in the "Aircraft of Special Interest Section". For a biplane design, the Super Solution was incredibly fast, hitting 270 miles per hour in practice runs for the 1931 National Air Races. With Jimmy Doolittle at the controls, the Super Solution won the 1931 cross-country Bendix Trophy Race. Unfortunately, winning that race had consequences, the Super Solution's engine had been pushed hard and was tired when it was time to run the closed-course Thompson Trophy Race. During the race the engine began to fail and trail smoke due to piston damage, and Doolittle was forced to drop out. Had the Super Solution been able to run full throttle and not developed engine problems, it was possible Doolittle would have beaten Bayles in the Gee Bee Model Z and won the Thompson Trophy Race, as the two aircraft were very evenly matched in speed.

The "Aviation Memorabilia" section of the newsletter has a stamp and postcard set issued by the United States Postal Service in 1996. The stamp set "Classic American Aircraft" featured iconic American aircraft in aviation history. This stamp and postcard set are great entry-level items for those starting an aviation memorabilia collection.

Lastly, the "Aircraft Models" has a unique model of the Aermacchi MB-339 featured from Air Force 1. The 1/72 scale model represents an aircraft flown by Al Fursan, the aerobatic jet demonstration team of the United Arab Emirates Air Force.

Thank you for reading "Distelfink Airlines" and supporting my aviation photojournalism work. Please feel free to share the newsletter with whoever you wish and invite them to follow the newsletter on its social media channels listed below.

Regards,
-Corey

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What's Inside:

Daher/Quest Aircraft Kodiak 100

A colorful Daher/Quest Aircraft Kodiak 100 Series III on approach to the Lehigh Valley International Airport in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Introduced in 2008, the Kodiak is a utility aircraft larger than the de Havilland DHC-2 Beaver, but smaller than the de Havilland DHC-3 Otter and the Cessna Caravan. The Kodiak's size and performance have made it popular with mission societies and humanitarian organizations, as well as skydiving, freighter, and corporate operators.

The Kodiak 100 is a variant of the Daher Kodiak American utility aircraft originally designed and manufactured by Quest Aircraft. Manufacturing of the Kodiak was taken over by Daher in 2019 when it purchased Quest Aircraft. The Daher Kodiak is a high-wing, unpressurized, single-engine turboprop aircraft that has fixed tricycle landing gear and is suitable for STOL (Short Takeoff And Landing) operations from unimproved or rough airstrips.

Quest Aircraft began design work on the Kodiak in 1999, with the aircraft flying for the first time in 2004. Designed as a utility aircraft, the Kodiak accommodated 8 people on track-mounted seats in the passenger cabin. These seats are removable so the Kodiak can quickly be converted into a freighter. The aft clamshell door that accesses the passenger cabin is equipped with automatic steps, to facilitate the quick loading of passengers or cargo. The Kodiak has a good useful load with excellent short-field capabilities. The STOL performance of the Kodiak comes from the fixed, discontinuous leading edge on the outboard wing and the powerful 750-horsepower Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A-34 turboprop engine. The Kodiak features an aluminum fuselage, which can be repaired with patches in the field if necessary. For operations off water surfaces, the Kodiak can be fitted with optional lightweight Aerocet carbon-fiber floats. Since its entry into service, Daher has introduced improved variants of the Kodiak. The improved variants of the Kodiak 100 feature a Garmin G1000NXi avionics suite, a Flight Stream 510 Tablet device, GFC 7000 autopilot, and an "Executive Edition" VIP cabin, which features club seating and improved climate controls. Optional equipment available on the updated variants of the Kodiak includes Garmin GWX-75 Doppler-capable weather radar and a quieter five-bladed Hartzell Propellers composite propeller. Over 300 Kodiak 100s have been delivered to operators worldwide. The Kodiak 100 is popular with mission societies and humanitarian organizations, as well as skydiving, freighter, and corporate operators. In 2022, a stretched variant of the Kodiak, the Kodiak 900, was introduced. With a longer fuselage and more powerful Pratt & Whitney Canada turboprop engine, the Kodiak 900 will supplement the smaller 100 Series model, but not replace it.

The Kodiak seen here is a 2022 Kodiak 100 Series III variant, with the optional five-bladed Hartzell Propellers composite propeller. This aircraft was spotted practicing approaches at the Lehigh Valley International Airport.


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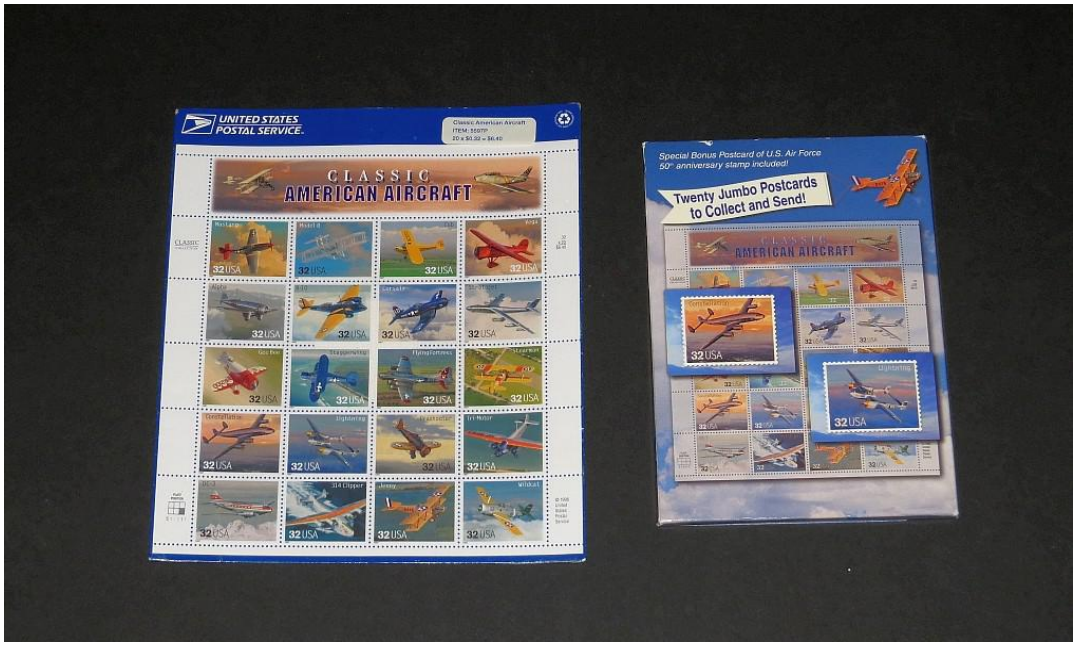
1996 Classic American Aircraft Stamp & Postcard Sets

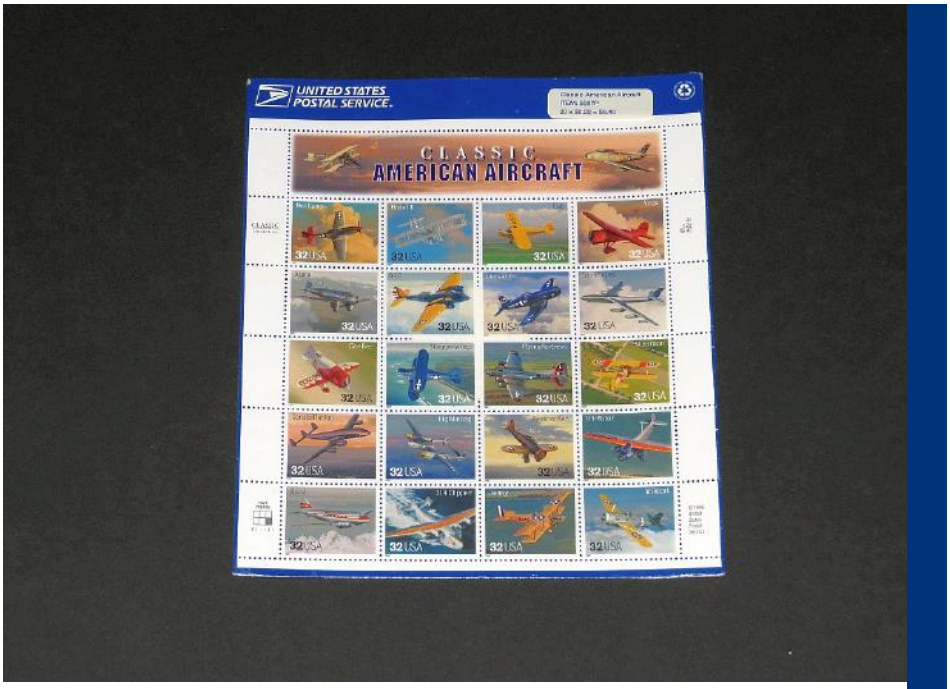


In 1996, the United States Postal Service released this set of 20 stamps as part of their Classic Collections series of collectible stamps promoting broadly-themed, Americana-themed subjects. Classic American Aircraft featured images of 20 iconic and historical American aircraft, with two additional aircraft, a Curtiss Pusher, and a North American F-86 Sabre, featured in the header image. Accompanying the stamp set was a postcard set, which featured all the artwork from the stamps on oversized 5" by 7" collectible postcards.

In 1993, to promote the idea of collecting stamps and reinvigorate interest in the hobby, the United States Postal Service (USPS) manager of stamp and product marketing, Carl Burcham, came up with the idea of the Classic Collections series of stamps. The Classic Collections would be sets of stamps promoting broadly-themed, Americana-themed subjects. These sets would be released in a pane of 20 semi-jumbo stamps with a descriptive selvage at the header and informational text on the back of each stamp below the gum line. The first set released in the Classic Collections series in 1994 was titled *Legends of the West*, featuring personalities associated with settling the West including Annie Oakley, Wyatt Earp, Buffalo Bill, Sacagawea, and Geronimo.

In 1996, American aviation history was honored in the Classic Collections series with the stamp set, *Classic American Aircraft*. The stamps depict 20 different aircraft (22 aircraft if you count the two in the header) that were iconic and important in American aviation history. The artwork for the stamps are oil paintings that were painted by William S. Phillips of Ashland, Oregon. To prevent the stamps from looking too similar, each aircraft was depicted at different angles and no two backgrounds were alike, with the clouds, lighting, and ground varying on each stamp. To ensure his paintings were accurate, Phillips used reference books, photographs, and even model airplanes he had built himself. Walter J. Boyne, the first director of the National Air and Space Museum, was a USPS consultant for the project and helped select the aircraft depicted on the stamps. Criteria for picking the aircraft included public perception, contribution to technology, aesthetic appeal, and importance to aviation history. Some of the iconic aircraft that can be found on the *Classic American Aircraft* stamp set include the Gee Bee R-1 Racer, the Douglas DC-3 commercial airliner, the bright red Lockheed Model 5 Vega flown by Amelia Earhart, the iconic Piper J-3 Cub utility aircraft, and the North American P-51 Mustang and Lockheed P-38 Lightning fighter aircraft from World War II. The first few Classic Collections stamp sets released, including *Classic American Aircraft*, were accompanied by matching postcard sets. These postcard sets were sold at USPS locations nationwide.

The *Classic American Aircraft* stamp and postcard set are great entry-level collectible items of aviation memorabilia, as they can still be found through stamp dealers and online auctions for reasonable prices. The postcard set is a bit harder to find complete with its original package. These items are a great introduction to some of the most iconic and important aircraft in American aviation history through beautiful artwork.



A concern of USPS when proposing the idea for the Classic American Aircraft stamp set was that the images of the aircraft would be too similar. Artist William S. Phillips used a variety of references to purposely paint each aircraft from a different angle and with a different background to add visual variety to the set.

The postcard set featured all 20 artwork images of the aircraft used in the stamp set, plus a bonus postcard. The bonus postcard is a stamp that would be issued in 1997 to honor the 50th Anniversary of the U.S. Air Force featuring an image of the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds Flight Demonstration Squadron.

Air Force 1 1/72 Scale Aermacchi MB-339NAT

This 1/72 scale replica of an Aermacchi MB-339 jet trainer is a product released by the die-cast model manufacturer Air Force 1. The model replicates an MB-339NAT flown by Al Fursan, the aerobatic jet demonstration team of the United Arab Emirates Air Force. The model can be displayed on its extended landing gear or using the included metal display stand. Al Fursan flies seven Aermacchi MB -339NATs in their demonstrations, and this model represents the #6 jet from the team, indicated by the number on the fuselage.

The Aermacchi MB-339 is a military jet trainer and light attack aircraft designed and manufactured by the Italian aviation firm Aermacchi. The MB-339 was developed during the 1970s to meet an Italian Air Force requirement for a new jet training aircraft. Over half of the 230 MB-339s built were delivered to the Italian Air Force, with the rest being sold and exported in small numbers to other countries as trainers or light attack aircraft. The MB-339 is most famous for its use by the Italian Air Force Aerobatic Team, the Frecce Tricolori, as their airshow demonstration aircraft.

Development of the MB-339 began in 1972 when Aermacchi was awarded a contract by the Italian Air Force to study a replacement for the aging MB-326 jet trainer, which had been the Italian Air Force's standard jet training aircraft since the 1960s. After evaluating seven new designs against an improved version of the MB-326, Aermacchi determined that improving the MB-326 would meet the Italian Air Force's requirements and be cheaper to produce than a clean sheet design.

Designated the MB-339, the new trainer shared many similarities with the MB-326 but had a new forward fuselage that raised the instructor's rear seat above the student's front seat for improved visibility. The pressurized cockpit was equipped with Martin Baker ejection seats and a jettisonable canopy. Other noteworthy features of the MB-339 included an enlarged tail for increased maneuverability, a single Rolls-Royce Viper turbojet engine, tricycle landing gear, and unswept wings with wingtip fuel tanks. Underwing pylons allowed the MB-339 to be equipped with additional fuel tanks or weapons packs when operated in the light attack role.

The first MB-339s entered service with the Italian Air Force in 1978. Since then, Aermacchi has offered improved variants of the MB-339 that feature modernized cockpits and more powerful engines. The MB-339 was sold and exported in small numbers for use as advanced trainers and light attack aircraft. Some nations other than Italy that have operated the MB-339 include Argentina, Eretria, Ghana, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Peru, and the United Arab Emirates. The French company SDTS operates the MB-339 in an aggressor role.

During its operational career, the MB-3389 has been praised by its operators for being highly maneuverable, easy to fly, and affordable to operate. Unfortunately, the MB-339 has begun to show its age in recent years compared to more modern and capable jet training aircraft. Many operators have already retired their MB-339s, with others in the process of phasing out the type.

Air Force 1 manufactures die-cast models of military and civilian aircraft in several different scales. Located in China, the company is officially licensed to produce aircraft models for the Chinese Air Force. Air Force 1 also produces die-cast aircraft models for sale through retailers worldwide. This model of the Aermacchi MB-339NAT is one of Air Force 1's 1/72 scale die-cast aircraft models. The model represents one of the MB-339NATs assigned to Al Fursan, the aerobatic jet demonstration team of the United Arab Emirates Air Force.

Fursan Al Emarat ("The Knights of the Emirates"), also known as Al Fursan, was formed in 2008 and flies seven Aermacchi MB-339NAT in their airshow displays. The team flies seven aircraft in their airshow displays representing the seven Emirates. The team began performing in 2010, with most displays held within the UAE. In 2022, Al Fursan performed at the Bahrain International Airshow. The seven MB-339NATs are painted in a sharp black and gold livery. Al Fursan plans to replace their MB-339NATs in the near future, most likely with Chinese Hongadu L-15 Falcon advanced jet trainers.

The Air Force 1 MB-339NAT is constructed of die-cast and plastic and features the correct paint scheme for the lead aircraft of the Al Furan aerobatic team. The model retails for about $25 to $30 in the United States. This model is discontinued by Air Force 1 but remains in inventory with many die-cast model and toy shops. The model comes with a metal display stand.

Unfortunately, this Air Force 1 MB-339NAT has its landing fixed in the extended position, and there is no option to display the gear retracted on the model. The landing gear would also be improved with better paint detail. Air Force 1 does not include pilots in the cockpits of their models, which makes them look empty.

The Air Force 1 1/72 MB-339NAT is a decent model of this popular jet training aircraft. The model is the only 1/72 die-cast model available of the Aermacchi MB-339. The unique colors of the fairly unknown Al Fursan aerobatic team add to the appeal of this small die-cast model airplane. The model will certainly be a conversation piece in any collection.

The Air Force 1 1/72 scale model of the Aerrmacchi MB-339NAT is painted with accurate colors and markings representing the Al Fursian aerobatic demonstration team. The model also features basic cockpit detail and external fuel tanks mounted on the wing pylons. Unfortunately, there is no option to display the model with the landing gear in the retracted or "in flight" position, and the landing gear is simple in paint and mold detail compared to the rest of the model.

John Jenkins Designs Gee Bee Model Z

The toy soldier manufacturer's excellent model of one of the famous air racing aircraft from the "Golden Age of Aviation".

In 1/30 scale, the John Jenkins Designs Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster is a large model with excellent details. Some of the excellent details featured on this model constructed of mix media materials include an authentic paint scheme and markings, a detailed radial engine, a cockpit with a painted pilot figure, and external bracing wires.

Historical photo of the Granville Brothers Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster in 1931. Built to compete in the 1931 National Air Races held in Cleveland, the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster won the coveted Thompson Trophy Race, as well as several smaller races, held during the week-long event. The air racer was destroyed in a crash later that year when it was used in an attempt to break the world speed record for landplanes.

The time period of aviation history between 1919 and 1939 is often referred to as the "Golden Age of Aviation" or the "Golden Age of Flight". This period of aviation history saw great advances in the development of aircraft and aero engines, with aircraft designs evolving from fabric-covered, open-cockpit biplanes to streamlined, all-metal monoplanes. Record-breaking flights by pilots such as Charles Lindbergh, Wiley Post, and Amelia Earhart captured the public's imagination and were headline stories in newspapers and newsreel footage worldwide. Aviation events such as flying circus airshows were attended by tens of thousands of Americans and became a part of the featured entertainment at state and county fairs nationwide. With larger and more reliable aircraft being built, air travel and air transportation also became common, with scheduled airline service for passengers, mail, and cargo becoming commonplace in the 1930s.

Another type of aviation event that became popular during the "Golden Age of Aviation" was air racing. There were generally two types of air races, long-distance air races from specified cities or locations and closed-course racing, in which competitors lapped a course marked by pylons. Air racing aircraft were generally built by independent designers or smaller aviation firms, drawn to the competitions along with the pilots by lucrative prize money offered by the sponsors of the events. These racing aircraft, often small in size and fitted with the most powerful engines available, became some of the fastest flying machines in the world, even outpacing the most modern fighter aircraft available to the U.S. Army Air Corps and U.S. Navy. These air races were also dangerous, with crashes resulting in the deaths of pilots and sometimes spectators.

Lessons learned from these racing aircraft in aerodynamics and engine design would find their way into future military and civilian aircraft. Some of the most famous air races of the era included the cross-country Bendix Trophy Race, the closed-course Thompson Trophy Race and the Schneider Trophy, an international closed-course competition strictly reserved for seaplanes and flying boats.

The Granville Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster was an American air racing aircraft built in 1931 for competition in the 1931 National Air Races held in Cleveland, Ohio. With Lowell Bayles at the controls, the Gee Bee Z Super Sportster won the 1931 Thompson Trophy Race, the main event of the 1931 National Air Races. The Gee Bee Z Super Sportster crashed in December of that year during an attempt to break the world speed record for landplanes.

With their aircraft business suffering a sales slump due to the Great Depression, the Granville Brothers of Springfield, Massachusetts, decided to build an aircraft to compete in the 1931 National Air Races. The Granville Brothers designed and built several sporting aircraft and hoped a win at the prestigious racing event with an airplane they built would generate additional aircraft sales for their business.

Working with their chief designer Bob Hall, the Granville Brothers built the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster in less than five weeks. The airplane was constructed for a cost of less than $5,000. The Model Z Super Sportster, named the *"City of Springfield"*, was a small, tubby airframe. The airplane had a wingspan of about 23 feet and a length of just over 15 feet. The Model Z Super Sportster was powered by a Pratt & Whitney Wasp Junior R-985 radial engine producing 535 horsepower. A fuel tank with a capacity of 103 gallons was located in the fuselage between the engine and the cockpit, as there was no room in the small, thin wings. Early flight testing promised speeds of over 230 miles per hour were possible with the Model Z Super Sportster, but the airplane was incredibly tricky to fly.

After some modifications to improve the handling of the Model Z Super Sportster, the airplane was sent to Cleveland for the 1931 National Air Races with a colorful black and yellow paint scheme and sporting race #4. The Model Z Super Sportster fulfilled its speed expectations on September 1, 1931, during the Shell Speed Dash qualifying sessions. With Lowell Bayles at the controls, the Model Z Super Sportster attained a speed of just over 267 miles per hour during the qualifying session.

John Jenkins Designs did an excellent job replicating the shape of the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster with their 1/30 scale replica of the historic air racer. Designed for speed, the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster was little more than a flying engine and gas tank with its tubby fuselage. Due to the small surface area of the wings and powerful engine, the air racer was difficult to fly, especially at low speed and during landing.

Air racing aircraft in the 1930s were painted in bright colors and decorated with large numbers so both spectators and officials could keep track of the aircraft on the course. For the 1931 National Air Races, the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster carrier race number #4 and was painted in this sharp back and yellow color scheme, with a red stripe separating the two colors. John Jenkins Designs did a fantastic job replicating this paint scheme on their model.

The next day, Bayles proved the Model Z Super Sportster's speed was not a fluke when he won the Goodyear Trophy Race, an event run over a 50-mile course at an average speed of 205 miles per hour. This was much slower than the Model Z Super Sportster's qualifying speed, but Bayles was under orders to save the engine for the higher-paying prize races later in the week. On September 5, Bob Hall, the Model Z Super Sportster's designer, won the General Tire and Rubber Trophy Race at the National Air Races. The Model Z Super Sportster was a favorite in the main event, the Thompson Trophy Race.

The main event of the 1931 National Air Races was the Thompson Trophy Race, held on September 7. Lowell Bayles piloted the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster in this race. The race turned into a battle between Bayles and Jimmy Doolittle in the heavily-favored Laird Super Solution, a small and fast green and yellow biplane. The two airplanes were fairly evenly matched, but Doolittle had pushed the Super Solution's engine hard in the cross-country Bendix Trophy Race to win that event, and was now pushing the engine hard once again in this Thompson Trophy Race. After several laps, the Super Solution's engine began running rough and trailing smoke. Doolittle was forced to retire from the race with a scuffed piston. Bayles ended up winning the race with an average speed of 236 miles per hour and earning $7,500 in prize money for the effort.

Unfortunately for the Granville Brothers, the win in the 1931 Thompson Trophy Race did not generate the sales of their aircraft that they were hoping for. Hoping to gain more publicity, the Granville Brothers decided to modify the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster in an attempt to break the world speed record for landplanes. Modifications to the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster included lightening the airframe and fitting a larger, 750-horsepower, Pratt & Whitney Wasp Senior radial engine to the racer. During trial runs with the modifications, Bayles hit 314 miles per hour with the airplane, but the more powerful engine made the Model Z Super Sportster even more difficult to fly.

In addition to its colorful paint scheme, John Jenkins Designs did an excellent job researching the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster and recreating the smaller markings that appeared on the air racer. The "City of Springfield" name and illustration are recreated on the cowling. Writing on the fuselage indicating sponsorship from the Springfield Air Racing Association is also present on the model, as well as the stylized Gee Bee label just behind the cockpit.

On December 1, 1931, the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster was officially clocked at 281.75 miles per hour, surpassing the previous record of 278 miles per hour. The margin, however, was too small to be officially submitted for the record. Four days later, a second attempt was made at setting the world speed record. During the run through the course, the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster's wing failed, causing the small air racer to roll uncontrollably and crash. Lowell Bayles was killed instantly in the accident and thrown from the wreckage.

The cause of the crash has never been officially determined. Since the flight was an attempt to break a world record, cameras were rolling and footage of the crash as it happened was available for examination. The footage was viewed frame-by-frame and some aviation historians claim there is evidence of something coming off the airplane and hitting the cockpit. These aviation historians conclude that the gas cap fastener failed, causing the gas cap to fly off and smash through the cockpit, incapacitating Bayles. The upset in the Model Z Super Sportster's pitch from this event caused flutter in the right aileron which resulted in the right wing failing due to vibration stress. The crash devastated the Granville Brothers, who had a close relationship with Lowell Bayles and thought of him as part of their family.

Desperate to regain their reputation after the crash and win more prize money, the Granville Brothers refined the Model Z Super Sportster's design. For the 1932 air racing season, the Granville Brothers built the faster and improved Gee Bee R-1 and R-2 aircraft. The R-1 had a more powerful engine for closed -course racing and the R-2 had a less powerful engine and additional fuel tanks for cross-country racing. The new Gee Bee aircraft still proved challenging to fly. Flown by the highly experienced air racing pilot Jimmy Doolittle, the Gee Bee R-1 won the 1932 Thompson Trophy Race. Despite the victory, the Gee Bee aircraft continued to have the reputation of being dangerous to fly. Eventually, the tragic accidents and a lack of money caused the Granville Brothers to exit the aircraft manufacturing business.

Today, thanks to their colorful paint schemes and streamlined designs, the Gee Bee aircraft are some of the most popular air racers from the "Golden Age of Aviation". Replicas of the Gee Bee aircraft have been built for flying in airshows and as static displays in museums. A flying replica of the Model Z Super Sportster, with longer wings and a longer fuselage for improved flight characteristics, was used in the 1991 Disney film, *The Rocketeer.* The Gee Bee are also popular subjects with aviation artists, authors, and model airplane builders.

This 1/30 scale model of the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster featured in this article is manufactured by John Jenkins Designs. John Jenkins Designs is a toy soldier company that manufactures figures, vehicles, and diorama accessories representing historical eras such as Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, Pre-Colonial America, the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, the American Civil War, the First World War, and the Second World War. This model of the Model Z Super Sportster is part of the company's "The Speedbirds Collection" product line representing air racing aircraft from the "Golden Age of Aviation". The Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster is product-coded SB-03 and retails for $188US. This model is out of production and retired from John Jenkins Designs, but some John Jenkins Designs dealers still have limited quantities of this model available in their inventory.

The Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster model comes in a sturdy box surrounded by protective foam padding designed to prevent the model and its delicate parts, such as the bracing wires, from sustaining damage during shipping. The model arrives fully painted and assembled. Moving parts on the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster include a rotating propeller and a hinged cockpit revealing a pilot seated in the cockpit. Similar to other John Jenkins Designs model aircraft, there is a screw hole in the bottom of the model allowing an optional display stand to be installed to display the model as if it were in flight. The clear acrylic display stands are sold separately and are available through John Jenkins Designs dealers.

The Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster model is shown mounted on one of the John Jenkins Designs acrylic display stands. When the model is viewed from this angle, it can be appreciated just how small and compact of a design the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster was. Lessons learned in aerodynamics and engine technology from air racing aircraft found their way into the designs of many fighter aircraft used during World War II.

The John Jenkins Designs Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster is a great model due to its unique subject matter. Not many model airplane manufacturers have offered fully assembled and painted models of air racing aircraft, and if they have, they are usually in smaller scales. The Gee Bee aircraft were small, and even in the larger 1/30 scale, this model only measures six and a half inches long and has a wingspan of just nine and a half inches. The larger scale of the John Jenkins Model Z Super Sportster allowed the manufacturer to showcase the unique shape of the airplane and some of its iconic details such as the streamlined wheel spats, wing bracing wires, and large radial engine.

John Jenkins Designs also did an excellent job on the model's paint details. Unlike the John Jenkins Designs models of military aircraft with their wartime paint schemes, the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster's colorful yellow and black paint scheme with large #4 racing numbers will brighten up any desk or bookshelf. John Jenkins Designs also correctly represented the red pinstripe throughout the airplane's paint scheme that separated the black and yellow colors. Finally, John Jenkins Designs painstakingly recreated all the smaller lettering on the model including the *"City of Springfield"* name on the cowling and the small writing on the tail that stated the name of the air racer and that the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster was a product of the Granville Brothers of Springfield, Massachusetts.

Although the John Jenkins Designs Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster is an excellent model, there are some minor shortcomings. One of these shortcomings is the quality of the model's paint finish. Although the paint finish overall is superb, the red pin striping on the model was hand-painted, and there are a few areas on the example of the model used for this review where the red stripe is slightly misaligned. There are also two minor paint errors on the model. The gas cap, located on the top of the fuselage, should be silver and the propeller decals are incorrect and do not match the propeller markings in any reference photo of the actual aircraft.

The John Jenkins Designs Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster model with its hinged canopy open, showing the seated pilot figure inside. The design of the cockpit canopy is one of the model's few shortcomings. The hinged canopy does not replicate the actual aircraft's canopy, which was a bolt-on style, and there is no locking mechanism such as a magnet or tab, to keep it closed. As a result, the canopy tends to flip open if the model is turned upside down.

Despite some minor shortcomings, the John Jenkins Designs Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster is an excellent model of the 1930s air racer. With its unique appearance and bright color scheme, the little Model Z Super Sportster will be a conversation piece on any desk or bookshelf. The model is a wonderful tribute to the beautiful air racing aircraft designed and flown during the "Golden Age of Aviation".

A more significant shortcoming of the model is the design of its cockpit. John Jenkins Designs manufactured the model with a hinged canopy. The canopy opens to reveal a pilot inside of the cockpit. Unfortunately, this is not how the canopy opened or closed on the original aircraft. The canopy framing on the model is also too thick in appearance On the Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster, the Granville Brothers used a canopy that bolted in place after the pilot was strapped in. Had John Jenkins Designs replicated the canopy on the model with a pop-on piece, the pilot figure probably could have been made removable and more cockpit detail would have been visible. A pop-on-and-off canopy piece would have been authentic to the original airplane as well.

A final issue with the hinged cockpit is that there is no way to lock it in place on the model. If the model is flipped upside down for any reason, such as installing the optional display stand that is sold separately, the canopy flips open due to gravity. Although nothing can fall out of the cockpit because the pilot is glued in place, the canopy could be snapped off if caught on fingers during handling the model if a collector does not realize the canopy has opened. A locking tab would have been an excellent feature to add to the model's cockpit canopy to keep it secure in place while handling the model.

The John Jenkins Designs Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster model is an excellent replica of the air racer that won the 1931 Thompson Trophy Race. The model captures all the iconic details of the famous air racer including its short wings, tubby fuselage, large radial engine, and streamlined wheel spats. The model also has a historically accurate paint scheme and its bright colors will light up any desk or bookshelf in a home office or study. With its unique looks and colorful racing paint scheme, the John Jenkins Designs Gee Bee Model Z Super Sportster will be a conversation place on display. With a little imagination, one can imagine this little air racer zipping around pylons and flying to victory in front of thousands of spectators at the 1931 National Air Races.

Travel Air D4D

A Travel Air D4D on display in the National Air and Space Museum's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia. This D4D was used for several years for skywriting by the Pepsi-Cola Corporation. Skywriting is the process of writing a name, message, or shape in the blue sky using the smoke trail from an aircraft. This Travel Air D4D, along with a second Travel Air biplane, visited airshows and aviation events and performed skywriting missions from the mid-1970s until the year 2000, when they were retired for safety reasons.

The Travel Air Company built over 1,200 open-cockpit biplanes between 1925 and 1930. Travel Airs were known in the aviation industry as rugged and reliable aircraft that saw service as barnstormers, crop dusters, and private and sport aircraft. For 40 years, this Travel Air D4D, known as the Pepsi Skywriter, traveled the nation for the Pepsi Cola Corporation performing a form of advertising known as skywriting.

Three men who would become giants in the aviation industry, Lloyd Stearman, Walter Beech, and Clyde Cessna, came together in Wichita, Kansas to found the Travel Air Company in 1925. Stearman and Beech worked together at the Swallow Aircraft Manufacturing Company in 1923 and 1924 as chief designer and vice president/test pilot, respectively. Aircraft designed and manufactured by Swallow were successful, but Stearman and Beech wanted the company to evolve and build aircraft using steel tube framework instead of wood. Management declined to change their construction methods so Stearman and Beech, along with William Snook, left the company and founded the Travel Air Manufacturing Company. The team brought into their fold Clyde Cessna, a farmer who liked to build airplanes.

The men soon designed their first airplane, a three-place, open-cockpit, fabric-covered biplane with a 90-horsepower Curtiss OX-5 engine. Steel tubing braced the fuselage and steel wires braced the fabric-covered spruce spar wings and ribs. Steel was also used in the construction of the rudder and elevator leading and trailing edges, and the leading edge of the horizontal stabilizer.

The first Travel Air was a sharp-looking airplane with a blue fuselage and silver wings. The airplane's engine was also fully enclosed by a cowling. Balanced ailerons on the upper wing overlapped around the edges of the wing for a striking appearance. Ira Beach made the first test flight with the new Travel Air on March 13, 1925. Examples of the Travel Air also performed well on the 1925 Ford Reliability Tour. National Air Transport purchased a Travel Air Model B for airmail contract work. In March 1928, the Travel Air Model A and Bs were designated the Travel Air Model 2000s.

In 1928, the Travel Air 4000 debuted. The Travel Air 4000 had the same airframe as the Travel Air 2000 but incorporated a Wright J-4 or J-5 radial engine, which dramatically improved the aircraft's performance and reliability. The Travel Air 4000 found popularity and versatility due to being offered with a variety of engines, passenger seating, and landing gear combinations. By 1927, Lloyd Stearman and Clyde Cessna had left Travel Air to pursue other endeavors. Walter Beach remained at Travel Air and began building other designs, including the Mystery Ship, a purpose-built air racer, and the Travel Air 6000, a high-wing cabin monoplane. In 1929, the Curtiss-Wright Corporation absorbed the Travel Air Company as a division but the company could not survive the Great Depression, and closed in 1932.

In 1929, NC434N, serial number 1340, was built as a Travel Air E-4000. In 1930, NC434N received Speedwings and a Wright J-6-7 engine and was recertified as a D4D. The airframe changes improved cruising speed to 110 miles per hour with a range of 520 miles, and the aircraft had a higher service ceiling of 14,000 feet. Andy Stinis of Skywriting America Corporation of America purchased the D4D in 1931 and flew it out of Floyd Bennet Field on Long Island, New York. Skywriting is the process of writing a name or message or drawing a shape with smoke from an aircraft against a blue sky. Pepsi-Cola Corporation was one of the longest-running contractors of skywriting and in the 1930s and 1940s, contracted or owned 14 skywriting aircraft. Andy Stinis flew for Pepsi-Cola Corporation from 1931 to 1953.

In 1973, Alan Pottasch and Jack Strayer of Pepsi began a search for old skywriters and found N434N still with Andy Stinis. The men intended to display the airplane at Pepsi headquarters in Purchase, New York. Strayer convinced Pepsi to modernize the aircraft with new navigation and communications equipment and put it on tour again. Pepsi gave the Travel Air a red, white, and blue paint scheme, and the Pepsi fleet soon included a second 1929 Travel Air. In 2000, Pepsi pilots Suzanne and Steve Oliver suggested the two Travel Airs be retired for safety reasons, and the Pepsi-Cola Corporation donated N434N to the National Air and Space Museum.

Laird LC-DW500 Super Solution (1931)

The Laird LC-DW500 Super Solution was a racing biplane designed and built in the early 1930s by E.M. "Matty" Laird and Raoul J. Hoffman of the E.M. Laird Aircraft Company for the Cleveland Speed Foundation. The Laird Super Solution was considered an advanced airplane for its time with small wings, a clean aerodynamic design, a tight-fitting engine cowling, and a large radial engine. Built for competition in the 1931 National Air Races, the Laird Super Solution was flown by Jimmy Doolittle and was the winner of the first cross-country Bendix Trophy Race from Burbank to Cleveland. Doolittle later raced the Super Solution in the closed-course Thompson Trophy Race but was forced to drop out when the air racer developed engine problems. This replica of the Super Solution is on display in the EAA Museum in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Laird LC-DW500 Super Solution

Crew: 1

Length: 19 ft 6 in

Height: 9 ft 5 in

Wingspan: 21 ft

Wing Area: 112 sq ft

Powerplant: Pratt & Whitney Wasp Junior S2A 9-cylinder air-cooled, radial engine (x1)

Propeller: 8.2 ft or 9 ft 2-bladed variable-pitch propeller

Range: Approx. 700 nmi

Cruise Speed: 250 mph

Maximum Speed: 275 mph

Empty/Maximum Takeoff Weights: 1,580 lb/2,842 lb

Service Ceiling: 15,000 ft

1931 Bendix Trophy Winner

Engine

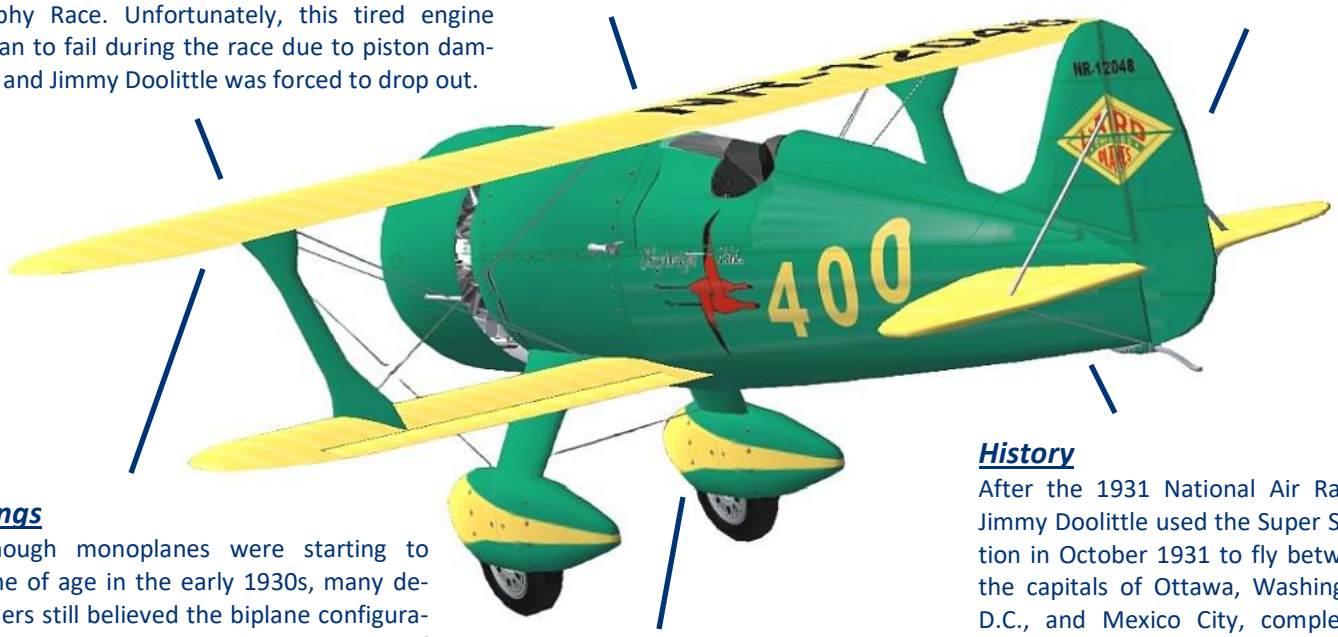
Two different engines were used in the Super Solution, both versions of the Pratt & Whitney Wasp Junior S2A nine-cylinder, air-cooled radial engine. One engine was a direct-drive engine and the other was a geared engine that allowed for a lower propeller rpm with a larger propeller. Both engines were modified with high-compression pistons and ran on "doped" leaded fuel. During testing, it was discovered that the Super Solution was almost uncontrollable rounding pylons when using the geared engine and larger propeller. There was no choice but to use the direct drive engine for the Thompson Trophy Race after it had been run hard in the cross-country Bendix Trophy Race. Unfortunately, this tired engine began to fail during the race due to piston damage and Jimmy Doolittle was forced to drop out.

Cockpit

The cockpit and windshield was faired with the fuselage for improved aerodynamics and so the racer had a minimal frontal area. Sides that folded up and down allowed easy entry into the cockpit for the pilot. With its narrow frontal area and location, cockpit visibility was poor. Although not a factor during the cross-country Bendix Trophy Race, visibility when flying around other aircraft during the closed-course Thompson Trophy Race was a concern for Jimmy Doolittle. Doolittle's race strategy was to get a good start and move into the race lead, so he did not have to worry about other aircraft around him.

Color Scheme

Similar to other air racing aircraft of the era, the Super Solution was painted in bright colors and decorated with large racing numbers. In 1931, the Super Solution wore this beautiful green and yellow paint scheme and carried race number #400. The E.M. Laird Airplane Company and Skyways Inc. logos also appeared on the tail and fuselage of the Super Solution, respectively.



Wings

Although monoplanes were starting to come of age in the early 1930s, many designers still believed the biplane configuration was superior. Matty Laird was one of those designers. The Super Solution had an upper wing that spanned 21 feet and a lower wing that spanned 18 feet. Initially the wings were connected by "H" style struts, but the design of the struts was changed to a wider and more streamlined "I" shape. During testing for the closed-course Thompson Trophy Race, it was discovered that high loading on the airframe while rounding the turns was collapsing and crushing the upper wing spar. Emergency repairs the night before the race involved bolting steel patches to the spar to restore its structural integrity and prevent its failure.

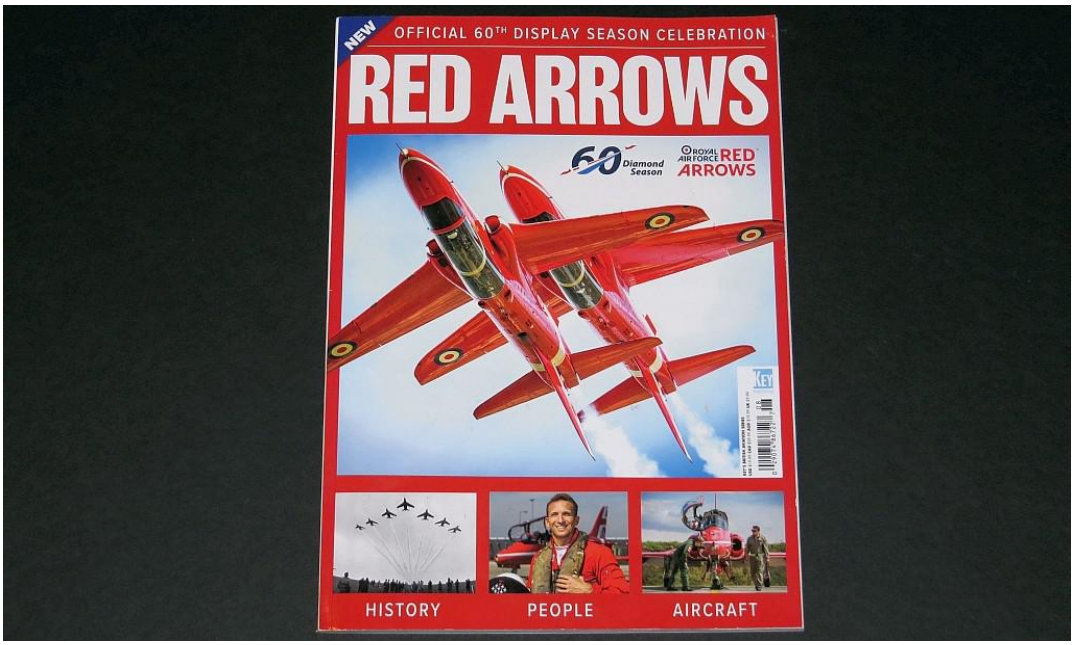
Landing Gear

Matty Laird chose a fixed landing gear layout for the Super Solution. To reduce drag and improve the Super Solution's aerodynamics, the gear was covered in streamlined wheel pants. Although retractable landing gear systems were available, they were unreliable, complicated, and added additional weight to aircraft, a disadvantage in air racing and speed contests. During test flights, it was discovered the design of the Super Solution's wheel pants limited the effectiveness of the rudder, so the rudder was redesigned to be taller and larger in area to improve its effectiveness.

History

After the 1931 National Air Races, Jimmy Doolittle used the Super Solution in October 1931 to fly between the capitals of Ottawa, Washington D.C., and Mexico City, completing the flight in 12 hours and 36 minutes. This record stood for several years. In 1932, Shell Oil sponsored the Super Solution and Jimmy Doolittle test-flew the racer in preparation for the 1932 National Air Races. The Super Solution was modified for 1932 with retractable landing gear and a higher cockpit to improve pilot visibility. The aircraft was damaged in a test flight in preparation for the air races and withdrawn from the competition. The Super Solution would never be flown again in an air racing competition.

Red Arrows 60th Diamond Season Commemorative Magazine



This year, the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, the Red Arrows, are celebrating their 60th Diamond Season of airshow displays and flypasts. To commemorate the milestone, Key Publishing, a United Kingdom-based magazine publisher, has produced a one-off magazine celebrating the Red Arrows. The magazine features dozens of photographs of the team and its personnel in action and articles about the team's aircraft, personnel, displays, and history.

The Red Arrows, officially known as the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, are the aerobatic display team of the Royal Air Force (RAF) and are based at RAF Waddington. The team was formed in mid-1964 as a replacement for several unofficial display teams formed by individual RAF commands. The Red Arrows are a prominent part of British culture, and their aerobatic displays and special flypasts are a fixture of British summer events. Since their creation, the Red Arrows have performed over 4,800 displays in 57 countries worldwide. The Red Arrows are known for their use of colored smoke, representing the colors of the British flag, and their "Diamond Nine" formation, in which all nine Hawk aircraft flown by the team fly in a tight diamond formation. The team consists of nine formation pilots flying the BAE Hawk T.1A advanced jet trainer, an aircraft the Red Arrows have flown since 1979. The 2024 display season is also the 60th Diamond Season for the RAF Red Arrows.

Key Publishing is a United Kingdom-based publisher specializing in aviation magazine titles. Some well-known aviation magazine titles published by Key Publishing include *Aeroplane*, *AirForces Monthly*, *Airliner World*, *Airports of the World, Combat Aircraft Monthly*, and *Flypast*. The publishing company also produces one-off magazine titles for organizations such as the Royal Air Force and on specific aircraft types. Key Publishing also produces directories for the British Aviation Group and the airshow program for the annual Farnborough Airshow. The publisher's magazine titles are available at newsstands in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and the United States.

To celebrate the 60th Diamond Season of the RAF Red Arrows, Key Publishing has produced a special one-off commemorative magazine about the team. The magazine is officially licensed by the Royal Air Force and the Red Arrows. The 114-page magazine documents the history of the Red Arrows as an organization, the aircraft flown by the team, a listing of the team members from each display season, the RAF bases the Red Arrows have called home, the future of the Red Arrows as a team, and much more.

The magazine is on newsstands currently and should be available at any retailer that sells magazines published by Key Publishing. The magazine is also available directly Key Publishing at www.keypublishing.com. The magazine retails for $19.99 in the United States and $29.99 in Canada and is sold at Barnes and Noble's bookstores.

ROYAL AIR FORCE RED ARROWS GNAT

Gnat

The Red Arrows flew the Folland Gnat for 15 years – lively to fly, sometimes challenging to operate, and popular with spectators.

"There is no question that the Royal Air Force has been well served in having the Gnat equip its aerobatic team," wrote Ray Hanna (Red 1 in 1966-69) in the first book on the Red Arrows, published in 1973. "It has about every aspect – performance, manoeuvrability, controllability and sheer attractiveness of line – much the former is virtually the ideal formation aerobatics aircraft."

Fighter origins

W.E.W. 'Teddy' Petter, one of Britain's foremost aircraft designers, had a keen nose at the turn of the 1950s – a small, simple, lightweight, single-seat jet fighter.

Folland Aircraft developed the concept as a private venture, producing the Fo.139 Midge (powered by a Rolls-Royce Viper engine), which flew in August 1954 from Boscombe Down, Wiltshire, and the Fo.140 Gnat (with a Bristol Siddeley BE26 Orpheus 5) flown in July 1955, also from Boscombe.

Ray Hanna wrote: "As a fighter, the Gnat was, in its day, a bad and pricey concept. It was approximately one-third of the weight and half the size of contemporary standard jet fighters.

Yet a head-high subsonic speed in level flight and the iconic capability in a small aircraft with an exceptionally good rate of climb and a tight turning radius."

Two-seat trainer

Single-seat Gnat FR1s were sold to Finland and India, but the Royal Air Force did not place an order. There was no interest in a proposed supersonic version with reheat for the Orpheus engine.

The RAF, however, did want a two-seat training variant, the Fo.140 Gnat T1. The Ministry of Supply in May 1958 ordered 14 for evaluation; the first (XM691) flew from Chilbolton, Folland's test site, on August 31, 1959. A successful evaluation led to 105 more being ordered for 105 aircraft.

The Gnat T1 became the Air Force's standard jet trainer, replacing the de Havilland Vampire T11 and Gloster Meteor (T.7) before it in turn was replaced by the Hawker Siddeley Hawk T1 at RAF Valley, Anglesey, in February 1982. The Central Flying School (CFS) at RAF Little Rissington, Gloucestershire, received the first example that November.

By the time the Red Arrows were formed in 1965, therefore, the Gnat had only been in service for three years. Ray Hanna (Red 1) "like almost every new aircraft, had his share of teething troubles."

Dave Green, the first Red Arrows Engineering Officer in 1965, remembers: "The Gnat had a really bad reputation for accidents at the time we formed the team. It was only 30% availability at Valley, and so much later at Little Rissington.

"A lot of engineers said we'd have to keep a seven-ship aerobatic team going. [But] the team was really dedicated, and we just went out to keep the aircraft going as always had been aircraft to us when needed. I'm very proud of that."

The Red Arrows in a neat line-abreast formation involving nine aircraft, at high altitude. Imperial War Museum

GNAT 50 Diamond Season

Red Arrows Gnats in Apollo formation. The aircraft's swept-wing profile directly influenced the development of the Red Arrows' display. Peter Devereux

Slipper tanks

Unlike the Gnats that equipped No 4 FTS and the Central Flying School, the Red Arrows Gnats did not routinely carry the underwing 'slipper' fuel tanks the type usually carried for extended range and manoeuvre.

Mike Whitehouse (the Red Arrows' team manager in 1977-78), pointed out: "If you've got fuel in tanks like that, there's a lot of inertia when you're trying to manoeuvre until they're empty."

Early in the team's existence, there was an occasional display with the slipper tanks, but these were exceptions. Ray Hanna wrote that flying without them made the Gnat "more pleasant to fly."

Red Arrows Gnats mostly only carried slipper tanks for longer transits abroad. Dave Green said, the tanks took around 30 minutes to remove, and slightly longer to reinstall. "They were never really an issue," he recalled.

Flying without the tanks meant the Gnat had a very limited range at display weight – only around 30 nautical miles. Wyndham Ward flew the aircraft on the Red Arrows in 1979, his first season on the team.

"The show was based around the fact that it didn't have a lot of fuel," he noted. "It was all-action and go in front of the crowd, so you had to do [the show] in about 20 minutes."

Nevertheless, Ray Hanna praised the Gnat as "very much a pilot's aircraft – highly manoeuvrable and a delight to handle, even in turbulent conditions close to the ground. Control is both crisp and super-sensitive."

Fuse 13

An exceptional roll rate was another difference between Red Arrows Gnats and the standard trainer.

In Red Arrows: A Great British Icon (2014), Lee Jones, the first Red 1, said: "We saw the [US Air Force] Thunderbirds at Paris perform a superb individual roll with their four F-100 Super Sabres. We wished we could do it. But our sensitive rate of roll precluded this.

Above: The Gnat's airbrake: partially extending the undercarriage, as seen here with Ray Hanna flying Gnat XS111 over Somerset in October 1966. Ray Deacon

"We discussed it, and Bill Lowmeed broke his sometime taciturn introspection to say, 'Why not pull Fuse 13?' This electrified those, who, until Bill, did not have such fantastic inner knowledge of the Gnat."

Fuse 13 connected the deflection on the aileron. "Someone – who shall remain nameless – went out to the line and pulled all the Fuse 13s," Jones recalled. "We then had a rate of roll of 420 degrees a second. We tried it all together – it really was a show-stopper."

Peter Evans, a Red Arrows pilot in 1966-69, told this publication's editor: "There »

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ROYAL AIR FORCE RED ARROWS BLUES

Blues

The Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team could not operate without its support team, including the engineering and technical specialists.

Red Arrows flying can only happen because of the hard work of the team's support personnel – the teamwork of the pilots in the air matched by that of those who work on the ground.

The support team comprises RAF regular and full-time reservist personnel, civil servants, and contractors – what the RAF calls the Whole Force. There is a diverse range of roles on the support team, looking after different systems, resources, and equipment.

Known as The Blues because of the distinctive royal blue coveralls they wear during the display season, the support team includes engineers, technicians, drivers, suppliers, logisticians, operations staff, photographers, PR, and personnel support.

The Blues are responsible for ensuring that the correct number of aircraft are available both during the summer display/aerobatic training season, and that the aircraft undergo appropriate servicing and maintenance.

Without them, the Red Arrows could not operate. The team emphasises on its website, it adds: "The support team is made up of a crew of engineering officers, predominately 1E0 (Air Engineering) technicians and other support staff such as flight operations officer, mission support flight commander and a public relations manager.

The Blues represent nine out of the Royal Air Force's broad range of more than 65 operational and non-technical trades. Every team member has undergone intensive training in their particular specialisation throughout their RAF career.

Engineering officers

Overall support engineering technicians and support staff are headed by a Senior Engineering Officer (SEngO). The SEngO has a management team of two Junior Engineering Officers (JEngOs), a warrant officer, and two flight sergeants.

Squadron Leader Andy King is the current Red Arrows SEngO. He completed a Masters' degree in aeronautics and astronautics at Southampton University. A Chartered engineer, he joined the RAF in 2014, and completed officer training followed by engineer training.

Sqn Ldr King says: "My first job was at RAF Coningsby on airborne equipment and engines. I then moved on to be the junior engineering officer on 3 (Fighter) Squadron, a Typhoon squadron, again at Coningsby, did two years and then after that moved here to RAF Weddington, where I did five years on various platforms. I was the deputy airworthiness manager for Sentry and Shadow, the ISTAR platforms."

Above: Squadron Leader Andy King, Ministry of Defence (Crown Copyright 2023)

Pit stop: A snapshot of the various Red Arrows support team functions. L-R: Dye team, photographers, engineering support flight, weapons, avionics, mechanical engineering, survival equipment, logistics, mechanical transport. Ministry of Defence (Crown Copyright 2023)

Distelfink Airlines

Est. 2013

ABOUT DISTELFINK AIRLINES

My late grandfather, John Brey, and I at the 2007 Geneseo Airshow. This was one of the few times that we had our photo taken together at an airshow.

The story of "Distelfink Airlines" begins in the early 1990s when my late grandfather, John Brey, began building and flying remote control model aircraft in his retirement. He enjoyed the hobby and quickly amassed a large fleet of model airplanes, which filled his garage and woodworking shop. He gave a name to his fleet of aircraft, "Distelfink Airlines". For the symbol of his fleet, he chose the Pennsylvania Dutch/German hex sign featuring the "Distelfink", a colorful bird that is a symbol of good luck and happiness. This hex sign and symbol is very common on Pennsylvania Dutch/German barns in Eastern Pennsylvania and is an important part of our local culture. He had custom "Distelfink" decals made for all his airplanes and had T-shirts made with "Distelfink Airlines" printed on them. It wasn't long before curious people began asking about "Distelfink Airlines" and what it was. My grandfather told anyone who asked that "Distelfink Airlines" was a new startup airline that was going to be offering service between the Lehigh Valley International Airport and Philadelphia International Airport with more routes to come soon.

In addition to flying his model airplanes, my grandfather enjoyed attending airshows and we traveled to airshows together for almost 20 years. He also enjoyed local aviation history and was particularly fascinated by the history of the Consolidated TBY Sea Wolf, a torpedo bomber that was built locally in Allentown, Pennsylvania during World War II. He also remembered when famous aviator Amelia Earhart visited the Lehigh Valley in the early 1930s to raise funds for her failed attempt to become the first woman to fly around the world.

Established in 2013 in memory of my grandfather, "Distelfink Airlines" is an online aviation newsletter that carries on a tradition of sharing a love for aviation that my grandfather shared with me. This newsletter features photographs and writings on a variety of aviation topics. The logo that was chosen for "Distelfink Airlines" is the hex sign that my grandfather chose for his fleet of remote control model aircraft many years ago. This proud symbol of local Pennsylvania Dutch/German culture is joined by a pair of Consolidated TBY Sea Wolf torpedo bombers, the aircraft that was built locally in Allentown during World War II and is such an important part of our local aviation history. Thank you for reading "Distelfink Airlines" and sharing in the passion for aviation that my grandfather shared with me.