

Chasing That One Flawless Flight

Bud Judy

BY ZINNIA KILKENNY, IAC 437244

HAVE YOU EVER SPOKEN WITH SOMEONE and from within you spontaneously smiled? That's the feeling you get with Bud. In a mere matter of seconds of conversing, one could extrapolate he's forthright, not self-aggrandizing, and without false modesty — in the truest sense, a genteel man.

An IAC member since its inception in 1970, he'd become a three-time U.S. Nationals aerobatic champion by age 72, twice in the Intermediate category and once in the Sportsman category.

Neither concerned with daredevilry nor motivated by trophies (though having the mettle for it), he thought the heart of the matter was to challenge himself personally in competitive aerobatics in pursuit of "flying that one flawless flight," and "the chance to feel the fun of flying again."

His friend and fellow aerobatic enthusiast, A.J. Hefel, reminisces, "Bud is the person you'd want to meet at your first contest; his upbeat personality made the sport fun, even though I didn't finish well." While not the finish vied for, Bud's zealous spirit and selfless mentoring made competing fun for those who surrounded him, priming them to come back for more.

It is qualities like these, represented in members like Bud over the club's 50 years of history, that give the International Aerobatic Club its priceless patina.

While rebuilding a Luscombe and reading *Roll Around a Point* by Duane Cole, Bud's foray into aerobatics would begin. Shortly after, several clip wing Taylorcrafts followed, and what began as a Stephens Akro soon metamorphosed over the course of two rebuilds into a Judy Monosport creation.

Not one to let grass grow under his feet, Bud won his first U.S. Nationals championship in 1972 in the Intermediate category at the age of 38. His second U.S. Nationals championship title would come in 2002 in the Sportsman category at the age of 68, and four years after that he would clinch his third U.S. Nationals title in the Intermediate category in 2006 at the age of 72. In total, he flew Sportsman and Intermediate for 34 years between 1972 and 2006. His goal was ultimately to take the Judy Monosport to Unlimited, until determining, "When it was over, it was over," he said. "It was an age thing; the Unknowns, [I] couldn't react quick enough. I felt it coming."

I posed the question to Bud, "Did you consider flying a lower category?" "It's not my nature," Bud acknowledged contemplatively. "I'm too competitive. I'm not a spectator."

I asked how do contests differ today from those of the past. It was an obvious question, yet worthy of comparison.

"The camaraderie is different today," he said. "Then, we all helped each other; we worked on our planes together. We built our own planes, then flew them. [We] flew to contests as a group.

"It didn't matter what level you were; we'd coach each other all week and laughed at each other. We were as honest as you could possibly be. If someone you coached won, it was like winning yourself. It brought a closeness to the relationship, and then we'd have a drink and go home.

"[Today] everyone shows up in nice equipment and pays vast sums of money to coaches. I'm not griping, just laying it out as I saw it back then."

Bud's volunteer contributions include serving on the Aerobatic Club of America and IAC board of directors simultaneously. He also served as a regional and national contest director and as a national judge, and he volunteered to get the necessary "grunt work" involved with contest minutiae.

When I inquired about volunteering, Bud said, "We'd start at the beginning and gained experience in the sport and worked our way up. We grew up with it.

"No one sat around waiting to fly. Everyone was involved. Wives were involved. Back then, the score keeping wasn't easy; scoring was difficult for the scorekeepers. They did it from a chart. We worked hard, played hard. It's what gave the camaraderie."



Bud Judy

BUD JUDY

Located: Texas

IAC: 339

Occupation: Retired Air Force, Air National Guard, airline captain



Former IAC Vice President Bud Judy with his wife Bonnie in 1979.

As for improving competitive aerobatics' popularity, I asked if he had any seasoned advice on how to get more people involved.

"The cost of equipment is a big drawback and has to come down," Bud said. "We enjoyed the satisfaction of building our planes to where it was relatively affordable enough and taking them to competition.

"We were relatively young back then ... how can we get young people involved? I don't know the answer to that. What do you do when the cost of equipment has to come down?"

Presently, Bud continues to dip into aviation's fountain of youth. He's building another clipped wing Taylorcraft like his original airplane. He continues to fly, is excited about planes at age 86, and enjoys the comradeship of his aviation cohorts.

Bud expressed heartfelt appreciation for "close ones and friends who helped me with the airplanes and contests. Without them, none of it could have been done."

It has been an honor looking at the last 50 years through the prism of Bud Judy's interview. Here's to the next 50, tally-ho. **IAC**



The Judy Monosport. Bud finished the project in 1988. In this plane he was recipient of the retired Lycoming 180-hp Trophy four times between 1991-2011.

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