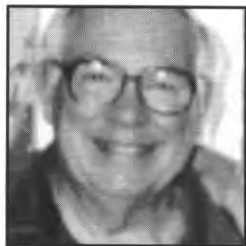


## A VISIT WITH DICK KORDA

by Bucky Walter



It was Dick Korda's 82d birthday on Feb. 15, 1997 at the Mentor Way Villa nursing home in Mentor Ohio.

Herb Kothe flew in from Lafayette, Colorado. Joe Elgin and his wife Amy, brought George Reich who is Dick's brother-in-law and winner of the 1961 Wakefield event. Joe was a member of

the 1951 Wakefield Team, and Herb placed second in the 1959 Wakefield, five seconds out of first place.

I brought my wife Joan, and Dick's long time friend and fellow model flyer Howard Robinson. Howard is a former AMA Vice President for District III.

It was quite a reunion. Herb was the manager of the 1961 Wakefield Team, when George won, and Herb and George have not seen each other since. There were a lot of smiles on everybody's faces, but the biggest smile was on Dick Korda's face.

We headed for a very old, well established restaurant in the Mentor area. Herb showed a photo of George drinking champagne from a trophy after winning the 1961 Wakefield Event. I overheard Amy telling Joan that Dick, George, Joe, and Howard all flew model airplanes together when they were young men.

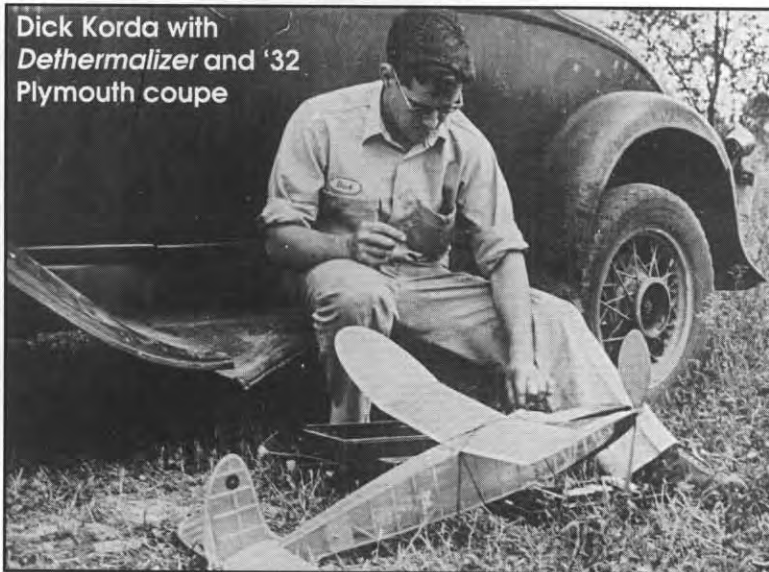
They are now seventy seven years young. Herb will be seventy and I will be sixty six this year. Dick was a tool and die maker, George was a machinist, Joe was a lithographer, Howard was an agriculture professor and dairy owner, and Herb and I were engineers.

Herb told about meeting a guy on a ski tram in Colorado. He was a Doctor from Cleveland who flew full size sailplanes. Herb told the doctor about Dick Korda who also flew sailplanes and the tow plane at the airport near Mentor. The doctor got a big smile on his face and said, "Dick is my patient and was my tow pilot!" Small world. (Note: Dick cannot fly or drive now due to the Parkinson's disease.)

I asked Dick if he knew a friend of mine, Ted Teach, who was champion sailplane pilot from the early seventies. Dick brightened up, didn't even blink an eye and said, "Sure I do!" Then he told me, "Ted and I were out front in a race and ran into bad air. I wondered if I should turn back, when I saw Ted (the champion) turn back. I knew for sure I better be turning back."

After lunch we headed back to the nursing home and looked at some plans, including the *Thermalier* designed by Joe Elgin. Howard had just built the model, and pointed out some of the things he changed.

Dick Korda with *Dethermalizer* and '32 Plymouth coupe



Another was sent to me by Tom McCoy, who will be the Rubber Contest Director for the 1998 SAM Champs in Muncie. Tom sent the plans for Ernie Linn's 1938-1939 *Kansas State Wakefield*. This model will be flown in a special event to honor Ernie at the 1998 Champs.

I brought a photo of Dick, Chester Lanzo, and George with a tall trophy sitting on a table in front of them. I asked, "What is the name of the trophy?" George thought it was the AMA National Club Trophy. Dick thought it was the



Herbe Kothe, Bucky Walter, Joe Elgin, Howard Robinson, George Reich, with Dick Korda seated in front.



Stout Trophy. After many years go by it is difficult to remember. I still am not sure of the name of that trophy.

I also brought a photo of Dick sitting on the running board of a 1932 Plymouth 4 cylinder coupe with a rumble seat. Dick was looking at his *Dethermalizer* model. It featured a rudder tab as a dethermalizer device.

Herb mentioned he won first place at the Plymouth Meet at Detroit in 1947 using the *Dethermalizer*. A photo of Herb and his *Dethermalizer* was printed in LOOK magazine just a mere 50 years ago. Herb then presented Dick with a a golf shirt for a birthday gift.

Dick said he is slowing down. He has not been swimming like he did and he will have to use a golf cart this year to golf. To me, Dick looks pretty good. He looks like he should be the maintenance man at the nursing home rather than one of the patients.

Dick Korda will always tell you, "I made one lucky flight and it got blown up into a big deal." He mentioned that James Cahill won the 1938 Wakefield with a 30+ minute flight, and Chester Lanzo had a 48 minute flight in 1937. No big deal was made of either flight. But Dick Korda's 1939 Wakefield flight inspired many a boy and young man to build model airplanes.

The newspapers had very good coverage on Dick Korda and his 1939 Wakefield win. From August 1939:

"A week ago today, Richard Korda was a WPA laborer out of work by congressional rule. He had nothing but time, and devoted most of it to his hobby of building and flying model airplanes. As a result of that hobby, Korda has \$800 today and the promise of a regular job with a local aviation firm.

Last Sunday the 24 year-old hobbyist won the International Wakefield Contest for model airplanes at the Bendix Airport near New York. His tiny rubber band-powered ship stayed up over 43 minutes.

When it came down after its record breaking flight, Korda received a trophy, \$45 in prize money, \$250 for the manufacturing rights to the plane, \$250 for a magazine article, \$100 for the British rights to the plane, and another \$150 for endorsements, articles and expenses. Korda also received a lot of newspaper publicity on his feat. It attracted the head of a local aviation outfit. And the "Junior Aviator" has a date with him today to talk job. Congress may have taken him off of WPA, but it's his hobby that's getting him a job again in industry."

Dick keeps his models in a large cardboard box over his TV stand, and stores hobby stuff in a few other boxes above his clothes locker. George got Dick a redwood board to build on. Dick placed the redwood board on his serving table in front of the window. When Dick builds he can look out the window at the bird feeder and the squirrel feeder.

The nursing home frowns on Dick's building airplanes due to the glue and dope smell, and the use of razor blades. Somehow Dick

gets his models built. Right now he is working on a *Gollywock* to replace the one he lost last year.

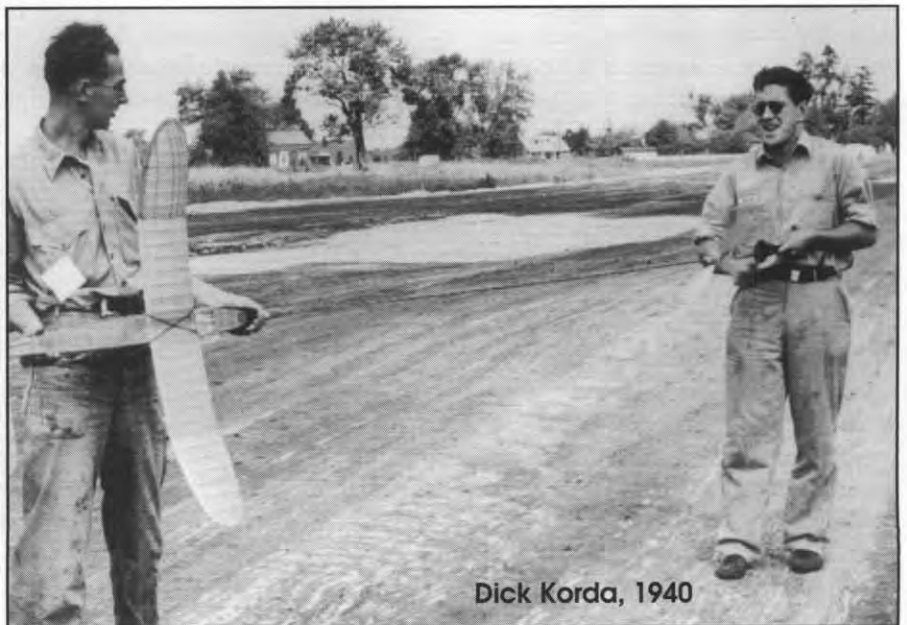
Dick showed us his aluminum blast tube with a slot along the length. The prop shaft can slide down the slot to remove the blast tube from the fuselage. This eliminates the extension wire that is used with the blast tube. Dick likes to feel the rubber when he is winding, but the extension wire puts the rubber out of his reach. In Dick's younger days he did not use a blast tube, extension wire, or a torque meter. As he wound, he just felt the rubber for hardness.



*Dick's half of the room with the redwood building board George gave him. He placed it in front of his window, above the air conditioner. He can watch the bird and squirrel feeders outside his window while he builds.*

The afternoon came to an end too quickly. It was not a sad ending. I know Dick is looking forward to working in his garden at his friend's farm, swimming, playing golf, and flying model airplanes.

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Dick Korda, 1940