

# The model man

*Dick Schiveley's lifelong fascination with building things began in 1936*

By Nancy Harwood  
Contributing Writer

**C**leared for takeoff in 1936 and still flying, Dick Schiveley's lifelong fascination with model planes began in 1936 when Rice University (then Rice Institute) put on a show of model planes at the Kress stores in downtown Houston.

"They had some planes flying, and that was the beginning of it," Schiveley said. "Mama spent 15 cents to get me a model and a nickel for a tube of glue, and it went from there."

Schiveley, now 76, is still building models, but the models he works with now are very different from that first little plane. His current project is a giant 12-foot radio-controlled model. Schiveley works on the plane in his garage, where he has set up a shop.

"I have a garage full of models, and I've got quite a shop," Schiveley said. "Guys from our flying club and other model builders come over to use the tools and machinery — I keep open house day or night. My wife thinks I'm crazy."

Although Schiveley's wife, Patricia, does not share his fascination with model planes, she does enjoy flying.

"She's a world traveler," Schiveley said. "Every time Continental gets an airplane off the ground, she's gonna be on it."

Schiveley and his childhood friends formed a club to fly their models, and later, after World War II began, they built profile models to be used for identification by airplane spotters.

"We built hundreds of those things," Schiveley said. "Then I went in the Air Force as soon as I found a way to lie and get in."

Schiveley joined the Army Air Corps at 16, first working with aerial photography and later as a jet fuel specialist. Later he worked with Special Services, going all over the country and directing the setting up of hobby and craft shops for the servicemen.

"I just lucked into that assignment," Schiveley said. "At the same time I was stationed at Eglin Field in Florida and going to the University of Florida."

After his discharge from the Air Force, ■ Please turn to page 11



Dick Schiveley works on a motor that he will install inside the latest model airplane

that he's building in the shop in his garage.  
Photo by Greg Densmore

# Houston Sports Flyers club on Kuykendahl named for Schiveley

■ Continued from page 1

Schiveley completed his degree in mechanical engineering and then returned to home base in Houston, where he went to work for Champion Paper in Pasadena. His fascination with planes and flying continued through the years, and he became a licensed pilot and for a time had his own plane. Currently grounded after two heart attacks, Schiveley now flies only with another licensed pilot in the plane.

These days his concentration is on the models and on Houston Sport Flyers, a flying club he started about 10 years ago in the West Mount Houston area just west of I-45. The group changed locations to its current site at 13939 Kuykendahl because the area where members used to fly their planes was building up so rapidly.

"They started building houses across the street, and it's embarrassing to have to go and pull a model out of a picture window," Schiveley said. "We even had to pull one out of a swimming pool once."

The club's Kuykendahl location, a 131-acre tract that is part of the Harris County Flood Control District, is leased from Precinct 4.

"We really appreciate the help of Precinct 4 Commissioner Jerry Eversole and Harris County Flood Control District Project Coordinator Clay Haynes in helping us lease this property," Schiveley said.

The field on Kuykendahl has been named Schiveley Field.

"I didn't go for it, but the other guys said that had to be the name of the field," Schiveley said.

Schiveley Field is the fifth field he's put in — he opened his first one in Pasadena in 1955.

"You've got to have a place for the guys to fly," he said.

Schiveley sees flying models as a sport for all ages.

"We've got a 9-year-old out there who can outfly the experts," Schiveley said. "And some of our members are in their 80s. If you've got the bug, you've got the bug — you're

a modeler."

The club has six or seven father-son teams as well as several other grandfather-grandson combinations.

"We have some granddaughters, too — that's a must," Schiveley said. "Sometimes they do better than the boys do."

The club encourages new members, and spectators are welcome if they obey the club's rules.

"You can come out to the field even if you're not a member," Schiveley said. "You have to have a sponsor, but if you come out, you'll meet somebody who'll sponsor you. We want to promote the hobby. We invite anyone to come out, and we'll be glad to teach them to fly models."

Information about the organization, including a list of club members available to instruct newcomers, is available on the club's Web site at [www.houstonflyers.com](http://www.houstonflyers.com).

Members fly their models every weekend and often in the afternoons during the week. Official meetings of the organization begin at 10 a.m. and are held on the second Saturday of each month.

"The meeting usually lasts about an hour and a half, and then everybody starts flying," Schiveley said. "We usually stay until you can't see the models — but there are some of us who keep on flying with flashlights taped on the models."

Club members pay \$100 annual dues, Schiveley said.

"Members also get asked to do a lot of volunteer labor to keep the property up," Schiveley said. "We're tightwads and poor and we keep up the property ourselves."

Schiveley and his fellow



This perfectly-crafted miniature train engine is just one of Schiveley's many build-it-yourself projects.

model enthusiasts find an unlimited fascination in their models.

"There's a fascination to this," he said. "Actually building the models teaches you, besides dexterity, about electronics and mechanics — you learn it all in models. You can get them to do stunts, or fly a pattern. Some people build scale models of real aircraft just to see how perfectly they can build them."

While many members of the group take pleasure in every detail of building their models, Schiveley says beginners can find models that are almost ready to fly.

"You just stick in a motor and a radio and throw it in the air," Schiveley said. "You just go to the hobby shops and look. You'll probably need someone who understands the controls to help you out in the beginning, and our guys are always glad to instruct newcomers and help them out."

Models can be expensive, Schiveley said. Hobby shops usually offer a wide range of models, but models can also be purchased at discount stores and toy shops.

"You can get models for all occasions — you can start out for \$200 up to thousands of dollars," he said. "It can get expensive, but usually you can get into it for a couple of hundred dollars for a basic radio, basic model and basic motor. There are some almost ready-to-fly electric-powered models, and some of those are as low as \$100 complete with everything."

In appreciation for his efforts over many years, Houston Sport Flyers honored Schiveley with a special Founder's Day celebration at

their March meeting. Some 250 members and friends gathered to show their appreciation to Schiveley as the organization's founder and the field's sponsor and presented him with a plaque honoring his efforts.

"They kept hollering 'Speech!' but I didn't know what to say," Schiveley said. "This was grand appreciation, but I don't need any appreciation. My payoff for building fields is seeing the guys get out there and use them — seeing them getting out there and pursuing their hobby."