

Gary Baughman is a lifelong Free Flighter and current member of the AMA Free Flight Contest Board for District V. A top F1A flyer in the 1970s and 1980s, he now enjoys a wide range of AMA, NFFS and FAC events.

Two of my TTOMA (Thermal Thumbers of Metro Atlanta) flying buddies began flying electric powered models several years ago. Later I saw Scott Lapraik and Jim Jennings flying electric models at the Nats. It looked effortless and easy, yet I was skeptical if I cob together a power train and learn how to fly electric models without a nearby mentor to assist me over the hurdles and into 21st Century power systems.

I am a Luddite when it comes to the computer age. I use a hand-me-down 2005 Motorola cell phone from my wife; I barely know how to use Microsoft XP let alone Excel. I don't have a laptop PC nor do I own an electronic tablet or reader. I paint with oils and watercolors. I am boggled by Photoshop. I send handwritten thank you notes in cursive script. If anyone needed a big nudge into the new paradigm of electric Free Flight modeling, it was me.

After I received plans and a short kit for a Super Pearl E-36 model from Don DeLoach, my resistance began to break down. When I found out that Hank Nystrom of Texas Timers was offering a "plug and fly" power package, I committed to flying an electric-powered Free Flight model. I ordered the motor, battery, folding prop, prop hub, charger, ESC, timer, and DT servo from Texas Timers. While waiting for the order to arrive, I began construction on the Super Pearl. The laser-cut wood was superb. The plans were clear. I used an old F1H balsa/carbon boom I had laying around the shop in lieu of the carbon boom suggested.

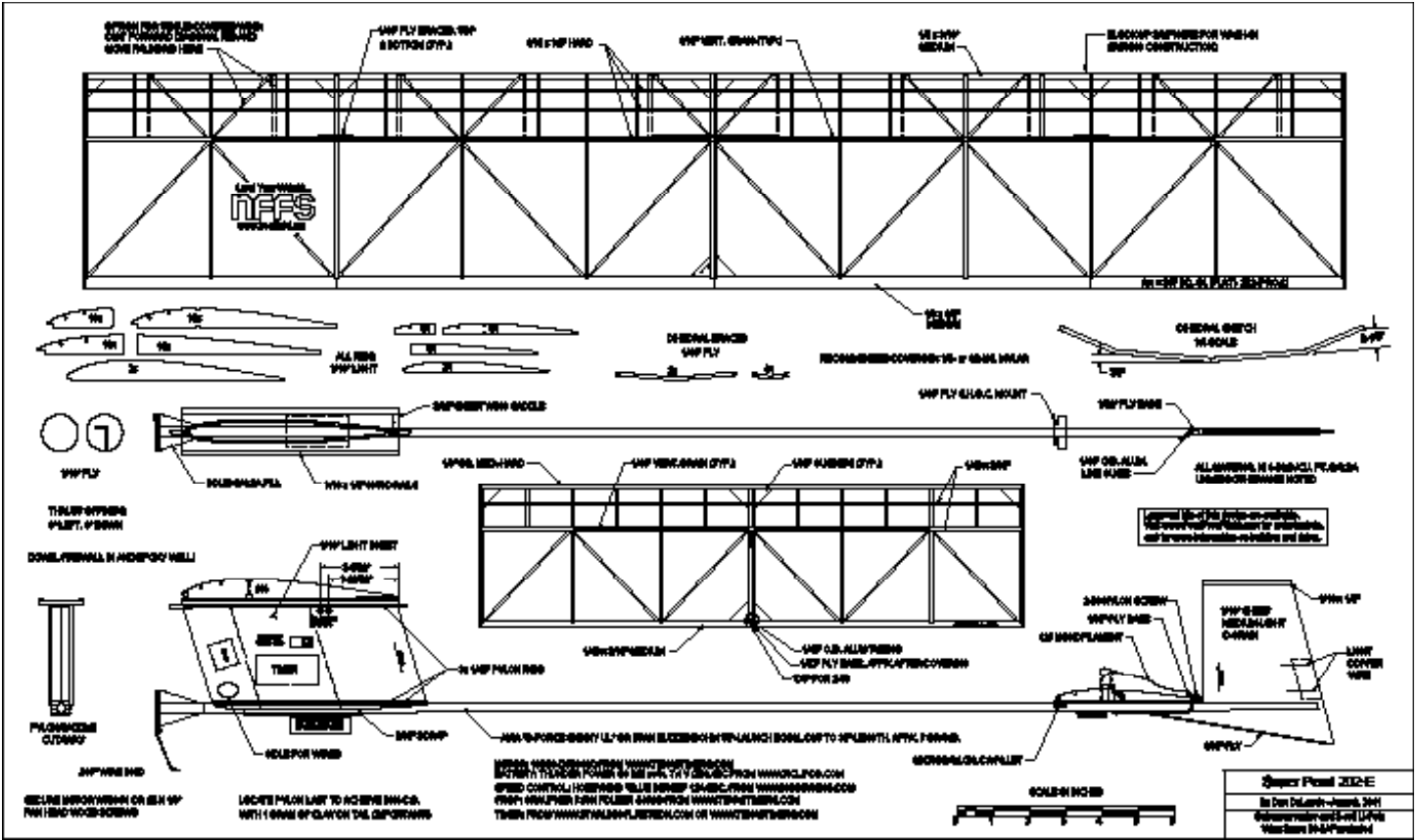
When the components arrived from Texas Timers, I laid them out on a piece of 1x4 pine. I screwed the motor down without the prop. I followed Hank's directions included in the order and on the website.

Voila! It was easy and everything worked perfectly as advertised. I installed the components into the model. I made sure everything was working perfectly before I installed the rest of the pylon sheeting. With the covering completed, the DT servo rigged, and the final balancing achieved by moving the battery on a Velcro strip attachment, I proceeded with some hand gliding in the back yard. A couple of tweaks on the adjustment screw in the rear of the stab and all was copacetic.

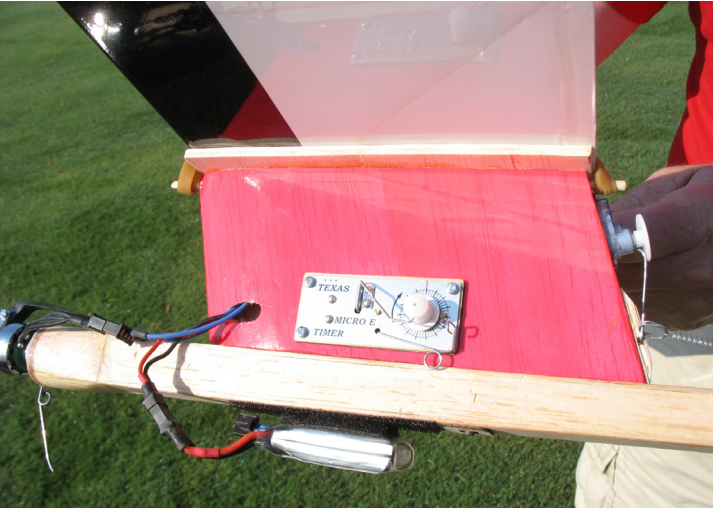
The May TTOMA contest date saw the Super Pearl and me at our sod farm flying field bright and early. A test glide or two assured me that everything was in order. Then came the moment of truth! I set the DT for one second and the motor run for three seconds on the Texas Timer scroll. Per the instructions, I pushed the start switch in for two seconds and released. The motor came to life. A flick of the start switch on the timer and the SP was released on its maiden flight. It was perfect. A few more motor runs of increasing length followed by a quick DT, punctuated a safe, zippy, efficient right spiral climb. The on-board circuitry is pre-programmed for a 1-, 10-, or 120-second



PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVID BARFIELD



initiation of the D/T servo as chosen by the flyer. Finally it was time for a 15-second motor run with a 10-second glide. Wow! The Super Pearl climbed like a 1/2A gas job without the noise, vibration, or oil residue. The climb height was amazing. The Pearl popped



out on top perfectly entering the glide. A few more flights confirmed that the

first one wasn't just luck. Every flight was on rails in the climb with a nice transition to glide speed at the top. My 153 gram Pearl with the 202 square-inch wing promises good thermal hunting capabilities. The Super Pearl 202 is more than a great entry model. I predict it will be highly competitive

on the national contest scene. I can't say enough good things about the Super Pearl 202 and the Texas Timer power package. The model and motor are perfectly suited to each other. The components will fit into a small space in the pylon. I chose to mount the start switch in the bottom of the square fuselage boom rather than

trying to wedge it into the pylon area. I have received some excellent service after the sale from Hank Nystrom at

BUILD THE SUPER PEARL

Order the Super Pearl 202-E from designer Don DeLoach, 831 E. Willamette Ave., Colorado Springs, CO 80903. Website: <www.pearlfreeflight.com>. Cost is \$5 for the rolled plan and \$18 for the laser-cut short kit (ribs, gussets, and plywood parts). Shipping: \$6.

Texas Timers. I highly recommend his products; he stands behind them 100%. If you have been holding back like I did, it is time to ditch your rotary telephone, burn the silk span, toss the banana oil, and enter the new age of electric-powered models. Gentlemen, charge your batteries! 🦋

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