

## Bring in the Satellites! By: Gina Trui

On August 11, 2003, Maynard Hill and his team, The Society for Technical Aeromodel Research, flew a model plane made of balsa wood from Nova Scotia all the way to Ireland. It had been their fifth attempt and twenty-fourth model. Prior planes had crashed, or, in one case, simply vanished.

The final flight flew 1881.6 miles, landing only five feet shy of its intended target. Landing on Irish soil at 2:08 pm, The Spirit of Butts Farm, as the plane had been nicknamed, took 38 hours and 23 minutes to complete the flight. The flight recreated



the first transatlantic journey of aviation pioneers John Alcock and Arthur Whitten Brown, who made the crossing in 16 hours and 27 minutes in 1919.

Maynard Hill was the driving force behind the achievement. He had long been a fan of model airplanes reaching back into his childhood. The trip across the Atlantic was also not his first record. Starting in the 60s, Hill set 25 world records flying radio-controlled aircraft as high as 26,990 feet, as long as 38 hours, and as fast as 151mph, and was inducted into the Model Aviation Hall of Fame in 1977.

Hill even managed to turn his hobby into part of his job at the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. He became a pioneer in developing unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, for the military.

In the 1997, Hill was inspired to try a transatlantic flight from New York to Paris, following in the path his hero, Charles Lindbergh. When that became unfeasible, it was decided on a more modest trip across the Atlantic, from Newfoundland to Ireland, which was ultimately successful with the Tam 5.

When Bob Dwight heard of this achievement, he wanted to get the airplane added to the then Historic Electronic Museum's collection. After some initial reluctance, Hill was convinced to visit the museum. He brought along his entire team to see if this was a place he wanted to donate one of his models.

After walking through the museum, The Society for Technical Aeromodel Research team and the museum staff sat down to discuss a possible donation. According to John McCarty, the meeting began with Hill's announcement that this was not a museum. The staff was understandably taken aback. Hill went on to explain that this was a memorial to the thousands of people who had spent their lives advancing the field of electronics. Hill agreed to donate a model like the Tam 5, which was placed in the space. The Spirit of Butts Farm was already committed to the National Model Aviation Museum in Indiana.

Maynard Hill passed away on June 7, and is survived by Gay, his wife of 59 years, and their three children.

