What has always amazed me is the possibility of your whole life being changed by the slightest of occurrences. Sometimes you don’t even realize it until years later when you try to remember the exact event that brought you to where you are today. I’ve traced John’s moment back to the summer of 1947.

He was eight years old and his brother was six. They were outside doing whatever boys of that age in that era did when they heard a strange noise overhead. There was a sputtering and then just a wind rushing sound as a disabled two-winger plane landed in the field directly across the road from their home. They joined the fast growing crowd to see the pilot safely jump to the ground with a gas can in hand asking directions to the nearest gas station. The brothers were in awe as they circled around and around the plane waiting for the pilot to return. They finally gave up and went home for the night but returned the next morning to see the pilot start the engine, taxi down the field and take off.

That was John’s moment and his brother’s too I believe. George, John’s younger brother, went on to pilot crop dusting planes in the south and to own and fly several planes and a helicopter of his own. Although John took a few hours of pilot lessons, his interest ran more towards models. The following is an account of how his modeling life progressed from there.

His first attempt at building was to assemble a plastic MIG. He would hang it from the ceiling of his room and watch the breeze from the window make it “fly”. When John was ten his older brother, Joe, was called to military service in Germany. The two younger boys, curious about what was locked in his desk drawer, finally managed to get it open and discovered a half dozen built cardboard model planes. They “flew” them. They ran from room to room and flew them into the walls and furniture until they were damaged beyond repair and discarded. To put it mildly, Joe was upset and hurt when he discovered his loss upon his return. John always felt guilty about the incident and some fifty years later found and replaced what was by then collector items to his brother. Joe returned them, still unassembled, shortly before his passing in 2005.

John’s first balsa plane was a ten cent Comet preprinted edition which was constructed with Comet glue. That led to many finger cuts as he used his Dad’s double-edged razor blades to cut out the pieces.

Since he was showing an interest in models, his parents bought him a completely built Aeromite with engine and fuel for Christmas in 1952. John was thirteen and spent hours and hours trying to get that engine started. He says now that he believes he burned up the glo plug by incorrectly attaching the battery clip. But he didn’t know that back then. Finally so frustrated that it wouldn’t start, he tied string to the lead outs and began whipping it around in a circle. He told George to catch the plane as it flew by and then he tried to maneuver it up and over George’s head to make him miss. George carries the scar on his upper lip to this day. On John’s birthday, April 1, 2006, Bob Zambelli presented him with an Aeromite that he found, restored and mounted on a display piece.
The first balsa model John owned, he did not build. He purchased a Sterling Monocoupe scale model that had a maroon finish. He had a friend who said he had flown models before and offered to test fly it for John. They started the engine, John launched it and the friend demolished it. Whether it was poor construction or poor flying or a combination of the two, the end result was the same.

John’s bug for building was taking hold and he was not discouraged by the wreck. Instead he found a small hobby shop in the little town of Kiedive about five miles away that was owned and operated by a gentleman affectionately known as Preacher Jewel. John bought a Mr. Mulligan scale plane kit by Sterling over the objection of the owner. He tried unsuccessfully to convince John that this was not a beginner’s kit. John bought it, built it, and destroyed it in three months time. At this stage of his building career, he had no idea how to balance a plane or that it was even important to do so. He suggests now his plane was tail heavy.

Shortly after he found the Kiedive hobby shop, the owner, Preacher Jewel, passed away. That event would lead him, at the age of fifteen with the financial support of his mother and the use of a corner of his family gas station, to open his own hobby shop. His first customer was Harry Drew. Harry bought a Sterling Corsair and a Fox .35 and John entered the hobby business. After building the Corsair, Harry brought it back and flew it in the field behind the gas station. John was so impressed he became a determined builder and flyer of scale planes. Harry has been to many of our Fly-Ins and still lives in the nearby town of Greensboro.

On his quest to learn to build and fly scale planes successfully, John built the Sterling Fokker D7 in 1955. Still not knowing much about balancing, he flew it and although it wrecked there was no significant damage. The following pictures are blurry because they were captured from an 8mm movie camera.
In 1956 John founded a flying club that would meet weekly at the hobby shop. He hoped to attract those interested in control line as well as new customers. Some of his first products were Testors Butyrite dope, Aerogloss dope, Cub fuel and Testors fuel. He proudly displayed his Corsair that he built but still had very little success in flying.
He decided to build a profile plane and see if he could do better with that type over a scale model. He built a Sterling Messerschmitt ME 109 and had it in the air for a couple of laps before it crashed and lost its front end.

while anxiously awaiting the next day to fly again. By 1958 he had joined AMA and proudly added his number to his flight box. He began building better flying planes like the Veco Mustang.

In January of 1961 he was newly married (this is where I join the story) and had moved to Washington, PA. In his whole life, this is the only time his address had been anywhere except Carmichaels, PA. The hobby shop was moved to Washington with John working nights in a machine shop and both of us tending the shop during the day. This lasted until 1962 when his brother took

In the summer of 1957, John purchased a Ringmaster that had been built and painted by someone else. It was not tail heavy and led to John’s first successful take off and landing. Sleep was hard to come by that night as the eighteen year old replayed that first flight
over running the hobby shop as John and I moved back to Carmichaels to take over the grocery business founded by his parents.

The next eight to nine years were spent only flying when time allowed which wasn’t often. John would get in an occasional flight across the street from our house, where he taught me to fly, and we had a few kits and supplies for sale in our garage, but most of his time was spent building stores and raising kids.

A friend who bought the infrequent item from John told him one day that he would build a control line model if John would build a radio control one. That brings to mind the radio control J3 Cub that John built. Before the radio equipment was ready, he and his brother thought they would free flight it. They started the engine and let it go. It took off and began flying in wider and wider circles until it was out of sight. Being bright yellow and a good sized plane, they felt they would have no trouble finding it. They finally drove to Waynesburg, rented a plane and flew back to Carmichaels to search from the sky. They spotted it in the dense trees about a mile or so from the house. It appeared to have run out of gas and glided into the top of a tall tree. They returned their rental and drove back to the spot where they had seen the model. John climbed the tree and had the Cub nearly in his reach when the property owner accosted George with a shot gun. He demanded to know why he was on private property that was posted, “No Trespassing”. When George tried to explain that his airplane was in the tree, the gentleman cocked and aimed the gun at him accusing him of trying to make a fool out of him. John yelled down while holding the yellow plane in his hand. They were allowed to peacefully leave the property with their model but John decided that radio control was probably not for him. He would rather have his plane on the end of his lines. In any event the time for flying ended for John altogether in 1972.

By 1984, the grocery business had flourished and John treated his family to a trip to England. Our daughter, Dena and I spent one afternoon at Harrod’s department store while John and our son, Joe wandered aimlessly around the streets. On one side street they came across a hobby shop and went in just to browse. Joe picked up a P51 Mustang profile control line kit and John told him that he used to build and fly those planes. Joe said he would like to learn and so they bought the kit and brought it home.
The closest hobby shop to Carmichaels at that time was A.B. Charles in Pittsburgh. They went there looking for supplies and found that anything for control line had to be ordered but it was possible to get what they needed. Together John and his son built the plane and flew it. John was hooked again. He began building Sterling C series scale planes. This is where he learned a lot of his building skills. The attention to detail that is required in the assembly and application of items such as machine guns, dummy engines and intricate cockpits keeps you focused and inventive. As much as he enjoyed this part of modeling, he didn’t do much flying. In fact he never attempted to fly these scale planes at all. They were just for display.

All of John’s kits were special ordered from the hobby shop in Pittsburgh, but when he traveled, he would look for local hobby shops in that area trying to find kits and accessories for control line. In many different towns and states he would get the same response, “Control line is dead, no one flies that anymore”.

Tired of ordering a kit at a time, John went to a wholesaler called Tri-State Hobbycraft in Pittsburgh and bought enough control line products to re-open the small shop in his garage. Goldberg, Top Flite, Sterling and Sig carried control line kits and accessories at that time. John had a few customers but most of them were interested in Radio Control. The year was 1987.

John and a few control line flyers were asked to put on a flying demonstration in Morgantown, WV at a hot air balloon festival. There were radio control flyers there as well. John and his friends flew some stunt and scale but

*** Clarification ***

I wish to express my sincere apologies to anyone that was upset by the play on words that I used to thank Pete Hermans and Doug Benedetti for ridding our home of a bat that flew down the chimney the first night of the 2012 Fly-In. Thank you for your concern but I was only joking and was never in any danger.

Sincerely,
Coral (Buzz) Brodak
gathered little attention as the RC guys drew the crowd to view their combat flying. As the allotted time was coming to an end, John and his son Joe decided to do a little control line combat. When they finished they had nearly one hundred spectators watching and giving them a hand. The onlookers loved to be able to follow every move the planes made right down to the mid-air collision at the end. The Brodaks definitely needed more practice. Also, John heard later that the RC flyers wanted them banned from any future balloon festivals. I guess they got a lot more attention than was expected.

In 1988 John moved his hobby shop from his garage to Brodak Commons on Rt. 88 in Carmichaels. The shop’s inventory was 90% radio control equipment. There was some control line products and John hoped to convert RC flyers to CL flyers but had no luck with that at all. John started a CL & RC airplane club in 1990 named the Flying Circus. In the beginning there were twenty-seven RC flyers and thirteen CL flyers. Within two years the RC pilots broke away and started their own club with their own field. This worked better for everyone involved.

By 1991 most of the companies that were producing CL products had gone out of business or had stopped carrying CL kits and supplies. At that time the only place to get what you needed was to know someone who knew a guy that made whatever you wanted and to scratch build your planes. Usually the fuel, lines, tanks, mufflers, etc were being produced by a very qualified guy in his basement or garage hundreds of miles away.

John started contacting these individuals to see if they would be interested in establishing a program that would have John buying from them and then advertising and
distributing the items through his company. He put out a catalog listing everything he could make available and the idea took off like a shot. It was so successful in fact, that the gentlemen who were producing the items were overwhelmed. Many were doing this as a hobby and didn’t want the pressure the demand was putting on them. John began buying them out and Brodak Manufacturing & Distributing was born.

Still an avid scale builder, John began attending and competing in the Cleveland, OH Static show. His prize plane was a scratch built ME 109. He had devoted 60 hours alone to the detail in the cockpit. He was very proud in 1991 when it won “Best of Show” and the plane hangs now from the ceiling of the Hobby Shop in Carmichaels.

In 1994 John took Brodak Mfg. & Dist. products to the Toledo Model Airplane Show in Ohio which is a showcase for companies to present their supplies. The first year he rented a half table and took only a few items as this was an RC Expo and he wasn’t sure what to expect. There was very little interest in what he had to sell. The second year John rented a full table and took a dozen kits along with other control line products. There were some complaints that year about a CL company being at an RC venue. There was talk of barring him from future shows until George Aldrich contacted someone within the Weak Signals club and it was decided that John would be cleared to partici-
2012 was John’s 18th year at the event and his display covered three tables with nearly one hundred CL planes available.

Bob Hunt was the editor of Flying Models in 1996. He called to express an interest in doing a story on Brodak Mfg. & Dist. When Bob came to Carmichaels to do the interview, John took him the one quarter mile up the road to show him the Flying Circus’ flying field which happens to be behind our house. Bob suggested that the field would be a great place to hold a contest. John didn’t think anyone would attend but Bob finally convinced him to give it a try. The first contest was in 1997 and there were thirty-six entries that flew seventy-seven flights over two days. In 2011 which was the 15th year for the Fly-In, there were one hundred and forty-seven entries that flew seven hundred and fourteen flights in five days. I guess Bob was right.

John always believed that control line would survive if the items needed were made available. He has now published his 18th catalog which lists over one thousand items. He never took a penny in profit out of the Mfg. & Dist. business or his Hobby Shop. Every cent that was left after expenses was reinvested in some way to promote and sustain control line flying.

Thinking back now to that day in London when John walked into a hobby shop that was tucked away on a side street and just happened to have a P51 Mustang in stock, I wonder how different things may have been if he would have skipped that street and walked up another.

If you are interested in a more detailed list of John’s life and accomplishments, you can follow along on the profile page that is included (on the next three pages).

~ Coral (Buzz) Brodak

NOTE: See John’s scale model airplanes on the inside front cover.
JOHN G. BRODAK – CHRONOLOGICAL PROFILE

1939 ......................Born April 1 in Fairmont West Virginia
                   Attended All Saints Catholic and Carmichaels District schools
1952 ......................Age 13, started work in parents’ grocery store
1955 ......................Joined PA National Guard - Company K 110 Inf.
                   Opened hobby shop - first business
1958 ......................Became a Disc Jockey - “Johnny Lee”
                   Became a certified electrician
1959 ......................Went to work as a machinist at the Piatt Machine Shop in Washington, PA
1960 ......................Married Coral Welsh
1961 ......................Opened Brodak Hobby Center in Washington, PA
1962 ......................Took over the Carmichaels grocery store from parents
                   Birth of first child, Melissa
                   Founded J&G Electric
1963 ......................Discharged from National Guard with the rank of Sgt.
                   John G. Brodak, Manager of Brodak’s Food Center Team in the Big 4 Softball League
1964 ......................Age 27, became the second youngest President of the Carmichaels Area Chamber
1965 ......................Remodeled Carmichaels store - enlarged to 7,000 sq. ft.
                   Birth of third child, Claudine
                   Became a member of the American Legion
1966 to 1972 ..........Commissioner of Atlantic Pacific Baseball Association “APBA”
1969 ......................Published a baseball game magazine, “APBA Innings”
                   Birth of fourth child, Joseph
1970 ......................Open Brodak Printing Company
1972 ......................Created Replay Games, Inc. (Baseball card game) became president
1974 ......................Open Millsboro, PA 10,000 sq. ft. grocery store
                   Became a 4th degree Knight in the Knights of Columbus
1977 ......................1st Place IGA Beef Round-Up (Millsboro Super Dollar)
1977 ......................Replay World Series (John G. Brodak Manager Carmichaels Ironmen)
                   1977.....Carmichaels defeated Minot 4 games to 2
                   1979.....Carmichaels defeated Shiloh 4 games to 2
                   1980.....Auburn defeated Carmichaels 4 games to 3
                   1982.....Carmichaels defeated NSA 4 games to 1
                   1983.....Crucible defeated Carmichaels 4 games to 2
                   1984.....Coldwater defeated Carmichaels 4 games to 3
                   1986.....Carmichaels defeated Ocean St. 4 games to 2
                   1988.....Carmichaels defeated Niceville 4 games to 0
1978 ......................Built a new 14,000 sq. ft. Supermarket in Carmichaels
                   1st Place IGA Beef Round-Up (Millsboro Super Dollar)
1981 ......................Became a Director of the Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
1982 ......................President of Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
                   Was an extra in a film made by the BBC - “Two Weeks in Winter”
1983 ......................Re-elected president of the Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
                   Became Commissioner of a play by mail baseball league Replay Games
                   Appointed Director of the King Coal Association
                   Remodeled Millsboro store to 14,000 sq. ft.
1984 ......................President of the Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
                   Director of King Coal Association
                   Opened a 10,000 sq. ft. Grocery store in Masontown, PA
1985 ......................4th Term as President of the Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
                   Elected Second Vice President of the King Coal Association
                   Enlarged Brodak Printing Company to 3,000 sq. ft.
                   Opened Brodak’s Dari-Delite, Millsboro, PA
                   Opened Brodak’s Video Showcase, Millsboro, PA
                   Election Day flood destroys Millsboro grocery store, Video Store, and Dari-Delite
                   All businesses reopened in 40 days
                   Opened Hobby Shop in garage
1986 .................. Director of Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
1987 .................. Helped establish Fredericktown Chamber - elected its first President
Purchased Brodak’s Mobile Home Village
1988 .................. Helped district 5 reopen Clyde Mine
Remodeled Carmichaels store to 16,000 sq. ft.
Opened Brodak’s Video Showcase, Carmichaels, PA
Attended Mickey Mantle/Whitey Ford Baseball Fantasy Camp
Stats: G-9, AB-40, H-20, 2B-4, RBI-17, GWRBI-1, AVG.-.500
Became an “All Season Flyer” with control line airplanes
Opened Brodak Hobby Center, Carmichaels, PA

1989 .................. Opened Brodak’s Holiday Travel International Agency, Carmichaels, PA
Was made an honorary member of the Fayette County Vietnam Veterans Association
Became a lifetime member of the National Aeronautic Association
Became a lifetime member of the Academy of Model Aeronautics
1990 .................. Began construction of a 26,000 sq. ft. store, Masontown, PA
Became President of the Flying Circus Flying Club
Appointed to the General Facilities Authority Board - elected Treasurer
Appointed Director of the Riverfront Development Board
Joined the Lion's Club International
President of WKEG Radio Station, Washington, PA
1991 .................. John G. Brodak keeps Flenniken Library financially stable
Formed Brodak Mfg. & Distributing Company, Inc.
Published the first Brodak catalog of model airplanes & supplies
Missed one month of flying for the “All season Flyer” challenge
Appointed to Greene County Committee for Growth, P.A.C.
Named “Man of the Year” by the Carmichaels Area Lion’s Club
Opened the new 26,000 sq. ft. grocery store in Masontown, PA
Opened Brodak’s Video Showcase in Masontown, PA
1991 to 1995 ....... Attended the 40th National Model Airplane Show in Cleveland, Ohio
Throughout the years of attending the show was awarded 18 static wins including:
1 Best in Show....10 First Place 4 Second Place 4 Third Place
1992 .................. Went to WKEG radio station as disc jockey, Johnny Lee
Purchased the rights to produce J. Roberts’ 3-line Handle and Bellcranks
Rejoined the “All Season Flyer” challenge
1993 to 2002 ....... Pool Tournament wins: 8,793...Losses: 5,631
1993 .................. Brodak Plaza Masontown rental space - CVS
Purchased and released Control Line Classics
1994 .................. Introduction of the first Brodak kit - “Lightning Streak”
Remodeled Millsboro store to 18,000 sq. ft.
1995 .................. Selected to be a member of the Universal Who’s Who Publication of Business Executives
1996 .................. Purchased Perfect Tanks
Fifth year as a “All Season Flyer”
1997 .................. Elected President of the Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
Appointed to the Board of Directors of the Greene County Industrial Development
Authority - served five years
First Brodak Fly-In - 36 Entries, 77 Flights, 2 days
1998 .................. Brodak Plaza Carmichaels rental space - Subway
Brodak Plaza Carmichaels rental space - District Court Office
Opened new 10,000 sq. ft. Brodak Manufacturing & Distributing Company, Inc.
Opened new 2,000 sq. ft. Brodak Printing Company
Introduced Brodak Butyrate Paint Products
Purchased Taft Tanks
Second Brodak Fly-In - 84 Entries, 173 Flights, 2 days
1999 .................. Expanded Carmichaels grocery store to 32,000 sq. ft.
Purchased BY&O Props
Took over PAMPA products
Third Brodak Fly-In - 132 Entries, 482 Flights, 3 days
Entered my first contest with a Ryan PT-21, ended up in 6th place at the Nationals
2000................................................................Brodkak Commons Carmichaels rental space - Dollar General
Brodkak Commons Carmichaels rental space - Wine & Spirits
Brodkak Commons Carmichaels rental space - Radio Shack
Expanded Hobby store to 5,000 sq. ft.
Started “Model Aviation As A Sport” campaign
Fourth Fly-In - 96 Entries, 199 Flights, 4 days
Sponsored Intermediate at the NATS

2001................................................................Brodkak Plaza Masontown rental space - Wine & Spirits
Brodkak Plaza Masontown rental space - Dollar General
Tenth consecutive years as “All Season Flyer”
Fifth Fly-In with 109 entries and 216 flights in four days

2002................................................................Elected Vice President of the Carmichaels area Chamber of Commerce
Purchased control line division of the Goldberg Company
Became PAMPA Director for District 3
Introduced the “Brodak 40” model airplane engine
Sixth Fly-In with 134 entries and 296 flights in four days

2003................................................................Brodkak Plaza Masontown rental space - China Garden
Elected Vice President of the Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
Seventh Fly-In with 148 entries and 702 flights in four days
Flood destroys airplane museum items, supplies and paint materials in Carmichaels
Flooding causes destruction in Carmichaels grocery store
Fire destroys entire paint shop of Brodak Mfg. & Dist. Co., Inc.

2004................................................................Elected PAMPA President
Introduced “Almost Ready to Fly & Almost Ready to Cover” control line airplanes
Inducted into KAPA (Kits and Plans Antiquitous) Hall of Fame
Elected President of the Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce

2005................................................................Vice President of Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
Fifteenth consecutive year as “All Season Flyer”
 Introduced the first Electric Almost Ready to Fly control line airplane
National Champion in Fun Scale control line airplane competition (Speed Six)
Published premiere issue of Control Line World magazine
Opened Brodak Beer distributor in Masontown, PA

2006................................................................Carmichaels Beer opens
Vice President of Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
National Champion in Profile Scale control line competition - LA-5
High Static Score in Profile Scale - LA-5

2008................................................................President of Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
Hosted the 12th Fly-In with 165 entries and 741 flights held over five days

2009................................................................President of Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
Hosted the thirteenth Fly-In with 156 entries and 752 flights
Second Place in Sport Scale at the 2009 NAT’s (Shoestring)
First Place in Sport Scale at the Garden State Circle Burners (Shoestring)

2010................................................................President of Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
Hosted the 14th Fly-in with 161 entries and 734 flights
Grand National Champion 2010 NAT’s (Shoestring)

2011................................................................President of Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
Hosted 15th Fly-In with 147 entrants and 714 flights
Honorary Life Member Knights of Columbus
Model Aviation Hall of Fame
First Place Sport Scale at the 2011 NAT’s (Shoestring)
High Static Score in Sport Scale (Shoestring)
Purchased Dare Design
Purchased Spirit of Yesteryear
Purchased Hobby Craft
20 consecutive years as an “All Season Flyer”

2012................................................................Vice President Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce
21 consecutive years as an “All Season Flyer”
Brodak Plaza CL Museum opens
Millsboro rental space - Family Dollar
Sponsored Intermediate at the NATS (13th year)