

WEN-MAC .049 ENGINE BACKGROUND

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The Wen-Mac model line was begun by two brothers, Len & Jack McRoskey, following their observation that a better C/L ARF could be done than the prefabbed aluminum model that caught their eye. Some custom plastic molds later and business was decent from the start. The company's name originated from a contraction of the partners names, the 'Mac' part is obvious, but the 'Wen' was from the (now) little known Adolph Wenland, their early partner. Though Wenland left after a few years, the company name was too established to contemplate a change. At first they were using a 100 engines a week, but soon were up to 1000 a day. Purchasing these from three different vendors was unsatisfactory. The only answer was to make their own.

Bill Atwood was contracted to design an .049 for them. Production and Quality control was left to the brothers own responsibility and things went better. They soon decided that starting a small engine was a hurdle and a pull cord starter was developed. The problem was that it was designed for a 4" pull, and users yanked it a foot or more. So the 'Roto-matic' spring starter was introduced in '57. By this time, the Wen-Mac had accumulated quite a few firsts in the industry; the first ready-to-fly plastic model planes, window packaging to better the display, the first marketable complete flying kit, bomb dropping, parachute ejection and rocket firing.

As of 1964, some 6000 Wen-Mac were being produced a day. As a result, Wen-Mac engine types tend to fall into groups. The parts interchangeability was quite high, and new models tended to include parts from earlier versions until they were used up. Wen-Macs have always been designed for use in plastic C/L models and consequently most of the apparently purposeless holes, protrusions were meant for specific installation purposes. Quality was good as 300 (15%), picked at random, were test run as a quality control check. Part of the quality check was included running several engines for 8 hours a day for as long as 30 days. Piston tolerances were 15 millionths of inch for size, roundness and taper. Probably not as sophisticated as Cox, but reasonable.

Bill Schmidt has had a reasonable amount of success in finding these engines are quite satisfactory for 1/2A Nostalgia FF. The Mark II and III models appear to be the most capable. Unfortunately, since he was able to get the engine legalized for NOS the e-bay price has risen sharply. It will usually take a number of engines to resurrect a workable one, as one can guess what the main reason they are not in a plastic airplane is...