JUN JUL OCT Go http://www.rocketryplanet.com/content/view/2460/95/ 4 captures 2010 2011 2016 15 Jul 2011 - 5 Oct 2016 Friday, July 15th, 2011 HOME WEBLINKS FEATURES NEWSDESK ARCHIVES FORUMS AUCTIONS CHAT CALENDAR SEARCH SITEMAP MORE INFO

Home / Archives / Fame shone on Nebraska model rocket pioneer

### Subscribe

## Fame shone on Nebraska model rocket pioneer

Archived Media Articles by JERRY GUENTHER, North Platte Telegraph FRIDAY, JULY 04, 2008

NORFOLK, Nebraska USA — The late Orville Carlisle will point out that he never sought the spotlight. Yet in the 1950s until his death in 1988, the Norfolkan couldn't help but be noticed around the world.

As a boy and young man, he was respected for his interest and knowledge in fireworks and model rocketry around Norfolk and Northeast Nebraska. But his name took off in 1954 when he devised a model rocket that took four years to get patented.



The rocket could be launched from to 100 to

1,000 feet depending on the charge. Then once in air, there was a second explosion where a parachute emerged and the rocket would then drift safely back to earth where it could be retrieved and reused.

The concept was especially appreciated by children and hobbyists because it saved lots of money. Only the inner workings would have to be purchased to blast off the rocket again.

It was 50 years ago this week on July 1, 1958, that Carlisle received his patent for the Rock-A-Chute reusable system.

He had been making them in his basement to sell (before the patent), recalls his daughter, Margaret Carlisle of Norfolk.

It was an exciting time for model rocketry in the 1950s, she said. The Russians had launched Sputnik, the satellite that began the space race between the United States and the Soviet Union.

From Popular Mechanics to hobby magazines, Carlisle was featured in many articles. He was often contacted through letters or at conventions by people telling him how much they appreciated his patent.

"We'd get letters from people, kids especially, saying, 'You saved my life. My friend just killed himself trying to make a rocket with a drain pipe and gun powder," Carlisle said. "A lot of kids lost eyes or arms trying their own thing."

Carlisle said that even later in his life, her father was contacted by people who grew up in that era telling him how much they appreciated his discovery.

"It was always safety first with dad, she said. He was extremely safety conscious."

From toy shows to pyrotechnics conventions, Orville Carlisle was in demand.

Mary Carlisle, his widow, recalled in the late 1950s being at one of the toy shows with him in Chicago.

Although Carlisle was placed in the back corner of the show attended by thousands of people, he quickly became the focal point, with lines extending all over, waiting for a chance to visit with him, she said.

Mary Carlisle said he hardly ever let her shoot off any fireworks or rockets. Yet he often asked her with help figuring out formulas. He was no mathematician, she said.

But it wasn't just model rockets and fireworks enthusiasts who tapped into his knowledge. Margaret Carlisle and Mary Carlisle both can remember times when the FBI or officials from NASA contacted him to ask him about explosives and pyrotechnics.

There were times when, based on his knowledge of explosives, law enforcement officials were able to obtain information that led to an arrest of bombings, they said.

### Sectional Menu

From The Archive Media Article Archive Editorials Archive

News Archive 1993

News Archive 1994 News Archive 1995

News Archive 1996

News Archive 1997

News Archive 1998

News Archive 1999

News Archive 2000

News Archive 2001

News Archive 2002

News Archive 2003

News Archive 2004

News Archive 2005

News Archive 2006

News Archive 2007

News Archive 2008

News Archive 2009

News Archive 2010

### Want Rocketry Books?

# SIGMA ROCKETS Canada's Rocket Shoppe

### **Help Support This Site**

INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS





RECURRING DONATIONS









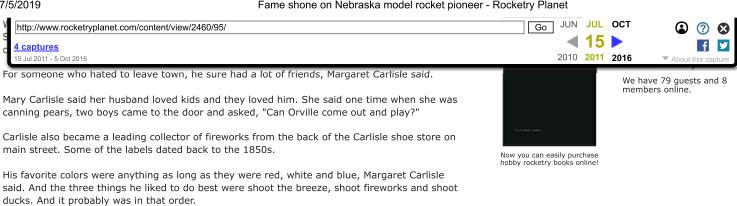
#### **Most Popular Archival**

APCP not an explosive, rules Judge Reggie B. Walton

Potassium nitrate "sugar propellant latest target of ATF scrutiny

BATFE submits APCP test results to court in TRA/NAR lawsuit

The BBC's Top Gear show launches their own space shuttle



### No reader comments

Copyright © 2008, North Platte Telegraph.

Registered users can add comments and discuss this article. To participate, please login or register.





Home Weblinks Features Newsdesk Archives Forums Auctions Chat Calendar

Copyright © 2006-2011 • All Rights Reserved