

BELLANCA W.B.2

*Fly it slowly and quietly
for the ultimate in realism.*

by Eric Fearnley



BELLANCA W.B.2
TYPE: R/C Scale
WINGSPAN: 74 inches
WING AREA: 703 square inches
LENGTH: 41 inches
WEIGHT: 7 pounds
ENGINE: .40
RADIO: 4-channel

• When Guiseppe Bellanca stepped off the boat from Italy onto American soil in the 1920s, no one imagined the influence he would have on the future design of passenger-carrying aircraft. With typical, classical Italian simplicity of design, he produced a functional outline and

filled it with infinite detail to give performance and reliability.

It was not easy to find work in the mid-1920s, but Bellanca was lucky enough to land an order to design a flying test bed for what was to become the world's most reliable radial engine—the Wright Whirlwind. Although only 220 horsepower, it would seemingly go on forever; Bellanca decided to design a ship capable of lifting the maximum in fuel to exploit this advantage. The result was the WB2 model. The wing was enormous, heavily undercambered, and secured with four large wing struts which were also of lifting section (a 2½" chord on the

model, which poses the question as to whether the WB2 is technically a triplane for model judging purposes!). Even the fuselage was of lifting profile, and the cabin as large as possible to take the payload it was able to lift. The nose was a beautifully faired cone, covering half the Whirlwind engine. By the standards of the day, this was a clean and efficient airplane.

Its success story is well known. It won cross-country races, carried up to six passengers on demonstration flights, and finally made history by flying over New York for 52 hours, using the fuselage as a giant tank to hold some 600 gallons of



Allow your imagination just a bit of freedom and these photos could be of the real Bellanca, its Wright Whirlwind engine . . .



. . . chattering away as it spans the Atlantic, crosses France, and then, running out of fuel, lands just short of Berlin.

gas.

Col. Lindbergh was at this time considering his transatlantic attempt, and felt that the Bellanca was the only airplane capable of crossing the ocean. He set about collecting funds, and went to purchase the plane with a check for \$16,000 in his hand. But by this time, it had passed into the hands of a somewhat shady scrap dealer named Levine, who would sell the plane only on the condition that he, Levine, could nominate the crew. This was out of the question for Lindy, so he approached the Ryan company, who offered to design and build a plane for \$10,000. The result was the

famous Spirit. The similarity between the fine nose of the Bellanca and that of the Ryan suggests the respect the industry had for Bellanca's new approach. In my own opinion, the WB2 was far superior to the Spirit; had Lindy bought it, I am sure his Atlantic crossing would have been much easier and safer.

Some 14 days after Lindy's triumph, Levine took off for Europe in the Bellanca. If it hadn't been for a series of legal battles, and fights with his pilot, he would certainly have been the first. As it was, the Bellanca staggered off the muddy New York field weighing 8,000 pounds—that's the weight of a fully

armed, WW II Wildcat, with about 1,000 less horsepower! With the same Whirlwind engine as in Lindy's Spirit, the Bellanca carried two men in comparative comfort, and the airplane was much more stable and easier to fly. The fuselage was an enormous tank, on top of which five-gallon drums were strapped.

Some 42 hours and 3,911 miles later, the aircraft was over Germany, having easily outflown the Ryan. By now, it was down to its unloaded weight of 2,000 pounds and flew so slowly that the German ground crew at an airfield were able to drive a truck alongside the plane and

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