

Loving's innovation techniques

Do it yourself

Neal Loving designed and built five original airplanes, working mostly by himself. Loving's constant teaching helped sharpen his personal expertise and skills. He was part of a movement of do-it-yourselfers that grew to become the Experimental Aircraft Association.

Set deadlines

Several of Loving's planes were built to enter competitions. Many late nights led to remarkably quick results—often just a couple of years per plane. He finished the midget racer "Loving's Love" in just nineteen months and his first roadable design in under a year.

Modeling success

Building model airplanes from balsa wood and tissue paper resembled the wood and fabric construction of real airplanes. Youngsters could learn similar construction techniques and practice flying their models before graduating to full size vehicles. The inexpensive kits made it easy for kids to begin, play, experiment, crash, repair and move on quickly to more ambitious models.

Models also helped test new designs. Photos show Loving's second glider was preceded by a scale model. Flying toys first inspired the Wright brothers as children, and they and others relied on models to test grown-up ideas.

Many small steps

Loving built his career on a series of achievable increments, and parlayed new skills into emerging opportunities, advancing steadily despite setbacks. Loving moved from model glider to two-seater airplane, and from hobbyist to aeronautical engineer.

Right time and place

Loving made the most of his luck, growing up in Detroit during the black migration from the south, capitalizing on the growing opportunities created by WWII to start his aviation company.

Keeping records, spreading the news

A self-described "string saver," Loving kept meticulous records, aided by his sharp memory for dates and events. Publicity spread word of his accomplishments, as magazine articles led to sales of plans to his midget racer. One copy of the racer even sold to a pilot of the supersonic SR-71 spy plane!

Persistence

Loving grew up with adversity and learned coping skills early on. Even as a teen he pushed back against roadblocks to pursue his dream in high school. With help from mentors and civil rights groups, Loving surmounted racial barriers to teaching jobs and business opportunities in aviation.

Teaching and community support

Loving's teaching graduated along with his students. Starting with model airplane classes, Loving then taught at the Aeromechanics School, at his own flight school, and finally through public speaking. Students became colleagues, supporters, and friends as he gave back to his community. After moving to Dayton, Neal's African-American peers included aviation professionals and educators Dr. Clark Beck and Dr. Lewis Jackson.