



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of WARREN KURTH

April 5, 1933-January 16, 2013



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The following was published in the January 2010 issue of Model Aviation magazine. Kurth was inducted into the 2010 Model Aviation Hall of Fame.

Warren Kurth

Warren Kurth was born on April 5, 1933, in Bloomington, Illinois. His modeling career began with a sheet-balsa model kit when he was six years old. He was an assistant instructor at a YMCA model building class during junior high school. Warren lectured on model building, flew Control Line demonstrations, and taught a model building class at the community center for disadvantaged boys when he was in high school.

Warren received his degree in mechanical engineering from Purdue University and joined the Air Force in 1955. He was on the Air Force Nats team and won the 1/2A Speed event at the 1957 Nats.

Warren designed several models in his career, including the *Miniball*, *Jetstream*, *Hedgehopper*, *Peetriot*, and the infamous *Peanut*. The *Miniball*, first published in the October 1970 issue of *Model Airplane News*, had seven National AMA records in 1/2 A Proto Speed in Open, Junior, and Senior classes between 1968 and 1972.

Warren's *Jetstream* also won many trophies in 1956, 1960, and 1961. The *Jetstream* set three national AMA records in 1959 and the early 1960s.

Several of Warren's kits and complete airplanes were donated to the National Model Aviation Museum.

Warren was the first to design, cast, and use aluminum speed pans on 1/2A Speed models. Using a high-speed strobe light, he discovered that sub-piston air induction engines in enclosed speed cowls would suck exhaust back into the engine. As a result, Warren pioneered the popular, open-face, half cowl as seen on his *Peanut*.

Warren designed and cast aluminum speed pans in 1/2 A, A, and B sizes that were used by several Nats winners. He designed two sizes of magnesium 1/2A Speed pans for Harter's Hobby Products in the late 1950s. Tens of thousands were either sold in *Peanut* kits or packaged separately.

During the late 1960s, Warren designed and produced the screw-machined parts for all sizes of the H&R Torque Transfer Units (Control Line Speed) distributed by Bill's Miniature Engines.

Warren had a hand in their engineering and development of the Shuriken line of 1/2A engines in 1989 and 1990. Although the engine won several national championships for Warren, production was limited to approximately 300.

Working with Larry Conover, Warren coauthored a series of feature articles on engine hop-up techniques titled "Hot Engines" in *American Modeler* magazine. Eighteen of Warren's articles and plans were published in *American Modeler*, *Model Airplane News*, *Model Builder*, the British 1971-1972 *Aeromodeller Annual*, the North American Speed Society's *Speed Times*, NFFS's *Free Flight Digest*, the German 1971 *Flug & Modell Technik*, and Frank Ehling's *AMA Kit Plan Book, Vol. I*.

Warren was actively involved in many aeromodeling organizations. He was the treasurer for the Bloomington, Illinois club for two years and reorganized the defunct Keesler Model Airplane Club, including securing a concrete apron for the club members to fly Control Line.

He organized model-flying demonstrations for the general public during base open houses on holidays. Warren even organized trips and arranged transportation for the club members to various regional contests.

Back in civilian life in 1958, Warren designed cranes and hoists for Conco Engineering Works before moving into the automotive industry. Warren worked for Walker Manufacturing Company as a product development engineer and then as a process development engineer, developing new rubber gaskets and an accelerated process to life-test them, which facilitated the easy removal of used spin-on, can-type engine oil filters.

In 1964, he developed automotive manufacturing applications using newly invented computer-controlled robotics. He was one of the patent holders on the world's first commercially successful computer-controlled robot. Additionally, Warren initiated the use of freewheeling robots to enable the programming of them "off-line," away from the production floor.

Warren has been an AMA Leader Member since 1962. He served as a Control Line Contest Board member for two years and has volunteered several days each year as an official at the AMA Nats. He usually volunteers as a Control Line Speed official and returns later to volunteer two or three more days as a Free Flight official.

Warren has always been generous to the AMA. He contributed to the "Dump the Deficit" campaign, contributed funds to the start-up of the North American Speed Society (NFFS), and is a long-standing National Model Aviation Museum Patron, NFFS Symposium Patron, and NFFS

Foundation donor. Warren is also a member of the Frank Zaic Fellowship.

In 1954, Warren was on the cover of the November issue of the *Exchangite*, the official publication of the National Exchange Club, when the organization began co-sponsoring model contests with the AMA. At the 1998 Celebration of Eagles, Warren received the AMA Pioneer Award.

In Warren's HOF nomination, his sponsor, Ronald Tweet, wrote, "[Warren is] believed to be the first and only Speed flier to pilot his own model at 50 different Nats."

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