



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of EDWARD (ED) J. LIDGARD



Modeler, Model Designer, Competitor

January 7, 1919 - January 23, 2002

Started modeling in the early 1930s

AMA #808

Submitted by E.JL (09/1996); Transcribed by NR (09/1996); Edited by SS (2002), Updated by JS (10/2008), Reformatted by JS (10/2009)

Career:

- AMA Leader Member
- Has had 13 of his designs published
- On three separate occasions, clubs have had Ed Lidgard one design contests, at which he was invited to attend and was the “Guest of Honor”

Honors:

- 1981: Model Aviation Hall of Fame
- 1984: National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame
- 1992: Society of Antique Modelers Hall of Fame

The following was written by Model Aviation magazine staff and published in the March 1982 issue under “Hall of Fame Awards.” He was inducted into the Model Aviation Hall of Fame in 1981.

Ed Lidgard is one of those people who seem to have been around forever, always helping others and taking an interest in what problems other people were having. He started to fly model airplanes in 1928 and is still entering contests “for the fun of it.” Hundreds of American modelers will remember “Sparky,” the kit that was produced over 40 years ago, and in production ever since, by Comet. It is a fine flying model design that helped “spark” an interest in model aviation for many youngsters. Over the years, Comet has used over 80 Lidgard plans.

A member of the AMA ever since it was formed, Ed has been active not only as a competitor, but also as a club officer. His current position is Secretary of the Free Flight Model Airplane Association of Southern California. With a great love for Wakefield flying, Ed has been on three Wakefield Teams – England 1949; Sweden, 1952; and Finland, 1953. He managed the U.S. Wakefield program for three years and in 1952 singlehandedly raised the funds to send he team to Sweden.

Back in 1935, Ed was a member of the Moffet Team at an international meet at Wayne County Airport, Detroit.

Prior to World War II, Ed held two Indoor records; Helicopter and Ornithopter. Both records were set in a Chicago Armory.

The list of models that he has had published in magazines is long and includes *Eugene Two* (Rubber), *Excess Two* (CO2), *Little Wake*, *Outdoor Flapper*, *Hi Ho*, *Little Cloud Sniffer*, and

more. Ed contributed a lot to folding propeller designs used by Free Flight modelers. He designed the first commercial hinge produced in 1938 for Midwest Products by Wally Simmers. He developed two lightweight, simple, all balsa beginner models with only seven glue joints in each and still has hopes that he can interest a manufacturer in putting them on the market for the benefit of beginning modelers.

Ed has contributed greatly to the world of model aviation for many years and is a strong supporter of AMA.

The following is the excerpt from a Perry, Georgia newspaper and was written by reporter Emery Warnock.

Lidgard's airplane models have made him a famous hobbyist

By Emery Warnock
Staff Writer

“If it isn't simple, it isn't finished.” Those are the words placed above his workshop where he sits and thinks...making new inventions every day.

Anyone who knows Perry (Georgia) resident Ed Lidgard will know that he is one of the biggest authorities in the world on simple model airplane flying.

Although he has been involved with this hobby for 61 years, his career is closely tied to the sport he loves.

“I am actually an inventor by profession. I like to create something from scratch and work until I find the solution,” Lidgard said.

Lidgard has 11 patents on glass shipping devices. He and another man formed their own company to concentrate on selling their product to major corporations to use in shipping glass, especially in automobile windshields.

But before his Edison-like career unfolded, he was active in the model airplane circles all across the country and still remains so – having fun making and then flying airplanes.

But Lidgard's introduction to the world of imagination flying remains a classic in the annals of model airplane flying.

“As I was walking down the street in Chicago, one day when I was nine years old, I came across this tailor shop and I saw set in the window a model airplane,” Lidgard said.

“Day after day I would go by the window and look at the airplane. I eventually asked the tailor who made it and how much it cost because I really wanted it,” he said, although these were the years of the Great Depression.

He said he paid 50 cents for his first model airplane in the early 1930s. Lidgard added that the tailor's son made the airplane and he eventually took classes with the son on how to make the models for himself.

“So I went to these classes, but we really didn't have a place to go and fly the models. So we founded the Chicago Aeronautics Club and we met once a week,” he said.

Lidgard further added that he has been a member of that club since its charter.

“These fellows certainly would fly airplanes and so I stayed with them until I went into the service,” he said.

While in the service, Lidgard said he was still involved with his hobby, so much so that he would hang up his model airplane wings that he had made and place them in between his coats during inspection.

After his service in the U.S. Air Force, he went to work for Comet Model Airplanes. Lidgard explained he had airplanes copyrighted by Comet during those years.

Lidgard explained that his airplanes are pre-dominantly made of balsa wood and then covered with silk.

“Some airplanes are made of Japanese tissue which is from rice but silk is a lot stronger and doesn't get punctured. Airplanes will break when they land but I haven't had one break in the field in 20 years,” he said.

“Airplanes are just like race cars; they're going to get dirty,” he added.

Lidgard will go out to Perry Industrial Park to fly his model airplanes but he wishes more people from this area would get involved in the sport.

“Everything I make, I'll give it away. That is just the way I am. I don't do this for the macho image like radio-powered airplanes can have,” he said. “I do this because I like to fly these kinds of airplanes, although I am getting a little involved in the electronic aspects.”

Today, he is a Model Aviation Hall of Fame member, and a Hall of Fame member with the National Free Flight Society and the Society of Antique Modelers. Lidgard humbly says that there are not too many people in the Hall of Fame of each of the organizations for model airplane activists.

He has been involved in world championships and has been to competitions in England and Sweden as well as across the United States.

Last month, Lidgard went to Florida to compete in the One-Design meet. Simply stated, everyone who came to the national competition had to fly a model designed by Lidgard.

“This was a lot of pleasure. It keeps coming home to me when I see everyone. I just so happened to take two of the first places,” he said.

He said the airplanes at the competition, along many others he has built, have been published in magazines or have been sent to people who may have requested one.

“I have three airplanes in museums now and another one will be going to a museum,” he said.

(signed) Ed Lidgard 9/96

Ed Lidgard passed away on Jan. 23, 2002

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