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# The AMA History Project Presents: Biographies of ADDIE MAE and TONY JR. NACCARATO



Addie Mae - Oct. 29, 1926 - March 4, 2007

Addie Mae's AMA #11093

Tony, Jr. - Born February 20, 1944

Tony, Jr.'s AMA #24538

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## Career:

- In 1944, Addie Mae and Tony, Sr. began working together full time on inventing products for model airplanes
- Addie Mae and Tony, Sr. made the first four-way wrenches
- Addie Mae hand-carved propellers for herself and her husband
- The entire family helped teach Control Line flying at Griffith Park in Los Angeles
- In 1951 Addie Mae and Tony, Sr. bought Hobby Bobby in Burbank, California, changing the name to "Tony and Addie's Hobby Lobby"
- Tony, Jr. won the 1964 National Championships
- While in the service, Tony, Jr. organized a model airplane contest between the Navy, Marines and Army
- After his release from the service in 1970, Tony, Jr. took over his parents' hobby shop
- Addie Mae and Tony, Jr. built some of the first Free Flight electric planes
- Tony, Jr. was the first person to fly a Free Flight electric scale model at the AMA Nationals in 1976
- Tony, Jr. set a few records for NiCad battery flying
- Tony, Jr. founded the Black Sheep Exhibitionists, which later became the Black Sheep Squadron
- Addie Mae and Tony, Jr. have given over 300 demonstrations across the country
- Addie Mae and Tony, Jr. helped the AMA construct rules for classes A and B electric Free Flight
- Addie Mae and Tony, Jr. were the first to fly a quarter scale indoor RC airplane that weighed only 24 ounces
- The Naccaratos developed the first rules for electric Control Line, which was flown at the Astro Flight Champs as well

## Honors:

- 1997: Addie Mae, AMA Fellow
- 2002: Tony, Jr., AMA Fellow

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Addie Mae got involved with model aviation when she was around 12-years-old. She had brothers who would start building model airplanes, but never finish them. Addie Mae could not stand to see the projects uncompleted, so she would finish building them.

However, once Addie Mae finished building the planes, her brothers would sell them, which upset Addie Mae. Her father decided to buy plane just for her to ease her emotions. Thus began Addie Mae's life in model aviation.

During her time flying models at Rosencrantz in western Los Angeles, Addie Mae stopped by a local hobby shop where she first met Tony Naccarato, the owner of the hobby shop since 1936. Though Tony was from Arizona, the two found they had a lot in common and their relationship began. It wasn't long before Addie Mae became Mrs. Naccarato.

World War II changed life for Addie Mae and Tony a bit. He was drafted into the Army and forced to sell his hobby shop. Life started to get back to normal when Tony was released from the Army in February of 1944. He and Addie Mae began working together inventing products for model airplanes. They made the first four-way wrenches. Tony would make the wrenches in the garage and press them out, then Addie Mae would hand paint each one individually. Tony also made tires for tether cars called Champion Tires.

During this time of inventing in model aviation, Tony became friends with Jim Walker. Any time Jim came to town, Tony and Addie Mae would go flying with him early in the morning before the crowds realized that Jim Walker was around. Tony eventually invented the first Control Line stunt tank to fly upside down at Jim's request.

This time was also like the revolutionary explosion of model aviation. Tony built his own model airplane engines and ran the first pressurized system for model racecars. He helped out with Bunch Tiger Engines as well as Duke Fox. He got an offer to work for Duke Fox around 1948 or 1949 where he designed the machines for Fox Engines' pistons and sleeves.

Tony and Addie Mae also were flying Control Line models at this time. Tony was the first to go over 100 mph with a Control Line model at class B speed. During his Control Line days, Tony invented the wing tip weight for Control Line models. Addie Mae served as pit boss and made excellent propellers. She hand carved her own, but sometimes the propellers wouldn't last for more than one flight because they would break on the landing.

When the Control Line revolution came about, the entire Naccarato family was in on the Control Line action. Every Sunday, Tony and Addie Mae would take their daughter and son, Tony, Jr., to Griffith Park in Los Angeles where 10-year-old Tony, Jr. and his 8-year-old sister would help people fly Control Line models. Tony and Addie Mae helped people flying the larger Control Line models at the same time.

This family outing ended when freeways were developed and Griffith Park was closed to provide freeway space. The Sepulveda Basin in San Fernando became the new flying site. The area is now called the Apollo Field.

When Duke Fox moved to Arkansas in late 1951, Tony and Addie Mae decided to buy out a hobby shop in Burbank called "Hobby Bobby." They changed the name to "Tony and Addie's Hobby Lobby" and got down to business during this threshold of developing Radio Controlled (RC) flyers. Friends such as Howard Bonner, Bob Dunham, and Stu Babcock would stop by to have Tony help them with mechanics.

The family resumed their teaching roles every weekend at the Basin. Tony and Addie Mae would fly RC models while Tony, Jr. flew Free Flight and Control Line models.

In 1952 or 1953, Tony made the first RC engine with a throttle. It was called the Fox 59 and had a rotary exhaust system. The Naccaratos flew it on a Navy Carrier with Tony and Addie Mae placing in the top three places flying two Bearcats.

In 1959, Tony, Jr. followed in their footsteps, flying on a Navy Carrier for the first time and winning first or second place. He eventually became a national champion in Navy Carriers.

Around 1964, the AMA flew Tony, Jr. to Pensacola, Fla. because he was the winner of the 1964 National Championships. He went on a cruise and gave model airplane demonstrations on the USS Lexington flying the F4U Corsair Carrier model. The deck on the USS Lexington was so narrow that his plane actually flew over the water. The crowds were impressed with his famous wing over.

While on that cruise, Tony, Jr. met an admiral. They began talking about model aviation and the admiral gave Tony, Jr. his card. This contact would benefit Tony, Jr. within a couple of years.

By 1966, Tony, Jr. worked for Bill Canon Radios at distributor shows. His work was cut short, though, when he was drafted into the Army. Out of panic, Tony, Jr. got a waiver from the company and took an exam with Navy and Air Force recruiters.

With one week left before he was to report to the U.S. Army, Tony, Jr. went to the naval recruiting office where he had taken the tests. He showed the card to the men there and knew he had something cooking when the recruiters all stood up and saluted the card.

Tony, Jr. ended up in the U.S. Navy within two days and became a flight engineer for the P3 Orion aircraft. He spent two years flying in Vietnam. This all came about because of his history with model airplanes.

The model aviation bug did not leave Tony, Jr. while he was in the service. He continued building full size model airplanes, even while in Vietnam. He flew Control Line airplanes as well, including one time during a typhoon at midnight on a dare. The typhoon flight was successful, winning Tony, Jr. a case of beer.

He did his best to promote model aviation even while in the service. When he was in the Philippines, he started a model airplane club and got a bungalow where the servicemen could rent a locker for a dollar a month and build models 24 hours a day. Tony, Jr. even successfully organized a contest between the Navy, Marines, and Army.

When Tony, Jr. was discharged from the military in 1970, he had to choose between getting into full size aviation for airlines or taking over his parents' hobby shop. Tony, Jr. chose to work in his parents' shop. Times were hard as his father began going blind from diabetes. Addie Mae now helped Tony, Jr. run the shop.

Working as a mother and son team, Addie Mae and Tony, Jr. made advances in model aviation. The pair built some of the first Free Flight electric planes. They competed in a scale Free Flight

competition put on by the Flight Masters Club of California. Addie Mae and Tony, Jr. received first place.

Tony, Jr. became the first person to fly a Free Flight electric scale model at the AMA Nationals in 1976. The next year, the first International Model Show (IMS) was organized in the Los Angeles Convention Center. The show was going slow until Tony, Jr. started flying rubber band models inside the building because he was bored. His flying drew attention and more people came into the show. The next year, he gave Control Line electric demonstrations in front of the convention center to attract more crowds.

By 1977, William Northrop held the first indoor competition for indoor electric, rubber band, RC and CO2 RC competition. There was a \$1,000 cash award in each category. This competition interested Tony, Jr. and Addie Mae. They drew up plans for the Astro Turtle NiCad model.

During the competition, Hal Conover won in the electric category after Tony, Jr. and Addie Mae's plane crashed when someone turned on a radio while they were flying. The pair did win the rubber power category after flying for two minutes in a figure eight pattern with a sad sack. Bill Watson won the CO2 category. Thus began indoor RC flying.

At the same competition the next year, there were four categories of flight, which were NiCad batteries, any batteries, scale, and scale bi-plane. At that contest, Tony, Jr. set two records in NiCad battery flying. He flew one plane for 28 minutes and .5 seconds.

The other flight was a bit more eventful. Two minutes into flying, someone turned on a transmitter, causing the Naccaratos' plane to dive toward the ground. Fortunately, an exhibitor shut off the transmitter and a shaken Tony, Jr. pulled the plane back into formation.

He continued to fly that plane over an hour, with the previous record being a half an hour. Since the air conditioner had to be turned off, people were encouraging him to land after he broke the record. Larry Jolly and Addie Mae encouraged Tony, Jr. to keep flying, which he did. The flight lasted for one hour, 28 minutes and 58 seconds. Tony, Jr.'s record held until 2000.

At the same competition, the Naccaratos competed with a scale airplane called the Farmen Mystique. Tony, Jr. had made the plans and Addie Mae built it in one week. The dope wasn't even dry when they ran over to the park to test fly the model. The plane flew well, winning first place in its category and becoming a legend.

During this time, Tony, Jr. was the founder of a club called the Black Sheep Exhibitionists. The club got permission from NBC and the United States Marine Corps to use the name based off of the T.V. series, "Ba, Ba, Black Sheep." They eventually became the Black Sheep Squadron.

Pappy Boington, a real Ace from World War II, and the movie star Robert Conrad were in the squadron along with the whole T.V. crew from "Ba, Ba, Black Sheep."

For two years, the squadron did demonstrations at the Independence Day celebration in Burbank, California. Movie stars, such as Meatball the Dog, attended the event in Cambridge Park. Over

40,000 people saw their show, which included sound effects and a Control Line combat mid-air collision by Patty Sasnick and her husband. The explosion sound effects echoed throughout the park.

Tony, Jr. and Addie Mae continued with giving demonstrations and gave over 300 demonstrations across the country flying quarter-scale Fannan just inches over the heads of people. With “oohs” and “ahhs” from the crowds, the Naccaratos were the first people to fly a quarter-scale indoor RC airplane that weighed only 24 ounces.

Since their demonstration days, Tony, Jr. and Addie Mae have been pioneers of electric flight, introducing multi-engine electric flight by flying a B36 Bomber at the QSAA in Las Vegas. The B36 weighed 18 pounds, had 48 batteries, and had six Astro Flight Cobalt .05s. The plane won at QSAA. Tony, Jr. even started an event for Free Flight electric called E 30, which is now very popular in England.

Together, Tony, Jr. and Addie Mae also flew some of the very first Free Flight electric competition models. They helped with constructing rules for classes A and B of the AMA electric Free Flight events. The Naccaratos developed the first rules for electric Control Line, which was flown at the Astro Flight champs, as well.

Addie Mae retired from the hobby shop, but still continues to build there. She is considered one of the world’s best modelers and has been modeling perhaps longer than any other woman. Tony, Jr. runs the shop full time and they both continue to promote model aviation for the youth of today, the modelers of tomorrow.

*Tony Naccarato, Junior  
January 2002*

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