



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of **JAMES (JIM) W. RICHMOND**



November 22, 1927 - December 15, 2023
Modeler since 1932 AMA #4936

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Career:

- Won several local modeling contests in his youth, including two at Purdue University when he was 15-years-old
- Served in the U.S. Navy during World War II
- 1949: Was Jet Speed Champion at the Plymouth International Model Plane Contest
- Has won the indoor world championship eight times; has also won three silver and two bronze medals
- Has been a US team member at 15 World Championships
- Has set eight world indoor records and 60 national indoor records
- 1988: Was the U.S. indoor championship grand champion
- Six of his planes have been named plane of the year by the National Free Flight Society (NFFS)
- Has 33 patents for mechanism designs related to engineering

Honors:

- 1984: AMA Distinguished Service Award
 - 1985: NFFS Hall of Fame
 - 1987: FAI's Paul Tissandier Diploma
 - 1988: Model Aviation Hall of Fame
 - 1989: Federation Aeronautique Internationale's (FAI) Alphonse Penaud Diploma
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Mr. Richmond was born on November 22, 1927 in Sullivan, Indiana. His parents were Gladys and Kenneth Richmond. Due to their subsequent divorce, his grandparents, Ernest and Lulu Richmond in Sullivan, raised James. James became interested in aviation and began his lifelong model plane hobby at the age of five. He won several local contests, including two at Purdue University when he was 15-years-old.

James graduated from Sullivan High School in 1945 and then entered college at Rose Polytechnic Institute (now Rose Hullman) in Terre Haute, Indiana. Because of the World War II draft still in force, in 1946 he elected to enlist in the U. S. Navy, which could offer further educational opportunities. There he received a year of accelerated electronics school and became an Electronic Technicians Mate III class. After a short tour of duty on the USS Mount McKinley and the USS 419, he was honorably discharged in 1948.

Having married Floella Bedwell during his boot leave, he purchased a house trailer to use as a residence while he continued his education on the G.I. Bill. He returned to Rose Polytechnic Institute for a time in 1948, but not having enough G.I. Bill to finish, he switched to the Terre Haute School of Watchmaking.

In 1950, he initiated his watch making profession at the K. B. Smith Jewelry Store in Sullivan, Indiana. His son Randal was born in 1951. Although successful in the watch making trade, James found that chances for advancement were very slim. He then accepted a position as draftsman at the Conner Tool and Cutter Company in Sullivan in 1952. This was the beginning of his successful career in engineering.

Conner folded in 1953 and James was then employed at Bedford, Indiana, by Curtis Automotive Devices, designing gages and fixtures used in the manufacture of jet aircraft engines. Laid off due to a business slump in 1954, he was then employed by Allis Chalmers in Terre Haute doing similar tool design work.

Then in 1955, he was offered an engineering position at General Time Corp. in Goshen, Indiana, which he accepted. This work involved mechanism design for clocks as well as military arming devices for missiles.

In 1961, James accepted an engineering position at Sunbeam Corporation in their timing division, designing a new low cost synchronous clock mechanism. This effort was successful, and, as a result, a new clock manufacturing plant was built in Forest, Mississippi. This led to his promotion to engineering manager of the timing division in 1963. Kimberly was born in 1967.

In 1971, he accepted an offer to return to General Time as manager of engineering of their Davidson, North Carolina division. He was divorced in 1973. In 1975, he married Mariana Petrascu. She was a citizen of communist Romania and the marriage was a considerable achievement at the time, requiring the approval of the Romanian president. Mariana was an English teacher with a master's degree and her father was commander of the largest pilot training school in Romania. Mark was born in 1977.

In 1979, James was transferred to the corporate headquarters in Atlanta in an expanded engineering management position. Then in 1981, the entire engineering department was laid off due to depressed business. He then accepted a senior engineering position at Mallory Controls in Indianapolis, Indiana, designing synchronous timers, valves, and automotive devices.

Meanwhile, Mariana held teaching and supervisory positions at local colleges. In 1988, she took the entrance exam at the IUPUI School of Law and was accepted. She graduated in 1991. She worked for the state for a couple of years and then established a new immigration department at the law firm of Barnes and Thornburg. She became a partner at the firm in 2000.

James worked at Mallory until he retired on May 31, 2000 when he was 72-years-old. He had 33 patents assigned to him during his engineering career. He has since survived a heart attack and dual bypass surgery. He spends much of his time with his model plane hobby as he always has. He won the 2004 World Championship and was a member of the first place USA team in 2008.

Summary of Achievements

- He has won the Indoor World Championship eight times and also won three silver and two bronze medals.
- Jim is the current holder of the Category III Open World Indoor records.
- He has set eight world indoor records to date.
- He has set approximately 60 national indoor records.
- Jim was national indoor champion in 1970, 1971, 1972, and 1986. He was also United States indoor championship grand champion in 1988.
- He is a member of the Model Aviation and National Free Flight Society (NFFS) Halls of Fame.
- His plane designs achieved NFFS Plane of the Year status in 1970, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1985, and 2002.
- He is a recipient of FAI's prestigious Alphonse Penaud and Paul Tissandier Diplomas.
- In the engineering profession, Jim has been awarded 33 patents for mechanism designs.

Awards and Honors

1965 through 1999: 33 patents were issued by the United States Patent Department for various mechanisms designed during this period.

1967 through 2008: AMA recognition and diplomas issued for each of 60 National Indoor Records set during this period.

1968, 1978, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, 2002, and 2004: Received the Rushbrooke Trophy and the gold medal from FAI for winning the Indoor World Championship on these dates.

1970, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1985, and 2002: Plane of the Year status was bestowed on his winning plane designs by the NFFS on these dates.

1970, 1980, 1982, 1998, and 2000: FAI gave silver or bronze medals for winning second or third place at the Indoor World Championship on these dates.

1970, 1971, 1972, and 1976: Recognized by AMA as the Indoor Champion on these dates at the National Indoor Championships. Appropriate awards were presented.

June 23, 1978; June 21, 1979; August 31, 1979; September 29, 1984; September 6, 1996; August 31, 1996; August 4, 2002; and August 4, 2002: FAI recognition of World Indoor Records set on these dates.

1984: AMA's Distinguished Service Award.

1984: The Toyotomi Cup was awarded for the most ingenious plane design at the 1984 Indoor World Championship. This is a treasured original bronze statue presented by the meet sponsor, Toyotomi Stove Company.

1985: Inducted into the NFFS Hall of Fame.

1987: Inducted into Model Aviation Hall of Fame.

1987: Received the Paul Tissandier FAI Diploma. This is a prestigious award given in recognition of outstanding ability and long term superior performance.

1988: The Grand Championship award was presented to him by the NFFS at the United States Indoor Championship on this date.

1989: Received the Alphonse Penaud FAI Diploma. This is FAI's highest model aeronautics award. Only a few other Americans have ever been so honored.

(signed) James W. Richmond
September 2003

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