



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of TIM DANNELS



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*The following was submitted by Bill Mohrbacher for Tim Dannels' nomination for the AMA Model Aviation Hall of Fame. Dannels was inducted in 2018.*

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## **AMA Model Aviation Hall of Fame Nomination for Tim Dannels**

**Editor and publisher of the Engine Collectors' Journal  
and the American Model Engine Encyclopedia**

Submitted by Bill Mohrbacher, MECA President, AMA 2825

I am nominating Tim Dannels for induction into the AMA Model Aviation Hall of Fame to recognize him for 55 years of continuous service to the model aviation community.

While I am submitting this nomination in my name, HOF members John Brodak, Larry Davidson, Clarence Lee, Jean Paillet, and Larry Scarinzi, as well as Richard Lyle Barlow (Model Aeronautical Association of Canada Past President, HOF, Life Member) have given me permission to use their names as additional endorsers of Tim's nomination.

Richard Lyle Barlow, "As an avid engine collector with many hundreds of engines – mostly diesels - I applaud what you are doing and am honoured that you asked me. I gladly give you permission to use my name."

John Brodak, "I would be very proud to endorse Tim. Thanks to Tim I have been a MECA member for over 30 years."

Clarence Lee, "Okay with me. This is something that should have been done a long time ago."

Jean Paillet, "I am happy to enthusiastically endorse the nomination of Tim Dannels to the AMA Hall of Fame. He has demonstrated many years of dedicated (and generally thankless) service and support to the model aviation community!"

The HOF instructions specify "Selection is based on the individual's contributions to model aviation which may include competition ..., education, organization, writing, publishing... Emphasis is on the accumulated contributions... over an extended period of time."

-Competition, organization: Tim was an active free flyer and was one of the individuals who founded the Society of Antique Modelers (SAM). He is an active engine collector and was active in the earliest days of the Model Engine Collectors Association (MECA).

-Education: He is the editor and publisher of *The American Model Engine Encyclopedia, Volumes 1* and *2*, the most comprehensive and accurate history of North American model engines. These volumes are without peers and are used nationwide and worldwide.

-Writing, publishing: Tim founded and still edits and publishes *The Engine Collectors Journal (ECJ)*. This journal served as the seed to crystallize the Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) and the Model Engine Collectors Association (MECA). *ECJ* is circulated worldwide.

-Accumulated contributions...over an extended period of time: Issue #1 of *ECJ* was published in 1963. Issue #242 was published in January 2018. That is 55 continuous years; quite a contribution over an extended period of time!

*ECJ* and *AMEE Volumes 1 & 2* are THE history of American model airplane engines. Model engines drove the model aviation hobby to where it is today; take the engine powered models out of the NMAM and you'll have a big empty space! The manufacturers and the thousands of modelers who have used these gems are leaving us at a rapid pace. Thanks to Tim Dannels and his publications, the history of these of these engines has been forever preserved. And his work continues. *ECJ* #243 was just published.

Tim was born in Denver on December 7, 1935. He worked for the Glenn L. Martin Co. (later Martin Marietta Co.) as a Xerox Operator. Printing was his vocation.

Tim started modeling when he was around 8 years old. In the late 1950s he was a member of the Martin Model Masters, a group that flew AMA gas, towline, and rubber. Around 1960, Tim got into Old Time (OT) Free Flight with a Buzzard Bombshell and a Dennykite, but there was no formal OT group.

Tim was storing his modeling collection in his garage, calling it the Model Museum. Near the end of 1962, Tim and his Denver flying buddies decided to stage a contest for old timers. Their meeting had been held in Tim's garage, so they decided to call their group the Model Museum Flying Club (MMFC). The Model Museum Flying Club held their Old Timers meet in May 1963, another in May 1964, and a fall meet in Sept 1964. Tim was the Contest Director for all of these meets. Betty, who he had married in 1958, was always working with Tim, processing models and serving as a timer. These early meets were the start of the Old Timer movement.

Meantime, in the 1950s, Bruce Underwood (Yellow Jacket engines) had formed an engine collectors' group that became known as MECA (Model Engine Collectors Association); there were about 17 members. In 1960, Joe Wagner took over MECA, produced an *Index of American Model Engines*, and put out a brief newsletter, *The Model Engine Collector*, 4 issues over 2 years. Tim showed up as a member in issue 3; MECA then had about 40 members. Joe had other commitments, so he had to cease his MECA involvement and MECA became dormant. In September of 1963, Tim issued his first edition of the *Engine Collectors' Journal*. [That issue is dated August 1963 on the inside cover.] Tim asked for contributors to share their knowledge of and experience with old engines. And they did! Allan Shively announced plans to restart MECA. By issue 4, there were more old engine articles, a regular MECA column from Allan Shively, and

the first of a series of articles on historical model airplanes (the KG-1) by John Pond (this series would be a regular feature for many issues). Later John would also write "Gas 'n Oil", a regular column devoted to Old Timer news, contest reports and contest schedules.

Tim began making many contacts as word of *ECJ* and its base spread. Contributors were worldwide - Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, and UK to name a few countries. *ECJ* became a very important instrument for communications for MECA and the Old Timers as they evolved. Engine history was also being disseminated in each issue. The engine reviews usually containing excellent pictures, construction details, specifications, and often interviews with the people who had created the engines. Now collectors had real references and a place to share their knowledge.

In December of 1964, the old timers, who now had formalized their group as the Antique Model Association (AMA), gave the Model Museum Flying Club the Chapter #1 charter. In May 1965, a name change was made (2 AMAs?) to the Society of Antique Modelers. Thus, the MMFC was SAM #1. There is no doubt that without the sounding board provided by *ECJ*, the vintage modeling movement would have had a much slower start.

It is well to mention here that Tim was not only a collector and publisher, but a quite skilled modeler. He and a friend travelled from Denver to the 1965 Willow Grove Nats (Philadelphia, PA) where Old Timers were "officially" flown for the first time. He made a similar trip in 1966 to the Chicago Nats. At both meets he flew a Carl Goldberg designed Valkyrie.

Tim competed as AMA 28335 and CDed many of the original MMFC meets as AMA 335. Tim started the *ECJ* before PCs and word processors. Each issue would be typed out (by Betty) on a narrow ribbon of paper, the width of a single column of a 2 or 3 column format. Picture placement was designed, spacing and hyphenating performed, then the whole finalized issue typed again for printing.

Eventually MECA and SAM produced their own publications, but *ECJ* kept them going until this could happen. *ECJ*'s contributors are collectors, manufacturers, and hobbyists from all over the world. For example, Tim counted Clarence Lee, Dick McCoy, and Lud Kading as personal friends.

In 2005, Tim released the *American Model Engine Encyclopedia*, a 215 page "Index of North American Production Power Plants for Models", 1911 to 1975. This illustrated book, probably averaging 6 pictures per page, became the "bible" for identifying engines. You'll see it quoted on eBay where an engine may be specified as "*ECJ* No. xxx". Tim's *ECJ* contributors were (are) recognized specialists who make this work especially accurate. And in 2015, he released *Volume II*, covering 1935-2015 with color pictures. (Both volumes have been sold in the AMA store).

*The Engine Collectors' Journal* issue 1 came out in September 1963 (cover date August 1963). Issue #200 was published in August 2010. The 50th anniversary issue was #217, August 2013. Back in issue #27, Spring 1968, Tim wondered if there was enough material to keep *ECJ* going; it seems there was.

Submitted by Bill Mohrbacher, MECA President

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