



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of GEORGE W. BROWN, JR.

December 11, 1926 - April 20, 2016

AMA #832



Submitted as a Hall of Fame application; Transcribed & Edited by SS (6/2002), Updated by JS (09/2008, 04/2016)

Career:

- Mid-1940s: Charter member and president of one of the original Sky Devil Model Flying Clubs
- 1950s: Charter member and president of the Snafu Aeronauts, a local flying club
- 1950s: Leader member and contest director
- Member and president of the Staten Island Speed Team from 1964 to at least 1975
- Organized a group of various types of modelers in his region in the mid-1970s called the Staten Island Modelers
- Worked for years to obtain a flying site on Staten Island
- Has given numerous instructional demonstrations
- Participant in all the Mirror Meets and many Nationals

Honors:

- Mid-1960s: Received a Sportsmanship Award at a Nationals contest
- 2001: Model Aviation Hall of Fame

The following information comes from the Model Aviation Hall of Fame application for George submitted by his wife, Mary Louise on May 3, 1975.

Gentlemen [of the Hall of Fame committee]:

It's very difficult for me to compose this letter without sounding like an adoring wife (which I happen to be), so I hope you'll bear with me, but this man of mine has through the years brought something great to our hobby. Namely, for as long as I've known him and been married to him, which is for 28 years, he has been the staunchest advocate of model aviation I know of. He was a charter member and president of one of the original Sky Devil Model Flying Clubs in the middle 1940s; he was charter member and president of the Snafu Aeronauts, a local flying club during the 1950s; he has been member and president of the Staten Island Speed Team, 1964 to the present time (1975); and presently, he is the guiding force behind the organization of another group of modelers here on Staten Island, but with members from neighboring New Jersey and other Boroughs of New York City. This group, known as the Staten Island Modelers, is composed of all types of modelers – airplanes, boats, and cars – whose primary purpose will be to band together to obtain some sort of adequate site for all modelers. For the last 20 years or so, Brownie has been attempting, by himself until the last few years, to obtain a flying site on Staten Island. To date all the efforts have been fruitless, but nevertheless, he stays in there trying – talking at meetings of various organizations, meeting with community boards and elected officials, always trying to make them understand that this hobby is more than a hobby. It

provides many educational opportunities as well as enjoyment, but needless to say, I don't have to expound on that to you.

To this end, he has appeared before groups of Boy Scouts, school organizations, church societies, both in New York and New Jersey, giving instructional talks and displays to youngsters of all ages. Currently he is involved in the Aerospace Program instituted by the New York City Board of Education for its junior and senior high schools. In this program, he is acting as an unofficial adviser, suggesting the proper planes and equipment for the children.

As for active participation as a contestant, Brownie has been a competitive modeler, again, since I've known him. He has participated in all the old Mirror Meet competitions, as many Nationals as his pocketbook would allow us to attend (where we always made it into a family vacation), plus hundreds of area meets. We have in our living room, bedroom, attic, and elsewhere over 400 trophies, attesting to his ability as a competitor. He has constantly gone out around our town just sport flying – U-Control, Radio Control (RC), Free Flight, thrown gliders, just everything – trying to promote the hobby to those who know nothing of it.

When I first met Brownie in 1946, I didn't know a model plane or engine existed. Today, I can sure enough distinguish a .049 from a .60! Seriously, we have traveled all over the country together to attend model meets and I have learned a multitude of things. I have been his "helper" at most of them. I have changed from an extremely self-conscious young miss into a self-confident mature woman under his love and guidance. His own personality, which consists of giving, giving, giving to others, has rubbed off on me, and today I am a person who can handle herself with poise in many situations that before would have completely knocked me down. He has done as much for others, young and old.

When our first son, George, was born, he literally had model airplanes born into him – for Brownie taught me to fly a U-Control the night before I gave birth! Talk about staunch promotion of the hobby! Our son George, over the years, has been right there along with his dad as a competent and competitive modeler. Our daughter, Marilou, with her older brother, has held many junior and senior records in speed U-Control, all because of their father's enthusiasm and guidance. He never pushed – he was just there, and his enthusiasm could hardly not be contagious to the rest of us. Marilou is a young married woman now, and has ceased to compete, but George is still active along with his father both in competition and in sport flying. Our younger sons, now aged 10, nine and seven, are beginning to join their dad in competition. Tom, the 10-year-old, has already competed in two or three Nationals, and has acquired a few trophies flying in area competition. He has begun to learn the rudiments of RC, as has the 9-year-old, John. All in all, we are a modeling family, through and through. You may recall our "family portrait" was on the November 1971 issue of *American Aircraft Modeler*, taken at the Glenview Nationals. That surely was a proud time for us!

I realize that the majority of those you have selected for your Hall of Fame have been men who are professionals in the area – designers, manufacturers, etc. – but you can't deny those on whom these professionals rely, the die-hard, staunch, never-tiring guy who over the years has kept his nose to the prop without recognition or personal gain from the hobby. I definitely don't mean to be derogatory in any way toward any of those previously selected – each and every one is

extremely deserving. Having been a reader of model magazines for 20 years, and having met some of these men at various times or another, I am aware of their tremendous contributions to the hobby. Without their expertise, model aviation would never have become as advanced as it is today. But, I am saying that the fellow who has constantly been a competitor – whether winning or losing – is the backbone of the sport.

Brownie's dream for many years has been to open a hobby shop. We did so just about two years ago. To date, the shop isn't making any money – but we are having a lot of fun! I sincerely mean this. Since we opened our little store, the surrounding neighborhood is no longer littered with broken bottles that the kids used to throw in the park. Now it is littered with the remains of little hand-launch gliders, which Brownie has been giving them so that they may learn a little. Even the neighbors comment on the improvement! Our shop is located in what is now popularly known as a "poverty area" and our immediate neighborhood affords little in the way of customers. Our prime trade naturally comes from out of the local area, simply because Brownie and George [the son] are widely known for their knowledge and helpfulness. And it is this asset that in time I hope will lead to a successful business.

Again, a point for my husband. He has received innumerable citations for sportsmanship, and was the recipient of the Sportsmanship Award at the 1966 Nationals. (It may have been 1965.) He gives himself selflessly to the hobby. For many years and today, still, he has taken under his wings novice flyers of all categories. He has taught them to fly, tune their engines, and observe the rules, all without any thought of personal gain. We know of many competent flyers (and some not so competent) who think nothing of charging for their time when teaching novices to fly, particularly the RC flyers. For more years than I can remember, Brownie has been spending his weekends (when there are no contests) teaching these fellows to fly. The fact that they get in the air and themselves become competent is enough thanks for him! Would that I had the time, I'd have gotten some testimonials from them! But, I'm writing a book as it is now, and I know you've no time to spare!

In the designer/experimenter category, we are presently in the process of kitting a competition type glider. Over the years, Brownie has designed all his own ships for speed U-Control and those for his fellow members of the Staten Island Speed Team. All these designs, although never officially manufactured for general use, were used successfully by many flyers in New York and New Jersey.

Both he and George have experimented with fuel mixtures, and he currently produces his own special blend of ingredients for RC and Control Line flyers in our area. Additionally, both father and son operate a successful engine hop-up service with many satisfied customers throughout the eastern portion of the country.

If Brownie knew I was submitting his name, he'd be the first to tell me to drop it. I just happened to pick up the latest AMA competition newsletter the other day, and it hit me that here is a man who without a doubt is one of the country's staunchest modelers. He lives, breathes, and eats model aviation. (I am contemplating writing a book called "Balsa in the Breakfast.") I'm sure that nitromethane runs in his veins! What a lift to the "average guy" to have an "unknown" join the ranks of the well-known greats!

You will notice that I have not filled in completely too many items on the first pages of your nomination form. As I stated before, and as your opening statement on the nomination form reads – “total contribution to the hobby” is the criterion on which your selections are based. The intangible things he has contributed over the years constitute most of his qualifications. I realize that these are much more difficult to evaluate than concrete names and dates, but, nevertheless, I hope you will bear with me in my little exposition of his accomplishments. As his wife and “helper” at multitudes of contests over the years, I can truthfully bear witness to his adeptness and contributions to the hobby.

(signed) Mary Louise Brown (Mrs. George W. Brown, Jr.)

May 3, 1975

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