



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biographies of PETER J. AND CHARLES SOTICH



Peter: May 13, 1922 – November 5, 1996, AMA #12

Charles: unknown

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Transcribed by NR (09/2000), MA staff (07/1962); Edited by SS (2002), updated by JS (10/2007), Reformatted by JS (02/2010, 12/2016)

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## Career:

- 1961-1962: Served as AMA president
- 1974: Was honored at a banquet after his retirement from the contest scene
- It took over a dozen Chicago area contest directors (CDs) to replace him in the 1975 season
- His credentials and CD expertise are based on a tireless devotion to those of us who want to get out and fly

## Honors:

- 1966: AMA Fellowship
- 1976: AMA Superior Service Award
- 1977: Model Aviation Hall of Fame
- 1978: National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame
- 1992: Society of Antique Modelers Hall of Fame

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*The following biography was taken from the "Eighth Annual Symposium of the National Free Flight Society." This was a report of the 1975 Lake Charles Nationals. On page five is a tribute to Pete Sotich by Dave Lindstrum, AMA 485 CD.*

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## Dedicated: That's Pete Sotich

Dedicated (read as devoted) – Peter J. Sotich of the Chicago Aeronuts, the Illinois Model Aero Club, the Academy of Model Aeronautics – meet devotion personified. We can think of no individual who has so selflessly devoted his time to the sport of free flight. Comparisons always come to mind – Ocie Randall, for example. Nevertheless, Pete is unique – they broke the mold for contest directors (CDs) when they cast him in that role. He has been CD at more meets than any of us care to remember, and he has always carried out his tasks with enthusiasm, foresight, careful coordination and, best of all, good humor. That ear-to-ear grin as you walk up to the timer table to register, that hearty handshake, that good natured banter as you wait for good air, that grin again as you collect your hard-earned trophy, that immortal tag line to a carefully detailed and lovingly hand-lettered contest report (sent to all flyers, not just AMA) – that's Pete, and you look forward to more when he says, "That's all from here for now."

Up around Bong Field, Wisconsin, on a hot summer's day when the maxes are marked by a circling hawk slowly drifting downwind, they say that Pete once built a model plane. Then they say that his brother Charlie, who has built hundreds of rubber jobs, gliders and rocket-powered ships, once built a greasy gas model. So you never know. However, you know that Pete builds a

great contest, be it a simple little indoor comp at Washington Park Armory in Chicago (where Pete is the Chicago Bears Number One Fan) or the Nationals. Pete has been on the AMA Nationals Planning Committee ever since he was AMA president in 1961-1962 and he has served as Nats Free Flight Director innumerable times. Not content to merely CD, he orchestrates – organizing event directors into complex choreography for the benefit of contestants. This skill served him as manager of two successful USA FAI teams.

We remember rather clearly the first time we ever met Pete, after having taken some detailed “correspondence courses” from Charlie in contemporary Coupe d'Hiver construction. This was back in 1964 when we were just experience re-entry into the atmosphere of aeromodeling. One day the mail brought a “You are cordially invited” note to the IMAC Invitational at Bong. We arranged school classes so we could spend a long weekend in Wisconsin, and drove up to Bond with Sid Jepson and our brand new Lucky Lindy. We found Pete in the line at the pre-contest banquet, stocking up on good food and drink to prepare him for the next day at the field. The jocular expression was still there in the morning, as he sat at the control table, inscribing times in his super-legible block letters on the scoreboard. He went out of his way to welcome us to our first meet at Bong. We did not win any trophies at that meet, but we did win a good friend. More than that, we saw that he was a friend of Free Flight. The Free Flight fraternity needs such friendship and thrives on it.

You may wonder why there is no portrait by Chicago Tribune artist John Rossi in this report. The fact is that Rossi has done such a likeness of Pete, and it was presented in appreciation at a Chicago Aeronuts' Annual Banquet a few years ago. Appreciation well deserved, and even more sincerely expressed at the 1974 Banquet, honoring Pete on his retirement from the contest scene. After the final contest of the season at Bong last fall, Pete wrote the last of his hand-lettered reports that we will ever see. He now has time for his own pursuits and the opportunity to devote some of his boundless energy to other interests. He has certainly earned this rest – and it has taken over a dozen Chicago area CDs to replace him in the 1975 season! No man is indispensable, but Pete came mighty close as the perennial CD.

Pete Sotich is a legendary figure in the literature of Free Flight, and he leaves the scene with good grace and with our good wishes. His credentials and CD expertise are based on a tireless devotion to those of us who want to get out and fly – and the dedication of this Symposium Report to him is only one more way of expressing the gratitude of the flyers for the person who makes it all happen. Pete has helped us all to fly free. Now it is his turn. Merci beaucoup, Pete - and “So long from here for now.

*Dave Linstrum, AMA 485 CD*

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The following is from the April 1978 issue of Model Aviation magazine, page 63.

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Peter J. Sotich, age 51, was president of the AMA (1961-1962), one of the founders of the National Free Flight Society, and president of the Illinois Model Airplane Club. He was twice U.S. FAI Free Flight team manager and served as Free Flight Category Director and/or Manager of the National Model Airplane Championships for many years. He is also a long-time member of the Nats Executive Committee.

Pete is best known for the many contests he directed through the year, especially in the AMA's

Free Flight Team Selection programs. He was named Contest Director of the Year at least once and would have won that title many times over except that this form of recognition was dropped – some say because Pete would have won it every time!

Pete's giving of himself for others was all the more remarkable because he was not a modeler. However, he had hundreds of modeler friends, and his brother, Charlie, is one of the top model competitors in the country.

With his naming to the Model Aviation Hall of Fame, Pete Sotich has won just about every honor in the field. He is an AMA Fellow and a winner of both the AMA Distinguished and Superior Service Awards.

Until his retirement from model aviation activities a few years ago, Pete could be seen working at every Nats and at practically every Free Flight contest held at Bong Field, Wisconsin. Pete was also a contest official for Free Flight World Championships held in the U.S. in 1954 and in Germany in 1955 and 1961. At the latter event, Sotich held the honorary title of Director of Competition.

Pete did not always agree with many of the rules he had to enforce at contests, nor was he happy with those in charge of Nats planning. However, Pete went by the book; whatever was official he lived by and gave his best. He did so with friendliness and good cheer so that modelers regarded him as their friend even though he was part of the “big brass.”

Since his retirement, Pete has gone underground and is no longer seen around the people and events he was part of for so many years. However, he is well remembered, and everyone who knew him agrees that he belongs in the Hall of Fame. He earned it.



*Pete and Charlie at the Nats.*

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*The following, about Charles Sotich and IMAC's Laird-Weaver Trophy, is from the July 1962 issue of Model Aviation magazine, page 14, in the "Club News" section.*

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*Since a fair number of AMA clubs have provided information to MODEL AVIATION, this department was begun to encourage all clubs to prepare information for publication. Short reports on particular items will appear on this page; more comprehensive reports - photos should be supplied - will be considered for feature stories.*

**Laird-Weaver Trophy:** At last year's annual banquet, the I.M.A.C. awarded to Charlie Sotich, for outstanding modeling efforts, one of model aviation's oldest trophies, the silver Laird-Weaver trophy, which belonged to the old Illinois Model Aero Club.

Stated the I.M.A.C. Newsletter, "It should impress us that this coveted trophy is one of our most important links with what probably was one of the oldest continuously active and certainly the most prominent modeling clubs in the United States.

"Founded in 1911, the Illinois Model Aero Club held their first contest in December of that year, when a flight of 90 feet was good enough to win first prize. By 1915, the art of aeromodeling had progressed to the state where club members succeeded in smashing four world records. By the year 1928, the I.M.A.C. held every national outdoor record for distance and duration, and over half of the indoor records."

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