



# The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of E. PAUL JOHNSON

Born August 22, 1915 Started modeling in 1925

AMA #8568



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Written & Submitted by EPJ (12/2001); Transcribed & Edited by SS (11/2002), Reformatted by JS (09/2009)

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## Career:

- Built numerous airplane kits as well as his own designs
- Organized and started the Des Moines Modelaires Club in 1935; the club is still going strong with 200 active members (in 2002) and named its flying field the E. Paul Johnson Field
- Member of the Army Signal Corps during World War II; maintained secret cryptography equipment
- Built his first Radio Control airplane in 1946
- Flew in and won many Radio Control contests, including second place to Dr. Walter A. Good at the 1949 National Radio Control Event in Olathe, Kansas
- Developed a pulse system to replace the escapement; this system was published in the July 1949 issue of Model Airplane News magazine; later improvements to the system were published in the magazine as well

## Honors:

- 1960: Maurice Roody Award
- 1962: Lincoln Sky Knights Award
- 1996: Glen Sig Spirit of Aeromodeling
- 1998: AMA Pioneers Award
- n.d: DM Modelaires Certificate of Merit

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At about 10 years of age, I built my first model, a baby Rise-off-Ground (ROG) rubber stick model. As I got older, I built more elaborate models – twin pushers and early kits from model manufacturers.

When model airplane engines became available, I built Free Flight gas models. Among the kits I built were a Buccaneer, a Musketeer standard, a Clipper, a Zipper, a Playboy Senior, and several scratch-built models of my own design.

Before 1935, there were no model clubs in Des Moines, Iowa. In 1935, I organized and started the Des Moines Modelaires Club. After all these years, the club is still going strong with more the 200 active members. This year the club got a new flying field and named it the E. Paul Johnson Field.

I was in the Army Signal Corps in World War II in electronics and the maintenance of secret cryptography equipment. After my discharge from the Army in January 1946, I built my first Radio Control model airplane. I built my radio on six meters and got an amateur radio ham license to fly it legally. I flew and won many Radio Control contests, among them the 1949 National Radio Control Event in Olathe, Kansas, where I placed a close second to Dr. Walter Good's first place. Jim Walker was third.

At this time, nearly all Radio Control planes were rudder only with their rudders controlled by an escapement. I didn't think this was very practical and developed a pulse system, which was a big improvement. My system was published in the July 1949 issue of Model Airplane News magazine. Later improvements to my system and an efficient three-tube radio I designed were in the May 1950 and April 1953 issues of Model Airplane News magazine.

I was pleasantly surprised by the many letters I received from modelers who were using my control system and radio. Howard McEntee wrote a "We'd Like You to Meet" article about me in the September 1956 issue. [*See text reprint of the article below.*]

In 1998, I received the Academy of Model Aeronautics Pioneers Award.

*(signed) E. Paul Johnson  
December 2001*

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*The following is the article written by Howard McEntee that appeared in the September 1956 issue of Model Airplane News magazine.*

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### **We'd Like You to Meet...E. Paul Johnson**

An electrician by trade, Paul has been active in model plane building since 1925. Most known in modeling circles for his Radio Control work, he has placed high in several Nationals (second in 1949, fourth in 1950 and ninth in 1948); took so many Radio Control meets in the Midwest area that other Radio Controllers just battled for places from second on down. Besides his contest prowess, Paul is known for his unorthodox plane designs and for his Radio Control experimental work; he has long been a pulse control advocate – his 1948 Nats placer had a form of pulse control, though escapements reigned supreme then. Has had many magazine articles published on various angles of Radio Control work.

On his trip to the model plane wars, Paul is always accompanied by his wife Lois (who has built and flown her own Radio Control plane) and daughter Carole, now 12. Many friends of the Johnsons do not know that they are very successful amateur magicians; have put on many shows in the Des Moines area. Paul spent three years in the Army Signal Corps, engaged in cryptography repair. He is a member of the Des Moines Modelaires.

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**AMA History Project**  
National Model Aviation Museum  
5151 E. Memorial Dr.  
Muncie IN 47302  
(765) 287-1256, ext. 511  
historyproject@modelaircraft.org

