



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of ELMER DEWITT HAYNES, JR.

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Written by EDH III (2018), Photos by DH (2018), Reformatted by JS (2018); Updated by JS (08/2021)

The following was written and submitted to the AMA History Project by Elmer Haynes, Jr's son, Elmer Haynes, III, in February through April of 2018.

Story of Mr. Elmer Dewitt Haynes, Jr. of Denver Colorado Model builder, Engineer, Designer, Flyer First African American to serve as a Contest Director for the Colorado district CD 525



How do you tell the story of a local legend in modeling activities that was full of strife and hardships but was fulfilling none the less?

Well if anyone can make such a monumental claim, it's my Dad. He raised us all to believe that despite it all, the positive attitude and energy will always win out.

Dad formed the H/R Racing team composed of his brothers Cliff and Leroy, Flavious Rowell, and later Andy Lewis of Denver, Colorado in the 1960s up through the 1980s.

He attended Aaron Gove Junior High School in Denver, Colorado. In 1941, in his wood crafting class, an Army Air Corps member asked the teacher to find volunteers who wanted to build 3D scale model wooden airplane replicas of both the German and Japanese aircraft. These were to be used for their WWII enemy air personnel aircraft spotting program.

In 1938, the AMA organization allowed its membership to join their organization despite race, color or creed. Elmer received his first four-digit AMA number for about \$1.00 in the 1930s. Unfortunately, while participating in the assembly line in school building various aircraft such as the German ME109 Japanese Zero and other enemy bombers, Elmer was only allowed to preform hand sanding. He could not use power machine tools at the time in class.

While working part time as a pin setter, he used his money to purchase his first model aircraft from the local hobby shop near his house. Thus began his modeling journey that continues even today.

He purchased a second 25-inch wide model named the Douglas Dauntless that ended with an unsuccessful flight. He then turned to building gas-powered balsawood models after being given this advice by an employee at the hobby shop.

In 1944, his first powered model was the Playboy. The Playboy project had a 36-inch wing and was powered by a gas-burning Olson 23 model engine. He flew it at the Wellshire Golf Course. To fly it, he needed to acquire a wartime gas rationing card to supply fuel for his new model. At the closing of the war, he successfully built a series of hand launching gliders. One was the Berkeley towline glider, the Trooper. This was followed by many thermic models - A, B, and C gliders. He built and flew many Cleveland and Comet kits. It was also noted he often studied aerodynamics by applying white talcum powder on top of the wings and tossing them off a hill to study how the air flows over the wings.

An example of one of his contest experiences: One of his rubber band powered models almost won him the award for making the longest flight of the day, but because of his ethnicity the judges said a circular path back to the takeoff spot voided the attempt even though it actually stayed aloft twice as long as the others. But Elmer was encouraged that his interest was not only flying but competing with the best of the best, and if given a fair chance he would be rewarded for his efforts.

Control Line Flying Beginnings - The Fabulous 1960s

Elmer always believed that to be successful in model building was an expression of your ability to be knowledgeable and skilled in design, engineering, art, craftsmanship, chemistry, and your pilot skills. He would put these beliefs to practice during the age of the fabulous 1960s when he joined the club called the RC Eagles in Denver. Later he would join the Jefco Aeromod'lers and the Mile High Denver RC club.

Kit-built flying models like the A-J Firebaby, Nobler, Ringmaster powered by the Redhead Torp 35 and Fox engines used for stunt, combat, and rat race engines would need to be reworked to improve their performance because of Denver's high altitude. At a mile high, these changes were needed to improve their performance at contests.

The intake and exhaust ports needed to be reworked. The fuel mixture would need to be altered as well as the props to compete against others. Thus began his willingness to apply engineering. Exploring different chemical formulas to increase the fuel burning mixture, he made changes in the stability of the model's design and made many aerodynamics changes to get improvement in performance.

He used aircraft such as the Baby Ringmaster, Berkeley Lancer, Flight Streak, and the Voodoo, along with many scratch built models. All were weapons of his choice. It was during this time he would take interest in contest flying by attending many of the local contests. This would lead him to becoming the District 9 control line rep, earning him Contest Director credentials with the AMA number of CD 525.

The 1960s were to test his skills as a modeler, his engineering abilities, finishing skills, and craftsmanship skills to compete in the beloved AMA Scale event for control line airplanes.

The demands of this event included having a high levels of building skills, excellence finishing skills, a high degree of engineering and mechanical skills, displaying a high level of craftsmanship, daydreaming, and electrical knowledge, topped with airmanship skills. Some examples of his work were: flying a twin engine Smoothie used for stunt, flying a tri-gear Ringmaster used in a Navy carrier event, and modifying a Stock Falcon 56 made to look like a U-2 spy ship using rudder and elevator control only.

He built and flew many Berkeley models, but it was the Eureka kit Staggerwing D17 that would become a well-respected scale model known for its finish and flying abilities at many contests. It had a full interior, lights, a functional door, and full span flaps movable in flight, along with motor control of his design flown with a Jim Walker three-line handle.

Still searching for that contest-winning model led to him to build a Eureka model of the Douglas DC-6 that had homemade retracting wheels using three individual screw drives and micro switches, movable flaps in flight also operated via a screwdriver, homemade brakes were made from 35 mm camera film containers, navigation lights, motor control using four modified Johnson 25s by the late Hi Johnson, green head using two right hand and two left hand turning motors, and a scale finish. A three-line handle and a control box with a volt and a half battery was in a box on his belt. It used toggle switches to operate the accessories in the model. The signal traveled down the 60-foot lines into the airplane.

In the 1970s, he flew a Flight Streak in the AMA stunt event at the AMA Nationals, held in Los Angeles, wearing his Navy Blues while serving in the Navy. Many of his ideals led to designing/engineering retractable gears and flaps, making motor control for Navy carrier events, and spring loaded landing gear for control line models.

It was during this time as President of the Jefco Aeromod'lers, a control line club in Colorado, where he introduced the general public to the joys of modeling by attending many public events, like flying between games at the Denver Bear baseball games, and flying at Celebrity sport center opening day where club members were standing in the shallow end of the indoor pool in three feet of water flying ½A models on floats. At the same time others were running powered boats in the deep end of the indoor pool around an S course marked with balloons tied to lead weights at the bottom of the pool. The club flew at many mall openings and attended many indoor mall shows displaying their models to the public.

Perhaps as one of his many honors, he was asked by the base commander of Lowry Air Force base in Denver to lead a team of Air Force personnel to form a national team to fly in several AMA nationals. The team flew from the base to attend the Nationals via Air Force planes. They flew in many of the events as a team.

Due to some social laws, many of the hotels and motels would not allow colored people to rent their rooms or facilities to him. Therefore, he resorted to competing at contests such as in the areas like Longmont, Colorado, Aroura, Colorado, Casper, Wyoming, Pueblo, Colorado, Salt Lake City, and in the Denver Metro area.

As the 1970s unfolded, Elmer found himself leading the way of innovative flying and designing RC models. Some aircraft had opening parachutes doors, glider launching harnesses located on top of powered airplanes, multi-engine planes, and he modified many kits to add custom accessories.

Pattern flying models include the Mambo, Livewire, School House, Taurus, Mach 1, Skylark, and Falcon 56 modified to look like a U-2.

From single channel mode citizenship radios to later using EK and Kraft RC radios, he moved with the technology. He flew single channel AMA RC patterns using rubber-powered escapements progressing to today's modern electric powered servos.

From the 1990s to current times, he still tries to encourage others to get involve with the AMA and the joys of the hobby of modeling.

When asked "What is one of your funniest memories?" he would say how the H/R racing team trained year round. We trained to be the best. During winter time we had an open field across from his house where we practiced. We would have one of the team members stand on a piece of plywood in the snow with the handle in their hand while his son was 60 feet away standing on another piece of plywood, holding the up line in his left hand and the down line in the other hand, a fuel bulb in his pocket ready to refuel the airplane. While he and the other members were in the basement of his home starting the engine running, then running up the stairs out the door across the street with a screaming engine running, then refueling the running engine tank, we would attach the lines to the model. Then off went the airplane.



Nobler



Flight Strik



Tu Bar



Elmer D Haynes Jr
CD 525

A J Firebaby



(Photos courtesy Elmer Dewitt Haynes III. Photos taken by Douglas Haynes. Text by Elmer and Douglas Haynes)

For RC, we did the same only we used to remove the wheels that were held on by rubber bands and replaced them with homemade skis made of plywood, shaped by steaming the wood. That is

how the team practiced in order to become one the best. When it comes to becoming a better modeler, Haynes would use the team's motto, *Discounting Mother Nature, human dynamics, the only difference between a good airplane and a bad airplane is sandpaper*. Happy modeling to everyone.

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