
Biography of DICK McCOY

Modeler since 1939
Written & Submitted by CM (4/97), Updated by
DM (08/02)

Lifespan: June 9, 1907 – December 30, 2005
Transcribed by NR (8/97)

AMA Number: L-27
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Career:

- For 35 years worked with Duro-Matic Designing and building the McCoy engines
- Continued with the engine designing when Testors Manufacturing bought out Duro-Matic
- Dick and his sons, Harold and Carl, owned and ran a machine shop
- Still produces parts for the McCoy engines to this day
- Produces The Real McCoy Glow Plugs to this day
- Sponsored The Radio Control McCoy Race for 25 years

Honors:

- 1983 – Model Aviation Hall of Fame
 - 1991 – Society of Antique Modelers' Hall of Fame
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Dick's good friend Charles Mackey wrote this biography specifically for the AMA History Program.

Dick McCoy

By Charles Mackey

The “Real McCoy” is an old American expression that my Webster's Dictionary defines as “the genuine thing or person as promised, stated or implied.” When Dick McCoy had “The Real McCoy” printed on his model airplane engine boxes it was in keeping with the Webster's definition. McCoy Engines have been a leader in the field since he built his first engine in 1942.

Dick McCoy was born on a farm June 9, 1907 in Orleans, Indiana. Dick's brother, Michael Norman Wright McCoy, was born October 9, 1905, and, like Dick, also became famous. Michael was a distinguished officer in the U.S. Army Air Corps. He flew 22 combat missions



over Japan. He set many distance records and he had the McCoy Air Force Base in Orlando, Florida named after him. He also received the Distinguished Service Medal posthumously. Their father sold the farm and they moved to Walnut, California in 1918. Dick's father worked on a ranch and maintained 15 acres of orange trees and 20 acres of walnut trees. For his services he received \$75 per month and a house without electricity and plumbing. Dick attended Walnut Elementary School where there were only three other classmates in his grade. His parents thought he could get a better education in a larger school so they moved to Pomona, California in 1923. He rode his brother's motorcycle or took the bus to La Puente High School, where he graduated in 1925. Dick's father had a job as a bus driver; his route was from Pomona to San Dimas.

Bus fare was 10 cents each way. Dick got a job driving the same bus in the evening. He lost his

job when the owner of the bus company found out he wasn't 21 years of age, so he went to work for Pomona Pumps operating a drill press for 40 cents an hour. When Dick was a little older he went back to the bus company as a mechanic. The family moved to Los Angeles but found it to be too crowded for their country way of life so they moved back to Pomona where his father opened a gasoline station. Dick's father would run a special sale on gas – six gallons for 96 cents. Dick did most of the oil changes and mechanical work and was paid \$16 per week.

A big freeze hit the Pomona area in 1939, Dick lost his job at Bordex a packing house, due to the severe crop loss so he went job hunting.

His next job was with Louds Machine Shop, a small company with 17 employees. He started as a lathe operator in 1937. He was promoted to night foreman when the company began to grow. The company manufactured tooling and aircraft parts for Lockheed, Douglas, Boeing and others. Dick's next promotion was to chief of quality control; Dick had 50 inspectors working under him when he left the company in 1956 and the company had grown to over 1,000 employees. Dick married in July 1929. The marriage lasted 63 years until his wife's death November 29, 1992. They had three children Doris, born 1932, Carl, born in 1935, and Harold born in 1937. At the time of this interview (January 1997) he had nine grandchildren and was expecting his 17th great-grandchild.

Dick had been racing model cars using Atwood and Cyclone Engines. In 1942 Dick built his own engine and began winning races. There was a big demand for McCoy Engines and cars. Fred Schott of Duro-Matic Engines located in Hollywood, California, contacted Dick and they signed a contract to produce engines and cars as soon as the war was over.

He was also approached by Ray Snow, a designer and manufacturer of Hornet Motors. The Hornet Motor was the only model engine that was giving Dick any serious competition. Ray wanted Dick to team-up with him for a manufacturing venture to produce the world's fastest engines. The partnership appealed to Dick McCoy, but he was informed by Mr. Schott that the partnership would be a violation of his contract so Dick had to decline Ray Snow's offer. The business contract with Mr. Schott proved to be a good one and the arrangement lasted for 35 years until the company was acquired by Testors Manufacturing. During this time Dick McCoy was awarded 16 patents for his engines and cars.

Dick's only personal venture in model airplanes came in 1939 when he purchased an Ohlsson 23 and built a Miss Tiny Free Flight. He had planned to take the airplane to a contest, but the night before the meet, his daughter accidentally crushed his plane. He stayed up most of the night making repairs. The airplane crashed shortly after it was launched at the contest and that ended Dick McCoy's model airplane career.

Dick's two sons, Harold and Carl, had opened a machine shop and most of their business came from the Louds Company where their father was working. When Harold and Carl entered the Navy, Dick had a meeting with his boss at Louds and it was decided that it would be best for both parties concerned if he would leave his job and devote full time to keeping the machine

shop operating. Dick hired his son-in-law and they kept the company going until his sons returned from the Navy in 1959. The business was incorporated, changing the name from C & H Products to C & H Inc.

After a few years they bought some commercial buildings and moved the business from the home workshop to one of the new buildings and expanded the business to include manufacturing of aircraft parts, and model parts for Radio Controlled (RC) cars. Dick said he did all of the quoting on the aircraft parts until he had his heart by-pass in 1984. They sold the aircraft portion of the business and moved the hobby part to the shop behind Dick's house where he now manufactures model pistons, sleeves, crankshafts, car parts, etc. The C & H, Inc. is now The Real McCoy Glow Plugs and air filters and is run by Harold and his wife Peggy. Harold is still active in RC car racing and tethered cars.

A visit to the McCoy home is an interesting and pleasant experience. Dick has a complete machine shop behind his house where he says his new wife claims he spends too much time. Dick has a good sense of humor and laughs when asked how he got along with the Hatfields. "Fine," he replied, "They lived across the street and we got along just fine." At 89 years of age Dick gets around more like he is 50. He doesn't mind being kidded about his full head of hair or his ability to put in a full day's work in his shop.

We asked Dick if he ever made "special" engines for his friends. "No," was the reply. "They pretty much run that way out of the box except for Ed Southwick. We used to go out every Sunday for about couple of years to Santa Anita Racetrack to work on the McCoy Stunt Engines. We tried different props, fuels and plugs and things like that."

We asked Dick which engine of his gave him the most pleasure and his answer was the McCoy 60 and he told us one of the best engines was also the cheapest - the McCoy 35 stunt engine.

Next thing Dick did was to pull out two copies of the Engine Collectors' Journal - one dated January 1981 and the other dated December 1992. Dick autographed both copies. Between the two issues, they pretty well tell the whole story and give the complete catalog of all the McCoy Engines, which seem to be close to 100 different designs. The only one that Dick didn't like was the Series 21 engine. He said they ran fine, but were too heavy. He was out-voted on this design.

We asked Dick what he thought of the Dooling Engines. He thought they were great engines although he could never quite catch up with them in his race cars, he was always able to stay a little bit ahead of them with the speed airplanes. We took a quick tour of Dick's workshop and visited his impressive trophy collection. He must have over 100 racecars - maybe 10 times that number in engines and 100's of trophies and awards.

Dick is currently (March 1997) building some McCoy cars and parts for collectors who want to restore the old McCoy Products. Dick has sponsored the Radio Control McCoy Race for 24 years. In June of 1997, he will host the 25th Silver Anniversary Race.

Dick's second wife passed away in July 1997 after about four years of marriage. He then met a very loving lady at the church he had attended for 45 years. They became engaged and were married in November of 1997. Dick continued to work in his shop with his engines and cars.

He attended the International MECA Exposition in 2000 at Kalamazoo, Michigan with his wife, Rosalie, and son, Harold. Dick was Guest of Honor and enjoyed seeing old friends and meeting new ones.

Dick's daughter, Doris, was married on June 9, 2001, which was Dick's 94th birthday. He had the pleasure of walking her down the aisle.

Dick continued working in his shop until February 26, 2002 when he suffered a heart attack. He has just recently started working an hour or so occasionally.

Dick celebrated his 95th birthday on June 9, 2002. He also sponsored a RC meet on June 22 and 23, 2002 in Montclair, California.

Dick is a member of the following:

AMA- L27 Life -Hall of Fame

MECA- 502 -01 Life

SAM-24 Life Hall of Fame

AMRCA- 0245

ROAR- 1146 Life

VMRCA- Life Member

Dick can be reached at his home, 5510 Yale Street, Montclair, California, 91763, through e-mail at realmccoyrd@aol.com or by phone at 909-986-1628.

The McCoy name may go down as the most respected in model airplane engine history.

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