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## Biography of GEORGE PERRYMAN

Began modeling in the mid 1930s

August 30, 1924 to February 22, 2003

AMA Number: 514

Transcribed & Edited by SS (2/03)

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### Career:

- Attended many national and international competitions
- U.S. team captain for the 1951 World Wakefield Championships; captain of the Nordic team in 1953 and 1954
- Awarded honorary membership into the Society of Model Aeronautical Engineers of Great Britain in 1951
- Many of his distinctive designs have been featured in magazines and books
- Some of his models include the Swami, Superasteroid, Little Daddy and the Great Speckled Bird
- Has been AMA District V vice president and associate vice president
- Has promoted model aviation on radio and T.V.
- Three of his models are in the collection of the National Model Aviation Museum – the Great Speckled Bird, the Helicopter Speckled Bird and the Giant Speckled Bird
- Won over 700 trophies in 47 years of competition
- Given the Robert Meuser Award for Modeler of the Year in 1983 and 1984
- Member of the Model Aviation Hall of Fame selection committee
- Worked as a designer for Lockheed for 35 years

### Honors:

- 1984 – AMA Hall of Fame
- 1985 – National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame
- 1991 – Society of Antique Modelers Hall of Fame
- 1998 – AMA Fellow

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*This information on George Perryman was written in 1985 – most likely at his induction in to the National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame.*

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George was born the son of a Methodist minister in Irvington, Kentucky, on August 30, 1924. At the age of 12 he and his family moved to Georgia.

The first models he saw fly were those he and his classmates built. They were simple stick models and a 20-second flight was a time for cheering and revelry. To see something they had built actually defy gravity was thrilling. This small town of Griffin, Georgia, had quite a number of boys who built and flew models. Mr. Andrew Whalen Sr. enjoyed watching them fly and decided they could do better if they had a club. He set up a clubhouse and model supply shop in his garage, and the Griffin Model Aero Club was in business in 1938. Under Mr. Whalen's guidance the boys held their own contests, and he taught them a lesson by having the boys solicit their own prizes from local merchants. George remembers winning in his first contest and Mr. Whalen's influence, which extends even today, since all "his boys" have experienced success in life. Some still fly models, notably, Bob Baker, Kenneth Grubbs and Van Thaxton.

George attended his first Nationals (Nats) in Chicago in 1941 and remembers the awe of seeing in person the famous modelers he had only read about. It seemed like a dream flying with legendary flyers Carl Goldberg, Dick Korda, Sal Taibi, Leon Shulman, Wally Simmers and the

other greats. His hero is still Chet Lanzo who befriended him and showed him how to get the most out of a rubber ship. Today George competes with a Lanzo stick and cabin ship in Old-Timer events and enjoys showing Chet how much better Lanzo models fly now with lighter weight and a more powerful rubber.

Three years service in the Air Corps saw him a ground crew chief on B-29s. He built and flew models at many of the bases where he was stationed.

From 1946 through 1949 he attended the Plymouth Internationals held in Detroit.

1948 was a banner year for George. He married Tina, the prettiest girl in LaGrange, Georgia, and they are still happy after 37 years. They have two sons, Steve and Greg, who brought back plenty of Nats hardware over the years. They also have two granddaughters, Stephanie and Paulette. Stephanie, now 15, won many first places in glider and rubber before she found out about boys. Flying with her was one of George's big thrills.

George, at 26, was U.S. team captain for the 1951 World Wakefield Champs held in Finland. He also captained the Nordic team in Yugoslavia in 1953 and in Denmark in 1954. In 1951 he was awarded honorary membership into the Society of Model Aeronautical Engineers of Great Britain by the late C. S. Rushbrook.

As an innovator, his designs are distinctive. Featuring gull wings, polyhedral stabilizer (stab), sweepback and curved wings and stabs. He uses pointy tips on everything, even props. His models are immediately recognized as Perryman designs. Many of his designs have been featured in magazines and books. His first published design was in Model Airplane News magazine's November 1943 issue. His Swami towline glider set many records and was published by Air Trails magazine in 1959.

His Asteroid and Superasteroid appeared in Model Airplane News magazine, the Black Mamba in Aeromodeller (a British modeling magazine) and Stephanie's Streaker and Solidifier were published in Model Builder magazine.

Model Airplane News published one of his most successful designs, Little Daddy, which won the famed Mulvihill Trophy for Mike Bailey, age 15, in 1969. Jim Lewis used his Little Daddy to win it in 1974 and 1976. George had tried for 36 years to win the Mulvihill. He finally realized his dream, flying a new design, the Great Speckled Bird, at the 1977 Riverside Nats. Winning the Mulvihill was one of his most remembered moments. Great Speckled Bird won Mulvihill again in 1980 and 1982. Little Daddy was National Free Flight Society (NFFS) Rubber Model of the Year in 1975 and the Great Speckled Bird was in 1978. The Great Speckled Bird also won the Canada Cup in 1976.

George is currently (1985) senior design engineer and team leader for Wind Tunnel Model Design with Lockheed Corporation. During his 33 years with Lockheed, mainly in the Flight Sciences Division, he has been instrumental in the development of many outstanding airplanes. Working under various NASA contracts, he is involved with several new conceptual studies,

which will be utilized on flight vehicles possibly years hence. He came with Lockheed as a result of the management reading of his modeling success.

George is on the Aviation Advisory Board of Directors for the city of Atlanta for the purpose of youth training and development. He is a member of the Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) and Beginning Aeromodellers Association, which lends aid to modelers of any age. He has been AMA vice president and associate vice president for District V. Currently he is Eastern Director for NFFS. His material has appeared in many magazine, book and newspaper articles. To boost model aviation, he has been on radio and T.V. several times. He was featured on CBS-TV News in 1983 flying some of his rubber-powered models. This exposed many millions of people to the great fun model flying has to offer.

He feels pride that three of his models are enshrined in the AMA museum – Great Speckled Bird, Helicopter Speckled Bird and Giant Speckled Bird.

Even though he has won over 700 trophies and awards in his 47 competition years, he still enjoys tough Free Flight contest competition. He can remember winning in 56 different categories and has probably forgotten some others. He has concentrated on rubber events in recent years and managed to compete in 17 events at the 1984 Reno Nats. He flies SAM rubber and AMA events and many NFFS unofficial events, which he thinks are the most fun of all. Over 150 of his wins have been at the Nats and King Orange Internats.

He was given the Robert Meuser Award for Modeler of the Year in 1983 and again in 1984.

George is a charter member of TTOMA (Thermal Thumbers of Metropolitan Atlanta) and Kamakazi Squadron 47 SAM Chapter. He still gets a thrill seeing a good flight and is always looking forward to the next contest and that next new design to test. He hopes to compete for 50 or 60 more years! He proudly sports AMA license number 514 (CD).

George is presently a committee member of the Model Aviation Hall of Fame selection committee.

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*The following is an excerpt from a letter to the editor George wrote in the November 2001 issue of Model Aviation.*

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I was born in the little town of Irvington, Kentucky, just across the Ohio River from Indiana. I was almost born a Hoosier, which wouldn't be half bad since it's a beautiful state. I've found from my many trips to Muncie, Indiana, the AMA folks and the local people are the friendliest and most helpful of anywhere I've been.

My father was a circuit rider Methodist preacher, and the little towns we lived in didn't have electricity or running water. I am still a hill boy from Kentucky.

When I was nine or 10, my mother, Nell, went to Elizabethtown, Kentucky, and bought me a model airplane kit for 25-cents. She helped me cut out all the pieces using scissors, which broke

most of the balsa wood. We didn't get the model finished, so she bought me a 10-cent stick model, which would fly across the street.

Today I still get a thrill – the same thrill I got then – flying models.

I went to the first of my 43 Nationals in Chicago in 1941 at age 16. I rode a Greyhound bus holding two small rubber models in my lap all night. I met many of my heroes.

My mother died last year at 100-years-old. When she was 98-1/2 she assembled a simple all-balsa model, the Centurian. She was tickled beyond words when National Model Aviation Museum Curator Michael Smith installed it in a glass case next to one of mine in the AMA museum. She was my greatest supporter for 76 years.

In 1938 I first joined AMA when a license to fly rubber and glider cost 50-cents. I didn't have money for an engine, for which a license cost \$1. I only built small rubber models and gliders, since I couldn't afford materials and rubber for big models. This is my 63<sup>rd</sup> competition year.

I was elected vice president of AMA for District V in 1954 when I was 29. I have been an associate vice president for several decades under outstanding guidance from my friend and district vice president, Jim McNeill. He and many others advanced AMA to where it is today.

Modeling is without a doubt the greatest of all sports. I owe my 35 years at Lockheed as a designer directly to models. Jim Wade, the employment manager of engineering, contacted me shortly after I returned from Finland as captain of the Wakefield team in 1951. I was a textile machine designer in West Point, Georgia, and Jim made me an offer I couldn't refuse.

Most of my career with Lockheed was designing wind-tunnel models, which I'd almost paid them to be able to do. I was privileged to help design some of the world's greatest airplanes – the C-130, C-141, C-5A and F-117 stealth fighter.

I am a full believer that God bestows special blessings to modelers. We have to do things that the average citizen is not required to do. Adding together all disciplines of modeling – Free Flight, Radio Control, Control Line, boats, racecars and rockets – we modelers are outnumbered by over 1,000 to one by fishermen and hunters.

We modelers should consider ourselves part of a brotherhood. Few, if any, organizations are as blessed as modelers, having as many fine people as we have.

By helping the upcoming young people like the Science Olympiad, we can ensure the future of modeling. Most of what we know we learned from someone else, beginning with our parents, then teachers, fellow workers, family members and modelers. The things we have learned should be passed along, which might be a help to many. I'm thankful every day for my modeling friends.

*The following obituary about George ran in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution following his death. This text was taken from the newspaper's Web site at [www.accessatlanta.com/ajc/metro/obits/0203/24perryman.html](http://www.accessatlanta.com/ajc/metro/obits/0203/24perryman.html)*

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As a country boy growing up in Kentucky, George Perryman made his own toys. As an adult, while he designed airplanes for Lockheed Martin Corp., he made it possible for thousands of people to build his toys – model airplanes.

In December, Mr. Perryman, 78, of Smyrna was honored by the Academy of Model Aeronautics as one of the 10 most influential model aircraft designers of all time, said Ron Sharpton of Daytona Beach, Fla., a hobbyist friend for 59 years.

Four of Mr. Perryman's model kits are found in hobby shops around the world including the Mini-Maxer, which has sold 60,000 and is the biggest selling kit of all time, said his son Steve Perryman of Acworth. Others are the Super-Maxer Speckled Bird, the Fludy Coop Speckled Bird and the Asteroid.

Mr. Perryman's popular speckled bird series of models is named for Atlanta's underground newspaper of the 1960s, the Great Speckled Bird, a name his father just liked, said his son.

The memorial service for George Parker Perryman, who died of bronchial problems at WellStar Cobb Hospital Saturday (February 22, 2003), will be at 3 p.m. March 2 at Tillman United Methodist Church. The body was cremated. Carmichael Funeral Home, Smyrna, is in charge of arrangements.

Mr. Perryman built his first model airplane at six and preferred rubber band-powered models over gas-powered. "Rubber is like a purist event," said his son. "It's a contest to see who can get the most out of the least and is highly competitive." Mr. Perryman won his last event in December.

"We were just at a competition in Muncie, Ind., and there were people there from all over the world," said his son. "They didn't even speak English, but they knew who George Perryman was."

And Mr. Perryman enjoyed the attention. "He loved recognition," said his son. "Every time he would design a new model, he'd say, 'One more chance at fame and glory.'"

Three of Mr. Perryman's models are on display at the Academy of Model Aeronautics museum: the original Great Speckled Bird, the Centurion and the Pot Bellied Tub O' Lard, said Mr. Sharpton.

Mr. Perryman's mother took him to his first model airplane competition, and a rubber stick model airplane she built at 98 is in the museum, also, said Mr. Sharpton.

“He had a special wing tip on his models, and NASA told him seven or eight years ago his design was more efficient than the tiplets being used on airplanes,” said Mr. Sharpton. “I’ve noticed since then that airplanes now use that pointed tip that trails to the back of the wing.”

Mr. Perryman, with a ninth-grade mechanical drawing class as his only engineering training, was hired by Lockheed in 1951.

The man who had studied at Emory University to become a geologist instead became a wind tunnel expert and helped design highly classified aircraft, said his son. He retired after 37 years.

His balsa wood and paper model airplanes would fly for miles. Mr. Perryman would do anything to recover a model, he said in an Atlanta Journal-Constitution article.

He once climbed a 12-foot fence topped with barbed wire to follow one of his planes, dashed past a man with a shotgun, then cleared a second fence before tracking down his model.

“I found out later I had been through the middle of a convict work camp,” he said.

Survivors include his wife, Tina J. Perryman; another son, Greg Perryman of Doraville; two sisters, Mary McCann of Decatur and Eleanor Morris of Dallas; and two grandchildren.

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*The following article ran in Model Aviation magazine’s June 2003 issue following George’s death.*

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**“The only difference between an expert and an amateur is plenty of sandpaper and a strong thermal.” – George Perryman, August 1924 – February 2003**

George Perryman, of Smyrna, Georgia, died February 22, 2003, following a brief illness.

George was honored by the Academy of Model Aeronautics as one of the 10 Most Influential Model Aircraft Designers of all time in December 2002. A prolific designer, his designs included the Mini-Maxer, which is the best-selling kit of all time, and the Speckled Bird series, named for Atlanta’s underground newspaper of the 1960s. His kits are sold in hobby shops worldwide.

George’s models on display at the Academy of Model Aeronautics’ National Model Aviation Museum include the original Great Speckled Bird, the Centurion and the Pot Bellied Tub O’ Lard. George’s mother sparked his interest in aeromodeling when she took him to his first model airplane competition. A rubber stick model she built at age 98 is on display at the museum.

George was six when he built his first airplane. Throughout his entire life, George preferred rubber-powered Free Flight models and considered them a great test of design.

George was an active builder and flyer, competing until the end. George won his last event in December of 2002.

Last summer he won many awards in the National Aeromodeling Championships (Nats) and Society of Antique Modelers Championships in July held in Muncie, Indiana.

Born in Kentucky, George moved with his family to Griffin, Georgia, in 1936. He attended Griffin High School and then Emory University where he studied to become a geologist. Following a stint in the Army Air Corps during World War II, George met Tina Johnson, who he married in 1948.

In 1951, George, whose only engineering training was a mechanical drawing class in ninth grade, was hired as a junior draftsman at Lockheed. Eventually he became a wind tunnel expert and helped design highly classified aircraft. George retired after 37 years as an aircraft design engineer.

George was able to combine his engineering skills with his hobby – aeromodeling. He designed a special wingtip on his models and was once told by a person at NASA that his design was more efficient than the triplets being used on full-scale airplanes.

As a person and an aeromodeler, George touched many people. Mike Fedor, a fellow modeler, wrote, “I first met George in the late 1960s as a Texas kid attending Georgia Tech and flying Free Flight models when I probably should have been studying.

“George was a true southern gentleman and the best rubber flyer I have ever met. He has been an ambassador for our sport over the years that cannot be equaled. As a contestant he has probably competed for the Mulvihill Trophy awarded for high time in unlimited/Mulvihill at the Nats more times than any one else and has even won it a few times.”

A suggestion to rename the Mulvihill Trophy in George’s honor is being considered.

George served as an AMA District V associate vice president and was a charter member of the Thermal Thumbers of Metro Atlanta (TTOMA). He was a member of the Model Aviation Hall of Fame and the Society of Antique Modelers Hall of Fame.

Longtime friend, Jim McNeill, wrote, “A description of George’s models’ performance closely describes his own performance in his journey through life. He climbed higher and achieved greater heights than anyone. George had no enemies and everyone liked him. His sudden passing is like one of his little airplanes fading slowly into the interminable haze of the afternoon walls of Heaven.”

George is survived by his wife of 55 years, Tina J. Perryman, sons Steve and wife MaDonna; Greg and his wife Connie; granddaughter Stephanie and husband William Busby; granddaughter Paulette Perryman. Other relatives include a sister, Mary McCann; sister, Eleanor Morris of Dallas, Texas; several in-laws, nieces and nephews and his beloved dog, Shadow.

All who knew George will miss him.

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## Photographs of GEORGE PERRYMAN

Began modeling in the mid 1930s

August 30, 1924 to February 22, 2003

AMA Number: 514

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George (left) in 1990 in Florida.



George (left) being presented an award by Dave Platt in 1989.



LEFT: George at the Lawrenceville Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) Champs sometime around 1995. His model is Paul Verdiere's 1935-1936 Wakefield model.

RIGHT: George in 1948 at age 24 with black hair. He is holding a Southerner 29 model.





George (left) and fellow modeler O.C. Stewart circa 1990 at the SAM Championships in Lawrenceville, Illinois.



This photo of George in 1985 holding a 1940 Chest Lanzo Cabin 300-square-inch model was on the cover of the National Free Flight Society (NFFS) Digest in January 1985.



George and his Speckled Moffett in 2001.



George in 1968 at a rubber meet.



O.C. Stewart (left) and George. George is the holding the last model that Chester Lanzo built and gave to him at the King Orange the year Lanzo passed away.



George speaking at the 1998 Celebration of Pioneers held in Muncie, Indiana.