
Biography of RICHARD J. SHERMAN

Modeler since 1929

Birth Date: December 14, 1923 AMA Number: 204

Transcribed & Edited by SS (3/03)

Career:

- Started the first model airplane museum in the United States in 1948
- Volunteered at most of the Nationals from 1958 to 1985
- Was hired in 1974 to set up the AMA archives
- Member of the AMA's scale contest board for District I from 1970 to 1981
- Published the plans for his Coupe d'Hiver design
- Turned his family farm into a flying site for local modelers in 1958
- Helped organize the New England Model Aircraft Council about 1960
- Served as club president of the Lawrence Aristocrats for three years from 1959 to 1965
- Serves as associate vice president for AMA District I
- Has been an AMA contest director and leader member since 1960
- Won the Old Goat Award from the Society of Antique Modelers in 1986

Honors:

- 1975 – AMA Distinguished Service Award
- 1982 – AMA Distinguished Service Award
- 2000 – AMA Hall of Fame

The following information about Richard J. Sherman comes from the AMA Hall of Fame application that Donald C. Krafft submitted on his behalf in March 1988. Richard updated the information in March 2003 for the AMA History Program.

Dick Sherman built his first model airplane in 1929 and is still active today in Old-Timer Free Flight and Radio Controlled (RC) sailplanes.

He is probably best known nationally for his model airplane museum. In 1929 he started the first model airplane museum in the United States. It was, and still is, open to the public free of charge.

Dick said that he started the museum because one didn't exist and modelers were throwing away their parts from the old ignition days. He decided he might as well keep them and collected them from other modelers, then refurbished them.

Please refer to some of the articles about the museum.

- Model Airplane News magazine, June 1964, page 68
- Model Airplane News magazine, February 1967, pages 14, 15 and 50
- Flying Models magazine, March 1980, page 37 – 39
- Flying Models magazine, April 1980, pages 33 – 35
- Model Aviation magazine, July 1983, page 24

Around 1938 or 1939, Dick joined the Jordan Marsh Aero League, which was directed by Willis C. Brown, the first AMA president, at the time.

He entered the service in 1942 and flew airplanes for the Marines for 15 years in World War II and Korea. After World War II, Dick was sent home to Plymouth, New Hampshire, where he started an airport. Just as the airport began to have financial struggles, Dick was called back into service for the Korean War. He was discharged from the Marines in 1955.

Dick has been a volunteer worker at most of the Nationals (Nats) from 1958 to 1985 when his health slowed him down a bit. After retiring from his airplane flying in 1970, he was hired by John Worth in 1974 to work for the AMA to set up its archives. In 1975 the AMA presented him with the Distinguished Service Award for his museum as curator of model aviation history. He was presented a second Distinguished Service Award for his 11 years of service on the scale contest board for District I.

Although his designs have not appeared often in magazines, his Coupe d'Hiver design, which was second at the 1970 Nats and fourth at the 1971 Nats, did get a bit of publicity, and plans were published by Dick.

Dick has been a driving force for modeling. In 1958 he turned the family 30-acre farm into a flying site for the local area clubs. The whole area was used for Free Flight, a 300-foot by 80-foot runway was provided for RC and there was one 80-foot circle for Control Line. This was all maintained by the Shermans for use by the modelers. When the Lawrence Aristocrats [a local modeling club] sponsored the Topsfield Model Fair Contests, Dick was the contest director. They had carrier as one of the events. But they had no carrier. Dick built the carrier so the event could be held. The desk was then moved to his flying site where all could use it. This desk was one of the desks used at the 1983 Westover Nats. It did serve the modelers well.

During his service to AMA, he has never sent a bill or expense report to the AMA. There has never been a charge to visit the museum. When asked why, the reply is, "It is my way of giving back something to the hobby that has been so good to me." I know that when he had to retire from airline flying, the museum provided good therapy and a means to stay in touch with modelers.

Professionally, Dick flew commercially for Mohawk Airlines until 1970 when he had to retire for medical reasons.

Competitor

Entered contests

- Jordan Marsh Aero League contest held in the Boston Garden in 1939, 1940 and 1941
- Southwesterns in Dallas during 1953 and 1954
- Has competed in most of the Nats from 1955 to 1984
- Entered the Australian Nats in 1983 and 1984
- Entered the 50th anniversary of the Wakefield trophy in 1987
- Participated in the vintage weekend at Old Warden in England in 1987

National event winner

- Held class A speed record in 1953 or 1954
- 1970 Coup D'hiver, second place
- 1971 Coup D'hiver, fourth place
- AMA Nats Old-Timer, first in hand-launched glider in 1985

Designer/Experimenter

Assisted H.M. Bourgeois in building the Jamboree stunt model published in Air Trails magazine in January 1955.

LeaderOrganized or helped establish clubs

- Organized a model group in the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts in the Tewksbury and Lowell, Massachusetts, area from 1961 to 1964
- Was the aviation merit badge counselor until 1969 for the Lowell district of the Boy Scouts of America
- Helped organize the New England Model Aircraft Council about 1960

Club officer

- Club president of the Lawrence Aristocrats three times from 1959 to 1965
- Was the Lawrence Aristocrats delegate to the New England Model Aircraft Council for eight years

AMA officer

- Member of the scale contest board for 11 years, from 1970 to 1981, for District I
- Presently is an associate vice president for District I

Contest DirectorDirected local meets

- Organized and was contest director for the Topsfield Model Fair and the Salem Model Fair from 1964 to 1971
- Has been a contest director and leader member of the AMA since 1960

Contest Accomplishments

Held a class A speed record for one week in 1953; set the record in Beaumont, Texas.

Yankee championships	1960	Indoor paper stick	First
Yankee championships	1966	½ A Free Flight	Third
Yankee championships	1967	½ A Free Flight	First
Yankee championships	1968	Hand-launched glider	Second

Yankee championships	1966	½ A Free Flight	Second
Yankee championships	1969	Hand-launched glider	Second
Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) summer outing	1984	Hand-launched glider	Second
SAM Champs at Westover	1986	Hand-launched glider	First
SAM Champs at Westover	1986	Commercial rubber	Second

- Won awarded the prestigious Old Goat Award by SAM in 1986.
- Australian Nats, 1983 and 1984, Old-Timer open rubber, fourth place
- 50th anniversary of the Wakefield trophy in 1987 in England, made the fly off and finished third
- 50th anniversary of the first flight of the Blackburn SKUA aircraft in 1987 in England, second place

- End -