
Biography of EARL WITT

Lifespan: 1920-2000 AMA: 19 and L-21

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The following represents a biography of Earl Witt, printed in Model Aviation magazine in 1993.

“Earl Witt has two AMA numbers. As president of the Academy, serving from 1979-1980, he was awarded AMA 19. He also purchased a Life membership, which carries number L-21. It was during his tenure that the land on which the Reston Headquarters stands was purchased.

Before his term of office, Earl received many AMA awards for his service to the organization and the sport of aeromodeling. He holds a Meritorious Service Award, a Distinguished Service Award, and in 1955 was made a Fellow of the AMA.

He has served in many capacities, including Chairman of the Rules Committee. He ran the first industry-sponsored air show team in 1954, a forerunner of AMA's Air Show Team Program.

An innovator, Earl produced the first *wedge* fuel tank, making it possible for CL models to fly inverted. In 1946, Earl and Dick Hill produced the first molded plastic control line model—the Comanche. Among the many designs Earl has to his credit are the Aggressor, Bottom Rocker, and Top Kicker. His 330 Biplane has been kitted and is commercially available.

He enjoys competition and served as FAI team captain for U.S. teams competing in F3A (RC Aerobatics) events in Denmark and New Zealand. His interest in contests started early, and from 1948-1953 he was Northwest Champion.

As an organizer, he helped establish the Cloud Clippers and the Northwest Associated Modelers clubs. He served as club officer in many functions over an extended period of years. His writings have been published in several magazines, including *Model Aviation*, *Model Airplane News*, and *American Aircraft Modeler*.

He served as Contest Director for the annual Nats and introduced computer scoring to the championships in 1978. He has been instrumental in producing hundreds of local and regional contests, including the All-Army Model Airplane Meet and the Jim Walker Around the World Meet.

As you can plainly see, Earl has been a strong supporter of this sport for all of his adult life.”

The following obituary of Earl Witt, written by Ron Morgan and Jim Haught, appeared in the June 2000 issue of Model Aviation magazine, page 134.

“Earl F. Witt, former AMA president and a major participant in the affairs of the AMA, died of numerous health problems related to diabetes February 14, 2000. He was 79.

Born in Seattle, Washington in 1920, his family moved to the Los Angeles area when Earl was five years of age; moved back to Tacoma in the late 1920s; then to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania in 1961, where he resided until his death.

He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Maxine, two daughters, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Earl served in the Army Air Corps during World War II, flying B-25 bombers and numerous other types of aircraft. He worked for the US Army as a Facility Engineer until he retired in 1980.

A professional airplane pilot, he operated a flight school and served as a safety advisor with the Federal Aviation Administration. He belonged to the Experimental Aircraft Association for many years and built a number of aircraft. In recent years, he owned a Moni powered sailplane, a sky bike and an Avidflier.

A creative model designer, many of his model designs were published in the modeling magazines in the early 1950s. An acquaintance of Jim Walker, he created a model show team with support from Walker and participated in Northwest shows during the late 1940s and 1950s.

Earl was an original member of the Nationals Executive Committee and attended 50 consecutive National Model Airplane Championships from 1947 to 1996.

“I knew Earl from many years of working at the Nationals,” said AMA Executive Director Joyce Hagar. “His love of model aviation was shown through the countless hours of volunteer service.”

In addition to serving as AMA president from 1979 to 1980, he served as AMA Secretary-Treasurer (now called Executive VP) during the 1970s.

During his service with AMA, he was recognized as a member of the [Model Aviation] Hall of Fame, was an AMA Fellow, received the Distinguished Service and Meritorious Service awards and was a Life Member of the AMA.

With Earl’s passing, another chapter in the evolution of AMA comes to a close. He was very active on the AMA scene for approximately 40 years.

Earl had tremendous skill in anticipating needs for whatever project with which he was involved. Much effort was put into getting the AMA on its feet financially during the early 1960s; another project was his desire to move AMA Headquarters away from Washington DC and into a permanent home. Although his plan was challenged when presented, his dream was realized a dozen years later.

Current AMA president Dave Brown has said many times that Earl was about 10 years ahead of his time.

He was an excellent teacher of student pilots and those he took under his wing for grooming in other administration positions. “I especially enjoyed his conversations about teaching new full-scale pilots,” said Hager. “Especially the ones where women were involved.”

Earl had a unique way to communicate that left no doubt to what he was saying. This was often interpreted as being gruff, and as a result, Earl was nicknamed “the mean man” in Nationals circles. Those who took the time would soon find he was a very gentle and kind person.

Not one to be afraid to take a position on a subject, he would defend his positions with logical arguments, making them difficult to challenge.

He loved the water and modeling, with seaplanes his favorite. Working with school students was a priority project anytime the opportunity would arise.

“Earl will surely be missed,” said Hager.

-Ron Morgan and Jim Haught