



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of JAMES (JIM) E. KIRKLAND 1924 – 1972



Written & Submitted by REV (03/1974); Transcribed by NR (12/1999); Edited by SS (2002), updated JS (09/2007, 02/2016), Reformatted by JS (10/2009)

Career:

- A prolific contest winner
- Author of many articles in the major model magazines
- Had numerous kit of his designs in production with a number of manufacturers
- A member of the AMA advisory board
- A member of the Radio Control contest board
- 1968-1969: Vice President of District V

Honors:

- 1975: Model Aviation Hall of Fame

The following biography was taken from a Model Aviation Hall of Fame application. Ronald E. Van Putte submitted the application was on March 17, 1974.

*Eglin Aero Modelers
12 Long Wood Drive
Shalimar, Florida 32579*

*Academy of Model Aeronautics, Headquarters
Hall of Fame Committee
806 15th Street North West
Washington, D.C. 20005*

Subject: Nomination to the Model Aviation Hall of Fame for James E. Kirkland

Gentlemen:

The Eglin Aero Modelers hereby nominate the late James E. Kirkland for consideration to the Hall of Fame. (The appropriate AMA Form is attached.)

His contributions during 36 years in the field of model aeronautics stagger the imagination. Please note on the completed AMA Form that Jim excelled in each of the categories referenced. Also, please note in the addenda to the supporting remarks the tributes paid Jim at the time of his passing by prominent individuals in the field of model aeronautics. He was also well known in other parts of the world and, if time would permit, similar editorials could be obtained. Among the contributors to Jim's memory are our dynamic, hard-working President, John Clemens and the boy wonder from Tallahassee, Rhett Miller, last year's national champion who was a prodigy of Jim's (see attached form for their thoughts).

It is felt that the heritage left by Jim Kirkland will continue to influence model aeronautics for

*some time to come; therefore, it is considered fitting that his name be placed in the Model Aviation Hall of Fame as a final tribute to his memory.
Your attention to this matter and your reply will be appreciated.*

*Very truly yours,
David O. Fraser
President
Eglin Aero Modelers*

Entered Contests

Time will not allow a thorough check of all contest results. The following information is taken from trophies.

Location	Date	Result
Masters Radio Control Tournament, Marietta, Ga.	1969	Second
Detroit (Mich.) Invitational	1964	First
Detroit (Mich.) Invitational	1965	First
C.C.R.C.C.	1970	Third (Control Line D Expert)
Guided Mites, Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.	1969	Second
Fiesta of Five Flags, Pensacola, Fla.	1971	Third (event unknown) and First (Control Line D Expert)
Fifth Orlando	1965	Best; First most touch and goes; Radio Control Scale Third Goodyear Pylon
Model Aviation Day, Lafayette, La.	1969	Second (Control Line D Expert)
Northwest Florida Autumn Championships	1969	First
M.T.R.C.S. 6 th Mid-South	1969	First (Control Line C Expert)
10 th Rocket City M.A. Championship	1969	Third (C Expert)
Rebel Rally	1969	First
Florida Radio Control Championship	1968	First (Control Line C Expert)
Fiesta Southeastern, Pensacola, Fla.	1970	First (Control Line D Expert)
Mobile G.C.R.C.	1971	Third (Control Line C Expert)
Atlanta Radio Control Meet	1968	Third (Control Line C Expert)
Fiesta Southeastern Pensacola, Fla.	1968	First (Goodyear Pylon)
Mid South	1970	Second (Control Line D Expert)
R.C.A.C.F.	1965	VIP Trophy
Model Airplane Day, Lafayette, La.	1972	Third (Control Line D Expert)
Fiesta Southeastern, Pensacola, Fla.	1965	First (Jr./Sr. Open) and First

		(Radio Control Champion)
Fiesta Southeastern, Pensacola, Fla.	1966	First (Jr./Sr. Open) and First (Radio Control Champion)
Florida Championship	1963	First (Radio Control Multi)
Model Airplane Meet, St. Regis	Unknown	Trophy (event unknown)
CAPS	1963	First (Pylon)
Fly for Fun Model Meeting	1960	Trophy (event unknown)
Third Fiesta Southeastern	1961	First (Radio Control Rudder)
TORKS Sixth American	1966	First (Open Pylon)
Capitol City Radio Control, Jackson, Miss.	1965	First (Class) and First (Scale)
U.S. Air Force	1963	First (Radio Control Multi)
U.S. Air Force	1964	First (Radio Control Multi)
First Annual Tournament of Champions, Oklahoma City	1965	Fifth
F.A.I. Germany	1965	Ninth
Nationals	1961	Thirds (Radio Control Rudder)
37 th Nationals	1968	Second (Expert)
36 th Nationals	1967	Fourth (Radio Control III)
41 st Nationals	1972	Fifth (Radio Control Pattern)
40 th Nationals	1971	Fifth (Radio Control Pattern)
39 th Nationals	1970	First (Radio Control Pattern)
34 th Nationals	1965	Third
32 nd Nationals	1963	First (Radio Control/Control Line III)
Tangerine Internationals	1968	Second (Control Line C Expert)
Tangerine Internationals	1971	First (Control Line D Expert)
Tangerine Internationals	1969	First (Control Line C Expert)
King Orange International	1962	First (Radio Control Multi) and First (Goodyear Pylon)
King Orange International	1965	Second (Radio Control Pylon), First (Radio Control/Control Line III) and First (Radio Control Scale)
Decatur Model Airplane Clubs	1965	Third (Control Line C Expert)
Fifth GCRC	Unknown	First (Control Line C Expert)
St. Petersburg International	1965	First (Radio Control III Expert)
C.C.R.C.C.	1965	First (Pylon Racing)
Alexandria Radio Control Contest	1966	First (Control Line III Expert)

First Fiesta Southeastern M.A. Championship	1962	First (Radio Control Scale), First (Radio Control Multi) and Third (Radio Control M.C. Jr. Sr. Op.)
CPPS	1963	First (Multi-Radio)
Fiesta Southeastern	1964	First (Radio Control Multi) and Second (Open Pylon)
King Orange International	1963	First (Radio Control Line III)
First Carrier Squadron Team	1964	Trophy (event unknown)
Florida State Model Plane Championship	1964	First (Radio Control/Control Line III)
C.C.R.C.C.	1964	Second (Control Line III Expert)
First Annual Gulf Coast M.A. Meeting	1964	First (Class III)
Billy Bowlegs First Radio Control Festival	Unknown	Second (Multi Pylon)
Atlanta Radio Control Meeting	1966	Fourth (expert)
Rocket City Radio Control	1972	First (D expert)
National	1962	Sixth
National	1964	Unknown
National	1969	Failed to qualify for semi- finals

Designs Kitted by Manufacturer

Manufacturer	Date	Name of Airplane
Veco Products Corp. P.O. Box 229 Burbank, California	1964	Beachcomber
Lanier Industries, Inc. Briarwood Road Oakwood, Georgia 30566	1969	Citron
Dumas Products, Inc. 790 S. Park Avenue Tucson, Arizona 37205	1969	Triton
Hobby World, Inc. 6602 Highway 100 Nashville, Tennessee 37205	1971	A-6 Intruder
Airborne Associates 4106 Breezewood Lane Annandale, Virginia 22003	1973	Nutcracker
Southern Radio Control Products, Inc.	1974	Mustang-X

8685 North Palafox Highway Pensacola, Florida 32504		
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Plans Published in Magazines

Name of Magazine	Date	Category	Name of Airplane
Model Airplane News	May 1963	Radio Control Pattern	Beachcomber
American Modeler	July/Aug. 1965	Radio Control Pattern	Citron
Model Airplane News	Aug. 1966	Pylon Racer	Shoestring
Model Airplane News	March and April 1971	Radio Control Pattern	A-6 Intruder
Model Airplane News	Dec. 1972	Radio Control Pattern	Mustang-X

Designs Used by Others to Win Contests

The Beachcomber, Citron, Triton, and Intruder are designs known to have been used by others to win contests. Time will not permit gathering precise information of how many of his designs have won or the date of the win. Top flyers Rod Chidgey, Don Coleman, Rhett Miller and others have flown his designs in contests. It is believed all of his designs, except the Talon, have been used by others. His Intruder was used by Rhett Miller to win second place in the 1972 Nationals Class A Pattern.

Experimenter

Jim was well known throughout the model aviation world as an experimenter, designer, and innovator. His airplane designs set standards for competitive aircraft configurations of today. His contributions in electronics set the stage for the modern Radio Control system; in fact, he was the first to win the nationals with a proportional system. His final and greatest contribution was the Funline radio system, which was ready for a team to commence production when he was struck down with a heart attack on Nov. 4, 1972. Due to space limitations, not all his contributions can be listed here; however, some of the major innovations are shown under Industry Attachment 9.

*D.L. Coleman, D.D.S.
134 N. Mobile Street
Citronelle, Alabama
March 14, 1975*

*Eglin Aero-Modelers
C/o Mr. Bill Grigsby
224 Hudson Drive*

Ft. Walton, Florida 32548

Dear Bill,

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Eglin Aero-Modelers upon their plans to nominate Jim Kirkland for inclusion in the Model Aviation Hall of Fame.

Having been closely associated with Jim for 10 years in Radio Control circles, I can think of no one in the South more deserving of this honor. His contributions to the whole port were those of a fine competitor, gentleman, sportsman, and true professional in all senses of the words.

I certainly wish you and your club complete success in this endeavor.

*Sincerely,
Don Coleman, 23214
RCCB District V*

*Headquarters
73 J Air Divisions (ADC)
United States Air Force
Tyndoll Air Force Base, Florida
Nov. 19, 1963*

*Reply to ATTN Of: 73CCR
Subject: Letter of Commendation
To: Air Proving Ground Center
Eglin Air Force Base, Florida*

- 1. I wish to commend a member of your command, Master Sergeant James E. Kirkland, 2303 Test Group, for his participation in the USAF 1963 World-Wide Fighter Interceptor Weapons Meet at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida.*
- 2. Sergeant Kirkland contributed significantly to the success of the Air Show and Open House, which were climaxed William Tell 1963, with an outstanding aerial demonstration of his Radio Controlled model aircraft. The complexity and variety of aerobatic maneuvers in this exciting performance was one of the highlights of the Air Show and approximately 30,000 people in attendance gained a new insight into a traditionally fascinating hobby. The professional competence that he had achieved in pursuit of his avocation and his willingness to participate voluntarily in military events, reflect great credit upon himself, his organization, and the United States Air Force.*
- 3. Please express my personal appreciation to Master Sergeant Kirkland for his outstanding performance.*

*R. W. Burns
Brigadier General, USAF
Commander*

*Rhett Anderson Miller, III
3039 Lakeshore Drive
Tallahassee, Florida 32303
March 18, 1974*

*Mr. Frank Prestwood
C/o Mr. Ron Van Putte
12 Long Wood Drive
Shalimar, Fla. 32579*

Dear Mr. Prestwood:

I was very pleased to see that the Eglin Aero Modelers have decided to nominate Mr. Jim Kirkland for the Model Aviation Hall of Fame. In my opinion, there could be no one more deserving of such an honor.

Not only did Mr. Kirkland devote his time to serving in various capacities in the AMA, but was also an active participant in AMA clubs throughout the fifth district.

It is a well-known fact that Mr. Kirkland literally dedicated his life to the development and research as it affected or related to model airplanes. This is evidenced by the fact of that most all of today's pattern airplanes can be traced to one of Mr. Kirkland's original designs.

From a personal standpoint, I shall always be indebted to him for his untiring efforts to assist me to fly the aerobatic patterns properly. In view of his unquestioned dedication to the hobby, there is no doubt in my mind that he is more than deserving of this honor.

*Sincerely,
Rhett A. Miller III*

*Chief of Naval Air Training
U.S. Naval Air Station
Pensacola, Florida 32508
August 14, 1964*

*Mr. Jim Kirkland
344 Edge Avenue*

Valparaiso, Florida

My dear Mr. Kirkland:

I wish to express my appreciation to you as a member of the 1964 National Model Airplane Meet Winners guest cruise, for visiting the Naval Air Training Command. The fact that you have taken valuable time away from your business to gain a better understanding of Naval Aviation is indicative of your patriotic interest in the welfare of your country.

May this day aboard the USS Lexington serve as a reminder that this Command continually strives to develop not only the finest aviators in the world, but officers of staunch character who will man our fighting ships in the best traditions of the United States Navy.

It was a pleasure and honor to have you aboard.

*Sincerely,
A.S. Heyward, Jr.
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy
Chief of Naval Air Training*

The following is taken from a monthly AMA mailing from November 1972 and was written by AMA President Johnny Clemens in his report to the membership.

We Bid Good-Bye to Champion

When I arrived in Huntsville, Alabama for the Radio Control Masters Tournament, Jim Kirkland, a smiling faced old friend of mine from the Deep South was one of the first people to greet me. Jim's greeting was, "Well, Johnny, how does it feel to be here in 'God's Country?'" Truly, everything that happened in Huntsville at the Masters was so impressive that, in writing about it in our AMA magazine section under "The President's Memo," I mentioned Jim's remark about "God's Country."

What a shock it was just a few weeks later to learn that Jim Kirkland had died of a heart attack! For those who had known Jim, no description of mine could add anything to the fine guy we knew he was. For those not personally acquainted with him, he was everything that you would like to see in an AMA champion. Skilled enough to have been a winner and champion at national and international level and to have been one of our fine technical innovators, Jim always had time to grin and chat a minute with anyone who wanted to bend his ear. And now, recalling again Jim's lasting remark to me about being in "God's Country," I am proud to have been among Jim's friends, and sad as he leaves to carry our AMA spirit and love into what is truly God's Country.



1971: Jim Kirkland's P-51 Mustang pattern airplane at the Chicago Nats. Photo taken by, and courtesy of, Mark Radcliff.



(Left) Jim Kirkland's P-51 Mustang pattern airplane on display at the National Model Aviation Museum. Photo taken by, and courtesy of, Mark Radcliff.

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