



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of WAYNE YEAGER



Written by JS (07/2017) and AMA staff (02/2000), Transcribed by JS (09/2006), Reformatted by JS (02/2010, 07/2017)

The following biography was printed in the February 2000 issue of Model Aviation magazine.

Wayne Yeager

Wayne Yeager, 67, is one of those aeromodelers who, while “bitten by the bug” as a youngster, is a relative newcomer. He came back to modeling in 1970 when he built a Heathkit radio system.

While mainly into sport-type airplanes, Wayne flew a little Pattern. However, when he saw his first Pylon race, he knew where he would concentrate his modeling interest. Although he won some prestigious events during the 1970s, Wayne eventually gravitated toward the administrative end of competition.

He served on the Pylon Contest Board and was chair for ten years. The FAI Team Selection Committee enjoys his services and he has been the district contest coordinator for about 25 years.

The international Pylon scene has been an important part of his life. He ran the first F3D World Championships and has since run two others. On three occasions, Wayne has served as the F3D team manager.

He has also served as the Nationals Pylon Event Director for 10 years and for the last several years has served in the position of RC Director.

Wayne is a longtime member of the Toledo Weak Signals, where he has served as an officer and as a part of the Toledo Show board. He has been the co-director of the show for 15 years. His duties include every aspect of the show operation, including buying awards, designing artwork for ads, patches and pins, selling booth space and organizing the mailings.

Other tasks with the club include being the current president, club historian and the newsletter editor.

Wayne is the president of an association of some 25 to 30 clubs in his area. In fact, he has been the only president for the 21 years of its existence. He received a variety of awards including the AMA Superior Service, Fellow, and Pioneer.

He is very proud of having received the Goldberg Vital People award in 1985. When it was suggested to Wayne that he met the criteria for the Model Aviation Hall of Fame, his response was, “But I’m just a volunteer!”

The following was published in the August 2017 issue of Model Aviation magazine, in the “I Am the AMA” column, written by Jay Smith.

I Am the AMA
Wayne Yeager Longtime Nats RC director and model show organizer

Jay Smith: How did you get involved with model aviation?

Wayne Yeager: I've always been fascinated with models flying around, swooping and soaring, looping in the sky, and it's probably a Walter Mitty-type desire to be the person making it perform all those great maneuvers.

I started when I was 9 years old and living next door to two brothers who built rubber-powered models. They lived in a huge house that had an outside porch on the second floor and they would fly their models off that porch. They had a huge advantage of height to launch from, and their models would climb even higher. There was an occasional tree involved, but most of the time they were able to gain some great altitude.

This soon ended [because] my parents separated. My three sisters and I went to live with Grandma who wasn't able to suddenly handle four kids. She found friends from her church who took in the girls and raised them, and I went off to a boy's school where I spent the remainder of my high school years until I was 18.

It was a nice place with a campus containing several buildings, cottages the boys lived in a gymnasium and a great amount of room to fly model airplanes. We couldn't go into town to buy anything, but the housemothers went weekly with long lists of various balsa contraptions. There were many other boys flying model airplanes besides me.

JS: How has model aviation impacted your life and/or career?

WY: It had little effect on my career. I worked various jobs before going back to school to gain the knowledge needed for a good job in the auto industry. I was fortunate enough to be hired by a division of General Motors with offices in the GM Tech Center in Warren, Michigan.

My personal life, though, was greatly affected by model aviation. Every year, I used my vacation time to attend contests across the country. Working for GM had some great benefits. It was a normal procedure for the company to give us additional vacation time, so after a few years, I had accumulated a month of vacation time and I used it to attend model airplane contests. I would take vacation days on Friday and Monday and attended weekend contests quite some distance away.

JS: What disciplines of modeling do you currently participate in?

WY: I live in a small apartment so I have no room for building; however, I do have two quadcopters that I fly quite a bit. You can do a lot of zipping around with these devices, but looping, rolling, and stuff like that are out of the question.

There are some great FPV models available, but my age has left me short of some natural skills and eyesight is one, so I have to make do with what I have.

JS: What are your other hobbies?

WY: Poker for one. I play Texas Hold 'em twice a week with a group of people and have some occasional luck, but it's more for the entertainment value than anything. It's fun raking in a big pot of chips with a good bluff.

Otherwise my hobby is working at the Nats. I work the Nats every year and look forward to it. I started out competing in RC Pylon, which I enjoyed, but after a few years, I decided to get involved in the administrative side of the Nats because there was a need for people willing to run these meets. I volunteered to be the RC Pylon contest director, which I did for 10 years. After that, I became the Nats RC director, which has continued for roughly 30 years. I shared this job with another who retired some time ago. I work the whole Nats, which runs about a month or so. I work with the various event directors on all of the RC events, settle protests, and get involved with other stuff like that.

JS: Who (or what) has influenced you most?

WY: I've admired many people involved with model aviation and many have had some influence on my thinking. Brenda Schuette has my admiration. She manages the Nats Control Line (CL) events every year, and sees that CL gets a fair shake. John Lorbiecki, who manages hundreds of Free Flighters (FF), sees that the dozens of FF events are all run properly and awards are given to those who earn them.

[AMA Executive Director] Dave Mathewson is an articulate individual who always has my attention when he speaks. Dub Jett [involved in RC Pylon] is a guy who gives without most people knowing it. That's the way Dub prefers it. There are more whom I'll think of after I lay this pen down.

JS: Do you think trade shows are still relevant in a digital age?

WY: Everyone knows I've been very closely involved with a major trade show for many years. We climbed to the top of success, and suddenly I see this monster [the trade show] sliding down the other side of the hill on a ride to nowhere - maybe! I was surprised as anyone to discover many old exhibitors those whom we relied on year after year were closing their doors or had already done so.

The impact of mail-house dealing was on us much sooner I than expected, with a much greater force. Only the FPV racers came to our rescue and gave us something to do with all of our space. What sits on the horizon? Does anyone know?

I use digital media quite extensively and never gave it a thought as to its effect on other industries. Why should my buying a toaster oven from a major mail-order house be any different from my buying a new P-38 kit from a model kit distributor? It's something my club and I will have to spend some time and thought on so we aren't unprepared and get blindsided.

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