



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of WILLIAM (BILL) C. MESSER

Born June 10, 1931      AMA #L9085



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Written by GF (04/2020); transcribed and reformatted by JS (07/2020)

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*The following was written and submitted to the AMA History Project by Gary Fitch.*

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April 23, 2020

## History of Mr. William C. Messer – AMA #L9085

### Personal Biography

- Born 6-10-1931
- Graduated from Olean High School in 1949 and St. Bonaventure University in 1953.
- Military service with the U.S. Army in 1953 -1955, attaining the rank of 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant.
- Married Dorothy Wills in 1956 and together they had five children.
- Employed by Dresser Manufacturing as a general accountant from 1955 until retirement in 1992.

### Hobby Related

- Bill joined the hobby of building model airplanes in 1942, together with his brother James Messer (AMA Hall of Fame and owner of Messer's Quality Model Products in the 1980s and '90s). It was then that he also joined the Academy of Model Aeronautics, which had only been in existence for 6 years at that time.
- At the same time, Bill joined the Olean Model Airplane club, which later changed its name to the "STARS" Southern Tier Aero Radio Society.
- His first airplane was a free flight Carl Goldberg "Zipper", powered by an Ohlsson & Rice .23 c.i. on ignition. His first glow engine was an Arden .09.
- Bill was part of the beginning of the U-Control airplane movement which allowed him to control the aircraft while flying. He did this by converting a "Buccaneer" free flight aircraft to U-Control using fishing line.
- At the age of 15, he attended and flew at the Mirror Meet at Grumman Field in 1946, in Bethpage, Long Island, which drew 1,358 contestants and over 150,000 spectators.
- Together with his brother, he was part of the beginning of Radio Control flight. It was a basic pulse operation with one pulse to turn right and the second pulse to turn left, and release to neutral.

- In the 1970s, he was one of five “STARS” members to design and build the first ¼ scale model aircraft. They were WWI Bristol Scouts. They built a fleet of five aircraft. This was the start of the giant scale revolution. STARS was the recipient of the second AMA Heritage Award for its leadership role in the giant scale movement. Bill helped design the Bristol Scouts strictly from 3 view prints.
  - a. Design problems had to be overcome due to increased wing loading.
  - b. Giant scale engines weren’t available, so together they developed geared and belted .60 glow engines, swinging larger hand carved propellers, which barely flew the aircraft. They used the outside wrappings of expensive cigars for scale woodgrain aircraft details.
  - c. Then, with the development of the Quadra 35cc engine, they had a powerplant which would provide the power needed for their ¼ scale Bristol Scouts.
  - d. They flew as a squadron at Ole Rhinebeck and attained national notoriety with several hobby magazines, including magazine covers.
- Bill has flown model aircraft from the Nationals at Glenview Naval Air Station in Chicago, IL, to the largest meet in Canada, Lake Placid, FL, and Long Island. He has attended and flown at over 200 meets, most within 100 miles of Olean, NY.
- Bill was STARS Treasurer for 25 years and the recipient of the STARS Bonehead of the Year Award. His handle was dubiously awarded as “Inverted including his brains” Messer.
- He helped to promote model aviation through the Boy Scouts, Lions Club, Special Olympics, senior living groups, mall shows, parades, civic activities, open houses, and Nationals attendance.
- His primary interest is in Scale model aircraft, and of all the aircraft that he has built and flown, his favorite is the ¼ scale Tomahawk that was part of Messer’s Quality Model Products line.
- Bill was involved with multi-rotors as these became popular.
- Throughout his tenure with STARS, of which he is still a member, Bill was involved in the development of four different club flying fields, the last of which the club purchased as their permanent home.

## AMA

- As of this writing, Bill has been an AMA member for 78 years.
- He was awarded an AMA Life membership in 2018.
- Notable people that have helped him and that he has flown with as STARS club members are James Messer - AMA Hall of Fame; John Grigg - former AMA President and District II VP; Dave Mathewson - former AMA President and District II VP; Bob Brown - former AMA President and District III VP; Gary Fitch - former AMA Executive Vice President and District II VP; and Eric Williams - current AMA District II VP.



*Bill Messer with Stinson Reliant SR-10 model. (Photo source: Bill Messer)*

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