



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of MAJOR BERNARD H. MULVIHILL



Written by NMAM staff (2010), reformatted and edited by JS (06/2018), Updated by JS (07/2018)

Video link: One of the National Model Aviation Museum's special Fly By report, "The Mulvihill Trophy", is on YouTube [here](#).



The following was published in the Winter 2010 issue of Cloud 9 newsletter, produced by the National Model Aviation Museum (NMAM). It was in the From the History Vault column, written by staff.

This month we present the biography of Bernard Mulvihill and the famous trophy named after him. Enjoy!

Maj. Bernard H. Mulvihill and the Mulvihill Trophy

Maj. Bernard Mulvihill, born June 8, 1890, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was a full-scale and model aviation enthusiast at the beginning of the era of flight.

He received a degree in civil engineering at the University of Pittsburgh in 1910, and for the first few years after college worked with the Pittsburgh Shawmut Railroad, the Kaul Clay Manufacturing Company, and served as president of the Natural Gas Conservation Company. He also served with the First Pennsylvania Field Artillery along the Mexican border in 1916 and 1917, but then transferred to the US Army Air Force (USAAF).

In the USAAF, he trained at the University of Texas-Austin, instructed at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio, and worked in Washington, D.C. He was on active duty through World War I, and then served in the reserves as a Major. He also served as vice president of the National Aeronautic Association (NAA).

In the model aviation world, Mulvihill was a member of the Aero Club of America and served as president of the local Aero Club of Pittsburgh. He helped the Pittsburgh club negotiate

permission to fly at the nearby Government Aerial Field.

Mulvihill saw the value in encouraging youth to build models, and in his capacity as vice president of NAA, he saw to it that model airplane events would be held during the NAA's national air races. In September of 1923, the International Air Race was held in St. Louis, and this seemed the opportune time to hold a modeling event.

A competition was held before the event to design the trophy for the contest, and it was appropriately named the Mulvihill Model Trophy. It depicts the Greek mythological character, Icarus, putting one of his wax and feather wings onto his left arm. The Kuntz Foundry Company of New York was employed to fashion the trophy out of bronze. Winners of the Mulvihill trophy would have their names engraved around the base. (Eventually, a sub-base was added to contain all of the names of winners.)

Although 27 contestants entered in the first Mulvihill Trophy Race, only 12 flew. Edward Lange won first place, earning him \$100 and a name on the trophy, which he was able to keep for a year. In the Deed of Gift to the NAA for the trophy, dated March 1923, Mulvihill stipulated, "the trophy shall be competed for annually by hand-launched model airplanes, driven only by rubber strand motors. The competitors for this Trophy must be builders of models used in the competition, and must be a member of the Boy Scouts of America ... The Trophy shall be awarded each year to the Troop represented by the pilot of the winning model and this Troop shall be entitled to the possession of the Trophy until one month prior to the next succeeding contest, at which time the Trophy will be returned to the Donee ..."

Although the Boy Scouts' stipulation was dropped after the deed was drafted, the competition remained generally the same. The Mulvihill contest is still flown during the Free Flight portion of the Nats.

Where is the trophy now? It resides at this museum, although is not a part of the accessioned collection. It still considered to be in use as a perpetual trophy.

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