



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of JAMES A. SUMMERSETT, JR.

1928 – 1993 AMA 4708



Written by JAS III (2019); Reformatted by JS (03/2019)

The following was written by James's son, James A. Summersett III, and submitted to the AMA History Project in late-February 2019.

Son of a career Army Lieutenant Colonel and pioneer aviator who piloted Breguet Bombers in World War I, James A. Summersett, Jr. (Jim) was born at Fort Warren, Cheyenne, Wyoming, June 23, 1928.

Jim began designing and building model airplanes at the age of five, a hobby which brought him national acclaim and a collection of over four hundred trophies. Jim at one time or another flew everything that had a model airplane engine attached to it. He flew Combat, Speed, Free Flight, Radio Control and Stunt, but was best known for his exploits in Control Line Speed and Free Flight. From 1951 to 1986, he was a six-time Academy of Model Aeronautics Open national record holder in Jet Control Line Speed and a two-time national record holder in Free Flight. He had one international record to his credit and was an AMA-designated Contest Director.

Early in 1952, both Jim and Ed Miller of San Antonio designed and built the first two 660 square inch "Texan" Free Flight planes. Both proved quite successful with the design, taking fifth in Class B Open in the 1952 Nationals. Since the two originals, dozens of models have been built and many wins and places have been won with the design, most notable being two firsts - 1/2A Open and B-C Open - and fourth in Class A Open at the 1958 Nationals. Jim also developed and sold cast aluminum speed pans, along with a handy accessory called the 'Little Jim' inertia starter. He has been featured in both *Model Aviation* and *Model Builder* magazines.

Jim was an innovator and the penultimate competitor. When a model didn't perform perfectly, he had a knack for knowing whatever adjustment was required and making that little adjustment in just the right amount. He would say 'Just tweak it a little,' and whatever was needed was corrected.

Seeking a better solution for his free flight model engine cut-off, Jim developed the *Texas Timer*, a quick de-thermalizing timer featuring a remote cut-off and thumb start trigger. The *Texas Timer* was a tremendous success, receiving positive publicity in several national model airplane publications and substantial editorial support from many regional newsletters as well. The *Timers* were eventually distributed through the SIG network of hobby distributors servicing the U.S., as well as South America, Mexico and the Pacific Rim. They were also sold through large

retail dealers and stocked by smaller area hobby shops as well. Twenty-five years after Jim's passing, *Texas Timers* continue to be marketed at www.texastimers.com.

Jim was also a long-time member of the Tri-City Flyers Free Flight Team. After Jim passed away suddenly in 1993, the Tri-City Flyers' 13th Annual Free Flight Contest was dedicated to his memory. Thirty-three contestants posted 99 event entries over two days of absolutely perfect flying weather. The real battle was in Nostalgia for the Jim Summersett Perpetual Trophy.

During his memorial service, Jim's good friend and fellow modeler Dimmitt Perkins perhaps summarized Jim's contribution to modeling best: "Jim Summersett added so much to our hobby. He should be considered for the Modeler's Hall of Fame. God needed a good modeler with a natural touch. Goodbye dear friend, we will miss you."

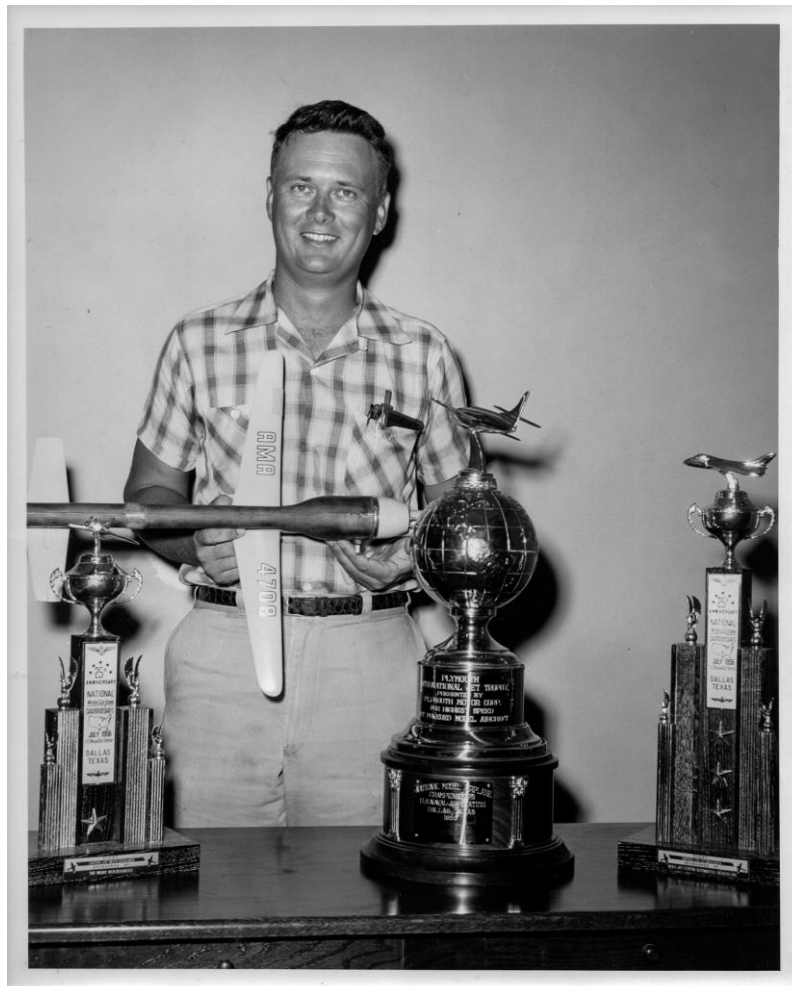
Academy of Model Aeronautics National Records

Date	Event	Record	Time
7/26/1951	FF B Gas, Open	National	666 sec
5/29/1955	Jet CL Speed, Open Class	National	163.57
9/6/1959	Jet CL Speed, Open Class	National	162.39
6/5/1960	Jet CL Speed, Open Class	National	165.53
7/31/1960	Jet CL Speed, Open Class	National	166.14
4/23/1961	Jet CL Speed, Open Class	National	169.26
7/8/1986	FF D Gas Open	National	451 sec

Academy of Model Aeronautics National Championships

Year	Event	Place	Time
1955	Jet CL Speed, Open Class	2	162.54 mph
1955	Proto CL Speed, Open Class	3	91.9 mph
1956	CL Jet Speed, Open Class	1	166.6
1956	CL Proto Speed, Open Class	3	97.47
1958	Jet CL Speed, Open Class	2	168.95 mph
1959	CL Jet, Open Class	1	160.79
1960	CL Jet, Open Class	1	166.14
1964	CL Jet Speed, Open Class	1	171.69
1964	CL Speed C, Open Class	1	174.52
1986	FF D Gas, Open	2	347 sec

1986	FF B Gas, Open	5	460 sec
1986	FF A Gas, Open	7	446 sec
1987	FF B Gas, Open	1	347 sec
1987	FF D Gas, Open	1	600 sec
1987	FF A Gas, Open	2	350 sec



*1956: James Summersett at the National Model Airplane Championships (Nats) held at the Naval Air Station in Dallas, TX.
(Source: James Summersett, U.S. Navy photograph)*



1956: James Summersett at the National Model Airplane Championships (Nats) held at the Naval Air Station in Dallas, TX. (Source: James Summersett, U.S. Navy photograph)

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