



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of CARL R. WHEELLEY

December 8, 1929 – March 15, 2002
AMA# 711



Transcribed by JS (09/2006), Reformatted by JS (02/2010)

*The following obituary appeared on the AMA website in April of 2002, written by Jim Haught.
(Reference – Previously on the AMA website as <http://www.modelaircraft.org/wheelley.asp>)*

Carl R. Wheelley, publisher of *Model Aviation* 1975-1990, died on March 15, 2002. He was 72.

A resident of Lusby MD, Carl was instrumental in starting *Model Aviation* in its current form, following the bankruptcy of *American Aircraft Modeler (AAM)*. Previously, *Model Aviation* had been a section within the *AAM* publication.

Launching a color, monthly magazine proved to be an enormous undertaking, but under Carl's leadership, the fledgling publication built a stable of quality writers and found advertisers willing to invest in AMA's largest and most significant publishing effort up until that time.

Carl's employment with AMA began much earlier, though. Fresh out of high school, Carl was hired as a clerk-typist in 1947. Carl then became responsible for assembling *Model Aviation*, which at that time was an eight-page pamphlet available by subscription for 50 cents a year. Later, Carl became AMA's Technical Director.



*Carl Wheelley in his office when
AMA headquarters was located at
815 15th Street in Washington, D.C.*

In a letter dated Feb. 14, 2002 to AMA Historian Norm Rosenstock, Carl reflected on some of AMA's early days:

"Those were the days when member records were on 3 x 5 cards which had to be filed by hand. AMA license cards (one a Gas Model License, the other a Rubber Model License) had to be typed, as did the file cards and a label to mail the member credentials kit."

Carl resigned from AMA in 1960 to pursue work with another modeler in the field of architectural illustrations. During this time, Carl's involvement with the AMA continued in the form of elected service. He served as AMA District IV Vice President, and then as secretary-treasurer (now known as Executive Vice President).

He returned to fulltime employment with AMA roughly ten years later, working on the "Model Aviation" section of *AAM*, the Competitions Regulations ("rule book"), and various other publications distributed by the Academy before launching *Model Aviation* magazine in 1975.

Carl assembled a top-notch staff for the magazine, including Bill Winter as editor and Frank Ehling as advertising manager. When Winter retired in 1980, Wheeley's title became editor and publisher.

"I take pride in the fact *Model Aviation* never lost any money during my tenure. Actually, the surpluses MA had each year, which went into general AMA funds, probably helped stave off AMA dues increases," Carl wrote in February.

Following his retirement in 1990, Carl periodically worked with AMA on various projects, and edited the "Modeler's Mall" section of *Model Aviation* for several years.

"Carl Wheeley was one of the best employees who ever worked for me when I was AMA's Executive Director. His competence was incredible, almost never requiring direction or assistance – he always knew what to do, how to do it, and had a dedication to producing *Model Aviation* magazine that knew no bounds in regard to hours needed to do the job right," noted John Worth, former AMA president and Executive Director.

Carl was a recipient of the prestigious Fellowship award, the highest honor AMA can bestow on an individual. He was a Life Member, a Contest Director, and a Leader Member.

"Carl was one of the most interesting men I have ever met," said AMA Executive Director Joyce Hager. "He was so full of knowledge about the organization and modeling. Whenever you didn't have the answer, you need only talk with Carl."

Carl was a lifelong modeler with a special affection for Free Flight, participating in competitions for many years. His crowning achievement was winning the individual Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (FAI) World Championship for Free Flight power models (now called F1C) in 1954.

"In my last year before my retirement it was a particular pleasure to have his 1954 World Championship power model hanging over my desk at AMA," Worth said. "I had talked him into bringing it from home so that I and others could admire this great example of his achievement on the international scene."

Carl is survived by his wife, Susanne Parran Wheeley, one daughter, Ann R. Wheeley, one son, Scott P. Wheeley and one grandson, Benjamin P. Wheeley. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the AMA at 5161 E. Memorial Dr. Muncie IN 47302, or Calvert Hospice, 238 Merrimac Court, Box 838, Prince Frederick MD 20678.

Carl was born in Durham, NC. He lived with his parents in Washington D.C. during World War II while his father was a machinist for the Navy Yard and his mother managed a boarding house.

He attended Powell Junior High and Central High School in Washington D.C. and graduated from Mineral Springs High School in Winston-Salem, NC.

Following his retirement from AMA, Carl and his wife moved to the Parran family farm in 1990.

A special thank you to AMA Historian Norm Rosenstock, John Worth, Executive Director Joyce Hager, Special Services Director Carl Maroney and the AMA History [Project] for providing most of this information.

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