



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of JESSE DAVIDSON

1913 - 1983

Transcribed and Edited by SS (06/2002)



Career:

- A leading authority of the history of the United States Air Mail Service
- Staff writer and then editor of Flying Aces magazine during the 1930s until World War II when he entered the military
- Wrote the book, "Famous Firsts in Aviation"
- Was Time/Life's leading consultant for their book "Flying the Mail"
- Had many articles published in modeling magazines

Honors:

- Awarded the Leuterschausen (Germany) Medal of Honor on August 14, 1982

The following biography of Jesse Davidson ran in Model Aviation magazine in March 1984.

We knew him as a modeler, an aviation historian, author, retired editor and technical writer, licensed pilot and research associate of the Gustave Whitehead International Research Committee and leading authority of the history of the United States Air Mail Service. He died on October 29 at the Albert Einstein Memorial Hospital, Bronx, New York, following a brief illness.

Many remember him from the 1930s. He was a writer on the staff of Flying Aces magazine, taking over the reigns of editor until he entered the military in World War II. He was a scale modeler and produced plans used by modelers of that period. He authored a book, "Famous Firsts in Aviation," and on Time/Life's volume, "Flying the Mail," Jesse Davidson served as the leading consultant. In that book Time/Life's editor noted they listed use of 52 early Air Mail photos contributed by Jesse and that his extensive collection "numbers more than 1,000 images."

Davidson had been awarded the Leuterschausen (Germany) Medal of Honor, August 14, 1982, for his research that led to the 1982 discovery of in-flight photo-evidence of successful powered flight in 1901 by Gustave Whitehead in Connecticut, two years before the Wrights brothers' famous flights.

In recent years he devoted much time to research concerning Whitehead's pioneering aviation activity and was better recognized outside the U.S. for these efforts than he was in his country.

A close friend of the legendary Charles Hampton Grant (often referred to as the father of model aviation and the AMA), Jesse Davidson's name was often seen in the many model magazines

before World War II. Many of his articles on full-scale aviation were helpful to scale modelers – he was a careful researcher and a stickler for authenticity.

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