



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of MICHAEL (MIKE) GLENN FULMER



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Mike Fulmer, AMA's New Museum Curator

By Pierson J. Holcombe

Have you seen any of these movies: *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Return of the Jedi*, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *Dragonslayer*, *Empire of the Sun*, *Always*, *The Rocketeer*, *E.T.*, *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*, *Cocoon*, *Back to the Future Parts I and II*, *The Golden Child*, and *Die Hard 2*?

If you have, then you've seen the handiwork of modeler supreme Mike Fulmer. Mike is the curator for AMA's new museum in Muncie, Indiana, at the Frank V. Ehling Complex.

Mike grew up in Nebraska, where he built models in a basement with his pal Vince Mankowski, who is now AMA's Executive Director. Both Mike's and Vince's fathers were World War II pilots.

After serving in the Marines, Mike moved to southern California and began a decade-long career as a welder. At the same time he ran a shop where he built street rods, race cars, and motorcycles.

His reintroduction to modeling came in 1979, when a customer asked him to build a scale model of an antique Cord automobile. The customer happened to be a television producer, who introduced him to some friends in San Francisco. Those friends happened to work for Industrial Light and Magic, George Lucas's special effects company. He was hired on the spot, and entered the glamorous but exhausting world of movie production.

He's modeled many things: Spaceships, flying bicycles, boats, snakes, trees, cars, zeppelins, and of course, airplanes. Some of the models cost up to a quarter of a million dollars!

His other Hollywood exploits include writing screenplays and doing stunts for Harrison Ford in *Indiana Jones*. After 12 years at ILM, Mike started his own company, Speedwings. He left Hollywood because he wanted to relax and because new computer technology makes model making obsolete in today's movies. The advent of the Video Toaster, a Commodore computer-based software and hardware package, allows even low-budget productions to have high-quality special effects.

Mike has high ambitions for AMA's museum. "In three to five years, our Muncie site is going to

be a showplace. I want to make it a showplace that everybody can enjoy ... It's about magic and having fun.

"That's what this museum should be about. It's about the dream we all have about being kids again.

"For me and a lot of guys my age, the circle's closing. This is a great opportunity for me to leave something behind."

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