



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of ERNEST (ERNIE) FREDERICK HUBER



Born September 6, 1931      Modeler since 1943  
AMA #33316

Transcribed & Edited by SS (04/2003), Reformatted by JS (09/2009)

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## Career:

- 1945-1950: Flew U-Control models and won many East Coast contests
- Early to mid-1950s: Placed first in the Japan Air Defense Force and Far East Air Force Championships in U-Control while he was stationed in Japan
- Mid-1950s: Began working on designs for Radio Control models
- Flew the prototype of Andrews Aeromaster bi-plane in 1965 and demonstrated it to a crowd of over 100,000 spectators
- 1968: Won the AMA open pattern at the New England Championships flying his own design, the low wing Aeromaster
- Designed an Radio Control helicopter in 1969 and got it to fly by 1971; took first place in Radio Control helicopter contest from 1972 through 1976
- 1979: Was the first person to hover an Radio Control helicopter inverted
- Invented the invert switch on radios
- 1970s-1980s: Built and flew helicopters in three movies
- 1989: Opened Ernie Huber's Radio Control Flight Training Center in Florida; teaches five-day classes and has taught over 700 student classes from 24 countries and 46 states logging more than 28,000 flights in the last 12 years (as of 2002)
- Holds his own AMA-sanctioned fun-fly every March

## Honors:

- 1998: AMA Distinguished Service Award
- 2001: AMA Distinguished Service Award

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*The following information on Ernie Huber was taken from a Hall of Fame application submitted on his behalf by Jeffrey S. Torsrud in March 2002.*

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Ernest F. Huber was born September 6, 1931 in Middleboro, Massachusetts. His friends and associates know him as Ernie and for this nomination, all references to Mr. Huber will be made as Ernie.

From a very young age, Ernie was fascinated with model aircraft. As a teenager in 1943, Ernie got his start in model aviation with a fly-by-wire or U-Control model. His first model was an Andrews Trixter developed by Lou Andrews (AMA Hall of Fame member). Ernie flew U-Control models from 1945 to 1950 winning many East Coast contests. In 1946, Ernie was able to meet Lou Andrews and Mr. Andrews became Ernie's lifelong mentor and friend until his death.

## **Military Service**

Ernie joined the U.S. Air Force in 1951 and trained to be a machinist. Ernie designed, built, and flew four U-Control models in Everett, Washington, while stationed there and was on the base model team in Bakersfield, California, flying hand-launched gliders. While stationed in Japan, he placed first in the Japan Air Defense Force and Far East Air Force Championships in U-Control stunt.

When Ernie wasn't flying models, he was designing and building other things. He designed and built a .60 size two-cylinder opposed engine. While stationed at Paine Field in Washington he designed and built a single-cylinder 35-size engine and an inline twin 30-size engine. [*See photo in Ernie's file in the National Model Aviation Museum Archives. For assistance, contact the AMA Archivist.*] The machinist skills Ernie had learned to this point would come to bear on the hobby in years to come.

Ernie knew he could design and build an aircraft that could be controlled from the ground without wires and thus designed his first Radio Control plane. Unfortunately, it was too much plane and not enough radio at this time. (Babcock three-channel with one channel for an escapement and two channels for a trim-able elevator.) Ernie was honorably discharged in 1955.

## **Civilian Life**

After leaving the Air Force in 1955, Ernie continued his pursuit of developing Radio Control models. Model aviation was catching on and many new developments in engines and radios were beginning to appear on the market. The Trixter Beam was the first successful Radio Control aircraft that Ernie flew in 1956. The Trixter was powered by a K&B .15 engine and the radio was a Bramco Reid eight-channel. [*See photo in Ernie's file in the National Model Aviation Museum Archives. For assistance, contact the AMA Archivist.*] In 1965, Ernie flew the prototype of Andrews Aero Master bi-plane to second place in class two pattern aerobatics and was selected to put on a flight demonstration to an estimated crowd of over 100,000 spectators. [*See photo in Ernie's file in the National Model Aviation Museum Archives. For assistance, contact the AMA Archivist.*] The 1968 New England Championships saw Ernie fly his own design of a low wing Aeromaster to first place in AMA open pattern competition.

## **Radio Controlled Helicopters**

It is well known throughout the Radio Control helicopter community that the name Ernie Huber and Radio Control helicopters are synonymous. In 1969, Ernie spotted a story in a model magazine about a German industrialist offering \$2,800 in prizes for the first pilot who could successfully fly a helicopter with radio controls – a feat never performed before.

Ernie set out to design and build a model helicopter and make the trip to Germany for the competition. Ernie freely admits, "I didn't know anything about helicopters." Many trips to the library set him on the path to building a Mechanical Monster. It wasn't until 1971 that he got the machine to fly, but the contest had gone on without him. Dieter Schluter captured the prize with a winning flight of just 5.5 seconds in 1969.

In the years that followed, Ernie's love for Radio Control helicopters continued and took him into many competitions. Ernie took first place honors in 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, and 1976.

In 1979, Ernie was the first person to hover an Radio Control helicopter inverted. Note: I did say, "hover inverted." Many people were able to fly around inverted, but Ernie was the first to hover inverted. Ernie was also responsible for inventing the invert switch on radios making it possible to fly inverted without having to use reverse thought process in controlling the helicopter. Ernie, along with Horace Hagan and others pushed to have Radio Control helicopters recognized by the AMA to establish national and international rules for competition. AMA created the first set of rules for helicopter competition in 1974.

In 1986, Ernie designed and built six three-horsepower, three-bladed, 20-pound life helicopters for industrial use in Texas. In 1988, Ernie designed and built a six-horsepower, five-bladed helicopter to carry a 30-milimeter gun camera to produce television commercials. In 1996, Ernie designed and built two nine-horsepower twin-engine helicopters for the U.S. Army to aid in carrying missile components; these helicopters had a gross weight of 86 pounds.

### **Radio Control Helicopters in the Movies**

We have all seen many movies where helicopters have made spectacular crashes. We also know that crashing real helicopters are impractical. So, the movies turn to Radio Control helicopter pilots like Ernie Huber.

- In 1973, Ernie was contacted by Bill Creeber, special effects director for Irwin Allen movies. Ernie was to build and fly nine Bell 212 helicopters and one Jet Ranger in "The Towering Inferno," for 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox. This was the first major motion picture to use Radio Control helicopters.
- In 1976, Ernie was contacted by Peter Hyams, director of the movie "Capricorn One." Ernie built and flew five Hughes 500 helicopters for this movie.
- In 1980, Ernie built and flew three 1/8-scale Hughes 500D and two 1/10-scale helicopters for the movie "Blue Thunder."

### **Radio Control Helicopter Flight School**

In 1989, after Ernie's second heart attack on New Year's Day, Ernie's wife Mary convinced him to retire from his high stress job as manufacturing manager of a 350-man C.N.C. machine shop. Ernie and Mary sold all their belongings, bought a 67-acre airstrip in Crescent City, Florida, and opened Ernie Huber's Radio Control Flight Training Center.

They offer five-day classes for anyone who wants to learn and fly Radio Control helicopters. Ernie provides all the equipment and training. Ernie, along with his partner, Ralph Delusio, instruct in basic through advanced Radio Control helicopter flying techniques. The five-day class

consists of many hours of hands-on flying time with Ernie or Ralph. At night, there is classroom instruction on theory and set-up procedures.

In the last 12 years, Ernie has trained over 700 student classes from 24 countries and 46 states, logging more than 28,000 flights. Ernie also sponsors and hosts his own fun-fly each March. This year (2002) will make his 10<sup>th</sup> annual AMA-sanctioned event.

Over the many years, that Ernie has been involved in model aviation he has contributed a great deal to both airplane and Radio Control helicopter aviation. Ernie has performed countless demonstrations at various events around the country and when asked how much he wanted for the demonstration (in terms of compensation), Ernie would simply tell them to send a donation to the AMA.

The AMA was established in 1936, and since 1943, Ernie Huber has been building, designing and flying model aircraft. His enthusiasm for the hobby and support for the AMA are above reproach.

I have known Ernie for only five short years and I've been to his school twice. Ernie is a very good friend and he is certainly my mentor. Learning and flying Radio Control helicopters is no easy task and without Ernie's help, his passion for the hobby and his expert teaching abilities, I would have given up on model aviation a long time ago.

Ernie Huber is a two-time AMA Distinguished Service Award recipient. Ernie has earned the right – and deserves to be placed in the AMA Hall of Fame!

*(signed) Jeffrey S. Torsrud  
March 5, 2002*

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**AMA History Project**  
National Model Aviation Museum  
5151 E. Memorial Dr.  
Muncie IN 47302  
(765) 287-1256, ext. 511  
historyproject@modelaircraft.org

