



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of DENNIS M. "MR. PENNY PLANE" JAECKS



Written by JJ (2016), reformatted and edited by JS (10/2016)

*The following was written by Jenifer "Izzy" Jaecks about her father, Dennis M.
"Mr. Penny Plane" Jaecks in 2016.*

Dennis M. Jaecks was born June 8, 1939 in Wausau, WI, and grew up in Wisconsin Rapids with his older brother, Duane, and their parents. From a young age, Dennis was an avid model builder, both static and flying.

After graduating high school in 1957, Dennis joined the US Air Force, where he served four years including 18 months in Japan. He was an electronics expert, and reached the rank of Airman First Class. He continued to build models during his time in the Air Force.

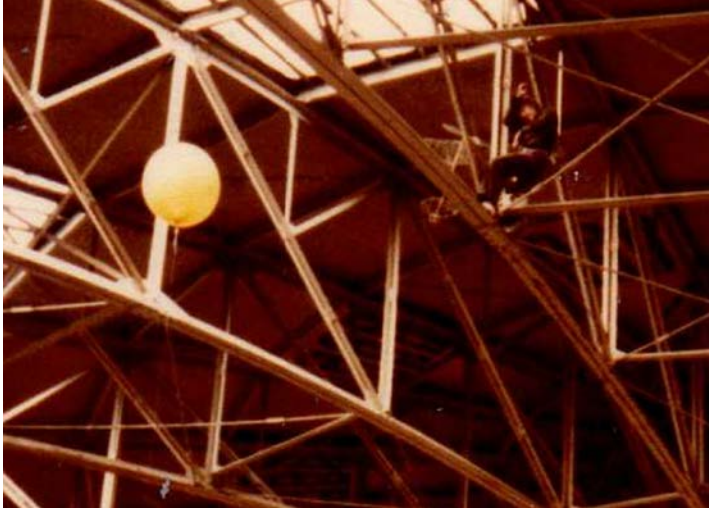
After his time in the Air Force, he attended (from 1961 to 1965) and graduated from the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point with a Bachelor of Science degree in Physics. He married Linda Gruver in 1965, and they moved to her hometown of Janesville, WI, where he quickly found work as an electrical engineer for Gibbs Manufacturing and Research Corp. While there, he contributed to an event timer which was used for Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo missions, including Apollo 11.

Dennis started building and designing Penny Planes in the early 1970s, and many of his winning designs were published in AMA publications, including a "controversial" biplane. He held National and World Records, earning him the nickname "Mr. Penny Plane." Dennis also built and competed in FAI stick, and built some peanut scale planes, but had the most success with his penny plane designs. His daughter, Jenifer (born March 18, 1971), started building penny planes as well, and earned a Junior World Record for penny planes in 1983. Her record time was recorded in the domed West Baden Springs building.

Dennis Jaecks died of a heart attack January 20, 1985. At the time of his death, he was an electrical engineer at Accudyne Corporation in Janesville,



c. late 1950s-early 1960s: Jaecks working on a model while serving in the US Air Force. Photo source: Jenifer "Izzy" Jaecks.



1980: Jaecks retrieving a model from the girders of the West Baden Springs Hotel dome during the World Indoor Championships.

WI, and in his spare time was working on wing profile designs for an EAA project for a full-sized airplane. He was also a member of the Madison Area Commodore Users Group computer club, making hardware modifications for Commodore computers. His penny plane models have been in storage with his older brother Duane, a retired physics professor of the University of Nebraska - Lincoln. Dennis is survived by his brother Duane, his daughter Jenifer, a leather worker in Milwaukee, and his son Michael (born April 1969), a freelance artist in Minneapolis.

Info on penny planes built by Dennis M. Jaecks, submitted to the National Model Aviation Museum:

- Two complete Penny Planes with identical dimensions. One fuselage has broken—the tail has broken off where it meets the motor stick.
- Jaecks Biwing Penny Plane, as illustrated in *Building and Flying Indoor Model Airplanes* by Ron Williams, ISBN 0-671-41366x, copyright 1981, pg. 93.
- Jaecks' biwing penny design first appears in *Model Aviation* magazine's May 1977 issue as the National Record holder at 13:42. In 1978, there was a rule consideration banning biplanes from Indoor Penny Plane and Novice Penny Plane competition. This ban never went into effect, and Jaecks held National and World Records for Penny Plane repeatedly until his death in 1985.
- Last known flight was on November 1983, with a flight time of 15:17.

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