



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of STEPHEN E. (STEVE) KANYUSIK



Written by MB, TL, RK, PS (06/2010); Formatted by JS (10/2010)

The following was printed in Model Aviation's In the Air section in the June 2010 issue.

Cloudbusters Honors Member for Aviation Accomplishments

The Cloudbusters of Sterling Heights, Michigan, has been giving a Life Achievement Award since 1990. It honors living Americans who have distinguished themselves in aviation – both model and full scale. The club is proud to announce the 44th recipient of this award: Steven E. Kanyusik.

Steve's contributions to aviation photography, aviation history, and model aviation began in Pennsylvania in the 1920s and continued through his U.S. Navy career, his residence in Minnesota, and his current ongoing activities in Sterling Heights.

In the 1920s and 1930s, as a student in Pennsylvania, Steve was a pioneer in aviation photography. He lived several miles from Allegheny County Airport and went there on foot whenever he got word that an interesting airplane was on the ground.

Those trips were documented in his article, "Hey! Let's Go to the Airport," published in the January 1990 *MA*. Steve's portfolio of historic aircraft photos has been a valuable asset to Scale modelers.

By the time Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, Steve was old enough to join the U.S. Navy. He was assigned to a crew of a quadruple 40 mm antiaircraft gun. The crew commander immediately deduced that Steve had a superior knowledge of aircraft identification and made him his pointer. Steve was responsible for instantly determining if a target was friend or foe.

He saw the ship's photographer taking a picture one day and went down to the photo lab when he was off duty. He asked permission to use the negative to make some copies for his own use. It was instantly realized that Steve knew more about photography than anybody else on the ship; he was reassigned to the photo crew and never went back to guns.

During Steve's Navy career, he served aboard the U.S.S. *Ranger* (CV-4) in the Atlantic Ocean; the U.S.S. *Manila Bay* (CVE-61) in the Pacific Ocean; and the U.S.S. *Antietam* (CV-36) in the Korean War. His photos of the Kamikaze attacks in the Battle for the Philippines are some of the best on record.

Steve was armed with a 7 x 7 aircraft camera, which weighed 41 pounds and carried 250 rounds of Kodak ammunition. He stayed on deck during an attack in which two Kamikaze aircraft hit the carrier. Steve was wounded and received the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star.

He also flew on airborne photo shoots in the Grumman *Avenger* in World War II and on helicopters off Korea.

Steve has been an active veteran and attends major events for those who served our country. On Memorial Day in 2004, he represented U.S. Navy veterans at the dedication of the WWII monument in Washington DC.

Some of his combat photos, featuring the Kamikaze attacks on American aircraft carriers, were broadcast on nationwide television during the dedication ceremony. Steve donated his extensive collection of WWII photos to the Air Zoo in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where they are stored in the library.

Steve authored more than a dozen articles for *MA*, including a story about old-time Free Flight in March 1987. His writing and photography has also been featured in *R/C Report*, *Live Steam*, *Warbirds*, and probably more publications than have come to our attention. In 2000, he won Macomb County's photo competition; his entry was used on the cover of the county directory.

Steve also did some nice photography for Classic Aero, a limited-edition producer of extremely high-quality Radio Control models, based in Oxford, Michigan.

-Cloudbusters Life Achievement Award Committee (Mike Bilotta, Tony Lang, Ralph Kuenz, Paul Smith) District VII



Model Aviation cover, March 1987

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