



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of AUGUST W. (BILL) KLEINHANS

May 12, 1920 - July 1, 2010 Started modeling in 1933

AMA #101



Written & Submitted by JK (04/2000); Transcribed by NR (04/2001); Edited & Formatted by SS (10/2002), Reformatted by JS (10/2009)

Career:

- Builder for the model airplane department of the F.W. Woolworths department store
- Taught people how to build model aircraft
- Joined AMA in February 1938; the fee was \$1
- In 1941, Bill went to work for NACA
- He took a position with Republic Aviation in Evansville, Indiana, working on the flight line at the Modification Center

Jim Kerney (AMA 280006) wrote the following biography about August W. (Bill) Kleinhans. At the time, in 2000, both modelers lived in Evansville, Indiana.

At the ripe old age of 12, Bill began his model career as a builder for the model airplane department of the F.W. Woolworths department store, located on the main drag in downtown Evansville, Indiana. He built kits for display and received kits for his work.

These small balsa and tissue models were shrunk with banana oil and had wingspans of 12 to 14 inches. Bill soon learned this arrangement was a great way to gain building experience and enjoy the hobby on a shoestring budget.

By the age of 14, he was building 30- to 36-inch rubber-powered models by companies such as Cleveland, Bunch, and Douglas. He still has the plans for several of these kits.



There was no formal competition in Evansville at that time and no designated flying field. He and his friends flew at parks, playgrounds and at the airport. Bill recalls that in the early 1930s he and his friends put on model shows at the airport air shows.

During the days of the WPA Bill was asked to teach people how to build model aircraft. When government supplies disappeared, so did Bill's short career as an instructor.

This modeler with very gifted hands moved from rubber-powered to spark-ignition models around 1936. He recalls kits such as the Bunch Mighty Midget (\$7) and Scientific's Red Zephyr. The early engines did not have classifications as they have today.

From earnings he received by cutting grass and doing home chores Bill started joining national groups as they were being formed. Prior to AMA, Model Airplane News magazine started the

International Gas Model Association. Bill still has his membership card. When he joined AMA in February of 1938, the fee was \$1. He received license/membership number 101. Bill has been an active member every year since then.

In 1941, Bill went to work for NACA, The National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, now called NASA. His title was under aircraft model maker. They hired several hundred-model builders. A year later Bill returned home, married and took a position with Republic Aviation in Evansville, working on the flight line at the Modification Center. Most of his work was with the famous P-47 Thunderbolt. In 1943, he headed for pilot training. As World War II started to wind down, some 5,000 cadets were switched to the B-29 Flight Engineer School. The war ended before he was assigned flight duty.

The first model aircraft club in the Evansville area was formed with about six members who rotated the leadership roles. While serving as treasurer Bill remembers keeping the entire treasury, about \$10, in his billfold. The flying site was “wherever you could.” That small group has evolved into the Evansville Radio Control Model Aircraft Club, with some 130 members and an outstanding club-owned field along I-164. Bill is still an active member and is recognized as one of the club's master builders. He is always willing to offer help and advice as members come to him with building problems.



Bill has also been a judge at local and national competition. His large shop is busy about seven days a week. Now in his 80s, Bill has completed more than 170 Radio Control models. He always shows up for work parties, is an enthusiastic participant at club picnics, and flies regularly.

This highly skilled fun loving modeler is a real pioneer of the model aircraft hobby.

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