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# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of ERNST G. KRAFT

Started modeling around 1935    AMA #5022



Compiled and edited by JF (11/2003), Reformatted by JS (10/2009)

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## Career:

- One of five founding members of the Gold Coast R/C Club in the late 1960s. Club exists today as AMA # 1016
- Wrote articles for Dave Platt Models in 1974-1975. Articles were published in *Model Airplane News*
- Contest Director of Condor's Flying Club of Coral Springs, Florida, for ten years
- A founding member of the IMAC (International Miniature Aerobatic Club) Southeast Club
- Volunteered to become director of an after-school modeling program at Olympic Heights High School, Boca Raton, Florida, in 2000

## Honors:

- First place in racing and Third place in aerobatics at AMA contest in Jacksonville, Florida in 1969. Ernie also won Best First Meet Performance at that contest
  - Honored recently by Gold Coast R/C Club, as they named their practice facility Kraft Field
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Ernie began making paper airplane models around the age of 5. Ernie lived on a farm but when he went to school, he saw some older kids flying balsa gliders. They were selling for about a penny-a-piece at a local candy store. Ernie asked his mother for some pennies and went and bought a few. He had a great time flying them. He learned how to adjust the wings and tail to do all sorts of tricks.

As he grew older, Ernie started building rubber band-powered stick models. In high school, a group of students got together and started building tissue-covered rubber band-powered models. Ernie joined them. A short distance from where Ernie lived was a farm. The farmer set aside some land for auto racing. Ernie asked the farmer if he would permit him to fly his models on the land. The farmer agreed and soon there were a few of Ernie's friends joining him. They all had a great time.

Gasoline engines soon arrived on the scene. Ernie bought a used engine from a school buddy's brother. Ernie learned about these engines, which were of the spark coil design. Since there were no radio controls at the time, the planes were flown in Free Flight. He took to designing his own models and did a lot of experimenting.

Still living in New Jersey, Ernie worked for the County Planning Board. An opportunity arose for Ernie to purchase some desirable land. There he built a house for his young family. The backyard was large enough to fly model airplanes. Some of his neighbors were also model builders and flyers. They got together and formed a club. The membership was three members. They flew from Ernie's field which was level, long and wide. The three of them started flying U-Control. Every Sunday, weather permitting, they flew their planes. It was soon after that Ernie purchased

his first R/C. In those days, R/C was a pulse type operation. It took some learning to master flight but Ernie did master the controls. Ernie also remembers building a Goldberg Comet Clipper, powered by rubber band. Around 1962, Ernie bought a single channel radio. He put the radio in a SchoolBoy, flying successfully. He still owns the plane.

Ernie's brother-in-law lived in Boca Raton, Florida, and that's where Ernie's family vacationed. They got to like the area and decided to move there. They moved to Boca Raton in 1967. During World War II, Boca Raton had a U.S. Army Radar Training Facility and airfield. After the war, it was abandoned and taken over by Florida Atlantic University. It still had runways from its flying days, and that's where Ernie flew his planes.

He soon met some local residents that were also model builders and flyers. They got together and formed a club. There were about five original members, Ernie being one of them. They started the Gold Coast R/C Club and petitioned the AMA for recognition. AMA #1016 was thus born. The club soon grew to become a club of about 200 members at present. A lot of the club's growth was due to Ernie's efforts in organizing contests and establishing teaching sessions.

Ernie wrote a few articles for Dave Platt Models in about 1974-1975. They were published in *Model Airplane News*. The first article was on the Waco Biplane. Dave was interested in making ¼ scale models. He asked Ernie to name some biplanes that can be built for aerobatics. Ernie mentioned the Jungmeister and Dave started designing the kit around this plane. Ernie was given credit by Platt in helping design the kit. When it was built, Ernie entered it in an AMA contest that was held in Jacksonville, Florida. He won a first and third place in racing and aerobatics in the novice class. He also won Best First Meet Performance there. Ernie entered many contests at various venues located in Florida. He received many awards over the years.

In addition to being a member of the Gold Coast R/C Club, Ernie joined the Condor's Flying Club in Coral Springs, Florida and became a Contest Director. He did this for about ten years directing an annual International Miniature Aerobatic Club (IMAC) event. Glenn Carter, an executive officer for the IMAC board on the west coast (California) contacted Ernie and asked him to start IMAC in the southeast part of the country. Ernie accepted and became one of the founders of this area's IMAC.

In 2000, Allen Rice, a member of the Gold Coast R/C Club and Assistant Principal of Olympic Heights High School in Boca Raton, Florida, approached the club with a proposal to start an after-school model-building program for the students. The club approved the program and Ernie, with all his model building experience, volunteered to be its director. The program, now in its fourth year, has had an average of fifteen students per school year. Two students are assigned to build a plane and when completed, they are given flying lessons at the club field. All students in the program are required to become AMA members. So far, the club has gained about ten full-time young members. Ernie and some club volunteers are the instructors. Ernie does all the design and layout work. When the planes are completed, they become the property of the club and are used for flight instruction. Some planes are bought by the students at cost with the funds being returned to the project.

In addition to building the planes, the students are treated to lectures on flight dynamics by volunteers knowledgeable on the subject. One club model builder brought his jet model and explained the workings of the engine, the retracts, and the full functions of the controls. Parents have approached Allen Rice with praise for the project, saying their kids have taken on a new interest in their studies.

In his initial discussions with Rice, Ernie's thoughts were to teach the students how to build the models- no ARFs. Allen agreed to this and so each student is taught how to read plans, layout, measuring, cutting, jigging, and how to use tools properly and safely. To raise funds for the project, Allen wrote letters to the Academy of Model Aeronautics, various manufacturers, and local contributors. Ernie puts on local air shows at different venues and charges a nominal fee. All proceeds revert to the program.

Throughout Ernie's model building and flying experience, he has contributed his time and effort to enhancing the sport. He is constantly being called upon to teach, lecture, and demonstrate the fine points of the hobby. Because of his devotion to the hobby, and for what he has contributed to the Gold Coast R/C Club, the club has honored Ernie by naming our new field "The Ernie Kraft Field."

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