



# The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of ALFRED LEHMBERG

**Modeler, Designer, Writer, Competitor,  
Kit Mfg, Museum Patron**

October 7, 1924-July 6, 1999 Started modeling in 1932  
AMA #7000086



Written & Submitted by AL (06/1996); Transcribed by NR (09/1996); Edited by SS (2002), Reformatted by JS (10/2009); Updated by JS (12/2011)

---

## Career:

- AMA Leader Member for over 40 years
  - Competitor
  - Kit Manufacturer
  - Life Patron of the AMA's Museum Patron Program
  - Contest Director (AAA Meet)
  - 1983-1995: Wrote Column in Model Builder Magazine
  - Book author
  - Wrote article for many other and other hobby magazines including: *Scale Ship Modeler*, *Live Steam*, *U.S. Boat & Ship*, *RC Boat Modeler*, and the National Model Aviation Museum's *Cloud9* newsletter
- 

*Alfred Lehmborg wrote the following in June of 1996.*

---

Alfred Lehmborg, also known as Fred, was born in San Antonio, Texas in 1924. Fred began modeling model ships and airplanes when he was eight. His first airplane was a tiny Gee Bee solid model. He felt there was something wrong with it.

After playing with it awhile and comparing it to an airplane passing overhead, he realized it had no stabilizer! Perhaps that is the reason he favored large stabilizers on most of his future designs.

He joined the Hearst Junior Birdmen in the 1930s and became proficient in rubber-powered models, then gas powered. His first engine was a Bunch Warrior and, in 1937, Christmas brought him the additional money he needed to get a Brown Junior, the top engine of the time.

He built a number of originals for this engine, including the 1938 *Goon* and the 1939 *Feather Merchant C*. He powered his 1940 Feather Merchant A with a Bantam. Our museum has an Ohlsson .19 powered replica of this model in its collection. He built all the Goldberg Comet kits and the Berkeley *Cavalier Standard*, the Modelcraft *Spook*, a Lackey *Zenith*, and a scratch built *Custom Cavalier*.

Fred's Class A Feather Merchant was a very successful design, winning nearly \$500 in two seasons of competition. Fred was a member of the San Antonio Gas Model Airplane Club. Years

later, he wrote feature articles about this Club in the September 1989 and November 1990 issues of Model Aviation magazine. He flew his Class D Indoor Stick to a national record on Dec. 6, 1941 in the Brooks Field Dirigible Hangar. The next day, Japan forced many modelers to grow up overnight and put their model aircraft aside for the duration. For some the duration was forever. Due to his model aviation experience, he was one of the modelers selected by the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (now NASA). He worked in the Dynamic Model Shop and the Free Flight tunnel at Langley Field, Va.

In the 1950s, Fred with Charlie Underhill and Ed Steffenhagen produced Radio Controlled (RC) model airplane kits in Ridgefield, Conn. The company, Model Tech Specialties, produced three RC designs. These were Leapin' Lena, a Fokker D-8, and the first advertised pylon racer, Firebird. Air Trails and Model Airplane News advertised these kits.

Fred also planned and was contest director for the First Annual Westchester County Model Airplane Meet. Sponsored by the Westchester County Airport and the Rotary Club of White Plains, N.Y., this was an AAA meet. It was one of the largest meets on the East Coast. Fred moved to California and, after a few years of boating on the Sacramento River, rediscovered RC models and the fantastic improvements in RC. He produced a few designs including the Jolly Baron biplane that was a winner in an annual design contest sponsored by RC Modeler. Fred moved to Oxnard, Calif. where he kitted three sizes of Feather Merchants and the Leapin' Lena.

His interest in the aircraft model hobby is still strong. He is also an active modeler of sail and steam powered model boats and scale display models. He is a Life Patron of the Museum of the Academy of Model Aeronautics, and has held an Administrative Leader Membership in the Academy for over 40 years.

Since his youth he has been active in yachting, both power and sail. He is a member of The International Blue Gavel Association as he is a Past Commodore (1976) of the Channel Island Yacht Club in Oxnard, Calif. He has Life Membership in the United States Naval Institute and in 1992 was awarded for "Contributions to the Professional, Literary, and Scientific Knowledge of the Naval and Maritime Services."

His articles have appeared in all the leading American hobby magazines and are multi-genre in nature. These are historical, documentary, and technical essays and construction projects. These magazines include Model Aviation, Model Builder, Scale Ship Modeler, U.S. Boat & Ship, RC Boat Modeler, and Live Steam. Over the years, Cloud Nine newsletter has published many of his nostalgic profiles of early model aviation and its personalities. He is looking for a publisher to market his fantasy novel about Assyria, Blade of Ishtar. He has presented technical papers before the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy. Many of his aerospace reports on his work at Aerojet, Sacramento are on file at the Battelle Institute in Maryland.

Joanne Lovitt has authored a lengthy profile, "Fred Lehmborg, Modern Day Janus," accepted by Model Aviation for 1996 publication. Liz Helm has produced a biographical sketch for the Summer 1996 issue of Cloud Nine newsletter.

## A Tabulation of Manuscripts and Publishers of Alfred Lehmborg

(T) =Technical            (H) =Historical            (D) =Documentary  
 (E) =Essay                (C) =Construction        (R) =Product Review

Abbreviations of editorial columns:

(P&F&CT) = PLANES & FACTS & CHICKUM TRACKS

(WL&C) = WATERLINES & CURRENTS

<b>Abbreviated Title or Subject</b>	<b><i>Publisher</i></b>	<b>Pub. Date</b>	<b>Type</b>
P&F&CT, Sopwith Camel Effect	<i>Model Builder (MB)</i>	Aug. 1983	T
P&F&CT, A Lot About Air	<i>MB</i>	Jan. 1984	T
P&F&CT, Witch Doctors and Thermals	<i>MB</i>	March 1984	T
P&F&CT, To Freewheel or not to FW	<i>MB</i>	April 1984	T
P&F&CT, Wind Tunnels and Airfoils	<i>MB</i>	July 1984	T
P&F&CT, When is an Old-Timers Not an O-T?	<i>MB</i>	Aug. 1984	E
P&F&CT, Thrust Stand	<i>MB</i>	Oct. 1984	T
P&F&CT, Physics and Chemistry of Air	<i>MB</i>	May 1985	T
P&F&CT, Wars and Literature, Effect/Hobby	<i>MB</i>	July 1985	D/H
P&F&CT, Downwind Turn, Extreme Case	<i>MB</i>	Nov. 1985	T
P&F&CT, Thoughts From the Forties	<i>MB</i>	Jan. 1986	D/H
P&F&CT, Noise	<i>MB</i>	July 1986	T
P&F&CT, Noise 2	<i>MB</i>	Aug. 1986	T
P&F&CT, Propeller Design	<i>MB</i>	Nov. 1986	T
P&F&CT, Props as Pumps, Power Poop	<i>MB</i>	Jan. 1987	T
P&F&CT, More Poop on Power	<i>MB</i>	Feb. 1987	T
Plans and Instructions for Paypod, an RPV	<i>MB</i>	May 1987	C
P&F&CT, Experiments with Paypod	<i>MB</i>	June 1987	T/D
P&F&CT, Old Timer Rules	<i>MB</i>	Aug. 1987	D/E
P&F&CT, Paypod Instrum'n and SAM Champs	<i>MB</i>	Dec. 1987	D
TINA, RC Sailboat, MB Version	<i>MB</i>	Late 1996	C/R
Wings, The Whole Banana	<i>MB</i>	Late 1996	T
Keystone Bomber, Hug Crchr with 2 wings and Rd Engs	<i>MB</i>	Oct. 1995	D/H
WL&C, Hull Lines, Introduction of U.S. Boat and Ship	<i>U.S. Boat and Ship Model (USB&amp;SM)</i>	Sumr 1987	D
WL&C, Stability and Metacenter	<i>USB&amp;SM</i>	Fall 1987	T
WL&C, Steam Article on Cole's Engines	<i>USB&amp;SM</i>	Wntr 1987	D
WL&C, Steam Basics	<i>USB&amp;SM</i>	Spring 1988	T
WL&C, Design of a 16-Foot Steam Launch	<i>USB&amp;SM</i>	Sumr 1988	T
WL&C, Sailing Rigs	<i>USB&amp;SM</i>	Fall 1988	D/E
WL&C, Propellers	<i>USB&amp;SM</i>	Wint 1989	T

WL&C, Turbulence – America’s Cup	<i>USB&amp;SM</i>	Sprg 1989	H/D
Vostellung die Damphbarkasse Patricia	<i>USB&amp;SM</i>	Sumr 1989	C
WL&C, Waves	<i>USB&amp;SM</i>	Sumr 1989	T
Building Quarter-Scale Steamer PUFF	<i>USB&amp;SM</i>	Fall 1989	C
Galleys, Rowboats with Class	<i>USB&amp;SM</i>	Fall 1994	H/R
Oh, Build Thou the Skip of Ra	<i>USB&amp;SM</i>	Wntr 1994	C
Hull Forms for Scratch Builders – Part 1	<i>RC Boat Modeler (RCBM)</i>	March/April 1991	T/H
Hull Forms for Scratch Builders – Part 2	<i>RCBM</i>	May/June 1991	T/H
Hull Forms for Scratch Builders – Part 3	<i>RCBM</i>	July/Aug. 1991	T/H
Review of Lobby Glasgow	<i>Scale Ship Modeler (SSM)</i>	April/May 1991	R
Stuart, A Royal Name in Steam	<i>SSM</i>	June 1991	D/H
Building the Sidewheel Tug Glasgow	<i>SSM</i>	June 1991	C
Building the Sidewheel Tug Glasgow, Best of	<i>SSM</i>	1991	C
The Chesapeake Bay Skipjack	<i>SSM</i>	Nov. 1991	R
Building the Willie L. Bennett	<i>SSM</i>	April/May 1992	C
Do You Need a Pilot, Sir?	<i>SSM</i>	Nov. 1992	C
Corsairs Sail Again	<i>SSM</i>	Oct. 1992	H/E
Corsairs Sail Again	<i>RC Ship Modeling, Special Vol. 1, #1</i>	1993	H/E
Heat Exchanger Design and Plans	<i>Live Steam (LS)</i>	Sept. 1988	T/C
To Sell a Boiler (on boiler design)	<i>LS</i>	June 1989	T
All Aboard (Review of Steam Exhibit)	<i>LS</i>	Oct. 1989	D
Weeden Steam Toys, A Premium Name	<i>LS</i>	Feb. 1991	D/H
Glasgow, A British Sidewheel Tug	<i>LS</i>	March 1992	R
Weaverville Steam Stamp Mill	<i>LS</i>	Late 1996	H
You Gotta Have Clout	<i>Model Aviation (MA)</i>	Sept. 1989	D/H
Planes Dutch Flew	<i>MA</i>	April 1990	H/D
Those Days of Wonder and Change	<i>MA</i>	Nov. 1990	H
Smilin’ Jack (Biography of Zack Mosley)	<i>MA</i>	May 1991	D
Feather Merchants, For Fun or Fight	<i>MA</i>	Feb. 1993	D/C
Sal Taibi, A Living Legend	<i>MA</i>	Dec. 1993	D
Leapin’ Lena, a 1950 RC Model	<i>MA</i>	March 1995	D/C

### **In Preparation or Filed**

Toilet in Research (model meteorology) – T

A Design For a Propane Burner (A burner for a model steam boiler) – T/C

Building Stuart Double-Ten Marine Engine (Building a steam engine kit) – C

Feedwater Pump For Double-Ten (Building a boiler feed pump for D-10) – C

People, People, People & Things (Environmental essay on over-population) – E

TINA, R/C - Sailboat (Different from that accepted by MB) – C/G

PUFF, a 16' Steamer in Full & 1/4 Scale – C

Blade of Ishtar: (A fantasy about Time Travel via controlled mind regression and visits to the cabarets and skies of WW-1 and to Mesopotamia in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.) How an ancient Sumerian curse affects the outcome of WW-2. [Completed novel]

Halcyone: A historical fantasy of the 5th Century BC about Darius the Great's Greco Persian War. A sequel to River of Return that involves the Book of Revelations and manipulation of the future to change its prophecy.

Cameraia: A fantasy novel about a colonization expedition of the future lost in the records of their parent planet. A political satire depicting the effects of government growth.

*(signed) Alfred Lehmborg 6/1996*

---

**This PDF is property of the Academy of Model Aeronautics. Permission must be granted by the AMA History Project for any reprint or duplication for public use.**

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

