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# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of ARTHUR J. MAY

c.1918 - May 14, 1993  
Started modeling in the 1930s  
AMA #741



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Transcribed & Edited by SS (04/2003), Reformatted by JS (10/2009)

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## Career:

- In 1934 won the Manitoba Provincial Championships senior division and the National Scale contest in Toronto, Canada
- Started the Missouri Slope Model Aero Club in 1939 and 1940; served as president many times from the club's start up through the late 1970s
- Directed regional meets in 1947 and 1948
- Directed virtually all local meets in his area from 1960 through 1988
- Contributed articles to Flying Models magazine
- Owned and operated May's Camera and Model Shop from 1967 to 1984; donated many trophies and kits as prizes
- Served as a judge at the 1968 Nationals
- Promoted model aviation by doing things such as teaching new pilots to fly and giving kits to youth who couldn't afford to purchase them

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*The following information on Arthur J. May is taken from the Model Aviation Hall of Fame application that Theodore R. Stockert (AMA 28558) submitted on his behalf in January 1989.*

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## An Overview of His Modeling Career

At age 17, in 1934, he won the Manitoba Provincial Championship senior division. The same year he also won the National Scale contest at Toronto, Canada.

In 1939 and 1940, he worked to organize and start the Missouri Slope Model Aero Club. The club was dormant during World War II, but was reactivated by Art in 1945 and 1946. He served as club president many times from 1939 up into the late 1970s.

In 1948, he flew his first Radio Controlled (RC) model using a radio built by two friends who were interested in radio. The plane flew over 100 flights before crashing.

Art was involved with contest directing as well. In 1947, he was the director for a regional meet in North Dakota. The next year he directed a regional meet in Helena, Montana. From 1960 through 1988, Art directed virtually all of the local contests in Bismarck, North Dakota (his hometown.)

Aside from all of his leadership roles concerning model aviation, Art also was involved with the publishing industry. He contributed articles to Al Lewis for Flying Models magazine and, as a good friend of Jimmy Walker; Art contributed a Golden Age picture of Jimmy to Hal DeBolt for publication in the late 1980s.

Art's modeling expertise didn't end on the field. He opened May's Camera and Model Shop in 1967 and ran it until 1984. Throughout this time, Art donated many trophies and kits as prizes. As of 1989, his stepson was managing the store.

### **Supporting Remarks from Theodore R. Stockert**

In 1968, Art was a judge at the Nationals in Olathe, Kansas; 1968 was the last year the Nationals was sponsored by the Navy. He belonged to the Charles H. Grant Model Airplane Pioneers, which was the forerunner of the AMA. He flew all types of models from rubber-powered Rise-off-Ground (ROG) to RC models. He is presently (1989) flying 1/4-scale models.

Over the years, it's hard for me to imagine anyone doing more to promote model airplanes than Art has. His unrelenting efforts include training new pilots, helping to build, giving models, radio and engines to people, especially young kids who couldn't afford the cost, and constantly cajoling reluctant modelers to join AMA. Some of the young people Art helped with modeling are now grown men and include an airline pilot, a doctor, and a NASA scientist at Los Altos, California. A few years ago as our club members labored until after dusk pouring concrete at the flying field Art drove into town and bought fried chicken, French fries, buns, gravy and soft drinks for 25 to 30 workers. This was in addition to a substantial cash contribution for concrete.

Art still (in 1989) has not let up at age 71. At our recent state meeting, Art gave a comprehensive and informative presentation on new frequencies.

I would like to add a few personal experiences I have had involving Art. When my youngest son, Tom, was 9-years-old he was my constant flying partner and enjoyed the camaraderie of the other flyers. On a field, mowing one night Tom pushed a mower for two and a half to three hours and refused any offers of relief. During one of my breaks, Art said, "Look at that kid work; no kid should work that hard and not get a reward." After we finished mowing, Art told Tom to come to the store the next day and he would give him a kit. The next day as we drove to the store I explained to Tom that Art would probably give him a simple stick kit or peanut scale model to get him started. You can imagine Tom's surprise, and mine, when Art handed him a Falcon 56 kit. I have never seen him happier or prouder than when we returned home and he showed his mom his kit. He built the kit with my help and flew it, a Kaos 40 and a Contender for the next six years. Tom is still an active flyer and for several years was our newsletter editor/publisher.

Three years ago due to work pressure taking up my building time and some unusual attrition of my planes, we had our annual fun-fly coming up and I was without a plane. Once again, it was Art to the rescue. He gave me an Akro-Bipe complete with a Webra Blackhead 61 and servos. All I had to do was install my radio. I recently (as of 1989) asked him if he would like it back and he said, "Nah!"

Every year a half dozen or so Canadians come down from Winnipeg for our fun-fly. On Saturday night, Art has always taken them, our club officers, my wife and I and our son, Tom, out to eat. He has also made the trip to the 1/4-scale-giant scale meet at Grabber Green, Manitoba, and other meets. He will also do things on the spur of the moment. For example, the local modelers meet

for coffee-breakfast each Saturday morning at 8 a.m. then go to the model shop to buy our week's supplies. At one breakfast, Art mentioned the fun-fly at Grafton, close to 300 miles away. Two hours later, he was on his way along with my son, Tom. They flew both days and didn't return until 1 a.m. because on the way home as they drove past the Fargo Flying Field they saw models flying and stopped to fly.

It has been and is a real experience being Art's friend. Just going to coffee and listening to him talk, not only about models, but full-scale aircraft, engines, etc., provides a wealth of information. I have told many of our local modelers that if they don't take advantage of all Art's knowledge they are making a mistake. I can't think of anyone who has had a more positive effect on my modeling or on my son Tom's modeling and self esteem than Art has. He is a rare individual.

*[signed] Theodore R. Stockert  
January 21, 1989*

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*The following is a list of questions that Ted Stockert answered on behalf of the May family for the Model Aeronautics Association of Canada. He submitted them to the AMA History Project (at the time called the AMA History Program) in July 2003.*

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***1. What is your earliest modeling memory?***

Not much is known before 1934 other than Art was always interested in aircraft models and full-sized.

***2. Did you have an influence, e.g., a person/club who got you started?***

Art's father, John, was his biggest influence; very mechanically inclined.

***3. What was your first really successful model?***

Not known.

***4. How long have you been modeling now?***

Art modeled from his early teens until he died May 14, 1993.

***5. What are your top three all-time favorite models?***

The Tiger (also Gypsy) Moth, the J3 Piper Cub and Fairchild F71C, F-24 and C8. He built an RC model of the F71C that had wings that folded back along the fuselage for storage when not flying.

***6. What is your least favorite model and why?***

Anything covered with MonoKote due to lack of realism.

***7. What is your favorite full-size aircraft?***

The J3 Cub.

***8. Have you ever done any flying of full-size aircraft?***

Yes. Art had a private flying license.

**9. Do you have any hobbies besides aeromodeling? What are they?**

Photography and woodworking.

**10. What do you do (or used to do) for a living?**

Worked for a power plant (commercial air conditioning), worked at an oil refinery and owned May's Camera and Model Shop until he retired at 65-years-old.

**11. What are your views of the use of modern materials, engines, and radios in Old-Time and nostalgic models?**

Art preferred staying as close to real models as possible with materials. He was usually on the cutting edge of technology with radio equipment.

**12. What sort of car(s) do you drive?**

Art usually had a vehicle suitable for model transportation such as a station wagon and later drove minivans.

**13. Do you have any specific building place, e.g., basement, shed, whatever?**

Early on, Art built in his basement. Later on he built a 24- by 30-foot (approximate) shed that was heated, air conditioned and equipped with table saws, drill press, and even a 12-inch metal turning lathe.

**14. When building a model, which is your most favorite process?**

Balsa, plywood, spruce with fabric covering and dope finish.

**15. Your least favorite process?**

Anything with Monokote, etc.

**16. Have you ever had a lay off from aeromodeling? If so, why?**

No.

**17. If yes, when and why did you restart?**

N/A

**18. Do/did you regularly read any modeling publications? Which ones?**

**19. What model clubs and/or associations do you belong to?**

Art belonged to the Academy of Model Aeronautics, Experimental Aircraft Association, the Missouri Slope Model Aero Club (which he founded), was a charter member of the Vintage Modeler's Association and the Giant Scale Association. Earlier as a Canadian citizen, he belonged to Canada's equivalent of the AMA and the local club. He was still a member of all of the above when he passed away.

**20. What is your fondest memory or anecdote from aeromodeling? Please feel free to go beyond a single incident.**

I believe his GHQ engine, which he could never get to run and threw into the Red River of the North. And the joint venture with his childhood friend, Don McLeod, and a Brown Junior.

**21. Do/did you regularly enter contests?**

Yes.

**22. What contests do/did you enter?**

Mall shows, some pattern events and also fun-fly events.

**23. What events do/did you compete in?**

See question 22.

**24. What models do/did you use? What power sources?**

Many modified planes based on the Kwik-Fly, powered by ignition gasoline in the early years, some gliders, glow powered .40 to .60 size and later the chain saw type engines.

**25. What success(es) have you had?**

Art was very innovative and successful.

**26. What was (were) the source(s) of your modeling supplies and equipment? What are your present sources?**

Early years sources were mail order, basement type stores and later Art owned May's Camera and Model Ship and did a superb job of supplying the modelers.

**27. Do/did you design your own models?**

Yes.

**28. If so, were any of the designs published?**

Not to my knowledge.

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