



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of JAMES EDWARD (JIM) MCNEILL



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Jim McNeill 1923-2004

James Edward “Jim” McNeill, age 81, died on May 21, 2004. A 33-year member of the Executive Council, Jim was first appointed an Associate Vice President in District V in 1972 and 1973. In 1974, he was elected District V Vice President (VP) then served as Secretary/Treasurer and later as Executive Vice President.

Jim was re-elected District V VP in 1989 and served in that position until his death in May 2004.

Jim was a lifetime member of AMA and the initiator of the McNeill Cup, an award, regardless of age, for high time in FAI Power.

One of Jim’s passions was designing, building, and flying Free Flight models, but above all else, he enjoyed people. Most weekends would find Jim and his wife of 57 years, Lucy, attending events throughout District V. He was never without his camera, taking “snaps” for his column and “pics” for his Web site, always ensuring that as many names as possible went with faces.

Jim took pictures of pilots and their airplanes, but he also made a special point of photographing the families that supported these fliers and the club members who volunteered their time and effort to organize and run the events they attended. He took pleasure in recognizing event organizers, contest directors, announcers, and the spouses who ran the concession stands, always thanking them for a well-run event.

In his early years as District V Vice President, Jim began honoring clubs in his district with the Club of the Month award. He wrote about the clubs in his “District V Report” in Model Aviation. Jim revived the practice in recent years, adding a flag and patches for all club members to the presentation.

Jim championed club newsletter editors whom he considered some of the hardest-working members of any club. In 1981, in conjunction with then Executive Director John Worth, he originated the AMA National Newsletter – a compilation of articles, hints, and tips from club newsletters. The newsletter was sent to club newsletter editors to give them additional material for inclusion in their own newsletters.

At the same time, he helped create the Aero Honor Society to recognize the working club newsletter editors. These editors were recognized for their contributions in the National Newsletter.

Jim was a Contest Director and Leader Member in both the Scientific and Administrative categories. He was awarded the Fellowship Award, AMA's highest honor.

Jim was a former VFW post commander in Bessemer, Alabama, and co-founder of the Birmingham Chess Club.

A decorated veteran of World War II, Jim served in the Army Air Corps. He received the American Theater Ribbon, the European African Middle Eastern Ribbon with two Bronze Stars, a Good Conduct Medal, and a World War II Victory Medal.

Jim graduated from Georgia Tech with a degree in engineering and was a member of Delta Tau Delta fraternity. He also held a Juris Doctorate from the Birmingham School of law and was a member of Sigma Delta Kappa honorary society.

Survivors include his wife, Lucy Grovenstein McNeill; two daughters, Sally McNeill Ebaugh (Kenneth Sherwood Ebaugh) and Lucy McNeill LeMaster (Kenneth Franklin LeMaster); and two granddaughters, Lulie DeBardleben Ebaugh and Lucy Anne LeMaster. He is also survived by sisters, Mrs. John Singleton, Camp Douglas, Wisconsin, and Mrs. Nancy Raufman, Janesville, Wisconsin.

Ed McCollough, former District XI VP, served on the Executive Counsel with Jim for nearly 20 years. Ed wrote:

“It was in the very early 1980s that Jim McNeill and I were introduced. Honestly, that first meeting is somewhat clouded by the passage of years, but my first impression of Jim was of a rather courtly gentleman, in both dress and manner. Over time, it was plain that his normal demeanor was soft spoken and reserved. Years of being at meetings did not change my first impression of Jim as a gentle man.

“Certainly Jim was passionate about modeling and the Academy, and he quietly worked to advance this goals. When faced with injustice, he worked diligently and successfully to overturn the original decision, an effort that demonstrated his innate courage.

“Jim McNeill and I served together on the AMA Executive Council for the better part of 20 years. It cannot be said that we agreed on everything, perhaps not even a majority of items under discussion. What can be said, though, was when Jim would introduce me to someone, he always said, ‘This is my friend, Ed McCollough.’

“Goodbye, old friend.”

Gerald Mulvehill, president of the Birmingham Radio Control club, wrote, “We all mourn the

passing of our AMA representative Jim McNeill. Jim was so busy it was hard to pin him down long enough to spend much time with him, but I do value the few times we had together and was always impressed with his knowledge and devotion to our sport. He was one of the pioneers of our hobby.”

Jim McNeill’s dedication to the sport and hobby of aeromodeling and to AMA will be missed.

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