



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of FRANK NEKIMKEN



Compiled and formatted by JS (02/2016)

The following information was gathered from biographical material submitted to the Model Aviation Hall of Fame by Otto Curth in 1985, the Journal of the Academy of Model Aeronautics, 1939, and the 1940 Nats program. Frank was a NFFS Hall of Fame inductee in 1981 and a Model Aviation Hall of Fame inductee in 1985.

- Became involved in modeling contests in the late 1920s or early 1930s.
- Came in sixth place at the 1937 Detroit Nats in the Outdoor Stick event, Stick Models, open class with a time of 1 minute 53 seconds.
- Came in seventh place at the 1937 Detroit Nats in the Balfour Contest/Outdoor Stick Model Contest, Open Age Class - over 21, with a time of 3 minutes 12 seconds.
- Was an Administrative Member of the AMA.
- Helped establish the Chicago Aeronuts, Gas Model Aeronauts, and the Riser Riders.
- Served as Contest Director for the 1940 and 1941 Nats, held in Chicago. He also ran many local events in the Chicago Parks District as an NAA Contest Director.
- Owned Sparky Industries in the Chicago area.
- Published plans in the Chicago Park District's Model Aircraft Series of instruction booklets, including both indoor and outdoor models. Children and teens were instructed on model building based on these Series in the late 1930s to early 1940s.
- Trained model airplane instructors.
- Per the *Journal of the Academy of Model Aeronautics*, Frank “[h]eld the first gas vs. rubber meet under sanction of NAA.”
- According to Otto Curth in his Model Aviation Hall of Fame application for Frank:

“Frank was in charge of the Model Airplane programs for Chi. Park District. As such he coordinated the Model program in 10 or 20 park field houses. Balsa planks, tissue and glue & dope were



Frank Nekimken

Photo of Frank, published in the 1940 Nats program.

made available for pennies (Depression times). Weekends and evenings he took modelers to flying sites. I would say Frank Nekimken was responsible for the model activity that developed in the Chicago area, provided a wholesome outlet for our youthful energies & kept an unknown number of us from being jail birds. He was a “Role Model” before we had the term!”



Frank Nekimken and one of his Park District classes

Photo of Frank teaching a Chicago Park District modeling class. Photo published in the 1940 Nats program.

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