



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of GERALD G. RITZ

Born in 1916 Started modeling in 1928



Transcribed & Edited by SS (01/2003), Reformatted by JS (01/2010)

Career:

- Taught modeling for several years in a Chicago Boy's Club
- Built a wind tunnel in the early 1930s and ran tests on airfoils and propellers
- In the 1930s, developed a gas model propeller carving system at the suggestion of Carl Goldberg; supplied millions of propellers throughout the world
- Manufactured 30,000 propellers for target planes during World War II
- Original member of the Chicago Aeronuts
- His Ritz Wing was published in Frank Zaic's 1937 Model Aeronautic Yearbook
- Won the 1959 Nordic Towliners world championship
- Participated in and was the U.S. team manager for various Wakefield competitions
- Served as chairman of the international Wakefield committee that shaped the rules regarding qualifying trials
- Wrote a series of articles on airfoils in the late 1950s that were published in Model Airplane News magazine
- Manufactured propellers and airplane kits for ultralight aircraft

Honors:

- 1982: National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame

The following biography on Gerald G. Ritz was written by James Bennett. Unfortunately, no date is given of when it was written. Most likely it was in the 1960s.

Gerald G. Ritz was born in Prairie View, Illinois, in 1916. He began building indoor models in 1928 and flew them in the school auditorium in the morning before classes. Music was another interest then and he won a gold medal in a national championship playing French horn. He attended Michigan Aero School and Northwestern University.

Gerry taught modeling for several years in a Chicago Boy's Club, developing a series of models that were used in teaching boys' clubs and Boy Scout groups. He built a wind tunnel in the early 1930s and ran tests on airfoils and propellers. Also in the 1930s, at the suggestion of Carl Goldberg, he developed a gas model propeller carving system and supplied millions of propellers throughout the world. During World War II, he manufactured 30,000 propellers for target planes.

He was an original member of the Chicago Aeronuts. Later he became a member of the Chicago Prop Nutz and then the Illinois Model Aero Club. The Ritz Wing can be seen in the 1937 Model Aeronautic Yearbook by Frank Zaic. It had a double ellipse plan form similar to indoor wings of that day. It was shaped from 1/8-inch balsa and used a highly cambered indoor type section.

Gerry did early development on the front-end mechanisms for Wakefield props and continued flying this event through the 1960s. His high point in model flying came in Nordic Towliners in

Belgium in 1959 when he won the world championship. He is the only entry from the U.S. to win the individual championship in this event. His Continental was designed for calm weather. Gerry qualified for the A2 team with his Therm V glider under extremely windy conditions in the spring of 1959. He designed, built, and tested the Continental in about a two-month period prior to his trip to Europe while working on a practice flying and fitness program to get in shape for the competition. He has since participated with U.S. teams as a manager. He chaired the international committee that shaped the rules regarding qualifying trails.

In the late 1950s, he wrote a series of articles on airfoils that were published in Model Airplane News magazine. Gerry manufactures propellers and airplane kits for ultralight aircraft. He and his wife Frances reside near Shelbyville, Tennessee, where he's building a 2,000-foot runway for the ultralights.

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