



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of FREDERICK V. WOLF, SR.

October 14, 1919 – March 31, 1993

Started modeling in 1936

AMA #3799



Written & Submitted by FRW, Jr. (05/1993); Transcribed & Edited by SS (09/2002), Reformatted by JS (02/2010)

Career:

- An AMA member for 56 years
- 1936: Designed his Wolf Special Free Flight model when he began modeling
- Worked in the Navy's Jet Assist Take-Off program during World War II
- Owned and operated a hardware and model supply shop in Camden, New Jersey before World War II and in Hallandale, Florida after World War II
- Worked with and helped many beginners as well as seasoned modelers
- Worked at Megow; designed for Pica
- Operated a charter boat
- Built and raced hydroplanes

Frederick (Freddie) Vincent Wolf, born on October 14, 1919, died on March 31, 1993, was a member of the AMA for 56 years. His AMA number was 3799.

Fred's interest in aviation began in 1932. He took flying lessons from aviator, Clarence Chamberline, and flew with Wiley Post. Post was selling rides on State Street in Camden, New Jersey, in an open field where Barnstormers occasionally stopped to sell rides.

Fred began his modeling in 1936 designing his famous Wolf Special Free Flight model. Even by today's standards, the Wolf Special was a graceful and beautiful design of geometric construction and proportion.

The Wolf Special was well known throughout the New Jersey area in the late 1930s and in later years in South Florida and Southeast Louisiana.

An experimental bomb release and special airfoil design for cold and hot weather was developed in the 1930s.

Fred's modeling was interrupted by his call to active duty by the U.S. Navy during World War II. It did not take the Navy long to discover Fred's abilities, skills and talent for building models. He was utilized by the Navy in the Jet Assist Take-Off (JATO) program.

Prior to World War II, Fred operated and owned a hardware and model store in Camden, New Jersey. After the war, Fred moved his family to Hallandale, Florida, where he opened another hardware and model supply business. His interests never left the modeling industry. Model boats and airplanes continued to be his passion after retiring from LaPlace, Louisiana.

At the time of his death, there were 65 Wolf Special designs in his garage. Models ranged from CO2, 020 to an OS 240-4 cylinder Pegasus, monoplanes, biplanes, tri-motor twins and scale World War I and World War II planes.

Fred continuously developed improvements on his Wolf Special design. His theory was to develop a single airplane and improve on the design.

Fred's love for model aviation never ceased. If he wasn't flying his models, he could be found working on one in his garage. An open house policy was always extended to beginners and seasoned model builders. His knowledge and expertise was developed in almost six decades. He shared it with any who asked – the only fee was the asking.

Nicknamed "The Maestro" by his peers, modelers would flock to his truck on weekends to see what new plane he brought to the field. He always said, "I have the only model airplanes that look like model airplanes."

If I may paraphrase Ray Bradbury – Fred was never Daedalus, nor was he Icarus, they were special in another way; but he was one of those who saw Daedalus try and Icarus fail and so he decided to do it himself.

Wayne Machado, fellow member in the Spillway Radio Control (RC) Club, LaPlace, Louisiana, best described Fred's character in the eulogy he wrote for Fred:

"Dear Friends:

At 5 p.m., Wednesday, March 31, 1993, we lost a gentle treasure, Frederick Vincent Wolf. Fred closed his eyes in peaceful sleep.

There will be no local memorial services.

Fred wanted to quickly return to the Florida he knew and so loved for much of his life. On Thursday morning, April 1, 1993, he boarded a Delta jet for his final flight. Indicative of our friend, he joked with his son about the flight; asking if it would be a smooth one and would the captain make a good landing? I can't imagine anything but a perfect touch down.

Fred's journey through life spanned nearly 80 years and those years were filled with the stuff most can only dream about – the kind of stuff a man does simply because it's what he wishes to do!

He flew with Goldberg, worked at Megow designing for Pica, operated a charter boat and fished with Jimmy Hoffa, built and raced hydroplanes and, finally, he was the master of the Wolf Special series.

Fred was also a humorist in the truest sense of the word. And, more importantly, he was a friend in the most sincere sense. This Treasure will be deeply missed.

On behalf of all those in our club who knew Fred – who spent hours in conversation at the field, at his home and in his garage surrounded by his planes, his wife Catherine and his son, Fred, Junior, I say on behalf of all, ‘Good-bye, Old Friend. In these few short years, you’ve touched our lives with joy! May peace be forever yours to enjoy!’”

Unfortunately, most of us take things for granted and never expect the unexpected. A world of knowledge that could have been recorded flew off into the clouds.

Due to Fred’s unexpected death and the turmoil that followed, the application for Hall of Fame was misplaced.

Some things that I recall were rubber banding the landing gear to the fuselage, sliding the center of gravity with wing change and engines being rubber banded to the fuselage so different size engines could be changed at a model meet to compete in different classes.

Robert J. Cherry, Fred’s brother-in-law, said that Fred came by his home in his 1935 Chevrolet panel truck and asked if Robert had any oil for Fred’s truck. Fred said that he didn’t have enough money to buy oil for the truck after buying oil to mix for his model airplanes. Robert said, no, so then he asked if Robert had any Johnson’s paste floor wax. Fred melted the wax, poured it in the crankcase of the truck and they went flying!

I would like to recommend my father, Frederick V. Wolf, to the Academy of Model Aeronautics Hall of Fame. He was a very special person to me. Most of his life was dedicated to modeling and perfecting the models he built.

*(signed) Frederick R. Wolf, Jr.
May 17, 1993*

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