



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of GEORGE XENAKIS

September 2, 1928 – November 1, 2008

Began modeling in 1939

AMA #1012



Written by AR (01/2009); Formatted by JS (01/2009, 03/2009, 01/2010)

The following article is from the February 2009 issue of Model Aviation magazine.

George Xenakis: 1928-2008

Born in Detroit, Michigan, George Xenakis began building 10-cent Free Flight model kits in 1939 and attended model building in Foch Intermediate School. He was a member of the Detroit Balsa Bugs.

In 1950, George graduated from Wayne State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in aeronautical engineering. He spent his professional career in aeronautical and space science, employed with the military, Lockheed, and NASA, where he worked on the Apollo Program.

He married Peggy, his wife of 50 years, in 1958, and had three children: Greg, Bill, and Suzanne. They have five children among them: Michael, Tim, Jessie, Hanna, and David.

George was a member of the Oakland Cloud Dusters (OCD) in California. He not only enjoyed the modeling hobby, but he also had a desire to teach it to the youth in his area.

He started the Oakland Cloud Dusters Youth Program at Miller Middle School and the Moreland West San Jose Community Center. The program has OCD members supervising the construction and flying of rubber-band-powered airplanes and gliders by boys and girls as young as 5 years old.

In 1963, George designed the *Belly Dancer*: a low-wing Wakefield design. He used it to win the Wakefield event at the Nats in 1964. Later, the plans for that model were published in *Model Airplane News* and the *Frank Zaic 1964-1965 Model Aeronautic Year Book*.

George made the US F1B Wakefield Team in 1967, 1969, 1987, 1991, and 1993. The US team placed third in 1969.

His contributions to model aircraft are many. George created the first recording thermal detector, pioneered in-flight adjustable surfaces, and wrote many technical papers that are often referenced in other articles.

In addition to designing many of the beginner-friendly airplanes that are used in the OCD Youth Program, he designed several other models. These include the *Tart*, *Tadpole Mk II*, *E-Z Penny*, and *Moffett 1* and *2*. The *Moffetts* and *E-Z Penny* were kitted by Lee Kiracofe. The *Tadpole Mk II* glider received an NFFS [National Free Flight Society] Model of the Year award in 1980.

George authored or co-authored several pieces for the *NFFS Symposia*, including “Energy Release of Rubber Measured with Automatic Integrators,” “Speed Effects on Model Trim,” and “Reynolds Number Effects of Model Trim,” In addition, he served as editor of the *Symposium* and the *NFFS Digest*.

Competition and recognition were prominent in George’s life. He won several awards, including the Michigan State Senior Champ, winning Indoor B Stick at the Plymouth Internationals; the Sierra Cup; and the OCD Getsla Trophy. He was inducted into the National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame in 1995.

In 1996, George won Mulvihill at the US Free Flight Championships in Lost Hills, California. On several occasions, he was awarded the OCD David Lloyd Trophy for his contributions to model aviation.

George Xenakis accomplished many things in his aeromodeling career. Most important, he had a desire to teach and educate youth about model aviation. Because of this, his legacy will continue.

-Ashley Rauen
Communications Specialist

Gary Hinze wrote the following chronology, from the Oakland Cloud Dusters’ Web site at <http://www.oaklandclouddusters.org/Default.aspx?pageId=226110>. It was reprinted here with permission from Mr. Hinze.

George Xenakis (1928-2008)

Born in Detroit in 1928, George passed away on November 1, 2008. The son of Constantine and Vasiliki Xenakis, he is survived by his sister Mary and brother Peter. George married Peggy, his wife of fifty years, in 1958. Their children are Greg, Bill, Suzanne, and daughter-in-law Ramona. They have five grandchildren -- Michael, Tim, Jessie, Hannah, and David. George was an aerospace engineer and worked on the Apollo Space Program. His great love was aero-modeling. Trisagion -- Tuesday, 7PM; Funeral -- Wednesday 10AM. St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in San Jose. Internment at Cedar Lawn cemetery in Milpitas, CA. Donations appreciated -- St. Nicholas Church Building Fund. Arrangements made by Lima Family Santa Clara Mortuary.



George recording flight times at one of the kids contests that he and Lou Young organized. Nicolas is holding an E-Z Penny, designed by George to introduce youngsters to indoor duration modeling.

Chronology

1928: Born in Detroit, Michigan, USA

1939: Began building free flight models with 10-cent kits and attended model building in Foch intermediate school in Detroit. Member of the Detroit Balsa Bugs.

1948: US Wakefield Team tryouts, Olathe, Kansas.

1949: Michigan State Senior Champ, won indoor B stick at the Plymouth internationals.

1950: Bachelor of Science degree in Aeronautical Engineering, Wayne State University, Detroit Michigan.

1951-1953: Icing flight research, Willow Run, Michigan.

1953-1963: Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, research and development work on stability and control of aircraft and missiles.

1958: Married Peggy. Their children are Greg, Bill, and Suzanne. They have five grand children.



Peggy Xenakis working the registration table at a kids contest in 2007.

1963: *Belly Dancer* a low-wing Wakefield design.

1964-1972: NASA Johnson Space Center, Apollo guidance and control and space shuttle electronic integration.

1964: Won the Wakefield event at the Nats with *Belly Dancer*. The plans were published in *Model Airplane News* and in Frank Zaic's *1964-65 Model Aeronautic Yearbook*, page 85.

1965: Variable Incidence Tail coupled to the rear peg so that decalage increases as the motor unwinds.

1967: US FAI F1B Wakefield Team.

1967: Introduced the first "Recording Thermal Sniffer."

1968: Thermal sniffer, with Marion Kitchens, published in the April *Model Airplane News*.

1968 *NFFS Symposium* article, "The Effects of Model Trim and Power Characteristics on the Climb Performance of a Wakefield Model."

1969: Technical editor, *NFFS Free Flight Digest*.

1969: *NFFS Symposium* article, "The Optimum Climb Path for a Rubber Model."

1969: FAI F1B Wakefield and F1A Nordic Teams, Free Flight World Championships, Vienna, Austria.

1970: Edited *NFFS Symposium*.

1971: Assistant manager, Electronic Systems Integration Office, NASA Manned Spaceflight Center, Houston, Texas.

1971: Wakefield model *TART* (Torque Activated Rudder and Tailplane) is a NFFS Ten Models of the Year, chosen for its torque activated rudder and tailplane.

1971: *NFFS Symposium* article, "Energy Release of Rubber Measured with Automatic Integrators."

1971: *NFFS Symposium* article, "A Comparison of 'Optimum' and Helical-Pitch Propellers."

1972-1983: Moved to San Jose, California, working at NASA Ames Research Center on VTOL guidance research.

1972: *NFFS Free Flight Digest* editor.

1972-1976: Contributing editor, *NFFS Free Flight Digest*.

1974: Awarded the OCD David Lloyd Trophy for contributions to model aviation.

1975-1995: AMA Member, Free Flight International Aeromodeling subcommittee.

1980: *Tadpole Mk II* A1 glider received a NFFS Model of the Year award.

1983: Awarded the OCD David Lloyd Trophy for contributions to model aviation.

1985: *NFFS Symposium* article, "FAI F1C Performance Tradeoffs."

1987: US FAI F1B Wakefield Team.

1987: Awarded the OCD David Lloyd Trophy for contributions to model aviation.

1988: Won the Sierra Cup.

1989: Edited *NFFS Symposium*, wrote editorial "The Sympo."

1989: *NFFS Symposium* article, "Over the Top With Hardy."

1991: US FAI F1B Wakefield Team.

1991: George Xenakis was the first winner of the OCD Getsla Trophy.

1992: Qualified as F1B Wakefield team member, FAI Team Finals, October 8-11, Lost Hills, California.

1993: US FAI F1B Wakefield Team.

1993: Aeronautical engineer for Lockheed Missles and Space Company.

1993: Edited *NFFS Symposium*, wrote editorials "The NFFS Symposium Report" and "NFFS Digest Tech Notes - A Compilation."

1993: *NFFS Symposium* articles, "FAI Power Model Flappers", "Density Altitude / Reynolds Number Effects on Models," "How to Make a Wakefield Model Look Sick".

1993: *G. Xenakis Wakefield* published in *NFFS International 1993 Plan Book*.

1994: *NFFS Symposium* articles, "Passive Boundary Layer Control," "Reynolds Number Effects on Model Trim," "Speed Effects on Model Trim."

1995: *NFFS Symposium* article, with Bob Meuser, "Passive Boundary Layer Control."

1995: NFFS Hall of Fame.

1996: Won Mulvihill at US Free Flight Championships, Labor Day Weekend, Lost Hills, California.

1998: *Moffett No. 1* kitted by Lee Kiracofe.

1998: Xenakis Kids Events, Saturday, August 22, part of the OCD First Annual Moffet Hanger One Indoor Free Flight Contest, Herb Robbins, CD. George and Lou Young organized these kids' contests for several years, with support from many OCD members.

1998: AMA District Award (District 10)

1999: Awarded the OCD David Lloyd Trophy for contributions to model aviation.

1999: AMA Fellowship Award

1999: *Moffett No. 2* and *E-Z Penny* kitted by Lee Kiracofe.



***E-Z Penny* built by one of the students.**

2006: Made the Stu Bennett and Joe Foster Trophies for the OCD, awarded for the first time in that year.

2001: AMA Executive Board discussed memorandum of understanding with Ames Research Center to provide access to Hangar One for the Youth Interactive Aeronautics Program spearheaded by George Xenakis.

2002: Lou Young and George Xenakis are featured in an article in *The Campbell Reporter* on the Moreland Community Center youth model airplane program.

2003: George Xenakis designed *E-Z Penny* used by Anjaney Kottapalli in his study of the effect of propeller size on flight duration.

2006: Lou Young and George Xenakis are featured in an article in *The West San Jose Resident* on the Moreland Community Center youth model airplane program.

2007: George designed the *Perky* to replace the AMA Cub as a first model with better performance. Lee Kiracofe kitted it as *EAGLE*.

Unknown Dates: AMA Contest Director

Unknown Dates: OCD member

2008: November 1, George passed away from congestive heart failure.



George trimming a Perky built by a first-time modeler at a kids contest in 2007.

Remembrances

The kids' model airplane program was started at Miller Middle School and at the Moreland West San Jose Community Center by Mr. George Xenakis. Mr. Xenakis passed away on November 1st. We often consulted him about ideas for improving the program, and he always had creative suggestions. We will continue the program as best we can without his guidance.

Many of you who flew your planes in our local competitions will remember "Mr. X" helping you with advice on airplane adjustments, winding rubber motors, celebrating your successful flights, and handing out trophies and prizes. He was the person who started the contest series way back in the 1970s, and Mrs. Xenakis is the patient person who tabulated scores at the contests while you all gathered around her to see who had the best scores.

Mr. Xenakis had a long career in aeronautical and space science working for the military, NASA and Lockheed. His contributions to model aircraft are many. He made the first recording thermal detector, pioneered in-flight adjustable surfaces, wrote many technical papers that are often referenced in technical articles, flew for the US on several World Championship teams, and also represented the national Academy of Model Aeronautics for Free Flight at the international model aeronautics governing body. He designed many of the beginner-friendly airplanes that we use in our program....

- Lou Young

George made the world a better place, especially for us aeromodelers. He will be remembered and he will be missed. If you wish to share remembrances or photos of George on this page, send them to me at DGBJ@aol.com.

-Gary Hinze

This PDF is property of the Academy of Model Aeronautics. Permission must be granted by the AMA History Project for any reprint or duplication for public use.

AMA History Project
National Model Aviation Museum
5151 E. Memorial Dr.
Muncie IN 47302
(765) 287-1256, ext. 511
historyproject@modelaircraft.org

