



# The AMA History Project Presents: History of AIR YOUTH OF AMERICA (AYA)



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## **Air Youth of America**

By Ernest Gamache, New York City  
Executive Director of Air Youth of America

Those of you who took advantage of the opportunity to go through the NACA labs this morning - and I trust most of you did - must have been deeply impressed with the activity we were privileged to see. I, for one, have no further qualms on the threat of foreign advantage over our aeronautic research. After reading so much in the daily papers this summer on the pros and cons of further appropriations for research labs on the west coast, and being left in a state of complete doubt as to their need, I now am convinced that it is money well spent.

Most of you by now have heard of **Air Youth of America** and the program service being developed to assist youth interested in aviation. Your chairman has asked me to sketch for you a picture of what we have in mind doing this coming year, and to indicate the part the Academy as an organization and its individual members might play. There is a basis for sound mutual relationship which, we feel, will lend prestige to both organizations. Before getting into that, however, a background of general information will be helpful.

All of you doubtless know of the extensive survey we made in the past year. To many of you, we are grateful for your cooperation and assistance. We have delved into every phase of junior aviation, not only to determine what is or is not being done, but to learn what form this activity takes and what benefits are being derived from it. Our Committee was interested in finding out what social advantages came from group activity, especially in recreational and leisure-time participation. Many of our findings will be reported in coming issues of our Bulletin, the first of which will go out early next month.

On the whole, we found a hit-or-miss development which has grown without thought or plan, attracts an unusually large number of youth, but suffers the loss of probably a larger number by reason of the lack of much needed guidance and assistance. This activity for the most part is local, sporadic, and little has been done to pull it together. In but few of our cities have efforts been made on the part of schools or youth organizations to cultivate and harness this intense youth interest and guide it into constructive educational channels.

The average boy or girl, usually more eager, more receptive than an older person, finds aviation a source of glamour and fascination unmatched by any other interest today in its intensity. Young people as a whole wish to know more about flyers and flying and the reasons planes fly. They,

being as a rule less enterprising than you were in your youth, look to their elders - their teachers, parents, and relatives to tell them.

They bring their eagerness into the schoolroom, but all too often they are stopped right there. There just isn't any information about aerodynamics and flying in the textbooks or in the classroom. Too often their teacher will lead them away from the subject, for our youth are getting to know more about aviation than their teachers.

We believe the most effective way youth can learn about aviation, especially as to its fundamentals, is to become immersed in it. You know how well it worked in your own individual cases. One phase of this immersion is in the building and flying of models. Another, in the study of text material presented in a way the youthful mind can grasp. Another, and probably the most important, competent guidance and stimulation by informed leadership.

How is it proposed to accomplish this? In several ways, all of which add up to a rounded service of leader guidance. A clearing house for authentic information is badly needed - a source to which leaders of groups, teachers, parents, sponsors or public officials may turn for assistance. A monthly bulletin, about which I spoke earlier, is being developed to answer this need. It will be given wide circulation and will serve as a clearing house for information on subjects of current interest. We seek your cooperation and assistance in making this a worthwhile contribution to group and educational work. Send in to us items of interest and reports on significant developments in your section. Only in this way can we know, and in turn pass on to widely interested groups, what leaders in junior aviation are doing.

In addition to the Bulletin, a series of booklets and handbooks are being developed, again directed to the teacher and leader to guide them along the path of group activity. Such subjects as: How to build model aircraft; How to form and run a club; How to hold a contest; are now being contemplated. From time to time, as the needs arise, booklets on aeronautical subjects such as meteorology, navigation, radio and engines are planned. Our aim is to orient youth in the science of flight.

Now as to the building and flying of models, I need say little. Each of you has probably forgotten more than we have learned. We see it as an important phase of leisure-time and recreational activity in which youth, if properly guided, derives a wealth of benefits. Our approach is to the group working on projects under the guidance of a trained leader. Do not infer that we are not interested in the individual builder. We are. It is, however, most expensive to service individuals, and we are convinced they do not commence to derive full benefit until they reach the stage where they are able to proceed on their own. Our service, at the start, will be basic and will emphasize fundamentals so as to encourage the beginner along the path of sound development. He learns more rapidly at this stage, working in groups.

To assist these young builders get started, a series of five kits have been developed, to be widely distributed through established dealers. The series will start with a hand thrown glider and will carry through a contest cabin job of the Moffett class. No kits will be sold or distributed by **Air Youth**. It is our desire to work through established manufacturers and retail dealers.

One of the current needs which must be met, if we are to move forward in this field, is the training of new leaders. You who are now expert builders will be able to assist considerably and you should take it upon yourselves to lend a helping hand to any group in your section desirous of getting started. But leaders who are already in youth work either in school or leisure time, should have a background of aeronautic fundamentals to effectively meet the demands placed upon them by our air-minded youth. It is our plan to develop leader training institutes through which information and techniques may be imparted to interested potential leaders.

Other educational work will be undertaken as the program expands and more participation results. We contemplate the development of a weekly radio program, the production of educational movies, the working into primary and secondary school texts more aeronautic factual information. The conveyor use of aviation in our established school courses is great, but little advantage of being taken of it today. Mathematics, science, physics, history and geography could be made more interesting.

Finally, within the scope of the present program, we plan a service of vocational guidance to assist educators know more about the employment possibilities and training requirements needed to get into aviation. Very little today is known in educational circles about these specialized fields of employment. A few books like Dr. Carl Norcross's "Getting a Job in Aviation" and Walter Van Haitzma's "Handbook of Aeronautical Vocations" are helpful, but not enough have access to these. Relatively few know of the high standards which exist in the industry. Boys who hope to get jobs must have real skill as well as desirable personality traits. They will be chosen carefully and the unfit weeded out. Aviation classes must not be made a dumping ground for dull boys who have nothing more to offer than an interest in aviation. So typical is the plea of one mother who is reported to have said to the head of one of our leading aviation schools, "My son is no good in his studies. He failed in his math and science courses and dislikes high schools. He is interested in aviation and believes he'd do well in your school." You know the answer. Sound vocational guidance information will assist in directing the right type of boy into the field and will lead him there properly prepared.

The aim of aeronautic courses in high school should not be solely to train boys for aviation. These lads should be encouraged to think of it as a leisure-time activity, one in which they might participate now through modelcraft, and later, by belonging to a flying club, assist in airport development and do other things to promote aviation in their area.

A National Council, the governing body for **Air Youth**, is now being formed under the temporary chairmanship of Winthrop Rockefeller. Such persons as Mr. Sanford Bates, Boys' Clubs of America; James E. West, Boy Scouts of America; Thomas Beck, Editor of Colliers; Dr. George Lewis of the NACA; Major Lester Gardner of the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences; Bill Enyart; Dr. John Studebaker, U. S. Commissioner of Education; Lowell Thomas; Edward P. Warner of the CAA, and others have agreed to serve. Others will be added to represent all interests in this broad field.

We expect to have the first phases of the program ready next month. It will be developed thereafter as rapidly as possible, and we expect to have it moving smoothly by spring. It will first be offered to units of existing youth organizations as Boys' Clubs, Boy Scout troops,

departments of recreation, summer camps, Junior Chambers of Commerce, Kiwanis, Rotary, Exchange Clubs and other similar organizations. We wish to get it established in these areas of leisure-time activity before opening up the schools. Late next spring, we plan to do exploratory work with picked schools, looking forward to a full development in the school area next fall. Our objective here is an aviation club in every junior and senior high school in the country.

Now, how can the Academy assist in setting up this program on a sound basis? In several ways. We recognize the Academy as the official rules-making body and the final source of authority on all technical matters involving model aviation. We believe that any new force coming into the field should work in conjunction with established lines of authority. We should like therefore to turn to you for rulings on technical problems and procedures which might arise. The prestige of Academy approval will assist us in establishing the validity of proposals to educators. We, on the other hand, can do considerable to help cement the position of the Academy as the **only** official rules-making body in this field.

Your Academy might later aid us in the contest area. It will be some time before boys, aided by our program service, will be ready to compete in sanctioned contests. In the meantime, we are going to do everything within our power to stimulate contests. It would prove helpful if, within your respective areas, we could call on you to assist in some of these from time to time. There is nothing quite as stimulating in any field of competitive sport as an expert who has been through the mill.

Lastly, you can be helpful by talking up **Air Youth** and its program, letting recognized groups know of our service and stimulating the formation of new groups among established youth organizations who are interested in getting started with this work. From time to time, as inspirations occur to you, write us. Your suggestions may be of valuable assistance in helping us steer a straight and sound course. Send us reports on activity in your section and keep us abreast of any new developments of interest. Unity in purpose and direction will give strength to all phases of junior aviation.

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