



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of JOSEPH JOHN LUCAS



Written by JL (05/1922), unknown author (02/1936), Popular Aviation and Aeronautics magazine's Model Editor (02/1929), and other information compiled and reformatted by JS (03/2016)

Joseph Lucas wrote the following history, published in Aerial Age Weekly in the May 15, 1922 issue, under the section Elementary Aeronautics and Model Notes.

The Illinois Model Aero Club

By Joseph Lucas

The Illinois Model Aero Club was founded during January, 1912, to popularize and study the science and art of aviation through model aeroplanes. This organization was one of the first model aeroplane clubs to be organized in the world, and it has advanced steadily while many other similar organizations formed later have fallen by the wayside. At present it is in its ninth year of successful operation.

Since the first model contests were held early in 1912, up until the present time, the club has progressed until it now holds nine of the ten world's records recognized for models of the rubber-driven type. In addition to holding these records, the club is the permanent owner of the Villard Trophy as a result of having won the National Model Aeroplane Competition three consecutive times. This competition consisted of a series of contests each year in which clubs from all over this country were entered. Practically all of the individual prizes, as well as the Villard Trophy, were won by members of this club.

From these facts it is easily seen that the Illinois Model Aero Club has been very successful in its work, and it is desired to continue this success by helping all who are interested in model flying or in aviation in general, and by popularizing this game throughout the world. It must be brought to as high a standard as possible and gain that high degree of respect and consideration which it deserves. There never was a mechanical field which held so much fascination for boys, not even the wireless craze that model building and flying has not surpassed. There can be no doubt that all its effects are beneficial, not only to the brains and hands of the model builder but to those leaders in the aviation world who welcome suggestions by model experimenters.

The following was published in the February 1936 issue of Popular Aviation, author unknown.

A New Model Organization

AVIATION POST NO. 651, of The American Legion, now has a Junior Birdmen of America Squadron made up of the daughters and sons of the post members. The unit is known as Aviation Post Squadron No. 1270, and is being directed by Joseph J. Lucas, noted model airplane expert and national model champion.

The officers of this squadron are:

Commander Joseph J. Lucas, Jr.
Major H. Hudson Woeltjen
Sergeant-at-Arms Charles Stuart Carmichael

The charter members of this Squadron are as follows:

Joseph J. Lucas, Jr.	Patricia Sweeney
Chas. Stuart Carmichael	Martin McMahon, Jr.
Robert Snyder	H. Hudson Woeltjen
Theodore Bjork	Katheryn Bamrick
Gifford Rich	Josephine Murison
Bernard Keegan, Jr.	Jack Cosmer
William Keegan	William Bunn
Lawrence Keegan	Alberta Bunn
Phillip Robinson	Walter Daiber

The officers have met on October 27, and arranged for a meeting, which took place on November 23 at the Hotel Sherman. At this Squadron meeting John Kusch, the 1935 National Champion of The Junior Birdmen of America, gave a talk on his trip to the West Coast, which he won as the Chicago Wing Champion, and winning the 1935 Championship in California.

His talk was of great interest and very educational. Another speaker at the November 23 meeting was Joseph J. Lucas, member and Secretary of the Executive Committee of Aviation Post, No. 651, of The American Legion, who gave a talk on "The History of Model Aviation and Its Scientific Value."

The members of the Squadron has [sic] also arranged for a Christmas Party during the last week of December with the Aviation Post members of the American Legion.

Aviation Post is sponsoring this Flight Squadron of this nationally wide organization of air minded boys and girls and Aviation Post members praise this youth movement as a very important step toward National Defense and also urge that other Legion Post and other organizations throughout the country to sponsor a flight squadron in the community they live.

The members of the Aviation Post Squadron are sons and daughters of some of the best known pilots in the country and these Junior Birdmen in this Squadron will be second generation Birdmen.

The following history was published in the January 1929 issue of Popular Aviation and Aeronautics magazine, compiled by the magazine's Model Editor.

Illinois Model Aero Club

During the latter part of 1911, members of the Aero Club of Illinois conceived the idea that a Model Aviation Club could be organized in this state, as well as an Airplane Club, in order to help promote aviation.

Many of the members of the Aero Club had visited all of the high schools in Chicago and suburbs, giving lectures on Model Aviation, how it would benefit them when they got into the big aviation game, and announcing the first meet for model airplanes.

In December 1911 the meet was held in the banquet hall of the Auditorium Hotel and there were over fifty machines entered (sizes from a toothpick to a battleship), with an attendance of about two hundred. Even a few girls entered machines. Prizes were given, with the result that a ninety-foot flight won first prize.

A meeting in January 1912, in the Auditorium Hotel was held and the Illinois Model Aero Club was organized, the constitution drawn up and the election of officers held.

During the early spring the club held its first outdoor meet at Cicero Flying Field. A large number of models were entered at this meet and there were over five hundred spectators. The crowd was very enthusiastic at this meet and it was necessary to have marshals to keep the people back of the starting line.

Harry Wilds won first, and the distance covered by his model was 971 feet. Cruver won second - 525 feet; and the third prize was won with a distance of 350 feet. This flight of 971 feet was a splendid record for the club at the time and everybody was proud of it. The best local flight for the club during 1912 was 1,628 feet. The members of the Aero Club of Illinois awarded cups to Harry D. Wells (1st prize), and Arthur E. Nealy (2nd prize) for the best showing in the model meets of the year.

The next year (1913) the distance jumped to 1,800, 2,240 and 2,740 feet. This flight of 2,740 feet was made by Arthur E. Nealy and was then a world's record. During that year the boys of the club started to build model hydro-airplanes and the first meet was held at Lake Calumet. The best duration was 17 seconds, made by Don Cornell.

In 1914 the Illinois Model Aero Club held meets for all types of models, such as hydros, hand launches, R.O.G's (rise off ground) and tractors. After flying hand-launched models during the years of 1912 and 1913, you can see how the boys advanced to other types of models in 1914.

During the year, Joseph J. Lucas and Addison Cruver each gave a cup for a series of three hydro meets (known as the J.J. Lucas and A. Cruver Hydro Model Airplane Contests) to the members who made the highest total duration and the best duration flight of the series. Ellis C. Cook won the Joseph J. Lucas Cup for the highest total duration and Joseph J. Lucas won the Addison Cruver Cup for the best duration of the series. This series of contests helped to stimulate the hydro work and later made it possible to increase club twin push hydro record to 57 seconds – by Ellis C. Cook.

The year 1915 was the club's best flying and active year since its organization, breaking four world's records, beating the Milwaukee Model Airplane Club at Chicago in an inter-state distance duration, R.O. G. Meet, and winning over 65 per cent of the prize money and the Villard Trophy for the year. The world's records broken were hydro duration (twin push) 100.6 seconds, by Ellis C. Cook; hydro duration single propeller (tractor) – 116 seconds by Lindsay Hittle; hand-launched distance (single-propeller tractor) 240 seconds, by Donovan Lathrop, and hand-launched distance (single propeller tractor) 1,039 feet – by Donovan Lathrop.

In the Inter-state Meet Ellis C. Cook made an official American R.O.G. duration of 134.4 seconds. During the early part of the year the Mozart Cup was donated to the club by the Mozart School of Chicago, for stimulating model aviation among its members, according to the rules of the Contest Committee. In September the club had given a two-day model flying demonstration at Milwaukee for the visitors at the Wisconsin State Fair.

The Mozart Cup is given to any member of the club who breaks one of the ten recognized world's records not held by the club. The cup is held by the member until another member breaks another one of the world's records (of the recognized classes), and so on until all ten records are broken. The member breaking the last record of the recognized ten receives the cup permanently.

The Villard Trophy is awarded to the club whose members collectively make the best showing each year in the National Model Airplane Competitions and the club winning it three consecutive years becomes its owner.

In 1916 the club entered the National Airplane Competition, winning 72 per cent of the prize money and the Villard Trophy again.

During the National Model Competition two world's records were broken: Thomas Hall, the hand-launched distance (twin push) 5,337 feet – 57 feet more than a mile, and D. W. Pease, the R.O.G. twin push distance – 3,364 feet. D.W. Pease won the Laird-Weaver Trophy for making the highest total score in all the model meets held by the club for the year.

The Laird-Weaver trophy donated by Emil Laird and George E. Weaver to the Illinois Model Aero Club, to be given to any member of the club for one year, making the highest total score in all the model meets was held by the club for the year.

In 1917 the National Model Airplane Competition was called off owing to the World's War. Even though many of its members had enlisted in the Army, Navy and Marines, three world's records were made by Phillip Breckenridge. They are as follows:

Hand-launched tractor distance – 2,200 feet.

R.O.G. (rise off ground) tractor duration – 227.4 seconds, and

R.O.G. tractor distance – 2,685 feet.

W. D Sprague won the Laird-Weaver trophy for the highest total score of the year.

There was very little model flying during 1918 owing to the war, and the National Model Airplane Competition was called off again. Despite the very little flying, two new world's model records were broken. Hand-launched (twin push) – 230 seconds, by William E. Schweitzer. Hydro duration (twin push) – 118 seconds, by Bruno Likosiak. William e. Schweitzer won the Laird-Weaver Trophy for the year.

The year 1919 was very successful, for the club won the Villard Trophy for the third consecutive time, and is now permanent owner of it. During the Model Airplane Competition, Aerial Age Magazine put up six medals as prizes. The club members had won all of them, making a 100 per cent clean sweep of the Competition. By winning the Villard Trophy for the third time, the National Model Airplane Competition ended.

The club members are indebted to the following fellow members: Robert V. Jaros, Joseph J. Lucas, Ellis C. Cook, William Schweitzer, and Ward Pease who made it possible for the club to become permanent owner of the Villard Trophy.

During the year, William E. Schweitzer broke the world's R.O.G. (twin push) distance record of 4,029 feet. He again won the Laird-Weaver Trophy for the year.

The Illinois Model Aero Club had a big exhibition during the Aeronautical Show at the Coliseum in 1920 and drew a large crowd at the club booth. Many fine exhibits were also given at Marshall Field's Department Store during the year. As a result of these exhibits, the club received fifty new members.

During the year, the club had carried out its regular model flying schedule and held its meetings. Two more world's model records were broken – hand-launched single propeller tractor distance record of 2,465 feet, by Bertram Pond, and the hand-launched twin push record for 300 feet at 45 M.P.H., by W. Watkin. Robert Jaros won the Laird-Weaver Trophy for the highest total score of the year at model meets.

The year of 1921 was the greatest year for the Illinois Model Aero Club in its history so far. Five world's model airplane records were broken, and the big exhibit and indoor model meet during the Chicago Pageant of Progress were both successes. The indoor meet was the best the club ever held, and as a result of this and the exhibit, the club received 85 new members.

Mr. Bertram Pond, with his indoor hand-launched single propeller duration machine made a world's record of 170 seconds at this indoor meet, and received a pair of Alfred Johnson racing skates, and also won the Mozart Cup permanently for breaking this last world's record of the club's ten recognized classes of records. The other world's records which were broken are as follows:

R.O.G. (rise off ground) twin push duration of 209.4 seconds by Robert V. Jaros.
Hand-launched (twin push) duration of 265 seconds by Robert V. Jaros.

Scale model (indoor ear driven) rise off floor duration of 22.4 seconds, by Robert V. Jaros.

R.O.W. (rise off water) twin push duration of 172 seconds, by Bertram Pond.

Robert V. Jaros again won the Laird-Weaver Trophy for the highest total score of the year's model meets.

The Model Club in 1922 had another big exhibition during the Chicago Pageant of Progress. Twenty-five new members joined the I.M.A.C. as a result of this exhibition and many Model Airplane Contests and meetings were held. Robert V. Jaros won the Laird-Weaver Trophy for the third consecutive year for the highest total score of all the contests for the year.

The year 1923 was also very successful for the I.M.A.C. The club made a splendid showing at St. Louis during the Mulvihill Model Airplane Contest, winning the first nine places of the model plane race. Edward J. Lange won first prize model and the Mulvihill Trophy for the Club with a time of 262 $\frac{3}{5}$ seconds. Mr. Lange's model hand-launched twin push flight was only 2 $\frac{2}{5}$ seconds under the world's duration flight made in 1921 by Robert V. Jaros of 265 seconds. Robert V. Jaros was second in the contest with a flight of 239 $\frac{1}{5}$ seconds. Both Lange and Jaros received gold and silver plaques of the Mulvihill Trophy, and the first seven contestants made a clean sweep of all the prize money. Mr. Edward J. Lange received the Laird-Weaver Trophy for the year. Members of the Illinois Model Aero Club also made a clean sweep of the prizes at the Chicago Model Airplane Tournament.

The Mulvihill Trophy is awarded each year to the club, body or chapter represented by the entrant of the winning model.

Gold and silver plaques are given by the donee [sic] to the owners of models winning first and second places in every contest for this trophy.

The Illinois Model Aero Club had another big and successful year in 1924, breaking five world's records and winning the Mulvihill Trophy gain. Robert V. Jaros accomplished the most remarkable feat ever performed – more than doubling his own record of 4 minutes 25 seconds by making a hand-launched twin push duration record of 10 minutes 14.2 seconds, winning the first prize and the trophy for the club at Dayton, Ohio. Paul Shifler Smith of the club won second place with a hand-launched single propeller tractor duration of 3 minutes and 20.4 seconds. All of the first seven places and prize money went to the club contestants.

Robert V. Jaros and Paul Shifler Smith received gold and silver plaques of the Mulvihill Trophy for first and second place. Two other world's records were broken at this model meet – the single propeller pusher hand-launched duration of 2 minutes 48.5 seconds by Walter L. Brock, and twin propeller hand-launched distance of 7,920 feet by Robert V. Jaros. The other world's records broken at the club meets were single propeller tractor hand-launched duration of 9 minutes 42.2 seconds, and single propeller tractor hand-launched distance of 6,024 feet by Paul Shifler Smith. Robert V. Jaros won back the Laird-Weaver Trophy for the highest total score of the year's model contests.

The next year – 1925 – the club entered the Mulvihill Model Airplane Competition at air races in New York and won the Mulvihill Trophy for the third consecutive time. The weather was very cold and windy and it was impossible to make a long duration flight. Mr. Bertram Pond won first place. The best time with his hand-launched twin push was 2 minutes 38 seconds, winning the Mulvihill Trophy for the club and a gold plaque for himself. Mr. Paul Shifler Smith with his hand-launched single propeller tractor of the club placed second – time 2 minutes 26 seconds. For this flight he received a silver plaque of the Mulvihill Trophy. Even though the club had only seven contestants in the meet it won five out of eight prizes, or in other words, 89 per cent of the prize money. Mr. Paul Shifler Smith won the Laird-Weaver trophy for the highest total score of the year in all the club's meets.

The Mulvihill Trophy was put up for competition again in 1926 at the Sesqui-Centennial International Exhibition held at Philadelphia, Pa. Some of the club members could not very well stand the expense of the trip to Philadelphia and therefore only a few attended the meet. Model flying conditions were not very good and it was a tough break for the I.M.A.C. to lose first place and the trophy. Mr. Joseph J. Lucas of the club managed to get second place, receiving a silver plaque of the Mulvihill Trophy and a silver Sesqui-Centennial International Medal, with a duration time of 2 minutes and 9.2 seconds. Mr. Pond placed third with a duration of 1 minutes, 57.2 seconds, receiving the bronze Sesqui-Centennial International Medal.

Mr. Lucas' hand-launched twin push model had two new features that worked very well on this type of model – the tall plane in the frame and the high lift elevator.

Several weeks after the Sesqui-Centennial Meet, an official flight was made at the I.M.A.C. Contest of 6 minutes and 19 seconds.

Lucas won first place in all the model contests for the year held by the I.M.A.C., and was awarded the Laird-Weaver Trophy for the perfect total score.

The year 1927 was marked by the great advance that Model Aeronautics made. Although only one world's record was broken, the year was very successful from the standpoint of the number of boys who were interested in the science of Model Aeronautics. During the early part of the year, the club held a model exhibition at the Boy Scouts Show. The exhibit was a great success and ten new members joined the club as a result of the exhibition.

Due to the increase in interest in model aviation, two national meets were held. The club was not very successful in the first meet of the year, which was the National Indoor Model Airplane Contest, held at Detroit, Michigan, March 19th. Failure to win this meet was not due to lack of leadership in design, but to the fact that the club was not in a position to have a full representation at the meet. The club representatives at this meet were as follows:

Joseph J. Lucas – best flight 1 minute, 58 seconds, due to the lack of time in preparing.

Bertram Pond, best flight – 1 minute, 5 seconds, due to experimenting with a new way of controlling the tendency of the model to stall at the beginning of the flight.

The second meet of national scope was held at Memphis, Tenn., October 8th. The club was represented at this meet by only two members as official contestants and by two members who acted as mechanics and managers. These representatives were: Messrs. Jack Lefker, Bernard Schwartz, Walter L. Brock and Eugene Docherty. The flight of the Lefker Model – 5 minutes and 37 seconds – (which was designed by Joseph J. Lucas) was the outstanding one of the meet, and set a new junior world's record for hand-launched twin push. Jack Lefker, even though in the junior class, more than doubled the flight of Jack Loughner of Detroit, the winner of the same event in the senior class. Jack Lefker also won second place in the indoor glider duration contest of 7 seconds. Bernard Schwartz won second place in outdoor commercial hand-launched model contest with a flight of 6 seconds for the Junior Class.

Donald Lockwood made a new fuselage model record of 1 minute, 24 seconds.

For the year of 1927 Donald Lockwood won the Laird-Weaver Trophy for the highest total score. The old members, not competing in any of the club's meets for the year, devoted their time to instructing the new members in the science of model building and flying.

The year 1928 has started off with a bang, breaking three world's model airplane records. The records are as follows:

Fuselage indoor rise off floor model, 1 minute, 36 seconds – by Donald Lockwood;

Twin push hand-launched indoor model, 1 minute, 35 seconds – by Carl V. Carlson; and

Hand-launched pusher and pull indoor model – 1 minute, 49 seconds, by Donald Lockwood.

The club already held the Model Exhibition at the Boy Scouts Show, and from what interest the boys are showing in model aviation, many had joined the club to learn more about the subject.

The reason for the Illinois Model Aero Club being so successful in its work is that the club holds its regular meetings on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of each month and model contests on the Sundays following the meetings. If you are interested in model aviation and want to learn more about models, write or call and the members will be glad to help you out.

The following information was gathered from biographical material by unknown sources found in the History Project files, from Nats records and from Boy's Life and Aerial Age Weekly magazines. Joseph Lucas was inducted into the Model Aviation Hall of Fame in 1983.

- 1916: Won the Aero Club of America modeling contest.
- 1922: Served as the Toastmaster of the IMAC banquet; also served as chair of the banquet committee.
- 1923: Came in fourth place at the Nats in St. Louis, MO with a flight of 2 minutes 14.4 seconds.
- 1926: Came in second place at the Nats in St. Louis, MO with a flight of 2 minutes 9.4 seconds.

- Designed twin-pusher airplane used by Jack Lefker for his first place win at the 1927 Nats. Jack's time was the new junior world record for Hand-Launched Duration. (Joseph published "The Lefker Hand-Launched Duration Model Plane" in the February 1928 issue of *Boy's Life*.)
- 1928: Joseph was National Outdoor Model Champion, according to *Boy's Life* magazine. Published "The World's Record Model Airplane – the Model that Flew More than 10 Minutes and a Mile and a Half" in the September 1928 issue of *Boy's Life* magazine.
- 1929: Published article, "The Boy's Life-Lucas Speed Model", in the July issue of *Boy's Life* magazine
- Listed in *Who's Who in Aviation : A Directory for Living Men and Women Who Have Contributed to the Growth of Aviation in the U.S.* (1942/1943)

The following photos are scans of prints housed in the National Model Aviation Museum Archives, from the Bert Pond Collection (Collection Number 0071).



Written in blue ink on back of this photo "The Mulvihill Model Airplane Contest at Philadelphia, September 6, 1926. Right Jack Loughner 1st, Center Joseph J. Lucas 2nd, Left Bertram Pond 3rd."



Written on front of photograph in ink: “DAMST – SHIF, SMITH, W.BROCK, POND, WELLS, MAV. JAROS, SCHWEITZER, DOGHERTY, LUCAS, LANGE, R.W.SCROEDER “SHORTY””. (Unknown location and date)



The Chicago I.M.A.C. Contingent.
 Standing L-R Paul Shiffler-Smith, Walter Brock, Bert Pond, Harry Wells, Francis Dampitz, Major R.W. "Shorty" Schroeder (official), Robert Jaros, William E. Schweitzer; Eugene G. Doeherty. Seated Joseph Lucas, Edward T. Lange.

Label reads “The Chicago I.M.A.C. Contingent. Standing L-R Paul Shiffer – Smith, Walter Brock, Bert Pond, Harry Wells, Francis Dampitz, Major R. W. “Shorty” Schroeder (Official), Robert Jaros, William E. Schweitzer, Eugene G. Doeherty. Seated Joseph Lucas, Edward T. Lange.” (Unknown date)

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

