



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of JOE OTT 1900-1986



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From an early age, Joe was interested in designing and building model airplanes. He began in the early 1910s. Around age eleven, he joined the Illinois Model Aero Club (IMAC) as their fifth member. He enjoyed designing rubber-powered scale models.

He took aviation-related correspondence courses throughout his high school years, as his school did not have enough classes related to aviation. Between 1911 and 1918, Ott worked for George Wallace Aircraft and Mackey Aircraft, and later for the Army during World War I.

In the early 1920s, he wrote articles in *Aerial Age*, and in the late 1920s/early 1930s, he wrote articles for *Popular Mechanics* and designed models for *Popular Aviation*, becoming its editor in the 1930s. His first book, *Model Airplanes: Building and Flying*, was published in 1931.

Between 1935 and 1938, Ott started Ace Whitman kits through Whitman Publishing Company. They produced millions of his kits. In 1938 through the 1940s, he made his own "Joe Ott" kits, first under the name of J.L. Wright Inc, then under his name, the Joe Ott Manufacturing Company.

One of his most famous products was the Ott-O-Former kit, manufactured through World War II. The kit provided formers, pieces that were trimmed and slipped onto a simple foundation frame to guide a modeler when forming the fuselage.

He also produced two other helpful products to aid in building models, the Bild-A-Set and Ott-T-Tube. These products saved beginner builders a lot of time.

After World War II, the economy slump in economy led to the demise of many model aircraft manufacturing companies, including Ott's. However, to this day, modeler's fondly remember the great contributions Joe Ott made to the modeling industry.

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