



# The AMA History Project Presents: History of RAM Products



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*Jay Smith wrote the following, published in the About Us section of Model Aviation magazine, March 2014 issue.*

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## **About Us: RAM Products**

LED lights and the occasional sound system have become popular accessories on our aircraft. One of the oldest and largest suppliers of these items is RAM Products, owned by Ralph Warner.

Ralph was interested in aircraft from an early age, partly because his father worked in aircraft recovery during World War I. Ralph began modeling aircraft using cardboard that he salvaged from shoe boxes to copy the penny gliders available at the corner candy store.

Living on the northwest side of Chicago near Naval Air Station Glenview afforded him opportunities to see naval aircraft in flight, which further spurred his interest. Ralph built all of the model airplanes he could get his hands on from companies including Comet Models, Joe Ott, and Cleveland Models.

After World War II, the family moved near Leonard's Hobby Shop where Ralph spent much time and helped out in the store. "If my mother couldn't find me, she would call the store and tell me to come home," he recalled.

Ralph met many people who would have a lasting connection to our hobby, including Carl Goldberg and Wally Simmers. He spoke fondly of the interesting conversations and insight they provided him.

Ralph joined the Model Nuts Free Flight club. He won a number of local contests and qualified to attend the Detroit Plymouth Internationals three consecutive years, competing in CL and FF events. He met Roscoe Turner, a famed air racing pilot, who presented Ralph with an award.

Ralph started working part time for his friend and club member, Joe Stanton, who bought the hobby shop from George Leonard in 1954. Together they began a company to manufacture a wooden airboat kit, the RaBoat, which was sold through the hobby shop and Ace Radio.

As RC flying became more prevalent, Ralph built and flew his first RC model in 1956, a modified Esquire with a Galin radio and Babcock escapement. Radios were regional in the early days, and Ralph said, "If one worked, everyone in the club got one. The gold radios were popular in Chicago."

As did many of us who began modeling at an early age, Ralph pulled away from the hobby to apply himself in college, but he still managed to construct an occasional CL model. After graduating, he taught science and history, then became a school principal, a position he held for 22 years until he retired in 1991.

Still interested in the hobby and wishing to develop a business in which he could be involved after he retired from the education system, Ralph decided to again manufacture the RaBoat. An industry friend from Lindberg Models suggested that it be constructed from vacuum-formed plastic for easy assembly, and the Quickee 18 was born. He molded the models using his friend Orv Broberg's machines at DuBro. The parts were trimmed and packaged in Ralph's basement.

Encouraged with his new product, Ralph reserved a booth at the 1977 Toledo Show in Toledo, Ohio, under the name of Radio Controlled Models. The boats proved popular and Don Anderson of Hobbico bought a couple of cases as did others.

Ralph began advertising in modeling magazines and Radio Controlled Models became RAM Products. Encouraged by sales, two other boats were produced, as well as vacuum-formed radio boxes to house the radio gear.

Looking to expand the business, Ralph purchased the prototype carvings for pilot figures from Lindberg Models. They were used to develop five pilot figures.

The O Bee 30 boat was an electric conversion that allowed an Astro 25 motor to be mated with a K&B outboard bottom end. In need of a reversible ESC for the boats, Ralph began working with an electronic engineer who produced two designs.

The engineer presented Ralph with an idea: why not sell lighting systems to be used on RC aircraft, cars, and boats? A few systems were produced and taken to the 1979 Toledo Show to determine interest in the product.

They turned out to be extremely popular and five lighting systems were made available. This was the beginning of the electronic line that would eventually offer nearly 200 products for RC and model railroads.

In 1984, Roland Bouche from Astroflight marketed an electronic conversion of the popular Jerobee .049 glow-powered race car. Other manufacturers were also releasing electric-powered vehicles.

Ralph jumped at the opportunity to design sound systems for them. He and his engineer designed three systems to make the cars sound like their full-scale counterparts. A modified system was also conceived for use with trains and a division of RAM, called RAMtrack, was born.

Ralph purchased a 5,000-square-foot complex for RAM products in northern Illinois. He told me he wanted to continue to develop and produce products. Throughout its 38 years in business, RAM has produced more than 250,000 products!

Ralph is proud to be a founding member of the Radio Control Hobby Trade Association in 1985. He served on its board for 12 years, was show chairman for two years, and president for six years.

Ralph still actively participates in the hobby and enjoys flying model airplanes, helicopters, and quadcopters. He no longer competes, but regularly attends trade shows and flying events. Ralph is the proud father of 15 children, two stepchildren, 26 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren. He is sharp and has a great sense of humor. If you speak to him for more than a few minutes, you'll be sure to hear a hearty laugh as he shares stories and insights into a lifetime dedicated to the hobby.

Before we ended our conversation, I inquired as to what he was most proud of when it comes to RAM. "The fact that we have introduced so many new categories and I am still here," he told me before laughing again. He also shared the enjoyment of seeing people successfully using RAM products and the positive feedback he receives.

If you're in the market for a sound or lighting system, give RAM Products a call and speak to Ralph. Not only will you find him knowledgeable about his products, you might even get to hear a story or two from the past!

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Sources:

RAM Products

(847) 740-8726

[www.ramrcandramtrack.com](http://www.ramrcandramtrack.com)

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