



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of JOHN ZAIC



Written by AMA Staff (01/2001); Edited by JS (12/2005), Reformatted by JS (02/2010)

The following biography, written by the History Project staff, was published in the February 2001 issue of Model Aviation magazine. John received the 2000 Model Aviation Hall of Fame award posthumously.

John Zaic – 2000

John Zaic, 85, has been an active model builder and contestant since the 1920s. He and his brother Frank began their model-building career in the pre-balsa days.

Hardwood, reed bamboo secured with thread, and LePage's glue were common. Bamboo paper and banana oil were used as covering and finish.

Following Lindbergh's historic flight in 1927, model building became common and more successful.

As Indoor model design improved, the hazards of girders and other snags became a problem. Zaic's solution to that problem was the use of gas-filled balloons to dislodge aircraft caught high in the rafters.

The benefits of balsa wood became evident to John. Since it was used as shielding and cushioning material for heavy ship cargo, it became common in New York City. Several lumber companies began to stock it.

John saw the benefits, acquired a table saw, and through an on-the-job training program, began producing sheets, strips and blocks for modelers use.

He soon developed a grading system regarding weight and types of cuts to help in model construction. In 1933, the Aeronut Supply Depot was created. Later, with a capital of \$75, this became the Junior Aeronautical Supply Co.

Besides balsa supplies, John developed and distributed a very successful microfilm solution for Indoor models.

Late in 1933, John returned to live with his parents in Slovenia. His brother Frank maintained the company until the entire Zaic family returned to the United States in 1939.

John served in World War II, and upon his return from service, the Junior Aeronautical Supply

Company became a family project. John was the driving force in developing production methods, sources of supply, designs, and kitting a line of gas models, RC, glider, etc.

Readers will recall the vast line of products know ultimately as Jasco.

John, along with his brother Frank, is recognized as a true aeromodeling pioneer.

Much interesting information about John and this era can be gleaned by reading the many yearbooks written and published by Frank Zaic, beginning in the 1930s.

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