



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of REX F. HINSON



Written by RFN (c. 2013); Reformatted and edited by JS (01/2014)

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## Career

- Contest Director
- AMA Leader Member
- Past President of the National Free Flight Society

## Honors

- 2008: Inducted into the National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame
  - 2013: Inducted into the AMA Model Aviation Hall of Fame
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*The following was written by Rex Hinson. Rex was inducted into the AMA Model Aviation Hall of Fame in 2013.*

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## Modeling History

Rex's modeling career got an early start, building models with the help of his mother. But modeling was put on hold for military service, marriage, and a career in aerospace. He rediscovered modeling and discovered free flight when he was in his mid-30s. Coincidentally, the year was 1967, the same year that NFFS was founded.

Although Rex has flown a variety of events, his first love was Wakefield. He participated in the team selection program from 1973 to 2001. He won the Fiesta of Five Flags Wakefield event 13 times and permanently retains the McNeil trophy for the event. He developed a compact and accurate torque meter that received the NFFS Gadget of the Year award in 1998. Rex produced over 500 of the torque meters in his garage workshop, always looking for ways to improve the product. More recently, while NFFS president, Rex initiated the idea for a small electric event. This has grown into the popular the E-36 electric event. His *Sparks* design was kitted by BMJR Models, with over 150 kits sold. Rex won the 2008 and 2009 E-36 event at the Nats with the design. His interest in electric expanded to the larger F1Q FAI event. Rex won the F1Q event at the 2011 Nats.

Rex has always been willing to share information. Several articles have been published in the annual *Technical Symposium of the National Free Flight Society*. These articles include "Free Flight Electronics, Overlooked Concerns" (1998), "Aeromodellers Who Helped Change the World" (2000), "Jigs and Fixtures: Don't Build Without Them" (2001), and "Down Thrust, Incidence, and Decalage, a Non-Technical View" (2003). In the late 1990s, he wrote a series of articles called "How'ed They Do That," which introduced beginners to the use of carbon fiber construction. He has also been a frequent contributor to the NFFS Free Flight Digest on a number of subjects. He wrote the "Presidents" column monthly in the *Digest* during his 4 years as NFFS President. Rex also worked with Bob Stalick in the preparation of the NFFS by-laws. He, along with Bob Stalick was instrumental in the formation of the NFFS Foundation, and

wrote its guidelines. Rex serves as liaison between the NFFS Foundation and the investment representative.

Rex was a founding member of the Moonport Modelers club in Titusville, Florida. He worked with Tom McLaughlan (AMA benefactor) to form the Florida Modelers Association, and was its first President. He also wrote the FMA by-laws.

Rex was elected a Vice President of the NFFS in 2001 and President in 2003. For Rex, the NFFS presidency became a full-time job. He worked tirelessly to build bridges to other free flight interest groups, such as indoor and scale, that may have felt excluded from the NFFS mainstream. He has also worked closely with AMA headquarters to further the cause of free flight at both the outdoor and indoor Nats. The improved relationship between the NFFS special interest group and AMA was one of his most satisfying accomplishments.

Rex always has time for a beginner.

## **Professional History**

After four years in the Air Force as an instructor at the ground approach radar school, Rex embarked on a long career in aerospace, which included stints with Northrop, Fairchild, and Martin, ending up spending most of his career at IBM. Rex worked on the Titan and Gemini programs and was lead technician for guidance and tracking on the Gemini program. With IBM, Rex was R.F. systems engineer on all the Apollo moon flights and for Skylab. In all, he was a crewmember on 100 launches at Cape Canaveral. He continued with IBM until his retirement in 1987. His last 10 years at IBM were spent in the Research and Development Lab at Boca Raton, Florida. During his time at IBM, he rose to the level of Advisory Engineer and Manager.

## **Personal History**

Rex and Chris married in 1954. (It's no coincidence that Rex's AMA number is 1954.) Rex and Chris will be celebrating 59 years this year. They have two sons.

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