



The AMA History Project Presents:
Autobiography of LEW MAHIEU
Modeler, Contest Director, Designer, Manufacturer,
Club Organizer



Born January 4, 1927 AMA #81281

Transcribed by NR (03/1997); Edited by SS (2002), Reformatted by JS (10/2009)

Career:

- AMA contest director for many years
- Holder of 14 AMA Records
- First to hold all four A, B, C and D speed records at the same time (1949)
- First to hold all four A, B, C and D Rise-off-Water Free Flight records (1948 - 1949)
- Was a Wind Tunnel Model Builder
- Was a manufacturer of model engine parts
- Designed the Zeek Free Flight model in 1946
- Elected the youngest president of the largest model airplane club, The Los Angeles Aero Modelers (400+ Members)
- Started a model club while in high school
- Developed the Supersonic Model Engine Fuels

Honors:

- 1992: National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame
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Lew Mahieu – Free Flight Hall of Fame

By Harry S. Murphy

Lew Mahieu was one of those modeling greats destined to make his most memorable marks in the history of our hobby while still in his teens. An advocate of the designs of the late Carl Goldberg, Lew began with Goldberg designed Zippers and Sailplanes to be followed in 1946 with the first concepts in the evolution of his now-famous Zeek series. Initial efforts incorporated Goldberg airfoils and simplified built-up fuselage constructions, which soon developed into the four-sided sheet balsa box concept of which the first commercially produced A/B Zeek kit personified.

A prolific builder, energetic competitor and innovator, Lew's initial Zeek offering was produced by his then employer, Ray Acord, himself a renowned modeler and engine builder. The Air-O A/B Zeek kit received instant popularity in the marketplace with its ease of construction and resultant excellent performance on the competition field. The kit plans were also the first to show a fuse-activated pop-up stab dethermalizer and the first to suggest stab tilt to control glide circle.

When Acord sold his Zeek interests to Bill Cranford in 1949, Lew went along on a part time basis to aid in the development, engineering, and manufacturing of the Premium Manufacturing Company's second-generation A/B Zeek kit, which incorporated a large stabilizer and other more subtle design revisions. This arrangement would also soon produce the famed 176 square inch 1/2A Zeek and Zeebin kits and develop other Zeek derivatives which would unfortunately not reach production stages.

Meanwhile, Lew's ongoing successes in the field of competition augmented his design talents with considerable interest being showed by other modelers in his home-brewed engine fuels. After determining that it was less expensive to properly package and sell his fuel mixtures than to give them away, he created the Super Sonic fuel label which he eventually sold to K&B Manufacturing Company, which still sells model engine fuel under the same logo today.

The thin flat-bottom airfoil of Goldberg's Comet Interceptor was the influence accredited to Lew's famous Kiwi design of which many sizes were built including a number for Pan Am Airlines Load competition purposes. By this time, he was an employee of K&B Manufacturing Company as a fuel and engine consultant. When the company announced its new Green Head .15 specimen for the new FAI Free Flight competition, they also released an appropriate sized Mahieu designed Kiwi kit for the new engine. This would become K&B's first and only venture into the competition kit market which was eventually sold to Guillow's.

Notwithstanding his many Free Flight accomplishments, Lew also had the unique distinction of becoming the only individual to hold all four AMA Control Line speed records at one time. This achievement has never been duplicated and attests to his overall enthusiasm for the sport of model competition.

In addition to his many awards on the field, innovations and creativeness, he also served a stint as a monthly columnist for Model Airplane News in reporting West Coast happenings for the magazine.

Lew dropped out of the modeling scene in the mid-1950s to pursue a business career and raise a family. However, to those who know him whether from close by or from afar, the trait most remembered by all is his "exuberance" to the situation at hand. This attribute would serve him well in subsequent years in making him most successful in a variety of business ventures including operating an air charter service between Los Angeles and Catalina Island, machinery sales, owning bus line, as well as his beloved machine shop where he still supports the hobby in producing many parts for various model engines. Recent activities in the latter vein have included parts for John Morrill's Hornet .19 and Morrison's Super Cyclone reproduction venture.

Current aviation interests are mostly full-scale in nature as he owns a number of aircraft - the latest being a fully restored North American T-28B Warbird all done up in authentic U.S. Navy colors. A home-away-from-home in Alaska for relaxation purposes keeps his pilot capabilities toned sharp and he indicates his interest in modeling is being rekindled as he ponders the eventual termination of full-scale flying and active participation in the business world. He also states he is quite amazed with the number of modelers who remember him and his accomplishments and of the revitalized interests in his old model designs brought about by the resurgence of the vintage NFFS Nostalgia Gas movement.

Lew Mahieu, with his early youth blessed with accomplishments associated with modeling, is one who has earned the “American Dream” and justly deserves this honor from his peers.

Lew Mahieu

Modeler 1936 - 1956

AMA Member 1940 – 1956; #8128

AMA Member 1996 – present; #81281

He was an AMA contest director for many years and a holder of 14 AMA Records. He was the first (or ever) to hold all four A, B, C and D speed records at the same time (1949). He was also the first (or ever) to hold all four A, B, C and D Rise-off-Water Free Flight records (1948 -1949).

He started a model club while in high school which produced a number of commercial pilots, airline captains, aeronautical engineers; one of which was Richard Tracey, Chief Engineer for Lear.

At 21 years of age, he was elected the youngest president of the largest model airplane club, the Los Angeles Aero Modelers (400+ Members).

In 1947, Lew developed the Supersonic Model Engine Fuels, which he sold to K&B Manufacturing in 1953. He was Sales Manager for K&B from 1949 to 1953. Designed many Free Flight gas and Control Line speed models. Designed the ZEEK F. F. model in 1946, which was kitted in 1948 by Air-O-Model Company and has been available continuously in kit form for the past 47 years.

He was a Wind Tunnel Model Builder for Douglas Aircraft from 1957 - 1960.

Lew has manufactured model engine parts and accessories for the past 40 years. Some of his customers include K&B, L. M. Cox, Kraft Systems, Perfect Parts, and Ohlsson Manufacturing, Repo engines Elfin Diesel, Super Cyclone, and K&B 29 Engines. From his Long Beach facility, he also manufactures parts for the aerospace and electronic industry.

After modeling, Lew built and flight tested experimental aircraft and owned over the years some 20 different aircraft such as the following: Cessna 172, 185 Amphibian, Bonanzas, Baron, Duke, North American T-28, Lake Amphibian, Spencer Amphibians, Grumman Widgeons, and Grumman Gooses. Currently has an antique Rearwin Speedster under construction. He was inducted into the NFFS Hall of Fame in 1992.

(signed) Lew Mahieu, 7/1996

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