



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of WILLARD S. (WOODY) BLANCHARD, JR.



December 7, 1923 - April 8, 2007
Started modeling in 1934 AMA #214

Written and Submitted by WB (05/1997); Transcribed and Edited by SS (06/2002), updated by JS (10/2007), (05/2010), (05/2012)

Career:

- 1953: Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) Open Class national champion
- 1954, 1955, 1956, 1958, 1961: AMA Grand National Champion five times
- 1957: Member of the Nationals Team Champion
- Set numerous AMA national records
- AMA District IV Vice President for two years
- Member of the AMA Free Flight Contest Board for several years
- 1987: Senior Champion of the Eastern Soaring League
- Chairman of the AMA electric contest board from 1988 to present (1997)

Honors:

- 1989: Model Aviation Hall of Fame
 - 1990: National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame
 - 2001: AMA Distinguished Service Award
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Overall Work

- Started building model airplanes at age 10 in June 1934
- High school graduate (Norfolk, Virginia) in June 1942
- Started college, Old Dominion University (ODU), in June 1942
- Enlisted as an aviation cadet in the U.S. Army Air Corps in December of 1942
- Completed pilot training in the U.S. Army Air Corps and commissioned a second lieutenant in February 1944.
- Completed tour of duty as B-24 pilot (in Italy) in February of 1945
 - Early missions were as co-pilot
 - Final five missions as first pilot and aircraft commander
- Returned to civilian life in July of 1945
- Returned to college (ODU) in September 1945
- Transferred to Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI) in October 1946
- Graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in aeronautical engineering in June 1948
- Began career as aeronautical engineer at NACA/Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, in September 1948
 - Co-inventor of the Project Mercury manned space capsule in 1961

- Numerous inventions for NASA
- Retired from NASA as aeronautical research scientists in 1974 after 30 years of service, including the time in the Army Air Corps around World War II
- Holds current commercial pilot's license (#363856) for single and multi engines with flight instructor's rating

Family Information

- Married Joan L. Townsend in July 1948
 - Son, W.S. Blanchard III born September 9, 1949
 - Divorced, September 1954
- Married Doris K. Selph in October 1956
 - Daughter, Tracy K. Blanchard, born September 23, 1960

Aeromodeling Accomplishments

- AMA Open Class National Champion, 1953
- AMA Grand National Champion five times: 1954, 1955, 1956, 1958 and 1961
- Member of Nationals Team Champions in 1957
- Numerous AMA National Records (clipper cargo, ½-A PAA Load, Jet PAA Load, International PAA Load, etc.)
- AMA District IV Vice President for two years
- Member of the AMA Free Flight contest board for several years
- Chairman of AMA Electric Contest Board from 1988 to present (1997)
- Model Aviation Hall of Fame, 1989
- National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame, 1990
- 1987 Senior Champion, Eastern Soaring League (ESL)

The following information comes from the Model Aviation Hall of Fame application that was submitted on Woody's behalf by Robert J. Biss and the Capital Area Soaring Association in February 1989. Woody was inducted into the Model Aviation Hall of Fame in 1989.

Competitor

- AMA Open National Champion, 1953
- AMA Grand National Champion, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1958 and 1961
- Member, AMA National Team Champions, 1957
- AMA National Record Holder:
 - 049-powered Free Flight Clipper Cargo, 1954, 1955 and 1956
 - 15-powered Free Flight Payload, 1955
 - 02-powered Free Flight Clipper Cargo, 1961
- U.S. /FAI Power Team, 1960 (Cranfield, England)
- Contestant in numerous Eastern Soaring League contests, Capital Area Soaring Association contests, League of Silent Flight contests, Cross-country sailplane races, 1980 to present

Designer/Experimenter

- Construction articles published in magazines:
 - 09-powered Free Flight model, *Pizona*, in *Model Airplane News (MAN)* magazine, 1948
 - FIC Free Flight powered model, *Faison*, in *MAN*, 1951
 - FIC Free Flight powered model, *Americano*, in *MAN*, 1953
 - Semi-scale Control Line stunt, *Typsy Moth*, in *MAN*, 1954
 - 049-powered Free Flight, *Duzit*, *Air Trails* magazine, 1955
 - 020-powered Free Flight, *Poco II*, *MAN*, 1956
 - FIC Free Flight powered model, *Gawn*, *Air Trails Annual*, 1962
 - Single channel 02-powered Radio Control model, *U-All-Too*, *MAN*, 1965
 - Electric-powered Radio Control semi-scale *Aeronca*, *Model Aviation* magazine, December 1988

- Designs kitted by manufacturers:
 - 049-powered Free Flight Payload model, *Payee*, Berkeley, 1955
 - 15-powered Free Flight Payload model, *International*, Berkeley, 1956
 - 020-powered Free Flight Payload model, *PAAMite*, Guillow's, 1959
 - Semi-scale *Aeronca* electric-powered RC, Guillow's, 1988

- Experimenter
 - Leading edge camber changing flaps, approximately 1980
 - Leading edge Flaperons, approximately 1981
 - Airfoil optimization for Radio Control sailplanes, 1978 to present
 - Three Ultra-Deep-Stall research projects utilizing Radio Control models, done under contract with NASA, 1977 to 1980

Leader

- Treasurer, Tidewater Gas Model Association (TGMA), 1941
- Treasurer, Brainbusters, 1955
- President, Brainbusters, 1963 and 1964
- AMA District IV Contest Coordinator, 1953 and 1954
- AMA District IV Vice President, 1962 and 1963
- Chairman, AMA Electric Contest Board, 1987 to present (1997)
- National Soaring Society District IV Vice President, 1985 to present (1997)
- Society of Electric Aircraft Model District IV Vice President, 1984
- Electric Aeromodel Association District IV Vice President, 1984 to present (1997)
- League of Silent Flight Vice President, 1986 and 1987

Contest Director

- Local meets
 - TMSS Sailplane Meets, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, and 1988
 - Capital Area Soaring Association (CASA) Sailplane Meet, 1987

The following letter was enclosed with the Hall of Fame application.

*Capital Area Soaring Association
12504 Circle Drive
Potomac, MD 20854
February 20, 1989*

*Academy of Model Aeronautics
Hall of Fame Selection Committee
1810 Samuel Morse Drive
Reston, VA 22090*

Dear Sirs:

As coordinator for the Capital Area Soaring Association (CASA), I wish to submit the following additional information in support of the nomination of W.L. (Woody) Blanchard, Jr., to the [Model Aviation] Hall of Fame.

One of the significant contributions Woody has made to model aviation has been his help to others so they could learn the fundamental of building and flying model airplanes. He shares his building techniques with modelers through demonstrations, newsletter articles, and discussions. In recent years, Woody has been especially helpful to Radio Control sailplane and electric model flyers. He is a willing flight timer and during flight he is timing he will frequently point out to beginners where good lift might be found. He makes suggestions regarding the trim of the model and other aspects helpful to novice flyers. Throughout his years in model aviation, Woody has provided an outstanding example for others to follow through his actions, this interest, his assistance, his enthusiasm, his flying ability, and his competitive nature.

Additional contributions Woody has made involve his personal building and designing of models and his participation in various model organizations. He is a prolific builder and designer. His contacts with NASA have provided him access to new findings in aerodynamics and he frequently converts this information into new designs of his models. These are enthusiastically displayed and demonstrated at various get-togethers of modelers.

As a result of his competitive nature and his design ability Woody is well known nationally. His enthusiasm for model aviation and general good nature and friendliness make him a popular and highly respected model builder.

It is the opinion of the Capital Area Soaring Association that Woody represents the best that our hobby has to offer. Woody's election into the Model Aviation Hall of Fame is strongly recommended.

*Sincerely,
Robert J. Biss, Coordinator
Capital Area Soaring Association
12213-L Peach Crest Drive
Germantown, MD 20874*

The following information about Woody appeared in the 50th anniversary publication of Virginia Tech in 1998.

Willard S. "Woody" Blanchard, Jr.

Norfolk, Virginia
Aeronautical Engineering
Two children, one grandchild

Aeronautical research scientist, program manager of several aircraft stability/control/performance investigations NACA/NASA; co-inventor of the Mercury Manned Space Vehicle (first U.S. manned space vehicle).

World War II, B-24 aircraft commander; 15th USAAF, Cerignola, Italy.

Former President of Grandview Shores Civic League, Radio Controlled Model Aircrafts.

The following is from the May 1955 Model Aviation issue, under the article title "Know Your Officers."

Willard S. Blanchard, Jr., Vice President, District IV, is serving his second term in this capacity. He resides at 10 Cornell Drive, Hampton, Virginia, and is employed by the N.A.C.A. as an Aeronautical Research Scientist.

Generally known as "Woody," his modeling activity dates to 1933 with the construction of a *Winnie Mae* and he first became an AMA member in 1939. His interests include all phases of flying with emphasis on Free Flight. Woody has been a real modeler's modeler – a record holder, Open National Champion in 1953 and Grand National Champion in 1954! He has been treasurer of the Brainbusters model club since 1950 and has been doing a good job promoting model activity in his locale.

Woody would like to see a higher power-loading requirement for Free Flight gas together with a lower maximum flight time to emphasize the consistency factor and decrease the luck element.

He sees a continued increase of modeling in the future and thinks that more and more people will come to realize the value of our hobby-sport-science as an educational asset.



To the victor goes the spoils, and no greater honor could be bestowed on Willard S. (Woody) Blanchard, center, Grand National Champion, than to have the championship trophy presented to him by Navy Secretary Charles S. Thomas. Keith Storey, left, AMA president, did a fine job of MC'ing the championship presentations. (Source: September 1955 Model Aviation bulletin, National Model Aviation Museum, Lee Renaud Memorial Library)

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