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# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of MILTON (BUTCH) HUGUELET



July 17, 1921 - Dec. 23, 1975    Started modeling around 1923

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Written by LV (03/2006); Formatted and Edited by JS (03/2006), updated by JS (07/2007), Reformatted by JS (09/2009)

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## Modeling Career Highlights:

- First Academy of Model Aeronautics National Champion (1938)
  - Holder of numerous national records in free-flight categories
  - First repeat AMA National Champion (1946)
  - Model Aviation Hall of Fame, Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) Hall of Fame, and the National Free Flight Society (NFFS) Hall of Fame
  - Charter member of the Chicago Aeronuts
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*Louis G. Vargo wrote the following biography of Milton Huguelet.*

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## Biography of Milton Huguelet 1921-1975

In 1938, Milton (Butch) Huguelet became the first AMA individual national champion. Like today, the competition was part of the annual AMA National Aeromodeling Championships (Nats). He was 16 years of age when he went to Detroit from his home in Chicago. He had about four years of training in designing, building and flying models under his belt from the older members of his club, the Chicago Aeronuts. Some of his mentors were Carl Goldberg, Joseph Matulis, and Wally Simmers. At Detroit, he won first, second, third and fifth in Senior events. The events were Indoor and Outdoor Stick and Cabin. In 1938, the only difference between Stick and Cabin design rules was a *minimum* fuselage cross-section area (fuselage length squared, then divided by 100) for cabin, and a *maximum* area (fuselage length squared, then divided by 200) for stick. It was common for modelers to use the same wing and tail on the two types of fuselages.

Butch was also a world-class indoor hand-launched glider flyer. His design for class B (30-100 square inch wing area) is used today in Old Timer competitions. During the old-timer era, he held several national records in both Class A (less than 30 square inches) and Class B Glider events, and in several rubber-powered categories. His Class B Rise-Off-Ground (ROG) microfilm design is in several of the old Zaic yearbooks and encyclopedias.

I knew Huguelet only slightly in a personal way before the war. At Aeronut meetings, he kept to himself. At this time, David Riesman was formulating his famous dichotomy of the "inner directed" versus "other directed" persons in *The Lonely Crowd*. Milton epitomized the former. He gave one the impression that he was continually thinking of some better way to do something. I do not mean in a "find a new gadget" sense, as a tinker/inventor would do, but how he could better combine and optimize his physical and mental capabilities that Free Flight modeling requires. Now, to advance the idea of the

"genius" (I do not use this word lightly) of Huguelet, I will tell you what else he was doing as avocations in this period. He was a national champion in fly-casting competitions and a citywide contender in table tennis (now ping-pong) tournaments. Enough said.

The first of 1943 saw most of the Aeronuts in uniform. We went to our separate military services with very little keeping track. Butch served honorably in the U.S. Army for over three years and received his discharge early in 1946. The country was in a major adjustment to peacetime after four hard years of all-out war effort. However, most model builders were eager to start building and flying again and, therefore, waited for the announcement of the 1946 Nats. It almost did not come. AMA leader members throughout the country, and particularly in Kansas, managed to make the arrangements. The contest dates and places were finally announced in April or May. This left only two or three months to prepare, with maximum efforts made by many in the modeling community.

This writer had to go to Wichita by bus, so I only brought a small towline glider in a box. Who was there to help me launch in a 25 mph breeze? My former club-mate Huguelet! I held his rubber model for winding: no stooges in those days. He talked of his wartime service a bit and we traded stories. Unlike the taciturn Butch of 1942, he was quite outgoing. I did not go to the indoor site, so I was unaware of the flying he was doing there. We all knew, however, that Butch would make his greatest effort in these indoor events, his first love. He won enough there to again become Grand Champion, the first and only person to do so. As one magazine described him at the time, he was a "Champion's Champion."

I did not live in Chicago after the war and my modeling associations were spotty. Therefore, this biography will end in 1946 when Butch was 24 years old and at the peak of his career. Years later, many were shocked to hear of his early death at age 52. I like to think that he lived so fully and accomplished so much that his heart got tired and needed a rest.

Written and submitted by Louis G. Vargo, 13 March 2006

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