



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of ARTHUR (ART) E. LANEAU



**C.E.O. of Ambroid Model Cements,
Hobby Industry, U.S.Navy Liaison**

September 18, 1925 - January 14, 2014

Modeler starting in 1980

AMA Life Member #L703

Written & Submitted by AEL (06/1996), PB (19998; Transcribed by NR (02/1997);
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Career:

- Joined the Ambroid Company in 1947
- Took over operations of Ambroid in 1952
- Appointed chairman of Model Aeronautics Division of the Hobby Industry Association of America (H.I.A.A.)
- Worked for 12 years on public relations between the Academy, the Navy and the H.I.A.A.

Honors:

- 1966: AMA Fellow
 - 1996: Model Aviation Hall of Fame
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Arthur E. Laneau – now a resident of Leesburg, Fla. Single engine fighter pilot in World War II. Joined the Ambroid Company in 1947. Took over operations in 1952. (Ambroid was the original liquid cement, used by all the top model builders for several decades.)

Joined the AMA in 1954 when membership was less than 10,000 and in severe financial problems. Started working with Russ Nichols (executive director of the AMA at that time) and Walt Billett of the Flying 8-Ball fame to help out.

Appointed chair of Model Aeronautics Division of the Hobby Industry Association of America (H.I.A.A.). Made contact with the admirals and staff officers of Chief Naval Air Training, the Chief of Naval Air Reserve Training and East and West Coast Liaison Officers for the Navy.

Without Navy support, the National Model Meet could not have been held on such a vast operation as it had been doing. Without the Nationals (Nats), the Academy may have disappeared back in the 1960s. Twice the Dallas Naval Air Station tried to have the Nats dropped, and both times, I was able to reach admirals and get extensions. During those six years of extended Navy support, the Academy started to come to life until the Navy finally dropped the Nats and the AMA was able to handle it practically on its own.

I was awarded a Fellowship by the AMA in the 1960s. For 12 years, I worked on public relations between the Academy, the Navy and the H.I.A.A. For six years, I was chair of the Model Aeronautics Division of the H.I.A.A. and was instrumental in setting up the Navy Carrier Cruise for Nats Champions and several other programs to benefit the Academy.

The Flying 8-Ball Shindig did a great deal to help thank the Navy base officers for their work during Nats week. Walt Billett was honorary six-star admiral of the 8-Ball. I was the five-star admiral whose job it was to put it all together – to feed and entertain 150-180 officers and Air Show performers. The hope was to break even, but it never happened, but all the bills were paid by private funds.

While I never built a model, my satisfaction comes from seeing the Academy grow from 8,000 to over 160,000 and know that I played a major part in its success.

I left Ambroid in 1970 and retired as president of a country club in Massachusetts in 1989. With Ambroid, I purchased rights and put out such National Champion's model kits as Still's Stuka Stunt, Bill Werwage's Ares Stunt, The Jetstream H/L glider, The Scrapper, combat and The Charger rudder only Radio Controlled Kit.

*Arthur E. Laneau
June 1996*

The following is the introductory speech that Paul Boyer gave when Arthur was inducted into the Model Aviation Hall of Fame in 1998.

Arthur Laneau was the president of the Ambroid Company, manufacturers of Ambroid Liquid Cement. This was the original cement used in making models, established in 1910. Until the advent of today's "miracle adhesives," it was used by most of the better model builders.

Arthur took over the firm in 1955. He became friendly with all the old time model builders and manufacturers – Duke Fox, Johnny Brodbeck, Mike Trost, Matty Sullivan, Bill Effinger to name but few. He also became interested in the AMA, which at that time was struggling for survival.

He became close friends with Russ Nichols and Frank Ehling. As chair of the Model Aeronautics Division of the Hobby Industry Association of America (HIAA), and a member of its annual trade show held in Chicago, he was influential in obtaining a free booth at the hobby show for the Academy to work out of while they canvassed the manufacturers for much needed support. Arthur used his contacts to get these people behind the Academy and it started to grow.

The main event for AMA was the annual National Model Airplane Championships held on a rotating basis at a Naval Air Reserve Station (NAS) in each section of the country – Willow Grove, Pennsylvania; Glenview, Illinois; Los Alamitos, California; and Dallas, Texas. As a commander in the reserves, Laneau had contacts with several admirals on a personal basis and was named liaison between the Navy, the HIAA and the AMA and set out to bring them closer together.

He organized a dinner for the admiral was the chief naval air reserve training and his staff (based at NAS Glenview) held each year starting in 1960 while the hobby show was in Chicago. During a tour of the show, Laneau would arrange for the admiral to be given anything in which he showed an interest. He asked his fellow manufacturers for donations to pay for the dinner and made up the difference out of his own pocket. The Nationals were sponsored by this branch of

the Navy. Anything Laneau did was in the name of the AMA.

The admiral at Pensacola was the boss of Chief of Naval Air Training (CNATRA). Laneau arranged for his admiral (Fitzhugh Lee) to be honored by the HIAA as their “Man of the Year.” As a thank you, Admiral Lee gave Laneau the OK to set up a carrier cruise following the Nationals for the winners in each category. They were flown from the site of the Nats in Pensacola, Florida, given a banquet and a day at sea on an aircraft carrier. After which the champions would fly their models off the deck of the carrier, giving the Navy a show. This carrier cruise was initially paid for by Laneau raising \$3,000 from his friends. After two years, the model aeronautics division of the HIAA paid for it for six years.

There were several other projects worked out between Laneau, John Worth (the new executive director of the AMA) and Frank Ehling, resulting in the Academy presenting Laneau with its highest award, a fellowship, in 1960. He continued assisting the Academy with public relations with the Navy officer working the Nationals and keeping the admirals happy. He rescued the Flying 8-Ball Club, which threw an annual party for officers and VIPs at the Nats; this was the only thank-you the officers on the station got for their work. Laneau spent considerable money (his own) entertaining key officers.

Eventually some teed-off reporter examined the situation and wrote a story about the Navy wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars, closing an active station for a week, just so a bunch of men could fly their planes. He had checked and found the average age well over 21 (this was due to the Radio Control flyers for the most part). The admiral’s aid at CNARESTRA called Laneau and told him there was a report on the way to CNATRA at Pensacola suggesting the Navy drop all support of the Nationals. Fitzhugh Lee was still in charge. Laneau got a Navy plane out of So Weymouth NAS and flew to see Lee. He explained that there were thousands of young boys in the AMA who couldn’t afford to go to the Nats. The “older men” were the leaders of local flying clubs who brought home the Academy’s messages and programs.

Fitzhugh told Laneau that if the admiral at CNARESTRA (George Koch) recalled the report it would be OK with him. Laneau then flew to Glenview and George (an old friend) went along with it, but said the next Nationals would be closely examined and a decision made after it was over. John Worth was apprised of the situation and the Academy went all out to do a good job at the forthcoming Nats to be held in Willow Grove. Laneau made several trips to meet with the captain and key officers during the year, and the Academy arranged to take much of the load off the Navy personnel. The Nats went over fine and the admiral approved continued sponsorship by the Navy.

Unfortunately, two years later the subject rose again after a Nationals in Dallas. This time it was the Dallas captain who made out a poor report. Again, Laneau was advised by one of the admiral’s staff and again flew to Pensacola. The new CNATRA was another friend, Sandy Hayward, and the new CNARESTRA was Admiral Dick Fowler. Once again, Laneau got the go-ahead, but was told to arrange a meeting in Washington, D.C. with the AMA and Navy people to see what could be worked out to insure younger contestants might go Navy someday.

The meeting was held and plans were formed for a very successful Nats that was held at Olathe,

Kansas. Laneau left the Ambroid Company at this time and his direct work with the Academy came to an end. However, it should be noted that had the Navy dropped the Nationals either time it had been proposed, the Academy might have been destroyed. At that time, the Radio Control people were the strongest part of the association and were being encouraged by a powerful editor of one of the flying magazines to break away and form their own association and contests. The Navy continued sponsoring the Nats for six more years, which gave the Academy time to develop and increase membership to where it stands today.

In 1998, the Academy finally recognized the tremendous behind-the-scenes work that Arthur Laneau had put into the Academy and the major part he played in keeping it alive through its leaner years. He resigned from the Ambroid Company in 1968, but continued entertaining Navy officers at the next three Nationals. He became corporate president of a country club in Massachusetts and retired to Leesburg, Florida in 1992 where he now resides with his wife, Pauline.



Nats, unknown year, c. 1960s: (left to right) Matty Sullivan, Ed Manulkin (in bus), Sid Axelrod, Frank Garcher, Art Laneau. (Photo Credit: Official Photograph U. S. Navy)

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