



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of RAYMOND (RAY) C. MATTHEWS, JR.



Born August 14, 1920

Started modeling in 1932

AMA #2468

Written & Submitted by TCW (02/2001); Transcribed & Edited by SS (01/2003), Reformatted by JS (10/2009)

Career:

- Earned an industrial engineering degree specializing in aeronautical engineering from North Texas Agriculture College in 1940
- Worked for Braniff Airways then joined the Army Air Corps in November 1940; returned to Braniff after being discharged in 1945
- Began working for the Civil Aeronautics Association (CAA) – later to become the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) – in 1947; retired from there in 1978
- Started his own airline consulting company, Matthews Aviation, Inc., after retiring from the CAA/FAA
- Past vice president of the AMA
- Won the junior flying scale event at the 1935 Texas State Fair
- Member of the Dallas Model Airplane Club in his youth
- Built model displays as a youth for the Lawrence Paint and Paper Company
- In the late 1930s placed first and second in regional Free Flight contests

Tandy C. Walker submitted the following biography on Raymond C. Matthews. It was part of a manuscript titled "A Review of Ray Matthews' Free Flight Designs: Volume One." The complete manuscript is on file in the National Model Aviation Museum Archives and includes photographs, a few plans and other details relating to Ray's modeling career. To see a copy of it, please contact the AMA Archivist.

Raymond C. Matthews

By Tandy C. Walker

Raymond C. Matthews Jr. was born in Dallas, Texas, on August 14, 1920. He grew up in Dallas and married Frances Williams on November 17, 1940. Ray completed North Texas Agriculture College (NTAC) at Arlington, Texas, in 1940, earning an industrial engineering degree specializing in aeronautical engineering. He went to work for Braniff Airways in Dallas that summer and then joined the Army Air Corps in November of 1940. He was discharged from the service in September of 1945 and went back to work for Braniff.

Ray was tested for employment as an inspector for the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) in the latter part of 1946 and in December, he was notified that he had passed the CAA examination. In January, he gave notice to Braniff in Dallas and resigned on February 1, 1947. Ray and his wife Frances moved to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and reported for duty on February 17, 1947, at the Oklahoma City CAA office located on Will Rogers Field, where he worked for six years.

In 1952, the CAA transferred Ray to their Miami, Florida, office to await assignment to Balboa, Canal Zone. He remained in Miami four years due to the CAA changing the location of its International Field Offices.

In 1956, Ray was transferred to the CAA office in Lima, Peru, where he remained until late 1959. He was then sent to the CAA office in New York. By this time, Ray and Frances had raised four sons, Ray III, Joe, John, and Jeff. However, the assignment in New York lasted less than a year. The CAA became the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in 1960 and Ray and Frances were transferred to FAA Headquarters located in Washington, D.C. Ray spent almost 10 years working at FAA Headquarters.

In 1969, the FAA offered Ray an assignment of his choice. He selected the FAA office back in Miami, Florida. He worked eight more years and retired in Miami on January 1, 1978. Ray had 31 years of service with the CAA/FAA.

After retiring from the FAA, Ray began getting a number of inquiries from U.S. and foreign-based airlines asking for certification help. Ray decided to form a consulting company and incorporated as "Matthews Aviation, Inc." The business kept Ray and Frances working long hours and weekends. Ray's clients either wanted to become an airline or an FAA-approved repair station. Over many months, Matthews Aviation certified new airlines in Detroit, Michigan; Kansas City, Kansas; Hawaii; Berlin, Germany; Atlanta, Georgia; Bartow, Florida; Dallas, Texas; and Miami, Florida. Often, Ray would act in his client's behalf until they could find qualified personnel. At different times, he has served as CEO, executive vice president and vice president of operations and maintenance on behalf of his clients.

Foreign airlines became one of Ray's biggest clients because they all wanted to fly into the United States, but did not know how to comply with U.S. regulations. This significantly increased the workload of Matthews Aviation.

Ray's company was also involved in certifying various clients as approved aircraft repair stations. He developed a maintenance program for aging jet aircraft that is in use today by several major domestic as well as foreign airlines.

During all this certification work, Ray bought a lot in Islamorada, Florida. He designed a beach home, got a building permit, and served as the building contractor during the construction, which took almost a year. In 1997, Ray and Frances decided they had worked long enough and retired again for the second and final time.

During his career, Ray served in many capacities. He was a former school teacher, pilot, A&P mechanic, flight engineer, ground instructor, international field officer, public speaker, accident investigator, propulsion technician, and personnel officer. In 1964, he was promoted to chief of the propulsion section in Flight Standards' Air Carrier Maintenance Branch in Washington, DC. Throughout his life, Ray was an active Free Flight modeler, dating back to his youth. He has been a model designer, national competitor and a past vice president of the Academy of Model Aeronautics.

Ray just recently had his 80th birthday and he and Frances still live in Miami. Their beach home and boat are located in the Florida Keys where they spend a lot of time together.

Modeling Activity

Like so many lifelong modelers, Ray Matthews was born with a love for model airplanes. Ray began building stick and tissue rubber models in grade school with Robert and Billy West when he was 12-years-old. In October of 1935, Ray won the junior flying scale event at the Texas State Fair with his Corban Super Ace rubber model. His prize was a brand new Baby Cyclone .35 model engine, which launched Ray into gas models.

Ray was a member of the Dallas Model Airplane Club and the club decided to build an eight-foot Flying Quaker and use Ray's Baby Cyclone engine. The model was too large for the Baby Cyclone and although it would fly, it would never get very high.

Ray scaled down the planes of the nine-foot KG Free Flight model to four-feet for his Baby Cyclone. This was Ray's first really successful gassie. He got a chance to sell both the airplane and engine. He took the money and bought one of the first Ohlsson 60 sideports in his area and he built a Scientific Red Zephyr for it.

The Lawrence Paint and Paper Company operated one of the few model shops in Dallas as part of their business. They hired Ray to build display models for them and paid him in supplies. Ray bought his first Brown Junior and built a Comet Clipper. Later he also built a Miss America for the Brown.

Ray ordered one of the new competitive Comet Zippers for his Brown directly from Carl Goldberg in 1938, which launched Ray into Free Flight competition. During 1938 and 1939, he won second place in San Antonio, first place in Fort Worth and first place in Houston with his Brown-powered Zipper.

Ray went to work for Braniff Airways in Dallas in the summer of 1940 and then joined the Army Air Corps in November. He was discharged from the service in September of 1945, returned to Dallas and went back to work for Braniff.

Ray returned to model building after he settled. He built a series of three Cleveland Playboys for Free Flight competition, an Atom-powered Baby Playboy, a Torpedo .27-powered Playboy Junior, and an Ohlsson-powered Playboy Senior. In the winter of 1947, he built the beautiful Comet Sailplane and powered it with an Orwick .64.

Ray Matthews made the following addition to his biography in July 2003.

Addendum

Late in 1959, the CAA transferred us from Lima, Peru, to New York. Most of the models went back in the box. I did give away some motors and many supplies to some very happy new friends. The box with all my models was not opened again until 2000 and then only to get some information for Tandy Walker who was writing a book about my designs.

When I saw the models and relived some memories of the past, the "bug" bit me and I started building again. First, I repaired my Crowbar, which now hangs in the National Model Aviation Museum. Then I built a Gollywock and a Dynamo. My Wakefield model was still in flying shape, so I began flying in the contests here in Palm Bay, Florida.



This photo, submitted by Tandy C. Walker, was taken on Sunday (August 25) the day before the start of the 2002 Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) Champs. He and Ray are holding Tandy's new Fubar 600X constructed from Ray's 1953 design plans. Tandy's wife took the picture that afternoon on the AMA Free Flight field.

Now [2003] I fly in all the contests I can get to, including the Nationals in Muncie, Indiana. My goal now is to fly in at least five more Nationals and win at least one event.

*[signed] Raymond C. Matthews, Jr.
July 2003*

Next came the Fubars – the original Fubar 36 only needed some small patches and it was back in competition. This is the model used by Midwest to produce the Fubar 36. The FAI Bar flew out of the box, just like it did in the FAI elimination in 1955.

Since August 2000 a line of Fubars have come to life in competition with some wins and some not so good. These are the Fubar 36X, Fubar 43X, Fubar 57X and Fubar 600 X. The “X” denotes a Fubar with the stabilizer mounted on top of the fuselage. The original Fubar had the stabilizer on the bottom of the fuselage, which made the dethermalizer unreliable.



c. 2002: Ray and his wife at the National Model Airplane Museum in Muncie, Indiana.

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