



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of LAWRENCE (LARRY) H. CONOVER



October 19, 1925 - May 21, 2009 Started modeling in 1935
AMA #1058

Written by LHC (n.d); Written by AMA staff (08/2009); Edited & Formatted by SS (10/2002)

Career:

- 1946-1965: Attended Nationals (Nats) each of these years.
- 1954, 1965: Won the outdoor hand-launched glider event at the Nats.
- Won flying wing cargo design at the 1958 Nats.
- 1960: Member of three U.S. power teams at the Cranfield world championships; received first place in a five-way tie.
- 1960s: Wrote a column called "No Strings Attached" for *American Aircraft Modeler* magazine.
- Wrote several articles for modeling magazines.
- Owned half interest with his wife in the magazine *Sig Air Modeler*.
- Worked on numerous research projects with Dr. Alexander Lippisch at Iowa State University.
- Designed model airplane kits including a Jetex delta wing for American Telasco and a vacuum-formed flying scale World War II series for Comet.
- Worked on designs for Berkeley and Sig.

Honors:

- 1982: National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame
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Larry's flying model days started in Iowa City in 1935. After a series of dime kits, including the *Endurance G10*, he built a 24-inch span *Flying Fool* with a triangular cross-section and a pine prop. The *Red Ripper*, from a 1940 *Flying Aces* magazine article, was his first gas engine plane. He powered it with a Brown D and entered a contest in Marshalltown.

He attended the first postwar Nationals (Nats) in Wichita and then in 1948 entered the first U.S. Navy-hosted meet at Olathe NAS. Larry took part in every Nats after that through the Willow Grove meet in 1965. At Glenview in 1954, he won the outdoor hand-launched glider event. The design was called *The Flanger*. He flew a shrouded prop *Clipper Cargo* entry that year, too. In 1956, he entered a flying wing cargo design and won that event in 1958. In 1965, Larry won the indoor hand-launched glider event at Lakehurst.

Three times, he was a member of the U.S. power team at the Cranfield world championships. Sylvio Lanfranchi, a proxy flyer from Switzerland, flew his *Lucky Lindy* into the fly offs and a received third place. Larry attended the meet in 1958 and 1960. An engine overrun knocked him out of the running in 1958. In 1960, he finished in a five-way first place tie. There was no increasing time with successive fly off flights then. After 13, the meet was called.

Larry authored several articles beginning with “Soup Up Your Engine” which appeared in *Air Trails* magazine. In the 1960s, he wrote a column for *American Aircraft Modeler* magazine entitled “No Strings Attached.” Larry and his wife Dorothy owned half interest in the magazine *Sig Air Modeler*. Dorothy and Larry edited and printing was done at Sig in Montezuma.

Larry worked a lot of research projects with Dr. Alexander Lippisch at Iowa State University. He's also designed toys as a free-lancer as well as kits. These included a Jetex delta wing for American Telasco. A vacuum-formed flying scale World War II series was undertaken for Comet. They looked good and flew well but production problems ended the project. Larry also did design work for Berkeley and Sig.

The following was written by AMA Staff for the August 2009 issue of Model Aviation magazine.

Lawrence H. (Larry) Conover of Waynesboro, Virginia, died early Thursday, May 21, 2009, at Avante Nursing Home in Waynesboro. He had suffered a stroke the previous month.

Larry was born October 19, 1925, to Emma Swann and Clarence Irving Conover, in Iowa City, but the responsibilities of marriage prevented him from completing his degree.

Larry's lifelong passion was designing, building, and flying free flight model airplanes. He began building at the age of eight. Later, he worked in aviation research and design with Dr. Alexander Lippisch at Collins Radio Company in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in the 1950s. He also worked in research and design for Nissan Trampoline Corporation in Cedar Rapids in the 1960s.

Larry was creative and an entrepreneur. Along with being a top ad salesman for the National Roster of Realtors, he built a successful grain bin business near Center Point, Iowa, called Harvestall Eastern Iowa, in the 1970s and 1980s.

Larry became a famous name in the model aviation world when he was a first-place winner at the 1960 FAI World Championships in Cranfield, England. His original design, the Lucky Lindy, is still being built and flown today. Larry continued to fly and to write articles for several model airplane magazines, including *Air Trails* and *American Aircraft Modeler*.

Larry had the privilege of mentoring other young model enthusiasts, such as Don Gurnett, who went on to be a professor in the University of Iowa Department of Physics and Astronomy.

Larry designed and produced kits for beginners and taught model flying in after-school enrichment classes in the public schools in Longmont, Colorado, with his wife, Dorothy, until failing health necessitated his retirement.

Larry and Dorothy have lived the last five years sharing life together with their daughter, Susan Taylor, and her husband, Aaron, in Waynesboro, Virginia. This kept them close to their granddaughter, Tammie Walker, and great-grandchildren Colin Kovacs, 18, and Amanda Kovacs, 15.

Their grandson, Major Matthew Lawrence Walker, U.S. Marine Corps, lives in Meridian, Mississippi. Matt built and flew models with his grandfather, and was inspired to become an *F-18* pilot for the Marines, flying several missions in the Middle East.

Larry was a member of the Church on the Hill, in Fishersville, Virginia. He was also a member of the Academy of Model Aeronautics, and was inducted in 1982 into the National Free Flight Society Hall of Fame.

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