



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of KENNETH (KEN) G. HELD



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## ABOUT OUR NEW PRESIDENT

Born in Brownstown, Indiana, Kenneth G. Held has spent most of his life in the three states of Indiana, New York and Michigan. At present he is located in Detroit where he is Chief Electrical Engineer in the Detroit Transmission Division of the General Motors Corp. Having been with this Division since its start, Ken has had much to do with the development of GM's Hydra-Matic Drive.

After college, Ken blossomed (or should we say billowed) out as a professional parachute jumper. During this time he operated the Held Parachute Service at Wayne County Airport in Detroit. This business was developed into a major parachute repair depot and Ken became the proud possessor of CAA Rigger's license #153. Sometime during his parachute barnstorming career, Ken landed at the feet of a very lovely girl by the name of Maryanne who, in due course, consented to become Mrs. Held.

In the early 20s, Ken gave up jumping and turned his attention to electrical engineering which profession he has followed since that time.

Starting with an Ideal Bleriot in 1918, Ken has been a consistent builder and flyer ever since. In addition, he was one of the originators of the American Miniature Race Car Association, holds AMRCA license #29 and served as their Mid-West Director for five years. Ken conducted the two AMRCA Nationals which were held in Detroit. Ken has gained a great deal of respect and recognition both as a model flyer and as an administrator of aeromodeling programs.

Ken and Mrs. H. are the proud parents of two boys, Richard, age 8, and Donald, age 5. Ken tells us that, "Both are born modelers, the two boys, my wife and I all build and fly model airplanes."

To our new president go our most hearty congratulations together with our pledge of cooperation and support during his term of office.

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*The following was published in the November 1980 issue of Model Aviation magazine, in the AMA News section.*

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**Ken Held**  
7<sup>th</sup> AMA President

Another former AMA President has left us. Ken Held, 74, of Livonia, Michigan, was president during an early and more difficult period of AMA history – 1950-1951. The number of members and the annual budget were much smaller then, so it was much harder to carry on the business of

operating a national association. But Ken was one of those early leaders who helped get AMA to the prominence we enjoy today as the world's largest sport aviation organization in the free world. He first became an AMA member in 1940 and then was No. 793.

Ken was a tenacious AMAer with a deep interest in AMA's welfare right up until the last stages of the leukemia, which claimed him on August 22 [1980]. He had earlier rallied from a long stay in the hospital, which had previously threatened to claim him, but he recovered from that to come home and resume his interest and activity in AMA matters. He was particularly concerned with the 1979-1980 controversies in AMA politics, and one of his last acts was to sign a letter, along with other past presidents of AMA, advising current leaders to seek positive solutions to AMA problems.

Born in Brownstown, Indiana, Kenneth G. Held spent most of his life in the three states of Indiana, New York, and Michigan. At the time of his election as AMA President, he was located in Detroit as Chief Electrical Engineer in the Detroit Transmission Division of the General Motors Corporation. Having been with this division since its start, Ken had much to do with the development of GM's hydra-matic drive.

After college, Ken was a professional parachute jumper. During this time, he operated the Held Parachute Service at Wayne County Airport in Detroit. This business was developed into a major parachute repair depot and Ken became the proud possessor of Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) Rigger's license No. 153. Sometime during his parachute-barnstorming career, Ken married a very lovely girl by the name of Maryanne, who became Mrs. Held. In the early 1920s, Ken gave up jumping and turned his attention to electrical engineering.

In modeling, he started with an Ideal *Bleriot* in 1918. In addition, he was one of the originators of the American Miniature Race Car Association, and served as their Midwest director for five years. In AMA, Ken gained a great deal of respect and recognition both as a model flier and as an administrator of aeromodeling programs. Just before his death, the AMA Council of Past Presidents voted him into the Model Aviation Hall of Fame.

As AMA President, Ken helped organize the contest coordinator network, which is the basis for sanctioning over a thousand contests a year in the USA. He also was a strong advocate for having each AMA member receive the Academy publication, *Model Aviation* – he worked toward that end and noted in the July 1950 editorial:

“...this one item will do more good than a host of others... it will also provide a source of information for all members, something sadly lacking in the past...”

Ken's Hall of Fame data notes that he was the first ever to break 150 mph in D Speed (Control Line) in 1950. He was a Leader Member since 1945 and Contest Director of the first five Plymouth International contests, in addition to many other meets. Four clubs made him an Honorary Life Member: the Midwest RC Society, Capitol Area Radio Drone Squadron, Greater Detroit Hiking and Soaring Society, and the Livonia Rib Crackers.

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*The following was published in the September 1981 issue of Model Aviation magazine, in the AMA News section after his 1980 induction into the Model Aviation Hall of Fame.*

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Kenneth G. (Ken) Held, AMA 7, deceased. Ken Held was a Contest Director, Past President of the Academy, and was recognized with the prestigious Academy of Model Aeronautics Fellowship.

An AMA member since 1940, his involvement in - and service to - aeromodeling and the AMA was tremendous.

A brilliant contest history, beginning in 1943, has many highlights. Ken set an AMA record in 1950 in D Speed; the first ever to break 150 mph. Another first was his all metal plane, an innovation that influenced the design of Speed models for years.

The creative mind and energetic personality that achieved so much competition success also was used effectively to help others. An organizer of many clubs, Ken served as President of the Royal Oak Cloud Busters, President of Detroit's Balsa Bugs, and was a member of the Midwest RC Society. A Leader Member since 1944 and a Contest Director since 1945, Ken held honorary life memberships in the Midwest RC Society, Capitol Area Radio Drone Squadron, and the Greater Detroit Hiking and Soaring Society.

Ken's activities included working with Plymouth Corporation to establish the Plymouth Internationals in the late 1940s. The first five Plymouth meets had Ken Held as the Contest Director, from 1947 to 1951. But the continuous modeling involvement did not end after his term of President. Contributing as an active member off the Council of Past Presidents, he provided advice and guidance to those who followed and was active in the Hall of Fame Awards Committee.

Ken's efforts to organize, support, guide and develop all organizational levels of aeromodeling - from local, city-wide, and regional to national - were legendary. His success record is awe inspiring. His inclusion in the Hall of Fame is certainly fitting.

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**AMA History Project**  
National Model Aviation Museum  
5151 E. Memorial Dr.  
Muncie IN 47302  
(765) 287-1256, ext. 511  
historyproject@modelaircraft.org

