



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of GEORGE M. LEWIS, JR.

Born August 20, 1929 Started modeling in 1938

AMA #27710



Written & Submitted by GML (03/2003); Transcribed & Edited by SS (03/2003), Reformatted by JS (10/2009)

Career:

- Placed well in local and state contests including the Michigan State Championships
 - Won the Jetex event flying an original design at the 1972 AMA Nationals
 - Flew A-2 Nordic gliders in FAI competition for 15 years, qualifying for the finals in 1974 flying an original design called Sunbird which was later published
 - Served on the FAI team selection program committee
 - Has served as president of his model club, the Cloudbusters, several times since joining in 1959
 - Has been an AMA-sanctioned contest director and AMA administrator leader since the early 1970s
 - Currently (2003) directs a AAA-rated indoor meet each year
 - Started club programs teaching model aviation to the Boy Scouts and other youth organizations
-

The Beginning

I began building model airplanes when I was 8-years-old. Those were solid balsa models and probably not very good, but they were airplanes. My friends also built models, so we had that in common. I remember Strombeckor Models, which had metal propellers. You could hang out the window of the car and they would turn in the wind.

My father was encouraging but not pushy; from time to time, he would check on what I was building. As time went by my friends and I would get on the streetcar and ride to the Fisher YMCA to attend a meeting of the Detroit (Michigan) Sky Guys. That was big stuff to us and probably we were just tolerated by the club since they had big models and cars to use to get to the flying field at Nine Mile Road and Northwestern Highway in Detroit. So with all that said, no one particular person was that influential to me, just a lot of things.

We lived in suburban Detroit and there were quite a few sizeable fields around us to be used as flying sites. Hand-launched gliders, American Junior (AJ) Interceptors and anything with a propeller and a rubber motor to turn it were always in use. Finally, at the age of 12, I received a Playboy Senior as a present, which I built. For my birthday, I got a Rogers 29 that had to be assembled. Believe it or not, it really ran. I completed the Playboy, installed the Roger 29 and my dad drove us out to the flying field (I always had flying buddies along). The Playboy flew beautifully, but the Rogers would only haul it to an altitude of about 300 feet. But, it was flying. I was hooked and never stopped from that point on.

Competition

I have competed on local and state levels for years. This includes the Michigan State Championships where I placed highly. (These are no longer held.) I have also flown in the AMA Nationals and in 1972 won the Jetex event with an original design that was later published. I think I set a national record with that model.

I flew A-2 Nordic gliders in FAI competition for about 15 years and qualified for the finals in 1974. I flew an original design called Sunbird, which also was published. I ended up in 12th place in the U.S. at that team selection finals meet, which was held in Taft, California. That model was also published in the National Free Flight Society (NFFS) Free Flight Digest. Somewhat prior to that time, I served with Dave Linstrum on the FAI team selection program committee.

Leadership

I became a member of the Cloudbusters model airplane club in 1959. (This club has existed since 1939.) I incorporated the club in 1965 and continue as the resident agent of the corporation to the present day (2003). I served as president several times. The club is charter number 1911 and also has been a Gold Leadership Club for several years.

I have been a contest director and an administrator leader since the early 1970s. I have co-chaired the Michigan State Championship meet, run FAI qualifying trials, and been contest director of many meets sponsored by the Cloudbusters model airplane club. Currently I direct an AAA-rated indoor meet, which we have put on for the last seven years.

I have been a co-editor of our model club newsletter for five years. The newsletter has no title name, but is 10 pages long and comes out six times a year.

Education

Our club has put on model making programs for Cub Scouts for 20 years. These programs revolve around the Delta Dart and involve building and flying. I started these programs in the club and they have had as many as 85 Scouts participating at any one time. The club has continued these programs and has extended them to elementary schools, juvenile detention facilities, and even Girl Scouts. I have been involved in the Science Olympiad Program as a mentor, coach, instructor, and assistant at flying sessions. Recently (2003) most of my involvement with youth has taken place at the Heritage Junior High School where the Cloudbusters fly during winter months. Juniors are always welcome there.

Personal Information

I received a bachelor's degree in science from Wayne State University in Detroit and am married with four grown children. I was employed by General Motors Corporation for 38 years and was a personnel manager at the time of my retirement.

*(signed) George M. Lewis
March 2003*

This PDF is property of the Academy of Model Aeronautics. Permission must be granted by the AMA History Project for any reprint or duplication for public use.

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

