



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of JACK SVEN LUCK

May 5, 1912 - December 23, 1963



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Written & Submitted by CM (03/2000); Transcribed by NR (04/2001); Edited & Formatted by SS (10/2002), Reformatted by JS (10/2009)

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## **Career:**

- One of three Radio Control modelers in Kingston, Canada during the 1950s
- Held informal meetings for people interested in Radio Control
- Flew at various meets in Canada and the United States whenever possible
- Often visited with the editors of Air Trails and Model Airplane News magazine when in New York on business
- Had magazine article published from 1944 to 1960
- Worked to promote more realistic-looking model planes as well as model aviation safety

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*The following biography was taken from a Hall of Fame application submitted by: Colin McKinley in March 2000.*

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## **Competitor**

Jack Luck lived in Montreal and Kingston, Canada. Working and raising a family, it was impossible to get the time to attend Nationals (Nats). The high point of his year was the Radio Control meet at Indian Town Gap, Pennsylvania. In the 1940s and 1950s, the lack of express highways isolated him in eastern Canada.

## **Designer/Experimenter**

In the 1950s, Jack was one of three Radio Control modelers in Kingston. He built receivers and transmitters from kits by Ace. One of his escapements survived. His designs and articles are attached separately.

After his sudden death, friends and relatives disposed of his workshop, articles, models, etc., while his widow and children were on vacation. All that remains is one escapement and two models, one of which I own.

## **Leader**

The model club in Kingston, Ontario, was for Free Flight and U-Control. Jack was not a member. He did hold informal meetings for those interested in Radio Control.

## **Contest Director**

He was not a contest director. There was very little organized model activity in his area while he was alive.

## **Writer/Publisher**

See attached list.

This output occurred while he worked more or less in isolation. His Noorduyn Norseman in Model Airplane News magazine in 1944 sort of forecast what Radio Control scale could become. Fran McElwee remembers Jack's plans as being so well drawn that they were ready for publishing when received.

Bill Northrop's first successful Radio Control model was the Faultless Chick (Model Airplane News magazine, 1949), the first in his long line of Radio Control biplanes (the father of Big John). If you compare the Faultless Chick and Big John, the similarities are obvious.

## **Supporting Remarks**

See following information from the Model Aeronautics Association of Canada, Inc. (MAAC) archives. Jack Luck was a unique person whose work covers Free Flight, Control Line, and Radio Control. The volume of his work is remarkable considering the fact that he was raising a family and did most of his model work by himself.

In Canada, the stylized "A" in the Aluminum Company of Canada (ALCAN) logo was created by Jack Luck in the 1950s.

This application for admission to the AMA Hall of Fame is supported by:

Art Schroeder  
John Worth  
Fran McElwee  
Bill Northrop

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*The following information came from the Model Aeronautics Association of Canada, Inc. (MAAC) archives.*

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## **Modeling**

Jack was designing, building, and flying when Mrs. Luck met him in Montreal. She is not too conversant with what he was doing but she said that he built beautiful models and flew them on the island and also at Longueuil across the river from Montreal. While at Kingston, he would fly at the Kingston field and at Gananoque Airport. He also flew at meets in the U.S. Mrs. Luck had no information on those.

## **Club Memberships**

I could not elicit the name of any model club Jack belonged to. Mrs. Luck thinks that there was a

rather loose association of modelers who he flew with but that they were a club in name only. It would seem that the same applied to Jack when he was in Kingston.

I have tried to determine if he had been a member of the MAAC, but can find nothing. However, unless we find evidence, we can only assume that he was a member.

According to Mrs. Luck, Jack was superb builder who enjoyed designing a model, drawing the plan and then building it. These gave him as much, perhaps more, pleasure than flying the finished model.

Jack traveled a lot for ALCAN and was often in New York for the company. He would drop into the offices of Air Trails magazine and Model Airplane News magazine to have words with the model editors. Mention is made of these visits by the editors of the respective magazines as well as some of the topics talked about during the visits. I have given an excerpt from one in the accompanying list and I recall one in *Air Trails* magazine some time in 1943 or 1945. I didn't make a note of the issue at the time and will have to search again. I have enclosed the list of his published articles and photos, as I have found them. If you can add to these, I would greatly appreciate it.

You mentioned that you have six of his plans now. Are these full-size plans or the ones from the magazines? If full-size, would you please tell me where you obtained them? I would like to add as many of Jack's plans as I can to the archives but I have yet to check John Pond's listing and also Dick Gleason's listings for them.

One last item. I was speaking with George Luck two weeks ago and learned very little from him. As Mrs. Luck told me, George was only about 12 when Jack died and he never really knew Jack. He did have a few anecdotes to relate and I persuaded him to record them for the MAAC archives. I hope he does.

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## **J.S. Luck and/or W.H.S. Bird List of Publications**

*Articles published in Model Airplane News, Young Men and in American Modeler magazines from 1944 to 1960. Compiled June 1997, revised June 1998 by Peter M. Mann, MAAC Archives.*

**Taylorcraft**, 7-foot scale. Photo and description. Model Airplane News magazine, December 1943, "Airways" section.

**Fury**. Photo of this Control Line model. Model Airplane News magazine, p. 28, January 1944, "Airways" section.

**Notes of** contributors to the discussion by J.S. Luck, some of his background supplied, Model Airplane News magazine, April 1944 (See below).

**The Falcon**, 54-inch span Control Line, B Free Flight. J.S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 33(6): 8-11, 44, 46, June 1944.

**Fury**, 22-inch span Control Line model. J.S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 31(2): 8- 10, August 1944.

**Noorduyn Norseman**, 77-inch Free Flight with pendulum control. J.S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 31(5): 8-13, 45, 48, 50-52. Photo p. 32. November 1944.

**Piperskycycle**, 25-inch Control Line. J.S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 33(5):14-16, 66, 68, November 1945.

**Control Line Flying Part 1.** J.S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 34(3): 22- 23, 84, 86, 88, 90, March 1946.

**Control Line Flying Part 2.** J.S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 34(4):26- 27, 43, 44, April 1946.

**Reynolds Number.** W.H.S. Bird, Model Airplane News magazine, 34(4): 20-21, 72, 74, 76, 78, 80, April 1946.

**Propeller Design.** W.H.S. Bird & J. S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 35(1): 24-25, 52, 54, July 1946.

**Airfoils.** W.H.S. Bird & J. S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 35(2): 20, 21, 40-43, August 1946.

**Fury Four**, 37-1/2-inch Control Line. J.S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 35(4):19-21, 94-95, October 1946.

**Rambler Part 1**, 48-inch biplane, six square feet area. J.S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 36(1), January 1947.

**Rambler Part 2.** J.S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 36(2): 25-27, 69, 70, 72, February 1947.

**Glide Testing.** W.H.S. Bird & J.S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 36(3): 32-33, 42, 44-45, March 1947.

**Scorpion II**, Control Line speed. J.S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 36(6):17, 18, 63, 64, June 1947.

**Fury Screwball**, 56-inch Control Line stunt. J.S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, (39) 6:13-15, 42, 43, December 1948.

**Faultless Chick**, 47-inch span, 475 square inches, C.I.A Arden .199 biplane. J.S. Luck Model Airplane News magazine, 40(2):16-18, 56, February 1949.

**Reliable Escapements Part 1.** J.S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 42(2): 24, 36-7, February 1950.

**Reliable Escapements Part 2.** J.S. Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 42(3): ??, March 1950.

**Northern Minx,** 4-footLw Radio Control. J.S. Luck, Young Men magazine (formerly Air Trails), 46(2): 32-33, May, 1956. Full size plan – Hobby Helpers Group 556.

**The Barnstormer,** Radio Control version of Faultless Chick. J.S. Luck, American Modeler magazine, 47(5): 32-33, February 1957. Full size plan – Hobby Helpers Group 257.

**Alouette,** Enlarged Radio Control version of Faultless Chick. Jack Luck, Model Airplane News magazine, 63(5):12-14, 45-47, 50, November 1960. Model Airplane News full size plan #76.

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*The following was taken from the Model Airplane Newsletter by Al Lewis that appeared in Model Airplane News magazine in April 1947 on pages eight and 10.*

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Latest exponent of the prototype Free Flight gassie to step forward and declare himself in no uncertain terms is the well-known model builder and flyer, Jack Luck of Montreal. Mr. Luck is well known to Model Airplane News readers as the designer of some outstanding craft. He is an industrial designer by profession and an individual to be reckoned with when it comes to reasons why models do or do not perform and just what makes a model behave.

This Canadian expert comes out flatfootedly and says the current regulations are downright unworkable and even dangerous. With the advent of the more powerful post-war engines, designer Luck contends that wing and power loadings should be raised – and immediately!

It is a fact that a number of discerning activity leaders and well-known designers have been thinking along the same lines. Although the actual thinking of the AMA contest board is not known at the time this is written, it is a matter of record that some members have been advocating a stepped-up requirement for the larger size models. Proponents of increases mention 80, 90, and 100 ounces per cubic inch for Class A, B and C power loadings respectively, and 7, 8 and 9 ounces per 100 square inches of wing loading.

The Northwest gas clubs are already flying with 120 ounces per cubic inch, but reports indicate that models still continue to go out of sight. It's a lot like the weather – everybody talks about the subject but nobody ever runs comparative contests.

But back to Jack Luck and his idea that what this country and Canada need are more realistic-looking models. Of course, in this day and age of supersonic experimentation it is somewhat difficult to predict what next year's aircraft will look like, so maybe there are arguments against

conventionality, too. However, it must be conceded that a lot of model aeronauts are turning to scale model aircraft flown on Control Line, so obviously the trend is in that direction. Frankly, we can think of nothing finer than to see a slick scale model take off, circle around the pilot, and go into a series of stunt maneuvers. That's what we call real modeling. And if the other fellows want to continue with Free Flight – why, let them set the wing up off the fuselage on a stepladder if they so desire.

Of course, when Jack mentions the safety angle he gets our attention, because a number of folks have been plugging safe flying for years. We think that increased wing and power loadings for the larger classes would do what Mr. L advocates – automatically produce better, cleaner designs more along the lines of what existing full scale jobs look like.

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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

