



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of RALPH W. KUMMER

**Modeler, Hobby Shop Owner and Manager,
Newsletter Editor**

Born January 29, 1916 Modeler since 1927
AMA #574144



Written & Submitted by RWK (09/1996); Transcribed by NR (11/1996); Edited by SS (2002), Reformatted by JS (10/2009)

Career:

- Pioneer Modeler:
 - Major Competitor
 - Instructor for model clubs for four years
 - Member of 1935 U. S. Wakefield Team
 - Charter member (one of four from St. Louis) of the AMA in 1935.
 - Co-Director (with Bob Sommers) of Stix, Baer, Fuller M.A.C.
 - Assistant Contest Director for Mississippi Valley and National contests
 - Editor of club newsletters
 - Produced and sold eight different plans for his championship models between the years 1930 to 1935
- Full Scale Aviation:
 - Army A.F. Pilot
 - Commercial Pilot & Flight Instructor
 - Aviation Editor
- General Aviation:
 - Sales
 - Public Relations
 - Sales Promotion
 - Lecturer on Marketing and Business Management
- Building models as a boy became the foundation for Kummer's lifelong career in working to advance aviation.

Honors:

- 1995: Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) Hall of Fame
- 1994: Honored by SAM 1066 of England for "major contributions to model and full-size aviation"

The following information came from Ralph Kummer in 1996.

1927: As an 11-year-old schoolboy, saw Charles Lindbergh fly under Mississippi River bridges at St. Louis following his trans-Atlantic solo flight, and was bitten by the aviation bug. Built a model from an "Ideal" kit (of hardwood), but it didn't fly!

1928: Joined AMLA, and from plans and kits offered by American Boy magazine built first balsa rubber-powered models. Some began to fly!

1929: Entered first contest; won third place in twin pusher.

1930: Joined Stix, Baer, Fuller M.A.C.; won trip to the Nationals (Nats) in Detroit; placed third there in outdoor stick event.

1931-1937: President of Cleveland High School Aviation Club; President of Stix, Baer, Fuller M.A.C.; Started a model airplane shop, operated it for four years.

- Won 36 trophies and many other prizes including three trips to Nats, a flight by Ford Tri-Motor to visit the 1934 World's Fair in Chicago, a six-week outing to a Dude ranch for boys in Colorado.
- Held world records for rubber-powered flying models in three different categories, including: indoor stick, Class B, outdoor twin pusher and outdoor Autogyro
- Instructor for model clubs for four years.
- Member of 1935 U. S. Wakefield Team.
- Charter member (one of 4 from St. Louis) of the Academy of Model Aeronautics in 1935.
- Co-Director (with Bob Sommers) of Stix, Baer, Fuller M.A.C.
- Assistant Contest Director for Mississippi Valley and National contests.
- Editor of club newsletters.

1950s: While working at Hiller Helicopters, initiated and planned a new model helicopter event, with large trophy, which was adopted by A.M.A.

1982-present: Became reacquainted with model friends of old, joined SAM, present built models, and attended model meets.

1994: Honored by SAM 1066 of England for “major contributions to model and full size aviation”

1995: Inducted into SAM Hall of Fame.

Notes:

The following Kummer-designed models had plans drawn and were offered to the public:

- 1930** twin pusher;
- 1930** indoor tractor;
- 1932** world record holder autogyro;
- 1932** indoor tractor;
- 1932** record-holding commercial (fuselage) model;
- 1934** world record holder twin pusher;
- 1934** world record holder indoor stick model, class B;
- 1935** Wakefield model (as member U.S. team).

Building models as a boy became the foundation for Kummer's lifelong career in working to

advance aviation. He learned to fly, was an artillery liaison pilot in World War II, then worked in marketing/management in many aspects of aviation.

Full Size Aviation

Learned to fly (1941): C.P.T. program, Lambert Field, St. Louis, in Piper Cub. Soloed March, Private pilot's license in May.
Airplane owner (1941)

Airplane owner (1941): Partner in purchase of new Porterfield airplane. Flew from Factory in Kansas City in June, then on many trips throughout Midwest until advent of World War II.

Aircraft inspector (1942): While awaiting call to active duty, was precision inspector for aircraft turrets (Emerson Electric).

Army Liaison Pilot (W.W.II): Member of first officer-trainee class at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, Training maneuvers in California 1943, followed by two years overseas combat flying in Pacific Theatre.

- Over 300 hours flying combat missions throughout New Guinea and the Philippines
- Awarded Air Medal, Oak Leaf Cluster
- Promoted to Major, commanding air operations for 191st Artillery Group Headquarters

Private Airport owner (1946-1948): As corporate Secretary/Treasurer and partner in ownership, handled administration, participated in flight and ground operations for Marquette Flying Service, Alton, Ill. Also included seaplane base on nearby Mississippi River.

Commercial Pilot, Flight Instructor (1946): Ratings obtained for both land and seaplanes.

Post-War aircraft owner: Both for airport venture and personal use acquired Fairchild PT-19 trainer and Taylorcraft seaplane, 1946.

Aviation editor: Using Bachelor of Journalism degree acquired at University of Missouri (1937) was assistant promotion manager of St. Louis Star-Times 1946 to 1948. During period was also appointed editor of a weekly aviation page (one of first such pages in U.S.).

Pilot-Salesman (1949): Following move to San Francisco, joined National Flight System, a package program financed by movie star Dick Powell, to sell businessmen on using private aircraft. During same year was producer/announcer for radio program "Today We Fly."

Public Relations Executive (1950-1957): As part of top management at Hiller Aircraft, managed international programs of advertising and sales promotion to build public and military acceptance of the helicopter. Helped pioneer helicopter planning in many cities and national government. Besides production helicopters, work also involved promotion of radical VTO concepts - from the ducted fan "Flying Platform" to tilt-wing transports.

General Manager (1957 - 1959): Initiated new planning and policies, which caused radical healthy growth in Bay Aviation Services Co., San Francisco Airport's first FBO for private and corporate aircraft. Directed operations and personnel (45) for firm that provided services to major airlines and military transports as well as business aircraft. Was also a Cessna dealership.

Sales Promotion Manager (1959-1961): With Airborne Freight Corporation and its six subsidiaries dealing in airfreight and travel services on global scale, supervised planning and implementation of new international marketing programs. Also conducted management education and sales meetings. Based San Francisco International Airport.

Marketing Consultant (1962-1982): As owner/manager of consulting firm specialized to aviation, examples of early projects included:

- Developed and wrote proposal to the Federal Aviation Agency which Administrator Balaby accepted to set up completely new program for accelerated development of general aviation, using new personnel and Small Business Administration.
- Planned and wrote management booklet "Starting and Managing An Aviation Fixed Base Operation," which was published and used by the U.S. Small Business Administration.
- Served as management editor for magazine "Airport Services Management," and contributed articles to this and other leading national aviation magazines.
- Produced business and marketing seminars for aviation companies, both on national and local scale.

From mid-1960s to retirement in 1982, consulting work included:

- Organization of a new company named Adair Agency (owned by R.K.) to broaden the range of services offered in management and marketing. It was located in San Mateo, California, and operated on a national scale.
- During the 20-year period, more than 100 clients were served in locations throughout the United States. Projects included management counseling, surveys and reports for recommended action, advertising, and public relations. In most cases, work with clients resulted in dramatic sales and/or profitability increases. Most clients were in aviation.
- Lectured on marketing and business management for the U. S. Small Business Administration and colleges throughout California.

Notes:

- In addition to Ralph Kummer Associates and Adair Agency, also owned and was president of an English giftware Importing company which distributed goods nationally.

Memberships included:

- Charter Member, Academy of Model Aeronautics
- National Aeronautic Association
- Pacific Wings Club
- American Helicopter Society
- Aviation Writers Association
- Bay Area Council

- San Francisco Chamber of Commerce
- San Francisco Press Club
- Quiet Birdmen
- Listed in *Who's Who in Aviation*, *Who's Who in the West*, and *Dictionary of International Biographies*

For International Executive Service Corps performed consulting projects in Thailand (1984) and in Bolivia (1988), as volunteer.

Flight hours as pilot - approximately 1,700

The following is taken from a write-up of the STIX, BAER, & Fuller, Model Airplane Club in Model Airplane News Magazine in 1935.

The Stix, Baer & Fuller Model Airplane Club was organized in the spring of 1928. During the years of 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, a special six-week course on model building was offered to be climaxed by the annual National Contest Eliminations held in the early in the early part of June of each year. Two boys were chosen each time and sent to represent the club at the "Nationals."

In 1930, at the National Contest in Detroit, Joseph Ehrhardt, one of the St. Louis representatives won the Grand prize, a trip to Europe. In 1931, at Dayton, Ohio, in the National contest, Ehrhardt again repeated his victory by winning the grand prize.

In 1931, many minor contests were held each week during the summer. In the fall of 1931 regular class work was started. The Junior members and beginners met every Saturday morning and the Senior members every Saturday.

In 1933, a very ambitious program of contests and activities was undertaken. Later in the spring, the club sponsored an All Scout Contest with many valuable prizes as a reward. Dick Courtial won the National Eliminations and was sent to New York to represent the club. He won third place in the International Admiral Moffett Contest and fifth place in the fuselage event. The Round-up Lodge Contest was held in late June and Marvin Schmidt and Russell Farber won free trips to Colorado and a two months stay at the famous boys' camp, "Round-Up Lodge." In late August, the 3rd Annual Mississippi Valley was held.

The year of 1934 was probably one of the most successful in our history. Four major contests were scheduled for the months of May, June, July and August. The "Third Annual Air Races" were held in May, and in June, the "National Elimination Contest" was held to decide who would represent St. Louis at Akron. Four members, Ralph Kummer, Dick Courtial, Marvin Schmidt and Russell Yungbluth, participated at the Akron Contest. Marvin Schmidt won the coveted International Admiral Moffett Trophy. The four boys together won 12 prizes, more than any other club represented.

Two new world's records were established in this contest. In July, the "Century of Progress Contest" was held and two members received free trips to Chicago by air to spend a week at the "Century of Progress Exposition. Ralph Kummer and Joe Conradi were the winners.

With a roster of 1200 air minded boys, the club entered its 7th year of continued activity. The weekly meetings were improved having a definite objective. Merits and proficiency in study were based similar to the Boy Scout program of activity and the gold wings and chevrons were the reward for advancement. The club was divided into four divisions: Beginners, Junior, Sub-Senior and Senior.

Classes were run like a public school with 15 assistant instructors capably handling the 15 divisions of the school.

For several years, it had been the ambition of the Stix, Baer & Fuller to hold the "National Contests" in St. Louis and after many months of preparation the desire was realized on June 29th, 30th and 31st. Three hundred and fifty boys from every State of the Union, Canada, England, France, and New Zealand made the greatest representation ever seen in a National Contest. Many worlds' records were established.

Activities of this club, as can be seen have not been confined to the building and flying of models to win prizes, but has reached out into a broader field of usefulness and community cooperation.

The Airplane Club is more than just an organization; it is a movement directing the character and skills of boys and has on its roll call, boys and young men from every class and creed, cemented in a genuine friendship by their mutual interest, Aviation.

As the Stix, Baer & Fuller model Airplane Club enters into the spring of its 7th year of consistent operation, class work begins with new vigor and enthusiasm.

The idea and organization of the club was executed by Mr. C.C. Carmichael, and has been under his direction since. Mr. H. T. Simmers developed the school to its present stage of efficiency.

World records held by members of the club:

Senior: Ralph Kummer, Stick Type Model, Class B, 17m: 49s
Senior: Ralph Kummer, Stick Type Model, Class D, 20m: 54s
Senior: Ralph Kummer, Autogiro Type Model, 2m: 06s
Senior: Russell Yungbluth, Fuselage Type Class C, 11m: 35s
Junior: Donald Dodd, Helicopter, 0m: 35s

Major Contests Scheduled for 1936:

(The rest of the article was the 1936 contest calendar [NR])

The following is from the October 1935 issue of Model Airplane News. This article tells of the beginning of the AMA we know today.

New Model Plane Council N.A.A. Chapter

At St. Louis during the National Championship Meet in June, a plan was worked out for the formation of a new N.A.A. chapter composed of leaders in the model airplane field. There is no age limit and both model flyers and non-flyers are included in the chapter's membership. However, only non-flyers who are definitely and actively interested in model aviation were included.

The purpose of the organization is to advance model aeronautics as a science and a sport and to aid constructive activities employing model aircraft as one means toward general aeronautic education. This program is to be carried out by the organizing council of about thirty-five who will form the charter group.

It has been felt for some time that model activities should be more closely knit into the N.A.A. structure and this chapter gives this result. The members will be regular N.A.C.A. members with voting rights for N.A.A. elections and conventions. Thus, model aeronautics becomes a direct part of the larger N.A.A. itself and more securely associated with the parent organization. The leaders in the model field, some of whom had never affiliated with the N.A.A. all become united in one advisory body, having a firm official standing.

Around this council chapter is to be built up a Model Builders Institute similar to the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences. All junior N.A.A. members will be affiliated with this Model Builders Institute as soon as their model plane performance justifies it. The requirements for this particular type of membership will be established shortly and those who are qualified will be given an opportunity to join the advanced group. In this way, all of the most proficient serious builders and flyers will be bound into one large self-governing group.

Special distinction will be given to outstanding (**note 1**) contributions in the advancement of model aviation by election to Fellowship in the Institute. Anyone who has done some particularly noteworthy work or made some especially valuable development in the science will be considered for this very limited honor each year. A committee will be appointed by the N.A.A. to recommend such selection for Fellowship. This will be the highest honor attainable in the field of model aeronautical science.

One of the results of the formation of this new chapter and its affiliated Institute is the elevation, officially, of the science of model aviation to its proper station of importance. It will focus deserved attention on the valuable work that is being accomplished by the model builders and flyers. It will mean that the members of the Institute will be regarded as the recognized leaders in their selected field. Among the charter group are:

Colonel Harry Blee,
H. M. Jellison,
Ernest A. Walen,
Gordon S. Light,
H. W. Alden,
Mrs. W. W. Milar,

William R. Enylart,
Captain Willis C. Brown
Carl Goldberg,
Charles Tlush,
Guy Scott,
Miss Frances Alexander,

C. E. Carmichael, (*)
John S. Stokes, Jr.,
Nathan Polk,
John Young,
Bruno Marchi,
Dick Courtial, (*)
Bill Brown,
Robert K. Allen,

H. T. Sominers, (*) (*-note 2)
Percy Pierce,
Frank Zaic,
Charles H. Grant,
Ralph Kummer, (*)
Jesse Bieberman,
H. Weir Cook,
Bert Pond.

It is considered that with such an excellent group as that listed in direct charge of the N.A.A. model work, much real good will is accomplished and that model aviation will remain on its definite upward trend.

(Note: 1) This was the beginning of the AMA. These charter members were responsible for formation of the AMA that we celebrate today.

(*-note: 2) For of the above names were members of the St. Louis Club, The Stix, Baer, & Fuller Model Airplane Club.

(signed) Ralph Kummer 9/96

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