



The AMA History Project Presents: History of the INTERNATIONAL GAS MODEL AIRPLANE ASSOCIATION

Started in 1936, absorbed by NAA in 1938



Written by NMAM staff (2011) and unknown (1938), Reformatted by JS (10/2018, 01/2019)

*The National Model Aviation Museum (NMAM) [posted the following about the IGMAA](#) in their 2011 History Moments weekly postings for the AMA's 75th Anniversary celebrations.
Written by NMAM staff.*

Week 2 - November 10, 2011: The attempt to ban the flying of gas models - 1937 - "We Shall Not Scrap Our Gas Jobs..."

Read Charles H. Grant's call to arms for members of the International Gas Model Airplane Association (IGMAA), [Model Airplane News, August 1937, p 7](#).

The message was in response to the concerns that gas model flying would no longer be allowed. Registrar Frank Goodwin of Massachusetts ruled in 1937 that "gas powered models are legally aircraft and cannot be flown in the state of Massachusetts unless licensed and operated by licensed pilots." (*Model Airplane News*, October 1937, p 28) Likewise, the Connecticut Commissioner of Aeronautics issued a regulation that "No model aircraft shall be flown in or over the State of Connecticut if powered by any means other than rubber bands. (*Model Airplane News*, November 1937, p 24) The United States Board of Commerce even began to investigate.

The IGMAA and its leaders along with the National Aeronautic Association and its model airplane division (the Academy of Model Aeronautics) lobbied for the benefits of gas model flying.

A delegation of Department of Commerce officials was brought to the 1937 National Aeromodeling Championships, after which they decided that gas models should not be banned and that restrictions placed upon the flying of gas jobs by the contestants themselves at the present time were sufficient." (*Model Airplane News*, October 1937, p 18)

The actual authority of the IGMAA to make rules however was called into question, as it was sponsored by a commercial organization. To solve this issue, the IGMAA became a part of the NAA, as the Gas Model Division, and "Leaders in gas model building will be selected to sit upon a governing board in the Academy of Model Aeronautics. (Model

Airplane News, February 1938, p 16-17) A “National Aeronautic Association Junior Membership News” article in [Model Airplane News, February 1938, page 24](#), outlined the program and encouraged IGMAA members, at a cost of \$1, to join the new division and receive a certificate attesting that they were an “early bird” and a pioneering member of the new division. Most importantly it also outlined the “Official Gas Model Fliers Pledge” that all members needed to agree to.

With the establishment of the new division, the NAA promoted the value of aeromodeling, and criticisms, concerns, and attempted bans disappeared.

The IGMAA had been formed in 1936 by Grant, who was a gas model airplane enthusiast and also the editor of Model Airplane News magazine. As editor, Grant saw how gas models were becoming an important part of aeromodeling, from homebuilt engines to the prototype Brown Jr. engine that Maxwell Bassett used to win all 3 outdoor events at the 1933 National Aeromodeling Championships. (*Model Airplane News*, July 1933 p 22.) At the same time he also noticed the growing negative comments, and so in the [December 1935 issue of Model Airplane News](#) a questionnaire asked readers for their opinions on gas model aircraft. The responses he received encouraged him to create the IGMAA. He introduced a special feature article in *Model Airplane News*, “Gas Lines,” to highlight the activity of members and units.

The stated purpose of the IGMAA was “to promote the activity of gas model airplane building in all its phases and in this way provide intimate knowledge of airplane design and construction and motors so that young men may have a clear conception of problems of aviation before they undertake their life work in this field.” (*Model Airplane News*, April 1936, p 8)



International Gas Model Airplane Association lapel pin, issued to members beginning in February 1937. (Source: National Model Aviation Museum Collection, 2006.19.01a)

The following are scans of the front and back of a 1936 IGMAA gas model license. The original is stored in the National Model Aviation Museum Archives.

L FILL IN ALL BUT FIRST TWO ITEMS (RETURN)
International Gas Model Airplane Association
OFFICIAL GAS MODEL PLANE LICENSE NO. I.G.M. *0-122-2*

Assigned *Philip Misa* *Jan 26*

Name <i>Philip Misa</i>	NUMBER OF PLANE
Address <i>42 Oakdale Blvd.</i>	1st..... 2nd... <i>x</i> ...
City <i>Farmingdale, L. I.</i>	3rd..... 4th.....
Class of Model to be registered... <i>Class E</i>	5th..... 6th.....
Type " " " <i>Cabin Monoplane</i>	7th..... 8th.....

Wing Span *62"* Make of Engine *Baby Cyclone* Engine No. *B-2792*

Date of First Flight... *none* Approx. No. of Flights Made... *none*

Duration of Longest Flight, Unofficial... *none* Date Made.....

Timed by I. G. M. A. A. Official... *none*

Date of Application: Signature *Philip Misa*

Unit No..... Witness *Walter Khan Jr.*

IGMAA (Over)
M 87-7-5

Front of International Gas Model Airplane Association (IGMAA) gas model plane license, 1936 (Source: #0001 AMA Collection, National Model Aviation Museum)

IMPORTANT

Fill in all blank lines in ink, except the following:—On slip marked A, the lines headed (ASSIGNED REGISTRATION NUMBER) and (DATE OF APPLICATION).

On slip marked L every line should be filled in except those marked (OFFICIAL MODEL PLANE LICENSE NO.), (ASSIGNED) and (DATE OF APPLICATION).

In the boxes on both slips, headed (NUMBER OF PLANE), check the number which corresponds with the building order number of the plane to be registered. If this is your second plane built, check 2nd, etc. Check only one number on each half slip.

Return both halves of slip to the head office of the I. G. M. A. A. Room 925, 551 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

If you belong to a unit, give its number in space marked for it. CLASS OF MODEL means N. A. A. Classification, such as Class "E"; which is any model having 300 square inches or more wing area. Smaller than these are Class "D" model.

TYPE OF MODEL means structural type (Give complete type, as PARASOL MONOPLANE).

Back of International Gas Model Airplane Association (IGMAA) gas model plane license, 1936 (Source: #0001 AMA Collection, National Model Aviation Museum)

The following was published in the January 1938 (Vol. 11 No. 1) issue of Fly Paper, the Metropolitan Model League's newsletter. The writer was not attributed in the newsletter.

I.G.M.A.A. Completely Reorganized

Becoming effective at once is the merger between the I.G.M.A.A and the National Aeronautic Association. Upon merging with the N.A.A. the I.G.M.A.A. becomes the gas model section of the leading aeronautical association of the country. While losing its identity as an individual organization it gains in importance and prestige by its affiliation with the National body.

It has been felt for some time that the N.A.A. could better carry on the work started by the Universal Model Airplane News magazine. While the magazine has done a grand job of building the foundation, the lusty "baby" has grown to such proportions that it required a full staff to operate it. Many felt that it was merely a promotional feature of the magazine.

In order to command due respect, a movement of this type must be strictly non-commercial therefore the tie-up with the N.A.A. was the logical move. Not only does the sport of building and flying gas models become a recognized branch of model aeronautics but through this merger it is placed on a really national basis thereby receiving national and international recognition through the N.A.A. and F.A.I.

JOINS OTHERS IN MAKING A UNITED FRONT

The I.G.M.A.A. in becoming affiliated with the N.A.A. joins three other "expert" organizations in the youth field. The Academy of Model Aeronautics, The Soaring Society of America, and the National Intercollegiate Flying Club in laying a technical base for integrated activity in the youth field. Thus, by interlocking membership agreements five aeronautical organizations have allied themselves under a common banner for joint effort.

With the nations experts in the present art of model building, gliding and soaring and club flying joined together under the banner of the N.A.A., furnishing the necessary technical direction, and with increased civic, education, government and industry support, many opportunities are presented for greater accomplishment in the youth air education and training field.

PROPER REGULATION NOW POSSIBLE

Detailed plans have been worked out to properly supervise the activity. Each builder will be required to sign a pledge to abide by simple common-sense rules in regard to flying of gas models. With the co-operation of every builder and flyer of gas models and with the weeding out by license revokement of those who break the laws the cooperation and assistance of aeronautic industry and civic groups can be secured to obtain proper flying sites and backing for the further promotion of the sport.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the N.A.A. gas model section will be \$1.00 per year which includes membership in the N.A.A. Those who already are members of the N.A.A. need only pay 50 cents additional. All N.A.A. members receive a wing pin and membership card which makes them eligible to enter official meets, to use assigned flying fields and receive recognition for outstanding performance.

No model builder need be told of the advantages of belonging to the N.A.A. and a builder who has reached the gas model stage will certainly not allow himself to be left out of the Gas Model section. All must lend their support to an organization whose sole purpose is the promotion and welfare of gas model aviation. In order for the organization to be effective it is important that every builder, for the sake of the game, become affiliated with the NAA,

FEES USED ONLY FOR MODEL WORK

It is hoped that all moneys received from model fees will be used only for model work and not placed in the general NAA fund. Many model builders feel that their membership fees should be used only for the promotion of model aviation. They do not take into consideration the fact that the administrative expenses for junior and model work have probably been greater than the income.

At any rate such is the feeling of a great many modeler and we felt that we should give it expression.

JOIN THE METROPOLITAN MODEL LEAGUE CHAPTER

The Metropolitan Model League which is the largest existing IGMAA Chapter in the world is desirous of maintaining that distinction by remaining the largest gas model unit under the new NAA plan. In order to do this, we urge all members of the IGMAA whether they are already members of the MML Units 4 and 7 or not to join through Metropolitan Model League Headquarters at 421 Seventh Ave., New York City. Like the NAA, through consolidating and coordinating the activities of various aeronautical organizations, the Metropolitan Model League is interested in presenting a solid front through a large enrollment of model builders in the area. We all realize that a small organization can do little for its members while a larger group can accomplish much. It costs no more to join as member of our group, and it places you with the leading model champions in the area. The Metropolitan Model League holds frequent meetings at which leading authorities in our field speak. Regular contests for both rubber and gas model are held with many valuable prizes. Each year representatives are selected to represent the League in the National Contest held in Detroit and are sent with expenses paid to compete with other champions from every state. Members receive copies of Fly Paper and insignias for their models. The League provides excellent opportunities for the exchange of ideas and experiences. With the coming season a busy program is being prepared and by participating in it much can be gained by everyone interested in the building and flying of models. There is not age limit and the majority of members are in the senior group.

Those who join through our chapter within the next few weeks will become Charter members of our group and their names will appear on our charter.

EARLY BIRDS TO BE RECOGNIZED

Those of us who are members of the IGMAA will be known as Early Birds or pioneers of the new gas model section of the NAA and those who re-register under the new plan by April 1st will receive a certificate in recognition of their pioneering efforts in supporting gas model aviation.

Come down to Headquarters now and register. Be among the first to join in the new

united movement. If you won't be down town within the next few days mail your dollar together with your full name, address, and age.

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