The AMA History Project Presents:
Biography of LARRY WOLFE

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The following was submitted by Michael Peck, in an application for Larry Wolfe for the AMA Model Aviation Hall of Fame award. Larry was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2013.

Larry Wolfe

Larry Wolfe has been building and flying model aircraft since 1954, and like most young people of that era, he began with stick & tissue rubber-powered airplanes and progressed to building & flying control line models. He grew up during the age of rapid jet aviation development, which began his lifelong fascination with the idea building and flying jet model airplanes, shaped his future motivation to become an aviator and ultimately a hobby industry innovator & leader.

In 1966, Larry enlisted in the United States Army where his love of aviation led him to become a helicopter pilot. His distinguished service to his country included two tours in Vietnam, and he achieved the rank of Captain. After returning home, Larry wanted to continue his aviation career and to provide service to his community. He served as a commercial helicopter pilot for both the Pomona Police Department and the Los Angeles Police Department, and he flew U.S. Forestry Service personnel and U.S. Geological Survey team members into remote locations while working for Rocky Mountain Helicopters in Provo, Utah.

In 1972, Larry learned to fly r/c models. His interest in jets and r/c modeling prompted Larry and his wife, Cyndy, to found Jet Hangar Hobbies in 1975, which continues today as Jet Hangar International and is one of the premier providers of jet kits, ducted fans, turbine engines, and modeling supplies to modelers around the world. During the 1970s, Larry and Mr. Bob Violet produced the first successful scale ducted fan unit in 1977, re-engineered its aerodynamics, developing it into an advanced and innovative unit that has been successfully used as a starting point into r/c jet modeling by more modelers than any other ducted fan propulsion system. Larry has dedicated much of his time to advancing the knowledge and reliability of jet model aerodynamics through the testing and development of airfoils, air inlets & exhausts, and ducted fan designs that have significantly contributed to performance and usability of both ducted fan and turbine powered jet models. His hobby industry development credits include a 1:12 scale C-130 kit as well as 18 jet model kits, most of which Larry designed and engineered himself. He is respected in the jet and scale communities as one of the original significant pioneers of ducted fan technology, and continues to be the biggest supporter of ducted fan jet modeling in the world.

In 1984-1985, Larry was commissioned to build and fly a 1:8 exact scale replica model of a Northrop F-20 Tigershark, the first in the world that incorporated a scale Mach speed airfoil with only a ½" thick root wing chord and a 100% replicated flight control system including functional computer that recorded 9 streams of flight data, and although it had an unheard of high level of wing loading for a model, it flew successfully, proving that exact miniature replicas of full scale aircraft could fly and that the flight characteristics of the model correlated to those of the full-

size aircraft. This was a breakthrough for the aviation industry as proof-of-concept scale models could be used to predict and validate full-size aircraft design concepts for 1/10 the cost of traditional full scale methodologies. The Northrop project opened the door for Larry to perform similar work with Boeing, Dynamic Engineering, Ford Aerospace and Communications, and others on numerous UAV projects, exemplifying Larry's contributions in model design and experimentation that have increased the stature of model aviation and positively contributed to the field of aviation engineering and development.

With the advent of safe and reliable turbine engines and the recent advances in battery and electric ducted fan technologies, Larry has continued to advance the model industry state of the art by offering new kits and supplies to modelers that incorporate turbine motor of EDF power systems in advanced flying model platforms.

Larry has also been a reliable supporter of, and participant in, scale r/c modeling contests, scale fly-ins, jet rallies, and other public r/c venues that promote our recreation in a positive light to the public. As a competitor, his A-list of achievements in competition includes 1st place in the US Scale Masters Regional Qualifier, high static score at Top Gun, and 3rd place at the US Scale Masters Championships. Larry has also volunteered his time and expertise to serve as a color and markings judge at many US Scale Masters qualifier events. His judging style is unique in that he is willing to let the contestant (particularly new contestants) sit with him during the judging process while he explains what he finds that could be done to reasonably improve the scale appearance of the model or how it is documented.

As a long time industry supporter of many events, Larry is well-known for his generous merchandise contributions to help sponsor national and regional contests, fly-ins, rallies, and club level activities that promoted the hobby to the public. What is not as well-known is that he frequently opened his business to contestants that had crashed at a nearby contest so that they could repair their model at night, and continue to compete in the contest (against Larry) the next day. These are actions of a true sportsman, with a love for r/c competition, who is always willing to help the new modeler get started, who will go the extra mile to assist a fellow contestant [who] needs help with his model, and they exemplify Larry's unique character traits in that regard.

Larry has been instrumental in presenting jet modeling in a favorable light to the general public through his work in designing, building, and flying realistic scale model aircraft that were used in numerous movies. His work demonstrated that a high level of model detail combined with the flying capabilities of scale models made it difficult to distinguish model aircraft flown on film from the real thing, and his screen credits include Fire Fox, Iron Eagle, Iron Eagle II, Top Gun, and the television series Weird Science.

Larry believes it is also important to advance the public image of model aviation through the education of youngsters on how modeling can be a fun and personally rewarding hobby. He has helped to introduce model aviation to young people through ten years of volunteer service at Artesia High School in Lakewood, CA where he taught modeling skills, basic aerodynamic theory, and offered radio control flight instruction to students in the Aviation Academy. He has been a supporter of collegiate SAE weight lifting events and has provided design support and piloting skills for Cal Poly Pomona.

He is a founding member of the California Air Show Team, has served twice as the CAS team manager, and was a flyer/member of the team for over 20 years. He continues to demonstrate leadership, sharing his skills and expertise by participating in scale finishing and detailing programs hosted by his local club, the Scale Squadron of Southern California, and he currently serves as a member on the Scale Squadron's Board of Directors.

Larry Wolfe's contributions to model aviation are clearly indicative of a lifetime's work that reflects credit upon the aeromodeling community, the aeromodeling industry, and the Academy of Model Aeronautics, and he is a qualified and worthy candidate for the Model Aviation Hall of Fame.

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