



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of VINCENT (JIM) VAN LOO

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*The following was published in the January 2009 issue of Model Aviation magazine. Jim was inducted into the 2008 Model Aviation Hall of Fame.*

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Jim Van Loo has devoted most of his life to the advancement of the sport and hobby of both full-scale and model aviation. His interest in aviation began with a ride in a Ford Tri-Motor when he was roughly 7 years old.

A bout with the measles and subsequent quarantine allowed him to experiment with building a Comet kit. With his interest in models piqued and his parents' support, Jim began doing odd jobs to earn money for his modeling projects. He saved his money and purchased his first engine, a Bantam .19 ignition engine, which he put into a *Strato-Kitten* Control Line model.

At age 15, Jim began competing locally in Control Line events and doing well. By 1962, he advanced to the national level, including five visits to the Nats throughout the decade. Jim competed with airplanes of his own design, and became one of the first to add a muffler to his model.

Jim joined the Air Force and became an air traffic controller, and intercept technician, achieving the rank of Airman First Class. He was awarded the Good Conduct medal and attended advanced military training to become a radar and facility instructor.

Following military service, Jim became a Federal Aviation Administration controller in Sioux City, Iowa, earning accreditations including Evaluations Proficiency Specialist, Control Tower Manager, and Chief Air Traffic Manager of a Level II Radar Training Facility. In all, he spent 28 years in federal civil service.

In 1985, Jim began competing in Radio Control events and by 1990, he had returned to the Nats, again with aircraft of his own design. Jim's designs- *the Chipmunk*, *the Mystere II*, and his *Giant Scale Extra 230* – were published in *Model Airplane News*, *Flying Models*, and *MA* respectively. *The Chipmunk* was kitted by Sig, and the Extra 23- and another model, his 90-inch-wingspan Taylorcraft, was kitted by R/C Extra's.

Jim became a Contest Director and judge in 1960, working at a number of large events throughout the central United States. He was noted for his superb public-speaking skills, and was often asked to handle the public announcing duties at model and full-scale events. These appearances have included such events as Hazel Sig's tandem parachute jump, local and regional fly-ins, and once an Air Force Thunderbirds Arrival Show.

Jim and his wife, Ruth, opened their first hobby shop in Sioux City, Iowa, in 1966. They later opened another hobby shop named Jim and Ruth's Toys and Hobbies. In 1985, with his wife and close friends, Jim formed R/C Extra's for the purpose of manufacturing Giant Scale Radio Control models. He developed, kitted, and marketed five new model airplane subjects.

In 1990, the company was sold to Ace Manufacturing. Jim worked in the research-and-development department at Ace, helping the company develop its *Big Bingo* and *Whiz .40*, as well as played a major part in the development of the new Radio Control systems.

Jim has participated in a number of civic events worldwide, promoting aeromodeling. In 1991, he was invited to Sicily for an international conference to demonstrate to hospitalized children that despite their handicaps, they can do almost anything, including fly model airplanes.

Accompanying Jim was a man named Stan King, a quadriplegic. Jim had helped Stan get a special transmitter so he could demonstrate his skills at the conference.

Jim served as president of the International Miniature Aircraft Association (IMAA), traveling internationally to attend events and promote aeromodeling. During his presidency, the membership of IMAA increased from 3,500 to more than 8,000.

Between 1967 and 2000, Jim published construction articles and kit reviews in a number of magazines including *MA*, *Model Airplane News*, *Flying Models*, *R/C Report*, *Scale R/C Modelers*, and *R/C Excellence*. He was a regular columnist for *R/C Report* and *R/C Excellence*, covering the RC Giants arena, and regularly covered RC Giants events.

Jim Van Loo has been an outstanding national and international ambassador for aeromodeling, the IMAA, and AMA.

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