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# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of HOWARD G. McENTEE

Started modeling in the 1920s



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Written by AMA staff (1965, 1971, 1972), Transcribed and edited by JS (10/2007), Reformatted by JS (10/2009), updated by JS (01/2011, 12/2018)

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## AMA Fellowships Howard McEntee

On January 30, 1965, at the Buffalo Bisons Annual RC Conference, Howard McEntee was the surprised recipient of both the coveted AMA Fellowship Award and the Bisons' own VIP award. Were it not for Howard's well-earned respect in worldwide hobby circles, and his popularity as a modeler, designer, writer and editor for so many years, official recognition would seem long overdue. The awards were as much a confirmation as a recognition.

"In all fields of endeavor," spoke Carl H. Schmaedig, District II Vice President, making the presentation, "particularly sports and hobbies, there are two types of participants – 'givers and takers.' Some go along for the enjoyment... leave much for the benefit of all. Others hang on... for what they can get out of it.

"Howard is a giver. In his many articles, he has given much enjoyment, sensible proven materials, honestly presented for the benefit of all who read and use his information. Few people in radio control have not benefited from Howard's continuous activity of over 30 years of contribution to the hobby. He reflects many of the aims of the AMA in his open willingness to furnish information and to help anyone who asks."

But Howard McEntee was, and is, a great deal more than just a modeler-writer. He was, for instance, editor of *Model Airplane News* for five years starting before the end of World War II, and worked as an editor in other fields before many AMA members were born. A graduate of the University of Maryland, where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in 1928, Howard participated in ham radio, starting when it was still in its infancy, and remembers clearly the spark coil and crystal detector.

Young McEntee's interest in aviation was stirred by magazines his father brought home during World War I. His first models, built in high school during the early 1920s, were from kits by Ideal, Wading River, and White. These generally called for hard wood and small nail construction. During lulls in college study, he continued to build, mostly scale, and continued avidly making these realistic ships after graduation. Most were made from plans he scaled up himself from magazine three-views.

As a sophomore in high school, Howard met Charles Hampson Grant, who was then operating a boy's summer camp. Charlie, an aeronautical engineer who had, among other things, worked under Virginius Clark at McCook Field, flown hang gliders long before World War I, been a

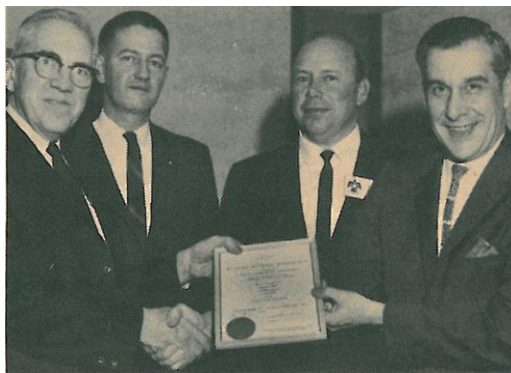
prime mover in large scale model plane and kit manufacturing before the Great Depression braked such things, and was to be a *Model Airplane News* editor himself for more than a decade, hired McEntee to teach model airplane building at his camp. When Charlie became *MAN*'s editor, Howard established himself as the Number 1 contributor with a fine series of construction articles and rubber-powered flying scale models – which old times still talk about. These included the *S.E.-5*, Howard's favorite, a Cessna which sometimes seems immortal, the Nieuport 28, and the Boeing *B-9*.

Leaving *MAN* in 1950, Howard began his famous radio-control column, which is still a highlight of the *American Modeler*. With his wife Elinor, he covers the Nats each year for that magazine's Annual – and has missed few since his first in Wichita in 1946. All this is but one facet of Howard's now 15-year-old free lancing stint. *Popular Mechanics*, *Popular Electronics*, *Popular Science*, and *Boys Life* are among those who have presented his fascinating projects – including RC cars, tractors, trucks, transmitters and receivers. He is an expert machinist, given to such fun projects as a meticulously worked out 4-cycle engine.

The radio fraternity knows him as a top-notch competitor. Probably the most effective promoter of Class 2, the old Intermediate Class, he's won many major meets (including Intermediate at the 1961 Nats) with his own-designed ships and equipment. Actually, his work with pulse justly marked him as “the father of pulse.” The present trend to all forms of proportional would have been greatly delayed had it not been for Howard's one-man battle at a time when the trade was preoccupied with on-off carrier-wave equipment with escapements, and early reed sets.

Although Howard worked out a 2-speed ignition Brown Junior for RC in 1939, it wasn't until 1950 that he got around to flying his first gas (and RC) model, a Berkeley *Brigadier*.

Once given to loading down a record player with boogie-woogie records for his building sessions, he uses a ping-pong table these days for a workbench – surrounded by old planes and cabinets of hamming equipment. He reads prodigiously – modeling mags, radio publications, newspapers. Strangely, he thinks it takes longer to build a model now – they make the print smaller? – so he prefers to repair badly dented ships rather than start from scratch. His only complaint is that, having made a living for so long at something he enjoys, he “doesn't have a hobby anymore!”



*Howard McEntee, left, is presented his AMA Fellowship certificate by Carl Schmaedig, right, the Dist. II V.P.; Jim Moynihan, next to Howard, and Ed Izzo, RC Contest Board Chairman, look on.  
Source: Model Aviation, April 1965*

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*The following was published in a 1971 issue of Model Aviation magazine.*

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### **Hall of Fame Award to Howard McEntee**

Howard G. McEntee, Ridgewood, NJ, has been named to the Model Aviation Hall of Fame by the Council of Past Presidents of the AMA. This is the first and only award to be announced for 1971.

McEntee was unanimously voted into the Hall of Fame as a result of a long and brilliant career as a writer, magazine editor, model aircraft and electronic circuit designer, and flyer of radio control aircraft. His career began in high school during the 1920s and has continued almost unabated until just this past year when illness forced a rest and hospital treatment.

During World War II and up to 1950, McEntee was editor of Model Airplane News. Since then, he has been a feature writer for American Aircraft Modeler and many other publications in the model aviation, science, and electronics fields. He was also a principal reporter of national and world championships, best known for his RC expertise, although his interest spans all aspects of model aviation. He and his wife, Eleanor, have been familiar participants on the scene of most major RC competitions and other events of the past 20 years.

The 1971 Model Aviation Hall of Fame award is the first to be administered solely by the Academy of Model Aeronautics.

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*The following was published in a September 1972 issue of American Aircraft Modeler magazine, in the "AMA News" section.*

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### **DCRC "Howard McEntee Award"**

Among his many aeromodeling achievements, Howard McEntee was a brilliant writer in several capacities during his life; he passed away in January. Just prior to his death he was the first and

only man to be named to the 1971 Model Aviation Hall of Fame (March 1972, *AAM*, p. 57.). Since then, many of his friends from all over the world have expressed a desire to continue in Howard's name whatever efforts he had greatest interest in. A fund for this purpose has been created by AMA; contributions sent to AMA HQ should be designated for credit to the "AMA Fund for Howard McEntee."

Howard McEntee will be remembered fondly in many other ways. We see, for instance, that the Board of Directors of the AMA chartered District of Columbia Radio Control Club [DCRC] has decided to initiate an annual "Howard McEntee Award" for the best technical article published in the club's *DCRC Newsletter* each year. Writing, especially of technical articles but in non-technical terms, was a special talent of Howard's - thus, the basis for the DCRC memorial award is very fitting.

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