



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of JAMES E. ADAMS

March 12, 1921 - April 23, 2003

AMA #463



Transcribed & Edited by SS (07/2003)

Career:

- Worked for North American until his retirement in 1984; spent some time in the military and some time working for Curtiss Wright Technical Institute as well
- Attended the first Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) Champs
- Editor of SAM Speaks for eight years, two of which he was also SAM president
- 1963/1964: Was one of the original members of the SCAMPS when it started
- 1965 until his death in April 2003: Served as secretary/treasurer of his local club, the Southern California Antique Model Plane Society (SCAMPS)
- 1997 until his death in April 2003: Editor of his club's newsletter
- Was the first person to serve three terms as SAM president during which time SAM expanded internationally
- Created the SAM model airplane magazine library
- Designed the double windshield on the space shuttle that eliminated a fogging problem
- Elected president of the California United Free Flight Model Airplane Clubs shortly before his death in April 2003

Honors:

- 1993: Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) Hall of Fame

The following article on James E. Adams ran in the July/August 2003 issue of SAM Speaks, the publication of the Society of Antique Modelers. Jim was on the cover of the issue and had many tributes to him throughout the entire publication. This particular one was written by David L. Ramsey. The article was written shortly before Jim's death, though it was published after.

SAM's Samson

By David L. Ramsey

Seldom do you find a man these days who is living in the town where he was born and raised in – we are a mobile society. But such is the case with Jim Adams.

Jim was born in Santa Ana, California, March 16, 1921. He went to grade school, Willard Junior High School, and high school in Santa Ana. In 1940, he went to work for North American, the aerospace giant, staying with them until he went in the service. After his discharge, he went to Curtiss Wright Technical Institute where Major Mosely manufactured the Super Cyke. He was involved at Curtiss Wright in 1947 when he was called back to North American to work on the B-45 bomber. He remained there working on various aircraft, missiles, and space projects until his retirement in 1984. The hometown boy just stayed home.

There is much more to Jim Adams than the aerospace scientist in Santa Ana. He began modeling in grade school and has continued pretty much ever since. Jim builds three or more models a year

to this day and he is into gas and rubber Old-Timers, big and small. There are a lot of old guys who still build model airplanes, but very few have made contributions like Jim Adams.

Adams was into the Society of Antique Modelers (SAM) before it was named. With other friends from California, he attended the first Champs, which was held at the East Colfax Airfield, just outside of Denver, Colorado, and attended many more over the years.

Jim has not only built and flown Old-Timer models for a long time; he has been an innovator in the SAM ranks. Jim was editor of SAM Speaks for eight years, during two years of which he was also SAM president. He has been editor of Gas Lines, his local club newsletter, since 1997. He has also served as secretary/treasurer for the club, SAM 13, the SCAMPS (Southern California Antique Model Plane Society) since 1965. But most of all, while serving as the first three-term SAM president, the current international SAM movement was formulated as we know it today [2003].

Just look at this list of SAM structures that were instigated during his six-year tenure:

- Creation of SAM Legal Designs for Rubber and Gas Models through the work of Ernie Linn, Bob Larsh, and George Armstead. Gene Wallock is now at the helm of this effort as you may have noticed in recent SAM Speaks articles.
- Began SAM Hall of Fame selection and presentations at the SAM Champs banquet. Bill Vanderbeek is now in charge of this task.
- The SAM by-laws were rewritten to recognize overseas chapters. Chapters were formed in France, Germany, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, Austria, the Czech Republic, and Great Britain.
- Defined the duties of the Board of Directors and established the annual board meeting to the membership meeting at the SAM Champs.
- Created the SAM model airplane magazine library by purchasing the original copies with SAM funds and convinced Gene Wallock to become librarian when he lived in California and to keep the job when he moved to Lawton, Oklahoma.
- Created the Chet Lanzo plan collection and got Floyd Reck to run that service. Tom McCoy got most of the original plans from Chet while he was alive.
- Encouraged Woody Woodman to serve as chapter listings chair for many years. Tom McCoy has assigned Bucky Walter to serve in that capacity now.
- Enlisted Bob Angel and Bob Larsh to improve and clean up the SAM rulebook.

In short, Mr. Adams has been the strong idea man in the SAM movement, and he still is.

The above information on SAM's Samson was collected and written before Jim's death on April 23, 2003. I have learned since that he actually was born in Orange, California, only two and a half miles from his home in Santa Ana. He went to high school and was also buried there. Jim read what I had written from our interview and was embarrassed that he had bared himself so completely to me, but asked if I would be his scribe if he preceded me in death. He died early one morning at home typing the SCAMPS' newsletter. Mike Myers finished the May edition and Kevin Sherman will be the new editor.

– *David Ramsey*

Mike Myers wrote, after a conversation with Sal Taibi:

“Sal said he and Jim were among the original members of SCAMPS back in 1963 or 1964 when Bud McNorgan founded the SCAMPS. Sal met Adams at Mile Square Park about that time and the two of them frequently traveled together to the Old-Timer events that John Pond organized at the AMA Nationals for a period of 10 or 12 years from 1964 through the mid-1970s and also frequently traveled together to the various SAM Championships.

“Jim was there at the very beginning of SAM and the Old-Timer movement. Bill Northrop recently sent me pictures showing Jim launching his Forster 99-powered KG3 at the Glenview AMA Nationals in 1965, which Pond trumpeted as the first time that the Old-Timer events at an AMA Nationals drew more entrants than did the AMA classes.

“Sal said Adams designed the double windshield on the space shuttle, which eliminated a fogging problem. Jim was a longtime program manager in the aerospace industry. I kidded him about his last title, which was “manager of dumps and drains” for the space shuttle program at Rockwell. Despite the unusual title, it was a very responsible position and Jim managed large groups of people over the years.

“Adams spent more than 40 years working at North American. Jim was working there when they designed the Mustang. He told me that he had solved a ‘jamming problem’ in the Mustang’s ammunition feed chutes by ‘using knowledge about how to draw a 3-2 ellipse I’d gotten from a Zaic yearbook.’ Jimmie was probably 21 or 22 when he did that.

“Bill and Joan Hannan remember Jim as a good scale modeler, which I suppose reflects one of Jim’s true gifts – the wide range of things he could do and the number and different kinds of people who were attracted to him and his calm friendly personality. He built and flew scale models, Old-Timer Free Flight models and Radio Controlled (RC) models. He was a good writer, a good leader and a good manager, being recently elected president of the CUFFMAC (California United Free Flight Model Airplane Clubs). He and Sal Taibi were the heart and soul of the SCAMPS and had been for years.

“Jim’s passing is going to leave a big hole in a lot of lives, not least his family and his two grandchildren, Allison and Steven, who he raised after their mother died when they were very young. Allison is now 18 and Steven is 20.”

– *Mike Myers*

Eric Cooper, president of SAM 35 (United Kingdom), wrote:

“We are all saddened to hear of the untimely death of Jim Adams. Jim had many friends over here in the United Kingdom, and I was delighted to meet him during one of his visits. Please be assured that the committee and members of SAM 35 share in your grief. His passing is a sad loss to the Old-Timer movement, as without his enthusiasm and vision the fraternity of SAM worldwide would not exist.”

– *Eric Cooper*

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