



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of EARL AVERILL



Written by AMA staff (12/2012), Reformatted by JS (01/2013)

The following was published in the December 2012 issue of Model Aviation magazine. Earl Averill was interviewed by Jay Smith, Model Aviation Editor-in-Chief.

I Am the AMA

Earl Averill

Former major league baseball player

JS: How did you get involved with model aviation?

EA: I remember asking for a dime model when I was probably in the fourth grade and trying to put it together. When I was in the sixth grade, one of my classmates brought a rubber-powered model to school. I was hooked. I went home and told my mom that I needed \$3 to buy the airplane from him.

I had several engines in the earlier days including Arden, Cyclone, Bantam, many Madewells, and dozens of others during the next 10 years or so. I progressed into RC, even making my own escapement.

I didn't have much early success flying; success was measured by a crash landing close enough to locate. I visited Walter Good in Washington, D.C., while I was with a major league club. He took me into his model room in the basement and I viewed his *Rudder Bug* among other models.

JS: How has model aviation impacted your life and/or career?

EA: Since my dad is in the Baseball Hall of Fame, one could guess that baseball is in my blood. My dad was, and still is, my idol and I am pleased that he never pushed me. My wife never knew I wanted to play baseball until I left for Cleveland and a tryout.

I continued to build models throughout my baseball life. I lost a new DeBolt *Live Wire Champion* on an initial flight in Tucson, Arizona. I had spent hours preparing it with a Babcock single channel with escapements on the rudder and engine, and checkerboard wings. I was one proud owner of that plane.

My wife, kids, and one of my teammates went with me after practice to entertain a maiden flight. As I prepared for takeoff I inadvertently hit the on/off switch. I released the airplane, realizing too late that the switch was off. The perfectly trimmed model had a full tank of fuel. We followed that airplane for perhaps an hour until it slowly disappeared toward the Mexican border.

JS: What disciplines of modeling do you currently participate in?

EA: I have a room full of models, including several electrics, but I haven't flown for the past couple of years. Most of my modeling is fussing and building. I still have visions of building a near-quarter- [scale] size Warbird.

JS: What are your other hobbies?

EA: Right now my hobby is watching any game on TC. I am, and will continue to be, a fan of my Oregon Ducks. Pat and I try to attend at least one game each year in Eugene. I love to play bridge.

JS: Who (or what) has influenced you most?

EA: My dad was my influence. My parents were married over 61 years before dad passed away in 1983 after attending the 50th year celebration of the initial All-Star game in Chicago. When I first started my baseball career, I got my first glimpse of how much a fan favorite my dad was. People from every walk of life went out of their way to enhance my belief in my dad. He was a friend to anyone who met him.

JS: Could you share a memorable moment during your baseball career?

EA: I don't have many bragging rights; my career was mostly as a utility player. I opened the season twice with the Cubs at third base. I became a successful pinch hitter with the Cubs. I hit 21 home runs as an original Angel in 1961 in a little over 300 at bats.

I think as you mature, nature takes hold and difficult tasks become a little easier. When you attempt to do too much, failure is a sure by-product.

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