



The AMA History Project Presents: Autobiography of C. LESLIE (LES) HARD

Modeler, Newsletter Editor

November 28, 1913 – 2005 Started modeling in 1927

AMA #4639



Written & Submitted by CLH (05/1996); Updated (07/2002); Transcribed by NR (09/1996); Edited by SS (7/2002), Updated by JS (9/2008), (12/2008), (09/2008)

Career:

- The official newsletter editor at the AMA Nationals every year from 1974 - 1986
- Edited the High Flight magazine of the International Miniature Aircraft Association (IMAA) for a total of eight years

Honors:

- 1978: AMA Distinguished Service Award
 - 1978: AMA Fellow
 - 1998: AMA Pioneer Award
 - 1999: Model Aviation Hall of Fame
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I was born at Washington Court House, Ohio, on November 28, 1913.

My first contact with airplanes was at age 7-1/2 years when a Barnstormer flew in and landed across the road from the County Fairgrounds during Fair Week to take up passengers. It was a Curtiss JN 4d. I still remember the pilot's name, a Lt. Davis.

The second airplane I became acquainted with was an Alexander-Eaglerock.

I started modeling in June 1927 shortly after Charles A. Lindbergh flew the Atlantic. I constructed solid wood model of his Spirit of St. Louis. I entered it in local hobby fair, quite a feat for me, and I won first place.

I subscribed to the American Boy magazine in early 1928 and joined the Airplane Model League of America (AMLA), headed by a man named Merrill Hamburg, and started building and flying stick and tissue rubber-powered models in early 1929.

I moved with my folks to Lansing, Mich. in early September 1930 and entered junior high school, joined Model Club in school and advanced to larger rubber-powered models.

In early 1937, I became interested in gas-powered models and purchased a secondhand Brown Jr., Model D engine. I designed and built my first Free Flight model, which I called Canary because it was painted bright yellow and trimmed in black. I began attending contests around the area and got well acquainted with the ways of contests and many modelers.

Spring 1940 saw a gathering of interested Free Flighters from all around the State who met at the Capital City Airport and formed an organization named Michigan Model Aircraft Council; I was elected the first president.

In May 1940, I entered a new Class A Free Flight model in a meet held by the Flint Gas Bugs and won first place but had the misfortune of losing the model in a thermal flyaway. But won a silver trophy, plus a new Ohlsson-Rice .19 engines.

In June 1941, I designed a new Class A model powered by an Ohlsson-Rice .19 and went to the Chicago Nationals, entering in Class A Open Category and placing sixth out of 57 entrants. But again lost my model on the third flight in a thermal flyaway.

Soon afterwards, I got the model back, but without the engine or ignition system. I had a spare system and engines and two weeks later, at a meet near Adrian, Mich., caught a thermal and followed the model for 10 miles but it was still on a rising air current; that was the end. In mid-June 1942, I helped run a two-day state model meeting at Miller Airport, near Eaton Rapids, Mich.

In late June of 1942, I was inducted in the U.S. Army Air Corps and went to Armament School at Buckley Field, near Denver, Colo. I was assigned to the 336th Bomb Group, 481st Squadron (M) as an armorer on Martin B-26 Marauders. Serving at Page Field, Ft. Myers, Fla., at the Bombing Range near Avon Park, Fla., at MacDill Field, near Tampa, Fla., then at LCAAF near Lake Charles, La.

While on this base, I helped form and headed a model club named the Aero-Nuts. I also worked on the base newspaper called The Log as staff artist and assistant to the editor.

I was married in November 1945 and discharged from the Service in early January 1946. We set up housekeeping with my wife in my folks' house. I got back into modeling in 1946 and for a short period in 1947.

In 1949 we began construction on the house we now are living in and have for better than 44 years.

I was out of modeling until around the summer of 1968, when I joined the Lansing Flying Aces and met many former modelers I had flown with before World War II.

The club elected me vice president in 1969. I helped run a large Free Flight meet in the summer of 1969. In November 1970, a new Radio Control (RC) Club was formed and in January 1971, I joined that club at their first regular meeting.

In February 1971, I created and named the club newsletter and served as its editor. I called it the Bee Line. The name of the new club was Capital Area Radio Drone Squadron. C.A.R.D.S. for Short. I designed the club logo using a bee in the design since we were Drones.

In 1974 during one of the Weak Signals RC Expos, I was approached by John Worth, Executive Director of AMA, and Johnny Clemens, then president of the Academy, and was told that they were planning a daily newsletter to be published during Nationals (Nats) week and that I was to be the editor. They also said that the Nats were to be held at Chennault Air Force Base near Lake Charles, La. Man this was like being told that I was to go back to my second home as I have said I was stationed at Lake Charles, La. during WWII. Well, I did the daily newsletter for 12 seasons – 1974-1975-1976-1977-1978, missed out in 1979 due to health problem, but was back in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, and for the last time in 1986.

I had also put out a daily newsletter at the World RC Aerobatic Championships at Springfield, Ohio in July 1977.

I retired from my job at Central Advertising Out Door in August 1979. In the fall of 1980, while attending a Model Expo near Chicago, I joined a fledgling organization named International Miniature Aircraft Association (IMAA).

But I am a little ahead of things, as in 1978 during one of the Four Mini Model RC Expos we called the Great Lakes Expos, I was presented with not one but two awards by AMA, one was the Grade Of Fellow and the other the AMA Distinguished Service Award.

Then in the spring of 1981 while attending the annual RC Expo at Toledo I was approached by officials of the IMAA and asked if I would take over the editorship of their quarterly publication. I agreed and put out my first issue in the summer of that year. I was editor of the publication for all of three and a half years, but had to give it up due to a health problem.

In late 1985, I began to get letters and phone calls from officials as well as members asking me to take the editorship back because the present editor was over three months behind schedule.

I accepted and put out the Winter Issue 1986 and continued editing and publishing the magazine until the Summer Issue 1990.

Then I was back doing the club newsletter during 1984-86. Then gave that up. In May 1994, I took back the newsletter and did it until the 25th Anniversary Issue in February 1996, when the club voted to discontinue putting the newsletter out.

Well that is a short rundown on my modeling life up until now.

*(signed) Les Hard
May 19, 1996*

Addendum

In the spring of 1996, I worked with John Worth on the preparation of the first Celebration of

Eagles by designing and producing over 50 nametags for those who were to attend this event.

I attended the Celebration of Eagles at AMA Headquarters and the banquet in early July of 1996.

During the late summer of 1998, I was awarded the AMA Pioneer Award.

During the summer of 1999, I was one of 11 chosen to be inducted into the [Model Aviation] Hall of Fame. In March 2000, I was given my award plaque by the District III AMA vice president at our monthly club meeting.

On June 15, 2002, I celebrated my 65th year as a member of the AMA. I received my first membership card on June 15, 1937; number 4639.

I will celebrate my 89th birthday on November 28, 2002.

(signed) Les Hard
July 29, 2002

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