



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of BRIAN O'MEARA



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The following was published in the January 2016 issue of Model Aviation magazine, in the "I Am the AMA" column, written by Jay Smith.

I Am the AMA Brian O'Meara, Warbirds Over The Rockies organizer

Jay Smith: How did you get involved with model aviation?

Brian O'Meara: I have been in love forever with anything that flies. I started building balsa models in 1953, when I was five. I have a picture of myself after my first building contest, wearing my Hopalong Cassidy cowboy suit. I am holding balsa models of an Me 262, an F-84, and an F-86 that I had built and painted. My RC flying career started almost 50 years ago.

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

BO: Building model airplanes has always been a big part of my life. There is always something new to learn and so many different disciplines.

There are two distinct skillsets - building the plane to last 1,000 flights and the skill to fly it realistically. I have learned to concentrate on details. I want my planes to last 1,000 flights, so I try to analyze what can fail and eliminate that problem. This philosophy carries over into my everyday life.

I am lucky that my wife, Bonnie, supports the hobby. She helped design our 2,000-square-foot workshop. She goes to contests and helps service the planes, along with calling for me.

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

BO: I love anything that flies, but my efforts today are focused on military scale. Not only do I love the aircraft themselves, but I am fascinated with military aviation history from both the designers' and pilots' perspectives. I have an aviation library with about 500 books.

I have competed in Scale modeling for decades, including the U.S. Scale Masters and Top Gun. Bob Violett and I are the only two who have attended every Top Gun since its inception in 1989.

I was asked by the AMA to fly my 1/3-scale P-47 at the EAA Air Show in Oshkosh, Wisconsin,

the last two years. What a thrill to be on the flightline with the full-scale Hanier, F-4, Matt Chapman, and the Air Force Thunderbirds. It is the largest full-scale air show in the world and it was an honor to be chosen to demonstrate RC models in front of 150,000 spectators.

JS: What are your other hobbies?

BO: I am never bored. I was a professional musician in the 60s and still play a little guitar. Bonnie and I love to dance, especially the Argentine Tango. We go to Buenos Aires, Argentina, frequently to take tango lessons.

When I was 50, I climbed the Grand Teton, which has 8,000 feet of vertical hiking. The last 3,000 feet is all rock climbing. Last summer, Bonnie and I climbed the 3,000-foot volcano, Mt. Vesuvius, in Naples, Italy. Swimming and photography round out my passions.

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

BO: My mom and dad are at the top of my list. My mom gave me a love of athletics and the arts. My dad gave me a work ethic. He taught me to figure out the right thing to do in life and then go do it.

My training by the Jesuits during my high school years gave me a thirst for knowledge along with the attitude of never quitting a project until it is complete. Always striving for excellence in every endeavor is a Jesuit philosophy. I have a sign in both my office and my shop that says "Good Enough Never Is."

JS: When thinking of the Warbirds Over The Rockies event, what are you most proud of?

BO: After 12 years, the event has evolved into something special. I don't know of any other event that comprises so many elements.

Of course, we fly military planes, but we put on a noontime show that highlights the history of military aviation from World War I through current jets. Our pyrotechnics show is realistically awesome.

During our banquet, we usually feature a World War II ace such as Bud Anderson, so I would say that I am most proud of the educational properties of the event, showcasing RC models and the history of military aviation to those who have no idea of the sophistication of RC modeling. The event allows us to help fund Mental Health America of Colorado and we have raised about \$175,000 for this worthwhile cause.

I am semiretired at 67. I have been the president/general manager of O'Meara Ford for almost 50 years and it is now time for my kids to run the family business. Our Ford dealership is 101 years old and was started by my grandfather in 1913, employing 300 people.

You could say that I am one of the lucky ones. I have loved my job, I am healthy, and I am

blessed with wonderful family and friends.

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