
Autobiography of MATHEW J. KANIA

Modeler, Model kit designer for Megow-Sterling, Competitor, Contest Director

Modeler since 1927

1917 to October 26, 1997

AMA Number: 1473

Written & Submitted by MJK (10/96)

Transcribed by NR (11/96)

Edited by SS (2002)

Career:

- Employed by Megow Model Corp. as designer and draftsman
- Became Chief Engineer at Megow
- Designed the (Miss Richmond) second successful flying gas model after Maxwell Basset
- Became chief engineer and production manager for P.D.Q. Products Co.
- Instructor of model plane building and flying class, at the Nicetown Boy's Club in Philadelphia, Pa.
- Originated the Annual Challenge Fun Fly between the Cape Coral R/Sea Hawks and the Southwest Florida RC Aeromodelers of Fort Myers, Fla.

Honors:

- 1985 Recipient of the first Cape Coral R/Sea Hawks Man of the Year Award
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I, Mathew J. Kania, 128 Southwest 54th Street, Cape Coral, Florida, (79 years of age and still very much alive) started building model planes in early 1927 using balsa wood and ambroid cement. I entered them in local hobby shops. Later the same year, I designed my flying stick models using rubber bands for power. I also made a lot of gliders, hand-launched and tow-line.

My first fuselage built-up model with 1/16" square balsa was the Spirit of St. Louis. In 1927, being a young boy, I drew up a plan of what my eyes saw from a 3/4 view picture in the newspaper of the plane with which Lindbergh crossed the ocean. I used balsa and shoebox tissue paper with rubber cement for the adhesive. The model did not fly well, but it pulled well on the porch floor in Philadelphia, Pa. where I lived. The neighbors thought this was great and said I would be another Lindbergh.

I continued building all kinds of rubber band powered models, thereafter. I took my models to school, and the Sisters of the Catholic school I attended thought my models were so great that they had me take the models to hobby and craft shows to Center City Philadelphia.

In 1932 a hobby shop owner asked me to design a baby Rise-off-Ground (R.O.G.) that he kitted and sold to the junior high schools for their hobby classes. The models would have to take off the ground and fly for 30 seconds. For that they received a grease monkey pin. The shop owner brought me my first Brown Junior Motor #11.

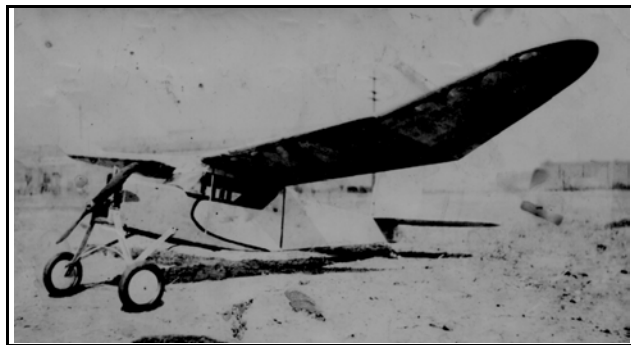


As a member of the Philadelphia Model Plane Association, I built and entered all of my designs in model plane meets, both indoor and outdoor. One of the years I received my first place trophy for the year. Jesse Beiberman was our club president and a high school teacher. He gave me the incentive to continue in the model airplane field. I feel that I owe him for my success, especially in getting into the gasoline engine era. He had the transportation and took me to all the contests that made my name and models famous.

I could go on and on about the highlights of my life and model planes. I guess one great memory was when I served in the Navy during the World War II. I had my training at Bainbridge, Maryland in early 1944. After a nine-day leave, 800 of us were to leave for the ships to go over seas. The officer in charge told me that I was to stay back and be with the ships company or be with the elite members of the base.

After a time they allowed me to take another leave. This time I came back to the base with my U-Control models, which I flew during

chow time. Thousands of (boots) watched and gave me a big hand for my performance. They never saw anything like this in their day. I also flew my models at pre-baseball games. For about three months I was assigned to the model shop where we built model planes and ships with a lot of detail for recognition training. The next big break came when I received orders to go to the Patuxent River Naval Air Station in



Maryland as a one-man draft. In a couple of days I was assigned to the land plane and sea plane group. My job was being a ground crew plane captain. This is when you are to take care of two or three planes and keep them in flying condition. I enjoyed the job. If we ever needed parts for the planes, I went along with the officer or officers, and they let me fly the planes upstairs. I never mentioned in my story that I'm telling, but I did have lessons in flying light planes starting in 1934.

As a ground crew plane captain, one thing I will always remember is when we had the Army/Navy Fighter Conference in 1945. The manufacturers brought in all their latest planes from all over the U.S. to show what they could do.

All of the big brass were there to witness a contest between a new F-8-F and a Jap Zero. The event was to take off with full brakes and full power and climb to 1,000 feet and fly back about a mile to a designated spot. The two planes took off when they received their signal. The F-8-F took off in 34 feet, climbed straight up to the 1,000 foot altitude and to the designated spot while the Zero was still climbing to the 1,000 foot altitude.

I will never forget how Forrestal (Secretary of Defense) held on to his hat and watched the F-8-F climb. The next day was devoted to the Marines and Coast Guard showing off and flying all different types of craft, which they considered buying for their services. One of the people invited to the Conference was Charles Lindbergh.

I will never forget as long as I live when he, being my idol of aviation, asked to fly my Grumman F-2-G of which I was plane captain and how I spoke to him and checked him out before takeoff. Not too many members of the A.M.A. had such an opportunity as this in their lifetime.

Designs by Matt Kania Kitted by Manufacturers

Designs Kitted by Megow Corp. Philadelphia, Pa.:

1934 - Helped in the Design & Engineering of the Flying Quaker

1938 - Designed Class A & B Gas Model Free Flight (Ranger)

1945 - Designed (Stardust) National speed record holder while in U.S. Navy

1946 - Designed (Flying Circus) Profile U-control Stunt model 1946 Designed Tyro); Built up U-control Stunt Model

- Designed (Super Quaker) Class C-Free Flight

1947 - Designed (Perky) Class A Speed Model

- Designed (Baby Quaker) Class A Free Flight

Designs Kitted by P.D.Q. Products Co . Philadelphia, Pa.:

1948 - Designed (Super Clown) Class B U-Control Stunt Model

Designs Kitted by Sterling Models Philadelphia, Pa.:

1950 - Designed the worlds most populous Profile Control Line Stunt Model (Ringmaster)

1953-58 - Designed (F-51 Mustang) semi scale profile

- (Yak-9) semi scale profile
- (Ringmaster Jr.) Class A-Profile
- (Super Ringmaster) Built up Fuselage model
- (Baby Ringmaster) Profile model
- (Space Kaydet) Fuselage Class A

Other Achievements

Started building models in 1927. Won contests in solid wood scale models outdoor and indoor rubber-powered indoor Microfilm models. Was member of the Philadelphia Model Plane Associates and Philadelphia Gas Model Association.

1939 - Employed by Megow Model Corp. as designer and draftsman

- Built Megow (soaring Eagle) for 1939 New York World's Fair

1946 - Became Chief Engineer at Megow

1932-33 - Designed the (Miss Richmond) 2nd successful flying gas model after Maxwell Basset

1948-49 - Became chief engineer and production manager for P.D.Q. Products Co.

- Designed the (Sunday Flyer)
Fuselage Midwing Model

1957-58 - Instructor of model plane building and flying class, at the Nicetown Boy's Club in Philadelphia, Pa.

1941-1958 - Entered many contests for Free Flight and U-control in areas of Philadelphia, Pa., Reading, Pa., Lebanon, Pa., Harrisburg, Pa., Newark, N.J., New York, N.Y., Atlantic City, N.J.

Leadership

Helped establish Patuxent Model Engineers in 1944 with Harold Debolt and Bob Dishong while in the U.S. Navy Club Officer.

1983 - Chairman of the scale contest for the S.W. Fort Myers Club

1985 - Vice-Pres.

1986 - President of Cape Coral R/Sea Hawks Club

1985 - Recipient of first Cape Coral R/Sea Hawks Man of the Year Award.

- Originated the Annual Challenge Fun Fly between the Cape Coral R/Sea Hawks and the Southwest Florida RC Aeromodelers of Fort Myers

(signed) Mat Kania 10/96

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