

MODEL AERONAUTICAL
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC.

Newsletter

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Vale Gordon Burford 1919 – 2010

It was with sorrow that the Australian and International model aviation community received the sad news that Gordon Burford had found his last flying field, hopefully with blue skies and where there is no wind or rain. Gordon and Jose (you can't really talk about one and not the other in an MAAA context) were very much leaders and visionaries in the early MAAA days and devoted a significant number of years to the Association.

In the 'History of MAAA' written by John Marquette, Gordon states: *"I started aeromodelling in 1929, when I was ten years old. My first model was a tractor model from a plan in Boy's Own magazine, made from hardwood (courtesy of a paling fence) and oiled silk. I later discovered that balsa was a better medium for model building.*

I flew free flight rubber models in contests at Victoria Park Race Course (South Australia) together with Jack Black and Boyd Felstead and others and have continued my interest in free flight over the years, my main love being A2 gliders.

Gordon described how in 1937 he bought his first engine, a Mighty Midget supplied in pieces which had to be assembled. It cost three pounds nineteen and sixpence. From then on his interest in model engines never ceased. He went on to recall, *"I always wanted to make my own model engines. I felt that reasonably priced, Australian made engines should be available. For a number of years I worked as a licensed Instrument Technician, making a few engines in my spare time.*

In 1949 I decided that my hobby of making engines should become a full time job. With Jose's blessing and opinion that 'we will never be rich but we will never starve, go ahead and give it a try' work commenced.

The first production engine was a fixed head Diesel, based on the 'Drone' which we called a 'Gee Bee'. Later came the Sabre 2.5cc followed by the Glo Chief engines. Brian Horrocks won the English Gold Trophy using a Glo Chief 49.

Until this time I had been working in a back yard factory at my house in Grange South Australia, subcontracting work to Frank Bargwanna and Ken Garrett. Jose and I decided to buy a block at Belfast Street Grange where we built our factory and eventually employed up to 20 people including my son Peter who joined the firm in 1958.

The factory production reached a maximum output of 1,000 units per month. Late in 1956 we decided to use the name 'Taipan' for future engines until production ceased in 1976. I have lost track of how many different versions of each size were made as well as a range of Taipan Glo Plugs and propellers. I 'retired' from manufacturing in 1974 and set up a business importing OS Engines and Pilot Kits (if you can't beat them join them)"

When the late Ron Neville decided to retire as MAAA Secretary, Gordon offered to take on the position as a joint effort with Jose. At the 27th Nationals Conference in December 1973, Gordon and Jose were introduced as the incoming joint Federal Secretary and Treasurer. This position was held from 1973 to 1984.

Gordon goes on to recount his attendance at CIAM from 1974-85 then held in Paris. *"Having previously met the Chairman of CIAM, Sandy Piminoff, he helped me to be accepted into the groups at the meetings, and I was soon in the lobbying sessions and talks which go on after hours. After a while Australian submissions were listened to with interest and then accepted.*



I was elected Chairman of the CIAM Pylon Subcommittee and gained the support of members from other countries which enabled us to get Australia's proposals for a new set of rules to be accepted. I met and made friends with people from many countries, and through these friendships a valuable contribution was made to Australia's standing in the Aeromodelling World". During Gordon's time in office a National Insurance Policy was arranged, specific radio frequencies for R/C model use were obtained along with Government Grants for a number of World Championship and other events.

In July 1985 Gordon was awarded the Paul Tissandier Diploma by FAI in recognition for his services to aeromodelling. This was the first time such an award had been made to an Australian aeromodeller.

Gordon and Jose were awarded MAAA Life Membership for 'Services to Aeromodelling in Australia' in 1982/3. At the MAAA Council Conference in 1988 Gordon was inducted into the MAAA Hall of Fame as a 'Competitor at the first Nationals 1938' and again in 2000 for 'Services to Aeromodelling'

Those Australian modellers who knew Gordon have ongoing fond memories of their association with him and this will remain over time. Through the MAAA Museum and the Gordon Burford Event at the Nationals, those who did not know him will appreciate that Aeromodelling in Australia will be the poorer without his life.

Rest in Peace Gordon and Jose