

A TRIBUTE TO JOHN BRODAK

Business Leader – Community Advocate – National Champion

In the world of model aviation, John Brodak was a champion in every sense of the word.

A life-long builder and flyer of control-line airplanes, his achievements in C/L spanned seven decades, culminating with his election into the Academy of Model Aeronautics Hall of Fame. Along the way, he became a Lifetime Member of the AMA, a Lifetime Patron of the AMA Museum, a director and later President of PAMPA, and a tireless promoter on behalf of model aviation.

The road to the AMA Hall of Fame began in 1952 when, at the age of 13, John purchased a Comet rubber-band model airplane, the first of many planes of that type that he bought and flew. Within two years, he purchased his first “real” kit, a Sterling P-51 with a Fox. 35 engine.

He and his brother George built the P-51 through trial-and-error, and the result was not very well built. John was a self-taught flyer and, without any advice or guidance, it took him two years of trying before he could fly a full tank of fuel without a wreck. The experience was one of the reasons John insisted that all Brodak kits have full-sized plans, step-by-step instructions with pictures, and a complete materials list.

John’s first hobby shop, which he called Carmichaels Hobby Shop, was a modest group of model planes, glue, dope, props, and engines that he sold from the corner of his family’s grocery store. His next venture, Brodak’s Hobby Center, was in Washington, PA, and lasted about three years.

It would be another 15 years until he decided to devote a section of his Carmichaels Video store to model aviation products. During those 15 years, John took over his parents’ grocery store, enlarged it, built two more grocery stores, purchased a mobile home park, opened a printing business, and ended up running 10 different businesses.

His love of C/L never wavered and, in 1991 he launched Brodak Manufacturing and Distributing Company, Inc., a business that has become the largest kit manufacturer in the world and a none-stop shop for everything related to both control-line and radio-controlled model aviation.

Through Brodak Manufacturing, he introduced Brodak Butyrate Dope Products, with the largest selection of colors anywhere. He released a series of 1/2 A planes, Almost-Ready-to-Cover and Almost-Ready-To-Fly planes, a series of motors, instructional videos and much more.

His desire to promote control-line building and flying led him to create, in 1997, the Brodak Fly-In, an event where builders and flyers could get together, swap ideas, and have fun. The event ran annually from 1997 through 2019 and became the largest event of its kind in the United States.

In 2002, John initiated a national campaign to promote model aviation as a sport instead of a hobby. He commissioned specially-designed lapel pins, spoke extensively on the subject, and published brochures explaining his ideas.

In a career that included promoting control-line, creating the largest kit manufacturer in the world, and launching the Brodak Fly-In, it was only a matter of time until John flew at the Nationals and won a National Championship. In succeeding years, he would win additional National Championships, a tribute to his skill as a builder and his dedication to honing his skills as a flyer.

John G. Brodak died at 1:58 p.m. Saturday, April 25, 2020, at Mon-Health Medical Center, Morgantown, W.Va., after a lengthy illness. He was 81.

He was born April 1, 1939, in Fairmont, W.Va., a son of the late Joseph G. and Valeria B. Batis Brodak. John attended All Saints Catholic School in Masontown and Carmichaels Area Schools. At the age of 13, he began working in his parent's grocery store in Carmichaels. In 1955, he joined the Pennsylvania National Guard and served with Company K of the 110th Infantry. That year, John opened a hobby shop as his first business. In 1958, he was certified as an electrician and became a disc jockey with the name of "Johnny Lee". In 1959, John went to work as a machinist at the Piatt Machine Shop in Washington. On October 21, 1960, he married Coral Lee "Buzz" Welsh, who survives.

John opened Brodak Hobby Center in Washington in 1961 and in 1962 took over the Carmichaels grocery store from his parents. That same year, he founded J & G Electric. John was discharged from the Pennsylvania National Guard in 1963 with the rank of Sergeant. He managed the Brodak's Food Center Team in the Big 4 Softball League.

In 1966, John was elected the second youngest president of the Carmichaels Area Chamber of Commerce. He served as president, vice president and a director many times throughout the years. In 1968, John remodeled the Carmichaels food store and enlarged it to 7,000 square feet. That year, he became a member of Cumberland American Legion Post 400. From 1969 until 1972, John served as a commissioner of the Atlantic Pacific Baseball Association and published a baseball game magazine, the APBA Innings.

Continuing his business career, John opened Brodak Printing Company in 1970 and in 1972 became president of Replay Games, Inc. In 1974, he opened his 10,000 square feet grocery store in Millsboro and was honored to receive the Fourth Degree from the John F. Kennedy Memorial Council 3569, Knights of Columbus, Carmichaels.

John was the manager of the Carmichaels Ironmen and won the Replay World Series in 1977, 1979, 1980, 1982-1984, 1986 and 1988.

John built a new 14,000 square feet supermarket in Carmichaels in 1978 and placed first in the IGA Beef Round-Up at the Millsboro Super Dollar.

Even though John spent much of his time as a businessman and community leader and servant, he found time to be an extra in a film made by the BBC, "Two Weeks in Winter".

In 1983, John was appointed a director in the King Coal Association by the Chamber of Commerce and in 1984, opened a 10,000 square feet grocery store in Masontown.

1985 was a busy year for John. While serving his fourth term as president of the Chamber of Commerce, he was elected second vice president of the King Coal Association, enlarged Brodak Printing Company to 3,000 square feet, opened Brodak's Dari-Delite and Brodak's Video Showcase in Millsboro, which were all destroyed in the election day flood. John was able to reopen these businesses within 40 days.

In 1987, John assisted in establishing the Fredericktown Chamber of Commerce and was elected its first president. That year, he purchased Brodak's Mobile Home Village.

In 1988, John remodeled the Carmichaels grocery store to 16,000 square feet and opened Brodak's Video Showcase and Brodak Hobby Center in Carmichaels. John always had an interest in flying control line airplanes and became an "All Season Flyer".

John G. Brodak Obituary

April 01, 1939 - April 25, 2020

John G. Brodak, 81, of Carmichaels, Pa., passed away at 1:58 P.M. on Saturday, April 25, 2020 at Mon-Health Medical Center

After opening Brodak's Holiday Travel International Agency in 1989, John was made an honorary member of the Fayette County Vietnam Veterans Association and a lifetime member of the National Aeronautic Association and the Academy of Model Aeronautics.

1990 saw the construction of a 26,000 square feet store in Masontown. John became president of the Flying Circus Flying Club, was appointed to the General Facilities Authority Board and elected treasurer, was appointed director of the Riverfront Development Board, joined the Carmichaels Lions Club and became president of the WKEG radio station in Washington.

In keeping with John's sense of community, he assisted in keeping the Flenniken Library financially stable in 1991. That year, he formed Brodak Manufacturing and Distributing Company, Inc. John published the first Brodak catalog of model airplanes and supplies. That year, he was honored as "Man of the Year" by the Carmichaels Lions Club and appointed to the Greene County Committee for Growth P. A. C. He also opened the new 26,000 square feet grocery store along with Brodak's Video Showcase in Masontown.

As John's interest in model airplanes continued, he attended the National Model Airplane Show in Cleveland, Ohio and was awarded 18 static wins from 1991 to 1995. 1994 saw the remodeling of the Millsboro store to 18,000 square feet. In 1997, John was appointed to the board of directors of the Greene County Industrial Development Authority, which he served for five years. That year, John hosted his first Fly-In in Carmichaels with 36 entries, 77 flights of a two-day period. Over the years, this tradition expanded to include hundreds of entries.

In 1999, John expanded the Carmichaels grocery store to 32,000 square feet, purchased BY & O Props and PAMPA Products.

As the years went by, John continued developing and adding to his various businesses in the local area. Prior to his passing, he had planned to open a model airplane museum next to his other establishments in Carmichaels. John's last control line fly-in in June of 2019 brought hundreds of competitors from around the country and the world. To John, it was important that his local community develop and thrive. He will be greatly missed by his family and his community.

Surviving, in addition to his wife, Coral, are three daughters, Melissa "Missy" Curtis (Jeffrey) of Rostraver, Jacqueline "Jackie" Horvath (Andrew) of Ligonier and Claudine "Dena" Ferek of Rices Landing; a son, Joseph I. Brodak (Stacey) of Washington; seven grandchildren, Lezlie Thorn (Sam) of Los Angeles, Calif., Lissa Kacsanek (Jeff) of Tucson, Ariz., Jaycee Curtis, of Strabane, Samantha Robinson (Marcus) of Eighty Four, Jessica Ferek (fiance, Mo Nahas) of Boston, Mass., Georganna Zeglen (Mati) of Rices Landing and Jonathan Brodak of Washington; six great-grandchildren, Ignatius, Sidney, Blaise, Bryer, Axel and Roux; and a brother, George J. Brodak of Oakland, Md.

Deceased are a grandson, Jeffrey Alexander Curtis; two brothers, Edward Brodak who died in childhood and Joseph R. Brodak; a niece, Meghan Crawford and a son-in-law, Stan "Stush" Ferek.

In keeping with current CDC guidelines, arrangements were private.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggested memorial contributions be made to the Humane Society of Greene County, 183 Jefferson Road, Waynesburg, PA 15370.