



AMA EXPO EAST

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The WRAM Show signals the beginning of spring.

It was about three or four months into 2016 that the West Chester Aero Modelers (WRAM) decided that after almost 50 years of continuous expos the club would not be putting together a show for 2017. This was an unfortunate decision as the WRAM show for many area modelers signals the end of winter and is one of the rights of passage into the spring



A mainstay of any show that features model aviation is a flight simulator, and to this end there was an entire row of simulators at the expo for modelers to sample.



For 50 consecutive years WRAM signaled the passage of winter and when it was decided that WRAM would not be hosting the show this year AMA District II Executive Vice President Eric Williams took the reins.

flying season. Knowing the importance of the show and the void it would leave aero modelers in the northeast, the AMA and namely the AMA District II Executive Vice President, Eric Williams, seeded the idea that the WRAM show would carry on as AMA EXPO East.

Having approximately six months to put everything together

and make the show happen required the concentrated efforts of the AMA along with the help of WRAM members, District II Associate Vice Presidents and our tight knit group of clubs in the northeast all pulling together, but it happened, and AMA Expo East was born.

The location was the same, the Meadowlands Expo Center, and with the severe time limitations it was decided to stick with the same basic layout WRAM has used for years. The big differences were a heavy injection of AMA presentations and guests. To this end a dedicated stage area was active for most of the show days and each of the show's dates. Since I am a District II Associate Vice President, my show started early as there was an AMA membership meeting prior to the opening of the doors.

One of the big changes this year was the opening, where an Honor Guard led the Pledge of Allegiance just before the floor was opened to attendees. Throughout the day center stage had various guests offering presentations. Of them was Robert "Hoot"

Gibson; astronaut, military and Reno air race pilot and avid radio control enthusiast. I got some time to chat with Hoot and he is a pure gentlemen and what a fantastic AMA representative. There were some notable local scale modelers present at the show and a visit from Nikolai Sikorsky, son of the famous aviator Igor Sikorsky, along with Sal Calvagna, who brought his huge model of the Sikorsky Ilya Muromets to the show for display. Listening to Nikolai speak about his father while at the same time looking at Sal's masterpiece of a model was a really enjoyable experience in itself.



There were a host of show regulars at the expo all displaying their respective products for an enthusiastic public

As in any expo, what most attendees came to see were the products and the vendors. Over recent years, the WRAM show had been seeing a steady decline in vendors, this was due to many factors but most of them were related to economics. However we were glad to see many of the mainstays that attended; Horizon Hobby, Sullivan Products, Robart Manufacturing were just a few. Also in attendance were various direct sale vendors, as well as a number of area hobby shops that had set up booth space for consumer sales.

As compared to shows of say 10 years ago, vendor attendance was noticeably light. However the show coordinators did a great job with the layout, this kept the floor looking full, yet it was comfortable to move around. For the first AMA EXPO East, there was a lot of chatter amongst the attendees that many were sort of feeling the show out.

This was a common theme of not only attendees, but vendors and future vendors. It's a shame, but this way of thinking may have influenced attendance somewhat.

The feedback I received from the academy and friends that attended the show was that AMA EXPO East was a good expe-



Avid model aviation enthusiast, Shuttle astronaut and AMA Ambassador Robert "Hoot" Gibson was at the expo and took time out of his busy schedule to chat with this author.

rience. They also added it was a great beginning for having such a short amount of time to coordinate such a massive task (said with no offense directed at AMA or WRAM) and that next year, without the severe time constraints it will be even better.

With any show it takes many people to pull it off. The area clubs played a big part in this and it's all volunteer help. In addition the show logistics there were multiple Take and Build and Try areas for newcomers and seasoned modelers wanting to try their hands at something new. As an example, the Central NJ Area Rocketry Society ran the Build and Take rocket table. It was great to see parents and their children working together perhaps even starting a new hobby and developing skills.

Additional demonstration areas for model boating, quad racing and the AMA Simulator booth were running all day, every day. Area clubs volunteered members to present and run the venues. There was a large display area for models of all types: planes, boats, vehicles and drones. A mainstay of all the previous shows was a well-stocked swap shop for those looking for that special "certified pre-owned" model. Throughout the show there was model after model being wheeled in or carried out.

The goal of the AMA EXPOs, both East and West, is not only to show the latest trends to the membership, but to expose new-



Although the focus of the expo was model aviation, all forms of radio control, including boats, were represented.

comers to the many aspects of modeling. Surely we are only as strong as our future, which includes all aspects of the hobby and we need to draw in not only the younger, but the older crowd as well. It's important to our future to get our young people to experience something more than poking at a phone and playing games.

There was a lot of positive energy to be felt throughout the show, folks scurrying about with their list of items they needed and bags under their arms. I'm rather certain vendor and manufacture feed-



It is hard to believe, but it has been 40 years since Star Wars first became part of the sci-fi world, but the robots continue to entertain youngsters and oldsters alike.



Many AMA SIG (Special Interest Group) such as IRCHA International Radio Control Helicopter Association) were on hand.

back will be passed around and the 2018 show will build on the success of the 2017 show. My personal feelings are the AMA organizing a great show, hitting the nail on the head in organizing an inaugural AMA Expo East, and I'll be at next year's show to let you know.

HM

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