

# Pilot Profile: Art Schmidt

by Russell Knetzger

This is the first in what will hopefully be a long line of pilot profiles. If you enjoy writing and would like to profile a pilot, write their story and submit it. A picture would be nice, but is not mandatory.

Art Schmidt is our leadoff profile because he is our oldest pilot: 88 years. He also could have won lead-off by being the field's most active flier. Art flies on many days of the week, though he tries to avoid the weekend. He figures as a retired person who can fly any day of a week, he should not pre-empt a working guy from precious week-end flight time.

Art is considerate in other ways. Nobody searches for a lost airplane as hard as Art, even if it is somebody else's plane. He often finds models on which the owner gave up. All that trekking may be what keeps Art in such physically fine shape.

By appearance and activity, no one believes he is in his 80's, much less 2 years away from age 90. Still, Art admits to one infirmity of age: reduced hearing. He no longer attends club meetings because even with the latest hearing aids, he hears only jumbled noise.

Unlike our second oldest pilot, Leo Pachucki, also 88 but who came to model aviation at age 70, Art has been flying since before World War II. Art tried many times to enlist in WW II but was turned down for high blood pressure.

While Art flew free flight then because that is all there was, (control line was invented just as WW II ended), Art tried all the early radio control systems, none of which worked. But in 1952 he experienced success with an F&M single channel (rudder) "escapement" system that was reliable. The "clicking" sound of the escapement mechanism helped you find a lost plane, which with rudder-only control was common. Perhaps that early success in finding errant models is what made Art such an ardent lost aircraft searcher.

Art is also well known at the field for being an expert "candid photographer." Candid means the subject is unposed, and often unsuspecting that a picture is being snapped. All of us who flew or did work at the field throughout the 1980s were caught by his lens. He donated scores and scores of his expert 5x7 black & white pictures to the club library.



**Art Schmidt** by the frequency control and bulletin board., Year 2000

Art comes by his photography skills from 42 years as company photographer for Kalmbach Publishing. Kalmbach is the nation's leading publisher of model railroad magazines. Art gave up that job at age 75.

Both during that job and prior, Art also was an auto mechanic. He worked evenings for the McCarty AMC dealership near S. 60<sup>th</sup> and W. Forest Home Avenue, until it closed. He came by his mechanic training via apprenticing on mass transit vehicles for the old TMER&L Co., The Milwaukee Electric ilway and Light Company. They came to be WEPCo., Wisconsin Electric Power Company, and now they call themselves WE Energies.

Art has a very large collection of flyable model aircraft. He hangs the fuselages vertically along his basement walls, and stores the wings in the joists. Currently his inventory is 93 planes.

**RAMS Horn**, November, 2005, Bill Stilley, Editor  
Rainbow Aero Modelers Society, Franklin, Wisconsin