

L.A. Johnston, 2020 SAM Hall of Fame

By Tom Boice

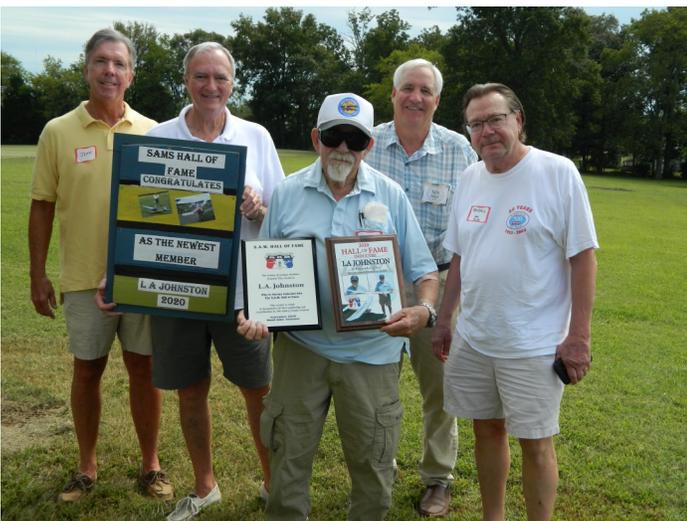
The induction of L.A. Johnston into the SAM Hall of Fame at Mount Juliet, Tennessee, was the only official event of the cancelled 2020 SAM Champs to come to fruition. The event was held at the estate of Charles Waterston on a beautiful, early fall day with plenty of comfortable outdoor seating. The guests started arriving at ten o'clock. L.A. had many of his SAM models displayed on the grass area near the guest seating. Some of L.A.'s favorite SAM models, the Blitzkrieg and a full size Valkyrie, were on display.

While the guests were socializing, L.A. decided to fly his electric Lanzo Racer to the delight of all the attendees. Lunch was scheduled for twelve o'clock. We enjoyed a real feast donated by many of the attending guests. The official ceremony started at one o'clock with a zoom meeting. George Shacklett was to be the MC; unfortunately, George was unable to attend because of a stay in a rehab facility. So Jeff Elliot took over as the MC and did a superb job. Jeff started off the ceremony with memories of L.A. and all he had done to help contestants and build up the Tennessee SAM chapter. Bob Galler called in by phone and said a few words; then officially, as the president of SAM, inducted L.A. into the Hall of Fame. The presentation of the official plaque was made at the podium. Before L.A. could

speaking the Tennessee chapter and the Midwest contestants presented L.A. with their own plaque. The plaque had a picture of L.A. holding one of his Blitzkrieg models and welcoming him into the Hall of Fame. Jeff had arranged a surprise call from George Shacklett. George, who worked tirelessly for years to get L.A. into the Hall of Fame, let everybody know how much L.A. had done for SAM and the Tennessee chapter. L.A. then got the chance to let everybody know how much the day meant to him. Fred and Barb Mulholland sent a warm greeting that was read from the podium. Guests had a chance to tell stories about L.A., starting with Randal Krystosek.

Things wrapped up on a really good note; pictures were taken and thank you's all around. The highlight of the day came when L.A. was putting his planes away. I asked "are you going to fly the Valkyrie?" "No," he said, "but would you like to fly it?" He didn't have to ask twice! We ended a great day with a beautiful flight of the Carl Goldberg Valkyrie.

If we were to list all the names who helped make this event possible, it would read like the credits at the end of a movie. To all who helped, thank you; and hopefully we will see you at the 2021 SAM Champs.



L.A. with his awards and friends. Left to right: Jeff Elliott, Charles Waterston, L.A. Johnston, Tom Boice, and Randall Krystosek.



L.A. with his plaques at the site of his induction.



L.A. and friends admire his Valkyrie.



L.A. with his full size Valkyrie.