



# The AMA History Project Presents: History of ATLANTA HOBBY

Since 1994



Written by JS (01/2010); Reformatted by JS (08/2010)

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*Jay Smith wrote the following, published in the About Us section of Model Aviation magazine, September 2012 issue.*

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## About Us: Atlanta Hobby



Cliff Whitney has been involved with the hobby for virtually his entire life. His father was a U Control pilot and like a good majority of people, Cliff learned to fly CL on a PT-19 Cox trainer when he was around 10.

Gliders really drew his interest and by 13 he was hooked on RC sailplanes. So much so that he learned to fly full-size gliders while still in high school. Shortly thereafter, he added a powered rating so he could pilot a larger variety of aircraft.

Working for Wolf camera would necessitate relocation which found Cliff living in both North Carolina and Tennessee.

In 1980, he started Whitney's Glider Supply, then later Sequatchie Valley Soaring Supply. While the main focus was on full-scale sailplanes, he also sold a small amount of RC (gliders). With his career taking off with Wolf and his partner also lacking the time to put into the business, the glider shop was closed.

In 2005, Cliff came out of retirement and opened Atlanta Hobby. Partly for something to do and also to help pay for his own interests in RC, it was housed in a hanger at the airport and was

primarily internet based.

Being involved in Soaring Cliff was a member of the North Atlanta Soaring Association (NASA) and invited them to fly on his property. This one gathering changed everything as Cliff was introduced to three-meter sailplanes and Zagi flying wings.

Shortly after, he began selling Zagi aircraft and became the largest flying wing dealer with wings from several manufacturers, including his own Zing Wing children's toy.

The increase in inventory necessitated a larger facility and Atlanta Hobby moved into a 3,000 foot warehouse.

After finding success selling Zagi aircraft, Cliff looked to bring other imported specialty products into inventory. Airplanes like the Wind Rider Elle Bee and Precision Aerobatics line of aircraft.

In January of 2007, Cliff launched Mercury Adhesives. His goal was to have glue manufactured in the USA. He worked directly with the largest manufacturer of CA to fine-tune the product to meet the needs of the hobby industry.

His business model was simple, have the glue made in Georgia to ensure freshness, only sell to dealers, and offer an unlimited, unconditional replacement warranty.

Mercury Adhesives has been successful and offers several types of CA, thread locker, and epoxy that is sold at 4,000 dealer outlets around the world and through Horizon Hobby.

Cliff has learned a lot about CA over the past five years so I took the opportunity to ask him a little about optimum storage.



The optimum temperature to store CA is 40° degrees and in low humidity. Store it in the fridge, but once you take it out, don't put it back as that can induce moisture. Only store the larger refill bottle in the fridge after opening. Do not freeze CA.”

I also wondered where “Mercury Man” seen on all Mercury Adhesives came from and Cliff shared that the design was influenced by the Thompson Trophy and an old Chinese cartoon.

The next big undertaking happened in 2009 with the RC Radio Network. The idea was to have a live RC show that people could watch and listen to on the internet.

The idea came about after a friend was doing live podcasts while involving the audience via chat. Cliff had another friend who owned a radio station and he had the idea to combine them.

He wrote the application and invested in all the equipment required to produce the show. Cliff then added licensing to play music around the clock without annoying advertising other than RC commercials and station ids.

Currently, RCRN has 10,000 songs in the playlist with is mixed by Cliff. "Air Show" can draw as many as 1,500 participants to the live interactive talk show where you can be part of the show via interactive chats, phone calls, and multimedia visuals.

It is broadcast every other week on the first and third Tuesday of the month. Cliff was very excited during our phone call when we discussed the RCRN. He has recently invested in new equipment to continue to make the show better and told me a little of what it take to produce one, upwards of twenty hours for a one hour show!

When I asked him why he would spend so much time per show his answer was simple.

“If we can give back to the industry and teach them something, then our purpose has been served.”

The RC Radio Network is totally funded through donations, so if you like “Air Show” or tune into the streaming music, a small donation is always appreciated.

A new iPhone app is under development that should be available by the time you read this that will allow streaming music, the ability to download the song and research the artist. On the RC side, a daily news feed is updated real time and pushed to you allowing the information to be personalized to include reviews, products releases, and product sales. RC conversion tools will be available and the ability to stream “Air Show,” and access the entire Atlanta Hobby store and make purchases on your mobile device!

All these exciting endeavors required a larger facility to support Atlanta Hobby, Mercury Adhesives, and the RC Radio Network. A 12,000 square-foot facility was obtained in Cumming, Georgia, just north of Atlanta.

The new facility includes a showroom open to the public. Visitors can also browse the climate controlled warehouse filled with 62,000 products.

The three companies are supported by nine employees and they are still growing with more hires planned.

Before we wrapped up our interview I had a couple of more questions for the man behind three RC entities.

***What are you most proud of?***

“Kids, the kids that come into the shop. I love it when they go “wow” that turns me on more than anything else. Put them on a buddy box and see their expression when they get to fly.”

“I’m proud of Mercury Adhesives because it is a USA made product sold from a USA company that supports the US economy.”

***Do you have a vision going forward?***

“In the hobby business I work more than I did in the corporate world. It is exciting to own your own business. I am fortunate to be able to influence the lives of the people working with me. They are my partners and we eat and breathe this business.”

“When the hobby business took off, I was in the right place at the right time and it launched me out of retirement. I am happy to go to work each day and my wife calls me each night and says comes home.

It is Christmas every day when the bay doors open and the trucks back up to deliver new products.”

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**AMA History Project**  
National Model Aviation Museum  
5151 E. Memorial Dr.  
Muncie IN 47302  
(765) 287-1256, ext. 511  
historyproject@modelaircraft.org

