



The AMA History Project Presents: History of AEROWORKS Since 1994



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

Jay Smith wrote the following, published in the About Us section of Model Aviation magazine, January 2010 issue.

About Us: Aeroworks

Aeroworks is known for producing quality models for both sport flying and competition. If you attend the Nats, International Miniature Aerobatic Club (IMAC) competitions, 3-D events, or even fun-flys, chances are that you have seen this company's aircraft. What you might not see is the man responsible for the aircraft and the company: Rocco Mariani.

As did many of us, Rocco got hooked on Radio Control at an early age, 10, thanks to an uncle who had caught the flying bug. Rocco excitedly described his first encounter.

"My uncle was really big time into Scale, like Byron Original scale airplanes," he said. "We went to his house for parties and I would go into his basement with awe."

That led to Rocco's joining a local club, the Jefco Aeromod'lers in Colorado, and being taken under fellow club members' wings. They took him to flying events and contests.

Starting at age 13, Rocco began competing in Radio Control Aerobatics (Pattern) at the Nats and other events. And his interest in larger scale aircraft continued to grow.

When Rocco was in his early 20s, he and a friend designed and scratch-built a 96-inch-wingspan *Laser 200* aerobatic model. At competitions, fellow pilots would ask where they could get one like it.

It didn't take many requests before, in 1994, Rocco and his partner started building airplanes in the 600-square-foot basement of a townhouse, as a way to pay for the hobby. Orders went from one or two a year to several a month, and that's how Aeroworks was born.

With a growing business, the product progressed from short kits to builders' kits, to ARFs and RTFs, to adding Scale Aerobatics models such as the *Edge 540* to the pair's aircraft offerings. Spurred by a leap of faith combined with a love of model aviation, Rocco left his full-time job of 10 years in upper management at Continental Airlines to put all of his effort into Aeroworks.

It continued to grow, not only as a company, but also with its airplane offerings. According to Rocco, they are designed for a certain purpose.

“If it is going to be an IMAC-type aircraft, I look at what the upcoming sequence and pattern require the aircraft to do and design the aircraft to excel in those maneuvers,” he said.

Rocco went on to say that the decision of what Scale aircraft will be produced is based on two main things, which are:

“Customer feedback and what I think is cool and will sell. If I have a passion for the design, it is easy for me to sell it.

“The *Cessna 195* was based on looks because of the round cowl. I attend a lot of full-scale events and racing events to get ideas, but those concepts can be up to three years ahead.”

With a growing company and a quickly changing industry, some major changes happened at Aeroworks five years ago. Rocco bought out his partner’s share of the business and decided that it was time to focus on providing even higher-quality products that would better suit the needs of modelers today and in the future.

That led to the creation of the company’s QB - Quick Built - models. Rocco shared with me how the line was started.

“What I wanted to do with the QB aircraft is make them better, with a focus on quality, ease of assembly, and superior flight performance. I looked at all the other aircraft manufactures and if they had something that was good, I wanted to make it even better.

“I wanted my aircraft to come out of the box with everything better than was currently available; I continue to build in improvements with each release.”

I had my first experience with an Aeroworks QB model when I reviewed the .60-to-.90-size *Extra 260*. In its level of completion out of the box, it surpassed most commonly available ARFs. The hardware provided was not only thoughtful and of good quality, but was also imperial size, which was a nice touch.

One of the ways Rocco continues to produce high-quality aircraft is through his level of involvement with them from start to finish. Everything is done in-house, to his satisfaction.

The process starts with his deciding on the model. Then he makes all drawings, shapes, outlines, and structures in AutoCAD. From there, the design goes to the factory, which builds only Aeroworks OEM (original equipment manufacturer) aircraft. The design is discussed further, and the prototype is framed and sent back.

Rocco inspects the airplane and normally makes 50-300 refinements before the next prototype is made, covered, and flown. More alternations are made from there, and the third version is typically used for further testing and to make the detailed manual as the final changes are put into production.

All test flying is performed at Aeroworks, and Rocco makes each new airplane's maiden flight. During this time, he also works out the color schemes – at times on his kitchen table – to provide an attractive finished product.

“We breathe aviation,” Rocco shared with me regarding the love of aviation he shares with his wife, Sandy, whom he met at an IMAC event. Together they attend Radio Control contests and full-scale events, and they work together at Aeroworks.

One of the things Sandy enjoys most is promoting Aeroworks to the benefit of clubs and the community, by handling flying demonstrations and providing products to support clubs, fun-fly and charity events, and public outreach. When Rocco and Sandy do find a little free time, they enjoy spending it with their pets and four wheeling.

One of the last questions I asked Rocco was about his plans for Aeroworks. Some of his goals include doubling the company's size, offering a wider variety of aircraft, and building a network of hobby shops that carry its products.

It was evident by his quick and reassuring response that we can look forward to Aeroworks continuing to raise the bar, by providing aeromodelers many great products in the foreseeable future.

-Jay Smith

Sources:

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