



# The AMA History Project Presents: History of RTL FASTENERS



Written by JS (07/2013); Reformatted by JS (08/2013)

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*Jay Smith wrote the following, published in the About Us section of Model Aviation magazine, July 2013 issue.*

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## About Us: RTL Fasteners

“I’ve always had a fascination with airplanes,” Rich Bastone, owner of RTL Fasteners, shared with me. That interest led him to model aircraft approximately 25 year ago when he made his first flight with a Cox PT-19 CL model. His brother convinced him to try RC and he found success with a Great Planes Sturdy Birdy.

Although Rich continued to progress and move on to other aircraft, owning several RC variants in different sizes, he found that sharing his hobby with others and providing training has been the most fun and rewarding.

Drawing from his experience in building and flying models, and listening to comments of other in his club, Rich realized that there was a need for quality and affordable hardware. A discussion with his wife, Tamara, across the kitchen table, resulted in the birth of RTL Fasteners in June 2001.

They launched with a basic inventory of the most common items a modeler needs such as hex nuts, locknuts, washers, etc. He laughed on the phone when he described the early days of having hardware throughout his house.

“We took out an ad in *Model Aviation* and began selling through mail order immediately. After two years, we had hardware in every room of the house, including the bathroom, and decided it was time for a commercial space.”

The goal from the beginning was to provide customers with quality hardware in the quantity they need. Available in various quantities, all of the fasteners are prepackaged and marked.

Rich felt that there was a demand for a bundle of common items to satisfy the modeler who might have a need in the middle of a project. The Master Builder Assortment was created to fill that gap and more products have been added as it has evolved, including the plastic parts bins that were supplied at the request of several customers.

Although many products have been added to the RTL inventory, none have been discontinued, which has necessitated moving to a larger facility. The current building is 2,500 square feet.

Company growth and ordering large volumes of hardware has positioned RTL to have some hard-to-find products, such as the M2 nylon insert locknuts, manufactured. RTL required that all of the companies it purchases from be certified, ensuring the products are high quality.

RTL Fasteners sells its products worldwide, with Australia and Canada bringing the most business outside of the US. Several manufacturers purchase RTL materials for the hardware supplied in their ARF aircraft. Outside of the hobby, NASA and people working in robotics regularly require RTL's parts.

The importance of customer feedback and satisfaction was mentioned several times during our call. I asked Rich what he was most proud of, and he shared the following:

“The respect that I have for my customers in terms of how I treat them and respond to them [is important]. If something is not right, I make it right. I'm proud to be able to maintain that level of service.”

Rich also said that RTL is committed to keeping prices low, which has been done by absorbing many of the price increases.

I was curious whether SAE or metric hardware sold better and which products were his top sellers. As it turns out, SAE and metric sell equally well, and socket-drive, servo-mounting screws with built-in washer heads have the highest demand.

It's common for many first-time customers to call in their orders, often because they are unsure of the hardware sizes they need. The staff at RTL can help determine the proper size, composition, and quantity.

At the end of the conversation, I asked Rich if he had goals for RTL. He shared that even after 12 years it is common to find customers who hadn't known the company existed. He hopes to continue to get the word out.

Other goals include adding to the line of tools that the company carries and tracking order history online to make it easier for shoppers to reorder products they have purchased in the past.

I am impressed with the quality of the Master Builder Assortment and the Complete Metric Assortment, which I've used on several projects. The company's commitment to the customers was evident when Rich made the following statement: “I don't want to oversell someone. I never have and never will. Your satisfaction is guaranteed or your money back, no questions asked.”

RTL Fasteners provides its customers the right mix of quality and quantity. So the next time you have a hardware-related question or need help, RTL is only a telephone call or email away.

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Sources:

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