



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of JODY JOHNSON



Written by JS (03/2017), Reformatted by JS (03/2017)

The following was published in the I Am the AMA column, printed in the March 2017 issue of Model Aviation magazine, written by Jay Smith.

I Am the AMA Jody Johnson, Winner of Best in Film for Architecture at the NYCDFE

Jay Smith: How did you become involved with model aviation?

Jody Johnson: I got involved with model aviation unexpectedly. I saw a video of my friend, Mark, and his daughter, Olivia, taken from the sky. This flying camera took video from about 200 feet up in the sky to what looked like 10 feet off the ground.

I did not know what type of camera it was taken with, but I knew I had to have it. I reached out to Mark's wife, Evelyn, and asked her what it was and where I could get one. It was a DJI Phantom 2 Vision+ and I had one the following week.

JS: How has model aviation impacted your life and/or career?

JJ: I like to fly in a real airplane as much as I like to go to the dentist (Sorry Dr. Frankel). With that said, I love the grace and beauty they have while flying through the air, as well as the amazing view you have when looking out of the window. I think it is incredible that I can capture this while standing on solid ground.

I am able to share creative views of my daughter playing sports, large group photos, etc. I have also helped my local fire department by documenting some of its safety drills. When I show up to an event, people either call me "The Drone Girl" or "GlideByJJ," which is my name on social media. I absolutely love this hobby and it gives me pleasure to teach others about it. It's great to have children come up to me and ask to see the screen so they can get a peek of the aerial view.

There is another specific instance in which model aviation has impacted my life. One day in early 2015, when I was filming at Greystone, the project supervisor came over to me to ask what I was flying. I showed him my drone and long story short, I am no longer a single mom.

JS: What disciplines of modeling do you currently participate in?

JJ: I am proud to say that I started an AMA Chartered Club in 2014 called Team GlideBy. We are all knowledgeable of the AMA rules and help teach others how to properly fly drones, including what specific rules apply to drones.

People who have seen me flying my drone often ask me questions and usually end up becoming more interested. Several strangers have asked for my guidance in purchasing a drone and a few have become friends and Team GlideBy members. It's wonderful to see others enjoying the same hobby and doing so in a positive and responsible way.

JS: What are your other hobbies?

JJ: Aside from model aviation, I have taken a liking to the demolition field. I learned a lot about this while I was filming the "Greystone Rising" video. I watched as the grapple would rip massive pieces off of the building as if it were paper and how the wrecking ball would smash concrete until it was in little pieces. The project supervisor taught me much about the machines and their uses.

JS: Who (or what) has influenced you most?

JJ: Randy Slavin (founder of the New York City Drone Film Festival [NYCDFF] and owner of Yeah Drones) and Brian Walk (pilot and consultant) are two who have been very influential. They explore the possibilities that drones offer as well as push them to their limits through aerial video and drone racing.

Randy sent me a message when I was chosen as a finalist for the New York City Drone Film Festival. I was privileged to be on "Fox 5 Good Day New York" with Randy, interviewed by the BBC, local news, etc. Randy helped to get my name in the industry and he continues to influence and motivate me by keeping things current and staying ahead of the game.

Brian has shown me applications such as Drone Deploy and teaches me things beyond just taking videos. Another inspiration is the Amelia Dronehart Group. We are a worldwide group of female drone pilots. Rhianna Lakin is the founder and continuously encourages us to do great things.

JS: As a filmmaker, how have drones helped you to tell the story?

JJ: Drones have helped me tell a story that I feel would not have had the same impact by any other means of documentation. When I came home after the first time I filmed at the Greystone Psychiatric Asylum, I was in awe of the footage. There was no other way to see how massive and beautiful this building was but to fly a drone there. More than 600,000 square feet of historic beauty was captured so easily with my very first camera-equipped drone.

There were countless people and media crews holding up giant poles and selfie sticks, only to get 10 or 12 feet higher than the ground on which they stood. Being able to watch the grapple dig into the top of the 100-year-old dome at Greystone was an experience I will never forget.

It was a sad day for those who wanted to see the building saved, but having the honor of documenting the demolition is something that will stay with me forever. After accepting the Best in Film award in the architecture category at the NYCDFF, I was shocked at how many people came up to me to thank me for telling the Greystone story. Since this film, other people have

reached out to me, asking me to be a part of other preservation efforts, including Tom's Diner, one of the oldest diners in the world.

This PDF is property of the Academy of Model Aeronautics. Permission must be granted by the AMA History Project for any reprint or duplication for public use.

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

