



The AMA History Program Presents: Biography of NATHAN RICE



Written by AMA staff

Transcribed by JS (02/08)

The following was published in the February 2008 issue of Model Aviation magazine. Nathan was a 2007 AMA Scholarship winner.

Nathan Rice of Spring Mills, Pennsylvania, is the recipient of a Charles Hampson Grant Scholarship totaling \$7,500. He is a graduate of Penns Valley Area Junior/High School where he was one of 11 valedictorians in his class with a 4.0 out of a possible 4.0.

Nathan was involved in the National Honor Society, Science Olympiad, Technology Student Association (TSA), and the F1 in Schools program. Through TSA, Nathan competed in Flight Endurance and earned third place at the state level. He also competed in CAD Animation Engineering 3D and earned first place in the national competition held in Nashville, Tennessee.

In the F1 in Schools competition, Nathan served as a design and manufacturing engineer on a five-person team. His team placed second and earned Judges' Choice at the state competition. At the national level, the team placed fourth. "This was our school's first year in the program," Nathan wrote. "I think we did pretty good!"

Nathan was part of the school's concert band playing the clarinet. He took part in the school's jazz band playing baritone sax and has played piano since he was in third grade.

In the community, Nathan participated in many club demonstrations. Each year he volunteers for his church's Harrisburg Service Retreat, which benefits a poor community in the inner city of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Joining AMA in 2003, Nathan was hooked on Radio Control flight. A demonstration put on by the State College Radio Control club (SCRC) inspired him. Nathan is now part of SCRC and even participates in the demonstrations that first peaked his interest. A strong interest in helicopters encouraged him to learn to fly his Century *Hawk Sport 30*.

From his high school graduation project, Nathan assembled a Great Planes *Ultra Sport 40 Plus* from a kit. He continues to fly the Ultra Sport and has since sold the Hawk Sport, but his favorite model is a Miniature Aircraft *X-Cell Pro* graphite 60. Nathan is in the process of building an airplane self-designed on CAD software based off the Jack Barns *Racer*, which was featured in the September 2005 *Model Aviation* magazine.

Nathan's career plan is appropriate as his past work experience follows the same path. He worked with a friend's dad in housing construction. He took up working for Nittany Engineering & Associates, LLC, working as a CAD draftsman for the firm. He is currently working for the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle laboratory at Penn State University, helping to build new autonomous aircraft for their research.

Nathan is attending Pennsylvania State University, enrolled in its architecture program. He is one of only 75 students accepted into the program each year.

Congratulations, Nathan! AMA wishes you the best in your future.

Nathaniel submitted the following additional information for his biography in January of 2009.

How and when did you get started in modeling?

I joined the AMA in 2003. I had always been somewhat interested in RC planes, and in eighth grade, the local RC club came and did a demonstration as part of our “flight unit.” After that, I was hooked.

Who was influential in this start and with whom did you fly frequently?

I learned to fly from Peter Spink, whom I met at the flying field one afternoon. My mom and I explained how I had just bought a plane and he was willing and eager to help me get it flying. He was a very good pilot himself and taught me well, having me take my time learning the basics before moving on to more advanced things. I think it was about 4 months later that I soloed on a plane.

About a year later, Sandy and AJ Jaffe moved to my area, and they flew helicopters. I had never seen them flown acrobatically before and I was very interested in getting one. Long story short, Sandy, with some help from AJ, taught me to fly helis.

I attended my first real fun fly in 2005—the Northeast Model Helicopter Jamboree in Rochester, New York. Here I met Ray Stacy and his very talented son Kyle. Ray has been extremely helpful to me since I met him and I can’t thank him enough for his support and advice.

Give details about your first models, including whether you build them from a kit, plans, or from scratch.

My first plane was a Hobbico Avistar trainer, which was RTF. I flew it for quite some time, about reaching the limits of the aircraft as far as its aerobatic capabilities.

My next aircraft was a Century Hawk Sport helicopter, which I learned to fly helicopters on. It had an OS 32 engine, Futaba standard servos, and a Futaba 401 gyro. I flew this for a long time before buying a 60-size Miniature Aircraft model from Sandy, and then later selling that for my current helicopter, a Miniature Aircraft Stratus.

A short while after I got the Hawk I built a Great Planes Ultra Sport 40 from a kit with the help of Al Niessner, Jr., who also became a large influence to my modeling career. I still fly the Ultra Sport regularly.

Have you designed anything in modeling? If so, what, when, and for whom?

I saw the Jack Barnes fantasy racer in the Free Flight Sport column in the September 2005 MA magazine, and thought, “*That would be a cool RC plane.*” So I sent off for the plans, scanned them into AutoCAD, and then traced the outline and scaled it up to RC size. I spent almost two years designing the structure for Radio Control use when I had time. I then printed out the plans on a plotter at school and started building from scratch. Time again was an issue and it took over another year to build the model. It ended up looking very nice, but it came out much heavier than I wanted (at a dangerous 30+ oz. /sq. ft. wing loading!) and is a complete handful to fly. I only have two flights on it at this point, but it seems to have some scary tendencies. I’m continuing to tweak things in the radio setup and balance in an attempt to make it flyable. I hope it wasn’t a waste of my time and money!

Did you ever fly in a competition? If so, when, where and what was the name of the first meet?

I first competed this summer at the 2008 International Radio Controlled Helicopter Association (IRCHA) Jamboree held at the AMA flying site in Muncie, Indiana. The event was called the IRCHA Amateur Nationals, and was a competition for non-sponsored pilots to have an opportunity to be noticed in front of such a crowd as the Jamboree. The winner received a one-year sponsorship with Empire Hobby, the host of the competition, and a chance to be considered as a pilot at the 2009 Futaba XFC. I'm happy to say I placed first at this competition, not only picking up a sponsorship with Empire, but also with Miniature Aircraft USA. I owe these two companies a big thank you for their support. I also earned a place at the 2009 XFC, so that will be my first true competition against some of the best helicopter pilots in the world. I'm quite excited, but also a bit nervous.



Nathaniel Rice, c. 2008

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