



# The AMA History Project Presents: History of the MODEL AERO

Started in the early 2000s



Written by JS (05/2012); Reformatted by JS (05/2012)

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

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## About Us: Model Aero

If the name Model Aero doesn't ring a bell with you, the name *Polaris* should if you enjoy float flying. The *Polaris* is based on the *North Star* design by Laddie Mikulasko and was adapted to an electric-powered foam model by Steve Shumate. It is Model Aero's most popular offering and you would be hard-pressed to attend a float flying event and not see at least one *Polaris* taking to the sky.

The man behind Model Aero is Scott DeTray, a lifelong modeler who again became excited about flying model aircraft thanks to advancements in electric-powered models.

Scott inherited his interest in aviation from his father, a Corsair pilot during World War II, and his brother who was heavily into model rocketry. Scott began flying a Galloping Ghost radio-control system when he was 10 and progressed through the hobby as technology improved. Although his primary interest was model airplanes, Scott also dabbled in RC cars, boats, and rockets with his brother.

When life's other priorities beckoned, modeling took a back burner until roughly 10 years ago, when Scott purchased a GWS *Tiger Moth* and found that modern electric power was everything he had hoped it would be when he was a kid starting out in RC.

After dabbling in electrics for a couple of years, Scott tried his hand at designing a pusher jet that was loosely based on the Bob Violett Models' *KingCat*. Scott's *AeroCat* was popular with his fellow club members, who convinced him to kit it. After some prodding, Scott began producing kits. He chose Depron for construction because it is easy to work with, sands well, and is waterproof. Graphics were printed directly on the foam.

Scott created a website to let the world know about his exciting offering. The URL, [www.modelaero.com](http://www.modelaero.com), was available, and Model Aero was born!

According to Scott, the *AeroCat* was the only production foam pusher jet that he was aware of at the time. It was capable of 70 mph flight speeds and had unlimited vertical climb, but could also fly slowly enough to operate in an indoor venue.

Scott attended the first E-Fest indoor event in Champaign, Illinois, to find out if his *AeroCat* would receive the same level of interest at an event that it had received online. He not only sold

every kit he brought, but he caught the attention of RealFlight. The simulator manufacturer asked permission to include Scott's model in the RealFlight Expansion Pack 2.

The following year, Scott attended the Toledo Expo to promote Model Aero's next aircraft and increase the company's exposure with modelers. Sales increased, as did Model Aero's number of offerings.

In 2008, Model Aero launched the *Polaris*. Although Scott knew he had a winner – as he did with the *AeroCat*. The number of sales and the feedback he received on the model was humbling – so humbling that he made it a point during our conversation to give credit to Laddie and Steve, whose design skills and contributions made the *Polaris* a reality.

The *Polaris* is the best-selling aircraft in the Model Aero lineup and it is now available in other sizes to satisfy the large number of customer requests. Increased sales allowed Scott to invest in a laser cutter for Model Aero, which improved quality. Now the company can implement changes immediately during production and can even make necessary modifications after release.

Scott feels that nothing is more important than ensuring that Model Aero's aircraft fly well and the customer has a successful experience. The company provides a recommended setup that includes a motor, speed controller, and battery that have been tested with the model, ensuring success.

Scott shared his commitment to quality products and customer service:

“The most important thing is to provide very high-quality products. We want to provide unique products that people are going to have success with. We have built the business on providing excellent support and building the customer relationship. We want long-term customers.”

Scott plans to continue expanding Model Aero's product line without sacrificing customer service. He shared with me the company's plan.

“We want to continue to grow while still maintaining the service aspect of it. We will continue to offer a couple of inventive and interesting products each year. With the popularity of the *Polaris* and the *AquaCat*, we have seen that multisurface vehicles are the niche we wanted to stay in.

Multisurface vehicles are models that can run on land or water. ModelAero's newest release, the *Drifter*, is an airboat designed to be at home on grass, water, or snow.

Scott is excited about electric-powered models and credits them for bringing him back to flying. He said,

“I am most excited about the virtually unlimited possibility you have with aircraft design. Thanks to advancements in technology, you are only limited by your imagination on what you can design.”

I reviewed the Model Aero *Cessna 310* and my experience with the company was positive. The aircraft brought together a nice-looking, twin-engine model with the simplicity and indoor flying capability I was looking for.

If you are interested in multisurface models made in the U.S. by a passionate electric-power convert, take a look at Model Aero and its ever-growing lineup of Depron aircraft.

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