



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of JOE SMITH



Written by JS (09/2012); Added to HP files by JS (08/2013)

The following was published in the September 2012 issue of Model Aviation magazine, in the "I Am the AMA" column, written by Jay Smith.

I Am the AMA Joe Smith, Sponsored Pilot

Jay: How did you get involved in model aviation?

Joe: My uncle is a test pilot in the Air Force, and my Dad used to fly RC. When I was 14, we were at an antique gas engine show and an RC club was having an event. I watched as a 40% airplane hovered over the runway. Nick Maxwell was the pilot.

I said, "Dad, I want to do that." When we got home we dug out his old airplanes, and I started to learn how to fly.

Dad's old planes would not hover, so I started searching the Internet for 3-D-type planes.

I got a simulator for Christmas and a 42-inch AJ Stick from 3D Hobby Shop. I then began watching Andrew Jesky's videos. I learned some of AJ's maneuvers on the simulator and headed to the field.

Dad took me to a Huckfest, and we were both amazed at the number of pilots and spectators watching huge planes do some really amazing stuff. I was hooked. Dad saw that I was quickly progressing, so we got an 89-inch Slick and headed to a Huckfest.

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

Joe: Flying RC planes has opened a lot of doors for me. I've participated in the EAA Young Eagles Air Academy program at Oshkosh and attended the camps they have. I was the president of the local Aviation Explorer Group and vice president of the local RC club for a year.

I have also won scholarships to earn my private pilot's certificate. I will be attending Purdue University studying aeronautical engineering.

The Crown Prince of Dubai has also invited me to come fly a demo at a world championship parachuting contest in November.

Jay: In what disciplines of modeling do you currently participate?

Joe: I find it very cool that there are so many aspects. I currently participate in 3-D, IMAC [International Miniature Aerobatic Club], and also 3-D helicopters. I would like to get into

Pattern. 3-D has always been my favorite, because the possibility of different maneuvers is endless.

Jay: What are your other hobbies?

Joe: I don't really have any other hobbies. I used to play trumpet, guitar, and drums, but I don't have enough time to keep up with all of them. Building and maintaining planes and practicing keeps me very busy, but it's what I love to do.

Jay: Who or what has influenced you most?

Joe: Nick Maxwell and Andrew Jesky have both been inspiring. Nick's flying got me started in this hobby, and Andrew's constant support has gotten me where I am today.

Nick is helping me learn to set up and fly helicopters, which has been a great experience. I can't thank these guys enough for taking the time to answer my questions and support me.

I also need to thank my sponsors for their support over the past few years, especially Ben Fisher from 3D Hobby Shop. I also want to thank my friends and family for their support.

Jay: What advice do you have for someone looking to become a sponsored pilot?

Joe: The desire to get sponsored is something that I have seen hurt many new pilots. The most important thing is being a quality pilot, and if sponsors want to jump onboard with that path, then I am more than happy to represent quality products.

I decided at the start that I was never going to be a sponsored pilot, so I never focused on being one. I was in the hobby for the fun of it, and I practiced a ton because I loved to do it. I made sure I worked my way through sport maneuvers before I tried 3-D, and that approach helped.

Many young pilots focus on getting sponsors instead of having fun and practicing the basics. Being helpful and kind to people is more important to a sponsor than how well a person can fly. The goal is just to have fun, though; anything more than that is a bonus.

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

