



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of SHAWN SPIKER



Written by JS (03/2013); Added to HP files by JS (08/2013)

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## **I Am the AMA Shawn Spiker, Industry professional**

*JS: How did you get involved with model aviation?*

SS: Since I was a little kid, I have always had a fascination with planes and loved building models. At the age of 10, while spending a summer at my grandparents, I put together a balsa-and-tissue rubber band-powered Ercoupe.

It was my first build and very much a learning experience, since I had never worked with the light and fragile wood before. Having to sand and shape pieces as they went together and building on top of plans was a new, exciting experience.

It never successfully flew, but I was hooked. I taught myself to fly with a Two-Meter Great Planes Spirit. I still enjoy building, but the time is just not there. There are a few unopened kits in my hangar waiting for attention.

I have been an AMA member since 1998 and am a member of the Wingmasters R/C Club.

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

SS: Model aviation is a huge part of my career and without it, I wouldn't be at Hitec. Being a modeler gives me a huge advantage in the day-to-day communications I have with my customers, dealers, and hobbyists. I am lucky to have made my hobby my career and use the products we make in the applications they were intended for. Sometimes I even get to have *fun* working!

My first career out of college was in the financial services industry, working in Manhattan, New York. The hobby industry has been a huge change, but one where I look forward to rolling out of bed and going to work.

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

SS: I get to fly a lot of electric-powered foam planes, but I also fly a few Giant Scale aircraft, gliders, and helicopters. If I had to choose a favorite, the easy winner [would be] gliders.

Southern California has many places to fly gliders, from scenic beaches such as Torrey Pines to some amazing mountain slopes. Gliders offer so much variety. Standing on a cliff somewhere flying a plane is the most Zen-like experience this hobby can offer.

*JS: What are your other hobbies?*

SS: My 6-year-old is my biggest hobby. He is a sports fanatic and one of the benefits of great weather is year-round sports activities. Basketball season has just begun and I am coaching, followed by baseball (my favorite), and soccer.

Somewhere in there I am teaching him to play golf and, of course, fly RC airplanes. He has some stick time on an Easy Star and loves playing on the simulator at home. I tried to get him to take the transmitter when I had my 50cc AeroWorks Cub in the air, but I couldn't get him to bite.

The nice weather also gives me the chance to mountain bike, play softball, and go camping with the family. I also am a huge Formula 1 fan and just returned from the inaugural Grand Prix in Austin, Texas, where I met a number of RCers who recognized the Hitec hat I wore.

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

SS: My wife, Mary, has easily been the most influential. With her encouragement and insight, I left my previous career to pursue something that simply made me a happier person and a lot more enjoyable to live with. Her support means everything to me.

I have to give a big credit to my parents. Only since becoming a parent can I truly appreciate how much sacrifice it takes to give your child as much opportunity as possible. I strive to be there for my child as much as my parents were there for me.

*JS: What advice do you have for someone looking to work in the hobby industry?*

SS: The keyword is *balance*. Turning your hobby into your work can be a recipe for learning to hate your hobby. You can never forget that the reason anyone participates in a hobby is because some type of enjoyment is supposed to be taken from it.

It helps to have other interests in your life that don't involve getting CA on your fingers or smelling like nitro all the time. Being well rounded not only makes us better modelers, but better people.

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