



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of ADAM WOODWORTH



Written by JS (2016); Added to HP files by JS (03/2016)

The following was published in the April 2016 issue of Model Aviation magazine, in the "I Am the AMA" column, written by Jay Smith.

I Am the AMA Adam Woodworth, Senior Hardware Engineer at Google

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

Adam Woodworth: My father, Lee, had been involved in modeling for a long time (initially rockets, then RC). He was big into the competition fun-fly scene in the late 80s/ early 90s, and would bring me to the field whenever he would go practice. My earliest memories were of being carried around on his back at the field, and sitting in the pits surrounded by flying things. He always had some new project on the build table, and always encouraged me to design and experiment.

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

AW: I feel somewhat spoiled in that I never wondered what I was going to do when I grew up. For me, it was always aviation. Other kids joined Boy Scouts, I joined Civil Air Patrol. My friends were saving up for video games, and I was drooling over some new addition at the hobby shop. I always knew that I wanted to find a way to build planes forever.

I ended up going to Massachusetts Institute of Technology to study aerospace engineering, and happened to graduate at a time when unmanned aviation was really taking off. I used to be envious of the engineers from the 50s and 60s who got to work on dozens of aircraft programs during their careers, but now it seems that unmanned aviation is going through a similar boom. I'm really grateful that I get to be a part of this next chapter in aviation history.

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

AW: If it flies, I'm interested in it. I've participated in all facets of the hobby, from Free Flight, to 3-D, to Giant Scale jets, but I'd have to say that indoor/ micro has been the most interesting.

Components are cheap enough now that you can put together some rather complex projects on a reasonable budget, and the size of the builds lends them to making lots of planes. Over the past several years, I've averaged about one new plane per month. I really enjoy creating things that haven't been flown before, and this provides a great outlet for that.

JS: What are your other hobbies?

AW: Ha-ha ...That's a tough one. If I'm not designing/building for work, I'm usually designing/building for fun. I used to be very into freestyle skiing. The injuries have caught up with me, but I try to make it out to a mountain a few times each winter.

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

AW: My family has been hugely supportive, and is the primary reason I'm so fascinated with flying stuff. Professionally, Professor Mark Drela and Bob Parks have been big influences, and great teachers. In the modeling world, I've met a ton of people who have helped me grow (as an engineer and as a person). Gordon Johnson got me into the micro RC community, and Joe Malinchak has been a friend and inspiration of what is possible with tiny airplanes.

JS: Of all of the interesting aircraft you have designed, which one was the most challenging?

AW: That's a hard one. I like weird planes, so there have been lots of builds where I've scratched a hole in my head trying to figure out how to get something flying nicely. I'd have to say my model of the Virgin Galactic White Knight Two/Space Ship Two combo was the most challenging.

It was difficult to get it to work structurally at that scale, and it had all sorts of flexible control problems. It was a 2-ounce model that took almost six months to get right!

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