

## Pilot Profile: Mark Matelski

by Russell Knetzger

Not everyone grows up to realize their childhood dream for their life's work, but Mark Matelski, 39, has done it. Already at age 11 or 12 he wanted to become an airplane pilot, and when his cousin paid for Mark to ride in a Cessna 152, that plus an airline ride to Disney World clinched it.

The 152 ride was from Horlick Airport on Racine's northside, the City where Mark grew up. The airport name has been changed from the malted milk powder company to John Batten Field, one time head of Twin Disc, Inc., like Johnson's Wax, a major user and supporter of the field.

From St. Catherine's Catholic High School in Racine Mark selected a college where he could obtain an aeronautical degree, complete with pilot training. That turned out to be Mankato State University in Mankato, Minnesota. He credits his Explorer Aviation Club in Racine with providing a good "ground school" back ground, which eased college studies.

Model aviation also helped somewhat, starting with plastic models, then stick & tissue rubber powered, and a foray into radio control via a Sig Kadet Sr., and a low wing .20 engine sport plane, the "Caliph." But in college he no longer had time for models.

Graduation from Mankato State gave Mark licenses to instruct both single and dual engine light general aviation aircraft. And that is what he did. Mark took instructing so seriously that he earned a post with **Flight Safety**, the large and world-wide private aviation school headquartered at La Guardia Field in New York. Mark's post was Vero Beach, Florida, right across the field from Piper Aviation. Some of his students were from Germany, taking the intensive (lots of simulator time) 6 months ATP course that led to an Airline Transport Pilot license.



**Above: Mark Matelski** with scale models of a Saito 1.00 Sig. Ryan STA and his new Saito 1.20 WACO YMF5.



**Above: Mark Matelski in Airline 1<sup>st</sup> Officer's Uniform**  
Mark flies the Brazilian made Embraer 145, a twin engine, Rolls Royce powered Regional jet that looks like a "shrunken" version of the DC-8 / MD80. Taken at Marquette, Michigan.

Mark built up so much flight time instructing that he decided to try for an airline pilot's job. American Airlines signed him for their **American Eagle subsidiary**, a "feeder/commuter" line. Mark did a lot of flying of the Florida routes, and in the process was reintroduced to aeromodeling by his captain. That came via a 1<sup>st</sup> Class hobby shop in Ft. Meyers, FL only 4 blocks away from the pilot's regular layover hotel. In 2000-2001 Mark built another Sig Kadet.

The Florida flying also gave Mark the opportunity to observe the "TOP GUN" scale contest near Ft. Lauderdale. That is what sparked his interest in Scale, and led to his careful rendition of the Ryan & Waco.

The "9-11-01" attack on the World Trade Center in New York, and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., has hurt the airline industry. With 4,500 hours of flight time, Mark should be a "captain." But higher seniority pilots who lost their jobs on larger airliners have "bumped" captains out of Regional sized jets. That has frozen Mark in his 1st Officer's job.

Mark is 300 "seniority points" away from a captain's seat. Such points measure actual flight time, not years on the job. Flight time starts when the airliner backs away from the gate, and ends as it redocks. These events are radioed to American's offices, and to the FAA, (who are measuring so that pilot's stay under a 100 hrs/mo. limit.) Mark is fortunate to rack up 90 hours a month, since pilots are paid by flight hours. Pilots with less seniority may have to settle for 75 hours, American's minimum pilot pay.

Mark commutes from his Milwaukee home near Mitchell Field, to Chicago-O'Hare. There he flies trips to Cleveland, Louisville, New York (JFK) and Providence, Rhode Island plus other locations.

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