

Pilot Profile: Andy Ohman

by Russell Knetzger

Andy Ohman, 43 is among the small group of pilots at the Milwaukee County R/C Model Airplane Field on Oakwood Road in Franklin who flies both helicopters and fixed wing airplanes. As a result, the decision by the SWARM helicopter club that uses the east-facing flight line, to raise its own dues to also cover automatic RAMS Club membership that uses the north-facing flight line for fixed wing flight, works well for Andy.

Andy's allocation of time and budget to conquer both styles of flight, virtually simultaneously, starts from his association with Scott Jones of Happy Hobby Stores. Scott operates the S. 80th & West National Avenue store. He has set aside Sundays to teach flying, using the Vincent High School ball diamonds in Northwest Milwaukee County.

Prior, Andy started with helicopters, patronizing "The Copter Shop" in Wind Lake. He attempted self instruction using a very simplified simulator, on a small "Corona" electric model at Pulaski Park, on S. 16th and W. Cleveland Avenue. He was operating a Cudahy branch of his father's boiler de-scaling business at the time. The home office was in North Chicago near the Fort Sheridan US Army base, one of its main customers. Andy grew up in the St. Charles-Batavia, Illinois area, but the business had many major Milwaukee industries as clients such as Briggs & Stratton, Milwaukee Electric Tool, Miller Brewery, and those made it worthwhile to have a branch here. That, and cutting down travel time to and from Andy's Milwaukee girlfriend.



Above: Andy Ohman kneeling on the 1st Base side of the hardball field of MPS Vincent High School on Granville Rd. near Calumet on Milwaukee's far NW side, where Andy did his student flying of helicopters (left) and fixed wing, Scott Jones, instructor.



Above: Andy Ohman at his new place of residence on S. 99th & W. Montana Avenue in West Allis, where he lives with wife Kim, and daughters Courtney & Andrea. He is holding his .60-.90 cu.in. engine Align Trex Nitro Pro 700 helicopter.

Andy concentrated enough on his Avistar trainer, that once he soloed, he moved into instruction at the Vincent site. Helicopter flying was eluding him until he upgraded both his simulator software and his flying equipment. That occurred as part of his observing, then joining, the SWARM Club at the Milwaukee County field. Their rigorous plan for advancing beginners to pilots has been key to Andy being able to do basic helicopter flying, though he feels he still has more to learn.

Introducing himself to a new hobby came as Andy was also taking over his grandfather's boiler cleaning business from his father, Dave. Though well established and secure, each day involved creating a vacuum inside a boiler's heater pipes and introducing warmed hydrochloric acid to chemically remove the accumulated calcium carbonate "scale", while generating explosive hydrogen gas. The process required a semi-truck sized operations trailer nearby. Andy accepted an offer to sell at a good price. After a year he joined a friend's computer/printers repair shop, "Midwest Capital" at Hwy. 100 & Bluemound Rd. They also do software upgrades, such as to Windows 7, etc.

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