



The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of CINDY MALINCHAK



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Rachelle Haughn Interviews Joe and Cindy Malinchak

If you've ever been to the NEAT (Northeast Electric Aircraft Technology) Fair, held annually in September in New York's Catskill Mountains, chances are that you know or have heard of Joe and Cindy Malinchak. This husband-and-wife duo is difficult to miss. They are both passionate about building and flying micro models and organize NEAT's popular Indoor Night for micro aircraft.

While Joe was home on vacation from working as a commercial airline pilot, and after Cindy's shift as a special-needs pediatric nurse ended for the day, Park Pilot's Rachelle Haughn asked them a few questions. Their love for each other and those tiny models was clear.

RH: *What attracted you to micro models?*

JM: When I was in college in the early '80s, I went to the One Eighth Air Force fly-in in Phoenix. This guy had a 25-inch wingspan airplane he was flying that had a tiny Cannon radio in it. I was amazed!

I immediately ordered a Cannon system, the smallest available at that time. I installed it in a little 20-inch wingspan Bantom rubber-powered FF kit and added a Cox Tee Dee engine and flew it at the next One Eighth Air Force event!

CM: We got married and after eight years I asked him, "Why are you always in the basement?"

JM: I love building models. It can be as enjoyable as flying them.

CM: I said, "That's it, I'm joining you!" I started building my first model airplane, a Peck-Polymer Nesmith Cougar FF Peanut Scale kit that was converted to micro RC. We've been married for 23 years.

JM: She built the Cougar with only a little guidance from me. Her model even won the Flying Aces award at the 1998 Small Model Airplane Lovers' League fun-fly in Little Rock, Arkansas. It was CO₂ powered with a lightweight single-channel receiver. At the time, it was state of the art.

RH: *What do you like most about micro aircraft?*

JM: It's a challenge to see how far I can push it. I just love miniatures.

CM: It's relaxing, too.

JM: I can fly the little ones in my front yard or indoors in winter. The smallest one I've built has a 2.5-inch wingspan.

CM: I love their size and that they're quiet. If you can make something that small fly, it just fascinates people. I love the look on their faces.

JM: The cost [of micros] is significantly less. Most of my models are built out of thin, lightweight foam.

RH: *Tell me about the micro models you have designed. Which are your favorites?*

JM: I love designing new airplanes, and I have many favorites. Designing a model that not only looks great, but flies well can be very challenging.

I did six designs for Plantraco Microflight of Canada (including Classroom Fighters, the Micro Butterfly, and the 1/72-scale Spitfire and Me 109), so that others could share my experience of flying a small micro RC plane. [Visit microflight.com to see some of Joe's designs.]

CM: That's a tricky question. My Butterflight butterfly airplane is my favorite. I made it after little Grace, my patient, passed away in 2008 when she was 10. Her mom gave the nurses butterfly bushes. Two years ago, it won the Best Micro aircraft award at the JR Indoor Electric Festival [now known as the Horizon Indoor Electric Festival].

JM: My little Twin (engine) 1/72-scale A-10 EDF is one of my favorites.

RH: *Have any of your designs won awards?*

JM: I've won several awards over the years. However, it's the experience that matters – from designing and building new models to flying them at these wonderful events for the public to enjoy.

I've won the Best Jet award three times and the Best Micro award the last few years at the Horizon event. However, one year Cindy beat me, and won the Best Micro award with her Butterflight Butterfly!

CM: I never in a million years thought I would win! I was shocked.

JM: Not only did she win the top award in Little Rock in 1998, at Toledo she won second place with her Nesmith Cougar one year when they had a micro RC category. Since then she has been going to events with me. The guys get a kick out of her. Getting your wife to build with you? Amazing! We really enjoy doing hobbies together.

RH: *How did your involvement in the NEAT Fair come about?*

JM: I've been going since the beginning. My friend, Henry Pasquet, came from Missouri and we were asked to start holding a seminar at the NEAT Fair about the latest developments in micro models. The crowds continued to grow each year, so we decided to bring it indoors.

This year, we had a micro Pylon Racing competition. The competitors had to design a model that used a 6mm motor. The gym is small so most of us had to fly at half power.

RH: *What do you two like to do in your free time?*

JM: Besides building model airplanes, I also enjoy model railroading, traveling, and catching a movie with Cindy.

I do some light aircraft flying as well, mostly taildraggers, and I write the bimonthly "Micro-Flying" column for *Model Aviation* magazine.

CM: I enjoy knitting scarves, making blankets, and designing jewelry.

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