



# The AMA History Project Presents: Biography of SID TANABE



Written by JS (11/2015), Reformatted by JS (11/2015)

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*The following was published in the I Am the AMA column, printed in the November 2015 issue of Model Aviation magazine, written by Jay Smith.*

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## **I Am the AMA Sid Tanabe, Model Builder**

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

**Sid Tanabe:** When I was a young boy living in Troutdale, Oregon, there were two young Japanese-American men who were building and flying model aircraft. One was Roy Morihiro, who had an aeronautical engineering degree from the University of Washington. The other was Roy Naemura, a schoolmate of mine.

These two inspired me to take up the hobby and awakened in me a desire to match what they had done. Both of them joined the U.S. Army. Unfortunately, they were killed in Italy during World War II, but their example of dedication stayed with me all my life. Their families were interned with my family in Minidoka, Idaho, during the war.

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

**ST:** Model aviation had been a lifelong hobby and inspiration to me. I took a home-study course in electronics so I could understand the intricacies of radio control as it made its appearance in the early 1950s. That understanding helped me in my later career working with biomedical equipment at the Saint Alphonsus Hospital, in Boise, Idaho.

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

**ST:** I build models from scratch, using my knowledge of the design of full-scale airplanes and the methods of fabrication used by the builders in their construction. Then I try to improve on them. I no longer personally fly them or enter them into competitions, but I derive great pleasure in watching my friend, Randy Matley, a retired airline captain, fly my airplanes for me.

*JS: What are your other hobbies?*

**ST:** I have no other hobbies, but my building model aircraft has led me to learning the difficult task of welding the alumni tubing that I have incorporated into my airplanes, just as it was in the full-scale airplanes. And I do a lot of reading about new construction methods.

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

**ST:** I was influenced by my association with the builders at Avid Aircraft, in Caldwell, Idaho, who showed me how to build my *Explorer* and *Magnum* model airplanes using their methods. I also am influenced by the members of the club, with whom I discuss new ideas for building airplanes. And I must admit that the recognition I have earned from the host of competitions I have won has been a great boost.

*JS: What advice would you give someone looking to get started in building model aircraft?*

**ST:** Go to school and study hard. Learn how to draw and to read blueprints. Learn about the different types of fabrication, and about the glues to use, and about the many finishing materials that can be used. And above all, learn how to work hard and stay with it until you have finished. It may take a long, long time to achieve your dreams, but you'll find it worthwhile.

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