

Pilot Profile: Mike Jankowski

By Russell Knetzger

In 1976, when Mike was 12 years old, Mike helped his mother, Diane, rescue Mike's father, John (an early R/C flyer at our field) from flames that were engulfing most of John's clothes, especially his pants. John had been working with solvents in kitchen refinishing and the fumes exploded when a spark from the refrigerator motor started up. The intense heat made John's clothing burn. Mike and his mother jumped on John to smother the flames. They were successful, and John was saved.

From that experience Mike knew he wanted to become a fire fighter, to more effectively prevent, or put out fires, and to rescue the injured. Now, at age 44, since January, 2007, Mike is the Fire Chief of the Village of Hales Corners Fire Department, in southwestern Milwaukee County. Before that he was an early full time employee of the Volunteer (paid only on call) Franklin Fire Department. Mike grew up and still lives in Franklin.

Because Mike knew from such a young age exactly what he wanted his life's work to be, he tailored his education to that goal. After attending Oak Creek High School, (its district takes in the part of Franklin where Mike grew up), Mike went to MATC-Milwaukee Area Technical College and earned his Fire Science Associate Degree.

For every fire call that Fire Departments now make, they make 10 to 20 Emergency Medical calls. Foreseeing that trend, and remembering his father's injuries, from MATC Mike worked 5 years as an emergency room technician at Columbia Hospital, next to UW-M on Milwaukee's east side. Then he pursued for 2 years Paramedic training and experience in Michigan earning his Certificate in Paramedics.

On top of his job-specific certificates, Mike has added a degree in Public Administration via Iowa University's distance learning program, which took him 6 years. Now he is pursuing a 5 year masters degree program through the National Fire Academy, which has included on-site work near Camp David in Maryland.



Above: Mike Jankowski, standing in front of one of his Hales Corners Village Fire Department's engine trucks, a Seagrave, made in Clintonville, Wis. While squinting into the bright morning sun, Mike is holding his Pitts Special ARF biplane made by Cermark. It has a 60 inch wing span, weighs about 10 lbs, and is powered by a four-stroke YS 120 engine. Mike is the Fire Chief.

Mike's interest in model aviation started with AMA Delta Darts in his boyhood. From there the transition to radio controlled model aircraft comes with his father, at the old Franklin field south of Ryan Road and east of 60th Street, now the Franklin Industrial Park.

Those lessons were with Leonard Mlynarski, a longtime loyal member of the MARKS Club and frequent visitor to our field, though less so in recent years as age and infirmities advance.

Mike lives with his wife, Christina, and children Alyssa, 9, and son Matthew, 7 on Madison Ave. in central Franklin. While in the three or so years Mike has belonged to the RAMS he has not as yet been an officer, in Nov., 2007 he gave free training to about a half dozen RAMS members in CPR-Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation.

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