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St. Charles CC

# Something Completely Different

The television program “Monty Python’s Flying Circus” aired on the British Broadcasting Corporation from 1969 to 1973. They produced six movies for theatrical release, 18 albums, numerous TV specials, and stage musicals.

The television production popularized many innovations, now accepted as conventions, including an abrupt sequence disruption in which John Cleese, reporting from a news desk in mid-sketch, said, “and now for something completely different.”

As turf managers we sometimes become overwhelmed with our vocation. Superintendents and industry support staff work in a dynamic, fluid, ever-changing environment. It’s easy to be buried in work and not look up. John Turner of Bayer Environmental Science looks up. He looks up a lot,

as it turns out. “JT,” as he is affectionately called, has been flying Remote Control (RC) Airplanes since 1969!



JT explains, “As a young model enthusiast, growing up in Indiana, I built stick models powered by rubber band and flew them near a golf course. I was introduced to a neighbor who built RC models and helped him build a larger plane that was operated by radio control. After saving up my yard money, I purchased my first RC plane for \$75 including the radio. Ironically, I still have it!”

JT elaborates a little, “My interest in flying started in the ‘60s with U-Control Planes, then progressed to model RC aircraft. Looks

like I have been in this for 40 years and still going strong!” It’s important to note, at this point, that the author of this article is only 36 years old.

JT’s habit (let’s call a spade a spade, shall we) has evolved over the years in to a variety of aircraft and modes of propulsion. “Gas has been the standard for many years, however electric is becoming the trend! No noise and exhaust residue from the motors. Battery sources (Lithium polymer) are providing longer flying time. Some of our members are flying RC aircraft with scale jet turbine engines that range from single to multi engine turbines. Each turbine engine is about \$6,000.” The enterprise, it seems, has changed a great deal over the years as new technologies developed.



JT’s wife supports his hobby, to a point. “Well she does not say too much about the monetary investment as long as I do not get too involved with her spending on shoes, clothes, house, etc. I’m only kidding! She does get upset when I go to field early Sat/Sun mornings every week for about 5 hours.”

It’s not dissimilar to having a tee time every weekend.



What about the dollar investment? JT says that while it's not cheap, it's also not the most expensive hobby, by a long shot. "Like any hobby one enjoys and has a passion for there is a cost. You can invest the minimal amount of \$100 for a small park model or spot \$20,000 for those quarter-scale or turbine jets. The question I always ask myself is, 'what is the dollar amount that I could afford to give up should a plane have a failure and crash in field?' The largest amount I have in one RC plane is about \$2,000, which is a 30% scale Extra 260 gas-powered engine."

JT's hobby keeps him busy most weekends in a field near his far west suburban home in Elburn, Illinois. "I belong to the Fox Valley Aero Club. I'm currently the Vice President of the organization. Our membership is 225 and growing. The average age of club members is probably 35-40."

JT and other club members aren't in it just for themselves but have extended into the community via charitable organizations. "Our club is very involved in local community activities such as Kids Day (teach a kid to fly), Festival of Flight, and the Salvation Army project, Toys for Tots. Our club also received an award from

the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) for outstanding newsletter and our contribution to the community." Way to go JT and Fox Valley Aero!



JT thinks the future is bright for model aircraft. "The RC future is promising with a variety of models including cars, boats, helicopters, and aircraft. You have seen our military using RC power drones (unmanned aircraft) for seeking out anything from a few hundred feet to almost outer space. The challenge with flying model aircraft is how far the technology

will allow one to fly from point of origin. There was some legislation that was presented to Congress on the height and distance allowed for model RC aircraft. The AMA lobbied in Washington and was able to meet some of the objections with favorable input on behalf of our hobby."



When asked about what he enjoys most about his hobby, JT told me, "Building an aircraft and watching it fly for the first time is what I enjoy most. Nailing a pin-point landing on land, water, and snow is such a thrill." @

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