

Jack Jella on Dope(s)

From the June 2001 issue of The Southern California Ignition Flyers *The Flight Plug*, Mike Meyers, Editor

No guys, I'm not referring to guys who launch (or chase) endurance models without trackers. I've switched topics. Jack Jella, a master modeler and flyer to the North, put this out recently. It's worth quoting to get his thoughts on the topic of dopes for model use.

"There has been a lot of traffic on SAMtalk the last few days regarding the use of various dopes and thinners for model use. My experience with Randolph aircraft finishes dates back to 1960, when as an airport FBO and Piper dealer, I discovered that all Piper fabric covered airplanes were finished with Randolph products. Berry Brothers (Berryloid) probably made the best dope ever, very bright colors, but they have been out of business for many years. I finish all my airplanes, silk or tissue, with nitrate dope. Butyrate, while somewhat resistant to alky base fuels, continues to shrink long after normal drying time, and cause warps and sometimes actual distortion of the airframe. There are different formulas for clear dopes and thinners, even by the same manufacturer, to meet specific requirements. I have found from years of experience that for me, the best nitrate dope by far is Randolph 210, and the reducer (thinner) Randolph 286. The thinner is formulated specifically for use with nitrate dope and contains a retarder to reduce the drying rate to prevent blushing. To control shrinkage, I plasticize my dope with Di Butyl Phthalate, 1 cc per ounce of unthinned dope is a good starting point. It prevents excess shrinkage and warps and remains flexible for years. You can buy Randolph products through Aircraft Spruce and Specialty www.aircraftspruce.com or you can check other suppliers of full scale aircraft parts. For colored nitrate dope, I buy from A1 Heinrich at Aerodyne. He has an excellent selection of colors in small quantities, and it comes already plasticized. I believe that a well crafted model deserves a good finish. There is a world of difference in the quality of dopes and thinners, but this is what works for me."

Those of us who have enjoyed looking at Jack's models over the years (and seeing them fly just as well as they look) know that the models have a great finish on them. So now he's told us how he does it. If you're not on the internet, Aircraft Spruce and Specialties has moved to Corona from Fullerton, so you'll have to find them in a new area code— probably 949.