Tips for Flying with Fido

Owner's Corner: Piper Meridian

Managing Cockpit Distractions

TWIN & TURBINE

FOR THE PILOTS OF OWNER-FLOWN, CABIN-CLASS AIRCRAFT

SEPTEMBER 2022 $3.95 US
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The Yellow Cub Road

You never forget your first real job. The one that launches you into adulthood, opening your eyes to the working world and ultimately laying the foundation for the rest of your career.

Mine took place 10 years ago at Piper Aircraft in lovely Vero Beach, Florida. I held a shiny new marketing degree, a pilot's license and no real plan on what to do next. Fortunately, I was soon hired as an intern on the Piper sales and marketing team to perform market research, giving me a few months to get my feet wet in a professional environment.

But as it happened, Piper was a good fit and by that fall, I was an official employee, assisting with advertising efforts, copywriting, tradeshows, and a long list of other marketing tasks. During my tenure at Piper, my passion for writing and editing particularly ignited (little did I know where it would eventually lead!).

Adding to the excitement was I joined the company right in time for its 75th Anniversary. Piper hosted a fly-in celebration to commemorate the milestone and celebrate its iconic starting point – the infamous yellow Cub. Ironically, it was in a Piper Cub that I had spontaneously learned to fly in just two years prior, leading me to choose a career path aimed at general aviation.

The fly-in event was attended by dozens of Cub owners, complete with vendors, dinners, tours and awards – all coordinated by our marketing team. Still to this day, I will never forget walking among the field of yellow right outside my office building.

A Decade Later

This past July, Piper Aircraft celebrated its 85th Anniversary at EAA AirVenture. It is hard to believe 10 years have passed since working at the factory – but the friendships and memories remain.

Throughout the show, I caught up with several former coworkers and salespeople from my Piper days. I was especially excited to see two influential women in my career (and life) and want to acknowledge them here – my former supervisors, Jackie Carlon and Rorie Ainbinder. Both were Piper Aircraft employees for nearly two decades each in the marketing department. Their passion and patience in training young professionals over those years is evident – and I was lucky to be one of them. Their counsel was invaluable in setting the stage for where I am today.

I am forever grateful to both the little yellow Cub and my time at Piper that lit the match igniting my passion for creative work. To Jackie and Rorie – who are both turning a new leaf in their own careers – I wish you the best, and offer my sincere appreciation for your mentorship. Cheers to you.

Impromptu sunset photos with my former supervisors, Jackie Carlon and Rorie Ainbinder, in the Piper Aircraft booth at EAA AirVenture 2022.

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Flying with Fido

by **Grant Boyd**

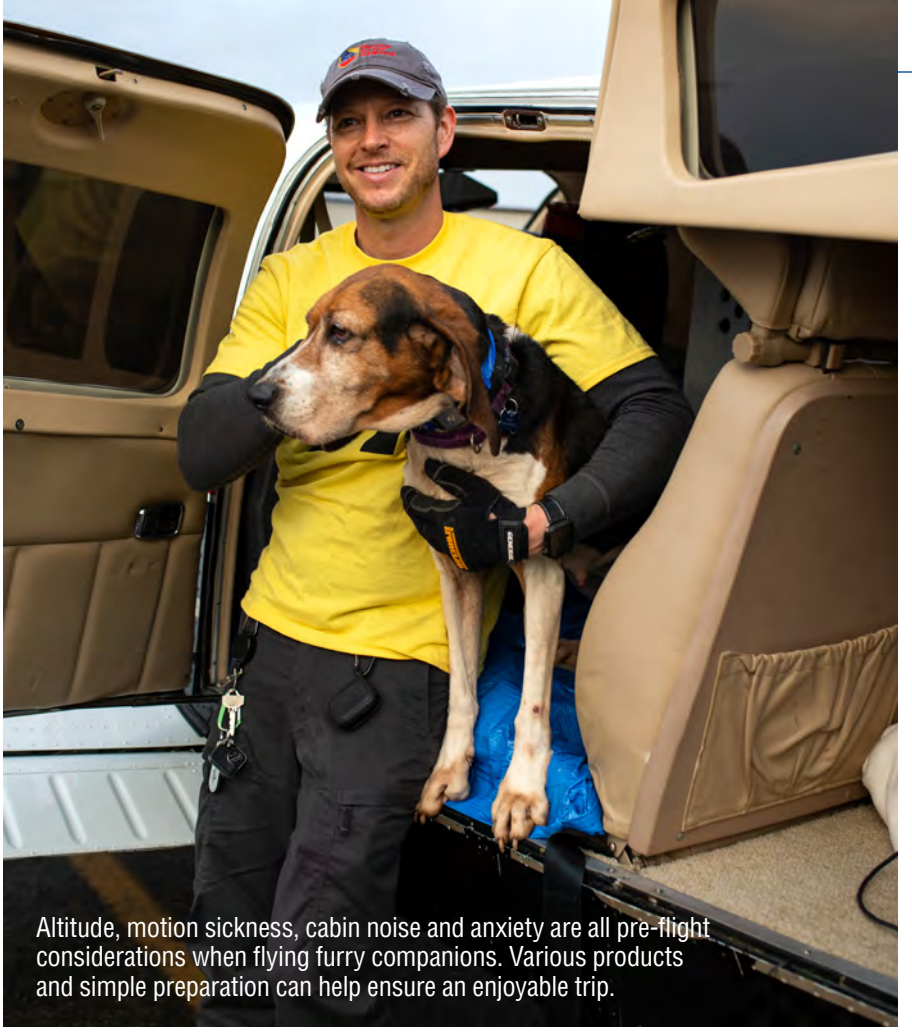
PHOTOS COURTESY OF PILOTS TO THE RESCUE

According to the American Pet Products Association's most recent tally, more than 62 million American families own a dog. Chances are many reading this article fall into that category and have at one point either flown your or your passengers' dog(s) – or possibly even rescue pups en route to their "furever" homes. Let's cover some tips and tricks to better the chances that flying with Fido is a fun affair for both you and your pet.

First and foremost, there are several key differentiating factors between transporting an animal in a car versus in a private aircraft. Of course, altitude is one of the most obvious ones. Dr. Michaella R. Abugov, DVM, private pilot and practicing veterinarian in the Greater Boston area, explains how altitude, rate of climb and related aspects affect dogs in flight.

"In pressurized cabins where hypoxia is a non-issue, a smooth and stable departure with a low rate of climb is key to the comfort of your canine companion. A dog's ears can pop just like ours as we climb through flight levels. Giving your dog a high-value treat (I love filling a hollow rubber Kong toy with peanut butter for my dog) for departure can stimulate chewing and licking that will release pressure behind their ears as well as help entertain them during the most potentially frightening phase of flight."

Another factor that may impact some dogs is motion sickness. Certainly, if you have an animal who turns green the second your car goes into first gear, you are unlikely to take them on a ride in one of your



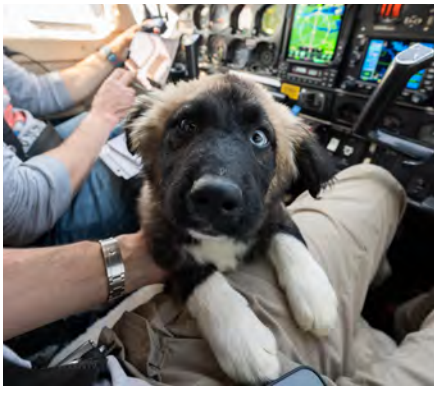
Altitude, motion sickness, cabin noise and anxiety are all pre-flight considerations when flying furry companions. Various products and simple preparation can help ensure an enjoyable trip.

most treasured investments. But the potential for dogs to become motion sick may increase in flight just as it does in people.

"If your dog gets motion sickness in the car, it is likely they will experience it in flight as well. In an otherwise healthy dog, I would recommend withholding food (not water) for 10 hours before flying if they have the tendency to vomit. There is also a prescription medication that has a very strong anti-nausea effect and will prevent vomiting. I recommend discussion with a veterinarian to see if this would be a good option."

A third identified factor in flight that pilots should bear in mind is cabin noise. There are several products in the marketplace that can help dampen noise mid-flight.

"Mutt Muffs" from Sporty's is a great option for ear protection. I also recommend equine 'ear stuffies' that you can buy from tack shops either in addition to or instead of the Mutt Muffs if your dog won't tolerate them."



If you have an anxious flyer on your hands, other products can help dogs enjoy flying more.

"There are many products available to the general public that can potentially help your dog with anxiety, such as the Thundershirt (which applies calming pressure around the dog's torso), the supplement Solliquin, or pheromone sprays and collars that work by mimicking natural pheromones that a mother releases to relax her baby," said Abugov. "Traveling with your dog's favorite toys, beds or blankets will help them feel more at home during the flight."

"While the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) discourages sedating pets for air travel, there are mild anti-anxiety medications that you can discuss with your veterinarian on a case-by-case basis to take the edge off for extremely anxious dogs."

Scott Johnson, based at Laconia Municipal Airport (KLCI) in New Hampshire, is the owner of a 2020 Cirrus G2 Vision Jet, in which he has accumulated more than 700 hours. He, his wife, and 15-year-old daughter are often joined in flight by their nine-year-old Cattle Dog rescue, Lucy. The family has had Lucy for over eight years, and she has enjoyed a countless number of flights from her own designated area of the cabin. Being that there are more seats than family members in the aircraft, Scott has removed the rear seats.

"I always take out the last row of seats, which leaves a ton of space for storage. But we usually just put a pad back there...it's gotten to the point where we get to the hangar and Lucy already knows what is going to happen. She just bounds right in and lays down on the little dog bed. And like most passengers, she's asleep within 10 minutes of taking off. She doesn't really meander around. She just lies there or sits up and looks out the oval window in the back."

Johnson said he is fortunate to have a great dog, so he has little extra in terms of preflight considerations for Lucy. Whenever they must land for fuel or take a bathroom break,

their canine back seater also appreciates the opportunity to stretch her legs. When asked about being around other aircraft, Johnson points out Lucy's mild manner and training as positives on the ramp. Often, his wife and daughter will go into the FBO to ask where the best place to walk Lucy is. "Everybody is so accommodating, although I do focus on where we stop. CAA (Corporate Aircraft Association) FBOs are typically preferred as they are good folks and accommodating."

Scott Krohn of Minneapolis, Minnesota, is also a Vision Jet owner who often flies with a canine component. But his inflight company consists of three full-grown Bernadoodles. These Bernese Mountain Dog and Standard Poodle mixes certainly hold a large part of Krohn's heart and equally large part of his cabin. The 2020 Vision Jet G2 has propelled Scott, Gonzo, Cooper and Winston on many memorable flights together. The lightest of the three "doods" is 90 pounds, with the other two sitting at 120 and 140 pounds.

When asked how his large dogs enjoy flying in his aircraft, Krohn said, "I haven't noticed any kind of discomfort with them. They don't whine or show any signs of being anything but happy boys back there. They are just trying to figure out where we are going to land. They want to know if we are going to see the sun in Florida or the snow in Minnesota."

All journeys for the happy tagalongs begin at the aircraft's two-foot-wide cabin door. "They will get their front feet up, and then I will help them out a little bit. The steps are a little tricky for them." He added, "I take out the rear console, at least one seat, sometimes two seats. I don't put them in a kennel or tie them. They don't play musical chairs and just stay in place the whole flight."

Krohn is careful to consider his dogs' personal limitations just as he would with human passengers. He typically will aim not to fly more than a few hours to make sure that a bathroom break is not overrun. The break also allows him to recalculate the weight and balance of the aircraft, which has a maximum payload of 1,128 pounds.

Aside from owner-flown pups, many dogs are flown aboard private aircraft each day in the United States via rescue organization efforts. "Pilots To The Rescue" is just one example of these non-profit organizations, which rely on a network of trained volunteers to transport animals within the continental United States. Since its inception, the group has transported hundreds of dogs, which are typically flown as part of a "pack" rather than alone.

Michael Schneider, a commercially rated pilot, serves as the organization's Executive Director, co-founding it in 2015. As "Top Dog," Schneider helps to oversee the non-profit's

non-ambulatory flights and serves as PIC on many of them.

"The most stressful part of the trip is loading. If the animal has never been on a flight, they may not want to go in the plane so easily. If it's your first time flying with a dog, I don't recommend doing it single pilot. Even if it's just a short flight, you don't know how they are going to react."

Predominantly, the group transports animals in its Piper Turbo Saratoga based at Essex County Airport (KCDW) in Caldwell, New Jersey. But they also lean on the support of its 1,000-plus volunteers to complete missions in their own aircraft, with frequent destinations being the Carolinas and Tennessee. These are common places where sponsoring agencies have driven (often through the night) so that the dogs can be further brought across the country for rescue. On top of saving these animals, a goal of Pilots To The Rescue is to ease the burden on these gracious "Road Warriors" and the amount of driving that they have to do, as well as the dogs.

This year, the group is to fly more than 1,000 animals – an ambitious goal roughly double the number flown last year. At present, depending on the animal and the size of their crate, roughly 10 dogs can be carried each flight. While Schneider notes that the group is currently in the process of getting a second Turbo Saratoga that will be based in Atlanta or another area in the South, the long-term goal is acquiring a Cessna Caravan. The single-engine turboprop would be a considerable improvement toward the organization's expanding mission. T&T

Grant Boyd *is a private pilot and general aviation professional. He has written more than 170 articles for aviation magazines and enjoys learning about unique aircraft missions. Grant was selected as an NBAA "Top 40 Under 40" recipient in 2020 and holds an MBA from Wichita State University. He can be reached at* **grantboyd2015@gmail.com.**

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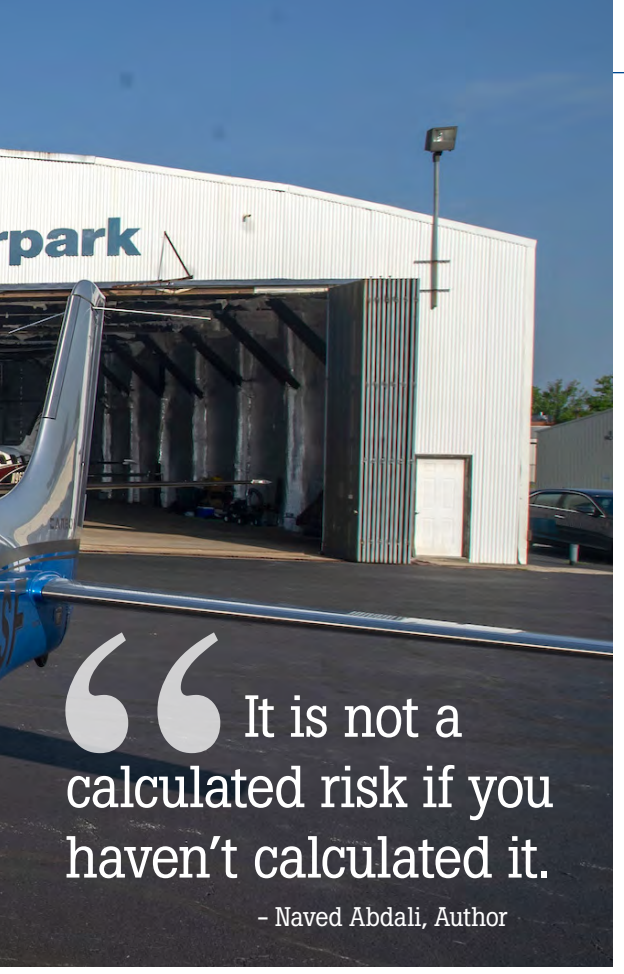


SINGLE PILOT
TOOLS & TRAINING

by **Dale Smith**

Year after year single-pilot IFR operations are statistically among the most dangerous types of flying. Fortunately, there are tools and training aids to help minimize and mitigate the risks and make every flight safer.

I’m willing to wager that if Mr. Right Stuff Brigadier General Charles Elwood “Chuck” Yeager were with us today, he’d agree that single-pilot operations in today’s IFR environment are about the riskiest kind of flying you can do.

Why? Well, airspace is busier, airplanes are more complex, and pilots are often overwhelmed by it all. And it all adds up to some unfortunate statistics. In fact, according to a report by Robert E. Breiling Associates, a single-pilot operator was between 1.2 and 1.5 times more likely to be involved in an accident than a dual-pilot operator.

The top four types of single-pilot, piston, and turbine-powered light business aircraft (LBA) accidents and incidents are as follows:

1. Runway excursions.
2. Loss of control inflight.
3. Runway undershoot/overshoot.
4. Controlled flight into terrain (CFIT).

Unfortunately, the list goes on. But from hangar rash to a total loss, every incident or accident has one thing in common: The end result is typically the last piece in a complex chain of events. The end result answers the what, but not the why. And, in too many instances, the why began a while ago with poor risk identification and management. While risk management is critical for every pilot, identifying and mitigating risks as they pertain to each flight is especially important to single-pilot operations. I'm hoping the reason is apparent.

"The workload demand on single-pilot operations necessitates that they are thoroughly prepared for every flight," explained Brian Laird, Chief Commercial Officer for TrainingPort.net. "Part of that means identifying potential hazards as well as assessing the severity and likelihood of the risks those hazards pose if encountered."

"The use of a FRAT (Flight Risk Assessment Tool) can be very helpful in risk management and mitigation," he continued. "The NBAA Single Pilot Safety Committee's FRAT uses the PAVE Model (Pilot, Aircraft, Environment, and External Pressures) guideline and simplifies the process." (You can download a copy on the NBAA website: nbaa.org).

"Using a risk assessment matrix, the risk associated with each identified hazard is derived from the hazard's probability and its severity from high to medium to low," Mark Larsen, NBAA Director, Safety and Flight Operations, said. "A risk management doctrine dictates the timing – before flight or in-flight – and level of effort needed to mitigate the hazard."

Larsen cited the matrix included in NBAA's Risk Management Guide for Single-Pilot Light Business Aircraft, which breaks the various levels of risk into three levels: high, serious, and low. "High" risks must be mitigated by taking action to lower the likelihood and severity to lower levels before departure. If the aircraft is already in flight, the risk can be avoided by an appropriate diversion or other decisive action.

"Serious" risks should be reduced to lower levels before departure or through appropriate divert or other actions if already in flight. Flights with "medium" risks can depart or continue but should involve action to lower the likelihood and severity whenever possible. "Low" risks can usually be addressed by following checklists and complying with standard procedures.

"There are varying versions of risk assessment matrixes, so be sure to follow the mitigation strategy appropriate to the matrix you are using," Larsen said. "Ultimately, risk management allows you to weigh the potential costs of a hazard against the possible benefits of allowing the hazard to stand uncontrolled."

One is the Busiest Number

By now, you're saying, "Of course, single-pilot operations are more dangerous. I've got to do everything myself."

Ah, there's a key. You are solely responsible for every element of the flight. And those responsibilities don't begin and end in the left seat. Think about it for a minute: How many times have you left home a bit late and rushed to the airport to fly out for an early meeting? Or perhaps at the end of a long day, you're faced with flying home in marginal weather. The list goes on and on.

Pilots being pilots, taking time to analyze all the elements of an upcoming flight isn't something you're going

to tend to do on the best of days.

"Typically, these aren't professional pilots. They are business professionals that happen to be pilots who use their airplanes for business and leisure travel," Laird said. "Risk management is not top of mind for them. It's possible that many of them have never heard of the concept as it regards their flying."

So, Mr. or Ms. business pilot, you're left with dealing with each and every situation "on the fly." Not the best course of action if safety is top of mind. But that may be changing. While risk management/mitigation hasn't been stressed in flight training in the past, Larsen said that's currently evolving.

"Risk management competency is crucial because poor risk management is likely a root cause of most fatal light business airplane accidents. Accident root cause analysis is not always available from conventional data sources for many such accidents. Still, safety experts regularly make the connection between poor risk management and accidents/incidents where the root cause has been investigated," he said. "I believe we are in a transition period with complete incorporation of risk management into flight training programs."

"For decades, the detailed regulatory basis for pilot training, check rides, and proficiency checks were in the applicable Practical Test Standards (PTS), which focused on knowledge and skills appropriate to tasks within given areas of operation," Larson added. "In the past decade, the FAA and industry began work to create Airman Certification Standards (ACS) that replace PTS's for all certificates and ratings."

The new standards add detailed, applicable risk management elements to the knowledge and skills of tasks within areas of operation," he said. "Those updates were originally released in 2018-2019, though further changes have been made since."

He also said that many training providers have or are updating their curricula and courseware to cover all elements of the applicable ACS, including the detailed risk management elements.

Single-Pilots Don't Have to Go it Alone

While the concept of risk management/mitigation may be new to many pilots, the good news is that there are many aids to help you add it to your preflight planning without drastically increasing your workload. TrainingPort.net has provided online courses for Single Pilot Resource Management (SRM) since Scott Macpherson introduced the company during the 2006 NBAA-BACE event.

"And 16 years later, our mission remains the same," Laird explained, "To equip pilots with online training solutions that mitigate operational risks, elevate competency, and facilitate continuous improvement. For example, our SRM (Single-Pilot Resource Management) topic has seven lessons. They explore the effective use of all resources available to single-pilot operators to meet the unique challenges they face while improving safety and efficiency. Each session takes 15 minutes to complete and can be completed all at once or spread out over time."

TrainingPort.net's seven SRM sections include:

- Threat and Error Management.
- Communications.
- Situational Awareness.
- Workload Management and Decision Making.
- Fatigue, Pressure, and Stress
- Automation and Technology Management.

Laird said that from his experience, the most valuable part of the program is workload management and decision-making. Second, by a small margin, is automation and technology management. Not surprisingly, considering the fact that in many cases, the first time a pilot sees these advanced systems is in the airplane's cockpit.

"Before I got into online training, I worked for a big simulator training provider for LBA pilots," he said. "Glass cockpits absolutely have a big impact on risk management. One of the biggest things I routinely found was that pilots were washing out because of their inability to

understand and operate the advanced avionics, not because of their stick and rudder skills."

"The technologies today require that you know whatever systems you have in the airplane 100 percent," Laird added. "When things happen, they happen quickly. And you need to know what to do fast. If you're not multiple steps ahead of the systems, you are lightyears behind the airplane."

He points to many contributing factors to pilots "getting behind the airplane," including lack of familiarity, complacency, distraction, and the overall dulling of basic stick-and-rudder skills.

"Also, the lack of tactile feedback from the controls can contribute to a loss of situational awareness," Laird said. "For example, some new fly-by-wire systems require no throttle management after takeoff. Set it and forget it. It's easy to overlook these systems and their correct operation until you have an emergency situation. Then it's often too late."

Additional Tools to Help Manage Risk

While it may seem that risk management/mitigation is a reasonably new effort, it's not. Larsen explained that for over a decade, NBAA has had a dedicated Single-Pilot Safety Working Group that is part of the NBAA Safety Committee. The group's sole focus is on addressing identified safety issues in a way that's appropriate for the single-pilot business aviation environment.

"That group, in conjunction with the broader NBAA Safety Committee, creates resources published on the NBAA website that single-pilot operators can use to strengthen the safety posture of their flights," he said. "In addition, pilots can attend the annual NBAA Single-Pilot Safety Standdown that is held in conjunction with NBAA-BACE each year."

To complement those events, Larsen said that NBAA has a host of single-pilot-focused safety resources on its website at nbaa.org/aircraft-operations/safety/single-pilot-operations/. In an ongoing effort to expand its reach, NBAA regularly works with single-pilot aircraft type clubs and leads an owner-pilot coalition of those associations to collaborate on issues relevant to the single-pilot community, including safety, insurance, and operational best practices, among other topics.

An example of that outreach is the NBAA's recent announcement regarding the formation of its Owner Pilot Association Coalition (NBAA OPAC). This dedicated group has been created to bring together leaders of business aircraft owner-pilot organizations in a "collaborative effort to tackle top concerns for business aviation."

The announcement release went on to say, "This new, grassroots coalition will connect the best thinking

to concrete action to address owner-operators' unique challenges, and also optimize the many ways aviation can support their business needs."

The first owners' organizations to join NBAA'S OPAC include Cirrus Vision Pilots and Owners, Citation Jet Pilots Association, Embraer Jet Operators Association, Malibu M-Class Owner and Pilots Association, Pilatus Pilatus Owners and Pilots Association, and the TBM Owner Pilot Association are all actively involved in the group's efforts.

Making Single-Pilot Operations Safer

Larsen strongly stressed that to make significant strides in reducing accidents, pilots must commit to making proactive risk management/mitigation part of every phase of flight.

"Appropriate preflight planning must include a comprehensive risk assessment, especially in the single-pilot environment. The best place to mitigate the risk of a hazard is while you're still on the ground," he said. "The proactive investment of time and thought in Risk Management, a critical Single-Pilot Resource Management skill, will make for less stressful flights and easier decisions while en route because you've preplanned your options."

"The ultimate goal is to provide the tools that enhance the likelihood of conducting your business and getting back home to your family without incident," Larsen concluded. T&T

Dale Smith *has been a commercial, private and business aviation marketing and media communications specialist for nearly 40 years. He is an award-wining aviation journalist and aviation artist. Dale has been a licensed pilot since 1974 and has flown more than 40 different types of aircraft. Contact Dale at* **dalesmith206@comcast.net.**

Altitude Critical Areas

by **Thomas P. Turner**

The greatest threat to safety in single-pilot operation is distraction. Without a second pilot on board to monitor the pilot flying and to help manage workload, the single pilot operator's best strategies are those that minimize distractions.

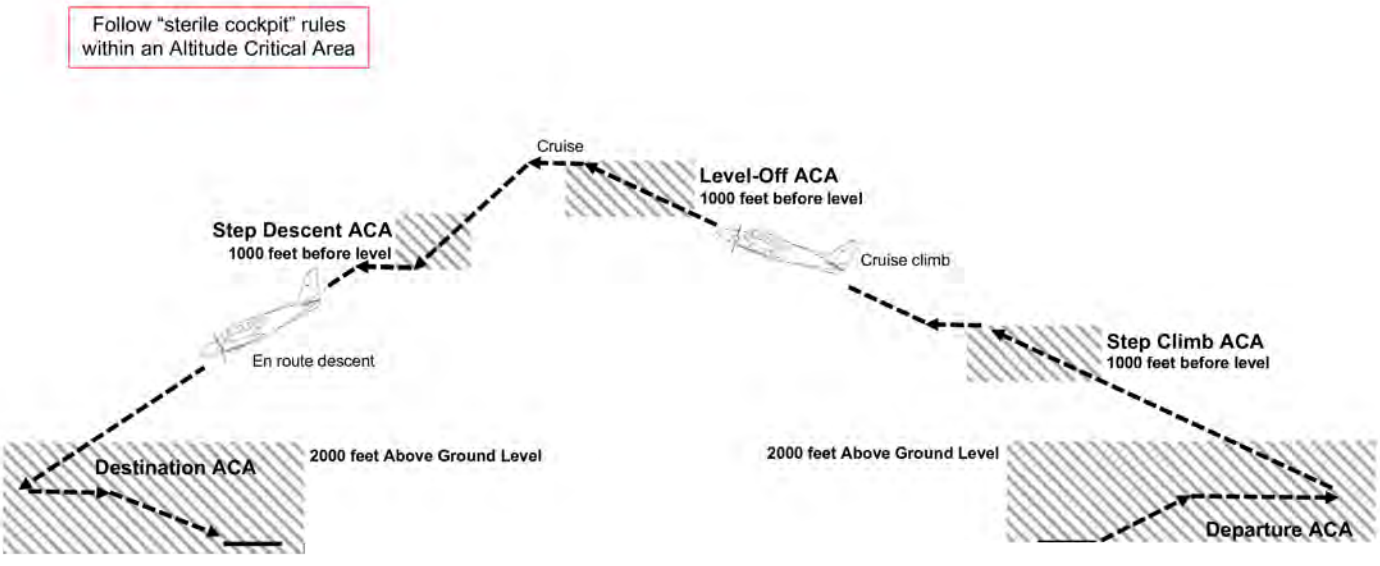
Most pilot deviations, Loss of Control Inflight (LOC-I) and other aircraft mishaps have at their core an element of pilot distraction. Distraction and deviation are most common when the pilot is in a transitory phase of flight: climbing out from the departure airport, transitioning from climb to level (whether in an intermediate "step climb" or at the final cruise altitude), leveling out of a descent, and in the approach and landing environment. These transition phases are easily defined in terms of altitude, as what I call Altitude Critical Areas (ACAs).

If distraction is the hazard in an ACA, then workload reduction is the mitigation. A very helpful workload reduction tool makes active use of the ACA concept. The idea for the ACA comes from the airline industry and most notably past NTSB chairman Robert Sumwalt, who in a 1990s National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) article coined the term to describe the final portion of an instrument approach. I've adopted Sumwalt's term to expand on the concept for single-pilot resource management (SPRM).

Defining ACA

I define an Altitude Critical Area as any range of altitude:

- within 2,000 feet of the ground and/or
- within 1,000 feet of a level-off altitude (whether on climb or descent) until established and trimmed on that altitude.



You may wish to increase the range of altitudes you use to define an ACA but do not decrease them. Altitude changes can happen rapidly in twin and turbine aircraft. The physical task of changing the phase-of-flight state and trimming the airplane (or monitoring the autopilot closely while it does so), then confirming your actions with the applicable checklist, takes time and requires your attention. The ACA technique helps you budget that time and sharpen that focus.

Using ACAs

Now that we've defined ACA airspace, what do you do when you're in it? The idea is to reduce workload by limiting nonessential tasks when you are in an ACA. The best way to do this is to invoke the Sterile Cockpit Rule.

The Sterile Cockpit Rule is an FAA regulation that applies to multi-pilot crews flying in scheduled airline service (Part 121) and crewed or single-pilot operations in an on-demand air carrier (charter) operation (Part 135). This regulation was enacted after the widespread introduction of Cockpit Voice Recorders (CVRs) in airliners, which allowed investigators to learn that many air carrier deviations and crashes occur while the cockpit crew is distracted by off-topic conversations or performing extraneous tasks.

14 CFR 135.100 spells out the Sterile Cockpit Rule for charter pilots. I've excerpted parts that might describe the way you fly your single-pilot aircraft and added emphasis to the most relevant parts.

> **No…flight crewmember perform any duties during *a critical phase of flight* except those duties *required for the safe operation of the aircraft.*** Duties such as [radio] calls made for…nonsafety related purposes…, eating meals, engaging in nonessential conversations…and reading publications not related to the proper conduct of the flight are not required for the safe operation of the aircraft… critical phases of flight include ground operations involving taxi, takeoff and landing….

Although these regulations do not apply to Part 91 operators, the technique is valid – at least with a little translation.

Techniques

So how can you glean the advantages of ACAs and the Sterile Cockpit Rule in your single-pilot cockpit?

- Brief your passengers. Let your passengers know there are certain times when you need to be fully focused on flying the airplane. These times include any time the airplane is moving on the ground, during takeoff and the first few minutes of climb, as you're leveling off on the way up and on the way down, and for about the last 15 minutes of your flight as you near the airport – in other words, when in an ACA. If you

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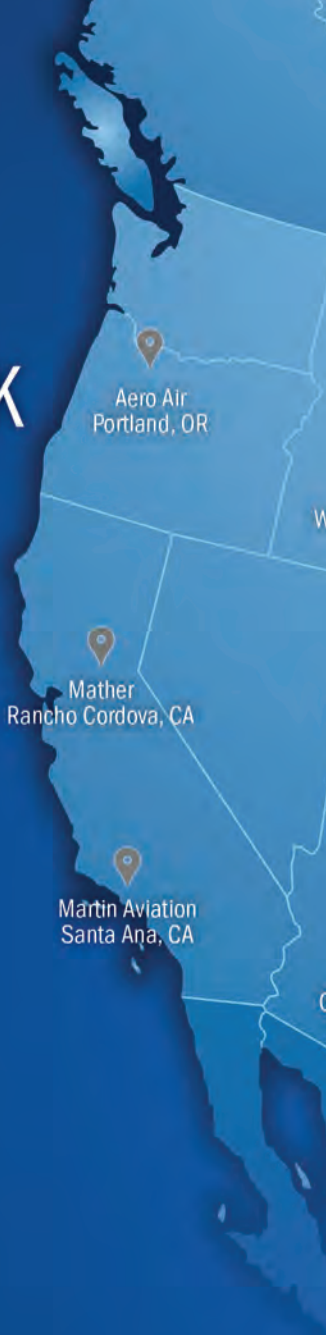

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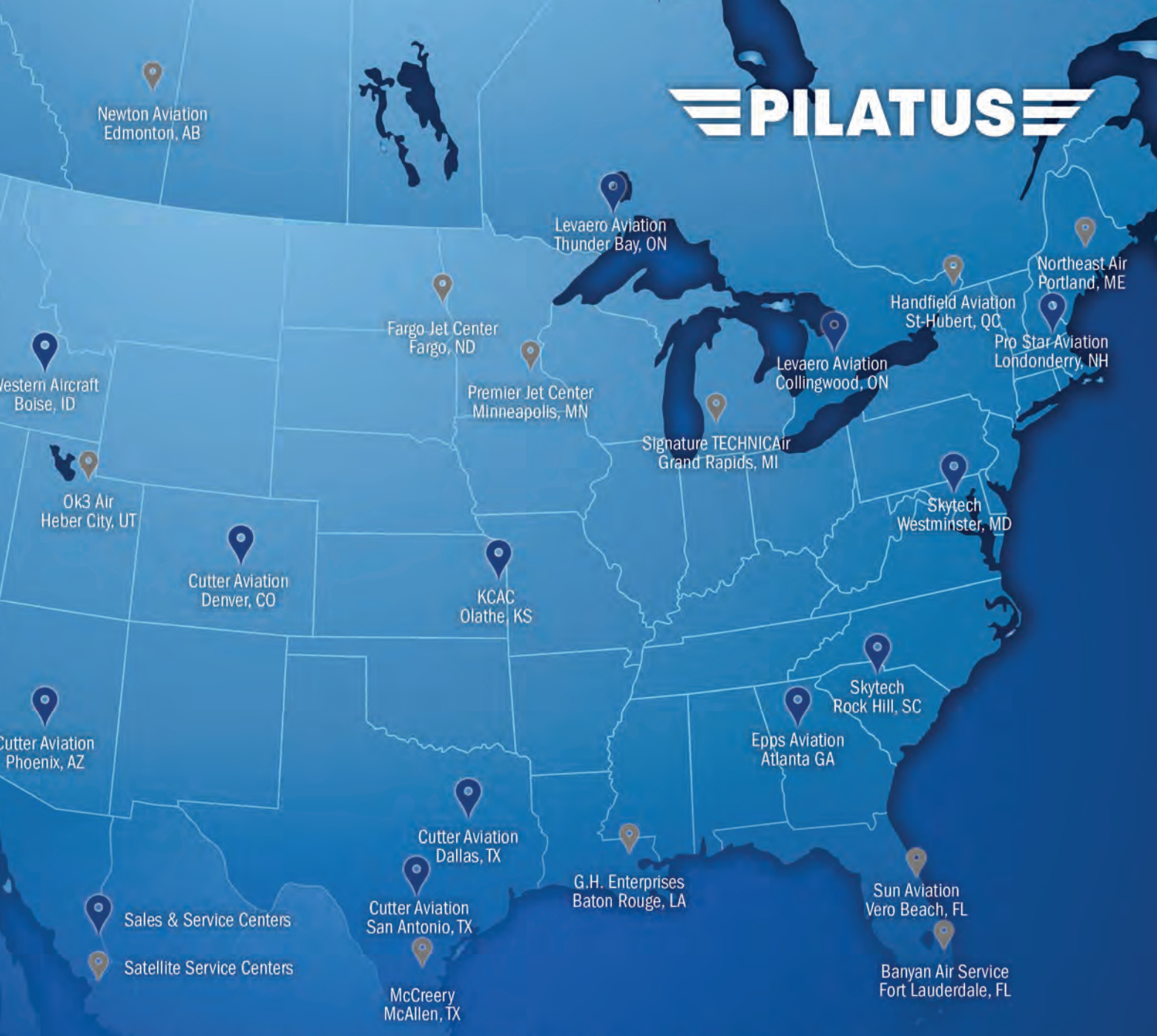

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have nervous passengers and think this will somehow make them doubt your ability as a pilot, blame it on the radio: "You'll notice it's sometimes hard to understand what the controllers and other pilots are saying on the radio. At certain times of the flight, I'll need to be listening for them. During those times, I'll ask you to refrain from talking to me so I can hear them better."

Brief passengers before you board the aircraft that you'll let them know when it's okay for them to talk to you, and when you need them to halt conversation as you near a new phase of flight. Advise them you may use the Pilot Isolation feature of your intercom so they can still talk among themselves during these times but you cannot hear them. Tailor this briefing to the level of pilot isolation you'll use and the way you'll notify your passengers.

- Get everything set and briefed before takeoff. Don't think you can plug in the flight plan once you're airborne – you'll probably be too busy for that until you're well on your way. Complete all your checklists and briefings before you call the tower or take the active to depart. Don't enter an ACA until all actions are complete.
- Delay anything that's not immediately necessary until you exit the ACA. Don't pull out or call up approach charts while in an ACA. Don't call ahead for a fuel order, to confirm a rental car, or answer an FBO's questions about how long you'll park or if you have passengers waiting while you're in an ACA-defined high-workload area. If it's not immediately necessary to the outcome of the flight, defer it until you exit the ACA.

Into Practice

Say you've been cleared to 12,000 feet MSL. You're nearing 11,000 feet and climbing – you're entering the Level-Off ACA that begins 1,000 feet below level-off. Reach up and activate the Pilot Isolation switch on your intercom – you're removing distractions from your passengers' conservation and questions. Set your iPad or other charts aside and focus solely on flying the airplane, with or without the autopilot – you're removing visual distractions and directing attention to what you really need to do at that moment. Reduce your climb rate to 500 feet per minute to begin accelerating on course and to spread out the big trim change between climb and cruise speeds – you're limiting distractions by moderating the pace of level-off.

If ATC calls with a re-route or wants you to change squawks or some other task, respond, "Stand by, I'll call when I'm ready." Hand-fly or closely monitor the autopilot's level-off and, using practiced cockpit flow checks, reconfigure the airplane for cruise. Once established and trimmed in level flight, with reconfiguring complete and the mixture leaned, run the Cruise checklist to ensure you've not missed anything. After you're satisfied the transition is complete, you're no longer in the Level-Off ACA. Respond to any ATC requests, pull the iPad back out for your en route charts or weather, and turn off the Pilot Isolation feature and say hello to your passengers until you enter the next ACA.

Each time you enter an ACA do the same thing: remove distractions, focus on the transition, confirm your actions with the checklist, then resume non-ACA operations.

One More Thing

The concept of the Altitude Critical Area helps you respond to abnormal and emergency situations as well. If you experience a systems failure or other problem while you're in an ACA, perform any "bold print" Emergency checklist memory steps that are necessary. Once that's complete, or if no bold print steps are required, exit the ACA if at all possible before you attempt to troubleshoot the failure or perform any printed Abnormal or Emergency checklist actions. Get away from the ground (continue initial climb after takeoff, or break off an approach and climb away from a landing), and when you're out of the ACA then deal with the condition. If you're in a Level-Off ACA, whether climbing or descending, complete the level-off, then handle the abnormality.

Do you see an abnormality or get an annunciator light? Will the landing gear not go down? Then don't enter the ACA. On the runway when you detect a problem? Abort the takeoff and figure it out after you've come to a stop. If you're airborne in an ACA, get out – climb if needed, and level off well away from the ground. Only after you're established in level flight outside an ACA should you identify the problem and make remedial actions. There you can begin troubleshooting and using any Abnormal or Emergency checklists. Whether taking off or descending, unless the airplane is incapable of doing so, don't fly into high-workload airspace with an unresolved indication or discrepancy.

Of course, some situations may not give you this luxury. But if what you're facing today does, take advantage of the operational pause provided by avoiding or getting out of the high-workload ACA and dealing with the problem in lower-workload airspace. Old-time pilots used to say the first thing you should do in an emergency is to wind the clock on the instrument panel. This is another way of saying "take your time and do things right." In the modern world, exiting or avoiding an ACA is another way of winding the clock.

Pilot workload is high enough on takeoff, on approach and landing, and during intermediate and final level-offs, without adding the distractions of passenger conversation and extraneous, non-time-sensitive tasks. Use the concept of the Altitude Critical Area and Sterile Cockpit techniques to better command your flight. T&T

Thomas P. Turner *is an ATP CFIIMEI, holds a master's Degree in Aviation Safety, and was the 2010 National FAA Safety Team Representative of the Year. Subscribe to Tom's free FLYING LESSONS Weekly e-newsletter at* **www.mastery-flight-training.com.**

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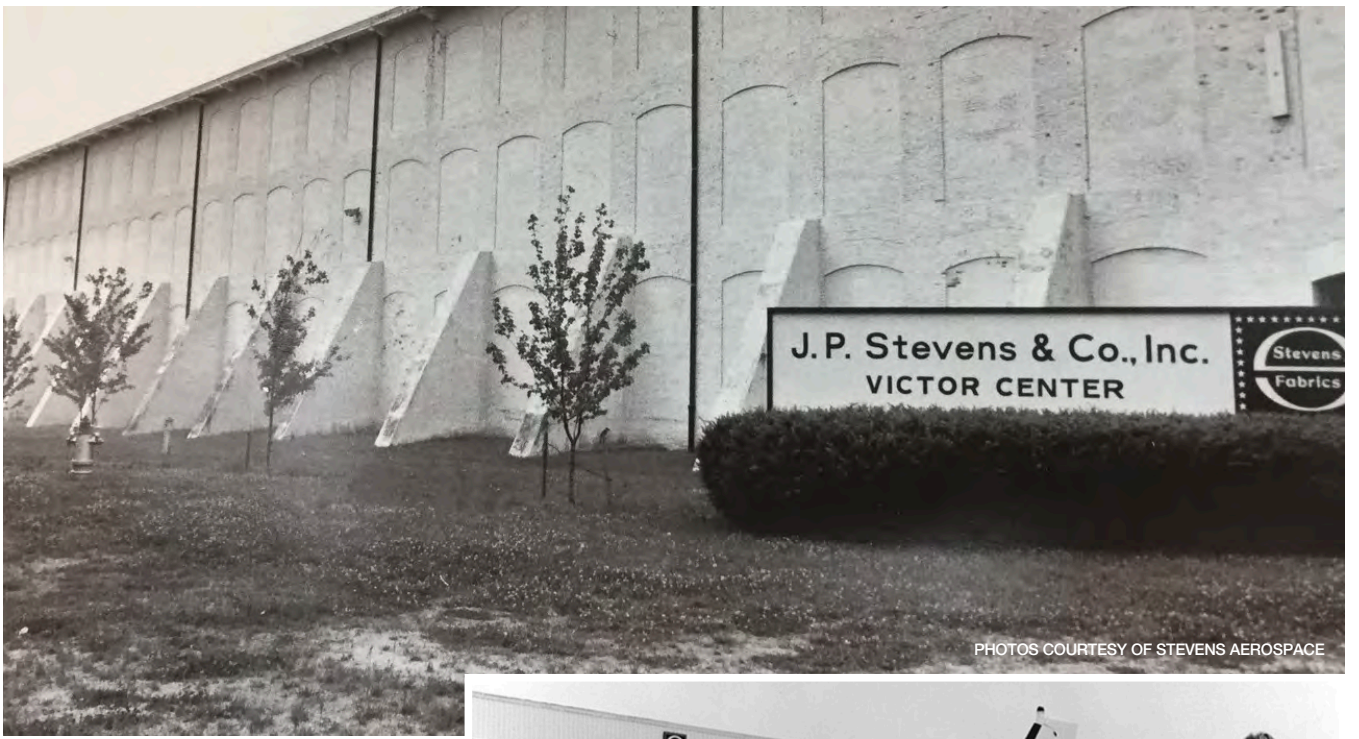
Stevens Aerospace & Defense

by **Lance Phillips**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEVENS AEROSPACE

Remington Ammunition was founded in 1816, Brooks Brothers in 1818, and Macy's in 1843. These are some of the oldest companies still in operation in the United States today. The founding roots of Stevens Aerospace & Defense Systems go all the way back to 1813, three years prior to Remington's existence. The Wright brothers didn't fly until 1903, so as you can imagine, there's quite a bit more to Stevens' history than is widely known in the aviation world.

According to the J.P. Stevens & Co. register, the company began in Massachusetts as Nathaniel Stevens in 1813, later changing to Nathaniel Stevens & Son in 1850 when Captain Nathaniel Stevens' son Moses T. Stevens became a partner. The company changed its name to M.T. Stevens & Sons in 1885. At the time, John P. Stevens, Moses' nephew, was a selling agent for M.T. Stevens & Sons, and in 1923 his company, J.P. Stevens & Co. was incorporated. In 1946, J.P. Stevens & Co. Inc. and M.T. Stevens & Sons Co. merged and kept the J.P. Stevens & Co. Inc. name. By then, J.P. Stevens was an east coast textiles powerhouse with plants up and down the eastern seaboard. The company went public that year. By 1950, they needed a flight department and the subsidiary, Stevens Aviation, was formed.

In 1975, J.P. Stevens and Co., Inc. had 82 textile plants in Alabama, California, Connecticut, Georgia, Massachusetts, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. The main offices remained in

What started as a textile company's flight department in 1950 has grown to provide civilian maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) services for Beechcraft, Challenger, Cessna, Embraer, Global Express, Gulfstream, Falcon, Learjet, Piaggio and Pilatus aircraft.

New York City, with administrative offices in Greenville, SC. The textile plants produced cotton, wool and synthetic yarns and fabrics and products such as towels, carpets, hosiery, glass fabrics and sheets. In 1989, the company was acquired and split into multiple companies. Stevens Aviation continued as a separate entity.

The Stevens Aerospace & Defense website describes its history in this way: *Stevens Aerospace sets the standard for excellence in aircraft sales, service and management. Its rich history began in Greenville, SC, when Robert T. Stevens, then president of The J.P. Stevens Company, decided to start his own flight department. By the mid-1950s, Stevens Aerospace expanded its capabilities by pumping fuel and doing repairs on transient aircraft. The flight department quickly outgrew its hangar at the Greenville Downtown Airport, and in 1962, Stevens became the only FBO at the newly constructed Greenville-Spartanburg Airport.*

The 1960s were a time of great growth for Stevens, especially once it became a Beechcraft distributor and authorized service center. By the end of the decade, they had over 100 employees and more than two dozen aircraft in their fleet. They became known as the place to have your King Air serviced.

Its services and geography continued to expand in the 1980s as it became a full-service facility offering maintenance, avionics, completions, sales and FBO services, with two additional locations added in Nashville, TN, and Dayton, OH. The company's current ownership by Tom Foley started in 1989.

Stevens is also a prime service provider of depot maintenance, refurbishment and modifications for military versions of general aviation airframes.

According to Bizav Media, Foley has headed up Stevens Aviation since he acquired it in 1989 as part of his share of a three-way buyout of the North Carolina textile manufacturer JP Stevens. Today's MRO operation began as part of the flight department of JP Stevens, under the direction of the company's chief pilot, Ralph Cuthbertson, back in the early 1950s. At the time, JP Stevens ran several Beechcraft aircraft and some of the family were pilots.

The buyout, for $1.2 billion, involved the rival, Georgia-based textile producer West Point-Pepperell, the Bibb Company, owned by Foley, and Odyssey Partners, a Wall Street investment firm.

Foley's involvement came out of his background in private equity. He has an MBA from Harvard Business School and had a stint with the consultancy firm McKinsey & Company before joining Citicorp Venture Capital. He left CVC to set up his own private equity firm, NTC Group, in 1986. Shortly after he launched NTC, Foley bought a textile firm, the Bibb Manufacturing Company, in Georgia. Initially, therefore, the buyout looked like simply a consolidation move in the textile business, with two textile companies acquiring a third, but when it came to deciding who got what with

respect to the target company, Foley found himself excited by the idea of acquiring JP Stevens' former flight department, which had branched out and was offering services to owners of aircraft outside the Stevens Group.

Over the years since acquiring and building Stevens, Foley has been quite busy. He was tasked with leading the group in charge of rebuilding Iraq's post-war economy and infrastructure. He served as U.S. ambassador to Ireland and even dabbled in Connecticut politics, running for the U.S. Senate and the governorship in the state.

Under Foley's command, Stevens built its massive 200,000 square foot completion and maintenance facility in Greenville, SC, in the 1990s to accommodate major expansion needs due to military contracts. This center continues today as its largest MRO and corporate office complex.

Seven years ago, Stevens launched its aircraft-on-ground (AOG) and Mobile Services group as a dedicated service division. Their AOG trucks and a crew of hand-picked "road-experienced" technicians cover the US and abroad and continue to grow with more trucks and locations every year. This fleet is utilized by OEMs, Part 91 operators, and Part 135 operators daily. In 2018, the company changed its name to Stevens Aerospace & Defense Systems after obtaining AS9110 and Military 8210.1C certifications and to reflect its expanding expertise.

In 2019, Stevens opened another facility on the east coast and announced that Christian Sasfai would become president of Stevens

starting July 1. Formerly Mr. Sasfai was vice president and chief operating officer of TAC Air, and before that he was with Piedmont Hawthorne/Landmark. Sasfai worked for Stevens as director of business development and financial planning from 1995 to 2002. In addition to Mr. Sasfai's extensive experience in aviation services, he is a pilot and certified flight instructor.

The company celebrated its 70th birthday in 2020. What started as a textile company's flight department in 1950 has grown to provide civilian maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) services for Beechcraft, Challenger, Cessna, Embraer, Global Express, Gulfstream, Falcon, Learjet, Piaggio and Pilatus aircraft. Stevens is now a U.S. and foreign government prime service provider of depot maintenance, refurbishment and modifications for military versions of general aviation airframes. Stevens Greenville is a Class III repair station that is ISO9001: 2015, AS9110C, Defence Contract Management Agency (DCMA) 8210.1C certified, EASA and DGAC certified and GFRC compliant. Stevens' Greenville and Dayton facilities have DCMA on the field. Stevens Aerospace operates facilities in Greenville, S.C. (GYH), Dayton, Ohio (DAY), Nashville, TN (BNA), and also operates a 24/7 AOG-MRT Division.

Last year, Sasfai told Vertical magazine, "We treat every project, large or small, as though it was our own aircraft. From the day-to-day customer communication to the quality of our workmanship, we want our customer to feel like their aircraft is our only priority. I think that's a large part of how we've achieved lasting success over more than 70 years." T&T

Lance Phillips *is an aviation professional, writer, pilot and photographer. He is executive director for the Pinnacle Air Network and owns Phillips Aero Services, an aviation marketing services provider. You can contact Lance at* **lance@phillipsaeroservices.com.**

Once Bitten
Assembly Of Aviation Aficionados

If you haven't heard, EAA AirVenture ("Oshkosh" for purists) was held at the end of July. And here is where, for the last 50-plus years, we would add the comment "as usual." But since Oshkosh 2020 was canceled and OSH 2021 was iffy until mid-year, EAA president Jack Pelton noted most succinctly that this year, like last, he was reflecting on the fact that he no longer takes AirVenture for granted – and this pilot/T &T writer agrees. After attending almost every year since 1972, I feel a renewed sense of gratitude. We all lost much to the pandemic – some lost everything. For the band of brothers and sisters who call themselves aviators, the return of fly-ins, pancake breakfasts and conventions like Oshkosh is a homecoming salve for our pilot soul.

Freedom is what EAA is all about.
Freedom to create and build, to dream, to fly.

– EAA Founder Paul Poberezny

By now, you've read more than a few recaps about the EAA gathering. Suffice it to say, Oshkosh is back and EAA membership now tops 258,000. In what has become an unwelcome trend over the last few years, however, a severe thunderstorm hit the field the Saturday before the event. Trees were downed in one of the campsites and by Sunday, many dumpsters were filled with ruined tents. The weather during the rest of the week was the best in years: mostly clear skies, moderate temperatures during the day, followed by cool nights. The daily flybys and airshows were plentiful and spectacular.

This year's AirVenture was a year of anniversaries: 75th for the USAF and the Beechcraft Bonanza, 50th for Vans aircraft as well as a handful of other early and now famous homebuilt aircraft including Burt Rutan's VariViggen, 40th for ultralight part 103 (which established regulations for ultralight vehicles marking the beginning of ultralights as we know them), 30th for the Young Eagles program and the 15th for EAA's WomenVenture. Vans aircraft unveiled the new RV-15, and in celebration of Vans 50th, a few of the days provided multi-plane formations of RVs, which often numbered in the dozens. Of course, there was much talk of new products and innovations, including a replacement fuel for 100LL. And, as usual, Oshkosh provided the perfect venue for the renewal of friendships and the exposure of younglings to the industry.

You are truly home when you find your tribe.

– Srividya

I once introduced a young man to aviation. He would say it's my fault he was bitten by the aviation bug. Flying or maintaining general aviation airplanes never has been a fortune builder. Michael jokingly blames me for getting him hooked on a money-losing career. Who can blame him, though. Aviation has that mystical allure. It also has a high expense-to-pay ratio. When I learned to fly twin-engine airplanes, I was paying 40 times my hourly salary for each hour of flight time. The ratio has become worse since the olden days of the 1970s. When my military and airline career finally led me back home to Michigan, Michael was there and all growed-up (tear in my eye). He was married with children. He had his single and multi-engine ratings and instrument and flight instructor certificates. He was a college graduate and an airframe and powerplant mechanic. He had swallowed it all – hook, line and tie-down chain. It was Michael who exclaimed the significance of Oshkosh the year we missed it because of a cracked engine case in

the Duke when he quoted the movie Apollo 13: "We just lost moon." Such is it with the thousands that attend Oshkosh.

> Through EAA, I've learned much more about people than I ever have about airplanes.
>
> – Paul Poberezny

Last year, we were sitting just off the Oshkosh flight line at the campsite of a fellow retired AA pilot waiting for the night airshow to begin. The picnic table we sat at was one of many available for campers to borrow and transport to campsites. I was shocked that no one but me noticed or recognized the carved signature on the tabletop. I wondered why the table wasn't across the field in the EAA museum. I took a picture of the signature with my phone and later showed it to another retired AA friend who had known the signatory for decades. They verified its authenticity: it was Paul Poberezny. This year, just as the convention was about to begin, we heard the news of Tom Poberezny (Paul's son) passing. I've been attending Oshkosh since 1972. While I skipped a few years to fly the F-16 and a couple of times for maintenance and weather, it's been a welcome constant in my life. And over those 50 years, it's a given that you will lose friends, acquaintances, innovators and supporters along the way. While new friends are made yearly at Oshkosh, it's never easy to lose old ones to age, illness or retirement; such as it is with Senator Inhofe.

EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2022 set records with an attendance of approximately 650,000.

After 35 years in congress, aviation friend and supporter senator Jim Inhofe, (R) Oklahoma, made his final trip to Oshkosh as a U.S. senator. He relayed the two aspects of AirVenture that he enjoys the most: the people he's known all of his life that he only sees once a year, claiming, "It's the most enjoyable thing I do every year," and second, the support he is able to gather for aviation-related legislation. Among the legislative goals he sees remaining is the transition to unleaded avgas. Senator Inhofe's legislative support and constant involvement in aviation will be sorely missed – as was Burt Rutan several years ago.

> Usually, the wacky people have breakthroughs. The 'smart' people don't.
>
> – Burt Rutan

In the early 1980s, I was an F-16 crew chief for a test squadron at Edwards AFB. The first time I met Burt Rutan was at the Mojave airport which was only a stone's throw away from Edwards. Well, after the 30-minute drive just to get off base followed by another 30 minutes to Mojave, that is. Burt was wearing latex gloves, holding a paper cup of goop in one hand, and a wooden stir-stick in the other. The aroma of epoxy filled the room. His dark, mutton chop sideburns were instantly recognizable. Outside the hangar that day was a boat-of-a-car. I don't remember the model, but it was big – maybe because my '76 Honda Civic looked so small parked next to it.

The license plate on the boat-of-a-car said something like Eze-1. On the ramp side of the hangar, resting on sawhorses,

sat a VariEze wing piled with sandbags used for stress testing. I had met him in the early 70s at Oshkosh as he was beginning his rise to fame with his VW-powered VariViggen and the original VariEze. The rest of his career is now world famous. My military career took me away from the EAA for a while, so it was good to soak in the feeling at Mojave. There are many such innovators and inventions on display at EAA's annual gathering. Some of them will fade away, but some will go on to change the aviation world. It's amazing to watch the transition from what is often called wacky when first introduced to a new normal for a component, system or procedure.

> Airplanes bring us together,
> but friendship keeps us together.
>
> – Paul Poberezny

Have you ever created something from nothing: comedy, music, literature, a painting or sculpture? Something functional, maybe like a piece of furniture, birdhouse or even an airplane? Something from your mind, an original idea, like John Nash's Nobel Prize-winning odyssey in governing dynamics: Equilibrium. Do you recall the most difficult part of those original idea projects? For me, it was trying to decide what to write or what to make, thinking of a concept and getting started – the beginning. Airframes and airfoils, powerplants, avionics, instrument approaches, aerobatics, construction materials and techniques, flying songs, poems, stories and manuals – all these things at one time were nothing. They did not exist. Someone at some point said to themselves: "I wonder what would happen if…" Then they performed the first outside loop and the Lomcovak, or made an airplane out of molded foam and fiberglass, or flew an approach without any outside visual references.

Someone made an airplane out of cloth and someone discovered how to weld aluminum. Someone soldered components that had never been soldered together before…and that was the beginning. The ability to transfer fuel in-flight from one airplane to another was developed. Someone figured out that you could design a spaceship that can re-enter the atmosphere based on the drag characteristics of a badminton birdie instead of a flaming meteor. An airplane was flown on instruments for the first time, and an author wrote a masterpiece about a seagull named Jonathon Livingston.

Creating something from nothing: the beginning. That's a very difficult place to be. Once you pass the beginning, often the rest of the project is simply busy work, making the picture in your mind become a material thing – doing the research, testing, problem-solving, trial-and-error and, heaven forbid, the editing. We often take so much for granted. Oshkosh reminds us how much work and how many smart, courageous people went before us and got us to where we are today.

> I fly because it releases my mind
> from the tyranny of petty things.
>
> – Antoine de Saint-Exupery

The left engine, cylinder #5 in the Duke swallowed an intake valve in June, so it's out of commission for a while. The in-flight failure was mostly uneventful except for an extremely delayed response from ARFF (more on this in an upcoming T &T). While the Duke gets fixed, I'm grateful to have the Part 135 gig to release my mind from the tyranny of petty things. As I finish this article from the "breezeway" of my tent at Oshkosh, B-17s and B-25s flying laps overhead, I'm already looking forward to next year. We need to be grateful for the events, innovators and legislators supporting our passion for aviation. I know that I am. And after a week of camping at Oshkosh, I'll also be grateful for a real shower and bed. T&T

Kevin Dingman *has been flying for more than 40 years. He's an ATP typed in the B737, DC9 and CE-650 with 25,000 hours in his logbook. A retired Air Force major, he flew the F-16 and later performed as an USAF Civil Air Patrol Liaison Officer. He flies volunteer missions for the Christian organization Wings of Mercy, is retired from a major airline, flies the Cessna Citation for RAI Jets, and owns and operates a Beechcraft Duke.Contact Kevin at* **dinger10d@gmail.com**.

Soaring Up to the Turboprop

Gavin Kim of Denver, Colorado, has owned a 2008 Piper Meridian since November 2021. With little but complimentary things to say so far about owning the 850 horsepower turboprop, he provided an overview of what he feels is one of its most defining attributes.

"I think the Meridian fits a very unique sweet spot and niche. The way you fly the aircraft at 10,000 feet, it still flies like a piston in the sense that the indicated airspeed at lower altitudes is fairly consistent with a high-power piston. The shown indicated airspeed will be around 170 knots, for example. But the interesting thing is that the higher you go, it still will maintain that same indicated airspeed."

He continued, "The reason I find that so compelling is the higher you go, all that incremental power you get from the turbine compensates for altitude. The aircraft may indicate 150 knots, but at 27,000 or 28,000 feet, you're flying at 300 miles an hour true airspeed. It's a very benign aircraft in that regard. You're so much more efficient high up. And keep in mind the fuel flow, which is not crazy, considering how fast you are moving along."

This speed has been important for Kim, who lives a fast-paced life on the ground and in the air. In his free time, he enjoys skiing, fly fishing and restoring classic cars – in addition to his long-standing career in the technology industry. He is the Chief Strategy Officer for DigitalReef, a software company focused on building advertising and consumer audience technology for mobile devices and connected television. Previously Kim served in varying senior leadership-level positions at Microsoft, Samsung and Imagination Unwired (which he founded).

While one wouldn't guess it during a conversation with Kim, he didn't grow up in a household of pilots. Even though aviation surrounded him growing up, an interest in flying wasn't fostered until his thirties.

"I attribute my interest in flying, which is somewhat of a latent interest, to growing up in Alaska. I was born in California, and then we moved up to Anchorage when I was three years old. Growing up there, it seemed like every other person in the neighborhood was a general aviation pilot. But I never thought it would be something in the realm of possibilities an average person could do. I had thought these people were somehow gifted with this incredible opportunity and learned to fly through a privilege or something not available to the average individual like me."

But with time, Kim learned that flying could be enjoyed by all who pursue it. "It was fairly recently, back in 2012, that I started flight training," he recalled. "I was working at a company in Dallas and one of the guys who worked for me called me out of the blue and said we should learn to fly airplanes. The whole concept was foreign but harkened back to a time growing up. I remembered that flying always seemed interesting to me."

The tech entrepreneur's realization 10 years ago was quickly followed by a discovery flight followed by a fervent effort to fly as much as possible. "I am one of those people that once I get convicted in an idea, I go full on, full board, and full into it. That's what happened. I just started training and earned my private some 60 odd hours later."

After gaining a baseline knowledge for flying, Kim immediately began working on his instrument rating. Around this time, he purchased an experimental Glasair Super II. "That's the aircraft I flew for around 600 hours and got my experience in. I flew it everywhere. It took me to all corners of the United States and through several ratings," Kim explained.


Gavin Kim and family.

"A couple years ago, I got a bug to continue additional training and went for my commercial rating. After that I decided to pursue my multi-engine rating, which was only a few months ago. Most of this training I did in my Glasair, which I kept through it all,

Prior to the Piper Meridian, Kim owned and flew a Glasair Super II and Cirrus SR22T G5.

only just recently selling it. That aircraft actually happened to be featured at AirVenture this year as part of the homebuilt exhibition flown by its new owner. The Glasair was a fantastic cross-country aircraft for an individual as it's a fairly capable aircraft. It goes far, fast, and is pretty efficient. But it certainly was not large enough to carry my family with me."

After identifying the desire to bring his family along on his aerial travels a few years ago, Kim didn't have to wait long to find a bird with more seats.

"I had the opportunity to purchase a Cirrus SR22T G5. It was a great aircraft and platform to advance from. After flying that for a few hundred hours, I started getting a hankering for something with a little more capability and payload, plus pressurization and other qualities," Kim said.

He said when he purchased the aircraft he now owns, it was an interesting time in the marketplace because Avidyne-equipped Meridians were extremely favorably priced. Now he says that gap has closed some with the recent uptick in used aircraft prices. Since acquiring the aircraft, Kim has had the aircraft painted and the interior redone. A Garmin avionics suite is on the list of next upgrades, expected to be completed before the end of the year.

Outside of speed and efficiency, pressurization and cruising in the flight levels have been game-changing. "It's been a fantastic aircraft for work but also as a recreational and family plane. Pressurization provides all day comfort and also removes the need to carry oxygen. Dealing with oxygen, especially for passengers in the back in the Cirrus, was beyond annoying. And being predictably above weather on long distance flights has been incredibly comforting, making flight planning simple. Lastly, the airframe icing equipment on board and inflatable boots are really spectacular. Unlike the Cirrus, the Meridian airframe inflatable boots are quick to deploy, are always available without needing TKS, and don't leak fluid when on the ground."

Kim has a selection of places where he typically flies the Meridian. Those on the shortlist include Dallas and Miami, where he has offices, as well as California and Montana with his family. He noted that these trips are perfect distances for the PA46-500TP to really show its unique combination of speed, range and operating costs.

When flying to the west coast, Kim will usually be joined by his wife and daughter, noting that they can sometimes make it to Seattle, a 900 nautical mile flight, without a fuel stop at max cruise speed. They will almost always make it back to Denver without one at the same power setting. The occasional fuel stops leave something to be desired, although Kim is still grateful for his aircraft's capabilities.

"If there is one criticism I have about the Meridian is that I would love to have longer legs on it. I would love for it to be a 1,000 nautical mile aircraft instead of an 800 nautical mile aircraft." Naturally, increased range capabilities would come at a cost. Kim believes that in his instance, stepping into a larger aircraft would not have the same effect moving into the Meridian had.

Elaborating on the anticipated diminishing return of a larger aircraft, he explained, "And then when you decide that you need to step up, what's the next step of aircraft above this? Lots of people point to TBMs or maybe a light jet like a Citation Mustang. When you step up, your fuel burn goes up a lot more and your speed maybe only goes up 10 or 20 percent, but your maintenance costs are quite a bit of a step. It is so much more of an increase in your fixed costs, as well as your hourly costs. For my purposes, the Meridian really fits this perfect little spot for me." While he will never say never, for now, it is the perfect aircraft for his needs. T&T

You can follow Gavin Kim's Meridian experience on Instagram @flymeridian.

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You have been trying to reach the CEO for months, only to be rebuffed by their administrative assistant. A sale to this potential client could make or break your quarter. But it's going nowhere. Finally, you get through. The CEO has little time for you until you mention the word "airplane." You have one and can be at the local airport tomorrow morning. Or would this afternoon after work be better? Perhaps we could take a short flight to see what your plant looks like from the air.

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During my business career, we often dropped in on prospects with our 1960s vintage Sabreliner. Back in the day, the Saberliner made a real impression at the airport with its thunderous turbojet engines. In small towns, folks would show up at the local airport just to see a jet land. And who was there to meet us?

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Imagine the CEO of an airplane manufacturer who decides to get his jet type rating so he can speak the language of his customers – what a brilliant idea.

Meet Ron Draper, CEO of Textron Aviation.

I met Ron recently in Wichita, Kansas, to find out how and why a guy running a multibillion-dollar business would invest the time and effort to become certified to fly his own Citation product.

"I just felt I needed to get closer to the people operating our products," Ron said. "I wanted to better understand their needs and challenges."

Ron was already a helicopter pilot from his Army days with over 1,000 hours in the Sikorsky UH-60 Blackhawk. Ironically, the slowdown in flying activity during COVID provided him the opportunity to start from scratch in the Textron Aviation Employees Flying Club. First in the Cessna 172, then earning his commercial in the Skylane 182 and Turbo Stationair 206 – and finally in the Beechcraft Baron for his multi-engine rating.

But getting a type rating in a Citation CJ3+ is no walk in the park. It's several weeks of intense ground school and simulator training, followed by a multi-hour oral exam and check ride – all while running a worldwide business that's pretty intense in itself.

"Living in the same town as the FlightSafety simulator made it more challenging because I tried to manage the business and learn to fly to ATP standards at the same time. In hindsight, I probably should have focused all my attention on the type rating," said Draper.

I agree. My most stressful type rating was the Falcon 50, where I dashed from the office to the simulator for 20 days and almost never recovered.

But after weeks of very early morning training, Ron passed with flying colors. You may see him at your favorite airport with a huge grin on his face.

Fly safe.

A video discussion with Ron Draper about his CJ3+ type rating experience can be found on the Textron Aviation YouTube channel. T&T

David Miller *has owned and flown a variety of aircraft from light twins to midsize jets for more than 50 years. With 6,000 plus hours in his logbook, David is the Director of Programs and Safety Education for the Citation Jet Pilot's Safety Foundation. You can contact David at* **davidmiller1@sbcglobal.net**.

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