



STEVE KROG

COMMENTARY / THE CLASSIC INSTRUCTOR

It Takes All Kinds

Why my students fly

BY STEVE KROG

PILOTS AND PILOT PROSPECTS are all ages and come from all walks of life. That is part of what makes being a flight instructor interesting. To be a good instructor, one must be able to know and understand what makes each student tick and then adapt your style to properly communicate with the student. However, I recently ran into a pilot that offered an excuse to fly that I had never before encountered.

Several days ago, an individual visited our flight training school. I approached him and asked if I could be of assistance. He said he wanted to fly a J-3 Cub, and I said we could help with that.

I always like to get better acquainted with an individual before flying with them, so we sat down and chatted. When asked why he wanted to fly a Cub, his answer was unique.

“I’ve been flying since I was a teenager, and I’m now 64,” he said. “Every flight I’ve ever made to date was either for the purpose of earning an additional rating or flying for pay. I’m currently flying the 777 internationally. I was thinking about my flying career while on one of the long trips and came to the realization that I’ve never flown an airplane just for the fun of it. That’s when I decided I needed to do something about that and come and see you.”

After performing a thorough preflight inspection (and comparing it to the 777), we were ready for our flight. The takeoff was smooth, straight down the runway, and uneventful except for the laughter coming from behind me. Then he added that this is really a lot of fun — and we’d only been in the air less than 30 seconds.

We climbed to a safe altitude and then practiced medium and steep turns, slow flight, and stalls. It didn’t take him long to get the feel of the airplane and use good coordinated aileron and rudder inputs. After he felt comfortable, I suggested that we do some ‘real’ Cub flying and had him descend



to a safe but much lower altitude. Now we could smell the alfalfa, spot wild turkeys and deer, and enjoy the pleasure of seeing the contour of the landscape.

“I’m seeing things that I’ve never before seen from the air,” he said.

Finally, we returned to the airport and began doing some pattern work. Every approach was quite stable and on the glide path. The flare and touchdown needed a bit of work, but he kept the Cub traveling straight down the runway. It seems that you level off and begin the flare at a much higher altitude in the 777.

Soon it was time to end the flight. As we pulled up in front of the hangar and the prop stopped, I asked him for his impression of the flight.

“Steve, I’ve never had so much fun flying an airplane as I’ve had today,” he said. “This was really special.”

Since his first visit, he’s been back several times. He’s working on getting a tailwheel endorsement and finally flying for fun!

Above: Sixteen-year-old Valerie Biddulph has a goal of becoming an aerospace engineer. In addition to taking many advanced math, physics, and science classes, she is also working toward becoming a private pilot.

I know many professional pilots look at flying as a job. They stay current, fly safely, but never fly for fun. Perhaps, upon reflection, the professional part of flying would be more fun if one flew just for pleasure occasionally.

Flying airplanes can mean many things to different people. For some, it's nothing more than a job and paycheck. For others, it's a means for rapid travel to weekend cabins or other points of interest. But for many, it is the challenge and pleasure of flight and seeing the world in three dimensions. It frees the soul for an hour or so from the burdens of work or stress. What better way is there to end the day than a sunset flight in a Cub (or whatever small aircraft you have available)?

INSPIRATION AND FOCUS

Last week, a 16-year-old and her mother came to the airport. Introductions were made, and again I asked how I could be of service. The young woman all but blurted out that she was going to be an aerospace engineer. Her mother explained that her daughter has wanted to pursue this career path for years and has been taking additional math, physics, chemistry, and science classes over and above the normal classes required. Many of these classes are college level, and she is earning credits for taking them.

Given the interest in this aspect of aviation, I asked if she ever considered being an astronaut. She said not really because she wants to invent, design, and build things. I thought, what a unique, focused young woman. At the age of 16, all I could think of was cars, girlfriends, and baseball.

We arranged for her to spend a full day with us shadowing several individuals. First, she helped rebuild a Cub wing and assisted with attaching fittings and trammeling the wing. Then she worked with another fellow and learned how to apply fabric to the fuselage of an airframe. Later in the day, she assisted with the installation of a new transponder in one of our flight school aircraft. We then went for a Cub flight. She did all the flying with some assistance and was quite excited about her first flight in a small aircraft.

At the end of the day, she had a list of questions to ask me about my interest in flying, how I got involved, etc.

I've had the opportunity over the last 10-12 years to work with a number of young men and women who work for me in exchange for flight time. Most all of them have gone on to pursue a career in aviation or an aviation-related field. I'm quite proud of all of them. However, this young woman really made a great first impression and is already scheduled to begin flight lessons. She's unsure of flying as a career but sees learning to fly as a way to provide a better understanding of the different aspects of aviation when she achieves her goal of becoming an aerospace engineer.

"I'm currently flying the 777 internationally. I was thinking about my flying career while on one of the long trips and came to the realization that I've never flown an airplane just for the fun of it."

— 64-year-old commercial pilot

DEDICATION AND DRIVE

Early this spring a good friend brought a young man, age 13, to the airport and introduced us. He was my friend's grandson, and they spend quite a lot of time together, especially in the summer. My friend had taught the young man a lot about tools, machines, and fixing things that were broken or worn out. The teen was quite shy at first but was finally able to ask me about working part-time and trading it for flying lessons. I agreed to the arrangement, and he committed to working every Tuesday during the summer.

I have a way of testing kids so see if they are truly serious about working and trading it for flight time. The first day of work starts with the necessary cleaning supplies and a floor creeper. Yes, cleaning the belly of the training aircraft is the first item on the list of things to do. It usually takes all day. If the kid comes back the next scheduled workday, I know they are serious.



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WEIGHTS AND MEASUREMENTS

MTOM:
900 kg (1,984 lbs)

Wingspan:
25 m (82.02 ft)

Wingspan (folded):
11.4 m (37.40 ft)

Wing area:
19.95 m² (214.74 ft²)

Height:
1.75 m (5.74 ft)

Length:
8.42 m (27.6 ft)

PERFORMANCE DATA

Glide ratio:
1:53

Cruise speed up to:
259 km/h (140 kt) TAS @10,000 ft

Climb rate:
Better than 3.28 m/s (645 ft/min)*

Range of up to:
1,759 km (950 nm)

ENGINE

Power plant:
ROTAX 914 F2/S1 Turbo

MTOP:
115hp

MCP:
100hp

Fuel capacity (center wing):
120 l (31.7 US gal)

Fuel consumption at 55% MCP:
13 l/h (3.4 US gal/h)

STEVE KROG



Adam Ingraham, 13, is all smiles after the flight he earned by putting in a long day of cleaning airplanes, mowing the lawn, and sweeping the hangar.

For those who have an interest – be it for pleasure or for a career – it is challenging, a confidence builder, and something that few others have attempted. It will also be one of the most interesting things you've ever done. You're never too old to give it a try.

This young man is a dynamo on two legs. He can accomplish more things in a day than any other individual who has worked here. When he finishes a task, he looks for other things to do. He cleans the airplanes of bugs and grime, refuels them between flights, and cleans the windows. When all of the aircraft are in use, you'll find him on the end of a broom sweeping out the hangar, emptying the trash, or mowing the grass.

Due to his age, I don't want to fly with him every week as he has a great feel for the airplane and his mind is a sponge. Demonstrating a maneuver once is all he needs. After a couple of tries by himself, he has the maneuver mastered. I don't want to rush things and have him capable of soloing but then have to wait three years to do so.

This young man is truly made of the right stuff. If he stays on course with his

life, studies, and work ethic, he'll do quite well in the real world and maybe someday become a pilot for an air carrier.

Flying airplanes is not for everyone. If it was, the sky would be quite crowded. But for those who have an interest – be it for pleasure or for a career – it is challenging, a confidence builder, and something that few others have attempted. It will also be one of the most interesting things you've ever done. You're never too old to give it a try. My youngest student this past year has been the 13-year-old I mentioned and the oldest is in his mid-70s. *EAA*

Steve Krog, EAA 173799, has been flying for more than four decades and giving tailwheel instruction for nearly as long. In 2006 he launched Cub Air Flight, a flight-training school using tailwheel aircraft for all primary training.