



OLD SCHOOL *is* STILL COOL

Much has been written about the famous 12 seconds on December 17, 1903, that forever changed the world. At the wind-swept sand dunes of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, a little known conversation took place between two brothers, Orville and Wilbur Wright, when their *Flyer* landed for the first time. The passage was believed lost in time, until today. Aviation archeologists recently unearthed the lost dialogue between the brothers. It has been transcribed from scribbled, handwritten notes and preserved for future generations. Here, for the first time, is the historic conversation between the two intrepid aviators:

“So, Orville, what did it fly like?”

“Well, that’s a foolish question, Wilbur; it flew like a Cub, of course!”



Sharon and Steve with their “his and hers” Cubs.

We all know the first Piper J-3 Cub wasn't built until the mid 1930s, well after the silver anniversary of powered flight. But the fictitious account rings true in modern day aviation circles. When you ask a fellow pilot, standing proudly next to his or her airplane, “What does it fly like?” Most responses, especially from those aviators who have been blessed with some early stick time in a J-3 Cub, will tell you that all airplanes fly like a Cub.

What if you have never flown in a Cub? What do people mean when they utter that phrase? How does that one simple statement relate to you, especially if you're new to flying or have logged time in modern day airplanes? Fortunately, there are some individuals among us, like the one you are about to meet, who take the saying one step further. This person not only teaches his students the finer points of Cub flying but also allows curious wannabe pilots to wander around “inside the fence.” He smothers them with the joys of grass-roots flying by letting them experience how learning to fly used to be.

Most training aircraft like the J-3 Cub had a stick and rudder, an open door and window, limited instrumentation, and low-powered engines. They were flown by *feel*, with your head outside the cockpit, instead of inside—with your eyes glued to a glass panel that tells you when to turn, climb, land, cough, and breathe. There was no such thing as a GPS back then, and the letters “IFR” meant “I follow railroads.” Most airports had wide grass runways, which were more forgiving to a student learning to fly a tailwheel airplane. Some might call it the old-fashioned way, while others refer to it as flying by the seat of your pants. I simply call it “old school.”

AN ‘OLD SCHOOL’ INSTRUCTOR

Steve Krog, EAA 173799, has his oil-stained hands shoved into the back pockets of his well-worn blue jeans. He paces alone at the edge of a dandelion-covered grass runway. The creases in Steve's leather flight jacket resemble the squint lines on his face. He turns his head toward the right, scanning the horizon. His eyes lock in on a slow-moving, black-and-yellow dot just to the south, a half-mile away on final at the Hartford Municipal Airport in Hartford, Wisconsin. He has stood this ground many times, like a papa bear watching his cub forage for the first time. Steve remains motionless as he gives verbal commands—that only he can hear—to his student. The student is about to land the J-3 solo for the first time.

“Get the nose up, get that nose up, and use that power. Good, that's it, tap that right rudder, don't



» HOW IT'S DONE

Steve breaks down his pre-solo flight curriculum into four segments. In the first one he explains to the student the required paperwork, rules of the air, preflight, and use of the controls. Next, Steve shows the student how to taxi and how the rudder and their feet will unite and become one as they learn to fly as a team. Then it's off the ground for some air work. He demonstrates climbs, descents, turns—both climbing and descending—slow flight, and stalls. And finally, Steve saves the best for last—spin training.

“Nobody I know in this day and age teaches spin training anymore,” said Steve. “I do it for a couple of reasons. Number one is because most instructors warn their students about the evils of a spin and how to avoid them at all costs by telling them, not showing them, how to recover from one. And number two, I know firsthand how scary it was when I was learning to fly. I was on my second lesson, practicing stalls with my instructor while he sat there saying nothing to me as the nose came up. Well let me tell you, there were two very scared people in that cockpit as the airplane went through four complete spin turns while the instructor was screaming at me, ‘Recover! Recover! Recover!’ I didn't know what to do, and he barely knew more than me, as my life flashed before my eyes. He finally recovered the airplane. I gave some serious thought to giving up flying and taking up canoeing!”

“The last thing I want to do as an instructor is to scare the bejesus out of the student. I try to challenge my students every time they fly and build them up to a higher state of proficiency. By the time I am done with a student and they are past the point of solo, I send them up to do some stall work before they come back into the pattern to do touch-and-goes. Nine times out of 10, the student will look at me and ask, ‘Is it okay to do a couple of spins before I come back in?’ The students know that the spin is nothing more than a maneuver, rather than something to fear. They want to do them because they are so fun, especially in a Cub.”

Because there are no radios or navigational lighting equipment in the Cubs, Steve uses a Cessna 150 to satisfy those requirements when his students fly into a towered airport, do instrument work, or fly at night. Most of the students, however, can't wait to get back into the Cub after flying a tricycle airplane. They claim it's much more exciting! In fact, Steve has recently instructed three students who became sport pilots and says that he tries to make every lesson fun. It doesn't matter to Steve if you are 16 years old or 66, male or female. What matters is that you have fun while learning to fly in a safe and structured manner.



Jim Busha



hang on it. Tap and release, tap and release, good, now get that wing up. Start easing off on the power; let that speed bleed off. Hold it, hold it, let it stall and she'll settle on her own. Keep that stick back, rudder, rudder. Looks good...."

The big, round, cartoon-like tires of the J-3 drag through the grass. Clouds of dandelion seeds cascade into the air behind the Cub. It glides to a stop only a few hundred feet away as the student pilot advances the throttle and kicks in some rudder, simultaneously pointing the

most first crushes, which seem to last just until the next pretty thing comes along, this one has endured. Steve's love affair with Cubs has kept a constant, dedicated pace with his age. Maybe it's that eye-catching yellow or that sexy black lightning bolt that runs along the entire length of the fuselage. Or maybe it's the fact that flying one of these non-complex airplanes lets you step back in time. Whatever the reason, Steve can't seem to get enough of the popular Piper with the cute little bear cub on its tail.

"For the first 10 years of my life I lived a mile away from a little airport that had four hangars on it," said Steve. "By the time I could ride a bike I would pedal over there and sneak inside the hangars. There were a couple of Cubs on the field, and I remember falling in love with them the first time I saw one. That big open door on the J-3 was like a huge invitation for a 6-year-old boy, almost as if it said, 'Come on, kid, climb inside and let's go flying!' By the time I was 10 years old I had over 200 hours of hangar flying in that Cub and knew someday I would own one."

Steve received his private pilot certificate in the late 1960s and wandered toward a dream of flying for the airlines. He became a flight instructor in the early 1970s and surpassed the 1,200-hour mark in record time, earning a commercial certificate and instrument and multi-engine ratings along the way. In 1975, after instructing and commercial flying, Steve's whole focus toward flying began to deviate from its intended course. Two distinct influences caused Steve to rethink his path in life. The first was a student pilot named Sharon, who became Mrs. Krog a year later. The second was the fact that Steve was getting sick

Most of the students can't wait to get back into the Cub after flying a tricycle airplane. They claim it's much more exciting!



slender yellow nose of the Cub toward its master. There is no emotion on Steve's face as he whirls his hand in the air above his head, signaling the student to take off and do it again. A quick nod from the student, and he repositions the Cub for takeoff. He adds power to the 65-hp Continental engine while the J-3 lifts its tail and climbs for another circuit. What the student failed to notice on takeoff, however, was the beaming smile on his instructor's once stoic face, and the words of praise and encouragement as he flashes by, "Good job, that was a real nice landing. Now let me see you do that again."

Steve became interested in aviation at an early age, while growing up on a farm in southwestern Minnesota. Steve's first real love was a Piper Cub that he laid eyes on when he was only 6 years old. Unlike



and tired of flying, or so he thought.

"I was spending 14 to 15 hours a day, seven days a week at the airport, hardly making any money," said Steve. "I was getting tired of flying the same old stuff and thought there wasn't any fun airplane left to fly. I was burnt out and newly married, so I figured I better find something a little more stable. I walked away from aviation and went to work in marketing, thinking I would never look back. Boy was I wrong! Sharon and I moved to Hartford, Wisconsin, in 1982, and a few months later I found myself looking up at every airplane that flew by. I also became acquainted with longtime EAAers Dick and Jeannie Hill, and they steered me back on course and saved me. Dick took little pity on me and ordered me to get my butt into the back of his E-2 Cub. After about two hours of flying with the wind in our face, Sharon and I got the sport flying disease real bad. It took me a long time to get that kid-like grin off my face as Dick's words of wisdom hit me like a brick, 'You weren't burnt out from flying; you were just flying all the wrong stuff. If you don't intend to fly for a career, then go fly the stuff you enjoy flying and then fly for the pleasure of it.' No truer words could have been spoken as Sharon and I went looking for an airplane."

As Steve started to shop around for something fun to fly, he realized there were a few taildraggers housed at the Hartford airport, but no instructors to check the pilots out or keep them current. Seizing the opportunity, Steve got his instructor rating renewed. It wasn't long, however, until Steve realized that he needed an airplane he could call his own. What he really wanted was a J-3 Cub, but according to Steve, the Cubs then carried a lofty price tag of \$8,000, which was way out of his league. Steve and Sharon settled on a "beater" Aeronca

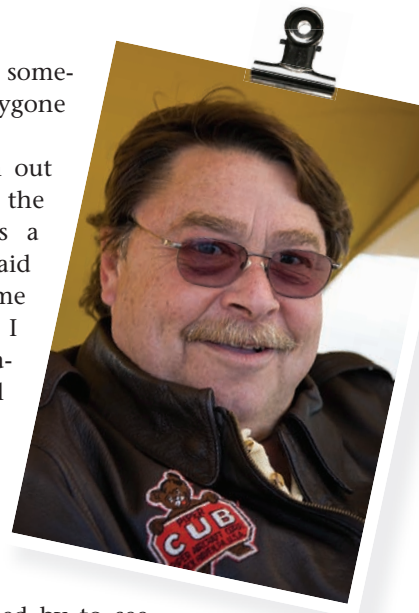
Champ instead, to meet their flying fix.

But something else happened at the airport when the husband and wife team showed up and began to fly their Champ in the late evenings, something magical, just like the bygone days of flying.

"When I checked Sharon out in the Champ, we were at the airport three or four days a week and every weekend," said Steve. "The airport at that time had very little activity, and I would fly for a while as Sharon would start the little grill we had and throw on some steaks and potatoes. When I landed, I traded my pilot hat for the chef's hat as Sharon went up and flew around the patch. Pretty soon a couple people stopped by to see what we were up to. Maybe it was the smell of the food cooking or the sound of the Champ flying by, either way the crowd started to get larger, and by the end of the summer we had a hangar full of people twice a week, cooking and commiserating, all enjoying the last golden rays of the afternoon sun fade to black. It doesn't get much more grass roots than that."

Steve and Sharon's circle of friends multiplied, but

Steve Krog left the corporate world for a simpler, and for him, more enjoyable form of flying.





Steve explains the finer details of flight with student Bob Campbell, by using a scale model of the J-3 Piper Cub.

Steve still wasn't satisfied. He longed for a Cub. As fate or Cub luck would have it, Steve was asked to fly a friend's J-3 out to Lock Haven, Pennsylvania,

for the annual Sentimental Journey fly-in. In the back of Steve's mind, he knew that this would be the true test; could he and Sharon both stand to sit in a Cub for 10 hours? Before they left, they both agreed this would be a trial run. It's not hard to figure out what happened next:

They were flown by feel, with your head outside the cockpit, instead of inside—with your eyes glued to a glass panel that tells you when to turn, climb, land, cough, and breathe.



With the window up and the door down, flying low and slow, watching the world go by, and the smells of the countryside wafting through the cockpit, Steve and Sharon made it halfway to Pennsylvania when they agreed they just had to have a Cub.

The Krogs joined the ranks of other Piper owners and became the proud parents of a 90-hp J-3 Cub. Steve decided that he wanted to share his pride and joy with

as many pilots as he could, so he put the Cub to work and started taking on tailwheel students, many of them pilots who wanted a tailwheel endorsement. Most of his students had 500 hours total time in the likes of Cessna 150s, 172s, and some of the Piper tricycle aircraft. Many of them thought they could easily learn to fly the Cub in just a few lessons. All of them thought wrong.

"I told most of these pilots that it would take them three hours longer to get checked out versus if they had no time at all," said Steve. "The reason being was because many of them had no idea what their feet were

used for, and I had to spend two hours, on average, undoing all the bad habits they picked up from flying the tricycle gear stuff. I took them out to the 200-foot-wide grass runway, as long as the wind was favorable, and told them to do a slow taxi the full length of the runway. Most of these new people ended up using almost all of the real estate from

side to side. After that they all became believers on what their feet were used for."

For the next few years things were running pretty smoothly for Steve as he instructed part-time in one of the two "his and hers" Cubs he and Sharon owned, besides working full-time at the ad agency he operated with three other partners. Steve had everything planned out in his life: Work another five or six years, do some

more writing for his aviation publishing business, and maybe someday, when he retired, he would teach new students to fly a Cub. The best-laid plans don't always follow the straight path, especially in a strong crosswind. That crosswind had a name—Sharon.

“My wife and I were having dinner together about two years ago,” said Steve, “when she leaned over and asked me one of my most dreaded questions, ‘What are your goals in life, Steve?’ I hate that question! Sharon reminded me that I had some goals and some dreams once upon a time and asked me what they were. I gave her the quick, un-thought-out answer, ‘To work hard and get ahead, I guess.’ No one knows me better than my beautiful wife does, and she knew what the truth was. Sharon opened my eyes and told me I was busting my butt working all day, flying in the evenings, and publishing four different newsletters to boot. She told me to take a long look around and take a breath. It felt like I had been whacked over the head with a spanner wrench! My life was going so fast that I forgot to stop and look around. I owe it all to my best friend, my wife, Sharon.” By the early spring of 2006, Steve was running a flight school, Cub Air Flight LLC. The response has been exceptional. In fact, Steve is flying and teaching considerably more than he anticipated. He feels the reason for that is twofold. First, anyone who has been around airplanes even a little bit knows the nostalgia behind the Cub. Second, Steve thinks the renewed interest in flying as a result of the sport pilot category has created a fast-moving resurgence especially among the students who are older than 35 to 40. Steve is also seeing his students soloing the Cub in 12 to 14 hours, as long as they can fly two to three times a week. The ones that can only make it up in the air once a week are averaging 17 to 18 hours to solo. That's not bad, and it's still a lot cheaper to operate a fuel-sipping Cub than it is to fly a

» SOME OLD SCHOOL STUDENTS

AMY BIONDICH

“I first started flying with my dad when I was 4 years old and knew I wanted to learn myself someday. That day arrived in June of 2006, when I started taking lessons from Steve. I ended up getting my private license from him in August of that same year. I wanted to learn in a Cub because for me, it makes me dream of the romantic side of flying, like it must have been like so long ago. Cub flying is by feel, and there is nothing that re-creates the feeling of being only a couple of hundred feet above the ground, with the door open, over the lush green Wisconsin farmlands.

“The most difficult part of the learning process, which happens to every student, is landing the Cub—every wrong way possible—before you start landing it the right way. The J-3 teaches you to use your rudder pedals, forcing you to work them back and forth while you constantly fly the airplane. The Cub is such a docile airplane, that once you learn to fly it, you can jump into most other airplanes without much difficulty. I think a lot of people in general think flying is something out of reach, or something they can't do. Well I am here to tell you that those people are wrong! You don't need superhuman strength; you just have to have a love of flying. Obtaining my pilot's license is by far what I am most proud of. I have a couple of college degrees under my belt; I am in medical school and hope to be a doctor in a couple of years. I have run a marathon, too, but none of those gave me as much satisfaction as learning to fly a tailwheel airplane...”

BOB CAMPBELL, EAA 217428

EAA Director of Museum and Residence Education

“I have held a great interest in aviation ever since I can remember. Most, if not all, of that is due to the fact that my father, Robert, flew a variety of aircraft when he was in the Air Force. I seriously pursued flying in September of 2006 when I decided to work at obtaining my sport pilot license. I owe much credit to Mr. James Ray, EAA 137309, who is a huge advocate of the J-3 Cub and its use in learning how to fly. The Cub, to me, invokes a simpler time, without a whole lot of worry. There are only a handful of gauges on the instrument panel, so most of your time spent is looking outside, learning to feel the airplane fly, instead of relying on an instrument.

“As the director of education here at EAA, I hear a lot of stories from some of the older members who say they flew Cubs when they were 16 years old and how much fun they had with them. I just wish I would have done this 25 years ago and hope to encourage as many young

people as I can by introducing them to this type of aviation with the help of the Young Eagles program. They are the future of aviation, and I think by learning to fly the Piper Cub it really instills the simple pleasures and mechanics of flight...”

ERICA LARSON

“My father, Rick, (EAA's vice president of Marketing) was the one who got me hooked on flying. He and I would go to air shows together, and before we moved to Wisconsin, my parents bought me a certificate for an introductory flight. Needless to say, I wanted to learn how to fly real bad! My father told me that if I learned to fly in a J-3 Cub, then once I got my license, I could fly anything. I ended up taking lessons from Steve down in Hartford and soloed the Cub the day before I jumped in my car and headed off to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

“I am majoring in aeronautical science and obtained my private license in March of this year. Flying the Cub has really given me a head start in my career. Most of the instruction at the university places an emphasis on flying by what your instrument says instead of by feel. I think I have a distinct advantage over my classmates because I don't need to hear a horn blowing in my ear to realize I am about to stall. I can feel the stall coming as the plane begins to get mushy, and I have no fear of it in the off chance it went into a spin...”

CHRISTOPHER HIBBEN, EAA 834542

“I decided to get my pilot license when I was 11 years old. That's when I met Paul Poberezny, founder of the EAA. My mother works as a librarian at the museum, and I used to tag along with her when she went to work. Paul gave me an autographed picture of himself standing on the wing of a P-51 Mustang, which I still have hanging on my wall. From that day forward I knew I would fly. As I grew up, everyone around my aviation world was telling me that the only way to learn was in a Cub.

“I started taking lessons from Steve in October 2006, and found that the hardest thing was landing. The one big trick with flying a Cub is for every stick input there is rudder input. Sometimes I forgot that early on, as the Cub wanted to go one way and I another. Eventually I prevailed, and still hear Steve's voice in my ear every time I fly, ‘Rudder! Rudder!’ The thing I like best about flying the J-3 versus learning to fly in a Cessna 150 or 172 is that this type of flying is old school. I believe some of the best pilots the world has known came from the World War II generation, with many of them learning to fly a Cub.”



Jim Busha

With only a handful of instruments on the panel, most of your time is spent looking outside, enjoying the view. Now that's old school.

thirstier tricycle gear. "Back in the 1960s I was getting my instructor rating from an old crop-duster pilot named Al," said Steve. "Old Al pulled me aside and said, 'For every 25 students that you fly with, one of them will wear the airplane, four will be above average, and the other 20 will drive it. And to this day the numbers are just about right. The big observation for me, though, is that generally the female students make better, smoother pilots.'"

The guy on his first solo isn't doing a bad job either, as he greases his last landing in front of Steve, who is clapping his hands loudly and directing the student back to the hangar for a "wet debrief." A cold bucket of clear water is thrown on the unsuspecting student, as a mad man wielding a pair of scissors attacks him and his

SHARON KROG

When I first met the Krogs in Hartford I could tell right away who was the brains and beauty behind the Cub flying operation. Sharon has it all, and I could see from the way she flew that Cub, in 2-inch heels no less, that she was one of those pilots who wore an airplane. But then again, how could you expect any less from someone who had such great teachers along the way.

Sharon explained that her aviation history started before she met Steve as a student. "My father, who had flown B-24 Liberators during the war, taught me to drive a three-speed stick when I was 6 years old," she said.

"I also flew a lot with my dad in his Cub, and cherish those memories. When it came time for me to get my pilot's license, I not only found the world's best instructor, but I also ended up with the world's best husband. I am a psychiatric nurse by trade, so it is kind of fitting to be around pilots all day long, especially the ones who are as fanatic about flying as Steve is. I am so jazzed to see Steve follow his passion and to see the looks on his students' faces when they come back down after an hour's instruction—it's hard to tell who had more fun!"




T-shirt. Like a surgeon who has performed this operation repeatedly, Steve cuts out a panel of the T-shirt and scribbles the student's name, date, and time across the drying cloth. Like a big-game hunter, Steve proudly adds the tat-



Steve is flying now more than ever and says he thinks part of it is the attraction of the legendary Cub, and part of it is the creation of the sport pilot certificate.

tered remains of the student's shirt to his trophy case on the hangar wall.

"The sensation of flight is near indescribable, until you have been up in the air among the clouds," said Steve. "I can sit here and tell you what the lakes and towns and small houses look like from the air, but to see them firsthand from 500 feet is truly magical. I can do 70 touch-and-goes with the students throughout the day and the last one is just as exciting as the first and the fourth and the 28th and so on. There is just something wonderful about breaking loose from terra firma and being in the third dimension. That is why I encourage so many people to try it and experience the thrill of flight. It is a passion I share openly with everyone—so why don't *you* come and fly with me?"

Flying a Piper J-3 Cub solo: \$65. Replacing a wet and torn T-shirt: \$10. Dragging those big, black Cub tires along a freshly mowed grass runway with the wind in your face: priceless! 

Jim Busha is a police detective and has served in law enforcement for 23 years. He is also an avid pilot and owns a 1943 Aeronca L-3. He recently co-authored his first book, The High Battleground, with photographer John Dibbs.



Just plane fun

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