

A FLYING STORY

The two men approached the Cessna for an introductory flying lesson. The instructor was an older gentleman, who had over the years developed an 'as-a-matter-fact' air, particularly when he was wearing his flight instructor persona. He was already studiously pointing out features of the Cessna 172 that they were about to fly.

The student, who had just turned sixteen, watched attentively as the older gent rambled on about such things as oil quantities, aileron clearances, what an empennage was, and how all flight controls worked in unison to make the aircraft fly in a coordinated way. He was stressing the importance of developing good habits in pre-flight-inspections as he walked around the airplane tapping on the fuselage, physically moving each flight control and inspecting each dent and ding in the leading edge of the wing as if he had never seen the airplane before.

What the old man didn't yet know was that this young boy was extraordinarily mature and already knew everything that the old man was trying to teach. The old man assumed that this was to be the kid's first flight. The student didn't indicate otherwise.

JD had been taught by his grandfather how to be receptive in learning, how to keep his opinions to himself, how to be mild when dealing with others, how to behave morally and how to fly like a bird. But the thing that made JD stand out more than all of the kids his age was his compassion for others and his respect for their opinions and their feelings. He not only looked after the underdog; he loved them and had learned to educate them in such a subtle and delicate way. He was a natural teacher, and seldom did anyone realize that he was constantly encouraging others. Everyone who knew JD loved him.

He started flying before he could see over the panel of the cub and had soloed during his ninth year. He had gobs of experience and had already taught his older brother and younger sister how to fly. At first both siblings made it known that they didn't like flying and didn't want to learn. But, before it was over they became born-to-fly-aviators.

It didn't take the old man long to figure out that he had been duped and once the final landing had been made he asked, "JD, can I visit with your dad when we get back to the hanger?"

"My dad was killed during Desert Storm, but you can call my Mom."

"Did she teach you to fly?"

"No, not really, although she does have an enormous influence on me."

"Enormous influence, that's a phrase that most kids your age never use. Okay then, I would like to talk to whoever it was that taught you how to fly."

"That would be my Granddad, but he isn't really a pilot anymore. He used to fly, but he lost his medical before I was born. But, you can call him when we get back. I don't think he would mind."

"Okay I would like that. In the meantime, lets keep it a secret that you already know how to fly, okay? That was sort of your intention in the first place wasn't it?"

"Okay. And, yes, but somehow I knew that I couldn't fool you."

After a very short post flight inspection of the Cessna and a brief post flight discussion of how to remain hush-hush about what JD and his granddad had been doing for the past several years. They parted company.

Immediately upon arriving at his office in the hanger, he punched in the number that JD had given him to call the Granddad.

A voice answered, "Hello."

"Hello, is Mr. Jack Flynn there?"

"Speaking."

"Mr. Flynn, I'm Ken Kollar, I own the only flying school at Sky Harbor Airpark here in Cherimoya County. I met your grandson, JD, this morning, and I must commend you for doing a fine job of teaching that young man to fly. I flew with him a couple of hours, and he could pass a commercial flight check right now. I do believe that he could teach me a thing or two, and I'm not exaggerating not even a little. I don't care about the fact that you have been flying around for the past sixteen or more years without a medical nor that JD has been flying around without certified instruction. I will keep your secret. Can you fill me in on what else this young man has been doing?"

"Well", there was a long pause, then he continued, "Ken. You caught us red handed! You don't mind if I call you Ken do you?" Jack asked.

"No, not at all, Mr. Flynn, Ken would be good."

" And, you just call me Jack," okay?

"Okay—Jack."

"About JD and what he has been up to. He has been going to school just like all other kids his age, however, he has already secretly tested out of high school at age 11, but I make him show up just the same, and I'll be dog-gone if his teachers don't have him tutoring students in some of the calculus and physics classes. The kid isn't a normal kid at all, he is what they call a phenomenon or a prodigy. It's like he has a photographic mind. He is so much smarter than I could ever be." Another long pause, "But you know what? He is different than most smart people like him. He has a sweetness about him, and not an arrogant bone in his body. He totally loves his mother, his brother and sisters, and is devoted to them. He has already taught two of them how to fly and has done it much better than I ever could have. I just want him to get him legal so that he can fly to other places without getting in trouble. Can you help me get that done? We have maintained secrecy about his natural abilities so far, and we would like to keep it that way."

"I'd be happy to, but I want to see if you and JD can help me. I have three young flight instructors, they are all loveable guys, but they can't fly, much less instruct. They can manage to get the airplane up and down, and they can talk the lingo, but they don't see the big picture, in other words, they could use some help. I can't seem to teach them anything. What I say goes in one ear and out the other. I'd like to get them to be JD's instructor and maybe he can teach them something without them knowing it. He had me fooled until he did a perfect chandelle after I had demonstrated it only once. He is the coolest acting kid I have ever met, and he is a natural flyer. Do you think we could work something like that out?"

Jack paused again, "I know it's possible, but I'll have to ask JD. He will probably say yes because he is always up for a challenge, and keeping this a secret won't be a challenge for him. But, teaching his instructor at the same time might be a little tough. Who is going to pay for all this flight time?"

Ken replied quickly, "Jack, we need to hide the fact that JD has been flying around illegally for the past several years, so you need to pay for most of it, but I can promise you this; JD will pay much less than normal students do, and he will get his commercial license on the appropriate birthday."

"That doesn't seem all that fair to me, Ken, but being between a rock and a hard place that will have to do. You sign him up for his second lesson and I'll clue him in on the deal if he is willing and all. Will you sign him off to take his written exams? The sooner he gets those behind him the better, Okay?"

"Done. Now, when would it be convenient for his second lesson?"

"He can sneak out of school around two O'clock and can be at the airport by three. How does that sound?"

"Fine Jack, I'll look for JD tomorrow. Stay in touch."

"Also, better get him a new Log Book since the one that we have been keeping will only reveal our failure to abide by all the federal rules and regulations concerning flying.

"You got it Jack, anything else?"

"No, nothing that I can think of. Thanks anyway.

"Okay. Good bye."

"So long."

Next day a three O'clock, JD shows up again at the flight school and was assigned to a young flight instructor named Victor who was smitten by his own position as a flight instructor. As soon as they met Victor advised JD to get the clipboard with the keys to a certain Cessna 172, which he did. Then Victor asked JD, "You do know how to do a pre-flight don't you?" He spoke with all the authority of a walk-on-water flight instructor.

JD softly replied, "Yes Ken showed me yesterday how to pre-flight an airplane. Aren't we going to go over what we are going to do on this flight?"

"Suppose we should go over the syllabus. You go to the third office down the hall on the left, and I'll be there in a couple minutes."

"What's with this guy?" Victor said to Ken's wife who worked the scheduling and answering of the phones, but was unaware of what was going on.

"I dono, seems like a real nice kid to me."

Victor came to the office and sat down behind the small table with his back to the wall. "Okay, today we are going to take off and fly to the practice area which is about five miles west of the airport. We are then going to fly straight and level with some turns to keep us in the area. We will slow the aircraft to a very slow speed. We will do some power off stalls. We hope to learn how to fly a constant speed at a constant altitude. Any questions?"

"Yes, I have a few. How will I know that I am staying at a constant speed and a constant altitude?"

"Instruments! Altimeter for altitude, and airspeed indicator for airspeed, you do know what those instruments look like, don't you?" A tiny bit of arrogance was in his voice which JD ignored.

"I know that, but how do I make the aircraft stay at a constant altitude?"

"Oh brother, you students are all alike. Haven't you been doing your homework?"

"Well, I have read the book, but I'm not sure how all of this works together. Is the trim wheel important? What do I see out the windscreen when we are climbing? Is it different than when we are slow flying? I just need to know what to expect and what is expected of me before we start spending my Granddad's money. Does that make sense?"

"Okay, lets go through the whole one hour flight. And, they did, and JD kept asking questions that made Victor think about what was going on during the lesson when they were airborne. JD's questions emphasized to Victor what it was that JD should expect to learn and what JD could expect of him to teach him.

The flight was a normal flight which meant much loud talking to be heard over engine and wind noise in order for them to communicate.

JD continued to ask questions that forced Victor to think and to think like an aviator. At the end of the lesson, Victor couldn't say enough nice things about JD and his flying

ability. He claimed that JD was a natural aviator. In all the reality of the lesson, Victor was the one who gained the most understanding about flying, and Granddad Jack paid for it all.

Ken was amused at the praise that Victor showered upon JD as he walked into the office after they had landed. He had never heard such from Victor before.

The next two days, there were two different instructors but the same routine with similar results taking place.

By the end of a week, JD had officially soloed, they cut off his shirt and everyone congratulated him for being the youngest student to solo in less than five hours of flight time. Those three instructors were patting each other on the back for their superb ability in the art of flight instruction, and lets face it, they were all the better instructors for having instructed JD.

~AV Yaw