

On Approach

Avemco® Policyholder News

Summer 2020



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A LOOK BACK AT PAST AIRVENTURES...



BECAUSE WE WISH WE WERE THERE, TOO.



CONFESIONS OF A LATE BLOOMER

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By John Wise, CFII

I guess you could call me a late bloomer in life. I am 64 and only a little over three years into my flight instructor career. I've been aviating in some form or other since 1970 when I first took a flight lesson in a red and white candy-striped 1946 Aeronca Champ from our family's grass strip in Ohio and after we landed my flight instructor would take me to school.

I went on to solo four days after my 16th birthday. My dad was a successful dairy farmer and owned 2 Skylanes, a 1969, and a 1975 model, which is what I would learn to fly next. It was in those IFR trips that I would develop an interest in air traffic control and a visit to that vast windowless building called Cleveland Center in Oberlin, OH, that sealed the deal for me. I joined the USAF, and after basic training and ATC school at Keesler AFB in MS, I spent the next four years working the VFR tower at Wright Patterson AFB. Of course, a career in the FAA was next, and after being notified of my acceptance in December of 1978, I headed to Oklahoma City for FAA terminal air traffic control school.

Alas, life took an unexpected turn. I decided to leave ATC for a career in broadcasting, and after obtaining a degree in radio/tv/marketing and advertising, I spent many years behind the microphone. Like many of us, I was like a human pinball in my career, gravitating from one place to the next. But it was in 2016 after a dozen years of building homes that I had an epiphany of sorts and decided to see what opportunities lie in flying. After having spent a few years as a substitute teacher in mostly high school classes, I found that I had the knack for teaching and motivating people. The opportunity to stand in front of those high

school students is partly what motivated me next.

I had heard about the pilot shortage and especially the shortage of CFIs, and with 500 plus hours, a commercial certificate with instrument and multi ratings, all I had to do was take the two written tests and, of course, fulfill the practical flying portion. Like most of us, I exaggerated my flying abilities, and it took me twice as many hours to finish as I assumed. However, on New Years' morning 2017, my examiner gave the two thumbs up and turned me loose. I can't express here what a feeling that was for me. A true fist pump moment as I left KPWA that morning.

A CFI friend who worked with me on this rating told me that I would probably ruin the lives of my students for the first 100 hours that I instructed. It was true, but hopefully not THAT bad. As of this publication, I have over 1000 instructing hours in almost every single-engine trainer out there, and I have evolved in my thinking about this whole business of training Homo sapiens to take to the skies safely.

Here are some of my observations:

First, after soloing several students, I have decided that, if I were king, I would make a decree that every person in America would be required to learn to fly and at least land the airplane unassisted. The look on a person's face and their demeanor at that moment are priceless. I always make a point on the rollout to put my hands in the air and tell them. "That was all you, buddy (girl). I didn't touch a thing". Of course, they say. "Really?"

Secondly, I have started taking a more holistic view, and stance and I consider what I do as more like being an instructor of an airborne ropes

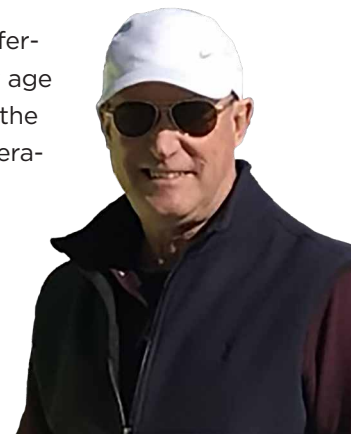
course. Our culture is one where people tend to watch other people do things instead of taking the risk of doing it themselves. This is important. Flying airplanes successfully is a huge confidence-building exercise. I applaud every student's successful turn, stall, landing, etc. I teach confidence and decision making. I just happen to use a big piece of aluminum called an airplane to do it.

Third. Flying, in my opinion, is an art, more than a science. The skills involved since those days on my dad's grass strip have remained, but because of technology, flight planning is much easier. Flying airplanes is not that difficult if you have enough repetition. My least favorite "type" of student is the "bucket list, or I've always wanted to try this" person. There is a considerable amount of study and commitment involved in this activity, and it naturally requires discipline.

As of this publication, I am a year and a half into having passed my CFII check ride, which, at my age, will most likely be my last. Since December 10, 2017, performing the job and service of being a CFII, is even more special now since it was on that night that I suffered an unexpected heart attack. It took 211 days of waiting, but my medical is now restored.

Do you want to make a difference? I encourage anyone my age to consider getting back into the game and teach the next generation. We sure do need you.

John Wise is a CFI/CFII, and a former Air Traffic Controller at Wright Patterson AFB in Dayton, OH, who lives in the Oklahoma City area.



By Gene Benson, Pilot and Aviation Educator

FROM THE SUBJECTIVE TO THE OBJECTIVE - MAKING BETTER DECISIONS

We make thousands of decisions every day. Most of them are done with little conscious thought such as whether to eat our soup with a fork or a spoon. Some require more thought but are not terribly important such as which kind of dressing we choose for our salad. Others are more important such as what to write in response to a performance review. But as pilots, our decisions regarding flying are kicked up to a much higher level of importance. Nearly all our aeronautical decisions are extremely important. Some of them are critical life or death decisions.

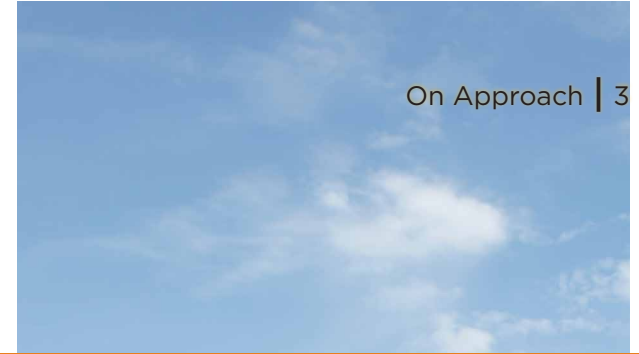
As pilots, we think that we are good at making aeronautical decisions. We provide evidence of that by citing our fat logbooks and our pilot certificates and ratings. But a study of aircraft accidents will most certainly include mishaps involving pilots with logbooks fatter than ours and certificates and ratings that exceed our own. How can we explain that? We can say that the pilot became complacent. We can say that the pilot became overconfident. But what we really need to say is that the pilot is human. Sometimes our humanness can get in the way of making the best decision.

Our brains are wonderfully complex organs that include plenty of automation. We know that we do not need to think about breathing, swallowing, or blinking an eyelid. These are things programmed into our brain's autoflight system. But the brain's autoflight system does much more, especially when it comes to decision making.

According to cognitive neuroscientists, only about 5% of our decisions are made on the conscious level and the remaining 95% are made by our brain's autoflight system. Of course, those cognitive neuroscientists would refer to the mind's unconscious level and not the brain's autoflight system.

Our brains work to make our lives easier by providing mental shortcuts which are generally helpful. But like any shortcut, sometimes we are led astray. This is especially true when it comes to our aeronautical decision making. We might be steered into a bad decision by external factors. The need to complete a flight to attend a business meeting, wedding, funeral, or something else perceived as being very important can cause our brain's autoflight system to shortcut our normal decision making. We may make decisions that contradict our training or good operating practices and we may venture into areas that exceed our capabilities. We may decide that something will be OK just this once. Of course, every time we deviate from a standard operating practice and get away with it, we are more likely to deviate again and stray farther from safe operations.

Our brain's autoflight system can also cause us to stick with a decision when evidence shows that it was not a good one. VFR pilots sometimes fly into IMC rather than turn around because they believe it is just a little rain shower and will be clear in a few minutes. Pilots take off with a rough run-



ning engine because they believe it is just a fouled spark plug and that it will clear up, but then continue the flight even when the condition worsens.

We can reduce the risk of allowing our brain's autoflight system to steer us into making bad decisions by using tools that provide concrete guidance to many of our aeronautical decisions. Yes, we have some tools to help us do that and most pilots are already familiar with them but may not be using them regularly.

First let me offer a word of caution regarding two common tools. The PAVE Checklist and the Risk Assessment Matrix are widely disseminated and promoted. They can be effective, but they are subjective and highly susceptible to influence by external factors if used just before a flight. I prefer tools that are prepared well before the flight and require objective decisions. Such tools allow us to use our conscious minds to set guidelines to be used in upcoming decisions.

A favorite of mine is the Personal Minimums Checklist. However, I am not a fan of some of the online versions because they still ask for a subjective decision such as, "Is the airplane suitable for the mission?" My favorite is "Getting the Maximum from Personal Minimums," which is an FAA publication authored by Susan Parson. By creating our own personal minimums checklist well before the need for a flight arises, and by quantifying our minimums, we are establishing a means of making an objective decision when the time comes.

Another one of my favorites is the Flight Risk Assessment Tool or FRAT. Widely used in business aviation, The FRAT quantifies many aspects of the flight by assigning a numerical value to each item based on predefined criteria. The numerical values



are totaled and compared to a scale that might indicate "GO," "NO-GO," or might provide a qualified "GO" with certain conditions applied. There are several online sources for FRATs, including some in spreadsheet format. An internet search will find several. I recommend using one from the FAA, but remember that it is critical that it be customized to fit you and that customization must be done well before the day of the flight.

Our humanness makes our lives worthwhile, interesting, and fun, but it can lead us down a dangerous path when it comes to aeronautical decision making. Let's use our conscious minds to protect ourselves from the tricks of our unconscious minds.

Remember, always fly like your life depends on it.

References: Daniel Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow, (New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011); <http://www.rochester.edu/news/show.php?id=3295>

Gene Benson has had a lifetime of aviation experience. He has lived and breathed aviation from his first official flying lesson at the age of 14, to his first solo on his sixteenth birthday, to his 8,000 hours of flight instruction given. He has served as the Dean of Aeronautics for an aviation college, as an instructor for a major domestic airline, consultant to several foreign and domestic airlines, and to business aviation. His academic background includes degrees in psychology, education, and business. His specialty now is the application of human factors to error reduction and safety in aviation and other industries. He is presently a FAAS Team Lead Representative and has recently served as a member of the NBAA Safety Committee. Gene's work can be viewed at <https://www.vectorsforsafety.com/>



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MULTIPLE WEIGHTS AND BALANCES FOR YOUR AIRCRAFT

By Jason Blair, ATP, CFI-I, MEI-I, FAA Designated Pilot Examiner, AGI

Every aircraft can carry as many 200-pound people as there are seats in the aircraft, right? Oh, and certainly doing so with full fuel wouldn't be a challenge, correct? I think you know that the answer to these questions is not affirmative.

In general aviation aircraft, we regularly have to trade fuel onboard, and therefore, range for extra people, baggage, or other weighted items. It's just part of the game. But for pilots who have more seats than they regularly use, want more baggage area, or have seats that aren't sized to accommodate adults well, removing some seats may be a desirable option.

Removing that third row of little seats in the back of your Cessna 210, the seat next to the door in your Baron or Cessna 340, or the back seats in your Piper Cherokee 140 offers pilots a couple of things. First, it can provide more space for baggage or just more open access to the cabin area of the aircraft. Second, it will give back a little bit of weight-hauling capacity when a seat or multiple seats are removed. It may not be a lot, but it may be one extra bag for that camping trip.

Keep in mind that removing a seat and operating your aircraft properly in compliance with regulations does mean you have to do some-

thing else. You will need a weight and balance that you will carry on the aircraft that will represent the current configuration of the aircraft. It's no different than when you have new avionics, or an extra fuel tank installed. You are changing the configuration of the aircraft from its original state, and the weight and balance must represent how the aircraft will be operated.

This doesn't mean that if you remove a seat or two, you can never put them back in. Nor does it mean you can't put them in and out as needed.

Many aircraft owners have chosen to have more than one weight and balance document certified by a qualified maintenance provider for their aircraft. This allows them to operate the aircraft in multiple configurations with a weight and balance document that will correctly reflect the Center of Gravity (CG) position and the overall empty weight of the aircraft. They can then determine what else they can put in the aircraft before reaching a maximum gross operating weight limit while staying within the CG limitations of their aircraft operating envelope.

If we consider an owner of a Cessna 206 who typically flies only with the pilot and one passenger, they may choose to remove the rear four seats in the aircraft. If we assume each seat weighs 30 lbs, that could translate into an additional 120 lbs that could be used for fuel or baggage.

I regularly fly a Cessna 340 for a friend who has decided to remove the "sixth" seat by the door to help make entry into the cabin easier. Another friend flies a Beechcraft Baron in which he has done the same. Yet another has a Cessna 207 that I can honestly say I've never seen with the back seats in! He has an alternate weight and balance and loves the extra space for bicycles he and his wife transport on their flying adventures.



So now a question. Is it necessary for a mechanic to remove and replace seats every time I want to do this? Fortunately, no.

You will, however, need a maintenance professional to certify an alternate weight and balance document first. But once that is in place, and if you configure the seating of the aircraft in accordance with each weight and balance you have developed, you can do this as a pilot/owner under the FAA preventative maintenance regulations.

Does this mean that you should just grab your tools from the garage and start taking things apart if you don't know how seats are removed from your aircraft? Well, I wouldn't recommend that, but if you got a little instruction from your local mechanic, it is probably something you could easily do on your own.

So, there is nothing wrong with having multiple weights and balances for an aircraft. I know many operators who have weights and balances that represent their aircraft in multiple configurations. And multiple configurations may make your plane more suitable for a wider variety of missions such as camping, bicycles, transporting shelter animals, or possibly longer distance between fuel stops.

Jason Blair is an active single- and multi-engine instructor and an FAA Designated Pilot Examiner with over 5,000 hours total time and over 3,000 hours instruction given and has flown over 100 different makes and models of general aviation aircraft. In his role as Examiner, over 1,500 pilot certificates have been issued. He has and continues to work for and with multiple aviation associations that promote training and general aviation. He also consults on aviation training and regulatory efforts for the general aviation industry. Jason Blair has published works in many aviation publications, a full listing of which can be found at www.jasonblair.net



Readback is your chance to tell us what you think about everything we have to say and do - including our PIREPs, articles, emails and previous issues of the *On Approach* newsletter. Content has been or may be edited for length and style before publication.

RESPONSES TO MEG GODLEWSKI'S "TECHNOLOGY IN THE COCKPIT"

We live in a world where most stores, banks, and other businesses encourage us to "GO PAPERLESS," and most of the younger pilots are programmed to use their devices for the information they seek. That is the way it is, and it works well for this Commercial pilot that got his private in 1963 and has clocked up over 7000 hours in aircraft, including Cessnas, ultralights, and Sport Planes.

For navigation and ADSB, I carry an 8" tablet and my cell phone as a backup. Both are kept charged from aircraft power.

Many local pilots who have yet to install ADSB warn about the head down at the screen. However, they don't yet realize that most ADSB applications give an audio warning along with the visual one.

I should mention that I did survive a midair

encounter while departing a non-towered airport. This was before ADSB was installed. Yes, I was looking outside, but the twin Baron that hit me was flying a non-standard pattern concerned that he didn't have all the gear down. So he was occupied with that issue and I was looking in the direction of where aircraft were flying the standard pattern. He was also 500 feet lower than the GA pattern which had him in our ultralight pattern.

It is not clear whether ADSB would have given warning since we were only 500 AGL.

I really like the fact that my ADSB directs my attention to oncoming traffic, but I also realize that those without ADSB have their targets delayed by at least ten seconds and some don't have transponders at all so I keep eyes outside 98% of the time.

--John M

RESPONSES TO GENE BENSON'S "KICK IT UP A NOTCH"

As one of many FAASTeam Representatives, I applaud AVEMCO and Gene Benson for writing and publishing this PIREP. While it seems to be an uphill task to promote the Wings Program, having you help with these simple words of encouragement really does help get the message across.

I would like to see a video presentation of this article whereby I can show it at the beginning of several seminars I conduct during the year? If

one considers the benefits v cost, it might be considered reasonable? I would also think the FAASTeam management would also encourage it?

--Gary B.

Editor's Note: *Avemco has since partnered with Gene Benson for safety content. Readers can view previous presentations in the video link (registration is required), take online courses, and sign up for his newsletter at <https://www.vectorsforsafety.com/>. Participation in the safety videos and courses qualify for Avemco's Safety Rewards credits.*

Always a heads up reading Pirep. Good solid recommendations and guidance.

--Ed Hasch, CFI, DAR-T

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RESPONSES TO MARCI VERONIE'S "WHAT RENTING AIRPLANES CAN TEACH YOU ABOUT BUYING ONE"

Great article. One of most important factors is how often you plan to fly. A \$130/hr rental for 50 hours equals about the annual cost of owning, excluding the cost of a loan. Any major repairs like radios, engine, or electronics and you get blown out of the water owning.

Had a PA-28-180 for 18 years. Now I rent instead of own.

--Tom Criqui

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The most fun we have all year is meeting you in person and strengthening our ties within the aviation community.

Avemco will be exhibiting at the following aviation tradeshows in 2020:

SEPTEMBER 18-19

Zenith Open House
Mexico, MO

NOVEMBER 11-12

DeLand Sport Aviation Showcase
DeLand, FL

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NSL0038 (06_20)