

March 2024

Ready on Alpha

The Pacific Flying Club Members' Newsletter

Special Edition

Editor's Note

The Newsletter Team is excited to release the first special edition of Ready on Alpha, which aims to promote longer format articles written by PFC members.

This month, our newsletter features a reflective article from Howard Jampolsky that is relevant to all of us who have been fortunate enough to pilot an aircraft. In "First Spin," Howard revisits his experience in flight training back in 1983 and explains the pivotal moments that influenced the next 40 years of his life as a privately licensed pilot with over 1,100 hours in the left seat.

Thank you to Howard for such a thoughtful article. Enjoy this very special March edition of Ready on Alpha!

- Phillip Souder

IN THIS SPECIAL EDITION:

- "First Spin" by PFC Member Howard Jampolsky
- Upcoming PFC Seminars

Header photo for this edition is courtesy of Laura Johnson. Send your photos to us via [email](#) to have them featured in future newsletters!



“First Spin”

By HOWARD JAMPOLSKY

I was 18 years old and just out of high school in 1983, and after dreaming of flying for as long as I could remember, I decided to try it out. I was not a fearless daredevil by any means. In fact, as much as I loved flying, which until that point in my life had occurred only a few times on bright, big orange CP Air 747's, I actually had a fear of flying. As much as I feared it, I yearned for it.

So on a sunny June day, I headed over to the south side of the Vancouver International Airport where a small portable building was home to two or three flying schools. This rundown shack looked like it was just dropped on the parking lot between the old South Terminal and the Flight Service Station building. That was the first time I walked through the front door of the Pacific Flying Club.

I had never been in a small plane, although I often walked around the south ramp among the rows of singles and light twins that dotted the airfield. 150's, 152's, 172's, Cherokees, Skippers, and a rag-tag collection of other airplanes including a bunch of taildraggers were neatly lined up, each dutifully tied to concrete-filled bald tires. But this time, my walk on the ramp was to a specific aircraft. Before my instructor, Pat Doyle, and I made our way to the plane, he asked me how much I weighed, took my \$20 Fam Flight fee, and grabbed a random aircraft journey log off the shelf. As we neared the little C152, I took note of the big letters printed on the side; C-GNLZ. Yes, my fam flight over 40 years took place in that little wonder that I occasionally still fly to this day. Imagine the stories, the joys, the triumphs, and the abuse that little airplane endured over the last 40 years.

I climbed into the left seat, and Pat started it up, made the calls, and we taxied down to the end of runway 26. (Back then, the north runway had not been built. Today, it is known as 26L.)

My heart was pounding. I was nervous, and scared, but equally exhilarated. I wasn't completely certain I would live to see the end of this day. How was this thing going to stay in the air? What crazy magic was needed to make it go up, and more importantly, return it safely to the earth? Did this stranger know what he was doing?

We sat at the end of the runway awaiting a takeoff clearance. In those days, you could sit on Taxiway “Mike” at the end of Runway 26 while several airliners lined up in front of you and departed, or wait for several on final approach to land. I remember many times being told to shut down the



engine because “this is going to be while”.

Today, I had no perception of time. We could have been cleared for immediate takeoff, or waited several minutes, but once cleared for takeoff that little C152 darted down the runway until Pat gave a little tug on the controls and we were up!

We flew out over the shoreline and once clear of the then-rectangular control zone, the radio went silent. Back in 1983, the Vancouver airspace was much simpler. Typical flying was to get out of the control zone, point the airplane at your destination and just fly. We pointed to what was then the South Practice Area located between Delta Airpark and Langley. I took the controls for a while and was surprised at how sensitive the airplane was. I was so careful as I thought one wrong move and we would just drop out of the sky.

We flew around for a while, getting a taste of flying, and as we headed back to the airport, I marvelled at the joy and serenity of flight. It was truly miraculous, and I loved every second of it, despite my fear.

Over the tunnel, direct to Richmond Centre, then cleared to land right back on Runway 26. That was the standard arrival in those days. We touched down smoothly and without incident. Phew! Made it safe and sound.

That very afternoon, I signed up for flying lessons.

I got started right away, flying once a week as funds were available. At \$43 per hour dual in a C152, once a week was all I could afford. (I looked forward to soloing. That was only \$35 per hour.) It wasn't often enough, so I went to the bank and borrowed the \$2,500 it was going to take to get my license

and started flying at least three times a week.

Pat and I worked through the Cessna training syllabus. First flying straight and level, then some turns, and in time, I was starting to feel more comfortable in the airplane. We had fun, too. With very little traffic ever around, we always left a few minutes on every flight for Pat to show off his flying prowess. (Pat went on to fly the Premier of British Columbia around in the government's Citation jets, but the fleet was sold in the 1990's due to cutbacks, and I lost track of Pat.)

Despite getting progressively more comfortable, my fear of simply dropping out of the sky persisted. It seemed to me that flying was like balancing on a unicycle, and even the smallest error or disruption of air over the wings would result in disaster. A turn that was too



steep, or stepping on the wrong rudder pedal, or stepping on the correct rudder pedal too hard, or not hard enough, or applying the wrong power setting, or doing just about anything not perfectly could mean disaster.

After each lesson, Pat would explain the next lesson, and one day, he told me our next flight would involve performing (GULP!) spins.

I knew this day would come. I felt like a death row inmate who just learned of his execution date. I even considered quitting, unsure if I could get through this. My father reassured me Pat would not steer me wrong. This is something I needed to face if I wanted a license. I needed to trust both Pat's experience and my newly learned skills.

On my drive to the airport, I wondered as I did on my very first flight if I would survive what I fully expected to be a

harrowing ordeal. Pat and I did a pre-flight briefing, and I know he could tell I was nervous. I asked him, "are you sure the weather is ok?" and "is the airplane airworthy?" and "are you feeling up to it?", among other questions, hoping that maybe – just maybe – this flight could be postponed.

Much to my dismay, the weather was perfect, C-GNLZ was in top condition – it was only three years old at the time – and Pat was feeling great.

We took off, headed to the practice area and climbed to 3,000 feet. Pat told me he would show me a spin, then it would be my turn. He pulled the power back to idle, and started to stall the airplane. I had never liked stalls either, but today, the stall was the least of my concerns. We were about to turn this airplane upside down and inside out. I took one last opportunity to look around at the city I grew up in, and think

about my friends, and family – all the wonderful people I would leave behind. At 18, I had not accomplished much in life. I had just started to live, and now I was in danger of it all coming to an abrupt end – or so I thought.

The airspeed indicator was now winding down, and the scream of the stall warning was blaring in my ears. (We didn't use headsets in those days... we just yelled at each other a lot.) "HERE COMES THE STALL"! I shut my eyes. I could feel the airplane flip one way, then the other. Pat was calling out every step. Did I open my eyes for any of this? I don't remember. All I know is that by some miracle, the airplane regained its composure and we were right side up, and still flying.

"Glad that's over. Let's go home," I declared, hoping that I would never have to go through that again.



“Now it’s your turn,” Pat said as we climbed back up to up 3,000 feet. “Just do what we talked about, and I’ll be here to help if you need it.”

Level at 3,000 feet, I pulled the power back to idle, and the airspeed indicator started winding down as I held my altitude. Then the horn. Then the stall. “FULL RUDDER!” I hit that left rudder and held it. With my eyes now wide open, I saw the earth spinning, and buildings and cars below getting bigger in the windscreen. Once around. Twice around. “RECOVER!” I hit the right rudder and held it until the spinning stopped, then eased back on the controls to recover from the dive. With the airplane now right side up and pointing in the right direction, I added power and we were flying again.

It was at that precise moment, as the airplane came out of the dive, that I finally felt at home in an airplane. I came to realize in

that one defining moment these airplanes are designed to fly. My anxiety and fear were gone. I was now a pilot and was pretty proud of that.

I completed my Private Pilot License in just under 55 hours, and for the past 40 years and over 1,100 hours and counting in the left seat, my love of flying has not diminished.

Today, I fly often with my 13-year-old son, Jake. He wants to learn to fly too, and I hope he does. We sometimes take his friends along and it gives me a thrill to share my love of aviation with them, showing what it can bring to one’s life, as long as you treat it with the utmost respect. I see the amazement and wonder in their eyes as they experience what I experienced all those years ago – before my first spin.

Thinking back, I miss the discomfort I felt before the exact moment I recovered from

that first spin. Flying was more mysterious before I recovered from my spin. I had the special thrill of not knowing how flying works. Near the end of the 1939 movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy’s dog Toto pulls away the curtain to reveal that the great and powerful Oz is just a man. So too does learning about the theory of flight, and how flow over and under the wings produces the lift that keeps us pilots and our beloved aeroplanes aloft. In that one defining moment, I lost the innocence that comes from not knowing the secret.

Of course, learning all these things is not only required to gain the license, but critical in understanding that airplanes don’t fly because of luck and magic, but because of physics and math. Experienced engineers design the airfoils, and wings, and control surfaces that we pilots manipulate like the conductor of an orchestra that allows us, in the poetic



words of John Gillespie Magee Jr., to 'slip the surly bonds of Earth, put my hand out, and touch the face of God.'

Perhaps some of that magic and mystery is lost, but if you close your eyes, even after 40 years of flying and a lot of years of living, your imagination can bring you back to those glorious moments.

UPCOMING PFC SEMINARS

Pacific Flying Club is offering seminars throughout February on the following subjects. Make sure to call PFC to book your spot!

NIGHT RATING SEMINARS:

Saturday, March 16th, 2024, 09:00 - 11:30

Cost: Free

INSTRUMENT RATING 3-DAY SEMINAR:

Friday-Sunday, March 15th-17th, 2024, 08:00-11:00

Cost: \$175.00

Check out the [PFC events calendar](#) for more information on these seminars as well as other paid seminars.

MEET THE NEWSLETTER TEAM

DENNIS WOLFF

Dennis earned his PPL in 2012 and has been a member of the Pacific Flying Club since 2014.



FRANK WU

Frank started his PPL training at Boundary Bay and completed it at CYPK in 2021. He has since become an active weekend renter from PFC. His favourite destinations are CYPW and CYCD.



FLORIAN KRAUTHAN

Florian earned his PPL in 2020 out of CYPK and joined Pacific Flying Club later that year. Florian enjoys sharing his love for aviation and the beauty of flying in the Lower Mainland with friends and family.



PHILLIP SOUDER

Phillip earned his PPL here at PFC in 2023. When he's not flying or working, you're likely to find him out on the beautiful hiking trails of B.C.'s backcountry or in the studio working on an oil painting.



ALEX BINEK

Alex became a PFC member in 2015. Since then, he has earned his CPL as well as his Multi-Engine and IFR ratings. His most memorable flight to date was a 300 nautical mile cross-country trip to Vanderhoof in virtually empty airspace in May 2020.



LAURA JOHNSON

Laura earned her PPL from PFC in 2003 and has flown all over B.C. and the U.S. Her most memorable flying trips include camping on Texada Island and attending the Reno Air Races. Laura loves sharing her adventures through her photography.



Have a question or comment about the newsletter? Let us know at gagroup@pacificflying.com