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Posted August 23, 2010

I'm Flying And So Are More Students

1 comment [Dave Rasdal](#)

NOTE: This is the eighth of 10 Ramblin' columns I'm writing on Mondays from July 5 to Sept. 6 about the first 100 years of flight in Iowa.



CEDAR RAPIDS — I move the control stick with my left hand and push the pedals with both feet, trying to keep the little ball on the video monitor between two lines.

I'm flying.

I'm really flying.

And that's the easy way to keep the airplane level. But it's also for amateurs — you really want to look out the windows at the wild blue yonder.

But, that would come with time if I'd join almost 1,100 people who are learning to fly in Iowa now. That's up from 650 student pilots in March and 800 or so students four years ago. When you realize Iowa has about 5,800 pilots, that's a considerable increase.

"It has really spiked," says Tim Busch of Cedar Rapids who tracks the numbers as president of the Iowa Aviation Promotion Group. "I don't know if we did that or if it just happened."



But it's good news in this, the 100th anniversary of the first powered flight in Iowa. Which is why I'm writing about it for ten Mondays from July 5 through Sept. 6. And why I'm at the controls of this cute little two-person Flight Design CTLS airplane with Tim in the passenger seat.



"It's not much different from driving a car," Tim says. "With the airplane, you just add the third dimension. The up and down."

It's not the up that bothers me.

It's the down.

At 2,500-feet above sea level (about 1,600 feet above the green pastures of Benton County) that's a long way to fall. But Tim isn't going to let me do anything stupid.

For one, Tim owns this plane.



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He's president of Iowa Flight Training which operates out of The Eastern Iowa Airport and airports in Iowa City, Vinton, Dubuque, Burlington, Clinton and Galesburg, Ill.

For another, Tim keeps his hand on the throttle.



After all, this is the \$99 introductory flight. The flight that allows you to shake hands with the control stick, to bank and turn and soar, to convince you that flying is not that hard, not that expensive.

As Tim shows me the plane, I ask if I need to empty my pockets for all of the loops and spins we're going to do.

"You don't even need to take your shoes off," he says, referring to airline security

checks. "We just fly."

As Tim wheels the plane from its hangar on this hot afternoon, I ask if it has air-conditioning.

"Just that big fanny thing in front," he laughs, nodding toward the three-bladed propeller. "I don't like to use technical terms."

As Tim flips the ignition on, I marvel at the video-game-like lights on the two screens.

"This plane has it all," he says.

The \$140,000 Flight Design CTLS is amazing.

Empty, it weighs just 770 pounds.

It holds 34 gallons of gasoline like you put in a car and burns 4 1/2 gallons per hour at 120 mph.

It's as technologically advanced as anything out there, especially for a light sport plane.

That's why Tim bought it. There's a new sport pilot certificate in Iowa that allows you to become a pilot for as little as \$3,575 plus tax.



It doesn't allow you to do everything you can with a regular license, but that would cost \$6,000 and up because it requires at least 40 hours of flight time compared to half that for a sport license.

So, with the "fan" cooling us, we close the doors and Tim taxis down the runway for takeoff.

As soon as we're airborne he turns the stick over to me.

Sure, this is more complicated than driving a car.

Sure, I follow Tim's directions to the letter.

Sure, a guy with more than 3,000 hours of flight time is really in control.

But, for 8/10ths of an hour, I feel the magic.

I'm flying. And I've got a log book to prove it.



Comments: (319) 398-8323; dave.rasdal@gazcomm.com

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One Response to *I'm Flying And So Are More Students*



1. [Jason](#) said:

On [August 23, 2010](#)

Great article Dave. As one of Tims students I can say you got the best .8 hour that money can buy. Sounds like you really enjoyed the ride, dont stop now! I've been keeping up with all these columns you've wrote on this and am lovin it, keep up the great work.

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