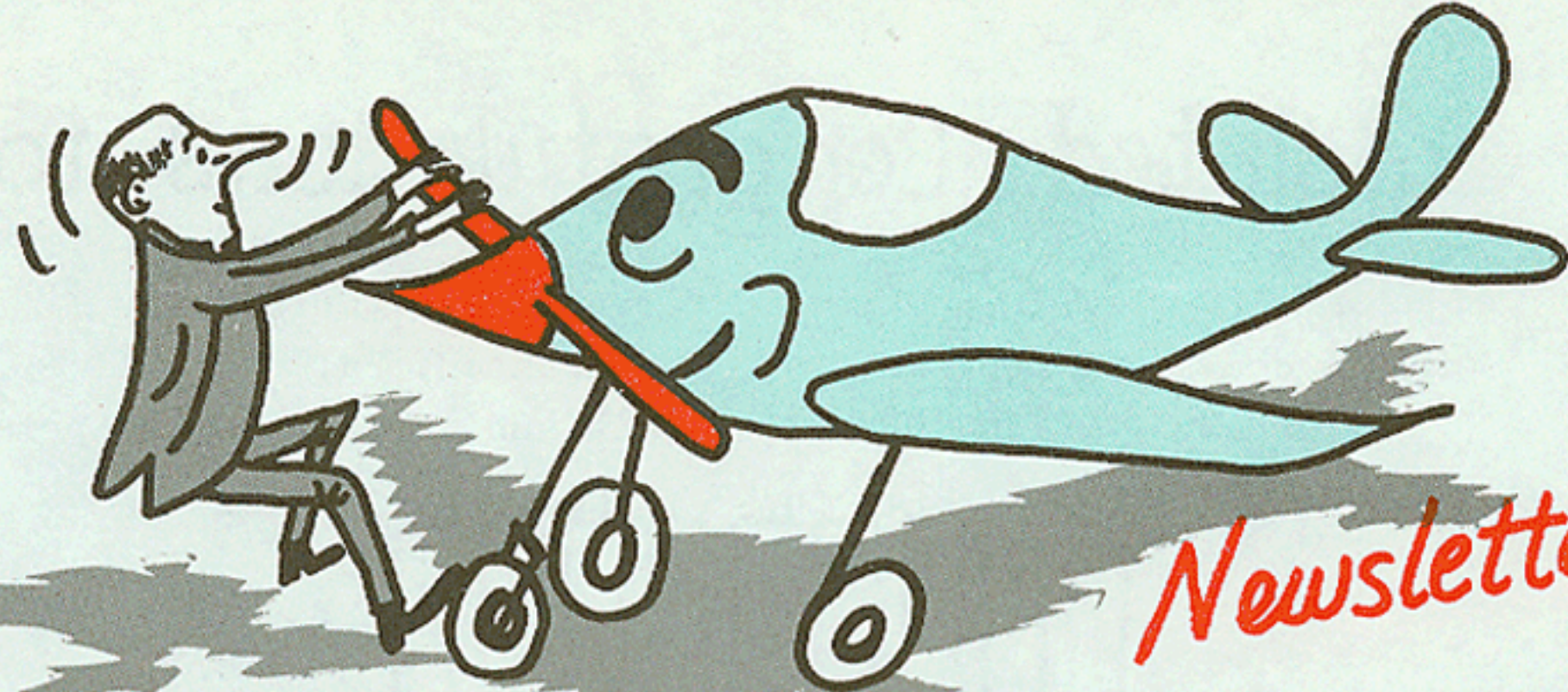


N.A.P.P.



Newsletter

VOLUME XIV

DECEMBER 1976

NO. 3

Brothers! This issue I have no intentions of plugging for anything other than a graceful Christmas and worryfree ??? 1977 for all the Flying Padres. I'm sure that these are the sentiments of the executive board and having said that recommend that you turn the page for Mel's beautiful Christmas issue. Best to all of you and your natural and parochial families.

Puck



An end of the year reminder to mark your calendar for the NAPP Convention, July 12 & 13, 1977 in Everett, Wash. Begin Making Your Plans!

Enclosed with this issue is a stamped envelope for sending us your annual dues. This is the ONLY notice you will receive. Dues are \$10.00 U.S. Give yourself a New Year's gift and mail immediately.



Belated Congratulations to:

JAMES C. TIMLIN on his ordination to the Episcopacy
September 21, 1976 in Scranton, Pa.

WILLIAM L. BEVINGTON on his 25th anniversary to the priesthood
December 14, 1976 in Nashville, Tenn.

Central Region Fall Meeting



Eight members attended the Fall Regional meeting hosted by John Herzog in Iowa Falls on October 4. Treasurer Charlie Teufel and his faithful companion, Ray Radzieta, received honors for coming the greatest distance - W. Virginia. The Spring meeting will be hosted by Msgr. Ben Bauer in Algona, Iowa on Tuesday May 10.

OOOOOPS!

Got the following article on the press before the headline. Headline should read:

Go to the First Ocean and Turn Right...

Educational psychologists are fond of speaking of "Plateaus of Learning" to describe progress in learning. While their in-depth studies of the knowledge processes of man have occasioned much of the turbulence that has rocked our schools in recent years, they have, I am sure, advanced the state of the art in some way. It occurs to me that those of us who fly and are also involved in a learning and developing process might consider the term, "Plateaus of Learning," to clarify and offer encouragement to those who are learning to fly (and aren't we always learning to fly?). The interest the aviation community has always had in safety is certainly associated with the learning and developing process. It is taken for granted that safety can be learned. How to teach it seems to be the real problem. Perhaps a plateau analysis of how we learn to fly safely might be helpful.

The flying experience is seen quite differently by pilots, depending upon the place from which it is viewed. A student pilot learning climbs and glides sees flying from a valid though quite different view-point from that of the seasoned pro transitioning to an approach or executing a SID. Both are doing the same thing, but it looks to each like something very different. Just as the view of geographic terrain varies, depending upon whether one sees it from the surface, or from an overlooking ridge, from an aircraft, or from an Apollo space craft, so one's view and, therefore, one's grasp and understanding of flying varies, depending upon the plateau from which it is seen.

Similarly, what one does at his place of viewing the terrain can be safe or unsafe depending upon just where he is. Thus handsprings, which might be perfectly safe on a beach, could be disastrously perilous if done on the edge of a ridge; and what one does as a student pilot and what the pro does in the same airplane can differ tremendously in objective safety. A student, for instance, under dual instruction, may be perfectly safe switching fuel tanks with his head down and locked, while a pro may become part of a mid-air statistic if he does the same. Conversely, the pro may be perfectly safe motoring through the mist with a bare three miles visibility, while a student doing that may be an accident waiting to happen. While both are pilots, and both do objectively (and legally) the same thing, they are, in the terminology previously alluded to, on different plateaus of aviation.

These plateaus might be described by using the pilot grades to which we are accustomed as a rough guide. Being intervals, they must be described with limits, and each has an approximate fore and aft margin of hours or experience. Thus, Plateau One can be described as that period of flying hours logged from hour one to hour of solo; Plateau Two can be described as that period logged from solo to private license or 100 hours, whichever occurs first; Plateau Three can be described as extending from hour 100 to hour 250; Plateau Four from hour 250 to the instrument rating/commercial license/multi-engine (any one or all three) and Plateau Five can be described as extending beyond hour 1000.

It will be noted that the dimensions of each plateau broaden. Plateau One is narrow, just a few hours. Successively, they widen, so that Plateau Five might be said to continue indefinitely. If safety has been learned in the first four plateaus, it is my opinion that the occupant of Plateau Five should try to be a pro as regards safety, whether he is specially rated or not. If he isn't safe, because he skipped a plateau somewhere or didn't learn what was appropriate to his plateau, he is not only not professional, he is dangerous.

It would be too ambitious to attempt an exhaustive description of each plateau in an article like this, but a brief exposition is possible and may be thought provoking. Plateau flying appears dreadfully complex, yet tantalizingly attractive, inspiring, fulfilling. Each hour with the instructor is variously fatiguing or relaxing, depending upon the skill of the instructor and the desire to learn, but, in any event, it is fresh and new and exciting. Respect for the intricacy of machinery and the grandeur of nature's laws is absorbed.

acquaintance with the wind is begun; one learns how necessary order and precision are to progress. One sweats, but one smiles.

Friends react positively or negatively, but in a most ego-satisfying way. A new horizon of interest opens. New words, new concepts are savored. One learns the FAR's. One begins to appreciate the charisma of writers like Anne Lindbergh who said, "And if flying, like a glass-bottomed bucket, can give you that vision, that seeing eye, which peers down to the still world below the choppy waves, it will always remain magic." The reverence instilled during these early hours in the air must automatically plant the seeds of safety. One is so overwhelmed by the beauty of life when one floats freely above it that one is instinctively, as it were, careful. The first plateau is not difficult to achieve, nor is it difficult to depart.

Plateau Two extends roughly to that day when the examiner certifies your performance and issues the temporary airman's certificate establishing you as a private pilot. Hardly any of the appreciations grasped on Plateau One have been lost and others have been added. One now has been introduced to Dame Weather, has experienced her vagaries, has been weathered in or winded out; mechanicals have delayed or cancelled trips; the occult mysteries of dead reckoning and electronic navigation have been studied and practiced and used. The microphone has become as comfortable as the telephone and, perhaps, jaunts for business or pleasure have been made to help explain away the money flying costs.

A fright or two has occurred. Familiar things have acquired new dimensions; a raindrop, heretofore hardly noticed, becomes a disturbing menace on a low-time pilot's windshield. One knows a great deal about clouds, at least about their names. Dreams build about trips to enchanting places; dreams build about owning one's own airplane. Some even dream of aviation as a way of life, and the private license launches them on a career. Safety grows apace with experience. One regrets little foolishnesses, becomes aware that he can be unsafe. This is a breakthrough in learning, for growth in safety is definitely related to one's awareness of his own predisposition to be unsafe. Resolutions are made to be more scrupulous in attention to procedures and check lists and fuel ranges. The flight test passed gives one a firm foothold on the surface of Plateau Two. While harder to achieve than the first plateau, it is very rewarding as long as one realizes that he or she is certified more as safe than as skilled.

Plateau Three, viewed from the standpoint of safety, holds just about the highest peril. One carries passengers while developing one's skills. One tends to show off and indulge the ego: "Look, Mom (or Sally or whoever), see what I can do all my myself." Self-preoccupation is always dangerous, is it not? It seems to me that whenever in history man has bogged down and made no progress or has regressed, it has been when he has become more interested in what he is or what he has done than in what he should be or could be doing. When this occurs, man loses his ideals and his dreams. He falls victim to a malady popularly called "Doing Your Own Thing." The buzz job over the golf course, the too heavy passenger one is ashamed to admit is beyond the C.G. capability; the marginal weather one hates to allow to thwart his plans; the not approach one is reluctant to abandon - these are frequent hazards on the third plateau.

Near misses of various sorts occur too, and sometimes leave scars of fright that make some into pattern pilots who fly only within gliding distance of home base. Others find the atmosphere on the third plateau too thin for comfortable respiration, and abandon what height they have achieved and never fly again. They are perhaps too sensitive to danger and quit because they sense that they are unsafe.

The terrain on the third plateau is rocky. It takes genuine love for flying to surmount it. Over-ambitious trip planning can reap bitter disappointment. "Is flying really for me?" "Was it the airplane that was inadequate or was it me?" This plateau can seem to some like the endless plain outside New Orleans pictured by Puccini in "Manon-Lescaut." And to them, Manon's death amid strange and hostile surrounding can stir up both apprehension nostalgia and a bit of déjà vu.

Safety is difficult on Plateau Three because one is continuously becoming aware of how unsafe it is possible to be. This can make one feel strange in the unfriendly sky, and make the aircraft seem rebellious and awkward. One is in the throes of "aviatal" adolescence and is beset with the same problems in flying that the emerging adult experiences with living. Those who attain the third plateau deserve to be called pilots.

Plateau Four (250-1000 hours): those who reach it have left the ranks of the "bold" pilot and have joined the "old" pilots. Self-confidence, nurtured by experience and learning, prevails. Maneuvers once clumsy are refined, techniques are developed. Engine and airframe, for the first

time, begin to function in unison. The jerky, unsophisticated actions we used to call flying smooth out and become instinctive, habitual, graceful. The joy common to the execution of any endeavor demanding skill is tasted; an appetite is whetted, the appetite for excellence, perfection.

One breathes easier on this plateau, flexes one's ability muscles a bit, pokes fun at flyable weather, talks knowingly of airway mysteries and airport procedures. One becomes a nervous airline passenger, watching carefully that flaps extend and listening with a worried frown for the thunk of lowering gear on approach. One develops a patronizing "ho-hum" attitude about un-knowledgeable people around airplanes, and becomes furious at the unknowledgeability of the general media. One even develops a slight aversion to primary students, criticizing their ineptness, as though a large dose of this might drive memories of one's own primary ineptness so deep into the unconscious mind that it will stay there forever and ever.

One reads aviation material avidly, attends meetings, writes letters to Congress about pending FAA legislation. One is at home in hangars, with avgas and ashless dispersant oils. One's vocabulary abounds with terms like black boxes, vacuum pumps, brake pucks and trim tabs. Over the years one's wrist watch has grown in size and one's sunglasses have become enormous and so necessary that one feels naked without them. Jepp charts, computers, transponders, TCAs, occupy both mind and conversation.

One's car grows steadily shabbier as its definitely inferior place as transportation becomes clearer and clearer. FAA writtens have sharpened one's regulation-consciousness. Engines run smoothly even over water, just as they do under the hood. One finally feels welcome in the sky and at home in the plane. Safety by now is ingrained; it is inhaled and exhaled like the air we breathe. Accidents always happen to others, and most of the others are low-timers or rule breakers. This is a pleasant plateau to inhabit. Few are anxious to leave it. The one above seems hardly worth the effort, unless one really wants....

wants what? Perhaps what this article is really about is why some want to leave that attractive fourth plateau. On it one is safe and skilled and can fly just about anywhere in the world. One can make a comfortable living in aviation from that plateau. What lure is there to attract one above when one is quite satisfied below? The answer to that question, in this writer's case, is as follows. I lived some very happy years on Plateau Four. The airplane provided me with a hobby, with transportation, introduced me to some of my dearest friends. It acquainted me with the United States and other lands, and gave me the mobility our age demands and added a dimension of speed and safety available in no other way.

True, it was demanding. There will always be unflyable weather and unscheduled mechanicals, and these are facts of flying life that will, I am convinced, always exist. The machine makes its demands, financial and otherwise. Thoreau was right when he said, "...a man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone."

Yes, flying makes its demands and the flyer must be willing to pay the cost. But perfection, it seems to me, has ever been the elusive grail. The already learned way palls, eagerness lags, and in the strangest ways, sometimes, a chance remark, a line read here or there, triggers that spark to move ahead, to make possible what before we had only dreamed.

Once, some years ago, I was approached by a friend, former instructor and pro while preparing a VFR trip from Philadelphia to Florida. He knew me well and knew my experience. Our conversation lit on the mountain of paperwork I was assembling to navigate the 1200 or so miles to FLL. He had earlier come by while I was supervising the fueling of the Model 50 Beechcraft I was using for the trip. He expressed surprise that I wasn't yet underway. When I explained that I wasn't quite finished plotting and planning my VFR trip and added that one of the seven radios in the Twin-Bonanza wasn't operating quite to peak performance, he astounded me with the comment, "Hell, what are you making such a big deal about? You want to go to Florida? Go out here to the first ocean and turn right!" He left.

Later I recalled another remark he had made some years before in the cockpit of a Twin Commanche he was trying to teach me to fly. The subject was slow flight, and I was having a bad time demonstrating that I understood what I was attempting to make the airplane do. His patience eventually wore thin and he snapped at me: "The trouble with you is you won't let go of what you think you know long enough to learn what you want to know. Slow flight is simply a climb that doesn't."

His comment spotlighted for me what I referred to above as perfection. His ability to fly, with such apparent ease and obvious confidence, was what I sensed as the ultimate goal. I wanted the ability to fly to Florida just as easily as he had flippantly described it. I wanted to be

able to reach that fifth plateau and to find there a happy combination of all the plateaus below it plus that indefinable extra something that allowed one to fly with safety, precision, confidence and ease. To be aware of the complexity of flight, yet be able to enjoy the poetry inherent in it. To possess the vision and still be able to see. To respect Dame Weather, yet not grovel before her. To handle mechanicals with equanimity rather than distress. To make the airways trace my flight plan, rather than the other way around. To fly an airplane the way Cliburn plays a sonata.

For after all, isn't that the only perfectly safe way to fly?

This article was written by Father Leo J. McGee and appeared in the March, 1972 issue of AIR FACTS.

REJOICE
JESUS
IS BORN

Let us HONOR Him
simply with GENTLE
CARE FOR THOSE
we LOVE