

Moving Up – Managing Your Transition

A quarterly report addressing topics of interest to the transition turbine pilot.

Hardware Store

What is Proficient?

And Who Is Ready to Meet the Challenge?



by Mike Dwyer

Who will join in my crusade?

Who will be strong and stand by me?

*Beyond the barricade there is a world
you long to see;*

*Then join in the fight that will give you
the right to be free!*

Like Marius and his compatriots in *Les Miserables*, we at Guardian Jet are on a mission. It is the emancipation of a beleaguered, sometimes maligned, frequently misunderstood and certainly under-insured group of pilots – specifically, owner-turbine pilots.

Emancipation of this group is not one that will result in a Nobel peace prize, as this group of individuals is neither undernourished, undereducated or lacking financial wherewithal. But someone has to stand up for the Ferrari-driving, fine-dining, multiple home-owning, time zone-crossing, jet



pilot and we at Guardian Jet have accepted the call.

While we may never be mentioned in the same context as Spartacus and the founding fathers, we would like to be on the leading edge of what will be a revolution in the way jet aircraft are operated.

Owner-flown jets have been here since the early 1970s. But with the advent of the Very Light Jet, (microjet is passé), the subject has never had the current level of scrutiny from the FAA, NBAA, AOPA and insurance underwriters. At the heart of the discussion is the role of the owner versus the professional pilot in a cockpit moving at 350-plus knots mixing with airline and corporate heavy iron traffic.

Certain airline and corporate pilots are concerned that the skies will be darkened and flight levels filled with pilots fresh from flight school with neither the skills nor humility to safely operate there. Insurance underwriters are granting insurance at premium levels that are expensive but more significantly, at liability limits that are well below the net worth of the individuals operating the aircraft.

In this article, I want to discuss the distinction between an owner and a professional pilot and then move on to a standard or definition that should apply to both equally. This article is written for pilots who own the airplanes they

fly. However, I would like to write it fairly so that it could as easily appear in a publication for airline pilots.

A professional pilot flies for his livelihood. That covers a wide spectrum from a Blue Angel lead to a 190-hour CFI that is meeting his/her first student pilot. It is not accurate to confer upon a professional pilot a measure of competency beyond the practical test standards simply because they are paid for their efforts.

In 2,000 hours of demonstrating new Mooneys to hundreds of prospective buyers, I can count on one hand the number of discerning customers who stopped the pre-flight and asked me if I knew what I was doing.

When was the last time that you turned left on an airliner and asked the captain what kind of day was he having? Pass the last sim session? Everything okay at home? Finances in order? Kids behaving? Spouse faithful? Dog obedient? There is a natural and frankly, necessary tendency to rely on the operator of a commercial aircraft to have adequately selected and trained the crew to operate safely.

I want to borrow an interesting definition of a professional pilot from my fellow transition columnist, Stan Smith, a superb example of a pro. Stan likes to say a pro is a pilot who loses his livelihood if he loses his ticket. Common sense

and Darwinian Survival Theory suggest that a higher degree of concern will be applied to any endeavor that drives your W-2 and ability to provide a living.

I flew a trip with a Citation captain that would not fuel the aircraft for a maximum endurance flight before he saw for himself the new girlfriend of the owner of the airplane. The owner was in his 30s, not horrible looking and an all around good guy. The captain ignored my suggestion that the young lady in question would probably comply with the FAA 170-pound standard. We waited, annoyed the owner and this captain, a stickler for detail, has operated for 30-plus years without a violation, incident or accident.

Here is a safety litmus test for you. A corporate operator with a fleet of six Gulfstreams does not operate, in the normal course of events, above FL 410. Gulfstreams are certified to FL450 and FL 510, depending on the model. This is a corporate operations manual policy that comes from FAR Part 91.211(b)(ii) that states that no operations are permitted above FL 410 unless one pilot has an oxygen mask on that is secured and sealed. This FAR is a function of your time of useful consciousness above FL 410, which in a rapid decompression is about as long as it takes you to read this sent...
ZZZZZZZZZZZZ.



What do you think of this corporate ops manual policy above FL 410? I cite this example often and get varying reactions. As a little background for readers who don't have to comply with this FAR in the course of their flying, here is a hint. IT IS UNCOMFORTABLE TO WEAR AN OXYGEN MASK THAT IS SECURED AND SEALED FOR A LONG TIME.

A Gulfstream V can stay airborne for 14 hours and it might be only human to consider ignoring the mask rule. If you don't see the wisdom in restricting operations to FL 410, get in an altitude chamber and go to 45,000 feet or try wearing a mask for more than 14 minutes, let alone 14 hours. This is a great example of a policy that not only addresses a crucial high altitude safety issue, but also has a lot of common sense.

Don't give an order, such as, "Wear oxygen masks above FL 410," that you know won't be obeyed. Why set a precedent for following some policies and not others? If you know pilots may not wear the mask, don't put them in the position to violate an FAR and subsequently their livelihood.

I don't want to characterize a professional pilot as someone who just follows a rigid set of policies set forth in a manual. Fortunately, the rule for commercial, corporate and airline operations in this country is one of a culture of safety and best practices as promoted

by dedicated individuals and organizations.

An owner-turbine pilot is a person that does not fly for a living. While he or she may fly in connection with a livelihood, it is typically to go back and forth between more lucrative opportunities than piloting an airplane. Higher insurance premiums and lower liability limits are the results of lower logbook times and training experiences that accompany spending your time amassing the net worth with which to buy an airplane.

That does not mean that safety is any less of a priority. Let's face it: there is a Darwinian Survival Theory case to be made that to be able to buy a turbine aircraft, you have demonstrated the knack for survival and success.

Let me tell you what sparked my interest in this topic. We wrote an operations manual that was aimed at owner-pilots flying single pilot or as a crew. We started with a Part 135 manual, ripped out what didn't apply, added an interesting chapter on risk assessment and generally tried to focus on what made sense. We sent the manual to a handful of pilots, both professional and owners, to get feedback. All of the feedback was worthwhile, as we only asked for remarks from people whom we respected.

One owner, I will refer to him as CL because he prefers anonymity, had the most interesting comment.

He was offended by our labeling of pros and owners. At the time, CL was flying the line as a 135 pilot with a King Air and Citation charter company. CL was not doing it for the paycheck. He owned several aircraft, including a King Air 200 and he had a Citation on order.

This was simply the most expedient way to build time. The owner of the charter company was happy to have a capable employee who was a very serious pilot, came to work on time, had a great work ethic and treated customers the way they wanted to be treated. It was just an interesting footnote that CL could have bought the charter company. CL became a line captain and met every criteria and competency of a professional pilot.

Today CL has approximately 4,500 hours in his logbook. CL owns numerous aircraft including a Beech Baron and a Citation. He progressed through four turboprops on his way to the Citation. His training regimen includes FlightSafety full service contracts for both the Baron and Citation. His annual training regimen includes three FSI visits per year for the Citation and two for the Baron.

CL does airmanship training in an Extra 300 at Fighter Training International in Mesa, Ariz. CL has several tail wheel and float aircraft, which attests to the fact that he has good hands and feet. CL operates the Citation as a crew with a 1,500-hour, single-pilot type rated, pro card-carrying co-pilot who has a fascinating logbook as well. As a testament to how CL thinks through limitations, he operates the Baron 500 pounds under gross so as to assure a better-than-500 foot per minute single-engine climb gradient.

CL's business interests take him to five time zones with a regular stop in the Rockies. CL also has a very experienced mentor or coach

with whom he can fly and consult for advice when he needs additional resources or experience. Given the nature of his travel patterns, airplanes are a very important part of CL's life. As you see, he takes his flying very seriously – certainly as seriously as any professional who flies for his livelihood.

In conclusion, while CL is not anxious for publicity, I asked his permission to describe his approach to flying. I did so because I want to be a part of raising the bar in how we prepare for the flood of turbine aircraft that are in and well on their way to market.

Make no mistake, there is a great deal of thought and concern already in motion as to how to address the number of turbine aircraft that will be the next step for high-performance piston operators. We, as pilots, have the first and best opportunity to prepare for and transition into these aircraft the right way. If we as pilots do not think through the best

course, we will have it handed to us by insurance underwriters and regulatory agencies.

I would like to eliminate from our language “owner” pilot. Webster defines proficient as: well-advanced in an art, occupation, or branch of knowledge. I also like that its Latin root is proficere; to go forward. That is appropriate as we enter a new era and the proliferation of the very light jets. In addition, I think Barry Schiff got it right when he wrote the aviation classic, “The Proficient Pilot.” Ernest K. Gahn in his foreword to “The Proficient Pilot,” uses this sentence when he is endorsing Mr. Schiff's credentials. “And best of all he thinks.”

As we operate our current aircraft and transition into the next one, let's think through the process with the same foresight that a very smart vice president of aviation did with his Gulfstream fleet and CL does with his Baron weight and balance.



Mike Dwyer is the president of Guardian Jet, a consulting and brokerage firm that offers maintenance oversight and pilot services along with an umbrella of services for light jet operators. Mike has held sales positions at Mooney Aircraft, Cessna Citation and Gulfstream Aircraft before starting Guardian Jet with a team of specialists. He is an ATP with 2,500 hours of which about 2,000 has been spent demonstrating aircraft to new owners. Mike earned a CitationJet type rating in 1994. For more information, visit www.guardianjet.com or call (203) 458-2500.