

Frank Kidd

MEMBER PROFILE

As long as I can remember I have been interested in airplanes. I did the typical things boys did, watch Sky King on TV and built plastic models. Later I flew and crashed control-line airplanes, luckily never losing a finger. I think my love for flying all started with my first airplane ride in a T-6. I was about 7 years old when my cousin offered to take Dad and me for a ride in his T-6. I sat on my Dad's lap in the back seat and everything was very fascinating. I really had the feeling of being on top of the world. The flight was going well but I could not see out of the cockpit very well and needed to pull myself up in order to get a better view of the countryside. The only thing I could reach was this black knob on the left side of the cockpit. I certainly got everyone's attention when I pulled on that knob. It turned out to be the throttle and that big radial went from cruise to idle in a matter of seconds.

A few years later my Dad bought a Cessna 120 and was also part owner of a J-3. I was able to enjoy many flights with him and my older brother who had finished flight training in the Army. There were many hours as a kid just hanging around the Halifax County airport watching airplanes. Nothing has changed much as I still hang out at the airport watching airplanes! Although I always wanted to learn to fly I never had the money needed for flying lessons. Graduating from college was a priority so flying had to wait. As I was nearing graduation from ECU I thought entering the Air Force might be a solution to my lifelong dream of flying. I also applied to graduate school just to have another option in case I was turned down for flight training. As it turned out I was accepted into both and had to make a very difficult choice. At the time graduate school seemed the right way to go and once again my dream of flying was put on hold.

In February 1981, I decided it was time to get my license and I went to Dr. Richards for my flight physical and on the way home stopped by the Wilson Municipal Airport to set up my first lesson. It looked as if the airport was abandoned. Weeds and tall grass was everywhere including the ramp and taxi areas. The small building was locked and a sign on the door indicated the airport FBO was no longer in operation. As I turned to leave Rudy Morton drove up. He informed me there was a new FBO taking over Wilson and he was one of the flight instructors. I became their first student! Three months later I was able to fulfill my dream and passed my check ride at Goldsboro Wayne with Mr,

Money penny. The Wilson Airport became a very busy place with lots of activity during the 80s. There were 4 or 5 planes available to rent so building time was limited only by my budget. I joined the CAP in order to cut the cost of flying and enjoyed many hours of flying an old CAP C-150 around North Carolina. That plane had at least 10,000 hours on it (former Air Force trainer) and the COM radio and wet compass were the only equipment that worked. I learned that dead reckoning was a fairly reliable mode of navigation. Of course, there were a few real search missions in the middle of the night. Those finds turned out to be perfectly good airplanes that were being worked on in a hangar and the ELTs were accidentally activated. Returning to WO3 in the early mornings after a night mission and finding the field covered in fog prompted me to get an instrument rating.

In 1993, I was part of the charter group to start Chapter 1047. We have come a long way since Brad Striplin started talking about how much fun starting an EAA chapter could be. Later that year, I was appointed to the Airport Commission and with 9 other hard working commissioners started pushing the City to put more money into the airport. I served as Chairman of this group from 1995 to 2000. We managed to get part of the airport paved and would have finished all the runways but the news media got involved and pressured the state to stop before runways 27 and 33 were finished.

I have been very fortunate and have owned or had a partnership in 6 airplanes. My first airplane was a C-150, which I paid for by trading the owner a sailboat. I just bought the Piper Cherokee, which is my 6th. In between was a fun time with two Christen Eagles and partners Frank Cannon and Lin Oakley. I never thought I would like aerobatics and felt I wouldn't care much for unusual attitudes. One day I went for a ride with Frank Cannon in his Eagle. I really enjoyed the thrill of aerobatic with Frank and couldn't stop grinning. When he said he would sell me part of the plane and teach me to do aerobatics I jumped at the chance. After the Eagles came the Piper Cub (L-4). A fun airplane that I know I will miss on those calm late summer afternoons. I still say a pilot needs 3 airplanes, a Cub, a Bonanza, and a Pitts.

Since 1981, I have logged nearly 1,000 hours and one of the best parts of my many wonderful experiences in aviation is the wonderful friends I have met over the years. Sharing the job of flight with friends is the best part of flying.

Gone flying,

Frank Kidd