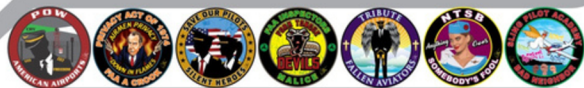


REBEL



AIR



Success Of A Flight Instructor!

Forgiveness

A Story of “Not doing the Maintenance.”

The Power of forgiveness.

A French Kiss Between Captains.



Hello my fellow aviators and beloved mechanics! Welcome to a new series designed to help you with actually doing the job of a pilot. In flight schools you may get upset at the maintenance of the aircraft. You may even bad mouth your flight school. Worst of all you may trash talk your flight instructor?

Let's dive into a story behind one of our beloved captains. A captain that was almost lost to our community by a simple piece of broken plastic. If not for forgiveness this great aviator might never have entered the cockpit. For I have a story to tell!

What is success for a flight instructor?

The success of a flight instructor does not come from building those flight hours. Or even the pay which works out to less than minimum wage when you factor in all the hours involved. So what is success on the flight line? I have a example about one of my best successes as a flight instructor. It goes back several years now, but is still something I think about often.

It was during a time that my flight school was being swapped with students from Brazil. One such student was the young son of captain at a major airline. I can not give the names of the captain or his son due to a strict policy of no social media by the airlines. So we will call this Captain Papa John Doe, and his wonderful son John Doe. Captain Papa was on hard times, and needed to train his eighteen year old son for the airlines. Captain Papa asked for my help as he did not have enough for the program. As a fellow captain I took the young man under my care. Even though he was really too young for such a task. He just barely finished high school. However, I remembered that it was teenagers, ages 16 to 19 years of age, that fought and won World War II. Please think of this if you are a young aviator! Do not become discouraged!

With this in mind I had John on my flight line within weeks. He was young. He was eager. He was the typical “rich kid” from Brazil. Just like me when I was eighteen years old he knew everything! This was a good sign as it really takes a hard headed “know it all” to become a pilot. His training went along well.



Having John around my house was a pleasure! He was just eighteen years old, stuck at a lonely house in the mountains, with absolutely nothing to do but study! Needless to say, he went bat shit crazy on me! I came home one night to find that John had gathered up rocks. He then used these rocks to spell out, “SOS” on my front yard. Seeing this gave me great concern. Advanced training was in order!

The next morning during our training flight I stopped John before start up. I did this just after he yelled, “*Clear Prop!*” With the care of a loving grandfather on his death bed I said, “*Your saying it wrong.*” John was completely baffled. I told him to instead yell, “*HELPPP!!!*” He turned and yell out “*HEELPPPP!*” I told him to do it louder. With his face turning red he kept yelling, “*HEELLLPPPP!*” I asked him, “*See anyone coming?*” John answered, “*No sir! No one is coming.*” I then explained that the cockpit is a very lonely place. No one is coming to help you. No one *Can* come help you. I think this is the best training we can give our young pilots. This is not something known by our young flight instructors with no work experience. It is a lesson that cannot be learned quickly enough. The “SOS” rocks quickly disappeared from my front yard.

John was a quick learner, and quickly finished up his private pilot's license within a month or two. With dedication and much hard work he quickly got his instrument airplane rating completed. Upon passing his instrument airplane rating I gave him the standard talk. Do not fly in real life actual instrument conditions in these trainers! You will be held to the same standards as an experienced captain. Even though you are new and inexperienced. You do not have a First Officer helping you. You do not have a \$300K plus radio system installed. If you disobey this instruction it may be the quickest way to end your flying career. For if you bust any instrument flight rule you will be given a violation. Any violation of the FAR's on your record will prevent you from becoming a working pilot. Understand? I was rewarded with the standard, ***"Yes sir! I would never think of doing that! You think I am stupid?"*** It takes around the commercial check ride for students to stop asking the question, ***"Do you think I am stupid?"*** By this point they know the answer will always be, ***"Yes, I do think you are stupid!"*** Followed up by, ***"Wanna talk about all the no diving signs around your gene pool?"*** Yep, by the time the commercial training is going on all personal chit chat seems to die down for some reason.



If you fly in actual IMC conditions in a flight school trainer this may be your CFII. He does not say much. Not much at all.

Not less than a week or two after this pleasant chit chat I got "the call." John and another student were flying in actual IMC in one of my trainers. The vacuum pump had failed. They had to fly partial panel until they got themselves back into VFR conditions. They landed safely. As their feet hit the ground it was all about the piss poor maintenance that I was doing on the planes! They recanted their story of

bravery in the face of impending death! Looking outside the cockpit they could only see the Grim Reaper looking back at them! That my flight school was a total failure. John was quick to inform his father of such unsafe conditions at my flight school. By the end of the day everyone on the airport knew of the poor maintenance on my aircraft!

By the next morning I had a four page email from John's father. Expressing his hatred, loathing, and complete disgust for me and my flight school. I was a bad instructor running a shoddy flight school. No one likes me. I sucked as a human being! I almost got his son killed. I believe he even said I was a "MotherDucker!" Anyone reading this that wants to open a flight school should

be forewarned. You will get more of these emails and letters than Christmas cards!

I had my cup of coffee and did my normal morning routine of saying “MotherDuckers!” I used restraint and did not respond with my normal, “And your point is?” I then informed Captain Papa that his little Johnny had done this flight in instrument conditions in direct defiance of my orders. That if he raised a son of this caliber, “maybe flight training was not appropriate.” That I would be driving him to the airport for his return home the next morning. Please just let me know what gate to drop him off at.



That evening I could make out the yells and profanity in Portuguese as little Johnny spoke with his father. Funny thing about profanity. You don't really need to even know the language to understand it. The thought of pulling up a chair with a bag of popcorn in front of Johnny's room did cross my mind! Nothing good was on TV after all.

I was all set to take John to LAX the next morning. The end of his flying career to be sure. I thought about all the insults I had gotten for “not doing the maintenance.” My favorite was, “You suck as an instructor! Someone should report you to the FAA!” Little did they know that if the FAA found out I sucked they would be there right away! Not to scold me. No sir! They would pat me on the back and offer me a job at the FSDO right away! John's father had laid some pretty good ones on me as well! They went along the line of, “No one likes you!” “You Son of a Beotch!!!” I had to admit that being cursed at in Portuguese was pretty damn sexy! It was a new experience! New experiences make one's life much richer. Needless to say, I was ready for the long drive in silence to LAX!

The next morning John came up to me. He did something I would have never have expected. He apologized for his actions. John asked if I could forgive him. This is pretty rare among student pilots. It has ONLY happened to me about two or three times in a 30 year career. It softened my heart.

His father was out of money to train him. If I abandoned John his future of becoming a pilot was doubtful at best. It just wasn't going to happen. I decided to forgive John. All of the insults that I had just received reminded me of dating. I made my mind up to just pretend that I had gone on another blind date. So glad I do not date anymore! I don't think my self esteem could take it anymore!

Looking back I believe that the best training device for a CFI is forgiveness. Forgiveness is perhaps the best thing I have ever learned. With forgiveness we could change the world. We can make things better!

The next day I took John with me to the maintenance hanger to change out the vacuum pump. We removed the old one together. As it came off the engine I pointed out the cheap hard plastic the gear is made of. Much the same as what a plastic pen is made of. Not what you would expect from a certified aircraft part, but that is what it is my friends.



This is why vacuum pumps fail on average every 500 to 700 flight hours. This is why it is not a good idea to fly IFR in a trainer with vacuum gauges. Eventually, your partial panel skills will be put to the test!

Broken gear on the left showing the cheap hard plastic of a vacuum pump. On the right a working pump. They even color the gear like metal to hide that it's plastic!

After seeing and holding the broken vacuum part in his hand. John's attitude changed for the better. He learned the importance of following the instructions of senior pilots. He listened to my words about how these planes break all the time. There is no emergency that you will not have to deal with during your career.



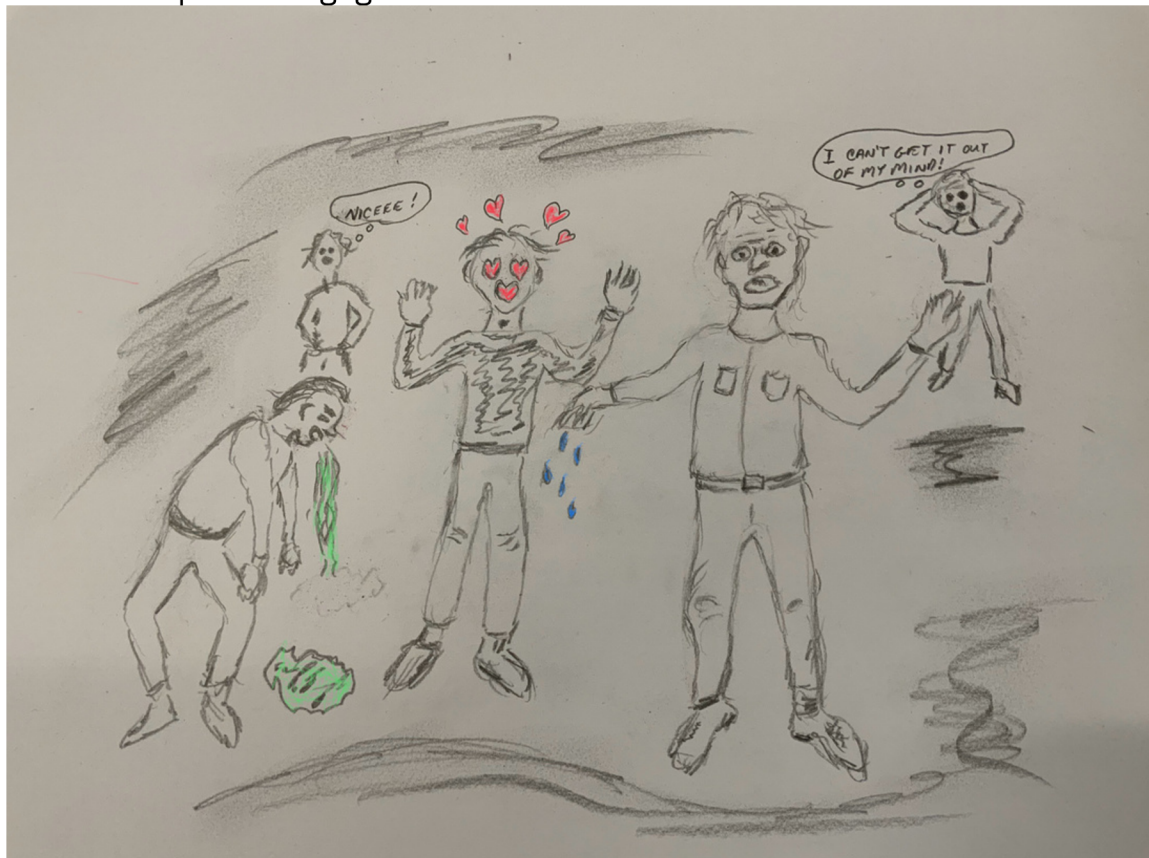
A close up showing the broken plastic which holds the gear.

In fact, ***“your job is not to fly a perfectly working airplane in good weather. Your job is to fly a broken piece of junk in the worst weather imaginable. Making it safely to your destination. With the stubbornness of a donkey! Do you understand Cowboy?”*** John took this to heart!

With this behind us he went back to being a fun loving eighteen year old flight student. Frequently running around in circles in my living room. Yelling at the top of his voice, *“She’s not pregnant! She’s not pregnant!”* Ah...to be young again.

John’s father started coming out to see his son. Bringing a big stick with him in case John needed some fatherly love. I had a bag of popcorn ready should he start beating up his son. Better than watching Netflix for sure! We quickly became dear friends after this incident.

One day on the flight line we were all gathered together just trash talking. Out of the blue John’s father grabbed me and pulled me close! He quickly placed his hand over my mouth, dipped me like a man kissing his bride at the wedding, and French Kissed me on the back of his hand. It was but only a moment in time that lasted forever. John and the other flight students stared at us two captains engaged in an affectionate French kiss!



Love is never properly understood by those around us.

For John this was like walking in on your parents busy making your little brother or sister. Truly, it was something that cannot be unseen! John immediately started doing that gagging cough before throwing up. The other students were in shock trying to un-see what cannot be unseen. John's father pulled away shaking my spit off of his hand. He asked, *"Why did you lick my hand with your tongue???"* I looked deeply in his eyes and replied, *"I thought this was for real. I was trying to wrap my tongue around your tonsils."*

John looked at me differently from then on. The other students often asking him if he started calling me "Daddy," or was it "Mama?" Genders were so confusing even back then! When back at home after a long day of flight training. I could be found running around in circles in the living room yelling, *"Captain Papa not pregnant! Captain Papa not pregnant!"* John refused to leave his room. I guess something good was on television.

John was soon off to ground school at a major airline. Being picked up right away. He left my flight school with well over 500 hours and at least 50 multiengine hours. I do not think any other applicants from other flight schools could match this training.

During the ground training for the airline John was not having fun. The other captains had their fill of training the kids of current employees. The gene pool in the airlines is rather shallow. Especially in other countries where this is a job held specifically for the children of the elite. John entered training as a target, and boy was he gonna get it!

John would email me during his ground training for encouragement. He was sure he was failing the ground school! Nothing he did was right! The captains doing the training were constantly putting him in flight conditions that could not be survived. They were singling him out for failure. Everyday his flight in the simulator ended up with him crashing. Killing everyone on board. The captains would taunt him saying, "Well John, you just killed another plane load of passengers."

John asked me if he should complain. I said, **"Don't you dare! Suck it up! No one cares! No one is coming to help you!"** This is about the best mentoring you can give to a young aviator. I told Brian to smile. To tell the captains doing his training that, "I will do better next time sir." To thank them for their time and training. I could feel the tears coming down John's face in the following emails. John followed his training. He obeyed my instructions. The incident with the vacuum pump still fresh in his mind.

At the end of his training John wrote to me. He said that **ALL** of the captains wrote glowing reviews about him! One of them even saying, "*We need more pilots like John to fill our ranks!*" John then understood that we are trained to deal with the impossible. To fly broken airplanes. To never give up. John came out of his training class as one of the top students. The influence of his father, that of being a senior captain at the company, having no weight in the matter. John was his own man.

John wrote to tell me about his first flight after passing ground school. He arrived on the flight line. He was met by the captain who had that look of despair, anger, and a mix of resignation. John's captain explained that the aircraft's pressurization system was totally "Ducked!" That they would have to fly low and deal with going thru the thunderstorms along the route. John told me that he looked the captain in the eyes and said, "*I will do my best sir!*" He told me that the captain gave him a warm smile. That they got the passengers safely to their destination despite the malfunctions. Despite the bad weather.

I could not be prouder of my student! I asked if he placed his hand over the captain's mouth and french kissed him? I could hear John retching all the way from São Paulo, Brazil. John hung up the phone as I was asking, "*Is the captain preg.....*"

Looking back on a lifetime of being a flight instructor I see what was important. It was not the money. It was not the flight hours. It was the pilots that we instructors have put in the skies that matter. Aviators are a very hard breed of people. We are the reaments of the cowboys that once roamed the open plains. Now we roam the open skies. Trading in our horses for our metal aircraft. I do believe that donkeys look at pilots and say, "Damn that guy is stubborn!"

How easy it would have been to abandon John for his insubordination. For his insults. For defaming me around the airport. It would have been completely justified. Now I look upon the broken piece of plastic on the vacuum pump. How easy this broken piece of plastic could have led to many broken dreams. Dreams of a father seeing his son become a pilot. Of a son not realizing his potential of becoming an aviator.

However, with forgiveness there is something greater that can become possible that we cannot see. If forgiveness is given a chance there are countless possibilities! In this case, we have a great aviator which John has become! A Captain focused upon caring for our passengers. Someone that is

now training the next generation of aviators with grace, confidence, and most of all forgiveness!

John is now a senior captain at his airline. He is actively training the next generation of aviators. Being the captain that he was meant to be. Teaching the new guys to safeguard passengers despite broken aircraft, bad weather, or anything else that gets in the way. To just smile. To endure whatever happens and do their best. Most importantly that no one is coming to help them!

He has joined the ranks of “Silent Heroes” that safeguard people from around the world. I could not be prouder of John. He will always be remembered by me as one of my best successes as a flight instructor.

At the end of one’s career there is usually some type of memento. A memento to reflect upon the years of dedication to duty. Of sacrifice given. For military personnel it is a shadow box displaying one’s rank and campaign ribbons. Police officers have their service sidearm and badge displayed.



What type of shadow box do we have as flight instructors? After 30 years of dedicated service I have an old broken vacuum pump. To anyone else it is a piece of junk that should have been discarded years ago. It reminds me that a student’s life can be changed by something so small as a piece of broken plastic. As I get older I realize that this broken vacuum pump will be just thrown away after my passing. It’s meaning completely unknown.



My beloved vacuum pump could only have meaning for two individuals. Myself and Captain John. As an old flight instructor coming to the end of things. It is my desire to give my memento to the only other man who would recognize its importance. To place it in the hands of another Captain. To see it in the hands of Captain John. The best success that I have ever had as a flight instructor.

My prized possession as a flight instructor. I have kept it for many years now.

When I am able to do this I will embrace John closely! All the while moving my hand quickly to cover his mouth.... To be young again! Running circles in my living room. All the while yelling, ***“Captain John is pregnant! Captain John is pregnant!”*** For it is never too late for love, or too late for forgiveness!



Two stripes??? This means your little first officer is on the WAY!!!

Please consider supporting my efforts to improve aviation. The flight patches you see are for free. I do ask for a donation if you can give one! Also please consider me for your next flight review. If you can put together a couple of pilots I can come to your airport. Afterwards, I would be happy to speak to your group about the issues we face in aviation. And most importantly what we are doing to fix things! You are the future of aviation, and as such you are most important!

God Bless! Keep Flying Speed!
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Other Flight Patches!

