

On Learning to Fly

When first learning to fly, it quite boggles the mind,
So students ... make sure your instructor is kind.
You'll be taught about forces, lift, weight, thrust and drag,
Torque, slipstream, aileron, glide speed and yaw.

And then there are flaps, trim, stabilator too
Axis, pitch, roll, slots - and slats to boot !
Gyroscopic precession – now, what on earth's that ?
It's sure to confuse you, no doubt about that !

Dihedral keeps level – perhaps your mind too ;
Computing air pressures, weight and balance – Oooooo !
And then there's the engine, carb heat, mixture rich
Magnetos, RPM ... Son of a b !

Next comes VFR, field condition reports,
Taxi clearance, charts, ELT's, surface winds, windsocks
Taxi, full power, now the real test begins ...
To find if you're made of the "right stuff", it seems.

You start straight and level, now that's not too bad
Climb, descend, overshoot, touch and go ... land.
Flight for range and endurance, you'd better learn quick
Else you might find you're ditching before you're equipped

Emergency procedures ... I wonder what for ?
Forced landings, diversions, engine failures and more ...
You then do a series of Circuits, they say ...
Take-offs and landings with cross winds some days.

You'll learn about ground effect, best rate of climb,
Round outs, flares, wheelbarrows ... how'd *they* get in this rhyme ?
Then there's mention of Solo – you mean I go alone ?
You're kidding. I'm ready ? Then your mentor is gone ...

You soon begin "air work" – but don't you be fooled
For this is designed to keep you bemused.
You start with slow flight – now that's not too bad,
Proceed through stalls, sideslips and spiral dives.

The word Spin slips in ... quite innocent it seems ;
"No problems, quite simple, you'll enjoy them", it's deemed.
Unaware of what's pending, 'cept what you've been told,
Up you go wondering if you'll live to grow old.

Have you ever been hung by your feet from a rope ?
Then twirled all about with your heart in your throat ?
The ground's coming up, it's spinning all 'round
Not quite ! It's the opposite ... it's you going down !

Keep your wits about you... Wanna Bet ... I'm insane !
Remember – no aileron You could get us creamed !
Your instructor just sits there, a smile on his face :
Says "this is for your exam – to make you an Ace"

Now, is the worst over ? I can't tell you yet.
There's still navigation, that long solo trip ...
Track errors, map reading, drift lines ... common sense.
A compass to guide you, VOR, ADF.

It's mentioned you're ready to take that flight test.
How come I don't know that ? Well, I'll do my best.
Your instructor's persistence as lessons unfold,
Hours of patient repeat ... a feat to behold !

He's shown his faith in you ... the written part's done,
So just trust when he tells you you'll pass this exam.
For once you've your license ... the real work begins
For good and safe flying ... without any spins !

By : Suzanne Ramsey-Falquier
February 1, 1990

Dedicated to Stu Lewis without whom I would never have achieved a Pilot's License