



*Dry
Bones
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Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

With Flying Colors

No one knows how hard it was to keep my hands off the controls of that little airplane. All summer long my son Bruce had been working toward his private pilot's license. My niece Marsha Squires, owns the little Rockledge Airport where she gives lessons. She promised Bruce to teach him to fly before he returned to college.

Last Saturday, just a week before he left for school, he passed his flight test and came home with his private ticket. I don't know who was prouder, Bruce or his daddy. He was now qualified to take up passengers, and even though I am a qualified pilot, I wanted to be his first passenger also.

Bruce rented a plane and met me at the Melbourne Airport, an hour before I was to leave on a much, much bigger plane for Pennsylvania. It was a special thrill to squeeze into the right hand seat of the tiny Cessna 150 and wait for him to complete his check list and shout

"Clear!" before hitting the starter. Memories, hundreds of them — flying off little dirt airstrips, getting lost on cross-country flights, being on top of the clouds and praying desperately for a hole — all came flooding through my mind as I sat beside my son.

But something was amiss. He hit the starter and nothing happened. Either the battery was low or the starter stuck. He tried several times and looked over at me apologetically. "Now what?"

"The planes I flew didn't have starters," I grinned. "Let me show you how the barnstormers cranked up."

With that I was out of the cockpit, made sure all switches were off, and pulled on the prop. "Now turn the switch on and give me a little throttle," I shouted. A big breath. Hands on the prop. Pull down. Jump back. And the engine roared to life.

Bruce was mightily impressed.

And I was ready to fly. I could feel the adrenalin pumping into my bloodstream. He'll never know how much I wanted to grab the controls and take charge.

"Taxi to runway 13," the ground control said through the speaker.

"Where's 13?" Bruce said. I realized he was unfamiliar with the Melbourne Airport. Automatically I put my feet on the rudders and reached for the throttle.

Gently he pushed my hand aside, picked up the microphone and called ground control. "Can you direct me to runway 13?"

I sat back. It was his flight, not mine. And he did a great job. I felt confident he had many years of safe flying ahead of him, for he had exhibited the two qualities necessary to stay alive. He was not afraid to ask when he needed help. He was not afraid to exert authority — even over his old tail-dragger Dad.

Those are marks of maturity.