



On the Fast Track

Typical Pilot

Doug, like many aviators, is a private business owner who discovered in his line of work that it would be much easier to get from point A to point B using his own aircraft—

not to mention the chance to enjoy the thrill of general aviation. So Doug set out to attain his private pilot certificate.

He spent a couple years piecing his flight training together with different instructors through a local flight school, all in a Cessna 152. As a busy professional with a family, Doug was only able to commit an hour here and there for his training. Looking back, Doug said that it was good to have different instructors while working toward his private certificate. One instructor may catch something that another would let slide.

After completing his journey toward private pilot certification, Doug thought it best to continue moving forward toward IFR certification. He started his instrument training at the same local school he had recently completed his private pilot instruction. Then his instructor left to take an airline position. After that

By Jennifer Jensen

it was on to a different instructor, in a different plane. Then that instructor moved on and Doug was forced to switch instructors and aircraft yet again. This happened several times over the next few months and Doug's frustration grew. Every time he switched aircraft he had to start all over learning how the systems in the new cockpit worked in comparison to the last plane.

On a fateful night in the cold of January, Doug went for his last IFR training flight. His instructor that evening had informed

him that he would be moving on and wanted to get Doug in the air at night one more time. There was no heat in the plane and Doug was shaking like a wind-blown leaf. The flight did not go well.

Doug decided he might be better off purchasing his desired plane now and then training in just that one aircraft. He purchased a brand-new Cirrus and took a three-day transition course in Morristown, N.J. Then, to get back into IFR training, he

took his new plane to the same school he had been working with for years.

He went up with a Master Instructor at the local school and, according to Doug, "The instructor had no idea how to fly the Cirrus. He'd never even been in one before." This was getting to be a hassle. Then he saw an ad for Accelerated Flight and Instrument Training (AFIT) and gave them a call.

AFIT

Tony Montalte started AFIT a little over 15 years ago when he recognized an industry-wide need for better instrument

instruction. Their IFR program is a ten-day course guaranteed to get you the IFR certificate.

The 46 instructors on AFIT's staff are all full-time employees and come with lots of experience. The average instructor is between 55 to 58 years old with around 19,000 hours of logged flight time—at least 2,000 of which are IFR hours.

So they have well-trained instructors and a guaranteed program, but that's not all. Since AFIT's instructors are staff positions in the company and because they all have a proven record of accomplishment, none of them use AFIT as a springboard into a new aviation career. These guys are there because they like it—and they're serious about what they do.

What really sets AFIT apart from other accelerated flight programs is these expert instructors come to you. You arrange for their flight to and from your home airport, set up a hotel room and local transportation and the instructor takes care of the rest. They will work around your schedule as long as you are able to dedicate at least eight hours each day to your training. One of AFIT's clients was a physician working from 10:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m., so they would do their IFR

training from 4:00 a.m. until a little after noon. As long as the lights are on at the airport and there is a plane available, these guys will fly.

This sounded like the perfect solution for Doug to finally get IFR certification.

Not Your Typical Day

Doug's instruction began the moment he picked up Ron at the local airport. Ron was familiar with Doug's previous training and, to Doug's amazement, knew the Cirrus airplane inside and out. "It seemed Ron had been flying the Cirrus every day for the last ten years. He knew all the systems and every detail in that cockpit," Doug said.

They immediately set up a plan of attack for the next ten days. Ground school would begin at 8:00 in the morning, an hour break for lunch and flying in the afternoon. If the weather was uncooperative they would flip-flop mornings and afternoons.

Doug said Ron was the perfect fit for him. He was patient yet demanding and provided a very relaxed atmosphere. Instead of letting Doug make mistakes and then correcting him, he would correct as they went along. Ron also wouldn't move

forward in the syllabus until he felt Doug knew the current lesson.

And he was always quizzing Doug on questions the tester might ask. "Even at lunch Ron would quiz me. It wasn't a social hour. We talked about kids and family maybe ten minutes total over those ten days. Ron was very focused on instrument, instrument, instrument," stated Doug.

Ron would assign homework each night to be reviewed first thing in the morning. For example, he might ask Doug to look over the approach plates and they would go over them the next morning.

In the air it was much of the same. While flying a specific approach Ron would blurt out questions: "What is the GPS approach here? How about the ILS approach? What are the minimums for the ILS runway 9R? Flying without a localizer what is your minimum now?" The list goes on and on—and Ron did. Doug felt this was a fantastic approach because you never know what the tester is going to ask—or when.

Ron also tailored his teaching approach to Doug's needs. Doug is a pilot who learns best by imitation—watch the instructor do it, then replicate their actions. Ron was a wealth of knowledge for Doug to siphon from.

The Result

Doug passed his IFR test on the first try and got his ticket that very same day. "I never thought something this hard to learn could be taught so thoroughly and stress-free in ten days," Doug stated. "I would recommend this program to anyone trying to get their IFR certification."

AFIT signs up between 18 to 20 students each week, and according to Montalte, this is a full load. They are available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and monitor each of their instructor's progress with their students. If there is a problem with one of the planes being used, they will help find a replacement. In 2007 over 60 percent of AFIT's business was by referral or returning clients looking for more ratings. Simply put, Montalte said, "We will provide the best service we can to each client while ensuring they will learn all they need to be safe and successful pilots." ✈️



For more information on AFIT and their training programs call (866) 270-8224 or visit their website at www.afit-info.com.