

Chapter 1: The Wrong Stuff

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- 1 There are many books written by pilots who have flown to stunning places in the world, or even around the world, and accomplished amazing feats of aviation history. This is not that kind of book.
- 2 There are books written by and about historical and modern brave fighter pilots and Earth's handful of astronauts who've seen the world in a way most of us never will experience. This is not that kind of book.

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Whether a pilot flies an experimental aircraft at a private airport, Air Force One, an aerobatic (stunt) plane, an antique taildragger rolled out of the hangar for airshows, a military fighter plane, a Piper two-seater, a floatplane to commute from an island, or a commercial jet, they most likely got their start at a local flying school in a two or four-seater fixed wing plane, like a Cessna 152 or 172, respectively.

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WARNING! This book may cause an overwhelming desire to learn to fly. You may find yourself booking an introductory flight at a local airport. Upon tasting flight for the first time, you may experience side effects of euphoria and an addiction to aviation. For those of you who may be afraid of flying,

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Like all student pilots I have dream goals, like rescuing doggies to forever homes, transporting patients to hospitals, or getting additional ratings like mountain, night and/or float plane. I want to take up my Dad in the copilot seat, with my Chihuahuas in back, and other friends and family taking turns. I'm taking names already—the list is embarrassingly short: a photographer who wants to do aerial shoots, an adventurous soul or two, other plots, so there's plenty of room to sign up still, dear readers.

It will be awesome to fly between Vancouver and the Sunshine Coast where I live and my family lives.

However, before I can realize any of the dreams, like every pilot from a recreational pilot to an astronaut, I have to go through the first steps of learning to fly at a flight school.

There are few books about the process of becoming a pilot, so I had no idea what to expect, except that it would be an adventure and that quitting wouldn't be an option for me after investing all that time, effort, and dollars.

I'm a cautious person and don't fit the pilot profile . . . no skydiving, or bungee jumping, in my resume. Neither have I jumped on motorcycles, and my husband, who'd been in a crash on one as a passenger and came away with two broken limbs, said he'd divorce me if I tried to ride one. I did want to do some deep sea diving, but with asthma no dive instructor would take me on, so I was relegated to

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snorkelling only, but there are interesting fish to see at the surface. I have ~~hoards~~ of diver and dive instructor friends, so it would've been fun to join in on dives at Porteau Cove, or ~~Vancouver~~ Island, dropping in on cold water critters, such as neon bright sea anemones and moody giant octopuses. Powell River has a sunken ship to explore and there's other shipwrecks to visit on the ~~Coast~~, which would be fascinating to explore.

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I recently had tea with my ~~long~~ time friend from uni days, who dives and told me how disorienting driving can be until you are familiar with an area. I was relating stories of how difficult it can be sometimes to find a new airport: being in the water and in ~~in~~ the air seem to play similar tricks on the body's perceptions.

As a Prairie kid, I jumped into haystacks, rode our horses bareback, skated on outdoor ponds, swam in the lake, cross-country skied, and generally ~~do~~ messed around and explored as country kids did, ad nauseam. I went back to university in my 40s and became a ~~high~~ school teacher. I worked in huge ~~cap~~ metro Vancouver ~~high~~ schools, some with over 2000 teenagers, where I developed a new kind of steely nerve. Until I woke up one morning with a crippling form of inflammatory arthritis ~~inherited~~, rare, severe, and career ending.

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- 1 So I wasn't blessed with the "Right Stuff" when
- 1 you think of a pilot—not a math whiz, near-sighted, and born without a sense of direction. Plus, your 50s isn't exactly the ideal age to learn something that requires superior reaction time and hand-eye coordination. Then there's my few health issues however, the physical part of flying is equivalent to driving. Yet, it's a thousand times more intense and engages

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all four limbs working in both independent and co-ordinated motion. The training time in the air starts out in short periods and slowly extends to around an hour, before it goes beyond. The longest I've flown continuously, so far, was a two and-a half hour solo, but I was lost, looking for the runway, and flying for my life.

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Like the ostrich who watches the eagles, I just didn't think it was possible in this lifetime for me to enter the cockpit. But it was now time to apply what I learned as an educator, to my own life and unpack those myths that kept me earthbound.

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A teacher's job is to help the student overcome the obstacles and barriers to learning.

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I needed to find the right instructor at a reputable flight school to start my journey into overcoming obstacles I had no control over.

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I was to find out that pilots are always in command, they are always to blame when something goes wrong.

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It's always the pilot's fault. Deer on the runway, still the pilot's fault that he overshot the landing. ✓

Chris

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