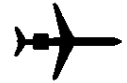


# The Power of Your Influence



by Jerry E. Tobias

Have you ever considered how much impact your conduct and comments have upon your fellow aviators? I can assure you that your influence is far greater and much longer-lasting than you probably have imagined.

Incredibly, it has been forty-four years since I first soloed a Cessna 150 at Hartlee Field in Denton, Texas. It has also been forty-two years since I graduated from U. S. Air Force Undergraduate Pilot Training Class 69-07 at Laughlin AFB, Texas. And, it was many of my experiences from those forty-plus years ago that significantly shaped my professional ideals and attitudes.

How? Most of my concepts of things like safety, professionalism, crew conduct, leadership, etc., were formed early in my aviation career by both *observing* other crewmembers and *listening* to the comments of my instructors and others who took the time to encourage me, advise me and/or critique my performance. Although I didn't realize at the time how defining their actions and input were, I understand now that *everyone* I flew with influenced me in one way or another. As a result, *each one* helped determine who I would become as a pilot and how I would conduct myself in the cockpit throughout my aviation career. Let me give you a few examples.

From my first civilian flight instructor I learned that being *precise and thorough* is the key to safe flight operations.

From my USAF T-37 flight instructor I learned that the best pilot is an *organized* pilot (mentally and otherwise).

From my first USAF KC-135A Aircraft Commander I learned that if I was not *actively monitoring or completing a task*, I was probably missing something.

From a fellow USAF C-123K pilot in Vietnam I learned that I needed to *continually prioritize* my attention, my actions and my responses as the current scenario dictated.

And, from a USAF E-4B (Boeing 747) flight instructor I learned that I must constantly be aware of the factors involved in completing a *successful mission*, not just a successful flight.

Other lessons I learned included:

- "*Fly every flight as though it were a check ride.*"
- "*Never assume that anyone else in my cockpit knows what I'm thinking.*"
- "*Never fly any less precise during VMC conditions than would be required during low IMC conditions.*"
- "*Never assume that situations or conditions have not changed since last checked.*"

- *"Maintain 100% vigilance and attention during EVERY phase of flight."*
- *"Do things the 'right' way and perform my duties in an absolutely professional manner - even if no one else ever sees or ever knows."*
- *"Avoid shortcuts, as they NEVER lead to predictable or positive outcomes."*

I could literally list dozens of similar thoughts. All would follow the same thorough, conservative and cautious theme, since I was fortunate to usually fly with instructors and crewmembers who had a very "by the book" philosophy. My point, though, is that the things I observed (both good and bad) and the instruction and input I received *still guide my actions* these forty-some years later. I urge you, therefore, to take your opportunities to encourage, critique, debrief, suggest and guide very seriously. Remember, too, that what you *model* speaks far louder than what you proclaim!

The bottom line? No matter what seat you sit in, no matter what vehicle you maneuver through the skies, and no matter how much experience you do or do not have, your performance and your influence *will be remembered*. Every time you fly with a fellow pilot, a student pilot or a future pilot, your conduct *will* impact their concepts and *will* shape their performance standards. Consider, therefore, that every time you fly, *you potentially influence aviation's safety record* for years and years to come.

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