October 2025

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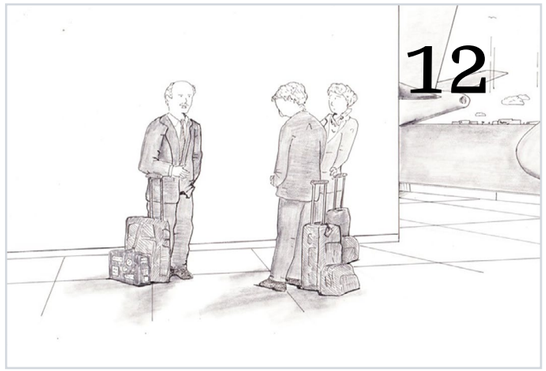
Your Industry Connection



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October 2025

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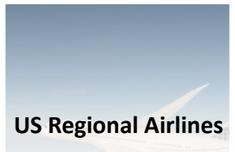
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Mesa Airlines
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Piedmont Airlines
PSA Airlines
RavnAir Group
Republic Airways
Silver Airways
Skywest Airlines
Star Mania Air, Inc.

The Grid (contract comparisons, pay charts, company details, etc.) has moved online. Click on the airlines above to go directly to that airline's information, or go to www. AeroCrewNews.com/go/thegrid.

Dear readers,



This month's feature has heartwarming stories of Angel Flight volunteers and their flights to help complete strangers. I personally love reading stories like this and I hope that this inspires you to want to volunteer. Click here to read the full story.

In the next coming weeks, you will notice a change in our social media tone. Regrettably, our social-media manager has stepped down and we will be transitioning with a new team leader to assume that responsibility.

The most important source of leads for our stories is our readers. Our "informants" have their own uniform, too. Purchase yours here and wear it proudly! If you have any *BREAKING* news that you'd like us to cover, please email it to info@AeroCrewNews.com. Thanks to all who keep us informed. Knowledge is power, so let's pour on the power together!

Fly safe,

Craig D. Pieper

Craig D. Pieper





About the Publisher

Craig Pieper is the Publisher and Founder of Aero Crew News. Craig obtained his Bachelors of Science in Aeronautical Science, along with a minor in Aviation Weather, from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in 2001. Craig is also a captain for a major airline with a type rating in the Boeing 737 & Embraer 145 and has logged over 10,000 hours of flying time since his introductory flight on November 14th, 1992.

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Feature – With a boot-scootin' gala, the Ashton Johnson Memorial CloudDancer Scholarship supports veterans aspiring to become pilots.

Baggage – Learn some natural ways to improve your mood.

Business Vector – Compensation predictions are compared to the data.

Coffee & Pretzels – It's a lav, not a library!

Fitness – Our new contributor, Scott has recommendations for pursuing better fitness in the flight deck.

Grey Matter – Just who supports changing the mandatory retirement age?

Money – Examine the ins and outs of the Health Savings Account and how it can impact your family.

Mortgage – Is this a good time to think about moving or refinancing your mortgage?

Perspectives – Professionalism counts at every phase of one's career.

Product Review – JetSeam has done it again, this time matching the UA blue.

Safety Matters – United Aviate Academy sets a higher standard for Upset Prevention and Recovery Training.

SkyLaw – This is a **MUST READ** as the FAA changes their procedures for the Medical Denial Policy.

Squall Lines – Preplan and use all your human and technological resources when you are confronted with the ubiquitous thunderstorm problem.



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CREDITS

Publisher / Founder
Craig Pieper

Aero Crew Solutions, CEO
Scott Rehn

Editor
Deborah Bandy

Layout Design
Sarina Williams

Additional Contributors
Greg Kaley
John McDermott
Richard Swindell
Sergio Sovero
Howard Parkin
Zeke Denison
Reini Thijssen
Scott Darragh
Christopher Broyhill
Charlie Mattingly
Angel Flight NE

Aviator Bulletins
Provided by the companies listed

Photographs By
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Photographs as noted or licensed by Aero Crew News, LLC

Grid Updates Email
GridUpdates@AeroCrewNews.com

Social Media
Edith Duran

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Spirit Airlines Receives Court Approval of First Day Motions to Support Continued Business Operations

Spirit Aviation Holdings, Inc., parent company of Spirit Airlines, LLC ("Spirit" or the "Company"), announced that it has received approval from the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York (the "Court") for its first day motions... Read More



Sun Country Pilots File to Open Contract Negotiations

Sun Country Airlines (SCA) pilots represented by the Air Line Pilots Association, Intl. have delivered notice to their management that they will open negotiations on a new pilot contract. Leaders of ALPA's Sun Country Master Executive Council (MEC) submitted an official Notice to Bargain during a meeting last Friday with... Read More



FedEx Pilots Declare Vote of No Confidence in President & CEO Rajesh Subramaniam as Shareholders Convene

As FedEx shareholders gather for the 2025 annual meeting, the FedEx Master Executive Council (MEC) of the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA), representing over 5,000 FedEx pilots, has... Read More



ATI AFA Flight Attendants Ratify New Contract Delivering Double-Digit Wage Increase

Air Transport International (ATI) Flight Attendants, represented by the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA), voted to ratify a new contract.

The four-year agreement provides an immediate, double-digit wage... Read More



ALPA Endorses No Tax on Overtime for All Workers Act

Capt. Jason Ambrosi, president of the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA), announced strong support for the bipartisan No Tax on Overtime for All Workers Act introduced by Representatives Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY), Emilia Sykes (D-OH), Nick LaLota (R-NY), Steven Horsford (D-NV), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), and Thomas Suozzi (D-NY). Read More



United Celebrates Turnaround at Newark Liberty International and Charts Bright Future

United CEO Scott Kirby was in Newark (EWR) to celebrate the airline's operational turnaround at EWR and discuss the bright future for the carrier's premier East Coast hub. Read More



United Express GoJet Flight Attendants Ratify New Contract

GoJet Airlines Flight Attendants, represented by the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA), have ratified a contract with wage increases and additional improvements throughout the duration of the contract, including a trigger for boarding pay and a pathway to shorter on-call reserve periods...Read More



JetBlue Retires Embraer E190, Completes Transition to Next Generation Airbus A220-300

JetBlue celebrated a significant milestone in its 25-year history: the final revenue flight of its Embraer E190 (E190) aircraft, marking the official retirement of the aircraft from JetBlue's fleet. As the airline bids farewell to the aircraft that helped propel it through a period of expansion and innovation... Read More



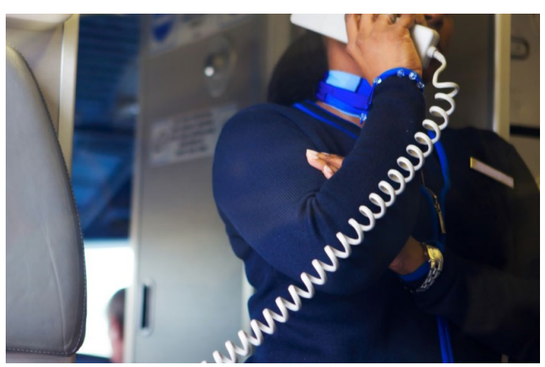
Avelo Airlines Orders up to 100 Embraer E195-E2s to Modernize Fleet, Reduce Cost, and Fuel Growth

Avelo Airlines has placed a firm order for 50 Embraer E195-E2 aircraft, with purchase rights for 50 more, supporting the airline's strategy to deliver affordable and convenient travel across the United States. Aircraft deliveries are expected to... Read More



ALPA Applauds House Passage of Key Mental Health Legislation

The Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA) commended the U.S. House of Representatives for passing the Mental Health in Aviation Act (H.R. 2591). Introduced by Representatives Sean Casten (D-IL) and Pete Stauber (R-MN) and supported by Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) and Ranking Member Rick Larsen (D-WA)... Read More



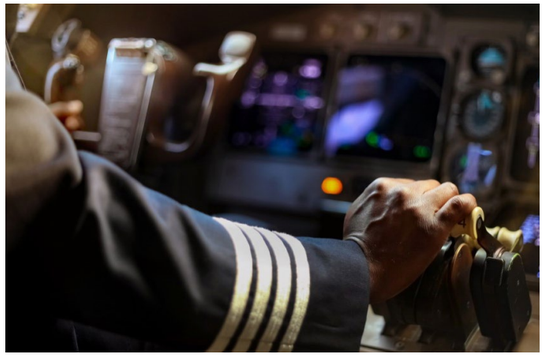
Twenty-Four Years after Sept. 11 Terrorist Attacks, Flight Attendant Bodies Still Serve as Flight Deck Barrier

Twenty-four years since September 11, 2001, the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA President Sara Nelson – a 29 year Flight Attendant – released the following statement about the... Read More



United Resumes Flights to Tel Aviv, Israel from Chicago and Washington D.C.

United announced plans to resume flights to Tel Aviv, Israel from Chicago O'Hare and Washington Dulles international airports. This marks the first time United has operated these flights since 2023. United offers more flights to Tel Aviv... Read More



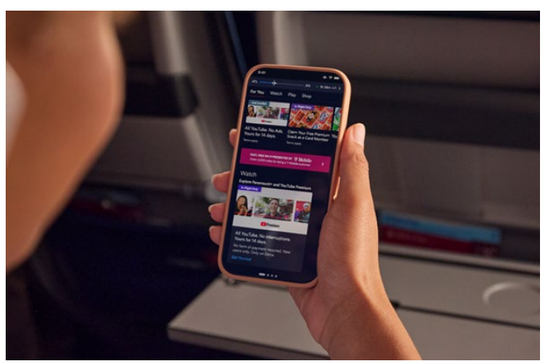
New Aeromedical Study Raises Critical Safety Concerns Over Proposed Reduced Crew Operations

A recent study published in the journal Aerospace Medicine and Human Performance highlights serious safety risks associated with Extended Minimum Crew Operations (eMCO), a concept that would allow commercial airline aircraft to fly... Read More



ALPA President Urges Other Airlines to Follow Southwest's Lead on Secondary Barriers

Capt. Jason Ambrosi, president of the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA), released the following statement in response to Southwest Airlines becoming the first major air carrier to implement secondary flight deck barriers... Read More



Discover more of your world: Delta welcomes YouTube and YouTube Premium onboard

Your next flight just got a lot more entertaining. Delta and YouTube are teaming up to bring two customer favorites together: Delta's industry-leading in-flight entertainment and fan-favorite YouTube content. Announced at CES 2025, the first-of-its-kind partnership unites... Read More



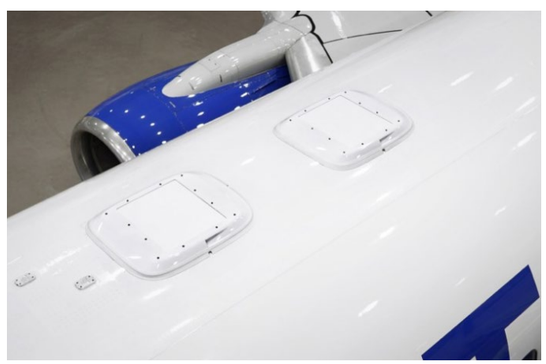
American Airlines and Porter Airlines celebrate new partnership enhancing North American travel

American Airlines and Porter Airlines are teaming up on a new codeshare partnership to give customers more ways to travel between the U.S. and Canada. Starting Customers can book codeshare itineraries for flights on aa.com... Read More



Delta uncorks the perfect pairing: New York to Porto, Portugal

Delta will launch its first-ever daily nonstop service to Porto, Portugal (OPO) from New York-JFK beginning May 21, 2026, giving customers direct access to one of Europe's most colorful coastal cities. The new route is part of Delta's broader trans-Atlantic expansion and reflects the airline's commitment to offering more destinations... Read More



United Receives FAA Certification for First Starlink-Equipped Mainline Aircraft

United announced the FAA certified its first mainline Starlink-equipped aircraft, and the first commercial flight is planned for October 15.

This certification comes less than five months since the first Starlink-equipped...Read More

coffee & pretzels

Greg Kaley



I had to go back to my hard case because the world was missing out on all my great stickers.



Check Out Last Month's Cartoon



About the Author

Greg Kaley is a pilot with a major airline who also happens to be a cartoonist. He started the cartoon "Coffee & Pretzels" in 2016. After graduating from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (Prescott Campus), he flight-instructed and subsequently... Read More...





Balancing Practicality and Hope in Aviation

Written by: John McDermott

I finished my flight-instructor training in late 2023, just as the airline hiring wave was coming to an end. There were still some stragglers picking up the most-qualified pilots—some charter companies, a final few into the regionals, with flight schools filling the gaps that had been so hard to keep closed. But it was clear that, at least for a time, flooding from the unprecedented tsunami that was the post-pandemic rebound was about dry.

Finding a flight instructing job that I could hold was tricky for a number of reasons. I was lucky that there were just enough jobs open for me to make a couple of mistakes in my first hiring push as flight crew, but I didn't have the luxury of sitting back and letting the jobs come to me.

Such was my first lesson in balancing my dreams of making a career out of professional flight and acknowledging that it would be some time before I made it into the right seat of some seriously heavy iron. The question was, then how I would maintain my motivation and dreams while acknowledging that it would not be as seamless as it was for some who came immediately before me.

Thus, I learned the practice of emailing hundreds of flight schools, charter companies, and commuter airlines—as well as the developing the skill of silencing the butterflies that came from the notorious lack of responses, and the discouragement of a dozen or more interviews that in one way or another ended with rejection.

Equally came the practice of considering a wider variety of positions: the possibility of working ramp at a local FBO while I waited for something more "ideal." I did, in fact, advance to the interview stage at a couple of these FBOs and was ready to take a position.

At the last moment, though, luck came knocking. The hope that I would be able to find something paid off, as I received interest from a school just north of Tampa. That position came with hopeful idealism equally mixed with a significant dose of practicality. When it became clear I would not find a position close to home any time soon, a mentor suggested that I consider the possibility that I, at the very least, gauge interest from flight schools down south, where the weather is more agreeable year round than the ice-ridden winters where I found myself in the Midwest.

Some things about the move were not practical. It was a long way to drive all my stuff, where I didn't have any connections to family, friends, or places to live. Circumstances demanded new ways to balance my strong urges to fly with patience. I kept an ear open to additional openings in that area, kept tabs on other potential leads in case I needed to take advantage, and waited to sign leases until I was fully onboarded.

As I settled into the new position, another dynamic set in. This time, my hope set a course for my practical decisions. By a few months in, it was clear that I would be teaching new pilots for quite some time. That was just fine with me—if anything I enjoy it more now than I once did—as I was glad to have any opportunity, but I knew I had to keep myself nimble.

I was lucky to be in a position where I could garner relatively diverse experience with more night time, cross-country time, and multi time than I might have otherwise had. I took that break and ran with it. If I wanted the best chance at making my dream a reality, I might as well seize as much opportunity as possible to become as qualified and proficient as I could be.

Equally, I took as many opportunities as I could to apply for new positions with my newly earned experience. For weeks on end, I used all the resources I had—reading recommended materials, utilizing my connections, and studying my tail off between lessons. I am proud that I succeeded at finding a better position—but I learned just as quickly that I would be back to the waiting game.

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That is where I find myself now—keeping aspirations on the yoke but with practicality ready to take over. Now, the practicalities look different. In the meantime, I continuing to look for experiences that will grow my résumé and elevate me to another level of proficiency, professionalism, and skill. I am still dropping off résumés, albeit now in strategic places that meet my constraints—instead of broadcasting catch-all emails in hopes that anyplace will pick me up.

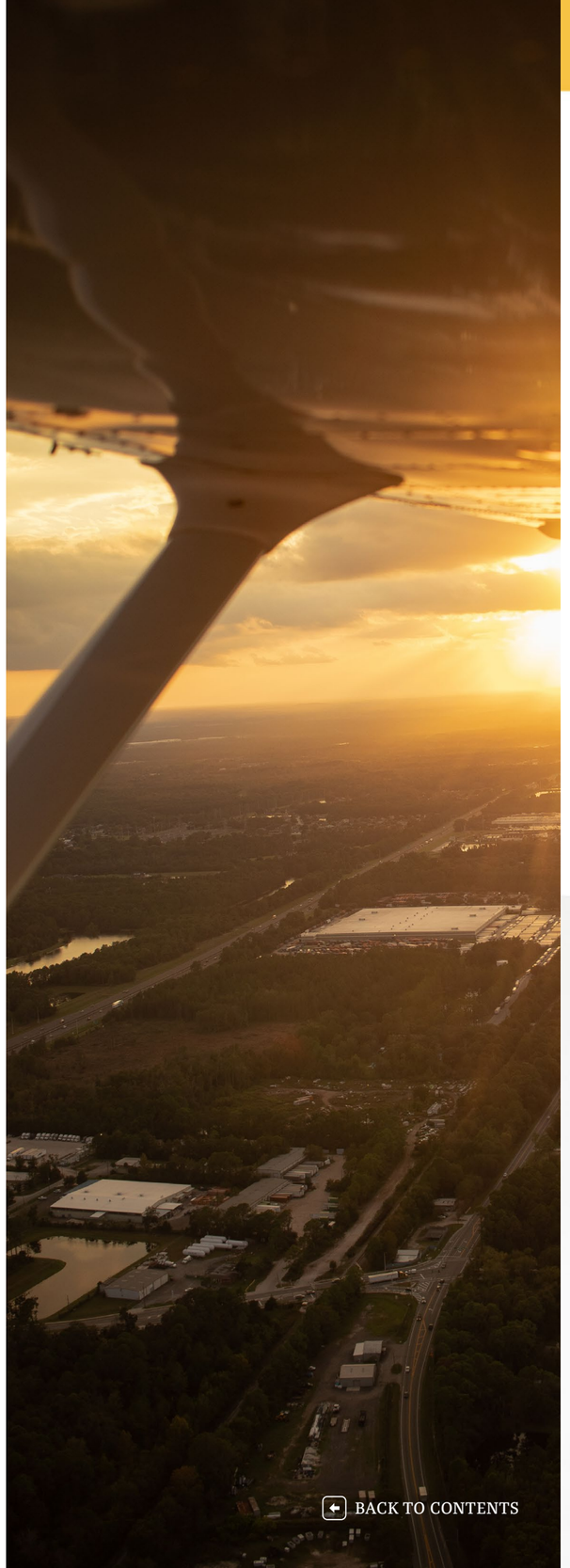
More and more, I have learned during my time in the industry that driving a career requires a good balance of hope and practicality. How do I achieve my dreams and keep moving forward in a way that is smart and reasonable? How, and when, should I push the bounds of what is comfortable in order to make progress without tearing myself down?

I am excited for the decades I have ahead of me in aviation and for the new, unexpected ways I will be able to let my excitement lead me no matter how measured that excitement must be.



About the Author

John McDermott's passion for aviation began in a Michigan bookstore when he found a story about a chance encounter between enemy pilots during World War II. Soon, after watching countless hours of fighter jets and traffic from his home near O'Hare International Airport, he was hooked forever.. Read More...



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The Great Airline Pilot Retirement Debate, Part 3

Who opposes an increase in age?

Written by: Richard Swindell

Picking up where we left off last month, we move from who supports an increase (or elimination) of the airline-pilot retirement age, to who is against an increase in the current Age-65 Rule.

Starting at the top, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the body that establishes global aviation standards, does not presently support a change in the retirement age. However, they have signaled (pursuant to health and safety data—and certainly pressure from member states such as Canada, Australia, Japan, and China) that their position could change in the future. If the U.S. were to amend the retirement age ahead of ICAO, then under the current conception of a lengthened retirement age, U.S. pilots older than 65 would likely be prohibited from operating international flights. This means they could fly only in U.S. domestic airspace, requiring many of these senior pilots to be retrained to smaller, domestic-only aircraft and flight routes. We'll come back to this in a bit with A4A.

Moving on to the FAA, the Administration also presently opposes it. Yet, they have left the door open to a change with, "...the need for more research in order to determine the viability of a retirement age extension." Really though, the FAA may just be waiting to see what ICAO does rather than initiate a change themselves.

As for individual airlines, most are rather quiet on the subject. However, Airlines for America (A4A), the industry body that collectively represents the leading U.S. airline management groups (passenger and cargo), does not generally seem to support it. They have indicated substantial training burdens and costs, as well as scheduling issues. Additionally, what would likely occur would be long-term disruptive displacements wherein pilots are bumped from their aircraft to accommodate the training of senior pilots to their "new" narrow body aircraft. The results could be a massive increase in training costs. Yet, A4A has also waffled a bit indicating a willingness to support an increase in retirement age, possibly based on members' competing interests. Some airlines may be hedging their bets against a future pilot shortage—a problem that is easily held at bay by appropriately compensating pilots for their knowledge, training, and skills. Some airlines have also indicated that the most senior pilots account for the majority of absenteeism—they have the most vacation time, ability to drops trips, use of sick time, and need for long-term disability provisions. And in terms of payroll, they cost the most. So, where's the benefit of retaining an aging population?

However, the strongest opposition to an increase in retirement age comes from a majority of pilot unions and other airline labor groups. Chief among their concerns is, of course, safety, which is fair and accurate enough. But there does exist an absolute apprehension regarding the near certainty of many years of expensive contract re-negotiations in addition to scores of costly grievances and lawsuits that would follow a change, as many aspects of pilot contracts are predicated on retiring at age 65. Again, as everywhere else in this debate, money is a substantial factor.

As a side note regarding pilot unions, the Southwest Airlines Pilots Association (SWAPA), did not previously support an extension, but has apparently swapped their position based on a recent pilot-group survey indicating support for increasing the pilot-retirement age.

For the average line pilot, extension concerns revolve around career stagnation, conflict on the flight deck, and consumption of corporate as well as union resources and finances

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to fix a problem that is not broken. On the other hand, money is money, and as long as career stagnation isn't too lengthy (a purely subjective measure), and wages aren't cut to support years of additional and unplanned pay to pilots at the top of the pay scale, then the opportunity to keep paychecks coming in after age 65 might not be a bad thing. This of course depends on who you ask and how close they are to the conclusion of an airline career. Then again, some line pilots out there are seemingly indifferent to the whole thing.

This brings us to the end of our series on an unresolved debate. Yet, before signing off, and in Grey Matter fashion, we close with a few other potential challenges to consider in the wake of a retirement age change. As suggested in previously drafted retirement age extension language, if an extension were passed to age 67, and an already retired airline pilot who was within the age increase (say 66), were eligible to return to flying as an airline pilot:

> Is the airline they retired from obligated to re-hire them? If not, are they entitled to some kind of pay protection for the duration of the extension instead?
>
> If not re-hired by their airline, would other airlines be required to consider them? If not, would this become grounds for an ageism lawsuit?
>
> If they were re-hired, is the pilot a new-hire again, starting over at year-one pay and benefits as well as under the conditions of first-year probation, or do they return as if nothing happened and with full seniority? Would they be entitled to any back pay?
>
> If they were new hires again and thus junior first officers subject to reserve life, flying long, exhausting domestic schedules in aircraft (A320, B737, or smaller), and throwing gear for a captain a third their age, how long would they last? Who would be mentoring whom?
>
> How often or quickly would these older "junior" pilots drop trips, call off fatigued or sick, or end up on long-term disability?
>
> Where is the supposed mentoring in this formula, the effective stopgap for a "pilot shortage", and the return on investment for training and requalifying the pilot over several months just to get a few months or a year in return?
>
> What about the elimination of a retirement age – can any retiree return or file a lawsuit for lost career opportunity and wages?

These are just some of the questions and concerns that are bound to arise if (more than likely when) an increase in airline-pilot age legislation re-surfaces.



About the Author

Richard Swindell left active-duty military service and transitioned to the airline industry where he flies and works as a line check airman for a major airline. Read More...





Center of Gravity: Effect on Flight Characteristics

Written By: Sergio Sovero

Center of gravity (CG) is a critical concept to ensure an aircraft is operated within safe margins and design envelopes. Since the beginning of flight training, pilots are trained to calculate CG prior to flight. In essence, center of gravity directly affects aircraft controllability, as well as the tendency for a stall to occur, along with its recovery.

A forward center of gravity is associated with a more stable aircraft. The airplane changes in pitch attitude and tends to settle back into its trimmed position when disturbed. During takeoff, rotation will feel heavier, requiring more back pressure on the flight controls. On landing, the pilot may find that they need a larger control input to raise the nose for the flare, and if the CG is very near the forward limit, it might feel like they are running out of elevator authority. Awareness is necessary to ensure the rate of descent is arrested sufficiently, while still landing in the touchdown zone.

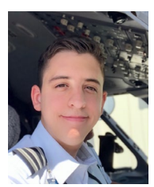
In terms of fuel efficiency, a forward CG is less efficient. The tail must push down harder to counter the nose-heaviness, the wing has to generate a little extra lift to support not just the airplane's weight but also the downward force from the tail. More lift means more induced drag, which means slightly higher fuel burn.

On the contrary, an aft CG is correlated to a less stable aircraft, particularly in the event of a stall.
Control inputs feel lighter, and it takes less effort to rotate for takeoff or raise the nose during landing. Instead of returning promptly to its trimmed attitude after a disturbance, the airplane may continue to oscillate or require pilot input to bring it back to level flight. As expected, given the tail does not have to push down as much, induced drag is lessened and fuel efficiency increased. In some aircraft types, this difference is significant enough that performance charts specify improved range and endurance at aft CG positions. As mentioned, stall recovery may be comprised if the CG exceeds aft limits, due to the natural nose-up tendency. In extreme cases, an aft CG can lead to a flat spin.

Both forward and aft centers of gravity can be flown safely as long as they are within the manufacturer's published CG envelope. Typically, the aircraft AFM (with the corresponding POH) is the primary resource to determine envelope limits. In airline operations, weight and balance planning is taken precisely by load planners and dispatchers.

There are documented cases where CG shifting has led to aviation accidents. An example would be National Flight 102, in 2023, in which a Boeing 747 cargo plane crashed shortly after takeoff in Afghanistan, killing all seven crew members. The investigation found that improperly secured heavy military vehicles broke free, rolled to the back of the cargo hold, and crashed through the rear pressure bulkhead, destroying the flight control system. From loading to securing, it is imperative all cargo is properly restrained.

The center of gravity of an aircraft is not just an abstract concept to be overlooked during preflight, as it affects every phase of flight. Pilots must resist complacency and take the time to refer to manufacturers' charts prior to every single flight, to ensure the limits are respected. Exceeding the limits, even by minimal margins, can compromise flight safety.



About the Author

Sergio Sovero was born and raised in Lima, Peru, and is currently a captain for Delta Air Lines. Read More...



Autumn Views in the Night Sky

Observe the spectacles from October to December

Written By: Howard Parkin. MBE BSc, BEd, FRAS

In the northern hemisphere, fall is one of the best times of the year for astronomers. The lighter nights of summer are now behind us and following the autumnal equinox (equal day and night) on 22 September, the nights are becoming longer. The fall constellations are rising in the east and are followed by the bright winter constellations around midnight.

As you observe the night sky, possibly from the flight deck of an aircraft in October through to December, it is the best time of the year to see the Milky Way as it stretches right across the sky from the southwestern to the northeastern horizon. To see the Milky Way, you need to have minimal lighting in the cockpit to enable your eyes to get used to the dark. Try to spot a band of faint mist/stars in the sky from 225o to 450o. To ancient observers, it looked like a patch of milk had been stretched out across the sky, hence the origin of the name Milky Way. According to ancient mythology, a wet nurse in the heavens was suckling a baby and the child bit her. In anger, the woman threw the baby across the sky and milk spilt from the child's mouth. Today we see this as the Milky Way, our home galaxy.

A few years ago, during a beautiful clear night, we held a public stargazing event, and I was in the process of pointing out various features of the night sky when a lady came up to me and commented, "What a wonderful night, but what a shame about that patch of cloud overhead."

"Well," I said, "That patch of cloud is in fact our own galaxy––The Milky Way!"

As the sun sets in the west, it is possible to see the three bright stars of the summer triangle moving toward the western horizon. The three stars that make up the triangle (Deneb in the constellation Cygnus, Vega in Lyra, and Altair in Aquila) are easily seen as the first stars visible as the sky darkens each evening. Once the sky is fully dark, the sky is dominated by the fall stars, noticeably the constellations Andromeda, Pegasus and Perseus. Andromeda has within it the magnificent Andromeda Galaxy (M31). All the stars visible to the naked eye are all within our Milky Way. However, the Andromeda Galaxy is

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another that is just about visible to the naked eye. If you can see it, you have great eyesight, as it is an astonishing 2.5 million light-years away. That means that the light your eyes are observing was generated by the stars of Andromeda about 2.5 million light-years ago! To find this, visible as a faint, diffuse object to the naked eye, use the chart below. If you have a pair on the flight deck, a small pair of binoculars will show it more clearly.

Until 1923, we believed that the universe comprised just one galaxy––The Milky Way. Edwin Hubble, working at the Mount Wilson observatory in California, using the period-luminosity relationship which had been discovered by Henrietta Leavitt a few years earlier, realised that stars in the Andromeda Galaxy were much further away, and therefore part of another galaxy. This was to give rise to the expanding universe or The Big Bang theory. We now believe there are as many galaxies as there are grains of sand on the beaches of our planet!

In fall and winter there are a few meteor showers visible. The Draconids peak on and around 7 October and untypically appear at their best before midnight. From the flight deck, if you look towards the northern horizon you may see about ten meteors in an hour. Another shower that peaks in October is the Orionid shower which appears to radiate from the constellation of Orion. The Orionids peaks on and around 21 October, and as the Moon will not be rising until well after midnight, there is good chance to see some bright and fast meteors in the eastern sky around midnight. The Orionid meteors often leave trails behind them that last a bit longer than other meteors, so it is well worth a look. The Taurid and Leonid showers both peak in November but are not normally very prolific. The Geminids however, on and around December 12, are one of the best of the year.

In the evening sky, the planet Saturn is visible in the evening sky in the constellation of Pisces, below the square of Pegasus. Saturn went through ‘opposition” on 21 September, which means it was due south at midnight, directly in the opposite direction to the Sun. Unfortunately, as seen from the Earth we went through what is known as a “ring plane crossing” earlier this year, which means that the magnificent ring system is to our edge making it difficult to see.

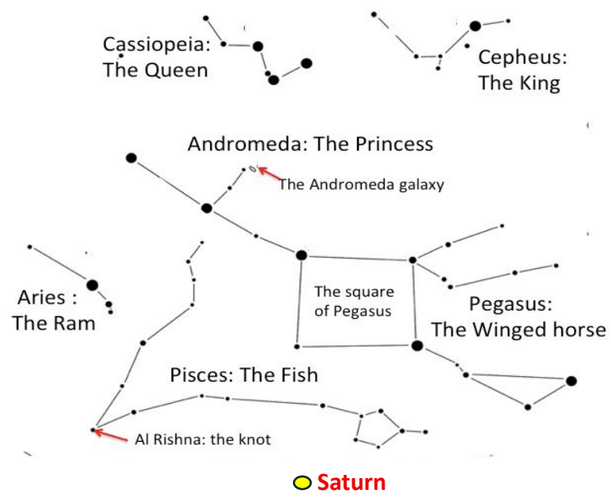
In the morning sky, Venus, following last month’s “eastern elongation” (furthest angular distance from the Sun) is now slowly heading towards and behind the Sun (superior conjunction) next January. The bright Jupiter is also easily spotted in the dawn sky above the brighter Venus in the winter constellation of Gemini.



About the Author

Inspired by the space race in the 1960s, **Howard Parkin** has been an enthusiastic astronomer since childhood and has become an accomplished and entertaining speaker on the subject throughout the... Read More...

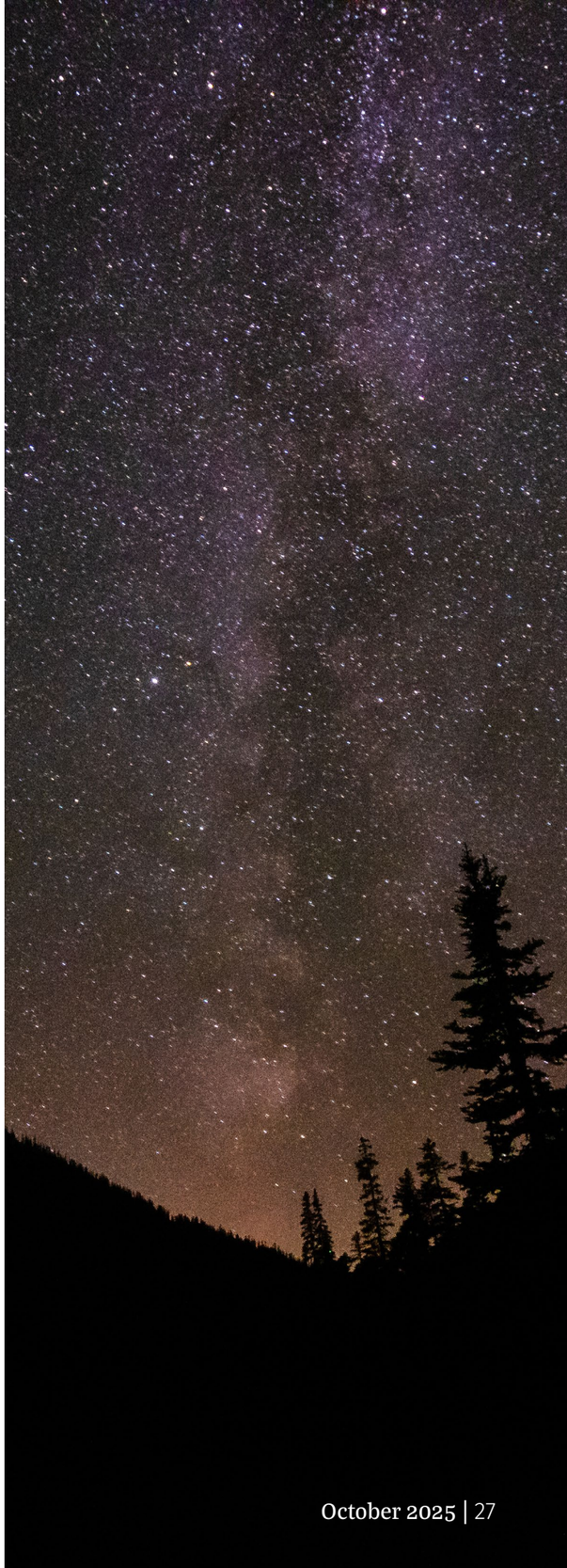
The Fall sky – October to December



The Andromeda Galaxy (M31)



The furthest object seen by the naked eye





Taking Flight Together

Father and son duo soar toward the skies

Written By: Aero Crew News Staff

In a world where career paths often diverge between generations, Gregory and Aiyden Waddoups stand out as a powerful example of shared dreams, mutual inspiration and a passion for aviation that bridges both age and experience.

From heavy machinery and hospital corridors to high-altitude ambitions, this father-son team is proving that it's never too early—or too late—to pursue your dream of flying.

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Aiyden Waddoups



Gregory Waddoups

From Labor to Lift-Off: Aiyden's Journey

Aiyden, a 2022 graduate of Graham-Kapowsin High School in Washington State, knew from an early age that the sky held something more than just clouds. After spending time operating heavy equipment as a lead laborer, Aiyden decided it was time to pivot. Encouraged by his father, Gregory, and inspired by a vision of life in the flight deck, he spent two years saving before applying to United Aviate Academy (UAA), United Airlines' wholly owned flight school located in Goodyear, Ariz.

"The Academy has been an incredible experience," Aiyden shared. "It's challenging, for sure. The training is immersive and fast-paced, it really keeps you sharp."

He quickly realized that success in the program required full commitment: "This is a 24/7 experience. You have to stay focused and constantly direct your time and energy to the right areas."

Now deep into his training, Aiyden is on a secured path toward a commercial pilot seat—with United as the ultimate destination.

From Nursing to Navigation: Gregory's Leap

For Gregory, the path to aviation was not as direct. A former registered nurse specializing in renal failure, Gregory spent years in clinical care before deciding to follow his long-held dream of flying.

A conversation with a pilot friend reawakened that passion, Gregory recalls. That encouragement led him to UAA, where he found a training environment that perfectly matched his ambitions.

"As someone coming into aviation later in life, I was looking for a structured program," he explained. "The opportunity of earning all my ratings in one place really appealed to me. And the fact that it's tied to United—my dream airline—made it the perfect fit."

While the program is intense, Gregory finds strength in perspective. “One of the biggest takeaways is realizing this is my journey and no one else’s. It’s easy to fall into comparison, especially during stressful phases of training, but everyone’s path is different.”



Waddoups family

Flying Forward, Together

Both father and son are navigating the highs and lows of flight training side-by-side. Though their professional backgrounds differ, their shared journey has strengthened their bond, with mutual support and pride fueling every step of their flight training.

Whether it’s Aiyden’s early ambition or Gregory’s bold reinvention, the Waddoups’ story is a testament to persistence, legacy, and the power of family. Together, they’re not just learning to fly—they’re writing a story that proves the sky isn’t the limit, but only the beginning.

“Watching Aiyden chase his dream with such discipline and passion makes me incredibly proud as a father,” says Gregory.

“Getting to experience this with my dad is something I’ll cherish forever,” Aiyden adds. “We’re literally learning to fly together. How many people get to say that?”

Ready to Start Your Journey?

If you’ve been dreaming about a career in aviation—whether you’re fresh out of high school or looking for a career change—it’s time to take the first step. United Aviate Academy’s application window is now open, and there’s never been a better time to start your path to the flight deck. To learn more and apply visit aviateacademy.com.

UNITED Aviate

About the Author

Aero Crew News is a pilot-hiring magazine designed for pilots by pilots. In the first few years, our cover stories/ features were dedicated to airlines and charter companies seeking pilots. Since then...Read more...

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Minding Your Ps & Qs and FARs

Written by: Zeke Denison, Esq.

A federal agency’s authority to issue new regulations originates from the laws (statutes) enacted by Congress. These laws grant an agency general authority to regulate the activity of a certain area of society. The FAA, for example, is tasked with regulating all aviation-related activity in the United States. The aviation regulations are housed in Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) and are referred to as the Federal Aviation Regulations or “FARs.” The FARs cover everything from airworthiness standards, charter operations, pilot certification, and more.

Agencies cannot go beyond their statutory authority and must stay within the confines of the U.S. Constitution when promulgating new regulations. An agency must also adhere to the framework of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA). This is primarily done through a “notice and comment” rulemaking procedure.

In general, the notice and comment process starts with a notice of the proposed rule. This notice is published in the Federal Register[1] and includes, among other information, the initial draft of the rule and instructions on

how the public can participate. The next step is a public comment period, typically lasting 30 days, wherein the public can submit written comments or feedback on the proposed rule. After the comment period, the agency will review and consider any comments and make edits as needed. The final rule is then implemented. This notice and comment process is fundamental to ensuring individuals, groups, and communities affected by a federal agency's proposed rule can be heard.

The AME Guide

Pilots are expected to know the FARs. While the FARs themselves may not change consistently, many of the FAA's underlying policies implemented to enforce the FARs do. A major example is with airman medical certification. The medical standard FARs are codified in 14 C.F.R. Part 67. The standards are sorted into six categories (mental, cardiovascular, etc.) and organized by the class of medical certificate. These FARs offer little detail and mostly outline generalized standards that formalize the FAA's role in deciding an applicant's aeromedical fitness. For specificity on how the FAA assesses medical conditions, one must look beyond the FARs and consult the FAA's Guide for Aviation Medical Examiners (or "AME Guide").

Per the FAA's website, the AME Guide "provides pertinent information and guidance needed to perform the duties and responsibilities of an Aviation Medical Examiner."[2] The information and guidance include explicit instructions on how AMEs should evaluate certain medical conditions. The AME Guide offers details on medical decisions that are *not* outlined in the FARs. The information in the AME Guide is directly published by the FAA and thus provides a unique insight into how the FAA internally assesses specific medical conditions. No other publicly facing information of its kind is available.

The AME Guide is supposed to update the last Wednesday of every month. The updates may be administrative or affect FAA medical policy. The content of the monthly updates is at the medical division's discretion and has been inconsistent in 2025. Prior to August 27, 2025, the last medical policy update was on December 12, 2024. After eight months of no movement, the FAA's last update had 39 revisions, six administrative and 33 medical policy changes.[3] The current iteration of the AME Guide is now 854 pages.

Unlike the notice and comment process that would be required to edit or add a medical standard in the FARs (14 C.F.R. Part 67), the AME Guide's medical policies can change *without notice and public comment*. The AME Guide is essentially a living document that evolves at the will of the FAA and requires consistent monitoring to ensure compliance with medical standards. Many pilots simply do not have the bandwidth to keep up to date with the shifting medical landscape and their fluctuating health circumstances. AMEs may also have difficult times, particularly those who are not primarily practicing in aviation. The result is a moving goal post for compliance that will ground pilots for extended periods of time if completed incorrectly. It is another wrinkle in the already delicate balance of reporting that pilots deal with each time they renew their medical certificate.

Options Moving Forward

Transferring the AME Guide policies into the regulations and subjecting all aeromedical standard changes to the default notice and comment rulemaking would be overburdensome. However, maintaining status quo, wherein significant amendments to the underlying medical policies in the AME Guide are simply published by the FAA, would continue to subject pilots to sporadic updates. Finding a balance, whether via other established rulemaking options (hybrid, informal, etc.) or via new methods, is needed. Including industry leaders, aviation organizations, and other interested groups in the FAA's determinations would create a joint commitment to stay at the forefront of aeromedical safety while at the same time fostering greater trust in the process and reasoning behind aeromedical changes. In the interim, it is recommended that pilots get as familiar with the AME Guide and/or contact legal counsel to assist with compliance and advocacy.



About the Author

Lead Certificate Defense Attorney **Ezekiel Denison**, Esq. is an aviation attorney in Denver, Col. who currently practices in Ramos Law's Aviation Division. Read More...

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1 https://www.federalregister.gov/

2 See https://www.faa.gov/ame_guide

3 See the following link for specific update information: https://www.faa.gov/ame_guide/media/archives.pdf





Nine Ways to Get Better at Small Talk

Written By: Reini Thijssen

Almost everything, friendships, relationships, and even careers, often begin with small talk. Although it usually has a reputation for being shallow or meaningless, having brief, light conversations actually bring many benefits. From boosting your mood, improving relationships, to safer flights, small talk is incredibly valuable. Small talk is essential on the flight deck. In this confined space with a fellow pilot, small talk helps break the ice, ease tension, and build good working relationships, which supports smooth communication throughout the flight. Knowing how to kick off a casual conversation, keep it flowing, and wrap it up smoothly are fundamental skills. The good news is that anyone can learn these skills. Following are insight and tips on how to help boost your social skills with small talk.

Small Talk About Nothing

The Oxford English Dictionary defines small talk as “polite conversation about unimportant or uncontroversial matters, especially as engaged in on social occasions.” In short, small talk usually covers casual, safe topics that avoid controversy or deeply personal issues. It can be as brief as a comment on the weather or a more extended conversation that helps people open up gradually

Research shows that it is often not what you say that matters, but that you say something. It is helpful to keep this in mind if you feel awkward, as most people do, starting conversations, and wonder what you should talk about. You can’t just say meaningless words, can you? Actually, you can, and it works pretty well. Words are like a thread that connects you to others, and it does not really matter which words you use. This way, you can satisfy basic and deeply human needs for connection, involvement, and trust, even with a seemingly trivial chat.

The Purpose of Small Talk in the Flight Deck

Small talk helps people get a quick sense of the situation and connect with others. Crew Resource Management relies heavily on effective communication, trust, and teamwork between aviation professionals. Small talk plays a surprisingly important role in that. When you engage in casual, friendly conversation, you are building rapport and mutual understanding. This connection makes it easier to share information openly, voice concerns, and work collaboratively during critical moments.

Small talk also helps reduce stress and break down social barriers. When the atmosphere is relaxed and positive, pilots are more likely to pay attention, think clearly, and support each other. This improves decision-making and problem-solving, which are keys to safe and efficient flight operations.

Why Small Talk Makes People Happier

If you are still unsure about the value of small talk, let’s take a look at some of the research highlighting its positive impact on our overall happiness and well-being:

- Small talk improves our view of people. Research found that talking to strangers usually leads to positive impressions; most people are kind and approachable, even if we worry about rejection beforehand. Breaking that social barrier makes us feel better about others and ourselves.
- Small talk helps strengthen relationships (at work and beyond). A quick chat by the coffee machine may seem trivial, but it matters a lot. Studies from the University of Exeter and the University of Arizona found that people who work in an office feel more connected than those working from home. Small talk contributes to a positive atmosphere and makes people more likely to help each other out.
- While deep conversations create authentic connection and satisfaction, small talk plays a key role as a warm-up. In psychology, it is often compared to the inactive ingredients in a medicine that help your body absorb the active ingredients. You cannot jump into a deep conversation without some lighter chat first.
- Small talk requires minimal effort. Even a wave, smile, or brief eye contact can boost your mood. Research showed that people who smiled or greeted a barista felt happier afterward and more at home in the coffee shop. Those who interacted less did not feel these benefits.
- Small talk keeps your brain active and healthy. Brief conversations activate parts of the brain that reading or watching TV do not. Brain scans show that when two people chat, their brainwaves synchronize, so being “on the same wavelength” is real.

Tips to Become a Small Talk Expert

Let's clarify: you do not have to be sincerely interested in every topic someone brings up during small talk. What matters is showing that you are engaged and open to communication. Listening politely and responding helps build trust and rapport, even if the subject is not personally exciting. One way to enjoy conversations more is to look for something positive or relatable in the topic, even if it is small. Smiling genuinely, maintaining eye contact, and using encouraging body language can help you feel more connected and make the interaction more pleasant.

1. What If Someone Is Not Interested?

If someone does not seem interested in talking, it is essential not to force the conversation. There are usually clear signs that the other person is not engaged:

- You may receive short, closed responses.
- The person avoids eye contact or does not look at you.
- They start or continue doing something else while you are speaking.

If the conversation feels like it is going nowhere, or there is no genuine interest from the other person, it is perfectly fine to end it and move on:

- Politely excuse yourself with phrases like:
  - "Excuse me, I have to go..."
  - "It was nice talking to you, but I have to..."
  - "Alright, see you around."

If a conversation does not flow or ends abruptly:

- Let it go without overthinking it.
- Do not take it personally.
- There are many reasons—often beyond your control—why a conversation might not work out.

2. Ask Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions invite the other person to share more than just a yes or no response, making the conversation richer and more engaging. They usually start with words like where, when, which, what, why, or how, which naturally encourage detailed responses.

- "Where did you grow up?"
- "How did you get interested in that hobby?"
- "Where do you usually like to fly?"
- "When did you first become interested in aviation?"
- "Tell me about your most memorable flight."

3. Topics

Having a few go-to small-talk topics can make conversations feel much more natural and less stressful. Classic and reliable subjects include work, hobbies, weather, music, food, and local events (avoiding more controversial topics like politics or religion). Staying up to date on everyday interests like trending shows, aviation news, pets, or travel can give you something easy and relatable to bring up. A helpful rule of thumb is the **FORD** method: Family, Occupation, Recreation, and Dreams; these areas tend to be safe and engaging.

It is also important to maintain a balance between asking questions and sharing something of your own to avoid coming across as prying. Questions like "What's been keeping you busy lately?" or "How did you get into [insert job title]?" are easy ways to get a conversation going. When you have a topic you are familiar with, it not only boosts your confidence but also opens the door to more meaningful and enjoyable connections.

4. Ask for Clarification

People generally enjoy sharing what they know, and asking questions shows you are interested and engaged. For example:

- *"Can you tell me more about that?"*
- *"How does that work exactly?"*
- If you want to keep it casual, try something like, *"I'm not too familiar with that. What is it all about?"*
- *"That sounds interesting, could you explain it a bit?"*

These kinds of questions invite the other person to share details without putting them on the spot and helping the conversation flow naturally.

5. Give Your Full Attention

People love to talk about themselves, so listen more and talk less. Show you are genuinely interested by maintaining eye contact, nodding, and responding thoughtfully. Avoid distractions like checking your phone or looking around, as these can make the other person feel uncomfortable. Active listening makes the conversation more enjoyable for both and also helps you pick up on details to build a stronger connection.

6. Build On Shared Stories

When someone opens up with a story or experience, listen actively and respond with related thoughts, questions, or even your own similar experiences. This shows genuine interest and keeps the conversation flowing naturally. By expanding on their stories, you create a sense of shared understanding and rapport, making the interaction more meaningful and memorable.

7. Be Honest

If you are not in the mood for small talk, it is okay to say so, politely and with a touch of humor. That kind of honesty often breaks the ice better than forcing a conversation. Most people will appreciate the clarity and respect the space.

For example: *"I am keeping things a bit quiet today, I just need a little space to focus. Nothing personal at all."*

8. Silences Are Ok

Silences are normal; they are a natural part of any conversation. When things go quiet, introduce a new topic or ask a fresh question

to keep the flow going. In social settings, if you need a graceful way to step away, you can excuse yourself by saying you are going to the restroom, grabbing food/drinks, or checking in with someone else. Taking a short break can help you recharge and come back to the conversation with renewed energy and fresh perspectives.

9. End Personably

Finish with a polite goodbye that leaves a positive impression. For example, say, "It was great meeting you [insert name], good luck with your marathon," or "I really enjoyed our chat, hope the rest of your day goes well!" Adding a personal touch shows you were genuinely engaged and helps build lasting rapport.

Questions to Make Conversations More Interesting

Want to add more depth to your conversations? Here are some questions that can make small talk more engaging and meaningful:

Work

- If you were not doing this job, what would you be doing?
- What is the weirdest thing a boss ever asked you to do?
- What is the best career advice you ever got?

Entertainment

- Are you reading any good books or watching any good shows?
- What is the last movie that really moved you?
- If you could travel the world with anyone, who would it be?

Food

- If you could only eat one thing forever, what would it be?
- What is the strangest food you have tried?
- Do you know any hidden gem restaurants in [insert city]?

Travel

- What, in your opinion, is the best way to spend a day at [insert location]?
- What is your favorite road trip you have ever done?
- Where would you travel if money did not matter?

Life Stories

- What did you want to be as a kid?
- Do you have any surprising talents?
- What is the best advice you have ever received?

Final Thoughts

Small talk might seem trivial, but in aviation and life in general, it plays a bigger role than you would think. When pilots share casual conversation, it helps build trust and sets the tone for clear, open communication, which is essential in the flight deck. A relaxed, friendly atmosphere makes it easier to speak up, share information, and work smoothly together, leading to better decisions and safer flights. The same idea applies outside the cockpit, too. Small talk helps bridge gaps. Remember: you share the same place and time, so you already have something in common. The more you practice, the easier and more enjoyable it becomes. Those small conversations can make your life a lot happier. So why not give it a try? Every short chat could be the start of something great.

Do you find yourself avoiding small talk or feeling awkward in everyday social situations? The good news is that it is a skill you can improve with the right support. At Emerald Mental Health, we offer support to help you build confidence in your communication, strengthen your social connections, and feel more at ease in both personal and professional interactions. Reach out to reini@emeraldmentalhealth.com or www.emeraldmentalhealth.com.



About the Author

Reini Thijssen is a licensed mental health counselor (LMHC, LPC) and a certified life coach specializing in supporting pilots and individuals in high-demand professions both within and outside of aviation. She has been a writer for Aero Crew News since 2019 and covers various aviation-related topics... Read More...

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Fat-Loss Goal–Burn Coal

Written By: Scott Darragh

I remember sitting on my hotel bed at the Home2, next to a truck stop in Fayetteville, N.C., day four of a trip and my prepped meals were gone by day two. The only food nearby was McDonald's, Popeyes, or Ruby Tuesday. I felt trapped—not just by my location, but by my career. I asked myself, "Did I pick the right path?"

The answer is yes. But it took me seven years to figure out how to manage my weight, fat, and muscle while flying for both regional and major carriers. Most trainers don't understand what it is like to have your routine ripped up every week. I lived it but I invested in the education, became certified through the National Academy of Sports Medicine, and discovered the simplest, most overlooked tool for fat loss—walking.

That is right! Walking. Research proves it. In one meta-analysis, people who added just four 40-minute walks per week without dieting lost about one percent of their body fat over 35 weeks. Another study compared walking, running, and biking for equal time and intensity. The walkers lost twice as much fat as the runners or bikers. Twice! How could that be?

Here is the science.

Your body runs on three fuels: fat (coal), carbs (gasoline), and creatine/other compounds (rocket fuel). Like an old ship, the body chooses which fuel makes sense for the job. Sprinting or high-intensity interval training (HIIT) workouts burn gas and rocket fuel, fast and powerful, but fat is barely touched. Walking, however, is "long range cruise." Your body shifts to burning coal. Fat.

Bottom line—fat needs oxygen to burn. If you are out of breath, you are burning less fat. Push intensity too far, and the body may even break down muscle before tapping into fat, leaving you "skinny fat" and worse at burning calories long term. This is why so many people pour hours into HIIT classes or long runs, only to look the same months later. Those programs feel exciting. They sell community and sweat. But they do not solve the problem. Walking does.

Here is the drill

So how do you make it work on the road? Keep it simple. Walk outside when you can. Hit the treadmill at your crash pad hotel and add some incline. Aim for 30 minutes a day or 8k to 10k steps. It is free, it is repeatable, and it directly targets body fat.

Run because you enjoy it. Take on Orangetheory for the cardio benefits if that is your thing. But if your goal is fat loss, walking is non-negotiable. Pair it with a solid nutrition plan (which I will cover in my next column) and you will stop feeling trapped by this career and start using it to your advantage.



About the Author

Scott Darragh is an MSP-based 737 airline captain, former U.S. Army helicopter pilot, aviation officer, who holds a BS in history and journalism from Washington State University. Read More...

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Some Thoughts About Compensation Trends in Business Aviation: 2020 to 2025

Written By: Christopher M. Broyhill, PhD, CAM, CCP

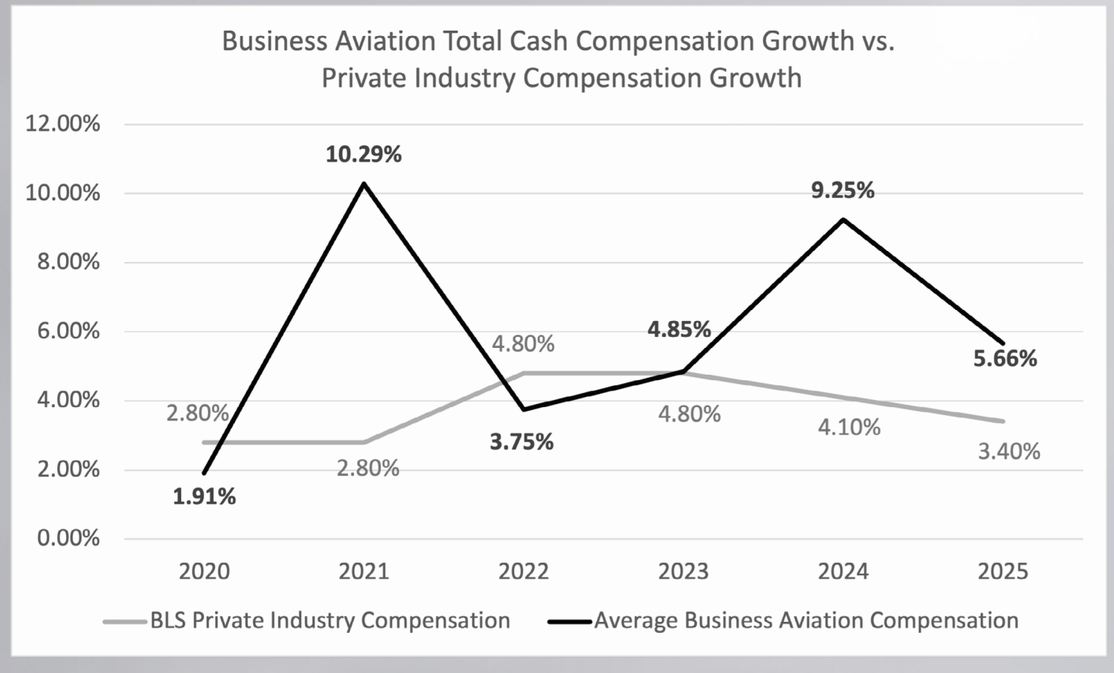


Figure 1 – Business Aviation Compensation Growth vs. Private Industry Compensation Growth

Now that the 2025 data have landed, we have one more set for the trend line providing a good opportunity to look back and see what compensation trends are emerging and what it might mean for the future. In the following several graphs, we'll examine the compensation trends from 2020 through 2025 for business aviation overall, and for some of the positions that exist within corporate aviation departments.

First, we mapped the average business aviation (BA) compensation growth against the growth of private industry compensation for the 2020-2025 period, as shown in the figure above. Keep in mind that for this graph and those that follow, we're mapping growth rates, so even when the rates shown are lower, compensation is still increasing, just at a slower rate. Also, the compensation level mapped is total cash compensation, which consists of base salary plus yearly bonus. There are a few observations to make about the graph in Figure 1. First, the growth of BA compensation has been significantly more volatile than the corresponding growth in private industry, and second, BA compensation trends don't always follow those in private industry. Finally, overall BA compensation increased by an average of 5.95% annually over the five-year period, while private industry compensation rose by an average of 3.78%.

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Now, let's examine some of the various positions within flight departments. All business aviation compensation data is computed using weighted averages to ensure equal treatment of individual datapoints across multiple surveys. We've also included incumbent counts for each position in each year. First, in Figure 2 above, we'll examine leadership positions, including director of aviation (both flying and non-flying), chief pilot, and director of maintenance. As you can see, except for a dip in 2023, those in leadership positions have enjoyed an average annual growth rate of 6.88% in total cash compensation.

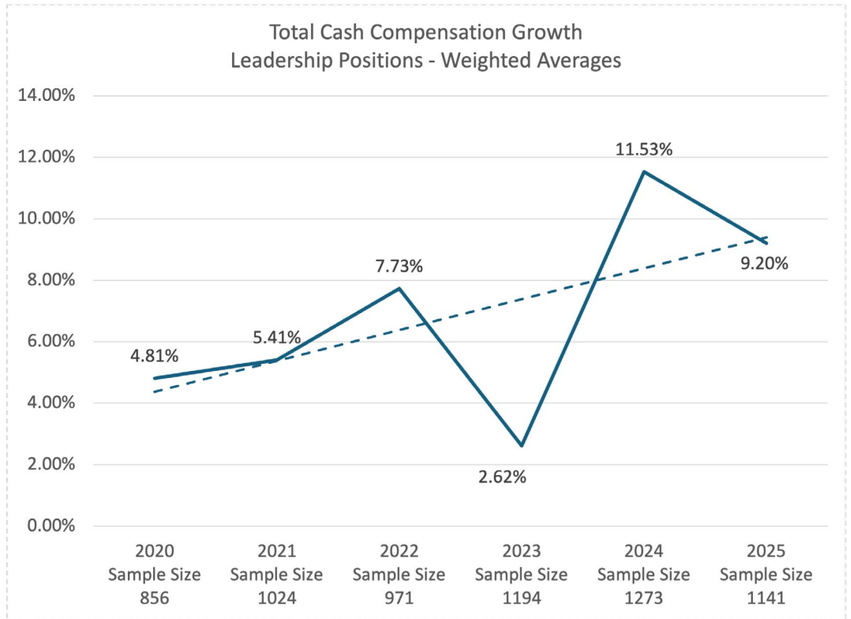


Figure 2 – Business Aviation Leadership Compensation Growth

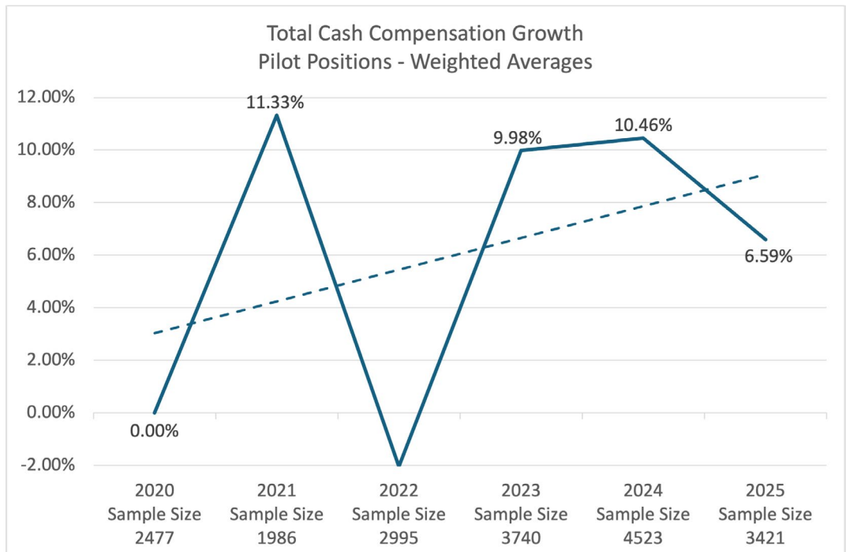


Figure 3 – Pilot Compensation Growth

From leadership, we turn to pilots: senior captain, captain, and first officer. In Figure 3, we observe an average annual growth rate of 6.08%, but a notable dip in the 2022 data. We also see a downturn in 2025.

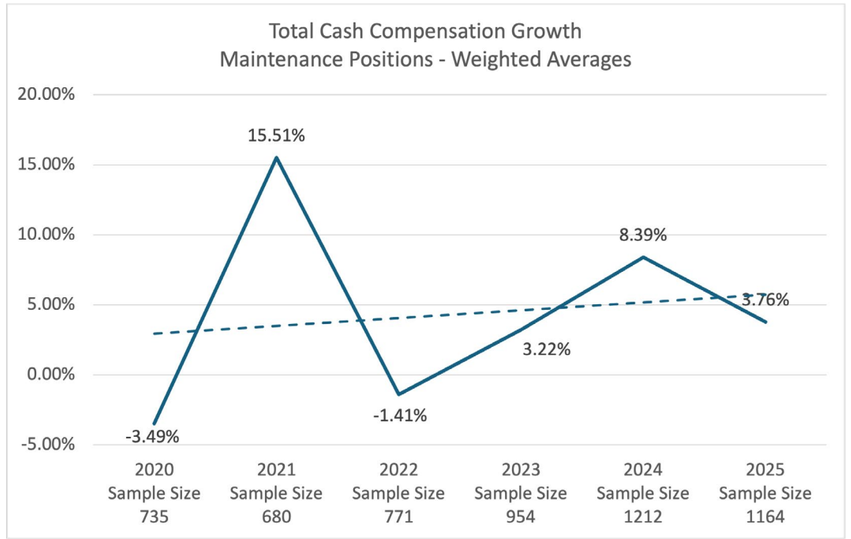


Figure 4 – Maintenance Personnel Compensation Growth

Figure 4 above shows the rate of compensation growth for maintenance personnel: maintenance manager/supervisor, maintenance technician, and line-service technician. While the average annual rate of growth at 4.33%, is less than that of the pilots, the overall shape of the graphs is similar.

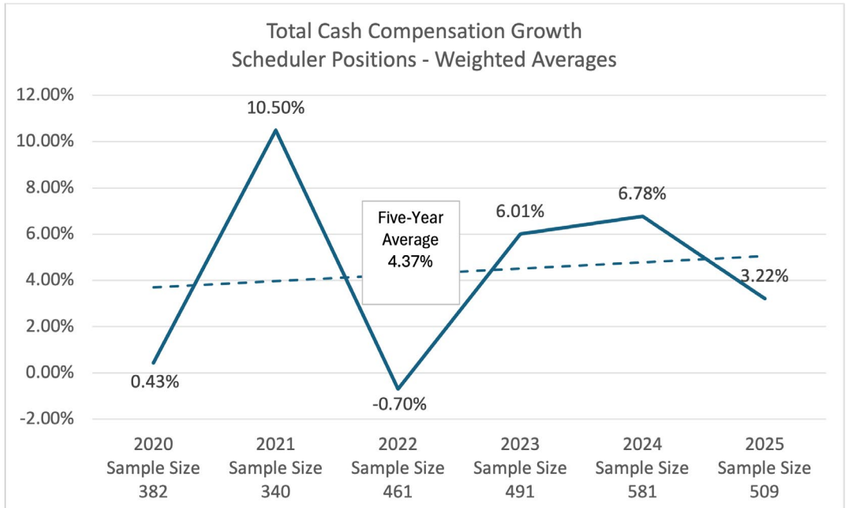


Figure 5 – Scheduling Personnel Compensation Growth

Figure 5 shows the rate of compensation growth for scheduling personnel: flight coordinator/office manager and flight coordinator/scheduler. The average annual growth rate is 4.37%.

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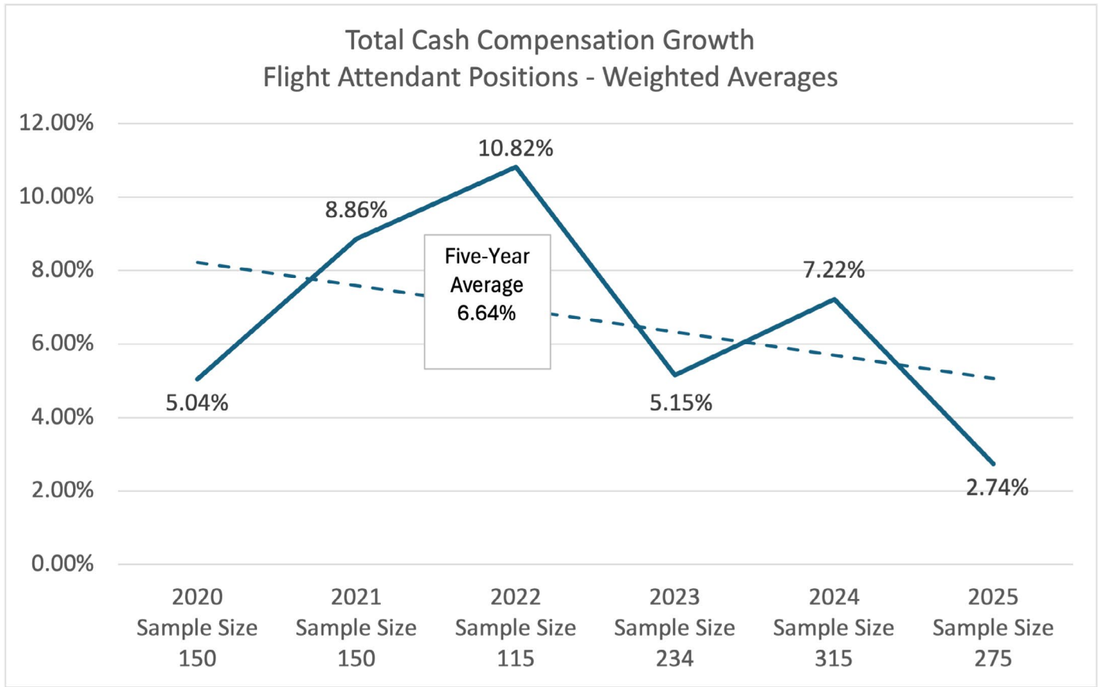


Figure 6 – Flight Attendant Compensation Growth

Finally, in Figure 6, we arrive at the in-flight service personnel, including senior flight attendants and flight attendants. While we have the second-highest average annual growth rate at 6.64%, we can also see that the trend line is angling downward, unlike the other employee groups, which are trending upward.

So, what observations and conclusions can we derive from this data?

First, while compensation growth has been constant during the five-year period, it has also been somewhat erratic due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Notice that every graph has a sharp dip in either 2022 or 2023. For most line positions, this dip occurred immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2022. For the leadership and flight attendant positions, the dip took place in 2023, during the COVID recovery timeframe. The average for all positions captures both of these dips, with the initial one in 2022, followed by another lower growth rate in 2023 as the various positions began to recover. These dips provide a graphic illustration of what all of us suspected in the wake of the pandemic.

Second, 2024 was the post-COVID recovery year. In the wake of airline hiring and a return to more stable economic conditions, 2024 was the year when all positions showed significant growth as flight operations attempted to return to normalcy and recover from the financial havoc of the previous two years.

Finally, 2025 shows comp growth slowing across the board. Wage growth in the private sector is slowing, and with it, wage growth in the business aviation industry. That doesn't mean that wage growth has stopped—it hasn't. Wages in the private sector and business aviation will continue to grow, just at a slower rate. In short, I believe the compensation correction that everyone has been waiting for and speculating about has officially occurred.

What does this mean for the future? Good question. The major airlines are resuming their hiring processes for pilots, and business aviation OEMs are continuing to deliver new business aircraft. The conditions that create demand for skilled personnel are still in place. Bonus depreciation is now a permanent fixture in the tax code, and the national management companies continue to advertise positions for business aviation personnel on a regular basis. I believe we will still see wage growth as we go forward into 2026, just not in the larger increments we've seen in the past. Time will tell



About the Author

Dr. Chris Broyhill is an industry veteran with over 40 years in aviation. He graduated from the United States Air Force Academy in 1982, served with distinction for over 20 years in the Air Force and flew multiple aircraft. Read More...



MONEY

Insights From Your Future 65-Year-Old Self

Written by: Charlie Mattingly



We are in a unique position to work with professional pilots (financial/retirement planning) ranging from brand new first officers to pilots well into their retirement years. Personally, I think they bring a fascinating collection of knowledge, experiences and financial perspectives. What we've learned is that on the one hand, all of us have unique lives and financial circumstances. On the other hand, the habits and practices that make pilots wealthy are more similar than we realize.

For example, we have airline-pilot clients in their forties, fifties and sixties who save a tremendous amount of money outside of their airline retirement plans simply because they took the time to design a spending plan that allowed their increase in income to quickly outpace their spending habits. When I ask them how they have accumulated so much savings outside of their airline retirement plans, they shrug their shoulders and simply say that they just don't spend as much money as they make. When I peel this onion back a little more, it becomes clear that they developed disciplined spending and saving habits very early in their flying career.

As in your professional career as an airline pilot, trying to crack the code on becoming a great pilot is unnecessary. It's already being done. Finding a unique, fancy shortcut to fly from LAX to ATL might mean introducing unnecessary risk leading to arriving five minutes early at best. Clearly not worth the added risk of cutting too close to a thunderstorm over the Midwest or the extra fuel used in the process of saving five minutes—unless it's the last day of your four-day trip and you might miss your commuter flight! Just kidding, been there, done that. Not worth it!

Unfortunately, it is very challenging visualizing our future, older selves. As a young FO, I could not imagine (and maybe didn't even believe) that one day my income would no longer be a source of stress in my life and marriage. In fact, there is a scientific reason why this is so challenging, and it's called the recency bias. A generally accepted definition of the recency bias is a cognitive bias that causes a person to remember the most recent events, activities or people, among others, more clearly than the past or envision the future. This bias can influence judgement and decision-making, because we over emphasize the importance of recent experiences or information.

In fact, I believe the very definition of planning for anything is bringing the future into the present so we can take action. An article from MindMapJournal.com titled "Future self-visualization for better decisions and a happier life" recommends four techniques to picture your future self:

1. Generate an aged image of yourself - Use age-progression software or AI tools to create realistic images of your older self. Google "create old image of myself" or use the old filter in your photo app.

2. Engage in dialogue with your future self - While looking at the old image of yourself, have conversations with your future self, asking what they would want or need.

3. Regular visualization - Make it a habit to visualize your future self and consider their perspective when making decisions.

4. Create a vision board - Compile images and descriptions of your desired future to keep your goals visually present.

At this very moment I know many of you are scoffing at the ridiculous thought of talking to a picture of your much older self. Me too! However, how many of you sat in a chair in

your hotel room during new-hire training and visualized an entire simulator profile for the next day? All of you! It feels silly, but science says it works!

The MindMapJournal article goes on to say, "Close your eyes and picture yourself 20 years from now. What do you look like? How's your health? Your relationships? Your finances? Now, imagine that future self could travel back in time and chat with you today. What would they beg you to do differently? What regrets would they urge yo*u to avoid? This surreal bit of mental time travel may sound like sci-fi, but it's actually a powerful psychology hack for making better decisions. And with AI image generators, it's easy to do.*"

So, let's get to it! What would your future-self recommend you do? What would your 65-year-old-self beg you to do now so that you can have as much fun in retirement as you did flying airplanes as a brand-new pilot.

Here's what we've learned from listening to our clients, researchers and real-life examples:

Relationships are critical to a great retirement, and most men suck at them.

Retirement satisfaction has been directly linked with the quality of relationships in retirement. We just hosted Dr. Michael Finke, retirement researcher and Professor of Wealth Management at The American College of Financial Planning on the Pilot Money Guys podcast (Episode/Flight #114). His research delves deep into what makes retirees happy and relationships are consistently at the top of the list.

I may have overstepped when I said men suck at relationships, however, it is true that currently most airline pilots are men and it's really hard to develop strong friendships outside of work. Obviously, part of this is because of the travel requirements for professional pilots.

Take the time before you step away from your flying job to invest in quality relationships outside of your marriage. Guys, your spouse will be tired of seeing you home all the time in retirement, so you'll need a friend group to go to when she asks if you can somehow go pick up another four-day trip!

Without your health, wealth is useless.

Author and physician Peter Attia's book "Outlive: The Science and Art of Longevity" should be required reading for retirees. He discussed VO2 max extensively, highlighting it as a key predictor of health and longevity.

Consider tracking and even improving your VO2 max so you can actually do the activities you want to do in retirement. Become a person who is healthy. Read the book!

Guaranteed income allows you to spend more money with less stress in retirement.

Many military retirees will have pensions from their time in the service. All of you (hopefully) will have social security pensions for you and a spouse, if you're married. All of these are sources of guaranteed income. Dr. Michael Finke's research shows that if retirees have one or more sources of guaranteed income that cannot be outlived, retirees feel comfortable spending more in retirement

We are not huge fans of all annuities as they are often overloaded with fees and oversold by aggressive sales pitches and free steak dinners, but there are some annuities that can reduce the stress of running out of money in retirement.

Currently single-premium immediate annuities (SPIAs) are at their highest payout levels in over a decade. For example, depending on age, gender and exact payout options chosen, a $100,000 SPIA could pay out as much as $600 per month for the rest of your life.

Below are seven more lessons learned from our experience with clients in retirement backed up by various research and anecdotal evidence.

1. An optimistic attitude leads to a better life and a better retirement.

2. Buying "stuff" only leads to temporary happiness, unless that stuff helps you to develop more relationships.

3. Having Long Term Care insurance (boring!) helps to reduce stress of health uncertainty in retirement and may allow you to spend more in retirement knowing that future long term health care costs are accounted for.

4. Work to build a pile of Roth (tax-free) savings while you're young, early in your aviation career and take advantage of Roth conversions early in retirement.

5. Avoid all financial gimmickry and any get-rich-quick schemes.

6. Do NOT confuse what you do with who you are. In other words, your personal identity is not what your career is.

7. If you think golf, pickleball, and vacationing is all there is to retirement you will be depressed (sometimes literally) by age 66. You must have a purpose and reason to get out of bed every day in retirement. View this Tedx Talk by Dr. Riley Moynes about "The 4 phases of retirement"

I hope you can take the time to digest these lessons we learned from your peers. I recommend taking more time to read and learn about each one of the lessons. Each one can fill the pages of a book for sure.

I believe the key to a great future and successful retirement is having intentionality about what the future might look like. Of course, we have no idea what tomorrow will hold for us, much less twenty to thirty years from now, but the alternative is to stick your head in the sand and let life happen to you. That never leads to successful outcomes in life or in flying!

Continue Reading →

So go ahead, visualize your next flight to make sure you're prepared and while you're at it, bring out the AI-generated picture of your old, wrinkly self and talk to them about your future!

Fly safe!



About the Author

Charlie Mattingly a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional, is a first officer for Southwest Airlines based in Atlanta. Read More...

Charles Mattingly, MBA, CFP® | CEO & Lead Planner
Leading Edge Financial Planning
865-240-2292 Office
865-328-4969 Cell/Text
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Please tell us if we can help you on your journey to financial peace and prosperity! Hopefully, you found this article interesting and helpful. If you have any questions, contact us at 865-240-2292 or Charlie@leadingedgeplanning.com. Check out our Pilot Money Guys podcast where we regularly discuss these types of financial topics along with some fun airline news updates and interesting guest interviews. Even the editor and founder of Aero Crew News – Craig Pieper!

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MORTGAGE

Mortgage Outlook: Q1-Q3 2025 Review and What's Next

Written by: Spencer Wartman



Well, folks, if the first half of 2025 felt like a steady grind with rates easing just enough to keep hope alive, Q3 turned things up a notch—finally delivering some real momentum on the downside. Back in my July piece, I laid out the case for why staying tuned to Treasury moves and Fed whispers could pay off big for homebuyers and refinancers, especially for us pilots juggling schedules and relocations. Now, as we roll into October, let's unpack what went down through September and sketch out the runway for the final stretch of the year. If you're eyeing a move or a refi, the data are looking friendlier than they have all year.

1. Up to Now in 2025

Q3 brought the volatility we all sensed was brewing, but in a good way; rates started sliding more decisively as markets priced in Fed action. Here's the snapshot as of mid-September:

- 30-year conventional fixed-mortgage rates have shed ground steadily, dropping from that mid-June perch around 6.84% (per Freddie Mac) to a national average of 6.35% last week—the biggest weekly dip in over a year. That's still above the dreamland of 2021, but it's a breath of fresh air after hovering in the high-6s for months.

- VA-loan rates, as usual, are giving folks like us an edge, tracking a shade lower. We're seeing national averages in the 5.375 to 6.14% range right now, with some solid lenders holding steady below 6% even amid the swings. (Shoutout to those who locked in late Q3—smart play.)

- The 10-year Treasury yield, that trusty mortgage bellwether, has cooled off from April's peaks above 4.5% and June's 4.43 to 4.48% zone, landing around 4.01 to 4.04% as of yesterday. It's been a bumpy ride with July's soft jobs data and August's inflation ticks keeping traders on edge, but the overall trend—downward, thanks to cooling economic heat.

These shifts mirror the broader chop from political headlines and global jitters, but the net effect has been a welcome thaw for borrowing costs.

2. Why the Treasury Yield Connection Matters

No change here—this link is as solid as ever. Mortgage pricing rides the 10-year Treasury wave plus a spread that lenders tack on for risk. When yields dip (like they have in Q3), it flows straight to lower rates, opening doors for pilots scouting base swaps or family upgrades. It's not magic, but it sure feels like it when your monthly nut drops.

3. Forecast for the Rest of 2025

Eyes on Q4: With Q3's momentum carrying over, the outlook is brighter, though nothing is a sure bet in this environment. Markets are buzzing about the Fed finally easing up after a string of holds. (Disclaimer: This article was written the week before the Fed meetings on September 17.)

- 10-year yields: That Reuters poll from earlier in the year nailed the gradual slide—we're already below their three-month target of 4.35%. Looking ahead, analysts are eyeing a push toward 3.9–4.0% by December, with some bolder calls dipping into the high-3s if inflation keeps cooling. Fingers crossed for the latter.

- Mortgage rates:

    - Fannie Mae's latest tweak has 30-year fixed averages easing to around 6.4% by year's end, a touch higher than their summer guess, but still a win from today's levels.

    - The National Association of Realtors sees the full-year average at 6.7%, trending toward 6% territory as we head into 2026.

    - Consensus? Expect the 6 to 6.5% band to hold through fall, with room for more if the Fed delivers.

- VA loans will likely tag along, drifting from the current low 6 percentages toward the high 5s by Q4, assuming yields behave. We've already seen some lenders dip under 5.5% for top-tier borrowers. Keep shopping around.

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Wall Street is betting on one or two rate trims through October's and December's Fed meeting sessions. Any dovish signals from Chair Powell could juice the drop even further. Watch the jobs report and CPI readout this month for clues.

4. What Should Be Done Now

Timing is everything, right? Q3's rate relief has already sparked a surge in refinancing applications, but with the Fed's pivot on deck, we're not out of the woods—or the savings—yet. If you're flexible, holding off even into November could net you another 0.25–0.5% shave, translating to real cash on a pilot's salary. But if life is throwing curveballs (new route, family expansion, etc.), today's levels beat June's hands down—jump in with a lender who gets the airline grind.

Pro tip: Glue your eyes to those Fed announcements. More cuts mean softer yields, mean softer mortgages. And yeah, chat with a specialist who crunches our unique airline contractual pay stubs without the hassle.

5. The Breakdown and (hopeful) Prediction

Item	Mid-Sept 2025	End of 2025 (Forecast)
10-yr. Treasury	~4.02%	~3.9–4.2% (high-3s possible)
30-yr. mortgage	~6.35%	~6.0–6.4%
VA loan	~5.4–6.1%	High-5%s to low-6s

A few basis points might not sound like much, but on a $400K loan, what do we make of that 0.5% swing? You're looking at $150 to $200 less per month—enough for an extra layover splurge or two. Q3's volatility gave way to progress, and with Fed cuts in the pipeline, we could see mortgages settle into more comfortable mid-6%s by holiday lights. If you're plotting a relocation, now's the time to get your ducks in a row and track those economic dials. Teaming up with a lender who is versed in airline income, VA perks, and investment plays is your best co-pilot for the deal.



About the Author

Charlie Mattingly a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional, is a first officer for Southwest Airlines based in Atlanta.
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Trident Home Loans (Equal Housing Lender, NMLS 65716) keeps leading the pack for aviators nailing down the perfect mortgage. Drop a line to Spencer Wartman (NMLS 2109932) at or spencerattrident.com—he's your guy for turning forecasts into keys in hand. Got a hot topic for the next roundup? Hit him up directly.

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You Must Get Crab Cakes

Maryland is for crabs, and G&M Restaurant near BWI is for crab cakes.

WRITTEN BY: VICTOR SOLER

Often as air crew, our schedules put us in places where the layover highlight is likely the crew hotel's breakfast buffet, where real eggs are a treat. Every now and then though, a city delivers something that makes you glad you packed your appetite. For me Baltimore (BWI) has made that list of places to go. That restaurant is G&M and the item to not miss is the crab cake.

Now, I have had crab cakes in more cities than I can count. Most are fine, some are forgettable, and a few try too hard with filler, seasoning, or fancy plating. But at G&M, they do it the way Maryland intended—big, bold, and unapologetically packed with sweet lump crab. No breadcrumbs masquerading as substance. No over-spiced distractions. Just a mountain of crab held together by little more than confidence and tradition. Did I mention it's full of crab yet?

The restaurant itself is not flashy, as most of my favorite places are not. G&M sits in an unassuming spot near BWI (only four miles in less than ten minutes away). It's the kind of place you could drive past without a second glance. But step inside, and you will find families, business travelers, and if you are paying attention, flight crews who know exactly why they are there. For us, the restaurant's proximity to the airport makes it so convenient. It is a crew secret.

G&M started as a pizzeria and transitioned into the restaurant of today with new ownership in 1993. That's when the star of their show—the crab cake platter of course—was birthed. If you bring a friend, you can split the tab and save a little cash when you order the platter which comes with two crabcakes. If you don't share you will be able to take a tasty cake to go that perfectly reheats in the aircraft's oven.

So, lets talk about what makes this a crab cake to remember. It is cooked to a delectable golden brown with sides that are mere bit players. (Let's be honest, no one remembers the fries when there's a softball-sized crab cake awaiting you.) It's a meal that sticks with you in the best way. The first bite is tender, briny-sweet, and so packed with lump crab that you'll wonder how it stays together. By the second bite, you'll stop asking questions and just enjoy it. With the third bite, you'll be regretting having shared the other cake. By the time you finish your portion, you will be thanking me for the suggestion to share and not listening only to your tastebuds that would surely send you into a food coma.

Here is the truth: in a world where crews trade food recommendations like other people trade stock tips, G&M's crab cakes have become legendary. They are the kind of dish that makes you plan a deadhead through Baltimore or wish your layover were just a little longer.



G&M's legendary crab cake, served with two choice sides near Baltimore/Washington International Airport.

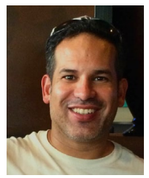


Here is another pro-tip for you; if your airline does not fly to Baltimore and you would like to try these renowned crab cakes, you can order a tub of crab cakes to be cooked at home from their website. They are delivered next day to all fifty states. You can even set a delivery date nearly a month in advance for your next dinner party. As of the publication of this article, I have not done this yet, but I'm sure as my family reads this review, they are going to request an order ASAP.

So, if your schedule drops you into or near BWI, do yourself a favor, skip the chain restaurants, grab a cab/rideshare, and head to G&M. Order the crab cakes! (If push comes to shove, you can DoorDash an order to your room, but it will not be as crisp after its commute to your hotel.)

An unofficial motto for the state is, "Maryland is for crabs" and G&M will prove it from the plate to your palate and into your stomach.

Address: 804 N. Hammonds Ferry Rd.,
Linthicum Heights, MD 21090
Website: https://gandmcrabcakes.com



About the Author

Victor Soler is a retired Army UH-60 helicopter pilot with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Occupational Safety and Health. Currently, Victor is a 767/757 captain. Read More...

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Angels in the Skies – Bringing Hope and Healing to Patients

Angel Flight NE volunteer pilots provide access and equity to healthcare.



When you hear a plane overhead, do you ever look up and wonder where it's heading or maybe who the pilot is at the controls? Being a pilot is not just a skill; it's an adventure providing a sense of freedom in the open skies and the opportunity to see the world from a unique perspective.

Aviation and Altruism – A Strong Combination

Aviation's power is amazing, especially its ability to connect people to destinations that may otherwise be unfathomable to access, especially for patients who must travel for medical treatment. This is exactly why Fr. Larry Camerlin founded Angel Flight of New England (AFNE) in 1996. Having always wanted his pilot's license and after retiring from his family-founded ambulance business, he pursued his dreams and earned his pilot's license in March 1996 followed by the purchase of his first plane—a 1996 Piper Archer. With his dream achieved, he then asked himself "What now?" Obviously, he could fly family and friends to dinner—also known as the proverbial $100 hamburger—as well as aerial sightseeing, but being a spiritual individual of deep faith always dedicated to helping others, he wanted to do more with his new aviation skills.

Little did he know that his answer would come in the form of a documentary on aviation highlighting how general-aviation pilots on the West Coast were volunteering their planes, fuel and skills to transport patients who needed to access medical care that was not available in their geographic area. At that moment, his next adventure was unveiled. The next day he inquired if a similar public flying organization existed on the northeast coast. He learned it did not, so he began putting a plan in place. This was when Angel Flight NE was born.



AFNE President, Founder and Volunteer Pilot, Larry Camerlin (rt) with co-pilot Roger D. (left) and AFNE patient Michele C. being flown from BED to ISP for cancer treatment. AFNE scheduled more than 200 flights for Michele over 18 months.

He reached out to other pilots asking if they would be interested in volunteering, secured a small office space at Beverly Airport (KBVY), and recruited friends and family to help him launch what has become a vital nonprofit organization providing access and equity to healthcare. The first AFNE flight took place on May 1, 1996 and in that first year alone, 600 free flights were provided to patients throughout the Northeast. Since that inaugural flight nearly 30 years ago, AFNE has expanded into its headquarters at Lawrence Municipal Airport (LWM) in North Andover, Mass.; has scheduled more than 3,000 missions a year and provided over 110,000 flights for patients who have traveled more than 17-million miles to 750 medical facilities throughout the United States—all FREE to the patients/families.

Among the Clouds – Flights of Healing and Hope

AFNE's mission would not be possible without the generous support of our volunteer pilots. They not only donate their time, planes, fuel and talents, but they provide compassion and the opportunity for patients to have hope and healing during their healthcare journey.

Richard Jacobs has always loved flying and recalls riding his bicycle from his home to a local airport to watch planes for hours. In his mid-thirties, his wife, Ilene, suggested, "You're always talking about airplanes and becoming a pilot...why not take a lesson and see if you like it?" With her blessing, he embarked on obtaining his pilot's certificate which he achieved in 1982. Since then, he has logged a little over 6,000 hours of flight time in his Beechcraft A36 Bonanza. Nearly 25 years ago, Richard joined AFNE when AirLifeLine members merged with Air Charity Network, a national nonprofit of which AFNE is a member. As one of the original AFNE volunteer pilots, Richard has been instrumental in the success of the organization's mission by reaching the astounding milestone of over 935 flights of healing and hope. When asked about his most memorable missions, he remarked that all are memorable but one stands out.



AFNE Volunteer Pilot Richard Jacobs with one of the hundreds of patients he has flown over the past twenty years.



16-month-old AFNE patient Wyatt C. from R.I. arrived safely in Penn. for his life-saving liver transplant with the help of AFNE Volunteer Pilot Richard Jacobs.



AFNE President Larry Camerlin presenting AFNE Volunteer Pilot Richard Jacobs with a recognition award for completing 800 flights of healing and hope in 2021. Since then, Richard has completed over 950 Angel Flight missions.

He received a call at 6:30a.m. from the mother of a young patient saying, "They have a liver for my 16-month-old. We live near Providence and need to get to Pittsburgh by noon. You're on a list which Angel Flight NE gave us. Can you please help?" Richard immediately did a preliminary check of the weather; and told her he'd meet them at the airport in Providence at 8 a.m. His attention immediately turned to a good cup of coffee and faced all the usual preflight planning details for takeoff from New Bedford Regional Airport (KEWB), plus coordinating with the ambulance company in Pittsburgh that would be meeting their flight. Richard, the parents and child arrived in Pittsburgh by 11:30 a.m. and the child received his new liver that afternoon.

When asked why he volunteers, Richard draws on his tradition, "Whoever preserves one life, it is as if that person preserves the entire world." Richard's compassion and belief in AFNE's mission have not only been recognized by AFNE but has been acknowledged by the New England Patriots Foundation as the 2021 Patriots Difference Maker of the Year. Most recently, in May 2025, he was presented with Aero Club of New England's Presidential Award. When asked how he would encourage other pilots to become involved and volunteer, he said, "I view flying for AFNE not only as a public benefit but also a way to give back to the community by helping folks who really need help and appreciate it, but also a great way to keep current, visit airports that you otherwise might not fly to, and your insurance company will be happy that you are flying regularly."

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AFNE Volunteer Pilot Bill MacLeod transported Jessica from LWM to LGA so she could receive treatment for stage-IV colon cancer. AFNE scheduled more than 60 flights for Jessica during her two-year healthcare journey.

As a child, Bill MacLeod, an AFNE volunteer pilot since June 1996, dreamed of being an astronaut. After completing his degree in engineering, marrying, buying a home in Rye, N.H. and starting his own firm in his thirties, his astronaut aspirations were replaced. He started talking to his wife about becoming a pilot. To provide a boost to his aviation aspirations, his wife, Beverly, gave him a gift certificate for a flight lesson at Eagle East Aviation in North Andover, Mass. He shared that he was so busy with his practice that the gift certificate sat in his leather briefcase for over five years until he finally found some time. His first lesson was in January 1991 at Eagle East Aviation at LWM, and with the help of his mentor, Joel Heil, a retired instructor, he obtained his pilots certificate in May 1991.

Since his first lesson, he has logged over 2,300 hours. Much like other AFNE volunteer pilots, Bill knew he could do more with his aviation abilities. He was introduced to AFNE in 1996 after meeting Larry Camerlin at Beverly (KBVY). Much like Richard, Bill notes that all the 500 Angel Flights he has flown are memorable, but the children's flights—especially those with severe burns—really stay with him. He shared that he would tell other pilots, especially those who are not flying much, that they need a mission—a reason to fly while making a difference. He went on to add, "Flying for Angel Flight NE will also provide pilots with the opportunity to help others, to fly to new airports and to hone their skills."

Aviation has always been deep in Steve Bernstein's family heritage. His grandfather was a career U.S. Air Force officer, and he grew up flying in light general aviation aircraft with his dad. From a very young age, he knew he wanted to be a pilot, so he earned his private pilot's license at the age of 17 and has since logged over 5,000 hours of flight time. When he learned from other pilots about a group providing public benefit flying, he researched and learned about Angel Flight NE. He joined its volunteer corps in 1997. Since then, Steve has participated in over 200 missions of healing and hope by flying either his 1997 Beechcraft A36 Bonanza or his 2006 Pilatus PC-12/47. While all his Angel Flight missions are memorable, there are a few that stand out, like in 1997 when he flew into DCA with a terminally ill cancer patient, and most recently, when he flew from PQI to HEF to transport a disabled veteran. For many AFNE families, he is the go-to volunteer pilot, and he fondly refers to them as "my friends for life." When asked what he would say to a fellow GA pilot to encourage them to become involved, he replied, "I've said this many times: volunteering is the most rewarding flying I do—from the collaboration with the AFNE mission coordinators, to the courtesy we're extended by ATC and the FBOs, to the gratitude of the families we serve—it's immensely fulfilling to share something we love so much with folks who appreciate it so much."

Veteran Navy Seal Eric S., accompanied by his service dog Reba and companion Laura, traveling from PQI to HEF with the help of AFNE Volunteer Pilot Steve Bernstein. AFNE's Angels for Armed Forces Program has coordinated more than 60 flights for Eric so he can receive medical treatment and care for an injury he sustained while serving.





Traveling every six weeks can be challenging, but for AFNE patient Ed C. (left) traveling from Vt. to Boston to participate in a clinical trial at Brigham and Women's Hospital for a rare form of mast cell cancer is made possible with the help of AFNE volunteer pilots like Mehran Givehchi (rt).

Joining AFNE just a little over six months ago, Mehran Givehchi has always been fascinated by engineering—especially the kind that defies gravity. He shared, "Every time a plane flew overhead, I'd stop and marvel at the complexity behind it." But the moment it became more than curiosity was one Sunday while cycling with friends near Hanscom Air Force Base. He explained, "I watched a small plane take off and felt something shift—like I was meant to be in that cockpit. From that moment on, I became laser-focused on aviation and never looked back." His first flight was in a Cessna 172 in April 2013; then achieving his pilot's license in October 2013; was instrument rated in August 2019; and accomplished his commercial certification in March 2025. He too knew he wanted to do more with his pilot's license and after learning about AFNE and its longstanding presence in the Northeast, Mehran was immediately drawn to the organization's mission and community. Just since this past May, he has already signed up for more than 30 missions.

One mission that really stood out to Mehran was this past August when he flew a young burn patient and his father from N.J. to Mass. From the moment they boarded, he could feel their quiet strength and positivity—especially that of the now young man who AFNE has been flying since January 2011. Right away, he started asking Mehran specific questions about flying and shared that he has wanted to be an air traffic controller since the age of nine. During the flight, Mehran invited him to handle some of the radio communications with ATC, and they spent the entire time talking about instrument approaches and all things aviation. Mehran noted "His curiosity was infectious, and his energy—despite the medical challenges he faces—was like a breath of fresh air. This mission was so meaningful not just because of the destination, but because of the connection. It felt less like a patient transport and more like sharing the cockpit with a future aviator. That experience reminded me just how powerful and personal this kind of flying can be." Mehran went on to say, "I'd recommend pilots to volunteer for AFNE because it brings aviation back to its most meaningful and human purpose. It's about far more than just logging hours — it's about using your skills to truly make a difference in people's lives. If you want to reconnect with the passion that made you fall in love with flying, this is the way to do it



AFNE patient Mason H. travels regularly from N.J. (VAY) to Shriners Hospital Boston (BOS and BED) with his dad Matt for treatment of burns he sustained over 90% of his body when he was two years old. Since 2011, AFNE has coordinated more than 500 flights of healing and hope for Mason so he can receive the continuous care and support he needs.

Making a Difference

While these amazing pilots volunteer their skills, time, planes, fuel, and compassion to patients' missions, as a nonprofit organization, Angel Flight NE must raise funds annually for its operations to ensure its ability to support every patient and family that turns to the organization for assistance. While flights are free to patients and companions, the coordination of a flight costs AFNE between $300 to $500. Some flights take only a few hours to coordinate while others can take days—depending on the complexity of the mission. And when general aviation is not an option for a mission, the AFNE team works with commercial aviation partners such as JetBlue and Cape Air that donate seats on their aircraft for patients. In some instances, its mission/flight coordinators must book tickets for other commercial airlines, which can be costly, especially given rising costs.

The organization is blessed with many long-term sponsors such as the Alexion Charitable Foundation, Hasbro, and M&T Bank, to name a few. Annually, it submits countless grant applications along with benefiting from third-party fundraising efforts to support its mission. AFNE also holds its own fundraising events such as the organization's Annual Evening of Angels Gala, being held this year on November 21, 2025, at the Seaport Hotel Boston. More than 500 guests gather to celebrate the organization's accomplishments and those who make it possible for an evening of dinner, dancing, silent and live auctions, and much more. Tickets are to attend and sponsorship opportunities are available on the event website.



AFNE coordinates more than 3,000 flights annually for patients—children and adults—who need to travel for specialized care and treatment. Coordinating each flight costs between $300 to $500 depending on the complexity of the mission. The 501(c)(3) nonprofit must raise funds to support its mission of providing flights of healing and hope in support of patients during their healthcare journeys.

Spreading the Word

Even with Angel Flight NE's nearly 30-year history, the biggest challenges it faces are, first and foremost, raising funds for its mission; secondarily, attracting new pilots, and lastly, spreading the word about its free air transportation services for patients in need. The organization is active on social media and participates in air shows and community events while also partnering with patient-advocacy groups, especially in the communities that are underserved that need specialized care and treatment that could be hundreds or even thousands of miles away. While healthcare insurance covers all or most of the costs for a patient, it does not account for times when travel is required. Medical travel can be especially costly when treatment requires multiple trips. Leveraging the power of aviation, Angel Flight NE's mission is to bridge the gap between distance and medical care so patients can focus on what is important—getting well.

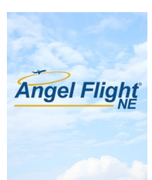


The annual Evening of Angels Gala is AFNE's largest fundraiser of the year, not only celebrate the organization's accomplishments but to also raise awareness and funds for its life-saving missions.

Ready for Take Off? Get Involved!

As a famous quote says, "The sky is not the limit, it's just the beginning," which is even more poignant for pilots who become public-air charity volunteers. Their unwavering dedication and compassion provide patients with the beginning of their journeys to healthy lives while providing much hope to many patients needing support during their healthcare crises.

To learn more about Angel Flight NE and how you can be involved as a volunteer pilot or support this organization's vital mission, visit www.angelflightne.org or call 978-794-6868.



About the Author

Angel Flight NE is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that arranges free air and ground medical transportation for patients with limited financial resources who require frequent trips to life-saving medical care. Read More...

Scan below or visit www.angelflightne.org to learn more about Angel Flight NE.

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