

BURSARY REPORT

By John Bacon

Having just retired from lifelong career flying with airlines, I wanted to continue to fly, as I had held an instructor rating from the 1980s which I had intermittently renewed during my years of airline flying. I decided that I wanted to put something back into the industry that had served me so well throughout my life.

I have a diabetic son who was struggling to get a medical certificate to learn to fly. This became my aim in life: to help people with difficulties to learn to fly by assisting them to overcome their individual circumstances and achieve a PPL.



Back to school...

It became obvious from an early stage that simply gaining a PPL was not going to be enough for many of the students I was working with. I needed to offer more. I looked at the cost of upgrading my instructor rating to cover training for night and IRR instructor privileges, but unfortunately this proved prohibitive on my pension. It was then that a colleague suggested that I apply for a bursary to help finance the proposed upgrade.

WHY ME?

I argued: "Why would somebody want to give me, a retired airline pilot, a bursary? Surely this money would be better spent on bringing younger people into flying?" It was pointed out to me that I had something very important to offer; a lifetime of experience flying many types of aircraft all over the world.

So, I turned to the Honourable Company of Air Pilots. After a quick phone call to confirm that I could apply and would be considered, I filled in the application form. I was amazed when just a few days later I received an email from Angie Rodriguez offering me a bursary to pursue the instructor's course.

After a long chat with Alan Newton, the Senior

Instructor, I selected On Track Aviation at Wellesbourne Mountford, which I knew from past experience was a leading UK training organisation. My instructor for the course was Alec Trevett, who I had previously met as a speaker at the old GASCO safety evenings; again, Alec was the consummate professional.



...and off to work as an FI

BACK TO THE BOOKS

It was an uphill struggle for me getting back into the 'books' after four years away from the airlines but it slowly started to come back to me. The flying I found slightly easier, as I had remained in practice, instructing, and it was great that the aircraft we used was the trusty Piper Warrior PA28, a type that I fly regularly.

The training course took a week to complete with the test scheduled for Friday 28th January. This day dawned to storm Eowyn, whose low cloud base and strong winds ended my hopes of testing that day. However the test was rescheduled for 31st January with Peter Thompson, a great examiner who put me at ease straight away and, whilst conducting the test in a thoroughly professional manner, gave me many great insights and tips.



John's own Robin DR400

I have now started night and IRR training and really enjoy the new challenge. My first night rating student has just completed the course, which really brought me sense of accomplishment. I would just like to say "thank you" to Angie and the Honourable Company of Air Pilots, and to Alan Newton and his team at On Track Aviation. □