

Flying lessons: Escaping the summertime blues

by CHRIS WELSCH

UNL from 4,000 feet in the sky — I could see the baseball game in progress (barely) and little bugs running all over the soccer fields on East Campus.

What started out as a typical story on flying lessons

turned into a trip behind the controls of a Cessna Skyhawk.

The Lincoln Aviation Institute provided the plane and the instructor. I was the student pilot. Lincoln Aviation, located at the Municipal Airport, charges \$20 for such an introductory flight.

The instructor, Scott Schlegelmilch, demonstrated

a pre-flight check. We walked around the plane, checking all the hinges on the flaps, and checking the space behind the prop. Schlegelmilch said birds sometimes nest back there.

Schlegelmilch drained a small amount of fuel from each tank in the wings. The fuel was a light blue. The fuel strainer allows the pilot to check for water in the fuel. After draining some fuel from the bottom of the tank, we boarded the plane.

SCHLEGELMILCH LISTENED to a weather briefing over the radio, then checked in with ground control. We taxied to our runway. To steer the plane while still on the ground, one must push two foot pedals, one to go left and one to go right.

Before take-off we checked in with the air controllers. Then, he pulled out the throttle. The plane rolled along the runway for about 50 yards before the ascent began.

At first the plane rocked back and forth, but the higher we climbed, the smoother the ride became. Soon the fields below seemed a mere checkerboard of trees and dirt.

Likewise, Lincoln seemed a conglomeration of squares; box-like houses suddenly were in proportion with the tall downtown buildings.

I had ridden in large commercial jets before, but the sights and sounds in a small plane make it easy to realize that you're flying.

Schlegelmilch demonstrated a few aerial tricks for his wary passengers. First he slowed the plane down to minimum airspeed. We were just hanging in the air, moving about 30 miles per hour. Normally, the plane's cruising speed is about 120 miles per hour.

Then we went into a stall, which isn't nearly as dramatic as it sounds. Schlegelmilch just tipped the nose of the plane up, then the plane dropped straight down about 10 feet, giving a slight roller coaster sensation.

Flying lessons at Lincoln Aviation are expensive, but fairly inexpensive compared to other local places for flight instruction, he said. Both Lincoln Aire and Seward offer flying lessons.

AFTER WE had flown across Lincoln (in about three minutes) Schlegelmilch let me take a turn at the wheel, so to speak. The plane was fairly easy to handle. I circled Holmes Lake and then Southeast High School.

All too soon Schlegelmilch took control of the plane again and we headed back to the airport. He made a smooth landing, and we proceeded to tour the LAI's class rooms and the airport hangar.

The minimum cost for obtaining a private pilot's license is \$1,397.38. That is, if you pick up the mechanical aspects of flying and study hard, 35 hours in the plane and simulators along with some studying will get you a license.

The average student will spend 45 hours getting his or her license at a \$1,865 cost. There is a 10 percent discount for paying in \$500 installments.

"It just depends on how serious you are about it," he said, explaining the difference in hours.

Almost anyone can learn to fly and hold a pilot's license, he said. All you need is a fairly able body and the ability to read and speak English.

Once obtained, a pilot's license is good for life, he said. A biannual check by a certified instructor is the only requirement.

The advantages of having a pilot's license are many. If you are a business or engineering student, possessing a pilot's license looks good on a resume. Businessmen need light planes for travel to smaller towns and to accommodate awkward schedules.

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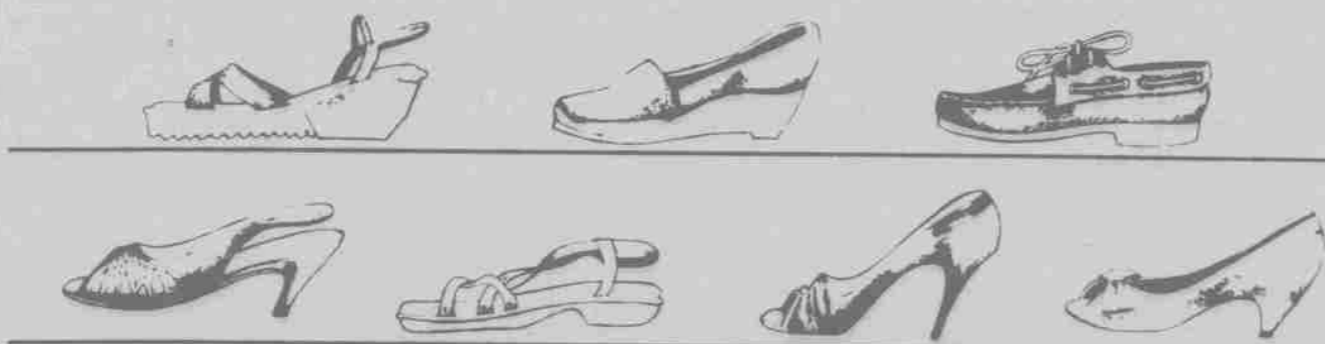
Staff Photo by Craig Andresen

The UNL City Campus as seen by Daily Nebraskan photographer Craig Andresen high above Lincoln in a Cessna Skyhawk.

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