



Reasons to take flight

Approaching aviation from a different angle

BY JULIE K. BOATMAN

To many pilots, the desire to fly lies in the urge to seek adventure, to get business done, or to set oneself apart from the crowd. There are pilots who fulfill these goals dramatically and visibly—Patty Wagstaff and her fellow airshow performers, visionaries such as Burt and Dick Rutan, and record-setting pilots like Steve Fossett.

But there are many other reasons we learn to fly, although they may not

sound as glamorous—or risky. For some pilots, that thrill is as simple as evading the ground-bound traffic on the way to a vacation home or family visit. Or the physical—and transitory—joy of a perfect landing. What a person gets from flying has a lot to do with what he or she brings to it.

Linda Fritsche Castner launched Take Flight workshops to explore the connection between a person's experiences flying an airplane and his or her everyday behavior patterns. Castner, a private pilot and second-generation airport owner, was interested in any approach to introducing aviation that might attract more women to the activity.

Piloting an airplane is not a gender-specific skill, nor is there much—if any—overt discrimination within the general aviation community. But what those of us who are firmly ensconced in aviation might lack is an ability to approach the question—who becomes a pilot and why?—differently. What can flying an airplane give a person who might not be drawn to its various parts—the mechanics of the airplane, the technical challenge of dealing with air traffic control and weather systems, the goal of flying the family home for the holidays? What about flying makes us feel so good about becoming pilots, and keeps us flying in the face of financial and physical obstacles?

And how can we bring that experience to people who might not other-



The Take Flight seminars use experiential learning, such as this wheelbarrow exercise (above). Instructor Rich Stowell takes participants through a preflight inspection.