



WRIGHT'S MEDIA

2407 Timberloch Place, Suite B
The Woodlands, TX 77380
Phone (281) 419-5725
Fax (281) 419-5712

Reprint Job#: 83935
Customer: Key West Seaplanes
Description: Airline Pilot Fantasy
Quantity: 6 month Eprint;
Pages: 1
Print Finish Size: 7.875 x 10.5
Date: 12/14/2011
Sales Rep: Deborah Barron

ATTENTION: Olivia Schnell
PROOF #: 1

- OK to Print/Proceed
- OK with Corrections
- New Proof Needed *

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

To ensure a successful QR code marketing campaign, please do a check scan of the QR Code on your proof prior to approving.

***All orders include 2-free proofs; each add'l proof is \$75.**

This e-proof is submitted for your approval, please read it carefully! Please print and fill it out. Once complete, fax or email it back to Wright's Media at (281) 419-5712. Any corrections needing to be made need to be marked on the proof itself and faxed or emailed back along with the e-proof sheet.

While every effort has been made to assure typographic correctness, Wright's Media cannot accept responsibility for errors unless the customer marks them for corrections. We must have an approved e-proof sheet in our possession at the time we are authorized to print.

Your signature on the e-proof sheet indicates you have checked the entire proof. No other check for accuracy will be made.

Return of this e-proof is required within 1 business day in order to meet delivery by the tentative delivery date.

***Please print out the proof approval sheet, select the appropriate option and write your response in the box provided.
Fax or email only the proof approval sheet back to Wright's Media
(281) 419-5712.***

Jumpseat



BY LES ABEND

Airline Pilot Fantasy

CAROL AND I MET NICK after accidentally parking our Cherokee Six in his spot. The spot was reserved for Key West Seaplane's amphibian Cessna 206. It was Christmas Day. Because the FBO was closed, the ramp had become a semichaotic aluminum mess. After we adjusted a few airplane positions, Nick and I exchanged business cards and a dry sense of humor. We soon became friends. I realized that Nick was living the airline pilot fantasy. What is that fantasy exactly?

The fantasy is the idea that I could trade in my polyester tie for a T-shirt, a pair of shorts and flip-flops. I could fly fun airplanes that would never see a Cat III approach, let alone an autopilot. Of course the real fantasy lies in the belief that I could quit my airline job and still pay the mortgage.

Undaunted by financial reality, I expressed my desires to Nick. I

volunteered to act as his copilot for a typical trip. After all, I have a seaplane rating. And I've logged well over 10 hours. And with almost 21,000 hours of total time, I was certainly overqualified. Yeah ... right. Despite his justifiable fears, Nick agreed to my proposal. (I had to buy him another beer.)

Key West Seaplanes is a dream of Nick Pontecorvo and Julie Ann Floyd. They are co-owners. Both have brought their own colorful character to the operation. Julie is a full-time physician. Her practice involves pain management and sports medicine. She is also a senior AME. For many years, Julie has contemplated changing her career to aviation. She began taking lessons in Wellsville, New York, and initiated a 10-year plan to shift her focus from medicine to airplanes. She has an instrument commercial and seaplane rating and is working toward her CFI. When the doctor is not in,

Julie spends her time helping to manage the operation. She also flies sight-seeing charters in the company Cessna 182 and flies with Nick when a seat is available on the 206.

The two owners met in 2003. Julie had been visiting Key West on a periodic basis and was contemplating moving her practice to the area. Nick had been flying a Caravan on floats out to the Dry Tortugas for the local FBO. Julie had been a passenger on one of the trips. For "weight and balance" purposes, Nick's calculations determined that the pretty girl had to ride in front. The rest is history.

As you may have guessed, Nick's background also adds color to the mix. He was a tax accountant before vacationing in Key West. He decided that a two-year career was enough. Nick called his company to tell them that he wasn't coming back.

Very loosely applying his financial background, Nick became a first mate on a popular local catamaran that carried tourists on day cruises and sunset sails. He further applied his financial skills as a bartender at the famous Sloppy Joe's and eventually transitioned to management level at another popular establishment.

Nick eventually caught the aviation bug. Initially, he joined the Navy Civil Air Patrol, flying club for both his primary and instrument training. His commercial training was completed at Key West's Island City FBO. The afternoon following his commercial check ride, Nick was dropping skydivers at nearby Sugarloaf Airport for the commanding salary of \$5 a person. He obtained his seaplane rating in the Miami area, flew floatplanes for a very brief period in Juneau, Alaska, and moved to Hawaii, where he flew gliders and became a CFI. Nick returned to Key West and began employment with the FBO as a flight instructor,



>>> View from the north side of the lower Keys' exclusive Little Palm Island, a frequent destination of Key West Seaplanes.

photo tour pilot and sightseeing guide. He flew for a Part 135 operation at Marathon Airport in the Keys and then began a five-year stint as a seaplane pilot, flying a 206 and a Caravan back at Key West Airport.

When Island City FBO discontinued its seaplane operation, Nick formulated plans for his own company. Nick and Julie have been in business now for two years.

On the day of my copilot assignment, I arrived at 0730 wearing the required uniform: a T-shirt with Key West Seaplane logo, blue shorts and deck shoes. Although only slightly groggy from my Tokyo trip the day prior, I was enthusiastic.

As I would have done at my regular job, I informed my captain that the WSI weather check indicated a great VFR day. Nick grinned and pointed

With preflight procedures complete, we climbed onto the floats and into the airplane. I glanced out the windscreen and smiled. Interestingly enough, the sight picture wasn't that much different from that of the 777 I fly at my other job.

The 206 started with the same juggling act of mixture and throttle that any other fuel-injected engine required. We rolled away from the tie-down spot and received our clearance to taxi. Once on the parallel taxiway to Runway 9, Nick offered me control of the airplane. It took all of one second to realize that steering an amphib on floats required differential braking and a deft use of power. I was operating a giant shopping cart. The reaction of the airplane was similar to that of taxiing a DC-3. I yearned for a tiller and 90,000 pounds of differential thrust.

>>> A seaplane flight plan can be problematic. Briefers don't quite understand that an airport with a concrete runway is not always part of the equation.

at the mostly blue sky. Our trip would remain within a 25-mile radius of Key West Airport. Technical weather analysis? Not so important.

Nick had already completed the walk-around inspection, informing me that the Wipline floats were absent any significant water. Cool.

At the airline, I would have begun the process of reviewing a flight plan prior to arriving at the airplane. Nick had done the same ... only via his iPhone. He had called an FSS briefer. A VFR flight plan is required under Part 135. On the return trip, we would be departing Little Palm Island, an exclusive resort just off the coast of Little Torch Key, with two passengers.

A seaplane flight plan can be problematic. Briefers don't quite understand that an airport with a concrete runway is not always part of the equation. Although Nick has discussed the issue with a supervisor, the message sometimes didn't quite make its way to the rank and file. He often resorts to using a nearby victor airway intersection to define his departures or arrivals.

I searched for a touch pad and an electronic checklist. Nick pointed out the takeoff placard on the lower instrument panel that displayed the appropriate items. That would do. I began the takeoff roll, hopping rather than rotating off the ground. A more subtle application of back pressure would have helped the airplane accelerate. I forgot about the floats.

I climbed the airplane all the way to Flight Level 004 over the water. Nick contacted the Navy base and received clearance to transit its airspace en route to Little Palm Island. As we neared our destination I studied the increasing chop on the water. I queried Nick about our arrival strategy. In my old career, the effect of the wind was a challenge only until touchdown. In my new career, the wind was a challenge all the way to the gate.

Nick indicated that his strategy was always evolving with the dynamics of the situation. On this particular day, he directed me to circle north of the island while he pointed out an approach and touchdown path toward the dock.

I managed to touch down with minimal rookie mistakes.

The next part of the arrival was to dock the airplane with no damage, or worse, embarrassment. If you're a boater, you know that a stone-cold, harbor face is essential. As we approached nearer the island, Nick determined that the best plan was to complete a U-turn, timing the momentum after engine shutdown to parallel the dock with the starboard float. We would face out, away from the island, to allow a quick exit. This required me to step out on the float in order to retrieve the appropriate line from the dockmaster. Despite my participation, the docking went smoothly.

Once secured, I assisted with bag loading. Nick positioned the luggage in the aft seats with the deftness of a professional grocery bagger. The passengers arrived smiling. A safety briefing was given as they climbed aboard.

Nick untied the lines from the dock while I held the wing strut. He slid into the left seat and started the airplane. I hopped onto the float in time for the prop wash to close the copilot's door before I could climb in. Unrattled, I reopened the door and jumped into the right seat. We departed in a flurry of noise and salt spray. Our arrival back at Key West was uneventful.

I completed my copilot duties by escorting our passengers and their bags to the main terminal, where they were to depart back to New York. Mission accomplished.

The new job was great. But I had participated only in the fun part. Nick explained that he was on the phone an average of two hours a day. He and Julie arrange the charters, schedule the maintenance, answer the e-mails and write the checks. Nick professes that the \$50 hourly rate that the business pays him is not to fly but to manage the company. I've watched him in action. I agree.

In any case, do I still consider the experience an airline pilot fantasy? Absolutely. Will I be saying goodbye to the 777? Well ... probably not just yet. But Nick and Julie are adding an amphib 172 to the fleet for seaplane instruction. I've been asked to be a flight instructor. Hmm ...