



STEVE KROG

COMMENTARY / THE CLASSIC INSTRUCTOR



Part 61 or Part 141?

Quality instruction is key to both

BY STEVE KROG

LEARNING TO FLY UNDER FAR Part 141 or Part 61 — which is better? They each have benefits and drawbacks. Part 141 schools have a more strictly defined curriculum which can make the courses more predictable, while a Part 61 program offers more flexibility and can be more easily tailored to an individual student's needs. According to FAA statistics, it will take an average of 55-60 hours to earn a private certificate regardless of which curriculum you follow.

I've discussed this at length with instructors who have taught in both environments. Their respective opinions vary greatly when compared to the flight school owners or managers.

I learned to fly in a Part 141 flight school and was able to take and pass my checkride at a total time of 39 hours and 10 minutes logged, including the checkride flight.

My first instructor and I didn't see eye to eye. He was a pleasant person, but our personalities didn't mesh, nor did his style of instruction. But my second instructor was fantastic. He seemed to understand how I learned and the type of encouragement it took to make me want to come back for the next flight lesson. I've mentioned him in previous articles and have patterned my style of instruction after him.

One of the differences I see when comparing the two curriculums is the dedication of the flight instructor and the quality of instruction they provide. Some of this is due to the rigid progression of lessons. Each lesson under Part 141 lists the objectives for that lesson. The objective is demonstrated and then practiced a time or two. Once the box is checked, it's on to the next lesson objective.

Little time is available if a student is having difficulty with a maneuver. A weak link in the student's flying ability, confidence, and safety has now been created, which will be reflected when doing the next series of maneuvers.

Many of the young instructors I've talked with who taught in a Part 141 environment expressed this as a true frustration for the student and instructor. The curriculum is so rigid they can't spend additional time with the student to work on the weak areas.

These young instructors also expressed frustration working with other instructors who are only focused on totaling their logbook every night in a race to reach 500 hours. Their quality of instruction is generally marginal to poor. Little or no thought is given to teaching, just going through the motions and building hours.

I currently have eight students who completed their private pilot training with us enrolled in universities offering flight training under the Part 141 curriculum. I communicate regularly with all of them and offer encouragement whenever possible. The single biggest complaint from all of them is the instructor(s) with whom they

fly. Some of them have dealt with as many as five instructors in one semester. Sadly, seldom do any of these students comment on having a good instructor. When one of my past students does encounter a good instructor, they will most always call and tell me about it.

I spoke with one of the students recently. She has been in school for only two weeks and already has a problem with her instructor. He has canceled her lessons a couple times for reasons unknown.

Additionally, his command of the English language is quite limited and difficult to understand. He also speaks softly, adding to the problem. She commented that aside from the communication issue, he is a nice, polite individual. After their first meeting he requested she study and memorize all the functions on the G1000 full glass panel before she would be allowed to fly.

While reviewing her logbook he commented that she had flown more different airplanes than he had. When he asked how some of the airplanes were equipped, she said most had all steam gauges but one had a Garmin glass panel. The instructor had never heard of or been exposed to steam gauges and wanted her to explain what they were.

One of the differences I see when comparing the two curriculums is the dedication of the flight instructor and the quality of instruction they provide.

VAN'S AIRCRAFT
TOTAL PERFORMANCE

WWW.VANSAIRCRAFT.COM

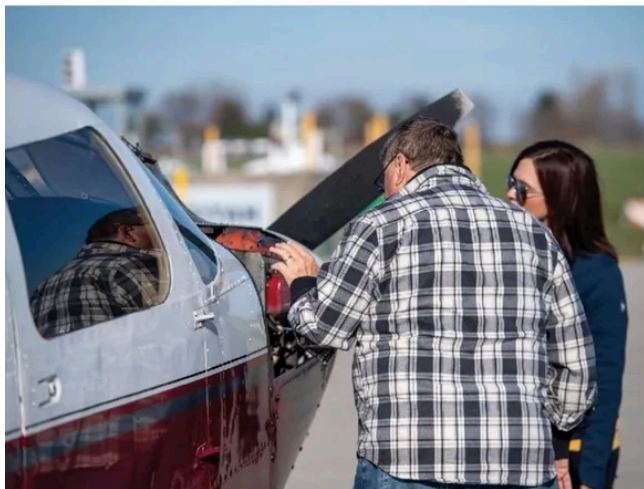
RV-8

THE WORLD LEADER IN KIT AIRCRAFT



STEVE KROG

COMMENTARY / THE CLASSIC INSTRUCTOR



From the discussions I've had with Part 141 flight program representatives, most all will admit the weak link in their programs is the high turnover rate of instructors and the quality of flight instruction. Sadly, this reflects on the quality, ability, and safety of the young pilots being trained and ultimately reflects on the school's reputation. These students are spending a lot of money to attend these well-known schools, but they sure aren't getting the value they deserve, in my opinion.

These representatives have also commented that instructor turnover is so rapid there is seldom an experienced pilot available to serve as a mentor. Many of these young, inexperienced instructors don't know what they don't know. They need advice and direction to perform to proper standards.

Flight standards and maneuver requirements beginning with the FAA Airman Certification Standards guide have been revised, possibly to compensate for this weak link. Previously when asked to demonstrate slow flight, for example, a student pilot was required to establish and maintain airspeed a fraction above stall speed (stall warning horn intermittently beeping), constant altitude, and constant heading. That truly is slow flight. This is no longer true. Today the airspeed must be 10 knots above stall speed. For many of the older airplanes we use for training today, this is the approximate final approach speed.

Stalls are another area of concern. We've had newly certificated Part 141 pilots come to us wanting to obtain a tailwheel endorsement. The first flight is spent out of the pattern getting acclimated to the aircraft including slow flight and stalls. Neither the Cubs nor the Champ we use has a stall warning system. When this is mentioned to the pilot, they have a hard time comprehending how one can demonstrate a stall without a warning system. As we progress with the stall, we usually learn the individual has never performed a full

stall with a break. How can a pilot be safe if they have no idea what the airplane does in a stall with a break?

At Cub Air Flight we instruct to old school standards as we teach stalls with breaks, cross-controlled stalls, secondary stalls, and accelerated stalls. Virtually every pilot flying today, seasoned or green, has unknowingly placed an aircraft in one or more of these configurations. Who knows what their response might have been had they allowed the situation to progress?

The Part 61 flight schools also experience some of these weaknesses but generally on a much smaller scale. The Part 61 schools in our area have an experienced instructor on staff. They may only be part time, but they're always available for discussion and mentoring. Young first-time instructors, if they profess to wanting to be good, need a mentor for guidance. I've chatted with several young instructors who sadly gave up because they had no one to turn to for direction.

One method of teaching that I disagree with is teaching by the numbers rather than understanding and feeling the airplane. During World War II, advanced flight training was done by the numbers. It was decided back then that this was the most expeditious manner for getting pilots qualified. It worked for the mass of pilots needed, but it also led to numerous training crashes. According to statistics I've seen, the United States lost more pilots and crew members in training than in combat. That is a statistic that is seldom shared. However, this method was needed to meet the demand for pilots at that time.

Today, many schools favor teaching by the numbers. Add full power, roll down the runway, and when the airspeed indicates 60, pull on the yoke. When we fly with one of these "numbers" pilots, it becomes obvious they have no feeling or understanding of the airplane, nor were they ever taught to do so. I've mentioned in past articles that airplanes are like fine race cars. They are always talking to you, telling you what they like or don't like. An aviator learns to listen to the airplane, tweaking inputs to make it fly faster, better, or smoother. A pilot just pushes on the throttle and goes.

I mentioned earlier that there are both strong and weak points in either the Part 61 or the Part 141 curriculums. With the influx of so many prospective new pilots enrolling in these schools, the capacity to handle the influx has compromised the quality. Airline check airmen will confirm this if you have an opportunity to talk with them.

My hope, long term, is that the airlines, flight schools, and yes, the FAA can together develop and institute a plan to correct the system weaknesses. Many of today's students will someday be airline captains. I want whoever is sitting in the left seat to know and understand the aircraft and how it flies rather than staring at numbers and pushing buttons. Automation in the cockpit is great only as long as it works.

Stay focused and keep flying safely. *EAA*

Steve Krog, EAA 173799, has been flying for more than five decades and giving tailwheel instruction for nearly as long. In 2006 he launched Cub Air Flight, a flight training school using tailwheel aircraft for all primary training.