

Good Evening Everyone

I wanted to thank you for being here tonight, listening to my story.

Everyone here has a unique story that has brought them to this point, and for the next 3 hours you get to hear mine...so buckle up... Nah I am just kidding

Now,who is Jay Longley you ask... I grew up as a normal kid, rode bicycles until the street lights came on, didn't travel much, especially by plane, so my aviation journey did not start until I was in my late 30s.

You see at that time I was with Kelly, down in the Berry Islands, planning our wedding...and a seaplane pulled up to the island. Everyone inside, jumped out, walked up to the little beach bar, grabbed a bite to eat, then hopped in the plane and left.

Seeing that I thought it was the coolest thing ever! Seriously!

So after our wedding, when we were Back in the US, I didn't know where to start. I didn't know any pilots, had never been in a small plane, and I had a HUGE Hurdle to overcome... you see, I had, and still do have, an incredible fear of heights. Like petrified of everything above a few feet off the ground. It's bad.

For me, also, I like to know everything possible about a situation (FLYING) before jumping into it.

SO I bought a VR headset, and a flight simulator, and started learning to fly on my computer with a friend. I did that for over a year, spent a few hundred hours in VR, and wanted to take it farther.

So I started an online ground school to learn more. And after almost 2 years of prep, I was finally ready to fly. So I found instructor and began with him.

NOW, this is the beginning of 2020, and we all remember when the world shutdown at the beginning of 2020... You remember...back when we looked at a simple handshake like it was a weapon, and you worried that a hug from a loved one would send you to your death bed...

Well just a few weeks before the pandemic, is when I had started to actually fly, and then flying was paused. Not only was flying paused, The Whole World had the Great Pause. With the world shut down and most businesses, schools, and airlines pausing and people parking their airplanes for an indefinite amount of time flying was done for me in 2020.

We lost many during the pandemic, but we made it through.

And the busy-ness of just normal life caught up to me, so for me there was an additional 2 year pause.

You see though, most of us have a story where we pause. I am not sure why, but it does seem to be a commonality between us GA pilots.

Fast forward a bit and my nephew Austin, a 15yo at the time, started flying. He loved the idea of aviation and the freedom it brings, so he went for it.

He was so proud when he called me, I was so proud of him for taking the step too! With that little bump, I moved my life around and started flying again.

Now, my pre-pandemic instructor was a great guy, he also teaches in an unorthodox way. He was not from Air Ventures just so we are clear.

This instructor liked to overwhelm, and then show you how you learned. We would fly in such crazy wind and turbulence, we would hit our heads on the ceiling of the plane...with me flying.. that he had a saying..."if your are not bleeding, it's not bad". "

I like the guy, but for me being petrified of heights too...I had to make a change.

So I connected with Sal, the president of RI Pilots (a great resource for anyone looking), and Sal connected me with Doug. Doug and I had that famous Air Ventures talk about "how they train pilots differently here", and let me tell you, they do. Thankfully.

So we set a time, and I came down to the school

This time walking into a school was noticeably different too, and I could feel it. You see, the scariest day is taking those first steps to walk in a school and ask for training. All you pilots and student pilots know what I am talking about.

Inside Air Ventures, there are a lot of young, intelligent, friendly, and calm aviators. They were all huddled around a coffee table, playing a board game that Doug invented, and they were all laughing, joking and having fun. It was an open and welcoming vibe here.

Once inside, I connected with Ian and started my flight training all over.

Instead of taking an hour and running through half a dozen different moves, per lesson, like I had in the past, here at Air Ventures we perform one maneuver per day. That's it.

We have focus time, learning time, and we step through each part strategically.

I, personally, also learn differently. I am not someone who can be told what to do theoretically, and then just do it. I've tried learning that way, I just can't

I have to actually see it, and feel it, to be able to do it.

So Ian worked with me, patiently...very patiently

He had taken someone who wanted to fly but was petrified of heights and he turned me into a pilot!

Now truth be told, I still am petrified of heights, when I am outside an airplane... Once inside a plane, I respect heights, and when I am in control I can finally enjoy flying.

Ian and I worked for around 9 months together, teaching, learning, refining, honing, and then the team here connected me with a few Designated Pilot Examiners. To me, one examiner stood out.

Michael Goulian. He wasn't just an examiner, he was a Red Bull Air Racer who traveled the world racing planes.

Michael Goulian is to Aviation, what Michael Jordan is to Basketball, he is the Tom Brady of Football.

To me, he is the top, and even at that level, he is well rounded, personable, reachable, individual who is always eager to help a fellow aviator.

But you see, everyone I have met in aviation is that way. Doug is that way. Ian, Will, Kevin, Mike, Libby, Mitch, Bob, Lou, Jack, my study buddy and fellow aviator Matt. They are all this way.

In my journey I have also met Jack Pelton, the CEO of EAA/Cessna, he is that way, and the famous Chuck Brown a seaplane legend, same way. Just a normal guy, always eager to help another aviator.

They are this way because aviation isn't something you do, aviation is something you have in you and being an aviator is something you are...

We all recognize that...find another aviator and you have found an instant friend...anywhere, always.

Back to that first checkride with Michael Goulian...With Doug's method and Ian's patience, I passed my test, and I cried a little, because it was THE SINGLE HARDEST CHALLENGE I have done in my entire life....by far...

Since that point I have continued my journey. In January of this year I finally achieved the rating of Seaplane Pilot...my goal from 2018

You see, because once you pass your first test, it doesn't end. It becomes just the beginning of a whole new life...of opportunities, adventures, and stories.

For me to be asked by Doug to be here was an honor, and I want to THANK YOU Doug. For the opportunity, for your patience, for answering text all hours of the day and night. For jumping on the phone and talking to me, helping me, guiding me and just being a great friend.

I want to thank my Wife Kelly, AND my daughters Sirena and Adriana, for their Patience with me DURING those ALL consuming late nights and early mornings, of STUDYING and FLYING, because THEY are my biggest supporters.

I want to thank my Nephew Austin for the kick I needed to reach this moment.

Most of all I want to thank my parents for their unwavering support through all the challenges I have undertaken Throughout my 44 years.

And for anyone looking to become an aviator, YOU HAVE FOUND YOUR CALLING, see it through. Reach out to me or any fellow aviator, we are here for you. One big family!

Thanks everyone!