

Memories of Jack,

I believe I was Jack's last IFR student. This was during the fall of 1999. Jack believed in real-time IFR conditions whenever possible and when at last Jack pronounced me "good enough" we made plans to fly east from RYY (north of Atlanta) to Mike 82 (north of Huntsville, AL., for my check ride. The date was set for December 5. In my Cardinal this was about a 1.5 hour trip. By then I had about 100 hours of simulated IFR training and about 10 or 15 in real IFR conditions. In the Southeast generally the best flying weather is in the fall but winter was approaching and we were running out of good weather opportunities. This was certainly true that year.

The morning of December 5 came and the weather was overcast 5,000 with a strong front coming in from the west, at takeoff it was projected to be over Mississippi. As usual both Jack and I did our flight planning and weather briefing independently. Jack asked me what I thought. I said, "Jack, if the front doesn't pick up speed we can just make it into M82 in time for the check ride but I'm not sure we will be able to get out". Jack agreed and said "let's go, we might not get another chance". So off we went headed for M82.

Besides being test nervous, I was really nervous about the weather. We landed at M82 ran into the FBO and I met the FAA examiner, an old friend of Jack's whose name escapes me now-I remember that he was a featured writer in one of the articles of "I Learned About Flying From That" while flying in his 210. I wasn't surprised that Jack knew the examiner; great pilots seem to know the other great pilots. As I recall, Terry McBride also took his check ride with the same guy and might remember the examiner's name.

After a few minutes of paperwork we were off and the fast moving front was just west of us. Well we literally raced through the check ride with me spitting nothing but cotton balls. Thanks to Jack's preparation, I was ready for about anything and everything is what I got. Every approach final was flown at close to full throttle, with one eye on the instruments and one on the front looming close by. Every time I would try to throttle back, the examiner would stop me with the command "faster!". After the final approach we headed back to M82 and the examiner said, "now let's see how you handle a 25G35 crosswind landing!" It was one of my best landings! By the time we taxed over to the FBO, tied down the plane, it was raining buckets!

Success! I was soaking wet from the run to the FBO but now I could relax, get dry, and wait out the fast moving front and in a few hours, after a bite of lunch we could trail the front back to RYY. Nope; Jack said "let's go now". So having just completed my check ride I filed pop-up IFR back to RYY. Jack kept me in the clouds all the way, he was still teaching and I was still learning all the way home.

I would flying anywhere, anytime with Jack. There is not another like him.

= Tom Philbeck =