

"Congratulations, welcome to the rotor wing world!" The FAA designated examiner greeted me after I passed my check ride at Long Beach Airport (LGB). It was a day after 7 years I longed for so much.

For some reasons I have dropped my helicopter flight training for almost seven years. I had written an article to the Club's official publication - Cross Wind in 1993. Forgetting what the content was, but to encourage and share the experience to fly a chopper for the new way of flying. Apart from the real fun that the helicopter flying brings, it tremendously broaden the views of horizon to those who can master this fancy flying machine which the controls are very different in nature with the fixed wing. For an added value, it can break the limitations of the weekend flying situation and the use of the airport facilities at present. This is one of the positive ways for our pilots to consider in this present difficult time concerning limited airspace and the use of airport facilities.

Without mentioning the event that a friend took me for a helicopter joyride one late afternoon before a monthly General Committee meeting, I would not have become a helicopter pilot today. The flight was perfectly smooth. The low flying characteristic of flying a helicopter was really amazing. The ride encouraged me greatly. This reminded me of how I was trained to fly across under the Golden Gate Bridge and the nice handling capability of this flying machine. I was totally overjoyed. I was deeply grateful for this friend of mine and thanked the almighty for the good weather that day!

I discontinued my helicopter flight training after my first 7 hours dual at the famous Helicopter Adventure Inc at the East Bay Area of San Francisco. I began to resume picking up my hover work, which was most difficult part to go through, by visiting a Chinese flight school in our neighbour town, Yang Jiang, last Christmas. I spent about 30 hours in the basic hover work in an R22. (I was a little slow for that. I was told that someone could handle it nicely in about 5 hours!) The local instructor is very experienced, he has total flying hours of 7000. He built up my confidence in handling this fragile and delicate machine in 6 days totally. To reduce the boring maneuver of the hover work, sometimes we paid visits to the nearby towns for cross country flights and sight seeing.

For the FAA helicopter certificate, I called up a flight school at El Monte Airport (EMT), 30 miles NE of Los Angeles International. The manager there gave me a positive push and confirmed that the school would prepare me a full time instructor and aircraft to fly for the 12 days I stayed with them. Apart from controlling the rotor wing swinging like a pendulum or yo-yo, I knew nothing for the check ride (although I am a current Certified

Flight Instructor - Airplane). The practical test standards include normal and abnormal operations, such as: flying straight and level, high performance take-off, normal, steep, and shallow approaches, running landings and take-off, quick stops, slope landing and take off, low rotor RPM recoveries during hover and cruise, simulated engine failure and recoveries, settling with power and recovery, low-G awareness and avoidance, hover autorotations, etc. Emergency procedures and practices are mandatory. These include straight in autorotation, manual operation of the helicopter without using the governor etc. (The governor is an electronic device to keep the rotor RPM within the green band so that the helicopter can keep its wing to fly). Flying without the governor means the pilot has to concentrate to keep the rotor RPM range between 97% to 104 % by using the throttle on the collective. In case of engine failure, entering into autorotation immediately has to be the reflex. In order to keep the rotor wing flying in case of engine failure, the pilot must be very alert to anticipate and in full concentration all the time.

Before sending me to solo, my instructor required me to accomplish more than the private pilot check ride standards. Needless to mention the precise pattern work procedures in some very busy airports, I have to go through the 90 and 180 degrees autorotations! (These are the PTS for commercial pilots.)

By regulation, I had to log at least 10 hours solo including 3 hours solo cross country which would be at least of 150 NM total distance and a leg of more than 50 NM apart. Night cross country was fun especially we were allowed to fly very close to the high rises in down town L.A. Practising autorotations at night time was really exciting. Thanks to my instructor, Guillaume, he dedicated all his efforts to make my dream come true. We used to fly the R22 during daytime and prepared for oral test of the check ride at night. We had worked from 7 in the morning to 11 in the late evening for 7 days.

(Guillaume happened to be Mike Miller's instructor too. Mike, Guil asked me to say hello to you)

On the day of check ride, I was arranged to meet Mr Tim Tucker, a world known expert in the field. Many rotor wing pilots should have heard his name either by being checked out by him, attending his safety conference, or simply reading related publications. Since I had got my airplane certificate, I was only being asked questions on the technical side and emergency parts during the oral test. Be honest, to memorize something from books, simple charts, mathematics, and weight and balance calculations are the strength of ours, being submerged in our education system for decades. I took a very short time to make my examiner satisfied and finished this part in just minutes. To fly with this rotor wing expert, I was full of confidence as being to have an advance training course in practice. Finally, apart from a little tense maneuver work on the running landing, I was greeted and welcome to the rotor wing world after taking 40 minutes JOY ride with Mr Tucker.

For those members interested to get their helicopter pilot licence in the United States, if they can spend 4 weeks there, it would not be a problem at all. They can pick up any flight schools in California, and set off for their training. (I recommend the West Coast because it is the place where the weather is very promising) If they do not have a long annual holiday, they can follow my footsteps. I would suggest they could prepare themselves to start with the basic helicopter training at Yang Jiang in a long weekend.

After mastering the basics, they could continue their intensive helicopter flight training in the US. Since I can make it in 12 days, it would not be surprised to see someone to get a helicopter licence in a fortnight! The FAA licence is without restrictions in night and cross country flying, of course.



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