

# In their shoes

BY JJ GREENWAY

**IT'S EASY TO FALL INTO A RUT** as an active CFI. CFIs at busy flight schools or college aviation programs may fly several times a day with several different students. We quickly pick up on common student mistakes and if we don't actually roll our eyes every time we see them made, we at least groan inwardly. My favorite, most commonly observed "student foible" is leaving the ATIS/AWOS/ASOS playing over and over again as they go through a checklist. I'll usually listen to three or four repeats of the same broadcast but I have my limits. It's easy to see when the student is distracted. The brain may be hearing the noise coming over the radio but as it assimilates unfamiliar tasks, it simply doesn't process the information.

I had the tables turned on me recently when I got to be a "new student" for a day. I was receiving a rather fast paced and intensive checkout in a twin-engine turboprop I had never flown. As I sat in the cockpit and muddled my way through engine starts and pre-taxi checklists, I realized that I had left the AWOS playing for several minutes. Sure enough, I looked over at my patient and long-suffering CFI (a veteran of more than 40,000 hours of dual given, by the way) and I could see a slight grin forming at the corners of his mouth. I quickly silenced the offending voice and mumbled a lame excuse, much the same as I've seen my own students do at times.

Even veteran CFIs need to step back sometimes and reflect just how much a brand-new primary student feels like a fish out of water as they experience the sensation of flying for possibly the first time. Think about how far outside their comfort zone they are and try to "be" them and anticipate their nervousness and their fears.

During my recent intense day of training, the instructor wanted me at one point to bring the airplane into a full stall. Now this is something I do every day in the light singles I instruct in. Not having flown twin-engine turboprops much in the past few years, I was more than a little reticent about fooling around down

near the blue line/red line corner of the airspeed indicator. My instructor sensed my reticence and instead took the controls and brought the airplane into a mild buffet before recovering and asked me to do the same. Within a few minutes, my comfort zone had vastly widened and I was performing full stalls to his satisfaction.

### **EVEN VETERAN CFIS NEED TO STEP BACK SOMETIMES AND REFLECT JUST HOW MUCH A BRAND-NEW PRIMARY STUDENT FEELS LIKE A FISH OUT OF WATER...**

I've always taken pleasure in watching someone perform a difficult task in such a smooth manner that they make it look easy. Even the city crews who plow snow in my neighborhood have an appreciative audience when they come past my house. How they manage not to destroy parked cars, uproot fire hydrants, and demolish stop signs is a never-ending marvel to me. I know if I got to sit in that seat without any training, I'd have my neighborhood looking like downtown Baghdad in no time.

Think about how you, the experienced CFI, look in the eyes of a new student. Not only can you fly the airplane, you can talk about it at the same time! And you're not even sitting in the pilot's seat. And you're not even flying with the same hands on the stick and throttle that you would if you were! Don't get a big head, but our primary students look up to us, more often than not! Take a minute to see what they see out the windshield and to feel what they feel in the yoke and in their seat. It goes a long way toward effective transfer of knowledge between you and your student.

*JJ Greenway, a CFI since 1980, has given dual instruction in aircraft ranging from the Luscombe 8A to the Boeing 767-300ER.*

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