

Appropriate Behavior

How to quantify what's good, and who's not

What makes a good pilot? Does unwavering compliance with the FAA's Practical Test Standards make a person a good pilot? The FAA says that the standards are minimum acceptable levels of performance, so they're probably insufficient to measure a good pilot. How about the respect of one's peers? They're unlikely to know how a person flies unless they're friends, and friends are likely to harbor bias. Advanced ratings? Naah—we've all run into folks with a pile of ratings whom we'd never allow to ferry mother home.

When I was wet behind the ears with 300 hours in my logbook, a wizened old aviator described a guy as "a good stick." I thought he was saying that the guy was a good pilot, until I realized he meant that although the fellow had smooth stick-and-rudder skills, he lacked foresight and common sense.

I recently had dinner with Michael Baum, a pilot who has given the question more focused attention than anyone I know. He's devoted the better part of two years to contemplating the question, and he started by deciding that behavior, not supporting data, is the essence of a good pilot. Then Baum set out to illustrate just what constitutes a good pilot, preparing a wonderful document, *Aviators' Model Code of Conduct*. Despite its bulky label, this is something every pilot should read, heed, ponder, and discuss.

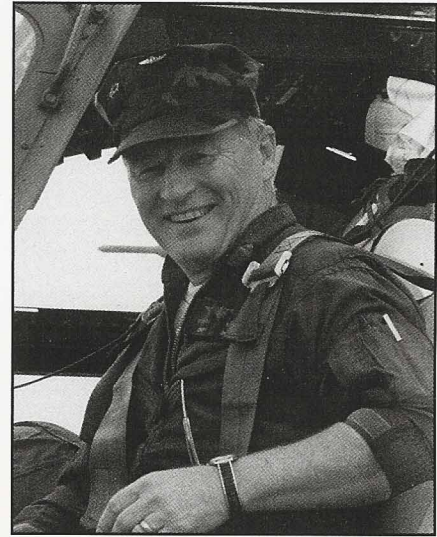
When I asked how he came to devote so much energy to this work, he explained that his initial experience with general aviation had been disappointing. There were behavior pat-

terns that tended to taint the positive aspects of GA, and he saw them too frequently. When he got the flying bug again a few years later, this instrument-rated Saratoga pilot decided to put together a tool that would help other fliers know what they can do to make the skies safer and help people to enjoy general aviation.

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The AMCC accurately describes itself as a set of recommended practices for general aviation pilots to advance flight safety, airmanship, and the general aviation community. It succeeds because its style is scholarly, as distinguished from the folksy writing customarily found in flight magazines. Sometimes stiffer is better. In addition to an overview of the general responsibilities shared by all aviators, Baum addresses six key topics: passengers and parties on the surface; training and proficiency; security; the environment; technology; and the advancement and promotion of aviation. In each area, he establishes boldface principles, followed by an explanation.

If I sound a bit evangelical here, it's because Baum's Code has impressed me enormously. Never before has anybody recorded such a careful breakdown of the qualities of a good pilot. Many of the AMCC



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points may make a person slap his forehead and say, "Of course!" (Or, if younger than 30, "Duh!") But this only underscores its value—a clear presentation of the elements of excellence can never be discarded as simplistic.

Baum has pointed out that the *Aviators' Model Code of Conduct* is a living document, to be updated periodically to reflect changes in aviation practices and the aviation environment. It is available online at www.secureav.com, along with several hundred pages of annotated commentary and a sample passenger brief. The basic document is one which every pilot should review from time to time, and which every flight instructor should mention during every flight review and prior to signing any recommendation for a new rating. Keep one in your flight bag.

Keep your airspeed up.

