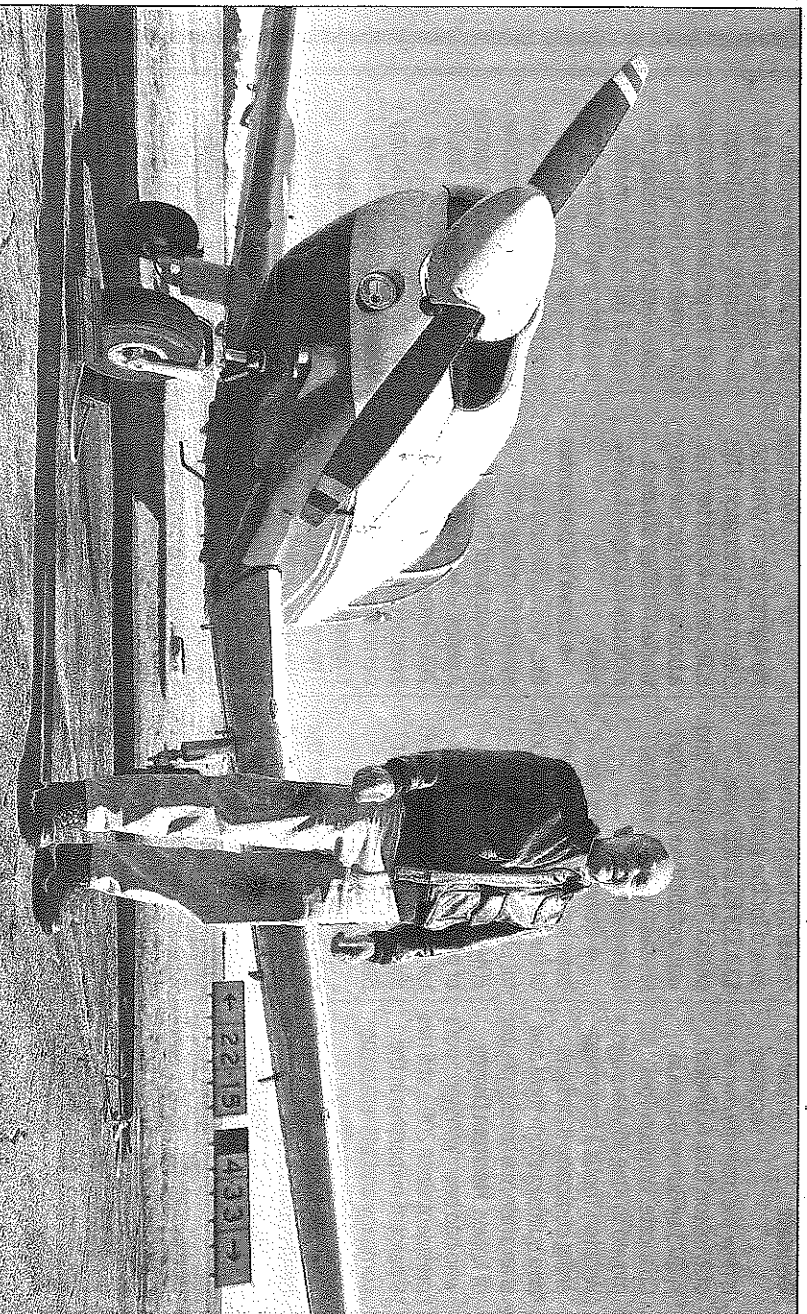


FLYING HIGH



WALT LINKS/JOURNAL

Charles Pittt of Winston-Salem, a part-time instructor at Piedmont Flight Training, was honored recently with the Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award.

Flight instructor, retired pilot receives FAA pilot award

BY FRAN DANIEL
Winston-Salem Journal

Charles W. Pittt, 67, was a teenager when he started flying solo.

A native of Winston-Salem, Pittt graduated from Reynolds High School. In 1964, he joined Piedmont Aviation where he was a flight instructor, then a charter pilot. He moved away from Winston-Salem in 1967 to work as a pilot for Eastern Airlines. He retired as a pilot from American Airlines in 2003. He also served in the Marine Corps Reserve from 1965 to 1971.

Now, Pittt is back where he started more than 50 years ago — in flight instruction. He is a part-time instructor at Piedmont Flight Training at Smith Reynolds Airport in Winston-Salem.

In August, Pittt was recognized by the Federal Aviation Administration with the Wright Brothers Master Pilot award.

The award recognizes pilots who have demonstrated professionalism, skill and aviation expertise by maintaining safe operations for 50 or more years. Recipients



To watch video of an interview with Charles Pittt, go to journalnow.com.

are awarded a certificate and a lapel pin and are recognized in the FAA's Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award Roll of Honor online at www.faa.gov/content/MasterPilot/.

Pittt lives in Winston-Salem with his wife, Martha "M.J." The couple has two sons and four grandchildren.

He recently talked about his award as well as changes and challenges in the aviation industry over the past 50 years. Here is an edited version of the interview.

Q: Why did you choose a career in aviation?

Answer: At an early age of about 7, my uncle, Marshall Williams, took me flying in the aero club general aviation airplane at Patrick Air Force Base in Florida. My uncle was a WWII and Korean War Air Force pilot. He let me move the controls and "fly" the airplane. Well, I was hooked. In 1962, I learned

"There is nothing better in a career than doing something that you love and getting paid for doing it."

Charles W. Pittt
Award-winning aviator

to fly and soloed at age 16. Then I figured out that I might be able to fly and actually get paid to do it. There is nothing better in a career than doing something that you love and getting paid for doing it.

Q: Tell us about your aviation education and training?

Answer: I received flight instruction at Piedmont Aviation at Smith Reynolds Airport. I received classroom and simulator training through Eastern Airlines and American Airlines.

Q: How important is The Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award?

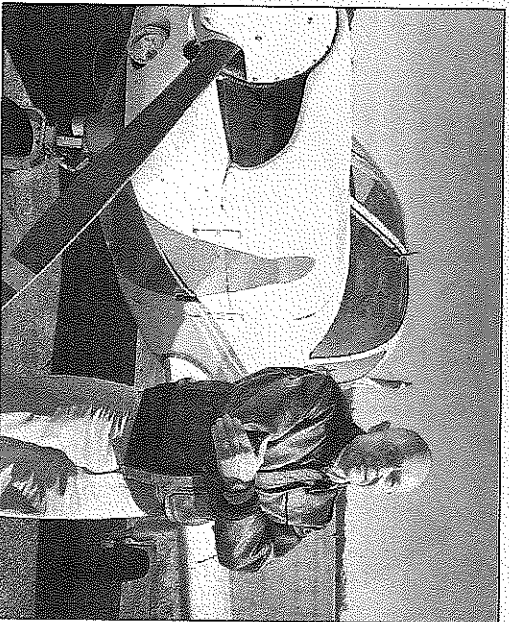
Answer: You have to have 50 or more consecutive years in active service to aviation to receive the award. I give thanks to my parents

for giving me good genes that have enabled me to stay healthy and fly for these many years. One has to also have had no safety violations. It is recognition of a passion or career devoted to contributing to the building and safety of what I consider to be, the finest aviation system in the world.

Q: What are the main challenges that the aviation industry faces today?

Answer: I think it is a matter of money. The U.S. aviation industry, whether it is airline or general aviation (air operations not operated by airlines or the military), must find a way to co-exist and be profitable.

Corporations must make a profit in order to support their flight departments. Airlines are still adjusting to the effects of deregulation, **PITTT, Page C3**



WALT UNKS/JOURNAL

Pitt discovered his love of flying at 7 years old and flew solo for the first time at 16.

Pitt

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the next 10 years?

although that happened a long time ago, and the more recent consolidation of airlines.

Q: What major changes have you witnessed in the industry over the past 50 years, locally and nationally?

Answer: The top two would be technology and security. I learned to fly in a single-engine airplane that cost \$11 an hour to rent. The first airline airplane that I flew was the four-engine propeller airplane L-1049 Lockheed Constellation. Navigation was by basic Omni directional equipment.

When I retired, I was flying a B-777 with two jet engines and navigation supplied by laser gyros and GPS capable of accuracy within 10 feet anywhere on earth.

General aviation has the same, or better, equipment available to them. We used to carry 10 pounds of paper charts and manuals with us. Now, they are stored in a tablet or iPad.

Full-motion and full-visual simulators now make it possible to do all the advanced training in simulators rather than in the actual airplane. In part due to the space program, aviation has made great strides in technology. I can only hope that this will continue.

As for safety, we all know the changes that have come about as a result of 9-11. When I started flying both in general aviation and the airline, flight deck doors were not even locked. Now, they are hardened locked doors resistant to firearms and explosive devices.

Unfortunately, I do not see a change in this situation anywhere in the future.

Q: Where is the aviation industry headed over

the next 10 years?

Answer: Only up, I hope. Rapid, efficient and safe transportation has become a way of life not only for the United States but the world. There is no substitute in business for eye-to-eye contact (not just on Skype). There is no way to travel any significant distance other than by air. The challenge will be to keep it affordable, not only for airlines but also for corporations, for the majority of the population and for shareholders.

Q: Are there any improvements you would like to see in the industry, especially in terms of safety and training?

Answer: I think the airlines and corporations do an excellent job with training, which of course, translates to safety. The FAA does an excellent job in policing and improving the industry as does the National Transportation Safety Board in investigating accidents and making safety-related recommendations to prevent future accidents.

The best thing I can recommend would be to let the agencies that deal with aviation do their job. Our Congress gets involved in trying to regulate an industry that, for the most part, they have no knowledge of the workings.

Q: What is your No. 1 advice to aspiring pilots?

Answer: Don't do anything — anything — that is not safe.

Every pilot sometimes in their career or experience will say, "I think it will be OK or I think I can do it."

If you have to ask yourself that question, then you should already know the answer. The answer is no, don't do it.

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