

I worked as a flight test engineer at Wright-Patterson AFB for a few years before entering the AF and going to UPT. My civilian boss was a retired LC who had worked in black programs. His advice was simple. There are two rules you need to live with in the military! Rule 1 – for every rule that says you can't there is one that says you can. Find the one that says you can and press on. Rule 2 follows, it is easier to ask forgiveness than permission. So, I entered the USAF as a "wet behind the ears" 2nd lieutenant with an interesting world view.

BACKGROUND:

Finishing UPT class I picked the OV-10 because my goal was to go to Vietnam. My slot was a Class A FAC so next was Cannon, AFB for Fighter Lead In (AKA Instant Fighter Pilot school.) Cannon was fun, flying the T/AT-33 as we learned to fly formation, drop bombs, shoot rockets and guns, drink and chase women. Shooting 100% on the rag was a highlight. Almost killing and instructor and myself, it turned out to be a good day. I was way too hot on a rejoin and just before the crash I put my plane into a cross controlled skid to slow down – a trick I learned flying a taildragger before UPT. The instructor was shocked that I didn't kill us both, but he never said anything about the dumb rejoin.

Hurlburt was another 6-week course crammed into 12 weeks. The majors and the LCs got long weekends off and the captains and lieutenants flew Monday and Friday. I have nothing major to report about that class except that I had no experience in a non-centerline thrust air machine. Nowhere in the syllabus did we really practice handling the OV-10 on one engine. I learned that lesson on the turn to final. Stiff wind blowing us away, turning into the dead engine, lots of airspeed, but pulling "Gs" to make the turn and the dead engine wing decided it was done flying and fell out of the sky. The good news is just before it quit flying the stick burbled. I recognized that from stalling the taildragger and relaxed the back pressure. In less than a heartbeat we were upside down at under 500'. I pushed the power lever up and immediately the wing decided it would fly again, so a little aileron and rudder got us right side up. We broke out of traffic, reentered for a full stop, changed our underwear and got a beer.

Forward Air Controller Theater Indoctrination School (AKA FACU) was where you got the message that no matter what jobs you had after this, they would all be letdowns. That was sage advice. For my first real job I was given control of the air war in a piece of a foreign country with no real on-site supervision. I stayed for 31 years, long enough to make O-6 in the AF Reserves and nothing came close in terms of responsibility. Yes, there were flying stories in the year, but this is supposed to be short, so they will have to come later. Suffice to say my year flying OV-10s was the best job EVER, among the finest people I've ever known.