

Above the Clouds

Avenues in the skies

A birds-eye-view of flying

By LEILA DUNBAR

It's a sunny, hazy, calm day. As you taxi to the end of the runway, you radio in, "Seven-bravo-bravo, departing runway two-six, Chapel Hill." Looking for any planes that might be landing, you swing the plane around to take-off position and push in full power. The white-dotted stripes in the middle of the runway change quickly to an unbroken white chain. You pull back on the wheel and you're airborne.

FLYING is just as enjoyable as it is expensive. Some people see the practical advantages of saving time, whereas others just like the feeling of being above everyone else, alone and at peace.

Bruce Clark, a law student said, "I like the time it saves, on long trips, but on short hops, to say, Raleigh, it's not worth the trouble."

Dick Crum, UNC head football coach agreed, "I have a Cessna 182 I use for recruiting. I like the time factor. I can fly to Asheville in 1 hour and 20 minutes. I'm much more mobile."

But Crum also sees the less tangible advantages. "It's a real challenge. It takes my mind off football and recruiting. It's relaxing, although flying itself has to make you alert."

Some like it because of the different view of the world seen through the airplane windshield, one of horizons and checkered landscapes.

"It's a whole different perspective," said Jeff Hughes, a UNC student. "I can take off and not worry about anything else."

Ken Anderson, a senior psychology major, said it's a special feeling. "It's a neat sensation," he said. "You get up over everything. It's corny, but it's a bird's eye view."

"You take a different look at the world from a few thousand feet," said Jerry Andersen, a graduate student. "You see what's important or what's pretty." "Nothing looks the same."

Other people like flying for its exclusion from pressures and people.

"I like not having the traffic around beeping and honking," said Sue Grill, who works in cancer research in Chapel Hill. "I'm alone, I don't have people buzzing in and out."

Carol Haynes, a graduate student, said that flying gives her a great feeling of accomplishment and self confidence. "It gives me a lot of satisfaction," she

said. "But I also like being alone. My two kids can't bother me. Only the radios."

Turning out of the pattern, you start towards Hillsborough. Immediately below you can see the patchwork farms, the string of high tension wires, and the city of Hillsborough, resembling a large scale sand castle city. You begin circling around, preparing to practice some stalls and turns.

When you ask most people how they started flying, they will answer, "I've always been interested." Those who start usually have friends or family who fly and pick up the interest from them.

Danny Johnson, a senior accounting major, said his sister Patty started taking lessons, and he decided to start, too. Since then, he has progressed to the point where he'll receive his license in a month.

Ken Anderson has friends who fly. Robert Mann, who started last May, said it was a lifetime goal of his. Sue Grill's family lived by a small airport, and she knew that the University offered flying lessons. Jerry Andersen said he wanted to fly since he was a kid and built model airplanes. Carol Haynes said her husband told her to learn how to fly so she could take him places.

Looking at your instrument panel, you try to turn all the way around back to your heading of 330 degrees. As you bank right your gaze wanders from the angle outside back to the instruments inside which help tell you if your turn is coordinated and if your altitude is constant.

Flying is more complicated than driving a car. You cannot pull over to the side of the road if your engine quits. But, with training it doesn't take an abnormally dextrous person to become a pilot.

ESENTIALLY flying is divided into two basic areas. One side deals with rules, regulations and procedures. A pilot has to learn different speeds, such as takeoff, landing, and flap speeds. Procedures in landing and takeoffs have to be learned. The rules and regulations of the Federal Aviation Agency have to be thoroughly absorbed. These can all be learned by memorization and practice.

The other side of flying is judgmental. A pilot must be able to know if his approach to land is high or low and how to correct for proper height. He has to know

what to do when a wind is blowing across a runway and be able to respond. He has to know when the conditions are not good enough to go out flying.

Sue Grill said she has a hard time landing a plane. "I'm still not comfortable landing yet," Grill said. Flying takes a lot of concentration. There are a lot of things to think about."

Anderson said that bookwork is the hardest part, not flying the airplane. "You have to be able to remember what to do in emergency situations. The hardest part is technicalities."

"I think anyone can fly, but you have to respect the weather," said Clarke. "If you get into any situation you think is questionable, you can't fool around."

Hughes agreed. "I think anyone can do it, if they have good nerves. If they panic about things, forget it. At first, everything seems difficult, but it comes. Learning about weather is hard, and it's a good thing to know."

"Flying's not real difficult," said Fred Smith, a graduate student. "But it's a large time commitment."

Flying seems to hold the same mystery as hang gliding, scuba diving and parachuting. It's exciting. The thrill of adventure, the feeling of deceiving nature by flying without natural wings.

But flying has its hazards. A sudden squall that no one sees, a valve that breaks in mid-flight, the engine that stalls on takeoff — all are dangers that pilots have to contend with.

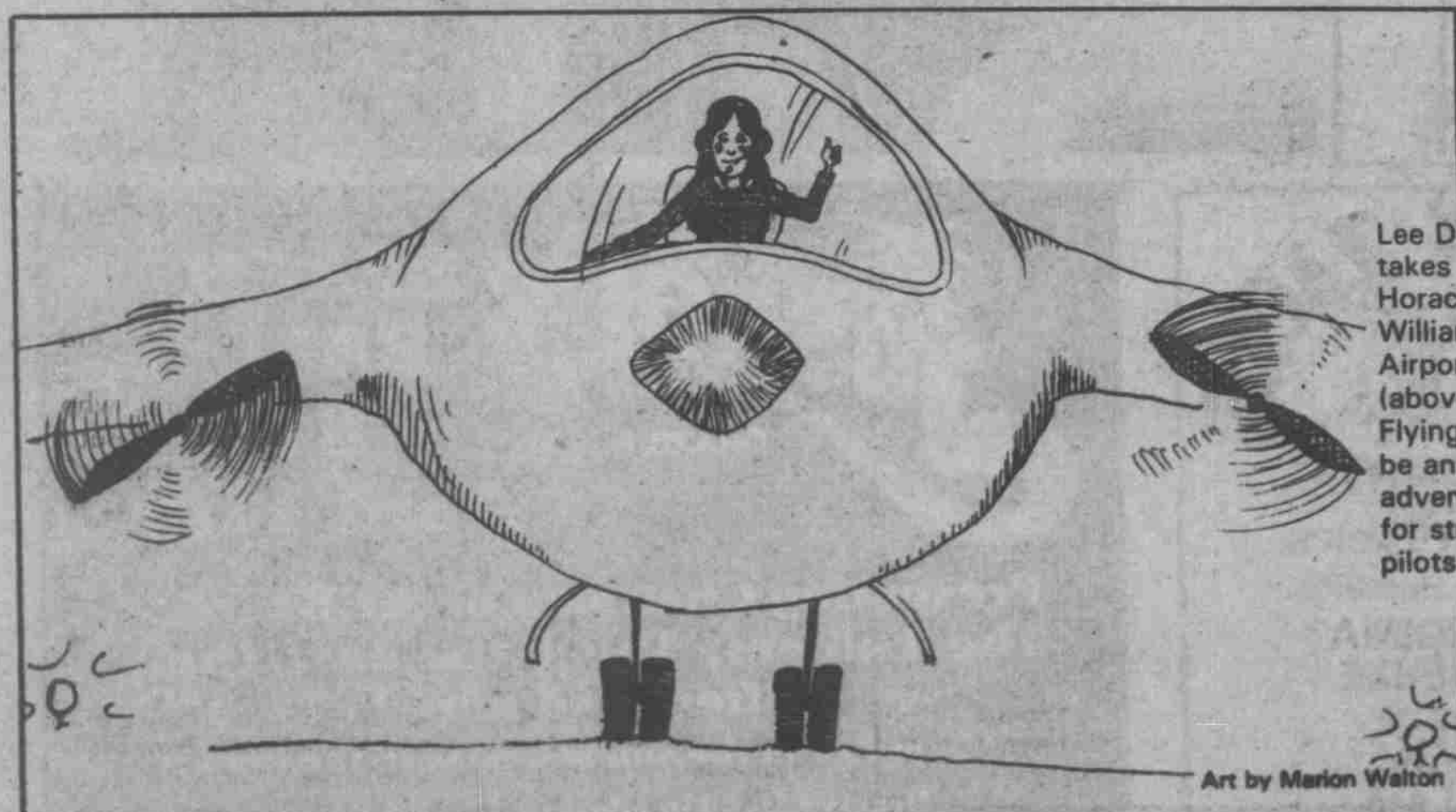
One of the biggest hazards is weather. "People have got to be alert for sudden changes in weather and respect it," said Dr. Thomas Wagner, president of the Chapel Hill Flying Club.

Anderson agreed. "The weather is the most dangerous thing. The plane's not dangerous. You have to be careful for heavy winds and storms."

Pilots have mixed opinions as to whether flying is more dangerous than any daily activity.

"I don't think that flying is really dangerous," Anderson said. "Accidents are gonna happen, no matter what." The safety standards and maintenance requirements are high, and so are the extensive preparations for your license."

No, I don't think that flying is dangerous at all," said



Lee Dunbar takes off at Horace Williams Airport (above). Flying can be an adventure for student pilots (left).

Art by Marion Walton