

"I learned to fly for the pure joy of it. Flying became my passion many years ago and since 1986, I have been sharing that passion with others as a flight instructor." While working as Registered Dietician and pharmaceutical representative for Ross Labs, Susan learned to fly. When her daughter started kindergarten, Susan turned her passion into a career flight instructing in Athens, GA. Going on to fly for the University of Georgia, she achieved her Airline Transport Pilots License and then for the joy of it purchased a German Motor Glider - soaring became a part of her life!

Susan reached her ultimate goal of instructing for Flight Safety International in Atlanta. Although 9/11 was devastating to the careers of many pilots, including Susan, believing all adversity leads to something better, Susan returned to the basics - her love of primary teaching and started her own flight school four years ago in Abingdon, VA.

Recently, Susan went to Alaska with four other pilots and obtained her Sea Plane Rating. Although most of her flying now is in the 4-seater Cessna 172s her pride is her antique classic 1946 piper Super Cruiser. One of her many goals in the aviation field - she wants to fly the 'Air Race Classic' - a 3000 mile all women cross country race. "There is always another challenge in the aviation field - always another beautiful day in the air!"

A growing number of Susan's students are women, ranging in ages from fourteen to almost seventy. Why do these young and young at heart fly? Simply put - because they can. The beauty and serenity experienced from a bird's eye view and the ultimate sense of accomplishment not to mention the sheer fun and excitement of it are some the reasons more and more women are taking to the sky. There's a compelling camaraderie among those of us who dare to leave our earthbound limits behind.

Are women intimidated by flying? "Perhaps some are, at first, but any intimidation quickly gives way to exhilaration. Women are naturals at being in control of their surroundings. They are the ultimate multi-tasker, often balancing a spouse, children, pets, cooking, cleaning, gardening, and household budgets - all while pursuing a career. For them, learning to fly is just another task to be mastered."

Recently Susan asked some of her students and other female pilots why they fly. "Their replies were varied as their lives, but a common lying theme soon emerged - THEY ALL LOVE IT!"

Among the many women students, Susan was thrilled when an mother and son wanted to take flying lessons together. "I thought what a great idea and was excited to get them flying!" Desiree Keithan, manager of the Holiday Inn at exit 7 in Bristol, VA and her son have taken their first flight as a Mother and Son team. Both hope to attain their pilot license. Michael, 15 years old, has plans for a career in aviation.

Piloting an aircraft requires aeronautical knowledge, technical skill, and delicate control in the cockpit." After the first few lessons, women settle right into this new adventure and gain confidence as their abilities develop, overcoming any early trepidation they may have felt. Most will discover that flying in a small aircraft is a 'just what the doctor ordered' stress reliever."

Experience the world of flight and beauty of the air for yourself. Learn to fly. Discover the self-fulfillment and unparalleled freedom 'taking wing' will give you. The work is not difficult. The FAA requires forty hours of flight time to obtain a pilot license. Each lesson

generally takes about two hours, and between lessons, the student has approximately one hour of study that must be completed. The total cost to get a license is around \$5,000 - paid as you go. It is an investment that will last a lifetime.

Susan Van Fleet is owner and operator of Abingdon Aviation Flight School, and teaches flying at Virginia Highlands Airport, Abingdon, VA.