

Loyal Air

By Tom Gavey

The Intelligencer

THURLOW TOWNSHIP — Jim Anderson laughs when he remembers Peter Thompson's unsolicited plug for learning to fly.

But, after more than 30 years in the air himself, Loyal Air's chief pilot concurs with the sentiment.

This is the 36th year the charter and flying instruction operation has worked out of the Belleville Airport on County Road 18, east of Belleville. It's owner is local flying legend Jim Marker.

Anderson says the charter operation has been going for 24 years and operates independently from the flying school.

Loyal Air ferries both passengers and cargo in its five-passenger twin-engine Aztec or three-passenger single-engine Cessna 172s.

"We specialize in one-day business trips. We can leave at 7 a.m. and have you back home for supper a lot of times. We're licenced to fly anywhere in North America," says Anderson.

Most of the company's business revolves around a 500-kilometre radius, although they have done over-nights as well.

"The 401 detracts from our business, especially in Ontario. It's nothing to get on the highway and drive to Toronto or Montreal. But, we get a lot of business to the U.S., places like Ithaca," says Anderson. That's a five-hour drive reduced to 90 minutes by air.

Loyal Air's biggest customers are business people looking to get their work done in one day. At \$2.25 a mile for the Aztec, Anderson says two or three passengers getting together can be an economical trip.

He adds their customers get the experience of "real flying."

"We provide our customers with the morning newspaper and coffee and donuts. With us they can see

and hear what the pilot is doing. And, every seat is a window seat," Anderson chuckles.

The charter operation can arrange a trip fairly quickly, but he says they like to have at least one business day's notice.

Loyal Air also ferries cargo and offers sightseeing trips.

"What I've found is that people love to see a pilot with grey hair," laughs Anderson, who flew with the Canadian Armed Forces and commercial flights as a civilian before joining Loyal Air.

He adds people who use the operation like the privacy a charter offers and the convenience of leaving and returning home when they

desire.

Perhaps better known than Loyal Air's charter operation is its flying school, administered by chief flying instructor Kjetil (Ken) Haereid.

There, students have achieved their private or commercial pilot's licence.

And, since late last year, a third option is available: the recreational pilot's licence. It requires 25 hours of instruction in the air and has some restrictions, including limiting the number of passengers and no flying at night.

Haereid says an increasing number of students are going the route of the commercial licence and finding part-time employment in the field to

augment their regular jobs.

The flying school's busy season begins in March and students can be anywhere from teenagers to those in their 70s.

"We get a lot of guys from the base and people like Belleville's city engineer, Joe Angelo and Peter Thompson from CJBQ," says Haereid.

He adds that as long as you can multiply, divide, add and subtract, you can learn to fly.

"We relate it to sailing. It's a matter of dealing with the elements and it provides a lot of the same thrills," says Anderson.

The school stresses taking the hobby seriously and Haereid recom-

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mends that even after being licenced pilots should continue to upgrade so that their skills don't deteriorate.

"Discovery flights" are offered for \$25 for those thinking about taking flying lessons. They receive pre-flight information, instruction on instrumentation and go up in the air with a pilot who lets them sample handling the controls.

Twenty-five hours in the air is required for the recreational licence, 45 hours for a private licence and the commercial licence requires 200 hours.

Both the charter operation and flying school can be contacted by calling 962-0124.