



Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Sean Foggin is a recent graduate of flight school and is building up his flying hours teaching in Kitchener. Flying hours are the number one qualification for pilots and Mr. Foggin is hoping to land a full-time job in commercial aviation.

Young Milton pilot was an ace in college flight course

By BRAD REAUME
The Champion

SINCE HE WAS FIVE YEARS OLD Milton's Sean Foggin has dreamed of flight. Twenty years later the holder of a physics degree from McMaster University and an aviation technology diploma with a flight specialty from Sault College in Sault Ste. Marie, is beginning a career as a pilot.

He graduated in style, earning the college award for combining high marks and proficiency in flying skills. After recently getting his instructor's certification, Mr. Foggin has begun teaching flight at Kitchener-Waterloo Airport. The resulting flying time will help qualify him for a position as a commercial pilot.

The Foggin family emigrated to Canada when Mr. Foggin was five years old. During the flight he was allowed into the cockpit, where pilots showed him the controls and explained their functions. The youngster was hooked. In his first year of flight school 67 people were in the program. Only 19 survived three years to graduate in 1996. Mr. Foggin said that ratio is pretty much standard for the program.

"You have your regular course load and then all the flight tests on top," he said. "If you fail to carry a 3.0 grade-point average or are unsuccessful in getting each flying licence then you are kicked out."

In addition to surviving until graduation Mr. Foggin received the Nielsen-Jones Award, which recognizes the student with the best combination of flying ability and academic achievement. The award comes with a plaque, his name on the trophy kept at the college, and \$500.

The aspiring commercial pilot has logged about 300 hours of flying time. He will need more than 3,000 hours before being considered for any openings at Air Canada or other international carriers. However, some regional airlines hire people with fewer flight hours, and landing a position there is a stepping stone to the larger planes. The flight hour qualifications generally conform to insurance requirements.

Mr. Foggin has his private licence, a commercial licence and is able to fly multi-engined planes and fly by instruments. He is also a certified instructor.

"One advantage is that within the next 10 years some 60 per cent of those pilots currently flying for major carriers will be retiring. That could open up some spots," said Mr. Foggin.

Technically he could qualify to be a co-pilot of a large jet in about a month but, as in so many other industries, the jobs are not there, so he has to bide his time and build his flying hours.

There are several flight schools in Canada including three in Ontario — Sault College, Seneca College and Thunder Bay. He said Sault College is pretty well respected in the industry, with graduates being hired straight into the big airlines as recently as the early 1980s. Many graduates are currently working for big airlines in Canada and around the world, he noted.

One of the more interesting trips he has been on was a final year flight by instruments to New Brunswick, Mr. Foggin said. A challenging moment came when he was doing an instruments-only approach and actually cleared the cloud cover only 50 feet above the landing decision point, where pilots must decide whether to attempt their landing or abort. Most of the instrument approaches were done in clear weather.

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