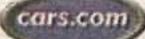


AUTOMOTIVE CLASSIFIED INSIDE AND AT  THE TRIBUNE'S ONLINE AUTO GUIDE

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Jim Mateja

425-h.p. 300C next big thing from Chrysler

As we pulled to the spotlight, the passenger side window of the 300C idling alongside shot down. "That thing got the BIG HEMI?" the driver hollered.

"Yup."

"Have to trade my car in then," he said.

At the next light, another 300C pulled alongside and the inquiring mind also motored his window down.

"That ..." he started to ask. Before he could finish, we answered "Yup, the BIG HEMI."

The reason for motorist concern is that Chrysler offers two versions of its Hemi V-8, a 5.7-liter, 340-horsepower version in the Chrysler 300C and Magnum R/T and a 6.1-liter, 425-h.p. in the 300C SRT8 that's on sale now. (The Magnum R/T SRT8 goes on sale this summer.)

If a 340-h.p. Hemi could attract 43 percent of all 300 sedan buyers to opt for the high-performance and higher-priced C version, Chrysler figured a 425-h.p. upgrade would reel in even more enthusiasts—and maybe get them to forget checking out a Ford Mustang or Pontiac GTO.

The SRT8 is the product of Chrysler's performance group headed by Dan Knafl, director of street and track racing technology. SRT was created to boost the automaker's performance image.

The SRT8 is a significant step up in power: It was available for a track adventure at Road America in Elkhart Lake, Wis., during the annual Midwest Automotive Media Association spring rally.

The track was a fitting venue for 300C SRT8 testing, considering every buyer of an SRT8 in 300C, Dodge Magnum or Jeep Grand Cherokee form gets to spend a day at a Skip Barber driving school, compliments of Chrysler.

Chrysler makes the offer to allow buyers to learn the nuances of performance motoring and their own limits on the track rather than on the road.

"All owners will get a day at the track because we feel it's important for them to learn how to handle this car safely on the road, because, at 425 h.p., this is a serious engine," Knafl said.

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TEST DRIVE



2005 Chrysler 300C SRT8

Wheelbase: 120 inches

Length: 196.8 inches

Engine: 6.1-liter, 425-h.p. Hemi V-8

Transmission: 5-speed automatic with Autostick manual mode

Fuel economy: 14 m.p.g. city/20 m.p.g.

Earning a pilot's license requires a well-grounded student

Taking a flier



Jerry Hermes examines the wing of a Beechcraft Sundowner at the Palwaukee Municipal Airport. Hermes is working toward his pilot's license. Tribune photo by Michael Fetz

By Chuck Green
Special to the Tribune

Jeff Omet used to love the drive to school—and not because he couldn't wait to get to class.

"We drove by an airport, and I've always been intrigued by airplanes," said Omet, of Arlington Heights, who earned his private pilot's license last November.

But at one time, piloting a plane seemed about as within reach as a trip to the moon. "I never thought it was something I could do. But in college, I got to know a family that was very involved in aviation, and I took a number of trips with them in small airplanes. It opened up a whole new world of being able to get 500 miles or so away quickly and easily."

He's not alone. According to the Federal Aviation Administration, there were 87,296 student pilots at the start of 2004, up from 85,991 through December 2002.

A willingness to work hard is a must for a student pilot, said Jon Dickinson, flight instructor at Waukegan Wings at Waukegan Airport.



Two planes are parked at Waukegan Wings Flying Club. Waukegan Wings offers a total immersion flight school, where students take the controls during their first flight. Photo for the Tribune by Brian Kersey

"It takes dedication [to earn a license]. Learning the concepts [of how to fly] isn't hard, but it's a matter of taking the time to memorize theories, learn about traffic patterns, weather and other variables. As instructors, it's our responsibility to make sure we're training students as best we can."

Omet, who's in sales, had started lessons a few years earlier but realized the time wasn't right.

"For every hour we fly, we need to spend a

good hour studying to get the most out of the time we spend in the airplane. When I saw what it would take to learn, I decided it was a better idea to not keep starting and stopping. I stopped until I knew I had the time and money to see it through," Omet said.

Pilot's licenses or certificates are made up of two parts. The license is not valid without a current medical certificate. "In other

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PILOTS: Certification a multi-step procedure

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

words, a pilot must be deemed medically fit for flight at regular intervals by a physician (Aviation Medical Examiner), the intervals to be determined by the level of pilot certificate," said Elizabeth Isham Cory, public affairs deputy in the Great Lakes region for the FAA.

Aviation Medical Examiners are local doctors who have taken training through the FAA and are qualified to provide pilot medical examinations.

"For example, if a pilot wants to fly large jets [air transport category], he or she must have a first-class medical certificate, which means a doctor's visit and approval every six months. A private pilot has a third-class medical, which means he or she is examined every three years, until the age of 40, when it becomes every two years."

Generally individuals starting out as pilots begin with a third-class medical certificate.

She added that FAA regulations dictate applicants must be at least 16 to fly solo with a student certificate and at 17 to obtain a pilot's license.

In general, a student must pass a knowledge exam and show proficiency in aeronautical experience. Their training must come from a certified flight instructor.

Regardless of age, some fledgling pilots come to schools with unrealistic goals, said Jim Kwasek, chief pilot for Palwaukee Flyers at Palwaukee Municipal Airport in Wheeling.

"When people first come out, they want to buy an airplane, even if they've never been in a small airplane," said Kwasek. "Until they get experience, they don't know what they're getting into. We might as well find out what right away if they're cut out for it."

That's where a total immersion flight, which Palwaukee Flyers conducts, comes in.

In a total immersion flight, a student pilot, under the close supervision of an instructor, is given control of an airplane in his first lesson. He or she has to do just about everything, except landing, that a licensed pilot would.

"They're challenged by their instructor to do everything a pilot does before, during and after a normal flight, right up to their abilities. The instructor's job is to push them up to their limits," added Kwasek.

"If they're not really ready to learn to fly it washes them out right away," though he said most students with whom his school works continue.

Wheeling resident Jerry Hermes, who is training, said he found the total immersion flight "exhilarating. You literally get in a plane and take off. I did a take off, full flight-check, I flew around, did turns, everything but land the plane. My 13-year-old son got to go with me. He loved it."

Hermes sometimes tags along on other students' total immersion flight.

"They encourage you to come out and ride while other students are learning. You sit in the back seat, where you can absorb a lot more than when you're in the pilot seat and trying to learn

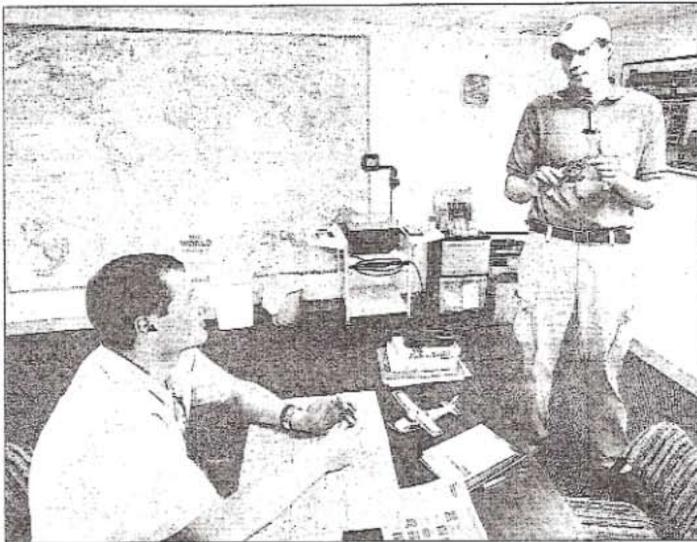


Photo for the Tribune by Brian Kersey

Mike Rachel (right) gives Joel Truog a lesson at Waukegan Wings Flying Club to help Truog prepare for his certification to become an instructor for multiple-engine aircraft.

all the rules they give you as you're piloting the plane yourself."

And like his job as a police officer in Wheeling, Hermes said learning to fly is a process.

"I've been in law enforcement almost 25 years, and I continue to go to classes. And I can see already that it [learning to fly a small plane] is something you have to do on a regular basis, too. You have to keep your skills tuned, just like I do being a police officer."

At A&M Aviation in Bolingbrook, President James Harvilchuck also thinks it's important to tune in as early as possible to a student's potential as a pilot.

"Some people get airplane or motion sickness, just as they'd get carsick. They don't seem to think it will happen to them, but if they get up there and get motion sickness, being a pilot isn't really for them," said Harvilchuck, who noted the cost for lessons is approximately \$4,000 to \$5,000.

According to Kwasek, the national average cost is around \$5,000 to \$8,000.

Hermes tries to get lessons in twice a month. "It can be a little intimidating, but I really want to do it," he said. "It's not like taking an algebra class when you were a kid and you just dreaded it and wondered when you were ever going to use it. This is something I want to do." So Hermes, is just doing it.

Onet can relate. "I just focused in on a schedule where I was taking lessons, rain or shine, two days a week and trying to sneak out any other time I could."

Harvilchuck said scheduling lessons is flexible, with some people doing an hour or so once a week and others logging three to four hours a day.

"If you do an hour a week, it will take you roughly a year to get done," he said. "Very few people usually get done in 40 hours, and the ones who do usually fly five or six hours a week."

(The FAA specifies that to get a private pilot certificate with an airplane category and single engine rating you must log at least 40 hours of flight time.)

Dickinson said his school likes to schedule lessons a couple of times a week, about two hours each. He pointed out that an extended period between lessons can set some students back.

"You have a learning curve, then as some time passes, you lose a little then re-learn some and learn a little more. It's kind of taking steps to completion. Some people take a year, some two months. It's the individual schedule."

But it's important for students to hit the books as hard as they do the sky, Dickinson added.

"They have to do their ground course at home so they get the most possible out of the actual flying time."

If student pilots do that, he noted, they probably can earn a license in two to three months.

And like most things after the terrorist attacks in 2001, Harvilchuck says it's gotten more complicated to get a pilot's license, particularly for non-U.S. citizens.

"As far as getting a license, the requirements have not changed. What's changed is some of the prerequisites, like citizenship, which, since 9/11, students now must prove. For some, it's easy; for others, it's a little more difficult."

Hermes figured this was as good a time as any to see his dream through.

"I don't think there ever is a right time to learn to earn a license. Even now, I'm getting married in June and we're going to buy a home, so obviously, economically, this probably isn't the greatest time to do it. But is there ever a right time to do something like this? It's like buying your first house. You tell yourself you're going to wait until you get a little more money for a down payment. Meantime, interest rates and home prices go up."