

Flying High

By Katrina Espinoza

If I close my eyes, I can still remember how it felt –the first time I took off in a Cessna. I can still hear the whir of the propellers increase to a roar as the pilot goes full throttle. I feel the plane jolt forward as it picks up speed and eventually lifts off the ground and soars into the sky. I had never experienced anything else like it. Right then, at the age of 12, I knew what I wanted to do: I wanted to fly.

Since then, I have continued to take advantage of free flights. I also discovered an organization for youth called Civil Air Patrol. CAP is the civilian auxiliary of the US Air Force. It offers aeronautics education and leadership and community service opportunities. Their orientation ride (O-ride) program for cadets gave me the chance to fly gliders and handle the controls of more Cessnas (with licensed pilot supervision, of course!). At our weekly squadron meetings, my squadron mates and I take turns giving classes about aviation. It's great to be among people who share my passion! Recently, I discovered another aspect of Civil Air Patrol: Search and Rescue (SAR). I learned that CAP carries out 90% of inland SAR missions. Cadets 18 years and older who have been appropriately trained can participate in these missions. This inspired me to do some research on the internet and find a career possibility: Search and Rescue pilot.

I knew I probably wouldn't be happy training pilots or flying for an airline. I wanted an exciting career where I could feel that I was helping my community in a more direct manner. To work as any type of pilot, I would have to earn a pilot's license; a difficult task in a world of vanishing funds. After more searching on the internet, I found out that just getting a private license could easily cost up to \$10,000. Determined to live my dream, I am continuing to investigate ways to earn that \$10,000.

Before I found out I loved flying, I created a small business: Catscades. I had learned how to knit 2 years before and had begun to do it in my spare time. I enjoyed knitting ruffle

scarves because they were colorful and quick to make. One day, someone complimented my mom on one of my scarves that she happened to be wearing. She was asked where she bought it. "My daughter makes them," was my mom's reply. I ended up selling nearly \$300 worth of scarves to an entire office of people! That motivated me to set up an online website and sell scarves at craft fairs making a profit close to \$500. In addition, I have played piano for 8 years, giving me the background I need to learn how to play the organ. Playing the organ at weddings or at a church is apparently quite lucrative, and can bring me within range of my goal if I play consistently for about 2-3 years. Finally, if I excel at school, I can earn flight scholarships, shaving off about \$3,000-\$5,000 off flight training. Determined to start early, I took my first high school science class in 7th grade. So far I have earned an above average score on one SAT science test. Encouraged by this, I am now taking high school chemistry (I'm in 8th grade) and intend to take Advanced Placement Chemistry in my freshman year of high school. If I continue progressing at this rate, I should be able to complete a significant number of AP courses by the time I finish high school.

I also intend to continue my involvement in Civil Air Patrol. I have learned that I will become eligible for a number of scholarships if I achieve the Billy Mitchell award in CAP. I joined last year, and am already approaching the half-way mark towards that award. My resolve to get it has pushed me to become the highest ranking (and youngest) cadet in my squadron in less than a year of CAP membership.

I know that what I decided I want for myself is neither easy nor simple. If it was, there would be dozens of SAR pilots flying right now. But, it's not entirely unreachable. What Thomas Edison said about genius ("Genius is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration.") is also true about dreams. Many people have the 1% and don't supply the 99%. I am capable of supplying the 99%, and I will.