Take an Aero Club trip into the wild blue yonder

by Laura Pellegrino
Sunburst staff writer

Since 1950, Aero Clubs throughout the Air Force have been certifying private, instrument rating and commercial pilots.

Holloman's Aero Club is one of 26 clubs left in the Air Force still carrying on that tradition.

The club is funded to teach intermediate flight training to students heading to undergraduate pilot training, said Tom Ferguson, Aero Club manager. But, private lessons are also available for active duty, dependents, retired military, reserve members and Department of Defense employees.

Most club members are looking to get a private license, Ferguson said.

Once a person has a private license, they can fly the aircraft they are certified for without an instructor. Most people get certified for the T-41, said Julie Todd, Aero Club operations clerk.

The nine certified pilots contracted by the club train between 12 and 20 students a year, Ferguson said.

"During training, you fly with an instructor for approximately 20 hours," said Mike Seymour, pilot instructor. "Then you go solo."

Although it can be done in 35 hours, it typically takes about 45 hours to become proficient at flying, Ferguson said. Flying two times a week, a private license can be earned in less than four months.

"Some people pick it up very quickly and have a natural talent for it," Seymour said. "But, usually it takes time."

There used to be an Aero Club at every base, Ferguson said. Now, there are only 26 clubs left in the Air Force.

"Leadership wanted a more structured situation due to the number of crashes that were occurring," he said. "They set up a system and made the safety guidelines more stringent."

Today's Aero Club is a safe and fun way to earn a pilot certificate, Ferguson said.

For more information, call 572-3752.

Photos by Laura Pellegrino

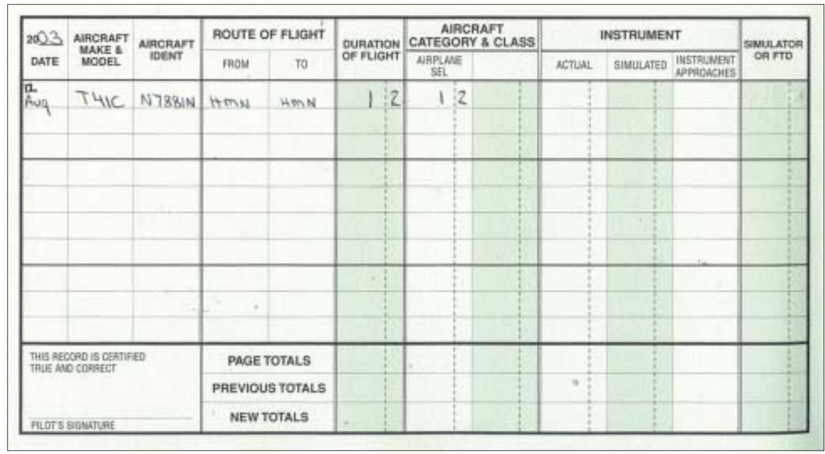
Above: 2nd Lt. Matt McMillan checks the bolts on the tail section of a Cessna 172 as part of a preflight inspection.

Left: McMillan adjusts the cabin climate controls to ensure the aircraft will be comfortable.

Right: McMillan examines a fuel sample before a flight to check for any contamination.

Above: Bill Webber, certified airframe and powerplant technician, works on rebuilding the engine of a Cessna 172.

Left: Mark Winiecki, certified airframe and powerplant technician, looks for the proper tools to use to reconstruct the engine of a Cessna 172.



2003 DATE	AIRCRAFT MAKE & MODEL	AIRCRAFT IDENT	ROUTE OF FLIGHT FROM	ROUTE OF FLIGHT TO	DURATION OF FLIGHT	AIRCRAFT CATEGORY & CLASS: AIRPLANE SEL		INSTRUMENT: ACTUAL	INSTRUMENT: SIMULATED	INSTRUMENT: INSTRUMENT APPROACHES	SIMULATOR OR FTD
1 Aug	T41C	N788IN	HMN	HMN	1 2	1 2					
THIS RECORD IS CERTIFIED TRUE AND CORRECT			PAGE TOTALS								
			PREVIOUS TOTALS								
PILOT'S SIGNATURE			NEW TOTALS								

Above: The pilot's flight log documents details on any flight a student or instructor pilot makes. In addition to recording the date, length of flight and destination, the log serves as an official record of the pilot's experience.

Left: 2nd Lt. David Damron makes an entry in his pilot log after an Aero Club flight. Damron is attending intermediate flight school at the club to prepare for undergraduate pilot training.