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## Lafayette Pilot's Life in the Sky

By Jade Shojaee



Steve Neighbor smiles from in his office in the sky. Photo provided

the aircraft aerobatically. Each time I break one of their gadgets, they go back to the drawing board to figure out why it broke and how to improve it. They've gotten very good at it, but I've gotten good at it, too."

Becoming a pilot is no easy feat says Neighbor, who has poured countless hours of training and studying into what now seems effortless for him. The process is "comparable to earning a master's or a doctoral degree," he says, "in that you have to be able to understand and teach on the correlative level, with the added difficulty of being required to perform certain maneuvers."

Neighbor gives new meaning to the concept of a 9 to 5 by flying figure eights through an empty sky. "I am fortunate to have the opportunity to teach my clients how to fly upside down and literally end over end," he says. "I instruct in a wide array of aircraft (12 in total), so there's a lot of variety. Every day is a little bit different, and there's always something to learn."

Neighbor generously offered to take this reporter on a mini-adventure up in his turf and even let me steer the plane. Since I was new to the sky (and quite the scaredy-cat) he went easy on me, but the views are absolutely spectacular and there was nothing more humbling than experiencing reality as a speck in that massive expanse of blue.

Long-term, Neighbor would like to network his way into a corporate airline and be an instructor pilot on the side. For kids aspiring to break into the industry, Neighbor offers this advice: "Work hard, save your money, and stay out of trouble. A great way to break into the industry when you're young is to work at a flight school by helping with dispatch or working as 'Line Service.' Flight schools like hiring young adults to help move, wash, and service airplanes for their pilots."

For information about Attitude Aviation, visit [attitudeaviation.com](http://attitudeaviation.com).

Steve Neighbor has been defying gravity since he first took flight at age 9 during a Fleet Week tour on board the USS Hornet with his father. "I had the opportunity to sit in the pilot's seat of a UH-1 Huey helicopter. I wanted to flip every switch and turn every dial. Needless to say, they wouldn't let me," he reminisces of the adventure that inevitably changed his life.

By night Neighbor fronts as an upstanding resident of Lafayette, but by day he paints the sky red as an aerobatic/tail-wheel instructor pilot at Livermore-based Attitude Aviation. If you think that sounds adventurous then get this: he also flies test flights for Department of Defense contractors. "One national DoD contractor chooses to use one of our airplanes (a Marchetti SF-260) as a platform to test their equipment in a real world, air combat environment," Neighbor says. "My job is to do my best to scramble their equipment by maneuvering

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